

“Sacrifice”

- What's in a word?
- Other words
 - Altruism
 - Generosity
 - Giving

Sacrifice

- The essence of sacrifice is choosing to give up something for the benefit of the other.

Traditional Wedding Vows

Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her,

- in sickness and in health,
- for richer, for poorer,
- for better, for worse,
- in sadness and in joy,
- to cherish and continually bestow upon her your heart's deepest devotion,
- forsaking all others, keep yourself only unto her

... as long as you both shall live?

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“Of course that very much depends on what you mean by the question, ‘Do you?’”

You mean I have to choose to let something else go?

Maybe

- “Maybe I do”
 - If you only focus on what you could be losing, you have already lost.
- “Do you . . . ?” is a question inviting a clear decision.

Let's Be Clear

- I am suggesting “all out” commitment includes sacrifice.
- I am suggesting that these things contribute to healthy, strong marriages.
- But choosing a partner wisely, in the first place, is part of the smarter path.
- Sliding vs. Deciding
 - (Stanley, Rhoades, & Markman, 2006)

The Reality of Sacrifice

- Sacrifices are frequently called for and performed in close relationships because conflict between self-interest and the good of the relationship occurs often.

Sarah Whitton

Research on Sacrifice:

Young field but much replication

- Strong findings across many studies:
 - different Researchers
 - different Samples
 - different Measures
 - different Methods
- Same general findings

NIH Support

- This talk and the research cited here from our lab was supported by grants from:

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)

- R01HD48780-1A1 (NICHD) Marriage Education and Risk Reduction for Army Families
- R01 HD047564-01A2 (NICHD) The Role of Cohabitation in Marriage and Union Formation
- R01 HD053314-20A1 (NICHD) Long Term Effect of Premarital Intervention
- Senior Investigators:
 - Howard Markman
 - Scott Stanley
 - Elizabeth Allen
 - Galena Kline Rhoades

More Detail on Studies and other Information
Posted On Our Website

- www.PREPinC.com
- Look for the link to this talk.

Fourteen samples/studies across these publications:

- Stanley & Markman, 1992 (two samples)
- Van Lange, Rusbult, Drigotas, Arriaga, Witcher, & Cox (1997) (six studies)
- Wieselquist, Rusbult, Foster, & Agnew (1999) (two studies)
- Whitton, Stanley, & Markman (2002, 2007) (two studies)
- Stanley, Whitton, Low, Clements, & Markman (2006)
- Tom Smith (2007) at National Opinion Research Center

Sacrifice Measured Many Ways

- Willingness to give up something very important
- Level of resentment when giving up something (even if small) for the partner
- Preference to suffer rather than let loved one suffer
- Inner satisfaction with giving to partner

A Paradox

- Focusing on getting an "equal" return will get you less of what you want.
- Givers make the best lovers.

Murstein & MacDonald: Exchange Orientation

- Exchange orientation the expectation that you should get back equal to what you give.
- Exchange orientation is associated with divorce and marital unhappiness

Murstein, B. I., & MacDonald, M. G. (1983). The relationship of "exchange-orientation" and "commitment" scales to marriage adjustment. *International Journal of Psychology*, 18, 297-311.
Clements, M. L., Stanley, S. M., & Markman, H. J. (2004). Before they said "I do": Discriminating among marital outcomes over 13 years based on premarital data. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66, 613-626.

Co-Dependency

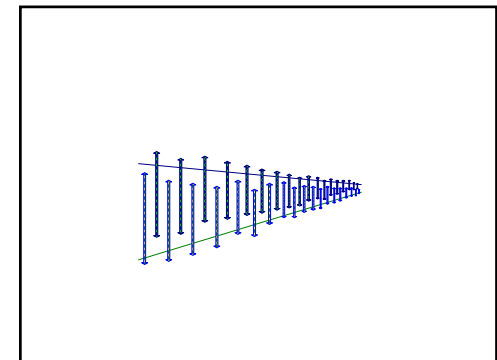
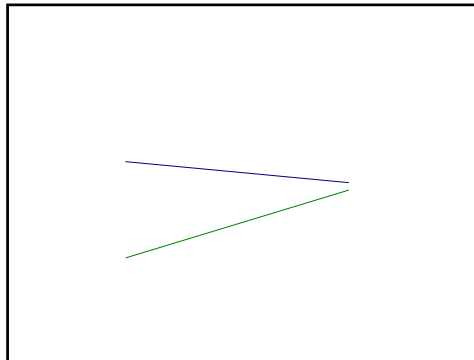
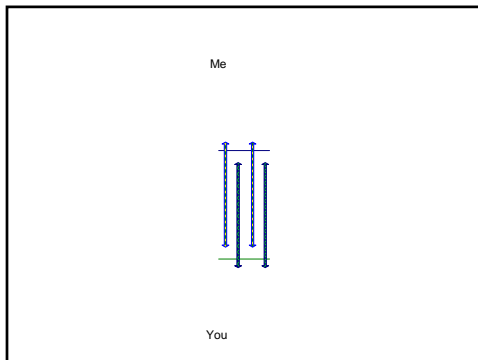
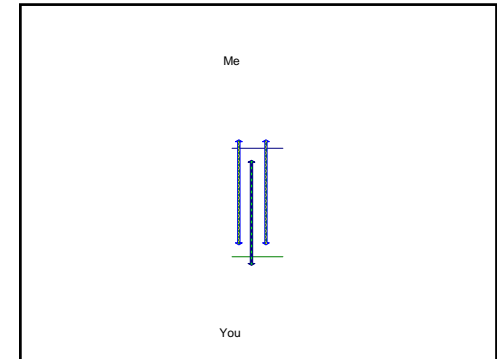
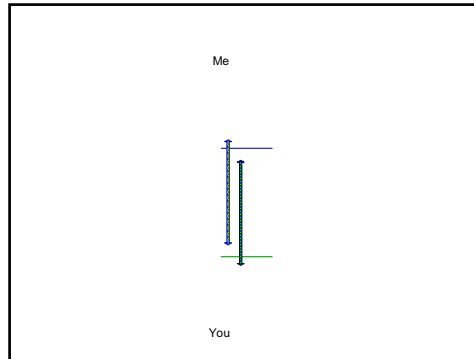
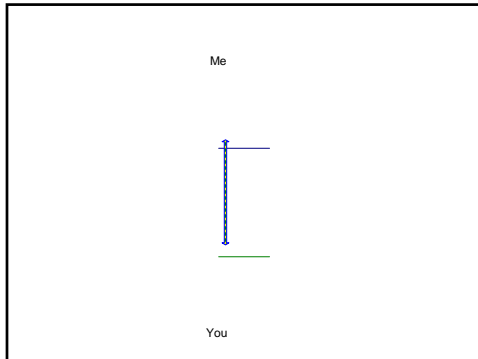
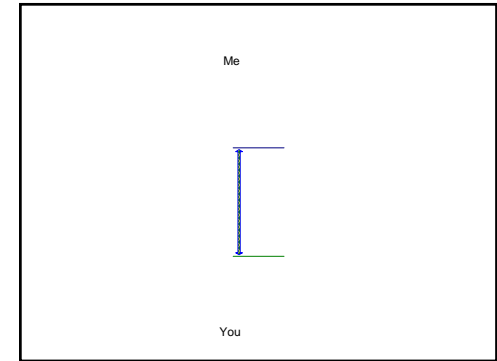
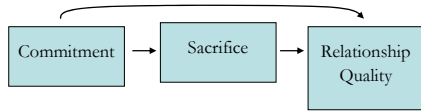
- A great idea gone bad
- "Real, healthy sacrifice involves a choice to be useful to another, not to be used by another."

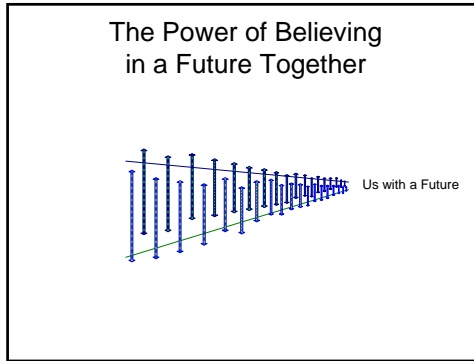
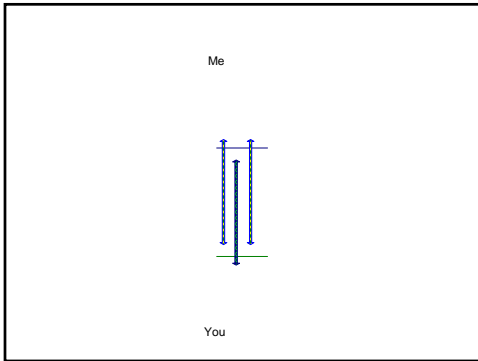
To be very clear . . .

- A person can give too much.

The Link Between Commitment and Sacrifice

Sacrifice: A commitment-inspired pro-relationship behavior
(from Whitton, Stanley, Kline Rhoades, Clements, & Markman, 2006)





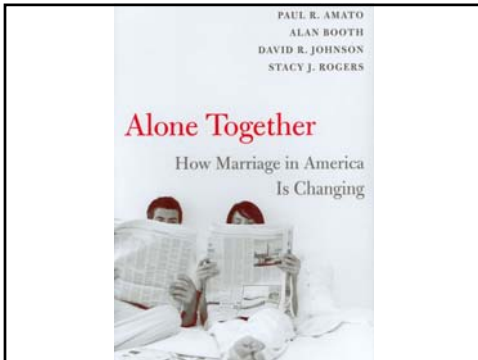
- Men and Women and Sacrifice:
 - Our studies to date show that sacrifice is more strongly related to long-term commitment in men than women.
 - Will look at in more studies over time, but . . .

A Trend Related to our Discussion

Disconnection from Community



- ### Alone, Alone, Alone
- Robert Putnam's
 - *Bowling Alone*
 - Gregg Easterbrook's
 - *The Progress Paradox*
 - Amato, Booth, Johnson, & Rogers'
 - *Alone Together*
- Amato, P. R., Booth, A., Johnson, D. R., & Rogers, S. J. (2007). *Alone Together*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.



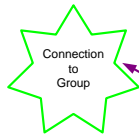
- ### Amato, Booth, Johnson, & Rogers
- We have fewer friends and memberships in common with spouse than 20 years ago.
 - The decrease in shared friendships, in marriage, was associated with declining marital quality (page 202).
 - "Increasing individualism appears to have had a corrosive effect on marital quality." (page 203)

"We opened our home . . ."

How does community and connection relate to sacrifice?



"I belong"



Signals Trust-worthiness



"I belong"

Signals Trust-worthiness



Making "Do"

Strengthening Community

Sample Strategies from PREP's
Within My Reach and *Within Our Reach*

- Developing community connections.
 - Increase support
 - Giving back

Building on Sacrifice

Types of Sacrifice: Big and Small

- Small acts of awareness of the other
- Acceptance of quirks
- Listening
- Forgiveness of transgressions and imperfections
- Resisting the desire to return negative for negative
- Doing something your partner wants to do for fun
- Expressing gratefulness

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- Nancy to Scott:

"If you didn't want to be improved, you shouldn't have gotten married."

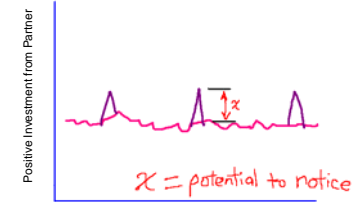
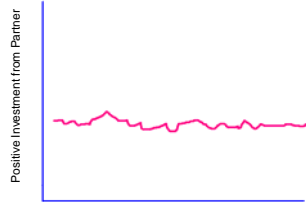
What's Makes Sacrifice Special?

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- "Less Talk, More Action"
 - Getting it done is what matters most.

Visibility: Seeing is Believing

- We get acclimated to the positive things our partner does.
- We just won't notice it unless we push reflection and gratefulness.
- BUT, sacrifice can be "seen" above the din of the daily grind.



“my partner shows me love . . .”

A Little Challenge

(Example of New Exercise in both
Within Our Reach and *Within My Reach*)

- **Two Things I Can Do This Week To Show My Love and Commitment**

- Write down two specific things you can do in the next few days for your partner.
- Don't share your ideas with your partner.
- Make a commitment to yourself to carry these two things out.

The Age Old Question?

Does size matter?

A Trend: Exploding Interest in Research on Happiness

Trying to Answer the Question:
“What makes people truly happy in life?”

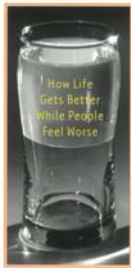
Hot Off the Press

- *The Happiness Hypothesis* (2006)
- *The Progress Paradox* (2004)
- *The Paradox of Choice* (2005)
- *Stumbling on Happiness* (2006)
- *Why Good Things Happen to Good People* (2007)
The Exciting New Research that Proves the Link Between Doing Good and Living a Longer, Healthier, Happier Life

An Area of Exploding Empiricism

- Edward Diener
- Martin Seligman
- Daniel Kahneman
- Daniel Gilbert

The Progress Paradox



Gregg Easterbrook

The Progress Paradox

- Gregg Easterbrook (2004)

About the American Dream

“ . . . [The American Dream], in its vital assumption, that the good life would confer happiness, turns out not to be true.”
(p. 187)

“Happy People” Research Summary

- Have and protect **Friendships**
- Are more **Giving** of themselves to others
- Are more **Grateful** and let others know it
- Are more **Forgiving**

What's your motive? More Paradox


- Where positive psychology may go wrong
- As soon as our primary motive in giving is to be seen giving, it seems (to me) likely to destroy the power of the thing.
- That turns it back into "you owe me" in that you owe me recognition.

The Hope of Sacrifice

- We do not meet our own standards. Mostly, we are not doing, thinking, or being for the other what we so often demand the other do, think, or be for us. (This is normal.)
- None of us would want a jury of our peers to examine our own behavior against the standard we hold our partner up to meeting.

The Hope of Sacrifice

- Sacrifice gives us a way around this, . . .
 - In the moment we choose, we overcome our focus on self in order to give to another.
 - In the moment we choose, we are able to focus on what we do rather than what will happen to us.
 - This is the essence of commitment: making a choice to give up other choices. It is also deciding, not sliding.
 - That choice to give transcends, for one moment, the focus on the self.



More details posted on our website:
(see Scott's Corner by going to any of the major sections and checking the menu bar)

www.PREPinC.com

My book "The Power of Commitment" is available at Amazon.com or on our website.