Pen or Pencil: A Research Based Approach

Dr. Kimberly R. Mills
Director: Educational Advocacy Initiative:
Fulton County Juvenile Court
According to a Georgia State University economist, divorce and out of wedlock childbearing costs taxpayers $112 billion dollars a year (Scafidi, 2008).

40% of American children are now born out of wedlock.

There is a new movement towards efforts to strengthen families through marriage initiatives.

- Ex. Texas: Allocated 15 million federal dollars for marriage education.

www.cnn.com/2008/living/personal/04/15/fragmented.families.ap/index.html
Significance data continued…

- When compared with White youth, Black youth experience divorce more severely in terms of loss of income (Page & Huff, 2005).

- “Marriage typically brings a host of important benefits to African American men, women, and children. On average, married African Americans are wealthier, happier, and choose healthier behaviors than their unmarried peers, and their children typically fare better in life-differences that indeed seem to stem largely from marriage itself (Blackmun et al, 2005).
“Today the number of children born into a black marriage averages less than 0.9 children per marriage. "The birthrates of black married women have fallen so sharply that absent out-of-wedlock childbearing, the African American population would not only fail to reproduce itself, but would rapidly die off."

*The Abolition of Marriage, by Maggie Gallagher p. 120*, citing Reynolds Forley, "After the Starting Line: Blacks and Women in an Uphill Pace," Demography 25, no. 4 (November 1988): 487, Figure 6.
“During the days of slavery a black child was more likely to grow up living with both parents than he or she is today.” Andrew J. Cherlin, Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage, rev. and enl. ed., (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992)

Blackmun et al (2005) also found that African American women tend to benefit from marriage less than Whites and men.

“Black Americans have been especially vulnerable to the rapid changes of a morally-fluid society over the past three decades as their community has been ravaged by the effects of high rates of out-of-wedlock births, single-parent families, and sexually-transmitted diseases.” (http://www.urbancure.org/article.asp?id=2999)
One Possible Solution…

Pen or Pencil: Freedom of Choice
Pen or Pencil is Powerful Because it Changes How People Think.

In Academia this is referred as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
The Benefits of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

- When using CBT, clients transform because they learn how to think differently and they act on that learning.

- CBT is based on the scientifically supported assumption that most emotional and behavioral reactions are learned. Therefore, the goal of therapy is to help clients unlearn their unwanted reactions and to learn a new way of reacting.
Research Questions

- How does the Pen or Pencil: Freedom of Choice Intervention affect youth self reports related to frequency of delinquent activity?
- How does the Pen or Pencil: Freedom of Choice Intervention affect youth self reports related to beliefs about Gangs?
- How does the Pen or Pencil: Freedom of Choice Intervention affect youth scores on content knowledge related to history and civil rights?
- How does the Pen or Pencil: Freedom of Choice Intervention affect youth self reports related to beliefs about aggression?
- How does the Pen or Pencil: Freedom of Choice Intervention affect youth self reports related to self esteem?
Description of Participants and Setting

- The Pen or Pencil Intervention will be subjected to a rigorous experimental research design. Majority African American teens.

- High Point School in North Carolina.

- Social Studies students. Random assignment to treatment group.

- 40 participants in experimental group.
Description of Procedures

- The independent variable for this research study is the Pen or Pencil: Freedom of Choice Intervention.

- The dependent variable are scores on various assessments.

Conceptual Underpinnings

- Civil Rights History
- CBT
- Service Learning
Description of Procedures Continued…

- Instructional procedures
  - Direct Instruction of Pen or Pencil Curriculum
  - Multimedia (TV, Video)
  - Student responses via written work, assessments, discussions

Contrasting theoretical models
  - Direct and Experiential education
Description of Procedures Continued…

- Control group

- Fidelity checks: 20% of the time: Actual Amount (TBD) based on actual numbers of youth.
Instrumentation

- Multiple Measures: Pre/Posttests
- Content Knowledge: Pen or Pencil: Let Me Read You Your Rights
- Normative Beliefs About Aggression: .90 Exemplary Reliability/Validity
- Self-Reported Delinquency: .74 – Extensive Reliability/Validity
Instrumentation Continued…

- Self –Reported Delinquency- Problem Behavior Scale: N/A Reliability/Validity
- Disciplinary and Delinquent Behavior – Sage Baseline Survey: N/A Reliability/Validity
- Beliefs About Aggression and Alternatives: .72 Extensive Reliability/Validity
- Hare Area – Specific Self-Esteem Scale N/A (Optional)
Design and Data Analysis

- True Experimental Design with random assignment to the treatment groups.
- Equal grouping
- Removes Internal Treats to Validity
- T-test score comparison for statistical significance
Results

A plethora of qualitative data relating to the effectiveness of the intervention

Pending Quantitative Results…

Questions???
For More Information About Experimental Design Contact

Kimberly R. Mills, Ph.D.
Director - Educational Advocacy Program
Fulton County Juvenile Court
395 Pryor Street, SW - Suite 2100
Atlanta, Georgia 30312

(404) 224-4431 - Office
(404) 551-9831 - Office (2)
(404) 224-1397 - Fax

kimberly.mills@fultoncountyga.gov
or kmills@sourceroute.net