

Strong Couples, Strong Communities

Enhancing family and community well-being through sustainable, evidence-based programming for couples in the North Central Region

Allen W. Barton & The Strong Couples project team

NCRCD Webinar

September 17, 2024



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A note of thanks to...

- NCRCRD Small Grants program
- Strong Couples coaches and other project team members
- Participating couples
- You for attending this!



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Outline for today's talk

- Why this project?
- What is the program?
- Who have we reached?
- Has it made a difference?
- What is next?



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Why this project?



- The pervasiveness of couple distress...

- *See states in red*

... and its wide-reaching effects

- Adults' mental and physical health
- Children's development and well-being
- Vocational engagement
- Economic well-being



Marriage and couple relationships in rural, middle-class America

BROOKINGS Election '24 U.S.

RESEARCH

Middle class marriage is declining, and likely deepening inequality

Richard V. Reeves and Christopher Pulliam
March 11, 2020

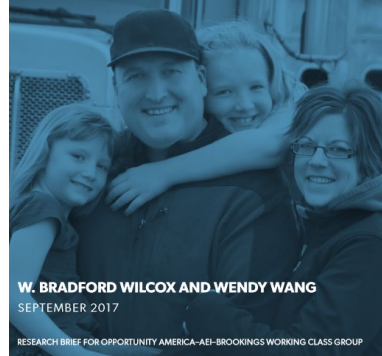
JULY 1, 2024

Rural America Has Urban Family Forms

by Laurie DeRose

The Marriage Divide

HOW AND WHY WORKING-CLASS FAMILIES ARE MORE FRAGILE TODAY



W. BRADFORD WILCOX AND WENDY WANG
SEPTEMBER 2017

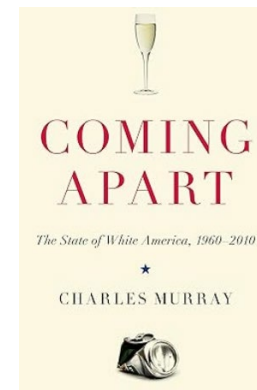
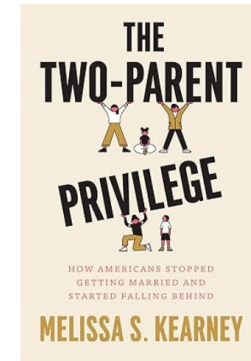
RESEARCH BRIEF FOR OPPORTUNITY AMERICA—AEI—BROOKINGS WORKING CLASS GROUP

Demography (2024)
DOI 10.1215/00703370-11237867 © 2024 The Authors

Are Rural Areas Holdouts in the Second Demographic Transition? Evidence From Canada and the United States

Shelley Clark, Matthew M. Brooks, Ann-Marie Helou, and Rachel Margolis

ABSTRACT A central premise of the first demographic transition theory is that



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So what can we do about it?



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What is the program (in 19 seconds)?



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What is the program?

- **6** online sessions of ePREP program
- **5** video conference calls with trained coach
- **4** free
- **3** waves of survey assessments
- **2** partners (i.e., dyadic participation)
- **1** stronger couple, stronger family, and stronger community



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What is the program?



FARM STRESS TEAM



Coach Training and Participation


- 2 Nine-week coach training workshops delivered (Fall 2022 and Fall 2023)
- 20 Extension professionals across 6 states trained to be program coach



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Who have we reached?

Because you want a relationship that lasts



The Strong Couples Project

- ✓ Participate in a 6-session online program scientifically shown to strengthen relationships
- ✓ Video calls with trained coach to help maximize program impact
- ✓ No cost to enroll and chance to win \$25 Amazon gift card for completing program surveys

To learn more and enroll, please visit go.illinois.edu/StrongCouples

Phase 1 (Illinois residents only; 2020 - 2022)

- 612 program interest forms
- 169 couples enrolled

Phase 2 (NC region and beyond; 2022 - present)

- 483 program interest forms
- 177 couples enrolled
- 19 states (8 of 12 North Central region)

22,000+ website visitors across both phases

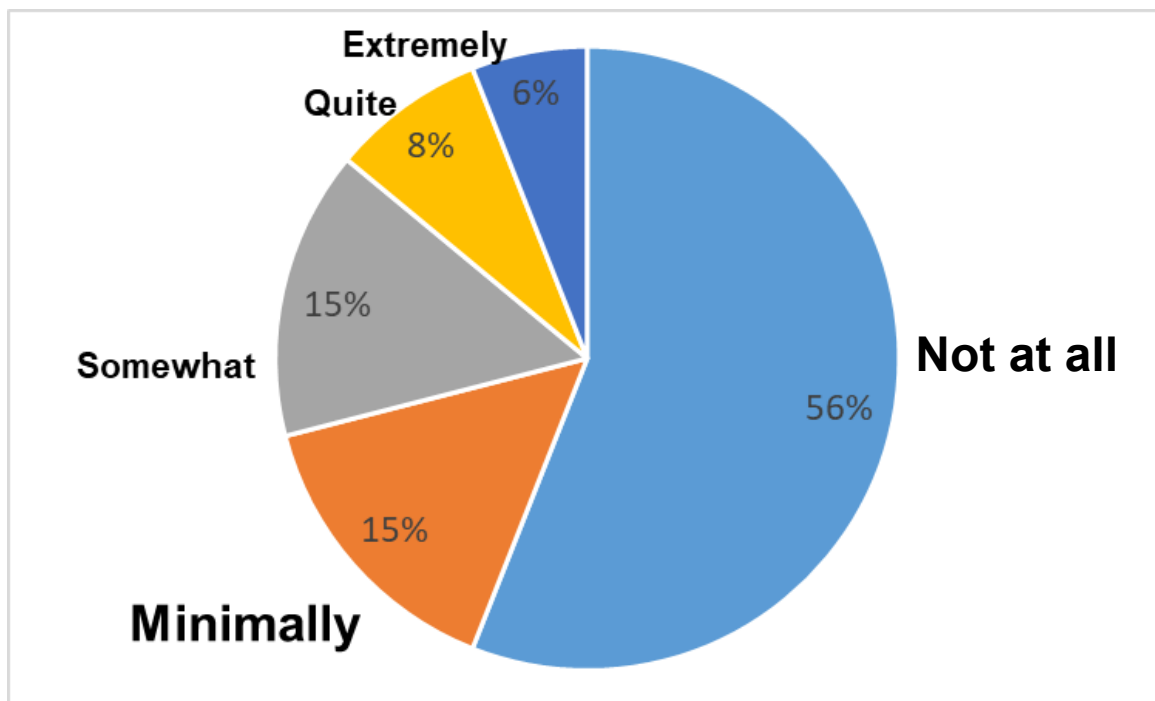


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Who have we reached?

How familiar are you with Extension?



85% had not participated in an Extension-sponsored program in the past 10 years

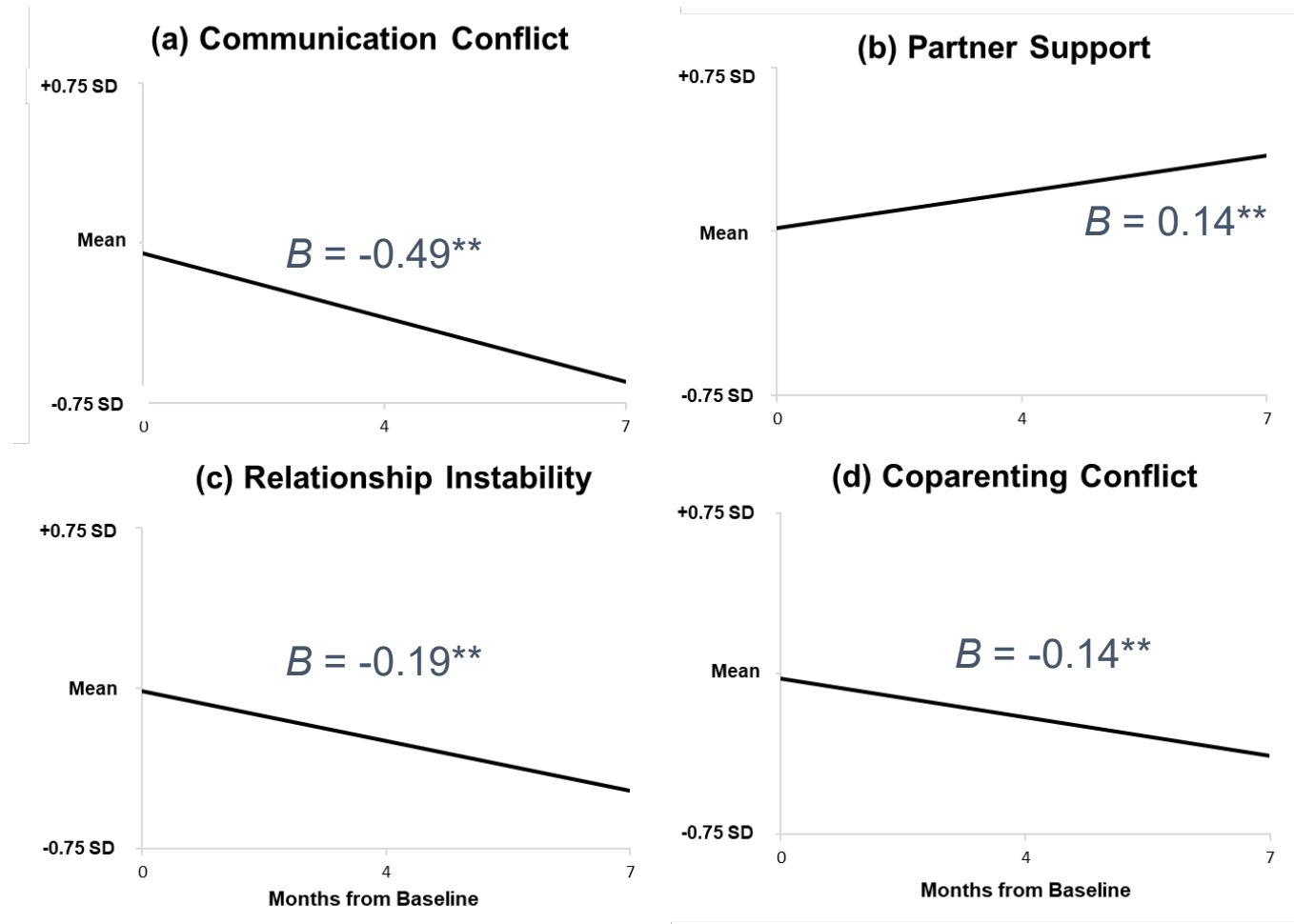


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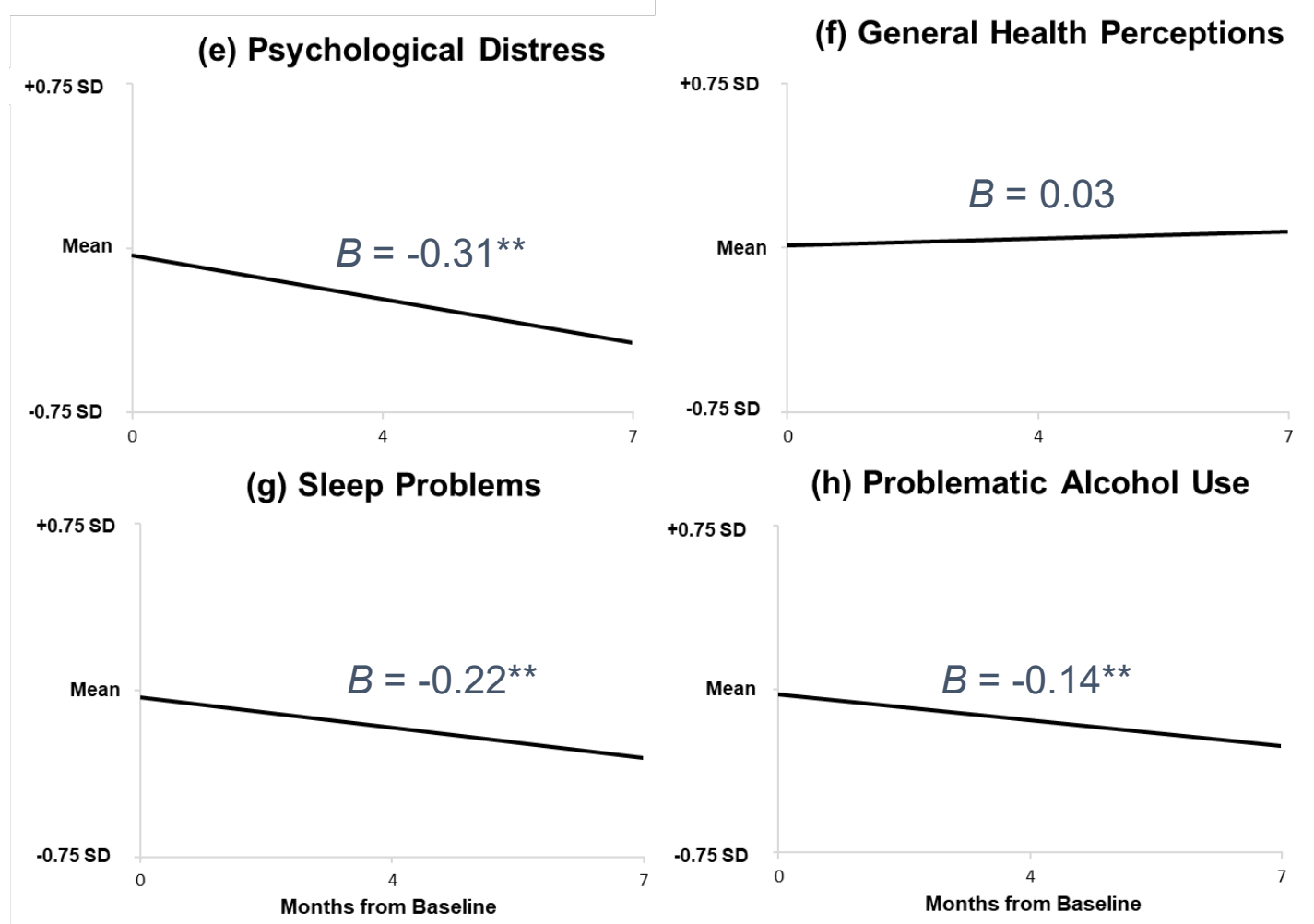
Has it made a difference?

Couple Relationship Outcomes (Phase 1)



Has it made a difference?

Individual Personal Outcomes (Phase 1)

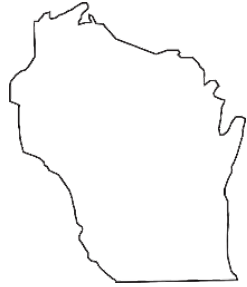


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Has it made a difference?

Couple Feedback (Phase 2)



“The tools are powerful and simple, mostly easy to implement, and worth the effort to implement. The program helped to bridge the divide between us. We still have a lot of work to do, but we are started.” – Tonya (WI)



“I enjoyed the structure and format of the program! I believe the material covered in the videos and the frequency of the video check-ins were beneficial to helping my partner and I grow together.” – Simone (IL)



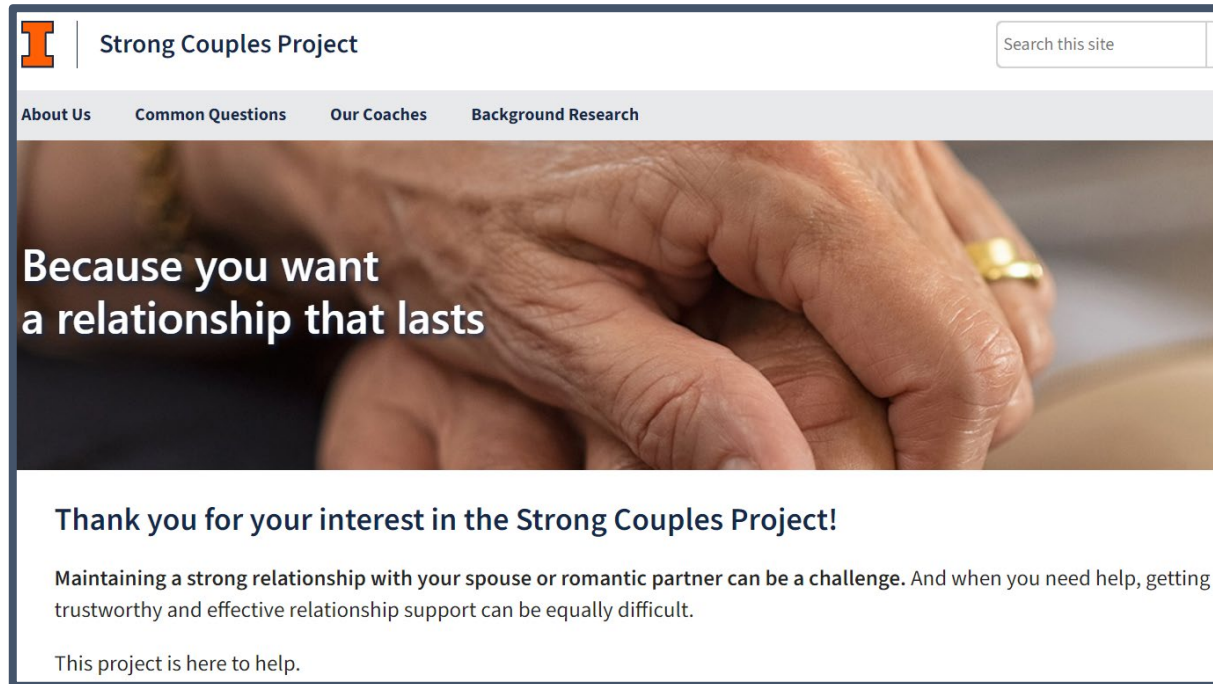
“The video examples were very relatable and engaging. The coach calls were so helpful in practicing and learning how to navigate the tools when topics are not straight forward.” – Katie (OH)



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What is next?



- Maintaining project sustainability
- Building project scalability
- Helping more couples develop strong relationships



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Questions and Comments

go.illinois.edu/strongcouples

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