

Handout and Other Things

- www.PREPinc.com
 - Look for the link to this talk.
 - Go to any section off the front page, and look for “Scott’s corner” at the top.
- See also www.SlidingvsDeciding.com

Sacrifice

- **The essence of sacrifice is choosing to give up something for the benefit of the other.**
- **It’s fundamental to commitment which can be thought of as “Making a choice to give up other choices.”**

The Power of Commitment (Stanley, 2005)

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?

Royal Bank of Scotland

“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”
 - When we focus on what we could be losing, we’ve already lost.
- “Do you?” is a question inviting a clear decision.

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

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

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

Summary

- Sacrifice is Good

A Paradox

- Focusing on getting an “equal” return will get one less.
- Givers make the best lovers.

Murstein & MacDonald: Exchange Orientation

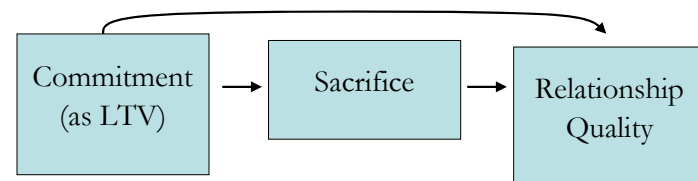
- Exchange orientation the expectation that you should get back equal to what you give.
- Exchange orientation is associated with divorce and marital unhappiness

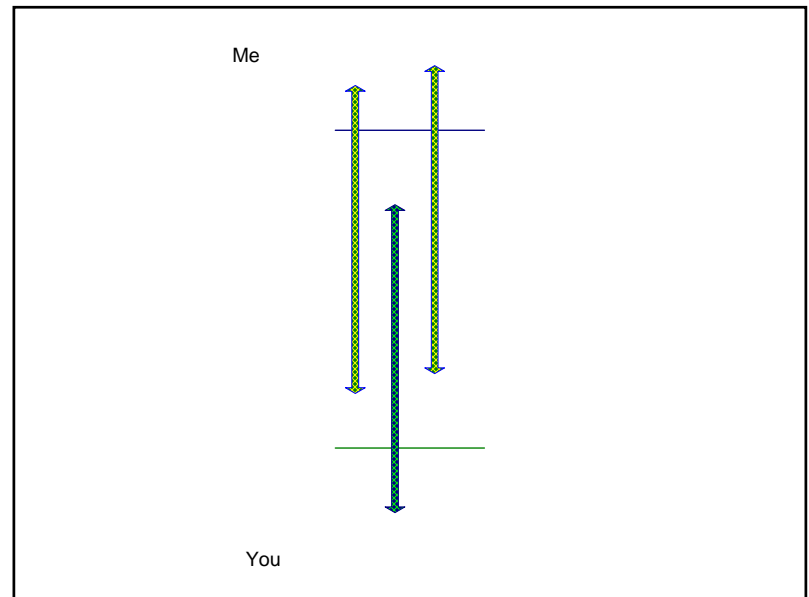
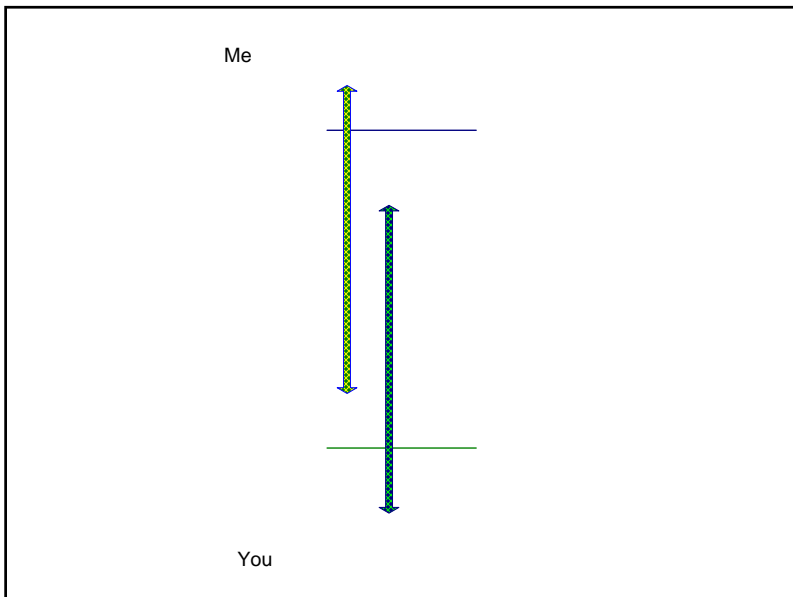
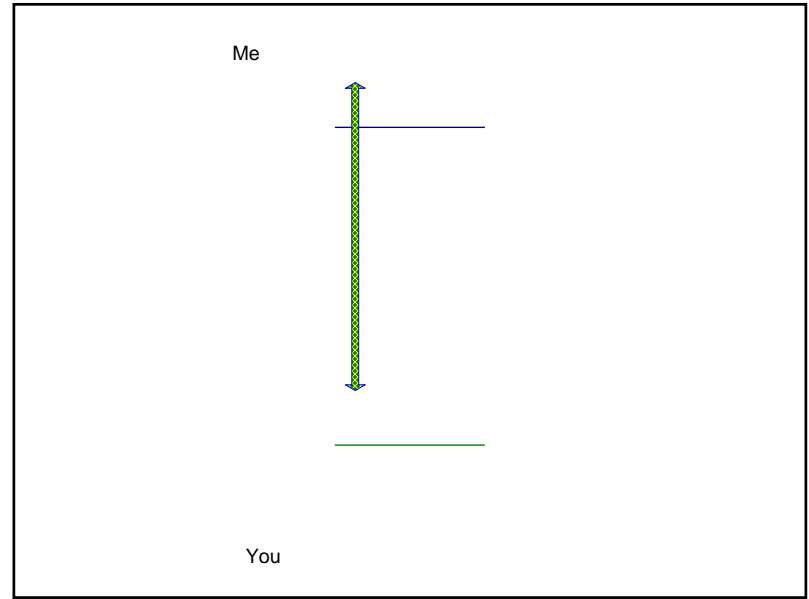
Murstein, B. I., & MacDonald, M. G. (1983). The relationship of “exchange-orientation” and “commitment” scales to marriage adjustment. *International Journal of Psychology, 18*, 297-311.

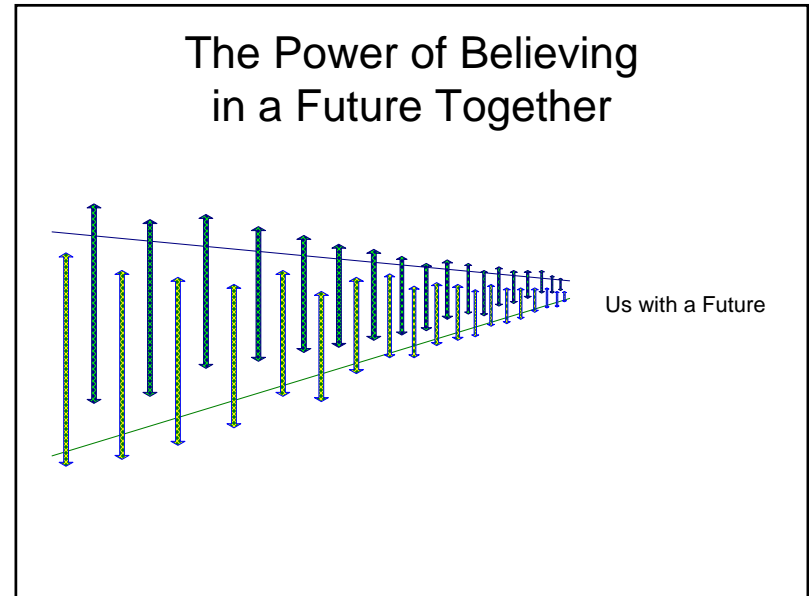
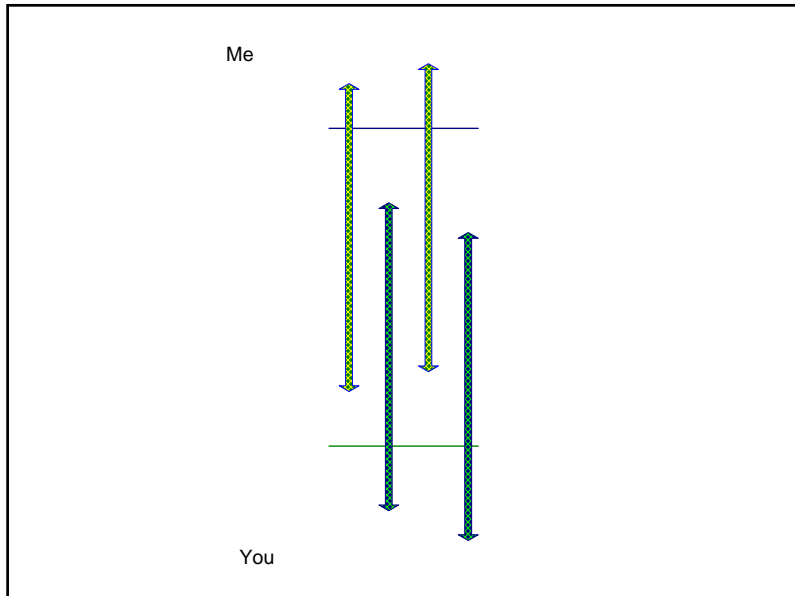
Clements, M. L., Stanley, S. M., & Markman, H. J. (2004). Before they said “I do”: Discriminating among marital outcomes over 13 years based on premarital data. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 66*, 613-626.

The Link Between Commitment, Sacrifice, and Marital Quality

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







A Puzzle

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

What's Makes Sacrifice Potent?

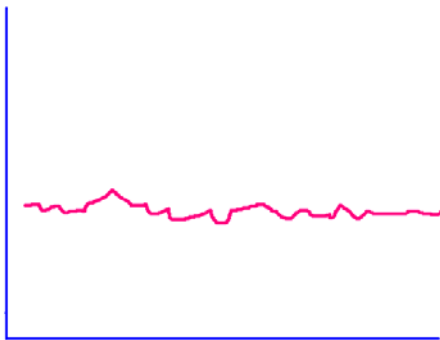
Visibility: Seeing is Believing

- 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.

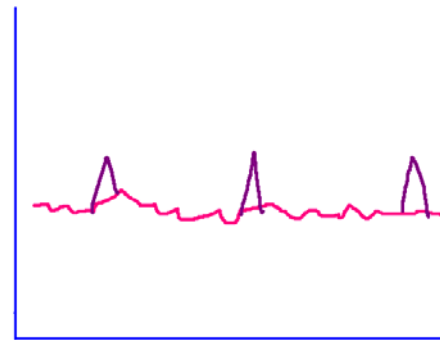
Types of Sacrifice: Small Things

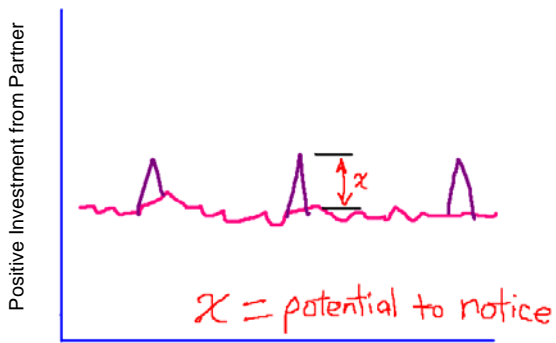
- Small acts of awareness of the other
- Acceptance of quirks
- Listening
- Forgiveness of transgressions and imperfections
- Resisting the desire to return negative for negative
- Doing something your partner wants to do for fun
- Expressing gratefulness

Positive Investment from Partner



Positive Investment from Partner





Negatives and Positives

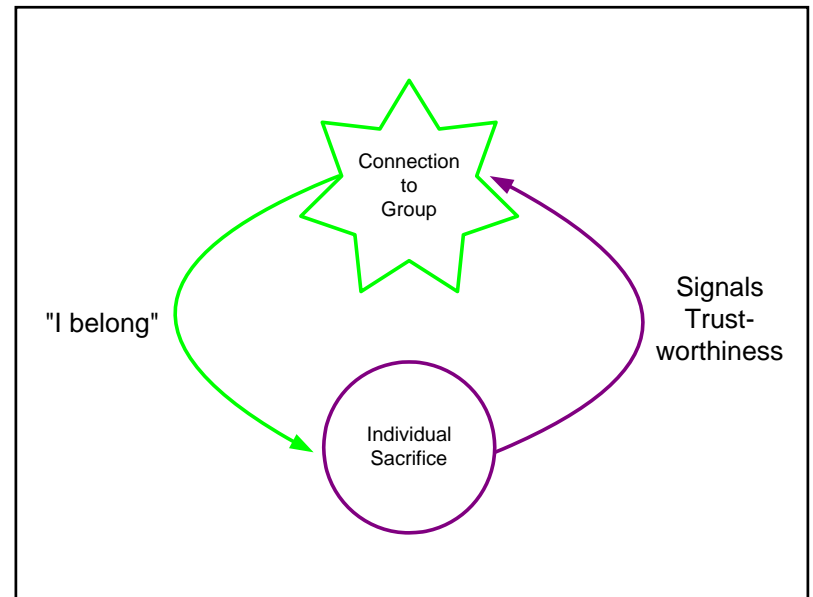
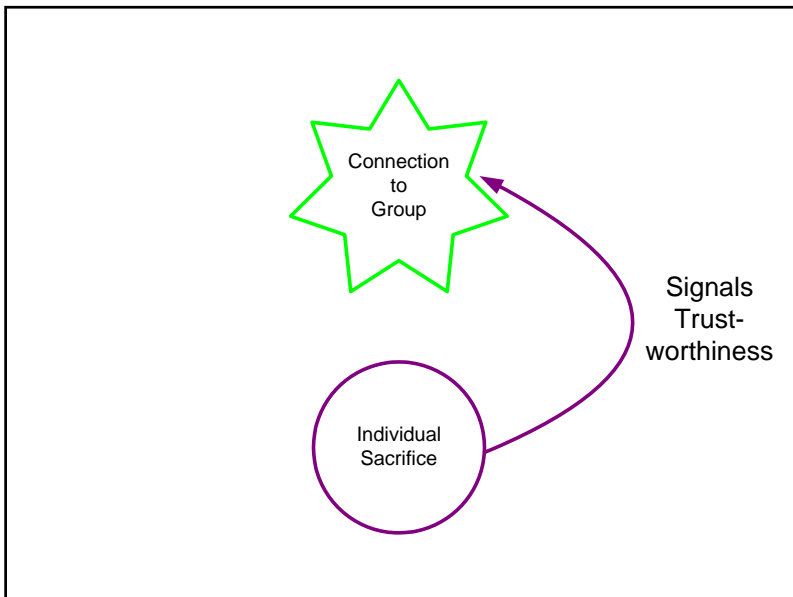
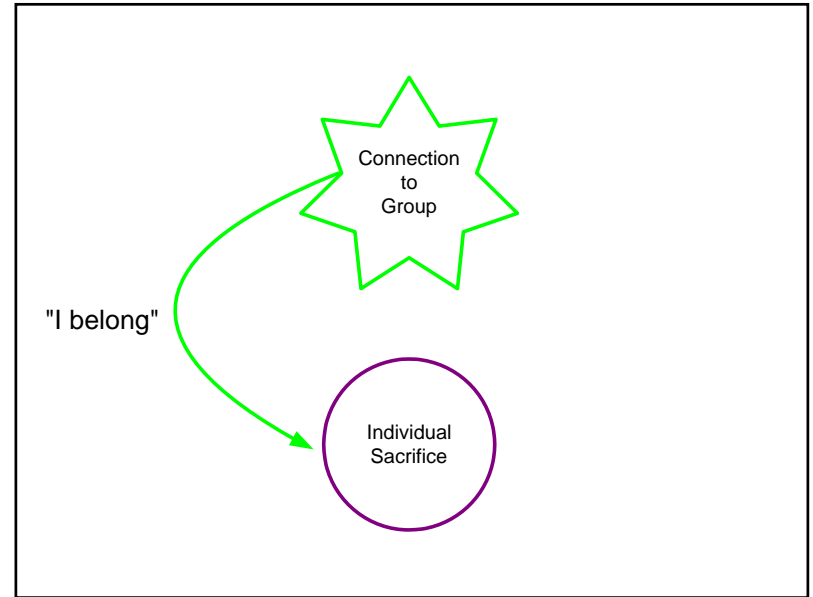
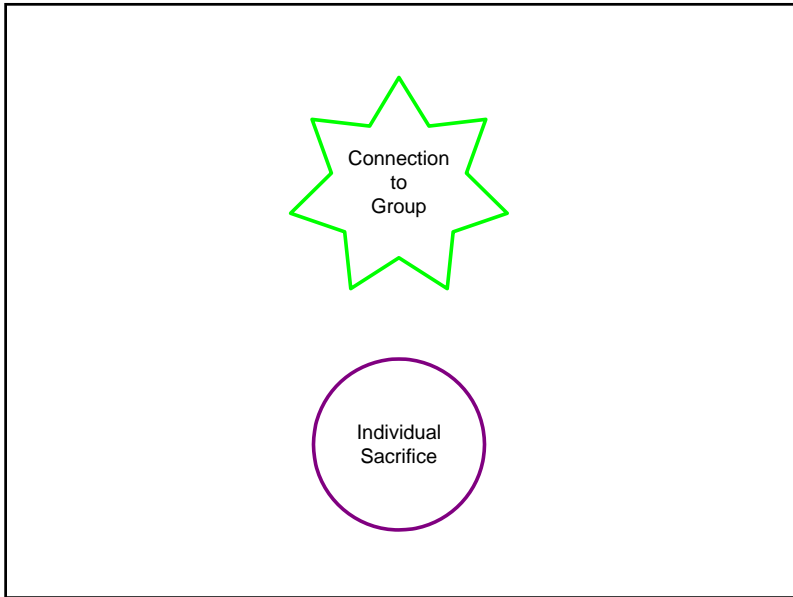
- Negatives are very salient.
 - Baumeister, R. F., Bratslavsky, E., Finkenauer, C., & Vohs, K. D. (2001). Bad is stronger than good. *Review of General Psychology*, 5, 323-370.
 - Notarius, C., & Markman, H.J. (1993). *We can work it out: Making sense of marital conflict*. New York: Putnam.
- Perhaps sacrifice is a potent positive that is salient and counters the negatives.
 - Cf. Fincham, F. D., Stanley, S. M., & Beach, S. R. H. (2007). Transformative processes in marriage: An analysis of emerging trends. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 69, 275 - 292.

Another Paradox

- It's very good for sacrifices to be seen.
- It's not good to sacrifice in order to be seen.

Signaling Commitment

A general function of sacrifice



Signaling

- Relevant to groups
- Relevant to marriages
- Implications at the roots of Christian theology

A Mini Detour to Consider Happiness

A major topic in positive psychology.

“Happy People” Research Summary

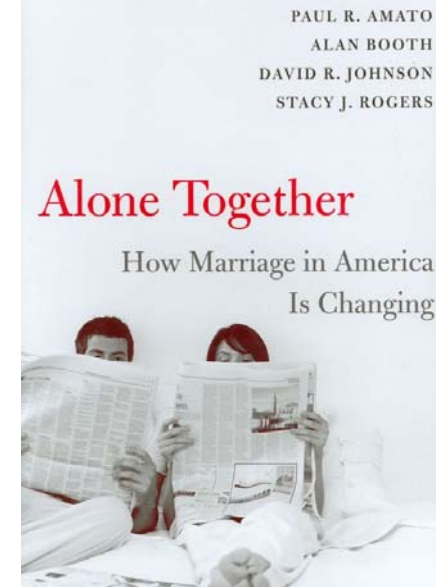
- Have and protect **Friendships**
- Are more **Giving** of themselves to others
- Are more **Grateful** and let others know it
- Are more **Forgiving**



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)

Paradox

- The societal focus on the happiness of the individual lessens happiness.
 - Sacrifice is relational. One cannot be a giver without connection with others.
 - It is hard to be happy in isolation.

Going Small

Paradox: Small is Larger than Big

- George MacDonald's Poem:

Willie's Question



Types of Sacrifice: Small Things

- Small acts of awareness of the other
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- Listening
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- Expressing gratefulness

A "Little" Challenge

(A little exercise in our relationship curricula.)

- **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 (or another).
 - Choose things you can do most any day but that you are not likely to do.
 - Don't share your ideas with your partner.
 - Make a commitment to yourself to carry these two things out.

- How do we ever get around acting only in self-interest?
- Practicing non-random acts of kindness

The Hope of Sacrifice

- 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.

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