



Attitudes Toward Traditional Marriage: A Comparison of Long- term FEP Recipients and a General Population of Adults

For:

Utah's Department of Workforce Services

From paper by

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Introduction

- Relationship between public assistance programs and family formation
- Purposes of TANF
- Healthy Marriage Initiative



Healthy Marriage Initiatives

- Oklahoma Marriage Study (2001)
- 2003 Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce
(Shramm, Marshall, Harris George, 2003)
- Long-term Family Employment Program (FEP) Study of long-term recipients



Research Questions

- 1) To what extent do long-term welfare recipients and the general population vary in traditional attitudes toward marriage?
- 2) Can differences between the two groups be explained by controlling for demographic variables?
- 3) Can differences between the two groups be explained by factors other than welfare receipt and demographics?



Study Samples

- Utah Baseline sample:
 - Random sample - 1186 adults in Utah
- Long-term FEP sample:
 - Population sample – 1685 former FEP recipients



Demographic comparisons (%)

	General	FEP
■ Age (mean):	36.3	32.7
■ Female:	48.7	96.3
■ Caucasian:	84.6	61.7
■ Ever married:	75.8	64.4
■ Age at first marriage	21.8	20.2
■ Has HSD/GED:	85.9	62.5
■ Has religious affiliation	82.0	71.1



“Traditional Marriage Views”

- Original 14 marriage attitude questions evaluated
- Tests for internal consistency resulted in nine questions being identified as associated with a view of marriage which could be called “traditional” (See Table 1)
- Results consistent with anecdotal responses in data collection



Results: Question 1

To what extent do long-term welfare recipients and the general population vary in traditional attitudes toward marriage?

- Responses to all nine questions reflected significant differences between groups ($p < .001$)
- For all questions general population reported traditional view of marriage significantly more often than long-term FEP respondents



Results: Question 2

Can differences between the two groups be explained by controlling for demographic variables?

- Characteristics evaluated: female, Caucasian, between 25-45, has religious affiliation, has been married, has HSD/GED
- Again, for all questions general population reported traditional view of marriage significantly more often than long-term FEP respondents (Gen - N = 244; FEP - N = 245)



Results: Question 3

Can differences between the two groups be explained by factors other than welfare receipt and demographics?

- Common question: Information regarding main reasons for divorce (See Table 5)
 - Samples: Gen – N = 252 FEP – N = 877



Focusing on an issue

- Responses to marriage attitude questions NOT significantly different for six of nine questions for those who have experienced domestic violence (See Table 6)
- Respondents from general sample with domestic violence as cause of divorce more like long-term FEP



Discussion

- Study results overall mirror findings of Oklahoma and Utah Baseline studies
- Relationship between socio-economic status and attitudes toward marriage are consistent



Discussion

- Findings suggest environmental factors and personal experience influence attitudes
- Additional TANF data
 - 64% grew up in a two parent home
 - 42% were sexually abused as a child
 - 70% had experienced severe domestic violence in a romantic relationship



Discussion

- Long-term FEP respondents distinguish between ideal and personal experience
- Attitude and value formation is part of larger process of human development
- Best predictor of childhood abuse and neglect is poverty



Conclusion

- Future research should include exploring factors which could be significant correlates to attitudes toward marriage
- Future programming needs to consider healing past life events to allow “ideal” to seem possible



Additional Resources:

- Other DWS reports at SRI web site:

<http://www.socwk.utah.edu/sri/dwsreport.asp>

Thank you!