



Research Projects for Clinical Research Postdoctoral Fellows

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Project #1: Violence Intervention Project

Overview: The Violence Intervention Project is a national, empirically supported effort to significantly and dramatically reduce intimate partner violence and sexual misconduct. We are disseminating and evaluating an effective intervention for reducing domestic violence for men court-mandated to treatment. We adapted the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) model to target intimate partner violence (IPV), resulting in a 24-week group intervention called ACTV. Two RCTs have been completed, demonstrating that ACTV significantly reduces physical, psychological and sexual aggression pre- to post-treatment (whereas standard treatment did not yield change) and reduces one-year recidivism in half compared to the standard treatment. Iowa became the first state to disseminate ACTV as a statewide, court-mandated, empirically supported intervention for IPV, and other states and countries are now following suit.

Current Initiatives: We are now working to replicate and extend the results of the RCTs in several states and countries. We are also conducting longer term follow-ups with study participants and testing the active mechanisms of change in our intervention. Finally, we will be assessing the indirect benefits for victims and children still living with the treated offenders. In addition, we are piloting two adaptations of our intervention: one for adolescent boys in juvenile detention, and one for college students who engage in sexual misconduct.

Project #2: Tailoring Couple Prevention Programs to Couple Skill Deficits

Overview: Historically, couple prediction models and prevention programs target conflict resolution and communication skills almost exclusively. These models only predict a small proportion of the variance and prevention programs are marginally effective. Through this project, we developed and validated the Relationship Quality Interview (RQI) to assess five different domains of couple functioning: emotional intimacy, partner support, sexuality, respect and acceptance and conflict management. Clinicians conduct semi-structured interviews yielding interviewers' scores of the quality of couple functioning on each domain. Through a series of multi-wave longitudinal studies, we found that different domains of couple functioning at the time of marriage predict different relationship satisfaction trajectories for men versus women, and for couples in community versus clinical samples, suggesting that different couples need help with different types of relationship skills to prevent dysfunction.

Current Initiatives: We are now translating the content of each domain in the RQI into 3-hour skills workshops for couples. We will be conducting feasibility and pilot testing of this novel prevention program in which couples are administered the RQI, given feedback on their strengths and limitations, offered the workshops relevant to their specific needs and then followed longitudinally to assess outcomes.