

Chapter to appear in:

Fincham, F.D., & Cui, M. (Eds.) *Romantic Relationships in Emerging Adulthood*.

Cambridge University Press

Relationship education in emerging adulthood:

Problems and prospects

Frank D. Fincham

The Florida State University

Scott M. Stanley & Galena K. Rhoades

University of Denver

Relationship education in emerging adulthood: Problems and prospects

The literature on emerging adulthood (EA) has focused heavily on basic research, a reflection no doubt of continuing debate about fundamental features of this stage of development (see special issue of *Child Development Perspectives*, 2007). It is, therefore, not surprising that examination of applied issues relating to romantic relationships in EA has been limited to documenting an association between romantic relationships and psychological adjustment (see chapter x,) and to showing that the quality of such relationships mediates the link between earlier parent-adolescent relationships and later mental health outcomes (Beyers & Seiffge-Krenke, 2007). The purpose of this chapter is to broaden attention to applied issues in the EA literature by considering how to facilitate what appears to be a prerequisite to entering adulthood, the ability to initiate and sustain an intimate romantic relationship with another person.

What is relationship education and is it necessary?

Historically relationship education has taken the form of marriage education and has been offered almost exclusively to couples. Such marriage education has its roots in religious institutions and the precursor to modern programs was Pre-Cana premarital counseling now required of couples wishing to marry within the Catholic Church (Ooms, 2005). Until quite recently, most relationship education occurred in religious contexts thereby excluding those who do not profess a religious faith or who are uncomfortable in such settings. Nonetheless, a substantial minority of marrying couples (44%) in the 1990s received some type of relationship education before marriage (Stanley et al., 2006).

In the US, government policy and the emergence of a formal “marriage movement” (Institute for American Values, 2004), has led to an unprecedented emphasis on relationship education in the service of promoting healthy marriages. This development is not, however,

limited to the US as government attempts to promote couple relationship education can be found in Australia, Japan, Norway and the United Kingdom (Huang, 2005; Ooms, 2005; Thuen & Loerum, 2005 van Acker, 2003). Although these countries exhibit less rhetoric on promoting marriage per se they share the same goal, to promote healthy, committed couple relationships, particularly as the strongest context for childrearing. Importantly, these policy initiatives have been funded and this funding is having an impact not only on their dissemination but also on marital research (see Fincham & Beach, in press). For example, in 2005, the US government made available 150 million dollars each year for promoting healthy marriage and fatherhood, with money funding various opportunities to develop knowledge ranging from demonstration projects to large scale, randomized trials in community settings.

Justifying such policy initiatives is recognition of the fact that marital problems and divorce not only adversely impact spouses (see, Amato, 2000; Proulx, Helms, & Buehler, 2007), 2003) but also their children (see Buehler, Lange & Franck, 2007; Grych & Fincham, 2001). Moreover, stable happy relationships are associated with a low likelihood of needing government support (Thomas & Sawhill, 2005) and persons in such relationships use health services considerably less than their distressed counterparts (resulting in about 25% lower costs, Prigerson, Maciejewski & Rosenheck, 2000). The most thoroughly documented process associated with relationship distress is poorly managed conflict (Fincham & Beach, 1999). As a result, “healthy marriage” is viewed by many as “a low conflict relationship or a relationship in which parents resolve their disagreements amicably” (McLanahan, Donahue & Haskins, 2005, p. 4).

Although well documented, this association between relationship distress and poor outcomes does not demonstrate a causal relationship and, even if it were known to be causal, this

link would not demonstrate the impact of *healthy* relationships. This is because relationship health is not simply the absence of relationship distress, and there is increasing recognition of the need for greater understanding of healthy relationships (e.g., Fincham & Beach, in press; Fincham, Stanley, & Beach, 2007). The new emphasis on relationship education provides an important opportunity to advance such research. After all, randomized intervention trials on the promotion of healthy relationships have the potential to not only identify the impact of such interventions but also causal mechanisms associated with well-being. Because relationship education is quite different from counseling this opens up a potentially fruitful line of inquiry for researchers who are not clinicians.

At its simplest, relationship education is the provision of information designed to help couples and individuals experience successful, stable romantic relationships. The goal is to impart knowledge, teach skills, and help participants develop appropriate expectations and attitudes regarding romantic relationships. The most effective interventions, arguably, will focus on dynamic (relatively changeable) versus static risk and protective factors (Stanley, 2001). There is often a strong focus on the acquisition of specific skills related to communication and conflict resolution (see Ragan, Einhorn, Rhoades, Markman, & Stanley, 2009). Programs typically include didactic methods, experiential exercises to learn specific skills, role playing, work-book exercises and practice homework assignments. Varying in length, programs range from a half-day to weekly sessions for up to 32 weeks. In essence, relationship education is preventive and addresses relationship challenges before they become problems in comparison to couple counseling which is provided to already distressed couples.

Because much of the increased interest in marriage education has arisen from policy initiatives related to poverty reduction, relationship education has been offered to increasingly

heterogeneous, more ethnically diverse, and less affluent target populations who, in many cases, are not currently in romantic relationships and who may not be married soon (e.g., Ooms & Wilson, 2004). It has even been implemented in middle and high schools and federal funding was also awarded to deliver relationship education to emerging adults in college.

Is relationship education needed in emerging adulthood?

The case for broad based relationship education rests largely on research done on marriage and marriage education. Although the growing divorce rate in the 1970s that prompted research on marriage education has since leveled off in the US (but remains high at 40%, Raley, & Bumpass, 2003), the continued need for marriage education is one potential reason to justify its implementation in EA. Furthermore, it has been argued that working with individuals in this age group may provide greater opportunities for preventive impacts (Stanley & Rhoades, 2009) as more variables related to longer-term outcomes are amenable to change (e.g., choice of partner rather than changes in preexisting couples). Surely addressing issues further “upstream” before they give rise to adverse outcomes in marriage is a good thing? But, one might argue, EA is a time of exploration regarding romantic relationships and persons at this stage are not supposed to settle into committed longer term relationships. This objection needs to be considered in light of several observations.

First, because the developmental tasks of EA include exploration of romance it provides what marital policy analysts label a “reachable moment” (Ooms & Wilson, 2004), a time when an individual is particularly open to learning about relationships. This makes it a particularly propitious time to deliver relationship education. Second, substantial numbers of persons in this developmental period do form committed romantic relationships. Indeed, many marry before age 23 (25% of women and 16% of men, Uecker, & Stokes, 2008) and in our own work we

typically find about 57% of college undergraduates report being in an exclusive romantic relationship, the median length of which is 1-2 years. Plus, another 29% are not in a relationship, but would like to be. Third, relationship behaviors learned at this time may be carried over into long-term relationships in adulthood, including marriage. Fourth, the average age of first childbirth is around 24 years of age and births to unmarried women in their 20s have increased in recent decades. In 2007, 60% of births to women 20-24 were to unmarried women (Ventura, 2009). These figures suggest that many individuals in EA are forming significant sexual and/or co-parenting relationships, often long before marriage.

Perhaps the most compelling observation to be made is that romantic relationships in EA may exhibit the very problems that prompted the recent emergence of marriage education. There appear to be substantial data to support this possibility. For example, consider intimate partner violence, something that cannot be justified even as an “exploratory” behavior. Since Makepeace (1981) published the first study of physical intimate partner violence in dating relationships, many studies have documented its widespread prevalence in Canada and the United States. Estimates of the prevalence of violence in college student dating relationships vary from 13% to 74% (e.g., Daley & Noland, 2001; Zweig, Barber, & Eccles, 1997), but the most consistent prevalence rates range from about 20% to 33% (Smith, Thompson, Tomaka, & Buchanan, 2005). For example, in a recent study, 34% of college students in dating relationships reported the occurrence of physical aggression in the relationship over the past 12 months (Straus & Ramirez, 2002). Nor is this a problem limited to the USA as in a study of 31 university samples in 16 countries, Straus (2004) found that at the median university, 29% of the students physically assaulted a dating partner in the previous 12 months (range = 17–45%).

Consider also that the individual and contextual changes in EA push to the forefront a host of risky behaviors that can increase risk for immediate and future problems (Braithwaite, Delevi & Fincham, in press). Thus, for example, sexual risk taking behavior can be a problem in this developmental period where “hooking up,” a reference to physically intimate behaviors that occur outside the context of a relationship with defined commitment or an intended future (Bisson & Levine, in press), has become common. Among college students, 50–75% report hooking up in the past year (Paul et al., 2000) and many studies have shown that hooking up is associated with mental and physical health risks (e.g., depressive symptoms, sexually transmitted infections, alcohol use; Grello et al., 2006; Owen, Rhoades, Stanley, & Fincham, in press; Paul et al., 2000). For example, Desiderato and Crawford (1995) found that approximately one third of sexually active students reported having multiple sex partners in the past 11 weeks and that within this group of students with multiple sex partners, approximately 75% reported inconsistent or no condom use. Similarly, friends with benefits relationships (friendships that include physical intimacy but with no implication of a romantic relationship) are relatively common among young adults with prevalence rates ranging from approximately 33 to 60 percent (e.g., Bisson & Levine, in press; Puentes et al., 2008).

It is not unreasonable to ask whether such behaviors reflect lack of efficacy or confidence in forming and maintaining committed romantic relationships rather than mere exploration. A survey reported by Levine and Cureton (1998) shows that college students aspire to have a single happy marriage but are unsure of their ability to achieve this goal. In a similar vein, Creasey, Kershaw, and Boston (1999, p. 524) observe that relationship difficulties are “a chief reason this population often seeks services” in college counseling centers. In any event, it is clear that

problems regarding romantic relationships in EA are somewhat analogous to those that prompted the emergence and growth of marriage education.

Another way to address the question posed in this section is ask whether committed romantic relationships confer any benefits during EA. Noting that healthy marriages are associated with multiple advantages for spouses, Braithwaite et al. (in press) set out to determine whether analogous benefits occurred among dating college students. In a random sample of 1,621 students, they found that individuals in committed romantic relationships experienced fewer mental health problems and were less likely to be overweight. Moreover, they engaged in less risky behavior (e.g. binge drinking, driving while intoxicated, having multiple sex partners) than their single counterparts and less risky behaviors among those in committed relationships mediated the association between relationship status and health problems. Although they conclude that dating relationships may provide health benefits similar to marriage (but not as comprehensive as marriage), it is possible that selection effects are at work even in dating relationships. Even where such patterns do reflect selection effects, the patterns (absence of stable, romantic relationship in this case) provide information useful for targeting those who are at higher risk with prevention efforts (e.g., Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2009). In any event, this study is among the first to provide data on the health benefits that may derive from committed dating relationships among college students.

The data reviewed thus far, combined with the observation that EA is a period when so many health relevant habits are formed and relationships that culminate in marriage begun, leads us to re consider our initial question. Rather than ask whether relationship education is needed in EA, we might ask rhetorically: can we afford to ignore relationship education in EA? An

assumption underlying this question is that relationship education can improve relationships, a topic to which we now turn.

Is relationship education efficacious?

As in the prior section, virtually all the data available to address this question pertain to marriage education delivered to couples. Several reviews of the efficacy of specific programs have appeared, with all agreeing, to varying degrees, that so-called “skill based” marital education programs tend to produce a positive, albeit modest effect on relationship quality and marital communication (e.g., Carroll & Doherty, 2003; Hawkins et al., 2008), and so provide a foundation for marriage education efforts (for review of specific programs see Ragan et al., 2009). Interestingly, effect sizes are significantly larger on observational measures (effect size = .849) of communication than self-reported communication (effect size = .173) and there is preliminary evidence from 5 experimental studies that these gains in communication are maintained beyond 6 months (effect size = .588, Blanchard, Hawkins, Baldwin, & Fawcett, 2009). In addition, questions have been raised regarding the extent to which skill mastery accounts for positive outcomes (Schilling et al., 2003; but see also Stanley et al., 2007), and there has been some evidence that those with greater marital problems may show the greatest benefit from current programs (Halford et al., 2001). The limitations of current, skill-based programs have led to conceptual work aimed at broadening the targets of premarital education programs (Hawkins et al., 2004). In particular, theoretical developments over the past decade suggest that it will be necessary to address a broader range of dimensions of healthy relationship functioning, including positive aspects of marital functioning, in order to increase efficacy (e.g., Fincham et al., 2007). Notwithstanding this concern, Stanley et al. (2006) found that among a random

sample of couples in the Southeastern USA having received premarital education was associated with greater marital satisfaction and lower odds of divorce.

Despite increasing evidence that marital education is efficacious troubling issues remain in generalizing from these data. First, it is noteworthy that the majority of studies (73%) in the most recent meta-analysis (Blanchard et al., 2009) served already married couples. Indeed, some have questioned whether the data base supporting marriage education is sufficiently strong to warrant widespread dissemination of current approaches; historically most programs have been examined with couples least at risk for marital disruption, namely, well educated, affluent and nondistressed couples (see Bradbury & Karney, 2004). It also has been noted that those who are less religious are more likely to have a history of premarital cohabitation and may be less likely to attend marriage education programs (Halford et al., 2006) despite the fact that these are risk factors for future difficulties, suggesting a need to attract these couples to relationship enhancement programs. In short, as Sullivan and Bradbury (1997) noted, historically those receiving relationship education have been at relatively low risk for divorce and other marital problems. In line with these concerns, there has been an expansion of marriage education activities to include education efforts aimed at younger, and single individuals (e.g. Pearson, 2004; Stanley et al., 2004) and identification of key transitions at which to offer specialized marriage education (Halford et al., 2008). There is a great need to take relationship education to environments populated with young individuals, where at risk populations are naturally found.

Building on this observation, it is worth noting that the majority of youth experience the transition to adulthood in the context of college (about 57%, Stoops, 2004) and this therefore seems that it would be an appropriate context in which to offer relationship education to emerging adults. We therefore turn to describe an effort to do so.

Relationship education in college

How does one institute relationship education in college? Many institutions of higher education are large bureaucracies characterized by considerable inertia. Thus introducing relationship education in such contexts is no easy matter. Perhaps the quickest way to do so is to convince student government or counseling centers of the value of such education. However, if successful, programs instituted in this way will need to recruit participants. Here strategies can range from web advertising and posting flyers to having recruiters ride campus buses with provocative life size posters that generate conversation among riders leading to attendance at relationship education events. These approaches have been used with limited success as recruiting students to attend campus events can often be difficult and labor intensive.

A second option is to introduce relationship education as a formal course. This is done most easily by a faculty member choosing to offer it as an elective. This approach has been implemented successfully at Northwestern University (see Nielsen, Pinsof, Rampage, Solomon, & Goldstein, 2004) but to our knowledge no efficacy data exist for such electives. The chief limitation of this approach, however, is that electives usually comprise small, highly selective classes and therefore have limited reach.

If relationship education is viewed through the lens of public health the two approaches outlined are unlikely to have the necessary reach to make them successful public health interventions. To do this, a program has to be cost effective, designed so that it can be taken to scale and therefore be used widely, and have monitoring and evaluation tools available in order to determine how well it works in each particular setting that it is used (Flay et al., 2005). Finally, it must address concerns about the need for research to “inform and improve the quality

of health and human services” thereby expanding “utilization of evidence-based approaches” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006, p. 1).

Project RELATE. These considerations informed the development of Project RELATE, a program offered to approximately 1,000 students each semester at The Florida State University. This broader based implementation was made possible by including relationship education as part of an established course that meets university liberal studies requirements in social sciences. Therefore participants potentially represent all colleges and majors on campus. The goal is to reach 10,000 students (25% of the campus undergraduate population) over a 5 year period and thereby impact local norms regarding romantic relationships.

Including relationship education material as one part of a class had two important advantages. First, it facilitated obtaining the various approvals needed from curricula committees. Second, it allowed us to deliver relationship education without advertising it as such and thus to serve students who were not specifically seeking out relationship education. However, this poses two important challenges, one ethical and one practical.

At the ethical level, students should not be forced to participate in relationship education to obtain a graduation requirement. To accommodate this concern, the course is also offered without relationship education and students who find themselves in a section of the course that offers relationship education that they do not wish to receive are transferred to a section that does not include the education. At the practical level, a student may be willing to be exposed to relationship education but not take it seriously. Indeed, some students have explicitly stated that “college is a time to party” in one’s social life and that they do not see the point of working to have healthy relationships at this stage in their life. This issue is explicitly addressed at several points in the curriculum, a topic to which we now turn.

The above practical observation makes it obvious that relationship education needs to be tailored to the specific needs of the population to which it is offered, a point emphasized by those who advocate its widespread dissemination (Halford, et al., 2008). But in the absence of research on relationship education in EA how does one do this? We began by examining empirically informed and empirically evaluated relationship education programs and soon found that the most studied program was the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP: Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 2001). This program is without doubt the most empirically informed and evaluated program available and has been shown to be efficacious for improving relationship quality across a number of different indices in at least seven randomized, controlled studies (for review, see Jakubowski et al., 2004), and is the only relationship education program listed among evidence-based programs at SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, www.SAMHSA.gov).

As the dissemination efforts noted earlier increased, two of the authors noted that this couple based program, like most in the field, had several gaps in regard to educating individuals about relationships (see Rhoades & Stanley, 2009). They therefore developed a version of PREP for individuals, a relationship education curriculum known as Within My Reach (Pearson, Stanley, & Rhoades, 2008). The curriculum has three major goals, namely, “(1) helping those in viable relationships to cultivate, protect, and stabilize their unions, and to marry if desired; (2) helping those in damaging relationships to leave safely; and/or (3) helping those desiring a romantic relationship to choose future partners wisely” (Pearson et al., p. 2). An especially attractive feature of this program is that it can be offered to participants in a relationship as well as those who are un-partnered. The focus is on the individual and one’s relationship options and behaviors relative to one’s relationship aspirations.

This curriculum was initially developed for unmarried mothers with low incomes levels and there is now data supporting its effectiveness with this population (Antle et al., in press). Given this initial focus, it included material that is less relevant for most college students (e.g., on parenting), but it served as a useful starting point as many topics addressed are relevant to all individuals regardless of their circumstance. For example, it includes a substantial focus on mate selection, a process that accounts for a sizeable proportion of variance in relationship outcomes (e.g. Clements, Stanley, & Markman, 2004). Providing information on mate selection to assist participants clarify what it is they are looking for in a potential partner is consistent with another important issue addressed in the curriculum, helping participants gain greater understanding of themselves and what they bring to a romantic relationship.

In Project RELATE considerable attention is given to family background influences, relationship expectations and the influence of sex role socialization on romantic relationships. Early on participants identify goals they have for a relationship and later material is presented in relation to these goals so that its relevance is quite obvious. As is typical in relationship education, participants also learn communication skills (e.g., the speaker-listener technique) and other ways to identify and manage conflict (e.g., use of time-out) in all kinds of relationships. Table 1 shows the objectives of each class session from both facilitator and student perspectives.

Two themes are evident throughout the program. Based on Stanley, Rhoades, and Markman's (2006) work on a transition and risk model framed as "sliding vs. deciding," considerable attention is given to making explicit decisions about the progression of a relationship (deciding) rather than just mindlessly letting things happen (sliding, which, for example, is ubiquitous in cohabiting relationships: Manning & Smock, 2005). Every opportunity is used to show how sliding can thwart participants' relationship and life goals for two major

reasons. First, individuals often slide through relationship transitions (sex, becoming pregnant, cohabiting and finding it difficult to break up) *before* making an appraisal of advantages relative to disadvantages. Thus, information bearing on risk is often obtained after one can fully act on it (Stanley & Rhoades, 2009). Yet such transitions are potentially life altering because they can diminish future options (e.g., by contracting a sexually transmitted disease, having a child out of wedlock, and the inertia of cohabitation). Second, sliding transitions can set up weaker internal motivation to follow-through on commitment in the future of the relationship, if there is a future.

The second theme evident throughout the program is safety, which is an important topic for emerging adults given our earlier observations. Within My Reach emphasizes not only physical safety, but also emotional safety (being able to talk openly, being supportive, being able to talk without fighting) and commitment safety (experiencing the security of a clear future, fidelity and mutual investment). The latter is particularly relevant in EA as this period is one in which the individual makes a commitment to a particular worldview, to a career direction and in their love life (Arnett, 2000).

Delivering such education to a large class is not possible given its interactive nature. In Project RELATE, relationship education is delivered in small break-out sections of 20-30 students offered once a week. This necessitates training about 12-15 facilitators (doctoral students) to deliver the curriculum and this is done in a three-day training offered by one of the authors of Within My Reach (Scott Stanley). In addition to receiving such training, facilitators meet weekly to go over the material covered that week. The goals for the session and the procedures to be followed each week are described in a detailed Project RELATE manual and audio visual materials used in the session are accessed electronically from a central location. To

ensure program fidelity, a team of three observers monitors break-out sessions and provide corrective feedback to facilitators when necessary.

The big challenge. Although many aspects of implementing a program like Project REALATE are challenging, without doubt, the greatest challenge is one of evaluation. The technology for assessing the efficacy of marital education is well developed but as Rhoades and Stanley (2009, p. 52) note, assessing the efficacy of relationship education for individuals “will require significant new thought and creativity.”

A simple minded approach to assessing efficacy is to start by building on the available marital technology (with appropriate modifications). Project RELATE did this with some success. For example, Wilson et al. (2005) developed a marital measure that focuses on self-regulatory behaviors directed at the relationship. This construct of relationship regulation is particularly relevant to EA and so we examined the extent to which participants made conscious efforts to work on their relationship using the following items from Wilson et al.’s (2005), measure: “I make an effort to seek out ideas about what makes for an effective relationship,” “I discuss the appropriateness of my goals for our relationship with my partner,” and “I try to apply ideas about effective relationships to improving our relationship” ($\alpha = .86$). Because we offer the college course with and without relationship education we were able to test whether participation in Project RELATE increased the amount of relationship regulation engaged relative to a comparison group. Controlling for initial levels of relationship regulation, students receiving relationship education reported higher relationship regulation at the conclusion of the course than those who did not receive relationship education, $F(1, 828) = 4.68, p < .05$. In a similar vein, we assessed reports of four conflict behaviors associated with marital distress using items developed by Stanley, Markman & Whitton (2002). Example items include “Little arguments escalate into

ugly fights with accusations, criticisms, name calling, or bringing up past hurts,” and “When we argue, one of us withdraws...that is, does not want to talk about it anymore, or leaves the scene” ($\alpha = .74$). Again controlling for initial levels of negative interaction, after receiving relationship education, participants reported lower levels of conflict behavior than those who had not received the education $F(1, 829) = 3.95, p < .05$.

Building on marital research can take us only so far, however. This is especially true for EA where successful outcomes may not be an improved relationship but separating from the partner. The simple approach outlined thus far fails to recognize such complexity. Consider also that an important goal of relationship education delivered to individuals is to change core beliefs and attitudes pertaining to relationships. Here the marital literature has little that can be co-opted. For example, recognizing that intimate partner violence may be sustained by inappropriate attitudes, we were surprised to find that while numerous measures of such violence exist, virtually no empirical attention had been paid to attitudes towards intimate partner violence, though changing such attitudes is a fundamental goal of the adapted intervention. We were thus forced to do the psychometric work needed to develop such a measure (see Fincham et al., 2008).

It is also important for partners to recognize warning signs that signal lapsing into an unhealthy relationship, if they are to avoid doing so and, if appropriate, instead work to have a healthy relationship. As there is no established measure of warning signs, we developed our own measure. Sample items included, “I am quickly able to see danger signals in a romantic relationship,” and “I know what to do when I recognize the warning signs in my relationship.” ($\alpha = .83$. with higher scores indicating greater awareness/action regarding warning signs). By collecting data at the beginning of the semester, midway through and at the end of the semester,

we were able to estimate a linear growth curve model for the warning signs measure. This model provided a good fit to the data, $\chi^2(2) = 2.2$, $p > .05$, RMSEA = .01, CFI = .99. As shown in Figure 1, the intervention condition did not predict intercepts (initial values on this measure) but it did predict slopes (linear change), such that participants who received relationship education showed greater change in warning signs than those in the control condition, $CR = 3.43$, $p < .01$. Again, this is a core goal of the intervention (Pearson et al., 2008); individuals are helped to develop schema of relationship health, with a goal to prime implemental intentions to exit from dangerous or ill-fitting relationships.

As noted earlier, simply “sliding” into major relationship decisions without adequate thought is a risk factor for an unhealthy relationship. Conversely, consciously deciding that the time is appropriate to do so increases the odds of having a healthy relationship (Stanley et al., 2006). Again, in the absence of a pre-existing measure, we developed our own items to assess this construct (e.g., “With romantic partners, I weigh the pros and cons before allowing myself to take the next step in the relationship (e.g., be physically intimate),” and “It is better to ‘go with the flow’ than to think carefully about each major step in a romantic relationship”). This measure was scored so higher values indicated more thoughtful decisions (less sliding) about relationship events ($\alpha = .78$). Again a linear growth curve model fit the data extremely well, $\chi^2(2) = 1.2$, $p > .05$, RMSEA = .00, CFI = 1.00. Figure 2 shows that being in the intervention versus the control condition was unrelated to initial values on this variable ($p > .05$) but that being in the intervention condition was related to slope (linear change) in the anticipated manner, $CR = 2.67$, $p < .01$. Participants who received relationship education show a significantly greater increase in thinking about relationship decisions during the course of the intervention than did those in the control condition.

Finally, we report data on an aspect of commitment safety, relationship fidelity. In examining this issue we only included participants who stated that they were in an “exclusive dating relationship.” Using logistic regression we predicted extradyadic sexual intercourse during the course of the semester from infidelity at the start of the semester, sex and age of respondent, relationship satisfaction, relationship length, social desirability and intervention condition (relationship education vs no education). The overall model was significant $\chi^2 = 30.88$, $df = 8$, $p < .01$ and accounted for between .10 and .26 of the variance in sexual infidelity rates, as estimated by the Cox and Snell R square and the Nagelkerke R square, respectively. Importantly, the odds ratio for condition was significant, $e^B = 0.30$ (95% CI 0.10 to 0.88). Participation in Project RELATE was associated with a 70 percent decrease in the odds of engaging in extradyadic sexual intercourse.

The above reported findings do not speak fully to the challenge posed by the need to evaluate relationship education in EA¹. Clearly there is considerable scope for improvement. For example, it would be helpful to know how exposure to relationship education impacts partner selection. This might be reflected in romantic relationship career following such education. Participants may engage in fewer or qualitatively different relationships following relationship education relative to their prior relationship history and they may show a different pattern relative to those who do not receive such education. Certainly one would expect to see lower rates of participation in friends with benefits relationships and in hooking up.

As previously stated, the greatest challenge for relationship education in EA is not in its delivery (though that is quite challenging) but in identifying the most appropriate way to evaluate such education. Doing so is likely to lead us to focus on new constructs in the relationship education literature and to develop a host of new assessment devices. Creativity is needed not

only in assessment and evaluation but also in reaching emerging adults. In the remainder of the chapter, we identify a feature of contemporary emerging adults and outline how it has impacted our attempt to offer relationship education to this population.

Generation Y, Z and Beyond: Implications for Relationship Education

Generation Y came of age in the 1990s during the digital revolution and are sometimes referred to as the Net Generation or First Digitals. Their successors (Gen Z), who will come of age in the 2010s, were “born digital” and are considered the first “digital natives” (Palfrey, 2008). A visit to any campus will show that today’s emerging adults live in a very real digital world; romantic relationships start and even end on social networking sites, texting and twittering is incessant much to the chagrin of many a professor, and so on. Relationship education must adapt to this reality to be viable as a public health intervention. Just as many colleges offer incoming freshmen an online module on substance abuse they might soon also offer a module on relationship education.

It is clear to the broader marital education community that couples are more likely to engage in self-directed programs (e.g., read books) than attend marriage retreats/workshops (Doss et al., 2009), and attempts to develop self-directed programs are receiving attention (e.g., Halford et al., 2004). However, attempts to use the internet for delivery of relationship education are rare and have been limited to completion of premarital and marital assessment questionnaires (e.g., PREPARE, FOCCUSS, RELATE), each of which is proprietary, is associated with a business venture, religious group, a larger program or a combination of these and thus have fees associated with their use. These constraints have limited their use outside of the milieu in which they were created, which focus on martially committed couples.

To increase the reach of relationship education in EA we developed a version of relationship education that can be delivered online. Arising from the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP: Markman, et al., 2001), this ePREP intervention teaches participants about static risk factors and dynamic risk factors (Stanley, 2001). Static risk factors represent relatively unchangeable factors that are correlated with poor relationship outcomes (e.g. parental divorce, certain personality characteristics, differing religious backgrounds). Dynamic risk factors are correlates of poor relationship outcomes that can be changed with some determination and effort (e.g. negative patterns of conflict, difficulty communicating well, unrealistic beliefs about marriage, low levels of commitment, Markman, et al., 2001). ePREP teaches individuals how to recognize and combat dynamic risk factors that lead to relationship distress. Specifically, it teaches communication techniques and problem-solving skills that help one to effectively deal with conflict. It also teaches couples how to enhance positive aspects of their relationship.

ePREP has been evaluated in three randomized clinical trials. The first found that, relative to a placebo control group, those who received ePREP showed improved communication, less intimate partner violence, depression, and anxiety at an eight week follow-up (Braithwaite & Fincham, 2007). In a follow up to this study, Braithwaite and Fincham (2009) examined the efficacy of ePREP over a longer span of time (10 months) using latent growth curve modeling. A virtually identical pattern of results emerged with ePREP producing mental health and relationship functioning gains that were maintained at ten months post-treatment. Recognizing that breaking up is a normative and healthy part of the process of partner selection, this study examined whether the benefits of ePREP were durable to relationship dissolution. Those who began romantic relationships with a different partner experienced similar mental

health or relationship gains, indicating that this program generalizes to new relationships.

Finally, this study showed that the observed mental health benefits were maintained even if an individual ended their relationship and remained single.

Given the gains described above for individuals who participated in the one hour, online intervention, the next step was to examine whether even greater gains might ensue when both members of a couple participated. After all, ePREP is a skill based program and many of the skills are likely to be optimally employed when both partners know and use them. Towards this end, homework assignments were included for the six weeks following initial program delivery. Because both partners were involved the Actor Partner Independence Model (APIM: See chapter xx) was used in analyses allowing us to examine a number of new issues such as the impact of the partner on the other's outcomes. Again ePREP participants demonstrated better mental health and relationship functioning at a six weeks post program than those in a placebo control group, with those engaging more fully in the intervention and showing greater mastery of the communication techniques experiencing superior outcomes. Interestingly, treatment effects were found on communication even with significant actor effects and significant partner effects taken into account. And, consistent with in vivo studies, effects were stronger on observed communication than on self-reported communication.

In sum, there is compelling evidence that a relatively small dosage of relationship education delivered online can improve mental health and relationship outcomes for emerging adults. This is important because ePREP addresses the two problems facing relationship education (accessibility and maintenance of gains); specifically, its flexibility allows easier access to target populations (even when both members of the dyad do not participate), and ePREP is ideally suited to help maintain gains from traditional relationship education when used

as an adjunct “booster” treatment. Finally, it is likely to be a particularly comfortable form of delivery for the new digital generations. This work represents the tip of the iceberg in terms of the potential to reach emerging adults in mediums they are already drawn to use.

Conclusion

We have covered a great deal of ground in this chapter. Noting the limited amount of applied research on EA we explored whether the current proliferation of relationship education is relevant to emerging adults. In terms of both conceptual considerations regarding the nature of EA and data on romantic relationships at this stage of the life cycle, we argued that relationship education is especially relevant in EA. However, providing such education is challenging and evaluating its efficacy is even more so. To illustrate one attempt to meet these challenges we described Project RELATE, a relationship education program at The Florida State University. Although unique as an attempt to provide larger scale relationship education on a college campus, it is not the only attempt to reach large numbers of emerging adults. Versions of Within my Reach have been developed for the US Air Force (Airman to Airman) and for the US Army (Got Your Back), and these programs have been well received, though no data on their effectiveness are being collected yet.

Clearly, work on relationship education in EA has just begun. However, even at this early stage indications are that it has the potential to materially improve the lives of emerging adults. Because the patterns laid down in EA have the potential to shape choices and behavior in adulthood, including marriage, it is quite possible that relationship education at this stage of life could also influence future offspring. Should it do so we will have come full circle in addressing what is possibly the single most important issue that prompted the current focus on marriage education, the impact of marital disruption on children (and the welfare system). In this and

many other ways, there is arguably much greater room to modify risk among individuals early in the development of their romantic relationship histories than later on, such as after childbirth or marriage.

Footnote

1. It is important to note that Project RELATE uses a quasi-experimental design as participants are not randomly assigned to condition. Rather, participants sign up for classes that run on Tuesday and Thursday (no relationship education) or run on Monday, Wednesday and Friday (relationship education occurs in the Friday class).

References

- Amato, P. R. (2000). Consequences of divorce for adults and children. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *62*, 1269–1287.
- Antle, B. F., Sar, B. K., Christensen, D. N., Ellers, F. S., Karam, E. A., Barbee, A. P., et al. (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*.
- Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, *55*, 469-480.
- Bisson, M. A., & Levine, T. R. (in press). Negotiating a friends with benefits relationship. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*.
- Beyers, W., & Seiffge-Krenke, I (2007). Are friends and romantic partners the “best medicine”? How the quality of other close relations mediates the impact of changing family relationships on adjustment. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, *31*, 559–568.
- 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.
- Bradbury, T. N. & Karney, B. R. (2004). Understanding and altering the longitudinal course of intimate partnerships. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *66*, 862.
- Braithwaite, S., Delevi, R., & Fincham, F.D. (in press). Romantic relationships and the physical and mental health of college students. *Personal Relationships*.

- Braithwaite, S. R., & Fincham, F. D. (2007). ePREP: Computer based prevention of relationship dysfunction, depression and anxiety. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 26*(5), 609-622.
- Braithwaite, S. R., & Fincham, F. D. (2009). A randomized clinical trial of a computer based preventive intervention: Replication and extension of ePREP. *Journal of Family Psychology, 23*, 32-38.
- Buehler, C., Lange, G., & Franck, .L. (2007). Adolescents' cognitive and emotional responses to marital hostility. *Child Development, 78*, 775-789.
- 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.
- Clements, M. L., Stanley, S. M., & Markman, H. J. (2004). Before they said "I do": Discriminating among marital outcomes over 13 years. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 66*(3), 613-626.
- Creasey, G., Kershaw, K., & Boston, A. (1999). Conflict management with friends and romantic partners: The role of attachment and negative mood regulation expectations, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 28*, 523-543.
- Daley, E. M., & Noland, V. J. (2001). Intimate partner violence in college students: A crosscultural comparison. *International Electronic Journal of Health Education, 4*, 35-40.
- Doss, B. D., Rhoades, G., Stanley, S., & Markman, H. J. (2009). Marital therapy, retreats, and books: The who, what, when and why of relationship help-seeking. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 35*, 18-29.

- Fincham, F. D., & Beach, S.R. (1999). Marital conflict: Implications for working with couples. *Annual Review of Psychology, 50*, 47-77.
- Fincham, F. D., Stanley, S. M., & Beach, S. R. H. (2007). Transformative processes in marriage: An analysis of emerging trends. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 69*, 275 - 292.
- Flay, B. R., Biglan, A., Boruch, R. R., Castro, F. G., Gottfredson, D., Kellam, S., et al. (2005). Standards of evidence: Criteria for efficacy, effectiveness, and dissemination. *Prevention Science, 6*, 151–175.
- Grello, C. M., Welsh, D. P., & Harper, M. S. (2006). No strings attached: The nature of casual sex in college students. *Journal of Sex Research, 43*, 255-267.
- Halford, W. K., Markman, H. J., & Stanley, S. (2008). Strengthening couples' relationships with education: Social policy and public health perspectives. *Journal of Family Psychology, 22*, 497-505.
- Halford, W. K., Moore, E. M., Wilson, K. L., Dyer, C., & Farrugia, C. (2004). Benefits of a flexible delivery relationship education: An evaluation of the Couple CARE program. *Family Relations, 53*, 469–476.
- Halford, W. K., O'Donnell, C., Lizzio, A., & Wilson, K. L. (2006). Do couples at high risk of relationship problems attend premarriage education? *Journal of Family Psychology, 20*, 160-163.
- 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 behavioral relationship education program. *Journal of Family Psychology, 15*:4, 750-768.

- 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.
- Huang, W. (2005). An Asian perspective on relationship and marriage education. *Family Process, 44*, 161–174.
- Jakubowski, S. F., Milne, E. P., Brunner, H., & Miller, R. B. (2004). A review of empirically supported marital enrichment programs. *Family Relations, 53*, 528–536.
- Levine, A., & Cureton, A. (1998). *When hope and fear collide: A portrait of today's college student*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Markman, H. J., Stanley, S. M., & Blumberg, S. L. (2001). *Fighting for your marriage*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- McLanahan, S., Donahue, E., Haskins, R. (2005). Introducing the Issue. *Future of Children*, 15:2, 3-12.
- Nielsen, A., Pinsof, w., Rampage, C., Solomon, A.H., & Goldstein, S. (2004). Marriage 101: An integrated academic and experiential undergraduate marriage education course. *Family Relations, 53*, 485-494.
- Ooms, T. (2005). *The new kid on the block: What is marriage education and does it work?* (Couples and Marriage Policy Brief No. 7). Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.
- Ooms, T.J., & Wilson, P. C. (2004) The challenges of offering couples and marriage education to low income couples. *Family Relations, 53*, 440-446.
- Palfrey, J. (2008). *Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives*. New York: Basic Books.

- Paul, E. L., McManus, B., & Hayes, A. (2000). "Hookups": Characteristics and correlates of college students' spontaneous and anonymous sexual experiences. *Journal of Sex Research, 37*, 76-88.
- Owen, J., Rhoades, G. K., Stanley, S. M., & Fincham, F. (in press). "Hooking up" among college students: Demographic and psychosocial correlates. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*.
- Pearson, M. E. (2004). *Love U2*. Berkeley, CA: The Dibble Fund.
- Pearson, M., Stanley, S. M., & Rhoades, G. K. (2008). *Within My Reach instructor manual*. Denver, CO: PREP, Inc.
- Prigerson, H. G., Maciejewski, P. K., & Rosenheck, R. A. (2000). Preliminary explorations of the harmful interactive effects of widowhood and marital harmony on health, health service use and health care costs. *Gerontologist, 40*, 349-357.
- Proulx, C. M., Helms, H. M., & Buehler, C. (2007). Marital quality and personal well-being: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 69*, 576-593.
- Puentes, J., Knox, D., & Zusman, M. E. (2008). Participants in "friends with benefits" relationships. *College Student Journal, 42*, 176-180.
- Ragan, E. P., Einhorn, L. A., Rhoades, G. K., Markman, H. J., & Stanley, S. M. (2009). Relationship education programs: Current trends and future directions. In J. H. Bray & M. Stanton (Eds.), *Handbook of family psychology*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Raley, R. K., & Bumpass, L. (2003). The topography of the divorce plateau: Levels and trends in union stability in the United States after 1980. *Demographic Research, 8*, 245-260.
- Rhoades, G. K., & Stanley, S. M. (2009). Relationship education for individuals: The benefits and challenges of intervening early. In H. Benson & S. Callan (Eds.), *What works in*

- relationship education: Lessons from academics and service deliverers in the United States and Europe* (pp. 45 – 54). Doha, Qatar: Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development.
- Schilling, E. A., Baucom, D. H., Burnett, C. K., Allen, E. S., & Ragland, L. (2003). Altering the course of marriage: The effect of prep communication skills acquisition on couples' risk of becoming maritally distressed. *Journal of family psychology, 17*, 41-53.
- Smith, B.A., Thompson, S., Tomaka, J., & Buchanan, A. C. (2005). Development of the Intimate Partner Violence Attitude Scales (IPVAS) with a predominantly Mexican American college sample. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 27*, 442-454.
- Stanley, S. M. (2001). Making the case for premarital education. *Family Relations, 50*, 272–280.
- Stanley, S. M., Amato, P., 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.
- Stanley, S. M., Markman, H. J., & Jenkins, N. H. (2004). Marriage Education Using PREP With Low Income Clients. Denver: PREP, Inc.
- Stanley, S. M., & Rhoades, G. K. (2009). Marriages at risk: Relationship formation and opportunities for relationship education. In H. Benson and S. Callan (Eds.), *What works in relationship education: Lessons from academics and service deliverers in the United States and Europe* (pp. 21 - 44). Doha, Qatar: Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development.

- Stanley, S.M., Markman, H.J., & Whitton, S. (2002). Communication, conflict, and commitment: Insights on the foundations of relationship success from a national survey. *Family Process, 41*, 659-675.
- Stanley, S. M., Rhoades, G. K., Olmos-Gallo, P. A., & Markman, H. J. (2007). Mechanisms of change in a cognitive behavioral couples prevention program: Does being naughty or nice matter? *Prevention Science, 8*, 227-239.
- Straus, M. A. (2004). Prevalence of violence against dating partners by male and female university students worldwide. *Violence Against Women, 10*, 790-811.
- Straus, M. A., & Ramirez, I. L. (2002, July). *Gender symmetry in prevalence, severity, and chronicity of physical aggression against dating partners by university students in Mexico and USA*. Paper presented at the XV World Meeting of the International Society for Research on Aggression, Montreal, Canada.
- Stoops, N. (2004). Educational attainment in the United States: 2003. *Current Population Reports*, P 20-550.
- Thomas, A., & Sawhill, I. (2005). For love or money? The impact of family structure on family income. *Marriage and Child Well Being, 15*, 57-74.
- Thuen, F., & Loerum, K. T. (2005). A public/private partnership in offering relationship education to the Norwegian population. *Family Process, 44*, 175-186.
- van Acker, L. (2003). Administering romance: Government policies concerning pre-marriage education programs. *Australian Journal of Public Administration, 62*, 15-23.
- Ventura, S. J. (2009). Changing patterns of nonmarital childbearing in the United States. In *NCHS Data Brief, No. 18*. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.

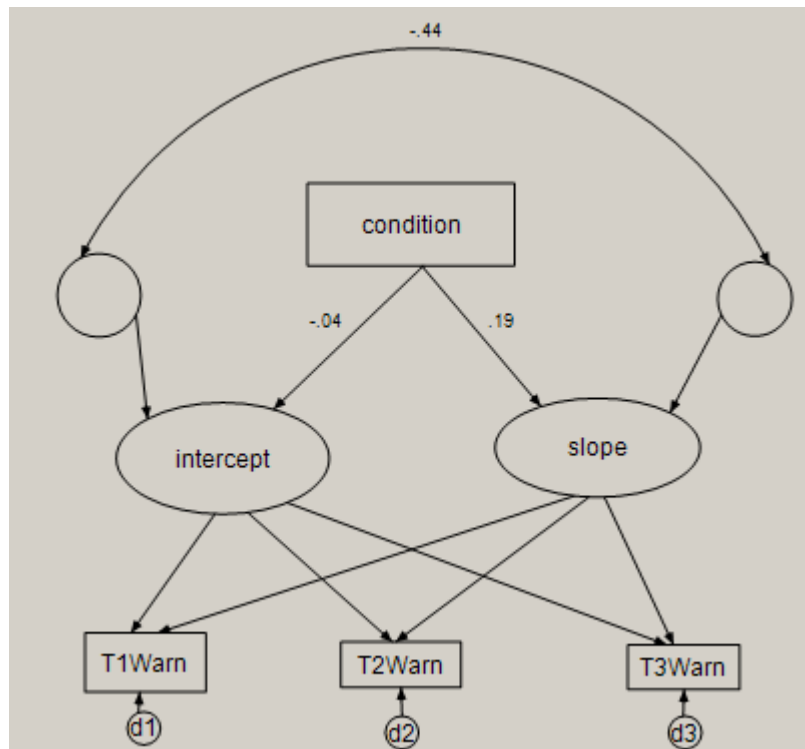
Uecker, J.E. & Stokes, C.E. (2008). Early marriage in the United States. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 70, 835–846

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2006). *Dissemination and implementation research in health* (PAR 06–071). Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved August 4, 2009 from <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-06-071.html#PartII>

Wilson, K. L., Charker, J., Lizzio, A., Halford, K., & Kimlin, S. (2005). Assessing how much couples work at their relationship: The behavioral self-regulation for effective relationships scale. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 19, 385-393.

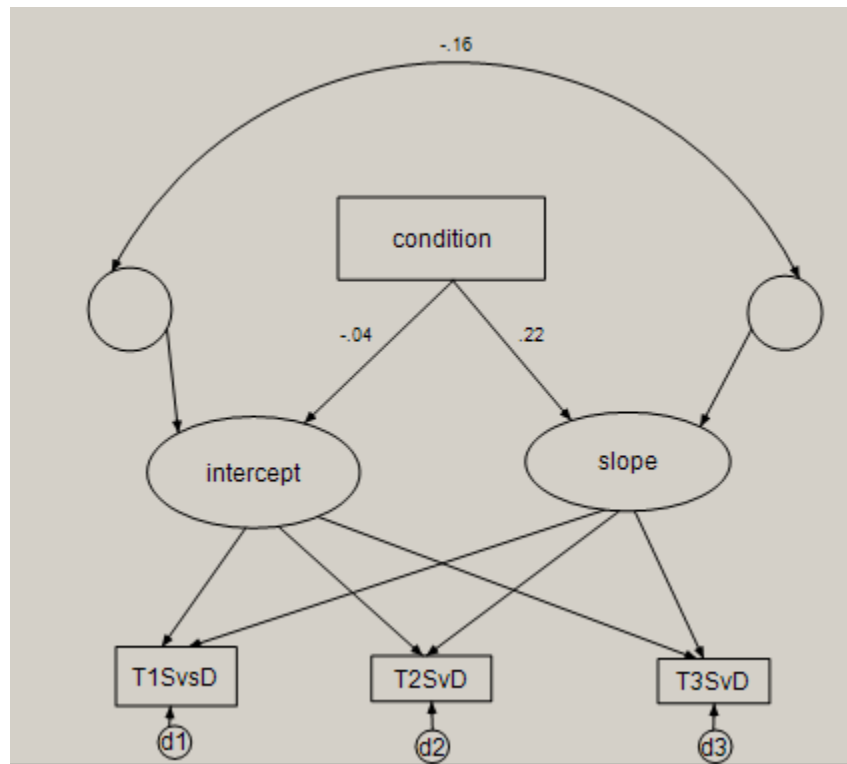
Zweig, J. M., Barber, B. L., & Eccles, J. S. (1997). Sexual coercion and well-being in young adulthood: Comparisons by gender and college status. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 12, 291-308.

Figure 1. Standardized parameter estimates of linear growth curve model for warning signs



Condition, 1= relationship education, 0 = no relationship education

Figure 2. Standardized parameter estimates of linear growth curve model for sliding versus deciding.



Condition, 1= relationship education, 0 = no relationship education

Objectives for Each Break-out Session	
<i>Instructor</i>	<i>Student</i>
<p><i>To introduce students to the course and to Project RELATE</i></p> <p><i>To foster commitment from students to put forth effort and seriously engage in Project RELATE.</i></p> <p><i>To create an educational environment conducive towards implementing the Project RELATE intervention</i></p>	<p><i>To summarize their current beliefs about romantic relationships.</i></p> <p><i>To explain the source(s) of their beliefs about romantic relationships</i></p> <p><i>To analyze how these beliefs influence the decisions they make in their romantic relationships.</i></p> <p><i>To compare and contrast their own beliefs with those of other students in the class</i></p>
<p>Session #2</p> <p><i>To help raise students' awareness about their relationship beliefs.</i></p> <p><i>To clarify the benefits of setting relationship goals and describe how these goals can lead to healthier relationship decisions.</i></p> <p><i>To illustrate the connection between family of origin experiences and students' relationship visions.</i></p>	<p><i>To identify one's vision of the future with regard to his/her ideas about the "ideal relationship.</i></p> <p><i>To become aware of family of origin patterns that may shape their ideas about relationships and may impact functioning in relationships.</i></p>
<p>Session #3</p> <p><i>To introduce students to the differences between sex, gender, and sexual orientation.</i></p> <p><i>To raise students' awareness about their personal gender beliefs of both men and women.</i></p> <p><i>To help students identify how their own gender beliefs impact their current and future romantic relationships.</i></p> <p><i>To assist students in acknowledging that gender beliefs are not static and can change.</i></p>	<p><i>To define the differences between sex, gender, and sexual orientation.</i></p> <p><i>To clarify their personal beliefs about gender and identify from where these beliefs originate.</i></p> <p><i>To compare their gender beliefs with others and examine how these beliefs might differ from their romantic partner's.</i></p> <p><i>To explain how the gender beliefs they hold influence their relationships.</i></p>
<p>Session #4</p> <p><i>To raise students' awareness about their personality traits and the traits they are looking for in a partner.</i></p> <p><i>To explore with students' how personality characteristics can lead to both relationship benefits and clashes within their relationships.</i></p> <p><i>To raise students' awareness about ways they can better identify positive and negative traits within themselves and within their current and/or potential partners.</i></p> <p><i>To illustrate how awareness of their own and their partners' personality and traits can lead to better relationship decision making.</i></p>	<p><i>To become aware of their personality characteristics and to apply this knowledge to their relationships.</i></p> <p><i>To become aware of how personality characteristics are critical in choosing a partner and knowing what to look for in a partner.</i></p> <p><i>To recognize that not all partners are created equal and that some have more risk factors than others.</i></p> <p><i>To appreciate the choices that are available in relationships and acknowledge that making relationship decisions consciously and thoughtfully increases the chances of a healthy relationship.</i></p>

<p>Session #5</p> <p><i>To raise awareness of students' expectations regarding relationships.</i></p> <p><i>To help students clarify which expectations they possess are realistic vs. unrealistic.</i></p> <p><i>To promote safety in relationships by identifying expectations that cannot be appropriately addressed in unsafe relationships.</i></p>	<p><i>To become aware of how expectations influence their relationships.</i></p> <p><i>To explain how their own expectations are realistic or unrealistic, and to compare these expectations with those of other students.</i></p> <p><i>To identify how issues of safety impact one's ability to discuss relationship expectations.</i></p>
<p>Session #6</p> <p><i>To reinforce the ideas of smart love and encourage active exploration of the principles of smart love.</i></p> <p><i>To demonstrate how active decision making in the present can impact the future of relationships.</i></p> <p><i>To introduce the concept of "sliding vs. deciding".</i></p> <p><i>To help students identify barriers that prevent healthy relationships in their own lives.</i></p>	<p><i>To increase awareness of the process of active decision-making, regardless of whether they have a current relationship.</i></p> <p><i>To identify and describe the Seven Principles of Smart Love.</i></p> <p><i>To summarize how future relationship goals impact their decision making in the present and to identify personal barriers that may prevent them from attaining their relationship goals.</i></p> <p><i>To explain the concept of "sliding vs. deciding".</i></p>
<p>Session #7</p> <p><i>To integrate the material from the last two sessions ("Being smart in reaching relationship goals" & "sliding vs. deciding")</i></p> <p><i>To explore ideas about commitment (negotiation, compromise, sacrifice) and what makes a marriage choice healthy.</i></p>	<p><i>To define and provide examples of sliding, deciding and coasting.</i></p> <p><i>To identify the differences between dedication and constraint commitment.</i></p> <p><i>To provide examples of behaviors which occur when relationship commitment is present.</i></p> <p><i>To identify at least three negative consequences of sliding into major life decisions (e.g., sexual activities, cohabitating, getting married).</i></p>
<p>Session #8</p> <p><i>To help students identify the differences between good and bad communication.</i></p> <p><i>To briefly familiarize students with the Speaker-Listener technique and identify situations where it might be usefully applied.</i></p> <p><i>To help students learn the basics of active listening and in acquiring the knowledge to successfully practice active listening skills.</i></p>	<p><i>To identify from video clips examples of good and bad communication.</i></p> <p><i>To describe and explain the basic rules of the Speaker-Listener technique.</i></p> <p><i>To summarize the key aspects of active listening and demonstrate ability to do so through practice.</i></p>
<p>Session #9</p> <p><i>To continue to explore the speaker-listener technique as a guide for good communication, focusing on active listening.</i></p> <p><i>To provide students with additional practice of active listening through role-plays and</i></p>	<p><i>To describe the essential components of active listening.</i></p> <p><i>To illustrate active listening skills through in-class role-plays and providing feedback for the role plays.</i></p>

<p>coaching. To introduce the concept of “time-out” as a strategy for enhancing communication through de-escalation.</p>	<p>To explain the purpose and procedures of calling a time out. To practice the time out skill in class and clarify reasons for calling a time out.</p>
<p>Session #10 To assist students in continuing to practice and use the Speaker-Listener technique To review and practice using “time outs.” To introduce and assist students in practicing XYZ statements</p>	<p>To illustrate how to teach a time-out and when to take a time-out during a conflict. To describe in detail the steps of using an XYZ statement. To practice XYZ statements in communication role-plays with other students.</p>
<p>Session #11 To continue to explore the use of XYZ statements. To briefly explore ideas about problem solving in relationships. To provide an overview of the elements of good communication. To assist students with practicing the Speaker-Listener technique.</p>	<p>To demonstrate skills associated with using XYZ statements. To explain the difference between problem talk and problem solving. To summarize at least three hidden issues that can affect close relationships. To explain the rules and steps of the Speaker-Listener technique. To demonstrate the rules and steps of Speaker-Listener technique through in-class role-plays.</p>
<p>Session #12 To help students identify sources of social support in their lives. To have students recognize conditions under which suggest the need to end a relationship. To help students learn how to break up effectively. To increase students sense of self-worth in relationships by emphasizing the importance of safety and respect for healthy relationships.</p>	<p>To describe a situation in their life during which a person broke their trust or failed to follow through on a commitment. To identify 2-3 people who can provide support during difficult times. To explain the difference between common couple violence and intimate partner violence. To summarize the effect of safety on maintaining a healthy relationship. To outline the Do’s and Don’ts of effective breaking up.</p>
<p>Session #13 To help students reflect on their goals in relationships. To help students gain closure on the course and Project RELATE. To review previous sessions and help students synthesize the knowledge they have gained To reinforce the message that help is available if needed, and to send students away on a positive note.</p>	<p>To re-evaluate their vision statements and add to or change their relationship goals based on the information from Project RELATE. To identify the most influential pieces of knowledge they have gained during the semester. To integrate the material from the semester and summarize how this information has affected their lives.</p>