



3 Questions

Associate Professor of Psychology Benjamin Le, whose research focuses on issues of commitment in romantic relationships, recently teamed up with a group of colleagues to launch a website, *ScienceOfRelationships.com*. The site, which is based on their book, *The Science of Relationships: Answers to Your Questions About Dating, Marriage and Family* (Kendall Hunt Publishing), aims to help people better understand their romantic entanglements by making the latest research interesting and understandable for a general audience.

How did *ScienceOfRelationships.com* come about?

Benjamin Le: The book came first. It is something we've been talking about doing for four or five years. The idea was that a book is only as strong as the expertise of its authors, and the best way to write a really great volume on any topic—for us it's relationships—is to get five or 10 or 12 contributors and everybody only writes about the stuff they are experts on. Along the way, six or eight months ago, as we were in the midst of editing and getting the book ready, we started thinking, "What would Volume 2 of this book look like?" The book is based on questions that people have about their relationships—*Why do people stay in abusive relationships? Do I have to believe in soul mates for a relationship to succeed?*—so we were thinking about what would be the next set of 40 questions that people have. We also thought in terms of updating the original questions, because there is new research all the time. Then we realized that maybe books are passé, so the way to do it is not to put out another book, but to work on the Web, where

new material can come out quickly, be revised, and include dynamic content like quizzes and videos. That way we can be responsive to readers' questions and comments very quickly and make use of technology. It's cool to see people reading our articles on their smartphones and iPads.

The site was conceptualized for general readers, but do you find it hard, as an academic, to write for that audience?

BL: That has been the biggest challenge. Being very familiar with the peer-review process, we decided to do our own in-house peer review. So when I write something for the site, it gets sent out to two or three contributors to the site, who read it and provide comments. ... I always get stuff back from my colleagues and they say, "You have to explain this more. Stop using fancy words." Dumbing it down isn't the right approach, because we want to be true to the science, but making it accessible is important. So we use a lot of examples and analogies, which is why the site includes a lot of references to pop cul-

ture. I don't watch a ton of TV and movies, so I'm not good at the pop-culture examples, but a lot of my colleagues are. We've got an article coming about the TV show *True Blood*, which just ended its season. One of our contributors said she wanted to write about vampire relationships, so we thought, "Why not, if there's science behind the take-home point of the article?" It's things like that people can grab onto, hopefully—examples from books and movies and so on—to understand the concepts we are talking about.

Has there been a time when you weren't able to translate the academic terminology appropriately?

BL: I wrote a piece for the site a few weeks ago about my own research on predicting relationship "success," but actually, my scientific article was on predicting relationship stability and persistence. We thought if we used the terms "persistence" and "stability" it would be confusing to readers, so we reframed the article as "success." But then somebody wrote in and commented, "Well, maybe a successful relationship is one that breaks up." And I wrote back to that reader and said, "You're absolutely right. We've been loose with the term 'success' here, and this is why we did it. But really we're just talking about whether a relationship survives, which is a totally separate thing from what's good for you."

news + notes

The compositions of **Associate Professor of Music Ingrid Arauco** were included on two albums released this past spring: *Invocation: Solo Piano and Chamber Music* (Albany Records) and *Florescence* (Meyer Media). The cover art for *Invocation* is a painting, *Lily #3*, by **Professor of Fine Arts Ying Li**.



Visiting Assistant Professor of English Thomas Devaney was interviewed for an Aug. 11 *Philadelphia Inquirer* article about new U.S. Poet Laureate Philip Levine. Devaney, a poet himself, described how he had clipped Levine's poem "What Work Is" and taped it to

the wall next to his desk. "For Levine, work and love are the same subject," Devaney told the *Inquirer*. "His poems are often about the working class, but the poems go further than that, illuminating work's greater meaning in all of our lives. His question of 'what work is' is a defining one, and one that rever-