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

  - “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
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
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%).
Establishment stage if
- 0 children
- Relationship length ≤ 5 years

Otherwise – used average age of children:
- *transition to parenthood* (average age < 2)
- *preschool* (2 ≤ average age ≤ 5)
- *school age* (5 < average age ≤ 12)
- *teenage* (12 < average age < 18)
- *adult* (average age ≥ 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Commitment (Full Model)</th>
<th>Control Rejection (Model 2)</th>
<th>Knowledge (Model 3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>$p$</td>
<td>$F$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>0.043</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-Test</td>
<td>124.863</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>73.839</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life Stage</td>
<td>0.849</td>
<td>0.516</td>
<td>2.506</td>
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<tr>
<td>Traditional or Not</td>
<td>11.409</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.854</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life Stage X Tradition</td>
<td>3.813</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradition X Pre-Test</td>
<td>9.811</td>
<td>0.002</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life Stage X Pre-Test</td>
<td>0.743</td>
<td>0.592</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Stage X Pre-Test X Tradition</td>
<td>3.706</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* We ran the full model for each outcome variable, and then removed interactions based on non-significance at $p < .05$. 
Commitment (Three-way interaction)
Control Rejection (Two-way Interaction)
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 $p < 0.05$.

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 ($p = 0.053$)
- 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