Religion Accommodative Couples Therapy: Process and Outcome Research

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Hope Focused Couples Counseling

- Empirically Supported (Jakubowski et 2004) approach to couples enrichment

- Supported as couples counseling (Ripley et al., 2007; Ripley et al, 2008) in doctoral student lab-based studies. Designed as religiously-accommodative

- Highly religious couples did not differ from moderately to low religious couples in previous research randomly assigning couples to explicitly religious therapy vs. standard tx

Analyzed Measures

- Measure of relationship
  - Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Busby et al, 1997)
  - Relationship Efficacy Scale (Fincham, Harold & Gano-Phillips, 2000)
- Forgiveness
  - Gordon-Baucom (2003) forgiveness stages, examined the "impact" first and "moving on" last stage
- Manifestations of God (Mahoney)
- Video Behavioral Coding
  - Couple rates self and partner on positivity/negativity scale
  - Interactional Dimensions Coding System (Kline et al 2004)

Descriptive Measures

- Religious Commitment Inventory (Worthington et al., 1997)
- Use of religious activity in counseling (reported by couple)
  - Prayer in counseling and as homework, similarity with therapist, Scripture/holy writing, God manifest in their counseling

Participant characteristics

Were the participants religious?

- RCI-10 mean = 31.32, sd= 12.26 (63% low to moderate, 32% highly religious)

- 50% non-denom xian, 24% Protestant, 10% Catholic, 6% Spiritual/no religion,

- 47% attend church weekly or more, 17% never attend

- Slightly more religious than the general community (Public University mean score on RCI-10 was 29)

Demographics

- N= 152 people

- Education: 8% H.S., 72% some to Bachelors, 19% higher than Bachelors

- 17% African American, 3% Asian, 71% Caucasian, 6% Hispanic

- Median family income $50,000

- 20 cohabiting, 18 engaged, 114 married

- 88 married once, 29 married twice, 3 married 3 times.

- Mean yrs married= 6.45, sd=6.49

- Mean age = 33.02, sd=9.21

Pre-post Effect Sizes, Cohen's d

Using Morris and DeShon's (2002) equation to correct for dependence between means. Using individual SDs.
Cohen's d (1998) small =.20, medium = .50, large = .80

Measure	Baseline to End of Treatment	Baseline to 6-month follow up
Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale	.76	.63
Relationship Efficacy Scale (waypower)	1.01	.98
Forgiving "impact" stage	.75	.84
Forgiving "moving on" stage	.41	.60
Manifestations of God Scale	.60	.44

Pre-post Effect Sizes
Cohen's d

Measure	Baseline to End of Treatment	Baseline to 6 month follow up
Couples behavioral rating of self	.53	.68
Couples behavioral rating of partner	.42	.54
Positive Affect (IDCS coding)	.59	.59
Negative Affect (IDCS coding)	.78	.56
Problem Solving Skills (IDCS coding)	.74	.79
Conflict (IDCS coding)	.74	.47
Communication skills (IDCS coding)	.85	.94

Highly religious vs. less religious
RCI divided at 38 (Ripley 2003)

- Differences at baseline on RDAS (F=5.32, p=.02) but all other measures no difference

- Multivariate Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance compared highly religious to less religious on all measures.

  - Multivariate Pillai's trace = .47, F = 1.76, p = .08.

- Time (without regard for religiosity) was significant Pillai's trace = .79, F = 7.66, p <.001

Received religiously accommodative vs. standard tx

- Not randomly assigned (ethics), "field" study
- Multivariate Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance compared religious accommodative tx to standard tx on all measures.
  - Multivariate Pillai's trace = .68, F = 1.75, p = .10
  - Only REM was univariate significant F =5.58, p=.005 with standard treatment better than religiously-accommodative treatment

What kind of religious activity was used
(always with consent/at couples request)?

Question	Not at all	Some-what	Often
How similar did you feel to your counselor's religion	13%	31%	69%
God played a role in our marriage counseling	9%	27%	64%
Counselor prayed blessing during counseling	32%	13%	56%
Prayer as homework	22%	30%	48%
How much was religion or spirituality used in counseling	25%	33%	43%
Discussed treatment issues in terms of religious ideas	17%	42%	42%
References to Scriptures or Holy Writings	26%	46%	27%
Frequency of disagreement on religious matters (question from Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale)	74%	21%	5%

Discussion

- Treatment was effective for various aspects of relationship, brief 8 session intervention
- There was no difference in outcomes comparing religious intervention vs. standard intervention
  - A diversity issue, not efficacy issue?
  - Similar to therapist race & gender preference research
  - "Everyone has prizes" – religiously accommodative couples therapy equally effective

Take home message

- Religiously accommodative couples therapy is equally effective as standard treatment
- Most couples seeking treatment preferred some religiously accommodative interventions