

Couples Research & Therapy NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter of the Couples Research & Therapy ABCT–SIG, Summer 2010

CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE

Letter from the Editors	1
New Initiatives to assist Military Veterans returning from combat duty in Iraq and Afghanistan Barron, McCabe, Schmitz & Sayers	1
Letter from the Co-Presidents Gordon & Dixon	2
Media Coordinator Request Poyner-Del Vento	7
Letter from the Student Co-Presidents Williams-Baucom & Fleming	7
Book Reviews	
• Intimate Relationships Dixon	8
• The Marriage Checkup Gordon	9
Treasurer's Update Clements	10
Hot off the Press	11
Kudos	12

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New Initiatives to assist Military Veterans returning from combat duty in Iraq and Afghanistan

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As a nation, we are well on the way to a full decade since the devastating events that occurred on September 11th, 2001, and the launching of our country's ongoing war on terrorism. That day changed the lives of all Americans, particularly the future of military service members and their loved ones. As a follow-up to an earlier article in the Couples SIG newsletter on couples and combat deployments (Sayers, 2008), this article will describe some of the research and clinical development work being conducted to address the needs of these military service members and their family members. We will review briefly the impact of combat deployment on individuals and families, and then discuss two projects focused on improving the lives of veteran couples. **(Continued on page 3.)**

Letter from the Editors

Amanda and I are delighted to serve as the incoming SIG newsletter editors. We are both graduate students in James Córdoba's lab at Clark University. Amanda just completed her fifth year and is heading to Duke University Medical Center to begin her internship in the adult health/transplant track. Ellen just finished her first year and is interested in integrating mindfulness-based approaches into couples work.

This edition of the newsletter features an article by Abbey Barron, Andrew McCabe, Theresa M. Schmitz, & Steven L. Sayers, on interventions for newly returned veterans and their family members and book reviews by our SIG Co-Presidents. Lee Dixon contributed a review of Thomas Bradbury's new text, *Intimate Relationships*, and Cameron Gordon reviewed James Cordova's recent book, *The Marriage Check-Up*.

We invite SIG members to send us ideas for article topics for future newsletters and to contact us if you would like to contribute an article or review to your SIG newsletter.

Best wishes for a wonderful summer & happy reading!

-Ellen Darling & Amanda Harp

Letter from the SIG Co-Presidents

Cameron Gordon¹ & Lee Dixon²

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Hello from your new SIG Co-Presidents, Cameron Gordon & Lee Dixon! We hope you are all enjoying a wonderful start to your summer and that you are concluding a satisfying and rewarding academic year! Those of you on the listserv have already endured several emails from us since we took office last November, but we wanted to take this opportunity to re-introduce ourselves and encourage you to contact either of us if there is anything we can do for you:

Lee Dixon, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor in the Psychology Department at the University of Dayton. He can be reached via phone at 937-229-2160 or through email at lee.dixon@notes.udayton.edu.

Cameron Gordon, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor in the Psychology Department at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington. He can be reached via phone at 910-962-2454 or through email at gordonc@uncw.edu.

We would also like to introduce the other new officers who were elected at our SIG meeting last November in New York. We have new Student Co-Presidents (C.J. Eubanks and Katie Williams-Baucom), new Newsletter Co-Editors (Ellen Darling and Amanda Harp), and a new Media Coordinator (Patrick Poyner-Del Vento). In addition, we are very grateful that Dr. Kahni Clements is continuing as our Treasurer.

A special thanks also goes out to all of the officers who concluded their terms last November. We all benefitted tremendously from their leadership and I know all of the current officers are working hard to continue meeting the standard of excellence our past officers set in serving the SIG.

The ABCT Convention in New York last November included numerous excellent contributions from our SIG. We would especially like to thank Dr. Mark Whisman for providing us with an outstanding pre-conference event. His discussion of the reciprocal association between romantic relationship functioning and psychopathology served as a terrific start to a very successful conference. The many outstanding symposia, posters, and other activities that SIG members conducted at the conference also continued to demonstrate the innovative, diverse, and high-quality work that you all do!

Since last Fall's conference our new Media Coordinator, Patrick Poyner-Del Vento, has been hard at work establishing a new SIG website – and he has done an excellent job with it! The new website is now online and can be found at www.abctcouples.org. The website includes lots of helpful resources including information about couples-relevant graduate training, internship, and job opportunities as well as information about our listserv, how to join the SIG (so you can easily refer all of your colleagues), and even archived copies of the SIG Newsletter for the past 10 years! We encourage you all to visit it often!

Finally, as we look forward to this year's conference in San Francisco, we would like to ask for your help with a few matters. You recently received an email from Lee Dixon requesting your input for pre-conference topics. If you have not done so already, please contact Lee with your interests as soon as possible as we will be inviting a speaker and announcing the results very soon. We will also be in touch later this Fall to encourage submissions to the SIG poster exposition held at our annual Cocktail Party as well as for submissions to be considered for the Robert L. Weiss Graduate Student Poster Awards. So please keep an eye out for those emails in the upcoming months.

In the meantime, we hope you have the opportunity to enjoy a summer that is both relaxing and productive, and we look forward to seeing you all in San Francisco this November for an equally fun and stimulating conference!

Continued from page 1.**Impact of Combat Deployment on Service Members**

Since 2002, there have been well over 1.5 million individual deployments of military service members to the conflicts called Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF-Afghanistan) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF-Iraq) (Congressional Research Service, 2008). From the beginning of these conflicts through February 2010, Congressional reports reveal that 4,365 OIF and 973 OEF soldiers have lost their lives, and over 31,000 OIF troops and nearly 5,000 OEF troops have been wounded during the same time period (Leland & Oboroceanu, 2010). The psychological impact of OEF-OIF combat deployments is extensive. Early in the history of the current conflicts, over 90% of soldiers surveyed in Iraq reported significant exposure to combat trauma, including being shot, handling dead bodies, knowing someone who was injured or killed, or killing an enemy combatant (Hoge, et al., 2004). The conflict in Afghanistan has been associated with lower levels of such events, but soldiers still reported substantial rates of parallel experiences during combat (Hoge, et al., 2004). More recent evidence suggests that 5-15% of combat veterans suffer from PTSD, 2-14% suffer from Major Depression, and 19% have Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) (Tanielian, 2008).

The family context of combat deployment and reintegration

The present day volunteer US military is different than previous generations in which the US forces were fortified through the military draft. The contemporary military's composition also differs. Over half of current military service members are married and more than 40% have one or more children (Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, 2005). Thus, military deployments have the potential to significantly affect the service member and his or her family.

There are two considerations in understanding the impact of combat deployments on the military service member and his or her spouse. First, reintegration of the service member back into a relationship and family involves a developmental readjustment process for both spouses. As a result of the deployment, the service member and his or her spouse have changed, sometimes significantly. Second, this developmental readjustment often occurs in the presence of the sequelae of the combat experience, including psychological and physical trauma.

The clinical and research literature on the developmental process associated with reintegration

suggests there is often an initial positive reunion/honeymoon period (MacDermid, 2006). The spouse of the service member may experience a loss of independence after having adapted to the service member's absence and managed the household responsibilities on his or her own (Amen, Jellen, Merves, & Lee, 1988; Logan, 1987; U.S. Army, 2007a, 2007b). Basic household chores and routines need to be renegotiated and re-established. The couple needs to re-establish and/or strengthen joint problem solving and decision-making abilities, and re-establish relationships with extended family and friends. Couples may also need to resolve marital tension remaining from the pre-deployment period. The service member also must re-familiarize him- or herself with each family member, some of whom may be developmentally different than they were pre-deployment.

The developmental process of family reintegration is likely to be more problematic when it occurs in the presence of trauma related PTSD or depressive symptoms. We called this phenomenon *complicated family reintegration*, because these trauma-related symptoms complicate the normal developmental reintegration process. In support of this idea, the results of the National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study (NVVRS) (Kulka, et al., 1988) and other studies (Cook, 2004; Riggs, Byrne, Weathers, & Litz, 1998; Soloman, 1992) have indicated that higher levels of war trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptomatology are associated with more marital problems, greater family violence, and greater child behavior problems than those without trauma. Few studies have examined this phenomenon among OEF-OIF veterans, but our preliminary research (Sayers, Farrow, Ross, & Oslin, 2009) found that among married/partnered OEF-OIF veterans, those with PTSD or depressive symptoms were more likely to have problems in family reintegration. Emotional numbing, avoidance, and depressive withdrawal were most highly associated with reintegration problems. Renshaw and colleagues (Renshaw, Rodrigues, & Jones, 2008) also found that higher levels of combat and relatively higher levels of symptoms were associated with lower marital satisfaction in the National Guard members deployed to Iraq. The association between service member's symptoms and the spouse's marital satisfaction depended upon the perception by the spouse that the service member's combat activities were relatively minimal. Another study (Nelson Goff, Crow, Reisbig,

& Hamilton, 2007) examined the impact of trauma symptoms in returned OEF-OIF service members on their relationship satisfaction. The soldiers in this smaller sample (N=45) had few symptoms of PTSD relative to the general population, however. Other symptoms, such as sexual problems and sleep disturbances, were found to predict relatively lower relationship satisfaction in the veterans.

The Complicated Family Reintegration Study “VALOR”:

We have begun a study to examine how psychiatric symptoms may complicate or interfere with the reintegration process of OEF and OIF couples and may negatively affect family functioning. This study, which we call the “VALOR Study” (Veterans And Loved Ones Reintegrating) is funded by the Department of Veteran Affairs’ Health Services Research and Development Service (HSR&D), which funds research that underscores all aspects of VA healthcare. We have hypothesized that the level of specific types of reintegration problems experienced by veterans (i.e., difficulty renegotiating their role in the relationship, feeling like a guest in their own home), will mediate the association between the veteran’s symptoms and overall couple and family functioning over a 1 year period.

This four year study will involve the recruitment of 270 married/partnered military veterans who served in the OEF/OIF conflicts after 2001 from the Philadelphia VA Medical Center and their spouses or intimate partners. Recruitment will be conducted through referrals from the Primary Care clinics including the Women’s Health Clinic and the Post-Deployment clinic. Potential subjects will be identified by providers within these clinical settings and through clinical behavioral health screening assessments which are routinely conducted by primary care providers. We plan to target participants with a broad range of psychiatric disturbances, ranging from those with minimal distress to those with clinically significant depressive and/or PTSD symptomatology. Newly returned veterans may also be recruited for participation in this study in community settings outside of the VA medical setting. This will help to ensure a more well-rounded study population.

In order to participate, veterans will have separated from military service within the past 2 years or will have been placed on inactive status in their Reserve or Guard Unit. Veterans must also be married or have an intimate relationship partner with whom they share living quarters 75% of the time. Exclusion criteria for OEF/OIF veterans in this study include those with impaired hearing and/or a diagnosis or

probable diagnosis of a severe mental illness such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.

Data analyses will examine the manner in which specific reintegration problems mediate the impact of psychiatric symptoms on global marital and family functioning over a 1 year period. These analyses will take into account both spouses’ perceptions of family functioning at the baseline and 12 month assessment points, the partners’ psychiatric functioning, as well as additional covariates such as demographic factors, psychiatric and couples treatment history, and presence of TBI and military sexual trauma.

The study will also include a qualitative component and the results of the quantitative and qualitative approaches will be integrated in order to understand the full impact of psychiatric symptoms on family reintegration (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). After completing the initial quantitative assessment, couples may be chosen to complete an additional qualitative interview several weeks later. This is a more in-depth interview that includes questions focusing on family experiences during the post-deployment period. The qualitative aspect of the study will consist of semi-structured interviews that will be administered separately to each spouse/partner. The use of open-ended questions is designed to elicit their perspectives regarding the impact of service members’ psychiatric symptoms on the reintegration process. Questions asked during the qualitative interview rely partially on existing clinical models of family readjustment, including the following domains and family processes: changes in family roles and routines and related renegotiation, conflict and family reintegration, the potential role of psychiatric symptoms in interfering with the emotional support and closeness among family members, feelings that family members are open to working out readjustment issues, and supports and barriers regarding reintegration in the post-deployment period.

The qualitative aspect of our research plan strengthens our study because of its ability to uncover themes or concerns of returning veterans in a systematic way. Qualitative methods and iterative analytical procedures will permit ideas to emerge that we as researchers may not have considered. The themes and problems generated by these qualitative interviews will validate that we have assessed important constructs and processes through the quantitative assessments and will supplement the interpretation of the quantitative findings.

We will integrate the qualitative and quantitative findings on two levels: the conceptual and

data analytic levels (Creswell et al., 2003). Our conceptual framework specifies that reintegration processes (renegotiation of roles, redevelopment of intimacy, and resumption of routines, resumption of influence/leadership in the family) are important tasks. The qualitative findings should indicate that veterans and their spouses are actively dealing with these issues in their adjustment to the post-deployment period. We will compare these results against the quantitative findings regarding the issues related to family consensus and cohesion. These comparisons will be conducted both cross-sectionally and from baseline to 12 months. Other details of the conceptual framework include the role that existing family vulnerabilities (i.e. history of couple conflict) have on the ability of the couple to accomplish reintegration successfully.

Qualitative-quantitative integration of findings at the data-analytic level will be accomplished multiple ways. We plan to create indices that reflect the degree to which each of the partners' responses fit into each category themes, specifically, what percentage of their responses focus on each theme. We will conduct multiple regression analyses using the indices as independent measures predicting the total score on the Complicated Family Reintegration Scale (CFRS) (Sayers, Farrow, & Oslin, 2009), which measures the extent of family reintegration problems. Additional correlational analyses assessing the strength of relations between the indices and symptoms measured at baseline will provide further information regarding how family processes are associated with veterans' symptoms.

The findings will inform the counseling and psychiatric services designed to assist service members to return to civilian life, and will also clarify whether and how psychiatric difficulties impede readjustment and reintegration. Lastly, these findings will extend our knowledge about the family experiences of military veterans in the post-deployment period.

Families At Ease:

Given that only 39% of service members who have been demobilized (separated from active duty military service) since 2002 have enrolled in Veterans Health Administration medical and specialty care, there is a clear need for new outreach programs to provide the nation's veterans and their families with vital information about their benefits and VA health care eligibility (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2010). The Philadelphia and Durham VA Medical Centers have combined efforts and launched a pilot program called "Families At Ease." This pilot program was initiated in January 2010, to help veterans and

their family members get the assistance they need and encourage the veterans to take advantage of the benefits they have earned and are entitled to receive. All returning troops who served in the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts have earned five years of free healthcare following their military separation date, but at least 50% or more have not taken advantage of their benefits. The Families At Ease program is designed to enhance outreach to recently returned Veterans who may be reluctant to seek help, or who may be unaware that they need it. While the VA offers a wide variety of services and treatment options for Veterans, very few programs and outreach efforts have focused on family members. Loved ones are often in the best position to see changes in the veteran and influence him or her to seek help. This program provides a way for family members to assist in getting their veteran connected with the help they may need.

In promoting Families At Ease, the program has made use of many different mediums to convey the program mission and message. The program has appeared in local newspapers, radio interviews, and even featured on the digital banner of a downtown building. The outreach to recently returned veterans has been carried to local churches and ministries, building relationships between community members and resources and the programs offered by VA. Program staff has attended military events for returning soldiers and their families, speaking in person to the service members and their loved ones. The program has been featured on the internet search site "Google" and has appeared numerous times on the VA's main website. We have also created a website (www.mirecc.va.gov/familiesatease/) and a Facebook page for the program, which can be found by searching "Families At Ease." An important outcome associated with the outreach being performed is the ability to see what tactics work for the program. This will be invaluable when reaching out to our returning veterans, to help them receive the VA benefits and care they earned for their service.

Family member or veterans who respond to Families At Ease outreach messages make contact with a call center in the Philadelphia, PA, or Durham, NC, VA medical centers. Call responders are trained to assist callers in many different ways and work closely with other teams and clinics within the VA system. Responders can provide information and guidance for Veterans seeking care and enrollment as well as provide helpful coaching to family members of Veterans reluctant to seek care. Responders help triage and make referrals to appropriate clinics depending on the issues raised during a call. The Families At Ease

program staff has coordinated efforts with the National Suicide Prevention Hotline in order to properly address and triage the possibility of veterans and family members who may be going through an immediate crisis.

Families At Ease has been receiving calls from veterans and family members alike, revealing the importance of involving family members in seeking care for their Veteran. Both the period of service and serving status of the veterans who have been assisted by this program vary from the Vietnam era to current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is important to recognize the significance of receiving calls of help from veterans of past conflicts and eras, as they represent one of the issues the program is trying to address: those veterans who require treatment but are not enrolled for VA care.

The responses from veterans, family members, and providers have been extremely positive. Many family members and concerned loved ones are glad to know they have a trained operator to listen and help guide them through the difficulties associated with their veteran's reintegration.

Conclusion:

Through research projects like the VALOR Study, and new programs such as "Families At Ease," we hope to fill pre-existing gaps in interventions for newly returned veterans and their family members. In doing so, we hope to develop new interventions that address issues which have received little attention or of which there was minimal awareness, as well as those which may have been overlooked in the past. Additionally, these projects will provide information regarding ways in which to strengthen programs and interventions that have already been developed and implemented. These projects will also provide information that will aid in eliminating the barriers that prevent veterans from getting the help they may need and encourage family member involvement in assisting veterans to access help. The ultimate goal of these projects is to increase the rates of successful transition and reintegration for both newly returned Veterans and their families, making the homecoming what they hoped it would be and more.

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Letter from the Student Co-Presidents

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¹University of California, Los Angeles, ²Clark University

Hello from your new student co-presidents, Katie Williams-Baucom and C.J. Eubanks Fleming! We'd like to take this opportunity to introduce ourselves, as well as to alert you to all of the ways in which you can utilize the resources that are available for communication and networking.

We'd first like to thank Will Aldridge and Rebecca Brock for all of their hard work and planning for our last two conferences. We are particularly excited about the student-member social event that they began during their tenure, and we hope that you will continue to attend and enjoy this new tradition.

As for your new co-presidents, Katie is a graduate student at UCLA and works with Andy Christensen studying couple interactions and interventions. CJ is a graduate student at Clark University and works with James Córdova investigating the factors affecting relationship help seeking and attitudes towards relationship help seeking within the couples context.

Finally, let us remind you of the ways that you can be involved with the SIG, particularly as a student. In addition to our wonderful listserv, we have a Couples SIG Facebook group (<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=266082574771>). We also have a student-specific facebook group, (<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=82988514892>), as well as a Google student discussion group (<http://groups.google.com/group/couples-sig-students>) for those of you who are not on Facebook. Feel free to email us if you would like to be added or removed from this group. We will be planning the SIG Cocktail Party this year along with the student get-together, and as always, we welcome any suggestions from those of you who have a favorite San Francisco locale.

Please contact us at anytime with comments, questions, suggestions, etc. We are looking forward to working with you over the next two years!

Sincerely,
 CJ (cjfleming@clarku.edu) and Katie (kwilliams@ucla.edu)

Couples SIG Wikipedia page: We need your help!

Greetings from your media coordinator! As you already know, we have a new website up and running (www.abctcouples.org), a new listserv (couples-sig@sfu.ca), and several discussion groups currently maintained on the web. More recently, I created a Couples SIG Wikipedia entry, but it's still quite bare and need of a lot of blanks to be filled in (e.g., a History section, etc.).

WE NEED YOU



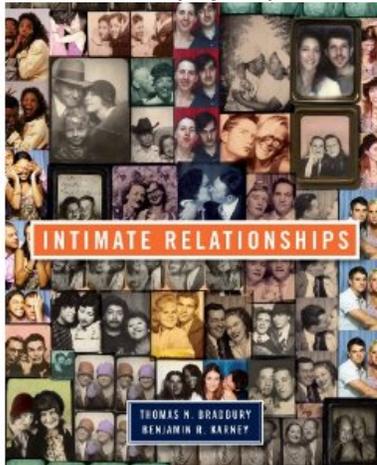
It's my hope that this project can be more collaborative and involve everyone from the Couples SIG. If you're interested in adding to this page, go to www.wikipedia.org and type in "ABCT Couples Special Interest Group" (you can also copy and paste this link: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ABCT_Couples_Special_Interest_Group).

Thanks for your support with this project!

- Patrick Poyner-Del Vento

BOOK REVIEW

Lee J. Dixon, Ph.D.
University of Dayton



Intimate Relationships

Thomas N. Bradbury (University of California, Los Angeles) & Benjamin R. Karney (University of California, Los Angeles)

Published 2010

W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. (598 pp).

Intimate Relationships is a textbook that seems well-suited for upper-level undergraduate students and perhaps graduate students as well. The text covers a broad array of theories and research regarding what many would call romantic relationships (the authors point out that not all romantic relationships remain romantic). Let me start off by saying that I think this book is excellent. I only wish that I had been assigned a textbook such as this one when I was an undergraduate, as I am pretty sure that reading it would have immediately cemented my desire to study intimate relationships. What reading this book at this stage in my career has done is confirm my desire to teach a course on intimate relationships as soon as possible!

The book is broken down into thirteen chapters, which are divided into three sections:

Section One - This first section addresses foundational issues, such as what we want to know about intimate relationships and how we go about studying and understanding them.

Section Two - The second section focuses on the elements and processes involved in intimate relationships, including sex and gender, sexual orientation, attraction, the effects of personality on relationships, as well as communication, conflict, beliefs and values, and stress and social support.

Section Three - The last section is called Changing Intimate Relationships and includes a chapter devoted to theories and research related to couples therapy and relationship

enhancement as well as a chapter focused on how intimate relationships change across the lifespan.

The authors have struck a hard-to-achieve balance between presenting a tremendous amount of information and presenting said information in a way that is both thought-provoking and entertaining. They grab the reader's attention from the very beginning as they describe the relational difficulties that Albert Einstein had throughout his life, highlighting how one of the greatest minds in all of history was unable to understand the mysteries of intimate relationships. Each chapter begins with a similarly captivating story along with a set of questions related to the story. Although such stories seem to be the norm in most textbooks that I have read recently, the ones in this book actually caused me to stop, think, and want to read on. To address the questions presented at the beginning of each chapter, the authors outline an abundance of research studies in an in-depth manner that will hopefully help students think more critically and analytically about research in this field and apply it to their own lives. In addition, it seems that the way the research is presented could help students become savvy consumers of research in other fields as well. Because such a vast amount of research related to intimate relationships is introduced, an added benefit of having this book on my shelf is that I am sure I will be using it as a quick reference tool.

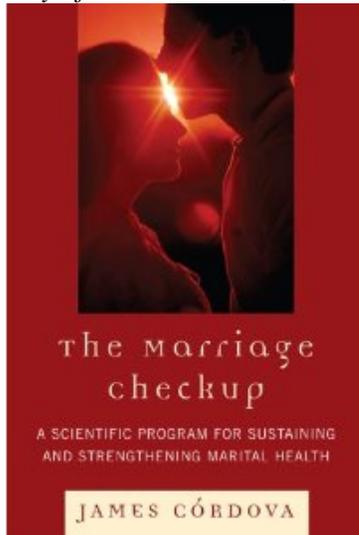
Intimate Relationships has a companion website with videos, study guides, flashcards, etc. I was only able to access the material for one chapter, as the publishing company has yet to post the material for the remaining chapters. However, the videos I was able to watch were very complimentary of the material in the textbook, and included interviews with researchers and students. Much like the book itself, the videos drew me in and prompted me to think more deeply about the topics being discussed, which brings me to my one very small concern with this text. I hope the fact that I found this book so fascinating is not an indication that it may be too difficult of a read for some of the students it is intended for. Having said this, I have no reason not to highly recommend this book to anyone teaching a class on intimate relationships.

Because this book is almost 600 pages long, and because I received a copy of it uncomfortably close to the review deadline, I knew that I would not be able to read it in its entirety. However, I found it nearly impossible not to read every word of every chapter. I have very little doubt that both the students who are assigned *Intimate Relationships*, and the instructors who assign it, will be just as captivated by its contents as I was.

BOOK REVIEW

Cameron L. Gordon, Ph.D.

University of North Carolina, Wilmington



The Marriage Checkup: A Scientific Program for Sustaining and Strengthening Marital Health

James V. Córdova (Clark University)

Published 2009

Jason Aronson (286 pp).

The Marriage Checkup: A Scientific Program for Sustaining and Strengthening Marital Health aims to provide laypeople, or “lay-couples” in this case, with an empirically sound perspective on how to strengthen their marriage and prevent distress. This goal is accomplished exceedingly well. As such, *The Marriage Checkup* will be of primary interest to couples and to therapists who work with couples. Its comprehensive and accessible review of the marital literature would also make it an excellent supplement to primary sources in an advanced undergraduate course on relationships. Although the positive tone of the book is particularly inviting to non-distressed or slightly troubled couples seeking a strengths-based approach to enhancing their marriage, this book would also serve as an excellent tool for those who find themselves in more dire relationship circumstances.

What is immediately striking about this book is the author’s adept ability to move fluidly between the roles of researcher, educator, and clinician in order to offer readers a comprehensive understanding of their relationship and their role in it. Each chapter finds the right balance between discussing the relevant research findings, teaching the couple how to understand those findings in the context of their own marriage, and then encouraging the couple to utilize specific skills that will help strengthen their relationship.

The author’s role as an active researcher in the marital field is readily apparent from the first page. Indeed, this book is based on the author, Dr. James Córdova’s, years of research focused on marital distress prevention and relationship enhancement. As such, *The Marriage Checkup* is not just a clever title for a book that contains a theoretical exploration of relationships, rather it is the name of an intervention that has been thoroughly investigated and empirically supported. This is evident throughout the book, starting with an introduction that establishes a clear intention to take the reader on a carefully planned journey through the research literature on marriage. The foundation for each chapter is firmly embedded in empirical literature and the book itself is organized around themes identified by research to be the most potent predictors of marital outcomes. Specifically, the book contains twelve chapters each of which focus on key elements of the marital experience such as intimacy, attachment, forgiveness, acceptance, mindfulness, and spirituality. The book also provides a strong focus on building specific skills that will assist with the couples’ communication (both emotional expression and decision-making), their sexuality, their parenting, and their respective relationships with money. Thus, readers are treated to a comprehensive review of the relevant research and they are also provided with citations to both primary sources and additional self-help books they may find beneficial.

Whereas his role as a researcher resulted in well informed decisions about how to select and organize the relevant topics, the book is further strengthened by the author’s role as a teacher. Throughout each chapter, Dr. Córdova adeptly distills even the most complex research findings into an accessible and engaging format for the lay-audience. Each concept is carefully explained such that the reader is first given a broad appreciation and understanding for why the concept is important to marriage and how it works to promote relationship well-being. This is followed by clear examples and specific skills that help readers understand how to apply the freshly gained knowledge in their own relationship. Thus, the book does an excellent job of providing a top-down mastery of a couple’s relationship processes. In other words, this book teaches couples to understand the vast and complicated landscape of their marriage in much the same way that a marital scientist would. By reading this book, the couple is learning to fully appreciate not only the importance of each construct, but also the interdependence and reciprocal influence of complicated processes such as attachment, intimacy, acceptance, communication, sexuality, and mindfulness to name a few.

Finally, the author’s role as a clinician is also readily apparent throughout the book. It is written with a tone of tenderness, encouragement, and non-judgment that underlies every chapter. Readers are never put in the position of judging either their spouses or themselves.

Rather they are provided a way of understanding and validating how they got where they are and they are skillfully shown how to promote greater strength and satisfaction in their relationships. This is achieved through a compassionate understanding of what drives couples into maladaptive patterns of relating and a realistic acceptance that all close relationships will include some degree of injury. Through the compassionate and patient tone in this book, even readers who find themselves perpetuating anger, emotional distance, and vindictiveness in their relationship will feel understood by the author. This validation helps the reader to minimize defensiveness and examine their own role in the marriage in ways that promote a genuine empowerment and motivation toward positive change. Throughout the book the author also judiciously offers detailed and specific direction, such as with the presentation of communication skills and the importance of embracing vulnerability to foster intimacy. Just as

importantly, however, the book is compassionately and skillfully non-directive and inclusive when encouraging broader processes to promote enhancement in areas of the marriage such as spirituality and sexuality.

In summary, *The Marriage Checkup* has achieved its goals exceptionally well. It is a thorough and carefully written book that relationship therapists will undoubtedly find to be a useful tool in their clinical work. The author's graceful movement between the roles of researcher, teacher, and clinician results in twelve thoughtfully considered chapters that leave readers feeling validated, knowledgeable, and equipped to promote positive change in their relationship. Each chapter gives the couple a clear conceptualization of the topic, a convincing argument for why it is worth their attention, and an easily understandable and empirically supported way to strengthen it in their marriage. In other words this book is, quite simply, very good therapy.

Treasurer's Update

Dear SIG Members,

Thank you for another exciting year at ABCT! Our SIG is growing stronger every year. We now have 191 members, including 87 professional members and 104 students. In 2009 we welcomed six new members to our Couples SIG.

Please be reminded that dues for professional members are \$25 and students, postdocs, and retired members pay \$5. If you weren't at the Couples SIG business meeting in New York or haven't had a chance to pay your dues, please send a check to Kahni Clements-Blackmon with ABCT Couples SIG in the memo line to the address listed below. Please note that I changed institutions in March and my address has changed.

Presently, our SIG balance is \$801.85. Prior to the 2009 conference our SIG balance was \$1186.85. At the conference we paid \$300 for the pre-conference speaker, \$300 for student awards, and \$600 for the cocktail party. Additionally, our new Couples SIG website was \$156. We collected \$511 at the conference and \$360 was sent following the conference.

I would like to thank of you who sent your dues after the conference. Fewer of you were able to attend the SIG business meeting than in previous years, yet many of you mailed your dues following the conference. Thank you so much for your support and commitment to the Couples SIG!

Don't forget, if you haven't already, please join the SIG listserv at www.couplessig.net.

See you in San Francisco!

-Kahni Clements

♦E-mail: kahni_clements@hms.harvard.edu

HOT off the Press

In Press and Recently Published Literature

- Baucom, D. H., Snyder, D. K., & Gordon, K. C. (2009). *Helping couples get past the affair: A clinician's guide*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Braithwaite, S., & Fincham, F.D. (2009). A randomized clinical trial of a computer based preventive intervention: Replication and extension of ePREP. *Journal of Family Psychology, 23*, 32-38.
- Brock, R. L., & Lawrence, E. (2009). Too much of a good thing: Underprovision versus overprovision of partner support. *Journal of Family Psychology, 23*, 181-192.
- Brock, R. L., & Lawrence, E. (forthcoming, 2009). Support adequacy in marriage: Observing the platinum rule. To be published in K.T. Sullivan & J. Davila (Eds.), *Support Processes in Intimate Relationships*. New York: Oxford Press.
- Brock, R. L., & Lawrence, E. (forthcoming, 2009). A unified and multifaceted approach to examining support transactions in marriage. To be published in F. Columbus (Ed.), *Marriage: Roles, Stability and Conflicts*. NY: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.
- Cano, A., Miller, L.R., & Loree, A. (in press). Spouse beliefs about partner chronic pain. *Journal of Pain*.
- Davila, J., & Kashy, D. A. (2009). Secure base processes in couples: Daily associations between support experiences and attachment security. *Journal of Family Psychology, 23*, 76-88.
- Denton, W.H., Johnson, S.M., & Burleson (in press). Emotion Focused Therapy-Therapist Fidelity Scale (EFT-TFS): Conceptual development and content validity. *Journal of Couple and Relationship Therapy*.
- Denton, W.H., Nakonezny, P.A., & Burwell, S.R. (in press). Reliability and validity of the Global Assessment of Relational Functioning (GARF) in a family therapy training clinic. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*.
- Denton, W.H., Nakonezny, P.A., & Burwell, S.R. (in press). The effects of meeting a family therapy supervision team on client satisfaction in an initial session. *Journal of Family Therapy*.
- Denton, W.H., Burleson, B.R., & Brubaker, P.H. (in press). Avoidance may be bad for the heart: A comparison of dyadic initiator tendency in cardiac rehabilitation patients and matched controls. *Behavioral Medicine*.
- Fincham, F.D. (in press). Forgiveness: Integral to close relationships and inimical to justice? *Virginia Journal of Social Policy and the Law*.
- Gordon, K. C., Hughes, F. M., Tomcik, N. D., Dixon, L. J., & Litzinger, S. (2009). Widening spheres of impact: The role of forgiveness in individual, marital, and family functioning. *Journal of Family Psychology, 23*, 1-13.
- Gordon, K. C., Dixon, L., Hughes, F. M., & Willett, J. (in press). Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy. In J. Bray & M. Stanton (Eds.), *The Blackwell Handbook of Family Psychology*. Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishing.
- Hall, J.H., & Fincham, F.D. (2009). Psychological distress: Precursor or consequence of dating infidelity? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 35*, 143-59.
- Herrington, R. L., Mitchell, A. E., Castellani, A. M., Joseph, J. I., Snyder, D. K., & Gleaves, D. H. (2008). Assessing disharmony and disaffection in intimate relationships: Revision of the Marital Satisfaction Inventory factor scales. *Psychological Assessment, 20*, 341-350.
- Herzog, T. K., Hughes, F. M., & Jordan, M. (in press). What is conscious in perceived attachment? Evidence from global and specific representations of relationships with parents and romantic partners. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*.
- Leisring, P.A. (In press). Stalking made easy: How information and communication technologies are changing the way people monitor and harass one another. In S. Kleinman (Ed.) *The Culture of Efficiency: Technology in Contemporary Life*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Leisring, P.A. (In press). What will happen if I punch him? Expected consequences of female violence against male dating partners. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment, and Trauma, Special Issue Addressing Women's Use of Violence*.
- Miller, L.R. & Cano, A. (in press). Comorbid chronic pain and depression: Who is at risk? *Journal of Pain*.
- Mitchell, A. E., Castellani, A. M., Sheffield, R. L., Joseph, J. I., Doss, B. D., & Snyder, D. K. (2008). Predictors of intimacy in couples' discussions of relationship injuries: An observational study. *Journal of Family Psychology, 22*, 21-29.
- O'Leary, K., & Woodin, E. M. (2009). *Psychological and Physical Aggression in Couples: Causes and Interventions*. Washington, DC, US: American Psychological Association.
- Paleari, F. G, Regalia, C., & Fincham, F.D. (in press). Measuring offence-specific forgiveness in marriage: The Marital Offence-specific Forgiveness Scale (MOFS). *Psychological assessment*.
- Tyksinski, R. B. (2009). *Disorganized Romantic Attachment: An integrative model*. VDM Publishing Co. Ltd.
- Whisman, M. A., Beach, S. R. H., & Snyder, D. K. (2008). Is marital discord taxonic and can taxonic status be assessed reliably? Results from a national, representative sample of married couples. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 76*, 745-755.
- Whisman, M. A., Snyder, D. K., & Beach, S. R. H. (in press). Screening for marital discord. *Journal of Family Psychology*.
- Williams, K.J., Atkins, D.C., Sevier, M., Eldridge, K.A., & Christensen, A. (in press). "You" and "I" need to talk about "us": Linguistic patterns in couples. *Personal Relationships*.

KUDOS!!!

We'd like to celebrate these special events in the lives of the following Siggers. Congratulations to you!

Brian Baucom recently got a 3-year F32 award (the post-doc version of an NRSA) to work with Gayla Margolin at USC on a study of domestic violence, emotional expression, and mental/relational health in families.

Joanne Davila was promoted to Professor in the Department of Psychology, Stony Brook University.

Barbara Kistenmacher is getting married to Jeffrey LeDonne.

Steven L. Sayers is being promoted to Associate Professor of Psychology in Psychiatry, Department of Psychiatry, University of Pennsylvania, effective July 1, 2010.

Katherine J. Williams-Baucom received the Randy Gerson Memorial Grant from the American Psychological Foundation.

If you would like to announce an achievement/significant occasion in your career or personal life, please email the co-editors with your news:

aharp@clarku.edu & edarling@clarku.edu