Redefining Practicum

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Clinical Science in Action

- How we prepared
  - Read the literature on marital therapy, then on marriage
  - Watched videotapes of marital interactions
  - Held workshops with experts (John Gottman and Dan Wile)
  - Made final decisions on treatment, marketing, clients, design and evaluation

- Who we treated
  - 12 couples (8 for 12 sessions, 4 for 3 sessions)
  - Age range: 20s to 50s
  - Mostly married, some long-term cohabitating
Clinical Science in Action

- What we did
  - Co-therapists met weekly with couples for 50 min. sessions
  - Focused on
    - Emotion expression
    - Emotion regulation
    - Intergenerational issues
  - Used set of “tools” (e.g., videotaped conflict discussion, family album, “the platform”)

- What we measured
  - Pre-post
    - Marital satisfaction
    - Marital stability
    - Couples communication
    - Who does what
    - Life stress
    - Symptom Check List (SCL-90)
    - Wahler Physical Symptoms
    - Beliefs about Marriage
  - Week-by-week
    - Satisfaction with marriage
    - Satisfaction with therapy
The First Year

Initial Findings
The Marriage and Life Stress

Satisfaction: Marriage

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<tr>
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<th>Husbands</th>
<th>Wives</th>
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<td>Pre</td>
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<td>Post</td>
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Life Stress

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<td>Pre</td>
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<td>Post</td>
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Marital Communication

Satisfaction: General Communication

- Husbands
- Wives

Satisfaction: Communication of Feelings

- Husbands
- Wives

Graphs showing pre and post satisfaction levels for husbands and wives.
Weekly Satisfaction Ratings

Satisfaction with Marriage (1-8)

Satisfaction with Therapy (1-8)
Did Treatment Increase Belief in Spouse’s Capacity for Change?

- Over the course of therapy:
  - Husbands’ belief in their spouses’ capacity for change decreased
  - Wives’ belief in their spouse’s capacity for change increased

Belief in Spouse's Capacity for Change

- Husbands
- Wives
The Video Tool: Was It Helpful?

- In the week following reviewing the videotaped conflict discussion
  - Husbands’ marital satisfaction increased
  - Wives’ marital satisfaction did not change
Comfort with Emotion

- Created a “comfort with emotion” variable by combining 7 items
  - I am comfortable with how...
    - I express anger to my partner
    - my partner expresses anger to me
    - I express my feelings of depression to my partner
    - my partner expresses feelings of depression to me
    - I express my feelings of happiness to my partner
    - my partner lets me know when s/he is feeling happy
  - In general, how do I feel about the way my partner and I share feelings?
Comfort With Emotion: Did It Change?

- Comfort with emotion did not change for husbands
- Comfort with emotion significantly increased for wives
Is Increased Comfort with Emotion Related to Improvement in Marital Satisfaction?

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<th></th>
<th>Δ $R^2$</th>
<th>Significance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husbands</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wives</td>
<td>.608</td>
<td>.022*</td>
</tr>
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For husbands: **No**
For wives: **Yes**
How are marital satisfaction and marital communication related?

**MEN**
- Marital satisfaction
- Satisfaction with couple communication
- Low struggle with partner

**WOMEN**
- Marital satisfaction
- Satisfaction with couple communication
- High collaborative problem-solving
How are couple communication and depressive symptoms related?

MEN’S VIEW  
pre and post

WOMEN’S VIEW  
pre and post

Dissatisfaction with communication

His Hi Depression
Her Hi Depression

Struggle with partner

Her Hi Depression

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Father’s involvement in household tasks and marital satisfaction

In the “non-clinical” Becoming a Family Project

Men’s higher involvement household tasks \[\rightarrow\] HIGHER Marital Satisfaction for both men and women

Tasks: Cooking, cleaning, laundry, paying bills
In the Couples Clinic Sample:

- Men’s higher involvement in household tasks **PRE**
- Men’s higher involvement in household tasks **PRE** and **POST**
- PRE Marital Satisfaction for men and women
- LOWER POST Marital Satisfaction for men and women
- Women’s depression
- Marital Satisfaction
- Men’s involvement in household tasks
Conclusions and Future Directions

- **Conclusions**
  - This form of couples therapy produces improvement in:
    - Marital satisfaction
    - Satisfaction with communication
    - Physical symptoms
    - Life stress
  - Improvement is greater for wives than husbands
  - Possible mechanisms for increased marital satisfaction with therapy
    - Wives’ improved marital satisfaction related to their increased comfort with emotion
    - The video conflict tool increased marital satisfaction for husbands
  - Ingredients of marital satisfaction differ for husbands (low struggle) and wives (high collaborative problem solving)

- **Future directions and research questions**
  - Group treatment
  - Co-therapists versus single therapist
  - Optimal treatment duration
  - Gay and Lesbian couples
Extras
Are Thoughts of Divorce Prior to Treatment Related to Spouses’ Marital Satisfaction After Treatment?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Husbands’ Satisfaction (Post-Therapy)</th>
<th>Wives’ Satisfaction (Post-Therapy)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husbands’ Stability (Pre-Therapy)</td>
<td>.542</td>
<td>.710*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wives’ Stability (Pre-Therapy)</td>
<td>.516</td>
<td>.312</td>
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For husbands: **Yes**
For wives: **No**
Is Length of Treatment Related to Improvement in Marital Satisfaction?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Sessions</th>
<th>Change in Husbands’ Satisfaction</th>
<th>Change in Wives’ Satisfaction</th>
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<tr>
<td>- .511</td>
<td>-.726*</td>
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</table>

For husbands: **No**
For wives: **Yes** (longer treatment associated with less improvement in marital satisfaction)