

# CONNECTIONS

A NEWSLETTER ABOUT FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS & PERSONAL GROWTH

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"Academically, family science is no longer primarily the province of family sociologists and (human ecology) scholars, but now involves increased numbers of psychologists, historians, social workers, anthropologists, nurses, physicians, social biologists, and family therapists."

Sourcebook of Family  
Theories and Methods

## PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

### 10 Tips for Finding & Presenting Good Information

Part of our profession is similar to what Jack Ryan said in the movie *The Sum of All Fears*, "My job is to get the right information to the right people!" Knowing how to find and communicate good information to the public is integral. Here are some tips in finding good information:

#### 1 PROFESSIONAL JOURNALS

Peer-reviewed journals (reviewed by other experts in the field) are a good resource to find up-to-date information on specific areas (e.g., *Journal of Marriage and Family*).



#### 2 REVIEWS OF THE LITERATURE

Often times, journals will produce articles that are reviews of the literature. These are articles describing what we know so far based on the research in a particular area. They are excellent for a quick review of what's out there.

#### 3 META-ANALYSIS



Another type of article that is similar to a review of the literature is called a meta-analysis. A meta-analysis examines multiple studies usually in the area of outcome effectiveness. Thus, an article might say based on 30 studies, we know that this type of educational intervention will typically produce this outcome (may be positive or negative).

#### 4 PROFESSIONAL BOOKS

Professional books are written by experts in a particular field. Different than a book written by a layperson, these books are typically based on research and experience (e.g. *Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* by John Gottman).



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FROM THE DESK OF

Charlotte Shoup Olsen



Family Science Research

We hope each of you is having a fun and productive summer with the many demands of summer camps and county fairs. Reading research articles is probably not part of your summer agenda, but we wanted to have this issue on your desk as you resume fall and

winter activities of planning and delivering Extension research-based education.

Charlotte Shoup Olsen  
W. Jared DuPree

### Answers to Questions from Kansas Extension Agents

#### Question:

As part of the 'Strong Marital and Family Relationships' advisory group, I understand that there will be no specific workshops in this area at the upcoming FCS Update. What other opportunities will be available for professional development during the next few months?

#### Answer:

You may already be aware that K-State Research and Extension is one of the partners in sponsoring a national satellite conference on *The Impact of Couple and Marital Relationships on Parenting and Child Outcomes*. It will be December 2 and 9, 2005, from 10:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. CST.

Selected sites are being set up throughout the state for you to view the satellite conference and to invite other community partners if you wish. Marketing flyers will be available at the August update. The intended outcomes are to increase your knowledge about:

- Program implications for working with unmarried parents who are considering marriage as an option;
- How the quality of married and unmarried couple relationships affect parenting quality, father involvement, and children's well-being; and
- Which has more influence on parenting quality—marriage and couples education or parenting education?

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#### Extension Spotlight

home as did the "boomerang children." She also enjoys cross stitching and other crafts.

Her career ambitions include making a difference in lives of Johnson County families through collaborations and program-

ming. Her personal goals include surviving the sandwich generation period of her life, helping her father adjust to life alone and assisting her children in becoming truly independent by establishing themselves soundly in the job force.

# Extension Spotlight

## Karen Elliott

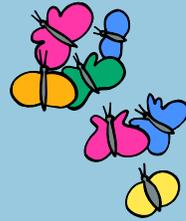
Dr. Karen S. Elliott has worked at Johnson County K-State Research and Extension for five years. Immediately prior to Extension, she worked for two years as a family educator at the Family and Child Center, Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center. Before moving to Louisiana, Karen worked at Fort Riley as a guidance counselor for Division Artillery, serving soldiers and family members.

She received a bachelor's in home economics secondary vocational education, a master's in general human ecology, and a Ph.D. in human ecology with specialization in human development and family studies, all from Kansas State University. She is excited to be reconnected to her alma mater and values working with a variety of people who are interested in learning and in helping others. However, she is often challenged by trying to do many things for different audiences at the same time—what a familiar response among Kansas Extension agents!

□

When asked about some of her everyday work Karen said, "Surveys indicate that our Knowledge for Life newsletter reaches an audience of persons 40 years and older. Since the newsletter does not reach the younger audience, I am trying to market family and parenting programs by other means than the newsletter. I'm working with our marketing staff person to determine the best means by which to reach this audience."

She delivers a variety of programs (e.g. parenting, family communication, Life Tapes, and Grandma's Yellow Pie Plate) for community groups, usually from requests by mothers, church and FCE groups. She wants to increase her programming efforts in the area of other family issues, too. However, one



"I'm most proud of my work for drug endangered children. The community collaborative efforts of the Johnson County Alliance for Drug Endangered Children have proved beneficial on many levels from public education to agency collaboration."

*Dr. Karen S. Elliott*

of her major emphases is working with drug endangered children and being the facilitator for the Johnson County Alliance for Drug Endangered Children and serving on the Kansas Alliance for Drug Endangered Children. She is on the state conference committee which is planning a statewide conference in Hays October 13 and 14. Karen will co-present a three hour session with Larry George from the Regional Prevention Center of NE Kansas.

On a more personal note, Karen has been married 35 years to Dennis R. Elliott and has two children: Shea, 29, and Dedra, 23. She lists her hobbies as animals and crafts. She has a horse, 5 dogs, 8 cats, 3 cockatiels, 2 ferrets, and 2 crested geckos. In her words, she says, "Many of the animals are 'children in need of care' who have become family members. Others are friends who returned

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## PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT

# The Two Gurus of Relationships: John Gottman and John Gray

The following article is an example of comparing two self-help authors. It is important to note that the following information does not suggest that John Gray's information is not useful (although many experts feel it is), it suggests that we do not know because it has not been tested (although a couple of research articles have come out criticizing some of his principles based on research). However, as you will see, Gottman's work does not suggest that his information is the final truth, but that the information can be trusted more to work because it has been tested. Although the article was written several years ago, it appears to reflect the essence of what each of these persons is doing today.

### Gottman and Gray: The Two Johns In A Nutshell, Gottman is the Gold-Standard while Gray is the Gold Earner

By Hara Estroff Marano

Walk into any bookstore in America—perhaps the world—head for the psychology shelves, and there bound together until sales do them part are the two gurus of relationships, John Gottman and John Gray.

John Gottman virtually invented the science of observing behavior in relationships and can predict future happiness with scary accuracy from groans and grimaces we're scarcely ever aware of. He's a very prolific writer, but most of his work appears in the academic literature. A couple of years ago he penned a popular book, **Why Marriages Succeed or Fail**. It sells respectably.

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Of course, nothing like the books by John Gray: at last count six million copies of **Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus**. Even his several other books—his latest is **Mars and Venus on a Date**—sell in the hundreds of thousands. Hey, why save a hot concept for married folks, or even adults? The Mars/Venus juggernaut is readying a kids' version. We haven't even talked about the audiotapes. A run on Broadway. Celebrity Line cruises. CD-ROMs. Seminars, and now the first franchise deal to hit psychotherapy. For a few thousand dollars, plus a yearly renewal fee, you too can buy the right to call yourself a Mars/Venus counseling center. You lack the professional credentials to practice? Don't worry—so does Gray. For somewhat less, anyone with a pulse and a purse can buy the right to lead Mars/Venus groups.

John Gottman and John Gray, side by side. The placement invites—no, commands—a comparison of the two. How does their information and advice stack up? The short answer is that Gottman is the gold *standard* while Gray is the gold *earner*. Gottman creates top psychology, while Gray mines pop psychology: Even that he's turned into "poop psychology," in the words of one Psychology Today reader. We've extracted the pith from their writing and sayings to compile a handy crib sheet. Judge for yourself.

## A Tale of Two Relationship Gurus

Issue	John Gottman	John Gray
<b>Chief Motivating Force</b>	Research	Revenge (first wife Barbara de Angelis taught him seminar biz then ditched him).
<b>Formal Research</b>	Naturalistic observation of couples living in apartment laboratory, plus video and physiological monitoring.	None
<b>Number Of Couples Actively Studied</b>	760	0
<b>Longest Period Of Follow-Up</b>	14 years	0
<b>Academic Credentials</b>	Ph.D., University of Illinois	Ph.D., Mail order, Columbia Pacific U. (unaccredited institution).
<b>License</b>	Psychologist	Driver
<b>Number Of Journal Articles Written</b>	109	0
<b>Cardinal Rule Of Relationships</b>	What people think they do in relationships and what they do are two different things.	Men and women are different.
<b>Defining Statement</b>	The everyday mindless moments are the basis of romance in marriages.	Before 1950 men were men and women were women.
<b>What Makes Marriage Work</b>	Making mental maps of each other's world.	Heeding gender stereotypes.
<b>What Makes Marriage Fail</b>	Heeding gender stereotypes.	Misunderstanding gender differences in communication style.
<b>Heroes</b>	Men who put the toilet seat down.	Men who escape to their cave .
<b>Role Of Gender Differences</b>	Mark of an ailing relationship.	Recipe for success in relationships.
<b>View Of Intimacy</b>	Comforts men	Scares men
<b>View Of Humor</b>	Right up there with sex; communicates acceptance.	"Men will tolerate humor. Women won't."

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### The Two Gurus of Relationships...

Issue	John Gottman	John Gray
Signs Of Marital Apocalypse	Criticism, contempt, defensiveness, stonewalling.	Arguing
How Spouses Do Best	Accepting influence from one another.	On separate planets.
Key Gender Difference	Men's and women's bodies respond differently to conflict	Women talk too much about feelings.
Why Men Withdraw	Their stress systems are over-activated during marital conflict.	They can only tolerate so much intimacy.
Cause Of Conflict	Virtually inevitable between two people.	She hates Super Bowl Sunday.
Men's Big Mistake'	Failing to deep breathe during conflict.	Solving her problems.
Women's Big Mistake'	Stating complaints with criticism.	Giving advice.
Why Men Don't Help More at Home	Their brain cells were not trained to notice domestic themes.	They give their all at the office.
Marriage Math	There must be 5x as many positives as negatives in marriage.	Men and women keep score differently.
What They Say About Each Other	"I envy his financial success."	"John who?"

This article was previously published in *Psychology Today*, November 1997 (Vol. 30, No. 6), Retrieved July 14, 2005, from <http://www.psychotherapy.net/cgi/frameset.cgi?mainframe=articles&subframe=twojohns>

**Question:** What do we learn?

**Possible Answer:** Good information is based on sound research that has been tested and re-tested with rigorous methods.

**Question:** Why is that important?

**Possible Answer:** Because we are dealing with people's lives. It is important to be careful about what information we suggest to people. Working with the lives of people is definitely not a frivolous endeavor to be taken lightly.

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### Ideas When Reading a Research Article

- How big is the sample?
- Does the sample represent many cultures? If not, can I make conclusions with other cultures based on this study?
- Is there a control group if the study is looking at effectiveness?
- How can I apply this information to my work?
- How valid is the information? Are there some suggestions and initial findings or strong conclusions based on past research they cited as well?

## Ideas When Reading a Research Article

It is important to address how researchers in family science do research. Understanding how researchers do research helps one become a better consumer of research. Here are a few principles of research to keep in mind.

First, there are two main types of research: Quantitative and Qualitative. Quantitative research is designed to make conclusions based on numerical data. For example, a group of people may be given a survey and the results of the survey will suggest some findings. Qualitative studies make conclusions based on non-numerical data such as interviews and observations.

### QUANTITATIVE STUDIES

Quantitative researchers have some things to worry about. First, they want to have a large enough sample size to be able to make some generalizations. In family science, a sample of size of 30 is typically acceptable for a study. However, more than 30 is always helpful to be able to make better generalizations.

*Rule: The higher the sample, the more conclusive your findings can be. So, when you are reading an article, look at the sample size. When it is a small sample, you could say to yourself, "This article is good for initial findings but needs to be tested more."*

Second, quantitative study researchers are worried about having a representative sample. They want to be able to have a group of people that represent who they are trying to study. Thus, if they are trying to understand Kansans, they may need 50% women, 80% Caucasian, 10% Latino American, 70% middle class, etc. They are trying to match the sample to the demographics of the area.

*Rule: If a study does not use a particular subculture in their sample, it is difficult to make conclusions for that subculture based on that*

*study. So, if a study only had Caucasians in their sample, you might say to yourself, "This may apply to Caucasians, but a study examining this with Latinos needs to be done."*

Finally, a quantitative study often wants to have a control group to compare to an experimental group. A control group is one that does not receive any treatment, class, and/or education while the experimental group does. Researchers want to compare the two to see if the class or treatment was effective.

*Rule: If a study does not have a control group, you cannot say that a group of people that improved after taking a class is better than a group of people that did not take the class. We don't know. So, if you see a study that has no control group, you might say to myself, "The study suggests that there is improvement in the treatment or class, but I don't know if a group of people that didn't take the class is much worse. More research is needed."*

### QUALITATIVE STUDIES

Qualitative researchers also have things to worry about. Their sample size will not be as large as a quantitative study, but they are more worried about the depth and richness of the information they gather. They are trying to understand a particular phenomenon or experience from a particular point of view. This can offer very good information in an applied nature through a case study or observational study. Strengths of the qualitative studies include lots of rich data, applicable data to everyday life, and unique data. Limitations include producing narrow results and difficulty in generalizing findings.

In conclusion, some questions to ask yourself when reading an article:

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The main difference between books and journal articles is that books do not require peer review by others in the field. Thus, not all information may be based on research or good information. Asking professionals in the field for book recommendations is a good way of sorting your way through professional books.

## **5** PROFESSIONAL CURRICULA

Extension professionals often produce research-based curricula. These are sets of curriculum based on theory and research in a particular area. They are more applied in nature and are designed to be used in that type of setting. Unfortunately, there are not always research-based curricula in particular areas.



## **6** BE CAREFUL WITH POP PSYCHOLOGY BOOKS

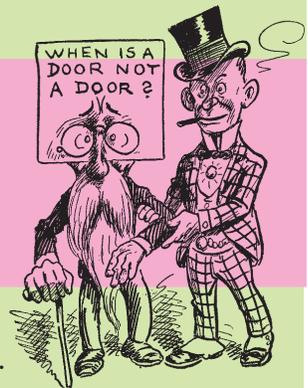
There are thousands of self-help books out there. Many are not based on any research. This does not mean they may not have good information. We just do not know if the information is good or not because it has not been tested. There are a number of books from the past that were not based on research that have produced more harm than good because of untested information.

## **7** BE CAREFUL ON HOW TO COMMUNICATE INFORMATION

Just because one article stated something about a particular area does not make it a fact. In the social sciences, hundreds of articles and years of work are typically required before we even get close to a fact. Using language like, "What we know so far" or "This article suggests" or "It seems that" rather than using rigid language like, "It is a known fact that" or "We know this causes that" or "This happens because of this" is important. Stating an initial finding as a fact is twisting the truth.

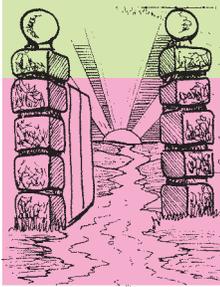
## **8** BE WILLING TO SAY "WE DON'T KNOW."

Some professionals feel that the research knows everything. Here are three possible ways to respond to a research question: 1) The research suggests...; 2) There is very little research on this, but so far the research suggests...; or 3) There is not enough research to make any conclusions.



## **9** BE WILLING TO SAY, "I DON'T KNOW."

Other professionals feel that they must have an answer for everything. Again here are three possible ways to respond to a personal question: 1) I have read a lot of the research, and it suggests...; 2) I have read a little bit on this area, and based on what I've read, the research suggests...; or 3) I have not read enough in this area to know how to answer that question.



## **10** REMEMBER, YOU ARE OFTEN THE GATEKEEPERS

In many ways, the general public look to you as gatekeepers of information. They are more likely to trust the information you give. It is our responsibility to be savvy gatekeepers and seek good information to communicate to the public.