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Employee Perceptions of Marriage Enrichment Training
Spillover Effects in the Workplace

by

Tonya Yvette Moore

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School,
College of Science and Technology
and the Department of Human Capital Development
at The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

As employees display a strong commitment to the work environment and experience high marital instability, the criticality of awareness regarding the potential spillover effects between work and marital roles increase (Rogers & May, 2003). Marriage enrichment training (MET) is designed to increase relationship skills and prevent marital distress and divorce. Communication skills, conflict management, stress management and emotional intelligence are techniques taught during MET that can potentially have an impact on the spillover effects within the work environment (Bowling, Hill, & Jencius, 2005). This qualitative study provides connections regarding the spillover effects of MET into the workplace. Semi-structured interviews with MET participants confirmed that spillover effects from MET occurred in the workplace. Two cross-cutting themes were consistently present during participant interviews: a) job-related communication and b) conflict management. Both are essential skills used in the workplace and should encourage organizations to consider MET as a viable training option in future health and wellness training programs.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation journey is one that I have not traveled alone. I want to thank God for helping me connect my study with my purpose. A special thanks to my wonderful husband Ricky for his continued patience and words of encouragement. I so needed to hear the “You can do it” shout when the process got long and exhausting. Thanks to my two beautiful children Kendall and Kennedy for inspiring me to do my best! I love you guys so much and I could not do this without you! I also want to thank my sister Torri for her contributions in helping me complete this life changing project. I thank my mom for her unconditional support in making sure that life still went on through my study! A heart filled thanks to many colleagues, friends and family members that kept me in constant prayer!

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>IPA</i>	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
<i>IRB</i>	Institutional Review Board
<i>MET</i>	Marriage Enrichment Training
<i>PREP</i>	Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program
<i>TIME</i>	Training in Marriage Enrichment

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

In a drastically and continually changing competitive world, organizations must invest in employees to produce a market advantage. Managers recognize that people are a company's greatest resource (Venclová, 2013). Understanding the human element within organizations becomes more complex when external influences affect the productivity of workers (Koekemoer, 2014). In order to maintain environments that nurture the health and wealth of workers, organizations must find creative ways to develop and retain their workforce. One creative way to maintain healthy work environments is through the development of health and wellness programs that focus on employee relationships. Participants of marriage enrichment training (MET) programs can bring transferable skills into the workplace (such as communication, conflict management, stress management, and emotional intelligence) that can potentially improve the work environment and enhance personal growth (Wayne, Casper, Matthews, & Allen, 2013).

Work-life balance can be a challenge as employees attempt to manage relationships at home and at work. Some employee relationships conflict with personal work-life influences that may hinder individual success and productivity at work (Koekemoer, 2014). Failing personal relationships indirectly contribute to a declining economy (Carbone & Cahn, 2014). Organizations experience negative effects through substantial productivity declines from workers in failing relationships (Coduti, 2014). Workers in failing relationships often have serious health concerns, increased stress and anxiety, increased rates of depression and substance abuse (Coduti, 2014). As companies identify strategies to manage higher healthcare expenditures, considerations regarding the need for employees to seek care for mental and physical health surface in strategic

planning efforts (Campfield, J., et al., 2008; Chaun-Fen, L. et al., 2009). In a study conducted by Olson & Turvey (2006), companies report a direct cost in higher healthcare expenditures and indirect costs resulting from negative societal effects of broken personal relationships.

Organizations can have an immediate role in assisting with educating the workforce about how relationship dynamics spill over into the work environment (Cardwell, Williams, & Pyle, 2017). Organizations can capitalize on unique person-centered tools similar to MET for employees to develop a more satisfied and versatile workforce (Gall, Grewal, Kadis, Lopes, & Salovey, 2006; Sharey & Vailland, 1985). As an organization's awareness to meet the relationship needs of human capital increases, leaders become more informed on professional development methods and tools to enhance the workplace (Averlid, 2017; Chung, 2015). Therefore, organizations that strategically develop employees can benefit from investments in staff development and training tools, ultimately increasing internal trust relations (Shieh & Wang, 2008).

According to Olson & Turvey (2006) organizations should not view individuals within the workplace as married or divorced but as people on a continual pathway towards relationship progression or regression. During this pathway experience individuals can be exposed to failing relationships which produce stress and anxiety within the workplace, ultimately impacting productivity and competitive edge for organizations. Spillover effects of skills learned during MET such as job-related communication, conflict and stress management, and emotional intelligence skills can compliment an organizations' efforts in the creation of employee-centered professional development opportunities. According to Rogers & May (2003), in the social context of

an employee's commitment to employment and marital stability, gaining an understanding of the patterns that influence work and marital roles can have a positive effect on employee relationships at home and at work. Both positive and negative experiences from one role (at home or at work) may spillover into another role. Understanding the spillover effects of MET and how effects may influence the work environment can provide human capital development professionals with additional options to consider in health and wellness program planning.

Financial Benefits of Healthy Relationships in the Workplace

Men and women encounter positive and negative relationships in multiple areas of life. Supporting the development of an employee's interpersonal skills can bring positive financial business results to the individual and organization. Employers can sometimes miss the value of quality mental healthcare for employees (Kahn & Langlieb, 2005). The American Psychological Association (2010, 2014) identifies five categories of workplace best practices that improve psychological health in employees such as employee involvement, work-life balance, employee growth and development, health and safety, and employee recognition. When quality mental health programming exists, the potential benefits for organizations are improved quality, performance, productivity, reduced absenteeism, and turnover; fewer accidents and injuries; improved ability to attract and retain quality employees; improved customer service and satisfaction; and lower health care costs (American Psychological Association, 2014).

According to Gallagher (2002), in a study entitled *Why Supporting Marriage Makes Business Sense*, marriage plays a powerful role in adult well-being; married people live longer and healthier lives and exhibit fewer signs of mental illness. Marriage

can also be viewed as a productive economic driver and a powerful generator of social capital. On average, married people earn more money than otherwise similar single individuals earn and build more wealth than singles with similar incomes. Married workers, especially married men, are more productive and motivated, on average, than otherwise similar single employees. “Married people experience less economic hardship than singles with similar incomes” (Gallagher, 2002, p.1). Marriage increases wealth for couples as well as creates productive behaviors to benefit family, business, and society. As couples share the burden of home and work responsibilities, they produce more social capital and wealth together than either would working alone (Gallagher, 2002).

According to Carbone & Cahn (2014), failing relationships are one result of a declining economy. The middle class is the largest group experiencing a major decline in the marketplace through the disintegration of job opportunities. Some marriages are getting weaker and some stronger since the 2008 recession as correlated with different social classes. Jobs previously available to sustain the middle class are slowly decreasing as wage stagnation negatively affects the family. Working and supportive roles within the family shift based on the earned income of the household in addition to the individual, either the husband or the wife (Carbone & Cahn, 2014).

Carbone & Cahn’s (2014) viewpoint regarding middle-class women, particularly new mother’s quick response to the collapse of marriage can be a cause for concern. As middle-class women assertively increase their work effort and take advantage of education opportunities to advance within the workplace, their male counterparts are less likely to respond to the pursuit of education as quickly. The economic and psychological impact of job opportunities provides evidence for the need of MET into the workplace

(Olson & Turvey, 2006). Relationship wellness programs similar to MET can potentially add value inside and outside the work setting.

Marriage Enrichment

Marriage enrichment is designed to enhance a couple's relationship. The historical goals of MET were to help couples become self-aware and gain a deeper understanding of their partners, explore their partners' feelings and thoughts, encourage empathy and intimacy, and develop effective communication and problem-solving skills. Marriage enrichment programs commonly teach effective communication, conflict management, stress management, and emotional intelligence skills (Bowling et al., 2005). As human capital development professionals seek to gain an understanding of how marriage enrichment training can impact the workplace, a framework to explain MET, the work environment and enhance talent development is needed (Murray & Häubl, 2003). As organizations become attentive to the relational health of the workforce, competitive gains in the marketplace, improved retention rates, and positive affects to the bottom line may improve from a better understanding of the marriage enrichment spillover effects in the workplace (Chinchilla & Torres, 2006).

As the MET system permeates work environments, organizations can capitalize on the transferrable skills obtained through employed participant's MET experience. For example, organizations such as HH Gregg and Chic-Fil-A creatively incorporate marriage enrichment systems into the organization's environment through social events for employees and their partners. Similar corporate health promotions designed to enrichment workplace relationships support a culture of appreciation, resulting in a positive work environment (Sanz-Vergerl & Rodriquez-Munoz, 2013). Workplace

examples of spillover effects of MET within the workplace provide insight for human capital development professionals on the impact of MET.

Spillover Effects of MET

Spillover effects are secondary effects that follow from a primary effect and may be far removed in time or place from the event that caused the primary effect. A primary effect may capture an employee applying the skill learned during training within a personal/non-job related relationship. A secondary effect could potentially occur within the same individuals work environment through the application of skills learned during MET to enhance the individuals personal/non-job-related relationship. Spillover effects refer to the extent to which a message influences beliefs related to attributes not contained in the message (Ahluwalia, Unnava, & Burnkrnt, 2001). This study will focus on the perceptions of employees and MET spillover effects in the workplace. Spillover effects may include the application of skills learning during MET such as job-related communication, conflict management, stress management and emotional intelligence. Each of the skills learned during MET may have an impact on employees, and how specific mindsets and behaviors can spill over in the workplace. From a behavioral perspective, when employees share experiences gained through MET, family well-being and satisfaction at work increases (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Llies, Keeney, & Scott, 2011). Lastly, when employees engage in an activity at work, like MET, the results can increase performance and job satisfaction at work (Bakker, 2005).

Statement of the Problem

According to Waggoner (2013), organizations that routinely invest in MET experience positive financial rewards. As the MET system permeates the general system of work environments, organizations may have an opportunity to capitalize on the transferrable skills obtained through the employed participant's MET experience to influence positive change in the workplace. As organizations become attentive to the relational health of employees, the organization also identifies positive affects resulting in lower operational costs (Chinchilla & Torres, 2006). Employees in failing relationships negatively affect the organization's bottom line (Olson & Turvey, 2006). Estimates show that American businesses have lost up to six billion dollars due to decreased productivity stemming from marriage and relationship difficulties (Forthofer, Markman, Cox, Stanley & Kessler, 1996).

Missed opportunities for organizations to capitalize on developing a healthy workforce may hinder efforts to sustain a competitive advantage (Forgarty et al., 2014; Gall et al., 2006; Snarey & Vaillant, 1985). The commitment to investing in the overall mental health of the workforce produces a healthy work environment and improved performance (Daniels, Wimalasiri, Beesley, & Cheyne, 2012).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore and identify perceived spillover effects of MET in the workplace. An exploratory approach will provide a foundation for current and future research regarding MET and potential spillover effects in the workplace. Several theoretical approaches identify the connection between marriage satisfaction and job satisfaction, however minimum empirical data

exist regarding the detailed accounts of skills application and the influence from home and work domain. Results from this study will aid in measuring the impact of MET in the workplace.

Research Objectives

Five research objectives determined the perceived spillover effects of MET in the workplace. The objectives of this study focus on the perceptions of employed individuals who have participated in MET. The following research objectives guide the study:

RO1: Describe participants of the study in terms of length of employment, industry type, marital status, and gender.

RO2: Explore and identify employee perceived MET spillover effects of job-related communication skills in the workplace.

RO3: Explore and identify employee perceived MET spillover effects of conflict management skills in the workplace.

RO4: Explore and identify employee perceived MET spillover effects of stress management skills in the workplace.

RO5: Explore and identify employee perceived MET spillover effects of emotional intelligence skills in the workplace.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study illustrates the spillover effects of employee perceptions of MET and influences on the work environment, aligned with the historical context of general systems theory (Bertalanffy, 1968). This model describes an interdisciplinary practice that defines systems with interacting components. Two systems under review in this research include MET and organization systems.

The MET system is an environment that allows participants to become more self-aware of needs in a relationship, explore their partner’s feelings and thoughts, be encouraged to have empathy and intimacy, and develop effective communication and problem solving skills (Bowling et al., 2005). The organization system refers to people, processes, formal and informal rules and other elements that create a hierarchy for structure and communication in the workplace. An explanation of participant experiences in the MET system help to determine if employee perceptions of spillover effects exist within the workplace (see Figure 1).

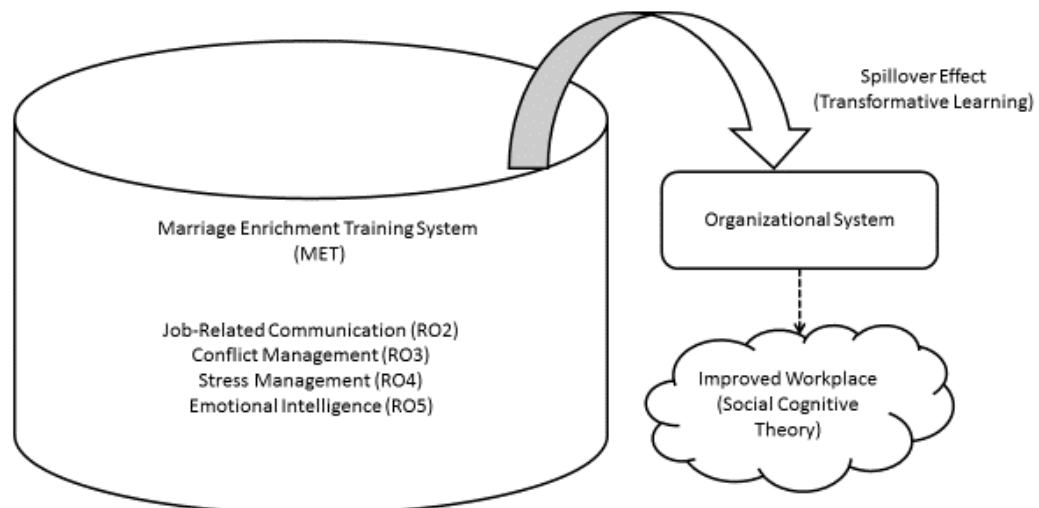


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Social cognitive theory (Bandura & Wood, 1989) focuses on potential forces that compel employee actions and work behavior. Bandura & Wood’s research can serve as a baseline for the collection of information that can assist with the development of tools to identify solutions and strategies for enhancing the work environment. Skills learned during the MET experience such as communication, stress management, conflict

management, and emotional intelligence classify as transferrable skills that influence individuals' perceptions within the workplace (see Figure 1). Transferrable skills can be beneficial in conflict management situations at home and at work.

Transformative learning theory originating from Mezirow (1997) translates three dimensions from the process of perspective transformation. Psychological, convictional, and behavioral changes consist of conscious thought processes that allow individuals to change their frames of reference. Individuals can decode information by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs and then consciously making and implementing plans that incite new ways of defining their worlds. Perceptions from employed participants may show transformational behavior patterns exist within organizations. Transformative learning is a significant part of the MET environment, which covers many skills (Bowling et al., 2005; Sullivan & Anderson, 2002). Marriage enrichment generally includes training that affects family sociology, human sexuality, conflict resolution, small group dynamics, affective education, programmed instruction, social skills training, humanistic psychology, and communication theory (Leigh, Loewen, & Lester, 1986). Each category within MET provides a transformational learning opportunity that can potentially create a spillover effect at home or work (see Figure 1).

Emotional intelligence is the ability to identify, assess, and control one's own emotions, the emotions of others, and the emotions of groups (Goleman, 1995). In the 1900's, even though traditional definitions of intelligence emphasized cognitive aspects such as memory and problem-solving, several influential researchers in the intelligence field of study recognized the importance of going beyond traditional types of intelligence (Gardner, 1983). As early as 1920, Thorndike (1920) describes "social intelligence as the

skill of understanding and managing others” (p. 227). Gardner describes the idea of multiple intelligences through two different perspectives: interpersonal and intrapersonal. Interpersonal intelligence is the capacity to understand the intentions, motivations, and desires of other people. Intrapersonal intelligence is the capacity to understand oneself and to appreciate one’s feelings, fears, and motivation. Both interpersonal and intrapersonal concepts provide a greater understanding of behavior outcomes with individuals (Gardner, 1983).

Significance of the Study

This research could potentially identify empirical data that may prompt organizations to consider MET to enhance the workplace. Findings of this study may uncover benefits of marriage enrichment programs in the workplace. The incorporation of MET within organizations, allows human resource managers to reach employees within the organization in a unique way (Schumn & Silliman, 2000). Exploring the effects of MET within the workplace can potentially create an atmosphere of self-initiated relationship growth through the application of skills learned during training. Ultimately, perceptions about transferable skills such as job-related communication, conflict management, stress management and emotional intelligence may effect work environments, job performance and areas for future employee training (Ahmann & Harvey, 2014; Finegold & Notabartolo, 2010).

Definitions of Key Terms

The terms listed in this section provide a detailed description of concepts utilized within this study. The description of terms will assist the reader with the development of key concepts.

1. *Conflict Management* – requires considering all factors that have contributed to conflict and using problem-solving techniques such as problem identification; brainstorming solutions, and asking if solutions are safe, fair, and acceptable to others (Arnold & Underman-Boggs, 2007).
2. *Emotional Intelligence* – the ability to perceive and express emotion accurately and adaptively, to understand emotion and emotional knowledge, to use feelings to facilitate thought, and to regulate emotions in oneself and in others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).
3. *Job-Related Communication* – informal or formal internal communications regarding changes or shared decision-making within an organization. Information exchange regarding work related activities, events or situations. Information sharing between management and or staff or agency-wide communication on programmatic changes (Bosco-Ruggiero, Spath & Strand, 2013).
4. *Marriage Enrichment* – an educational approach to help couples become aware of themselves and their partners, explore their partners’ feelings and thoughts, encourage empathy and intimacy, and develop effective communication and problem solving skills (Bowling et al., 2005, p.4).
5. *Spillover Effect* – a secondary effect that follows from a primary effect, and may be far removed in time or place from the event that caused the primary effect. Effects with references to the extent to which a message influences beliefs related to attributes that are not contained in the message (Ahluwalia, et al., 2001).
6. *Stress Management* – applied intervention based on self and environment change. The self-change approach involves personalizing or individualizing stress

management where individuals will learn how to adapt and cope effectively with stressful situations through positive perception and ways of thinking, appropriate action, and self-reflection. The environment change approach relates to organizational stress management, in which individuals try to change the stressful situation or environment to become less stressful rather than try to improve their coping abilities (Esa, Naing, Yaacob & Yusoff, 2013),

7. *Transferrable Skills* – versatile skills developed in one situation which can be transferred to another situation (Cryer, 1998).

Summary

Chapter I indicates that the more knowledgeable and experienced employees are with communication, stress management, conflict management, and emotional intelligence, the greater the opportunity for increased work performance behaviors that enhance the work environment (Ahmann & Harvey, 2014; Finegold & Notabartolo, 2010). Chapter II provides a literature review that identifies how general systems theory, social cognitive theory, transformative learning theory, and emotional intelligence theory, support MET in the workplace. The concept of MET and key elements that enhance interpersonal relations assist with understanding the potential spillover effects in the work environment. A theoretical framework in the literature supports the need for organizations to understand how relationship wellness training compliments efforts to enhance the work environment. Lastly, examples of workplace transferrable skills provide a pathway to determine improvements in the work environment and the usefulness of resources like MET in the workplace.

CHAPTER II – LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review includes an overview of MET programs, an investigation of marriage and work environment connections, and an examination of the potential spillover effects of MET within the work environment. Lastly, a theoretical foundation provides direction in understanding the link between employee-centered professional development opportunities and the impact on the work environment. The theoretical foundation includes general systems theory, social cognitive theory, transformative learning theory, and emotional intelligence theory.

Overview of MET Programs

The concept of MET emerged in the early 1960s to assist couples with working through complex issues within relationships. These MET programs are an educational approach to help couples become more self-aware, explore feelings and thoughts that evolve in the relationship, encourage empathy and intimacy, and develop effective communication and problem-solving skills (Bowling et al., 2005). Programs were developed for couples in healthy relationships but most were developed for troubled and dysfunctional couples (Hof & Miller, 1981). Marriage enrichment was developed to assist families (particularly couples) with effective communication in faith-based communities (National Marriage Encounter, 2001).

According to Sillman & Schumn (2000), several leading marriage enrichment resources provide enhancement tools for marriage enrichment practitioners. These tools include (a) the Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment, (b) Training in Marriage Enrichment (TIME) Relationship Enhancement Program, (c) Prepare and Enrich, (d) the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP), and, (e) Personal Growth in

Marriage. Resources similar to the training curriculum provided by the Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment promote better marriages through enrichment opportunities and resources to strengthen a couple's relationship; increase intimacy; and enhance personal growth, mutual fulfillment, and family wellness (Sillman & Schumn, 2000).

Marriage enrichment experts, Dinkmeyer & Carlson (1985) describe the TIME relationship enhancement program as a 10-session training program in marriage enrichment that employs a socio-psychological group approach to teach skills such as accepting responsibility, understanding priorities and values, communicating effectively, making choices, responding to whole messages, and resolving conflicts. Studies on the TIME program report effectiveness in producing positive changes in couple relationships. The TIME program claims that people are socially oriented beings constantly making decisions and that all human behavior is purposeful. The move toward purposefulness helps couples take ownership in the development of the relationship. Ownership is shown through participation in marriage enrichment programs (Dinkmeyer & Carlson, 1985).

According to Bowling et al. (2005), Prepare and Enrich is an online assessment tool for both married and unmarried couples who want to understand and improve relationships. By asking key questions in the beginning of the assessment, Prepare and Enrich addresses each couple's relationship stage, situation, challenges, philosophical and or spiritual orientation, and personalities and tailors the inventory to assess the couple's strengths and areas where growth can produce the greatest benefits. Each partner completes the inventory independently by answering approximately 200 questions.

Bumpass & Martin (1989) present the PREP MET technique as scientifically-based and empirically-tested for over 30 years in teaching relationship education. Employee-centered training that focuses on relationship education is one of many interventions that can enhance the productivity of the employee as personal relationship goals are achieved. Topics in the program include communication, conflict management, commitment, friendship, sensuality, problem solving, and emotional supportiveness. Further, PREP offers practical materials that help facilitators modify or enhance dimensions of relationships that link research and theory to effective marital functioning. Using techniques of cognitive-behavioral marital therapy and communication-oriented marital enhancement programs, PREP aims to help couples maintain high levels of functioning and prevent marital problems from developing. PREP is one of many marriage enrichment programs involving the holistic aspect of the individual.

Some marriage enrichment programs are based on Adler's (1964) doctrine, indicating that behavior serves as compensation for feelings of inferiority. Adler, an Austrian medical doctor, psychotherapist, and founder of the school of individual psychology, was the first to emphasize the importance of the social aspect in an individual's behavior re-adjustment process. For example, the Personal Growth in Marriage program is similar in its premises to the Adlerian Principles and has four main objectives. The first objective builds the clients' self-esteem; the second helps them recognize responsibility for their own behavior; the third helps clients develop relationship skills; and the fourth provides education (Adler, 1964). Each objective provides a platform for practitioners to coach participants on how to progress from an undesirable state to a more desirable state to achieve relationship goals (Bowling et al.,

2005). Participants experience various stages of development throughout marriage enrichment programs, hence the need for multiple levels and methods of learning through brief or extended lengths to obtain the desired behavioral outcomes (Hof & Miller, 1981).

Bowling et al. (2005) suggests a variety of ways MET occurs. Some programs are intensive and require active participation and others may occur in one training session or workshop. Examples of extended programs include instruction and counseling implemented over multiple weeks. Brief programs provide guided instruction during one-day workshops with additional resource materials administered by a facilitator. The emotional stage or transition of the couple dictates the use of extended or brief techniques. Each couple experiences transition differently, so the facilitator must treat each couple uniquely. Assessments help couples understand responses to changes within the relationship (Bowling et al., 2005).

According to Worthington (2009), the number of disruptions in routine schedules, the number of new decisions that create disagreements and the level of ongoing conflict prior to the MET intervention aid in a facilitator's technique selection. If the degree of disruption of time schedules is great, the couple can experience great upheaval in their lives. At this point, the couple can experience disorientation, and both partners can struggle to get their lives back on track. Couples' feelings of distress and the inability to cope with changes in life require high dose programming. Conversely, if the couple experiences a low level of conflict or if a minimum number of routine changes are present, then the couple may prefer low dose programming. When couples fully discover and apply all of the resources available to them by learning how to interact well and develop relationship depth, they have the potential of greater satisfaction at home and at

work (Ahmann & Harvey, 2014; Finegold & Notabartolo, 2010; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

Marriage and Work Environment Connections

Basic skills developed during MET can also be applied within work settings. Promoting role and job resources leads to work and family enrichment that influences positive outcomes at home and at work (Hakanen, Peeters, & Perhoniemi, 2011). According to Greenhaus & Powell (2006), the work-family enrichment experience in one role (work) can improve the quality of life in another role (home) and vice-versa. Effective communication, conflict management, stress management, and emotional intelligence are universal skills that provide benefits to MET participants and employers. When employees transfer skills learned in MET, employers benefit (Nasir & Sakdiah, 2010). Common workplace skills outlined in this study are helpful when employees take ownership in learning job-readiness competencies and have the emotional intelligence to use the skills at home or at work. Jorfi et al. (2014) suggest that in today's complex communication environment, emotional intelligence, effective communication, and strategic alignment are among the top priorities of organizations and the couple relationship. Communication effectiveness remains crucial to essential performance outcomes and progress for employees at home and work (Burleson & Denton, 2014; O'Daniel & Rosenstein, 2008).

Job-Related Communication Skills

Ahmann & Harvey (2014) suggest that effective communication strategies such as validation taught during MET resemble strategies an employee obtains in the work environment. Validation is a key component of any interpersonal interaction. Validation

refers to taking another person's thoughts and feelings seriously, both recognizing and acknowledging them, leading to an increased sense of well-being and calmness for everyone. Effective communication includes building rapport, empathy, and cooperation through the art of inquiry, not talking to or at employees or spouses (Kippist & Duarte, 2015). Highly valuing supportive communication skills transforms the mindset of married employees into a mutual problem-solving orientation that leads to a willingness to confront and explore relationship concerns with one's partner in a sensitive and mutually constructive way (Burlison & Denton, 2014). Developmental activities assist employees with navigating through complex conversations at work and at home, resulting in the creation of a more proficient communicator (Polito, 2013).

Research by Arif, Zubair, & Manzoor (2012) reveals that supportive communication climates at home and work correlate positively with innovative work behavior and that defensive communication climates result in negative work behavior. Results also indicate that differences exist between men and women. Female employees reflect more innovative work behavior and supportive communication climates in comparison to male employees. In addition to gender differences, new employees participate in more supportive communication environments than experienced employees (Arif et al., 2012).

According to the article "Top 10 Characteristics of the Four Generations Currently in the Workforce" (2012), new employees exhibit more innovative work behavior and supportive communication climates in comparison to experienced employees. Individuals are capable of influencing well-being in the workplace by displaying character traits such as a positive mindset and efficient communication skills.

However, communication regarding wellbeing is present through actions by management and the employee's home life, ultimately influencing individual traits and behaviors from multiple dimensions. The work and home-life rewards are greater for employees with better communication skills, especially when the environment is uncertain (Rainer & Smith, 2012).

Organizations can develop training to assist employees with enhancing communication skills through workplace counseling and training. O'Daniel & Rosenstein (2008) suggest that communication, collaboration, and teamwork are lacking in industries such as healthcare. Barriers in communication can lead to broken rules, mistakes, lack of support, incompetence, poor teamwork, disrespect, and micromanagement. Creating a culture that provides a feeling of safety in which individuals can voice concerns is crucial to reducing risks. Best practices and evidence-based management serve as a guide in developing effective communication skills that lead to quality improvement, even when the conversations are difficult (Polito, 2013).

According to Polito (2013), a strong need exists in the workplace to establish skills in conducting complex conversations. Best practices and management guide the decision to promote communication training in order to minimize stress and conflict. Teaching communication skills may be a potent point of intervention for married couples experiencing high levels of work-family conflict (Carroll, Hill, Yorgason, Larson, & Sandberg, 2013). Constructive communication is a skill that couples can use to cope with the demands of managing work and home life. Couple communication is one variable consistently linked to marital satisfaction. Couple communication patterns are qualitatively different for distressed and non-distressed couples (Gottman, 1994). Married

employee actions are a key indicator of the quality and stability of relationships with each other and those around them (Carroll et. al., 2013).

Mastery of effective communication skills when conducting complex conversations, either at home or at work, is integral to keeping channels of communication open and productive. Effective communication skills may assist in minimizing confrontations with other employees (Polito, 2013). Greenhaus & Beutell (1985) indicate that both constructive and destructive communication may influence how work-family conflict is experienced. Destructive communication can negatively affect the work domain and cause health and depression issues, thus decreasing the work satisfaction levels of both husbands and wives (Sandberg, Yorgason, Miller, & Hill, 2012).

Schulz, Cowan, Cowan, and Brennan (2004) suggest that negatively arousing workdays (including fluctuations in workday pace and end of the workday mood) link with angrier marital behavior for women. For men, negatively arousing workdays link to more withdrawal behaviors. Dual earner couples report more positive marital interactions on days when work hours were minimal. Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Wethington (1989) asked participants once per day about work and family experiences over the previous 24 hour period. A once-per-day assessment raises concerns about retrospective distortions and introduces questions about the temporal ordering between work and family experiences (Larson & Almeida, 1999). Participants' recall of the workday may be influenced by mood at the time of recall and the quality of family experiences after the workday. Repetti's (1989) study suggests wives report of husbands' marital behaviors and objective indicators of daily work stress shows strong evidence that workday

experiences and evening experiences at home link. Therefore, couple communication may be a factor that interacts with the couple's perception of work-family conflict and the quality of overall couple communication in the digital age (Preston, 2015).

According to Preston (2015), new research from Georgia Tech and Yahoo Labs on how couples communicate through technology drives the message of choice between partners. Each message determines which tools are used between partners. For example, sharing a private moment might be sent as a text, while working on a honey-do list could happen over an email. The study also shows that couples discussing one task, often involves using several technology channels. As technology advances and employees spend less time interfacing with each other, fewer opportunities exist to develop interpersonal skills. Technology is not an end-all but rather an addition to the multiple options that couples use to communicate (Preston, 2015). A greater sense of awareness when developing communication skills is essential for employees to experience success in marital relationships and in the workplace. When employees become self-aware of communication strengths and weaknesses in the workplace, this knowledge can also aid in maintaining healthy relationships at home and minimize conflict in both domains (Finegold & Notabartolo, 2010).

Work-Family Conflict Management

Conflict management requires the consideration of all contributing factors that influence conflict and the use of problem-solving techniques such as problem identification; brainstorming solutions; and asking if solutions are safe, fair, and acceptable to others (Arnold & Underman-Boggs, 2007). Conflict management arises as a result of inadequate communication and thus results in intrapersonal conflict with

oneself and interpersonal conflict with others (Brinkert, 2010). Table 1 shows multiple examples of work-family conflict in various sources. *Work-family conflict* is defined as “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible so that participation in one role (home) is made difficult by participation in another role (work)” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Work-family conflict negatively relates to limited support of one’s spouse and associates with more blame and negative emotional displays when communicating about work issues (Green, Schaefer, MacDermid, & Weiss, 2011).

Table 1

Studies Investigating Work-Family Conflict

Author	Sample	Type of Conflict
Bohen & Viveros-Long (1981)	Employees of two federal agencies	Job-family role strain
Burke, Weir, & Duwors (1979)	Male Canadian administrators and/or wives	Impact of husband’s job on home/family (assessed by wife)
Greenhaus & Kopelman (1981)	Male alumni of technological college	Work-family
Holahan & Gilbert (1979)	Dual-career couples	Professional spouse and parent
Jones & Butler (1980)	Married male U.S. sailors	Family/work role incompatibility
Keith & Schafer (1980)	Dual-career couples	Work-family role strain
Werbel (1978)	Employees (96% male) of 9 companies	Inter-role conflict between work and family

According to Bohan & Viveros-Long (1981), job-family roles exhibit strain within federal agencies. Assessments by wives of husbands’ jobs as Canadian

administrators show influences in the home from the work environment breed into job-family conflict (Burke et al., 1979). Greenhaus & Kopelman (1981) suggest that male alumni of a technological college experience work-family conflict and rely on effective communication skills to minimize the stress level. After examining dual-career couples, both Holahan & Gilbert (1979), and Keith & Schafer (1980), find those who experience work-family conflict experiences as couples attempt to manage professional spouse and parent roles. Jones & Butler (1980) suggest married male United States sailors experience feelings of incompatibility through family-work roles and often seek ways to resolve sensitive situations. Werbel (1978) reports the presence of work-family conflict within nine companies with a 96% male employee population, each experiencing inter-role conflict at home and work. Each example shows a common theme regarding the existence of work-family conflict and the importance of developing healthy mechanisms to communicate effectively.

When employees, similar to partners in relationships, do not like each other and allow counterproductive behavior, conflict arises and hinders communication. If the problem is severe, other employees within the work environment will begin to take sides, and divisiveness can dominate the organization. If employees are able to show their dislike, the problem can fester, creating a toxic atmosphere. Conflict impacts morale, legitimizes poor behavior, and undermines trust in organizations. At this stage, a loss of productivity occurs as employees focus on personality conflicts instead of performance. The organization can break down as dysfunctional behaviors affect the workplace, public perception, funding, and the ability to maintain talented employees. Leaders must address root causes of dislike among employees as the potential harm to the organization

can be significant (Farrell, 2014). Research presents several models that further explain the coping mechanisms employees may consider when interacting with coworkers.

According to Somech & Drach-Zahavy (2012), two test models exist to determine the relationship between personal coping strategies and formal organizational family-friendly supports in mitigating work-family conflict. The additive model indicates that personal coping and organizational supports together associate with decreased work-family conflict. Work-family conflict decreases when individuals perceive the investments between their efforts in personal coping strategies and the organizations efforts as equal. Grzywacz & Bass (2003) indicate that the additive model can have negative effects on individuals such as depression and problem drinking. Enrichment buffers the negative relationship between conflict and anxiety. The additive model of conflict and enrichment can serve as a predictor for a variety of socioemotional well-being outcomes like mental health, life satisfaction, positive and negative moods, and partner relationship quality. Lastly, the interactive model of personal coping and organizational support reveals a mechanism to compensate partners in decreasing conflict. Nevertheless, in each model, personal coping strategies serve as a better approach to minimizing work-family conflict than formal family-friendly supportive methods. Somech & Drach-Zahavy (2012) indicate the importance of organizational support in decreasing work-family conflict. Production decreases when employees lack the personal coping strategies required or when they perceive the organization's efforts are unfair in relation to their own coping efforts.

According to Enehaug, Helmersen, & Mamlund (2016), involvement in workplace conflicts has a significant impact on individual well-being. Research indicates

the absence of conflict management at early stages can potentially paralyze the organization and serve as an interlocking mechanism that contributes to hindered action from management. One fifth of the employees in this study were directly involved in conflicts, and two thirds felt their local work environment served as a negative influence towards conflicts. The results show that individuals directly involved with conflict experienced negative health consequences. In addition to negative health effects, the overall well-being of the entire organization experiences impact, hindering future progress toward the mission and goals of the business (Enehaug et al., 2016).

Researchers challenge leaders within the business environment to think differently about assisting employees with the development of conflict management skills. Often leaders are not aware of additional methods regarding the management of conflict (Katz & Flynn, 2013). When leaders implement programming that teaches employees how to utilize skills from MET, these efforts can complement the organization's attempt to develop conflict management skills. The lack of awareness, perception, and use of conflict management strategies hinders performance results (Choi, 2013). Findings show a lack of clear definition of conflict, absence of integrated conflict management systems within most organizations, and dissatisfaction with antiquated grievance systems negatively affects retention within organizations (Katz & Flynn, 2013). When organizations equip employees with efficient conflict management tools, stress levels in employees' personal lives and work environment decrease (Wright, 2014). Conflict can be stressful for individuals; therefore, employees must learn how to manage both conflict and stress (Bashir & Ramay, 2010; Enehaug et al., 2016).

Stress Management and Marriage Satisfaction

According to Wright, Sweet, Ascott, Chummun, & Taylor (2011), stress occurs as a response to perceived threat activated by the sympathetic nervous system. Stress prepares the body for a physical action. Stress occurs when the demands placed on an individual exceed the resources he or she experiences (Cox, Randall, & Griffiths, 2002). Organizations can help minimize stress-related situations by focusing on the employee's emotional (psychological) state through healthy workplace practices. Five types of practices exist: (a) health and safety activities such as exercising assist employee's in recovering from burnout; (b) employee involvement brings greater autonomy and control over work demands (c) work-life balance allows for greater control to manage the conflict between work and non-work-life; (d) employee growth and development provides an avenue for individuals to learn about stress management skills and career resiliency; and (e) employee recognition improves motivation and engagement (Grawitch, Ballard, & Erb, 2015). Employees experience an array of situations at work and home that require the management of emotions. According to a study conducted by Mansour & McKinnish (2013), employees spend more time at work than at home and can benefit from healthy workplace practices to enhance relationships and positively impact production and mood with co-workers and spouses.

The most influential factor changing marital satisfaction is stress management (Zarch, Marashi, & Raji, 2014). Emotional communication and economic factors have an influential role in a couple's satisfying relationship or successful marriage. Research shows that general mood ranks as one of the most effective factors that changes marital satisfaction. Occupational stress registers as a serious threat to the well-being of

employees and organizations, leading to unhealthy behavior outcomes and resulting in loss of productivity at work and marital stress. According to Ju, Wilbur, Lee, & Miller (2011), a need exists for occupational interventions such as lifestyle physical activity that target both members of the married couple. Leaders can determine services and how employees respond to work-related stress situations to help detect barriers and facilitate solutions for ineffective stress management interactions. Occupational health interventions aim to address work-related stress for employees and may have a significant effect on both the individual and the organization (Kinnunen-Amoroso & Liira, 2013). As employees develop stress and emotional management skills, the ability to solve disagreements at home or at work increases (Zarch et al., 2014).

Emotional Intelligence

Research led by neuroscientists result in the adoption of a concept known as *emotional intelligence*, which focuses on empathy, self-awareness, and self-control, all emotions necessary to maintain healthy relationships. Findings from the research show support for MET since emotional intelligence skills are essential skills that can be learned (Ooms, 2007). Research indicates that emotional intelligence is a psychological theory, as argued by Salovey & Pizaro (2003), and that emotional intelligence provides an organizing framework enabling psychologists to synthesize a large body of research on affective phenomena. Emotional intelligence also reaches beyond traditional views of intelligence by incorporating the emotional system, thus providing a theory of individual differences in emotional competencies (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Emotional intelligence skills can be beneficial tools learned at home and at work. Obtaining mastery in the use of emotional competencies involves the ability of an individual to perceive surroundings

and comprehend the complex world to improve performance in various situations, learn new things in depth, seek answers to questions, and produce better results (Ancona, 2012; Weng, 2015).

Four concepts provide a greater understanding of emotional intelligence: (a) perceiving emotions – the ability to perceive emotions in oneself and others as well as in objects, art, stories, music, and other stimuli; (b) using emotion to facilitate thought – the ability to generate, use, and feel emotion as necessary to communicate feelings or employ them in other cognitive processes; (c) understanding emotion – the ability to understand emotional information and how emotions combine and progress through relationship transitions and to appreciate such emotional meanings; and (d) managing emotions – the ability to be open to feelings and modulate them in oneself and others so as to promote personal understanding and growth (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Synonymous with moral character, self-control, and an attractive personality, emotional intelligence provides a model to understand how reason and emotion interact. Emotional intelligence rates more important than intelligence testing in predicting life success (Goleman, 1995). If employees have the ability to modify wants and expectations through reality testing, the development of personal and professional goals may be more appropriate and attainable. The development of emotional intelligence skills in the workplace can become a valuable technique contributing to successful relationships at home and at work (Stein & Book, 2011).

The Impact of MET and Spillover Effects in the Workplace

According to Schultz et al. (2004), married couples may experience difficulty in prioritizing employment and marriage. Satisfaction in the work or home domain remains

relevant to the individual's fulfillment of basic needs and self-identity. The relationship quality at home and work results in satisfaction within both aspects of life. Working couples face challenges with multiple demands and pressures at home and work. Greenhaus & Powell (2006) conceptualize the concept of work-family enrichment as the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role. Work-family enrichment occurs when resources gained in one role (family) improve performance in the other role (work) or vice-versa (Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne & Grzywacz, 2006). As organizations become more global, more emphasis is placed on better job performance, higher productivity and increased profits (Nasir & Sakdiah, 2010).

Zadeck's (1992) spillover theory proposes that work and family experiences interconnect. Work experiences spill over to family experiences, and family experiences spill over to work experiences. Participation in one role may enhance or enrich the quality of the experience in another role. Rogers & May's (2003) research suggest that both positive and negative long-term spillover are present between marital satisfaction and job satisfaction. The study also indicates that an increase in marital satisfaction significantly associates with an increase in job satisfaction and that an increase in marriage discord significantly associates with a decrease in job satisfaction. Results from this study support spillover theory, which indicates similarities between occurrences in the work and family environment, such that happiness at work leads to happiness at home (Zadeck, 1992).

According to Judge & Illies (2004), employees' feelings about their jobs influence the moods experienced at home. Mood at work spills over outside the work area,

influencing mood at home. Therefore, probability exists that a person's job satisfaction may influence marital satisfaction (Judge & Illies, 2004). A supportive partner serves as a motivating factor for better performance at work. Better performance may lead to job satisfaction and vice versa. Since spousal support is necessary in contributing to a healthy marriage and workplace success, receiving words of affirmation from one another regarding the development of effective communication tools in the relationship can potentially aid in creating a healthy environment at home and work (Perrone & Worthington, 2001). Most couples surpassing the five-year period of marriage have a greater chance of moving beyond the stages of relationship adjustment, increasing the probability of marital satisfaction, and potentially providing a positive influence in the work environment.

Happiness and dissatisfaction impact the home and work environment; however, positive experiences in the workplace can reduce psychological distress (Nasir & Sakdiah, 2010). The employee's ability to manage both domains effectively requires a sense of emotional awareness and skill development and an understanding of the emotions of others in both the home and work environments (Stein & Book, 2011). Sandberg, et al., (2013) suggest that even though extensive research on the family-to-work spillover exists, little is understood about the connection between marital interaction and work satisfaction. Marriage enrichment programs may provide positive outcomes for organizations, the employee, and family members in the long term. Enhancing MET programs to expose participants to transferable skills applied in marriage and the workplace can also benefit the work environment (Hakanen et al., 2011).

Common skills developed during MET directly impact job satisfaction, job performance, and marital satisfaction (Fogarty et al., 2014; Susanty & Miradipta, 2013). Conversely, some researchers doubt the effectiveness of marriage enrichment programming for three reasons: (a) doubts about the long-term effectiveness of enrichment programming, (b) the reality that prevention is not generally accepted by the public, and (c) the general refusal on the part of practitioners to accept pedagogic and norm-orientated interventions (Riehlmede & Willi, 1993). However, research continues to evolve regarding measures of success with couple relationships after MET experiences (Barton, Futris, & Nelson, 2014; Hickman, Protinsky, & Singh, 1997). Statistical analyses show varying perspectives on the measurement of success within the MET practitioner community (Baldwin, Blanchard, Fawcett, & Hawkins, 2009).

Among the general population, approximately two thirds of couples report happiness in their marriages, yet demographers estimate that two thirds of all first marriages will end in divorce (Bumpass & Martin, 1989; Wolfinger, 2005). Family life continues to drastically change, and families experience marital instability. Research regarding the legacy of marital instability confirms the need for continued MET. Research across multiple environments similar to the workplace indicates couple relationships can be improved, while simultaneously enhancing the work environment (Bumpass & Martin, 1989; Silliman & Schumn, 2000).

Emotional Spillover Effects into the Workplace

Rogers & May (2003) reveal the relationship among marital interaction, physical and mental health, work satisfaction, and the spillover effects from marriage to work. The results show that negative marital interactions were associated with significantly

lower work satisfaction. Higher negative marital interaction results were directly linked to elevated depression levels for both men and women. In the marital discord model of depression, negative marital quality was conceptualized to increase the level of dyadic hostility as well as decrease the level of partner support, putting both spouses at higher risk for depression (Beach, Dreifuss, Franklin, Kamen, & Gabriel, 2008). The marital discord model suggests that marital problems predict depression over time. Researchers conclude that depression is a pathway through which negative marital interaction could spill over into health and work satisfaction (Avorn et al., 2006; Berndt et al., 1998).

Depressive symptoms might compromise a person's system functioning both at home and at work (Hays, Wells, Sherbourne, Rogers, & Spitzer, 1995). An interactional description of depression provides a framework on the potential influence of marital interaction on work satisfaction and a closer view of the spillover effect (Beach, Brody, Katz, & Kim, 2003). The results indicate that marriage-to-work spillover can be costly for families, organizations and governments. Marriage-to-work spillover effects are important because research shows that work satisfaction is significantly related to work performance, with satisfaction predicting work productivity and quality (Bono, Judge, Patton, & Thoresen, 2001; Rose, Kumar, & Pak, 2009).

Kistenmacher & Biglan's (2000) study provides a link between marital distress and work satisfaction and is further explained through an end product known as depression and physical health problems. These findings are critical to employers, health care providers, mental health professionals, and policy makers as a growing body of research indicates that marital/couple problems are a public health concern with tremendous cost to families, organizations, and governments. Employees with the

greatest risk for physical and mental health issues and work problems can potentially benefit from company-wide interventions to reduce couple-to-work spillover (Anger, Bodner, Hammer, Kossek, & Zimmerman, 2011).

Behavioral Spillover Effects into the Workplace

Literature indicates potential links exist among physical health, mental health, and work outcomes. For example, marital discord is a known predictor of depression, and depression is the main identifier that leads to annual sick days-more than physical illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, and back problems (Druss, Rosenheck, & Sledge, 2000). The way couples disagree on a day-to-day basis may influence a partner's ability to focus on work, therefore negatively affecting productivity. Various types of conflict may influence the nature of the spillover, as previous research has shown angry or depressive conflict styles may be more problematic for couples than compromising styles of conflict (Cummings, DuRocher- Schudlich, & Papp, 2011). Conflict styles may hinder effective communication efforts at home or work, leading to a greater chance of negative interaction. Couples with more positive interaction may perceive their marriage as a source of social support, which can buffer against the strains of work (Ray & Miller, 1994). Couples with low negative marital interaction levels may have more resources, both physical and emotional, to successfully deal with work challenges (Nishina, Repetti, & Saxbe, 2008). Over 20 years of empirical support indicates behavioral marital therapy and MET tools reduce depressive symptoms and improve marital functioning (Beach & Whisman, 2012). Possible solutions to modify the specific types of negative interaction that likely feed depression can be useful for an employee at home and at work. Failure to identify realistic solutions to minimize

negative mood swings can lead to job stress, resulting in less desirable production outcomes in the workplace (Rost, Meng, & Xu, 2014).

Two different social responses to an increase in job stress are identified in literature: (a) increases in conflict and expressions of anger and (b) social withdrawal. In cross-sectional and longitudinal designs, chronic job stressors link to increases in marital conflict through changes in psychological distress (Galinsky, Hughes, & Morris, 1992). Previous research also indicates experiences in the workplace and the emotional consequences for individual workers affect marital relationships. For example, in a longitudinal study by Matthews, Conger, & Wickrama (1996), 337 Midwestern couples experienced higher levels of work-related psychological distress causing increased hostility and decreased warmth and supportiveness in marital interactions. Likewise, in the negative mood spillover model (Story & Repetti, 2006), stressors such as heavy workload or negative interactions with coworkers may create feelings of irritability, tension, and frustration. Negative mood spillover increases the opportunity to become engaged in conflictual marital interactions, causing post-work tension that carries over into the home environment (Song, Foo, & Uy, 2008; Williams & Alliger, 1994).

According to Crouter, Perry-Jenkins, Huston, & Crawford (1989), in a study of 29 men, the spouses of male employees shared that work-related stress at the end of the work day was related to subsequent negative behaviors. Suggestions by Repetti (1989) indicate that from a sample of 33 male air traffic controllers and spouses, husbands' high work-load days show increases in the likelihood of husbands' withdrawal in the home that evening with supportive wives. Repetti (1989) also suggests that supportive spouses

may have a positive influence on the level of withdrawal, resulting in stress and arousal by husbands, ultimately promoting emotional recovery from high workload days.

Reverse effects at work and home are described in a study by Bolger et al. (1989) indicating in a sample of 166 couples, arguments in the workplace increase the likelihood of arguments at home according to both men and women. A second example of reverse effects in both the work and home domains are outlined in a cross-sectional study of a single large company. Hughes, et al., (1992) suggest several psychological factors such as perceived job stability and job control influence perceptions of work and family conflict and marital tension, in addition to enriching jobs and providing greater marital companionship. A third example of reverse effects documented in a diary study, provide evidence that wives, but not husbands, are angrier and may exhibit critical daily behaviors toward their spouses following busy workdays (Brennan, Cowan, Cowan, & Schultz, 2004). However, Spain, and Bianchi (1996) suggest that spillover effects of marriage quality and job satisfaction operates similarly for married women and men. Marital relationships appear more central and more meaningful in the lives of married versus non-married individuals than gratifying work roles (Rogers & May, 2003). At the same time, both husbands and wives experience the psychological, physical, and material benefits associated with marriage (Ross, 1995).

Previous research indicates positive aspects of marriage such as warmth and supportiveness, as well as negative aspects of marriage such as hostility and arguments, influence individuals work experiences and psychological domains (Rogers & May, 2003). Work roles affect marital roles through psychological spillover of positive and negative emotional states from work to marriage. The spillover effects of negative moods

are reciprocal and naturally affect both domains within an employee's life at home or work. Regardless of the logical reasoning, both can potentially create financial concerns for an organization due to increased cost from the loss of productivity (Berndt et al., 1998).

Financial Spillover Effects into the Workplace

Research on the financial impact of healthy relationships in the workplace serves as an indicator to consider MET as a strategy to improve profits in organizations. Olson & Turvey's (2006) research indicates employees in successful relationships contribute to increased profits for employers. These workers are more stable, more committed to employers, and are often more dependable and motivated. Empirical benefits exist for organizations with employees in healthy relationships. Healthy relationships contribute to physically healthier employees experiencing fewer chronic health problems like stress, anxiety, and depression, saving companies money in overall health care expenditures.

According to Waggoner (2013), human development professionals have several opportunities to be creative when developing relationship wellness programs. Utilizing strategic tools such as marriage enrichment programs is a productive way to incorporate the family unit into the workspace, hence motivating the employee to respond positively while in the work environment. Organizations that routinely invest in human capital development strategies have a higher probability of reaping positive financial rewards. A small but growing number of companies have implemented training programs designed to help employees strengthen their marriages or other personal relationships (Olson & Turvey, 2006; Silverman, 2007). Some companies benefit from the motivation developed by employees through religious values and practices that encourage the

building of strong marriages and families (Gallagher, 2002; Olson & Turvey, 2006). As more research provides evidence that divorce and relationship stress can make workers less efficient, more companies offer marriage training programs to compliment business operations (Gallagher, 2002; Silverman, 2007). Literature supports the contribution marriage enrichment provides to an employee's performance outcomes at home and work (Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997). Wayne, Grzywacz, Carlson, & Kacmar (2007) suggest when employees feel that resources at work or home provide a benefit for family or work life, cognitive contributions are made by employees to the area in which the enrichment process began. Individuals will attribute the enrichment experience to the originating life domain, generate positive attitudes towards that domain, creating a gain spiral effect from an emotional, behavioral, and financial viewpoint at home and at work.

Gain Spirals and Positive Performance in the Work Environment

According to Hakanen et al. (2011), MET participants experience gain spirals after attending events such as a workshop or conference. Gain spirals occur when job resources lead to work engagement and work engagement leads to personal initiative. Gain spirals can have a positive impact on work-unit innovations that lead to personal initiative. Personal initiative then results in a positive effect on work engagement. Positive work engagement behaviors then lead to positive retention rates leaving the onboarding process within organizations unburdened with undesired expenses. Positive performance results have the capacity to birth future job-related resources that can become a benefit for the organization and employee. Research on the MET process and gain spirals at work and home indicates that spillover effects can occur when employed individuals participate in MET activities (Hakanen et al., 2011).

Several studies indicate the relationship between family and work engagement performance outcomes. A supportive family allows individuals to work longer hours and engage in developmental opportunities (Aryee, Srinivas & Tan, 2005). In a study among employees of an insurance company, emotional support from family positively affects family and work engagement, increasing performance in both domains (Wayne, Randel, & Stevens, 2006). Stevens, Minnotte, Mannon & Kiger's (2007) study of dual-earner couples display the importance of maintaining the mental health of employees. For both men and women, family cohesion, emotional work satisfaction and managing or enhancing the psychological needs of family members creates a stable environment and improves performance at home and work.

Benefits of Mentally Healthy Employees

In order to stay competitive and retain the best talent, organizational leaders must tap into their human capital by providing resources that will produce mentally healthy employees (Cooper & Cartwright, 1994). Mentally healthy employees can become loyal employees when organizations demonstrate willingness to invest in employees' overall health (Susanty & Miradipta, 2013). Loyal employees within an organization tend to display better job performance results and may go above and beyond the normal duties expected on the job, thus becoming more valuable human assets to the business unit (Abbaspour & Noghreh, 2015). Additional information obtained on the mental health of employees can assist organizational leaders with building rapport with their most valuable asset, human capital (Chernyak-Hai & Tziner, 2014). Rapport can be developed through the perceived efforts of employers to improve the quality of life of employees, minimize stress factors which allow employees to focus on organizational goals, and

provide applicable communication skills to prevent barriers that may negatively impact performance (Farquharson, et al., 2012; Anis-Ul-Haque, Nawaz, & Zaman, 2014; Fogarty et al., 2014; Susanty & Miradipta, 2013).

Literature validates the importance of continual generation and conservation of resources for married employees and the critical need of the marriage enrichment process (Hankanen et al., 2011). Several scholars outline the central role of psychosocial resources in the positioning of positive performance results at home and work (Baltes, 1997; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Schaufeli, 2001; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). The conservation of resources (COR) theory identifies the prominent types of resources in well-being. According to Hobfoll (2001), COR resources are tools people value and therefore try to obtain, retain, and protect. The theory further implies individuals with fewer resources are more vulnerable to resource loss, and those with greater resources are less vulnerable and more capable of resource gain. Wayne et al. (2007) provide insight in the value of reviewing the motivation behind an individual taking advantage of the resources to help them grow and develop. The resource-gain development (RGD) perspective highlights how resources relate to work-family facilitation on a system level. The concept outlines the thought process that individuals have regarding natural tendencies to grow, develop, and achieve the highest level of functioning for themselves and the system in which participation exists, either at home or work.

Theoretical Foundation

This section presents the theories that provide the foundation for the study. Systems theory (Jackson & Watzlawick, 1967) makes up the foundation for the study, and the motivational theory (Bandura & Wood, 1989) provides a link to essential

connections between the mental motivation and action of an individual to change behavior. Transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1997) outlines the learning process of self-identification and application of resources. Lastly, emotional intelligence theory (Salovey & Mayer, 1990) is a principle that reviews the mastery of making intellectual decisions regarding emotions. The usefulness of each theory allows the researcher to explore additional options for organizational leaders to provide workplace support to its workforce.

Systems Theory

Systems theory was expanded by the work of Jackson & Watzlawick (1967) through the interactional system as “two or more communicants in the process or at the level of defining the nature of their relationship” (p.102). Jackson and Watzlawick indicate that human behavior is displayed through natural ways of communicating. Behavior patterns can be useful in identifying the effectiveness of systems. In any system, multiple parts serve a variety of functions to maintain alignment within the environment. Members within organizations tend to respond according to the functions and the systems around them. Specific functions within a unit are Beftalanffy’s (1968) view of open and closed systems. An open system presents importing and exporting, building-up and breaking-down of components. A closed system is not as liberal as an open system and isolates only the components permitted in that environment. Systems theory exhibits application in multiple disciplines (Jackson, 1967). Human capital professionals continually apply worker training plans within the organizational system to motivate and engage the workforce to increase performance and retention (Finegold, Gatta, Salzman, & Schurman, 2010). Motivation links residual performance results

between both the organization and the marriage enrichment system. The happier and more motivated an individual in both systems, the higher level of marriage, job satisfaction, and retention in that individual's life (Susanty & Miradipta, 2013).

Motivational Theory

According to Bandura & Wood (1989) motivational theory is multidimensional and directly links to performance improvement efforts. The theory is especially relevant to performance because human behavior is complex to understand and change.

Recognizing the forces that compel employee actions and work behavior can provide motivational theorists with a baseline of information. Data on work behaviors can potentially help determine solutions to address performance issues from a holistic perspective. The study of psychology, specifically motivation theory, makes it possible to explain and predict human behavior and offer an opportunity to improve employees' performance in the workplace. As an employee's performance quality increases, transformative learning takes place and improves the existing work environment (Bandura & Wood, 1989).

Transformative Learning Theory

The study of transformative learning emerged with Mezirow's work in 1997. He defines transformative learning as learning that induces greater far-reaching change in the learner than other kinds of learning, especially learning experiences, which shape the learner and produce a significant impact or paradigm shift which affects the learner's subsequent experiences (Clark, 1993). Mezirow also developed the concepts of "meaning perspectives," one's overall world-view, and "meaning schemes," identified as smaller components that contain specific knowledge, values, and beliefs about one's

experiences. Meaning perspectives operate as filters that determine how an individual will organize and interpret the meaning of his or her life experiences. Meaning perspectives naturally change and evolve in response to life experiences, especially those which induce powerful emotional responses in the individual. Often these life-changing events are personal crises such as divorce, death of a loved one, natural or man-made disasters or accidents, health crisis, financial upheaval, or unexpected job changes. Through the concept of meaning perspectives, Merizow examines primary changes that occur in transformational learning.

Bache (2008), in *The Living Classroom* proposed one of the most provocative discussions of environment, subject matter, and learning activities relating to transformative learning. He describes a “subtle energetic resonance” (Bache, 2008, p. 67) that spontaneously rises in learning circles. He identifies a psychic field that surrounds and saturates the learning environment as inclusive of the teacher’s personal energy and the energy field created by all the participants. He states that the stronger and more focused this mental field, the more likely that change will occur among participants. Bache also believes that certain types of subject matter are particularly conducive to transformative learning. For example, inquiries into the origins of an individual, mind exploration, the mysteries of human suffering and purpose, and other universal questions engage and motivate the learner to change his or her current state (Bache, 2008).

Emotional Intelligence Theory

Salovey (1990), outlines ways in which an individual’s utilization of intelligence combined with emotions provides a holistic worldview. Over the years, several theorists have revealed attempts to combine both domains together. Salovey expresses a wider

view of intelligence by reinventing the concept in terms of leading life successfully. His viewpoint led to the appreciation of personal and emotional intelligence in living a fulfilled life. Five domains explain the theory. The first domain is knowing one's emotions. Self-awareness is recognizing a feeling as it happens, the keystone of emotional intelligence. The second domain is managing emotions. This domain represents the handling of feelings so that they are appropriate and builds on self-awareness. The third domain is motivating oneself. When an individual is self-motivated, he or she has the ability to marshal emotions to achieve a goal which is essential for paying attention and mastering the completion of tasks. Controlling one's emotions, delaying gratification, and stifling impulsiveness underlies every aspect of accomplishment. According to Salovey, when individuals have the ability to self-initiate the process of motivating themselves, this state of mind enables outstanding performance of all kinds. People who have this skill tend to be highly productive and effective in whatever they attempt to do to be successful. The fourth domain is recognizing emotions in others. Showing empathy, is another ability that builds on emotional self-awareness and is a fundamental "people skill" that delivers positive results in relationships. Lastly, the fifth domain is the art of managing emotions with others including handling relationships. These abilities undergird the mastery of making intellectual decisions regarding emotions, a prime skill present in interpersonal effectiveness situations.

Emotional intelligence theory (Goleman, 1995) assists with the creation of a framework showing how the MET concepts are applied within a work setting. Emotional Intelligence is relevant to organizational development and the development of human capital. Emotional intelligence theory, also known as emotional quotient principles,

provides an enriching way for organization leaders to understand and assess behaviors, management styles, attitudes and interpersonal skills to improve work performance (Caruso, Mayer, & Salvovey, 2004). The emotional quotient principles can be applied within the home or work setting and could lead to positive behavior patterns. Professional development programming geared toward emotional intelligence creates an opportunity for employees to reinforce skills learned during the MET experience. Refresher sessions are highly recommended to reinforce learned skills (Floyd, Markman, Kelly, Blumberg & Stanley, 1995) and empower employees to apply concepts learned during training.

According to Zarch et al. (2014), the emotional intelligence theory is useful in determining the emotional state of couples. The emotional forces between a husband and wife are critical for the survival of a marriage relationship. Therefore, strategic training in the development of emotional intelligence may produce positive benefits.

Sophisticated measures have been developed that provide moment-to-moment tracking of the emotional nuances that couples encounter. Most of the complexities of the emotional dynamics between men and women stem from childhood experiences. The crux of the emotional realities within couples can potentially result from biological assignments that trace back to childhood (Goleman, 1995).

Applied Emotional Intelligence with Couples

Gottman (1994) conducted a detailed analysis of the emotional glue that binds couples together and the destructive feelings that can destroy a marriage relationship. In his laboratory, couples' conversations were videotaped and then subjected to hours of microanalysis designed to reveal emotional currents during the study. The recording of fault and/or blaming situations between a man and a woman may lead to a couple's

decision to divorce. The trail of blaming makes a convincing case for the crucial role of emotional intelligence in the survival of the marriage relationship (Gottman, 1994). During the last two decades, Gottman has tracked the experiences of more than 200 couples, some just newlyweds, others married for decades. Gottman has charted the emotional ecology of marriage with such accuracy that in one study, he was able to predict which couples seen in his lab would divorce within three years with 94% accuracy. Gottman is known for being thorough in his methodology, including the use of probes. While the couples talk, sensors record the slightest change in their physiology. For a second-by-second analysis of their facial expressions, couples use a system to read emotions. Emotional intelligence is a transferrable skill that is useful in the couple relationship and within the workplace. Recent research begins to show reasons for emotional spillover effects across home and work domains between partners and even provides a glimpse of how negative interactions within a couple relationship may influence feelings about work (Green et al., 2011).

Summary

The literature outlined in the chapter provides a view of MET and work environment connections. A foundation of job-related skills such as communication, conflict management, stress management, and emotional intelligence is examined to determine the impact of potential spillover effects from MET into the work environment. Gain spirals are also discussed to analyze the potential connections and performance impact between marriage and job satisfaction. Further, research provides organizational benefits of maintaining a mentally healthy workforce. The theoretical framework outlines the process in which potential emotional, behavioral and financial connections of an

employee are identified. A theoretical focus on systems, and motivational and emotional intelligence theories assist with the exploration of MET and potential spillover effects into the work environment.

CHAPTER III – METHODOLOGY

Chapter III provides a detailed plan of the methodology used in this qualitative study to explore spillover effects from MET to the workplace. In today's competitive world, the issue of work-life balance and its impact on the work environment has financial implications for business leaders (Aryee, 1992; Frone, 2000; Siegrist & Wahrendorf, 2016; Smeaton, Ray, & Knight, 2014; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). A link exists between work-life balance and the productivity and performance of organizations (Deery & Jago, 2015; Dorio, Bryant, & Allen, 2008). According to Nanda (2015), globalization has changed the world, making it harder for organizations to gain and sustain their competitive advantage. Downsizing, mergers, and acquisitions present challenges for employees to balance jobs and family lives because of long hours at work, high expectations on the job, and an increased use of technology. Nanda provides insights on the spillover effects of healthy marriages on work-life balance and the need for increased evaluation of the influence on the work environment. Therefore, this study explores participant perceptions of MET spillover effects in the workplace.

Research Objectives

The following research objectives guided this study:

- RO1: Describe participants of the study in terms of length of employment, industry type, marital status, and gender.
- RO2: Explore and identify employee-perceived MET spillover effects of job-related communication skills in the workplace.
- RO3: Explore and identify employee-perceived MET spillover effects of conflict management in the workplace.

RO4: Explore and identify employee-perceived MET spillover effects of stress management skills in the workplace.

RO5: Explore and identify employee-perceived MET spillover effects of emotional intelligence skills in the workplace.

Research Methodology and Design

This research study utilized a qualitative approach for exploring and understanding the information individuals communicate about regarding a social or human problem (Creswell, 2014). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), interpretive paradigms are viewed as “the net that contains the researcher’s epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises” (p. 22). In qualitative research, the goal of the researcher is not to measure results but to capture and explore participant perceptions. For this study, the researcher captured employee perceptions of spillover effects of MET to the work environment through in-depth interviews. The researcher explored the perceptions of employees’ spillover effects of skills learned during MET in the workplace. Previous research on this subject only hints at employee perceptions of marriage and job satisfaction but fails to explore how the two domains influence one another in the workplace (Chinchilla & Torres, 2006).

Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. Creswell (2007) identifies qualitative research as “a set of assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the inquiry of the meaning of individuals or groups associated with a social or human problem” (p. 37). Qualitative research methods aid in exploring a problem. Exploration is necessary to study a group or population and to identify variables for further investigation. The qualitative research approach provides

empirical data rather than relying on predetermined information from the literature (Creswell, 2007; Giacomini & Cook, 2000). To obtain a detailed understanding of employee perceptions on MET and spillover effects in the workplace, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews. The preliminary qualitative research framework consists of articulating preconceptions over time to discover meanings through experiences from participants.

For this study Giorgi (2009) and Moustaka's (1994) studies provided a guidepost to understand the perceptions of MET and spillover effects in the workplace through a clear definition of phenomenological studies. Phenomenological research design is based on a philosophy and psychology that allow the researcher to describe the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as explained by the participants. Participant interviews assist with cultivating the experiences of multiple individuals with new and emerging experiences. The research design has a clear focus on a single concept, collaborative efforts with participants, an exploration of the context or environment of the participants, the collection of participant meanings, and interpretations of the data (Creswell, 2014).

Population and Sample

For this research, participants within the population met the criteria of current employment and participation in a Prepare and Enrich training program. Unemployed individuals were not included in this study. Individuals who have experienced a change in marital status such as remarriage or divorce were included in the study. The research goals focused on MET participant experiences in the workplace. Participants chose MET for one of two reasons: pre-marital enrichment or crisis intervention training. Either

reason can influence a participant's choice of how knowledge can be applied within the workplace.

Approximately 247 individuals have participated in the Prepare and Enrich MET program over the past fourteen years. Participants of the Prepare and Enrich MET program participated in this study. According to Creswell (2013), sample size depends on the qualitative design. Creswell (2013) also suggests, in phenomenological studies, sample size typically ranges from three to ten. The completion of data collection and the resulting sample size may be the result of data saturation. The sample size of this study was 16 participants who completed the MET. The sample size of 16 participants allowed the researcher to ensure themes from participant experiences were adequately captured. Sixteen participants provided data through a semi-structured face-to-face interview process on how skills obtained during MET may spill into the work environment. According to Crouch & McKenzie (2006), adequate sample size in qualitative studies is a matter of judgment and experience. Evaluating the quality of the information collected against the uses to which it was applied determines the type of research selected and purposeful sampling strategy employed. Sixteen participants were chosen in this qualitative study based on recommended sample sizes outlined by Creswell (2013) and Crouch & McKenzie (2006).

The first individuals to respond to an invitation to participate in the study and who met the study's criteria for participation were interviewed. Five additional individuals were placed in queue if any of the intended sixteen individuals were not available for an interview. The remaining five individuals' notifications were sent according to the data collection procedures outlined by the researcher. A sample population of sixteen

participants in the middle Georgia area were used in this study to reach saturation (Charmaz, 2006). Saturation is defined as “data adequacy” and operationalized as collecting data until no new information is obtained (Morse, 1995). The researcher integrated recommendations by Creswell (2014) to interview two additional participants after saturation had occurred to ensure consistency within the identified themes. The researcher’s chair confirmed saturation was reached allowing the researcher to present the study findings in a manner that provided transferability.

Instrumentation

The goal of this research plan was to identify spillover effects of the MET program in the workplace. Areas of concentration during the interview consisted of job-related communication, conflict management, stress management, emotional intelligence, and spillover effects in the workplace. The researcher developed specific interview questions for this project. Best practices developed by (de Leeuw, Hox, & Dillman, 2008) were considered for the creation of interview questions and the interview process. Previously created instruments were considered but did not provide questions that would produce the necessary results for this research.

The researcher of this project served as the primary instrument through the facilitation of interviews. According to Bernard (1988), semi-structured interviews are best used when the interviewer has only one opportunity to interview a participant. According to Creswell (2014), a best practice for identifying participant perceptions is to obtain information through qualitative semi-structured interviews utilizing open-ended questions to reveal views and opinions of participants. Semi-structured interviews with participants provided deep and rich data as well as encouraged participants to speak

openly in a supportive environment. Semi-structured interviews allowed the interviewer and respondent to engage in a formal conversation. There are several benefits to semi-structured interviews such as the ability to prepare questions in advance, a presence of confidence during the interview, the ability to give the participant the freedom to communicate his or her viewpoints in a customized way, and the opportunity to obtain reliable and comparable qualitative data (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

Semi-structured, face-to-face interview questions were developed to obtain the empirical data necessary to analyze spillover effects of MET in the workplace. Predetermined questions regarding the spillover effects of job-related communication, conflict management, stress management, and emotional intelligence were included to guide the interview process. According to Ploeg (1999), qualitative research questions can ask two pertinent kinds of questions: (a) “What is this?” or (b) “What is happening here?” Both types are focused more on the process than on the outcome. Semi-structured questions are utilized in qualitative studies when the researcher has some knowledge of the topic. Ten questions were used for this study. Easy-to-answer questions were introduced during the start of the interview to allow the participant time to warm up to the interview environment. Demographic questions were used at the beginning of each interview to ensure that participants met the criteria of the study. These questions were also in place to describe the population of the study. Demographic questions indicated participation in the Prepare and Enrich MET program, length of time employed, industry type, marital status, and gender. Industry type described the participant’s category of work such as manufacturing, retail, education, healthcare, etc. The length of time

employed was represented in months and years. Marital status was identified as engaged, married, or divorced. Gender was represented as male or female.

The interview procedures served as the roadmap to allow the researcher consistency in collecting data among participants and providing order during the research process. The researcher capitalized on the semi-structured format to embrace the ability to explore issues while remaining focused on the topic. The interviews began with easy-to-answer questions and then transitioned to complex questions. As each interview progressed, the researcher helped the participant to feel relaxed and answer questions fully and confidently (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010). Interview questions focused on each participant's experiences, opinions, feelings, knowledge, and background while achieving the research objectives of the study.

The first interview question (Q1) was designed to obtain specific demographic information from the participant. The next two questions (Q2-Q5) served as a warm up to get the participant familiar with the question format. The following four questions (Q6-Q9) answered the research objectives that involve job-related communication, conflict management skills, stress management skills, and emotional intelligence. Q10 served as concluding questions by asking the participant to share any additional learning experiences after all questions had been prompted during the interview. The research objective and corresponding questions are listed in Table 2. A pilot study was utilized for this study to ensure all interview procedures and questions met the targeted goals established by the researcher.

Table 2

Research Objective and Interview Question Comparison to Literature

Research Objective	Interview Question	Literature Review References
R01	1	
R02	2,3,4,5,6,10,11	Ahmann & Harvey (2014); Kippist & Duarte (2015)
R03	2,3,4,5,7,10,11	Arnold & Underman-Boggs (2007); Greenhaus & Beutell (1985)
R04	2,3,4,5,8,10,11	Grawitch et al. (2015); Zarch et al. (2014)
R05	2,3,4,5,9,10,11	Ancona (2012); Ooms (2007); Salovey & Pizaro (2003); Weng (2015)

Pilot Study

According to Baker (1994) and Crossman (2017), a pilot study is a pre-study of the major research project. A pilot study is also considered a small-scale study that researchers can utilize to determine the best approach for the study. During this process, the researcher refined the research questions, determined the best methods for achieving the research objectives, and gauged the amount of time and resources that were needed for the study. The researcher implemented recommendations suggested by Crossman (2017):

- Identify and refine the research questions.
- Identify and evaluate a sample population, research field, and data set.
- Test research instrument (semi-structured interviews) and interview guides.

- Evaluate and decide on research methods.
- Identify and resolve as many issues as possible.
- Estimate the time and cost required for the project.
- Determine if the research goals and design are appropriate for the study.
- Conduct a scan of analytical procedures to determine the usefulness of the data and make modifications as needed.
- Produce preliminary results that can help secure findings.

Two individuals not included in the study participated in the pilot interview. The data collection procedures outlined in Table 3 were followed. An interview guide was used along with semi-structured interview questions during the interview process. The individuals participating in the pilot study also received all pre- and post-interview email correspondence. During the pilot study the researcher discovered the importance of providing the participants with a table of contents with topics covered during MET to assist with remembering the areas that were most impactful. The first participant completed the interview in 35 minutes. The researcher determined that more detailed information regarding the participants' experiences were needed. Therefore an additional follow up question was asked for each construct such as, was it easier to apply the skill learned at home or at work? The question provided an opportunity for the participant to elaborate more on the perceptions of the MET and the impact in the work domain. The final data results were transcribed by a third party and entered into the NVIVO software to conduct the data analysis process for the study.

Validity

According to Gibbs (2007), qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures. The researcher used four primary strategies recommended by Creswell (2013), to ensure study validity. The four primary strategies considered include the following: 1) member checking 2) journaling 3) avoiding bias and 4) saturation. Two reliability considerations are also discussed in this section: 1) checking transcripts for errors and 2) the development and monitoring of a coding system.

Member Checking

The first strategy was member checking. Participants were given an opportunity to review and confirm the accuracy of the transcription. Each participant was emailed a copy of the transcript to review content for accuracy of meaning and check the authenticity of their responses. Participants were able to confirm their views, feelings, and experiences. All sixteen participants agreed with the emailed transcript, there were no discrepancies in the interviews.

Journaling

A journal was used to record accounts during the interview and indicate any discrepancies during the interview. For instance, when some questions were asked, the participant may not have been able to recall an example of the experience but later in the interview provided an example during the conversation. Emerging themes were logged in a journal such as the importance of effective communication and the multifaceted use of conflict resolution techniques, impact of gender differences in the workplace, awareness of financial management, value in employer provided training, specific spillover effects

in the workplace, and the ease of applying skills at work. Each journal entry provided a context for determining the alignment between the literature and application of skills learned during MET in the workplace. All logged notes provided the context for the researcher to avoid researcher bias. An exploratory investigation of the notes from interviews assisted with the development of themes based on the verbal accounts of the participants, not the assumptions of the researcher. However, journaling in this study was also used as a self-reflective process that facilitated a flexible use of the journal to examine personal goals and assumptions and to clarify the researcher's belief system.

Avoiding Bias

Fisher (1993) recommends that neutral information is provided to participants about the aim of the study and that any communication of the hypotheses is avoided to prevent the researcher from influencing the participant's responses or encouraging social desirability bias. Social desirability bias is a type of response bias which includes the tendency of survey respondents to answer questions in a manner that will be viewed favorably by others. It could take the form of over-reporting "good behavior" or under-reporting "bad" or undesirable behavior. The variability of responses represented by participants from multiple industries confirmed the low probability of social desirability bias. The researcher utilized an interview script to ensure that each participant was asked the same questions in the same way. Participants were also provided pseudonym names to protect their identity and allow individuals to speak freely without the concern of being judged by others.

The clarification of bias the researcher brings to the study is essential for validity of the study. The goal of the researcher is to self-reflect on potential biased perspectives

or opinions to create an open and honest narrative that accurately reflects the data and eliminates researcher bias. Ortlipp (2008) recommends an additional method to include in the research process such as journaling to avoid researcher bias; recording new occurrences in the data; and capturing unique experiences, opinions, thoughts, and feelings from participants. According to Dickson-Swift et al. (2005), researchers should always be aware of the reason for involvement in a study in order to prevent undesirable results. The researcher also properly scheduled interviews to provide ample recovery time between interviews to reduce the risk of emotional exhaustion while allowing sufficient time for analysis of the emotional aspects of the research. Scheduling ample time in between interviews minimizes the urge for the researcher to arrive at quick conclusions that lean toward favorable research outcomes.

Saturation

The fourth strategy, recommended by Creswell (2014), was used to ensure the data was reliable through the process of saturation. During the saturation process the researcher reviewed each participant's response to justify the themes of the study. The researcher finalized data collection based on a strategy recommended by Charmaz (2006). As the categories and themes saturated, no new content was sparked by interview questions. Saturation was reached after 13 interviews were completed; an additional three interviews were conducted to validate the consistency of themes and to ensure no new themes emerged.

Reliability

Gibbs (2007) suggests qualitative reliability indicates that the researcher's approach is consistent across different projects. Reliability experts such as Yin (2009)

suggest that qualitative researchers must document the procedures of interviews and as many of the steps of the procedures as possible. Researchers should utilize detailed protocol and database files for others to follow in future research studies. The researcher followed two reliability methods suggested by Gibbs.

The first method involved a checking system for the transcripts to make sure obvious mistakes were avoided during transcription. The second method was the development and monitoring of the coding system. Based on suggestions by Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, (2012), the researcher monitored the creation and use of codes in a qualitative codebook by constantly comparing data with the codes and by writing memos and definitions for the codes. The process was repeated multiple times to ensure reliability of research data.

Confidentiality

Based on research conducted by Kaiser (2009), Sieber (1992), and Tolich (2004), to protect the confidentiality of participants, self-identifiable information was not included in this study. The researcher's primary focus was to maintain each participant's confidentiality while presenting rich, detailed accounts of employee perceptions of MET and spillover effects in the work environment. Baez (2002) identifies the convention of confidentiality as a means to protect the privacy of all persons, to build trust and rapport with study participants, and to maintain ethical standards and the integrity of the research process. To ensure participants' rights were protected, the researcher followed all guidelines required by The University of Southern Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (IRB; See Appendix A). This study was approved by the IRB. The IRB is responsible for ensuring that proposed research meets the relevant federal and

institutional standards and guidelines. All investigations and experiments involving human subjects in any way, regardless of funding source, must be reviewed and sanctioned by the IRB before initiating the research.

The researcher informed participants of the process, procedures, and timelines regarding the study. To protect participant confidentiality, a letter and number coding sequence were adopted, omitting any association with the study subjects. It was imperative that both parties have a clear understanding of identified roles. To ensure adequate comprehension of the procedures and expectations, interview details were provided in writing and orally. During and after the data collection process, confidential data (electronic and paper) from participants was stored in a secure place away from public access (Sieber, 1992). All digital identifiable data was saved and password protected. Identifiable data will be destroyed three years following publishing (Bilgrami & Cole, 2015).

Data Collection

Based on Creswell's (2013) data collection procedures, qualitative data in this study is available through face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Participants within this study are employed and have completed MET. According to Dillman (1978) and Marshall & Rossman (1999), it is important to be inclusive and inviting to research participants. Multiple contact methods such as email and phone calls provide flexibility for participants with busy schedules to respond to invitations. Incentives provide motivation for participants to take part in the research study. Each participant received a thank you card which included a \$10 gift card to Walmart after the completion of the interview and member checking process. At the conclusion of each interview, each

participant was provided with the researcher's contact information to ask any questions or request copies of the final summary report.

The data collection process occurred in five phases as illustrated in Table 3. Phase 1 included obtaining approval from The University of Southern Mississippi's IRB (IRB; see Appendix A). The IRB provided oversight in the facilitation of research involving human subjects to ensure the rights and welfare of individuals were protected during the study. Tasks during this phase included the completion and submission of all paperwork to the IRB.

Phase 2 included semi-structured interviews with the participants. Tasks during this phase included the project sponsor sending a letter via email to participants introducing the research study (see Appendix B). The project sponsor emailed initial participant letters regarding the purpose of the research, including consent forms. According to Dillman (1978); Khurana & Talbot (1998); and Presser, Blair, & Triplett (1992), endorsement of the research and the use of the project sponsor's logo build credibility for the study and show additional interest in the results. Once credibility was established through the research sponsor, the researcher maintained credibility during the interview process.

The researcher then emailed invitations to participate in the study (see Appendix C). A second email reminder was sent from the project sponsor to participants who did not respond to the first email (see Appendix D). Some respondents were contacted by phone to verify email. After validating individual contact information, respondents received emailed instructions on how to participate in the study's face-to-face interview process. Meeting days and times were established immediately with individuals who

responded within the first week of the invitation. A reminder email to individuals who had not responded was sent within two weeks. Next, participants received an electronic postcard via email to confirm interview appointments (see Appendix E). Participants received a confirmation agreement (consent form) and interview details (see Appendix F). The final task in Phase 2 included conducting semi-structured interviews (see Appendix G). Participants received copies of the 10-Steps to Resolving Couple Conflict to assist with answering interview questions (see Appendix H & I). Interview procedures served as a guide during the interview process (Appendix J). An interview script was used as a checklist during the interview to ensure that all pertinent information was discussed with the participant (Appendix K).

Phase 3 provided an opportunity for the researcher to conduct the member-checking process to verify transcriptions. The researcher sent interview transcriptions to participants to verify data. After the researcher received a confirmed transcription from a participant, data was reviewed for accuracy. The final task in Phase 3 included sending a post-interview thank you email to each participant (Appendix L).

Phase 4 was the data analysis process. The tasks for this phase included data input into the NVIVO software system. The researcher analyzed data and formulated codes to identify themes. During this process the researcher made observations in the software and explored participant experiences to identify relevant themes.

Last, Phase 5 included a follow-up email to participants. The researcher sent each participant a note of thanks and a \$10 Walmart gift card. The note thanked the participant for their interest in the study and participation in the interview. Participants

received an electronic copy of a summary report after approvals from the dissertation committee were obtained (Appendix M).

Table 3

Data Collection Procedures

Phase	Phase Description	Data Collection Task
Phase 1	Obtain approval from IRB	Completed IRB required paperwork to conduct research with human subjects.
Phase 2	Invite participants and conduct interviews	<p>Emailed letter from project sponsor to eligible participants.</p> <p>Emailed invitation from researcher to participate in study</p> <p>Emailed reminder letter from project sponsor.</p> <p>Emailed electronic post card to confirm interview appointment with participant.</p> <p>Provided confirmation agreement to participant. (consent form).</p> <p>Conducted (16) interviews.</p>
Phase 3	Conduct member-checking process	<p>Sent transcripts received from third-party transcriber to participants for member checking.</p> <p>Reviewed final transcripts for accuracy.</p> <p>Sent post-interview thank you email.</p>
Phase 4	Data analysis	<p>Inputted data into NVIVO software.</p> <p>Analyzed data and formulate codes to identify themes.</p>
Phase 5	Follow-up	<p>After participant completed interview and member-checking process, sent thank you card with \$10 Walmart gift card.</p> <p>Emailed summary report of results to participants after dissertation approval.</p>

Interview Procedures

Interviewers have several responsibilities during an interview such as motivating respondents to deliver answers to the interview questions, providing clarity to questions by answering respondents' queries, and probing after inadequate answers. The main objective for the researcher during the interview is to collect data suitable for answering the research questions. The prime concern of the interviewer carrying out the main task is to avoid or at least minimize interviewer bias and variability.

Participants were asked to arrive 15 minutes prior to the interview to allow time for the investigator to review interview instructions. Once a research participation agreement was completed, individuals participated in a 45-60-minute interview. Interviews occurred in an office to allow for open and honest dialogue and to protect the privacy of each participant (Oltmann, 2016). During the interview process, the researcher had multiple tasks to achieve.

The researcher utilized the four components within a detailed interview schedule as outlined by Smith (1996). The first component is determining the topics to address in the interview and range of issues the interviewer must cover. The second area places the topics in the most appropriate sequence. Proper placement occurs by answering a series of questions such as "What is the most logical order in which to address these areas?" "Which is the most sensitive area?" and "Is it a good idea to save sensitive topics for later to allow participants to become more relaxed?" The third item involves thinking about the appropriate questions related to each area in order to achieve the research objectives

established during the study. Last, the researcher deployed probes and prompts to encourage the participant to expand on interview content.

Funneling questioning seeks further information that may be more specific or become more general. The researcher in this study sought to obtain both the respondents' general views and responses to more specific questions and concerns. According to Smith (1996), memorizing the interview schedule is a good practice; the schedule then serves as a mental prompt if needed. The researcher also memorized interview questions in advance to minimize dependence on recorded notes that included interview questions.

Smith (1996) also indicates that audio-taped recording and transcription are essential when implementing the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) process. The researcher audio-recorded the interview to capture important nuances and build rapport with the participant. Each interview was transcribed including the interviewer's questions. Margins were used on both sides of the transcript for analytical comments. According to Pink's (2001) recommendations, prior to the interview, each participant received an informed consent form and notification indicating that the interview would be audio-recorded for transcription purposes.

According to Creswell (2013), qualitative data can consist of information in the form of video or audio-tapes, emails, social media text, or any form of sound. The advantage of audio tapes is that they provide an opportunity for participants to share experiences directly with the investigator. The disadvantage is that they may be difficult to interpret. The investigator recorded information from interviews by making notes and using audiotape recordings.

As interviews were completed, data were logged on a data collection chart to confirm interview time, and information received. Formulated data collection procedures allowed the researcher to gather and organize data in an organized fashion. Interview protocol procedures developed by Creswell (2013) served as a guide for this study. The researcher utilized the following steps for each interview session:

1. The interviewer used a blank sheet of paper that included the following headings: date, place, interviewer's name, and participant identifier code (to maintain confidentiality).
2. The interviewer provided clear instructions for the participant to follow so that standard procedures were in place for each session. After instructions were read, the interviewer utilized a digital recorder during each interview for accurate transcription.
3. During the interview, participants were provided with open-ended question prompts to obtain information on experiences from participating in MET.
4. Space was provided on the sheet in between questions to record responses.
5. The interviewer maintained a log during the interview process to record the source of data received from participants. General comments regarding the value of data sources were also noted.
6. The interviewer utilized a final thank-you statement to acknowledge the time the participant spent during the interview.

Summary

In summary, Chapter III provides an overview of the methodology for the outlined qualitative research plan. The qualitative method was chosen based on the research objectives of this study. To obtain the thick and rich data necessary to answer the questions, the researcher utilized evidence-based methodologies to obtain accurate results. The target population and sample were chosen to research the phenomenon of spillover effects from skills obtained in MET to the workplace. The target population consisted of employed individuals who have participated in the Prepare and Enrich MET. To obtain the required data to satisfy the research objectives, interview questions were developed specifically for this research. The interview questions focused on key variables within the study such as the overall effects of MET and the effects of job-related communication as well as conflict management, stress management, and emotional intelligence. Data were collected, analyzed, and recorded in five phases. The first step consisted of obtaining approval from the IRB. The second step included conducting semi-structured interviews with respondents. The third step consisted of providing the final transcripts to the respondents to validate the interview data results. The fourth phase included inputting data from the interviews into the NVIVO software for analysis. Data were organized through data sources, coding structures, demographics, and the literature review identified in Chapter II. Methods of analyzation consisted of coding, queries, and memos. After the data collection process was complete, the researcher organized and analyzed results. The fifth phase allowed the researcher to follow-up with respondents. Each respondent received a thank you card, a Walmart gift

card, and with approval of the dissertation committee, a copy of the summary report of research results.

CHAPTER IV – RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore and identify employee perceptions of MET and spillover effects in the workplace. This chapter provides an examination of multiple skills learned during training spillover in participant workplaces. Research objectives help identify the participant demographics and skill usage after MET. This research study provides a qualitative analysis of the understanding of the skills of job-related communication, conflict management, stress management, and emotional intelligence spillover from MET training to the workplace.

According to Cole & Cole (1999), MET positively influences and enhances personal relationships. A current need exists for both process and outcome research that evaluates the effectiveness of skill retention over time to adequately evaluate the most effective training content for MET. Research demonstrates a correlation between job satisfaction and marriage satisfaction but lacks accounts of how MET may influence the workplace (Schultz et al., 2004). Therefore, this study provides a detailed perspective on MET and spillover effects as transferable skills used in the workplace.

A spillover effect is defined as a secondary effect that follows from a primary effect, and it may be far removed in time or place from the event that caused the primary effect (Ahluwalia, et al., 2001). For this study, spillover is referred to as the transmission of experiences from MET into the work domain. Participants in the study shared perspectives regarding the use of skills learned during MET within the work domain as it relates to job-related communication, conflict resolution, stress management and emotional intelligence.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) allowed the researcher to explore each participant's view of MET and spillover effects in the workplace. According to Smith (2004), this process allows the researcher to get closer to the individual's personal world to obtain an insider's perception of how events and situations occur within a work domain. The first section of this chapter outlines the IPA approach and how it was used within the study to analyze data regarding participant perceptions. Analytic tools such as NVivo software aided in identifying centralized themes from the data. The second section provides the validity of the study's results. The third section includes descriptions of the participants in the study. Employee perceptions of MET and spillover effects in the workplace are guided by the research objectives for the study. The final section identifies specific spillover effects of MET into the workplace and the effects of MET into the workplace and the effects of participant's choices to utilize various skills and techniques from MET in the workplace.

The first research objective provided an opportunity for the researcher to collect demographic information from each study participant. The second research objective focused on employee perceptions of MET and spillover effects of job-related communication skills in the workplace. The third research objective explored employee perceptions of MET and spillover effects of conflict management skills in the workplace. The fourth objective helped to identify employee perceptions of MET and spillover effects of stress management skills in the workplace. Last, the fifth objective explored the perceptions of MET and spillover effects of emotional intelligence skills in the workplace.

Data Analysis

Chapter IV includes results from the data collection and analysis process. A qualitative phenomenological approach using IPA provided an exploratory way to discover perceptions of MET participants and spillover effects in the workplace. According to Smith, Jarman, & Osborn (1999), IPA involves a detailed examination of the participant's viewpoint and attempts to explore personal experiences. Smith's (1996) IPA procedures served as a guide throughout this study. This method aimed to explore the details of how participants make sense of their personal and social worlds and the meaning of these experiences and events. The researcher implemented the IPA process to explore personal experiences and learn more about an individual's personal perception or account of an event. The researcher has an active role by attempting to get closer to the participant's personal world (Conrad, 1987).

Two stages exist in the interpretation process of IPA. During the first stage of the interpretation process, participants are trying to make sense of the world. In the second stage, the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants who are trying to make sense of the world. In qualitative studies, IPA involves asking critical questions of participants. According to Denzin (1995), social interactionism describes how meanings are constructed by individuals within both the social world and the personal world. One important consideration when using this method is that IPA utilizes both cognitive psychology and social cognition approaches during the data analysis process (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). The researcher of this study considered the ideology of IPA by examining how individual perceptions of MET spill over in the workplace.

Through the IPA approach, the researcher explored an individual's perception or account of an object or event, as opposed to producing an objective statement of the object or event itself. As the researcher learned about the participant's world, various beliefs and constructs manifested from the interviews. This unique analytical approach was appropriate for this study because IPA is conducted on small sample sizes, thus allowing for more intimate data collection and analysis.

According to Bannister & Fransella (1971) and Smith (1996), researchers should focus on three elements at a time to allow for a detailed examination of similarities and differences, convergence and divergence. Semi-structured interviews are the best way to collect data in IPA studies. This form of interviewing allows the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue in which initial questions are modified in light of the participant's response, allowing the researcher to probe for interesting and important areas that may arise (Plummer, 2001). During the semi-structured interviews in this study, the researcher applied a set of questions from an interview schedule, but the interview served as a guide rather than dictated the process. The researcher utilized semi-structured interviews to facilitate rapport and empathy, allowing for greater flexibility of coverage to discuss the participant's perceptions of MET and spillover effects, and allowing the interview to flow into unique areas and produce richer data. This interview process attempts to establish rapport with the respondent, is not concerned with the order of questions, allows the interviewer to investigate interesting areas that arise, and provides the interviewer an opportunity to follow the respondent's interests or concerns (Smith, 1996).

During data analysis, the researcher reviewed the content and complexity of the meanings from interviews rather than measured the frequency of themes. The researcher engaged with the transcription to obtain the real meaning of each participant's perceptions. The researcher began by looking in detail at the transcript of one interview before moving on to examine the other transcripts, case by case. All new occurrences in themes were noted in the researcher's journal.

During this study, less emphasis was placed on the frequency of themes but on the authentic meaning of each participant's response. An interpretative review of the transcript was essential in the identification of relevant themes. In the first step of the IPA process, the researcher attempted to capture and interpret the meanings of responses and to learn about the psychological and social world of the participants. Meanings were determined through an extensive engagement with the text and a process of interpretation.

Based on recommendations by Smith & Osborn (2008), each transcript was read a number of times, the left-hand margin was used to record interesting or significant facts shared by each participant. During the first step of the IPA process it is important to read and reread the transcript to become familiar with each participant's account (Smith, 1996). Each round of reviewing the transcripts provided the researcher with new insights. A textual analysis without rules was applied to this analytical process to segregate the text into meaningful clusters and assign a comment for each cluster. Some parts of the interview provided richer information than others which created an opportunity for more commentary. Some responses were lengthy, therefore summarizing or paraphrasing was a part of the interpretative process. Throughout the data analysis process, the researcher

documented the use of participant language and notes were made regarding similarities, differences and contradictions from individual comments. All transcripts were used as relevant data and no attempt was made to omit or select particular passages within transcripts. No stipulations were required for the creation of themes allowing emerging themes to reflect the richness of each passage within the transcribed text.

The second step included connecting the themes. Emergent themes were listed on a sheet of paper and the researcher identified connections between them. The order was provided chronologically on the initial list and based on the sequence with which they appeared in the transcript. The third step involved a more detailed theoretical ordering as the researcher tried to make sense of the connections between emerging themes. As the clusters emerged, the researcher reviewed the transcript to make sure the connections were accurate from the actual words of participants. As the data was analyzed, the researcher observed a natural clustering of themes while others emerged as subcategories of the concepts. The researcher compared the interaction between the reader and text as well as one's interpretative resources to make sense of what the participant actually said. Directories of the participants' phrases that support related themes were compiled to access clusters of emerging thoughts easily as they became available to the researcher. Next, the researcher reviewed the material again to assist with the clustering process, and as clustering developed, the extracted material was moved, condensed, and edited (Smith, 1996).

Thematic analysis was conducted using the NVIVO software tool to provide an overview of the themes. The thematic analysis process allowed the researcher to place data into the NVIVO software to code and study results. The NVIVO software is a platform for analyzing all forms of unstructured data using search queries and visualization tools. All participant responses were entered into NVIVO utilizing the same process to maintain consistency and accuracy of the data. For qualitative research, NVIVO is ideal for the use of the multiple coding method. Multiple coding involves a cross checking process of coding strategies and interpretation of data by independent researchers to identify emerging themes (Barbour, 2001). Once data was collected, research results were aligned and coded by themes to develop and label data appropriately for future use. Any new phenomenon was uniquely recorded and discussed within the research findings. Coding methods and themes were utilized for interviews. The coding method provides validity through the saturation process, and the evidence of triangulation appears through the repetition of data research results. Consistent responses and themes were noted to identify if saturation is prevalent in the concepts (Barry, Britten, Barber, Bradley, & Stevenson, 1999). Larger researcher projects, such as the Stanford School of Medicine, have relied on this data analysis technique to produce valid and consistent results. Easy-to-follow techniques aided in the success of a well-developed research project (Guest & MacQueen, 2008).

The researcher produced a table of themes, in the order of occurrence. The clusters were given a name and represented the superordinate themes. Table 4 lists the themes that connect to each superordinate theme, and an identifier was added to each instance to aid in the organization of the data analytics process. Upon completion of

analyzing all transcripts, the researcher moved into the fourth step of the IPA process. The researcher prioritized themes through data reduction. Convergences were discovered within each transcript and used to interpret consistent patterns within the themes.

Last, Smith (1996) provides a process for the final section when moving from the final themes to a write-up and final statement outlining the meanings of the participants' experiences. This stage focuses on translating the themes into a narrative account. Here, the analysis becomes expansive again as the themes are explained and illustrated (see Figure 2). The table of themes is the basis for the account of the participants' direct quotes, taking the form of the narrative argument, in addition to the exact words from the transcripts to support the case. Special focus is placed on distinguishing between what the respondents said and the analyst's interpretation or account of it.

An investigative analysis of six themes from participants lived experiences were produced through the study. Two themes aligned with RO2, which identified the way participants communicated with co-workers and customers. One theme aligned with RO3, showing how employees solve problems during conflict. Two themes aligned with RO4, providing a holistic approach to managing stress and employee growth and development from interactions with conflict and one theme aligned with RO5, revealing connections between leadership and emotional intelligence (see table 4). Five research objectives guided this study, the first of the five objectives provide the demographics for the study participants.

Table 4

Theme and Research Objective Relationship

Classifications & Themes	RO
Demographics	(See Table 5)
Communication with coworkers	2
Communication with customers	2
Employee problem solving during conflict	3
Stress management techniques from diverse industries	4
Stress management and employee growth and development	4
Emotional intelligence and improved leadership	5

Participant Demographics

RO1. Describe participants of the study in terms of length of employment, industry type, marital status and gender.

Purposeful sampling was used to identify employed MET participants from the middle Georgia area. Sixteen individuals were selected for the study. The following demographics were provided by participants: (a) length of employment (b) industry type (c) marital status and (d) gender. Participants reported length of employment ranging from five to 20 years within various industries. Individuals were employed in multiple industries including education, civil service, finance, housing, human services, computer science, criminal justice, health and wellness, engineering, faith-based organizations and manufacturing. Regarding marital status, 13 participants reported a status of married, one single, one engaged and one divorced. A total of 10 females and six males participated in the study. Pseudonym names were used to protect the privacy of each participant.

Participants with various roles in the workplace were represented in the study such as leadership, supervisory, and support positions. The various roles helped to gain an

understanding of how skills learned during MET may have been utilized in various work roles. Table 5 provides an overview of the demographics of the sixteen study participants.

Table 5

Participant Demographics

Characteristics	Number of Participants (<i>n=16</i>)
Length of Time Employed	
5 years or less	5
6-10 years	4
11-20 years	7
Industry Type	
Education	6
Civil Service	5
Computer Science (1)	
Engineering (1)	
Finance (1)	
Inventory Management Specialist (1)	
Manufacturing (1)	
Criminal Justice	1
Faith-Based	1
Health & Wellness	1
Housing	1
Human Services	1
Marital Status	
Single	1
Engaged	1
Married	13
Divorced	1
Gender	
Female	10
Male	6

Research Objectives and Themes

The remaining research objectives focused on four key areas: (a) job-related communication (b) conflict resolution (c) stress management and (d) emotional intelligence. Six themes and six subthemes emerged during this analysis process and link to the research objectives. Two cross cutting themes also emerged (see figure 2).

Participants provided a detailed account of experiences and perceptions of MET and spillover effects into the workplace.

As the interviews were conducted, common themes began to surface. For example, all sixteen participants shared accounts of improved communication skills with colleagues and clients/customers after utilizing techniques learned during MET. Being assertive and active listening examples were provided by participants. By giving the person they were communicating with “whole face attention”, a technique learned during MET, participants noted improved results. As participants disclosed how conflict resolution skills were applied in the workplace, themes began to emerge in reference to the process of applying skills learned during MET such as “taking a time out”, identifying the most optimal time to have difficult conversations and utilizing components of the conflict resolution process learned during MET. Participants reported being more invested in resolving the problem after the MET experience. One of the learned concepts during MET training was “moving the pen” which encourages individuals to address issues completely. Participants reported avoiding problems that may fester as a result of unresolved feelings. The mental capacity to handle situations in a healthy manor became apparent during each interview. The increased knowledge of effective communication and resolving conflict reported by for each participant had a positive impact on relationships in the workplace. During MET, participants completed an assessment to discover the main stressors in life such as time management, job demands, lack of time with self, weight goals and financial concerns. Participant’s reported holistically utilizing the skills learned during training to strategize approaches to minimize stress in the work domain. During the interview process participants reflected

and recognized personal and professional growth patterns in managing stress as a result of MET. Growth was even more apparent in participants exercising emotional intelligence in the workplace after MET. Participant leaders reported the ability to utilize emotional intelligence skills learned during MET with ease in the workplace. Most participants shared how emotional intelligence skills influenced the way daily tasks were completed and their approach to social interactions in the workplace.

Two cross cutting themes surfaced during the study that describe spillover effects of MET in the workplace (see figure 2). All sixteen participants mentioned increasing the effectiveness of job-related communication and conflict resolution skills in the workplace as a result of attending MET. Job-related communication and conflict resolution skills appeared in conversation with all participants in varying occupations. Spillover effects of MET in the area job-related communication and conflict resolution appeared in participant interactions with coworkers and customers/clients.

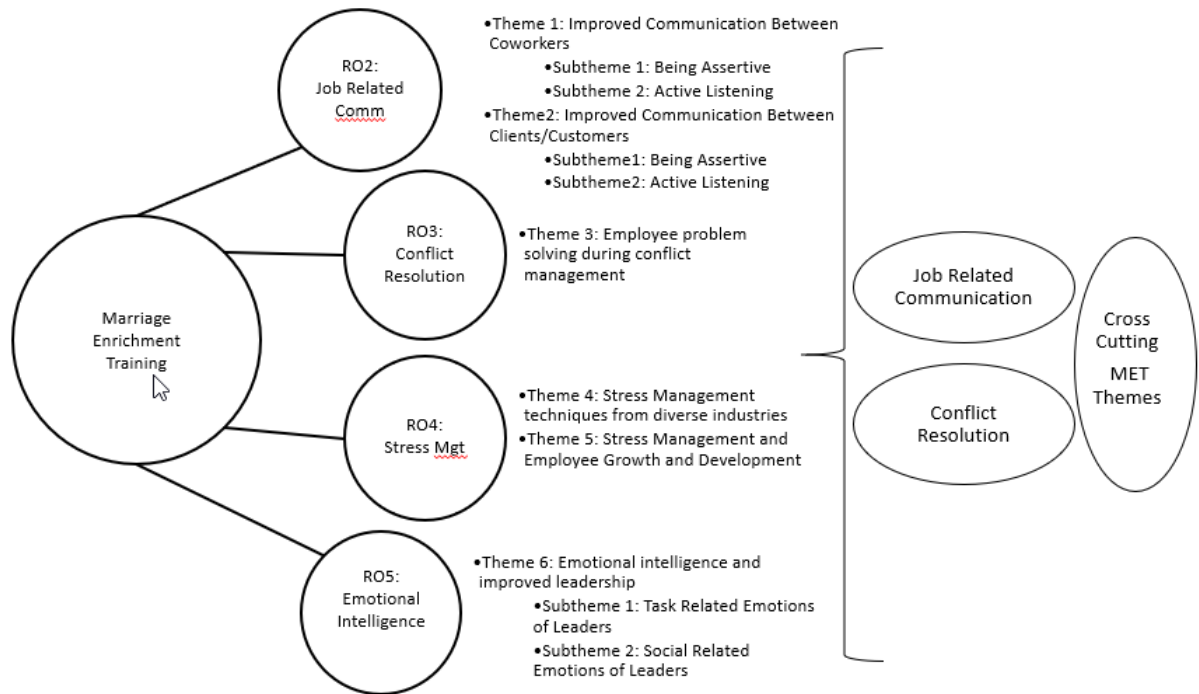


Figure 2. Employee Perceptions of MET Spillover in the Workplace

Job-Related Communication Skills

RO2. Explore and identify employee perceived MET spillover effects of job related communication skills in the workplace.

Participants provided detailed accounts of skills learned during MET and shared applied use of skills outside of the original learning environment, in the workplace. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain data about each individual’s job-related communication experiences at work. Interview questions were formulated to explore each skill learned during MET as indicated in the research objectives (see Appendix G).

The first area of focus during MET is communication, an area which assists participants with (a) being assertive and (b) active listening. Being assertive allows the communicator the ability to express (to the person he or she is communicating to) exactly what he or she wants. Active listening involves providing (the individual who is

communicating) one's undivided attention without distractions. During MET, participants learned to listen for meaning and understanding from others. The use of both communication techniques appeared to spillover in the workplace for all study participants. Two major job-related communication themes emerged from the interviews: (a) improved communication between coworkers and (b) improved communication between clients/customers. Participants provided specific job-related communication examples of being assertive and actively listening to co-workers and clients/customers.

Theme 1. Improved Communication between Coworkers

Participants in the study shared accounts of work-related interactions among coworkers. Communication within the workplace is a common occurrence, however communication can present challenges if not utilized properly among employees. Based on the responses, MET participants utilized communication skills effectively and regularly in the workplace. Participants reported increases in their ability to communicate more effectively with co-workers after MET. Two themes emerged from the interviews related to communication between coworkers: a) being assertive and b) active listening.

Subtheme 1: Being assertive. Participants in this study were asked to describe a time when they applied communication skills obtained during MET such as being assertive or actively listening in their place of employment. All participants (n=16) reported applying the communication skills of being assertive and actively listening with coworkers in the workplace. The variation in the role of the participant such as leader or supervisor showcased the different ways that individuals chose to communicate. One participant said, "I now have the ability to be more assertive with my principal." Serving

as department chair, she reported the ability to better evaluate her decisions versus quickly saying no to new ideas. She is able to listen and offer feedback and suggestions. A second participant, an elementary school teacher, attends grade level meetings and connects with learning communities. She reports practicing assertiveness techniques learned during MET. She also uses the techniques when interacting with minority students. She reports applying assertiveness during major organizational change when communicating with colleagues. A third participant indicated the following:

In my teaching, I am a grade level chairperson. I lead meetings when we come together. I don't always talk the whole time. Sometimes I also listen. I don't just make decisions myself. I put it out on the floor and allow the other team members to come up with solutions. I try not to take over. I have learned that my idea is not the best idea. I throw ideas out there, then we just get together to determine what it will be. My peers like the way that I communicate because I am not one of those delegate kind of people. I also put in the work. They like the fact that I come to them. I look at it as a level of respect.

A fourth participant said, "my leader looks to me to solve workplace issues. Morale is low in the work environment." A participant in the computer science industry provided an example of effective listening while communicating at work:

Communication is big in my job. First thing in the morning we speak to what we have done and what we intend to accomplish and if there are any issues that we have to work on. My software lead told me on more than one occasion, 'don't wait until in the morning to bring issues to me. I am right around the corner, come to me then.' Something I learned from the MET, issues don't magically go away,

they don't resolve themselves. If I run into issues I just turn around in my cube and I ask everybody, 'Hey, does anybody know whatever the issue is?.' It is a friendly atmosphere where we can actively show our weaknesses. The guys are willing to help you out. Most of the communication is verbal among co-workers. Study participants provided examples of applying communication techniques learned during MET.

Subtheme 2: Active listening. The second communication skill that participants referenced as skills learned in MET and used in the workplace was active listening. One participant in the field of engineering within the civil service industry reported the following view:

The communication piece is vital, not only in the workplace but in my own life. I have applied active listening skills with an employee who was trying to get into the department. He tried three times. I allowed him to shadow another employee to provide him with an opportunity. I had to have the difficult conversation that placement was not working out. I communicated openly about the issue; I could not jeopardize the life of others. It was a liability issue.

A second participant actively listens to maintenance staff to gain an understanding of situations. She indicated that she "actively works to talk to staff without belittling them or talking down to them." She reports utilizing skills from the MET to have a better relationship with co-workers. "The MET training does help with communication. It helps you better talk to people and resolve things, especially with tenants." A third participant, a social worker within the criminal justice field shared the following sentiments:

I applied communication skills while supervising parolees. I have to be upfront and direct. I had to serve employees but also provide structure and balance. I felt that I listen too much; I have to think about the whole person. I had a sense of awareness, needed to be more than just a supervisor. Since the MET, I am more efficient when I consider the whole person.

A fourth participant said, “I listen to the complaints of coworkers. I provide feedback based on my perceptions of others. The goal is to improve morale issues. I actively listen to improve my organization.” Participants also shared that active listening helped when encountering difficult conversations at work. A fifth participant talked about his conversation with struggling teachers:

These are individuals who may not have their contracts renewed. As the principal, I have to really focus on active listening skills to be able to provide feedback to teachers on their progress. I have to focus on the positive and build opportunities; this was a concept that I learned during MET training.

In addition to improving communication skills among co-workers, participants also shared accounts from improved communication with clients/customers was another common spillover theme from MET among the study participants.

Theme 2. Improved Communication between Clients/Customers

Participants in the study shared feelings about learning the value of effective communication and applying those skills in the workplace, particularly with co-workers and clients/customers. Based on the responses, several participants provided perceptions of views regarding the interactions between clients/customers. Two subthemes emerged

from the interviews related to communication between clients/customers: a) being assertive and b) active listening.

Subtheme 1: Being assertive. In work environments, individuals can be viewed as customers/clients. Positive interactions with customers and clients are vital to achieve organizational goals. During the interview process, participants shared the need for effective communication skills in the workplace with customers/clients. The following accounts shared by participants provide an understanding of how participants applied job-related communication skills learned during MET training in the workplace. A participant indicated workplace experiences while being assertive:

A goal is to do what is best for the client. With my interaction with the client, I have to be mindful about communication. I have to be assertive in group and individual therapy sessions. Especially with clients that are dealing with substance abuse. I am mindful when communicating with clients regarding diagnosis. I have to be assertive when communicating with clients about medicine management.

Another participant in the faith-based industry said, “I coach clients on how to utilize communication techniques such as being assertive, one major concept learned during the MET program.” Some of his clients communicate in different languages. The participant reported the usefulness of communication skills learned in MET with helping diverse clients develop communication skills to determine if their view of problems is accurate. One participant, a counselor in the Human Services industry said “I am more assertive with clients after participating in the MET program.”

Subtheme 2: Active listening. In addition to an employee effectively communicating their wants and needs by being assertive, the listening individual must provide the communicator with undivided and non-competing attention. According to study participants, the active listening technique learned during MET is one of the most important applied skills within the workplace when interacting with clients/customers. As noted by participants within this study, communication is a transferrable skill that can be applied in any setting. A male high school teacher in the study shared improved results from customers (students) implementing active listening skills learned during MET:

I actively listen to kids, make good eye contact and provide them with whole face attention, a communication skill learned during MET. Kids can tell that I really care about them. I am able to encourage and get to know them better because of the whole face attention concept learned during MET.

Another participant serving in the mental health field was able to share how active listening skills were applied in a one-on-one counseling session:

I am able to engage in sessions by actively listening to and truly understanding the client. Our clients come in with heavy issues. I have to be able to listen and engage. We have to respect each other, hear each other out, and hear varying opinions.

The next session discusses the skill of conflict management. This skill is a primary focus of the MET. Participants shared specific examples of the use of conflict management skills learned during MET and utilized in the workplace.

Conflict Management

RO3. Explore and identify employee perceived MET spillover effects of conflict management skills in the workplace.

The conflict resolution technique was a core item in the MET curriculum and was designed to provide participants with tools to resolve conflict in a healthy way. The conflict resolution process included the following steps: (1) identify the problem (2) identify how you contributed to the problem (3) identify unsuccessful attempts to solve the problem (4) brainstorm on potential solutions (5) choose a solution to try and (6) identify a reward for successfully managing the conflict. The goal of this building block process is to utilize the communication skills learned during MET to identify problems and effectively communicate potential solutions. Participants were reminded of the process by presenting them with a handout of the conflict resolution steps during the interview. Participants were asked to describe situations that occurred in the work setting that allowed the use of the conflict resolution technique taught during MET. Several participants in the study provided accounts of how components of the conflict resolution techniques assisted in handling disagreements among colleagues and client/customers.

Theme 3. Conflict Resolution Process Learned in MET and Applied in the Workplace

Conflict resolution techniques were used by multiple participants in the workplace (see figure 3). One participant serving as a high school teacher and coach indicated that he went above and beyond to help a student who did not have learning accommodations. This student was not allowed to receive extra help from any of the teaching staff do to the violation of state law. The participant contributed to solving the problem by helping the student on his own time. He tried to brainstorm on ways to help the student without

violating state laws. He connected the student's parents with a resource coordinator to get the child evaluated for accommodations. The child received accommodations, and a follow-up meeting was established with parents who were very grateful for the help. Another participant employed with a housing development as a manager, was having personal issues at home, yelled at a maintenance staff member at work. Her staff members recognized that she was having issues. She utilized the brainstorming techniques to solve problems in a small group setting with staff. She was able to build rapport and show empathy. She had the ability to talk about issues "off the record" and to address concerns. She also met with group members one-on-one. Another participant serving as a high school principal shared his philosophy and use of conflict management skills, "it is easier to apply the conflict resolution process at work than home because there are less emotional ties at work."

Participants within the study displayed a positive mindset towards handling conflict. Solution focused employees recounted how they maximized skills learned during MET, allowing others an opportunity to actively participate in the problem solving process. Conflict provides an opportunity for organizations and employees within those organizations to view issues from different perspectives. One participant serving in the civil service industry as an engineering supervisor provided a detailed account of the conflict resolution process in the workplace:

I received a call from a representative in our call center informing me that we had a customer who wanted power lines cut over the weekend. I was upset when I got the call because our policy is not to accept service calls over the weekend. I was able to look at the big picture, brainstorm potential options and think about the

repercussions of the decision. I decided to solve the problem by sending a technician over to cut the lines even though it was outside of our normal business hours.

Another participant serving as a financial manager openly shared how conflict resolution techniques were applied among co-workers:

I experienced miscommunication among co-workers. I tried to view various perspectives and how communication may have been viewed by others. I brainstormed on different things such as reviewing communication techniques learned in training to help solve the problem. I decided to use a more open approach. The solution was my choice to be more respectful and open when communicating with others.

Reports of positive change occurred for participants when utilizing basic conflict resolution techniques and skills learned during MET (see figure 3). The conflict resolution process grid outlines participants experiences utilizing the conflict resolution techniques learned during MET. The next section discusses stress management techniques utilized by participants of MET at work.

Participant	Identified Problem	Contribution to Solving Problem	Unsuccessful Attempt to Solve Problem	Brainstormed Solution	Choice of Solution to Try	Reward/Solution
<u>Tina</u> High School Teacher	Addressed issue with controlling co-worker	Did not allow others to voice opinions	Attempted to communicate about issue but nothing was resolved	Identified various plans to try over school break	Collaborated with co-worker on best plan	Celebrated winning competitions
<u>Edward</u> High School Teacher	Student was failing a class. Appeared to have learning challenges.	Went over and beyond to help student without accommodations. Reprimanded by supervisor	Helped student on own time after hours.	Tried to help student without violating laws.	Connected parents with resource coordinator to get child evaluated for accommodations	Student is now receiving accommodations. Parents and administrators are now on one accord with plan
<u>Lucy</u> Elementary School Teacher	Pressured goal for teachers: Students had to read 50 sight words in one minute prior to 1 st grade promotion	Complained to colleagues about the unrealistic goal during evaluation of lesson plan to determine potential solutions	Sent sight words home with parents but parents were not helping children	Brainstormed with teachers to determine best solution	Provided sight words in two different classes	Students met sight word reading goals. Had classroom celebrations
<u>Shelia</u> Financial Manager	Two co-workers argued in staff meeting	Attempted to calm co-workers down	Attempted to share each person's contribution to problem but appeared to be taking sides	Spoke with supervisor about potential solutions	Provided co-workers with tools to better communicate problem	Co-workers reconciled. Supervisor is now more confident in ability to problem solve
<u>Mike</u> High School Principal	Evaluated non-performing teachers over 10 standards	Allowed teacher to identify problem first	Discussed issues in detail with teacher	Brainstormed with teachers to determine solution	Role played solutions with teachers	Closed meeting with each teacher to evaluate progress and provide solutions
<u>Eye</u> Electrical Engineer	Subordinate took service call over the weekend after business hours	Initially was upset about issue	Questioned subordinate about thought process	Brainstormed options to keep clients happy and employees safe	Sent technician over to cut lines	Was able to look at big picture and think about decisions

Figure 3. *Conflict Resolution Process Grid (Participant Experiences)*

Stress Management

RO4. Explore and identify employee perceived MET spillover effects of stress management skills in the workplace.

According to Grawitch et al. (2015), there is no one-size fits all approach to identifying the effects of work stress, but the approach of choice should fit the culture of the organization, structure, and day to-day realities of an organization, as well as the specific needs of workers. Participants in the study reported unique perspectives on the

role of stress in the workplace. The participant's perspectives confirm persuasiveness of the use of stress management techniques in the workplace.

Theme 4: Stress Management Techniques from Diverse Industries

One participant, a health and wellness coordinator at a large level one trauma center hospital, shared perspectives about stress management:

I would participate in employer provided training because I understand the benefits. I believe that would be smart if an employer provided stress management training in the workplace. The health and wellness of the workforce affects an employee's level of production. If you are mad at work because of your spouse, you will not be as productive at work. Issues must be addressed as soon as possible.

An inventory management specialist serving in the manufacturing industry commented on the usefulness of prioritizing tasks in the workplace to manage stress, she said:

You have to prioritize what is important from least to greatest. In my job you would not get anything done. I am able to minimize stress at work by focusing and prioritizing on my daily task. I have to stay aware of my workload and make the priorities of my organization the first things I focus on to minimize the stress of not getting it done.

A high school principal in a public school system also commented on the usefulness of prioritization in the workplace to manage stress, he said:

I prioritize things that must be done no matter how crazy the day gets. Everything else falls into place. The safety of the kids come first, I expect to get them home to their parents safe. Sometimes the list gets out of order because you have to put

people first, situations happen. Stress hits people in different ways. I have a hierarchy list of what I deem as most important to least important.

An employee's stress level can be a result of the interplay between employees and their environment (both work and non-work). According to Ganster & Perrewe (2011), more contemporary models of stress include some mention of the interactions among people, the environment, and available resources. As employees learned to maneuver through stressful situations in the workplace, a growth mindset surfaced as participants made the decision to make achieving work-related goals a priority.

Theme 5: Stress Management and Employee Growth and Development

Progressive stress management programs aim to provide employees with skills needed to manage stress. These programs can include training focused on relaxation, mindfulness, resilience and time management (Luthans, Vogelgesang, & Lester, 2006). One participant employed as an engineer said that she "focuses on the locus of control". She shared her perspective on the best way to address stress at work. "My best strategy to address stress at work is (a) do what is ethically correct first, (b) do what is morally correct, (c) identify the best outcome for all involved, (d) review the policy and procedure, and (e) review the safety guidelines." During MET she learned "you should not stress over everything, ultimately you have to let go." Another participant in the human services industry said that "managing stress is still a challenge after participating in MET." In her role as a mental health therapist, she has to identify what is most important to the client. She has to type up notes for the client in between sessions which can be time consuming and stressful. Her job function requires time management; sometimes clients are very talkative, and additional appointments must be taken care of

after the session. “Documentation is important, and it is difficult to prioritize everything.” Several stress management techniques such as: (a) focusing on the things you can control (b) prioritizing the things that are important and (c) addressing them one by one were covered during MET (Craig, 1984; Rodin, 1986; Rotter, 1966). Each stress management technique serves as a personal resource for MET participants to manage stress.

Stress management interventions can target multiple levels of interactions between co-workers and clients/customers. One participant shared a perspective of the effectiveness in the training environment on stress management:

I participated in resiliency training on my job. Information was provided on balance so when issues come up you are less stressed. It helps to know that people care, I view my co-workers as family. I prefer small versus larger settings, I am more open at work when the classes are small. It would be less stressful to participate in MET training at work if the class sizes were small.

One of the major skill development areas with MET is learning how to prioritize issues and focus on one area at a time to minimize stress (Wotschack, Glebbeek & Wittek, 2014). Participants of this study reported multiple examples of the use of stress management skills learned during MET in the workplace. Another participant said “she makes a list of what is most important.” Another participant agreed.

I make a to-do list every day and then prioritize what is most important. Each task is assigned a due date, skills learned during MET. I minimize stress by getting the big ones out of the way first. In order to keep the stress level down I have to do some private time management, first thing in the morning.

Another participant employed in the finance industry applies the stress management skills learned in MET daily. She said “there are a number of issues that occur in finance. It is stressful when issues are taken to upper management and they don’t get resolved, similar to my relationship with my husband. I have learned to communicate about issues with my direct report in a non-threatening way” Another example provided by a participant currently serving in the housing industry indicated that she applies the skills learned during MET at work. She indicated that she learned to take different approaches to situations to avoid stress. She said “If there is a stressful situation, I take a time out, then come back (when I am better) the next day to handle the situation (a skill learned during training).” As participants shared coping mechanisms for managing stress, the personal growth from those experiences served as signs of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence among employees within the workplace are productive characteristics that contribute to positive cultural change.

Emotional Intelligence

RO5. Explore and identify employee perceived MET spillover effects of emotional intelligence skills in the workplace.

Emotional Intelligence is the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically (Goldman, 1996). According to Rathore, Chadha, & Rana (2017), an individual's work environment is filled with a wide variety of emotions. The role of emotional intelligence in the workplace is critical based on the research conducted in the areas of occupational stress, job performance, leadership, team effectiveness, conflict management, and organizational commitment. It is important to note that emotional intelligence is a value

added skill in the workplace. Employees may experience conflicts due to a natural occurrence in the variation of values, ethics, and, belief systems. One participant serving as an elementary school teacher shared the use of emotional intelligence skills in the classroom while interacting with a student:

Sometimes I feel that I have lacked emotional intelligence skills. I had a student who had behavior problems in the classroom. I decided that I was not going to put up with his behavior. I shared my concern about having another child with my husband because I felt that he would try to beat up on me in the classroom during my pregnancy. I think about emotional stress at work and the emotional stress of taking care of a toddler, so my spouse and I decided to back up the date of having another child.

A participant currently serving as an engineer shared:

When you work in close proximity with people you begin to recognize when something is off kilter. You learn when it's time to ask questions and when it is time to just allow the person to have their space. My co-worker had a mother-in-law in a nursing home. We discussed him being more compassionate and understanding of his wife's feelings. We talked about having more empathy and thinking about how he would want her to feel. His mom passed away 3 years ago. I told him that it was not only about him. He feels it is something that she would have done anyway. However, the training did help me with considering how others feel and how your actions make others feel. Sometimes people need a listening ear. Since I am the only female, the guys that I work with are interested in the female perspective. I am always mindful of my emotions.

This can also become a complex situation as employees attempt to navigate through decisions that may impact their ability to lead within the workplace. Gaining awareness of one's emotions and learning how to address issues is a key component of emotional intelligence.

Theme 6: Emotional Intelligence and Improved Leadership

Leadership competencies in the workplace evolve daily based on the needs and resources within an organization. During this study, a number of participants serving in the role of leader identified connections between skills learned during MET and the application of those skills in the workplace. Self-awareness of one's emotions aided with communicating effectively and solving problems within the organization. A participant currently serving in the housing industry recalled the use of emotional intelligence skills while mentoring a co-worker:

I overheard the conversation between a co-worker and resident. I told her that is not how you talk to people. I said don't allow this job to make you be somebody you are not. Take a break if needed. This co-worker is also involved in ministry at the church. I said you have to remember your position at church. Don't let them bring you to be somebody that you are not. Later on this co-worker said that I was right. The resident came back to me and apologized for lying to me.

A high school principal shared the connection between leading and the utilization of emotional intelligence skills learned during MET:

I am the leader at home and at work. I am very mindful especially in dangerous situations. I always think about how my response may impact our teachers,

students and community. I am very aware of my perception of how I feel about something emotionally versus how I have to handle something to make sure that my emotions do not flare up.

A participant working as an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) teacher in an elementary school shared her perspective on emotional intelligence when coaching others:

I had to exercise emotional intelligence while working with a fourth grade teacher who was overwhelmed. I tried to give her a pep talk and inform her about what was going on within the workplace. I always tell her that she is doing a good job. Emotionally, I try to deal with new teachers at their level. I provide them with feedback on how they can improve in a positive way. However, sometimes their emotions are fragile. Most of the teachers don't understand the volume of work. We have a high turnover with new teachers, part of that deals with emotions. It is important to know how they feel and help build their confidence as much as possible. During our faculty meetings some of the teachers leave in tears. I try to help the teachers because they have a hard time adjusting to the fast pace of the curriculum and classroom management. One of the teachers felt like she was going to lose it emotionally if she didn't get some help.

A participant working as a high school principle said "it is easier to apply communication skills at work because there are no emotional ties. It is more difficult to apply emotional intelligence at home than work because there are more emotions involved at home." Another participant working in the criminal justice field as a therapist commented on the important need of emotional intelligence skill application in her area of influence:

It is easier to apply communication skills at work because my spouse always felt like I was overdoing it. He said that I was giving too much of myself. I felt more respected and appreciated at work, I was able to be more productive and be myself at work. I had to give myself a self-talk at home because I could not be me.

Another participant working as a high school teacher and coach said “MET gave me the ability to understand when students are experiencing emotional distress. I am able to be more aware and observant. My students are able to receive what I am saying better because I am able to see how they are doing.” One participant recalls using the skills from emotional intelligence during MET while working in higher education at a small community college as an admissions counselor:

I used emotional intelligence when dealing with students who were having a bad day and just needed to talk about things like having a bad grade. I also used it in my civil service job as an inventory specialist with a co-worker who just wanted to get something off his chest like his wife going into surgery. I learned to shut my mouth and be quiet and have empathy for the other person. I have also learned to control my emotions when things get real stressful at work. I don't have a quick temper, but sometimes my emotions get piled up.

Another participant working as a finance manager within the civil service industry provides another example of using emotional intelligence at work:

I had a situation that started with a co-worker and supervisor. The co-worker had feelings built up and just shared how he felt in front of two or three of us. After the employee vented, I began to communicate (using communication techniques

learned during training) with the supervisor about what he was really saying in a less emotional way. I think that calmed the situation down. I don't think the way he communicated his feelings was the best, it just makes others shut down. This is what I learned during the MET training.

Two sub-themes related to emotional intelligence emerged as conversations progressed with participant leaders during the interviews within this study. The two sub-themes are: a) task related emotions of leaders and b) social related emotions of leaders. Participants either discussed the impact of emotions while handling tasks or the development of interpersonal relationships in social settings at work.

Subtheme 1: Task related emotions of leaders. The sign of an effective leader is having the ability to be flexible and adaptable with subordinates (Farrell, 2017). Each situation requires a different level of emotional connection based on the situation and the employee. Leaders are often task driven individuals in need of people to carry the mission forward (Farrell, 2017). During this study participants in leadership roles shared specific examples of how the skills learned during MET served as helpful tools when interacting with employees. One participant shared the following:

Working in the criminal justice field I had to manipulate situations. In the field of social work, it is so important to get to know the other person. I tried to build on their weakness and turn it into a strength. I tried to groom the client to make the situation a strong suit so that we can accomplish the things that we need to accomplish. When working with my team we were able to focus on the task at hand. You have to be able to understand the individual and be able to get them to be forthcoming and talk. Sometimes this interaction can be an uncomfortable

situation, but it is something that has to be done. The emotional intelligence training allowed me to respect the differences of others. It also allowed me to be more cautious with clients and not project my own biases on individuals to make them feel uncomfortable or any less. I actually used some of the activities from training in our teambuilding exercises from MET. Some of the same things can be internalized and presented, the objectives are just different.

Another participant indicated, “I allowed feelings of others to cloud my own feelings. I instantly realized that I was doing the same thing on the job, even though I served in a dominant position. I played a subservient role when completing tasks to make sure the needs of others were met.” Interviews revealed the participant’s leadership practices utilized the emotional intelligence skills learned during MET to improve social interactions with clients/customers.

Subtheme 2: Social related emotions of leaders. In sub-theme two, participants report that leaders within the workplace spend time learning about each employee and developing an understanding of their needs to create a positive work environment for all. Leaders oftentimes find themselves socializing with the team to develop relationships and become more connected from an emotional standpoint. One participant working as an engineer conveyed this:

When you work in close proximity with people you begin to recognize when something is off kilter. You learn when it’s time to ask questions and when it is time to just allow the person to have their space. A co-worker has a mother-in-law in a nursing home. We discussed him being more compassionate and understanding about his wife’s feelings. We talked about him having more

empathy and thinking about how he would want her to feel. Your mom just passed away three years ago so you should understand how she feels. It is not only about you. I believe this was something that I would have done anyway but the training did help with considering how others feel and how your actions make others feel. Sometime people need a listening ear. Since, I am the only female, the guys that I work with are interested in the female perspective.

Another participant serving as a senior licensed therapist also discussed a one-on-one interaction with a subordinate that helped enhance relationships:

I had a client that was dealing with a crisis. I provided her with words of encourage and affirmation. It appeared natural for me. If an associate therapist is having a bad day I try to lift them up. I don't allow myself to get sucked in a bad place. I incorporate kind gestures such as taking them to lunch and giving compliments. I feel that responses to challenges are not a natural occurrence just because I work in the field of counseling. I have worked in different climates, some of which have not been as warm. People did not speak. It was very hard to manage emotions. Some of my co-workers may read things the wrong way because they don't know me very well.

Each participant account summarizes the consistent responses of the spillover effects of MET in the workplace. In summary, both the emerging communication and conflict management themes were cross-cutting and consistent among all participants regarding applied skills used in the workplace. Participants from diverse industries shared unique accounts of the application of stress management skills learned during MET and the transferable use in the workplace. As the researcher explored the participant's use of

emotional intelligence skills in the workplace, a common theme among leaders began to emerge, validating the effective application of skills learned during MET. Steps adopted by Creswell (2013) were implemented in this study to ensure that findings were valid.

Summary

In summary, Chapter IV provides a detailed description of the results in this study. A qualitative analysis of employee perceptions of MET and spillover effects in the workplace focused on job-related communication, conflict management, stress management, and emotional intelligence. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 participants. Data was collected based on 10 open-ended interview questions.

The IPA method was used to analyze the data through the exploration of participant's perceptions to identify spillover effects of MET skills learned during training in the workplace. Towards the conclusion of the data analysis process the researcher prioritized each theme through a data reduction method. Six themes surfaced during the study. Theme one involved the improved communication skills between coworkers, theme two was improved job-related communication skills between clients/customers, theme three involved the conflict resolution process learned in MET and applied in the workplace, theme four was a holistic approach to stress management, theme five showed the usefulness of stress management skills in employee growth and development and theme six displays the positive effects of emotional intelligence skills and leadership characteristics among participants.

Two cross-cutting themes consistently present during each participant interview include job-related communication and conflict management. Job-related communication and conflict management skills are the first skills taught during training to allow

participants to apply them in other aspects of life. Lastly, the researcher utilized four primary strategies to ensure validity within the study: a) member checking, b) journaling, c) avoiding social desirability bias and d) saturation. Each validity method utilized in this study provided consistent results of the participant's self-assessment of the application of MET skills in the workplace.

CHAPTER V – CONCLUSIONS

This study examined employee perceptions of MET and spillover effects in the workplace. The study explored participant experiences within the workplace to determine potential spillover effects from MET. The research outlined an awareness of spillover effects of MET in the workplace that impacts employee's decisions and overall well-being in the work domain. Connections exist between marriage satisfaction and job satisfaction but minimal research exists on the spillover effects of MET in the workplace. This chapter provides a summary of the study results, findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Recommendations for future research are also discussed.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore and identify employee perceptions of MET and spillover effects in the workplace. A qualitative approach using IPA served as a method to interpret participant experiences. Purposeful sampling was used to identify study participants. The criteria for inclusion of participants in the study was current employment and participation in the MET program. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with 16 participants. After the data collection process the researcher organized, coded, and analyzed the data using an IPA process. Participants provided information on the use of job-related communication skills, conflict management skills, conflict resolution skills, stress management and emotional intelligence skills.

Interviews consisted of 10 open-ended questions. Participant interviews were recorded and transcribed to examine potential spillover effects from MET into the

workplace. Participants were also encouraged to share overall experiences and perceptions of spillover effects from MET in the workplace.

Findings

Three findings from this research provide an understanding MET's spillover effects in the workplace. Connections can be made to the literature review with similar skills learned in MET and used in the workplace. Interpretations from participant interviews provide concluding themes and results of spillover from MET in the work domain.

Finding #1. MET Provides Individuals with Communication Skills That Spill Over to the Workplace

The first finding indicates that MET provided employees with additional skills to communicate effectively in the workplace. Participants in the study were intentional in communicating effectively with co-workers and clients/customers. As skills were applied by participants in the workplace, an increased level of confidence and empathy for others surfaced. Leaders within organizations were able to manage and communicate emotions when making decisions concerning others. Some participants were also able to communicate with co-workers and clients/customers with greater understanding. As MET participants developed an understanding of various perspectives, the knowledge gained from those experiences assisted with decision making and subsequent actions in the workplace.

Conclusion. MET provides participants with a deeper understanding of communicating with the intent to understand. When MET participants have the opportunity to apply communication skills in work domains, skills are sharpened

ultimately achieving organizational goals towards success. Communication strategies suggested by Kippist & Duarte (2015) were designed to help employees build rapport and empathy. Similar transferrable skills were reviewed with participants during MET and align with Ahman & Harvey's (2014) research on the implementation of effective communication skills in the workplace. As employees build transferrable skills such as communication, organizations may benefit in multiple ways ranging from increased productivity, innovation, better retention, increased engagement and a perception of contributing to the team (Arif et al., 2012). Communication is a common skill that is applicable in all work environments.

Recommendation. Each industry represented in this study can benefit from having a workforce with strong communication skills to solve workplace problems. By establishing successful relationships with coworkers and clients/customers, organizations could benefit from incorporating MET programs in the workplace, possibly as part of health and wellness programming. Interpersonal relationships should be nurtured within the work environment to impact real change. A specific focus on job-related communication is critical in today's changing workforce. Organizations should conduct an assessment of the current culture, including communication culture, to determine if MET aligns with the mission and workforce development goals.

Finding #2. MET Participants Utilized Conflict Resolution Skills at Home and in the Workplace

Participants transferred conflict resolution skills learned during MET to the work environment, ultimately increasing morale and productivity. Participants practiced conflict resolution skills during MET like "taking a time out" when in conflict. The study

revealed the execution of similar methods utilized by participants in the workplace with co-workers. Workplace conflict impacts the well-being of employees and coworkers (Enehaug et al., 2016). The study reveals that participants were not only concerned about the health of their personal relationships but were also vested in their workplace relationships. Taking the time to reflect and coach others through the problem-solving process allowed participants to focus on the work related task and not the conflict. Productive behaviors minimized stress and allowed participants to take ownership in the outcome of a conflict situation.

Conclusion. A study conducted by Katz & Flynn (2013) indicates that in today's business environment, workplace conflict is a significant issue and will continue to increase as work demands increase. Katz & Flynn predict that leaders and managers are not fully aware of structures and processes available to manage conflict. According to Barclay & Wolff (2011), costs and benefits associated with conflict in the workplace are not adequately measured. Conflict can often create a toxic environment in the workplace or cause organizations to dissolve. Supplemental training similar to MET, can aid in building confidence and morale in employees, ultimately creating a healthy work environment. Conflict can also add value to an organization, depending on how employees choose to resolve problems. All of the participants within the study shared personal examples of handling conflict in a healthy way. For some participants this positive mindset transferred to other members in the organization. Transformational behaviors involving managing conflict can originate from multiple places in an employee's life. Healthy conflict creates an open space for transformation and can be an asset to organizational growth and development. Both constructive and destructive

conflict is costly to an organization and its members, and it ultimately can cause a decrease in productivity and performance, creating the urgent need for change (Coleman & Fisher-Yoshida, 2004). Therefore, organizations should consider diverse areas of training and development to achieve organizational results.

Recommendation. Consideration should be given by human capital development professionals to the infusion of conflict resolution resources similar to those learned during MET which creates an atmosphere of professional and personal growth and development. Employers should consider MET to potentially minimize conflict situations in the workplace. Conflict resolution can be implemented by equipping employees with the skills to handle conflict which can result in decreased productivity.

According to Polito (2013), research conducted on emotional labor jobs such as door to door sales, the way that workers perceive their job function can impact the individual's level of motivation about work. Motivation also impacts workplace interactions in both positive and negative ways. The key to success for organizations is gaining an understanding of the type of conflict situations that front-line employees face. According to Kinnunen-Amoroso & Liira (2013), organizations should address the need to incorporate occupational health interventions to equip employees with the necessary tools to resolve conflict.

Finding #3. Emotional Intelligence Skills Learned during MET Provide Employees with Confidence to Lead within Organizations

Emotional management in the workplace is a learned skill based on one's ability to demonstrate empathy and patience towards others, to manage one's own emotional reactions and to lead others as a team member (Maliket al., 2014). Emotional intelligence

is one of the best predictors of leadership success (Rosete & Ciarrichi, 2005). The five categories of Emotional Intelligence were presented by participants during interviews such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. Emotional Intelligence skills learned during MET provided employees with confidence in making decisions as leaders within organizations. Leaders within the study were self-aware of the need to identify their emotional state and regulate emotions based on the situation. Multiple industries were represented in the study and consistent skill application across industries were reported. Knowledge from MET training was shared to motivate subordinates, co-workers, and clients/customers to perform a variety of tasks within the workplace. Empathy was more prevalent in the helping professions and among educators. Social skill development was consistent with participant's views of personal relationships. MET provided a deeper insight on strengths and opportunity areas when interacting with co-workers. An increased self-awareness through emotional intelligence skills learned from MET created a keen sense of confidence that encouraged the participant to explore more productive ways to manage people and situations within the workplace.

Conclusion. Leaders within the study applied Emotional Intelligence skills while encouraging co-workers in overwhelming work situations, improved strategies for assessing performance, effectively provided cognitive support for clients and completed daily tasks in group settings with varying viewpoints and ideas. Participants gained confidence as emotional intelligence skills were applied that resulted in positive outcomes that led to personal success.

In research conducted by Kimbler, Margrett, & Johnson (2012), emotionally supportive messages may be related to increased performance. Emotional Intelligence skill development impacted leader's confidence levels within the workplace through emotionally supportive messages. Leaders within organizations are expected to cultivate an atmosphere of learning and growth (Lyon et al., 2018).

Recommendation. Participants within the study shared an appreciation for the gained knowledge of maintaining emotions at work. MET could be seen as an opportunity for employees to view Emotional Intelligence from a different perspective, ultimately complimenting interactions in the work domain. Decision makers within organizations should utilize assessment resources more efficiently, such as emotional intelligence inventories. Similar tools are designed to measure and manage talents and abilities of individuals. With emotional intelligence assessment tools, coaches and managers within the organization can obtain information that describes the emotional behavior patterns of individuals. Emotional assessment tools allow for more efficiency in organizing tasks, and can assist with succession planning within the organization. Human Capital Development professionals can use emotional intelligence tools to gain an understanding of the emotional competencies of individuals. Emotional intelligence tools assist in identifying employee fit within the organization. Therefore, organizations can ensure leaders within the workforce are equipped to handle emotions in an effective way. Programming such as MET can assist the workforce in developing the emotional intelligence competencies needed to manage the work environment. Human Capital Development professionals should make this a priority for health and wellness benefits for staff.

Limitations

Limitations exist for all research (Patton, 1999). For this study, several limitations impact the results. The sample was framed according to the purpose of the study. However, those sampled were individuals who participated in a specific MET program. This sample focused solely on that subset group, restricting the sampling of other individuals who were involved in similar MET programs. A broader perspective on the spillover effects of MET in the workplace could have been captured with a larger or more diverse sample of the population. An additional limitation is the volume of data analyzed within the study. The extensive review process may have caused the researcher to miss or inadvertently omit pertinent information.

The researcher's ability to only analyze participant's perspectives within a specific period of time can also be considered a limitation. Longitudinal research would provide a more consistent perspective of the participants and provide clear patterns over time to capture a greater understanding of the phenomenon that exists within the study (Cherry, 2012). Another limitation of this study was the participant's ability to recall past situations that may have occurred at work. According to Creswell (2003), in some cases, a participant's inability to reflect on details could result in the delivery of inaccurate information. In this study, during the first interviews conducted, the researcher noticed participants experiencing challenges in recalling specific skills learned during MET due to the time lapse from training to interviews. To aid in recall, the researcher included a table of contents from the MET training to assist participants in identifying the most memorable skills from MET. Self-reported data can increase the probability of inaccurate

information (Donaldson & Grant-Vallone, 2002). Therefore, inconsistencies may exist from participant interviews.

As interviews were conducted, participants sometimes provided limited information while responding to interview questions. Additional probing questions could have provided a more detailed account of the participant's experiences, possibly aiding in determining participant's choices of skill application at work. A further limitation of the study, and a primary disadvantage of utilizing a content analysis technique such as IPA, is that context is usually not considered or is highly constrained, which can limit the richness of the summary data produced and could be the case in the current study. Lastly, as Stake (2010) cautions, researcher bias may surface during a research project, especially one utilizing a qualitative methodology, and may hinder efforts to interpret data objectively. The researcher acknowledges a set of beliefs and experiences regarding MET training that may hinder efforts to consider a broader range of perspectives for the study.

Recommendations for Future Research

According to Harter (2002), employee engagement refers to the individual's involvement, satisfaction and enthusiasm for work. When employees are engaged they mentally and emotionally invest in their work and contribute to their employer's success (Czarnowsky, 2008). Shuck & Wollard, (2016) suggest that cultures that promote authentic engagement practices become positive and desirable places to work. Many of the practices and skills learned during MET provide ways for employees to engage and become active contributors in enhancing the workplace. Future research in this area

could provide practitioners with creative options that engage workers while assisting them in developing a healthier work-life balance.

A personal resource allocation framework was developed by Grawitch, Barber, & Justice (2010) that integrates self-regulation research within the context of work-life balance (practices that support work flexibility and help employees meet their non-work demands). Researchers Lim, Lent, & Penn (2013) and Newman (2011) suggest in the areas of career development and stress management the issue of sustainability and resiliency. The need for employees to be prepared to adapt to and cope with changes while engaging in continuous learning is a productive strategy in the workplace.

According to Shuck & Reio (2015), positive workplace climates and engagement were directly connected, suggesting that organizational leaders, managers, and practitioners could increase employee engagement and increase the likelihood of positive individual-level outcomes. Additional research on the role of MET as a possible engagement strategy in the workplace can potentially improve supervisor engagements with teams, build more cohesiveness with cross-functioning work groups and enrich the organization as a whole.

Discussion

The responses from the MET participants within the study provided greater insight on the usefulness of the skills learned during MET training. Participants obtained knowledge regarding the application of skills learned during MET and the transferrable skills used in the workplace. As participants reflected on the experience from training, a self-discovery period allowed them to see themselves in an authentic way. Authenticity is a valuable characteristic especially in the workplace. Participants described the

building of relationships as part of the narrative in explaining their role as an active member in helping to achieve organizational success. Empathy for others and the need to solve workplace problems was a consistent viewpoint of each participant. A choice to be an active participant in solving workplace issues is prevalent and useful for human capital development practitioners in understanding the diverse way employees decide to navigate through issues. Some participants utilized the skills in meeting the needs of coworker and clients/customers, recognizing the need to approach each group differently while utilizing the skills learned during MET. As spillover effects from MET occur within the workplace, it is critical for human capital development practitioners to meet workforce needs by providing education and training opportunities for employees to grow personally and professionally. As our world becomes more complex and relationship dynamics shift in the next century, organizations will need to be innovative with identifying ways to retain and engage the workforce. The promotion of positive versus negative behaviors through MET has the potential to spillover in the life of the employee and to everyone in close proximity.

Summary

Chapter V provided a summary of the results obtained through the use of the IPA process. Research findings, conclusions, and recommendations were provided based on the literature review which guided the study. Future research recommendations and discussions were provided by the researcher. The purpose of this study was to explore employee perceptions of spillover effects of MET in the workplace, and thus broaden the scope of how organizations approach wellness training. MET assists individuals with increasing awareness of themselves and how to best use strengths to improve work

climates. This study confirms a connection between marriage satisfaction and job satisfaction. Current literature eludes to the connection between marriage satisfaction and job satisfaction. However, this study provides a more narrow scope to the specific MET skills learned during training and the spillover effect into the workplace. Consistent responses from participants show the possible link to the value of MET through the transference of knowledge into the workplace. Participants felt the usefulness of skills learned during MET through the application of the same skills in personal relationships and impactful interactions with subordinates and leaders. As organizations evaluate workforce needs, diverse training strategies should be considered to allow flexibility in synchronized training systems that promote employee growth and development.

Participants in the study agreed with the level of accountability with organizations taking the responsibility of developing the workforce. Progressive organizations are intentional with obtaining direct feedback from frontline staff to determine if any changes are needed within the organizational structure. Feedback from individuals such as front life staff who are responsible for managing one of the most important parts of the organization which is clients/customers can find the collection of feedback a beneficial exercise that can provide long-term benefits. Certification training is available in multiple content areas for training and development leaders to implement various components of MET in the workplace that can align with the organization's mission and goals. Today's global society is built on interpersonal relationships that mold and shape the face of commerce. Even though the world is becoming more technologically advanced, people are still needed to manage and implement systems. Interpersonal training and development workforce needs will never go away, employees will always

need development. Smart organizations will take the time to invest in its most valuable asset, its people who are responsible for moving the organization forward. MET can be an investment that provides increased returns in improved communication and conflict management skills.

A global society can result in relationship challenges between people. The challenges surface as generational issues that never get completely resolved. Interventions such as MET create an awareness of the cause of relationship issues, allowing individuals to be active participants in addressing the issue in a healthy learning environment. Research from this study provides a perspective on spillover effects of MET in the workplace. Participants shared how skills learned during MET were applied when building relationships with clients/customers in the workplace. Some workplace roles require employees to go beyond basic communication skills to seek a deeper understanding through meaningful interactions with co-workers. Application skills learned during MET serve as a mechanism for employees to develop the skills necessary for workplace success.

A global society can result in relationship challenges between people. Interventions such as MET create an awareness of the cause of relationship issues, allowing individuals to be active participants in addressing the issue in a healthy learning environment. Research from this study provides a perspective on spillover effects of MET in the workplace. Participants shared how skills learned during MET were applied when building relationships with clients/customers in the workplace. Some workplace roles require employees to go beyond basic communication skills and to seek a deeper understanding through meaningful interactions with co-workers. Communication,

conflict management, stress management and emotional intelligence skills learned during MET can help employees to develop the skills necessary for workplace success.

APPENDIX A – IRB Approval Letter



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

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NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.
Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 17110104

PROJECT TITLE: Employee Perceptions of Marriage Enrichment Training and Spillover Effects in the Work Environment

PROJECT TYPE: Doctoral Dissertation

RESEARCHER(S): Tonya Moore

COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Science and Technology

DEPARTMENT: Human Capital Development

FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: N/A

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 11/02/2017 to 11/01/2018

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.

Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B – Initial Letter From Project Sponsor



Dear XXXX:

Tonya Moore is a doctoral student at The University of Southern Mississippi. As part of her research, she is conducting face-to-face interviews with members who have participated in the Prepare and Enrich marriage enrichment training program. The purpose of her study is to explore the perceptions of marriage enrichment training and its influence in the workplace.

As a project sponsor, I am hopeful that you will participate in this study. Your participation will remain confidential and you will not be associated with any identifiable data. The interview will last for approximately 45-60 minutes in length. All persons completing the interview process will receive a \$10.00 gift card from Walmart.

Thank you in advance for your support. You will receive an email in the next couple of days that will include instructions for participating. If you have any additional questions regarding this study, please contact Tonya Moore @ tonya.moore@usm.edu.

Sincerely,

Carlos Kelly, Senior Pastor
Beulahland Bible Church
Project Sponsor

APPENDIX C – Email Letter #2 Research Participants

Dear XXXX:

You've been chosen to participate in an important research study! As a doctoral student at The University of Southern Mississippi, I am studying employee perceptions of marriage enrichment training and spillover effects in the workplace. A 45-60 minute face-to-face interview with individuals who have completed the Prepare and Enrich marriage enrichment training program is needed to collect data. All eligible candidates should have received an email from my project sponsor, Carlos Kelly, Senior Pastor of Beulahland Bible Church, requesting your participation. Interviews can be scheduled now to participate.

Please reply by email to establish an interview time. Your participation in this study will remain anonymous and will not result in any identifiable data. Individuals participating in this research study will receive a \$10.00 gift card from Walmart.

Your participation is greatly appreciated! I look forward to hearing from you soon! Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Tonya Y. Moore
Doctoral Candidate
The University of Southern Mississippi
Tonya.moore@usm.edu
478-258-0098

APPENDIX D – Follow-Up Email From Project Sponsor



To: XXXX Marriage Enrichment Training Participants

From: Carlos Kelly

Research participants are still needed. The research study deadline is quickly approaching! Please mark your calendars for _____ which is the last day to participate in this study. As noted in my previous correspondence, your participation will assist with identifying employee perceptions of marriage enrichment training and spillover effects in the workplace. Participants in this study will receive a \$10 gift certificate to Walmart. Don't miss out on this opportunity. Thank you kindly for your support! Please contact Tonya Moore directly at Tonya.moore@usm.edu or at 478-258-0098 to schedule an interview time.

Sincerely,

Carlos Kelly, Senior Pastor
Beulahland Bible Church
Project Sponsor

APPENDIX E – Postcard Interview Appointment

You're Eligible to Receive

a \$10.00 Walmart Gift Card

SIGN UP TODAY for your interview! The face-to-face interviews on employee perceptions about marriage enrichment training and spillover effects in the workplace will only take 45-60 minutes. Contact me by February 9, 2018 to confirm your interview date and time. Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in this important research study!

Tonya Y. Moore
Doctoral Candidate
The University of Southern Mississippi
Tonya.Moore@usm.edu
478-258-0098

APPENDIX F – Consent for Participation in Interview Research



INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
STANDARD (SIGNED) INFORMED CONSENT

STANDARD (SIGNED) INFORMED CONSENT PROCEDURE S
<p>This completed document must be signed by each consenting research participant.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Project Information and Research Description sections of this form should be completed by the Principal Investigator before submitting this form for IRB approval. • Signed copies of the consent form should be provided to all participants. <p style="text-align: right;"><small>Last Edited July 20th, 2017</small></p>

Today's date: October 6, 2017

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: Employee Perceptions of Marriage Enrichment Training and Spillover Effects in the Workplace		
Principal Investigator: Tonya Y. Moore	Phone: 478-258-0096	Email: Tonya.Moore@usm.edu
College: The University of Southern Mississippi	Department: Human Capital Development	

RESEARCH DESCRIPTION

1. Purpose:

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore perceived spillover effects of marriage enrichment training in the workplace. This research could potentially identify empirical data that may prompt organizations to consider marriage enrichment training to enhance the workplace.

2. Description of Study:

Findings of this study may address the benefits of marriage enrichment programs in the workplace. For this research, participants within the population must meet the criteria of current employment and participation in a Prepare and Enrich training program. The sample size of this study is 10-15 participants who have completed the marriage enrichment training program. Participants will participate in face-to-face interviews that will take place within a 45-60 minute time frame. The researcher will utilize the following steps for each interview session: 1. The interviewer will use a blank sheet of paper that includes the following headings: date, place, interviewer's name, and participant identifier code (to maintain confidentiality). 2. The interviewer will provide clear instructions for the participant to follow so that standard procedures are in place for each session. 3. During the interview, participants will be provided with open-ended question prompts to obtain information on experiences from participating in marriage enrichment training. 4. Space will be provided on the sheet in between questions to record responses. 5. The interviewer will utilize a final thank-you statement to acknowledge the time the participant spent during the interview. 6. The interviewer will maintain a log during the interview process to record the source of data received from participants. General comments regarding the value of data sources will also be noted.

3. Benefits:

Participants will receive a \$10 Walmart giftcard. Participants will also receive a final summary of the research findings as a result of participating in the study.

4. Risks:

Research will accommodate participant as much as possible to ensure that interview takes place at a secure, confidential and non-threatening location. Researcher will also provide flexibility for participants to interview during a time that is convenient for him/her. If problems arise in conversation, participants will be allowed to take a break in a secure area.

5. Confidentiality:

During and after the data collection process, confidential data (electronic and paper) from participants will be stored in a secure place away from public access. All digital identifiable data will be saved and password protected. Identifiable data will be destroyed three years following publishing.

6. Alternative Procedures:

[Not Applicable]

7. Participant's Assurance:

This project has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations.

Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the IRB at 601-266-5997. Participation in this project is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits.

Any questions about the research should be directed to the Principal Investigator using the contact information provided in Project Information Section above.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Participant's Name: _____

Consent is hereby given to participate in this research project. All procedures and/or investigations to be followed and their purpose, including any experimental procedures, were explained to me. Information was given about all benefits, risks, inconveniences, or discomforts that might be expected.

The opportunity to ask questions regarding the research and procedures was given. Participation in the project is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. All personal information is strictly confidential, and no names will be disclosed. Any new information that develops during the project will be provided if that information may affect the willingness to continue participation in the project.

Questions concerning the research, at any time during or after the project, should be directed to the Principal Investigator with the contact information provided above. This project and this consent form have been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5116, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, 601-266-5997.

Include the following information only if applicable. Otherwise delete this entire paragraph before submitting for IRB approval: The University of Southern Mississippi has no mechanism to provide compensation for participants who may incur injuries as a result of participation in research projects. However, efforts will be made to make available the facilities and professional skills at the University. Participants may incur charges as a result of

treatment related to research injuries. Information regarding treatment or the absence of treatment has been given above.

Research Participant

Person Explaining the Study

Date

Date

APPENDIX G – Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Have you participated in the Prepare and Enrich marriage enrichment program? Are you currently employed? If not, thank you for your time and interest in the study. Have a great day. If so, please identify your length of time employed and industry type. What is your current marital status? Are you engaged, married, or divorced? Please confirm your gender type; would you classify yourself as male or female?
2. Tell me about your experiences in the Prepare and Enrich marriage enrichment program.
3. Identify how the Prepare and Enrich marriage enrichment program may or may not have been useful to you?
4. Think back to when you participated in the Prepare and Enrich marriage-training program; were there any memorable skills you learned?
5. Describe how skills learned in Prepare and Enrich may or may not have influenced you in your place of work?
6. Job-related communication is defined as communication that takes place among your colleagues and bosses. Communication can include but is not limited to information shared between management and staff or company-wide about job-related situations or problems. Describe a time when you applied communication skills obtained during marriage enrichment training such as being assertive or actively listening in your place of employment.
7. During marriage enrichment training 10-steps to couple conflict was used to help manage conflict in your relationship. After reviewing the 10-steps to manage couple conflict, can you think of a situation in which that technique may have been used in your place of employment (see appendix I). Please describe this situation.
8. One way to manage stress is to prioritize the issues that are most important to you. Another way is to decide what issues can be changed or resolved and which ones cannot. Can you describe how stress management skills learned during marriage enrichment training may or may not be applied to your daily work experiences?
9. Emotional intelligence is when an individual is able to recognize their own emotions, and the emotions of others. When someone has emotional intelligence they are able to handle interpersonal relationships and recognize, understand and influence the emotions of others. Can you think of a situation when you may or may not have applied emotional intelligence skills learned during marriage enrichment training in your place of employment?
10. Are there any additional lessons from marriage enrichment training that may or may not have affected your work experience?

APPENDIX H – 10 Steps to Couple Permission Email

Sharlene Fye <sharf@prepare-enrich.com>

Sharlene Fye

Wed 8/16, 5:27 PM

Tonya,

You have our permission to use the 10 Steps for Resolving Conflict in your dissertation.

Sorry for the delay in getting back to you.

Sincerely,

Sharlene Fye | Senior Systems Specialist

651-259-2425 | 800-331-1661 | [www.prepare-enrich.com]www.prepare-enrich.com

Tonya Moore

Thu 8/10, 2:56 PM

sharf@prepare-enrich.com

Dear Ms. Fye:

My email serves as a request for permission to utilize the "10 Steps to Couple Conflict" tool within the Prepare and Enrich assessment for my dissertation at The University of Southern Mississippi. My research focus has changed a little since we last spoke in 2015 (see email below). I would like to speak with you in more detail and answer any questions that you may have regarding my request. You can reach me at 478-258-0098.

Thank you in advance! I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Tonya Moore

USM Doctoral Candidate

Human Capital Development

tonya.moore@usm.edu

APPENDIX I – Ten Steps for Resolving Couple Conflict

1. Set a time and place for discussion.
2. Define the problem.
3. List the ways you each contribute to the problem.
4. List past attempts to resolve the issue that were not successful.
5. Brainstorm on 10 possible solutions. Pool your ideas together without judging.
6. Discuss and evaluate each of these possible solutions.
7. Agree on one solution to try.
8. Agree how you will each work toward this solution.
9. Set up another meeting to discuss your progress.
10. Reward each other for progress.

APPENDIX J – Interview Procedures

1. Prior to start of the meeting:
 - a. Choose a setting with the least distractions.
 - b. Review scripted interview questions.
 - c. Have 2 copies of “Long Form Consent” available for each participant (Appendix
 - d. Check digital recorder for operation.
 - e. Ensure researcher journal and pen are available to capture non-verbal details.
2. After introductions between researcher and participant:
 - a. Offer thanks for time and participation.
 - b. Explain the purpose of the study.
 - c. Provide 2 copies of the “Long Form Consent” (Appendix F) and discuss study description, benefits, risks, confidentiality, assurance, and informed consent. Participant and Interviewer will sign both copies. Provide one copy to participant and keep one copy for study records.
 - d. Explain the interview will last between 45-60 minutes, will be audio recorded, and that the researcher will be taking notes throughout the interview.
 - e. Explain the right to withdraw from the study at any time.
 - f. Answer any questions from participant.
 - g. Conduct a quick test of the recording device to ensure both voices will be heard and understood during playback.
3. Start the interview:
 - a. Start the recording.
 - b. Ask the 10 semi-structured, open-ended interview questions.
 - c. Ask one question at a time.
 - d. Use prompts and deeper questions as needed to assist the respondent in answering the questions and to help the discussion refocus should the conversation go astray.
 - e. Remain as neutral as possible.
 - f. Provide transition between major topics.
 - g. Occasionally verify the tape recorder is working.
 - h. Do not lose control of the interview.
 - i. If not already concluded before 60 minutes, end the interview and stop the recording.
4. After the interview:
 - a. Ensure participant has a copy of the Long Form Consent.

- b. Explain that a contracting service will transcribe the interview and that the transcription will be emailed to the participant for validation.
 - c. Explain the importance of “member-checking”.
 - d. Request the participant respond to the validation request within 3 days.
 - e. Remind participants that a \$10 Walmart gift card will be received after the member checking process is complete.
 - f. Verify if tape recorder worked throughout the interview.
 - g. Make any additional notes on written notes from the interview.
 - h. Write down any observations made during the interview.
5. At the conclusion of the meeting:
- a. Thank the participant again for their support to the research project.
 - b. In appreciation to their participation, results of the study will be provided to them once they are finalized and approved by the university.
 - c. Answer any remaining questions.

APPENDIX K – Interview Script

Thank you for participating in this study. This oral presentation will explain information concerning consent for participation and it will serve as an interview script to follow throughout this meeting. You have been given a copy of the 10 steps to managing couple conflict which will be referenced during our interview today.

Purpose: The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore perceived spillover effects of marriage enrichment training in the workplace. This research could identify data that may prompt organizations to consider marriage enrichment training to enhance the workplace. Your experiences during marriage enrichment training can aid in the further development of marriage enrichment programming.

Description of Study: As a participant in the Prepare and Enrich marriage enrichment program who is currently employed, you have agreed to participate in this person-to-person interview lasting 45-60 minutes. Exploring the effects of marriage enrichment training within the workplace can potentially create an atmosphere of self-initiated relationship growth through the application of skills learned during training. Information obtained during this study will help determine if there is an application and utilization of skills learned. This interview is being conducted in a private space to respect your privacy and avoid distractions.

Benefits to Participants: Study participants completing person-to-person interviews will receive a \$10 Walmart gift card after the process is complete. Participants will also receive a special summary report of the study findings.

Risks: Participation in this study poses no known identifiable risks to interviewees. Participation in the project is voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time

without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. Participants may skip any questions they do not wish to answer.

Confidentiality: During and after the data collection process, confidential data (electronic and paper) from participants will be stored in a secure place away from public access. All digital identifiable data will be saved and password protected. Identifiable data will be destroyed three years following publishing.

Participant's Assurance: This project has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of The University of Southern Mississippi, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations.

Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the IRB at (601) 226-5997. Participation in this project is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits.

Project Information Section:

Principal Investigator:

Tonya Y. Moore

Email: Tonya.Moore@usm.edu

Phone: 478-258-0098

Any questions about the research should be directed to the Principal Investigator using the contact information provided in the Project Information Section above.

The consent form will be signed by the participant.

Before we start, do you have any questions regarding the research or the interview procedures?

(Turn on recorders)

I will begin the interview by asking you to describe general demographic information about your participation in the Prepare and Enrich marriage enrichment program.

In conclusion, I want to thank you for your informative interview and your valued contribution to this study.

Principal Investigator Authorization:

By signing my name below, I attest that the procedures for the interview script described above were followed:

Principal Investigator

Date

APPENDIX L – Member Checking – Post Interview Thank You Email

Participant's name,

Thank you for again for agreeing to participate in the research project entitled *Employee Perceptions of Marriage Enrichment Training and Spillover Effects into the Work Environment*. The input that you provided will assist in the development of future marriage enrichment training programs.

As discussed previously, your digitally recorded interview was transcribed by a contracting service. Attached is a file of your transcribed interview. Please take some time to read through the document to verify the information is correct. This is a validation step in the study process called “member-checking” and it ensures the accuracy of the transcribed data. If you find the document an accurate transcription of our interview or should you have concerns or questions regarding the transcribed dialog, please provide a response within 3-days so that corrections can be made and further progress can be made on the research project. If no response is received, the assumption is that no errors occurred in the interview transcription.

Your support and cooperation is greatly appreciated in this research project. In appreciation of your participation, I will ensure receive a copy of the study results once they are finalized and approved by my university. Please contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Tonya Y. Moore
Doctoral Candidate, The University of Southern Mississippi
Tonya.Moore@usm.edu
478-258-0098

APPENDIX M – Final Thank You and Results Email

Participants Name,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research project entitled *Employee Perceptions of Marriage Enrichment Training and Spillover Effects in the Workplace*. Your valuable input will further the work of the development of Marriage Enrichment Training programs.

As previously discussed and in appreciation of your participation in the study, the finalized and university approved results and an executive summary are included in the attachment. Your continued support and cooperation throughout the project was greatly valued. Please contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Tonya Y. Moore
Doctoral Candidate, The University of Southern Mississippi
Tonya.Moore@usm.edu
478-258-0098

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