

RELATIONSHIP RESEARCH NEWS

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

November 2018 Report by Anita Barbee University of Louisville

I am thrilled to begin my term as IARR President! I was introduced to a parent organization (INPR) of IARR in 1988 when a colleague submitted my dissertation for consideration for the INPR Dissertation Award. Luckily I was honored for my Dissertation work at the INPR Conference in 1989 in Iowa City, Iowa. From there I began to regularly attend both ISSPR and INPR conferences, served as Secretary/Treasurer of ISSPR, co-hosted the first joint conference of the two organizations in 1999 before the merger was finalized and IARR was born in 2002, served as Associate Editor of *Personal Relationships*, co-hosted an IARR mini-conference in 2013, and have been serving as IARR President-Elect the past few years. So from the beginning of my career until now, 30 years later, IARR has been an integral part of my professional and personal life- some of my best friends and valued colleagues are also a part of IARR! I urge each of you as members of IARR to think about your professional journey and the role IARR and our parent organizations have had on your work in the field of personal relationships. We welcome your input, participation, and service to our organization. If you would like to be more involved, please reach out to me at anita.barbee@louisville.edu, and I will find a way to connect you.

Highlights of 2016-2018 Accomplishments

Publications

- ✓ Renewed the contract for *JSPR* with Sage. The contract runs from 2017-2021. Between 2017 and 2019 the number of issues of *JSPR* has moved from 8 to 10 and then 10 to 12 issues a year.
- ✓ Renewed the contract for *PR* with Wiley for five years.
- ✓ Created and posted a privacy policy on the IARR website at the urging of Wiley Press.
- ✓ Renewed the contract for the *Advances Book Series* with Cambridge Press. The series will publish a maximum of 9 books over a 3-year period. IARR and the author/editors split royalties.
- ✓ Implemented TOP-Level 1 guidelines at the two journals.
- ✓ Laura VanderDrift was named Editor of *Relationship Research News* (RRN) for 2018-2020.

Conferences

- ✓ Held a successful Mini-Conference in 2017 in Syracuse with 156 in attendance.
- ✓ Held a successful main Conference in 2018 in Fort Collins with over 500 in attendance.
- ✓ Approved two mini-conferences for 2019 in Ottawa, Canada and Brighton, England.
- ✓ Approved the 2020 main conference for London, England.
- ✓ Gave scholarships of \$12,305 to 107 students at \$115 each to pay for half the registration fee for the Fort Collins Conference.

Membership

- ✓ Membership ranged from 527 (2014) to 638 (2018) in the past 5 years. We fluctuate by about 100 members in non-main conference and main conference years.
- ✓ Updated the IARR membership brochure and translated it into other languages such as

French, Spanish, and Japanese. The brochure is on the IARR website.

- ✓ Created, distributed and analyzed results from a membership survey. Highlights of results found a desire for
 - Increased diversity
 - Offering of small research grants to students, new scholars and international scholars
 - Engage more non-North Americans in IARR (by holding more conferences outside North America, lower conference fees, enhance collaborations, increase international leadership opportunities, provide English writing services, host regional webinars, networking sessions and small meetings)
 - Improve communication with more notices about conferences, include sharable links for RRN articles, increase Twitter and FB posts, improve the website
 - Stream keynote addresses and other presentations at conferences
 - Increase underwriting of conferences to reduce registration fees
 - Make it easier for young people to break into leadership roles.

Mentoring

- ✓ Mentoring Committee helped plan the New Scholars Pre-Conference at the Mini-Conference held at Syracuse University in 2017.
- ✓ Hosted a Mentoring lunch and New Scholars Poster Session, which coincided with the Mini-Conference Welcome Reception at the 2017 Mini-Conference.
- ✓ Hosted a Symposium for Graduate Students and Early Career Professionals (ECPs) at the Main IARR Conference (Fort Collins, 2018)

Teaching

- ✓ Improved the usability of the teaching portion of the IARR website by making sure the links are in working order (e.g., media section), re-organizing (e.g., textbooks section), streamlining (e.g., teaching grants and journals sections), and highlighting the most up-to-date information (e.g., course outlines section). For instance, assignments are now

organized by type of assignment (e.g., weekly, short, & long papers, class exercises) and contain a brief description to ease navigation. Additionally, course outlines are organized by area (e.g., Communication Studies, Social Psychology), level (undergrad vs grad), and year (with the most recent at the top).

- ✓ Updated teaching resources (i.e., added new assignments, course outlines, & media clips).
- ✓ Increased the visibility of the pedagogical practices and tools in the RRN newsletter.

Media Relations

- ✓ Developed newsletter articles on the use of social media
- ✓ Connected with a wide range of IARR members on Twitter and Facebook to provide updates on IARR matters.
- ✓ Student volunteers reviewed other research society websites to see how they profile their members, and recommended changes to the website layout and ways to promote membership and interest in IARR general.
- ✓ Highlighted members on the website.
- ✓ Sponsored a symposium at the 2018 Conference.

Ad Hoc Committees

- ✓ The Ad Hoc Fundraising Task Force and Ad Hoc CEU Task Forces came up with recommendations for the Board to raise more funds and offer CEUs at future conferences. The Ad Hoc Website Improvement Task Force was formed and continues to work on transferring the current website to the Wild Apricot platform and improve the look, content and capabilities of the IARR Website.
- ✓ The work of the current Website Ad Hoc Committee builds on other improvements made to the IARR website the past few years such as updating the membership page so that member website links are current, adding a member snapshot and including a direct link to JSPR that gives IARR members access to the journal without much fuss.

Finances

- ✓ We are operating in the black with a robust endowment in the event that a future main conference operates in the red.

Strategic Planning

IARR is on the move as we begin to plan for upcoming anniversaries of our organization! In 2022 IARR will celebrate two anniversaries. 2022 will be the 40th Anniversary of the first Relationship Conference in Madison, Wisconsin in 1982. 2022 will also be the 20th Anniversary of the birth of IARR after the merger of two parent organizations the International Society for the Study of Personal Relationships (ISSPR) and the International Network of Personal Relationships (INPR) in 2002.

Towards this end, the IARR Board of Directors is working on a strategic plan to guide us over the next four years. We gleaned a great deal of information from the membership in the survey distributed last spring. This summer the board and committee chairs participated in several webinar meetings to build on the issues raised by the larger IARR membership. All of this information has been synthesized to create a preliminary strategic plan. Once the board assesses the document and streamlines the plan and the rest of the leadership team weighs in, we will share the plan with everyone.

As a preview I can tell you that there is consensus that we want to

- ❖ Stabilize and grow IARR membership
- ❖ Increase the diversity of IARR membership
- ❖ Increase member engagement and satisfaction through enhanced communication, collaboration, and impact
- ❖ Increase assets of the organization
- ❖ Strengthen our journals

We may add to these goals and are certainly thinking about many strategies for achieving such lofty outcomes.

Conferences

Teams at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada and the University of Sussex in England are busy preparing for the two IARR Mini-Conferences in the summer of 2019. We are very excited about the topics of *Positive Action in Relationships* and *Applied Relationship Science* and a chance to reach out to more relationship researchers in Canada and Europe to join IARR and our collegial conference communities. The Call for Papers will be found on the IARR website.

In addition, at the Ottawa conference the IARR New Scholar Workshop will again take place. We look forward to seeing graduate students, post-docs, Assistant Professors and others new to their positions in industry, government and nonprofits at the IARR New Scholar Workshop.

As you plan your conferences for the next few years, note that the IARR main conference will be held in London, England in July of 2020.

If any of you are interested in hosting a 2021 IARR Mini-Conference or the 2022 Main Conference, please reach out to Ashley Duggan at ashley.duggan@bc.edu for more information about the application process for consideration.

Gratitude

I want to extend my heartfelt thank you to a number of IARR leaders:

Sue Sprecher for her outstanding leadership as IARR President the past two years!

Jeff Simpson for his outstanding leadership as IARR Past-President and Chair of the Election Committee the past two years which yielded a great set of new Board members!

Jennifer Harmon, Lisa Neff and their **teams of committee members, reviewers, and student assistants** who made the 2018 IARR Conference in Ft. Collins one to remember! We had over 500 scholars in attendance. We also made a profit which will help graduate students attend the 2020 IARR Conference in London!

Susan Boon, Chloe Huelsnitz, Brian Ogolsky, Rich Slatcher, and **Jen Theiss** who recently ran for office and will serve on the 2018-2020 IARR Board.

Eli Finkel, Omri Gillath, Ashley Randall, Denise Solomon, and **Jeffrey Stokes** who stood for election to serve on the IARR Board.

Leah Bryant, Sylvia Niehuis, Dan Perlman, and **Sue Sprecher** who continue to serve on the IARR Board.

Deborah Kashy, Geoff MacDonald, Chris Agnew, Chip Knee, John Caughlin and Terri Orbuch who continue in their roles as Editors of our journals and book series.

Karen Blair, Asuman Buyukcan-Tetik, Michael Cunningham, Ashley Duggan, Jessi Eckstein, Liz Keneski, Julie Verette Lindenbaum, Terri Orbuch, Ashley Randall, Dylan Selterman, and Laura VanderDrift who agreed to leadership positions as committee chairs, ad hoc committee chairs, and Editor of RRN!

Michelle Luke, Kathy Carnelley, Kate Canavagh, Cheryl Harasymchuk, Liz Keneski, Stanley Gaines, Angela Rowe, Madoka Kumashiro and Francesca Righetti who are leading 2019 and 2020 conference teams in Brighton, Ottawa and London.

It is the wonderful members that make IARR such a special professional organization.

Conclusion

I look forward to seeing a more diverse, engaged membership from across the globe in the next few years as we all contribute strong scholarship to our journals and conferences. This is an important time for members of IARR to zero in on our core values of elucidating not only the mechanisms of how relationships begin, are maintained or are harmed or broken, but also on applying and translating our research findings to improve the health and well-being of individuals, colleagues, friends, romantic partners and families. We have a duty to educate the public about the important role healthy relationships play in day to day life. One poignant outcome of the Kavanaugh hearings is the importance of educating the public on the vast research that has and is continuing to be conducted on the role of race, class and sex on the development and interpretation of sexual scripts, communication styles, and intimate partner violence. It reiterates the central importance of interpersonal relationships to our private and public lives.

**Submission deadline for the
Next issue of RRN**

April 1, 2019

**Submit all materials
to Laura VanderDrift
lvanderd.syr.edu**

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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 Laura VanderDrift via lvanderd@syr.edu. The deadlines for final copy are October 1 and April 1. Inquiries regarding Feature Articles are welcome at any time.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

by **Brian G. Ogolsky**
**University of Illinois at Urbana-
Champaign**

How quickly things come and go. After three years at the helm of RRN, my term has come to a close. I owe a deep debt of gratitude to my editorial team: Laura VanderDrift, Casey Totenhagen, and Sylvia Niehuis. Without them, this job would have been impossible. I am also thrilled that one of the Associate Editors, Laura, has agreed to take over the newsletter. Her innovative mind and careful eye ensures that the legacy of RRN is in great hands. Look for her first issue in May of 2019.

Inside this issue you will find all of our recurring columns chocked full of great information. Check out our junior and senior spotlight columns for some of the cutting-edge work coming out of the communication discipline. David Kenny then entertains us with some good old fashioned statistical humor. Chloe Huelsnitz kicks off her term as the new professional representative with an interview with some gainfully employed young professionals. That is followed up with an overview of the teaching committee by Julie Verrete Lindenbaum. Our feature column in this issue comes from the media committee reminding us how to keep current as we do our work. Be sure not to miss our book review series and a host of important announcements about upcoming conferences, hosting your own conference, and how to get involved in your great organization.

It has been a pleasure to serve this great organization over the past three years. Even though I am wrapping up this chapter, I will still be hitting your email inboxes on a regular basis as I move into my new role as the secretary of my favorite organization. Thank you to all who make IARR the best! Happy Reading!

JUNIOR SPOTLIGHT



Leah LeFebvre
University of Alabama

Dr. Leah LeFebvre received her PhD from the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Texas at Austin under the direction of Dr. René Dailey. After graduating, she accepted an Assistant Professor position at the University of Wyoming. Recently, she transitioned to the University of Alabama (UA) in the Department of Communication Studies. Dr. LeFebvre supervises masters and doctoral students and is building a burgeoning program emphasizing interpersonal communication and emergent media in the College of Communication and Information Sciences.

Broadly, Dr. LeFebvre explores romantic relationships and their intersection with the emergence of technologies, on mediated communication, and through media. Specifically, Dr. LeFebvre investigates how the proliferation of online, recordable relational communication technologies (e.g., Facebook, Tinder, mobile media, voicemails, etc.) influence communicative processes in past, current, and future relationships.

The emergence of technological integration posits inquiries about prior communication and relational processes under face-to-face assumptions. Driven by Duck's (1995) paradoxical claim that the existence of a relationship is at least partly (and importantly) a result of a pair agreeing a relationship exists, and needs only one to dissolve, Dr. LeFebvre and her colleagues began considering the dissolution process and its archival practices that drive existential relationship memories without either partner. Heavily influenced by the Relationship Dissolution Model (RDM; Rollie & Duck, 2011), she initially explored how people navigate social networking sites when adjusting to their breakups and determined behaviors that align with particular dissolution processes (LeFebvre, Blackburn, & Brody, 2015). She found that individuals

who reported no breakup-related Facebook activities in response to their breakup had better post-breakup adjustment. These findings lead to the development and validation of a new scale of social networking behavior for the relationship lifespan (Brody, LeFebvre, & Blackburn, 2016).

Pivoting to relationship initiation, Dr. LeFebvre (LeFebvre, 2017b) examined the mobile dating application, Tinder, as an emergent dating medium. Specifically, she analyzed how Tinder changes interpersonal relationship initiation functions, and modifications cause adaptations from traditional face-to-face relationship development models. In other words, she noted that Tinder blurs the line between interpersonal and mass communication with static optimal-mediated user representations. She indicated users must employ more self-reflection, awareness, and expertise. Dr. LeFebvre further highlighted how initiation, selection processes, and strategic pre-interaction behaviors evolve through asynchronous self-branding. Dr. LeFebvre advised that relational scholars must reconsider how the medium modifies and mediates interpersonal relationships. She shared more information on this research via a *JSPR Podcast* (LeFebvre, 2017c).

Dr. LeFebvre and her colleagues (Blackburn, LeFebvre, & Brody, 2018) extended their investigation to relational curation, or the management of relationship relics. Virtual relics embody meaning of a previous relationship, and they operate as both private and public media offering users a method to (re)visit memories. She examined the catalogued archival management styles – *deleters*, *selective deleters*, and *keepers* – and how people engage in memory management processes with the goal of both remembering and forgetting. The relationship curation process extends the RDM as a distinct process, whereby people compile and delete individual, partner, and/or relationship relics. Additionally, Dr. LeFebvre and colleagues are now enlarging their scope and postulating how management styles that allow for rereading, replaying, viewing, and sharing relics affect emotional states, rumination, or nostalgia. Dr. LeFebvre and colleagues are also investigating memory because it is assisted by technology. Collective (e.g., shared, common, pooled-community perspectives) and personal (e.g., user-generated content) memories provide public and private relationship experiences. She is considering how

virtual relationship memories change the dynamics of relational processes, in development, initiation, maintenance, and dissolution.

Drawing on mediated context influence on communication and relationships, Dr. LeFebvre (LeFebvre & Haggadone, in press) has explored asynchronous exchanges of voicemails. She aimed to bridge implications for mass and interpersonal communication surrounding information retention, temporality, and interpersonal memorization. She demonstrated that unlike online memorialization depicting communal spaces for grief and commemoration rituals, voicemail contains a privatized interpersonal communication that affirms the sender's prior presence, and increasing absence situates the loss and memory.

Building on questions of uncertainty and loss, Dr. LeFebvre (LeFebvre, 2017a) has examined ghosting, which now enables physical and psychological absence with technological presence. She defined ghosting as: unilaterally ceasing communication (temporarily or permanently) in an effort to withdraw access to individual(s), prompting relationship dissolution (suddenly or gradually) commonly enacted via one or multiple technological medium(s). Dr. LeFebvre argued ghosting questions are relevant and distinct from previous withdrawal dissolution strategies for initiators and non-initiators. Recently, she presented her findings demonstrating that ghosting occurs simultaneously across media, the medium impacts non-initiators' emotional suffering, and leaner media causes greater distress (LeFebvre, Allen, Parrish, Wilms, & Parrish, 2018). She found that the absence of communication from ghosting operates in a channel and as a message for non-initiators.

Dr. LeFebvre is always interested in accepting graduate students, especially in the new UA doctoral concentration in Interpersonal Communication and Master's emphasis in Interpersonal and Organizational Communication. To learn more, visit the collegiate program at <https://cis.ua.edu/cis-doctoral-program/> and department at <https://comstudies.ua.edu>. For more information about Dr. LeFebvre, please contact her directly at lefebvre@ua.edu or visit <http://lefebvre.people.ua.edu>.

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SENIOR SPOTLIGHT



Denise Solomon

Pennsylvania State University

Denise Solomon's interest in communication in personal relationships was sparked when she was an undergraduate at Lewis & Clark College and had the privilege of learning from Leslie Baxter (now Professor Emeritus of the University of Iowa). As Dr. Baxter grappled with the initial articulation of *relational dialectics theory*, she encouraged her students to consider the dynamics, tensions, and states of flux that are woven into the fabric of close relationships. These conversations had an indelible impact on Dr. Solomon's research. [She also discloses that she is one of the undergraduate research assistants in the Baxter (1990) study, who were "hand-picked by the principal investigator based on the perception that they were skilled in interactions with others" (p. 75).] In graduate school at Northwestern University, Dr. Solomon engaged questions about relationship change and stability with guidance from Michael Roloff and Charles Berger. Professor Roloff encouraged her to consider conflicts as catalysts for relationship change and together they studied how relationship qualities, such as power and intimacy, shape communicative responses to relationship problems. Professor Berger underscored the importance of cognitive processes and the often implicit, subjective biases that are an inherent part of interpersonal communication.

These formative experiences grew into a career-long program of research on how relationship qualities, particularly those that are salient during periods of change or transition, shape people's subjective experiences of particular – and often challenging – communication episodes. In the early 2000s, alongside then graduate students Leanne Knobloch (Professor of Communication, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) and Jennifer Theiss (Professor of Communication, Rutgers University), Dr. Solomon advanced the *relational turbulence model* to describe

how transitions in relationships elevate relational uncertainty and complicate interdependence in ways that polarize cognitions, emotions, and communication in romantic relationships (Solomon & Knobloch, 2001; Solomon & Knobloch, 2004; Solomon & Theiss, 2008).

For the next decade, Dr. Solomon continued to expand research on the relational turbulence model, driven in no small measure by graduate students who sought to study a variety of communication and relationship topics, including hurtful messages (e.g., McLaren & Solomon, 2008), supportive communication (e.g., Priem & Solomon, 2011), the experiences of breast cancer survivors (e.g., Weber & Solomon, 2008), and couples coping with infertility (e.g., Steuber & Solomon, 2008). This body of work culminated in the articulation of *relational turbulence theory*, which explains both communication in specific high-stakes episodes and the emergence of relational turbulence as a persistent characteristic of some romantic relationships (Solomon, Knobloch, Theiss, & McLaren, 2016).

Relational turbulence theory manifests echoes of Dr. Solomon's mentors, with its focus on relationships in flux and its attention to implicit cognitive and behavioral biases that can undermine communication in personal relationships. As she explains, "We still don't have a clear understanding of how relationship qualities shape people's experiences of particular interactions and how those interactions coalesce into overarching perceptions of a relationship. These processes are at the heart of interpersonal communication." Testing new hypotheses deduced from relational turbulence theory is a top priority for Dr. Solomon's future research. Meanwhile, she continues to work with recent and current graduate students who expand the scope of her research to consider experiences as varied as parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (e.g., Brisini & Solomon, 2018) and people coping with bereavement (e.g., Tian & Solomon, in press).

Connecting the dynamics of interaction to more global outcomes is also the focal point of Dr. Solomon's recent research funded by the National Science Foundation. In collaboration with Graham Bodie (Professor of Integrated Marketing Communication, University of Mississippi) and Susanne Jones (Associate Professor of

Communication Studies, University of Minnesota), Dr. Solomon is examining how people's experiences of supportive messages affect emotion regulation on a turn-by-turn basis within interaction, as well as how these conversational dynamics predict short term and durable conversational outcomes. According to Dr. Solomon, "After we understand more about how to analyze conversational patterns and predict emotion regulation outcomes, we can start to study how relational turbulence might undermine the communication dynamics through which partners convey support, mitigate hurt, or manage conflict." What advice does Dr. Solomon have for new scholars? "My career is the product of many fulfilling personal and professional relationships. None of it would have been possible without the generosity of my mentors and the enthusiasm and aptitude of my students. Sometimes, people think that they can be most productive if they close themselves off and write. But for me, the best developments in my research have come from listening to people, from looking outside my immediate field of vision, and from chance conversations at an IARR gathering. Those are the experiences that encourage theoretical and methodological advances, which is what social science is all about."

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Tian, X., & Solomon, D. H. (in press). Grief and post-traumatic growth following miscarriage: The role of meaning reconstruction and partner supportive communication. *Death Studies*

Weber, K. M., & Solomon, D. H. (2008). Locating relationship and communication issues among stressors associated with breast cancer. *Health Communication*, 23, 548-559.

HUMOR COLUMN

The One-Letter Word that Generates Many Four-Letter Words: R

By David A. Kenny

One of the things retirement afforded me was enough free time to learn (or something approximating “learn”) the computing language R. I knew that R was free and open source, which means that anyone can add to the set of programs. Many people who I greatly

respect, like Niall Bolger and Elizabeth Page-Gould, were telling me that R was the language of the future. I decided to learn R without taking a course. I would just write a program in R and learn as I went along. After 40 years of lecturing to others, I am totally incapable of listening to someone talk for more than a few minutes (except, of course, my wife and children, or so I think). It was perhaps a foolish course of action, but it was the one that I embarked upon. In this column, I will describe how it is that this one-letter computing language leads to many four-letter expletives by users like myself.

You might wonder why it is called R. As best as I can figure out, R was created by two Kiwi researchers, both of whose first names started with R. Also, because R evolved from the computer language S, the letter R was chosen for the name. The very name, R, is an inside joke, not a particularly funny one, and understandable only to geeks.

Like most novice R users, there were some odd features that I needed to get used to. One is that capitalization matters. The two statements $x = 3$ and $X = 5$ define two different variables. Thus, you might have the statement $X - x$, and you would find it equals 2. This is a major problem as variable names often need capital letters to help you understand them, e.g. Emotional Stability at Time 2 becomes EmotStabT2. You have to make sure you capitalize just the right letters. Another odd feature is that R has two different equal signs: a single equal sign or “=” and the double equal sign or “==,” and if you use the wrong one, your program will not work. To further confuse you, instead of just saying $x = 5$, R geeks want you to say $x <- 5$. What is the difference between the two? Here is what R help page says: “The operators $<-$ and $=$ assign into the environment in which they are evaluated. The operator $<-$ can be used anywhere, whereas the operator $=$ is only allowed at the top level (e.g., in the complete expression typed at the command prompt) or as one of the subexpressions in a braced list of expressions.” Do you understand? I have no idea. I know the R geeks prefer “ $<-$ ” and so that is why I always use “ $=$.”

Because R is open source, you depend on others to write programs in R and distribute them. Luckily, there are now about 15,000 programs that you can download. These programs, which are called *packages* because they usually contain multiple

programs, are in a depository called CRAN. This has nothing to do with berries, but is the *Comprehensive R Archive Network*. To have your program hosted on CRAN, you have to go through a very rigorous process. However, that almost always results in the documentation provided on CRAN being unintelligible to those of us who are not R geeks. Also, very often the documentation has no examples. Can you go to CRAN and download the programs that you need? No, that would be too easy. You first need to select a “CRAN mirror.” I have no idea what this means, but what you have to do is pick a site, somewhere on this planet (e.g., China, Lanzhou) to gain access to CRAN. You can then download the package you want and place it in your library. Then, whenever you need the package for your R program you have to get it from your library. A word of warning: A package can inexplicably disappear from CRAN. So, if you have depended on that package, you will suddenly find that your program will no longer work. This has happened to me several times.

Because R is open source, there is relatively little documentation. Perhaps it reflects my ignorance, but CRAN is rarely of much help. Many of us novice R users have had to rely on something called *Stack Exchange*. The basic idea of Stack Exchange is laudatory: Someone posts a question, and then some knowledgeable expert posts an answer. Stack Exchange grew out of Stack Overflow where literally any question can be answered. In fact, one recent question was “What damage type vulnerability makes sense for disease-based Zombies rather than being undead?” I was disappointed to find that Stack Philosophy had recently closed the question “What is the meaning of life?” because I was hoping someone would post the answer. Stack Exchange is limited to questions about programming. Generally, answers on Stack Exchange start out by pointing out how stupid the asker is. Common things the answer does is to point out how the question was answered years ago, how the question is improperly stated, how the question should be rephrased, and how poorly the code is written. A questioner has to risk being insulted and criticized. Note that I have never asked a question. That said, after you wade through the condescension and the arrogance, you often find the answer to the question that was asked.

Besides looking at Stack Exchange, I would sometimes seek out a local R geek. One warning in

talking to an R geek: Do not say you have used some other language, even if that language was simpler and quicker than R. These geeks are totally monogamous when it comes to computing and give you a very dirty look if you mention some other program. They might not help you if they think you are being unfaithful. One reason I decided to learn R is that I heard that it has marvelous graphics. You do see some spectacularly beautiful R graphics on the web. That is great in principle, but in practice learning packages like ggplot, the major R graphics package, is beyond my level of comprehension. I think I could learn to give my car a valve job before I could even begin to understand how to use ggplot. I am exaggerating a bit here, maybe.

Another source of frustration is that you are totally at the mercy of someone else to write the R package that you need. If no one has done it, then you cannot do it in R, unless you want to write the code yourself, like that is going to happen. Also, it is perplexing that there can be several different competing packages that do the same thing. No doubt one is better than the others, but initially you are bewildered as to which is the best. Furthermore, the writer of the code does it the way he or she wants to do it. For instance, the writers of the code for multilevel models do not believe in significance testing of variances, and so those tests are not done. Unfortunately, editors and reviewers do want those test results. Similarly, some programs routinely have error messages that cannot be fixed. For example, I often use a function called *tp* to compute power. It frequently generates error warnings in the calculations, which appear (I hope!) to be just a bug in the program. However, the author of the program is under no compulsion, nor apparently inclination, to make any changes.

Something that illustrates the cultish aspect of R is the pipe operator or “%>%”. I am not going to explain this operator, mainly because I do not understand it. But I am going to explain why it is called the “pipe.” You may know of the famous painting by Belgian artist Magritte called “La Trahison des Images” or in English, “The Treachery of Images.” It is a painting of a pipe, but written on the picture in text is (translated into English) “This is not a pipe.” The writer of R package *magrittr* (note the name!) chose to name this function the “pipe.” The whole thing is an inside joke, which is about as humorous as this column.

That said, overall my experience with R has been positive and beneficial. It allows me to retrieve from any output, sometimes with great difficulty, the esoteric statistics that I yearn to apply. Additionally, the price is right – free, and I can share my code with undergrads and researchers in less developed countries and not have to worry about imposing a financial burden on them. Also, shiny, an RStudio product, has allowed me to make my programs available to anyone who can access the web. I have not yet drunk the kool-aid, and have yet to smoke the “pipe,” but I am cautiously optimistic about the future of R.

NEW PROFESSIONAL'S COLUMN

How Five Gainfully Employed Research Psychologists Got to Where They Are

by **Chloe Huelsnitz**
University of Minnesota

For those of us in the Western hemisphere, the leaves are starting to shift into bursting arrays of Instagram-worthy colors, festively-flavored coffees abound at the local Starbucks, and students that started out the semester bright-eyed and bushy-tailed are devoting more and more time to staring at their phones. For many of us, fall also comes along with the stress of applying for jobs. Therefore, in my first column as the New Professional Representative, I interviewed five different IARR members who have recently obtained jobs to ask them for their advice and strategies regarding the job application process. The interviewees span four different types of jobs (tenure-track teaching-focused, tenure-track research-focused, industry, and postdoctoral fellowships/scholarships). As someone who will be applying for jobs in 2019, I felt incredibly motivated and slightly less anxious after hearing their responses, and I hope you feel the same!

The Interviewees:

Will Johnson (WJ) has his PhD in Social Psychology from the University of Minnesota (2018). He is currently an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Widener University.

Brett Peters (BP) has his PhD in Social Psychology from the University of Rochester. He is currently an Assistant Professor in Health Psychology at Ohio University.

Claire Yee (CY) has her PhD in Social Psychology from Arizona State University. She is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow at Northwestern University (funded through post-doctoral advisor).

Christine Lehane (CL) has her PhD in Psychology from University of Copenhagen, Denmark. She is currently a user-experience Researcher on the Community Integrity Team at Facebook as well as an Associate Researcher in the Department of Public Health at the University of Copenhagen.

Rhonda Balzarini (RB) has her PhD from Western University and a Masters from SUNY Stony Brook. She is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow at York University (funded through a Mitacs Accelerate Grant and industry partnership with Standard Innovations)

CH: When did you start the job search?

WJ & BP: September before my final year of graduate school.

CY: I started coming up with a list of people I would like to work with two years before I planned to graduate. With the help of my advisor, I came up with a list of people who were doing innovative research using methodology I hadn't used, or were working with populations or data I hadn't had access to. My advisor helped put me in touch with several of them she knew well and we got to chat over Skype so I could learn more about the role of postdocs in each person's lab and where they were planning on directing their research in the next few years to see whether I might be a good fit. While this sounds really early, it actually gave both sides a chance to get to know the other more authentically without the time pressure of needing to fill a specific position immediately, and gave me the luxury of getting to keep my eye out for funding opportunities as they

came along. It definitely made the start of my final year much more relaxed as I felt I already had established a relationship with the people I wanted to work with and could easily see the exciting new opportunities each lab had to offer, rather than trying to fit myself into a job posting.

CL: I started looking for jobs throughout my final year of my PhD. I was looking at funding within academia and preparing grant applications. I was also looking at job requirements in industry and how my skills might transfer if I decided to leave academia.

RB: I made a list of people I was interested in working with for a postdoctoral fellowship, and began preparing my application materials for both postdocs, potential grants, and for academic positions approximately 1 ½ years before I graduated. Applications for grants and postdoc/academic positions are often due a year to 8 months before the position would begin, so I recommend starting to search and prepare for opportunities early.

CH: Did you use any strategies to find jobs and to decide which jobs to apply for?

WJ: The biggest thing I did was closely monitor the Psych Job Wiki (<http://psychjobsearch.wikidot.com>) and sign up for the Division 2 (Teaching of Psychology) listserv, where job searches at smaller teaching-focused schools are listed. The location of where I could work was also contingent on my wife's work (she was applying for post-docs around the same time), so I also just Wikipedia-ed "list of colleges and universities in City X" and sent emails with my CV to every department chair in cities where she was applying.

BP: The psych job wiki is a wonderful resource. I applied for most positions that were available with the exception of a few geographical areas or positions where I would not receive funding to do my research.

CL: For academia, I started to build a personal relationship with my funding organization - sharing my research output with them, inviting them to my presentations, and asking for feedback on my ideas for proposals in the coming year. This helped me to understand what they want from research and to be aware of upcoming grant calls and requirements. I applied for grants from private organizations that I

had developed a relationship with who support work in my area and are not as competitive as national grants. Private funds are very often a good avenue and less well known.

Regarding industry work, I applied for jobs within industry that I knew I would not accept if offered in order to become more comfortable in an interview situation. Thereafter, I made applications to companies I was seriously considering. I restricted the companies I was most interested in to those in which I had a contact who could refer me. Internal referrals in companies are typically more visible and you can get a quicker response.

RB: My general strategy was to review job postings at least once a week, from sites like [SPSPs career center](#) and the Facebook Relationship Research Initiative Group (RRIG). As there were a lot of opportunities to apply for, I chose to only apply for the jobs I was most interested in actually accepting, and that were in locations I would be willing to move. I also initiated contact with my top choice for a postdoc supervisor and began discussing grant opportunities we could pursue for research of shared interest. I had made a list of potential grants and we applied to two grants and acquired funding before I had completed my PhD.

CH: What did you do to prepare for job interviews (phone and campus interviews)?

WJ: Mostly, I tried to think of concrete examples and evidence of my teaching philosophy and goals. I think it helped to have an anecdote that accompanied each idea (active learning, meaningful assessment, engaging students in research, etc.). For my campus interview, I tried not to monkey with my sample lecture too much. I was tempted to try and "spice it up" with more activities or examples but it felt better to just go with the lecture I'd already given so many times in regular classes.

BP: I made sure I knew who was interviewing me so that I could read up on their research. I also assembled a list of questions that I could ask, some that were relevant to any position I was applying for, and others that were specific to the job opening, department, or university. That way, I could rely on the question bank when I was inevitably asked if I had any questions. I also asked my advisors and senior

colleagues about questions that I might be asked and had prepped answers for those.

CY: In September of my final year, one of my advisor's collaborators sent her a posting for a postdoc position in the collaborator's lab. Even though the position entailed working with a clinical population I had no experience with, the methodology and research framework were all things I was familiar with. My advisor convinced me to setup a Skype meeting to get more information about the position with the two PI's on the project. When preparing, I thought I was just in an information gathering meeting rather than an interview, and I think that going into the meeting with that framework worked really well. Instead of being anxious about an interview, I was genuinely excited and curious to learn more about the position and each of the labs I would be working with. It also meant I had prepared a ton of questions and wasn't afraid to be more genuine about my interests, and strengths and weaknesses because it didn't feel like I was expected to show off or have to put on a certain level of formality, it just got to be all about the excitement for research!

CL: I watched videos online and practiced my general HR type questions with friends. The real practice came in applying for jobs that I knew I would not be interested in but were in a similar work area. Interviewing for these positions got me through initial interview anxiety and prepared me well for the questions I would later be asked by the bigger companies I was applying to.

RB: Prior to submitting my apps or landing an interview, I had a mock job talk and lecture prepared. I also kept my CV up to date, and arranged a document outlining information about the faculty members in the department, the department's overall philosophy, and any other information relevant to the criteria for each position I applied for. I used this to prepare for interviews and to help personalize my cover letters. Beyond that, I prepared a list of questions I had for either students, faculty members, or staff, and read recent work from the faculty members in the department in which I had an interview.

CH: What factors do you think were most important in helping you land your current job?

WJ: I think that (a) my values matched institutional goals and (b) I got a little lucky. Any job requires good fortune to get, but you get more swings at the home run with every application.

BP: Having publications that showed I was independent of my advisors, having external funding in graduate school, being able to convey a program of future research that I would bring to my new position. Also, this seems obvious, but being enthusiastic about the position! For example, if they provide an opportunity to go on a real estate tour, take it! Show that you are "thinking ahead" about living in the area.

CY: I think it was important that while I didn't have a lot of experience with the clinical population I get to work with now, it was something I was clearly eager to learn more about. I asked a lot of questions about what I could do to prepare and what papers I could read to prepare as much as possible in advance, and I think that willingness to learn went a long way. I was also pretty frank about the areas that I wanted to get more experience with, and I think that made the interview more productive for everyone because they knew exactly what my own goals were and they had an accurate assessment of what I was bringing to the table. It can be easy to conceptualize some of the things we don't have experience in as limitations. However, the goal of a post doc position can be to learn things you didn't get to do, or haven't perfected yet, and I found reframing it for yourself and your interviewers as goals that you're hoping to get out of the new position was more productive for everyone involved.

CL:

Academic position:

1. Building a personal relationship with the reps of private foundations and the head of my research group
2. Maintaining a public presence in my work – I ran a Twitter page specific to the topic of my research as a resource for patients, support organizations, and funding agencies

Industry position:

1. Being referred by an existing employee
2. Being able to demonstrate how academic skills transfer to industry work. This evolved over the course of earlier interviews and discussions with friends.

RB: One of the challenges with finding a postdoc position is acquiring adequate funding to do so. In some cases you may have a professor in mind that would be your ideal to work with, but they may not have funding for a postdoc, so the most important thing that I think helped me land my current (dream) position was seeking out funding for our research early on. A year and a half prior to beginning at York, I had begun collaborating with Dr. Muise on grant applications and some research related to the work we proposed in our grants. Starting early allowed me to acquire enough data to support the research we proposed in our grants, and to obtain funding prior to my completion of my PhD, thus securing me a position to move on to immediately after finishing my PhD.

CH: Knowing what you know now, would you do anything differently when it comes to the job application process?

WJ: I certainly would have started earlier and cast a wider net. I was very intimidated by the application process, and dragged my feet to avoid it. This meant that I only really applied for jobs that interviewed in the late spring. I also didn't apply to some jobs because they seemed like intimidating institutions. I ended up getting an offer at a place that I never expected and I wish I had taken a few more crazy shots at places I thought I had no chance.

BP: My first thought would be to apply to fewer positions. I believe I applied to over 60. Yet, I also have the benefit of hindsight, knowing that I was lucky enough to get a position. That sentiment also ignores the anxiety and uncertainty I had at the time about getting a job or post doc position. So, maybe some more carefully worded advice would be to think critically about how much money you need (via start-up funds) to conduct your research (assuming research is a part of your potential position). The higher the number (i.e., > 50-100k), the more I would apply only to R1/R2s and ignore R3 positions.

CL: Yes, I would have spent more time earlier in my PhD to decide whether I wanted to move into industry or stay in academia. I should have taken time to reach out to people who had moved to industry, as pressure to stay in academia from colleagues can bias your thinking about what is right for you after your PhD. I was indecisive until the last moment and disappointed

some of my colleagues and networks that had invested in my academic development and career.

Also, decide what you *don't* want and don't spend time making grant applications for projects that you can't see yourself committing to. I spent months writing grant proposals because of pressure to extend my postdoc and the proposals I sent in were not projects I was excited enough about to stick with. Because I wasn't clear about what I didn't want to do, I got great offers from researchers who are brilliant in the field and was told by others how lucky I was. The thing is, I didn't actually want to stick with the same work I had been doing for the past years and when I turned down the offers, I confused and disappointed people.

RB: This advice may be stage dependent, but I was completing my PhD while beginning the application process, and I had made the decision to submit an integrated doctoral thesis that consisted of six peer-reviewed articles. Keeping up with the work required to submit and revise all of these papers related to my dissertation package, while also completing the applications for jobs, postdocs, and grants, was hectic. As such, I would recommend trying to get PhD requirements completed (or almost completed) prior to starting your final year of your PhD.

CH: Anything else you would like to add?

BP: The job market process is brutal, and the feedback you receive will largely be indirect and negative (e.g., finding out they sent out invitations for in-person interviews after obsessively checking the psych wiki board 5 times a day). Keep your chin up! Even making short lists is a good sign, because it means you are rising above the pack for some faculty. At the end of the day, most decisions come down to "fit," which ultimately means the decision is a subjective one. Put together the best application materials that you can muster and then hope for the best.

CY: I think it is never too early to embrace deciding to do a post doc after graduate school. Sometimes people frame post docs as a "waiting to get things published," period, but I think post doc positions are really about new research opportunities. They are a great way to learn a new method, work with people who approach your area in a new way, or try out an area you've always been curious about. It can be easy

in research to focus only on the methods you already know, or relying on what you feel comfortable with. Post doc positions can offer a way to engage with your current research in a completely novel and creative way. If you love doing research, I would definitely advise thinking about planning early on for a post doc position and embracing the opportunities it offers!

CL: Be visible but not in an overly self-promoting way. Work your network. Prepare for your desired job by getting through the interview process at places you would not consider working at – this boosts knowledge and confidence going into the interviews that really matter.

TEACHING COLUMN

**by Julie Verette Lindbaum
The Sage Colleges**

How many of us delight in the study of close relationships! Recall your reaction when you *first* became aware that the entire field of close relationships was available *to you* for study. Whether this realization emerged as an early undergraduate student, as a graduate scholar, or later along your career path, I expect that a certain sense of excitement accompanied this discovery. This enthusiasm drives us to *teach* a relationships class as well, motivating us to cultivate the intrigue in our students that we first experienced when exposed to the fascinating intricacies that make up our science.

The Teaching Committee is dedicated to serving instructors who teach courses centered on relationships across disciplines, levels, and specific topics. The Teaching Resource section on our IARR website functions as our primary means of sharing supporting materials with teachers of relationship science. Sample syllabi, favorite assignments, and

instructional media support new and seasoned instructors.

Primary Teaching Committee goals for this term include updating, refining, and expanding the Teaching Resource content and topics on our website. Other preliminary goals include adding *Activities* and *Case Studies* as separate sections to support relationship topics, and developing a network for sharing slides and other teaching suggestions. Whereas many teaching resources may be applicable to general relationships courses, other resources will target classes focusing on specific types of relationships. More to come as we brainstorm ways to support our IARR teaching community.

The range of research interest among committee members will strengthen our capacity to identify teaching resources that can reach undergraduate and graduate students across disciplines and topics. I am delighted to introduce our committee members for the 2018-2019 term: Sylvia Bartolic (Sociology, University of British Columbia), Alexandra Black (Psychology, University of Rochester), Michael Coolson (Business, Shippensburg University), Marie-Joelle Estrada (Psychology, University of Rochester), Wind Goodfriend (Psychology, Buena Vista University), Cheryl Harasymchuck (Psychology, Carleton University, past Chair), Gary Lewendowski (Psychology, Monmouth University, continuing member), Kevin McIntyre (Psychology, Trinity University, continuing member), Moran Mizrahi (Psychology, Ariel University Center of Samaria), Lucia O'Sullivan (Psychology, University of New Brunswick), Andrea Swenson (Human Development and Family Studies, University of Wisconsin-Stout), Dana Weiser (Human Development and Family Studies, Texas Tech University), and Julie Verette Lindenbaum (Psychology, The Sage Colleges, Chair). If you have suggestions for how the Teaching Committee can support your teaching, please feel free to contact Julie at Lindej2@sage.edu. We would love to hear from you!

**FEATURE
ARTICLE**

Strategies of Three Social Media-Savvy Relationship Researchers

**by Lucia O'Sullivan
University of New Brunswick**

Question One: How do you use social media to recruit participants for your research?

Sarah Vannier on where to post studies: The lab where I am completing my postdoc has a Facebook and Twitter page so all of our studies are shared there. I also reach out to websites that are willing to share links to our studies on their site (e.g., Science of Relationships, Rainbow Health Network, Sex and Psychology, socialpsychology.org). Often these pages have social media accounts as well and share the links to our studies with their followers.

Karen Blair on online advertising strategies: For each new study that we launch, we develop an online advertising strategy to recruit participants. We keep a spreadsheet of where we have posted the study and what the response was. It makes sense to keep track of where you advertise and the specific parameters you use in all of your targeted ads so that these can later be reported when writing up your work. We often make use of separate links to the survey in order to monitor where people found the study so that we can quantify our success in various locations on the Internet. Most online survey programs will offer this feature, either by recording the URL where the participant came from or by recording hidden variables that you have inserted into the URLs that you post.

Justin Lehmillier on hosting a research webpage: I host a page on my website (Sex & Psychology) entitled "Sex Studies." I post calls for

participation for my own studies on this page, but I also post calls for others' studies as well. Every time a new study is posted, I put out a few tweets linking to this page, but I often promote it through other social media channels as well. I've found it to be very effective and have recruited several large samples through it. In fact, since launching this page, it has been visited more than 100,000 times!

Karen Blair on making the most of social media: In terms of posting, we look for relevant Facebook groups, we tweet about our study on a regular basis, we make Instagram posts, and we also post in relevant Reddit threads. We make use of infographic sites like www.canva.com and <http://www.slide.ly> for generating some of the content that we share. Most recently we have begun creating short 'teaser' videos to advertise our studies.

Karen Blair on paid advertising: With regard to paid advertising, the greatest benefit is that most of the social media sites allow you to narrow in on a specific target audience. For example, you can pick geographic location, relationship status, gender, relationship stage, and various proxies for sexual identity (that are imperfect, but useful). On Twitter, you can target your ads at people who follow various accounts, so if you wanted to do a study of the relationship views of people who follow Donald J. Trump vs. Ellen Degeneres, you could specifically target your Twitter ads at the followers of those two individuals.

Question Two: How do you use social media to share research with colleagues or students?

Justin Lehmillier on having multiple social media profiles: I put out social media posts about new research on sex and relationships each and every day (and if I'm on vacation or it's a weekend, I schedule my posts in advance so that they're always going). The "channels" I use each day are Facebook, Twitter, and Reddit; however, I also post on Pinterest, Tumblr, and LinkedIn occasionally. My posts will either direct readers

to recent blog posts I've written about a new study, or a news article I find that I think does a good job of summarizing an interesting study. I try to make my posts engaging, so I do more than just post the headline--I usually try to pull out a key quote or write my own brief summary.

Karen Blair on tweeting and using hashtags: I frequently tweet or re-tweet articles that I find interesting as a way of sharing them with colleagues. In terms of sharing with students, I have a hashtag for each of my courses (e.g., #XPsy240) and I use these to indicate which courses various tweets or Facebook posts are targeting. If students follow the hashtag for the course, or if they even just search for it, they can see all of the different articles and social media posts that I have tagged as relevant to the course going back multiple years.

Sarah Vannier on Twitter: Although I do use social media to share my own work, I spend much more time sharing and re-tweeting links to other people's research. Twitter is a great place to follow other researchers and stay on top of their most recent work. I also follow the accounts for several journals.

Question Three: How do you use social media to translate your research for a wider audience beyond academics?

Sarah Vannier on blogging: We write up a blog post describing the research in an easy to read and accessible format each time our lab publishes an article. This summary gets posted on the lab website and then shared on Twitter and Facebook. It is also really handy to have these posts ready to share when we present at conferences for people who want to know more about our research.

Justin Lehmler on blogging and writing for the media: Whenever I publish a new study, I either blog about it on my own website or, for even more exposure, I might write about it for a major media outlet if my editor is receptive to the idea

(such as Psychology Today, Playboy, or VICE). Once published, I use social media to promote whichever article I've written. And if I'm writing for a big media outlet, they will usually share it on their social media accounts as well and tag me on the post(s).

Karen Blair on tweeting vs. blogging: I try to make my research accessible to the broader public by distilling the main findings into digestible 'tweets' or, when more space is needed, blog posts, which I then share through social media outlets.

Justin Lehmler on open-access publications: If the research I've published happens to be in an open-access journal, I will tweet direct links to it as well so that my colleagues (and any interested readers) can access it.

Karen Blair on video abstracts: I've also begun making video abstracts for each of my articles that I can then post on youtube and share through other social media accounts.

Question Four: In your experience, have you ever developed a research idea or found a new area of research through social media?

Karen Blair on generating new ideas and collaborations: I often pull research ideas from observing the world around me. Now that social media is such a large part of our day-to-day lives, it is difficult not to generate research questions or ideas! Beyond this, there have been a few times where conversation threads on Twitter or Facebook have resulted in new study ideas or collaborations.

Justin Lehmler on coming up with new ideas and learning about other research areas: This happens almost daily! In fact, most of the research I read anymore is what I encounter on social media. I follow several colleagues in different disciplines, which helps expose me to a far more diverse set of studies than I would otherwise encounter on my own. I'm constantly

getting new research ideas through social media.

Question Five: Last thoughts on how social media helps you to connect with others and advance your career.

Sarah Vannier on building connections with colleagues through social media: Twitter has been a great way to develop and strengthen connections with other researchers. Interacting with someone on Twitter, by liking, commenting, or sharing their tweets makes it so much easier to approach them at a conference and strike up an in-person conversation.

Justin Lehmillier on interacting with the media: I have connected with multiple journalists over Twitter. Because of my posts, they frequently reach out to me for comment for articles they're writing. I've appeared in a lot of articles this way.

Justin Lehmillier on keeping up with the scientific literature: Social media also really helps me as a textbook author. It allows me to keep up on the literature in a way that would be very difficult to replicate on my own. My friends and colleagues are, in a way, curating and summarizing the literature for me on a daily basis--and every time I see something relevant to my textbooks, I copy and paste the information from the post into a spreadsheet, which I then come back to when it's time to do revisions. This is invaluable because it means I don't need to start from scratch every time I want to revise one of my books.

About the Researchers:

Karen L. Blair, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia. Twitter for Research: @KLBResearch Facebook for research: www.facebook.com/KLBresearch Youtube Channel: <http://youtube.com/klbresearch> Website: www.KLBResearch.com

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Sarah Vannier, PhD, is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia Twitter: @sarahvannier

JSPR can be followed at @JoSoPerRel and IARR can be followed at @IARRofficial.

BOOK REVIEWS

Review of “Sexual Essays: Gender, Desire, and Nakedness”

by Dana Weiser
Texas Tech University

James Giles's *Sexual Essays: Gender, Desire, and Nakedness* offers a thought-provoking journey into sexuality studies. With his training in philosophy, Giles offers a unique humanistic framework for readers more commonly immersed in a social science perspective. The book is comprised of eight essays. Essays one through six offer an analysis of gender and biological sex as well as sexual desire. A strand throughout the essays is a critique of both biological essentialism and social constructionism paradigms. Essay seven shares a case study of an adult man who identifies as a baby and receives tremendous erotic pleasure from fantasizing about and enacting this infant role in dyadic interactions. Giles names this experience “age dysphoria.” Essay eight explores how hairlessness in humans evolved and how sexual interactions may have played a role in such an adaptation. Perhaps there is a common thread to all eight essays in the mind of the author, but I personally found the last two essays to be more of an addendum.

The essay I found most informative and engaging was the essay titled, “No Such Thing as Excessive Levels of Sexual Behaviour.” In this essay, Giles queries the assumptions of human sexuality and problematizes many of the moralistic assumptions of the hypersexuality construct and sex/porn addiction. He smoothly integrates his philosophical reasoning with the excellent neuroscience research by Nicole Prause and colleagues (Steele, Staley, Fong, & Prause, 2014). Although he does not mention the position statement by the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors, and Therapists (AASECT, 2016), his mode of inquiry leads him to the same overall conclusion. Namely, that there is not “sufficient empirical evidence to support the classification of sex addiction or porn addiction as a mental health disorder, and 2) does not find the sexual addiction training and treatment methods and educational pedagogies to be adequately informed by accurate human sexuality knowledge” (AASECT, 2016). This essay highlights how a multidisciplinary perspective can illuminate the intricacies of sexuality.

The other essays of the book I found to have less merit as many of the arguments were grounded in antiquated views of gender and sexuality. While I am certain Giles meant to write an inclusive book, and his numerous caveats back this supposition, much of the writing read as tone-deaf and revealed a weak grasp of the gender and sexuality literature. Given the central thesis of the book dwells on gender and sexualities, I found myself oscillating between frustration and curiosity throughout my reading of the book. From the opening essay, I was troubled by Giles’ position of equating both gender and sex with one’s genitalia. While Giles does acknowledge the existence of intersex and trans individuals, he does not dwell on the complexities of both sex and gender, and instead adopts a reductive definition.

Moreover, much of the literature cited is dated and not reflective of contemporary understandings of gender and sexuality. It is particularly glaring that among approximately 200 citations in the book, only about 70 citations were from the years 2000 to present. For example, one would expect in a discussion of sexual fluidity some mention of Lisa Diamond’s large body of work (see Diamond, 2008) rather than merely relying on Kinsey’s conceptualization. I also was puzzled by his argument in essay seven linking an absentee father with same-gender sexual attractions, a

Freudian proposition long dispelled by social scientists (see Bell, Weinberg, & Hammersmith, 1981). Giles’ dissection of biological essentialism and social constructionism was a stimulating line of thought throughout the essays. His “phenomenological view of sexual desire” unpacks many of the weaknesses of both perspectives (see Tolman & Diamond, 2014 for a more thorough review and analysis). However, it felt like he could have further focused on the strengths of the perspectives and given more credit to the merits of esteemed scholars like Judith Butler, Hilary Lips, Rhoda Unger, John Gagnon, and William Simon.

These concerns translate into several areas of the book where less than ideal language is utilized. For example, in his essay on “age dysphoria” I was disturbed by the parallels he drew between his own created definition of “age dysphoria” and gender dysphoria. I believe he misunderstands gender dysphoria and extends this to his analysis of the case study. He also dives into some very controversial topics, such as autogynephilia, with little detail or clarity. When talking about people’s identities and lived experiences, great care is needed to use precise definitions and demonstrate expertise in the topic area. While one should not avoid controversial topics, particularly in light of scientific evidence, it is best when such controversy is acknowledged and nuance is adopted.

In closing, I would recommend this book for an advanced sexuality and gender scholar who relishes an opportunity to engage in intellectual exercise. Giles certainly offers a fresh lens to the study of sexual desire and broaches topics on the periphery of sexuality studies. The book is an excellent catalyst for conversation and I found myself discussing the book with colleagues on multiple occasions. However, I would warn against using the book for pedagogical purposes given the limitations enumerated and argue the book is not appropriate for an undergraduate or graduate course.

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Review of “Communicating Revenge in Interpersonal Relationships”

by Vincent Waldron
Arizona State University

Although forgiveness is a topic of my own research, I admit to enjoying occasionally the sweet taste of revenge. Of course, I feel a bit guilty about my admission, and that emotional response is quite in keeping with one of the many insights offered by Stephen Yoshimura and Susan D. Boon in their recently published *Communicating Revenge in Interpersonal Relationships* (Lexington Books, 2018). As the authors argue, the urge for revenge is nearly-universal, but its practice is often condemned, perhaps unfairly, even by us relationship scholars who too often view revenge as the poor (and surly) relation of empathy, forgiveness, and other, well, *nice* responses to bad behavior. Due to revenge’s bad rap, this common and very human response is difficult to study. Research participants are often loathe to cop to their vengeful tendencies and even revenge researchers such as Yoshimura and Boon (here I am reading just slightly between the lines) encounter scholarly blowback from colleagues

who apparently find even the study of revenge to be distasteful.

How wonderful then, to encounter a volume that explores in a clear-eyed manner this complicated and emotionally-freighted relational practice. The book’s introduction nicely stakes out the conceptual territory by clarifying the author’s definition of revenge, which differs in some important ways from lay understandings and those of some scholars. Those with communicative leanings will be interested to learn that our authors view revenge as the crafting of a message rather than a raw expression of emotion or an instinctive act of destruction. And what is the message? That a friend, partner, or family member has violated relational standards and needs to change emotionally, psychologically, or behaviorally. We learn in this introductory section that revenge can be brutal and violent -- horrific acts that make newspaper headlines, as when a disgruntled employee returns to the workplace to exact vengeance with a gun. But the authors focus on more ordinary and benign forms of revenge, the kind that most of us have experienced in our interactions with siblings, peers, spouses, and other tormentors, people who actually care about us; people who are neither evil nor deranged.

Chapter 2 takes up the question of how this more ordinary revenge looks and sounds. One fascinating feature is a table compiled by Yoshimura based on a 2004 study of 893 acts used by romantic partners to “get even.” It turns out that partners can be quite creative when it comes to vengeance. The table presents a taxonomy of 15 major categories, ranging from the spiteful initiation of intimate relationships with new partners (most common) to acts of self-harm (among the least common). I will find this chapter useful in my teaching because it does a fine job of grounding the complicated concept of revenge in concrete communication practices that students will find familiar. Chapter 2 also explores differences in relational context, revealing that we know much less about revenge

in families than we do about its practice by romantic partners or coworkers. For many readers, especially those of who bear the scars of sibling conflict, this chapter is a clarion call for family-centered research.

For this reader, Chapter 3 (“Ways of Studying Research”) was a highlight. I will certainly consider assigning it in my graduate research methods courses because it so nicely elaborates on the logistical, ethical, and measurement challenges faced by revenge researchers. First comes a concise but very useful review and critique of self-report measures of revenge including such evocatively named instruments as the Driving Vengeance Questionnaire (DVQ). The psychometric properties and limitations of scales are thoroughly documented, and sample items are presented. The creativity of revenge researchers was on display as the chapter proceeded to a section on behavioral observation methods. I chuckled my way through descriptions of the “hot sauce allocation” procedure and the “voodoo doll task” (realistically illustrated by a Yoshimura photo on page 46). But the point here is well made – revenge researchers must be inventive as they operationalize expressions of revenge in a manner that shields participants from harm. The chapter includes a discussion of complicating factors, including the effects of social desirability bias on self-reports and the difficulty of observing revenge in its natural settings. Ethical concerns are addressed toward the end of this chapter, as the authors worry appropriately over such experimental practices as provoking participants to be vengeful and offering them the means to punish offenders.

Theoretical explanations are the focus of Chapter 4. Evolutionary perspectives receive considerable attention here (and throughout the latter part of the book). This section is worth a close read, but the basic claims are that revenge aids survival by encouraging sharing resources/cooperative behavior and deterring transgressive actors. The problem here is that

similar claims could be made about any number of social behaviors, such as unprovoked aggression (e.g., bullying), warnings and threats, dispute resolution processes, collaborative trading systems, and even public processes of forgiveness and reconciliation. I left this section wanting to know more about why these functions might be better served by revenge.

The subsequent discussion of culture is quite engaging in part for its explanation of the differing roles played by informal processes of revenge in honor cultures, as opposed to institutionalized cultures, where revenge is outsourced to a justice system. Theories based on personality, attribution, emotion, and communication goals are reviewed here as well. I found the discussion of goals to be particularly useful in explaining the mixed success (discussed earlier in the book) of revenge in creating relationship change. Although it may be an efficient means of evening the relational scales of justice, revenge may be less advantageous when it comes to achieving goals related to the partner’s preservation of valued identities or sustaining relational intimacy.

I was pleased to see Yoshimura and Boon introduce their own model of the revenge process rather than simply relying on existing models, which, as they argued early in this volume, are insufficiently concerned with meaning and messages. Their framework is rooted in the revenge-seeker’s perception of the offense and the related emotions and goals that arise from that experience. Perhaps the most unique contribution is their discussion of the “fantasy/action phase,” which acknowledges research suggesting that revenge is sometimes more satisfying as an imagined interaction rather than an overt expression. The model’s “outcome phase” allows for changes in the “target” (e.g., acknowledgment of wrongdoing) that may result in changes in the avenger (e.g., feelings of satisfaction). Presumably, these changes might serve as a kind of feedback loop, reshaping perceptions of the original offense. For example,

the target might communicate that a particularly dull or oversensitive avenger has misunderstood (again!!) the intention, type, or magnitude of the “offense.” Alternatively, the target might find the vengeful communication itself to be offensive, given her or his understanding of relational or community norms.

The model presented in Chapter 5 is a useful mechanism for integrating the complicated research on revenge. But it left me longing for more. Despite the promise of a communicative approach in Chapter 1, Chapter 5 has little to say about the qualities of revenge messages (or revenge conversations). I was concerned that the “target” label creates the impression of a passive recipient of revenge, one at the mercy of messages transmitted by an active avenger who calls all of the communicative shots. I left Chapter 1 imagining revenge as a dynamic trading of offenses, accusations, admissions, and punishments – the kinds of interactions that partners use to place blame and negotiate relational justice. I wondered about the possibility that revenge is enacted as a sequence of (potentially escalating) interactions that extend well beyond a single offense-revenge-change exchange. These possibilities are left largely unexplored. Nonetheless, Yoshimura and Boon’s model is offered in an invitational spirit. You get the sense that they would warmly welcome fellow scholars to continue the discussion at our next conference – a kind of revenge roundtable, if you will.

Communicating Revenge ends on a philosophical note, and I will do the same. Yoshimura and Boon assure us that they are interested in the empirical dimensions of revenge, but really, it is the moral implications of their topic that will interest many readers. Among the questions raised in Chapter 6, is this one: “Is Revenge Virtuous?” Or I might phrase it this way: “When is it right to hurt someone who hurt you?” This is a much different question than “Is revenge effective?” or “Is revenge socially appropriate?” Questions of virtue trouble most of us relational

partners when we contemplate revenge (or forgiveness, for that matter). Many of us seek ways to balance our moral commitments to both justice and mercy, even as we hope for relationships that are mutually-respectful, intimate, and psychologically safe. Indeed, among the most important functions of interpersonal communication is negotiating the moral codes that make us and our relationships seem good, in the moral sense of that word. Yoshimura and Boon deserve our thanks for boldly exploring one of the more controversial tactics we use for this purpose, the communication of revenge.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Call for Submissions

by **Xiaomeng (Mona) Xu**

Please consider submitting to “The Science of Pair Bonding and Future Directions” edited by Mona Xu and Bianca Acevedo. The manuscript deadline is July 19, 2019 (suggested abstract deadline is February 18, 2019). This is a Research Topic that is cross-listed in three Frontiers journals: Evolutionary Psychology, Personality and Social Psychology, and Comparative Psychology.

We are interested in all research on pair-bonds (human and non-human animal) and all types of methodology (self-report, behavioral, physiological, longitudinal, big-data using social media etc.). We especially welcome research that reflects the changing landscape of the pair bonds literature and highlights future directions (e.g., consensual non-monogamy, LGBTQIA+ populations, technology-assisted relationships).

More information can be found here: <https://www.frontiersin.org/research-topics/8915/the-science-of-pair-bonding-and-future-directions>

**Job Announcement:
Department of Communication at
Rutgers University**

The Department of Communication at Rutgers University seeks an assistant, associate, full, or distinguished professor whose research focuses on Interpersonal Relationships and Health to join the department in Fall 2019. We seek candidates for this position whose scholarship focuses on the ways in which communication in interpersonal relationships is involved in the management and maintenance of health and wellness. We invite applications from scholars studying communication in various types of relationships, including family, romantic, friendship, professional, and/or patient-provider relationships, and the ways in which communication in such relationships relates to a wide range of health and wellness issues. For more details and to submit an application, go to: <http://jobs.rutgers.edu/postings/73397>

Book Announcement

**Tell Me What You Want: The Science
of Sexual Desire and How It Can Help
You Improve Your Sex Life**

by Justin Lehmiller

What do Americans really want when it comes to sex? And is it possible for us to get what we want? Dr. Justin Lehmiller, Kinsey Institute Research Fellow and author of the blog *Sex and Psychology*, addresses these questions in his latest book. *Tell Me What You Want* is centered around the largest and most comprehensive survey of sexual fantasies conducted to date in the United States. Dr. Lehmiller spent almost two years surveying more than 4,000 Americans about their sexual fantasies, personalities, sexual histories, and demographics.

This book offers an unprecedented look into our fantasy worlds and what they reveal about us. It helps readers to better understand their own sexual desires and how to attain them within their relationships, but also to appreciate why the desires of their partners may be so incredibly different. This book is designed to help readers enhance their sex lives and maintain more satisfying relationships by breaking down barriers to discussing sexual fantasies and allowing more of their desires—the ones that are safe and consensual—to become sexual realities.

Tell Me What You Want, published by Da Capo Press, is available now as a hardback, e-book, and audiobook.

Congratulations to Phillip Shaver

The Society for Personality and Social Psychology is pleased to announce Phillip R. Shaver as the 2019 Annual Convention Legacy Honoree.

Phillip R. Shaver, PhD, is Distinguished Professor of Psychology Emeritus at the University of California, Davis. He joined the faculty of UC Davis in 1992 after serving on the faculties of Columbia University, New York University, University of Denver, and SUNY at Buffalo. His research deals with attachment theory, close relationships, human emotions, and personality development.

The Legacy program is designed to honor luminary figures in social and personality psychology and trace the impact of the scholar's seminal contribution to contemporary work through a series of events at the SPSP Annual Convention including a Symposium, a Luncheon, and Posters.

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