

**The Relationship Education Workshop and Its Impact on
Learned Healthy Relationship Outcomes and Self-
Compassion in the Emerging Adulthood Population**

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Ashley Nicole Russell

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DEDICATION

First, I must dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Lonnie and Debra Morris, for their unwavering support throughout my education from start to finish. I also must dedicate this to my partner, Andrew Russell, who is and has remained my rock. Lastly, I must wholeheartedly dedicate this to my daughter, Everest Russell, who has been my reason for everything since the day she was born.

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined the effectiveness of the Relationship Education workshop (Davila, 2020) on several outcome measures for its target population, emerging adults. The Relationship Education workshop is comprised of two consecutive three hour sessions which take place a week apart. Participants were recruited from a southeastern state university campus. Participants were given a thorough and group-discussion based didactic focusing on the relationship competency skills of insight, mutuality, and emotion regulation with other core focuses, including relational decision making and adaptive relationship beliefs. Participants who completed the Relationship Education workshop were hypothesized to show improvement in these target domains as compared to their waitlist condition peers. Self-compassion is also a lesser targeted skill interwoven throughout the workshop, and relates highly to several of the core skills taught. A mediation model was proposed for the association of workshop participation and self-compassion mediated by learned relationship knowledge from the Relationship Education workshop. 61 participants (n=30 workshop, n=31 control) completed baseline, post-workshop completion, and one-month follow-up measures for all variables of interest. Repeated measures analyses of variance were used to test outcomes related to the relationship competency skills as well as relational decision making and adaptive relationship beliefs. A mediation model utilizing the bootstrapping sampling method was proposed for the association of workshop participation with self-compassion as mediated by learned relationship knowledge. Results indicated that workshop participants had better long term outcomes in mutuality, emotion-regulation, relational decision making, and adaptive relationship beliefs as compared to those in the waitlist condition. The mediation model proposed was significant, indicating that learned relationship knowledge functioned as a mediator on the association between workshop participation and self-compassion. Those that were in the workshop condition displayed higher self-compassion scores at the final post-test, and these scores were mediated by the learned relationship knowledge (learning targets of the workshop). Findings from the present study contribute to the early outcome data for this relationship workshop and provide evidence of effectiveness for a different population from those initially tested.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Relationship Education Programming in America

Relationship education is a burgeoning initiative in the United States of America, as well as across the globe. Broadly defined, relationship education is viewed as the efforts that focus on providing relationship knowledge and skills to individuals and couples to increase their chances of being successful in fostering safe, stable, and healthy relationships (Markman & Rhoades, 2013).

Individuals from a variety of disciplines including psychology, social work, psychiatry, law, and clergy leaders have developed programs to promote healthy relationship skills based on evidence-based practices for relationship maintenance and restoration since the late 1970s (Markman & Rhoades, 2013). Over the past several decades, there has been a growing concern that conventional practices and methods of marriage therapy have not been effective at targeting the growing rate of divorce. Numerous studies observed elevated rates of school drop-outs, drug addiction, unemployment, and domestic abuse believed to be associated with marital and family breakdown (Amato, 2001). Children who experienced high levels of parental conflict or the dissolution of the parent relationship tended to fare worse than peers on a host of outcomes spanning from infant development to adolescent social adjustment (Cummings & Davies, 1994; Grych & Fincham, 1990).

Early contributions to the field include Vera and David Mace who developed the Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment with their first seminal retreat occurring in 1962 (Mace & Mace, 1974). Louise and Bernard Guerney, the founders of filial family therapy, founded the Institute for the Development of Emotional and Life Skills (later renamed “Relationship

Enhancement”) in 1972. Dr. Lori Gordon created a 120-hour, semester-long relationship education course for graduate students, she titled this the Practical Application of Intimate Relationship Skills (PAIRS; Harway, 2005). Integration of relationship education into pre-existing therapy was also being promoted, and Virginia Satir began training therapists to act as relationship educators embedded within these clinical contexts (Satir & Baldwin, 1983).

When attempting to voice why this shift to relationship education is essential, Satir (1984) eloquently stated:

We’re at a crossroads, an important crossroads of how we view people . . . I’m fortunate in being one of the people who pushed my way through to know that people are really round . . . What people bring to me in the guise of their problems are the ways of living that keep them hampered and pathologically oriented. What we’re doing now is seeing how education allows us to move toward more joy, more reality, more connectedness, more accomplishment, and more opportunities for people to grow. (Satir, 1984)

Satir was adamant in proclaiming that the presenting problem in therapy typically was not the actual primary problem, rather how people coped with relational issues and lack of relationship knowledge was the root issue.

Recent political policy pushed for the federal funding of relationship educational programming (Simpson, Leonhardt, & Hawkins, 2018). National government agencies are becoming interested in increasing stable relationships and bettering families, as is demonstrated by calls for federal grant proposals focus on research dedicated to these aims. The intention of these new grant programs is to target at-risk individuals and couples to foster healthy relationships which may have societal benefits on a large scale. Since 2005, the United States

government has allocated more than \$1.5 billion for projects that support the development of healthy relationships (Hawkins & VanDenBerge, 2014).

Relationship education is often behavioral with a focus on the learning of effective communication and interaction skills, although it varies from program to program. Meta-analyses that have investigated the effectiveness of existing relationship education programs demonstrate consistently mild to moderate positive effects on relationship skill-building and education knowledge (Fawcett et al., 2010). The studies of the effectiveness of these relationship education programs in disadvantaged populations indicate mixed effectiveness (Hawkins and Erickson, 2015).

Relationship education programing is commonly distilled down into four main types by their differing aims: communication, enrichment, enhancement, and prevention (Van Widenfelt, Hosman, Schaap, & van der Staak, 1996; Silliman & Schumm, 2000). Prevention programs are further broken down into 1) *selected intervention programs*, which focus on couples at risk of divorce or distress, 2) *indicated programs*, which target couples at early stages of distress, and 3) *universal prevention programs*, which typically start with young couples and individuals who are not currently indicating distress (Markman & Floyd, 1980; Markman, Stanley, & Kline, 2003).

Many relationship programs are preventative with the couples who are driven to participate already experiencing significant marital discord or relationship distress (Bradford, Hawkins, & Acker, 2015). Many programs are designed to address couples' relationship issues once the union has been formed, focusing on maintaining a mutually beneficial relationship and avoiding typical relational pitfalls. Presently, however, although there is substantial attention to relationship education for couple members who are in relationships, there is a lack of programs

that attend to relationship education for the individual *prior* to engaging in romantic relationships, especially for those who are adolescents or emerging adults.

A recent survey among those married since 1990 indicated that 44% of couples have received some form of premarital education, typically provided in a religious organization (Stanley, Amato, Johnson, & Markman, 2006). Relationship education provides a crucial way to reach many potentially diverse couples with manualized and evidenced-based practices, who may not otherwise engage with psychological treatments such as couples therapy. In one study of married couples, only 19% of couples endorsed receiving some form of couples therapy, in those that eventually filed for divorce, only 37% had received couples therapy beforehand (Johnson, et al., 2001). Other studies show that in the United States between 80-90% of couples who file divorce have not engaged in any form of relationship intervention provided by a mental health professional (Glenn, et al., 2002). In addition, when couples eventually do seek therapy, they typically are unable to receive evidence-based treatments (Johnson, et al, 2001).

Relationship education has the potential to reach more individuals and couples prior to relationship distress or soon after distress begins. This method of psychoeducation can target difficult, treatment-resistant relationship problems before they are given the chance to properly develop. Relationship education is an accessible, less intimidating form of treatment that may be better able to engage at-risk individuals in beneficial evidence-based treatment than traditional psychological therapeutic practices.

Currently, the most well-known and utilized relationship education curriculum for adult couples is the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP). This is regarded by many in the field to be the gold standard for relationship education. This program is based on up-to-date research in commitment, conflict management, affect regulation, communication,

intimacy enhancement, expectations, and emotional and physical safety (Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 2010).

Several adaptations of this popular program include *Within Our Reach* for couples and *Within My Reach* for individuals, both of which more acutely focus on building insight and improving relationship decision making (Rhoades, 2015). *Within Our Reach* builds on the existing strengths of a couple by adding important life and relational skills to bolster these unions (Rhoades, 2015). *Within My Reach* provides participants with a new set of tools that help them better understand themselves, pursue “smart love”, and make their own decisions (Antle et al., 2013). These programs focus on teaching these skills through the application of engaging activities that reinforce self-awareness and commitment to proactively realizing and achieving relational goals. PREP has also been adapted for corporate use in the workplace, in governmental agencies, the U.S. military, and various other businesses and organizations to better the welfare of the individuals in these contexts through stable and healthy relationships (Markman, Stanley, & Kline, 2003). These programs focus on adults as a whole and do not target emerging adults, a population whose learning needs and focuses may differ.

The original PREP program is 15 hours in length and can be costly to administer. The cost is estimated to be approximately \$633 per participant, in a course with five other couples participating (Engsheden, Fabian, & Sarkadi, 2013). Factored into this estimation is training for two PREP leaders, their working time, cost of printed materials, having to rent a venue, and time investment by the participants, making the cost excluding leader training estimated to be \$282 per participant (Engsheden, Fabian, & Sarkadi, 2013). While best practice, this program can prove too costly for many professionals to administer or for individuals seeking help to participate in. A shorter, less costly program could fit an existing need.

Best practices of relationship education have been defined as having these seven key features: 1) assessment of variables associated with risk for distress and relationship dissolution, 2) encouragement of high-risk couples to engage, 3) assessment of education about relationship aggression, 4) targeted relationship education for relationship transition points, 5) relationship education for mildly distressed couples or individuals early in distress, 6) adaption of programs for diverse populations, and 7) increased accessibility (Halford, Markman, Kline, & Stanley, 2003). When a program can address each of the features above adequately and intentionally it is more likely to be of benefit to the individual or couple engaging in the program (Halford, Markman, Kline, & Stanley, 2003).

Many programs meet these criteria, but it can be difficult to address all key features, especially regarding accessibility. Programs offering quality relationship education with adaptations to address the accessibility constraints of differing populations are necessary. Emerging adulthood is a developmental period with unique features requiring tailored methods for relationship education.

Emerging Adulthood

Emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000) is a novel developmental period pushed into being by large societal forces and shifts in the United States and other developed nations in the last half-century. Generally defined, emerging adulthood extends from ages 18 to 29 and is viewed by researchers, as well as those in this age range, as the “time in between” (Arnett, 2004; Muncy, 2006). Individuals in this stage are in the process of concluding adolescence and moving toward adulthood, while still feeling closely tied to parents and family (Arnett, 2000). This new developmental stage is believed to likely endure for many generations to come (Arnett, 2004). Shifts in society have placed unique pressures on the emerging adult individual. Higher rates of individuals pursuing tertiary and advanced educational degrees, increased options for education

and employment for women, the rise of birth control which grants one the ability to easily and effectively delay childbearing, and deep changes in how we define adulthood itself, all contribute to the delay of the traditional milestones of adulthood (Waters, 2011). Most emerging adults are hesitant in taking on the obligations of adulthood, despite offering security and stability, as they signal a closing of doors as marriage and children represent the end of independence, spontaneity, and boundless life possibilities (Arnett, 2000).

Some have debated that this period merely represents an extension of adolescence or that these individuals should be considered very “young” adults (Hendry & Kloep, 2007a, Hendry & Kloep, 2007b). There are apparent differences between these phases as the emerging adult does not have the same constraints which commonly define the adolescent period, namely expected parental control and supervision, and often lacks the hallmark indicators of adulthood: marriage, parenthood, and stability in career.

This developmental phase is identified as a uniquely exciting yet stressful period for a multitude of reasons. Commonly during this period of transition, emerging adults face many developmental challenges that have the potential to impact psychological well-being, academic, and career success, as well as lifelong romantic relationship quality. These challenges may strain personal resources and influence overall functioning during these tumultuous years (Billings & Moo, 1982). Adapting to the academic, work, and social demands while adjusting to significant changes in relationships and familial expectations are challenges encountered during emerging adulthood (Conley, Kirsch, Dickson, & Byrant, 2014). Evidence suggests that adjustment problems early in the period of emerging adulthood negatively impact functioning later in development (e.g., Rao, Hammen, & Daley, 1999; Reinhertz, Giaconia, Hauf, Wasserman, & Silverman, 1999).

During the emerging adulthood developmental stage, individuals often explore and experiment in the domains of work and love, attempting to solidify their identities and beliefs in these areas (Arnett, 2014). Emerging adulthood begins at the age of 18 when most individuals are in the process of leaving their home or city of origin, attending college or entering the workforce or military service. This shift presents many opportunities for these individuals to develop financial and emotional independence, which if accomplished, is associated with a sense of perceived self-reliance (Arnett, 2000). This process naturally encourages a separation from parents and guardians that enables these individuals to explore themselves in an in-depth manner as independent entities for the first time in their lives (Grotevant & Cooper, 1998).

Researchers conceptualize this individuation process as consisting of two components: individuality and connectedness (Connolly & McIsaac, 2009). One's identity encompasses discovering who one is, what one believes, and the roles and responsibilities one has in society (Erikson, 1968). Emerging adults encounter difficult questions about who they are and what they wish to become. The identity status model posits that individuals process and answer these questions by experimenting with identity options, ultimately selecting choices from those experimentations they wish to embrace (Marcia, 1966).

As emerging adults gain independence which helps them forge a sense of identity through self-exploration, they also must learn how to form *interdependence* with others. Interdependence is a beneficial separation between the individual and his or her family members, peers, and romantic partners balanced with firm connection and a healthy reliance on close others. Erikson's theory asserts (1968), and empirical research supports the notion that one must develop a firm sense of and comfort with one's self-identity before successfully fusing that identity with another (Seiffge-Krenke, 2003; Beyers & Seiffge-Krenke 2010). Erikson

argued that adolescents who fail to establish comfort in their identity might experience considerable difficulty in forming and maintaining close relationships with romantic partners.

Romantic Relationships in Emerging Adulthood. During the emerging adulthood transition period, individuals are especially prone to loneliness (Baker, 2012; Özdemir & Tuncay, 2008). The significant life changes, such as moving to the university or into one's own home, disrupt earlier connections and relationship security thereby pushing the individual to establish new relationships, which are often romantic in nature (Asher & Weeks, 2014). Emerging adults strive to develop autonomy from their families of origin, a continuation of a process that typically initiates in adolescence (Collins, Welsh, & Furman, 2009; Grotevant & Cooper, 1998), friendships and romantic relationships become more critical (Arnett, 2014). While gaining independence, emerging adults in Western cultures, concurrently are expected to form intimate and meaningful relationships with romantic partners (Grotevant & Cooper, 1998). Shulman and Connolly (2013) asserted that these emerging adults must coordinate various life responsibilities, namely the hopes for their academics, careers, and financial stability, with their potential romantic partners. This task is a novel and stressful experience for many of these romantic partners.

In emerging adulthood, individuals are still striving to foster romantic relationships skills. Emerging adulthood may be marked for some by casual dating and a focus on sexual relationships with friends and acquaintances (Claxton & van Dulmen, 2013; Grello, Welsh, & Harper, 2006). Many emerging adults report that their motivations for relationships are sexual rather than for pursuing a romantic partnership (Lehmiller, VanderDrift, & Kelly, 2010). These individuals experience many brief, cycling, and intense relationship experiences (Halpern-

Meekin et al., 2013). Marriage is now occurring later in adult life than previously observed, with the average age of a first marriage occurring at 29.8 for males and 27.8 for females (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). In 1960, the median age at first marriage was 22.8 for males and 20.3 for females (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). As the focus for many individuals in this developmental stage is not primarily on developing strong, mutually beneficial romantic unions, this vital aim is often neglected. Individuals may not be pursuing these relationships as they feel unsure of what and how to pursue them. This provides an excellent target area for relationship intervention geared toward increasing knowledge about healthy relationships, as well as the skills necessary to create such a relationship.

For many, romantic relationship formation is a novel and intimidating domain, perhaps even a secondary interest. Emerging adults are in the process of understanding how to develop meaningful relationships which involves first creating a representation of what they feel a meaningful relationship entails and why it is essential to strive to maintain such a union with another. Many young adults hold high romantic relationship aspirations; 80% of adolescents expect to get married in their life, and of those individuals 90% expect to stay married to the same person throughout their life (Wood et al., 2008). Despite these aspirations, many young people experience difficulties in forming healthy romantic relationships, with disadvantaged youth being at even higher risk for poor relationship outcomes (Sawhill, 2014).

During this same period of development, emerging adults must face the task of learning how to independently self-regulate emotional responses during a period of tremendous stress. Many individuals encounter situations in which they must problem solve without the assistance of parents and teachers. Facing substantial, new situational stressors and learning how to respond in emotionally appropriate ways presents a challenge that can make navigating the problematic

aspects of relationship formation even more anxiety-provoking and stressful. Developing romantic competence, at any stage of adult life, is a complicated process; adding the parallel processes of emotional self-regulation development, navigating self-reliance, and further differentiating from nuclear families creates more difficulty.

For emerging adults, adaptive romantic functioning is vital for general wellbeing. Despite this, there are relatively few theory-driven efforts to educate people, particularly young people who have not yet entered into a committed relationship, on how to function most skillfully in navigating this essential part of their life and in making healthy, best-informed choices.

Relationship Education for Emerging Adults. Emerging adults are an important group to target via relationship education interventions as they are often actively developing the ideals of what a relationship should be and determining what type of partner is the right fit for them (Arnett, 2000; Scott, Schelar, Manlove, & Cui, 2009). The emerging adulthood population has high rates of cohabitation, sexual activity, and relationship involvement (Arnett & Schwab, 2012). The prevalence of emerging adulthood romantic relationships is notable in that early relationship quality is known to be one of the strongest predictors of personal well-being, having demonstrated associations with depression, self-esteem, and attempts at suicide in later life (Brent et al., 1993; Joyner & Udry, 2000).

Emerging adulthood is a fundamental developmental stage for making many crucial decisions about relationships that can have the potential for a considerable life-long impact. Recent shifts in American culture, such as pervasive internet and social media use and parenting without marriage, have contributed to an increased difficulty for emerging adults in successfully developing the capacity to closely relate to others (Reed, Wilson, Brown, Furstenberg, & Verma, 2002). Divorce rates have slowly declined in most recent years (3.4 per 1,000 couples in 2009)

yet they remain high with approximately 45% of first marriages resulting in divorce (Raley & Bumpass, 2003; Tejada-Vera & Sutton, 2010). Intervening at the emerging adulthood point in development could encourage healthy relationship decision making which increases the long-term likelihood of relational success.

Relationship programs for this age traditionally are designed to teach college-age and emerging adult populations the skills to manage *specific* relationship issues, particularly domestic violence, sexual assault, and the prevention of sexually transmitted infections. Often these programs lack the fundamental education which informs the person on how to foster a healthy relationship and what one should be seeking in a partner (i.e. choosing someone who can fulfill their needs). Overwhelmingly these programs near exclusively emphasize risk prevention. Enabling young adults to build the skills to make healthy relationship decisions about sexual and romantic encounters may, in turn, allow them to experience healthy relationships that could inherently reduce exposure to risk.

The majority of relationship educational programming for emerging adults and youth which exist today focuses on interpersonal communication, problem-solving, and self or emotion regulation (Simpson, Leonhardt, & Hawkins, 2018). The attitudes held and knowledge about successful relationship practices are also often targeted and have clear influence on relationship outcomes (Kerpelman et al., 2009). Youth and emerging adults are also known to consume significant amounts of media (Roberts, 2000) which may send confusing and harmful messages about romantic relationships (Ward, 2016). Evidence supports that detrimental attitudes about relationships severely reduce the odds of forming a successful and long-term partnership with another; for example, the unrealistic standard of finding a soulmate can create challenges in forming healthy unions as the standard for success is too high (Wilcox & Dew, 2010). Most

relationship education programs strive to elucidate these unhealthy expectations and focus squarely on providing accurate knowledge about what a healthy relationship looks like (Cottle et al. 2014). Other targets of these interventions are the difference in physical attraction vs. mature love and how to develop smart strategies for dating (Adler-Baeder et al. 2007).

Several relationship education programs are currently utilized with emerging adult college students. The vast majority of these programs have used the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP/ePrep; Braithwaite & Fincham, 2007; 2009; Holt et al., 2016) or one of its many variants, i.e., Within My Reach (Cottle, Thompson, Burr, & Hubler, 2014), RU (Braithwaite, Lambert, Fincham, & Pasley, 2010), or Project RELATE (Fincham, Stanley & Rhoades, 2011). All of these programs include a central focus of communication, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills, as well as mindful decision making, and setting realistic expectations. These variants have several additional foci, including safety in building connections in relationships (Within My Reach, RU), personality and family of origin issues (RU, Project RELATE), infidelity (RU), and attachment styles and patterns (version of ePREP, Holt et al., 2016). These programs range in length from 1 hour (ePREP) to 13 hours (RU, Within My Reach) and all include some type of mechanism for consolidation of learning, typically quizzes, engagement in role plays, and written reflections. Medium effect sizes were observed from a recent metanalysis, signifying that these RE programs are generally efficacious in promoting a variety of positive relational outcomes (Simpson, Leonhardt, & Hawkins, 2018)

Emerging adult relationship education would also benefit from challenging and reducing other prominent maladaptive relationship beliefs such as “love conquers all” (Kerpelman et al. 2009). There is a need for these programs to help decrease the acceptance of relationship violence, a common factor that keeps many individuals in violent partnerships from seeking help

(Gardner et al. 2004). Many youth and emerging adult relationship programs also neglect to put a firm focus on de-stigmatizing seeking relationship help via therapy (Williamson et al. 2014).

The gap between goal and reality has long been thought to be related to a lack of relationship literacy (Willoughby et al., 2015). It has been noted by many scholars that the young adults and youth of our society do not receive adequate guidance for navigating through romantic relationships, with many of these individuals expressing a clear wish to receive more help from parents and educators (Regnerus & Uecker, 2011).

The effects of this lack of guidance are apparent. Recent research has indicated that 30-40% of emerging adults' sexual and romantic relationships involve violence, with those of lower incomes experiencing this violence at a markedly higher level (Berger, et al., 2012). Lower-income young women, in particular, are more likely to have higher rates of abuse in childhood from their caregivers which may translate into difficulty in building healthy relationships (Burton et al., 2009). Disadvantaged young women are less likely to prioritize higher education which seems to play a vital role in the willingness to start families earlier than young women from higher-income families (Amato & Kane, 2011). In turn, this appears to contribute to lower-income youth entering unstable relationships and having children before securing long-term, secure, and healthy romantic partners (Hymowitz et al., 2013).

This pattern perpetuates as the children who are born of these unstable relationships then grow up experiencing the same economic hardships, lacking the same healthy relationship modeling which perpetuates the continuation of the unstable family formulation cycle (Conger et al., 2010). Relationship education could be an intervention point which may help disrupt this unhealthy relationship cycle for economically disadvantaged emerging adults.

The Relationship Education Workshop (Davila et al., under review)

Davila et al. (2020) have created a relationship education program based on the research of romantic competence combined with the broader evidence base on what contributes to healthy relationships. Romantic competence is best defined as an individual's capacity to function adaptively in all stages of the romantic relationship process, regardless of the type and status of the relationship. Davila's research indicates that romantic competence is best reflected in three interrelated skills: insight, mutuality, and emotion regulation (Davila et al., 2020). Davila et al. (2017a) have demonstrated that the skills of insight, mutuality, and emotion regulation form a coherent romantic competence factor, lending support to the validity of the construct.

Insight refers to the ability to think about the self, others (potential partners or partners), and associated relationships in a manner that shows (1) awareness of one's own and one's (potential) partner's needs, goals, motivations, and effects on others, (2) awareness of causes and consequences of behavior, and (3) the ability to learn from past experience. Having insight means knowing oneself – who one is, what one needs, and why one acts the way they do. It means knowing the same things about one's potential partner. It translates to having the ability to look ahead and see the positive and negative consequences of a particular relationship choice and to think about the potential consequences of one's actions. Insight involves learning from mistakes in ways that directly lead to an intentional change in behavior. When individuals approach romantic relationships with insight, they do so with a desire to understand, an enhanced sense of clarity about what is right for them, and confidence in their decisions.

Mutuality refers to the awareness and consideration of the needs of both the self and others and the intention to maximize outcomes for all parties in a relationship. This translates to behaving in a way that takes into account the needs of both individuals, conveying that both sets

of needs are important, and ensuring that both people's needs are attended to. When individuals approach romantic relationships with a perspective of mutuality they are appropriately assertive in advocating for their own needs as well as eagerly responsive to a partner's needs, factoring both into decision making. If a relationship is mutual both individuals feel respected and cared for.

Emotion regulation, in the romantic competence context, is the ability of one to regulate emotions in response to relationship-relevant experiences making choices and decisions that are successfully dealt with emotionally. Individuals who are engaging in healthy emotion regulation will be aware of their emotions, express emotions adaptively, and will be able to tolerate uncomfortable feelings. When individuals regulate their emotions in these ways, they can more effectively process their decisions and actions, maintain self-respect and commitment to their needs in the face of emotionally challenging experiences, and subsequently behave in a manner that fosters healthy interactions.

Empirical research with different-sex couples revealed that greater romantic competence in female partners was associated with comparatively better adaptive expression of positive emotion for both couple members in a behavioral observation task which elicited such emotion (Davila, Wodarczk, & Bhattia, 2017b). Greater romantic competence was associated with increased adaptive social support during couple interaction (Zhou, Bhatia, Davila, & Luginbuehl, 2020). In a sample of 106 different-sex couples, romantically competent behavior was associated with successful problem-solving interaction for the couple (Zhou & Davila, 2019). These empirical findings provide support for romantic competence being manifested in subsequent healthy relationship behaviors for emerging adults.

In applying the Relationship Education workshop, Davila et al. (2020) have shown, in three independent samples, that greater romantic competence, as indicated by these skills of insight, mutuality, and emotion regulation, is associated with key indicators of relational and individual well-being, specifically greater romantic attachment security, healthy romantic decision making, greater relationship satisfaction, and lower internalizing symptoms among college-age females and males (the intended targets of the Relationship Education workshop).

The Relationship Education workshop differs from the typical emerging adult and adolescent relationship programs that are strictly designed to inform these individuals of skills to manage specific relational issues, typically centered on domestic violence, sexual assault, and STI prevention. These overly specific programs do not instruct young adult individuals on how to foster and initiate healthy romantic relationships.

Risky or dangerous situations, such as violence, sexual assault, and STI contraction, often occur within the context of romantic relationships or casual sexual encounters. The Relationship Education workshop offers individuals the skills and knowledge to make healthier decisions in romantic and sexual situations which enables them to build the relationships which intrinsically reduce the exposure to risk.

Emerging adults are an important group to target for relationship education because they are often seeking relationships and exploring what type of relationship and partner is “right” for them (Arnett, 2000; Scott, Schelar, Manlove, & Cui, 2009). During emerging adulthood, there are increasing rates of relationship involvement, cohabitation, and sexual activity (Arnett & Schwab, 2012; Chandra, Mosher, Copen, & Sionean, 2011; Copen, Daniels, & Mosher, 2013), and marriage (Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher, 2012). Therefore, emerging adults are making crucial decisions about romantic relationships that have the potential for significant long-term

effects. Teaching healthy relationship skills during this phase of development will allow young people to participate in healthy decision making and behaviors that increase their likelihood of relational success.

While the Relationship Education workshop shares some learning methods and aims with existing programs, it differs in a number of key ways. For example, rather than being organized around a set of individual skills (e.g., communication skills, decision making skills), this workshop is structured around a set of theory-based overarching skills (insight, mutuality, emotion regulation) that apply to all of the challenges and issues broadly covered in the workshop. This workshop is designed to offer participants a toolkit that they can use in many situations. The Relationship Education workshop is furthermore organized around a crucial set of topics relevant for the emerging adult population specifically. Rather than being adapted from an existing program for a different population, this relationship workshop was created and designed specifically for emerging adults.

The Simpson et al. (2018) comprehensive relationship education meta-analysis is comprised of relationship education studies with various designs (RCTs, quasi-experimental designs, and one-group pre/post designs), though only three RCTs. Those RCTs only investigated effectiveness of ePrep (Braithwaite & Fincham, 2007, 2009; Holt et al., 2016), with only one of these including participants who were not already engaged in relationships (Holt, et al., 2016). This metanalysis underlines the importance of additional demonstration for the efficacy of relationship education programs (especially regardless of relationship status) via RCTs. A metanalysis of this scope has yet to focus on solely emerging adults and a comparison of differing relationship education programs would be beneficial.

The Relationship Education workshop is designed for all emerging adult college students, regardless of whether they are currently in a relationship and regardless of what type of romantic or sexual relationship they are pursuing. No assumptions are made about the type of relationship an individual might choose (and this is indicated throughout the workshop) and the information and skills provided are not geared toward any particular type of relationship. Explicitly, this workshop focuses heavily on the many issues of partner selection, which has been covered by some (for an example of a program that focuses specifically on partner selection, see Bradford, Stewart, Pfister, & Higginbotham, 2016), but not many relationship education programs. Often, existing relationship education programs target emerging adult college students already in active relationships (Braithwaite et al., 2007, 2009), though there is demonstrated importance for providing relationship education to individuals not currently engaged in a relationship (see Markman, Halford, & Hawkins, 2019).

The Relationship Education workshop is unique in that it includes a prominent focus on partner selection that is not typical of relationship education programs. Participants in the Relationship Education workshop learn about themselves, their identities, and what they need out of a relationship in order to then gain insight into the type of partner they should select. Most relationship education programs are designed to be utilized by couples, prior to or in the midst of distress. However, this poses a problem when individuals have already selected a partner who is incapable of meeting the individual's relational needs thus rendering the relationship difficult to remedy, with the fundamental issue and cause of relational distress being choice of an unsuitable and incompatible partner. Beyond relationship competence skill building the Relationship Education Workshop also aims to equip participants with skills in relationship decision making and to help individuals develop adaptive beliefs of relationships.

Relationship decision making. A new and quickly growing body of research indicates that people tend to be motivated to meet their romantic partner's needs (Joel, Impett, Spielmann, & MacDonald, 2018). Individuals may be highly focused on the partner's welfare to the detriment of their own, often with little concern as to what they will receive in return (Clark & Mills, 1993; Mills, Clark, Ford, & Johnson, 2004). This disregard of one's own needs in a relationship can influence individuals to make decisions that contribute to poor relationship outcomes, i.e., staying in relationships that are unfulfilling solely for the sake of the partner (Joel, Impett, Spielmann, & MacDonald, 2018).

The Relationship Education workshop explicitly challenges its participants to analyze how they make decisions in romantic contexts. Participants explore a needs assessment during the Relationship Education Workshop, which provides a thorough method for making mutually beneficial decisions.

The Relationship Education workshop also utilizes the "wise mind" concept presented by Linehan (1993) in order to teach participants how to regulate intense emotions which naturally occur in the relationship context. The "wise mind" is a combination of logical processing and emotional intuition used in concert to make decisions (Linehan, 1993). The 'wise mind' produces a "state where one is able to make the wisest decision possible, knowing just what is needed in any given moment" (McMain, Sayrs, Dimeff, & Linehan, 2007, p.158).

Adaptive Relationship Beliefs. Individuals endorse varying beliefs about what constitutes a "good" relationship (Fletcher & Thomas, 1996). Researchers have begun more thoroughly investigating the impact of these cognition on romantic relationships (Reis & Knee, 1996). One area which has garnered much interest is that of implicit theories held about the relationship itself. Two prevalent implicit theories view attributes of relationships as fixed (or destined) or as

developed (or grown). These implicit theories of relationships have demonstrated influence on motivations, goals, behavior, and attributions in romantic relationships (Knee, Patrick, & Lonsbary, 2003).

The destiny belief of relationships translates to an individual believing primarily in initial compatibility, or “love at first sight”. This view may prove to be maladaptive as it often leads the individual to make quick decisions about the fate of a relationship based on minimal knowledge. These individuals also are especially sensitive to signs that indicate that the relationship is “not meant to be”. This belief is associated with disengaging from the relationship at the initial signs of a problem (Knee, 1998), is associated with the idea that partners are unable to change themselves and the relationship (Eidelson & Epstein, 1982). Individuals with this belief often have a pragmatic shopping-list approach to finding love (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986).

The growth belief translates to an individual believing relationships inherently have challenges that have to be overcome by the couple (Knee, 1998). Those who endorse stronger growth beliefs about romantic relationships typically view success in the relationship as tied to growing closer through the conquering obstacles together. Increased growth belief is associated with stronger attempts to maintain the relationship by utilizing a variety of coping and conflict resolution methods (Knee, Patrick, & Lonsbary, 2003). Growth belief is positively correlated with conscientiousness and agreeableness (Knee, 1998). The growth belief is positively associated with voicing concerns in the relationship and remaining loyal to the relationship (Rusbult, Zembrodt, & Gunn, 1982).

Emerging adulthood is a critical developmental period where these implicit theories are likely being formed and tested. The Relationship Education Workshop informs the participant of

healthy adaptive beliefs to be held in the relationship, thus explicitly targeting and addressing the implicit beliefs which may lead to decreased healthy outcomes in relationships.

Outcome Data of the Relationship Education Workshop. The initial data from randomized controlled trials of the Relationship Education workshop with emerging adults has demonstrated that participants in the workshop condition demonstrate increases in adaptive relationship beliefs, confidence in their relationship, and the ability to engage in healthy decision making, compared to participants in the waitlist-control condition (Davila et al., 2020). Additionally, qualitative analyses revealed that among participants in the workshop condition, reports of behaviors changed due to the workshop reflected increases in insight, mutuality, and emotion regulation, the three romantic competence skills expressly targeted in the workshop (Davila et al., 2020).

Though not explicitly targeted, self-compassion outcome data from the Relationship Education workshop has not yet been analyzed. Several modules of the workshop have a focus on self-compassion or one of its core components.

Self-Compassion

Self-compassion is a construct primarily derived from Buddhist psychology proposed as a way to conceptualize one's capacity for healthy self-attitudes (Neff, 2003). To comprehend self-compassion, it is essential first to fully understand its root, compassion towards others. When one feels compassion for someone else, they enable themselves to be open to another's suffering. When open to another's suffering and painful experience, feelings of caring and kindness for the individual often arise. Compassion for someone who has made a mistake translates to an open-minded, nonjudgmental attitude towards the person rather than criticism or

judgment. Compassion also indicates that one recognizes the shared humanity with another person.

The construct of self-compassion is a resilience resource that may prove useful in encouraging positive health behaviors and lending balance during tumultuous times (Neff & McGehee, 2010). This construct is loosely defined as the ability to mindfully turn toward the self in a kind manner in a moment of failure (Neff, 2003). This construct consists of three components: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness (Neff, 2011). In moments of distress, an individual might experience self-compassion by offering kindness to the self and viewing suffering as part of the human condition, while having a balanced awareness of the negative thoughts and feelings present without overly identifying with the emotion (Neff & Germer, 2013).

Self-compassion is associated with many aspects of mental health. Self-compassion may play a role in psychological well-being, quality of life, and the ability to manage life stressors in effective and ultimately healthy ways (Allen & Leary, 2010). An individual's level of self-compassion was shown to be a robust predictor of depression, anxiety, and quality of life in an international community sample (Van Dam, Sheppard, Forsyth, & Earlywine, 2011).

As self-compassion requires mindfulness as opposed to the over-identification with negative emotions, it is often linked to a large body of work existing on emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990) and mindfulness (Shapiro, Schwartz, Santerre, 2002). Increases in self-compassion have been demonstrated via interventions such as mindfulness-based stress reduction courses (Kabat-Zin, 1990) and school-based emotional intelligence programs (Goleman, 1995).

Romantic Relationships and Self-Compassion. Research has shown that self-compassionate individuals are more likely than more self-critical peers to have trusting and supportive

relationships with others, both peers and romantic partners (Crocker & Canevello, 2008). It has been suggested that self-compassion may be linked to healthier romantic relationship behavior, such as exhibiting more caring and supportive behavior rather than being controlling or verbally aggressive with partners. Self-compassion has been demonstrated to be a strong predictor in positive relationship behavior above and beyond self-esteem and attachment style (Neff & Beretvas, 2013). Though studies show definitive links between healthier relationship behaviors and self-compassion individual self-compassion has also been shown to be a weak predictor of relationship quality in romantic unions, (Jacobson, Wilson, Solomon Kurz, & Kellum, 2018). While self-compassion may be a helpful component in a relationship for satisfaction and health, it may not be a solely sufficient factor for positive relationship outcomes.

The predominant rationale behind why individuals with higher levels of self-compassion may tend to exhibit healthier behaviors in romantic relationships lies in the understanding that these individuals can meet their own needs in terms of kindness and self-comfort (Neff & Beretvas, 2012). These individuals, as a result, can balance independence with connectedness, which is demonstrated as necessary for healthy relationship development (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In times of struggle, one who is more self-compassionate will find increased feelings of connectedness with others (Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007).

Self-compassionate persons have a mindful, balanced approach to suffering; because of this nonjudgmental awareness of thoughts and emotions, these individuals are more likely to bring the same manner of responding to their relationships. This sensitive and mindful responding will likely positively influence relationship outcomes. Individuals who show high self-compassion are hypothesized to have strong conflict resolution skills due to their ability to see their partner's point of view during a conflict. These individuals are likely to be

understanding of the role that disagreements play in relationships and to understand how disagreements are a part of the human experience of suffering (Jacobson, Wilson, & Kellum, 2018).

Research has indicated that high self-compassionate people are less prone to experiencing reactive and anxious jealousy in romantic relationships, with this relationship partially mediated by a willingness to forgive in cases of reactive jealousy (Tandler & Petersen, 2018).

Self-Compassion and Emerging Adulthood. During the process of emerging as an adult, many individuals undergo an extensive process of exploring their identities and establishing significant relationships. This transition involves various stressors that necessitate the exploration of potential coping resources. Self-compassion can function to facilitate healthy emotional regulation and coping which may protect young adults from the consequences of excessive self-reliance and body image concerns (Choo & Marszalek, 2019; Rodgers et al., 2017).

The Present Study

The present study seeks to investigate the effectiveness of the Relationship Education Workshop in multiple domains of relationship and self-functioning. These aims are examined within a short-term longitudinal design with specific quantitative analyses chosen to address the impact of the Relationship Education workshop on targeted outcomes.

This first research question examines the effectiveness of a relationship education workshop in teaching romantic relationship competence skills to emerging adult *individuals* who may not be currently in a romantic relationship. The effectiveness of this workshop will be examined in a 4-year university sample. Some data collection was attempted at a local community college to examine the effectiveness in a wider population of emerging adults, but this information will not be used in analyses. This decision to remove the small amount of data collected from the other

intended sample is discussed at length in the latter sections of this paper. Workshop participation is hypothesized to lead to an increase in romantic relationship competence and related skills. Specifically, participants in the relationship education workshop are hypothesized to show improvement in (a) insight, (b) mutuality (c) emotion regulation, as well as (d) relational decision making and (e) implicit relationship beliefs. These expected associations were tested via repeated measure analyses of variance for each expected outcome variables.

Given the well-established association between compassion toward the self and compassion towards others, the second study question investigated the role of a relationship education workshop on increasing self-compassion as well as healthy relationship skills that are expressly targeted in the workshop. Self-compassion is believed to increase when individuals feel their needs deserve to be addressed and met (Shamsi & Sufi, 2017). Since the Relationship Education Workshop emphasizes participants examining their own needs, we hypothesize that it will increase self-compassion, even though the Relationship Education workshop only explicitly discusses self-compassion briefly throughout the workshop. An explicit aim of the Relationship Education workshop is to encourage an appreciation of one's own needs as well as adequately embracing and addressing those of their romantic partner.

Self-compassion is an aspect of "mindfulness" (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999; Kabat-Zinn, 1994). The Relationship Education workshop targets and teaches mindfulness briefly during the course. One could expect that this focus may lend some improvement in self-compassion for workshop participants as well. We hypothesized that the participants of the Relationship Education Workshop experienced higher self-compassion and that this association is mediated by learned relationship knowledge.

This dissertation examines the effectiveness of the Relationship Education workshop in multiple areas, both in relational and individual domains, for emerging adults. Our hope is that this project beneficially contributes to formal outcome data for the Relationship Education workshop. This data will allow for further refining of this program, increasing the learning potential and impact for the participants who take part. This data will also demonstrate the effectiveness of the Relationship Education workshop on a population from a different geographic region than initially tested. Later comparisons of these two samples could provide helpful insights into how to strengthen or adapt the workshop to suit particular subgroups of emerging adults or, adversely, how to generalize material so that it is suitable for larger audiences.

CHAPTER 2

Methods

Procedure

All procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Boards at the University of Tennessee and Pellissippi State Community College.

Participants were recruited via flyers placed in public spaces on each respective campus as well as targeted advertisements on social media websites (Instagram and Facebook).

Participants were eligible based on the following criteria: aged 18 to 29 and a current student of the university or college where the data was being collected. Once participants indicated interest in participating by filling out their contact information, indicating their time/day preference, and answering the screener questions on a google document, they were randomly assigned to complete the Relationship Education Workshop or assigned to a waitlist control (surveys only) condition. Equal numbers were assigned to each of the two conditions. The participants were then contacted with instructions about how to proceed and given a consent form followed by the first round of questionnaires.

Participants completed a set of questionnaires at three time points: (1) at first contact after confirming interest in the study, (2) immediately following the workshop completion, and (3) 4 weeks after workshop completion. The control subjects completed the questionnaires on the same timeline. Participants were given 3 days to complete the set of surveys at each time point, with one reminder email given on the third day.

Participants assigned to the Relationship Education Workshop attended two consecutive weekly sessions. Each session lasted approximately two hours in length. Monetary compensation for completion of the study was provided to the subjects after each survey and increased as the

study progressed. After completing the first set of questionnaires each participant was given \$10, after completing the second set of questionnaires they were given \$15, and after completing the final set of questionnaires they were given \$20. This scaled increase in compensation was utilized to incentivize continued participation in the longitudinal design, when participant attrition can be high. Participants were given the option to receive a) cash or b) Amazon gift card codes.

Relationship Education Workshop. This dissertation writer was trained in administering the relationship education workshop by the program's creator (Dr. Joanne Davila) during a two-day workshop boot camp. Training including observing a full-administration of the Relationship Education workshop as a participant, completing all activities and discussion with other instructors in-training, focusing on ways to troubleshoot issues that may arise in personal workshop administration. Dr. Davila provided consultation and mentorship to the dissertation writer and her advisor on an as-needed basis during data collection and after.

As an overview of the workshop, participants met for 2-2.5 hours per consecutive session. Before attending the first scheduled Relationship Education workshop session, the participants complete the pre-participation questionnaire. The first workshop session begins with an overview and rationale for the Relationship Education workshop.

Part 1. The instructor begins by focusing on the core concepts of healthy relationships which are interwoven throughout the program, a) the romantic competency skills (insight, mutuality, and emotion regulation) as well as b) the three necessary conditions which help assess whether one's and their partner's needs are being met via a relationship (my partner knows and likes me, I know and like my partner, and I know and like myself).

The first half of the workshop then focuses on two central points in the form of questions: “How do I know a relationship is right for me?” and “What makes a relationship work?”. In exploring how to know if a relationship is right, participants complete individualized needs assessments and explore insight-oriented activities that shed light on what is essential for the participant to observe in a partner. Participants are introduced to the 14 most common needs in a relationship (for example, acceptance, attraction, authenticity, familiarity, listening, and caring), and rate how important each is for themselves to have in a romantic partner. Participants complete a trait assessment of themselves (for example: affectionate, moody, energetic, impatient, and suspicious) that informs the participant on how they typically respond in relationship contexts.

Next, participants focus on “What makes a relationship work?”. Participants explore “need conflicts” which arise when partners experience an impasse in a relationship due to competing needs (for example: “My partner doesn’t satisfy my need of care and affection because it interferes with his need for independence and autonomy in a relationship”). Participants then learn how utilizing the skills of insight, mutuality, and emotion regulation can help one navigate such conflicts. For example, insight helps the participant understand and communicate the problem to the partner, mutuality enables better negotiating of competing needs together with the partner, and emotion regulation ensures that the participant responds in a way that is productive to facing the issue together with his or her partner.

Part 2. The second half of the Relationship Education Workshop focuses on the key questions of “Should I stay or should I go?” and “How do I deal with a breakup?”. Participants learn how to determine whether to continue with a relationship or to end it through the following process 1) Identifying unmet needs in the situation or relationship as a whole 2) Learning to

tolerate uncertainty inherent in a relationship 3) Using emotions for accurate guidance in decision-making and controlling intense emotions that can lead to bad decisions and lastly, 4) Knowing personal deal-breakers in a relationship.

Next, participants explore how to deal with the painful aftermath of a necessary relationship break-up. Participants explore why it feels so hard when a relationship ends by exploring the science of love and rejection. Participants have the goal of accepting natural emotions as they arise and coming to terms with the reality of unmet needs. Lastly, participants explore the seven common, problematic reactions to a break-up (ruminating, co-ruminating with others, experiencing low distress tolerance, seeking support from the ex-partner, acting on impulse, idealizing an ex-partner and denying reality, and criticizing and blaming the self). Participants then learn several strategies to combat each problematic reaction. The session ends with a full review of all covered topics and concludes. Participants then complete a post-workshop questionnaire and are informed that a later follow-up will be sent virtually in one-month.

Participants

Participants for the current study were initially recruited from two educational contexts: a four-year public university and a two-year community college. The primary sample used for this study's analyses included 59 participants from a mid-sized, flagship public university in the southeast. The second sample was attempted, but garnered a mere 10 active study participants, only 2 of whom completed the full workshop condition from a community college in the southeast. All participants are between the ages of 18-29, the emerging adulthood range.

The target was to gather data from two samples of equal size, and to also look at comparative differences for the two samples (if any). Unfortunately, due to the unequal sizes of the two samples, these comparative analyses cannot be incorporated.

Measures

Demographics. Participants completed a demographic questionnaire developed by the research team, which included items on demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, racial/ethnic background, relationship status, Pell Grant status).

Insight. The Self-Reflection and Insight Scale (SRIS; Grant, Franklin, & Langford, 2002) directly assesses the private self-conscious via self-reflection and insight. This questionnaire has 20 Likert-type items, 12 of which refer to self-reflection and eight which correspond to insight. The participant is instructed to think about his or her current romantic relationship (or relationships in general if they are not currently in one) and asked to rate the extent to which they agree with a set of statements. Sample questions include: “Often I find it difficult to make sense of the way I feel about things in my relationship” and “I usually know why I feel the way I do in my relationship.” Possible responses are measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 through 6 (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*). Previous research has shown coefficient alphas as .91 for the self-reflection scale and .87 for the insight scale, with test-retest correlations between .77 and .78 (Grant, Franklin, & Langford, 2002). In this study, this insight scale demonstrated good reliability across samples and time ($\alpha=.875$). See Table 1 for a list of means, standard deviations, and Cronbach alphas for all variables in the study.

Mutuality. The Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire (MPDQ; Genero, Miller, Surrey, & Baldwin, 1992) measures perceived mutuality in relationships. This questionnaire has 22 Likert-type questions. Items are derived from elements of mutuality:

empathy, engagement, authenticity, zest, diversity, and empowerment (Miller, 1998). The participant is instructed to think about their current romantic relationship (or relationships in general if they are not currently in one) and is asked how well the items refer to the different things the participant or his or her partner may do when talking about things that matter to each partner. Sample questions include: “When we talked about things that matter to (my partner), I am likely to be receptive” and “When we talk about things that matter to me, (my partner) is likely to get frustrated.” Possible responses are measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 through 6 (1 = *never*, 6 = *all the time*). Obtained alpha coefficients ranged from .89 to .94 in previous samples (Genero, Miller, Surrey, & Baldwin, 1992). In this study, this scale demonstrated good reliability across samples and time ($\alpha=.809$).

Emotion Regulation. The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ, Gross & John, 2003) is a 10 item Likert-type scale that assesses a respondents’ tendency to regulate emotions in two ways: cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. Sample questions include: “I control my emotion by not expressing them” and “I keep my emotions to myself.” Possible responses are measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 through 7 (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Previous research has demonstrated alpha reliabilities as .79 for Reappraisal and .73 for Suppression and test-retest reliability across three months was .69 for both scales (Gross & John, 2003). In this study, this scale demonstrated good reliability across samples and time ($\alpha=.734$).

Adaptive Relationship Beliefs. The Implicit Theories of Relationships Scale (Knee, Patrick, & Lonsbary, 2003), is a 22 item Likert-type scale that assesses commonly held romantic relationship beliefs in two categories: growth and destiny (11 items per category). Sample questions include: “The ideal relationship develops overtime” (growth belief) and “Potential relationship partners are either destined to get along or they are not” (destiny belief). Possible

responses are measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 through 7 (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). Individuals who score high in growth believe that relationships are strengthened by successfully navigating obstacles and conflict. Those who score high in the destiny belief believe that partners are simply compatible or not, with a strong initial connection between partners being the primary indicator of a suitable relationship. Factor analyses of several samples indicate that destiny and growth beliefs are independent. Items reflecting each belief when averaged demonstrate that destiny and growth are uncorrelated ($r = -.01$) (Knee, Patrick, & Lonsbary, 2003). Prior research shows internal reliabilities for destiny and growth as .82 and .74, respectively, from a sample of 400 participants (Knee, Patrick, & Lonsbary, 2003).

As we expressly targeted fostering of the growth belief, we used the growth scale for our analysis. In this study, the growth scale demonstrated good reliability across samples and time ($\alpha = .781$).

Relationship Decision Making. The Relationship Decision Making Scale (Vennum & Fincham, 2011) is used to assess healthy decision-making construct. This scale consists of 12 items, ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Sample questions include: “I feel good about the prospects of making a romantic relationship last” and “It is important to make conscious decisions about whether to take each major step in romantic relationships.” Possible responses are measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 through 5 (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). Higher scores on this scale indicate increased effectiveness in relationship decision making, specifically demonstrating: higher relationship confidence, knowledge of and ability to deal with warning signs, and thoughtfulness regarding decision making. Coefficient alphas were between .90 and .71 for the previous samples tested with the

Relationship Deciding Scale (Vennum & Fincham, 2011). In this study, this scale demonstrated good reliability across samples and time ($\alpha=.844$).

Self-Compassion. Participants were administered the Self-Compassion Scale (Neff, 2003) at all three time points. This questionnaire is a 26-item self-report survey used to assess inward responses and self-talk to oneself during tough situations. Items include brief descriptions of responses and prompt participants to rate whether they utilize the stated strategies. Sample questions include: “I try to be loving towards myself when I’m feeling emotional pain” and “When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.” Possible responses are measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 through 5 (1 = *Almost never true* to 5 = *Almost always true*). Internal consistency has been demonstrated as moderate ($\alpha = .77$) in previous samples (Neff, 2003). In this study, this scale demonstrated good reliability across samples and time ($\alpha=.926$).

Relationship Knowledge Questionnaire. Participants were administered the Relationship Knowledge Questionnaire, an unpublished survey developed by the Relationship Education workshop’s creator (Joanne Davila) at all three time points to measure the learning outcomes of this study. Items ask the participant how much they agree with statements of relationship knowledge such as “I have a good sense of what the components of a healthy romantic relationship are” and “I know when it’s time to exit a romantic relationship.” The participant responds by rating statements on a Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

This survey was constructed for the workshop to assess whether the target skills were obtained, and knowledge gained in the areas of focus in the Relationship Education workshop. The following variables and factors are assessed in this questionnaire: confidence about knowing

what to do, ability to cope with/handle problems, willingness to change self for a partner/relationship, ability to make relationships work, guidance by emotions/romantic ideas, and dysfunctional beliefs held about aggression. In this study, this scale demonstrated good reliability across samples and time ($\alpha=.871$).

Data Analytic Plan

IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 26 was used for all statistical analyses for this study (IBM, 2019). Bivariate correlations of variables were calculated and reported for all time points.

To test hypotheses on workshop related outcomes for the present study, repeated measures analysis of variance (RM-ANOVA) (Time X Group) were utilized. Descriptive statistics of means (SD), median, kurtosis (SE), and skewness (SE) were reported for all variables, see Tables 2-5.

If the variables were found to be normally distributed the maximum likelihood with robust standard errors (MLR) was utilized as the estimator. MLR is robust to non-independence and non-normality of observations (Asparouhov, 2005). Sphericity, a case of circularity assumptions, was checked to see if the variance/covariance matrix of the observed data followed a given pattern. If sphericity was observed, the RM-ANOVA procedure provided a powerful test about repeated measures. In order to test this assumption Mauchly's Test was applied which investigates the equivalence of the hypothesized and observed variance/covariance patterns. If significant, this suggested that the metric does not have approximately equal variances and covariances. Violations of sphericity often compromise the results of a mixed-model ANOVA for repeated measures. Box (1954) demonstrated that nonsphericity often inflates F values for omnibus tests of main effects, leading to an increased potential for Type I Errors. If this test was

significant, the Greenhouse-Geisser and Huynh-Feldt epsilon corrections were applied (as appropriate). These did not affect the computed F-statistic, but instead raised the critical F value needed to reject the null hypothesis.

Several Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance (RM-ANOVA) were used to investigate if the workshop produced the expected learning outcomes for its participants. This analysis was a 3 X 2 model (three testing points X two groups) for each respective outcome tested. Each participant was assessed three times on the same dependent variables. Several repeated measure ANOVAs were utilized. Running each analysis produced an F statistic. Contrast tests were then completed to interpret the data further, determining the meaning of significance of the F statistic found.

Of interest to the current study was how the two separate samples performed on the selected outcome variables. This was not a defined hypothesis, as the investigators were unsure of what differences may emerge. Due to incompatible sample sizes after an inability to garner many participants from the community college sample, RM-ANOVAs were not completed to compare the workshop conditions of the separate samples. The Relationship Education Workshop has not been successfully tested on a community college sample; thus, the effectiveness of the Relationship Education workshop in that context remains unknown.

To investigate the mediation of learning relationship knowledge on the association between workshop participation and self-compassion a mediation analysis was completed. The bootstrapping technique was utilized via a macro PROCESS v. 3 for SPSS (Hayes, 2012) on SPSS version 24. Bootstrapping is a resampling procedure that tests mediation. This process involves repeatedly sampling the data set and estimating the indirect effect in each instance of the resampled data set. This method of bootstrapping (Shrout & Bolger, 2002) has demonstrated

more observed power than traditional methods such as the causal steps regression approach (Baron & Kenny, 1986) and is particularly useful in testing smaller samples as low as 20-80 cases (Koopman, Howe, Hollenbeck, & Sin, 2015). Departing from the Baron & Kenny model of mediation (1996) there no longer is a requirement for a direct effect between the independent and dependent variables in order for mediation to occur (Hayes, 2009; Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Bootstrapping is a nonparametric test and thus does not assume the normal distributions.

We calculated a 95% bias-corrected confidence interval (CI) using 5,000 bootstrap resamples to determine if relationship knowledge helped explain the association between self-compassion and workshop participation. Similar to the testing of a null hypothesis, if zero does not fall within the 95% confidence interval, there would be a 95% likelihood that the indirect effect is significant. Refer to Figure 1 for a visual representation of our hypothesized model.

CHAPTER 3

Results

Sample Characteristics

Those who opted to participate in the study were primarily female identifying ($N = 61$, female = 56, male = 5). No individuals in the study identified as trans male, trans female, or gender queer. Participant sexual orientation was primarily heterosexual or “straight” identifying (93.4%, $n = 57$). 4 participants identified their sexual orientation as bisexual (6.6%) and no participants identified as lesbian or gay. 33 participants were in a relationship during study participation (54.1%), 27 identified as “currently single” (44.3%), and 1 individual chose not to answer (1.6%).

73.7% participants identified as Caucasian ($n = 45$), 11.5% identified as African American ($n = 7$), 4.9% identified as Asian ($n = 3$), 1.6% identified as Latinx ($n = 1$), 1.6% identified as Middle Eastern ($n = 1$), and 6.6% chose “other” for ethnicity ($n = 4$). Participants ranged from 18 to 29 years of age, with mean age of participant being 19.3 and the modal age being 20 ($n = 15$).

Several participants ($n = 9$) were removed from analyses due to incomplete data or failing to participate during scheduled follow-ups. Several chi squares and paired sample t tests were conducted to explore if any factors contributed to attrition or retention of participations. No demographic (race ($\chi^2 (1, 66) = .006, p = .936$) age ($t(70) = -.042, p = .73$), or gender ($\chi^2 (1, 70) = .79, p = .37$) or relationship characteristics (single vs. in a relationship, $\chi^2 (1, 69) = .35, p = .55$) were associated with the likelihood of a participant completing follow-up portions of the study. It is important to note that race was coded for this analysis as 1 = white and 2 = non-white due to low numbers of participants self-identifying as belonging to a minority group.

Primary Analyses

Repeated Measure Analyses of Variance. To answer the question of effectiveness, analyses were conducted using repeated measure analyses of variance. Time was the repeated measures factor (for three time points, T1, T2, and T3). Study condition was a fixed factor (Relationship Education workshop or Wait List). Five separate analyses were completed for each of the outcome variables of interest (insight, mutuality, emotion regulation, relationship decision making, and adaptive relationship beliefs). Each analysis included main effects and interactions. The 2-way interaction of time x condition on the dependent variable was primarily examined. Sphericity was examined in all tests and Epsilon corrections were applied when the assumption violation was observed, and is noted.

Insight. The analysis for insight yielded a marginally significant 2-way interaction, $F(2, 58) = 2.575, p = .085$. In utilizing independent samples T tests to investigate group differences at each time point respectively, groups did not differ ($p = .417$). However, at T2 ($p = .011$) and T3 ($p = .008$) groups did differ significantly. Refer to Figure 2 to see the estimated marginal means of insight graphed in a profile plot highlighting the differences between the groups across time points. Box's test of equality of covariance matrices was not significant ($p = .026$), indicating that the observed covariance matrices of the dependent variables are equal across groups. Mauchly's test of sphericity which tests the null hypothesis that the error covariance matrix of the orthonormalized transformed dependent variables are proportional to an identity matrix, was not significant ($p = .051$), and the assumption of sphericity was met. Levene's test of equality of error variances was not significant for any values, meeting the assumption.

Though our RM ANOVA statistic produced a trend that, compared to the wait list group, the Relationship Education workshop group had a slight increase in insight, our primary

hypothesis was not supported for this variable as we failed to reach the predetermined level of significance.

Mutuality. The analysis for Mutuality yielded a significant 2-way interaction, $F(2, 58) = 3.439, p < .039$. Partial eta squared = .106 indicating that 10.6% of the variance is explained by this interaction. In utilizing independent samples T tests to investigate group differences at each time point respectively, groups did not differ at T1($p = .660$), T2 ($p = .163$), and T3 ($p = .140$). Box's test of equality of covariance matrices was not significant ($p = .141$), meeting the assumption. Mauchly's test of sphericity was not significant ($p = .958$), meeting the assumption. Levene's test of equality of error variances met the assumption as no values were significant. Our primary hypothesis is supported for this variable. Refer to Figure 3 for a profile plot of compared means for mutuality across time points.

Emotion Regulation. The analysis for Emotion Regulation yielded a significant 2-way interaction, $F(1.656, 58) = 4.409, p = .020$, after applying the Greenhouse-Geisser Epsilon correction due to violation of sphericity. Partial eta squared = .07 indicating that 7% of the variance is explained by this interaction. In utilizing independent samples T tests to investigate group differences at each time point respectively, groups did not differ at T1($p = .808$), T2 ($p = .086$), and T3 ($p = .164$). Box's test of equality of covariance matrices was not significant, indicating that the observed covariance matrices of the dependent variables are equal across groups. Levene's test of equality of error variances met the assumption. The error variance of the dependent variable is equal across all groups. Our primary hypothesis is supported for this variable. Refer to Figure 4 for a profile plot of compared means for emotion regulation across time points.

Decision making. The analysis for relational decision making yielded a significant 2-way interaction, $F(2, 58) = 17.634, p < .001$. Partial eta squared = .378 indicating that 37.8% of the variance is explained by this interaction. In utilizing independent samples T tests to investigate group differences at each time point respectively, groups did not differ at T1($p = .715$), but differed significantly at T2 ($p < .001$), and T3 ($p < .001$). Box's test of equality of covariance matrices was not significant ($p = .623$), meeting the assumption. Mauchly's test of sphericity was not significant ($p = .314$), meeting the assumption. Levene's test of equality of error variances met the assumption as no values were significant. Our primary hypothesis is supported for this variable. Refer to Figure 5 for a profile plot of compared means for decision making across time points.

Adaptive relationship beliefs. The analysis for adaptive relationship beliefs (growth) yielded a significant 2-way interaction, $F(2, 58) = 3.36, p = .042$, Partial eta squared = .10 indicating that 10% of the variance is explained by this interaction. In utilizing independent samples T tests to investigate group differences at each time point respectively, groups did not differ at T1($p = .137$), but differed significantly at T2 ($p = .001$), and T3 ($p = .004$). Box's test of equality of covariance matrices was not significant ($p = .237$), meeting the assumption. Mauchly's test of sphericity was not significant ($p = .128$), meeting the assumption. Levene's test of equality of error variances for testing homogeneity of variances was not violated with no significant values. Our primary hypothesis is supported for this variable. Refer to Figure 6 for a profile plot of compared means for adaptive relationship beliefs across time points.

Mediation Model. To answer the question of whether a simple mediation model is suitable for encompassing the relationship of learning relationship knowledge on the association

between workshop participation and self-compassion the bootstrapping technique, via a macro PROCESS v. 3 for SPSS (Hayes, 2012), was utilized.

The outcome variable for the analysis was self-compassion. The predictor variable for the analysis was workshop participation. The mediator variable for the analysis was learned relationship knowledge. We tested the significance of the indirect effect of workshop participation on self-compassion using bootstrapping procedures, 5,000 re-samples from the data set were bootstrapped for this analysis. The 95% confidence interval was computed to determine the indirect effects at the 2.5th and 97.5th percentiles. The bootstrapped unstandardized indirect effect = .507, with the 95% confidence interval of -.874, -.268. Thus, we conclude the indirect effect to be statistically significant ($p < .001$).

The mediation model was significant and thus supported our hypothesis of relationship knowledge as a mediator on the relationship between workshop participation and self-compassion.

CHAPTER 4

Discussion

The present study investigated the effectiveness of a relationship education workshop in teaching romantic relationship competence skills to emerging adult individuals who may or may not currently be in a romantic relationship. Workshop participation was hypothesized to lead to an increase in romantic relationship competence and related skills, with participants in the relationship education workshop expected to show improvement in (a) insight, (b) mutuality, (c) emotion regulation, (d) relationship decision making, and (e) adaptive relationship beliefs. The present study also sought to investigate the role of a relationship education workshop on increasing self-compassion as well as healthy relationship skills that are expressly targeted in the Relationship Education workshop, and a mediation model was proposed to encompass the expected relationship. Specifically, the change in self-compassion for those participating in the workshop condition was proposed to be mediated by the relationship knowledge gained.

Collectively, this study examined the effectiveness of the Relationship Education workshop on multiple targets for the emerging adult population. Findings from this study will contribute to providing formal outcome data for the Relationship Education Workshop. All previous testing of the Relationship Education workshop was completed in the North-Eastern region of the U.S and the current study analyses outcome measures for individuals in the South Eastern region. Differences in effectiveness between these two samples from different geographic regions could be an important area for future analysis.

In analyzing the results, there was support for most hypotheses regarding explicit learning targets of the Relationship Education workshop. These findings complement findings from the previous testing of this workshop for this population. Specifically, results indicated that

those who participated in the Relationship Education workshop demonstrated significant gains in mutuality, emotion regulation, relationship decision making, and adaptive relationship beliefs as compared to their waitlist counterparts. Significant differences in the relationship competency skill of insight were not identified. We see evidence of differences in this outcome between the groups at later time points (T2 and T3) yet we do not meet the threshold for a significant interaction effect as hypothesized.

Many Relationship Education workshop participants stated a clear desire for a focus on more insight-oriented activities via the participant feedback after the final workshop. Several individuals stated that this section of the didactic felt “vague” or difficult to apply. This common comment is consistent with the author’s opinion as this portion of the workshop felt dense and difficult to translate in terms that were easily understood by all participants. The insight skill learning section of the Relationship Education workshop often garnered the most questions during administration. The Relationship Education workshop could benefit from the addition of more active exercises addressing insight as well as paring down unessential information. These actions would make the material comprehensible and relatable for future participants.

The results supported our mediation model hypothesis. Relationship knowledge mediated the association between workshop participation and self-compassion. This provides support for the program initiating a discernable change in the participant’s capacity to utilize self-compassion skills via the learning of applicable relationship knowledge. This finding adds to the existing outcome data in that it provides evidence of clear *self* or *personal* change for the participant and not solely beneficial relational target outcomes. Future research could benefit from investigating other self constructs that are directly and indirectly influenced by the learning of these relationship skills via the Relationship Education workshop.

Participant Feedback Regarding Workshop

Open-ended questions were provided to the participants as a final review of the workshop during the administration of the final surveys. Participants were asked about what changes they had personally experienced due to their participation in the Relationship Education workshop as well as suggestions for changing the program.

When asked what changes participation in the workshop had inspired in their own lives, responses varied, some included: “put myself first”, “try to stay calmer during disagreements”, “I will face conflict with my partner as a team rather than us against each other”, and “be more accepting of my own emotional needs”. The general themes which emerged focused on taking partner perspective into account, building self-awareness, learning skills to regulate emotions during arguments, and completing needs assessment for the partner and the self.

Feedback from the participants was primarily positive, though multiple individuals thought the workshop would benefit from more time dedicated to discussion and less didactic. Some responses included: “I felt things were a little too vague”, “but where do we meet compatible partners?”, “little discussion other than after the videos”. Other recurring themes in suggestions for workshop alterations were focuses of sexuality and how to discover your own (as this informs what partner you may be seeking), a request for more thorough needs assessment and insight-oriented activities to help with partner compatibility, and discussion of how sexual assault/abuse impacts relationships.

Of the 30 workshop participants, 2 indicated they would not recommend the workshop to others (6.67% of participants). When asked why, they respectively indicated “I thought this was specifically on online dating, and it did not cover that” and “I already knew everything”. When asked if the participant changed their behavior in their relationships after workshop participation

(Question: “Based on what you learned in the workshop/course, have you done anything differently in romantic relationships?”), 33.3% of participants (n=10) indicated they had.

Limitations and Future Directions

When interpreting this data, several limitations must be considered for the current study. This study relied on self-report data for all measures. As a result, there can be an assumed level of social desirability bias in answering the questions. Research has shown that individuals tend to be biased to underreport negative aspects of their romantic relationships when completing self-report measures (Loving & Agnew, 2001), as a result, some negative aspects may be underreported in this present study. Currently, the study does ask open-ended questions which may elicit helpful feedback, but it would be beneficial to see outcomes tied to clearly observable behavioral changes in future studies of the Relationship Education workshop. Using these observational methods would be more labor intensive on all fronts of data collection to interpretation, but could provide outcomes less subject to the inevitable social desirability of self-report.

Longitudinal research design commonly has attrition between data collection across time points, which in turn decreases power and increases risk of for Type I and II error (Deeg, 2002; Zhou & Fishbach, 2016). Factors related to participant attrition were mindfully observed and attempts were made for them to be controlled in analyses, regardless, it is always possible that characteristics which improved chances of continued participation may have biased the sample at follow-up time points of data collection.

This study had high levels of participant attrition. Many individuals indicated interest, but did not follow through with complete participation and attendance. Many individuals completed the first survey but failed to attend the workshop during their preferred time despite being given

the option to choose the best time to attend and given several reminders as the date and time neared. This greatly affected data collection for the community college sample, in particular, where it was also more difficult to garner interest in the study.

Attrition in the workshop condition may have been due to motivational issues on the part of students (i.e. incentive was not viewed as adequate for the level of commitment necessary to participate), as well as the barriers discussed above. Understanding what can effectively motivate these individuals to participate in and fully complete the relationship education workshop would be important to encourage better workshop attendance and completion rates.

The sample is composed of primarily white, female, middle-class, cis-gender, and heterosexual, traditional college students. As a result, these findings may not generalize to diverse populations. It is important for future research to expand into testing these differing populations which were not adequately captured in the present study.

In attempting to collect data from a sample more diverse, attempts were unsuccessful in acquiring participation levels which could extend to beneficial comparison analyses. Though advertising was vigorous, and multiple workshop dates and times were offered, it was difficult to secure a stable source of participants. Rates for those indicating desire to participate were markedly lower as compared to the university sample, as well as the rate at which participants confirmed intent to attend. Subsequently, no-show/absence of workshop dates was exceptionally high (>90%). Those in the community, especially those in a community college setting, are likely to have many life, educational, and career obligations which make physical attendance for 6 hours over a period of two days difficult. All attempts to mitigate these competing roles and counteract the potential losses for the participants were not successful (offering monetary incentive, childcare, snacks during participation in workshop, etc.).

Soon after encountering this difficulty in initial data collection, COVID-19 prompted nationwide campus closures and state government issuance of limitations on in-person activities, further affecting ability to gather a large enough sample. This is expected to continue being a barrier for in-person relationship workshop participation, further prompting adaption of this and other workshops to address the emerging safety needs of participants due to current events.

Future research of a population more representative of a community sample would benefit from adapting the workshop to fit the needs of a non-captive campus population. Beneficial modifications of the Relationship Education workshop may include creating an online version of the workshop that still requires individual participation, or delivering the workshop on individual basis in the home of the participant.

New instruction modalities and access methods could appeal to the needs of a larger, more diverse populations. Interactive, multimedia delivery would permit individuals with rigid or unconventional schedules and/or those lacking geographic proximity to workshop delivery sites to access these programs. Flexible and self-directed relationship education has been recommended (Halford, Moore, Wilson, Farrugia, & Dyer, 2004). Many relationship programs have already opted to adapt to a more fluid and accessible paradigm of computer delivery (Duncan, Steed, & Needham, 2009; Braithwaite & Fincham, 2007, 2009, 2011).

Different communities and sub-groups require particular adaptations to increase chances of relationship education success, rather than a “one-size-fits-all” method (Halford et al., 2003). Researchers have begun to garner empirical support for the success of computer-based relationship education programs. For couples assigned to a self-driven, internet relationship program similar changes were observed in terms of relationship satisfaction and effective

communication as was seen in those who completed an in-person six-session, weekly, program (Duncan et al, 2009).

In terms of outcome measurement, although the workshop creator team (Davila et al., 2020) was successful in the development of a scale that measured workshop relevant content, it would be beneficial for further development of measures that assess, in the relational context, the romantic competence skills taught in the workshop (insight, mutuality, and emotion regulation).

Lastly, the follow-up period is relatively short. Future studies of this workshop would benefit from being considerably longer in duration so that outcomes can be evaluated across a greater span of time.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the results from the present study suggest that the Relationship Education workshop is successful in its aims of improving the skills of romantic competence (except for the skill of insight), increasing beneficial relationship decision making, and increasing adaptive relationship beliefs for participants as compared to their waitlist condition peers. As discussed above, the proposed mediation model fit our current observations as expected.

Findings from this present study should provide a basis and impetus for future research and application of the Relationship Education workshop. More outcome studies are necessary to demonstrate the effectiveness of this respective workshop especially for differing populations (i.e. non-college student, racially diverse, gender queer, LGBTQ+, etc.). Participant feedback indicates that some changes in presentation and format of the workshop may be beneficial. The workshop could also benefit from increasing accessibility. As proposed above, an online format of administration with purposeful interaction throughout could help reach participants with time and resource constraints. Many participants suggested decreasing the lengthy didactic portions of

the workshop and adding more room for intentional discussion and personal exercises. Overall, most participants indicated feeling as though they had learned the target relationship competence skills and many participants felt comfortable in now applying said new skills in their current or future relationships.

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APPENDIX

Table 1. *Means, standard deviations, possible range, and internal consistency of all measures across all time points*

	Potential Range	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
Insight	8-48	31.71	7.02	.875
Mutuality	12-72	55.66	6.05	.809
Emotion Regulation	8-56	36.45	7.04	.734
Self-Compassion	26-130	80.33	15.56	.926
Relationship Knowledge	22-161	122.27	16.06	.871
Decision Making	12-60	45.52	6.90	.844
Adaptive Beliefs	7-77	56.22	.65	.781

Table 2. *Descriptive statistics of means (SD) for variables in repeated measures analyses of variance at all time points*

	Time		Time 2		Time 3	
	Workshop	Wait-List	Workshop	Wait-List	Workshop	Wait-List
Insight	3.92 (.81)	3.73 (.94)	4.23 (.77)	3.63 (.98)	4.25 (.79)	3.71 (.74)
Mutuality	4.41 (.43)	4.46 (.52)	4.66 (.49)	4.49 (.85)	4.64 (.62)	4.43 (.43)
Emotion Regulation	4.49 (.71)	4.54 (.93)	4.76 (.84)	4.40 (.78)	4.74 (.99)	4.42 (.80)
Decision Making	3.71 (.65)	3.65 (.50)	4.19 (.46)	3.55 (.47)	4.19 (.52)	3.59 (.50)
Adaptive Beliefs	5.10 (.55)	4.90 (.45)	5.34 (.53)	4.89 (.48)	5.43 (.68)	4.96 (.56)

Table 3. *Descriptive statistics of medians for variables in repeated measures analyses of variance at all time points*

	Time 1		Time 2		Time 3	
	Workshop	Wait-List	Workshop	Wait-List	Workshop	Wait-List
Insight	3.88	3.88	4.44	3.75	4.44	3.75
Mutuality	4.53	4.50	4.64	4.45	4.64	4.45
Emotion Regulation	4.50	4.30	4.75	4.40	4.70	4.30
Decision Making	3.75	3.67	4.17	3.58	4.17	3.58
Adaptive Beliefs	5.05	4.91	5.36	4.82	5.45	4.91

Table 4. *Skewness (standard error) for variables in repeated measures analyses of variance at all time points*

	Time 1		Time 2		Time 3	
	Workshop	Wait-List	Workshop	Wait-List	Workshop	Wait-List
Insight	.05 (.43)	-.33 (.42)	-.32 (.43)	-.28 (.42)	-.92 (.43)	-.02 (.42)
Mutuality	-.88 (.43)	.14 (.42)	-.38 (.43)	-.06 (.42)	-.36 (.43)	.10 (.42)
Emotion Regulation	-.23 (.43)	.48 (.42)	-.43 (.43)	.14 (.42)	-.16 (.43)	.13 (.42)
Decision Making	-.24 (.43)	.48 (.42)	-.55 (.43)	.20 (.42)	-.64 (.43)	.10 (.42)
Adaptive Beliefs	.19 (.43)	.85 (.42)	-.38 (.43)	.40 (.42)	.06 (.43)	.10 (.42)

Table 5. *Kurtosis (standard error) for variables in repeated measures analyses of variance at all time points*

	Time 1		Time 2		Time 3	
	Workshop	Wait-List	Workshop	Wait-List	Workshop	Wait-List
Insight	-.77 (.83)	.66 (.82)	-.07 (.83)	-.93 (.82)	.75 (.83)	-.57 (.82)
Mutuality	.36 (.83)	-.34 (.82)	.22 (.83)	-.29 (.82)	.45 (.83)	-.04 (.82)
Emotion Regulation	.44 (.83)	-.33(.82)	.10 (.83)	-.11 (.82)	.33 (.83)	-.61 (.82)
Decision Making	-.80 (.83)	-.30 (.82)	.53 (.83)	-.42 (.82)	.33 (.83)	-1.14 (.82)
Adaptive Beliefs	-1.40 (.83)	.78 (.82)	-.27 (.83)	.24 (.82)	-.94 (.83)	-.73 (.82)

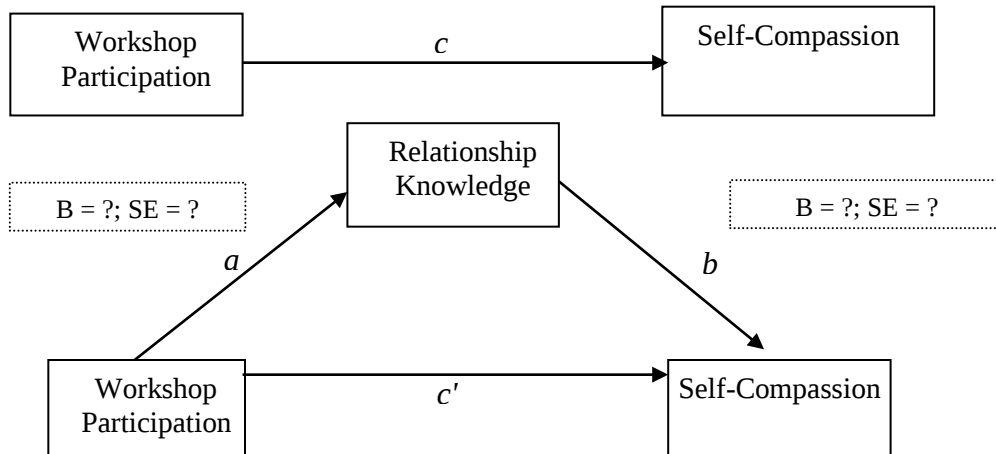


Figure 1. Mediation model of workshop participation predicting self-compassion.

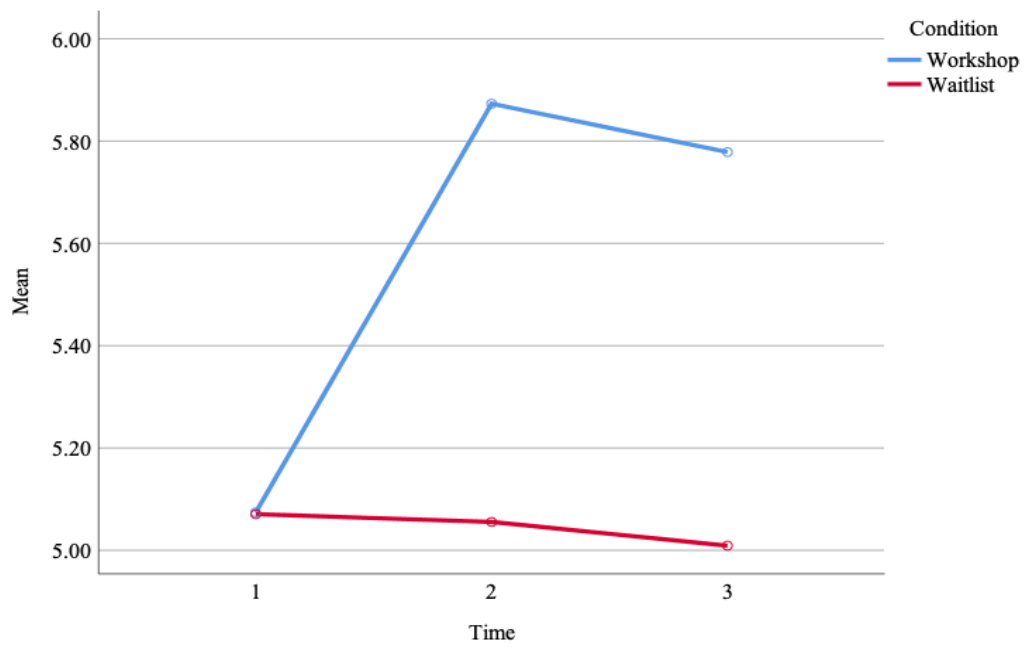


Figure 2. Profile plot of means for insight across time for both conditions.

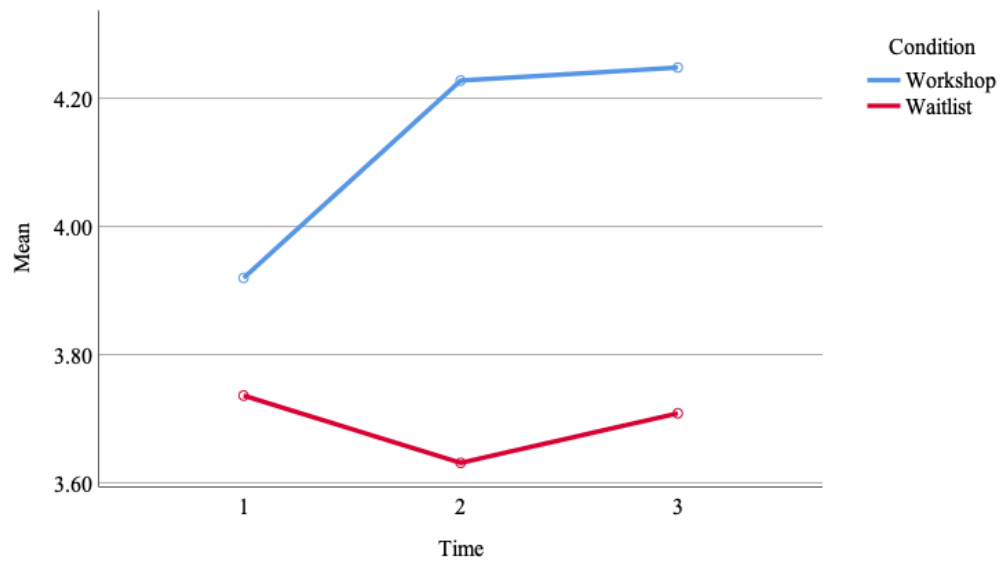


Figure 3. Profile plot of means for mutuality across time for both conditions.

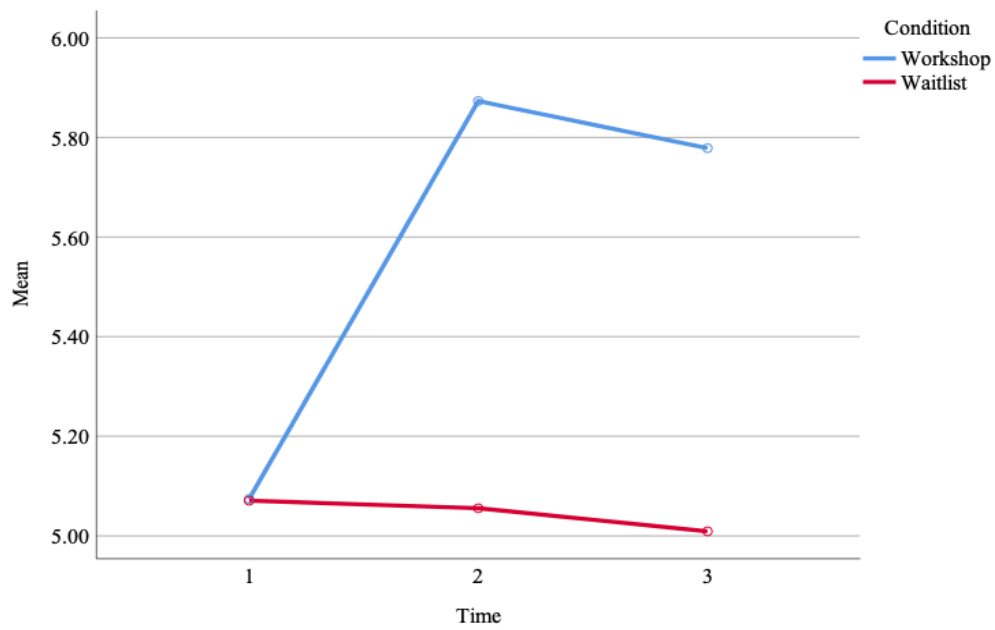


Figure 4. Profile plot of means for emotion regulation across time for both conditions.

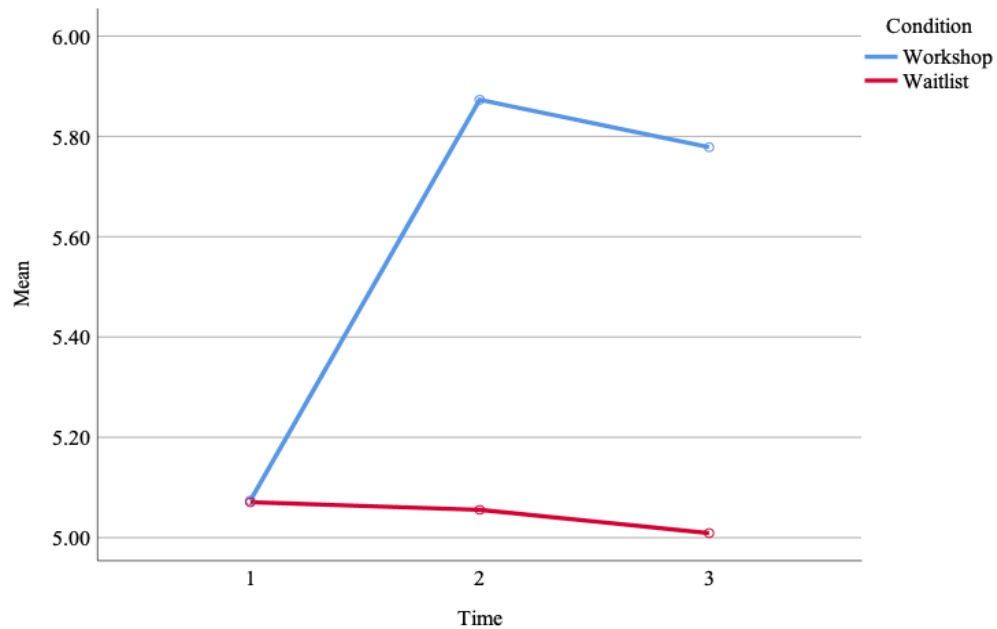


Figure 5. Profile plot of means for decision making across time for both conditions.

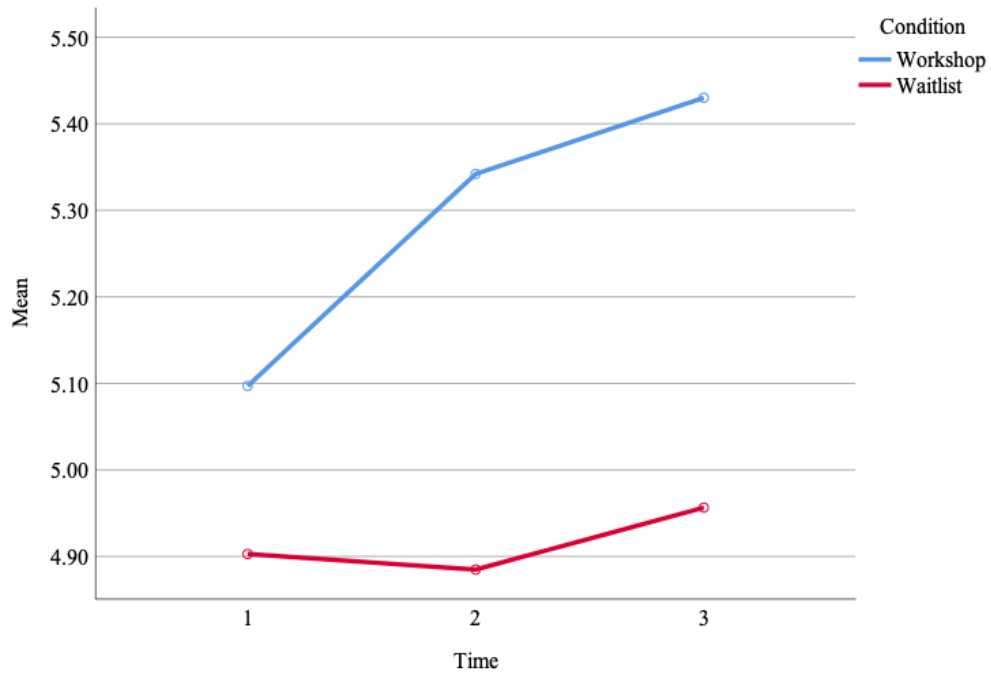


Figure 6. Profile plot of means for adaptive beliefs (growth) across time for both conditions.

VITA

Ashley Nicole Russell was born in Morehead, Kentucky. She earned her Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees in psychology and clinical psychology from Morehead State University. She is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. Her research focuses on factors that contribute to healthy romantic relationships and how to improve the outcomes of relationship education for the emerging adult population.