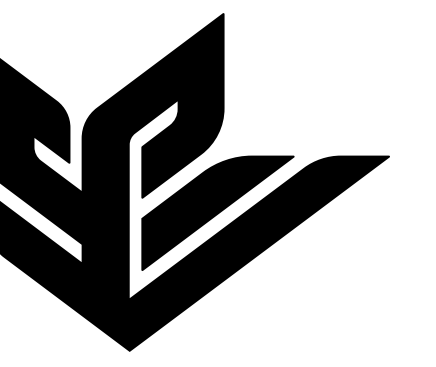


Impact of Narrative Therapy on American Interracial Couple's Marital Satisfaction



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ABSTRACT

In the United States, the number of interracial couples has continued to rise since 1967 when miscegenation laws were overturned. Interracial couples face unique challenges related to racism, discrimination, and the complexity of blending cultures. The current study aims to explore the effectiveness of Narrative Therapy (NT) in increasing interracial couples' reports of marital satisfaction. Twenty couples experiencing low marital satisfaction will be chosen using convenience sampling and will be randomly assigned to an intervention and wait list control group. The intervention group will receive ten 50-minute sessions of Narrative Therapy. Pre-test, post-test, and two-month post-test follow up scores on the Index of Marital Satisfaction will be analyzed to assess for effectiveness of treatment.

INTRODUCTION

- Since 1967, when miscegenation laws were overturned in the United States, the number of married couples that are interracial or interethnic has continued to grow. From 2000 to 2012-2016, the percent of married-couple households that are interracial or interethnic grew from 7.4 to 10.2 percent (Rico et. al, 2018).
- In 2015, 17% of newlyweds were married to someone of a different race or ethnicity (Livingston & Brown, 2017).
- Interracial couples face "unique challenges across the lifespan" including factors related to racism, discrimination, and the complexity of blending cultures (Roy et. al, 2022).
- "Sociologists point out the role of homogamy in marital stability of interracial couples, as they may have more misunderstandings and conflicts due to their differences in cultural background" (Kuroki, 2017).
- Initial studies completed in Iran have shown narrative therapy to be effective in increasing the marital satisfaction of women (Ghavibazou et. al, 2020 & Yeganehfarzand et. al, 2019).
- There is a lack of research on therapeutic interventions specifically aimed at treating this population. "Most of the literature regarding mixed marriages has been restricted to statistical data describing national or regional cross-ethnic marital patterns or has focused on various legal or social aspects of mixed marriages" (Negy & Snyder, 2000).
- Based on this area of neglect in the current body of research as well as the contextual and systemic focus of narrative practice, I argue that this proposed study will offer an important contribution to our understanding and treatment of interracial couples.

PRIMARY AIM AND HYPOTHESES

The purpose of this study is to understand the effectiveness of Narrative Therapy in improving interracial couples' levels of marital satisfaction.

Research Question

- What is the effectiveness of Narrative Therapy on American interracial couples' levels of marital satisfaction?

Hypothesis

- Narrative Therapy intervention will increase American interracial couples' levels of marital satisfaction.

METHODS

Participants

- Interracial married couples will be referred by three community mental health agencies located in Seattle. Couples interested in participating will be invited to complete the Index of Marital Satisfaction, which measures the degree, severity, or magnitude of the problem a partner has in a relationship.
- To be included in the study, both partners in the couple must score 30 or above on the Index of Marital Satisfaction, indicating that there are clinically significant problems in this area. Couples must identify as interracial and be currently married.
- Couples reporting current physical violence within the relationship will be excluded from the study and referred for further treatment at community agencies.
- The sample size will be 20 couples (40 total participants). 10 couples will be placed in the treatment group to receive narrative therapy and 10 couples will be placed in a control group waitlist.

Procedures

- The treatment group (10 couples) will receive ten 50-minute sessions of narrative therapy over the course of three months. The control group (10 couples) will be put on a waitlist and will not receive treatment until the end of this study.
- Treatment will be provided in person in therapy rooms at a community mental health site. Treatment will be provided by three therapists who have been practicing narrative therapy for at least two years and who will complete a two-day training by a supervisor from the Vancouver School for Narrative Therapy prior to the study.
- All data will be collected in person. Participants will complete the Index of Marital Satisfaction before the initial session of therapy (T1), one week after the completion of the intervention (T2), and two-months after the completion of the intervention in a post treatment follow up (T3).

MEASURES

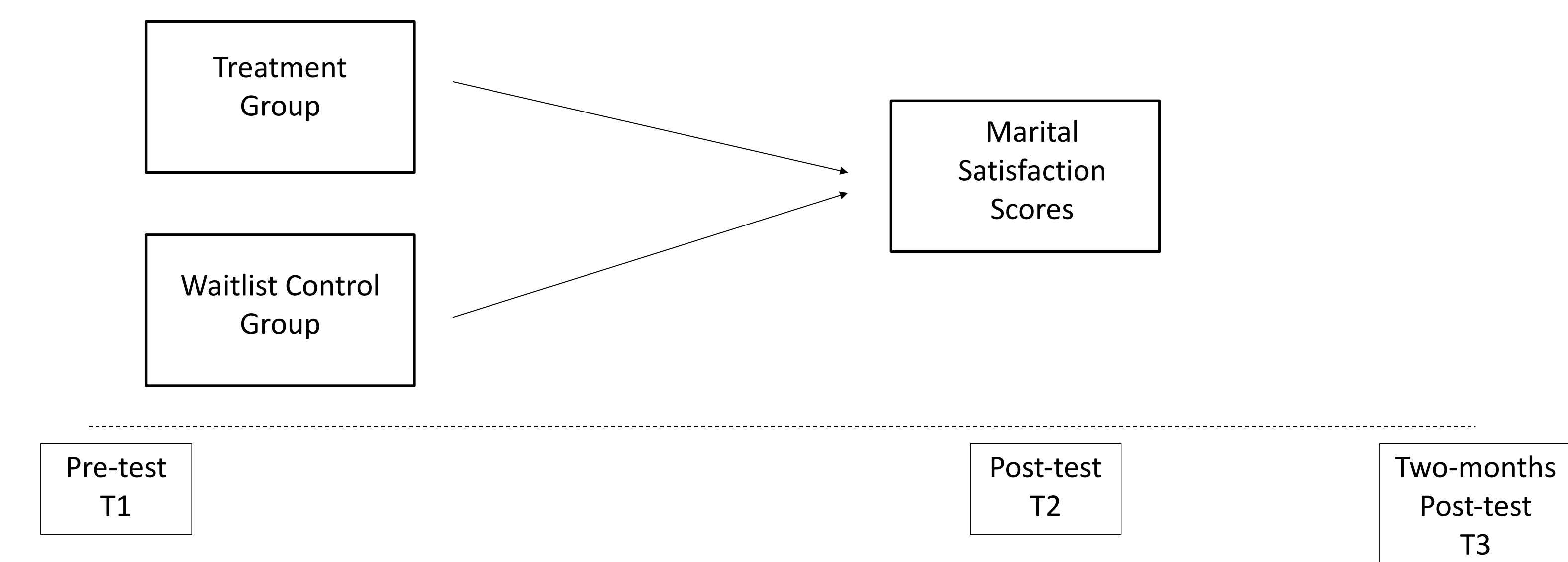
Index of Marital Satisfaction

- Participants' levels of marital satisfaction will be measured using the Index of Marital Satisfaction (IMS).
- The IMS is a 25-question scale designed to measure the degree, severity, or magnitude of the problem a spouse or partner has in a partner relationship. A score below 30 is presumed to reflect the lack of clinically significant problems in this area. A score higher than 70 suggests severe distress. The IMS has a reliability coefficient of 0.96 and "its concurrent validity has been established" (Morowatisharifabad et. al, 2014).
- The mean scores at T1, T2, and T3 will be averaged within groups to create scores for marital satisfaction. These scores will then be compared across groups to analyze for group differences.

RESULTS

Research Question: What is the effectiveness of Narrative Therapy on American interracial couples' levels of marital satisfaction?

The mean marital satisfaction scores at T1, T2, and T3 will be analyzed using ANOVA.



Discussion

Social Implications

- This study seeks to consider the distinct treatment needs of the growing population of interracial couples whose unique strengths and challenges merit clinical consideration.
- Continuing to improve the therapeutic world's skills for engaging race and ethnicity with couples will open up more opportunity for couples of color to confidently receive services.

Clinical Implications

- Developing a more precise understanding of Narrative Therapy treatment implications for interracial couples will improve clinicians' ability to attend to this population's unique needs.
- While it can be assumed that many clinicians are already treating interracial couples, this research can contribute to a more grounded base from which clinicians can draw in their therapeutic work.

Implications for Further Research

- Understanding this study as one of the first to examine Narrative Therapy as a treatment model for interracial couples, more research will be necessary to verify the results.
- This study has multiple limitations that may be addressed in future research, including a limited sample size, the lack of a comparison group, and a single measurement tool.
- Future research may expand this study's results by comparing Narrative Therapy to other evidence-based couples treatment models such as Emotion Focused Therapy, in order to further substantiate Narrative Therapy's place in treating interracial couples.
- In addition, further research should consider other measures of couple relationship to understand how Narrative Therapy more holistically.