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Recent Research Abstracts

Vol. 1 – August 2003

RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION

Carroll, Jason S. & Doherty, William J. (2003) Evaluating the Effectiveness of Premarital Prevention Programs: A Meta-Analytic Review of Outcome Research. *Family Relations*, 52 (2), 105-118, April 2003

We present a comprehensive, meta-analytic review and critical evaluation of outcome research pertaining to the effectiveness of premarital prevention programs. Results revealed that the mean effect size of premarital programs was 0.80, which means that the average person who participated in a premarital prevention program was significantly better off afterwards than 79% of people who did not participate. Stated differently, the average participant in a premarital program tends to experience about a 30% increase in measures of outcome success. Our findings suggest that premarital prevention programs are generally effective in producing immediate and short-term gains in interpersonal skills and overall relationship quality and that these improvements are significantly better than nonintervention couples in these areas. However, because of a lack of extended follow-up research, conclusions about long-term effectiveness remain elusive. We propose implications for future research, education and policy.

Simons, M & Parker, R (2002) Relationship Education Services. *Family Matters*, 63, 77-79, Summer-Spring 2002.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies in partnership with the Centre for Research in Education, Equity and Work undertook a survey of relationship education services across the country on behalf of the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, known as the Study of Australian Relationship Education Services. This survey was to identify gaps in service provision, and develop a classification system to distinguish among the various types of programs available. Recommendations made on the basis of the study pertain to various areas of service provision, including program design and development and the implementation of evaluation frameworks. This article outlines the outcomes of the study and the recommendations that emanated from it.

Halford, W.K.; Sanders M.R. & Behrens, B.C. (2001) Can skills training prevent relationship problems in at-risk couples? Four year effects of a behavioural relationship education program. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 15(4), 750-68

83 couples were stratified into groups at high and low risk for relationship distress and randomized to either Self-Regulatory Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (Self-PREP) or a control condition. As predicted, there were differential effects of Self-PREP on high-risk and low-risk couples. Because of low statistical power, results must be interpreted cautiously, but at 1 year follow up high-risk couples in Self-PREP showed trends towards better communication than control couples. However, there was no difference in the communication of Self-PREP and control low-risk couples. High-risk couples receiving Self-PREP exhibited higher relationship satisfaction at 4 years than control couples, but in low-risk couples relationship satisfaction was higher in the control condition. High-risk couples seemed to benefit from skills-based relationship education, but low-risk couples did not.