

Family Life Stage and Relationship Education Efficacy

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Purpose

- ▶ Help further refine the effectiveness of relationship education (RE), by seeking to identify aspects of a participant's life that may influence what the participant gets out RE.

Theoretical Orientation

- ▶ Hawkins, Carroll, Doherty, and Willoughby (2004) put forth a framework for considering RE
 - “The more tailored educational offerings are to the temporal and life circumstances of their participants, the more likely they are to meet perceived needs” (Hawkins et al., 2004, p. 550).
- ▶ Family development theory (FDT)
 - About how families change through time (White, 1991)
 - Thus, well suited for considering life circumstances
- ▶ FDT: development of the family is the process of progressing through distinct, qualitatively different stages (White, 1991)
 - Stages are central to the theory (White)

Theoretical Concerns

- ▶ Common operationalization of stages uses Duvall (1971)
 - Establishment
 - Transition to Parenthood
 - Preschool
 - School Age
 - Teenage
 - Launching Pad
 - Empty Nester
 - Old Age

Theoretical Concerns

- ▶ Those stages ≠ modern family formation
 - Too rigid
- ▶ One fix
 - Just use child age
 - Ignore:
 - Marital status
 - Career status
 - Individual age
- ▶ Problem-FDT is more than a parenting theory

Our Approach

- ▶ Use common operationalization
- ▶ Add additional variable
 - Account for additional aspects of FDT
- ▶ Traditionality
 - Traditional (per the theory)
 - Non-traditional
 - Those that don't fit the rest of the theory

Relationship Education Outcomes

- ▶ This RE course focuses on couples
 - Communication
 - Commitment
 - How to balance a relationship
 - Relationship Knowledge

Procedures

- ▶ Participants (n = 749) self-selected to take RE
 - offered in a Western state of the United States.
- ▶ Community-based
 - Community agencies
 - Department of Workforce Services (DWS)
- ▶ Curriculum focused on improving couple relationships
 - Six hours
 - Two-hour sessions over three weeks
 - Or as a single six-hour long class
 - Participants received a meal along and course materials
 - DWS participants received credit
- ▶ Pre- and a post- evaluation measure.
- ▶ Single participants not in a relationship and had no children were removed
 - (69 cases),
- ▶ Three removed due to a lack of response
- ▶ Others removed due to lack of data used for traditionality
- ▶ Final sample size, $n = 510$

Participants

- ▶ Community agencies (62.9%).
- ▶ Age = 35.80 years ($SD = 10.23$)
- ▶ Relationship length = 8.47 years (median = 5.25, $SD = 8.65$).
- ▶ Female (55.6%) and Caucasian (84.3%).
- ▶ Income = \$56,039 ($SD = \$29,333$)
- ▶ Technical, college, or graduate degree (52.8%).
- ▶ Never divorced (70.5%)
- ▶ Married (71.6%).

Measures: Life Stage

- ▶ *Establishment* stage if
 - 0 children
 - Relationship length \leq 5 years
- ▶ Otherwise – used average age of children:
 - *transition to parenthood* (average age $<$ 2)
 - *preschool* ($2 \leq$ average age \leq 5)
 - *school age* ($5 <$ average age \leq 12)
 - *teenage* ($12 <$ average age $<$ 18)
 - *adult* (average age \geq 18)
- ▶ The average age of the children?
 - Majority of participants had multiple children
 - Average age could be used as a proxy for overall stage
- ▶ *School age* served as the reference group.

Measures: Traditionality

- ▶ Participants = traditional if:
 - Married
 - Never divorced
 - Children in the home
 - *adult stage* ≠ children in home
 - *establishment stage*
 - married
 - dating or engaged but not cohabitating.
- ▶ Participants = non-traditional if:
 - Relationship other than marriage
 - Been divorced
 - Children did not live with them
- ▶ The traditional category was used as the reference.

Measures: RE Outcomes

- ▶ *Knowledge* -three items from the Perceived Relationship Knowledge scale (Bradford, Stewart, Higginbotham, & Skogrand, 2015)
- ▶ *Commitment* -three items from Stanley and Markman's (1992) commitment inventory.
- ▶ *Control Rejection* -three items from the Control subscale of the Intimate Partner Violence Attitude Scale (Fincham, Cui, Braithwaite, & Pasley, 2008)
 - One item was modified to keep consistent directionality in the questions (e.g. “I wouldn’t forbid my partner from talking to someone of the opposite sex”).

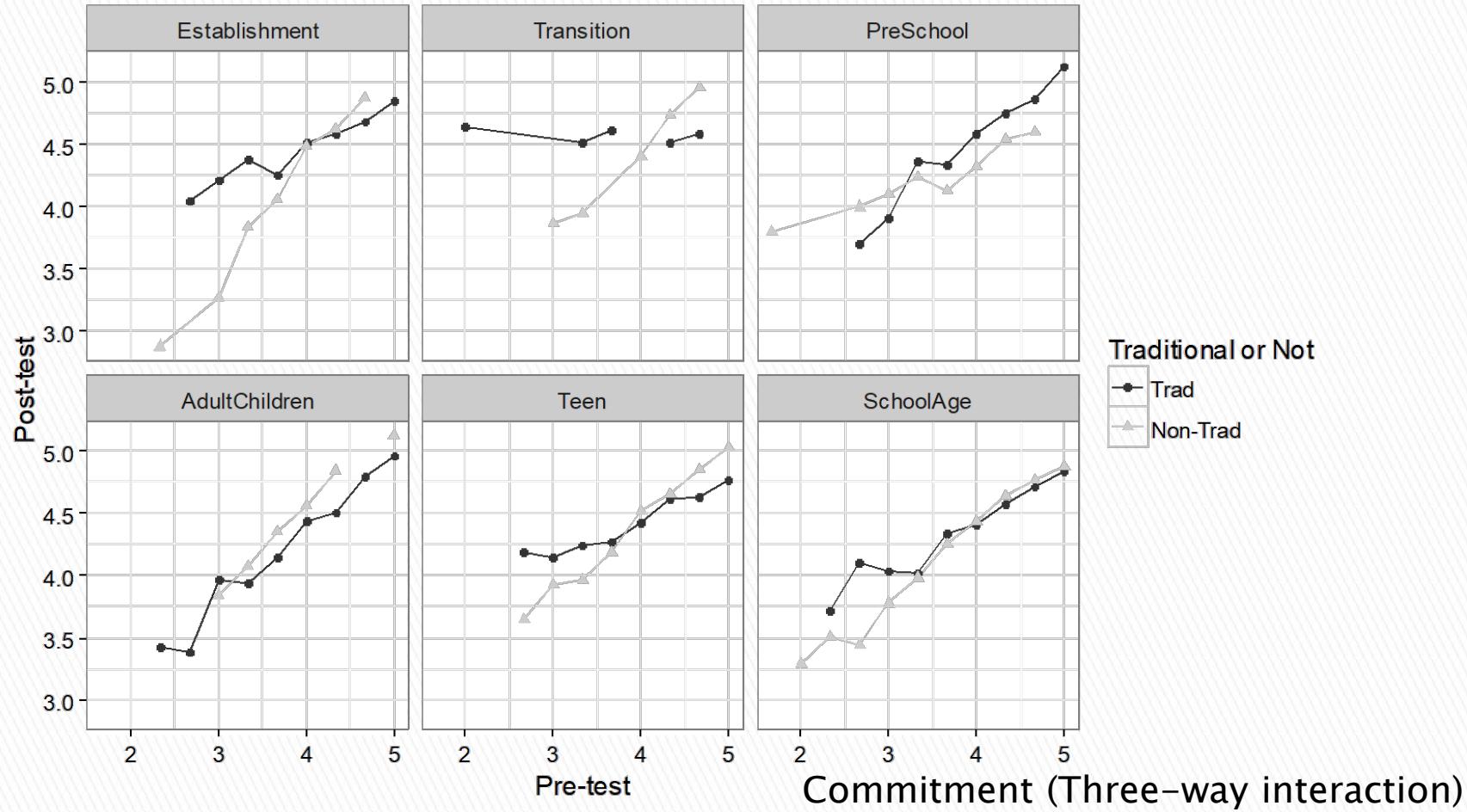
Plan of Analysis

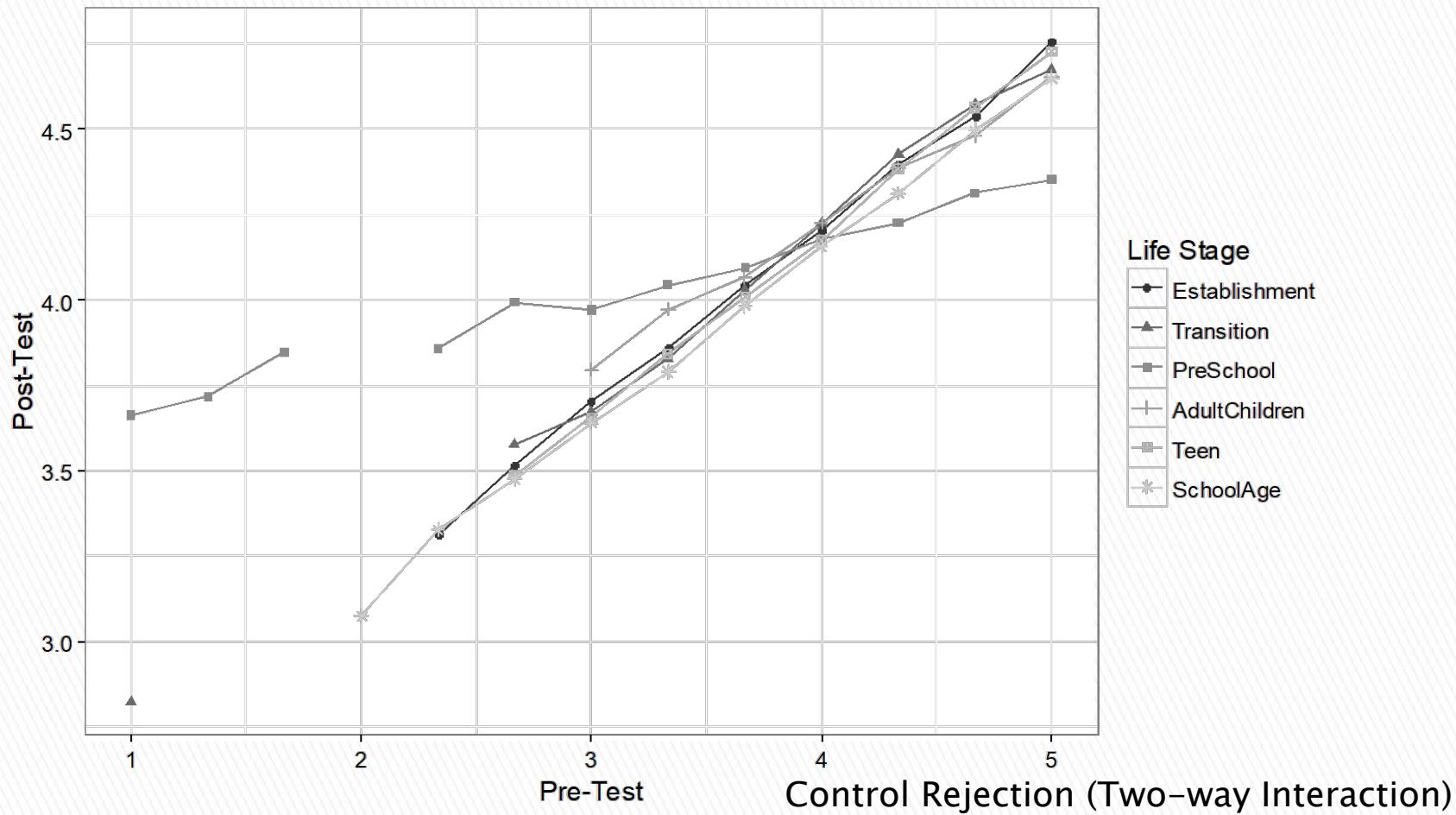
- ▶ Linear mixed-effect models
 - Dependence of data between partners
 - included as a random effect.
 - Unequal cell size across family life stage
- ▶ Outcome = post-test scores
 - Controlling for pre-test scores and income.
- ▶ Predictors = Family life stage and Traditionality
 - Traditionality*life stage*pretest score
 - We ran the full model for each outcome variable
 - removed interactions based on non-significance

Significance Tests for the Final Model for Each Outcome

Variable	Commitment (Full Model)		Control Rejection (Model 2)		Knowledge (Model 3)	
	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Income	.	.	0.043	0.837	3.780	0.053
Pre-Test	124.863	< .001	73.839	< .001	62.87	< .001
Life Stage	0.849	0.516	2.506	0.030	0.744	0.592
Traditional or Not	11.409	0.001	0.854	0.356	0.297	0.586
Life Stage X Tradition	3.813	0.002	--	--	--	--
Tradition X Pre-Test	9.811	0.002	--	--	--	--
Life Stage X Pre-Test	0.743	0.592	2.304	0.044	--	--
Life Stage X Pre-Test X Tradition	3.706	0.003	--	--	--	--

Note. We ran the full model for each outcome variable, and then removed interactions based on non-significance at $p < .05$.





Knowledge

- ▶ In the first two models:
 - Three-way, $F(5, 335) = 0.37, p = 0.87$
 - Two-way interactions,
 - $F(5, 313) = 1.37, p = 0.24$ (life stage and traditionality),
 - $F(5, 337) = 0.72, p = 0.61$ (life stage and pretest),
 - $F(1, 338) = 1.21, p = 0.27$ (traditionality and pretest),
 - were found to not be statistically significant at $p < .05$.
- ▶ In the third model, life stage and traditionality were also found to be non-significant.
 - However, income was found to be strongly trending towards significance ($p = .053$)
 - Income may be important above and beyond what is already accounted for in life stage and tradition.

Implications

- ▶ The common operationalization of the theory is insufficient
 - More of the theory and its considerations need to be used
- ▶ Change in commitment:
 - Life stage
 - Traditionality
 - Traditional may get more out of the course
 - Purpose of RE?
- ▶ Pre school age may function differently than the others