

What interventions strengthen family relationships?

- **A review of the evidence** -

Harry Benson

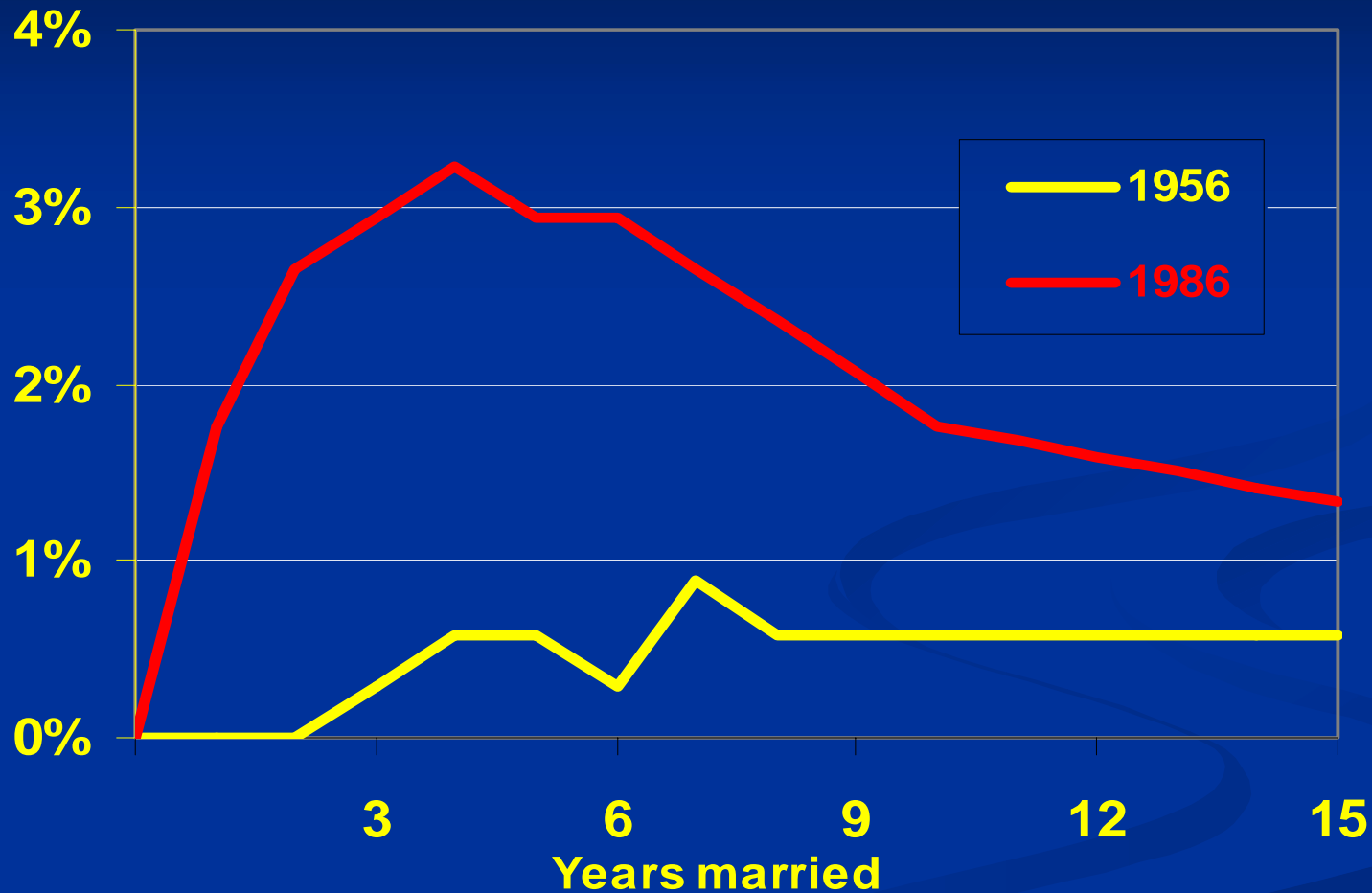
Main family influences on child outcomes

- Family stability
- Parental conflict
- Parenting style

Family stability

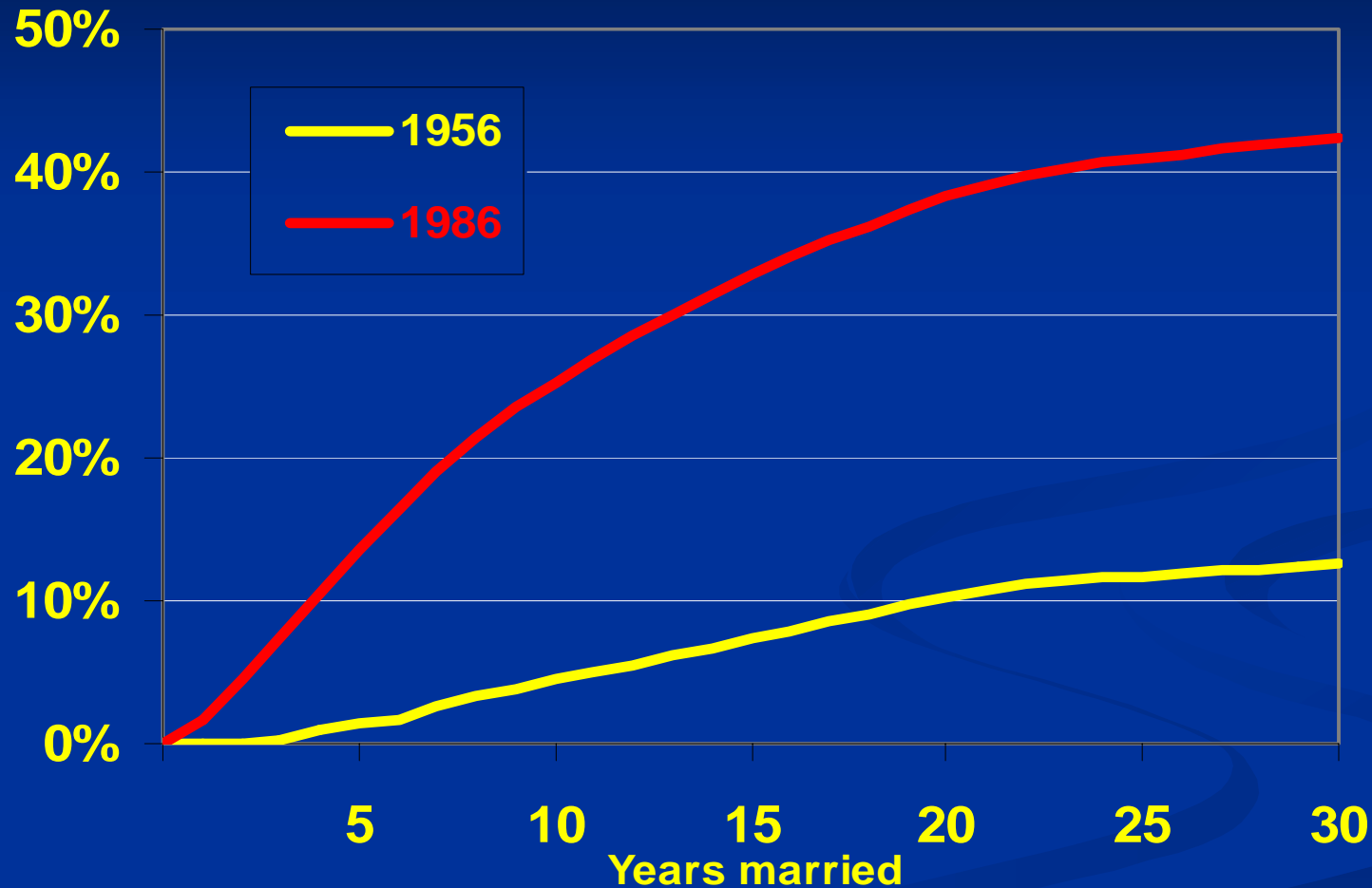
- *Employment*
- *Education*
- *Well-being*
- Time
- Family structure

Divorce rates are high...



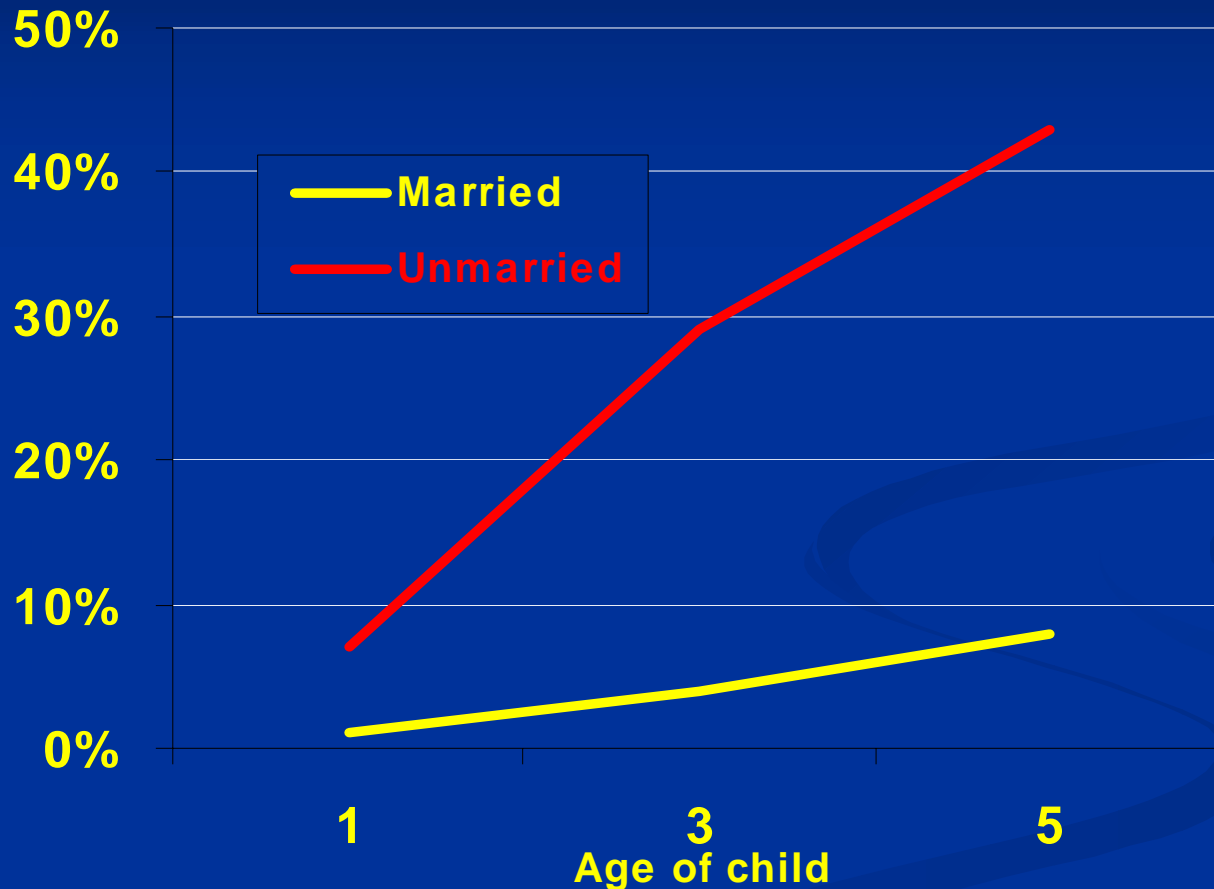
Source: Ermisch (2002) & HB estimates

...lifetime divorce risk 45%



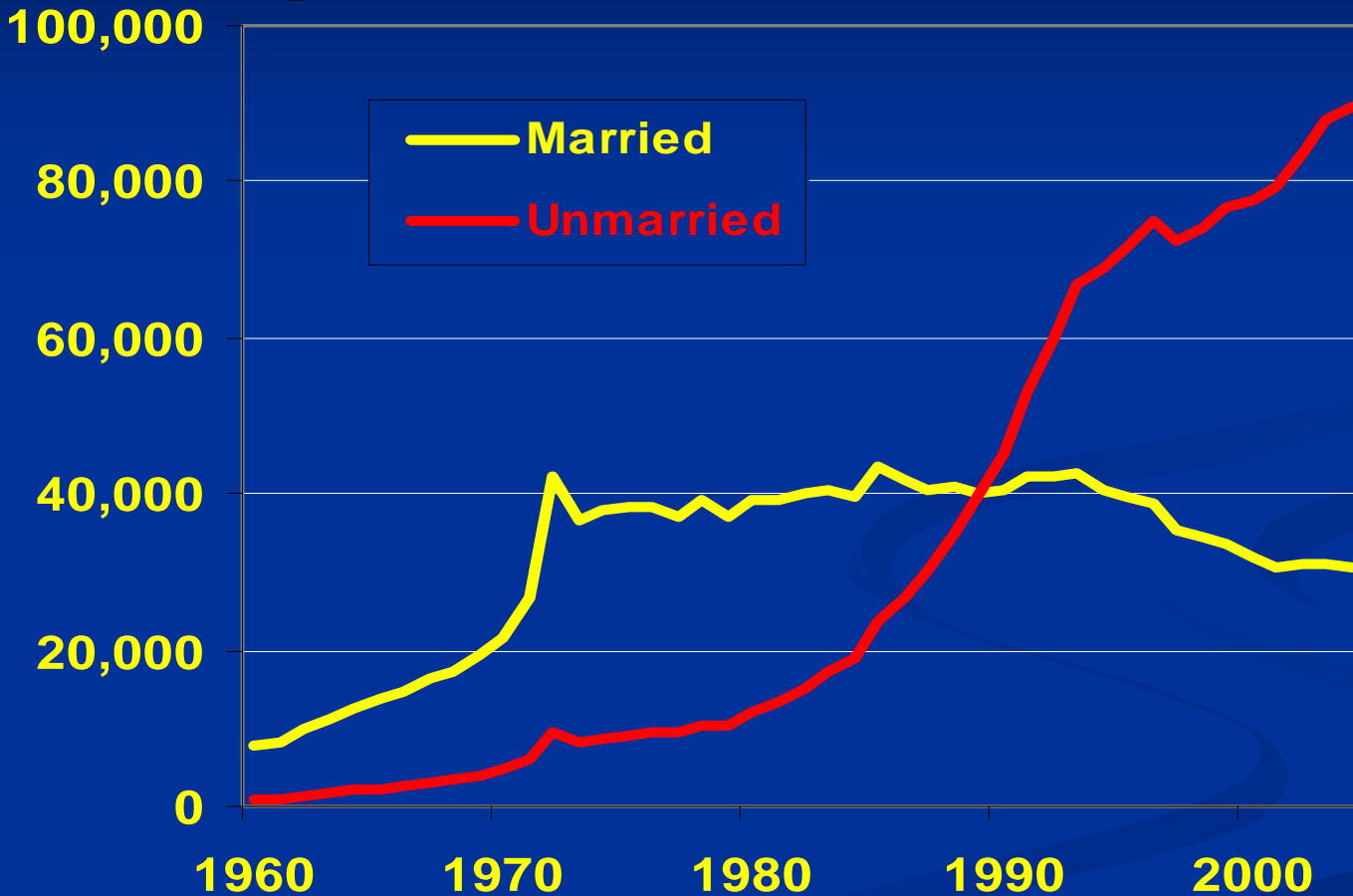
Source: Ermisch (2002) & HB estimates

Yet unmarried families are far more unstable...



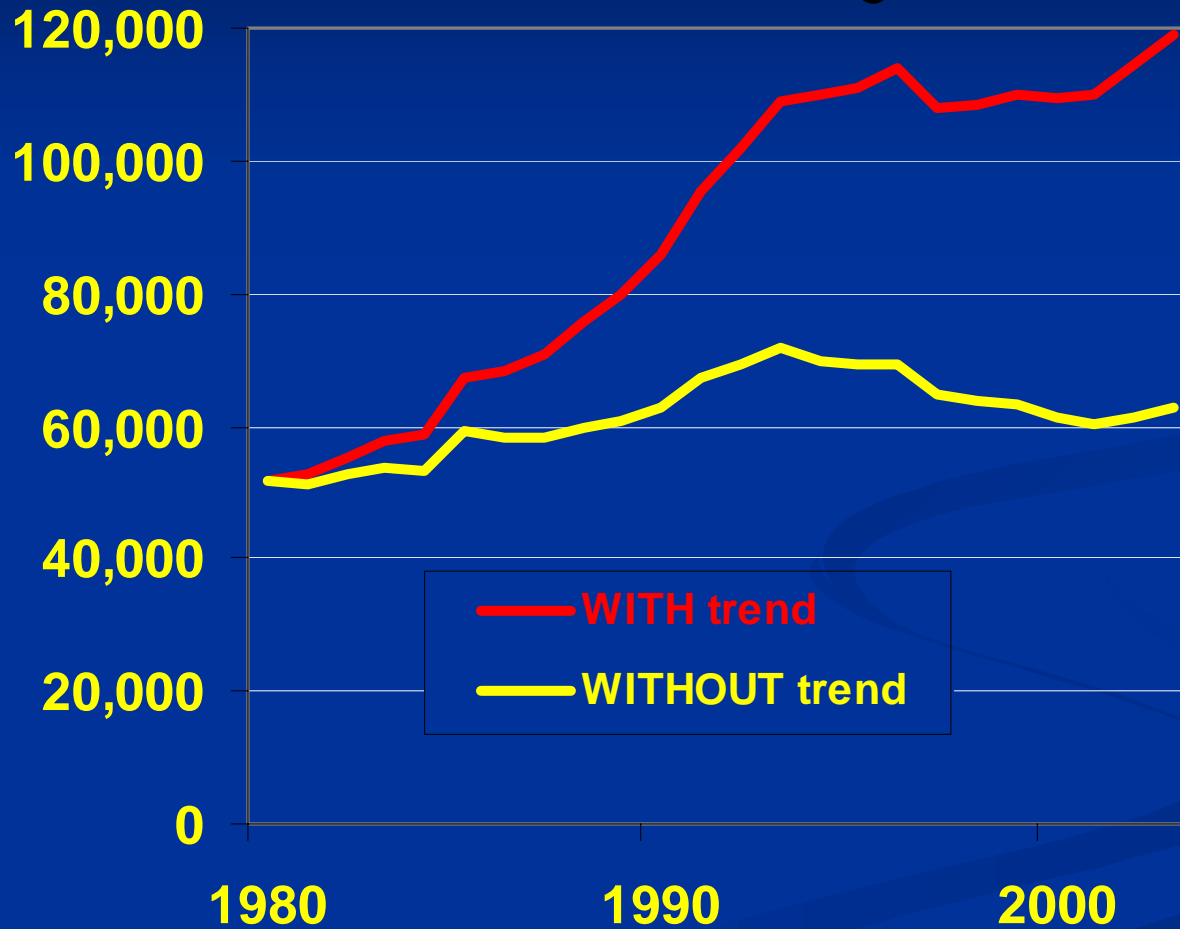
Source: Kiernan (1999)

...leading to a collapse amongst unmarried families



Source: HB estimates based on ONS data

The trend away from marriage has increased family breakdown



Source: HB estimates based on ONS data

Marriage matters to children

Regardless of economic & parental resources (*Brown, 2004*):

- Children do better at school
- Teenagers do better behaviourally & emotionally
- Cohabiting = Stepfamilies
- Cohabiting = Single parent families

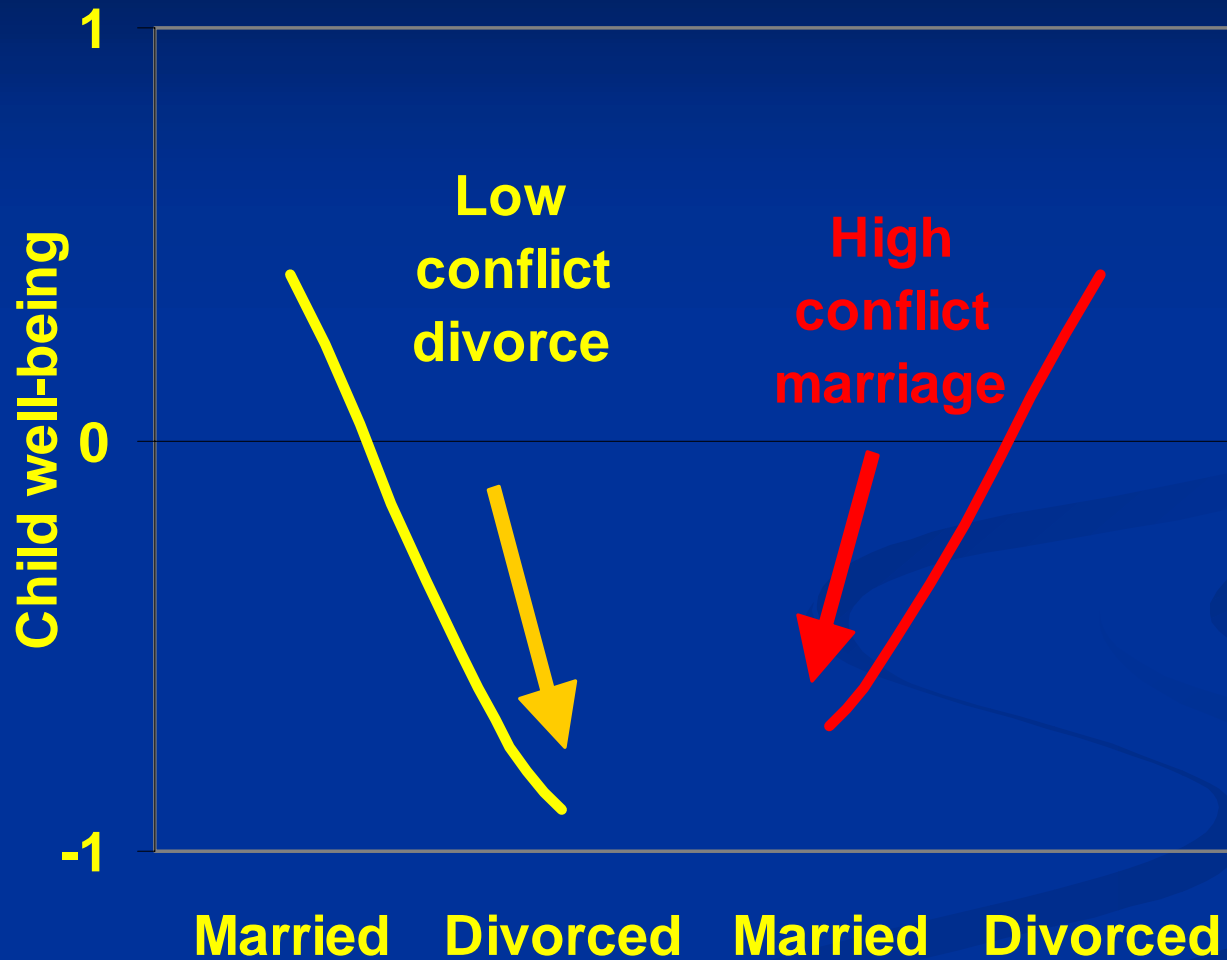
Is it marriage or people?

- Longitudinal studies
- Depression (*Lamb & al, 2003*)
- Alcoholism (*Horwitz & al, 1996*)
- Relationship quality (*Kamp Dush & al, 2003*)
- Family breakdown (*Marsh & Perry, 2003*)

Family stability: successful interventions

- Public pro-marriage policies (*Birch & al, 2004*)
- Couples skills programmes (*e.g PREP*)
- Relationship inventories (*e.g PREPARE, FOCCUS*)

Parental conflict

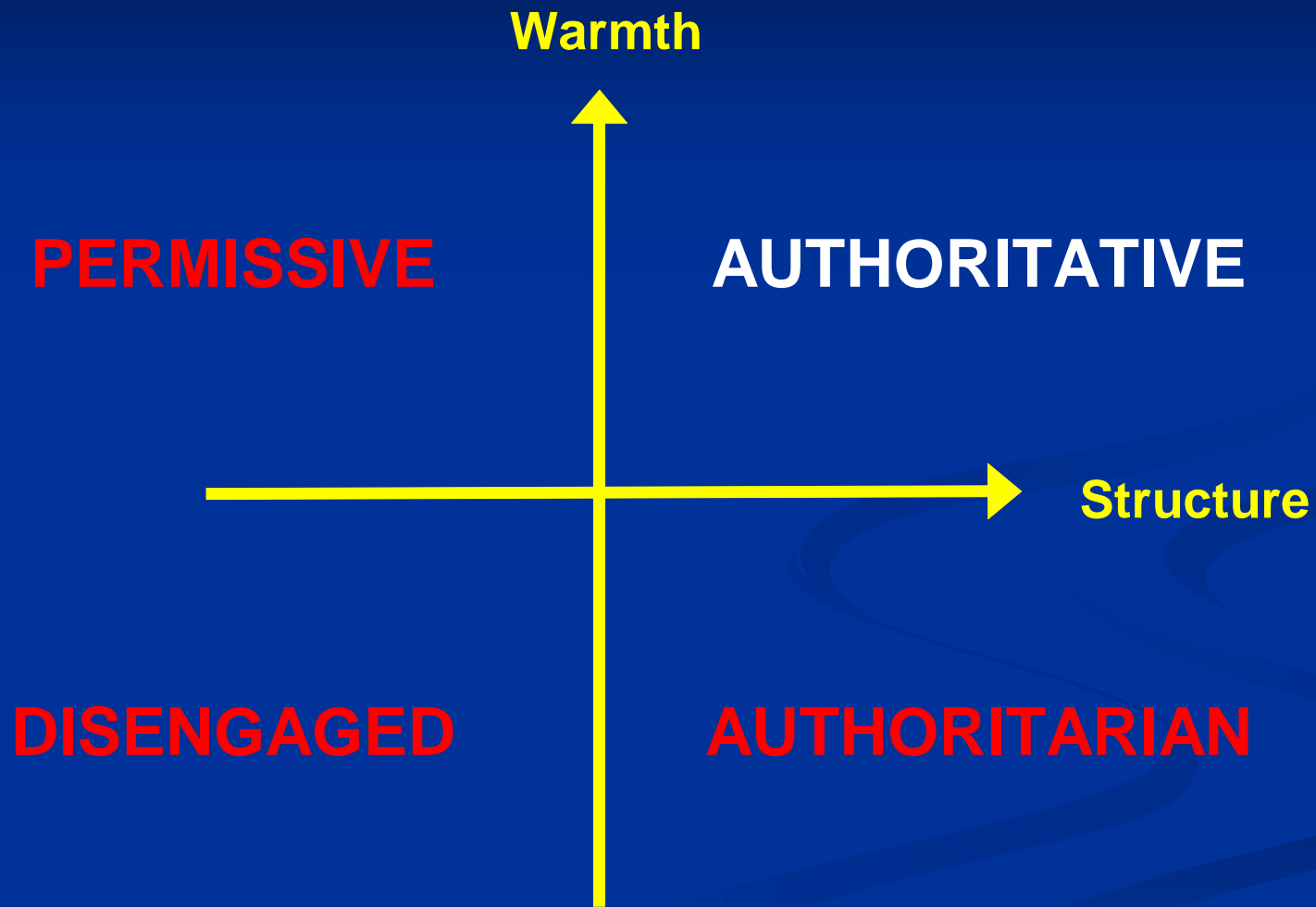


Source: Booth & Amato (2001)

Parental conflict: successful interventions

- Couples skills programmes (*Carroll & Doherty 2002*)

Parenting style



Parenting style: successful interventions

- Both parents
- One parent
- Post-divorce (*mothers only*)

What interventions strengthen family relationships?

- Pro-marriage policies
- Relationship education
- Mentoring with inventories
- Parenting education