

A DAY ON A CHALLENGE COURSE AND THE EFFECTS  
ON HETEROSEXUAL MARRIED PARTICIPANTS

By

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ON HETEROSEXUAL MARRIED PARTICIPANTS

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

“I don’t know if I could have done it by myself, but I knew he (husband) was right behind me.” – Swinging with your Sweetie Participant, 2011

Almost half of all marriages end in divorce (Amato, 2010). There is a 50/50 chance any presently married person will stay married. This thesis will look at one possible intervention to curb the rising statistic. Over the past two years Oklahoma State University Outdoor Adventure program has held a Valentine’s Day event, Swinging with your Sweetie. During the event couples experienced some games and then completed the high challenge course as a team being supported by another couple on the ground. Following the events couples’ conversations and electronic feedback showed the event to have meaning for the couples and their relationship. The purpose of this thesis is to evaluate the usefulness of a challenge course experience on a heterosexual married couple.

Married couples typically live their lives outside the work place. Some researchers divide work and leisure; believing leisure only happens outside of the work environment (Goodale & Godbey, 1988). Leisure research continues to struggle to define leisure (Kelly, 2009). Kelly (2009) explains that leisure is commonly understood as non-work, but Kelly highlights that non-work is not leisure (p. 439). It is during the non-work

time when individuals choose to pursue leisure. Gottman & Silver (1998) and Harley (2011) address the importance of married couples developing shared time and shared meaning to bring about a satisfactory married relationship. A satisfying marriage can bring about the benefits similar to a quality leisure experience (Gottman & Silver, 1998).

Leisure to the Greeks included study and philosophy (Goodale & Godbey, 1988). Within leisure lives the world of experiential education. Experiential education is developed through the idea people experience an activity or participant in an experience causing them to rethink or reflect on their life (Schoel, Prouty, & Radcliffe, 1988; Kraft & Sakofs, 1988). Using experiential education, specifically a challenge course, the participants share a common experience to reflect upon and build.

Gillis & Speelman (2008) reviewed 46 different challenge course related research articles and found “challenge courses are an effective tool for impacting a variety of educational and psychological constructs with a variety of participants” (p.127). With this knowledge about challenge courses and knowledge from Gottman & Silver’s (1998) seven principles for quality marriage I hypothesize that a day long experience on a challenge course for married couples can promote couple “we-ness”, couple team-building shared meaning, group cohesion, and reflection. The research shows effective interventions with groups, teams and families on a challenge course (Gillis & Speelman, 2008). Challenge courses are tools used in four main areas recreational, educational, developmental, and therapeutic (Gillis & Speelman, 2008). Included under the developmental and therapeutic categories are the groups utilizing the challenge course for marriage enrichment (Simcik, 2010).



Marriage enrichment and education groups give couples a shared leisure experience. Gottman & Silver (1998) explain marriages require an emotional and intelligent couple: “the better able they are to understand, honor, and respect each other and their marriage-the more likely that they will indeed live happily ever after” (p.3). For this reason Gottman & Silver (1998) give seven impact points necessary for a quality and successful marriage. According to Gottman’s (1999) research these principles can prevent divorce if implemented. In addition to Gottman, Elsa Simcik (2010) reported couples were able to reconnect during weekend marriage retreats with Worldwide Marriage Encounter. The encounter is an enrichment program, not designed for couples in distress, but to build deeper connections and understanding (Simcik, 2010). The purpose of this thesis is to propose, not an intervention for struggling marriages, but to evaluate the interactions of couples participating in a common challenge course experience.

In reviewing the literature, the married couple is a group and can be treated as a small group (Gladding, 2008; Johnson & Johnson, 2003). Married couples progress through the group stages like any other group. Gladding (2008) defines the group stages as Orients, Transitions, and Performs in which the individual members (partners) influence one another. Gottman and Silver (1999) and Tillotson (2008) and Ackison (2008) remind us marriage enrichment works best through activities and hands-on-learning. This research suggests that a married couple will experience team-building, group “we-ness” and reflection in a one day challenge course experience. A couple will also develop shared meaning, enhance love maps, and cohesion through a one-day challenge course experience.

## **Statement of the problem**

As stated early nearly 50% of marriages end in divorce (Amato, 2010). Married relationships need help to be successful. Oklahoma has begun the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative (OMI) in an effort to increase the quality of life for families and children. Reducing the number of single parent homes and increasing healthy relationships individuals are shown to be more productive employees, have less health risks, and enjoy a higher quality of life (OMI Website, 2012).

In a recent article, Simcik (2010) shared the value of a marriage enrichment program where couples could share in a common experience. The couples wanted a weekend to restore their vows and focus on the love they share (Simcik, 2010). These experiences include challenge course or ropes course activities exploring feelings and trust (Simcik, 2010). These programs, like the challenge course, potentially may be utilized to strengthen marital relationships and reduce the number of divorces.

## **Research Questions**

Can a day on the challenge course improve a couple's dyadic cohesion, consensus, marital satisfaction, and dyadic trust?

Will a married couple experience team-building, group "we-ness", and shared meaning in a one day challenge course experience?

## **Hypotheses**

Hypothesis #1:

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no change in a married couple's dyadic trust as measured by the Dyadic Trust Scale (DTS) as a result of a day on the challenge course.

H<sub>A</sub>: There is a change in a married couple's dyadic trust as measured by the DTS as a result of a day on the challenge course.

Hypothesis #2:

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no change in a married couple's cohesion, consensus, and marital satisfaction as measured by the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) as a result of a day on the challenge course.

H<sub>A</sub>: There is a change in a married couple's cohesion as measured by the RDAS as a result of a day on the challenge course. A couple's group cohesions seems to be impacted by a day on the challenge course.

Hypothesis #3:

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no difference between the male or female individual's combined DTS and RDAS scores as a result of a day on the challenge course.

H<sub>A</sub>: There is a difference between the male or female individual's combined DTS and RDAS scores as a result of a day on the challenge course.

### **Definition of Terms**

Marriage – For the purposes of the study a married relationship is a heterosexual relationship where two people of the opposite sex choose to pursue life pursuit and common interests as both husband and wife (Merriam-Webster: Marriage, n.d.; Duncan, 2009).

Challenge Course – Also called a ropes course, it is a series of games, initiatives, low elements, and high elements. It requires trained facilitators or instructors utilizing

industry standards for operation (Rohnke, K., Rogers, D., Tait, C.M., & Wall, J.B., 2007; Gillis & Speelman, 2008).

Low Elements – This is a series of lower cables, ropes, and poles, including games, initiatives. The elements are spotted by other participants and facilitators (Rohnke, K., Rogers, D., Tait, C.M., & Wall, J.B., 2007; Gillis & Speelman, 2008).

Games – Games are activities providing fun and play.

Initiatives – These are activities that require group interaction, usually consisting of a problem solving element. There is a problem or task the group needs to solve.

High Elements – Typically 12 feet off the ground and requiring the participants to be in harnesses and needing additional training and equipment like ropes, belay devices, and carabiners (Rohnke, K., Rogers, D., Tait, C.M., & Wall, J.B., 2007; Gillis & Speelman, 2008).

### **Significance of the Study**

The theory of group dynamics is typically addressed in the large scale groups of 6 or more. The application of the theory to a smaller group like a family is similar to a systems approach used by Marriage and Family Therapists. The significance of understanding and applying this theory to marriage allows more flexibility in the typical marriage definitions.

The impact of this research is useful to practitioners on the fields of marriage and experiential education. Groups providing marriage enrichment could have another tool for impacting relationships. Organizations, like the Association for Experiential Education (AEE), utilize research to improve the standards of practice.

## **Assumptions**

There are several assumptions for the study including that only married couples will participate. It is assumed that participants will be married. The researcher will not ask for their marriage license as a condition for their participation in the study. There is an assumption the participants are there willingly, that the group is willing to change if necessary, and wants to learn and grow. Lastly, it is assumed the participants will respond honestly and openly to the Dyadic Trust Scale (DTS) and the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS).

## **Limitations**

If married couples change with a challenge course, then the investigator should demonstrate this change has taken place. Unfortunately, there are limits to the amount of observation which can take place before and after such an experience on the challenge course. John Gottman and Nan Silver (1999) have the ability to observe and track the relationships within marriage at the University of Washington with the scientific accuracy of the medical community. In addition, Gottman and Silver (1999) point out the flaws to the usual self reporting of marital satisfaction results. Self-reporting has its utility; unfortunately the approach is limited. There is no real way to know if the couple is telling the truth just because they circle the number on the scales (Gottman & Silver, 1999, pp. 7-8). Although it is not ideal according to Gottman (1999), the researchers are left to trust the self-reporting of the participants themselves.

Additionally the couples will be asked to give up a Saturday in June to participate in the challenge course. This group will not necessarily be representative of all the married couples. The group sample will be a convenience sample. The study will also not

have a control group. Reviewing the literature suggests there is a positive correlation between the challenge course and group team building (O'Bannon, 2000).

### **Organization of the study**

This study is organized in a downward arrow from Leisure to a Challenge Course. Additionally a married couple is a group, so that information is organized from group theory to the married couple. Reviewing the literature there is a positive correlation between the challenge course and group team building (O'Bannon, 2000).

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Many married relationships are on rocky ground. This literature review entails concepts from Leisure, Group Theory, and Marriage utilizing current research as well as the foundations of theories such as Dewey's Experiential Theory. Marriages are groups of two and groups are changed in a challenge course experience. Therefore, group theory applies to marriages that will need the same skills any group participating on a challenge course will need to be successful.

#### **Leisure**

Leisure is difficult to define (Kelly, 2009). Goodale and Godbey (1988) use the definition of freedom from obligation and freedom to choose the activity or pursuit internally motivated (pp. 5-10). The idea of leisure comes from the Greeks as they began to pursue betterment of their own lives (Goodale & Godbey, 1988). This definition of leisure requires the person involved to accomplish something; to improve the individual's life because of the leisure experience (Kelly, 2009; Goodale & Godbey, 1988). The need for leisure is important to recover, rest and renew (Kelly, 2009; Goodale & Godbey, 1988).

Leisure and recreation can be spontaneous, but many Americans must be prepared and pursue it (Goodale & Godbey, 1988). Most Americans want free time to do what

they want (Henderson, K.A., Bialeschki, M.D., Hemingway, J.L., Hodges, J.S., Kivel, B.D., Sessoms, H.D., 2001). Leisure activities influence the overall happiness of the individual. Leisure is expressed by some theorists in three basic concepts: time, activity, and state of mind (Henderson, K.A., et al., 2001). Leisure can be defined as unobligated time, where an individual is free to choose the activity they want (Henderson, K.A., et al., 2001). Although leisure can be both time and activity the experience can also be done at work or with a variety of other obligations. Leisure is effective to promote well-being and encourage life satisfaction (Goodale & Godbey, 1988; Kelly, 2009).

The majority of people as cited in *Introduction to Recreation and Leisure Services* (2001) do not perceive they have enough time for leisure time, and Ateca-Amestoy, V., Serrano-del-Rosal, R., Vera-Toscano, E (2008) found a negative correlation between the amount someone works and their leisure satisfaction. Incomes and salaries have increased, but the time allocated for leisure has seemed to decrease. The standard work week of 40 hours drags on with commute times increasing (Henderson, K.A. et al, 2001). With increasing demands on the person it is difficult to have a high quality of leisure satisfaction (Ateca-Amestoy et al., 2008).

Leisure experiences connect participants. Individuals who recreate and play together have common motivations to pursue recreation and play experiences. These common bonds form social and cultural communities (Henderson et al., 2001). It is from the leisure activities that families can plan a fishing trip or experience to share together. The family's experience has five parts to the experience. These parts are theorized to be in outdoor recreation pursuits, planning, traveling, doing, returning, (and) reminiscing (Henderson et al., 2001, p. 63) can connect the participants together. Forming these



common tasks as a group to participate in a specific leisure or recreation activity assists the group to bond together. As this model has been updated, the traveling and returning from a leisure experience have been perceived as constraining factors.

There are many constraints to people participating in leisure (Crawford, Jackson & Godbey, 1991). The constraints could be education, income, national origin, or location for recreational pursuits (Crawford et al., 1991). In addition to constraints, Raymore (2002) discusses a “glass half full mentality”. The idea is that there needs to be more facilitators of the leisure experience for individuals to access the necessary leisure experience. It has been seen in leisure there are limitations to people’s ability to access leisure. Raymore (2002) believes that facilitation is necessary, and it can be used for couples looking to enhance their leisure experiences.

Raymore (2002) defines leisure facilitators by using “Jackson’s (1997) definition of constraints... *Facilitators to leisure are factors that are assumed by researchers and perceived or experienced by individuals to enable or promote the formation of leisure preferences and to encourage or enhance participation*” (p.39). More simply Raymore (2002) explains the facilitator encourages and helps guide our everyday leisure preferences. In fact Raymore (2002) gives a different view point to the parent and child facilitator. A child could give their parent access to another child’s parent by the two children playing together. In this way the child acts as a facilitator to their parent. This idea helps fill some gaps in the constraints research, giving added cause for participation or non-participation.

Raymore (2002) makes a strong case for the need of complementary leisure research. Raymore (2002) uses Crawford et al. (1991) to show how facilitators fit the

accepted model. The intrapersonal facilitators are the individual characteristics, traits and beliefs. The interpersonal facilitators are the groups and support groups surround the person. Finally structural facilitators are the social groups, organizations, and society's cultural norms (Raymore, 2002, p.43). These leisure facilitators are necessary when educators and facilitators use groups to bring about change. Experiential education uses groups to influence the individual members through the interpersonal and structural facilitators Raymore (2002) discusses.

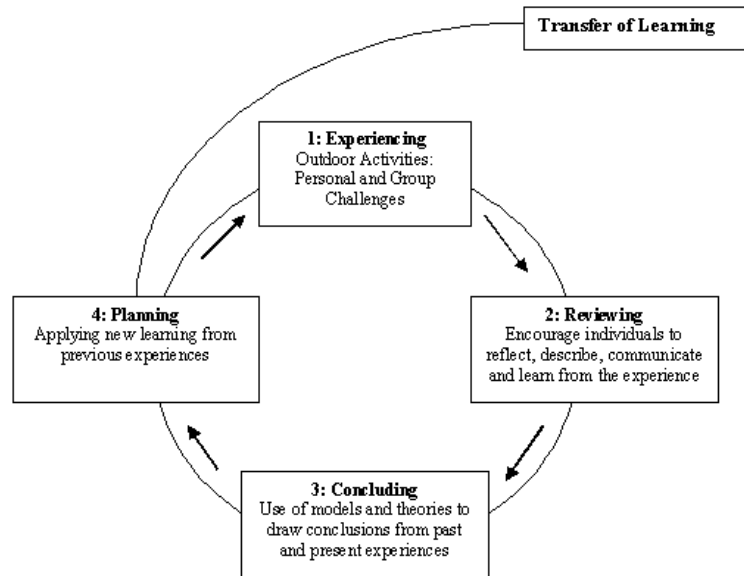
### **Experiential Education**

Experiential Education is the process of actively engaging participants in a real experience that will have benefits and consequences (Kraft & Sakofs, 1988). Participants must make the discoveries themselves instead of hearing or reading about the experiences of others. The participants also reflect on their experiences, thus developing new skills, new attitudes, and new theories or ways of thinking (Kraft & Sakofs, 1988). Experiential education includes a variety of tools and activities from challenge courses to project based learning in schools (Schoel et al., 1988). The role of experiential education is first hand primary experiences teaching life lessons and not the textbooks and teacher lectures (Kraft & Sakofs, 1988).

The Association for Experiential Education, AEE, is an organization of members striving to bring education, research, and training to practitioners. In this Journal of Experiential Education authors, Berman and Davis-Berman (2005), reviewed the need for positive psychology in outdoor education. They state that positive psychology is necessary for developing the performance leading to growth. Factors present are the positive emotions, positive individual traits, and pro-social attitudes (p.18). Contrary to

this newer way of thinking, a traditional model for growth is to place participants in stressful or perceived risky environment. The purpose is to cause the participant to adapt and grow. However, working with vulnerable populations may only create a greater sense of stress in the participant. Berman and Davis-Berman (2005) suggest that through positive psychology a participant can have greatest chance for growing and changing in a place where the individual feels comfort, security, and love.

Experiential Education Theory that is applicable to the challenge course and this thesis is Dewey's Primary Experience and the Secondary experience (Hunt, 1988). Dewey described the primary experience as the raw experience, the action of the education (Hunt, 1988). Secondary experience is the reflection of the primary experience. During the secondary experience the learning makes sense of the primary experience (Hunt, 1988). Dewey's theory seems to be developed deeper by Kolb, who created a circular cycle of learning. Kolb's Theory of Experiential Learning begins with a concrete experience like Dewey's primary experience, then to reflective observation like Dewey's secondary experience. Kolb expands by adding abstract conceptualization followed by active experimentation. The following Figure 2.1 shows the cycle (Exeter, 2001). Each experience is connected to the one before it. Individuals continually experience, review, conclude, and plan. Figure 2.1 also displays the transfer of learning process (Exeter, 2001).



*Figure 2.1 The experiential learning cycle, Kolb developed this model to explain how individuals learn through primary experiences.*

*Islands of Healing* (1988), defines Adventure-Based Counseling (ABC) as “growth through action” (Schoel, Prouty & Radcliffe, p.7). Growth through action can be caused by a variety of activities and experiences, but the goal is to bring about changes in the personal thinking and awareness to the participant’s self (Schoel, Prouty & Radcliffe, 1988). One way to affect individuals and groups is through Challenge Course programming (Gillis & Speelman, 2008).

### **Challenge Course**

The challenge course, also called a ropes course, is broken down into a variety of low elements and high elements; “Priest and Gass have defined low challenge course activities as requiring spotting and high challenge course activities as those requiring belaying” (Gillis & Speelman, 2008, p. 112). Low elements consist of games, initiatives, ice breakers, and problem solving tasks. The low elements can be up to 12 feet high and require the group to set goals and work as a team. High elements are more physical and

use the additional resources of trained challenge course personnel and equipment (Gillis & Speelman, 2008; Rohnke, Rogers, Tait, & Wall, 2007).

Challenge courses began with Kurt Hahn, founder of the British Outward Bound schools, who began to teach leadership and team building for naval sailors and educators. The early challenge courses represented ship riggings and were introduced in Colorado in the 1960s (Rohnke et al., 2007). The foundation of the challenge course represents a desire to allow the team to practice prior to performance. Team-building and teamwork were primary driving forces on the early courses. The goal was to bring week long expedition-style trips to fit the need of city programming (Rohnke et al., 2007; Gillis & Speelman, 2008). Hahn saw the power of the Outward Bound courses and wanted a tool for those individuals not able to make the voyages.

Development of the challenge course became the tool for Kurt Hahn and others. Challenge courses are an effective tool which builds teams and group cohesion. Team-building is a primary goal for using a challenge course, and programs advertise the courses' ability to develop groups (Gillis & Speelman, 2008). Also, courses build self-esteem and self-efficacy within challenge course participants (Gillis & Speelman, 2008). Their meta-analyses study took 44 different studies to see the effectiveness of the challenge course. The authors found it is an effective tool that works best within the contexts of therapeutic groups and families.

Challenge course studies show positive changes in teambuilding and group cohesion to participants versus the control groups not given the challenge course treatment (Gillis & Speelman, 2008; O'Bannon, 2003). To quote Gillis & Speelman (2008), "The highest outcome measures were family and group interactions. Challenge

course are most often marketed for their team-building qualities. This data corroborates the common qualitative assertions regarding the importance of the relationships that are positively impacted through the use of challenge courses” (p.129). O’Bannon (2000) also found the importance of the challenge course in bringing individuals together in corporate and team building. “The implication of this finding is the utilization of the Ropes (Challenge) Course as a beneficial training program to perhaps boost work team overall performance and effectiveness... The Ropes Course brings the physical, affective and cognitive domains together to reinforce transfer of learning” (O’Bannon, 2000, p. 114-115).

Transfer of learning occurs when learning in one context or with one set of materials impacts on performance in another context or with other related materials. For example, learning to drive a car helps a person later to learn more quickly to drive a truck, learning mathematics prepares students to study physics, and learning to get along with one’s siblings may prepare one for getting along better with others. Transfer is a key concept in education and learning theory because most formal education aspires to transfer (Perkins, 1992). Transfer of learning is a common theme in counseling and group counseling. Counselors hope to have the members of the group transfer the learning within the group or experience to the outside world. Group theory provides more information on what happens within these groups.

### **Group Theory**

The group stages presented by Gladding (2008) in *Groups: A Counseling Specialty* are Forming/Orientation, Transition, Performing/Working, and Mourning/Termination. These stages of the group are necessary to know when a group is

willing or able to give individuals a place to grow, change, or heal (Gladding, 2008). A group is formed when two or more people come together for a specific purpose and know they are a member of the group (Gladding, 2008; Johnson & Johnson, 2003). During the beginning of the group, members work to be accepted and want to feel safe and present. This is similar to a new relationship.

Continuing with Gladding's (2008) stages, the next stage is Transition. This stage includes both Norming and Storming (Tuckman, 1965; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) where groups work through primary tension to secondary tension. Primary is the awkwardness of being in a new place or situation. Secondary tension is group conflict (Gladding, 2008, p.132). Members may be resistant to the storming and tension. At this point it is important for the facilitator to step in and help work through the conflicts. The second part of the transition phase is Norming. "Group norming is the feeling of 'we-ness,' identity, group-ness, or cohesiveness that comes when individuals feel that they belong to an association or organizations larger than themselves" (Gladding, 2008, p.143).

The next stage of group development is the Working/Performing stage (Gladding, 2008). This stage peer relationships are strong coming through the storm. Gladding (2008) comments there are feelings of empathy, compassion, and love. Groups bond interpersonally and emotionally, and the group begins to understand each other better (p. 151). During the working stage the group develops strong bonds and continues to encourage teamwork and team building (Gladding, 2008). Corey (2012) adds the working stage is the cohesion and productivity stage of the group. This cohesion brings about behaviors such as risk-taking, confrontation, and action (Corey, 2012, p. 97). Groups that do not work through the transition stage and storm cannot share deep meaningful group

cohesion and trust (Corey, 2012; Gladding, 2008). Characteristics of the working stage include “trust and acceptance, empathy and caring, intimacy, hope, freedom to experiment, catharsis, cognitive restructuring, commitment to change, self-disclosure, and confrontation” (p. 100-104).

The final group stage is Termination/Adjourning. Termination is the event allowing one set of experiences to end and another to begin. It happens quickly or it can be thoughtful and planned (Gladding, 2008, p. 174). The ending of a group is an event. The facilitator progresses toward an ending and reflects on the entire group purpose (Gladding, 2008). A group does not just end at once, but the facilitator will develop an ending and closing for the members to Adjoin from the group into other parts of life (Gladding, 2008). These stages of development of groups are necessary to define a marriage.

Understanding group theory and how it can be applied to marriage and families allows the facilitator to see areas that may need to change. A typical theory used is the systems theory approach in Marriage and Family Therapy. However, marriage is a group: two or more people with a common goal and both individuals chose the interaction. Applying group theory to marriages, an individual can see the same factors creating strong group bonds are the same factors necessary for close and trusting married relationships.

The marriage relationship shares the same group dynamics developing an effective team. Groups can be affected by experiential education (Johnson & Johnson, 2003). Johnson and Johnson (2003) define seven guidelines for effective groups including establish clear group goals, inaugurate effective two-way communication,



ensure leadership is distributed, use of power is distributed, match the method of decision making, encourage conflict, guarantee conflicts are mediated and resolved positively (p.30).

Using these goals for group effectiveness from Johnson & Johnson (2003) it would be possible to evaluate the stage in which the group is performing based on Gladding's (2008) stages. The early stages of the group process must be completed to develop high levels of trust and cohesion (Gladding, 2008; Johnson & Johnson, 2003). Groups are together for a specific role or task (Gladding, 2008; Corey, 2012).

According to Corey (2012), the ability for the group to share parts of their lives is contingent on the amount of trust and cohesion they feel (p.81). Yalom (2005) was quoted by Corey that group leaders need to establish just enough structure to encourage growth and facilitation. The group leader on a challenge course is the facilitator. It is necessary to have goals and a level of group understanding (Schoel & Maizell, 2002). Even Stanchfield (2007) indicates that the level of facilitator direction depends on the overall functioning of the group. This level would also vary based on the married couple. Gottman and Silver (1999) give principles impacting the marriage relationship.

## **Marriage**

A marriage is a select group defined as two individuals (one male and one female), who choose to interact for the common purpose of life pursuits and/or children (Duncan, 2009; Stewart, 2008). Marriage is also defined in the Merriam-Webster as "the state of being united to a person of the opposite sex as husband or wife in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law" (Marriage, n.d.). In 2008 the Orthodox Jewish and Catholic communities shared a common commitment "to marriage between a

man and a woman” (Leibel, 2008, p. 11). The definition of marriage also fits within the definition of a group. It is a simple group of two individuals with a common goals and purpose (Johnson & Johnson, 2003).

Marriage satisfaction is important to life happiness with a person who is married (Gottman, J.M., Coan, J., Carrere, S., Swanson, C., 1998). Married couples will stay married longer with a high level of satisfaction and positive interactions (Gottman & Silver, 1999, Gottman et al., 1998, Gottman, 2011). These interactions are highlighted in-depth in Gottman & Silver (1999) *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* and again in *The Science of Trust* (Gottman, 2011). In Gottman & Silver (1999), a couple is more likely to stay married if found four things are not present.

These four things are criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling. Criticism is a complaint that becomes toxic. Gottman & Sliver (1999) state complaints, by themselves, are not negative. Complaints can mature the group deeper in the transition (storming) stage (Gladding, 2008). However, the problem arises, according to Gottman & Silver (1999), when criticism attacks a partner’s habits and character (p. 27). Next is contempt, which is the worst of the four horsemen. It conveys repulsion with your partner (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 29). The third horseman described by Gottman and Silver (1999) is defensiveness. When one partner complains or criticizes, the other partner immediately becomes defensive. These three factors together don’t always mean a marriage couple is headed for divorce, but when stonewalling rides into the marriage one partner has already “checked out” (Gottman & Silver, 1999). Stonewalling means one partner is no longer trying to work on the conflict (Gottman & Silver, 1999). Gottman

and Silver (1999) can predict divorce with the four horsemen, but he also shares the ways a married couple must work to develop intimacy and group “we-ness” (Gladding, 2008).

The seven principles listed by Gottman and Silver (1999) are revised in Gottman’s (2011) book *The Science of Trust*. Gottman and Silver (1999) present the principles as enhance your love maps, nurture your fondness and admiration, turn toward each other instead of away, let your partner influence you, solve your solvable problems, overcome gridlock, and create shared meaning. Gottman (2011) revised the list a little including the principles build love maps, shared fondness and admiration, turn towards, the positive perspective, manage conflict, make life dreams come true, and create shared meaning.

Each of the principles are highlighted with activities; places where the married partners can re-connect and find each other once again. For example Gottman & Silver (1999) describe an exercise called “I appreciate...” (p. 68-69). The exercise lists 72 different characteristics like, “loving, cheerful, graceful, shy, committed, reliable, warm, playful, assertive, great parent, etc.” (p. 68-69). Each partner in the couple will select three characteristics for their partner, and remember an incident where their partner displayed this specific characteristic. Each partner will complete the task by themselves then show or read the characteristic and description of the incident to their partner (Gottman & Silver, 1999). This type of activity builds fondness and admiration building each other’s emotional love bank (Gottman & Silver, 1999).

Tillotson’s (2008) *Adventure in Marriage (AIM)* created activities for building connections in a marriage. AIM (2008) was created for couples to work through experiences together. His dissertation developed a complex marriage workbook for

couples to experience one another together. Tillotson starts with a Full Value Contract and his values are adapted from *Exploring Islands of Healing* (Schoel, 2002). The values are to be committed, to be safe, to be honest, to be caring, to be present, to be adaptive and to try new things (AIM, 2008, p.181). It is in this type of contract and agreement where a group or married couple can define their relationships. In addition to the Full Value Contract, groups work through defined stages (Gladding, 2008; Tuckman, 1965; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) and establish deep meaning through tasks and goals common to the group.

Marriages in which the partners interact and participate in leisure are more willing to have positive marital interactions (Gibson, H.M., 2005). Gibson (2003) found a positive correlation between leisure and marital satisfaction. She used existing data to find that a positive view of leisure time promoted a healthier marriage (Gibson, 2003). In addition to this, Harley (2011) in *His Needs, Her Needs* suggests shared leisure time and participation is a factor for most male individuals in a married relationship. This common leisure experience enhances the love attraction (Harley, 2011, Gottman & Silver, 1999).

### **Assessment**

Some surveys of interest include the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS), and the Satisfaction with Married Life Scale (SWML). The measurement, DAS, consists “of four factors: dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, and an affection expression factor, which used the composite of dyadic differences, interpersonal tensions, and personal anxiety” (Ward, P.J., Lundberg, N.R., Zabriskie, R.B., Berrett, K., 2009, p. 416). From the DAS the

shortened RDAS was created and consisted of only 14 items as opposed to the 32 questions on the original DAS.

The SWML measures marital satisfaction, specifically (Ward, et al. 2009). It doesn't depend on the dyadic relationship as the RDAS does. SWML utilized a measurement that takes a life satisfaction measurement and adjusts it to deal with "Married Life" specifically and not just "life." (Ward et al., 2009) Furthermore, Ward et al. (2009) analyze the data to demonstrate the SWML to measure marital satisfaction higher as compared with the 5 items on the RDAS. The RDAS' items are valid as indicators. Ward et al. (2009) says, "This single component explains over 86% of the variance within the scale and all the items loading ranged from .887 to .957 on a single factor (Table 4). This suggests that the SWML is measuring only the construct of marital satisfaction." Although Ward et al. (2009) encourages the use of the SWML, the need for a broader undertaking is necessary for this research. The RDAS is more appropriate when evaluating change on a challenge course experience showing three areas including consensus, cohesion, and marital satisfaction.

## **Summary**

Marriages in which the partners interact and participate in leisure are more willing to have positive marital interactions (Gibson, H.M., 2005). In addition to this, Harley (2011) in *His Needs, Her Needs* suggests shared leisure time and participation is a factor for most male individuals in a married relationship. This common leisure experience enhances the love attraction encouraging healthier marriages (Harley, 2011, Gottman & Silver, 1999). A challenge course experience provides a unique experience for married couples to build group unity. Challenge course programming is shown to have positive

effects on groups and teams (Gillis & Speelman, 2008; O'Bannon, 2000). For these reasons the one day challenge course should affect a heterosexual marriage relationship.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

Reviewing the literature on challenge courses, groups, and marriage, one can see marriage could be affected by the day on a challenge course. The positive psychology needed in Berman and Davis-Berman (2005) is evident in Gladding's (2008) stages of group development. This development is facilitated through the activities like the Full Value Contract (Tillotson, 2008; Schoel, Prouty, Radcliffe, 1988). There could be some transfer of learning for the participants in the married couple. The experience can speak only as loud as the facilitator to the leisure experience can help it transfer (Raymore, 2002; Perkins, 1992; O'Bannon, 2000).

#### **Participants**

The participants in the study were married heterosexual couples. Flyers were posted around the Oklahoma State University campus area. Marie Basler, Coordinator for Non-traditional Students, emailed her list of students. In addition to these forms of communication, the researcher contacted local church leaders. The hope was to inform young-married couples groups. These groups meet weekly and provided an avenue to tell young married couples about this research opportunity. There were two churches who responded to emails and phone calls: University Heights Baptist Church and Sunnybrook Christian Church. The research is based on group theory and what makes a functional

team. The method used a variety of game and initiatives to highlight the places the couples have success and areas for growth. All the participants were emailed information including the informed consent form, (Appendix VII), a link to the Outdoor Adventure waiver and release of liability form, a link to the directions to Camp Redlands, and other general challenge course information. This email and the forms gave the participants the necessary information about the data collection and management of the data. The participants acted in an appropriate manor and fully participated in all the activities presented. They listened well and seemed to enjoy the overall experience. There was no actual risk if all the participants follow directions of the trained challenge course staff. The Challenge Course is perceived risks and allows participants a safe place to challenge themselves (Schoel, Prouty, & Radcliffe, 1988).

### **Instruments**

There were two measures used in this thesis. The first is the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale, RDAS (Busby, Crane, Larson, & Christiansen, 1995). The RDAS is valid and reliable (Busby et al., 1995). It is based on the original DAS scale produced by Spanier (1976). Spanier's (1976) DAS is highly researched and supported (Graham, Liu, & Jeziorski, 2006; Carey, Spector, Lantinga, & Krauss, 1993). The DAS measures four subscales: Affectional Expression, Dyadic Cohesion, Dyadic Consensus, and Marital Satisfaction (Carey et al., 1993). This revised scale is shorter than the DAS and the subscale sets are larger (Busby et al., 1995). The DAS is 32 items and the RDAS is 14 items. As with the original DAS the RDAS scale seeks to answer Dyadic Consensus, Marital Satisfaction, and Dyadic Cohesion (Busby et al., 1995). The RDAS leaves out the Affectional Expression as a subscale but includes it as a part of the dyadic consensus



subgrouping. Within the three subgroupings the RDAS further defines variables like decision making, career decisions, values, affections, stability, conflict, activities, and discussion. The RDAS is more effective than the DAS with internal consistency and reliability at or above .80 (Busby et al., 1995). This scale is a good measure of the overall health of the dyadic pairing (Busby et al., 1995). There are 14 items and each item is paired with a six-point Likert scale with the exception of item 11 is a five-point Likert scale.

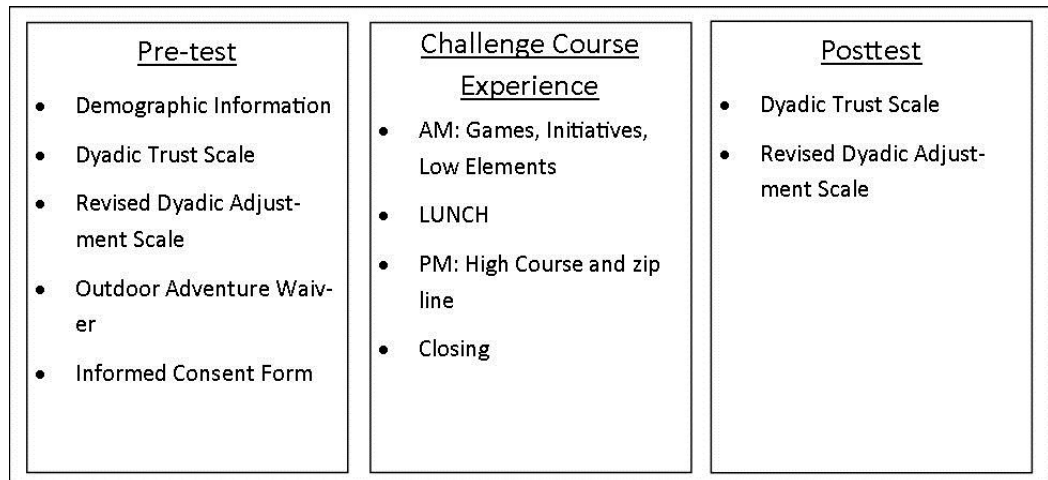
Scoring was completed in following manner. Items 1-6 are given 5 points for “Always agree,” 4 points for “almost always agree,” 3 points for “occasionally disagree,” 2 points for “Frequently disagree,” 1 point for “almost always disagree,” and 0 points for “always disagree” (Poll, 2006). Items 7-10 are reversed scored by giving 0 points for “All the time,” 1 point for “most of the time,” 2 points for “more often than not,” 3 points for “occasionally,” 4 points for “rarely,” and 5 points for “never” (Poll, 2006). Item 11 on the RDAS is the only 5-point Likert question. The scoring is 4 points for “every day,” 3 points for “almost every day,” 2 points for “occasionally,” 1 point for “rarely,” and 0 points for “never” (Poll, 2006). The last three items 12-14 are scored similar to items 7-10. 0 points are given for “never,” 1 point for “less than once a month,” 2 points for “once or twice a month,” 3 points for “once or twice a week,” 4 points for “once a day,” and 5 points for “more often” (Poll, 2006). The total RDAS scoring can range between 0-69. Distressed dyadic couples fall below a score of 48 and non-distressed dyadic couples above 48 (Cane, Middleton, & Bean, 2000).

The other instrument used in the study is the Dyadic Trust Scale (Larzelere & Huston, 1980). This scale was chosen for its high reliability and validity (Miller, 2002).

Larzelere & Hutson (1980) had 195 total subjects and most of the participants were married (n=127) (Miller, 2002). In addition to the large number of participants the overall reliability is reported at 0.93, and the individual items ranging from 0.72 to 0.89 (Miller, 2002). The scale is only eight statements, and the participants self-report on a seven point Likert scale (Larzelere & Huston, 1980; Miller, 2002). This DTS instrument is scored with a 7-point Likert scale. Items 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8 are scored 1 to 7. Items 1, 2, and 6 were reversed scored. DTS scores range from 8-56. High scores indicate a positive trust and love (Larzelere & Huston, 1980).

### **Research Design & Procedures**

The research design was a Pre-Post Test design using the RDAS and the DTS. This design allowed the participants to fill out the two scales in the morning just before the challenge course experience. Following the challenge course the participants again filled out the two instruments. From the research in the literature review, the scales should have shown improvement in both scales. A positive change would have demonstrated the challenge course's effectiveness to affect the dyadic relationships of married couples and their dyadic trust.



*Figure 3.1 Diagram of pre and posttest design, this demonstrates the overall plan for this research project.*

## **Procedure**

In *Islands of Healing* (1988), the Forming/Orientation stage is developed through a Full Value Contract (Schoel et al., 1988; Schoel & Maizell, 2002; Tillotson, 2008). A Full Value Contract is an agreement on how the members of the group interact and work together. From this FVC a facilitator sets the tone for the group. Literature on group dynamics starts with forming, but on a challenge course the facilitator provides norms to the group. The primary investigator set up the experiences of the day by giving the group expectations of behavior and to telling them to focus on one another. In addition to this the facilitator told the group to share about their experiences. Facilitators mentioned by publishing their experiences and learning to the rest of the group they would benefit from hearing it spoken to the group. Other members would also benefit from their own learning.

Adventure in Marriage (AIM, 2008) was developed by Tillotson to develop a step-by-step marriage enrichment curriculum for therapists. Tillotson's games as well as

activities and tips from challenge course facilitators are used to develop the list of games, initiatives, low elements, the high elements.

The agenda for the day on the challenge course is listed below. The day of activity started about nine AM with games and initiatives. The group broke for lunch just before noon, and completed the high elements in the afternoon. A schedule of the day is seen in Figure 3.2.

9:00 AM	The group meets and fills out surveys and waivers
9:30 AM	Start the Games and Initiatives: Couple Geography, Line Up, Chip and Noodle Game, Peanut Butter and Jelly Tag, Busy Life/Happy Life, Trust Lean, Trust Walk (Sherpa Walk), Group Minefield, Turn the Pillow Case, Mouse Trap Trust, Bear/Fish/Mosquito, and Win Win
11:45 AM	Lunch (Fill out the “I Appreciate...”)
12:30 PM	Harness Speech, Transfer Speech, and High Element Walkthrough and briefing.
1:30 PM	High Elements and Zip line
4:30 PM	Group Closing and “Last Word”

*Figure 3.2 Agenda for the Day, showing the detail itinerary for the day on the challenge course.*

The games and initiatives the couples played are listed. Each of the games and initiatives were selected to focus on a specific area Gottman (2011) found to be keys to healthy marriages, Sound Relationship House, appendix VIII (Gottman, 2011). Most of the activities are considered initiatives. Some games were played to allow the couples to give information without an introduction time, like couple geography and couple line up. Others were played for the fun of it, like noodles and chips. Others like peanut butter jelly tag are fun games with a message. Good facilitators know what outcomes they hope to accomplish before they start an activity (Stanchfield, 2007).

1. Couple Geography – Couples will move to a place on an imaginary “map” to places where the couple met, where the couple had their first kiss, most memorable experience, etc. The activity will share parts of the couple’s relationship with the other couples.
2. Noodles and Chips – This is a type of tag game the couples play against one another. They will compete and then play as a team to maintain balance in their relationships. You can only knock off a chip from someone's hand with a noodle.
3. Couple Line Up – The couples line up by “Years Together”, “Number of Kids”, etc. This shares the information with the group, but is also interactive and fun.
4. Peanut Butter and Jelly Tag – One of you is peanut butter and the other jelly. Tag one another switching from ant to PB and J.
5. Busy Life...Too Busy for YOU! – Walking with purpose and busy the couples will notice one another but they have no time with the burdens of life.
6. Happy to See YOU! – Welcome home... I missed you... The couples move away and when they reunite within the circle they are happy to see one another as if they have been away for a week. Celebration!
7. Helium Hula Hoop – The group is placed in a circle. Everyone uses just one finger pointing across the circle. The group needs to make contact with the hoop and lower the hoop to the ground. No shortcuts in marriage sometimes it is just hard work.

8. Turn the Pillow Case – Each couple will stand on a pillow case and be challenged to “flip” the pillow case over without stepping off the pillow case.
9. Trust Lean – Couples will be instructed on proper spotting techniques to support the weight of their partner. Then, one person will be the “faller” and the other person will be the “spotter/catcher”. Fallers will allow the spotters to catch them as the lean back keeping their back straight. Spotters return them to a self-standing position.
10. Mouse Trap Trust – Mouse traps have a high level of real risk; however if the hand lays flat on the trap and is lifted straight up there is no risk of getting snapped. This activity has a high degree of perceived risk, but little actual risk if participants follow directions. This activity is great to transition to the high ropes course activities.
11. Bear, Fish, Mosquito – Two teams will face off in a paper, rock, and scissor style game where you can be a “Bear” a “Fish”, or a “Mosquito”
12. Win/Win – Couples faced off and the winner will end up with the other partner on their side. The couples will be forced to win/lose, lose/lose, lose/win, or win/win.
13. “I Appreciate...” during lunch – Couples selected three adjectives to describe their spouse and wrote about when they saw those specific three characteristics with their partner.

Upon completion of the morning activities the researcher handed out the Sound Relationship House on cardstock for each individual (Appendix XIII). The researcher processed the specific activities focusing on Gottman (2011) principles for successful

relationships. Six out of the seven principles are positive and focus on the knowing one another deeply and intimately. During the day on the challenge course the couples and facilitators tried to create a positive environment for the couples to be successful. This positive environment is created using Schoel & Maizell's (2002) Full Value Contract. In addition to the FV C, the facilitators set up "norms." During the group process people set up "norms;" however, a facilitator can give the group structure by providing the group with "norms," guidelines for behavior for the day.

### **Hypotheses**

Hypothesis #1:

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no change in a married couple's dyadic trust as measured by the Dyadic Trust Scale (DTS) as a result of a day on the challenge course.

H<sub>A</sub>: There is a change in a married couple's dyadic trust as measured by the DTS as a result of a day on the challenge course.

Hypothesis #2:

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no change in a married couple's cohesion, consensus, and marital satisfaction as measured by the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) as a result of a day on the challenge course.

H<sub>A</sub>: There is a change in a married couple's cohesion as measured by the RDAS as a result of a day on the challenge course. A couple's group cohesion seems to be impacted by a day on the challenge course.

Hypothesis #3:

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no difference between the male or female individual's combined DTS and RDAS scores as a result of a day on the challenge course.

H<sub>A</sub>: There is a difference between the male or female individual's combined DTS and RDAS scores as a result of a day on the challenge course.

All the hypotheses will be tested at alpha level of less than or equal to .05.

### **Analysis**

The analysis for this research study used an ANOVA test. The analysis of the variance was applied to the group's pre-test scores and post-test scores. The researcher tested to see if the group's scores demonstrated the effect of the day on the challenge course. Additionally the researcher examined the relationships within the married dyad to observe if the challenge course was effective to significantly change the scales, RDAS and DTS.

There are many variables that could affect the significant or less than significant changes between groups. These variables include whether there are children in the home, the number of children in the home, years married, gender, amount of time spent dating, and education. These variables could influence the findings and the results of the group's scores. Independent variables within the study include the individuals, the dyads, and their relationship. The dependent variables are the scales (DTS & RDAS) as well as the subscales. The individuals and the married dyads needed to experience some change, growth, or understanding for the scales to indicate a significant change given in the pre- and post- tests.



## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Advertising went well and there were over twelve different couples who contacted the primary investigator through a variety of emails and personal contacts. However on Saturday, June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012, only 7 couples arrived at Camp Redlands in Stillwater. The weather was to be warm with no chance of rain. It was a typical June summer day in Oklahoma.

The couples were emailed the Institutional Review Boards (IRB) informed consent, links to the OA Challenge Course waiver and a map. The hope was to begin at 9:15am with the first activity. Two couples arrived after 9:15 am, so the beginning of the day was less planned than desired. In addition to this the researcher had one less demographic sheet than necessary forcing a volunteer to run back to town for copies. In the end all couples filled out the surveys, DTS and RDAS, prior to starting with any activities or interactions with other participants.

#### **Participants**

There were seven couples who participated in the research study. Couples came from a variety of areas around the Stillwater area including Ponca City, Newkirk, and Duncan. Each individual completed the demographic data sheet (Appendix VI). Three of the seven couples had children. Two had only one and one couple had two boys. The

other four couples had no children. All but one of the couples had been married for 5 years or less. There was one couple that had been married for 23 years. One individual male was 41, four other individuals were in their 30s, and the other nine individuals were in their 20s. Nine of the individuals checked “white/non-Hispanic” as their race. One couple indicated themselves as American Indian, and one couple marked Asian. Nine of the individuals had received a degree either associates or higher including graduate degrees. The other five had completed at least a high school diploma and two had some college education. Four of the couples designated they were members of a local church. One couple wrote they were sort of members. The last two couples said they were not members.

Family income was varied with two couples making over \$75,000, three couples at the \$45,000-\$59,999 range, one couple checking \$15,000-\$29,999, and one making less than \$14,999. All the couples date or go out on a special event at least several times a year. Three couples indicated they do something monthly and three marked they go every week. Lastly the couples were asked if they shared activities together. All but one individual mentioned they shared time watching movies as a couple. Other activities the couples have in common were reading and outdoor activities like walking, hunting, fishing, biking, walking dogs, a variety of sports, and adventure sports (climbing, rappelling, etc.).

### **Scoring Assessments**

Scoring for the RDAS is given as a whole number from 0-69. Items 1-6 are given up to 5 points for “Always agree,” and 0 points for “always disagree” (Poll, 2006). Items 7-10 are reversed scored by giving 0 points for “All the time,” to 5 points for “never”

(Poll, 2006). Item 11 is scored by 4 points for “every day,” through 0 points for “never” (Poll, 2006). The last three items 12-14 are scored similar to items 7-10. 0 points are given for “never,” and up to 5 points for “more often” (Poll, 2006). The total RDAS scoring can range between 0-69 (Cane, Middleton, & Bean, 2000). Distressed dyadic couples fall below a score of 48 and non-distressed dyadic couples above 48 (Cane, Middleton, & Bean, 2000).

Scoring the Dyadic Trust Scale (Larzelere & Huston, 1980) is similar to the RDAS. The scores range from 8-56. This DTS instrument is scored with a 7-point Likert scale. Items 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8 are scored with the value indicated, and items 1, 2 and 6 were reversed scored (Larzelere & Huston, 1980).

	RDAS Male	RDAS Female	DTS Male	DTS Female
Couple 1 Pre-test	53	49	52	51
Couple 1 Posttest	54	51	49	52
Couple 2 Pre-test	45	49	50	45
Couple 2 Posttest	47	50	48	52
Couple 3 Pre-test	51	56	46	50
Couple 3 Posttest	52	56	47	45
Couple 4 Pre-test	49	58	51	55
Couple 4 Posttest	51	56	51	56
Couple 5 Pre-test	48	46	45	46
Couple 5 Posttest	51	46	47	47
Couple 6 Pre-test	50	44	45	46
Couple 6 Posttest	52	52	41	54
Couple 7 Pre-test	47	43	47	38
Couple 7 Posttest	47	47	51	36
Note: This table shows the couples 1 through 7 by row pre-test and posttest scores. Columns are organized according to the RDAS and the DTS scores and by gender, male and female.				

*Table 4.1 Couples scores, this table indicates the pre-test and posttest scores for both the RDAS and DTS scores*

The final scores are shown in Table 4.1. Married couples were numbered one to seven.

## Analysis

As mentioned in Chapter 3 the data was analyzed with ANOVA. The assumptions for ANOVA were not all met. The couples were not homogeneous expect that they were all married couples in Oklahoma. The diversity of ages, race, and length of marriage made for a unique mix of demographics. This limits the study.

The following table, Table 4.2, shows the overall analysis.

SUMMARY							
<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>	<i>Std. Dev</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
Combined Pre-Test	14	1355	96.79	60.80	7.80	88.99	104.58
Combined Posttest	14	1388	99.14	47.52	6.89	92.25	106.04
ANOVA							
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>	
Between Groups	38.89	1	38.89	0.7182	0.4045	4.2252	
Within Groups	1408.07	26	54.16				
Total	1446.96	27					
Note: The ANOVA test compares the combined pre-tests and the combined posttests. Notice the F value is lower than the F critical. These two groups are not significantly different. The alpha level for the P-value is 0.05. P-value for the test is 0.4045, $0.4045 > 0.05$ .							

*Table 4.2 Combined scores ANOVA test, this figure shows the couples combined RDAS and DTS scores comparing the pre-test and posttest.*

There were a total of 14 individuals for the data sample. Overall averages in the pre-test and posttest differ by only about three points. Looking at the ANOVA test it shows there is not a significant difference between the combined scores of participants' pre-tests and posttests scores. ANOVA tests the differences between the two groups' variances. In this case the F critical value is greater than the F value. In addition, the P-value is .4045 which is greater than the alpha which was set as 0.05.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no change in a married couple's dyadic trust as measured by the Dyadic Trust Scale (DTS) as a result of a day on the challenge course.

H<sub>A</sub>: There is a change in a married couple's dyadic trust as measured by the DTS as a result of a day on the challenge course.

Based on Table 4.3 the researcher fails to reject the null hypothesis. There is no significant difference based on the ANOVA test comparing the DTS pre-test scores to the DTS post test scores. Participants' test values do not exceed the alpha level of 0.05. The P-value is 0.7226 for the test.

SUMMARY						
<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>	<i>St Dev</i>	
DTS Pre-test	14	667	47.64	17.63	4.20	
DTS Posttest	14	676	48.29	27.30	5.22	
ANOVA						
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	3	1	2.89	0.1288	0.7226	4.2252
Within Groups	584	26	22.46			
Total	587	27				
Note: This ANOVA test compared the specific Dyadic Trust Scale's pre-test and posttest. The F value of 0.1288 is less than the F critical value. Additionally the P-value of 0.7226 is greater than the alpha of 0.05.						

*Table 4.3 DTS pre-test and posttest ANOVA test*

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no change in a married couple's cohesion, consensus, and marital satisfaction as measured by the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) as a result of a day on the challenge course.

$H_A$ : There is a change in a married couple's cohesion, as measured by the RDAS, as a result of a day on the challenge course. A couple's group cohesions seems to be impacted by a day on the challenge course.

Observing Table 4.4 the researcher fails to reject the null hypothesis two. There is no significant difference based on the ANOVA test comparing the RDAS pre-test scores to the RDAS post test scores. Participants' test values do not exceed the alpha level of 0.05. ANOVA's F critical value, 4.2252, is greater than the F value, 1.4171.

SUMMARY						
<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>	
RDAS Pre-test	14	688	49.14	18.59	4.31	
RDAS Posttest	14	712	50.86	10.44	3.23	
ANOVA						
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	20.57	1	20.57	1.4171	0.2446	4.2252
Within Groups	377.43	26	14.52			
Total	398	27				
Note: The ANOVA test for the specific RDAS is not significant. The P-value is not less than the alpha, 0.05. Also, F value, 1.4171, is less than the critical F value, 4.2252.						

*Table 4.4 RDAS pre-test and posttest ANOVA test*

$H_0$ : There is no difference between the male or female individual's combined DTS and RDAS scores as a result of a day on the challenge course.

$H_A$ : There is a difference between the male or female individual's combined DTS and RDAS scores as a result of a day on the challenge course.

From Table 4.5 it is observed that the F critical value is 3.0088 and the F value is 0.2853. This finding by the ANOVA test results in failing to reject the null hypothesis. The alpha level of 0.05 is also less than the P-value indicated on the table of 0.8355.

SUMMARY						
<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>		
Pre-test Male	7	679	97.00	17.67		
Posttest Male	7	688	98.29	12.57		
Pre-test Female	7	676	96.57	113.95		
Posttest Female	7	700	100.00	88.67		
ANOVA						
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	49.82	3	16.61	0.2853	0.8355	3.0088
Within Groups	1397.14	24	58.21			
Total	1446.96	27				

Note: The table displays the values for the combined scores grouping them by males and females. ANOVA testing reveals a F value of 0.2853 and a F critical value of 3.0088. This is not significantly different. The P-value of 0.8355 is also greater than the alpha of 0.05.

*Table 4.5 Pre-test and posttest grouped by gender*

All three null hypotheses were not rejected using ANOVA. However, the variances in the tables, excluding the DTS scores, are different. In fact the variances indicate the groups in the post testing are more homogeneous. In Figure 4.1 the scatter plot demonstrates the posttest scores grouping closer to the single line.

Analysis of the data shows no significant change for the couples. The day was positive and the couples shared a meaningful experience. From ten years of experience on a challenge course this group showed positive traits and willingness to participate. However, the significance is not revealed by the data from the scores. The statistics do not reveal any effect to the couples based on the RDAS and the DTS scores. None of the null hypotheses could be rejected.

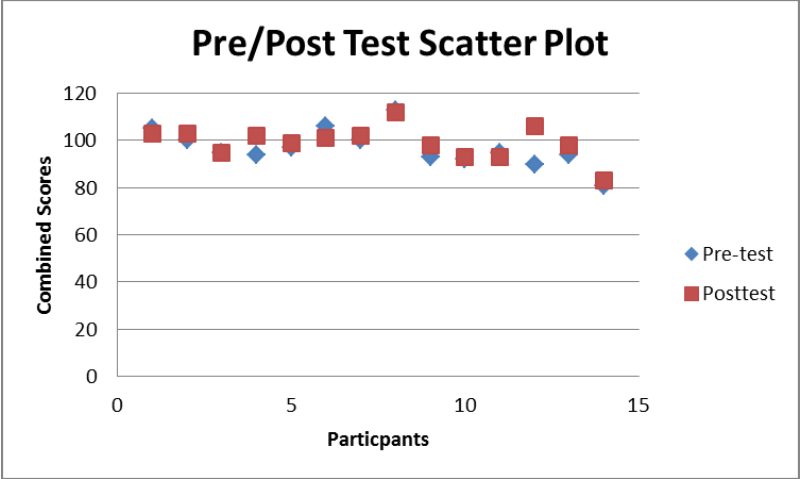


Figure 4.1 Scatter plot graph of participants' combined scores, the values of the combined posttests are more clustered around a linear line.



## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

Literature supports couples learning and growing through positive experiences together (Gottman, 2011; Harley, 2011). Experiential education trusts primary experiences teach with more meaning than any secondary experiences. Couples in this research were given primary experiences focusing on their personal couple interactions. Any processing after the activities was based on the Sound Relationship House developed by John Gottman's life of research on couples (Gottman, 2011).

Couples who participated were positive throughout the day. Feedback during the closing of the day designated the power of the challenge course experience. One couple, who had been married the longest of the group, shared during the closing that they wanted to spend more time together. They said they will spend time together watching movies, but being outside and being active was meaningful to them. Other couples also shared about moments where they learned something through the activities.

After two specific activities, "peanut butter jelly tag" and "too busy for you", the tone for sharing was set. The activities required the couples to decide who was peanut butter (a person searching for a partner, jelly) and jelly (spirited and free jelly doesn't need peanut butter). The partner who was peanut butter had to tag jelly then would

become jelly and have to hide from the new peanut butter partner. This game was played on a space just big enough for the couples to stand comfortably. So the impact is that those around us are either assets to use or obstructions. In the case of the game, jelly could hide out behind the chaos using it as a shield. For peanut butter, the chaos was the distractions and disorder that seems to circle our lives. Later on part of the group norms were evident as a female member mentioned she feels needy like peanut butter and wants to be next to her jelly. The group knew the meaning because of their common experiences together. During the processing after the activities, the couples talked about how this game was true to their lives. Other people would get in their relationship and obstruct and block them coming together.

In another game, “too busy for you,” couples moved around and would notice their partner but they were too busy to spend any time together. After this activity the couples seemed down. They expressed the truth in life this game revealed. During the processing, the facilitator mentioned Gottman’s (1999) four horsemen: criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling. The connection was made to how easy it can be to just become too busy for each other. Couples shared frustrations with the fast paced lives they felt forced to live. This was a common theme that helped to connect the couples emotionally as they agreed it was difficult to prioritize their relationship at times.

### **Research Questions Revisited**

In chapter one there were two research questions asked:

Can a day on the challenge course improve a couple’s dyadic cohesion, consensus, marital satisfaction, and dyadic trust?

Will a married couple experience team-building, group “we-ness”, and shared meaning in a one day challenge course experience?

According to the analysis in chapter three, research question one about challenge course’s effectiveness to improve a couple’s dyadic cohesion, consensus, marital satisfaction, and dyadic trust could not be proven true in this study. The findings with these seven couples the researcher could not reject the null hypotheses. There are a few conclusions as to why there was no significant difference in the data. One conclusion is the couples did not change.

Another conclusion is the couples scored too high in the pre-test. Scoring high on the scales to begin with removes the ability for the couples to change with significance. The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale indicates couples are distressed if their scores are below 48. Looking back at Table 4.1, only one couple reported scores from both the male and female indicating distress. This couple had been married the longest in the group. There were three other couples who either the male or female indicated a score less than 48, couple numbers two, five, and six.

Also, the couples represent a group interested in participating in the challenge course. These couples were not forced or enticed to participate in the study. Couples needed both the male and female to be willing to climb 50 feet in the air and climb around on the challenge course. The demographic data indicated the couples regularly participate in leisure activities. Many of the couples already make time for one another. Their partner is a priority indicating a value setting the couple up for marital success.

Now reviewing the second research question dealing with team-building, group “we-ness”, and shared meaning was more difficult to measure. The study had no way to

measure these variables directly. Throughout the day the couples got to know each other better through shared experiences. Couples worked to solve tasks and resolve problems facing their couple and the group of couples. Also, looking at the data the couples overall scores became more homogeneous. This could indicate the couples grew closer together in their thinking and team feel. It is the opinion of the researcher the challenge course did provide the experiences necessary for the couples to develop team-building, group “we-ness”, and shared meaning. Experiences drive people together.

For example, one of the participants chose to be lowered down from the high course leaving her husband to complete the course alone. The group supported her decision, but there seemed to be a sense of disappointment that not everyone could finish together. Later the facilitators moved an entry point rope allowing the couples to climb and just do the zip line for a second time if they wanted. The couple who was unable to complete the course together decided to climb up once again to zip line down as a couple. The group rallied around them and celebrated with them as both the husband and wife zipped off the platform with a one, two, three count.

### **Limitations**

The couples sampling was convenient and voluntary rather than random. In fact, it was difficult to get couples for the day. The researcher was contacted by at least 12 different couples and some were not married. Limiting the research to only married couples limited the number of couples who may have been willing to participate.

The wording on the flyer was a problem. By using the term “Heterosexual Marriage,” one of the church staff members made a comment to me about the need for this definition. In addition to this there were complaints to discrimination about the

wording on the Oklahoma State Campus Recreation page. It seems by trying to specify the research requirements and definitions, some groups of possible participants could have been offended. This is a problem for future research. The climate surrounding marriage is a sensitive topic and can create issues.

### **Implications for Professionals**

The challenge course is a tool for a numerous groups for recreation, education, and treatment (Gillis & Speelman, 2008; Rohnke et al, 2007; Stanchfield, 2007).

Practitioners in the world of experiential education and the challenge course industry program for families, treatment, counseling, youth serving organizations, students, churches, etc. (Gillis & Speelman, 2008; Stanchfield, 2007). All these groups could benefit from knowing the challenge course provides unique and positive experiences

The findings in this study were not significant leading the researcher to reject the null hypotheses. However, it does appear the variances of the groups became more homogeneous based on the experiences of the day. During the day individual members, who were part of a married couple, shared together about their life struggles. The group members voiced similarities and connected through meaningful activities. It was this type of experience that allowed the couples to grow in purposeful ways.

On the high ropes course couples were paired together and observed the transfer from one element to the other. This “transfer” requires the partners in the air to move their life lines. This bonding and trust building can happen in a number of locations, but it can happen in the span of a day on the challenge course. It is this reason Kurt Hahn and others developed this experience to mimic the dynamic outward bound experiences in the 1960s (Rohnke et. al, 2007; Gillis & Speelman, 2008).

## **Recommendations**

Challenge courses are tools in the hands of gifted facilitators and counselors. This research could have been more dynamic if the couples would have filled out the surveys a week before the day's experience. This would reduce the answer bias from taking the same survey only seven hours before. Furthermore, spaced repetition is great for learning. A one day experience can give a couple a great emotional high for the day, week, or even a month. However, multiple spaced out experience like those in Tillotson's (2008) *Adventure in Marriage* could impact the couple's change more.

Another recommendation is for challenge course and other practitioners using challenge courses to continue this type of programming. Marriage enrichment activities utilize these activities and experiences. Oklahoma State Outdoor Adventure needs to continue programs like *Swinging with your Sweetie*, a *Valentine's Day Experience*. These types of programs bring couples together and allow them to share common experiences, solve problems, and ultimately develop a stronger team feel.

In addition to programming, outside groups and organizations need to partner with local universities and challenge course to create and operate days like this. For example, Texas A&M's challenge course manager informed the researcher of the married program they are running. Challenge Works partnered with a local church to develop a curriculum using the challenge course to save engaged couples on their marriage license. This is similar to the Oklahoma law giving couples a discounted license for participating in pre-marital counseling. These types of programs provide an experiential and adventurous avenue in addition to traditional marital counseling.

Lastly the challenge course impacts relationships. It can save marriages and create bonds to strengthen couples to stand against the burdens of this life. Marriage and families are under attack from the outside influences of the media and popular culture. Creating strong and successful marriages impacts the economy and the children for generations to come (Oklahoma Marriage Initiative Website, 2012). Is it the challenge course, the experience, or is it just the time the couples make to put the priority on each other? John Gottman (2011) says in his book it is the love maps the couple creates, it is their fondness and admiration, it is the positive attitude, it is the shared dreams, and it is the life they choose to spend together.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX I

### Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale

Instructions: Most persons have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.

	Always Agree	Almost always agree	Occasionally disagree	Frequently disagree	Almost always disagree	Always disagree
1. Religious Matters						
2. Demonstrations of Affection						
3. Making major decisions						
4. Sex relations						
5. Conventionality						
6. Career Decisions						

	All of the time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
7. How often do you discuss terminating your relationship?						
8. How often do you and your partner quarrel?						
9. Do you ever regret that you married?						
10. How often do you and your mate "get on each other's nerves"?						



	Every day	Almost Every day	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
11. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?					

How often would you say the following occur between you and your mate:

	Never	Less than once a month	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Once a day	More often
12. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas.						
13. Work together on a project.						
14. How often do you calmly discuss something?						

## APPENDIX II

### Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale

From Busby et al, 1995

#### The Questions of the RDAS Grouped by Subscale

#### **Consensus**

##### *Decision Making*

Item 3. Making major decisions

Item 6. Career decisions

##### *Values*

Item 1. Religious matters

Item 5. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)

##### *Affection*

Item 2. Demonstrations of affection

Item 4. Sex relations

#### **Satisfaction**

##### *Stability*

Item 7. How often do you discuss terminating your relationship?

Item 9. Do you ever regret that you married?

##### *Conflict*

Item 8. How often do you and your partner quarrel?

Item 10. How often do you and your mate "get on each other's nerves"?

#### **Cohesion**

##### *Activities*

Item 11. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?

Item 13. How often do you work together on a project?

##### *Discussion*

Item 12. How often do you have a stimulating exchange of ideas?

Item 14. How often do you calmly discuss something?

## APPENDIX III

### Dyadic Trust Scale

**Instructions:** Please respond to the following statements by circling an answer between 1-7, with 1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree. Please be as honest as you can in relation to your married partner.

1. My Partner is primarily interested in her (his) own welfare.

Strongly disagree      Strongly agree  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

2. There are times when my partner cannot be trusted.

Strongly disagree      Strongly agree  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

3. My partner is perfectly honest and truthful with me.

Strongly disagree      Strongly agree  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

4. I feel that I can trust my partner completely.

Strongly disagree      Strongly agree  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

5. My partner is truly sincere in his (her) promises.

Strongly disagree      Strongly agree  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

6. I feel that my partner does not show me enough consideration.

Strongly disagree      Strongly agree  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

7. My partner treats me fairly and justly.

Strongly disagree      Strongly agree  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

8. I feel that my partner can be counted on to help me.

Strongly disagree      Strongly agree  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

APPENDIX IV

Flyer for Advertising



## Research Participation Needed

Saturday, June 9th, 2012 from 9am-5pm

OSU's Challenge Course @ Camp Redlands

This is a FREE event for interested and willing participants

**Requirements:** Must be a heterosexual married couple.

- Consent to and fill out confidential research surveys and OSU waiver.
- Willing to participate in activities and learn more about your partner.

**Benefits:** FREE Marriage Enrichment Opportunity

- Grow and Strengthen your marriage with a unique opportunity.

**Registration:** PLEASE register before the event with Jason Hynson and Outdoor Adventure. Email: Jason.Hynson@okstate.edu

- OPEN to the community! Being an OSU Student is not necessary.

Great experience for your marriage. This event is similar to a Valentine's Day Favorite, "Swinging with Your Sweetie." Outdoor Adventure is assisting with this research study.

**Jason Hynson: Jason.hynson@okstate.edu; 405-762-0915**

Jason Hynson Jason.hynson@okstate.edu 405-762-0915	Jason Hynson Jason.hynson@okstate.edu 405-762-0915	Jason Hynson Jason.hynson@okstate.edu 405-762-0915	Jason Hynson Jason.hynson@okstate.edu 405-762-0915	Jason Hynson Jason.hynson@okstate.edu 405-762-0915	Jason Hynson Jason.hynson@okstate.edu 405-762-0915	Jason Hynson Jason.hynson@okstate.edu 405-762-0915	Jason Hynson Jason.hynson@okstate.edu 405-762-0915
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APPENDIX V

Outdoor Adventure Challenge Course Wavier



OSU Challenge Course

Any person attending the Challenge Course must sign a participation agreement. Please bring the form with you and give it to the instructor.

Date at

The undersigned Applicant wishes to be accepted for participation in an Oklahoma State University Adventure Challenge Course Program to be organized by:

\_\_\_\_\_ (Organizing Agency or Group)

And in consideration of Oklahoma State University's action in allowing the applicant to participate in such course, the undersigned acknowledges that the Challenge Course will necessarily involve participation in exercises which are, by their nature, physically demanding and will subject the applicant to stress, anxiety, and possible hazards, not all of which can be foreseen. It is fully understood that the applicant will be climbing and walking on cables, logs, ladders, walls and beams; at times, thirty feet above the ground. Reasonable precautions will be taken to protect the applicant.

The undersigned assumes all of the ordinary risks normally incidental to the nature of the program, including risks, which are not specifically foreseeable.

MEDIA RELEASE I hereby authorize and give full consent to OSU Outdoor Adventure to copyright or publish all media in which I appear while engaged as a participant in any and all Outdoor Adventure programming. I further agree that Outdoor Adventure may transfer, use or cause to be used, these photographs or video for any and all exhibitions, public displays, publications, commercials, art and advertising purposes, without limitation, reservation or any compensation other than that receipt of which I hereby acknowledge.

MEDICAL TREATMENT RELEASE In the event of an emergency, I do hereby authorize any x-ray examination, anesthetic, dental, medical, surgical diagnosis or treatment by a physician or dentist and any hospital service that might be rendered under the general, specific or special consent of the Outdoor Adventure staff.

HEALTH HISTORY: Do any of the following medical conditions apply to the undersigned. (Please explain if answering yes to any question.)

- Heart condition NO YES
Back or neck injuries NO YES
Allergic reaction NO YES
Knee, bone, or joint injuries NO YES
Epilepsy, Seizures or asthma NO YES
Recent surgeries NO YES
Currently taking medications NO YES
Pregnant NO YES
Other (please explain) NO YES

APPLICANT (print) \_\_\_\_\_ AGE \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_ WITNESS \_\_\_\_\_

PARENT OR GUARDIAN \_\_\_\_\_

(If the applicant is under 18 years of age)

## Outdoor Adventure

### Waiver of Liability, Indemnity Agreement, and Assumption of Risk

**Waiver:** In consideration of permission to use, today and on all future dates, the property, facilities, and services of Oklahoma State University's Outdoor Adventure program (hereafter referred to as OA), I on behalf of myself, my heirs, personal representatives, or assigns, **do hereby release, waive, discharge, and covenant not to sue** OA, its directors, officers, employees, volunteers, independent contractors, and agents from liability **from any and all claims arising from the ordinary negligence of** OA or any of the aforementioned parties. This agreement applies to 1) personal injury (including death) from accidents or illnesses arising from participation in OA activities including, but not limited to, organized activities, workshops, observation, and individual use of facilities, premises or equipment; and 2) any and all claims resulting from the damage to, loss of, or theft of property.

**Indemnification and Hold Harmless:** I also agree to HOLD HARMLESS AND INDEMNIFY OA from all claims resulting from negligence and to reimburse them for any expenses incurred as a result of my involvement at OA. I further agree to pay all costs and attorneys' fees incurred by OA in investigating and defending a claim or suite if my claim is withdrawn or to the extent a court or arbitration determines that OA is not responsible for the injury or loss.

**Severability and Venue.** The undersigned further expressly agrees that the foregoing waiver and assumption of risk agreement is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by the law of State of Oklahoma and that if any portion thereof is held invalid, it is agreed that the balance shall, notwithstanding, continue in full legal force and effect. Likewise, I agree that if legal action is brought, it must be brought in Payne County, Oklahoma.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Acknowledgement of Understanding: I have read this waiver** of liability and indemnification agreement and fully understand its terms. **I understand that I am giving up substantial rights, including my right to sue.** I acknowledge that I am signing the agreement freely and voluntarily, **and intend my signature to be a complete and unconditional release of all liability** to the greatest extent allowed by the law in the State of Oklahoma.

**Assumption of Inherent Risks:** Physical activity, by its very nature carries with it certain inherent risks that cannot be eliminated regardless of the care taken to avoid injuries. OA has facilities for and provides for activities including but not limited to rock climbing, backpacking, hang gliding, horse packing, surfing, snowboarding, mountaineering, caving, artificial wall climbing, and whitewater rafting. Use of OA facilities and the aforementioned activities may involve strenuous exertions using various muscle groups, some involve quick movements involving speed and change of direction, and others involve strenuous physical activity which places stress on the cardiovascular system. Environmental hazards include but are not limited to temperature and weather extremes, rock fall, encounters with dangerous wildlife, as well as extensive travel in 15 passenger vans, The specific risks vary from one activity to another, but in each activity the risks range from 1) minor injuries such as scratches, bruises or sprains to 2) major injuries such as bone, joint or back injuries, loss of sight, concussions, and heart attacks to 3) catastrophic injuries including paralysis and death. I have read the previous paragraphs and **I know the nature of the activities** at OA, **I understand the demands** of the activities relative to my physical condition and skill level, and **I appreciate the types of injuries** which may occur as a result of activities made possible by OA. **I hereby assert that my participation is voluntary and that I knowingly assume all such risks.**

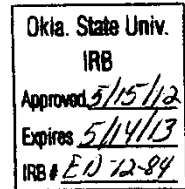
**Acknowledgement of Understanding: I have read** this assumption of risk and fully understand its terms. I acknowledge that I am signing the agreement freely and voluntarily **and intend my signature to signify a complete assumption of the inherent risks of participating in or observing recreational activities at OA** to the greatest extent allowed by law in the State of Oklahoma.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX VI

Demographic Data Questionnaire  
(Adapted from Lettenberger, 2011)

1. Research Number: \_\_\_\_\_
2.  
 Male  Female
3. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_ years
4. How long have you been married? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Is this your first marriage? (yes or no) \_\_\_\_\_
6. Do you have any children? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes; how many? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What is your race?  
 White/Non-Hispanic  Asian  
 Black or African American  American Indian  
 Hispanic  Pacific Islander
8. What is the highest level of education you have completed? (Check one)  
 Some high school  College degree/Bachelor's  
 High school graduate/GED  Some graduate school  
 Some college  Graduate degree or higher
9. Are you a member of a local church or religious group? (Yes or No) \_\_\_\_\_
10. What is your annual income as a couple/family?  
 Less than \$14,999  \$45,000-\$59,999  
 \$15,000-\$29,999  \$60,000-\$74,999  
 \$30,000-\$44,999  More than \$75,000
11. How often do you and your spouse go on a date or special event together?  
 Never  About once a month  
 About once or twice a year  Nearly every week  
 Several times a year  Every week
12. Do you share any common leisure activities together (golf, movies, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_
  - List some of the activities? \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX VII

### INFORMED CONSENT

Project Title: A Day on the Challenge Course and the effects on Heterosexual Married Participants

Investigators:

The primary investigator is Jason Hynson. Jason has 10 years of Challenge Course Facilitator Experience. He is also a trainer for new facilitators and instructors on the challenge course. Jason is affiliated with Oklahoma State University and is completing his Master of Science Degree with this thesis project.

Purpose:

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the effects of a challenge course experience on married couples. Married couples have only a 50% chance of staying married, and want to know if a day on the challenge course could improve their team building and trust.

To participate in this research we ask that you be open to change and want to grow in your marriage. You will be asked to fill out an Outdoor Adventure Challenge Course Waiver, some general demographic information, and two relationship scales (the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale and the Dyadic Trust Scale). The RDAS is 14 questions asking you how well you share information with your partner. The DTS is an 8 question scale using a 7-point scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

This is a one day experience. You will show up a 9 am and leave by 5 pm on May 26th, 2012.

Risks of Participation:

The risks are the same for any challenge course or climbing experience: There will be walking, maybe running, and climbing to heights of over 40 feet. It helps to have some physical ability. Due to the physical nature of the challenge course there is risk of minor cuts and scrapes. There is a possibility of a sprain or strain to muscles or ligaments. Activities using ropes and other materials may create friction burns or the need for an adhesive bandage. You are welcome to challenge yourself to the level you feel comfortable. You will be placed in stressful situations to encourage growth with your married partner. You may feel stress and fatigue as you climb the poles and walk on cables only 3/8 inches thick 50 feet off the ground. There is NO ACTUAL RISK of falling if you listen and follow directions. All staff have completed a 40 hour training provided by Scott Jordan. Scott is the Coordinator for Outdoor Adventure and has over 20 years of experience including being a licensed counselor. All staff are trained in First Aid and CPR. The OSU Challenge Course has an AED at Camp Redlands. There is also a first aid kit with standard bandages and cleaning supplies for minor injuries and cuts or scrapes. You assume all risks and will be presented with an Outdoor Adventure Waiver in order to participate. This is required for any and all participants on the Oklahoma State Challenge Course.

**There are no known risks associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or with the participation on any Challenge Course Experience.**

Benefits:

The benefit could be a fun and exciting day with your married partner. The challenges and experiences will highlight your love and trust. It could encourage more connection or reconnection with your spouse.

Confidentiality:

All information will be confidential:

The information you give will be numbered so that no one other than the primary investigator will be able to match names with data on the relationship scales (RDAS & DTS). The Outdoor Adventure waivers will be stored at OA in 050 Colvin Center with all other forms for any participant using the





APPENDIX VIII

The Sound Relationship House

Create Shared Meaning
Make Life Dreams Come True
Manage Conflict
The Positive Perspective
Turn Towards
Share Fondness and Admiration
Build Love Maps

**The Sound Relationship House**

From: *The Science of Trust* by John Gottman

Gottman, J.M. (2011). *The science of trust*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, INC.

APPENDIX IX  
Outline and Script

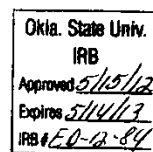
Outline and Script

**A Day on the Challenge Course and the effects on Heterosexual Married Couples**

**Welcome Briefing**

Have the group form a large circle. The essential elements of a briefing include:

- **Cover these things:**
  - **Thank them for coming and being willing to participate in the research project.**
  - **Physical Nature of the Activities, Challenge by Choice, Rules of the Course, Environmental considerations, Sequencing**
- “Welcome to Oklahoma State University’s Outdoor Adventure Challenge Course, and today you may be challenged. [**Physical Nature of the Activities**]It will be physical and we (facilitators’ names) will do our best to keep you safe, Physically, Emotional, and Socially. You may be asked to run, climb, lift, balance, and stand for long periods. Everyone was asked to fill out those waivers and forms, but PLEASE let us know if you cannot do something or don’t want to. If you have any medical concerns, then PLEASE let us know.” [**Challenge by Choice**] “Like I said if you cannot do an activity, game, or element, then please let us know. We will not coerce, argue, or make you do something you DO NOT want to do. We want this day to be supportive and positive.” [**Rules of the Course**] “Everyone today needs to agree to be Safe, be Honest, be Here, commit to Goals, Care for self and others, and Let go and Move on. Everybody here is responsible for yourself and your neighbor (the person next to you and the person next to them). We want to give protection, safety, and enjoyment. [**Environmental considerations**] “Camp Redlands is home to many other animals and insects. There are armadillo, who dig holes, snakes, bees, wasps, ticks, spiders, deer, and maybe a mountain lion. There are also things that could cause you to trip, slip, slide, fall, blunder, blooper, drop, tumble, or just plain get hurt.” [**Sequencing**] “Throughout the day we will give you a task, activity, or game that will increase in challenge either physically, mentally, or socially. We want to push this group to be better a problem solving, decision making, trust, communication, and working as a team. The day will be fun, each activity must be taken seriously and safety instructions must be followed.
- **REMEMBER:**
  - Remove all jewelry including: watches, earrings, necklaces and rings (this includes wedding bands and religious necklaces).
  - Remove sharp objects from pockets (all objects if possible).
  - Turn off cell phones and pagers unless use is absolutely necessary



- No gum, candy, chewing tobacco, or other objects in mouths at any time (these are choking hazards)
  - Keep off all elements (not even to rest on) until instructed in use and given permission
  - Attempt each activity only with proper spotting or safety systems
  - Follow stated safety procedures for each event
  - Keep camp clean, no littering
  - No smoking or tobacco use of any kind except in gravel area of parking lot, and never with harnesses on
- **Questions** – Take this time to ask for and answer any questions.

**Participant Forms, Assumption of Risk and Release of Liability (EVERYONE MUST HAVE ONE TO PLAY!)**

Outdoor Adventure protocol for the collection of Participation Agreements is as follows:

- All participants must submit a complete, signed and dated OSU Challenge Course Participation Agreement form. Forms from other programs or organizations are not acceptable.

**Consent forms, Surveys and Demographic Questions**

- This information is necessary for participation in the free experience on the challenge course.
- Present the consent forms to all participants.
- Have the participants fill out the RDAS and the DTS
- Participants answer the demographic information

Okla. State Univ.
IRB
Approved 5/15/12
Expires 5/14/13
IRB # ED-12-84

VITA  
Jason Hynson  
Candidate for the Degree of  
Master of Science

Thesis: A DAY ON A CHALLENGE COURSE AND THE EFFECTS ON  
HETEROSEXUAL MARRIED PARTICIPANTS

Major Field: Leisure Studies

Biographical:

Education: Graduated from Stillwater High School, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May 1998; received Bachelor of Science degree in Leisure Studies from Oklahoma State University in December 2003. Complete the requirements for Master of Science degree with a major in Leisure Studies at Oklahoma State University in July 2012.

Experience: Beginning in 2001 was trained in Challenge Course operation by Oklahoma State Outdoor Adventure Program; worked as challenge course facilitator and challenge course manager at Golden Spread Council, Amarillo, TX and Cal Farley's Boys Ranch, Boys Ranch, TX from 2004 to 2010; became the Challenge Course Coordinator at Oklahoma State University as a graduate assistant from 2010 to 2012.

Professional Memberships: National Recreation and Parks Association, Texas  
Experiential Resource Association

Name: Jason Hynson

Date of Degree: July, 2012

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: A DAY ON A CHALLENGE COURSE AND THE EFFECTS ON  
HETEROSEXUAL MARRIED PARTICIPANTS

Pages in Study: 75

Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science

Major Field: Leisure Studies

Scope and Method of Study:

Almost half of all marriages end in divorce (Amato, 2010). This study looked at one possible intervention to curb the rising statistic. Oklahoma State University Outdoor Adventure program has held a Valentine's Day event, Swinging with your Sweetie. During the event couples experienced some games and then completed the high challenge course as a team being supported by another couple on the ground.

These events led to the following research questions. Can a day on the challenge course improve a couple's dyadic cohesion, consensus, marital satisfaction, and dyadic trust? Will a married couple experience team-building, group "we-ness", and shared meaning in a one day challenge course experience? The instruments used were the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Busby, Crane, Larson, & Christiansen, 1995) and the Dyadic Trust Scale (Larzelere & Huston, 1980).

Findings and Conclusions:

The day on the course involved seven different married couples from Oklahoma. All but one of the couples had been married for five years or less. Three of the couples have children in their home. All the couples indicated they participate in leisure experiences including movies, walking, biking, climbing, and hunting. Participating couples also go on special events or dates at least several times a year.

The study hypothesized married couples would show significant difference on the RDAS and the DTS instruments pre and posttests. It was also suspected there could be differences between the male and female participants. However, none of the null hypotheses were rejected based on the ANOVA statistical test.

Although the study failed to reject the null hypotheses, the couples showed to be more homogeneous in their posttest scores. This was demonstrated by the variance change in pre/posttest scores. In addition to the variance the couples shared meaningful experiences purposefully chosen using John Gottman's Sound Relationship House (Gottman, 2011). The couple experience and group dynamics prove there was an impact, as one spouse mentioned, "this reminded us we need to do things like this more."

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Lowell Caneday

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