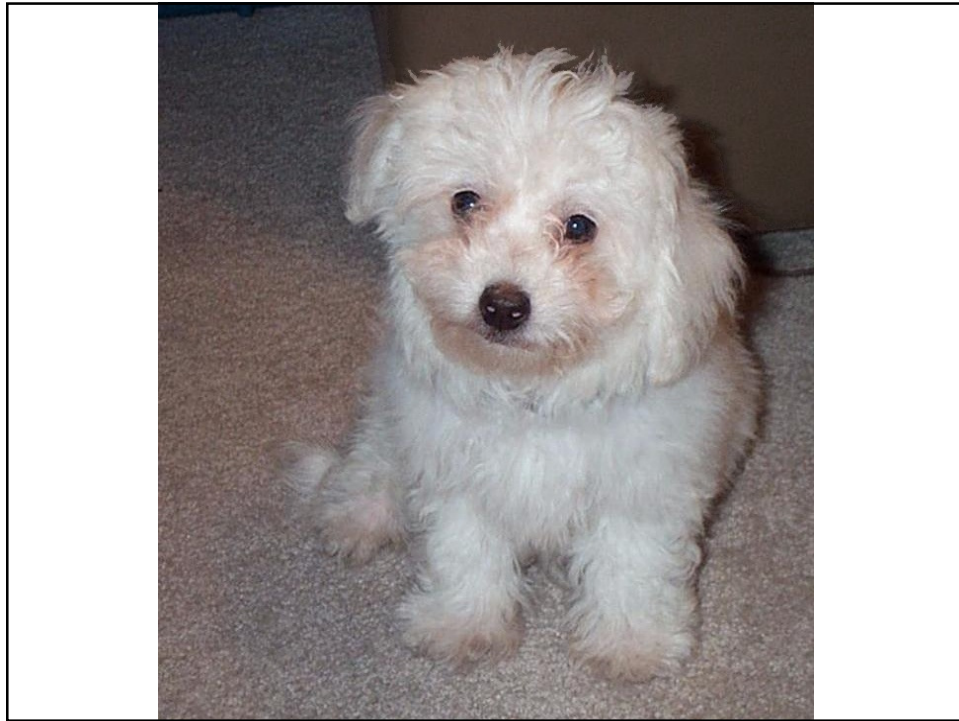


*What Do We Know and Where
Do We Go Next?*

Prof. Scott M. Stanley
University of Denver

- Support for much of the work by the University of Denver team in these areas has been provided by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the United States.



Targeting Risk Factors

- With committed couples, where you are trying to help them make it:
 - focus more energy on dynamic risk factors.
- With individuals you are trying to help make best choices in partners:
 - both static and dynamic risk factors are equally pertinent.

Five Reasons to Work in Individual-Focused Contexts

- (1) People are not in committed relationships (esp. marriage) until later ages.
- (2) Most of our existing contact points are with individuals, not with couples.
- (3) We have a new generation of *individuals* who are shaky about their odds in relationships and marriage.
- (4) You can get at things with individuals that are much harder to “touch” with couples.
- (5) With individuals who have not yet settled deeply into a specific relationship, much more is changeable.

Anxiety Driving Riskier Behavior

- Ambiguity
- Cohabitation (esp before commitment formed)
- Serial Cohabitation
- Multiple sexual relationships
- Delaying marriage until self-insured
- Seeking the perfect love(r): Soul Mate Ideology

- We could use this anxiety to drive people into activities that might lower their risks.

- Example: Cohabitation
 - Testing relationship while increasing constraint?
 - Testing worst answer for why cohabit: (Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2009)
 - Testing relationship in less risky ways:
 - Relationship education as testing (long before constrained) (e.g., Rhoades & Stanley, 2009;

Couple & Relationship Education Effectiveness Research

Couple vs. Individual Based

- There are a vast number of studies, of varying quality and importance, on services to committed couples.
- There are very few studies on individually oriented relationship education. Initial promising studies (though, many methodological issues to be addressed in future studies):
 - Antle, B.F., Sar, B.K., Christensen, D.N., Ellers, F.S., Karam, E.A., Barbee, A.P., & van zyl, M.A. (in press). The impact of the Within My Reach relationship training on relationship skills and outcomes for low-income individuals. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*.
 - Antle, B. F., Karam, E., Christensen, D. N., Barbee, A. P., & Sar, B. K. (2011). An evaluation of healthy relationship education to reduce intimate partner violence. *Journal of Family Social Work*, 14(5), 387-406.

Types of Studies

- Meta-analytic studies
 - Studies analyzing the results from many studies
 - There are numerous M-A studies out now
- Influential Individual Studies
- Large Government Trials

- Giblin, P., Sprenkle, D.H., & Sheehan, R. (1985). Enrichment outcome research: A meta-analysis of premarital, marital, and family interventions. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 11(3), 257-271.
- Carroll, J. S., & Doherty, W. J. (2003). Evaluating the effectiveness of premarital prevention programs: A meta-analytic review of outcome research. *Family Relations*, 52, 105-118.
- Stagner, M., Ehrle, J., Kortenkamp, K., & Reardon-Anderson, J. (2003, September 4). *Systematic Review of the Impact of Marriage and Relationship Programs*. National Poverty Center Conference , Washington D. C.

- Blanchard, V. L., Hawkins, A. J., Baldwin, S. A., & Fawcett, E. B. (2009). Investigating the effects of marriage and relationship education on couples' communication skills: A meta-analytic study. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 23, 203-214.
- Hawkins, A. J., Blanchard, V. L., Baldwin, S. A., & Fawcett, E. B. (2008). Does marriage and relationship education work? A meta-analytic study. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 76, 723 -734.

Evidence of General Effectiveness

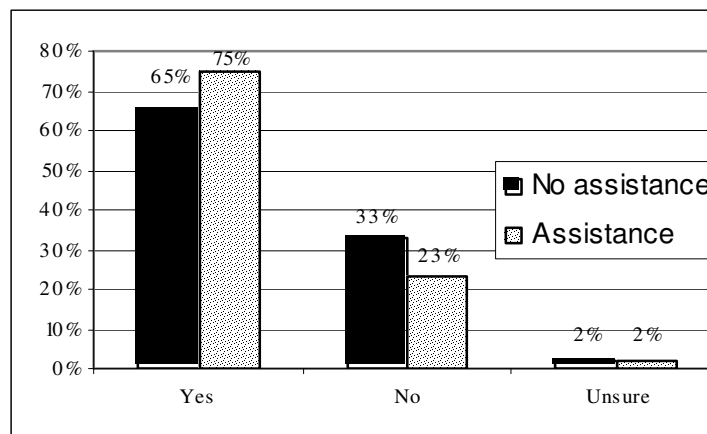
- Meta-analyses generally examine impacts across many studies
- Showing consistently positive impacts on dimensions such as:
 - Relationship Satisfaction/Adjustment
 - Communication Quality

Impacts Across Groups:
Race/Ethnicity and Income as
Moderators

- People have doubted if disadvantaged groups are even interested.
- You cannot infer interest where there is no access.
 - Theodora Ooms
 - Howard Markman
- Various types of studies show there is a lot of interest and just as great and sometimes greater impacts for disadvantaged groups.

Q: Would you consider using relationship education, such as workshops or classes to strengthen your relationship?

(Oklahoma Baseline Survey, 2002: Johnson, Stanley, Glenn, Amato, Markman, & Dion)



Would you consider using relationship education, such as workshops or classes, to strengthen your relationship?

	White	African American	Native American/ Alaskan Native
Yes	63%	75%	59%

Meta-Analysis:

Need more studies, but evidence is encouraging

Hawkins, A. J., & Fackrell, T. A. (2010). Does relationship and marriage education for lower-income couples work? A meta-analytic study of emerging research. *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy, 9*, 181–191.

– Results hold across different groups

In Our Studies, We Find Results Consistent Across Groups

- In our earlier, smaller study in the US Army:
 - Stanley, S. M., Allen, E. S., Markman, H. J., Saiz, C. C., Bloomstrom, G., Thomas, R., Schumm, W. R., & Baily, A. E. (2005). Dissemination and evaluation of marriage education in the Army. *Family Process*, 44, 187–201.
- In large randomized trial within US Army:
 - Allen, E. S., Stanley, S. M., Rhoades, G. K., Markman, H. J., & Loew, B. A. (2011). Marriage education in the Army: Results of a randomized clinical trial. *Journal of Couple and Relationship Therapy*, 10(4), 309-326.
- In a large, random household phone survey:
 - Stanley, S. M., Amato, P. R., Johnson, C. A., & Markman, H. J. (2006). Premarital education, marital quality, and marital stability: Findings from a large, random, household survey. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 20, 117-126.

The Building Strong Families Study (BSF)

- In the very large, Building Strong Families (BSF) study in the US, the 15 month results showed that African American couples benefitted the most in this study of unmarried couples expecting a baby.
 - Other than Oklahoma, the data for benefits for other couples was weak to non-existent for reasons I'll explain in the next section.

Programmatic Moderators of Impacts

- Hawkins, A. J., Stanley, S. M., Blanchard, V. L., & Albright, M. (in press). Exploring programmatic moderators of the effectiveness of marriage and relationship education programs: A meta-analytic study. Behavior Therapy.
- Moderators examined in meta-analysis:
 - Dose
 - Format of dose (much less data than we'd like to have)
 - Content: Specific vs. non-specific effects

Dose?

And A Large Methodological Issue

- 1 – 4 Hours: single doses, such as one-time MRE service have weak evidence of impacts.
- 6 – 8 hours: stronger evidence but modest.
- 9 – 20 hours: consistent record of sizeable impacts.
- Over 20 hours: weaker evidence (selection confound here)

Format: Distributed or Concentrated?

- For example, if doing 12 hours:
 - Weekend?
 - Two Saturdays?
 - Three 4 hour weekend workshops?
 - 6 two hour sessions?
- Distributed is likely most effective
 - But definitive research on this has not been done

Inoculation as a Prevention Metaphor

- Some are one brief shot: Polio
- Some require repeated strengthening:
Tetanus

Content

- This is a very poorly understood area.
- There is clear evidence of various risk factors that can be targeted in CRE.
- However, it is not as clear that targeting key risk factors is automatically more effective than doing other things.
 - Knowing risk and changing risk may be different.
 - CRE may change risks in ways not envisioned by program developers

Content: Communication as The Major Example

- Communication patterns matter.
 - We can change communication patterns.
 - Programs that target communication patterns have the largest effects on communication outcomes.
- There is a tendency, but not definitive, for programs that include a strong communication focus to have better impacts on relationship quality.

The Rich Tradition of “Non-Specific Factors”

- In virtually all fields of psychological interventions, it has been difficult to show specific effects.
- The classic non-specific effect is the power of the relationship between provider and participant. AND this does matter:

Owen, J., Rhoades, G. K., Stanley, S. M., & Markman, H. J. (2011). The role of leaders' working alliance in premarital education. *Journal of Family Psychology, 25*(1), 49-57.

Scott's Favorite Nominee for A Potentially Large Non-Specific Factor

- Commitment
- Each partner can see an example of the other willing to spend time in this way.
- Strong literature on commitment impact of seeing partner sacrifice in various ways.
- BSF study: A potential (negative) example

Even if Non-Specific . . . Cautions

- What is presented to couples must be plausibly useful.
- Modern couples appreciate some attention to research basis.
- Quality of care, attention to reduction in barriers, ability to put couples at ease, and incentives are going to matter.

Break-up and Divorce

Divorce Findings in this Field

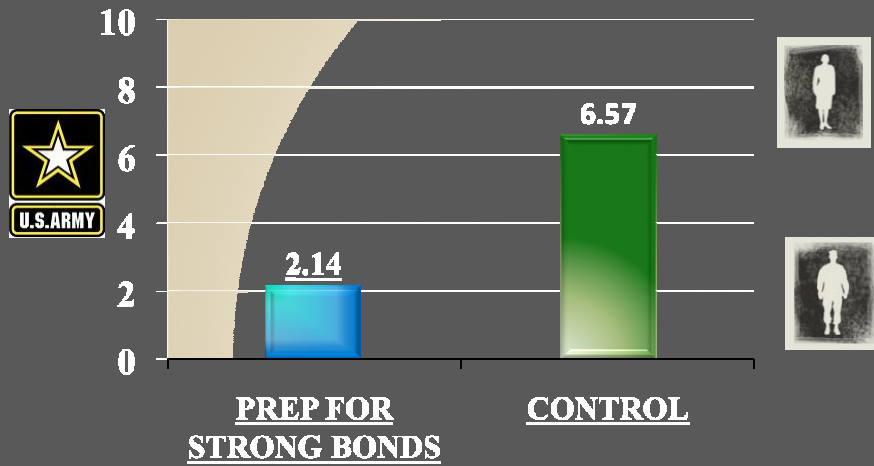
- Most studies in the relationship education field do examine or obtain sig. impacts on break-up/divorce.
- Exceptions:
 - Long-term outcomes, premarital education (Hahlweg, Markman, Thurmaier, Engl, & Eckert 1998)
 - Divorce outcomes, one year post training in our large US Army study (Stanley, Allen, Markman, Rhoades, & Prentice, 2010)
 - Divorce outcomes and premarital education in large, random survey (Stanley, Amato, Johnson, & Markman, 2006)
 - Oklahoma site, BSF Study: (Wood, McConnell, Moore, Clarkwest, & Hsueh 2010)
 - Bradbury, Rogge et al. (unpublished; Bradbury, 2011, ABCT)

Army Marriage Project Divorce at One Year

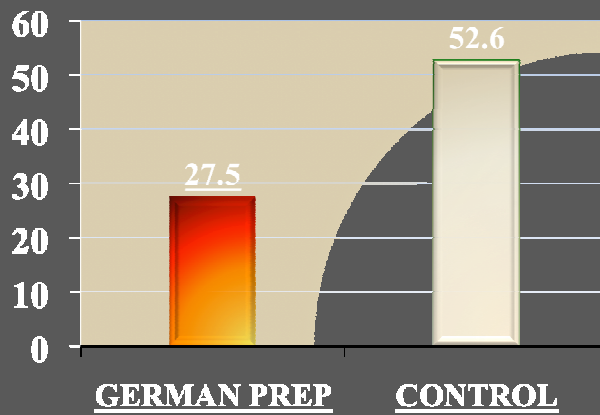
- Fort Campbell: Significant Difference*
 - **2% PREP for Strong Bond** (5/246)
 - **6% Control group** (14/226)
- Fort Benning: No significant difference
- Both Sites Combined: Significant Difference
 - **2.3 % PREP for Strong Bonds**
 - **4.7 % Control group**

* Stanley, Allen, Markman, Rhoades, & Prentice (2010). *Journal of Couple and Relationship Therapy*

**PREP AND CONTROL COUPLES
DIVORCE OUTCOMES (1 YR)
at Ft. Campbell**

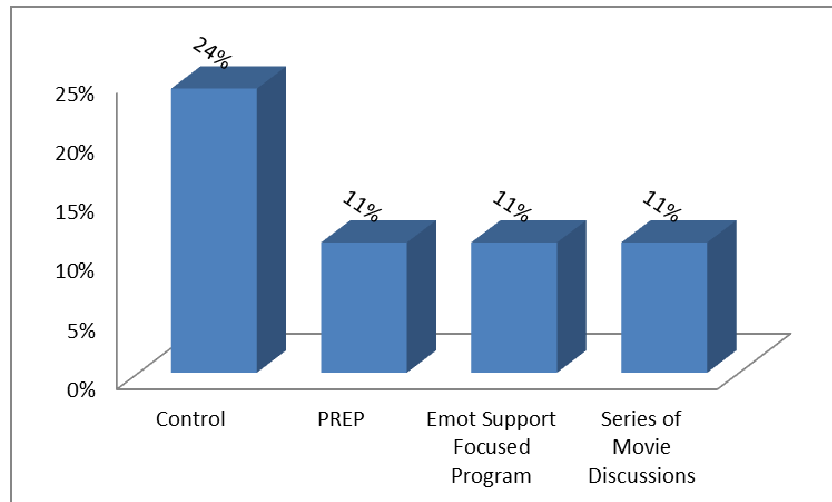


**GERMAN Study on PREP
% DIVORCE OUTCOMES (11 YRS)**



UCLA Study

Bradbury, Rogge, et al. (Bradbury, 2011)



Bradbury, Rogge et al.

- Note: they conceived the movie discussions group as an attention placebo.
- But it is either a solid intervention in it's own right or makes strong use of potent non-specific factors.
- (We at the University of Denver tend to see it as a solid intervention of a very different type than others that have been developed.)

Building Strong Families (BSF)

“Building Strong Families” (BSF) ACF Study

- One of the very large federal studies being conducted at multiple sites
- Results released for 15 month outcomes
 - 36 month impacts will be out soon
- (Another large study will have results in two years: Supporting Healthy Marriage: SHM)

Couples

- 5102 couples across the 8 sites
- Randomly assigned to BSF program or control group
- Low income & generally low education
- Non-married or unmarried prior to conception
- Very diverse sample across sites (only 12% white)

Results (Pooled Across Sites)

- **No effect** on relationship quality
- **No effect** on relationship stability
- **No effect** on father involvement

Across the Study Subgroups Who Clearly Benefited from BSF Programs

- African American couples
- Couples with the lowest education levels
- Younger Couples
- Couples with higher initial relationship satisfaction levels (but those with initial quality gained the most in Oklahoma)

- Among 8 sites, only one site had consistently positive results on many indices.
- The Family Expectations Program
 - The Oklahoma site
 - Strong methods, staff, and program
 - Becoming Parents (BPP/PREP)

Positive Results in Oklahoma

- Relationship Stability (staying together)
- Relationship Happiness
- Support and affection
- Fidelity (to one's partner)
- Conflict management
- Co-parenting & Father involvement
- Fathers living with their children

Some Perspective and History

- Large trials of new government initiatives rarely show any impacts or show only weak effects.
- It is a BIG deal to get strong, clear results.

Wild Cards (just one of the biggies)

- Dose received varied *greatly* by site.
 - Oklahoma got the most people through the most material.
 - In a number of sites, only 40% of couples ever attended one session together.
 - 45% of OK couples completed 80% of the curriculum vs. 9% at other sites

Oklahoma . . .

- . . . Used a lot of creative incentives (some other sites did as well)
- . . . Made the program inviting, warm
- . . . Kept people involved with great community activities
- . . . Regularly evaluated performance data
- . . . Created a family-like connection for people who may not have it otherwise

Are Oklahoma's Impacts Replicable?

- Arguably, quite replicable because:
 - Specific, detailed procedures
 - Thorough training and supervision
 - Active, effective program management
 - Created an incredibly warm environment for the couples
 - Clear incentives and supports
 - Highly structured curriculum

Supporting Healthy Marriage (SHM) Study

A second very large, multi-site randomized trials of significant services to low income couples (married).

SHM: Reasons for Optimism in Reaching Low Income Couples (as reported in Bradbury & Lavner, in press)

- Recruited 6300 couples across sites
- 75% below 200% poverty line
- 50% Hispanic, 30% White (non-Hispanic), 15% African American (5% other)

SHM: Participation in Services

- Over 80% of the couples attended at least one session, and go on to complete an average of 20 hours of training.
- 85% attend at least one family support session, and complete an average of 4.5 family support meetings in 6 months period.
- **Incredible evidence of ability to reach couples at higher risk who most often never receive such services.**

[My source, Bradbury & Lavner, in press; see Gaubert et al., 2010]

Are Government-Supported Healthy Marriage Initiatives Strengthening Families? A State-Level Analysis

Amato, Hawkins, Kinghorn, & Dahle

in preparation

preliminary results, carefully checked
and being readied for peer review

Presented here by their permission

Method

- Used data on government money spent per state, per capita, in healthy marriage/relationship programs
- Accounted for funding information on 86% of the projects nationally
- Examined cumulative funding per capita from 2000 to 2011
- Examined various family outcomes using The American Community Survey

American Community Survey

- Large, robust, best data on family pattern trends
- Outcomes analyzed
 - Percent divorced
 - Percent married
 - Percent of children living with both parents
 - Percent of children living with one of their parents
 - Percent of children living in poverty (& near poverty)
 - Births to married women
 - Etc.

Analyses

- Pooled regressions with fixed effects to control for within state changes and other differences and changes within states.
- The analyses robustly control for various types of unmeasured variables that could otherwise confound interpretation of results.
 - Time invariate state variables (region, culture, urban/rural, etc.)
 - Period effects

Highlights of Results

- No significant impact:
 - % married
 - % non-marital births
- Significant impacts, all in direction intended by policy funding:
 - % divorced
 - % children living with both parents
 - % children living in poverty (or near poverty)

Clickity-Clack

- Trains
- Tracks



email: scott@stanleyemail.com

You can get word.doc versions of some of our
papers at:

<http://www.box.net/shared/xnxx4fb1ao01p0750h9s>

[Scott's blog] www.slidingvsdeciding.com