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## Outcomes of a Multi-Component Family Enrichment Project: 12-Month Follow-up

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*Previous research has established that family enrichment programs work with a variety of populations (e.g., Hawkins, Stanley, Blanchard, & Albright, 2012). It is unclear if a multi-component program focusing on a variety of family outcomes can lead to lasting change. This study used growth modeling to examine effects of relationship (i.e., Within My Reach), parenting (i.e., Making Parenting a Pleasure), and financial enrichment (i.e., Spend Some, Save Some, Share Some) classes over 12 months. Results revealed improvement in family functioning at one year post for all three programs. Program specific improvements included relationship functioning and parenting alliance. Program participants reported overall satisfaction and gaining of valuable skills. Findings suggest these family enrichment programs can have long-lasting effects; potential reasons for sample success and implications are discussed.*

*Keywords:* family enrichment, marriage enrichment, parent education, financial education

During the last decade, a surge of marriage and relationship education programming and research has focused on helping foster healthy and stable relationships (Halford, Markman, & Stanley, 2008; Hawkins et al., 2012). Unhealthy relationships have been linked to issues related to physical health, mental health, crime, and domestic violence (Dush, Taylor, & Kroeger, 2008; Gunlicks-Stoessel & Powers, 2009; Stolzenberg, & D'Alessio, 2007). Relationship struggles can spill over to other aspects of family life (e.g., parenting; Katz & Woodin, 2002) and are affected by multiple issues, such as economic stability (Dew, 2011). As relationships do not occur in isolation and can affect the entire family structure, programs that take a multifaceted approach are needed.

Family Success in Adams County (FSAC) was formed under the Healthy Marriage Initiative by the Administration for Children and Families (2005) with the mission of promoting and nurturing safe and healthy family environments. FSAC is housed at a Cooperative Extension

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department of Colorado State University and takes a holistic approach to relationship enrichment including programming in multiple critical areas (i.e., healthy relationships, parenting, and financial education) with a focus on serving low income and minority families. Programming was based on a comprehensive educational framework using aspects from Bandura's (1986) social cognitive foundation to impart knowledge and skills to participants (Hawkins, Carroll, Doherty, & Willoughby, 2004) with the understanding that relationships are part of complex social systems and need to be addressed as such (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). FSAC is a unique family enrichment project offering multiple types of programs going beyond short term follow-up, with personalized one-on-one connections to aid recruitment and retention to best assess impact.

### **Multi-Component Approach**

Multi-component programs have been used in Extension to address problems ranging from nutrition and exercise to workforce development and have been successful with complex behaviors (Jackson & Day, 2005; Peterson et al., 2008). FSAC understands that decisions involving romantic relationships influence other aspects of an individual's life (e.g., parent-child relationship; Carlson, Pilkauskas, McLanahan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2011). Specifically, research indicates that romantic relationship interactions can have both positive (e.g., parental engagement, child well-being, and co-parenting; Carlson & McLanahan, 2006; Carlson et al., 2011; Kolak & Volling, 2007) and negative (e.g., emotional health, lack of acceptance, and discipline; Carlson & McLanahan, 2006; Nelson, O'Brien, Blankson, Calkins, & Keane, 2009) implications for children. Researchers acknowledge the need for comprehensive marriage and relationship programs where parenting elements are also available (Hawkins et al., 2004; Knox & Fein, 2009). Therefore, a parenting program was added to FSAC with the hope of transcending outcomes beyond the parent to children, creating impact beyond the individual or couple.

An additional element often intertwined with relationship struggles are finances (e.g., Dew, 2011; Larson, Stephan, & Beley, 1994). A needs assessment conducted in 2003 and 2009 identified work readiness and family stability as two of the top concerns of FSAC potential participants (Yang, Fetsch, McBride, & Benavente, 2009). Along with a dramatic increase in the Hispanic population in Adams County from 1990-2000, it was recognized that low-income and minority residents had limited access to research and evidence-based financial literacy education programs. The majority (56%) of the FSAC population reported a household income of below \$14,000/year, representing a population significantly below the average household income of \$56,087. Understanding the connection between struggles in finances correlating to relationship struggles and responding to participant need, a financial education program was added to FSAC. With relationships existing as part of complex systems, programs are needed that provide multiple options to ensure a healthy family environment.

## **Evaluation**

Cooperative Extension faculty and professionals understand the importance of program evaluation and are increasingly requiring programs to document impact on populations served (O’Neil, 1998; Taylor-Powell & Boyd, 2008). Recent data indicate that 88.5% of the Extension articles surveyed documented evidence above the level of participation and that almost two-thirds were measuring outcomes; however, only 5.6% documented long-term outcomes (Workman & Scheer, 2012). While there is not one standard definition of long-term follow-up, similar studies that follow participants up to 6 months have been called short-term with long-term follow-up defined as greater than 6 months (e.g., Hawkins & Ooms, 2010; Workman & Scheer, 2012). In order to provide evidence of program impact and improve public value of Extension services, outcomes should be assessed beyond post and short-term timelines.

Within the areas of family enrichment, more studies are needed that examine program outcomes longitudinally (Collins & O’Rourke, 2010; Halford & Bodenmann, 2013; Holmes, Galovan, Yoshida, & Hawkins, 2010), with a lack of longitudinal studies being highlighted as a crucial weakness of intervention programs. Essentially, previous findings could be reporting “honeymoon effects” of program outcomes with only post and short-term follow-up assessments. Long-term evaluation is essential, providing the ability to examine need for and timing of booster sessions or delayed positive effects, thus, providing guidance for future program design. The mission of the current project was to promote long-term positive effects on family outcomes, therefore, program design and evaluation includes face-to-face contact with service providers over a 12-month follow-up period to encourage retention and facilitate individual goal setting over time.

## **Purpose of the Study**

Research has shown that various programs aimed at enriching families have been efficacious in establishing well-functioning couples, improved communication skills, improvement in parenting skills, and better financial decisions (Hawkins & Ooms, 2010; Zimmerman & Roberts, 2012). However, a majority of studies lack large sample sizes and significant follow-up of impact. It is important to examine outcomes over an extended period of time to gain a better understanding of individual trajectories helping to inform future programming. Goals of the current study include an exploratory look at changes in broad outcomes over a 12-month follow-up among participants after completion of relationship, parenting, or financial enrichment programs.

## Method

### Participants

Demographic data was collected on all participants involved in any of the three offered programs (see Table 1). The demographics were broken down by program participation (i.e., took relationship program only, took parenting program only, or took financial program only).

**Table 1. Demographics by Class**

| Measure                    | Relationship Class |        | Parenting Class |        | Financial Class |        |
|----------------------------|--------------------|--------|-----------------|--------|-----------------|--------|
|                            | <i>M (SD)</i>      | %      | <i>M (SD)</i>   | %      | <i>M (SD)</i>   | %      |
| Gender                     |                    |        |                 |        |                 |        |
| <i>Female</i>              |                    | 78.10% |                 | 80.50% |                 | 77.80% |
| Ethnicity                  |                    |        |                 |        |                 |        |
| <i>Hispanic</i>            |                    | 51.20% |                 | 54.10% |                 | 40.50% |
| <i>White</i>               |                    | 31.10% |                 | 31.80% |                 | 36.80% |
| <i>Other</i>               |                    | 17.70% |                 | 14.10% |                 | 22.70% |
| Work                       |                    |        |                 |        |                 |        |
| <i>Full-time</i>           |                    | 24%    |                 | 19.40% |                 | 31.90% |
| <i>Part-time</i>           |                    | 11.20% |                 | 12.90% |                 | 40.90% |
| <i>Unemployed</i>          |                    | 53.50% |                 | 59.10% |                 | 49.50% |
| Education                  |                    |        |                 |        |                 |        |
| <i>No HS or GED</i>        |                    | 23.50% |                 | 27.40% |                 | 20.10% |
| <i>HS or GED</i>           |                    | 37.70% |                 | 40.40% |                 | 30.80% |
| <i>Some College</i>        |                    | 21.90% |                 | 15.90% |                 | 23.20% |
| <i>College Degree</i>      |                    | 17.30% |                 | 16.30% |                 | 25.90% |
| Income                     |                    |        |                 |        |                 |        |
| <i>\$6,999 or less</i>     |                    | 44.20% |                 | 45.60% |                 | 39.80% |
| <i>\$7,000 - \$13,999</i>  |                    | 13.30% |                 | 14.70% |                 | 10.80% |
| <i>\$14,000 - \$24,999</i> |                    | 12.90% |                 | 12.60% |                 | 12.40% |
| <i>\$25,000 - Above</i>    |                    | 19.70% |                 | 15.4%  |                 | 37.00% |
| Marital Status             |                    |        |                 |        |                 |        |
| <i>Single</i>              |                    | 25.80% |                 | 28.10% |                 | 29.30% |
| <i>Dating</i>              |                    | 22.50% |                 | 17.60% |                 | 21.70% |
| <i>Engaged</i>             |                    | 12%    |                 | 13.70% |                 | 13.10% |
| <i>Married</i>             |                    | 39.60% |                 | 40.40% |                 | 35.70% |
| Age                        | 34.22 (11.34)      |        | 32.45 (10.21)   |        | 41.14 (9.7)     |        |
| Marriage Length            | 11.65 (9.25)       |        | 10.55 (7.55)    |        | 12.75 (5.56)    |        |
| # of Children              | 2.60 (1.59)        |        | 2.58 (1.42)     |        | 3.14 (0.9)      |        |

## Procedures

Participants enrolled in the study through various methods, including self-referral from advertisement and direct referral from Social Services, health departments, and community partners, including Head Start. Before completing the program, participants met with a Family Service Coordinator to complete a baseline survey. Family Service Coordinators worked one-on-one with each participant to assess baseline goals and determine the program in which participants were interested based on need and scheduling; randomization was not possible due to emergent need. All participants signed an informed consent and were offered the parenting education program, *Make Parenting a Pleasure* (MPAP; Birth to Three; Saks, Hyman, Reilly, & Rusch, 2006); the relationship education program, *Within My Reach* (WMR; Pearson, Stanley, & Kline, 2005); or the financial education program, *Spend Some, Save Some, Share Some* (SSS; Frobose, Grimes, Kubin, Miller, & Zimka, 2006), either in Spanish or English.

**Relationship program.** WMR (Pearson et al., 2005) was chosen as it was tailored for those who struggle with economic disadvantage and is based on the research-supported premise that virtually all people have aspirations for relationships that are happy, healthy, and stable and that children tend to fair best in the context of healthy marriages and worse in dangerous adult relationships or repeated relationship transitions. Specific topics include some of the following: practice replacing communication danger signs with proactive strategies for respectful talking and listening; examine the warning signs of dangerous patterns in relationships; develop skills to help manage stress and reduce the negative effects of stress; learn the brain science behind love and how to enjoy and thoughtfully navigate decisions while in love; acknowledge long-term satisfaction possible through commitment.

**Parenting program.** MPAP (Birth to Three; Saks et al., 2006) is a group-based program for parents with children up to eight years old and was named as a national family-strengthening model by the Federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in 1999. The materials are written at the 4<sup>th</sup> grade level and are designed to be adaptable to a wide array of socioeconomic, educational, cultural, ethnic, religious, and geographic environments. The curriculum includes stress management, social isolation, positive discipline skills, and parenting self-confidence.

**Financial program.** SSS (Frobose et al., 2006) is a financial education program designed for individuals entering or re-entering the workforce or for employed individuals who want to improve their basic financial management skills. The curriculum includes identifying spending, saving, and sharing habits; developing spending, saving, and sharing plans; protecting financial identity; understanding the relationship between health habits and wealth habits; establishing personal health or wealth goals; analyzing possible obstacles; and choosing appropriate rewards.

All programs were offered in either four sessions lasting two hours over the course of four weeks or in weekend courses (depending on participant schedules). Participants completed a survey at baseline (i.e., wave 1 - prior to receiving a program), immediately after the program when 8 hours was completed (i.e., wave 2), six months after completion of the program (i.e., wave 3), and 1 year after completion of the program (i.e., wave 4). Every time participants completed an evaluation survey, they were given a small monetary reimbursement (\$20-\$25). The surveys were previously piloted and available in both Spanish and English. All programs were free, lasted six to twelve weeks (depending on participants' schedules), and provided child-care, meals, as well as bus tokens to aid participation.

## Measures

**General assessments.** A demographics questionnaire gathered descriptive information about the sample: age, ethnicity, income, years of education, number of children, relationship status, employment status, and other basic information.

**Specific post-program questions.** Additional questions related to specific concepts covered in the program, skills learned, instructor assessment, and overall quality of the program (e.g., "I have learned strategies for successful parenting;" "I have improved my relationship with my partner;" "I have strengthened my financial skills") were also assessed at immediate post using both Likert scale and open-ended questions.

**Family Function Style Scale (FFSS).** A factor analysis was conducted on the FFSS scale (Trivette, Dunst, Deal, Hamby, & Sexton, 1994) that resulted in eight remaining questions that tap into the family functioning construct ( $\alpha = 0.70$ ). The FFSS measures the extent to which a family, either as individuals or a group believes they are characterized by different strengths, capabilities, and competencies. Questions are rated on a five-point Likert scale; higher scores indicate greater family strengths and better family functioning. Participants answered these questions as an individual. The scale shows adequate validity and reliability (Trivette et al., 1994). Participants in all three programs completed this scale (current  $\alpha = .92 - .93$ ).

**Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS).** The current study used six items from the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS). The RDAS contains multiple items measuring the domains of consensus, satisfaction, and cohesion (Busby, Christensen, Crane, & Larson, 1995). Questions are rated on a five-point Likert scale; higher RDAS scores indicate less marital distress (better adjustment). The RDAS scores were examined for each individual. This tool has been found to be a valid measure of relationship quality (Crane, Middleton, & Bean, 2000) and was administered for the WMR program only (current  $\alpha = 0.84$ ).



**Parenting Alliance Measure (PAM).** The PAM (Abidin & Brunner, 1995; Abidin & Konold, 1999) is one of the few current measures that assesses parenting, partner communication, and partner cooperation in regard to childcare for children between the ages of 1 and 19 (e.g., “My child’s other parent and I communicate well about our child”; 1 = *strongly agree* to 5 = *strongly disagree*). Higher scores on the scale indicate lower communication and cooperation. The PAM has an internal consistency of .97 and has been found to be correlated with parenting stress, partner communication, family functioning, and marital satisfaction. This measure was administered for the MPAP program only (current  $\alpha = 0.98$ ).

## Data Analysis

**Latent growth modeling.** The goal of this study was to see if growth was present for outcomes from pre to 12-month follow-up. Latent Growth Modeling (LGM) was used to test the initial research questions of whether improvements were seen on FFSS for all three programs from pre to 12-month follow-up, and to investigate whether growth was seen for program specific outcomes with MPAP and WMR. In LGM, data from repeated measures are used to model intra-individual change over time as well as inter-individual differences in change processes (Duncan et al., 1997; McArdle, 1988). When performed in a structural equation modeling framework, the overall goodness of fit may be assessed using several fit indices. Models were considered to have a good fit if the chi-square test was not significant, the Comparative Fit Index ( $CFI$ )  $> .90$ , and the Root-Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)  $< .10$  (Bollen & Curran, 2006). Linear and quadratic terms were tested during the analysis, with the linear models producing the best fit.

For each outcome of interest, analyses began with an unconditional model to determine the best functional form for change. To identify the intercept, the factor loadings for the outcomes at waves 1 to 4 were constrained at 1. To identify the slope, the factor loadings for the outcomes at waves 1 to 4 were constrained at 0, 2, 8, and 14 respectively. These values correspond with the number of months that elapsed since baseline (i.e., wave 1).

**Missing data.** As recruitment occurred at various time points and participants were allowed to leave or return to the study at any time, missing data was mostly due to the design of the study and transient nature of participants. A full information maximum likelihood model was used to estimate all models (Bollen & Curran, 2006); this type of estimator allows for individuals with just one or two data points to still be included in analysis.

## Results

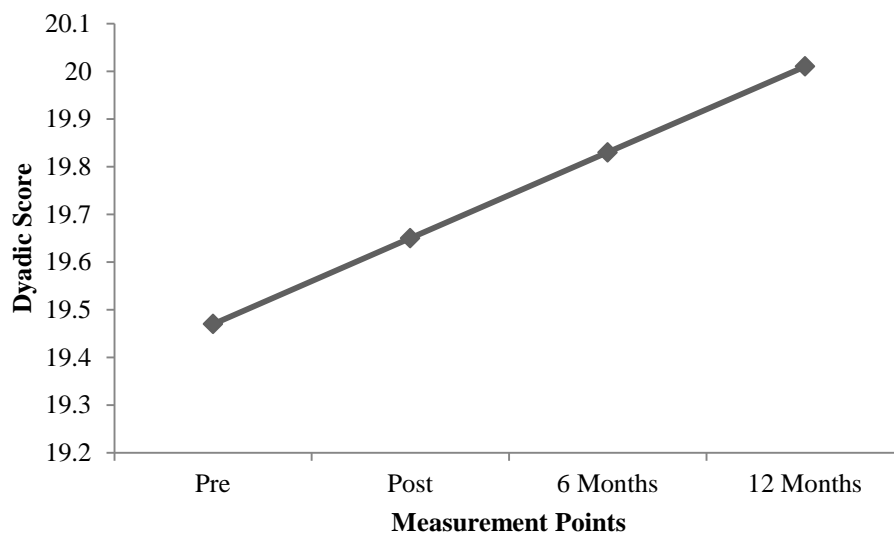
### Specific Post-Program Questions

Frequencies were run on the same post-program questions from all three programs. Overall program quality was reported with above average to excellent (98%). Participants reported the program as appropriate and useful (*agreed* or *strongly agreed*; 95%). Participants would also refer the program to friends or family (*agreed* or *strongly agreed*; 94%). Post feedback for WMR was positive, with 88% reporting an improvement in attitudes about marriage/relationships, and 80% reporting an improvement in their current relationship because of the program. Post-feedback for MPAP was also positive, with 93% reporting learning new strategies for successful parenting, and 86% reporting improved communication skills due to participation in MPAP. Last, post-feedback for SSS was encouraging, with 100% reporting improved financial skills, and 79% reporting improved conflict resolution skills due to participation in SSS.

### Within My Reach

**Family Function Style Scale.** The Linear Growth Model for FFSS for the WMR program provided a good fit to the data:  $\chi^2(5, n = 601) = 4.26, p = .51$ ;  $CFI = 1.00$ ;  $TLI = 1.00$ ;  $RMSEA = .01$ ; 90%  $CI = .00$  to  $.05$ . Analysis showed a significant intercept ( $p < .001$ ), indicating that on average, participants scored 30.06 on the FFSS at the pre measurement. Intercept variance was significant ( $p < .001$ ), indicating individuals did vary on initial FFSS scores at baseline. However, covariance of the slope and intercept was not significant ( $p > .05$ ). In addition, analysis showed a significant slope ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that on average, there was a .10 unit increase in FFSS scores at each measurement point. Variance of the slope was not significant ( $p > .05$ ), indicating participants did not vary in their rate of change from pre to 12 months.

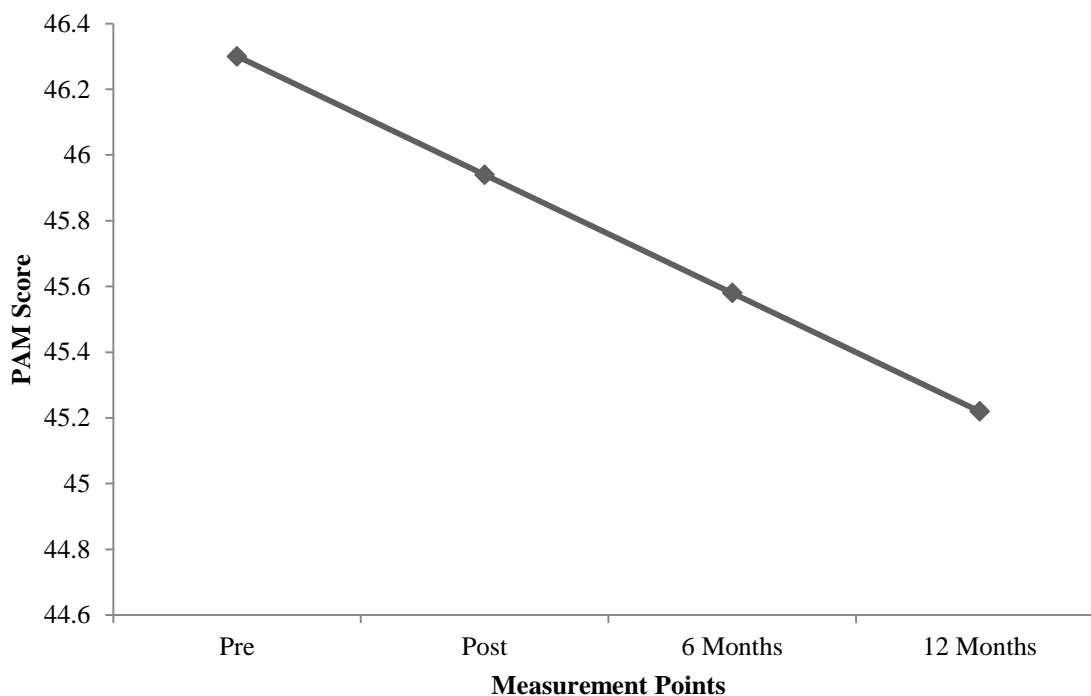
**Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale.** The Linear Growth Model for the Dyadic Scale for the WMR program provided a good fit:  $\chi^2(5, n = 602) = 3.03, p = .69$ ;  $CFI = 1.0$ ;  $TLI = 1.0$ ;  $RMSEA = .01$ ; 90%  $CI = .00$  to  $.04$ . Analysis showed a significant intercept ( $p < .001$ ), indicating that on average, participants scored 19.47 on the Dyadic Scale at the pre measurement. Intercept variance was significant ( $p < .001$ ), indicating individuals did vary on initial scores on this scale. However, covariance of the slope and intercept was not significant ( $p > .05$ ). In addition, analysis showed a significant slope ( $p < .01$ ), indicating that, on average, there was a .18 unit increase in the Dyadic Scale scores at each measurement point. Variance of the slope was not significant ( $p > .05$ ), indicating participants did not vary in their rate of change from pre to 12 months. See Figure 1 for Dyadic results.

**Figure 1. Dyadic Results Over Time**

### Making Parenting a Pleasure

**Family Function Style Scale.** The Linear Growth Model for FFSS for the MPAP program provided a good fit:  $\chi^2 (5, n = 875) = 5.27, p = .38; CFI = .99; TLI = .99; RMSEA = .01; 90\% CI = .00$  to  $.05$ . Analysis showed a significant intercept ( $p < .001$ ), indicating on average, participants scored 30.96 on the FFSS at the pre measurement. Intercept variance was significant ( $p < .001$ ), indicating individuals did vary on initial FFSS scores at baseline. However, covariance of the slope and intercept was not significant ( $p > .05$ ). In addition, analysis showed a significant slope ( $p < .001$ ), indicating that on average, there was a .10 unit increase in FFSS scores at each measurement point. Variance of the slope was not significant ( $p > .05$ ), indicating participants did not vary in their rate of change from pre to 12 months.

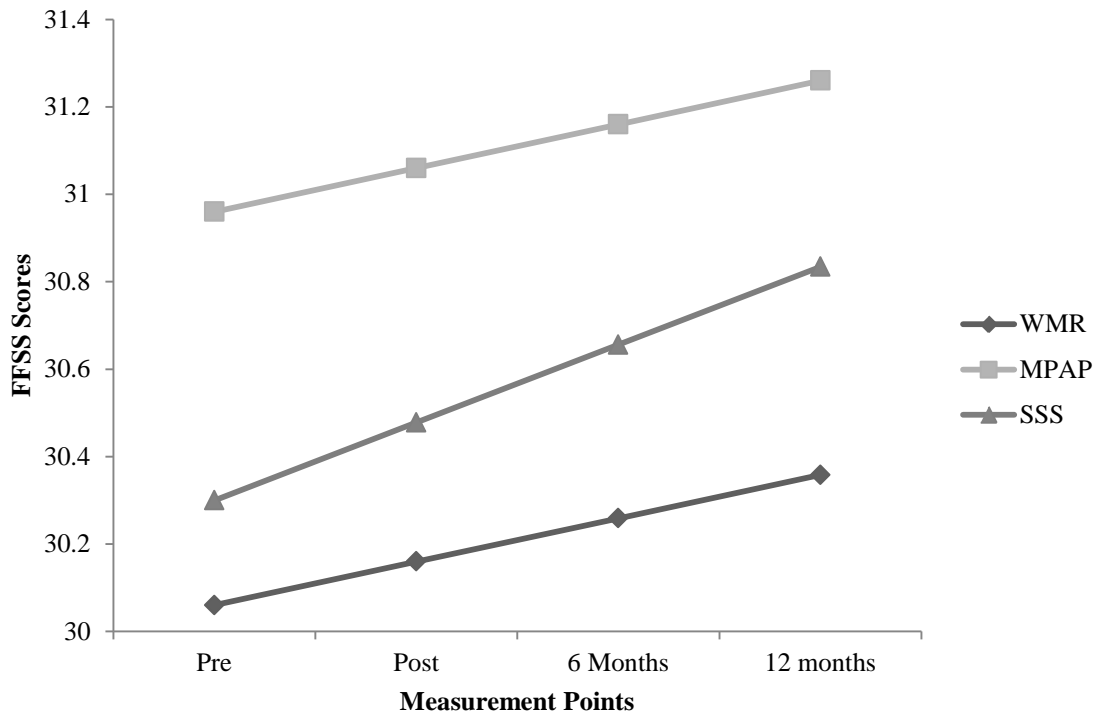
**Parenting Alliance Measure.** The Linear Growth Model for PAM for the MPAP program provided a good fit:  $\chi^2 (5, n = 744) = 6.23, p = .28; CFI = .99; TLI = .99; RMSEA = .02; 90\% CI = .00$  to  $.05$ . Analysis showed a significant intercept ( $p < .001$ ), indicating that, on average, participants scored 46.30 on the PAM at the pre measurement. Intercept variance was significant ( $p < .001$ ), indicating that individuals did vary on initial PAM scores. The covariance of the slope and intercept was significant ( $p < .05$ ). In addition, the analysis showed a significant slope ( $p < .01$ ), indicating that, on average, there was a .36 unit decrease in PAM scores at each measurement point. Variance of the slope was significant ( $p < .05$ ), indicating participants did vary in their rate of change from pre to 12 months. See Figure 2 for PAM results with lowering of scores representing improvement in the construct.

**Figure 2. PAM Results Over Time**

### Spend Some, Save Some, Share Some

**Family Function Style Scale.** The Linear Growth Model for FFSS for the SSS program provided a good fit:  $\chi^2(5, n = 373) = 10.57, p = .06; CFI = .93; TLI = .91; RMSEA = .05; 90\% CI = .00$  to  $.10$ . Analysis showed a significant intercept ( $p < .001$ ), indicating that, on average, participants scored 30.30 on the FFSS at the pre measurement. Intercept variance was significant ( $p < .001$ ), indicating that individuals did vary on initial FFSS. The covariance of the slope and intercept was significant ( $p < .05$ ). In addition, the analysis showed a significant slope ( $p < .001$ ), indicating that, on average, there was a .18 unit increase in FFSS scores at each measurement point. Variance of the slope was not significant ( $p > .05$ ), indicating participants did not vary in their rate of change in FFSS from pre to 12 months. See Figure 3 for FFSS results. See Table 2 for results of all growth models by class.

**Figure 3. Results for FFSS**



**Table 2. Results of Growth Models by Class**

| Model       | Parameter                |                              |                          |                              |                            |
|-------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
|             | Mean of I<br>Coeff. (SE) | Variance of I<br>Coeff. (SE) | Mean of S<br>Coeff. (SE) | Variance of S<br>Coeff. (SE) | Covariances<br>Coeff. (SE) |
| <i>WMR</i>  |                          |                              |                          |                              |                            |
| FFSS        | 30.06(.30)**             | 32.84(4.20)**                | .099(.045)*              | .034(.07)                    | -.73(.11)                  |
| Dyadic      | 19.47(.20)**             | 14.30(1.82)**                | .18(.03)**               | -.03(.03)                    | .18(.21)                   |
| <i>MPAP</i> |                          |                              |                          |                              |                            |
| FFSS        | 30.96(.25)**             | 31.28(3.46)**                | .10(.03)**               | .003(.05)                    | -.55(.34)                  |
| PAM         | 46.30(.86)**             | 41.49(3.21)**                | -.36(.12)*               | 1.74(.69)*                   | -15.40(4.16)**             |
| <i>SSS</i>  |                          |                              |                          |                              |                            |
| FFSS        | 30.30(.37)**             | 38.97(4.76)**                | .178(.04)**              | .113(.07)                    | -1.50(.55)*                |

Note: Coeff = coefficient; SE = standard error; I = intercept; S = slope; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .001$

## Discussion

The current evaluation of an Extension study of family enrichment programs showed overall encouraging findings. Impact was found through the use of 12-month assessments and growth modeling techniques. In addition to positive post-program feedback, outcomes of family functioning, parenting alliance, and relationship satisfaction were reported for various programs from pre to 12-month follow-up. It has been stated that the ultimate goal of Extension should be “true” impact with a focus needed beyond just participation to an examination of higher-level outcomes and data that goes beyond short-term follow-up (Workman & Scheer, 2012). The Family Success in Adams County (FSAC) project was able to create meaningful impact by influencing family-related outcomes over time.

### 12-Month Outcomes

The main goal of FSAC was to strengthen families and foster healthy relationships. Participants from all three programs reported improvement in family functioning (FFSS) over a 12-month period; this is encouraging as it highlights family members’ increased strengths, capabilities, and competencies contributing to the family unit, thus, leading to a better family environment (Hossain, 2001). The current sample consisted of majority low income and minority participants who often face increased stressors and risk factors for family strain (Ooms & Wilson, 2004). As higher family functioning has been linked to improved responses to crises and stressors (Pirila et al., 2005), improvement on this outcome may be particularly impactful for our population. Lastly, the all-encompassing nature of the FFSS (e.g., “We can depend on each other to help out when something unexpected happens”) may translate to broader improvements in family communication and structure.

In addition to having curriculum focused on romantic relationships, parenting outcomes were addressed with a program devoted specifically to the parenting relationship. Improvements in the parenting alliance measure (PAM) were found for the MPAP program, indicating better parenting cooperation or the belief that parents have a sound working relationship. The PAM has also been correlated to marital satisfaction and child adjustment (Abidin & Brunner, 1995). Findings imply meaningful changes in intimate relationships and parenting constructs including reduced conflict and improved child well-being.

Based on the target population of these programs, improvement in relationship satisfaction (as measured by the RDAS) for the WMR program at 12-months is noteworthy, as a common occurrence with low income couples is lower relationship satisfaction compared to higher income couples (Wilcox, 2010). Therefore, improvement in relationship satisfaction may demonstrate effectiveness of programming in preventing relationship break up for couples at higher risk. As unhealthy relationships are linked to mental distress (Leach, Butterworth,

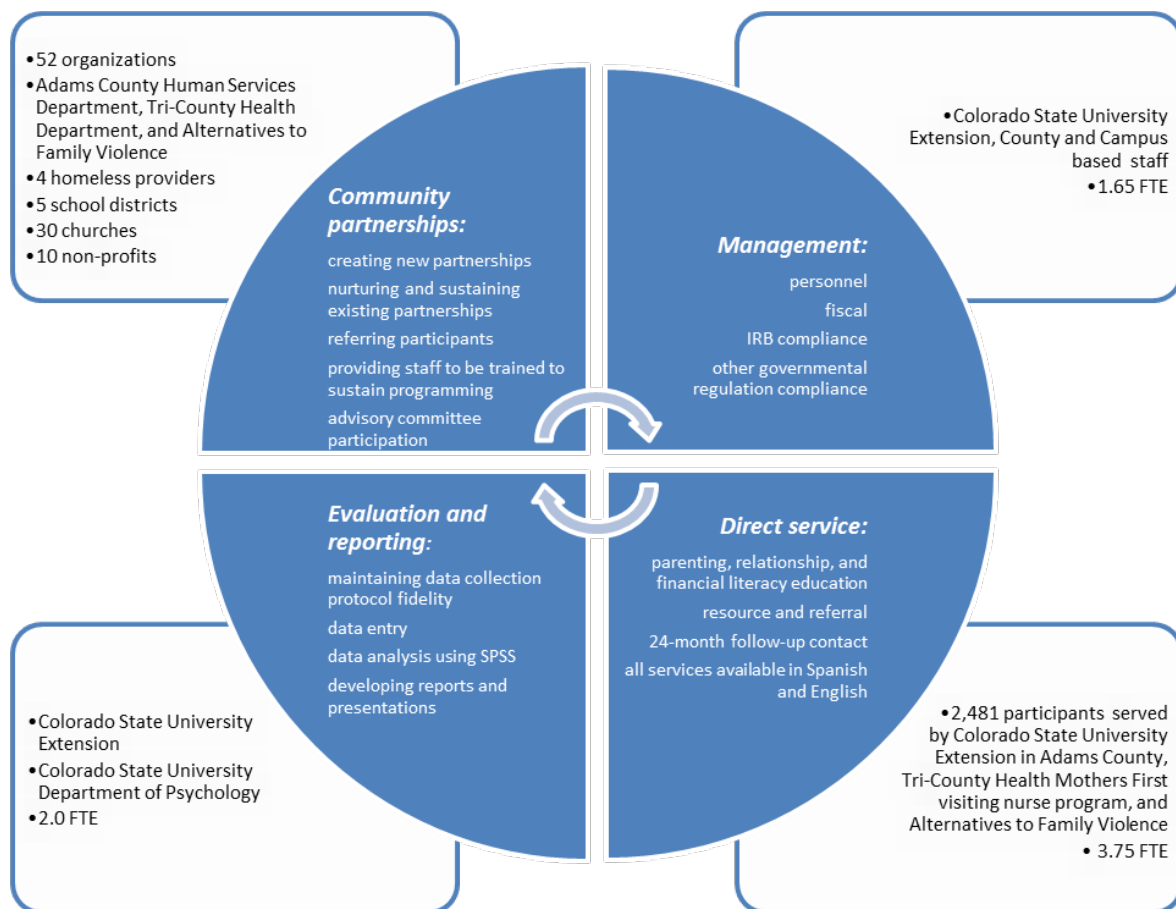
Oleson, & Mackinnon, 2013) and dyadic adjustment scores (i.e., RDAS; Whisman, Uebelacker, & Weinstock, 2004) have been correlated with mental distress (e.g., depression), programming may lead to improvements in participants' overall well-being. The financial enrichment program (SSS) also received positive post results (i.e., improved financial skills) and may impact participant well-being, as reduced financial strain is related to a decrease in stress (Stanley, & Einhorn, 2007).

### **Recruitment and Follow-Up**

Researchers have called for effectiveness of family enrichment programs to be examined with socially disadvantaged and minority populations (Johnson, 2012). Extension programs understand the changing demographics across the country and, similar to other successful programs, focus on family life with Latinos (Allen, Gudino, & Crawford, 2011). FSAC used a grassroots approach to recruitment and retention of participants. Specifically, staff was able to form partnerships with pre-existing organizations (see Figure 4 on the next page) with strong ties to the community. Additional components were relationships formed between the family services coordinator and participants. FSAC maintained the same two family service coordinators throughout the grant, resulting in personalized relationships with participants to encourage lasting contact. Participants received support through personal goal setting, growth discussions, and information about various local services (e.g., GED classes, head start programs) at each follow-up meeting. Key components of the family service coordinator approach (patterned after the Family Development Worker model) are communication built on strength-based assessment and shared power goal setting (Cochran & Henderson, 1986). Although not measured in the current study, in-person meetings and subsequent relationships were thought to be essential to 12-month success and should be objectively examined as a model in future studies and similar populations.

### **Limitations**

The sample was a convenience sample not randomly assigned to classes or screened for current life stressors or other factors that may have impacted effectiveness of the programs. Program participation was based on current need, and a wait-list control was not used, as the majority of participants expressed immediate interest. This limitation means no causal implications can be drawn, and maturation over time or cultural/historical factors may be responsible for findings. However, a recent meta-analysis showed the benefit that these more realistic studies can have, demonstrating similar effect sizes with field and experimental studies (Hawkins & Ooms, 2010). A large amount of attrition occurred as participants tended to be transient (with multiple address or phone number changes during the follow-up period). Every attempt was made to maintain contact, including multiple postal mailings, contact on Facebook, multiple phone calls, and incentives. As participants were majority female, recruitment efforts were made throughout the

**Figure 4. FSAC Organizational Chart**

grant to attain higher male participation rates through offering various class times, using Hispanic male staff to recruit, and addressing this need during class sessions. Future studies should investigate more effective ways to recruit male participants in family enrichment programs and examine for whom these programs are most effective. As current sample size did not allow for comparison of participants who took one program component versus those who took more than one, this question is recommended for future multi-component studies. Additionally, although not part of the current study design, future studies should compare similar multi-component interventions with single service models to better assess differences in impact.

### Conclusion

Cooperative Extension faculty and professionals understand the importance of program evaluation and are increasingly requiring programs to document impact on populations served (O'Neil, 1998; Taylor-Powell & Boyd, 2008). Family Success in Adams County aimed to create sustained impact by improving family enrichment through offering a variety of classes catering



to participant need. Specifically, the current study demonstrated strengths with regard to providing multiple services, showing improvements in outcomes lasting up to 12 months, and the use of a grassroots approach for recruitment and retention. Growth modeling allowed for use of all participant data and provided insight into the efficacy of these family enrichment programs.

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