

Couples Research & Therapy *Newsletter*

The Newsletter of Couples Research & Therapy AABT–SIG Fall/Winter '02

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Notes from the Triumvirate

SIG Co-Presidents' Column

Notes from the Triumvirate

It is October, thus time to think about falling leaves, midterm exams, HIPAA extensions, and dinner reservations at AABT. The upcoming conference has a lot to offer those interested in marriage.

The **preconference meeting** has been scheduled for Thursday November 14, from 4:30pm until 7:30pm in Carson, room 3. During the last year there was a sustained dialogue on the listserve on a wide range of issues pertaining to the current state of couples research. Topics included the need for improved theory, the need for a relational disorder in the DSM, and the connection between marital research and public policy. Due to the tradition of observational methodologies in this group, we felt the topics from the listserve should be discussed in a venue where affect could be coded. Therefore, the preconference meeting will consist of the following two panels:

1. **Couples Research and Theory: Where We are and Where We are Headed?**
Panel members will include: Don Baucom, Deborah Capaldi, Joanne Davila, and Kim Halford.
2. **Couples Research and Public Policy: How do we get there from here?**
Panel members will include: Rick Heyman, Terry Patterson, Scott Stanley, and Bob Weiss

With this group of researchers, the preconference meeting can't miss. We plan to devote half of each session to panel presentations and half to audience discussion. We think you will find this meeting worth attending and an excellent way to begin the conference.

We will also have our **business meeting** on Saturday from 10:30AM to noon in Sierra 1 & 2. We know that this time overlaps with two symposia of interest to the group. Annmarie is working on getting the time and location switched. So, please watch the listserve and the schedule addendum for a change in the time and location of the SIG business meeting.

Our SIG has reserved a table at the **networking lunch** to be held on Friday 12:30 to 1:45 in the Ballroom. The cost is \$15. We hope you will take advantage of this opportunity to discuss your interests and concerns with your colleagues. You can sign up for this on the registration form.

We will have some posters in the **SIG Expo and Cocktail Party** in the Reno Ballroom from 6:30 to 8:30 on Friday night.

The student representatives to the SIG are planning a **dinner on Saturday night**. Watch for announcements regarding this supper.

It promises to be a full and informative weekend. We look forward to seeing you at the conference and hearing about your work over the last year.

*Annmarie Cano
Kristina Coop Gordon
Matthew D. Johnson
SIG Triumvirate*

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Editor's Comments

Susan Stanton

I write this note as I am knee-deep in putting together posters, presentations, plane tickets, hotel reservations, and, of course, skiing plans. We have reached that wonderful time of year when we hear about exciting research, chat with friends, eat too much, and dance way too much. This year we have the bonus of blowing all of our holiday money at the casinos and injuring ourselves in time for our vacations!

In anticipating all the joys of AABT, our co-presidents provide a guide to the myriad of couples research and clinical discussions, workshops, posters, policy considerations, business meetings, networking opportunities, and parties available at the annual AABT conference in Reno, not to mention the fun sights and tastes of this city!

This issue also primes our thinking about interesting new couples topics with some terrific articles in the current issue. Kristi Gordon and colleagues urge us to conduct research and treatment on infidelity in a conceptually useful framework of this tough, multifaceted relationship difficulty. We are challenged by Keith Harris to adopt a valuable methodological technique of physiological measurement to understand our constructs better with an article describing theoretical, practical, and monetary considerations in this approach. Adam Troy and Jean-Phillippe Laurenceau review some good plane reading for us, while many of you point to our readings for the next year by announcing your in press publications. We have many reasons to congratulate some of you at the conference, as seen in Kudos!

Please contact me at stanton@email.unc.edu to contribute to the Spring/Summer 2003 newsletter. It's never too early!

TREASURER UPDATE

Erika Lawrence

Hello all. I am very much looking forward to seeing all of you in November. Our treasury contains approximately \$1800, which will allow us to: (a) pay for all of our SIG costs at this November's AABT convention, (b) hold a pre-convention meeting on the Thursday before the conference, and (c) even bring in Terry Patterson as a guest speaker!

With regard to SIG membership: we have approximately 75 student members and 90 non-student members, for a total of approximately 165 members in our SIG. Please be aware that everyone in the SIG is presumed to be on the SIG listserve and have access to the SIG website. Feel free to contact me if for some reason you are not connected to one of these resources and would like to be.

As always, dues are \$20 for faculty members/professionals and \$5 for students/1st year Ph.D.s. I will bring the membership list to our SIG meeting at the November conference, so that you all will have a chance to update your contact information and/or pay dues for the current academic year. If you will not be able to attend the SIG meeting at AABT but would like to pay dues for the current academic year, you may mail me a check made out to the "AABT Couples SIG" at:

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See you soon!

KUDOS!!!

Joanne Davila is now in the Department of Psychology at SUNY Stony Brook where she has been promoted to Associate Professor.

Miriam Ehrenshaft announces the birth of Oliver Jonah Ehrenshaft Shindell on October 1, 2:35 a.m., 7 pounds 4 ounces. They are both doing great.

Frank Fincham, director of clinical training, was one of four faculty members in the College of Arts and Sciences at SUNY—Buffalo to be named SUNY Distinguished Professors by the Board of Trustees. The designation as distinguished professor—a rank above full professor and the highest in the SUNY system—denotes exceptional contribution in an academic field through publications, national and international research presentations, research findings and the training of students. (From an article by Sue Wuetcher, *Univ. of Buffalo Reporter*, 9/26)

Carlos Fruzzetti was born August 31 to parents Armida and **Alan Fruzzetti** and his three siblings.

Keith Harris and his wife Amy welcomed McKenzie Marie on October 25 at 9:08 a.m., weighing in at 7 pounds 10 ounces.

Jean-Phillippe Laurenceau was awarded an NIH Scientist Development Award for New Minority Faculty.

Michael Lorber received a predoctoral National Research Service Award (NRSA) from NIMH, for one year, effective Sept. 1, 2002.

Terry Patterson has been elected a Fellow of APA, through the Division of Family Psychology (43). He is also co-chairing a Work Group on Relational Diagnosis for Division 43, in collaboration with AABT and Couples SIG members.

Kieran Sullivan and his wife had a baby boy, Liam, on April 23, 2002. He was 8 pounds, 12 ounces and 21 inches long.

A Framework for Understanding Infidelity Empirically and Clinically

Kristina Coop Gordon, Ph.D., University of Tennessee-Knoxville

Data from the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago suggest that approximately 37% of all men aged 50 to 59 and 19.9% of all women aged 40 to 49 report that they have had an affair at least once during their marriage or marriages (Lauman, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994, pp. 215-216). In addition, a survey of practicing couples therapists revealed that therapists consider affairs to be the second most damaging problem couples face and the third most difficult problem to treat (Whisman, Dixon, & Johnson, 1997). Consequently, given that infidelity touches a large percentage of couples and can cause a great deal of damage to a relationship, it is important that marital therapists and researchers develop a better understanding of this phenomenon.

A Framework for Researching and Treating Infidelity

Recently, my colleagues (Beth Allen, Dave Atkins, Don Baucom, Doug Snyder, and Shirley Glass) and I have developed a framework for understanding infidelity and the factors involved in its development, maintenance, and recovery. Currently we are in the process of reviewing the literature as it pertains to this framework in an attempt to provide some coherence and structure to a rather fragmented area of research. The framework, as presented by our group at AABT last November (Gordon, Atkins, Allen, Snyder, Glass, & Baucom, 2001) suggests that there are specific phases of development for an affair which consist of: predisposing factors, approach, initial extramarital involvement, maintenance, discovery/disclosure, and recovery. The literature can be organized into this framework and this organization should provide a clearer picture of how these studies inform our understanding of why affairs occur, why they end, and who recovers. However, even more importantly, this organization provides a clearer picture of where the gaps are in our knowledge and where we need to focus our attention. Similarly, this framework provides a clinical function in that it provides clinicians with a guide to formulating a coherent timeline of how an affair developed and why it did so.

Predisposing factors refer to enduring vulnerabilities that pre-exist the affair but may contribute to the likelihood of the person's engaging in the affair. The most common and stereotypical example would be relationship distress; however, less commonly acknowledged factors may be more distal influences such as the occurrence of an affair in one's family of origin or familial beliefs and attitudes about conflict. Approach refers to factors that are more proximal to the current affair's occurrence and that may more directly influence the decision to have an affair, such as sudden increases in relational distress, the availability of a willing

affair partner, and a job atmosphere that condones or even encourages sexualized behavior. The initial extramarital involvement factor addresses issues or situations that may facilitate an individual's "crossing the line" into actual sexual behavior, or into clearly "forbidden territory" in the case of an emotional affair. Examples of these factors might be a long business trip with the potential affair partner or alcoholic disinhibition at a holiday party. Whether the affair then becomes on-going versus a one night stand may be influenced by maintenance factors, such as decreased investment in the marriage, reinforcing properties of the affair, or conversely, increasing guilt over the betrayal. The discovery or disclosure of the affair encompasses such issues as the suspicion of the injured partner, the guilt of the participating partner, renewed interest in the marriage by the participating partner or recognition of the potential costs of the affair. Finally, the response phase may be affected by a variety of factors such as the pre-morbid functioning of the relationship, individual abilities to contain and regulate affect, attitudes toward forgiveness, etc. As a final note, each of these phases should be considered in regard to four domains: *intrapersonal*, or factors regarding the participating partner; *spousal*, or factors regarding the injured partner; *marital*, or factors regarding the marital relationship; and *contextual*, or factors such as job stress, in-law problems, or features of the affair partner.

When the existing research is reviewed in light of this framework, it becomes clear that there are major gaps in our empirical knowledge. For example, a majority of the research is on potential "predisposing" variables that differentiate people who engage in extramarital affairs from those who do not. Very little attention is paid to spousal factors that contribute to the context of the affair, nor is there much empirical study of factors that encourage individuals to initiate, maintain, or disclose an affair. Furthermore, the literature focused on examining the predisposing factors tends to fixate upon demographic variables, as this information generally is gleaned from large sociological data sets. For example, whereas we may have numerous studies indicating that men engage in infidelity more than women do, we have no studies empirically examining the source of this gender difference, and thus are left with only speculation. As clinicians, we cannot change an individual's gender (unless we also are surgeons); therefore, this information does not offer a great deal of clinical utility. Greater knowledge about all phases of infidelity and responses to infidelity, as well as more sophisticated examination of psychological constructs

underlying this phenomenon is necessary to help develop a better understanding of, and treatments for, this problem.

A Case Study

Similar gaps in couples' understanding of their affairs can cause great distress in their relationships. Often when couples present for treatment following the discovery of the affair, they are primarily focused upon one domain (usually the participating partner or the marriage) and its contribution to the affair, but they find that this narrow focus is not enough. In our treatment pilot study, one injured partner expressed his frustration: "I understand why she was unhappy with me in our marriage. What I don't understand is why she had an affair instead of telling me how unhappy she was." Consequently, out of his confusion he was interpreting her behavior as a lack of love for him or alternatively as an act of deliberate spite. These attributions caused him to fluctuate between extreme anxiety that she would leave him and cold rage at what he perceived as her willful attempts to hurt him. When he had these anxieties and such little understanding of how she could have come to have this affair, he could not move beyond the affair to focus on the wife's legitimate problems with their marriage.

His initial point was a good one; many individuals experience marital distress at some point in their lives, yet not everyone resorts to an affair. This husband's experience serves as a good example of the need for an awareness of a wider framework when assessing the "causes" of an affair. In this case, as the therapist examined more fully the various phases of the affair development across all domains, the husband was able to see more clearly how his wife came to have the affair. When the time came to explore how the affair occurred, the intervention began with the relationship. Clearly, several factors in their relationship structure and communication strategies placed this relationship at risk. Most strikingly, the husband demonstrated a number of invalidating behaviors when the couple discussed areas of conflict, and in response the wife withdrew from all communication with him; both admitted that this had been a problem from the beginning of the relationship. This pattern could thus be considered a predisposing factor. Furthermore, more recently, the wife consistently felt abandoned as the husband experienced increased job stress and spent many days and nights working on a project, often not talking to her for days on end. As this was a recent development that was more proximal to the time of the affair, this may be considered an approach factor. However, as mentioned before, the husband did not see how these problems lead to an affair rather than her insisting on

counseling or telling him how upsetting his behavior was to her. At that point, the therapist began to explore all the options she had at the point of realizing her dissatisfaction with the relationship and why she chose the response that she did.

As we explored these options, we covered more distal predisposing factors than the relational distress, and discussed expectancies about conflict that both partners had developed in their families of origin. We also explored their previous romantic and sexual histories and found a similar experience of profound rejection and insecurity, making both of them vulnerable to invitations to flirtations with members of the opposite sex. Essentially, these pieces of information emerged as distal predisposing influences on this couple that make them both vulnerable to an affair (interestingly, the husband had had an affair in a previous marriage). As this information was added to the couple's understanding of the context of the affair, it became clear how confronting her husband did not seem to be an attractive or effective choice for the wife, and why she instead chose to confide her troubles to her attractive, sympathetic, and pursuing male co-worker, the presence of whom served as an approach factor. Her husband was able to alter his attributions about his wife's malicious intent and to accept that she still may care about him, but that she also made poor decisions about how to handle her dissatisfaction. This shift in his understanding enabled him to forgive the affair and to focus more freely on their current relational difficulties, particularly his invalidation of his wife. Similarly, the wife gained a better understanding of how her husband's own insecurities drove his obsession with his work, allowing her to approach the issue with greater sensitivity and less affect, and making her more effective in developing better solutions with him.

Infidelity is likely to be multiply determined; in a different relationship with a more responsive spouse, this wife might not have withdrawn and sought out another male companion. Similarly, if she had not had a history of rejection and familial conflict, she might have confronted her spouse more effectively and forcefully, and an affair might not have been an option. Space necessitated a drastic simplification of this case, preventing an example of every cell of our framework. However, the point remains that when facing an issue as difficult as an affair, a comprehensive contextual understanding of the precipitants that takes into account both distal and proximal influences is likely to be necessary for effective treatment.

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Wired for Love:

Studying Physiological Reactivity in Married Couples

By Keith W. Harris

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Few researchers employ physiological measures in their studies of marital interaction. The scarcity of physiology studies in the marital literature is more likely due to lack of training and resources than to lack of interest. More importantly, it seems possible that couples researchers have underestimated the contributions that physiological measures can make to their overall understanding of marital functioning. The goal of this article is to familiarize members of the Couples SIG with the marriage and physiology literature and to perhaps inspire some to broaden their studies of couples to include measurement at the physiological level.

Why Study Physiology in Married Couples?

Physiological data can be a valuable complement to customary measures of marital interaction. Take for instance a study of positive and negative affect in marital conflict. A typical approach might include self-report (e.g., pre- and post-interaction ratings of affect) and observational data (e.g., behavioral coding of the interaction). Consider an interaction that is mostly positive except for a brief highly negative exchange in the middle. Whereas pre/post ratings of affect would not capture the variability in this case, continuous physiological data would likely reveal a spike in arousal during and after the negative exchange. Though observational coding could capture the behavioral variability in this example, it too could be informed by physiological data. Couples often behave atypically in the laboratory (Foster, Caplan, & Howe, 1997), and a calm demeanor may belie significant internal emotion and arousal. An interaction that appears positive on the surface could be the product of two angry people on their best behavior. Physiological measurement would offer a window into the putative internal turmoil such an interaction might generate. Since most physiological measures are not under conscious control, physiological data offer a means of circumventing the self-presentation bias that is endemic to observational studies of marital interaction.

Selected Findings from the Marital Interaction and Physiology Literature

Marriage provides a perfect venue for the study of physiology: happy marriages buffer each spouse from stress and are health promoting (House, et al., 1988), while unhappy marriages not only fail to buffer spouses from

stress, but also contribute to stress via increased conflict (Kiecolt-Glaser, et al., 1993). John Gottman and his colleagues were the first to study marital interaction and physiology systematically, and in the past twenty years they have gathered a wealth of data on the role of physiological arousal in marital dissolution. The other leader in this field, Janice Kiecolt-Glaser, has accumulated compelling data on the effects of marital conflict on immune and endocrine functioning. The following sections outline the important findings from these pioneers' laboratories and offer suggestions for future inquiries.

1. Marital conflict is physiologically arousing.

✓ To the extent that conflict is characterized by negative behavior, it is physiologically arousing. Similarly, distressed couples typically exhibit greater reactivity in laboratory interactions than nondistressed couples because they engage in more negative and less positive behavior. It should be noted, however, that even happily married newlywed couples exhibit elevated stress hormones after conflict (Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 1996).

2. Physiological arousal impacts the marriage.

✓ Gottman and colleagues' (e.g., 1996) work suggests that diffuse physiological arousal (DPA; i.e., a high arousal state) during conflict is predictive of divorce. DPA is problematic for couples because it limits constructive behavior and often leads to behavioral escalations. Additionally, the discomfort of DPA can lead participants to withdraw or avoid conflicts entirely, leading to greater problems in the future.

3. Physiological arousal impacts health.

✓ Low marital quality is associated with greater likelihood of illness and symptom exacerbation. The link between marital quality and health is thought to be physiological arousal during marital conflict. In support of this, Kiecolt-Glaser and colleagues have shown that marital conflict is associated with elevated stress hormones and down-regulation of the immune system (e.g., Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 1993). In essence, marital conflict operates as a chronic stressor, weakening the immune system's ability to prevent illness.

(CONTINUED ON FOLLOWING PAGE)

4. There may be gender differences in physiological arousal

- ✓ The evidence on gender differences in physiological reactivity is decidedly mixed, with studies concluding that husbands are more reactive, wives are more reactive, or that no differences exist (cf., Gottman & Levenson, 1988; Kiecolt-Glaser, 1996). At the risk of oversimplification, Gottman suggests that husbands are more reactive and that this explains husband withdrawal behavior (i.e., it is a means of physiological soothing). Kiecolt-Glaser, on the other hand, suggests that wives are more reactive and that this explains the finding that wives exhibit poorer health than husbands in distressed marriages. Because their studies differ in methods and populations, a direct comparison of Gottman and Kiecolt-Glaser's gender findings is beyond the scope of this article.

5. Certain traits and behaviors have a stronger association with physiological arousal than others.

- ✓ Traits such as dominance and hostility are associated with elevated cardiovascular reactivity in marital interaction (e.g., Smith & Brown, 1991). Negative behaviors such as Gottman's four horsemen of the apocalypse (criticism, defensiveness, withdrawal and contempt) are also associated with increases in physiological arousal. Regarding positive behaviors, numerous studies have concluded that they are not related to physiological functioning, while recent evidence suggests that positive behavior may be related to lower stress hormones and lower heart rate during conflict (See Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001 for review). It is my contention that marital conflict is the wrong domain in which to examine the effects of positive behavior on physiological arousal. A more fruitful domain might be social support (see discussion of my dissertation, below).

Suggestions for Future Inquiries

The marriage and physiology literature has focused primarily on harmful interactions between spouses and the long-term damage these interactions can cause. While it is important to understand the harm spouses can inflict on one another, it is equally pressing to understand the ways spouses help each other. In fact, one of the most obvious conclusions to be drawn from the marriage and physiology literature is that couples therapy ought to include techniques for soothing the physiological reactivity that accompanies stressful interactions. Social support is a potentially valuable domain for understanding the way marriage buffers spouses from the effects of stress. In my doctoral dissertation I measured physiological arousal during social support interactions and found that support (i.e., positive behavior) from a spouse was associated with lower heart rate and blood pressure. This was true only for wives, however. For many husbands, the social support interaction took the form of a confessional, which can be highly physiologically arousing even in the presence of a supportive spouse. Further research is needed to understand

the ways that spouses can physiologically soothe one another.

Beyond the physiological indicators of stress (e.g., blood pressure, heart rate, cortisol), couples researchers are beginning to study the physiological concomitants of gender (e.g., testosterone), bonding (e.g., oxytocin), and positive affect (e.g., electrical activity in the muscles responsible for smiling), to name but a few. Below are two additional intriguing but unanswered questions regarding marital interaction and psychophysiology.

❖ *Is love a chemical addiction?*

Everyone is familiar with the honeymoon period in a relationship, where everything is exciting and fresh. Panksepp and colleagues' work with animal models suggests that elevated levels of endogenous opioids may cause this sense of euphoria. As with any addiction, the new lover seeks repeated contact with the object of his/her affections in order to regain the "high." Forced separation creates psychological and physiological withdrawal, complete with separation distress that can mimic depression (Panksepp, 1998). Though much of the work on opioids has been conducted on animals, the possibilities for couples research are exciting.

❖ *Is there a neurological substrate for marital satisfaction and marital stability?*

Neuroscience may hold unique promise in the study of marital interaction. Davidson and colleagues have reported that positive emotions are associated with greater activation of the left frontal region, and negative emotions with greater activation of the right frontal region of the brain. What might we learn from EEG or ERPs collected while couples observed a videotape of their interaction? Might satisfied couples exhibit greater left frontal activation? Might this asymmetry be predictive of marital stability or therapeutic outcomes? Because asymmetrical left activation occurs in approach-related emotions and right activation in withdrawal-related emotions (Davidson, 1992), at the behavioral level might we even see neurological concomitants of demand-withdraw behavior?

Conclusion

Though researchers have been studying physiology in marital interaction for over twenty years, the field is young and many unanswered questions remain. Skilled behavioral researchers such as those in the Couples SIG would be welcome additions to the field. For those whose curiosity has been piqued, below are recommendations for further reading and a cost estimate for setting up a laboratory to measure autonomic responses during marital interaction. Autonomic responses that could be measured in the lab without great expense or blood draws described below include cardiovascular activity (e.g., heart rate, cardiac output, vagal tone, blood pressure, total peripheral resistance) and electrodermal activity such as skin conductance level.

(TABLE, RECOMMENDED READINGS, AND REFERENCES ON FOLLOWING PAGE)

Table 1. Cost estimate for lab equipment measuring autonomic nervous system activity in couples (from Biopac Systems, Inc: www.biopac.com)				
Apparatus	Description	Unit Price	Qty	Amount
MP100 System for PC ^a	Core component, necessary to run the entire system	\$3,495.00	1	\$3,495.00
Electrocardiogram Amplifier ^a	Measures heart rate, interbeat interval, vagal tone, respiratory sinus arrhythmia	\$545.00	2	\$1,090.00
Noninvasive Blood Pressure System ^a	Measures blood pressure noninvasively and continuously	\$4,995.00	2	\$9,990.00*
Electrodermal Response Amplifier ^a	Measures skin conductance level (SCL)	\$545.00	2	\$1,090.00
Electrodermal Response Transducer ^a	Necessary for measurement of SCL	\$125.00	2	\$250.00
ECG Cable Extension ^a	Connects ECG electrodes to amplifier	\$145.00	4	\$580.00
Electrode to Amplifier Cable ^a	Connects SCL electrodes to amplifier	\$15.00	4	\$60.00
8mm Adhesive Collar ^b	Used to fasten electrodes to skin	\$15.00	10	\$150.00
Electrode Gel ^b	Used to improve conductivity of electrodes	\$15.00	4	\$60.00
			Total:	\$18,245.00
* Note: Instead of the noninvasive system, a digital sphygmomanometer (BP Cuff) can be used pre- and post-interaction for a crude measure of blood pressure change and a savings of nearly \$10,000.				
^a One-time purchase				
^b Consumables (i.e., repeat purchases necessary)				

Recommended Reading

- Cacioppo, J. T. & Tassinary, L. G. (1995). Principles of Psychophysiology: Physical, Social, and Inferential Elements. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
This edited book holds a wealth of information on psychophysiology. It is organized into sections on conceptual foundations, biological foundations, general concepts, systemic psychophysiology, and statistical analysis of psychophysiological data.
- Kiecolt-Glaser, J. K. & Newton, T. L. (2001). Marriage and health: His and hers. Psychological Bulletin, *127*(4), 472-503.
The definitive current review of marriage and physiology studies. As the title suggests, the review is organized around the positive and negative impact of marriage on health, with special emphasis on possible gender differences.

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Notes From Danielle and Lauren

Couples' Sig Graduate Student Co-Presidents' Column

Since AABT is right around the corner, we tried to gather information about the Reno and Lake Tahoe area. There are plenty of activities and attractions in the Reno and Lake Tahoe area. Of course, some activities will depend on the weather. We look forward to seeing you at the SIG couple dinner!

Weather

Weather in Reno during November is quite variable. The average high is 56 degrees, and the average low is 24 degrees.

Casino Nightlife

Before Las Vegas, Reno was the gambling capital of Nevada. Although Reno is not as well known for gambling today, the city boasts many casinos. To find out more information on specific casinos, check out the websites below:

Atlantis Casino Resort	www.atlantiscasino.com
Boomtown Hotel Casino Reno	www.boomtowncasinos.com
Eldorado Hotel/Casino	www.eldoradoreno.com
Flamingo Hilton	www.flamingoreno.net
Harrah's Reno	www.harrahs.com
Peppermill Hotel Casino Reno	www.peppermillcasinos.com
Silver Legacy Resort Casino	www.silverlegacyreno.com

Golf

Golf in November? For more information on golf courses in Reno go to <http://www.golfrenolaketahoe.com/>. The site has a course finder section to help you find the right golf course for you.

Skiing and Winter Sports

The Reno and Sparks areas get much less snow than the Lake Tahoe Basin. So, it is possible to play a round of golf in Reno in the morning, and ski in surrounding areas that same afternoon. Most of the ski resorts are open by Thanksgiving. Some resorts are more likely to be open in November because they have snow-making abilities. For example, two years ago Alpine Meadows opened on November 1. The following website provides general information regarding skiing in the area: www.renolaketahoe.com/ski/. Below you will also find the web address for several ski resorts:

Skiing in North Shore Lake Tahoe

Resort	Web-address	Phone number
Alpine Meadows	www.alpinemeadows.com	(800)-441-4423
Boreal Mountain Resort	www.borealski.com	(530)-426-3666
Diamond Peak Ski Resort	www.gotahoe.com	(800)-468-2463
Donner Ski Ranch	www.donnerranch.com	(530)-426-3635
Granlibakken Ski Resort	www.granlibakken.com	(800)-543-3221
Mt. Rose-Ski Tahoe	www.skirose.com	(800)-754-7673
Soda Springs	www.skisodasprings.com	(530)-426-3901
Squaw Valley USA	www.squaw.com	(800)-545-4350
Sugar Bowl	www.sugarbowl.com	(530)-426-3847

Skiing in South Shore Lake Tahoe

Heavenly Ski Resort	www.skiheavenly.com	(530)-541-1330
Homewood Mountain Resort	www.skihomewood.com	(800)-525-7669
Kirkwood	www.kirkwood.com	(209)-258-6000
Sierra-at-Tahoe	www.sierratahoe.com	(530)-659-7453

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

Attractions

Circus Midway Stage (www.circusreno.com)

The circus acts are free and perform daily from 11 A.M. to midnight.

Fleischmann Planetarium (www.scs.unr.edu/planet)

The Planetarium is open Monday through Friday from 8 A. M. to 8 P.M.

National Automobile Museum (www.automuseum.org)

The museum houses the most comprehensive public display of cars in the country. The museum is open Monday through Saturday from 9:30 A. M. until 5:30 A.M.

Cablecar at Squaw Valley USA(www.squaw.com)

This tram ride allows a spectacular view of the Lake Tahoe area. Squaw Valley USA is best known for hosting the 1960 Winter Olympics.

Gondola Ride at Heavenly Ski Resort (1-800-243-2836)

Located on the South Shore of Lake Tahoe, this gondola ride climbs 6,200 feet from the Stateline. Once at the top, you can enjoy skiing (weather permitting) or hiking.

Fannette Island (www.ceres.ca.gov/sierradsp)

Fannette Island is the only island in Lake Tahoe. The island is home to the Vikingsholm castle. The only access to the island is by private boat.

Hornblower's Tahoe Queen (www.hornblower.com)

The Hornblower Tahoe Queen is an authentic paddle wheeler that sails from its pier in South Lake Tahoe to Emerald Bay.

36th Annual AABT Conference – Couples' Events and Conference Activities

Date and Time	Event	Place
Friday, November 15th 8:30 – 10:00 a.m.	Symposium: Bi-directional dating violence: Conceptual and empirical findings	Ruby 1 & 2
8:45 – 10:15 a.m.	Symposium: Marriage and family in the conceptualization and treatment of health problems	Shasta 1 & 2
8:45 – 10:45 a.m.	Master Clinician Seminar: Couple therapy with difficult problems	McKinley
11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	Symposium: Comparison of two couple therapies: Do they work, for which couples, and in what way?	Shasta 1 & 2
12:30 – 1:45 p.m.	Networking Lunch - See program for details	Reno Ballroom
12:45 – 2:15 p.m.	Symposium: Support behaviors in couples	Crystal 1
1:30 – 2:30 p.m.	Poster Session: Anger and Violence	Pavilion
1:30 – 4:30 p.m.	Workshop: Acceptance and change in couple therapy	Nevada 4
2:45 – 3:45 p.m.	Poster Session: Depression	Pavilion
2:45 – 4:15 p.m.	Panel Discussion: Extending the boundaries of couples research and practice	Shasta 1 & 2
3:15 – 4:45 p.m.	Symposium: Examining the interaction between interpersonal and cognitive factors in depression: An integrative perspective	Movie Theater 1
4:00 – 5:00 p.m.	Poster Session: Parenting, school issues, child depression	Pavilion
5:15 – 6:15 p.m.	Awards Ceremony	Carson 3 & 4
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.	SIG Exposition and Cocktail Party	Reno Ballroom

Date and Time	Event	Place
Saturday, November 16th		
8:30 – 9:30 a.m.	Symposium: Incorporating emotion regulation into couple therapy	Shasta 1 & 2
8:30 – 10:00 a.m.	Symposium: Is there a need to update traditional behavioral couple therapy for special populations?	Movie Theater 2
8:45 – 10:15 a.m.	Symposium: Bridging the marital dyad and the family triad: A process-oriented approach	Whitney
10:15 – 11:45 a.m.	Symposium: Affairs, abuse, drugs, and depression: The promises and pitfalls of couple therapy	Ruby 2
10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	<u>SIG Meeting: Couples Research and Treatment</u>	Sierra 1
11:15 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.	Symposium: Ending abusive relationships: Methods for improving dating violence intervention and prevention programs	Shasta 1 & 2
1:00 – 2:30 p.m.	Symposium: Findings from the Web: Internet-based assessment and treatment of couples	Shasta 1 & 2
1:15 – 2:45 p.m.	Symposium: The role of validating and invalidating behaviors in families	Crystal 5
2:45 – 4:15 p.m.	Symposium: Exploring the future of couples' interaction research: It's not just about problem-solving anymore	Shasta 1 & 2
3:00 – 4:30 p.m.	Symposium: Understanding the developmental course of physical aggression in intimate relationships: Using the basic research to craft interventions	Crystal 5
5:00 – 6:00 p.m.	Presidential Address	Reno Ballroom
6:15 – 7:15 p.m.	Annual Meeting of Members	Carson 1
6:00 – 7:00 p.m.	Couples SIG Student Social	Aspen Lounge
Approx. 7:00 p.m.	Couples SIG Dinner – Details to come	
7:30 – 10:00 p.m.	Bowling for Scholars – See program for details	
9:00 p.m.	Saturday Night Party	Reno Ballroom
Sunday, November 17th		
9:00 – 10:30 a.m.	Symposium: Understanding the association between cohabitation and poor relationship outcomes: Implications for preventive education and couples therapy	Sierra 1 & 2
10:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.	Symposium: Matchmaking in couple therapy: Enhancing efficacy through treatment selection	Sierra 1 & 2
10:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.	Poster Session: Treatment resistance, persistent disorders, couples and family	Pavilion

****Please try to stay Sunday morning to attend these symposia and poster session.**

Book Review

Couples in Conflict

Edited By: Alan Booth, Ann C. Crouter, Mari Clements. (2001) Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Retail Price: \$59.95.

Review by: Adam B. Troy and Jean-Philippe Laurenceau, University of Miami

The study of conflict is one of the most frequently researched topics in the marital literature, and with good reason. Conflict is one of the most observable difficulties we see in marital therapy, as well as what often defines our notion of marital satisfaction. A Psychinfo search of "conflict and marriage" will reveal over 2000 published works, and a search of "conflict and marital" will reveal close to 4000 published works. As such, we have a great abundance of knowledge about the intricacies of marital conflict, including predictors of divorce from conflict discussions (e.g. John Gottman's four horsemen), maladaptive conflictual communication patterns (e.g. Andrew Christensen's demand/withdraw interaction), and a variety of research on cognitions, expectations, and emotions influencing and resulting from conflict.

So what else is there to know about conflict? Or more importantly, do we really need another book about marital conflict? These were some of the thoughts we were having as we began to read *Couples in Conflict*. Fortunately, our concerns were quickly alleviated when we noticed that *Couples in Conflict* was anything but a review of old findings. We were quickly caught up in the new perspective the book had to offer about a well-researched topic.

Editors Booth, Crouter, and Clements have compiled chapters from an interdisciplinary team of experts across the fields of clinical psychology, sociology, demography, developmental psychology, and evolutionary psychology. The contributors bring readers to a new

level of understanding regarding marital conflict, its underpinnings, effects, and remediation. No longer are we reading reviews of outdated research, or examining new findings from studies replicating old ideas, but *Couples in Conflict* tries to answer core questions about the functions conflict serve and the implications that conflict has for families, society, and intervention. With these aims in mind, the book is divided into four parts, each examining one of four questions:

1. What are the societal and bioevolutionary underpinnings of couple conflict?
2. What are the interpersonal roots of couple conflict, and the consequences for individuals and couples?
3. What effects does couple conflict have on children, and what are the mediating effects of children's individual differences?
4. What politics and programs influence couple conflict, and what works?

Beginning the volume is a series of four chapters on the societal and bioevolutionary underpinnings of conflict by Margo Wilson and Martin Daly, Jay Belsky, Frances K. Goldscheider, and Rena L. Repetti, respectively. Wilson and Daly start the book by examining the evolutionary implications of conflict differences in *Registered vs. De Facto* (i.e. "common law" marriages) marital relationships. They provocatively, but poignantly, suggest that conflict and violence

function to stabilize a relationship that is perceived as more vulnerable by males. Vulnerable, and therefore conflictual, relationships typically reflect an increased risk of female sexual infidelity, especially where there is no legal contract, females are younger, and step-children are involved. Following this piece are commentaries expanding evolutionary theory to male jealousy and female child-care (Jay Belsky) and living arrangements and financial concerns (Frances K. Goldscheider). Rena L. Repetti closes this section by examining conflict as a balance between self-interest and cooperation in marriage, a balance that is grounded in evolutionary theory. Simply put, after reading the chapters in this section, you will leave with a more solid notion of the function conflict serves in relationships and how it may have evolved to be that way.

[Wilson and Daly] provocatively, but poignantly, suggest that conflict and violence function to stabilize a relationship that is perceived as more vulnerable by males.

The next group of authors examines the interpersonal roots of conflict. Thomas Bradbury, Ronald Rogge, and Erika Lawrence present a provocative discussion of the importance of expanding our notion of what conflict is, and challenge the previous focus on conflict as the sole method to understand marital functioning. Interestingly, they suggest that incompatible goals may

be a key catalyst driving marital conflict, and argue that marital conflict may not be the sole path to marital deterioration and dissolution. Steven R. H. Beach presents some assumptions in the history of research on conflict, and suggests an alternative self-evaluation maintenance model for better understanding when partners work as a team versus when they work as adversaries. He suggests that how one performs relative to significant others affects how one views the self. Michael P. Johnson more specifically examines domestic violence, noting that the role of control has been neglected as a distinguishing feature in violent and nonviolent couple conflict. James V. Cordova finishes the section noting a need for practical issues within marital research, and presents his Marriage Checkup, consisting of a comprehensive relationship assessment and feedback session, as one such practical application of the wide range of couples research. Together, these chapters relate the factors that make up conflict, and how to best understand and evaluate it.

The third section opens with a chapter by E. Mark Cummings, Marcie C. Goeke-Morey, and Lauren M. Papp, noting a need to understand the impact on children and families within the domain of couples conflict. Expanding on this issue, Christy M. Buchanan and Robyn Waizenhofer present research on the influence of conflict on adolescent children, and the role gender and loyalty play in the family system.

Rand Conger presents one framework from a sociological perspective by which family stressors intensify caregiver conflict, which in turn influences how conflict affects children. John H. Grych finishes up the section discussing the need for refined conceptualizations and improved outcomes measures of conflict and implications for the study of child adjustment to marital conflict.

This one volume covers a variety of psychological and non-psychological theories of marital conflict, clearly calling for the necessity of greater appreciation for and attention to what some may see as a “tired” topic.

The fourth and final section of the book focuses on programs that influence marital conflict. Matthew R. Sanders leads the section by reviewing research on family interventions, and presents and explores one such family intervention entitled the Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) as an effective tool for understanding and treating behavioral problems in children by enhancing parental cooperation and teamwork. Unique features of this intervention program include its focus on family health vs. skills deficits, and the range of delivery levels to meet needs within a community. A thought-provoking commentary by Richard J. Gelles

challenges the notion of a homogenous view of conflict, and suggests that different types of interventions are necessary for different types of conflict, while explaining common features of how interventions have their effects. Theodora Ooms introduces and discusses different policies for integrating domestic violence, child adjustment, and parenting into interventions for couples. Robert Emery discusses behavioral family intervention as one tool for intervening with families, but notes the limitations and necessary improvements needed for an effective treatment. The book ends with a chapter by Chris Knoester and Tanya L. Afifi that integrates the four sections into a coherent notion of the wide range of variables affecting the course, intensity, and impact of marital conflict.

Not everyday does a book come along that integrates such a wide range of experts and ideas about such an important topic. As we read through the book, we were struck by the exemplary use of theory to explain and integrate the findings presented. This one volume covers a variety of psychological and non-psychological theories of marital conflict, clearly calling for the necessity of greater appreciation for and attention to what some may see as a “tired” topic. This book will no doubt add much to the knowledge of anyone interested in the study of marital conflict, from beginners to experts.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Joanne Davila submitted this announcement about an exciting new program. This may interest people who are advising undergraduate students on graduate programs or thinking about starting a similar program at their universities.

The Close Relationships Group at Stony Brook offers a concentration in close relationships for PhD students in clinical and social psychology who are interested in basic and applied research relevant to marriage, families, courtship and dating, and adult-adult or parent-child attachment. Our faculty and students are using developmental, experimental, longitudinal, and neuroimaging methods to explore many facets of close relationships from infancy to adulthood in community and clinic samples. We offer a unique opportunity for students to be immersed in an environment that can provide them with a diverse array of options to acquire an in-depth knowledge of the study of close relationships, including the chance to work with numerous faculty members with expertise in different areas of close relationships, to conduct independent and collaborative research on close relationships, to attend ongoing colloquia relevant to the study of close relationships, and to accompany research groups attending and presenting research at national conferences. Current core faculty include Arthur Aron, Judith Crowell, Joanne Davila, K. Daniel O’Leary, Everett Waters, and Harriet Waters. For more information, please visit our website at www.psychology.sunysb.edu/relationship

What's In Press?

Baucom, D.H., Hahlweg, K., & Kuschel, A. (in press). **Are waiting list control groups needed in future marital therapy outcome research?** *Behavior Therapy*.

Capaldi, D.M., Shortt, J.W., & Crosby, L. (in press). **Physical and Psychological Aggression in At-Risk Young Couples: Stability and Change in Young Adulthood.** *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*.

Physical and psychological aggression was examined over a 2 1/2-year period for at-risk young couples. It was predicted first, that there would be persistence in any physical aggression across time in the group of couples who stayed together; second, that stability in levels of aggression toward a partner would be higher for men who remained with the same partner compared to men who repartnered; third, that increases in levels of aggression would occur over time for couples with the same partners; and fourth, that changes in aggression over time would be concordant for couples. Measures of aggression included reports of aggression and observed aggression. Findings indicated considerable stability in aggression for the same-, but not for the different-partner group. Length of relationship and being with the same partner predicted aggression at T2. Changes in aggression over time were highly concordant within dyads.

Cordova, J. V. (in press). **Behavior analysis and the scientific study of couples.** *Behavior Analyst Today*.

Cordova, J. V., & Dorian, M. (in press). **Observing intimacy in couples' interactions.** In P. K. Kerig & D. Baucom (Eds.), *Couple observational coding systems*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Cordova, J. V., & Mirgain, S. (in press). **Social problem solving training with couples.** In Chang, E. C., D'Zurilla, T. J., & Sanna, L. J. (Eds.), *Social problem solving: Theory, research, and training*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Davila, J., & Cobb, R. (in press). **Predicting change in self-reported and interviewer-assessed adult attachment: Tests of the individual difference and life stress models of attachment change.** *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*.

The study tested the key assumption of the individual difference model of adult attachment change: that people who have experienced certain vulnerability factors will be prone to change attachment styles because they have developed unclear models of self and others that render their attachment models unstable. This model was compared to a life stress model, which states that change occurs as an adaptation to new, interpersonally-relevant life circumstances. Changes in self-reported and interviewer-assessed attachment were examined among 94 young adults who were followed over one year. Analyses yielded support for the individual difference model for change in both self-reported and interviewer-assessed attachment. The life stress model was supported for change in interviewer-assessed attachment only. Implications for differential change processes for self-reported versus interviewer-assessed aspects of adult attachment are discussed.

Davila, J., Karney, B. R., Hall, T., & Bradbury, T. N. (in press). **Depressive symptoms and marital satisfaction: Dynamic associations and the moderating effects of gender and neuroticism.** *Journal of Family Psychology*.

Given the emphasis on within-subject associations between depression and marital quality in recent theory and practice, our study had three goals: to examine within-subject associations between depressive symptoms and marital quality over time, to address gender differences in the magnitude and direction of these associations, and to determine whether neuroticism moderates the strength of these associations. One hundred sixty four newlywed couples provided eight waves of data over four years of marriage. Hierarchical linear modeling confirmed the existence of bi-directional within-subject associations between marital satisfaction and depressive symptoms. Gender differences were rarely significant. Although neuroticism strengthened the effect of marital distress on symptoms as predicted, it weakened the effect of symptoms on marital distress among husbands. The theoretical and practical implications of these findings are discussed.

Ehrensaft, M.K., Cohen, P., Brown, J., Smailes, E., Chen, H., & Johnson, J.G. (in press.) **Intergenerational Transmission of Partner Violence: A 20-Year Prospective Study.** *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*.

An unselected sample of 543 children was followed over 20 years to test the independent effects of parenting, exposure to domestic violence between parents (ETDV), maltreatment, adolescent disruptive behavior disorders, and emerging adult substance abuse disorders (SUD), on the risk of violence to and from an adult partner. Conduct Disorder (CD) was the strongest risk for perpetrating partner violence for both sexes, followed by ETDV, and power assertive punishment. The effect of child abuse was attributable

to these three risks. ETDV conferred the greatest risk of receiving partner violence; CD increased the odds of receiving partner violence, but did not mediate this effect. Child physical abuse and CD in adolescence were strong independent risks for injury to a partner. SUD mediated the effect of adolescent CD on injury to a partner, but not on injury by a partner. Prevention implications are highlighted.

Fals-Stewart, W., & O'Farrell, T.J. (in press). **Behavioral family counseling and naltrexone for male opioid dependent patients.** *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology.*

Men (N = 124) entering outpatient treatment for opioid dependence who were living with a family member were randomly assigned to one of two equally intensive 24-week treatments: (a) Behavioral Family Counseling (BFC) plus individual treatment (patients had both individual and family sessions and took naltrexone daily in presence of family member) or (b) Individual-Based Treatment only (IBT; patients were started on naltrexone and were asked in counseling sessions about their compliance but there was no family involvement or compliance contract). BFC patients, compared with their IBT counterparts, ingested more doses of naltrexone, attended more scheduled treatment sessions, remained continuously abstinent longer, and had significantly more days abstinent from opioids and other illicit drugs during treatment and during the year after treatment. Compared to those who received IBT, BFC patients also had significantly fewer drug-related, legal, and family problems at 1-year follow-up.

Fincham, F.D. (in press). **Marital conflict: Correlates, structure and context.** *Current Directions in Psychological Science.*

Marital conflict has deleterious effects on mental, physical and family health and three decades of

research has yielded a detailed picture of the behaviors that differentiate distressed from nondistressed couples. Review of this work shows that the singular emphasis on conflict in generating marital outcomes has yielded an incomplete picture of its role in marriage. Recent efforts to paint a more textured picture of marital conflict incorporate study of spouses' backgrounds and characteristics, investigate conflict in the contexts of support giving and affectional expression and consider the ecological niche of the couple in the broader environment.

Gordon, K.C., & Baucom, D.H. (in press). **Forgiveness and marriage: Preliminary support for a measure based on a model of recovery from a marital betrayal.** *American Journal of Family Therapy.*

Johnson, M.D. (in press). **The Observation of Specific Affect in Marital Interactions: Psychometric Properties of a Coding System and a Rating System.** *Psychological Assessment.*

The Specific Affect Coding System (SPAFF; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989) has led to conclusions about which types of dyadic affect predict positive and negative outcomes in marriage, yet the lack of information about collinearity among the codes limits interpretation of SPAFF results. Psychometric properties of SPAFF were examined by assessing the interactions of 172 newlywed couples with SPAFF and with an affect rating system developed for this study. For husbands and wives, factor analysis indicated 4 distinct factors of affect, representing anger/contempt, sadness, anxiety, and humor/affection. Anger/contempt and humor/affection were associated with marital satisfaction, relationship beliefs, and appraisals of the interactions. Correlations were in the expected directions. The strengths, limitations, and implications of the data are discussed.

Kelly, S. (in-press). **African American Couples: Their importance to the stability of African American families, and their mental health issues.** In J.S. Mio & G.Y. Iwamasa (Eds.), *Multicultural mental health research and resistance: Continuing challenges of the new millennium.* NY: Taylor & Francis.

African American couples are shown to be an important family unit. Unfortunately, they have a hard time forming lasting marital bonds, as evidenced by higher than average never married and divorce rates. Much of these rates can be explained non-pathologically by the unique societal issues faced by African Americans, and by the typical methods of coping that are used. Notably, African American's strengths allow them to overcome a number of couple related issues. Readers are exposed to the mental health related strengths and weaknesses of African American couples, given therapeutic strategies designed to work with these couples, and encouraged to engage in thorough self exploration related to their own race and culture. Therapists with these skills are likely to overcome the couples' typical reluctance to enter treatment, assist these couples in using their own strengths to improve their couple relationships, and potentially strengthen their families as well.

Kline, G. H., Wood, L. F., & Moore, S. (in press). **Modified family and interparental conflict scales: Validation with young adults from divorced and non-divorced families.** *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage.*

This study investigates the reliability and validity of two modified family conflict scales, one assessing interparental conflict and the other overall family conflict. Each scale was revised in order to ease administration, improve response accuracy, and provide uniform instructions for participants from divorced and non-divorced families. The Children's Perceptions of

Interparental Conflict Scale (Grych, Seid, & Fincham, 1992) was reduced from 49 to 13 items to include only those items assessing conflict intensity and frequency. For the Conflict Subscale of the Family Environment Scale (Moos & Moos, 1994), a family member checklist was added. In addition to adding uniform instructions for individuals from divorced and non-divorced families, a 6-point response format was added to both scales. Participants (N = 375) completed the revised and original scales as well as validation measures. Findings support the reliability and validity of the revised scales in assessing young adults' perceptions of interparental and overall family conflict.

Lorber, M.F., & O'Leary, K.D. (in press). **Predictors of the Persistence of Male Aggression in Early Marriage.** *Journal of Family Violence.*

The prediction of husband-to-wife physical aggression was examined in a sample of 94 community couples in which the husband engaged in at least one act of physical aggression toward his partner during the engagement period. Predictors were measured approximately one month prior to marriage, and physical aggression was assessed again at 6, 18, and 30 months postmarriage. Seventy-two percent of the men who were physically aggressive during the engagement period were physically aggressive at one or more of the next three assessments across the initial 30 months of marriage. Nearly 62% were severely aggressive at one or more assessments. Results were generally supportive of the hypothesis that risk factors for persistent antisocial behavior would predict the persistence of aggression. More frequent physical partner aggression, aggressive personality styles, general aggressiveness, and witnessing interparental aggression in the family of origin were associated with continued aggression. Only general aggressiveness and premarital physical aggression predicted the persistence of severe aggression.

Mahoney, A., Pargament, K. I., Murray-Swank, A. & Murray-Swank, N. (in press). **Religion and the sanctification of the family.** *Review of Religious Research.* * (*an empirical psychology journal)

Despite ample evidence that global indexes of religiousness are linked to family functioning, the mechanisms by which religion uniquely influences family dynamics are not well understood or empirically documented. To advance the scientific study of religion's role in families, we delineate how the construct of sanctification applies to marital and parent-child relationships as well as to the entire family systems according to diverse religious traditions. We define sanctification as a psychological process in which objects are perceived as having spiritual character and significance. We summarize the psychometric properties of two sets of measures that we have developed to assess the sanctification of marriage, parent-child relationships, and sexuality: Manifestation of God and Sacred Qualities scales. We hypothesize that sanctification has desirable implications for family life, supporting this assertion with empirical findings from our program of research. We also highlight the potential harm that may result from the sanctification of family relationships and discuss circumstances that may present particular risks (unavoidable challenges, violations by family members, loss, conflict, and intrapsychic and institutional barriers). Finally, we discuss future research directions to study more closely the influence of religion and sanctification on family life.

Moore, T.M., Stuart, G.L., Eisler, R.M., & Franchina, J.J. (in press). **The effects of relationship aversive female partner behavior on attributions and physiological reactivity of verbally aggressive and nonaggressive males.** *Violence and Victims.*

The present study assessed the effects of aversive female partner behavior on cognitive attributions and physiological reactivity in verbally aggressive and non-aggressive college males (N=39). Participants were presented four audio-taped vignettes, which depicted hypothetical dating situations in which the female's behavior was relationship aversive or non-relationship aversive. Participants' physiological reactivity (i.e., systolic blood pressure, diastolic blood pressure and heart rate) was obtained before and after hearing each vignette. Attributional responses were obtained following the presentation of all vignettes. Relationship aversive partner behavior was expected to produce greater increases in attributional and physiological reactivity than non-relationship aversive partner behavior. Additionally, verbally aggressive males were expected to demonstrate greater negative intent and responsibility attributions and evidence greater physiological reactivity for situations involving relationship aversive partner behavior than were non-aggressive males. As hypothesized, results showed that relationship aversive partner behavior produced greater increases in systolic and diastolic blood pressure than did non-relationship aversive partner behavior. Results also showed that verbally aggressive males evidenced significantly greater negative attributions to relationship aversive partner behavior than did non-aggressive males. The potential interaction between physiological reactivity and attributions in explaining males' verbally aggressive behavior toward their female partners is discussed.

O'Farrell, T. J., Fals-Stewart, W., Murphy, M. & Murphy, C. M. (in press). **Partner violence before and after individually-based alcoholism treatment for male alcoholic patients.** *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology.*

This study examined partner violence in the year before and the

year after individually-based, outpatient alcoholism treatment for 301 married or cohabiting male alcoholic patients, and used a demographically matched nonalcoholic comparison sample. In the year before treatment, 56% of the alcoholic patients had been violent toward their female partner, four times the rate of 14% in the comparison sample. In the year after treatment, violence decreased significantly to 25% of the alcoholic sample but remained higher than in the comparison group. Among remitted alcoholics after treatment, violence prevalence of 15% was nearly identical to the comparison sample and half the rate among relapsed patients (32%). Thus, partner violence decreased after alcoholism treatment, and clinically significant violence reductions occurred for patients whose alcoholism was remitted after treatment.

Schilling, E.A., Baucom, D.H., Burnett, C.K., Allen, E.S., & Ragland, L. (in press). **The effect of premarital communication skills acquisition on couples' risk of becoming maritally distressed.** *Journal of Family Psychology.*

Stuart, G.L., Moore, T.M., Ramsey, S.E., & Kahler, C.W. (in press). **Relationship aggression and substance use among women court-referred to domestic violence intervention programs.** *Addictive Behaviors.*

Although there is extensive theoretical and empirical evidence linking men's alcohol abuse and marital violence, no previous studies have assessed the substance use characteristics of "female batterers." We recruited 35 women who were arrested for domestic violence and court-referred to batterer intervention programs. We administered multiple measures of substance use and abuse and assessed the women's marital aggression, marital satisfaction, depressive symptomatology, use of general violence, and their relationship partners' substance use. We also divided the sample into

groups of Hazardous Drinkers (HD) and Non-Hazardous Drinkers (NHD). Across the entire sample, almost half of the women were classified as hazardous drinkers. Over one-quarter of the women reported symptoms consistent with an alcohol abuse or dependence diagnosis, and approximately one-quarter of the sample reported symptoms consistent with a drug-related diagnosis. Over one-half of the total sample reported that their relationship partners were hazardous drinkers. Relative to the NHD group, the HD group scored higher on measures of drug problems, relationship aggression, general violence, and marital dissatisfaction. The results of the study suggest that substance use and abuse should routinely be assessed as part of batterer interventions and that batterer programs would be improved by offering adjunct or integrated alcohol treatment.

Stuart, G.L., Ramsey, S.E., Moore, T.M., Kahler, C.W., Farrell, L.E., Recupero, P.R., & Brown, R.A. (in press). **Reductions in marital violence following treatment for alcohol dependence.** *Journal of Interpersonal Violence.*

The present study assessed the impact of an intensive outpatient treatment for alcohol dependence on alcohol use, marital violence, psychological abuse, and marital satisfaction among 24 heterosexual male patients and their partners. Patients received 5-6 days of substance abuse treatment in a partial hospital. Patient and partner assessments were conducted at baseline, 6-month follow-up, and 12-month follow-up. Results revealed decreased alcohol use in male patients as well as significant declines in the frequency of husband-to-wife marital violence and psychological abuse from baseline to 6- and 12-month follow-up. Men reported no significant changes in their marital satisfaction. Results also showed significant decreases in the frequency of wife-to-husband violence from baseline to 6- and 12-month follow-up. Female partners

reported a significant increase in their marital satisfaction from baseline to 6- and 12-month follow-up. Overall, the study suggests that the marital violence perpetrated by male patients and their female partners declined following the males' substance abuse treatment. The clinical implications of the findings are discussed.

Please contact Susan at sstanton@email.unc.edu to contribute ideas or articles to the Spring/Summer 2003 newsletter.

END OF THIS NEWSLETTER