Healthy Marriage and Relationship Curriculum Design for the Center For Fathering

A Summary Paper

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Author Note

This summary paper discusses the curriculum created for Urban Ventures Leadership Foundation Center For Fathering three-year grant program. The Office of Family Assistance, Award No. 90FK0007-01-00, project title: Minneapolis Project Promoting Fatherhood. The curriculum is an amalgamation of copyrighted materials and is not for profit.
Abstract

Providing couples and singles in the South Minneapolis area evidence based curriculum by utilizing established relationship education programs. The curriculum is representative of common themes and misconceptions about relationships within the context of generational poverty. The availability of evidence based curriculums in low-literacy application is minimal. The Healthy Marriage and Relationship will be serving primarily African Americans in the culture of poverty. Subjective analysis of the process and presentation of the curriculum reveals Adlerian concepts and professional conduct.

Keywords: generational poverty, curriculum, relationship education programs
Healthy Marriage and Relationship Curriculum Design for the Center For Fathering

Sociology studies demographics and culture mannerisms around a particular group within the same marco-culture, for example; Western civilization studying a portion of its population. A theme in sociological and social-psychological studies is the culture of poverty. Factors driving the intense focus on American poverty are the distribution of wealth, the shrinking middle class, achievement gap, unwed pregnancies and births, incarceration rates and mental health (Bobo, 2009).

Another factor gaining more attention in research (Chambers & Kravitz, 2011; Dixon, 2009; Ooms & Wilson, 2004; Oberlander, Agostini, Houston & Black, 2010), is poverty’s affect on the decision to marry and/or remain in a monogamous cohabitation lifestyle. Over the past decade the federal government provides millions of grant dollars in parenting and relationship classes taught in various programs as an effort to strengthen families (Hamilton, 2007). Some of these programs are done through hospitals, continuing education programs, community centers and other non-profits. There is debate as to whether or not the federal government needs involvement in educating on relationships, as there are many different cultural understandings of relationship in existence (Hamilton, 2007). However, these dollars do provide people who are lacking relationship skills a chance to learn and grow.

The Culture of Poverty

Poverty is the lead salient factor in mental illness (SAMHSA, 2001) and unmarried co-parents (Chambers & Kravitz, 2011; Cowan, Cowan & Knox, 2010; Dixon, 2009; Waller, 2001). A missing factor in research discussing co-parenting and unwed parents is the fear of losing what resources and government aids are available. Poverty is defined as a family of four living under $22,313 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Poverty is comprised of stressors, followed by
dependency and unreliable survival partnerships (Cowan, Cowan & Knox, 2010). An Adlerian perspective of the culture of poverty is difficulty in striving for security, belonging and significance (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956).

Security is hindered by unmet needs. There is belonging in poverty, but often in the wasteful behaviors; gang violence, drug and alcohol addiction, multiple sexual partners and other harmful outlets. Mentioning the urban church is a double-edge sword; as the church gains money by accepting offerings from the poor and while receiving donations to give to the poor. In the perspective of significance, a person in poverty is affected by out-of-wedlock births, low income parents, gang leadership, or being known as a lover/playmate. These roles are not conducive to a healthy lifestyle.

The culture of poverty is left with little opportunity. Those who do change classes are left with a foot in each realm. The struggle is how to keep a relationship with those left behind and trying to fit into a class that is foreign (Payne, DeVol & Dreussi Smith, 2001). Stability, network, net worth and safety nets are hard to maintain between the classes. This lifestyle is a struggle in security, sharing new earned resources; belonging, gaining approval of the new class; and significance, maintaining and increasing accomplishments.

Poverty and Black relationships

Poverty is blind to race; however, 37% of those in poverty are African-American (Blacks) and Multiracial (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Blacks make-up less than 13% of the United States population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Furthermore, Blacks are least likely to marry (Chambers & Kravitz, 2011). Black culture history is mired in broken families, stemming from slavery and manifesting today in terms of employment, educational advancement and incarceration. The Black population lives primarily in the metro-urban cities or in the south
(U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). People who no longer live in the culture of poverty fear losing resources and independence. This fear sometimes influences the decision not to marry and have children (Chambers & Kravitz, 2011; King & Allen, 2009).

Where Blacks and others in poverty live influences the relationship types they encounter. As mentioned earlier, gangs and churches are among those relationships. The dependency on community centers, employment resources, educational support, child care and the like become difficult to sustain because economic resources are low. Adlerian terminology uses the phrase inferiority complex, a loss or inability to strive (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). The culture of poverty assumes a low-form of respect and little meaningful assistance.

For example, people who are in poverty do not have immediate access to transportation. Their inability to travel from point A to point B in a direct route causes missed appointments and resources. This discourages finding help and often those helping seem to look down on the ones requesting help (Payne, DeVol & Dreussi Smith, 2001). This perpetuates the lack of trust in relationships. The unmet needs and inability to support oneself places such persons on a vertical plane descending into a negative self-concept. The structure of the vertical and horizontal planes in Adlerian psychology is a sense of competition versus collaboration (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956).

**Statement of the problem**

Access to resources in improving relationship development, education, poverty, lowering crime and abuse are affecting how urban adults form couples and marriages. The minority group most affected is the Black population. The culture of poverty does have a sub-group, generational poverty. Generational poverty is when two or more familial generations are in poverty because the subsequent generation did not move beyond the poverty of their family of
origin (Payne, DeVol & Dreussi Smith, 2001). This creates limited opportunities for the next generation.

This generational structure imparts values dissuading marriage or monogamous relationships, achievement and resiliency. There are many theories on how to help families move out of generational poverty. Single-headed, multi-generational, co-parented and homosexual-couple households are a part of the culture of poverty, yet are not fully discussed in this paper. The summary presented here is focused on teaching healthy marriage and relationship to couples and singles whether married or not, despite their sexuality and gender inclinations. The summary further refers to a specific curriculum design, audience and cultural limitations.

**Purpose of the Study**

The Urban Ventures Leadership Foundation is a faith based organization that began in 1993 to combat “crack alley” in the Central and Phillips neighborhoods of south Minneapolis. Urban Ventures’ mission statement: 

*Breaking the cycle of generational poverty in our community one person, one family at a time.*

Over the past 19 years Urban Ventures continues to serve children, families, mothers and fathers, both Hispanic and African-American (Black). The Center For Fathering is one of their many programs. In October 2011, the Center For Fathering received a federal grant, Award No. 90FK0007-01-00 from the Office of Family Assistance, to start a healthy marriage and relationship education program, in addition to continuing their *Family Time*; a parenting education program. To meet federal grant guidelines the Center For Fathering needs to choose and/or design a curriculum to satisfy the needs of their community.
Significance of the Study

The Center For Fathering serves people in poverty. Income does not exclude people from participating in their educational programs; rather people in poverty are attracted to the Center For Fathering. The curriculum presentation style is oral instruction and participant dialogue. The curriculum is composed of objectives and explanations to allow the facilitator to follow the classes’ learning engagement. The facilitator is responsible for delivering the main points, objectives, with insight and story illustrations.

Definitions

Understanding healthy relationship depends on terms such as: education, intimacy, cohabitation, and marriage definitions. Marriage/Relationship education programs (REP) educate couples in how to understand, communicate and validate each other (Dion, 2005). Intimacy is an attachment between individuals who have a strong physical and emotional closeness that does not bother either party when they encounter each other (VandenBos, Ed., 2007). It is important to convey that intimacy is not sexuality, as some adult conversation will use the term to imply the act of sex.

Cohabitation is an unmarried couple sharing a residence and living as a legally married couple (Scott & Marshall, Eds., 2005). Cohabitating couples may have an informal contract, such as shared bank account or a division in household bills. In most states there is no legal binding on sharing assets should a cohabitating couple separate. Marriage is a legal union between an adult male and adult woman, although this definition is in transition (Scott & Marshall, Eds., 2005).

Coupleship, an unofficial term; describes a union between to unmarried individuals. Author, Wegscheider-Cruse, uses the term in the book title Coupleship: How to build a
Evidence based practice integrates materials, applications and treatment outcomes within a defined population. The curriculum development model consists of identifying the issue, target audience, intended outcomes, content, how to instruct and evaluate what works in providing an education (El Sawi, 1996). These terms form the search for evidence based practices and curriculum design.

**Teaching Relationship Enhancement in a Community of Poverty**

**Generational Poverty**

Stability is the family’s foundation; if there is little control over two or more necessities then the family is at risk (Payne, DeVol & Dreussi Smith, 2001). Necessities include, but are not limited to, secure family attachment, a home with utilities, manageable finances, nourishment/clothing, community, access to education and health care. Children are born into their families; if lacking resources children are likelier to feel discouraged. The majority of non-profits and family support services do not base programming on generational poverty, rather on the number of people they can serve each year. Overcoming generational poverty means helping parents, couples and children to increase their self-reliant behaviors and self-worth. This means non-profits actually strive to work themselves out of work.

Families in generational poverty can live in suburban, rural or urban areas. The focus on urban is significant because the density is higher. Parents who try to impart a strong value system to their children are up against a community that feels defeated and hopeless. A recommendation for non-profits and family support services is the mindset of generational poverty, resiliency and empowering families to improve their community.

The family is the first relationship that humans experience. If the family is dysfunctional then subsequent relationships are too (Heckman, 2011). Relationships in the form of marriages
and committed couples are difficult to maintain when there is stress stemming from one’s family of origin. Often issues of trust and abandonment are present in generational poverty couples. There is a mismanagement of communication, conflict, resources, intimacy and self-esteem. Both partners are thinking of how to protect themselves against the other partner. Thus, to marry is to give-up protection. This is a mistaken belief, a guiding faulty logic (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956).

**Relationship Education**

REP is an educational, supportive, coaching, and relationship skills building process that focuses on communication, respect, intimacy, conflict resolution and other dynamics in the marriage or coupleship to help the partners improve their relationship. There are several REPs on the market ranging in price from free online downloads to expensive workshops. The resources are similar in content and delivery, resulting in difficulty choosing a single program. Each REP’s mission is reflected in how the materials help significant others to improve the quality of their relationship.

The key point in FOCCUS (Facilitating, Open, Couple, Communication, Understanding and Study) is open dialog. Other programs like TIME (Training in Marriage Enrichment) increase the ability to empathize. ACME (Association of Couples for Marriage Enrichment) provides long-term support groups and low-literacy materials. Other than ACME, the REPs mentioned are more compatible with middle class Caucasian Americans (Bowling, Jencius & Hill, 2005). That population has the ability to pay for support services, which drives the market to use a certain curriculum design and reading level.

Those in generational poverty are at a disadvantage in the ability to recognize subtle communication style differences (Payne, DeVol & Dreussi Smith, 2001). REPs need facilitators
who can explain middle class material to a lower socio-economic status population. *The Couple Checkup* (Olson, Olson-Sigg & Larson, 2008) and PREPARE/ENRICH (Olson & Larson, 2008) materials have a middle class bias, however there is an undertone that skills are missing and mismatches occur in coupling. This undertone resonates with the inability to trust, which is often found in generational poverty clients.

**Educating Clients**

**Incentives.** Ooms and Wilson (2004) state incentives that encourage low-income clients to attend community centers to receive job skills training, parenting education and relationship support. These incentives are: employment assistance, legal assistance/referrals, convenient and safe meeting times, referral network and use former participants as recruiters and word of mouth promoters. No community can be a one stop resource; having an in-depth resource and non-profit guide is essential. Most clients do not know what resources are readily available to them without using a government resource. Community centers thrive when they establish connections with other community non-profits in the social services field.

**Respect.** Clients in poverty tend to have low self-esteem, this means respect can be difficult to give and receive. Those administering services must have mutual respect, the ability to respect the self and others within the same context (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). Clients seeking relationship support, and any other skill, will not learn from a facilitator who lacks the ability to validate the clients’ potential and current knowledge. Unlike a relationship workshop for middle class clients, the relationship support group process is easier for low-literacy clients to understand. The facilitator is usually the *healthy* model clients will use as a guide in change.

**Humility.** A facilitator does not need a personal history of poverty; though in some cases the background is helpful in establishing trust. Humility is letting clients know the facilitator is
not the ultimate information authority. Supportive education is dependent on establishing a relationship with clients. This is similar to individual therapy’s focus on the alliance between therapist and client. Not exalting the self over the group is important for building and maintaining a relationship in the group.

Encouragement. The courage to be imperfect is encouragement (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). The inferiority complexes clients bring to the educational support group gets in the way of forgiveness and accepting the past. Clients in poverty tend to have an all or nothing complex because the mistaken belief is *perfection means receiving an opportunity to succeed*. Clarifying distortions is necessary in teaching REP curriculum. Relationships are not perfect, there are good and bad times. Clients learn to recognize their situation, understand there is no perfect answer, but work jointly together to develop the best solution. Encouragement allows for trial and error.

Methods and Procedures in Curriculum Development

The Center For Fathering has an existing program called *Family Time*. The current structure is a meal, childcare, program delivery, providing bus tokens and pantry needs. The program materials consist of positive parenting, natural and logical consequences, parenting youth in stress, domestic violence and the role of fathers. Observing the program delivery and studying the current curriculum gives direction into the population needs and educational ability. The *Curriculum Development Guide* from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (El Sawi, 1996) uses a non-formal education curriculum design; understandable implementation, framework flow and evaluation process.

The community around Urban Ventures lacks healthy relationship skills. The target audience is clients who participated in *Family Time*, singles and couples. The intended outcome
is to increase self-awareness and define a healthy relationship. Content topics include relationship roles, expectations, domestic violence, communication skills, conflict resolution skills, intimacy, co-parenting, finances and goals. The source curricula came from the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families (2009).

**Population**

Current Center For Fathering clients sign a media release and confidentiality statement upon registration. Clients take a pre and post-survey to assess healthy relationship awareness and behaviors. Clients also receive a domestic violence survey; the center refers clients to an outside organization for domestic abuse therapy. As of January 3, 2012 there are approximately 500 clients that participate in Center For Fathering’s programs. The average client age is 36, youngest age is 17 and the oldest age is 68. 78% are African American, 17% are multi-racial and 5% are Caucasian or American Indian. 86% of the clients live on less than $15,000 a year, which is below the poverty line for a single adult (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). This is an over representation of the culture of poverty. Many families and individuals rely on government assistance. 60% have a High school Diploma; that does not mean clients have a twelfth grade reading comprehension. It is likely that many of these clients have a learning disability.

**Project development**

*Family Time* uses oral delivery; information is imparted through lecture, video demonstrations and group dialogue. The primary prospective client base for piloting the relationship class are previous *Family Time* participants. Retaining the oral delivery style is crucial to jump-starting this new program, while also allowing for program consistency and client predictability as an effort to increase retention. Concise relationship education objectives
give facilitators discretion in combining resources from their experience and other curricula to interest the target population. *The Healthy Marriage and Relationship* curriculum provides summary details and background information for each objective.

Facilitators have seventy-five minutes to present the information for each session. The curriculum is designed for questions and dialog with the facilitator and group. The seven content topics are covered in eight sessions. In research studies Blacks are less likely to maintain a committed relationship (Chambers & Kravitz, 2011; Dixon, 2009; Wilcox & Wolfinger, 2007). The first topic Relationship Roles and Expectations takes two sessions because the assumption is that Blacks and those in poverty are lacking a positive relationship example.

**Source Curricula**


*The Healthy Marriage Handbook*, created from the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (2007), is a free online text with sections in domestic violence, roles and expectations, finances and goal setting. *The Marriage Garden: Lesson Guides*, another free online lesson text by the University Of Arkansas Department Of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service (2006). Each lesson guide centers on a metaphor around gardening, such as commitment in
growing together as a couple and increasing intimacy. *Together We can: Healthy Future for Our Family*, created from the Michigan State University Extension (2009), provides a co-parenting lesson plan and contract.

**Healthy Marriage and Relationship Session Summaries**

In sessions one and two, Relationship Roles and Expectations, Clients are asked to think about what roles and expectations they play in their relationships. This discussion focuses on goals and needs each client is trying to fill or have filled when in a relationship. They receive insight into what a realistic relationship looks like. Session three, Domestic Violence, focuses on the holistic effects of domestic violence as there are higher rates of domestic violence in areas of poverty (CDC/NIVS, 2011). Session four, Communication Skills, seeks to replace domestic violence with recognizing communication skills and asking clients to take responsibility for their communication style.

Conflict Resolution Skills, session five, seeks to diffuse the power struggle between the abuser and the abused. Intimacy, session six, is related to the ability to seek and grant forgiveness (Olson, Olson-Sigg & Larson, 2008). Participants learn that sex is not the only way to demonstrate love and affection. Co-parenting, session seven, affects the relationship between two adults who are starting over in a relationship where previous partners still have place in their life because of shared children. Session eight, Finances and Goals, discusses how to handle money and shame in the context of relationship responsibility.

**Evaluation of Process**

**Personal.** There were times in the research process where copyrighted material looked more public domain than unique. The materials have sections on conflict resolution, relationship expectations and intimacy. The issue of copyright became clear when taking a look at
assessment versus information. The money driving copyright in marriage and relationship curriculum are the face to face workshops, assessments, evaluations and research studies. The actual content delivery can be found for free on various websites, secondary online sources.

The fear of copyright kept me in more research than design. Once I understood where the money drove the REP market, I was able to follow the curriculum development model presented by El Sawi (1996). I have a certificate in PREPARE/ENRICH. The familiarity with information and seeing the tenets in other REPs became the foundation in designing the curriculum for the Center For Fathering. What I looked for in each curriculum was the research and rationale on a particular item and how to incorporate the information into an oral delivery session.

This project took research in curriculum development, urban demographics and a purpose for using the source curricula. Center For Fathering places a strong emphasis on their relationship with clients, an out of the box curriculum is impersonal. I received the charge to review multiple curriculums, choose the parts that best fit the client population and then frame the material in a manner suitable to the program needs.

I had a phone conversation with Peter Larson on January 4, 2012 to discuss using the PREPARE/ENRICH workbook as the foundation material, he asked me to send him an update as to how the clients respond to the curriculum. The presentation I gave on January 10, 2012 to my co-workers lacked comfort. I joined Urban Ventures on November 24, 2011. Despite being nervous, I maintained respect and delivered the information regarding the curriculum. I enjoyed the research and review process, I did not know how many non-clinical resources exist in the relationship and family market. This project taught me there is a difference between and
facilitator and a therapist. The education in psychotherapy provides a framework for movement. Facilitation provides information not transformation.

**Presentation.** The curriculum was pre-approved by the Director of the Center For Fathering on January 3, 2012 and a preview meeting with my chair took place before the formal presentation. I presented the curriculum at a staff meeting on January 10, 2012 prior to the pilot session delivery scheduled for that day. After the presentation, six participants submitted responses. Four of the participants found the presentation favorable, one mediocre and one as poor. Some of the events that took place in the meeting did not relate to my presentation, but may have affected the responses people gave.

In the presentation video, conflict arose early in the meeting. Performing a presentation amongst fellow student peers at Adler is different than a staff meeting where the presenter is a new employee and colleagues need to reaffirm their status in the department. I felt dissonance. I recognized how quickly various staff members sought a space on the vertical plane, significance over others (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). Staying on the horizontal plane, significance over task (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956), is difficult when others are trying to discredit the work you completed or demonstrate they have more knowledge.

Overall, I was rated low on population knowledge. I expected this result. The staff participated in the Urban Ventures’ programs or grew up in the neighbor surrounding the campus before becoming staff. The relationship is key, my colleagues and myself grew-up in the culture of poverty. I have completed nearly three months at Urban Ventures, I sense there is a positive difference in how the staff and participants now relate to me. I wonder if I were to give another informational on the curriculum design if the responses would remain the same. I do believe the
overall responses would be more positive. The Healthy Marriage and Relationship classes have twenty-five to forty participants each session.

**Project Future**

The Center For Fathering is making use of the curriculum. The pre and post-surveys are in use and is under review for terminology comprehension. As the community changes and recruiting new participants takes place the curriculum is subject to change. Educational materials need regular updates. The goal of *The Healthy Marriage and Relationship* curriculum is not to force individuals into marriage. Rather, to educate a better way of living and investing in their relationships whether they lead to marriage or not. In addendum to the curriculum there are prelude pages. The purpose page describes the Healthy Marriage and Relationship classes’ mission. There is a summary page on teaching to those in poverty and low-literacy comprehension.

**Summary**

*The Healthy Marriage and Relationship* curriculum’s current form could change depending on approval from the Federal Grant Office. Participants are continuing to attend; retention is positive indicator validating the curriculum selection and presentation style. Since pre and post-survey measures are taken, some content language may change. Overall, the process in developing an evidence based practice takes time and effort. The overuse of a resource does not necessarily mean reliability.

Population history and recognizing nuances informs curriculum design. The group reviewing the information is just as important as the population receiving the information. My colleagues saw a moderate population understanding, as I did not go beyond their current participant demographics. Evidence based practice is required in the grant and needs
quantitative data, a pre and post-survey. The culture of poverty and generational poverty, qualitative data, is found in the way of instructing their clients and client feedback.

Conclusion

The phrase healthy illustrates decisions that do not involve high levels of stress and dissatisfaction with others. There is a sense of belonging in a relationship, as opposed to being fearful of a relationship. The Healthy Marriage and Relationship classes are step toward strengthening families, decreasing domestic violence and creating satisfying inter-personal relationships. The skills taught in REPs can be translated into the work place, friendship and other social interactions.
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Gottman’s theory of *Sound Marital House* provides the framework of conducting pre-marital counseling for six couples in a pilot study. The couples gained insight in conflict styles, attachment and their mate’s personality. Barnacle & Abbot demonstrate how couples need to have communication skills that can build from within their unique strengths.


Some relationship education programs ignore sexuality. Others address the physical aspect when assessments demonstrate that sexuality is a problem area. Bischof, Tambling, Lieser and Murry believe that pre-marital educators are in a place to dispel myths around sex in marriage. This background knowledge provides a basis for not including in-depth sexuality in the urban community, intimacy is a higher priority.


Coparenting relationships are increasing. Gender affects how former couples and spouses to perceive their coparenting relationship. Coparenting performance is related to the level of remorse each parent feels for their situation. Co-parenting is on the rise.
because of out-of-wedlock births and divorces; African-Americans have a higher tendency to engage in co-parenting relationships.


Age, education, race and income level depicts whether people are more likely to cohabitate versus marrying. Blacks [African Americans] tend to have higher levels of cohabitation across all generations. This article relates to how cohabitation is becoming a first step toward marriage vows. The cultural aspect Brown, Van Hook and Glick demonstrate is socialization is a macro and micro process.


Marriage preparation can enhance the level of commitment spouses have for their relationship. The way in which couples approach money can affect the conflict level in their marriage. Couples address their money type according to their commitment level. This article offers a positive projection for people who participate in a relationship education program because they gain a deeper insight of each other and their skills.


67 couples from the 129 married couples in the study are devitalized, they have a high-distressed and low satisfaction marriage. These same couples participated in PAIRS, Practical Application of Intimate Relationship Skills, because they wanted to save their
marriage. Devitalized couples, at least in DeMaria’s research, are motivated to receive treatment. Most couples in the urban community are conflicted or devitalized.


The mismanagement of marital conflict and conflict styles affect couple satisfaction. Treatment implications are engaging clients in using constructive conflict style, a manner to have differences without the emotional anger response. Clients need to know their anger and depression triggers. The information presented by Du Rocher Schudlich, Papp and Cummings addresses the need for clients in a healthy marriage and relationship education program to learn acceptance, change and relationship termination.


Fincham, Beach and Davilia studied 96 couples’ conflict and forgiveness patterns over the course of a year; an initial assessment and a follow-up assessment. The ability to give and maintain forgiveness depends on how severe the transgression and the level of involvement in pro-active conflict resolution. Forgiveness in relationships can either support or undermine conflict resolution.

Social workers and lawyers both interface with domestic violence. Social workers are involved in the processing and reporting; lawyers in defending and prosecuting perpetrators. Forgey & Colarossi state that collaborative domestic violence curriculum in social work policy and legality is an intervention and prevention effort. Social workers are often not fully aware of domestic violence impact on the legal system, thus affecting their clients' ability to understand what is happening in a criminal investigation. This article supports the awareness a facilitator needs in teaching domestic violence.


The conflict style and communication style can demonstrate low marital satisfaction. There is a relationship between withdrawal and combative conflict styles. Negative affectivity does not change easily and results in lower problem-solving skills and marital dissatisfaction. Hanzal and Segrin give explanation as to why couples may feel their problems are not ceasing. These insights give awareness to a self-care section for inclusion in a healthy marriage and relationship education program.


This study takes the client couple survey in comparison with Gottman’s *Sound Marital House* framework. The data shows how couples view strengths in their mate. Some items, the need to have a well-run home and control over finances, are indirectly related
to the *Sound Marital House*. Hicks, McWey, Benson, & West seek to create a strengths model versus a couple deficit model. The examples in the article highlight finding positives in the relationship to help support couple growth.


Perspective develops curriculum. Programs that use a clinical or client based model tend to view evidence based practices as functional within a framework of helping. Closing the gap between clinician and researcher is a task requiring fundamental changes in program structure, marketing to research oriented students and faculty, program costs and a progressive education model. This article serves a rationale for the curricula used in designing a healthy relationship education program.


Teaching family therapy relates to several fields and applications, not just in a clinical setting. Marriage and Family therapy students benefit from a diverse curriculum and opportunities to implement learning. There are ethical considerations, such as allowing for free-expression. Counter-transference is likely to occur in teaching and answering questions around marriage education.

Marriage and income can reflect the level of self-esteem found in African American mothers. This information serves as a purpose to understand why relationship and finance instruction are fundamental to self-esteem development. Marriage and relationship problems can be linked to issues of self-esteem. The article provides a rationale that communication style is reflective of self-esteem.


Relationship education programs seek to strengthen and build skills in couples who wish to remain in a long-term relationship. The ability to access support depends on location and costs. *The Couple Checkup* is a direct couple assessment tool and book. Couples can take an assessment and print a report, then read relevant skills building chapters. Not all couples can handle taking an online assessment, knowing the option exists is another tool.


Ratliff and Ambrose survey what textbooks four COAMFTE therapy programs use in six areas: theoretical foundations of marital and family therapy, assessment and treatment in marital and family therapy, human development and family studies, ethics and professional issues, research, and supervised clinical practice. They found a lack of congruence in textbook selections. Textbooks provide organization and structure, while
journal article selection limits content to a particular variable. Curriculum development covers content areas and applications.


Couples’ relationship stages range from dating to post-retirement. There is some expected difficulty in reaching an agreement on money. Shapiro believes that money is actually a metaphor for another issue in the relationship. Shapiro offers a framework covering cultural and developmental themes that surround money in a relationship. The framework seems applicable in oral delivery.


Co-parenting and separation affects the ability to feel as a useful influence in raising a shared child. This study seeks to understand the constructs fathers use to reconcile child separation and parental responsibilities; a source of conflict between co-parents. This article gives insight into how fathers may internalize their inability to be present for their children.


Money control in marriage is not only dictated by who makes more, but also whether the person is male or female. In heterosexual marriages, the ability to give input in money management is not co-equal. Though the article does provide a racial breakdown, there is
not enough of a representative African American population to determine if money management is shared.