

RELATIONSHIP RESEARCH NEWS

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Greetings from the President

by Jacki Fitzpatrick

I am honored to serve as the President of IARR for the 2009-2010 academic year. I wish to thank the past presidents, officers, committee members and colleagues who have contributed so much to IARR's growth prior to my term. I aspire to meet the standard of excellence that they have set.

From my perspective, one of my tasks is to showcase the future plans for the organization. As you might know, IARR conducts workshops/conferences to promote professional development and facilitate collaborative relationships. IARR will be conducting three conference events this year. In addition, a fourth conference is being conducted by another organization with which IARR has a cooperative relationship. These events are being held in three different countries and two different seasons. Thus, it is hoped that these events will provide adequate opportunities for colleagues to share their work and advance the study of personal relationships.

New Scholar Workshop – November 2009, Lawrence, Kansas, USA

The New Scholar Workshop (NSW) is designed to foster professional development in the early career phases (e.g., student, untenured faculty, colleague who completed degree during the last five years). This year's NSW will be conducted as a series of panel discussions by senior scholars. The discussions will focus on topics such as job interviews, adjustment to academic positions, publication

processes and work/personal life balance. Consistent with IARR's focus on interdisciplinary perspectives, the senior scholars represent several disciplines (e.g., sociology/anthropology, psychology, family studies, communication, social work). Thus, their advice and feedback is likely to be valuable to new scholars with diverse interests. The workshop will be limited to approximately 30 attendees, so it will provide more direct opportunities for discussion among new scholars and senior scholars. The NSW is being coordinated by Dr. Leah Bryant (of DePaul University, USA), who is also the Chair of the Mentorship Committee.

IARR Mini-Conference – November 2009, Lawrence, Kansas, USA

As you might know, IARR conducts some conferences that focus on specific themes. Compared to the main conferences (that are conducted in summer of even-numbered years), the themed conferences tend to be briefer and have fewer attendees. Thus, they are known as "mini-conferences". The 2009 Mini-Conference is being conducted in collaboration with the University of Kansas Close Relationships Interest Group. The theme of this conference is "New Directions in Research on Close Relationships: Integrating Across Disciplines and Theoretical Approaches". The conference presenters will be discussing relational processes from diverse perspectives (e.g., psychological, sociological, evolutionary, biological). Theoretical developments and research techniques (e.g., multilevel modeling) will be discussed as well. Although the conference is being conducted in the USA, the presentations are not limited to US or North American relationships. Colleagues are planning to present information about relational processes in several countries (e.g., Finland, Uganda, Japan, South Korea, Nigeria, Russia, Ghana). Thus, the cultural context of relationship studies will be given considerable attention. This conference is being coordinated by Dr. Omri Gillath (University of Kansas, USA).

Australian Psychological Society (APS) Psychology of Relationships Interest Group Conference – November 2009, Brisbane, Australia

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) has several interest groups, in which colleagues who focus on particular topics build working relationships. One such group is the Psychology of Relationships Interest Group, which will be conducting its ninth annual conference soon. The theme is “Connecting Research and Practice in Relationships”. This conference will provide an opportunity for colleagues with clinical expertise and colleagues with empirical expertise to share perspectives. Thus, this conference highlights mutual respect for colleagues who have different disciplinary views on relationship themes. The Psychology of Relationship Interest Group Conference is being coordinated by Dr. Zoe Pearce Hazelwood (Queensland University of Technology, Australia).

IARR Main Conference – July 2010, Herzliya, Israel

IARR is planning to conduct the next Main Conference in Israel. The local arrangements are being coordinated by Dr. Mario Mikulincer (New School of Psychology, Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya, Israel). The conference program is being coordinated by Dr. Ruth Sharabany (University of Haifa, Israel) and Dr. Ashley Duggan (Boston College, USA). They and their colleagues have given great care to the conference plans, and I’m sure that IARR will benefit from their efforts. Conference information (e.g., location, Call for Submissions) will be posted on the IARR website in the coming months.

During my brief term as President, I have received the most questions and comments about the location for the Main Conference. Some colleagues who have not traveled to Israel expressed concern or hesitations. I was unfamiliar with Israel as well. To learn more about the country, culture and conference plans, I traveled to Israel in July 2009. With the utmost respect, I share a brief summary of the trip. I recognize that my experience might not mirror your experience, and that much can change in a year. On this point, Israel is no different than any other conference location.

Of course, a brief summary does not fully represent the country or location. Due to space constraints, I will focus my comments on the topics which IARR members have addressed to me.

-Travel to/from Israel

I traveled from the New York area (of the USA) directly to Tel Aviv, Israel (site of the main airport). In addition to the standard security process at a US airport, there was a security review at the flight gate. This additional review took less than two minutes. The flight was scheduled for 11 hours, but was in fact only 9 hours of air time.

Upon arrival in Tel Aviv, it was easy to navigate my way through Passport and Customs Control. All airport signs that I saw were in more than one language (including English). The Passport/Customs Control lanes for foreign visitors were clearly marked and the entire process took less than 10 minutes.

However, it was a more time-consuming process for my return flight to the USA. There were several brief interviews with security professionals who reviewed my passport, luggage, activities during my time in Israel and travel plans. When it was clear to the professionals that I was unfamiliar with the process, they guided me through it. After check-in for the flight, I had to repeat two parts of the security process again (passport review, examination of carry-on luggage) before entering the boarding area. These latter steps were very similar to my experience at many other airports.

Some guide books describe that US citizens need a visa to enter Israel. At the time of my trip, a US passport was the only document that I needed to enter/exit the country. Document requirements might vary by country and change over time.

-Travel within Israel

There were taxis available to travel directly between the airport and Herzliya. Many signs that we passed on the highway were in 3-4 languages, so it was easy to see my progress to each location. Dr. Mikulincer was kind enough to arrange for taxis on two occasions while I was in Herzliya. On other

occasions, taxis were available outside hotels and I could find them on the main streets.

Dr. Sharabany was kind enough to host me for a day visit to Haifa. The trip to Haifa required train travel. Herzliya has a train station, which provides access to locations north and south of the city. The only challenge that I faced was that some trains did not have announcements in English. However, local residents often provided translations of the announcements, so I did not have any major travel delays.

-Conference Site

The conference will be held on the site of the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC). The IDC is a new university site that contains several schools/colleges (including the New School of Psychology). There are a few large academic buildings, but many buildings are shorter (1-2 floors). Some campus walkways are lined with trees and shorter buildings are partially covered with ivy. So, the campus has a natural element that is appealing. Sculptures are placed throughout the campus, which add to the aesthetic quality.

The rooms in which meetings will be held are quite nice. Most rooms have a curved design (chairs are u-shaped around the podium). This design could facilitate discussion among presenters and session attendees. The rooms have many technological resources that will accommodate various presentation modalities.

The restaurants/cafes at which meals will be offered during the day are centrally located on campus. The buildings have covered and open-air options. Dr. Mikulincer showed me that one open-deck area offers a breeze from the sea.

-Personal Safety

I travel frequently, so I am quite accustomed to being in a new city (alone or with others). On this particular trip, I traveled alone. While I was with Dr. Mikulincer and/or Dr. Sharabany for part of the trip, I was by myself for some days and each evening. In order to orient myself to the neighborhood around the hotel, I walked 4-5 blocks each night. Over the entire trip, I walked a total of 22 blocks. I usually saw other

people on the street, but there were periods of 10-15 minutes when I did not see anyone. Yet, I felt comfortable. There were enough hotels, restaurants, stores, and parks nearby that I felt I had resources if I needed help. It also appeared that some hotels had their own security staff, who seemed quite aware of the neighborhood. So, I had no indications that I should have been more (or less) mindful of my personal safety than any other place that I've visited. Overall, I had a wonderful experience and look forward to my return next summer.

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RELATIONSHIP RESEARCH NEWS

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Relationship Research News is published twice a year. Contributions are very welcome and will be published as space permits. Announcements, letters to the editors, cartoons/humor, teaching tips, and other information relevant to IARR members are all appropriate. If you would like to contribute a feature article or personal commentary, please submit a brief (one paragraph) description to the editor first (please do not send manuscripts). Submit all materials to Marian Morry, University of Manitoba, Department of Psychology, Winnipeg, MB, CANADA R3T-2N2; marian_morry@umanitoba.ca. The deadline for final copy is September 1 for the Fall issue and April 1 for the Spring issue. Inquiries regarding Feature Articles are welcome at any time.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

by Lesley Verhofstadt
Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium

*T*his is the last time my team and I present you *IARR*'s newsletter, as we end our editorial term once the Fall 2009 issue is in press. We are happy to give the torch to Marian Morry – the incoming editor- and her editorial team.

In the special feature section of the current issue, Joao Moreira writes about his experiences as chair of the International Task force on international issues within *IARR*. As a nice complement to the past special feature on interdisciplinary research collaborations, we also have a report from Peta Wellstead (Australia) about difficulties doctoral students might encounter when trying to carry out interdisciplinary studies.

This issue we also bring you a column by George Levinger, who reflects on his life since retirement. Also in this issue, Ben Le gives us an update on the launching of the new *IARR* website. In our New Professionals column, Andrea Lambert provides relational scholars with advice on how to create a strong civic engagement component for their tenure portfolio.

Andrew Christensen has written a review of the 'CoupleCare program' developed by Kim Halford and his colleagues. And Anita Vangelisti discusses Melinda Blau and Karen Fingerman's recently published book 'Consequential Strangers'.

Moving to our journals update, Paul, Rebecca, and Lorne present their report and the tentative tables of content for the upcoming issues of *JSPR* and *PR*.

Don't forget to read our Announcements and Member News sections! In this context, we would like to thank Mark Fine for writing a tribute to Larry Kurdek, who recently passed away.

Let me end this column by thanking the *IARR* board for their confidence over the past three years. Thanks to the previous editor, Susan Boon, for her practical support in the beginning of my editorial term. I also would like to say a special thank you to Dan Perlman and Susan Sprecher, who were always prepared to give thoughtful advice and kind support when needed. Thanks to the many individuals who have contributed to our series of special features and special thanks to the people who wrote columns every issue. And to all the people who were member of my editorial team: thanks for being such reliable and kind collaborators! Serving as the newsletter's editor gave me the joyful opportunity to interact with numerous *IARR* members. I really enjoyed serving *IARR* in such a way over the past three years! I hope you enjoyed it as well...

**Submission deadline for
Spring 2010 issue of RRN**

April 1, 2010

**Submit all materials
to Marian Morry**

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FEATURE ARTICLES

The International Task Force on International Issues within IARR: A Perspective on Better Serving International Members

edited by

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Editor's introduction

*D*uring the 2008 IARR Conference in Providence, Rhode Island, USA, and following discussions that took place at the board meeting there, then incoming President Frank Fincham decided that action needed to be taken regarding the participation of international members in IARR. Although IARR aims at being a truly international association, most of its members still come from developed, western, Anglo-Saxon countries, and particularly from the United States and Canada. To make matters worse, members from less represented countries are apparently less committed to membership and, after joining, for example due to an IARR conference taking place in their or in a nearby country, often do not renew their membership. Although IARR officials and editors have made intense efforts to recruit scholars from such countries to take on roles as committee members or chairs, associate editors, editorial board members or reviewers, there are lingering problems.

One of these is the perception by at least some international members that they do not get a fair share of rewards at IARR and its journals. Complaints about difficulties in publication and the extremely low (bordering on nil) frequency of IARR awards going to scholars not from the US, Canada or Israel are sometimes heard in

informal discussions among international members. These concerns contrast with the past constructive attitude of IARR, INPR and ISSPR in encouraging participation of international scholars. Given the need to find further ways to deal with these contradictory aspects, Frank decided that the best thing to do would be to appoint a special Task Force, composed of international scholars (broadly speaking) and that would bring their perspective more clearly to the IARR board. This feature section is intended to share with other IARR members my personal view of the work that was developed by this Task Force and the results to which it arrived. It should be clear that other Task Force members are not responsible for opinions presented here, as they have not been consulted about the content of this feature. It is quite possible and desirable, though, that some of the other Task Force members, or any other IARR members, may want to share different perspectives on these issues, as happened with the latest issue on cross-disciplinary collaborations. I am sure an appropriate outlet can be found for such continued dialogue, either in this same newsletter or through some other, more convenient means.

This Task Force was formed following contacts mostly taking place during the Providence meeting, and it was formally appointed by President Frank Fincham on August 5, 2008. Members were, in addition to me, who chaired it, Chiung-Ya Tang, of the University of Central Florida, USA, Lesley Verhofstadt, of the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium, Maria Kaźmierczak, of the University of Gdańsk, Poland, Rodrigo Carcedo, of the University of Salamanca, Spain, Silvia Macher, of the University of Graz, Austria, and Sophia Jowett, of Loughborough University, United Kingdom.

Between August and December, the Task Force engaged in lively and thoughtful debate on the several aspects of this complex problem, with the help of an internet-based discussion group set up by Chiung-Ya, that helped us in distributing messages and sharing documents. Many ideas were brainstormed, coming either from the Task Force members themselves or from other colleagues who volunteered them

(maybe sometimes unwittingly) to our eager eyes and ears.

And as the discussion went on, we became increasingly aware (or maybe it was just me, maybe others were more aware from the start) of how difficult and delicate the problem was. Many ideas that initially appeared attractive proved much less so on second thought. To make matters worse for us, Frank made it clear that he expected “specific and concrete recommendations” that would be actionable with the Association’s finite resources and within his one-year presidential term. I believe I even one time read the expression “no pie in the sky”, although it may only be one of those false memories. Asking for pie in sky would actually have been that much easier.

Just to give a brief perspective on issues we have had to confront, we recognized that social psychological in-group/out-group identity issues were involved in this, and that they colored every perspective on the matter, from that of the people who raised the issues to the average North-American IARR member who would hear about our recommendations and about the Board of Directors’ decision. This included, necessarily, our own perspective as non-North-American members, and we had to be careful to de-center from our own cultural perspective and to avoid crying out “it’s all their fault!”

Another issue we had to take into consideration was that there is a competitive journal market out there, and editors struggle hard to improve IARR journals impact factors. Any action that would undermine the journals’ standing would harm the association’s interests and certainly meet with severe objections and legitimate resistance. This might be the case with any decision to markedly increase publication of articles by non-North-American scholars, especially if without close attention to quality standards. (Such concerns had been anticipated in Board discussions that antedated the constitution of Task Force.)

Alerted by our new awareness of these issues, we eventually identified a number of other pitfalls. We collectively disfavored any option

that, like the one mentioned above of increased number of articles by non-North-American scholars, would be achieved without an increase in the intrinsic quality of the work that was produced. This would only contribute to maintain the marginalized status of such scholars as producers of second-rate research, in addition to creating unacceptable inequity.

We also had to give special consideration to the resources IARR can provide. The Association has proved across its existence to be a fantastic source of competent and generous scholarly collaboration. It is not, unfortunately, a bottomless source of financial wealth. Wise administration, therefore, would require close attention to cost/benefit ratios, and any idea involving huge spending without the corresponding increased revenue (e.g., financing a professional translation service, publishing a special book series) was dead from the start. Pie in the sky does come expensive.

In our thoughts about the ways IARR could better fulfill its role as a truly international scientific society, we therefore eventually concentrated on two crucial vectors that have just popped up in this text: our resources and our role. Our role is that of a scientific society whose main purpose is to bring together scholars whose work is focused on relationships, and to push the field forward by this bringing together and the cross-fertilization of their ideas that may result. A scientific association cannot take the place of government agencies, foundations or universities in funding research, creating tangible incentives for scholars, or subsidizing research outlets for emerging but marginal research. What is expected of us is that we help create a global community of scholars by promoting collaboration and communication, and the spread of theoretical and methodological innovation. By creating a level playing field in which researchers from all parts of the world can participate, a huge expansion of the field of relationship research would be achieved, as not only additional scholars, but also additional funding, publication outlets, etc, would become available in emerging regions for the benefit of all.

To help realize this dream, we can count on the best IARR has had to offer in the past: the generous effort of the best of us for the sake of the field and a greater participation of new and more diverse colleagues in it. The challenge, then, would be of how to channel these resources to the pursuit of the broad goal above. It soon became apparent, however, that the only reasonable way of going about this was to invest these resources in promoting high quality relationship research in those countries and regions of the world that are currently underrepresented in IARR. We envisaged three main ways of going about this goal.

The first of these would be through the development of research partnerships and collaborations between scholars from well-represented countries (WRCs in our new terminology) and those from underrepresented countries (URCs). As was true of our whole action plan, we saw this as bringing benefits not only for URC colleagues, but to those from WRCs as well. Collaborating with colleagues around the world will give more established scholars the opportunity to test theories originating in developed countries¹ against the challenge of being applied in a widely different cultural context. This testing of cross-cultural generalizability, we believe, will give those papers the edge in the competitive publishing market of today, and we hope that such collaborations might also be valued by review committees evaluating their professional performance.

Additional gains may come from such collaborations, however. Innovative ideas may come from cultures where many aspects of people's approach to life are different. Many emerging countries are earmarking increased funds for research, and these joint ventures could try to capture some of these, including in the form of graduate students coming from abroad. Publication venues are also developing in such countries, and papers scoping diverse cultures are apt to get increased citation counts from around the world.

¹ The term 'developed countries' will be used to refer to countries with more developed research systems.

The greatest benefits, however, would certainly go to URC researchers. These collaborations will probably be one of the most effective ways to ensure the transfer of know-how from countries with more developed research systems to those where scholars face more obstacles and limitations. True, much of this can be accomplished by people in URCs reading research methods handbooks. That, however, does not provide much of the tacit knowledge that achieving research excellence requires. The perceptiveness required to detect a heuristic and innovative idea, in contrast with one that is trivial and not likely to create impact in the research community, is a skill that requires a great deal of experience, discussing and bouncing ideas off mentors and colleagues throughout a scholar's career. Most URCs lack the vibrant academic and professional communities that more developed countries have, and lack of such interaction limits the development of researchers' intellectual skills.

We therefore put forward as one of our main recommendations that IARR invest special effort into the promotion of research collaborations between scholars of WRCs and URCs. Several ways of accomplishing this have been suggested. One of these was the creation of some kind of forum where ideas for international research projects might be exchanged. This might take, for example, the form of a web page where established researchers could advertise their interest in carrying out cross-cultural projects and aspiring collaborators could post their availability for collaborations in their areas of interest and/or expertise. Some way of filtering out non-serious or unprepared candidates would be established.

Other ideas were proposed that could provide incentive to such collaborations. Proposals could be submitted to journal editors for special issues or competitive articles sections composed of papers approaching relationships issues from an international perspective, whatever the criterion for this might be (diverse authors, empirical cross-cultural comparisons, etc.) Or an award could eventually be established to reward the best of such papers, for example.

The important point is that in no way should this be seen as endorsing the acceptance of second-rate work. True, criteria might have to become a little more flexible, but excessively lax criteria, in addition to harming journals' rating, would only help confirm work from URC scholars as low in quality and therefore ignorable. The peer review system and its stringent standards have a crucial role in sustaining the credibility and value of research.

One second way of pursuing this goal of greater and better participation by URC scholars would tap on the endless generosity of our research community. In many cases, it would be hard to distinguish between this and the previous suggestion, as this generosity could basically mean involving aspiring international scholars from URCs in joint research projects. The only difference in this case would be that altruistic motivations would have a greater weight in originating this behavior, and illuminated self-interest a lesser one.

Other, more evidently pro-social attitudes would be for some established scholars to stand up as volunteers to mentor scholars from URCs in their areas of interest and expertise. IARR could provide incentive for such initiatives in several ways. A special program might be established and publicized, so that such volunteer mentors would get visibility and recognition, in addition to the joint authorship their involvement from the beginning of research projects would justify. Awards could also be employed for this purpose.

One variant of this strategy would be to have experienced journal reviewers volunteer to give extra help to prospective URC authors in bringing their papers in line with the journals' standards. I personally do not favor this view, as I think very often papers from scholars less involved with sophisticated research networks have basic design and theoretical flaws. On other occasions, they fail to address timely, critical issues and gaps in knowledge in a way that is creative and heuristic enough to provide true advance in knowledge. These shortcomings are not generally resolvable in the reviewing and editing phase, and therefore the whole exercise may end up in frustration and discouragement.

Although this tactic may prove valuable in many cases, however, I think it has limited effectiveness by itself.

This does not mean, however, that the publication process can be slip away from our radar. In many cases, the reviewing and revising stage is a source of major difficulties independently of problems pointed out above. We have all heard (and sometimes produced) words of annoyance about reviewers and editors, and have questioned apparently absurd criteria and expectations (Mischel, 2008), not to mention the apparently endless waiting and the repeat "revise and resubmit" cycles. In addition, many cultures outside the Northern European-American Protestant-inspired-improve-yourself group do not value or react positively to direct, blunt, even if constructive, criticism of one's work. Some international scholars may see such reviews as insulting and demeaning (some reviews would actually be seen in that way by almost anyone), and decide they will not put up with it. Alternatively, they may have their fragile self confidence in attempting to reach the world's most prestigious journals shattered, and give up for a long time if not for good. The reviewing process, therefore, also needs a good deal of our attention, if we want to encourage greater diversity without compromising scientific quality standards.

In that regard, the Task Force recognized value in one idea, put forward by some, that a group of volunteer super-reviewers could be formed within IARR journal's editorial boards that would be willing to provide extra help and guidance to scholars from URCs in their attempts to deal with the intricacies and hardships of the reviewing process. The effectiveness of this initiative, of course, would always depend on the existence of such volunteers and on their continuing availability. There would also be the risk that this extra help would be available for some, but not for all, URC scholars seeking to publish in PR or JSPR.

The Task Force therefore extended another recommendation, namely that special care be taken when dealing with submissions from URC authors. More specifically, the recommendation

was that a recommendation in this direction be issued by the Board to journal editors. This should not be understood, as clarified above, to mean criticism of the policies these journals have followed. On the contrary, much has been done by journal editors and editorial boards to increase diversity in authors, associate editors and reviewers' geographical and disciplinary origins. Our point was to ask editors to reflect on the extent to which such concerns had reached the core of the process, namely the actual reviewing and the communication of reviewers' comments and editors' decision.

Several dimensions might be considered relevant in this request for "special attention" to submissions from URCs. First, as pointed out above, extra care in avoiding anything that might be interpreted as insulting or demeaning. Instead, it should be recognized that URC authors have probably faced limitations in resources at their disposal, opportunities to develop skills, adequate mentoring, etc. Papers' shortcomings should definitely be pointed out, and the paper rejected if that is the best decision, but ad hominem attacks (e.g., "the author of this article really ought to try to work in a field that's more commensurate with his level of mental abilities"; see Benson, 2003; Sternberg, 2002), overgeneralized comments (e.g., "the authors just ignore the current literature on this topic"; without specifying what that literature might be), or sarcastic remarks (e.g., "why do we have to be bothered with articles this bad?") are not helpful at all. Instead, the "extra care" mentioned above should mean preserving the authors' face, being specific, constructive and informative in criticisms (e.g., if authors fail to acknowledge important literature, point out how and where to search for it; if there are methodological or data analytic errors, explain why the procedures used are inadequate and lead authors to information on more adequate ones), and being encouraging even if the papers needs to be rejected, by pointing out ways in which authors may get to produce better work in the future. Of course, the main problem with this broad suggestion is that it will probably have little impact and for a limited period of time unless methods are found to monitor whether it is being followed. But more on that later.

One third way of helping develop better research in URCs would be through skill-building seminars for new and international researchers. These seminars could take place next to IARR conferences, especially when they take place in or near URCs. Again, this is something that has been done in the past, often with a focus on new scholars from WRCs, but it needs to be increased in size and frequency and directed also at URC researchers. Relevant topics for such seminars could obviously include things like new electronic technologies in research (e.g., internet data collection), methods (e.g., diaries), sophisticated data analysis techniques (e.g., HLM), ethics and logistics of research (e.g., ethical requirements for publishing in U.S. journals), grant writing (e.g., planning, budgeting, and presenting a major research project for evaluation by an international panel), scientific writing and reviewing, etc. Although many of these topics are taught at local universities in URCs, in many cases faculty members at these universities may not be entirely up to date in their own knowledge, or lack concrete experience and thus cannot pass it on to local students and new researchers. Tutoring by established scholars from scientifically developed countries could do much to improve this situation.

None of this will work, of course, in the absence of motivation on the part of international scholars and students. In my view, such lack of motivation often results from local circumstances (e.g., international publication is considered out of reach or is not valued in terms of social prestige and career advancement) or personal ones (e.g., lack of self-confidence), both amenable to change. Cultural and legal contexts should also moderate the degree to which specific advice is applicable or valuable (e.g., the best techniques of grant writing may vary from one country or region to another; see Peta Wellstead's accompanying piece for an illustration of these contextual specificities and of the obstacles faced by relationship researchers in a country that is not that badly represented in IARR). By decidedly going international, one thing we will be faced with is much greater diversity. This will require a great deal of

information collection and detailed, adaptive planning, if we want to make sure that our initiatives will be useful and meet with some success.

It also seems evident that the results of any initiative aimed at improving international participation in IARR will not obtain short-term results. Such a broad goal, facing so many obstacles, cannot be dealt with by a task force with a six-month mandate. It was for this reason that the Task Force put forth one further recommendation, maybe the most important one in its report. If IARR is serious about its international character, and considering the difficulties that are apparent in the fulfillment of this character, it needs to be a permanent target of attention on the part of IARR governing bodies. For example, most of the issues that have been pointed out, in this feature section as in other writings and many hallway discussions at IARR conferences, are not sustained in hard data (e.g., how under-represented URCs actually are). Proposed actions would also need to be bounced off its potential beneficiaries, to assess to extent to which they would probably be successful. For all of this, the Task Force recommended that IARR establish a permanent committee on international matters.

This committee would be “dedicated to surveillance, reflection, and issuing of recommendations regarding the role of IARR as an international association” (quoting from the Task Force’s recommendations). It “could collect and disseminate information regarding participation by scholars from underrepresented groups, for example through quantitative analyses of journal submission and publication rates, membership, attendance at conferences, member surveys, etc. Such information would provide a more solid foundation for policies regarding international issues in IARR. The establishment of such a committee would also carry to international members the message that IARR values them, and would provide them with a point of contact to express their specific concerns.”

Given all the commitment members of the Task Force had put into their work and into the

mission of helping IARR become a truly global association, I believe I can speak for everyone in saying how happy we were to know that, in one of its last decisions during Frank Fincham’s term as President, the Board of Directors had approved the creation of this committee and of the IARR International Award. In a considerably more risky decision, Frank has asked me to be the first chair of this committee. Although I clearly felt the weight of responsibility, I also felt I could not frustrate the confidence of Frank, the Board and all the colleagues who had worked with me in the Task Force. The work ahead is hard and complex, but I hope I can count on the help not only of future committee members but of the broader, worldwide membership of IARR.

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DIALOGUE

Last issue’s feature on research collaborations, and especially interdisciplinary research collaborations, struck a sensitive chord for IARR student member Peta Wellstead from Australia, to the point she took the initiative of sharing with us some aspect of her personal experience carrying out an interdisciplinary doctoral study. International issues were also raised in that piece, and they also resounded with Peta. Therefore, her following piece not only provides

us with new insight into the difficulties students find when trying to carry out interdisciplinary studies. It also illustrates many of the challenges researchers from countries outside North America face when trying to carry out relationship research. And that in a relatively well-represented country!

Interdisciplinary Research: An Australian Perspective

by Peta Wellstead

*T*he last edition of RRN included very insightful columns regarding the complexities of undertaking interdisciplinary research. As these columns provided a northern hemisphere perspective I thought readers might be interested in some background to the situation in Australia. I will provide some information about structural constraints, and then personal insights² into realities for individual scholars.

There are 40 universities in Australia; 37 public, 3 private. Only a handful of these can be considered mature in terms of age or research output. Only seven Australian Universities fall inside the top 100 universities world wide. Most universities in Australia are less than 30 years old and have developed as a result of amalgamations of teacher's colleges and other post secondary training institutions such as Institutes of Technology during the 1980s. This amalgamation and rebranding was undertaken in attempt to bring a level of maturity to the higher education sector, provide a more cohesive funding model, and to streamline the status of awards. This evolution has been met with mixed reviews!

While Australia has its strengths, overall, esteem for the Academe is not one of them. The sector

² Please note that these are the author's opinions and do not necessarily represent the views of the section's editor, the newsletter's editor, or of other IARR members.

is significantly underfunded and is without the culture of philanthropic alumni which provides significant support to universities in North America and elsewhere. While funding is allocated in line with research outputs, the university sector in Australia relies heavily for its funding on full fee paying overseas students (mostly from Asia who return to their own countries on completion of their degree), and lower, yet still significant, fees from local students. Australian universities have a strong vocational mandate: almost all students undertake study at undergraduate level in a professional discipline, class sizes are high and teaching workloads are heavy. For most academics, undertaking a personal research programme within this educational culture is extremely difficult.

Another feature of university education in Australia is the low levels of financial support to students. Many students delay university education in order to work to save for either fees, or living expenses. Almost all undergraduate students live at home with their families and study at the university closest to their home, except those from rural areas who move to the city. Mature age entry to undergraduate education is common. Almost all students work in paid employment while undertaking their degrees – at all levels. At undergraduate level this is usually in service industries, at post graduate and Higher Degree level most students work within their profession while they study part time, in the evening and at weekends. This tends to diminish contact with other students where collegial relationships, shared ideas and joint projects might develop. Sitting on the Seine as De Beauvoir and Sartre we are not!

Humanities researchers in Australia in particular struggles for recognition and credibility, and funding for the social sciences overall is poor. We are very much a nation of innovation and industrial progress, contemplating the finer points of, say, relationship transactions is considered a bit passé! Most Higher Degree students in humanities are mature professionals who return to study as a pathway to professional career advancement. Another factor which

impacts on research outputs from the humanities is the fact that it is not generally permissible to use students, either your own or those of colleagues, to take part in research projects. In cases where ethics clearance is given to undertake such research (rarely!) there is no credit allocation to students for taking part. These factors create particular difficulties in terms of participant recruitment and the cost of undertaking humanities research. It does mean, however, that we are not overburdened with a critique of the lives of 18-25 year olds which is the feature of a considerable body of research undertaken elsewhere.

Due to its low population, and the particular culture and structure of the university sector outlined above, Australia is a net importer of research. It is, however, notable that with only 0.3 per cent of the world's population Australia produces 3 per cent of the world's research papers (Carr, 2008). In an effort to increase research outputs from Australian universities numerous initiatives have been undertaken by government over many years, creating headaches and workload issues for both academics and university administrators. The latest of these is the *Excellence in Research for Australia* initiative. The publicity for this initiative suggests that the nation will soon have a streamlined mechanism for identifying research strengths and weaknesses. The new scheme will be developed and implemented by the Australian Research Council and \$A35.8 million will be allocated in the 2009-2010 federal budget to expedite this work.

I have presented this preamble to a discussion of interdisciplinary research in Australia as there has been considerable discussion in the media and elsewhere of the possibility that new research framework for Australia will damage vital multidisciplinary work as it will pigeon hole research into no more than three subject codes. Funding is allocated to universities in terms of research output. If a project does not fit the criteria of a measurable research output – because it does not fit the subject codes – universities will be reluctant to support research on these projects, either within individual institutions, or across them. The Federal

Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research has sought to delay these concerns suggesting that:

the indicators used will vary from discipline to discipline ... and the ERA will accommodate researchers working on the disciplinary frontier in several ways. First, it will evaluate research in eight discipline clusters, each of which is itself multidisciplinary. Second, research outputs and researchers can be assigned to as many as three fields of research, which do not have to be in the same discipline cluster. Third, institutions will be able to devise their own reporting codes that link outputs to research centres, departments and other organisational units, including multidisciplinary ones. And fourth, institutions will be able to identify each research output, with up to two themes broadly aligned with national research priorities: climate change, for example, or indigenous studies (Carr, 2009).

The Minister also suggests that “The watchword of the *Excellence in Research for Australia* will be flexibility”. Submissions for the Research Evaluation Committee for the humanities and creative arts will be open in August 2009. How the new scheme will operate in practice and the impact on interdisciplinary research is unclear, but undoubtedly the makeup of the evaluation committees will be crucial.

As a personal perspective, I have just completed my PhD thesis which was an interdisciplinary examination of the help seeking behaviour of Australian men who are experiencing stressful life events. When I began this work the standing joke amongst my colleagues was that would be the shortest PhD in history: Australian men don't seek help for anything! While this may be an amusing cultural anecdote the statistics for male suicide in Australia (20.1 per 100,000 compared to 5.3 per 100,000 for women (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007)) and the fact that Australian men die prematurely from most other causes of ill health and accident suggested to me that finding out more about

men's help seeking behaviour, and what might encourage them to engage more readily in it, would be a worthwhile endeavour.

I did not come to this line of enquiry via what would perhaps be considered a usual path for an interest in help seeking – psychology, social work or one of the health sciences – but from the perspective of information behaviour. I am a librarian by profession and have, for a considerable portion of my career, worked within agencies which are seeking to engage the community on matters of health and wellbeing, and developing information products and services to support this undertaking. There has been considerable investment in Australia in recent times in initiatives to inform the community of the need to develop healthy behaviour in a wide range of domains. Many of these initiatives have been targeted to inform the community about those issues which could be considered “masculine behaviour” – alcohol consumption, dangerous driving, smoking, etc. The fact that Australian men continue to have poor health outcomes, high levels of road death and trauma, and commit suicide so much more often than women would suggest that these public information campaigns are not either well targeted, or men are ignoring them. The premise for my research was “information and knowledge have impact only to the extent that they result in action” (Chatman, 2000, p. 9). My professional practice had also alerted me to the fact that men were not using services set up to support them during periods of stress or duress. I wanted to find out why, and what could be done to assist Australian men to seek help more routinely.

As I had worked in multidisciplinary teams in community organisations I wanted multidisciplinary research to be the underlying framework of my PhD research. I wanted to share what my professional colleagues and I had discussed in team meetings for many years, and bring academic enquiry to support that knowledge base. I was interested in exploring the antecedents to men's poor help seeking such as Australian history and culture, the esteem for the particular anti-authoritarian masculinity which prevails in Australia, the emerging

understanding of the differences in the male and female brain, and the considerable difference we bring to parenting boys and girls in Australian society and how this might impact on patterns of attachment and the willingness to seek help and support later in life. I was also interested in social network theory and the way that information and support are transferred during informal relationship transactions. An examination of the style of current service delivery and co-existing information products would allow me to explore the issue in other aspects of men's help seeking – if men are not using these services, why not, and what might they do differently if it was offered. I am a mature professional and I was trying to synthesise over 25 years of professional experience and knowledge into a PhD thesis. Contemplating a PhD is a little like pregnancy – if only we knew the travail we would perhaps desist!

Major hurdles and obstacles to my interdisciplinary work included:

1. Finding a supervisor who shared my interest, or at least could support me to find others who did;
 2. Identifying professional colleagues and others outside the Academe who were interested in my exploration, and had wisdom to share about any of its component parts;
 3. Explaining how my research fitted within the University Department in which I was undertaking it – aka, the glazed-over look!;
 4. Unpacking the literature of a range of disciplines, although as a professional librarian this did not present as many difficulties for me as it might to others who are not as experienced in working with a breadth of literature;
 5. Selling myself in other academic disciplines who guard their conferences and journals fiercely, and challenge interlopers who seek to enter;
 6. Identifying examiners who might have a interdisciplinary knowledge base to critique my research and its findings;
- And then last, and no means least,

7. Finding a career pathway from my interdisciplinary research programme into an academic position within the vocationally orientated culture which is present in the Australian university sector.

All of these crossroads, and not to say a few cul-de-sacs and dead ends, presented uncharted territory and opportunities for learning more about my topic, and perhaps more importantly, about my own strengths and weaknesses. The examination process of my thesis presented particular challenges due to its interdisciplinary nature and I was required to re-write a portion of it to satisfy my examiner. Both my supervisor and I knew exactly what was under review and why, but my reader did not share a similar knowledge base for that particular section. This is just one of the many challenges one can encounter.

The particular cultural context where research in undertaken has a huge bearing on what we can achieve and on the home we find for our research interests and outputs. The university sector in our various countries will nurture, or challenge, us depending on what it is we are trying to achieve and how it fits with both organisational, and political, paradigms. Developing an understanding of these paradigms will assist us to navigate the terrain more readily which is why this series in RNN is so valuable. Perhaps though, the best research comes when we follow our passions, and share that with others. I learnt a great deal while undertaking my interdisciplinary research, and I know that my companions on the journey learnt a lot from me. Where that leads is an unfolding journey.

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RETIRED PROFESSIONALS COLUMN

So Far, So Good

by George Levinger
University of Massachusetts, Amherst

There's a story about a man who jumps off the top of the Empire State Building. As he passes an open window, he yells to an onlooker: "So far, so good." And so it is with my retirement. It allowed me to float freely, but there's also a downside.

I appreciate the newsletter editor's invitation to reflect on my life since retirement. I've now been retired for 17 years since I left teaching at age 65, much longer than any of my three younger retired colleagues who previously shared their reflections in these pages. Thus my own experience is now confounded with the process of aging. Please pardon me, therefore, if I preface my own particulars with a few general observations about retirement plus aging.

In her poignant book, *60 on up: The truth about aging in America*, Lillian Rubin (2007) reports on her interviews with Americans aged between 65 and 95. Most of her conclusions put a damper on people's glorious expectations for that period in their lives. Rubin emphasizes the social losses. Her chapter, "The golden years: You got to be kidding," is especially grim. A former salesman who had looked forward to full-time golf after his retirement, now laments: "I love it *but* . . . It's not a life, that's all." Her interviewees repeatedly tell her that this period of life has made them feel useless, that there's little they now look forward to, or that living onward has lost its meaning.

Writing about the adjustment of older people, Powell Lawton (1989) emphasizes the importance of both their "security" and their "autonomy." He argues that these two often stand in opposition to one another. In a "resource-poor" environment, their security is often emphasized at the cost of their independence. In a resource-rich environment, however, both can be maximized.

My own experience. So far my own retirement experience has been mainly positive. Despite a progressively severe hearing loss which convinced me to retire at 65, and a lessening in my physical and mental agility, I've learned to compensate for my losses. For one thing, I've adjusted my aspirations to fit my abilities and new opportunities. Although I can no longer speed-walk or run down stairs two at a time, I still bicycle and do serious yard work. I drive more defensively and sleep more assertively. I'm privileged, though, to continue living in the "resource-rich" environment of Amherst, where I enjoy a network of old and new friends.

My privileges extend further. Given generous pensions, annuities, and other income, my wife (Ann) and I have few financial worries. Also valuable are the university faculty benefits I've retained. The best benefit is keeping a department office, to which I like to bike. But, while I still have departmental and professional involvements, I no longer confuse my career with the rest of my life.

From his experience as a therapist and holocaust survivor, Victor Frankl has argued that "the meaning of one's life always changes," but remains central to one's personal well-being (1962, p. 113). The "meanings" in my own life now derive largely from contacts with family and friends, new explorations through reading and travel, and pursuing my long-time social concerns.

Family. With our children, grandchildren, and other family dispersed widely across the continent, we have relished opportunities to visit them more often. Last May, for example, Ann and I drove over 2600 miles around the Far West in order to attend the college or high school graduations of three different grandchildren, combining those visits with seeing numerous other West Coast relatives and friends.

Additionally, I decided some time ago to write a memoir for our children and grandchildren to read some day. To do so, I have explored family records as well as writings by my mother and her father, and I've found letters and diaries of many years ago. Since I was born in Germany before Hitler and later went to school in three more countries, before entering college at age 16 in New York and later serving in the U.S. army before the end of World War II, I have had much to write about.

Travel. I've also had time to explore other cultures. Ann and I had mostly postponed overseas travel while I was busy with a full-time job, but two months after my retirement party, we spent a week in a Buddhist ashram in Bali, after snorkeling in Micronesia with Ann's youngest sister who was then living in Guam. Since my retirement, we've averaged two international trips a year including four bicycle tours in different European countries. We've revisited my birthplace of Berlin several times, admiring the rebuilding of this marvelous city, and also made several trips to Norway where we spent a sabbatical year in the 1970s.

Especially rewarding were two 3-week experiences as English-language teachers with a U.S. organization, Global Volunteers (www.globalvolunteers.com), which promotes

international understanding through service partnerships with host organizations in 19 other countries. Ten years ago we taught English for Chinese students in X'ian and three years later for Vietnamese young people in Vung Tau.

Since my army service in Japan in 1946-47 I had never returned there. Last November, however, Ann and I had the opportunity to spend three exciting weeks in that country. I witnessed the results of its transformation from an impoverished, starving land after World War II into a model advanced modern country. I also found that the Japanese social psychologists I met were knowledgeable about American relationship research.

Social activism. By far the largest part of my time has, of course, been spent locally. I've had time to assist innovative social-issue oriented organizations as either a volunteer or board member. I've chaired my town's civil rights commission, worked for a loan fund for low-income people, and served on the boards for a progressive organization which monitors the federal budget and military expenditures (www.nationalpriorities.org), for two local organizations working mainly overseas, and for a couple of Quaker groups. My most stimulating and demanding involvement has been facilitating weekend prison workshops for the Alternatives to Violence Project, initiated by Quakers over 25 years ago and now operating in many other lands. Each weekend in the prison has itself been a truly cross-cultural experience; most of these prison inmates have had totally different life experiences and outlooks from our own.

Despite all those activities, and despite much enjoyable reading and other entertainment, I do have many occasions for sadness and concern. Good friends decline and die. The news of the wider world is discouraging, and I worry about our children's and grandchildren's generations.

But can I say anything encouraging to relationship researchers? My biggest good fortune has been my long marriage to a loving and adventurous wife (see Levinger & Levinger, 2003). Ann and I now spend much more time

together and we appreciate it even more than before. We complement each other's strengths and weaknesses; where one of us has problems, the other often can take over. Some researchers in the 1970s hypothesized that marital satisfaction follows a "U-curve" from early to late in a relationship. They noted that satisfaction is highest during the honeymoon, declines soon after and during the child-rearing years, but then rises as spouses age. This hypothesis was criticized because it was based on purely cross-sectional data; many of the less-satisfied pairs would have separated along the way. Nevertheless a later longitudinal study, of Berkeley couples still together after 50-69 years, found that marital satisfaction had indeed tended to rise since the previous measurement (Weishaus & Field, 1988). Our own experience confirms this, even though we've always been happy together.

But what happens after either of us departs? I take some comfort from Victor Frankl's reflections on his experience in a Nazi concentration camp. Even on his worst days, his spirits were sustained by two kinds of feelings: by his repeated gratitude for nature's beauty, such as sunrises or sunsets, and by his continuing feelings of love for his absent wife. Frankl concludes that love is the highest goal to which man can aspire, and this idea inspires me too as I contemplate my own present and future situation.

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NET NEWS

by Ben Le
Haverford College

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, at the beginning of the year we circulated a call for proposals to a number of web design firms to find a designer to revamp the IARR website. The goals for this project are to (1) expand the audience for the site, (2) increase the functionality of the site for both IARR members and website administrators, (3) decrease our reliance on outside services for key organizational functions (e.g., membership), (4) improve the site's visual aesthetics and organization, and (5) stay within a reasonable budget.

After reviewing proposals from over a dozen designers, we selected a firm and they are in midst of working on the new site. I'll be working with a team of IARR members to provide feedback on the new site as it progresses, and if all goes according to plan, the new site should be launched by the end of the year.

If you have any comments/suggestions that you'd like heard during this process, please let me know as soon as possible. In the meantime, if you have any announcements you'd like posted on the website, edits to specific pages, or other suggestions or comments regarding the website, please direct them to me at (ble@haverford.edu).

NEW PROFESSIONALS COLUMN

Creating Civic Engagement Opportunities: Putting Relational Research to Work

by Andrea N. Lambert
New Professional Representative
Northern Kentucky University

As expectations for tenure-track faculty increase many universities are encouraging junior faculty to offer their expertise to the community at large. In fact, at my university, civic engagement is a requirement for tenure (along with the typical teaching, research, grant, and service expectations). In the following paragraphs, I will provide five steps for relational scholars wanting to create a strong civic engagement component for their tenure portfolio.

Step 1: Have your RPT (Renewal, Promotion, and Tenure) committee define 'civic engagement'

Civic engagement is a broad term defined differently by promotion and tenure committees. Some see civic engagement as creating service-learning courses for their students, while others see civic engagement as the faculty member creating their own engagement project and offering their expertise and time to the community at large. Here are some questions that should be considered and negotiated early on in your appointment: What are the expectations for engagement at your university? Do you need to offer a service-learning course? Are you expected to secure significant grants for an engagement project? Does the university offer additional funding or training for your project? Overall, be sure that your work and service is counted toward your tenure. The best way to find out is to talk to recently tenured

individuals about the types of service they have been engaged in.

Step 2: Incorporate service-learning into the classroom

One of the easiest ways to implement civic engagement is to include a service-learning project in your class. There are many ways to implement service-learning in the classroom. However, be aware that some define service-learning projects narrowly. According to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), to be defined as a service-learning course, projects “must meet minimum standards to be considered an effective service-learning project rather than simply a community service component attached to a class. In addition to curricular integration, the major components of service-learning include a response to real community needs over a sustained period of time, student decision-making and participation in the design of the project, and regular reflection and analysis.”

Step 3: Foster community connections

There are many non-profit groups clamoring for experts to talk to their members and/or constituents about relational issues. For example, I currently give seminars to union stewards about how to deal with a variety of interpersonal issues. In addition, I provide lectures for the American Cancer Society about the relational impacts of a cancer diagnosis and the subsequent treatment. These opportunities came about through casual conversations with colleagues around campus. Additionally, some universities have centers for civic engagement that catalog opportunities in the community. Make an effort to introduce yourself to center associates and you will likely end up with more opportunities than you know what to do with.

Step 4: Consider becoming a mediator

As relationships scholars we are prime candidates for offering our services as family mediators. I became a family mediator through my university’s Alternative Dispute Resolution Center during my first year on the tenure-track. I

mediate a variety of family and relational issues at a local county court including truancy, divorce, shared parenting, domestic disputes, and an assortment of other family issues (I recently even mediated a shared parenting agreement concerning a divorcing couple’s dog). Most of my work is pro-bono, but at times I also offer my services on a sliding scale according to income. My family mediation work is by far the major engagement component for my tenure file. Additionally, on a personal note, it is quite possibly one of my most rewarding experiences as a college professor and relationships scholar.

Step 5: Assessment and proof of engagement

If your civic engagement includes teaching a service-learning course, be sure to develop clear learning outcomes that can be assessed easily. If your civic engagement is your own project, be sure to ask for testimonials and proof of your engagement work. Most importantly, make others aware of the work you do. Many times I have heard colleagues in my department and on my RPT committee say “I had no idea you were doing that.” Be your own advocate. Schedule talks to let students and colleagues aware of the work you do.

Overall, requirements for tenure and our attitudes about our role in the greater community have changed. As noted by Sylvia Hurtado, the director of the Higher Education Research Institute, “Civic engagement and diversity are among the core values that many institutions articulate in their mission. It is important that faculty now view this as essential in their work because they are charged with preparing students to live in today’s diverse world. Students represent our best hope for social progress.” As New Professionals, I am sure that we will embrace this change with confidence, hope, and grace. I wish you the best of luck in your engagement projects.

In my next New Professionals Column I would like to spotlight your civic engagement achievements and opportunity ideas. If you would like to share your experience with the RRN readers please email lamberta3@nku.edu.

BOOK REVIEWS

CoupleCare: Couple Commitment and Relationship Enhancement

Edited by W. Kim Halford et al
 Australian Academic Press: [2007], 120
 pp. + DVD.

Reviewed by Andrew Christensen
 Professor of Psychology, Department of
 Psychology, UCLA

Kim Halford and his colleagues have been at the forefront of the movement to extend the reach of relationship education for couples beyond individual or group training (e.g., Halford & Casey, in press). The *CoupleCare* program developed by W. Kim Halford, Keithia Wilson, Elizabeth Moore, Carmel Dyer, and Charles Farrugia is a visible part of that effort. Subtitled “Couple Commitment and Relationship Enhancement for the 21st Century,” *CoupleCare* is a relationship enhancement program for couples in committed long-term relationships, especially those in early marriage or live-in relationships. It is designed so couples can administer it, largely, on their own at home with assistance from a relationship educator through regular telephone contact. The program consists of a DVD containing six units or modules, each about 20 minutes long, a 120 page guidebook or workbook for life partners, and a 42 page relationship educator’s manual.

The goals of *CoupleCare* are to help couples assess their relationship strengths and vulnerabilities, to define the kind of relationship they want, to develop important relationship skills, and to identify specific individual actions that each can take to improve their relationship. The six units that comprise *CoupleCare* are:

- 1) Self-Change, whose goals are to explore relationship expectations, develop a shared vision of the relationship, and

- promote self-change as a way of achieving that vision
- 2) Communication, whose goals are to identify strengths and weaknesses in the couple’s communication and improve communication by focusing on what each can do
- 3) Intimacy and Caring, whose goals are to develop social support within the couple, to strengthen ways of communicating caring, and to address the balance of individual and couple interests and activities
- 4) Managing Differences, whose goals are to assess how differences are dealt with in the couple, to improve those ways of managing conflict, and to improve recovery from conflict
- 5) Sexual Intimacy, whose goals are to debunk myths about sex, to assess and improve communication about sex, and to explore ways to keep sex satisfying and
- 6) Looking Ahead, whose goals are to explore possible life changes that may occur and how they may impact the relationship, develop ways to ensure the relationship continues as a priority, and to consider alternatives if the relationship is not working such as seeking additional professional help.

These DVD units provide a mix of didactic material (a relationship expert discussing relationship processes) and videotaped examples of couples interacting in order to illustrate communication processes. The participant guidebook includes summary material that reiterates the points in the DVD but is primarily a workbook with exercises so the couple can apply the ideas in the DVD to their particular relationship. The Relationship Educator’s Manual provides information about *CoupleCare* such as its evidence base and when it is appropriate for a couple. It also provides guidance in the delivery of *CoupleCare* with suggestions for each of the six modules as well as interview outlines for assessing the appropriateness of couples for *CoupleCare*. The *CoupleCare* program is thorough, going over major general issues of concern for couples,

such as communication, conflict, and sexuality. It does not target specific content issues of concern for young couples, such as dealing with in-laws or the transition to parenthood. There is, however, an additional supplemental program, *CoupleCare for Parents*, targeted to couples undergoing the transition to parenthood (Halford & Casey, in press). The *CoupleCare* program is based on established research on couples, such as evidence on the usefulness of communication skills training for couples. Consistent with Halford's 2001 book on brief couple therapy, there is an emphasis on self-regulation skills such as self-evaluation and self-change.

Overall, *CoupleCare* is a thoughtful, well-organized program. The DVD material is professionally presented. The videotaped interactions include nice touches such as some age and ethnic diversity in the illustrative couples as well as content diversity in their concerns. Both male and female experts offer advice and didactic material on the DVD. When my graduate students and I watched the videotape interactions on the DVD, we occasionally thought the scenarios were too sex stereotyped and that the proposed communication solutions were a little too easy. Perhaps a coping rather than a mastery model would have pleased our tastes more. However, all in all, it is a very impressive program.

CoupleCare is based on two previous approaches to relationship education that have obtained empirical support: *PREP (Premarital Relationship Enhancement Program)* by Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg (1994) which emphasizes couple communication, commitment, shared expectations, and shared positive time together; and, *Self-PREP* by Halford, Sanders, and Behrens (2001) that includes *PREP* material but adds a focus on self-regulation. Unlike these face-to-face approaches, *CoupleCare* is designed to be, largely, self-administered with the assistance of a relationship educator. The website for *CoupleCare* (www.couplecare.info) indicates that there are four clinical trials conducted on *CoupleCare*, three of which are published. One of these studies combined *CoupleCare* with counseling for problem drinkers; one was of a face-to-face version of *CoupleCare*. Only the third study I found was of *CoupleCare* delivered

as intended. Couples randomly assigned to *CoupleCare* showed greater improvement on several self-report measures relative to a control group but not on observed measures of communication (Halford et al., 2004). An important and growing, albeit limited, evidence base.

CoupleCare is only one of a large number of programs available to enhance marriages (e.g., see the "Directory of Programs" on the Smart Marriages website: www.smartmarriages.com). Many like *CoupleCare* are thoughtfully and creatively developed. What distinguishes *CoupleCare* is that it has, and is continuing to be, subjected to rigorous empirical validation. That raises its stature well above the multitude of others that rest only on the testimonials from a few satisfied customers.

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***Consequential Strangers: The Power
of People Who Don't Seem to
Matter. . . But Really Do***

**Edited by Melinda Blau and Karen
Fingerman W. W. Norton & Company;
2009, 304 pp.**

**Reviewed by Anita L. Vangelisti
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Communication, University of Texas at
Austin**

Most of us study close, personal relationships because we believe they matter. We believe that our ties to friends, family, and romantic partners influence our sense of well-being, our physical health, even our mental stability. While we acknowledge the importance of less close relationships – or weak ties – we focus the majority of our theorizing, research, and teaching on intimate relationships. *Consequential Strangers* offers us reason to contemplate the emphasis we place on intimacy as well as the various ways that our less intimate relationships shape our day-to-day lives.

In *Consequential Strangers*, Melinda Blau and Karen Fingerman skillfully weave together social scientific research and vivid testimonies to demonstrate the importance of non-intimate relationships. Consequential strangers are people who “occupy the broad region between complete strangers on the far left and intimates – our strongest connections – on the far right” (p. 6). The authors note that these individuals are people we know, but who are not part of our “inner circle.” Perhaps because our relationships with consequential strangers are less intimate than the relationships we typically have with those who are part of our inner circle, we often overlook them. Blau and Fingerman argue that in a world that is becoming increasingly diverse, consequential strangers make essential contributions to our personal and professional well-being.

In Chapter 1, Blau and Fingerman define consequential strangers and provide a compelling argument for researchers, practitioners, and laypeople to adopt a “new vocabulary” that includes non-intimate relationships. The authors describe various ways that consequential strangers can influence our careers, facilitate our projects, and help us meet our personal needs. Blau and Fingerman dismantle the case made by Robert Putnam that many of us are *Bowling Alone*. They show that, instead, we live, work, and play in a social context that is characterized by many diverse relational ties.

In Chapter 2, the authors take an “aerial view” of social relationships. They look at consequential strangers as a whole or, as termed by Antonucci, as a “convoy.” Our social networks – our convoys – change in size and composition over time and differ from person to person. In understanding our social networks, Blau and Fingerman suggest that we need to grapple with issues associated with the size, composition, and density of our convoys as well as the roles played by the people who make up our convoys.

After setting the ground work for looking at consequential strangers in the first two chapters, the authors use Chapters 3 and 4 to delve more deeply into some of the functions of non-intimate relationships. In Chapter 3, Blau and Fingerman argue that consequential strangers can expand the way we view ourselves and allow us access to experiences, information, and resources that we might not otherwise access. In Chapter 4, the authors use the vast literature on social support to illustrate the myriad of ways that weak ties strengthen our ability to manage our health and cope with our own and others’ illness. Many of the points raised in these two chapters have been raised by researchers who study personal relationships, but Blau and Fingerman offer a very different perspective on this research by placing non-intimate relationships at the fore.

Chapter 5 focuses on the influence of physical contexts or “being spaces” on the formation and maintenance of non-intimate relationships. In examining these spaces, Blau and Fingerman not

only describe concrete aspects of physical environments that affect relationships, they also point to the social interactions that take place within these environments and show how those interactions create space for relating. The social behavior of individuals and groups becomes particularly important when the authors note how contexts for relating are created virtually in online communities, dating sites, and support groups.

Although the emphasis of this volume is on the positive functions of consequential strangers, in Chapter 6, Blau and Fingerman acknowledge that there is a “downside” to non-intimate relationships. Whether relationships with consequential strangers are formed face-to-face or online, they can be plagued by gossip, power struggles, prejudice, and deceit. Indeed, some of the most rewarding qualities of non-intimate relationships (e.g., their ability to expose us to different information and experiences) can be threatening, uncomfortable, and even harmful.

Blau and Fingerman close the book with a forecast for the future of non-intimate relationships. The authors argue that weak ties will offer people important ways to stay connected in a fast-paced, “wired” society. Consequential strangers will give us resources we need as individuals to navigate the various demands of our personal and professional lives. They also will provide us with a sense of community or belongingness that our more intimate relationships cannot give us.

Consequential Strangers is written for well-educated laypeople. It would be a welcome addition to upper-level undergraduate courses on human relationships and would be an excellent resource for clinicians who are looking for ways to encourage their clients to expand their social networks and broaden their views of intimacy. Blau and Fingerman’s careful use of research also makes the book a “must” for teachers and researchers who are looking for innovative applications for extant concepts and theories.

When I first picked up *Consequential Strangers*, I thought I would get a lesson in the importance of weak ties to our physical, mental, and

emotional health. I got that, but I also got much more. *Consequential Strangers* explains what we know about non-intimate social ties, but it also demonstrates that those social ties can illuminate a broad range of theories and concepts from social psychology, communication, and sociology. It shows that researchers can gain new insights on old work by studying consequential strangers more closely. And it emphasizes the importance of attending to social and environmental changes – like the prevalent use of the internet – in studying social and personal relationships.

Blau and Fingerman note that they hope this volume will inspire readers’ “social imagination.” Thanks to the authors’ exquisite writing, careful research, and use of clear, vivid examples, the book does just that.

References

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- Kahn, R. L., & Antonucci, T. C. (1980). Convoys over the life course: Attachment roles and social support. In P. B. Baltes & O. G. Brim (Eds.) *Life-span development and behaviour*, (pp.253-286). New York: Academic Press.

JOURNALS UPDATE

Editor's Report on the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*

**by Paul A. Mongeau,
Arizona State University, USA**

This is my least favorite time of year in Arizona. The American college football season begins next weekend and the first day of fall is only a few weeks away, but summer won't release its fiery grip over the Arizona desert for another month or more. (As I type, it is 107 degrees [43C] outside.) Despite that fact, the ability to 'pen' my *fall* IARR newsletter copy gives me hope that, indeed, cooler weather will arrive...eventually.

As I'm sure you've heard by now, Mario Mikulincer has been named the next (and only fourth) JSPR editor. I am sure that he is busy putting together his editorial team, being trained on Manuscript Central, and all the other tasks that go along with becoming editor. Mario and I have worked together to develop the transition plan and will continue to do so over the next year-plus. The current editorial team will continue to process new submissions through the end of the year (122 days away...but who is counting). We will also continue to work with revisions of manuscripts submitted under our watch through 2010. Any manuscript (new or revisions) submitted after the end of 2010 will be handled by Mario's editorial team. Finally, I will continue to facilitate the production of issues through volume 27 (i.e., the 2010 production year).

The good news for this report is that the impact rating for JSPR continues to increase. The 2008 ratings exceeded 1.00 (coming in at 1.097) for the first time in recent memory (and, perhaps,

ever). We stand 14th in Communication journals and 27th in Social Psychology journals. (If we were to appear in the Family Studies list, we would be 19th.) What is more, we continue to excel in the Eigenfactor Score (6th in Communication and 25th in Social Psychology), though I have to admit that I don't understand what it means. Our relative standing within disciplines has remained relatively flat while the impact ratings continue to climb because many journals are chasing after the same brass ring.

As my days of being the 'receiving editor' dwindle, I want to make sure that I begin to thank all those people who have helped make the journal the high-quality enterprise that it is. There are so many associate editors, advisory board members, ad-hoc reviewers, authors, production editors, book review editors, editorial assistants (past and present) that all have to work together to make this journal an interesting, enlightening, and indispensable reference, that I cannot name them all. There are so many people that I've asked for advice and help and given unreasonable deadlines for uninteresting tasks that I cannot express how much I appreciate the amount of collective effort that has been exerted on the journal's behalf.

Thank you all.

Final Report from the Masthead Editor of *Personal Relationships*

**by Rebecca G. Adams,
University of North Carolina
at Greensboro, USA**

My editorial team's term is grinding to a halt. *Personal Relationships* (PR) 16:3 (September) is in production and 16.4 is almost ready to submit. In addition to the 10 articles that have been accepted or will soon be accepted to appear in my editorial team's last issue, six manuscripts remain active in our queue. Lorne Campbell,

my successor, has graciously agreed to let any authors who were invited to revise and resubmit their manuscripts to my team but failed to do so before we had filled our last issue to submit them to his team as new submissions. I will email the relevant authors when the time comes. When Sue Sprecher's term was nearly over, she needed one article from my team in order to fill the pages she had remaining in her last volume. In contrast, my team will be requesting that the IARR Board purchase some additional pages to accommodate the manuscripts we have accepted. The need for an increasing number of pages reflects an increase in the submission rate, not an increase in the acceptance rate. I will not report detailed submission statistics here because Sarah Hosman, Brandi McCullough, and I intend to summarize them in the Preface for our final issue (16.4). Note, however, that Sue Sprecher received 100-120 submissions per year; in contrast, I received an average of 161 submissions per year. Although I have not yet computed the final acceptance rate for my term, during this same period acceptance rates decreased from the 20-25% that Sue reported to fewer than 20%.

Blackwell-Wiley recently notified me that they are now providing two new services to *PR*. First, articles based on research funded by the National Institute of Health (NIH) published in *PR* will now be submitted to PubMed by Wiley-Blackwell. When the *PR* Editor submits articles to Wiley-Blackwell for publication, production assistants will scan the acknowledgements for mention of NIH funding. Any NIH-funded article will then be uploaded to an FTP site for PubMed to collect. See the following link for more details regarding our publisher's policy regarding PubMed articles: <http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/Section/id-321171.html>

Second, as part of Wiley-Blackwell's ongoing commitment to providing guidance and support to societies and journal editors in handling actual or suspected infringements of publication ethics, the company has recently enrolled *PR* as a member of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE): <http://publicationethics.org/>. COPE was founded in the United Kingdom (U.K.) in

1997 by a group of medical journal editors concerned about publication misconduct (e.g., plagiarism, attempted or actual redundant publication, attempts to pass off fraudulent data, unethical research, breaches of confidentiality). Originally a loose gathering of individuals, COPE is now a limited company and registered non-profit in the U.K. Membership in COPE sends a signal to authors and reviewers that a journal upholds the highest ethical standards and that an editor will take appropriate action in cases of possible misconduct.

I would like to end my final report by thanking those who, during my editorial term, have helped make *PR* the top quality journal it is. In addition to providing important special services like those mentioned in the two preceding paragraphs, Wiley-Blackwell's staff have provided my team with outstanding routine support. Although I will not mention all staff by name, I must mention both of our production managers (Sarah MacKay and Erin Bogle) and our proofreader (Beth Baugh) for their professionalism, thoroughness, and patience. It has also been a delight to work with IARR Presidents (Sandra Petronio, Beverley Fehr, Phil Shaver, Frank Fincham, and Jackie Fitzpatrick), Board members, Treasurers (Chris Agnew and Michael Cunningham), and Publications Chairs (Julie Fitness, Dan Perlman, and Susan Sprecher). The journal would not have been possible without the Editorial Board, the reviewers, and especially the authors. I would also like to give special thanks for their exceptional work and perseverance to my associate editors (Susan Boon, Susan Branje, Rodney M.Cate, Catrin Finkenauer, Mario Mikulincer, and Denise Solomon) and to my current and former Editorial Assistants, Sarah Hosman and Brandi McCullough. I have come to realize that it takes not one, but two villages to produce and publish a journal, a professional organization and a publisher. Fortunately IARR and Wiley-Blackwell are both special organizations whose members and staff take not only their work, but also their personal relationships with their co-workers, seriously.

Editor's Report on *Personal Relationships*

**by Lorne Campbell
University of Texas at Austin, USA**

*I*n this report I want to discuss the special issue of PR that is being guest edited by Dr. Timothy Loving, and provide some basic statistics for the journal.

Over a month ago Dr. Loving sent out a call for manuscripts for a special issue of PR that will focus on the mind-body connection in personal relationships. The goal of this special issue is to compile a set of articles that represent cutting-edge approaches to understanding how the mind and body are connected within the context of personal relationships. This special issue is tentatively slated for the March 2011 issue of the journal, and we believe that this stellar collection of manuscripts will serve as a useful reference for researchers for years to come. The call for submissions can be found on the IARRs website (www.iarr.org/recentannouncements.html).

Please contact Dr. Loving if you have any questions about this special issue (email: tjloving@mail.utexas.edu). We look forward to receiving your submissions.

At the time of writing (September 9, 2009), we have received a total of 235 original submissions to PR since our editorial team began processing manuscripts on June 1, 2008. Our editorial team continues to do a wonderful job processing manuscripts. The average number of days from submission to first decision for submitted manuscripts is 73 days (between 2 and 3 months). The average reviewer turnaround time is 32 days for original manuscripts, and 34 days for revised manuscripts—thank you reviewers! Lastly, the average number of days from submission to our team making a final decision on manuscripts is 84 days. To date, our editorial team has made decisions on 156 manuscripts, with 28 (or 17.9%) being accepted and 128 (or 82.1%) not being accepted. Of the manuscripts not accepted for publication, 26 (or 20%) were

triated, or not sent out for review (the triage rate for all manuscripts in which a decision has been made is 16.6%). Of course these values represent averages, and we will continue to attempt to minimize the time to final decision for each manuscript submitted to the journal.

In terms of diversity of authorship, 61% of new submission have come from scholars based in the United States (down slightly from the 65% I previously reported), whereas 39% have been submitted by scholars based outside the United States. Manuscripts have been submitted from scholars based in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, Croatia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Israel, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, as well as the United Kingdom. Given that IARR is an international society, it is encouraging to see a large proportion of manuscript submissions from scholars based outside of the United States, representing a wide range of countries and cultures.

A goal of our editorial team is to provide an efficient review process for authors, as well as publish high quality research. The number, and diversity, of submissions makes the latter goal accomplishable, and we look forward to publishing our first issue of PR in March 2010. Achieving the former goal is always a work in progress. It is the continued hard work of the Associate Editors, and the relatively short turnaround time of the reviewers, that has kept the efficiency of the review process at a very high level to date. Thank you to everyone that has assisted with the submission/review process!

Tentative Contents of Upcoming Journals

***Journal of Social and Personal
Relationships***
Volume 26, Number 7 [November 2009]

HARRY WEGER, JR. AND MELISSA C. EMMETT
Romantic Intent, Relationship Uncertainty, and Relationship Maintenance in Young Adults' Cross-Sex Friendships

SHIRI LAVY, MARIO MIKULINCER, PHILLIP R. SHAVER, AND OMRI GILLATH
Intrusiveness in Romantic Relationships: A Cross-Cultural Perspective on Imbalances between Proximity and Autonomy

SOWAN WONG AND ROBIN GOODWIN
Experiencing Marital Satisfaction across Three Cultures: A Qualitative Study

THOMAS V. POLLET AND DANIEL NETTLE
Birth Order and Adult Family Relationships: Firstborns Have Better Sibling Relationships Than Laterborns

ROBERT J. TAORMINA
Social and Personality Correlates of Gambling Attitudes and Behavior Among Chinese Residents of Macau

TAMMY L. ZACCHILLI, CLYDE HENDRICK AND SUSAN S. HENDRICK
The Romantic Partner Conflict Scale: A New Scale to Measure Relationship Conflict

PATRICIA H. HAWLEY, HAL S. SHOREY, AND PAUL M. ALDERMAN,
Attachment Correlates of Resource Control Strategies: Possible Origins of Social Dominance and Interpersonal Power Differentials

***Personal Relationships,
Volume 16, Number 4 [December 2009]***

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Editing *Personal Relationships*

ARTICLES

ESTHER S. KLUWER, MAUREEN TUMEWU, AND KEES VAN DEN BOS
Men's and Women's Reactions to Fair and Unfair Treatment in Relationship Conflict

UZMA S. REHMAN, AMY HOLTZWORTH-MUNROE, KATHERINE HERRON, AND KAHNI CLEMENTS
"My Way or No Way": Anarchic Power, Relationship Satisfaction, and Male Violence

BROOKE C. FEENEY, JUDE CASSIDY, EDWARD P. LEMAY, JR., AND FATIMA RAMOS-MARCUSE
Affiliation with New Peer Acquaintances During Two Initial Social Support Interactions

BART SOENENS, MAARTEN VANSTEENKISTE, AND CHRISTOPHER P. NIEMIEC
Should Parental Prohibition of Adolescents' Peer Relationships Be Prohibited?

JENNIFER S. PRIEM, DENISE HAUNANI SOLOMON, AND KELI RYAN STEUBER
Accuracy and Bias in Perceptions of Emotionally Supportive Communication in Marriage

GEROLD MIKULA, DOMINIK SCHOEBI, SONJA JAGODITSCH, AND SILVIA MACHER
Roots and Correlates of Perceived Injustice in the Division of Family Work

ROBERT W. FUHRMAN, DOROTHY FLANNAGAN, AND MICHAEL MATAMOROS
Behavior Expectations in Cross-Sex Friendships, Same-Sex Friendships, and Romantic Relationships

JASON D. HANS AND MARILYN COLEMAN
The Experiences of Remarried Stepfathers Who Pay Child Support

BRIEF REPORTS

VICTORIA C. PLAUT, GLENN ADAMS,
AND STEPHANIE L. ANDERSON

Does Attractiveness Buy Happiness? "It
Depends on Where You're From"

AMY JANAN JOHNSON, MICHEL M.
HAIGH, ELIZABETH A. CRAIG, AND
JENNIFER A. H. BECKER

Relational Closeness: Comparing Undergraduate
College Students' Geographically Close and
Long-distance Friendships

JURGITA BABARSKIENE AND ROGER G.
TWEED

Marital Adjustment in Post-Soviet Eastern
Europe: A Focus on Lithuania

KOJI UENO, MATTHEW D. GAYMAN, ERIC
R. WRIGHT, AND STEVEN D. QUANTZ

Friends' Sexual Orientation, Relational Quality,
and Mental Health Among GLB Youth

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

News from the IARR Publication Committee

The IARR publication committee has several announcements and acknowledgements. First, we are pleased to announce the selection of Marian Morry as the next editor of RRN. Marian is a professor of psychology at the University of Manitoba, Canada. Marian and her team of associate editors will be responsible for the issues of RRN for the years 2010 - 2012. We are confident that the RRN will be in good hands. We also want to thank Lesley Verhofstadt and her associate editors for their work over the past three years in creating interesting issues of RRN, including

disseminating news and announcements to the membership.

To repeat an announcement that was in the spring issue of RRN, our committee is also happy to report that Mario Mikulincer will be the next editor of *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* and will begin processing new submissions in January of 2010. IARR is indebted to Paul Mongeau for his work as Editor of JSPR for the last 5 years.

Acknowledgement and gratitude also go to Rebecca Adams, who just recently completed her last issue of PR. Lorne Campbell and his editorial team have been busy processing manuscripts being submitted to PR, and will begin filling the issues, as of the first issue in 2010.

Recently, our committee also approved a new contract with Cambridge publishers to continue the IARR-sponsored *Advances in Personal Relationships*. Anita Vangelisti is spear-heading this effort, and announcements will soon be made to encourage IARR members to consider submitting their proposals for edited and authored books to this series.

From Susan Sprecher (Chair) and Members Walid Afifi, Leah Bryant, Rodrigo Carcedo, Eli Finkel, Pearl Dykstra, Robert Milardo, and Daniel Perlman

IARR 2010 Conference

We want to announce the 2010 Conference of the International Association for Relationship Research to be held at the Campus of the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya, Israel in July 22-25, 2010. Mario Mikulincer, Professor of Psychology and Dean of the New School of Psychology, IDC Herzliya will act as the head of the local organization committee. Ruth Sharabany, Associate Professor at the Department of Psychology, University of Haifa,

will act as the head of the conference scientific committee.

Herzliya is one of Israel's most special cities. It is located 10 miles north of Tel-Aviv. Established in 1924 and named for the founder of modern political Zionism, Theodore Herzl, the city is a microcosm of 21st century Israel. It is renowned for its affluent homes, exclusive beach resort, flourishing high-tech industrial and commercial zones, shopping malls, leisure and entertainment center. Whatever the interests of participants, they should be able to have a very enjoyable and exciting time while here. There are many places to visit in Israel beyond Herzliya. People might want to visit Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv, the Dead Sea, Eilat and the desert, The Galilee Sea, Nazareth, and other cities and places.

We look forward to welcoming you to the IDC campus, Herzliya in July 2010 for a highly stimulating intellectual exchange and what promises to be a rich, provocative, and enjoyable conference.

Mario Mikulincer
Gurit Birnbaum
Yair Amichai Hamburger

Local Organization Committee

Miniconference

*D*ear colleagues,

The full program for the 2009 IARR mini conference, which we are hosting November 5th-7th here at the University of Kansas, is now available on-line.

For more details and registration please visit: http://www.continuinged.ku.edu/programs/new_directions/

For an online copy of the program visit: <http://www.psych.ku.edu/gillath/iarr2009program.pdf>

We're looking forward to seeing you here in Lawrence this coming November.

MEMBER NEWS & UPDATES

TRIBUTE TO LARRY KURDEK by Mark Fine University of Missouri, Columbia

Lawrence Kurdek passed away on June 11, 2009 after a too long battle with cancer. As most of you know, Larry had a distinguished scholarly career and was a prolific researcher in a number of areas pertaining to interpersonal relationships. He was trained as a developmental psychologist at the University of Illinois at Chicago and was a faculty member in the psychology department at Wright State University in Dayton, OH for over 30 years.

Larry's interests bridged developmental, clinical, social, and family psychology. His earliest interest was in social and cognitive perspective taking among school-age children, which he soon related to how children reacted to parental divorce, particularly how their cognitions regarding their circumstances influenced their adjustment. He later became perhaps the preeminent scholar in the area of predictors of satisfaction, functioning, and stability among gay, lesbian, and heterosexual relationships. One of his major findings was that these predictors of stability among these different types of relationships were more similar than different.

Not only was Larry a prolific scholar, but he was one of exquisite integrity. Larry believed in letting empirical data, rather than ideology, answer important questions regarding relationships and how they develop over time. Time after time, in his own scholarship and his occasional invited commentaries on others' work, he consistently advocated for conducting high quality, theoretically driven research to

address such controversies as the long term effects of divorce on children and whether gay and lesbian relationships had qualitatively different dynamics and consequences than heterosexual ones. He was a true empiricist in the very best sense of the term. Countless times, I was told by highly regarded scholars with a range of views on family life how much they respected Larry's empirical work and trusted its nonbiased nature.

Larry was perhaps the most humane person I have ever known. He was a loyal and caring friend who would do anything to help a loved one—I will never forget that he came out to my/our house in Dayton to support us when we had to put our Old English sheepdog to sleep. There was a softness and humility in Larry that is not always present among preeminent scholars. He would rather talk and interact with a small number of very good friends than be on the podium giving an invited lecture or looking around a crowded conference room to see if he could interact with supposedly more prestigious colleagues. His love of and for dogs is well known, but his love of and for his human friends was also overwhelming.

Perhaps without always being aware of it, Larry was a mentor to many of us, including me, in many different ways. My very best scholarly work was done in collaboration with Larry, and I frequently called upon him for advice on ethical issues pertaining to publishing in and editing scholarly journals. Outside of work, his love of and devotion to his partner of over 30 years, Gene Siesky; his sisters and brother; and his nephew and Gene's son were models to me (and many others) of how to nurture and sustain healthy relationships.

I miss him every day, but, more importantly, the scholarly community has lost one of its most important contributors and voices and the world has lost one of its most humane members. It is up to all of us to try to continue the standards established by Larry Kurdek.

NEW PUBLICATION

Oxford University Press has just published a new book by **WILLIAM ICKES**, Distinguished Professor at the University of Texas--Arlington. Titled *Strangers in a Strange Lab: How Personality Shapes Our Initial Interactions with Others*, the book draws on 30 years of research findings to show how our initial interactions with others are shaped by our gender, race/ethnicity, birth order, physical attractiveness, Big Five personality traits, androgyny, shyness, and self-monitoring. It also explores the role of personality similarity/dissimilarity in people's relationships. Designed to be used as a short, supplementary text in undergraduate courses in personality and social psychology, its content and writing style have been praised by David Funder ("delightful"), Sam Gosling ("authoritative"), Elaine Hatfield ("the gold standard"), and David Kenny ("well-written and informative"). Sam Gosling has characterized it as "an essential read for anyone interested in the science of getting along."

CHRIS AGNEW was recently promoted to Full Professor and was appointed Department Head in the Department of Psychological Sciences at Purdue University (West Lafayette, Indiana, USA).

SUSAN HENDRICK was recently appointed Chair of the Department of Psychology at Texas Tech University.

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