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The Pennsylvania
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November 2011 • UPDATE

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

PPA Wants YOU

Mark A. Hogue, PsyD

Dr. Mark A. Hogue

It is that time of year again—PPA is looking for nominations for the Board of Directors for the 2012 elections. The following positions will be on the ballot: president (a 3-year commitment—as president-elect, president, and past president), secretary, and the chairs of the Professional Psychology Board, Program and Education Board, and Public Interest Board. These are 2-year commitments (except the president) and people can serve for two consecutive terms.

Current committee chairs, regional psychological association leaders, and other psychology organizations' leaders are well prepared for board positions. To learn more about each position, visit the PPA website at http://www.PaPsy.org/index.php/governance/. This is in the members-only section, so you will need your 4-digit member number (found on this issue's mailing label) for the username and your last name for the password. Click the tab "Nominations & Elections." Then please nominate yourself or a colleague using the form on that page. The deadline is January 2, 2012.

Questions? Write to me as chair of the Nominations and Elections Committee, at hoguepsy1@verizon.net. Our future depends on our leadership!

Last year was our third year doing electronic voting, and the success of this method means we will hold elections electronically from now on. It saves PPA precious dollars and it is greener. People who do not have an e-mail address will still be sent paper ballots. Please watch for further announcements in the coming months.

Last Reminder on the Apportionment Ballot

APA will mail the apportionment ballot to all members around November 1. Please take a few minutes to vote in this election—it is critical to the programs and priorities of PPA.

We urge you to give all 10 votes to Pennsylvania.

The Council of Representatives is APA's chief governing body and is charged with legislative and oversight responsibilities for the entire association. Council's main function is to develop and implement policies and programs

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LAST MONTH

License Renewal

November 30 is the deadline for licensed psychologists to get their licenses renewed. The State Board of Psychology sent out a postcard in September with license renewal instructions for 2011–13. If you do not get the postcard, we suggest that you contact the State Board (ST-PSYCHOLOGY@pa.gov) and verify that they have your correct address and that a license renewal form was sent out. The most common reason that psychologists fail to get the licensing renewal form is that they have moved and not informed the State Board of Psychology.

Do not send renewal information to PPA. Be certain to send renewal information to the State Board of Psychology, 2601 N. Third Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110. Their phone number is 717-783-7155.

Be sure that you have completed your continuing education requirements. If you need CE credits you can get them by registering onsite at the PPA Fall Conference in Exton November 3–4. You can also get online or home study CE programs through PPA. Psychologists must obtain at least 30 hours of CE credit during the 2-year period of December 1, 2009, to November 30, 2011. Half of that can be by home study. Online offerings such as webinars count as home studies unless there is full instructor-participant interaction. See the back page of this issue for more information on upcoming programs and home studies. Be certain that you have at least 3 credits of CE in ethics, which are noted on the CE Calendar.

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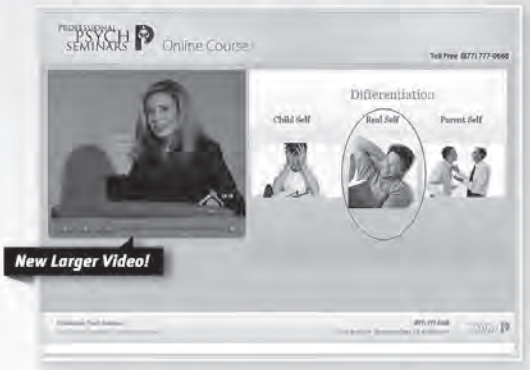

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LAST REMINDER ON THE APPORTIONMENT BALLOT

Continued from page 1

for APA. Whereas policy development begins with APA's boards and committees and the Board of Directors, the final decision-making body is the Council of Representatives.

The Council votes on many items that impact state associations and the professional practice of psychology. For example:

- The APA budget—including funds for the Practice Directorate and the Practice Organization—which funds CAPP grants, public education activities, federal advocacy, etc.;
- Policy documents, such as the policies governing APA CE sponsor approval;
- Various guidelines that impact professional practice, from the Ethical Principles to the Record Keeping Guidelines and everything in between.

Who are the members of Council? Psychologists representing state, provincial, and territorial associations (SPTAs) and divisions. The apportionment process determines the number of Council positions. Every SPTA and every division has at least one seat on Council. The number of votes obtained in the apportionment ballot process then determines which SPTAs and divisions have additional representatives.

State associations must increase our voting numbers to serve you! Help Pennsylvania retain both of our seats. It would be a shame to have to recall one of our representatives for 2013.

Let's work together to keep Pennsylvania's voice strong. The outcome of this vote will have a significant impact on state issues, the direction APA takes in the coming years, and how PPA's needs and issues will be addressed by APA.

Giving Back and Giving Forward

Albert D. Jumper, MA

Albert D. Jumper

The year 2011 has been a landmark year for me. I've reached the age of 60 and am now squarely in Erik Erikson's eighth (and final) stage of life development—"Integrity vs. Despair." I'm happy to say that the "despair" part has not been a major issue. Not that I don't have a few regrets, but the balance has been in the other direction. Erikson also speaks of the wisdom that comes with experience and I am hopeful that I have gained some of that quality as well.

Being 60 does cause one to reflect on his/her life including accomplishments and failures. I am fortunate to have had a happy and satisfying personal life with a 37-year marriage, three grown children and one delightful grandson with another grandchild on the way. Any failures, I will keep to myself!

As I looked back on my career as a psychologist, I began to think not only of my career track, but also of my involvement in professional development in general and with PPA in particular. I have been a member of PPA for many years, but have become more active in the organization over the past seven or eight years. My increased involvement occurred as a direct result of assistance provided to me and other regional psychologists by PPA staff, which resulted in the resolution of some difficult issues with managed care and a local insurance carrier. This experience stimulated me to "give back" by increasing my activity as well as my financial commitment to PPA through PennPsyPAC. Prior to this time, I was, like many members of professional organizations, a dues-paying member who would occasionally attend a CE program or make a call to the PPA office for information.

After several years of increased activity with PPA, my admiration for the staff and the many member volunteers has grown exponentially. The commitment made by these individuals is the key to the numerous contributions made by PPA to our profession. In addition, it has been a pleasure to meet and work with psychologists from around the state on the PennPsyPAC Board of Directors. I have come to appreciate the importance of political action at the state level and how crucial it is to the future of our profession. An additional personal benefit has been the satisfaction of giving something back to the profession that has been so gratifying and allowed me to live the life I have had.

This brings me to one notable regret. Why did I not become involved sooner? What opportunities have I missed? This is where the "giving forward" part comes in. I can recall some discussions over the past few years at PennPsyPAC board meetings on the need to recruit early career psychologists (ECPs) to become involved in political action as well as other areas of PPA. I am happy to say that PPA is working hard at attracting those new professionals to the ranks. One piece of wisdom that I believe I can impart to those ECPs is that the earlier you get involved, the more you can enhance your own career with both professional and personal satisfaction.

For those ECPs as well as us "seasoned" members, a few suggestions. First, respond to legislative alerts sent out by PPA staff. PPA has had a good response to these requests in the past and we need to continue to increase response rates.

Second, consider attending the annual spring Advocacy Day activities in Harrisburg. This is a great opportunity to meet other PPA members, to learn how our legislature works, and to become informed on the important professional issues of the day.

Third, consider a contribution to PennPsyPAC during the annual campaign or when renewing your PPA membership. PennPsyPAC makes contributions to legislative candidates who support our agenda and serves as the engine that drives much of the ongoing legislative agenda of PPA.

After 60 years, one thing is apparent. What you will accomplish throughout your career, both for yourself and those you serve, is directly proportionate to what you are willing to put in. Giving of both your time and your financial resources will pay back tenfold. For those of us who have engaged in this profession for many years, it is not too late to get involved. For those of you who are in the early stages of your career, get involved now. Give forward and give back!

Introduction to Special Issue on Book Reviews

Samuel Knapp, EdD, ABPP, Director of Professional Affairs

Dr. Sam Knapp

Popular books on psychological topics are a major part of public education, or "giving psychology away." They can educate the public with more depth than can typically be found in a newspaper article or an hour-long presentation. In addition, some of the better popular books, which are reviewed in this issue of the *Pennsylvania Psychologist*, can be helpful for psychologists as well in so far as they review a specific area of psychology or present a new perspective on a well known topic.

The books covered in this issue of the *Pennsylvania Psychologist* have been written by a psychologist (Ellen Langner), a physician (Jerome Groopman), legal scholars (Naomi Cahn and June Carbone), a sociologist (Andrew Cherlin) and professional writers (David Brooks and Gretchen Rubin). The topics covered included marriage, aging, performance, and the development of character and promotion of well-being. I selected these books by looking through the best-seller lists and considering the quality of the books as evidenced by reviews. Having narrowed down the pool of books, I chose to submit the reviews for publication based on the quality of the book and my perception of its relevance to professional psychologists. Space limitations prevented me from reviewing many other fine books.

If there is a recent popular book on a psychology topic that you want to bring to my attention, please feel free to e-mail me at sam@PaPsy.org.

Demographic Data Highlights Strengths and Weaknesses in American Family Life

A Review of *Red Families v. Blue Families*, by Naomi Cahn and June Carbone, and *The Marriage-Go-Round*, by Andrew Cherlin

Samuel Knapp, EdD, ABPP

Marriages often begin with great enthusiasm, but sometimes end with equally great bitterness and regret. Most people are very happy with their relationships when they are first married. They take the vows of living together until "death do us part" seriously and fully intend to honor them. However, 50% of American marriages end in divorce and the causes of these failures, and the implications for society, have become the target for much social comment.[1]

The quality of marriages has widespread public health and social consequences. Happily married couples tend to report better physical and mental health, and have longer life expectancies than those who have stressed marriages, or who are unmarried. Furthermore, married couples are predominately responsible for child rearing and care.

Psychologists who deal with troubled couples by necessity have to work from a proximal perspective. That is, they need to deal with the issues and communication patterns that the couple before them brings into the therapy session. Nonetheless, psychologists may benefit from supplementing this perspective on marriage by looking at the distal data presented in these books by legal scholars (Naomi Cahn and June Carbone: *Red Families v. Blue Families,* 2010), and a sociologist (Andrew Cherlin: *The Marriage-Go-Round*, 2009).

Both books note that marriage and family life have changed greatly in the last 50 years due to the greater availability of birth control (at least for middle class women), the entry of women into higher education and the work force, and the decline in the availability of good jobs for Americans without higher education.

In *Red Families v. Blue Families*, Cahn and Carbone present detailed information on demographic factors related to marital success. Despite concerns about a crisis in the American family, it is in trouble primarily for one segment of the population: those who marry early and have less education or income. For example, college-educated couples who marry over the age of 25 have a 10-year current divorce rate of 16%, compared to 51% for those who dropped out of college and married before the age of 25. Among college-educated women, only 7% of their births were out of wedlock, compared to 43% of births to women with less than a

[1] **The 50% divorce rate is calculated by looking at the success of all marriages. Divorce rates are higher for persons in second or subsequent marriages. Approximately 70% of Americans will remain married to the same person for the rest of their lives.**

high school education. Abortions are far more common among women who have not finished high school compared to women who graduated from college.

Concerning the economic difficulties of persons who have not graduated from college, Cherlin notes the reduction in the number of the "blue collar aristocrats," or the well paid industrial, auto, or steel workers who prospered in the 1950s and through the 1970s. Now men without higher education or specialized job skills are less likely to have jobs that pay well or have good career opportunities, making it hard for them to support their families in a style of life acceptable to them. The real income in terms of earning power for Americans without a college education declined 20% from 1979 to 1996. Economically, many young men "simply aren't attractive marriage partners."

Efforts to save American families often involve debates on moral motivations or character that result in polarized positions on same-sex marriage, abortion, or sex education. Cahn and Carbone describe the issues in terms of competing red and blue family paradigms. The traditional ("red") view sees the unification of sex, marriage, and parenthood (sex occurs within marriage, which lasts for life, and biological parents are responsible for raising children). A competing ("blue") view holds that sex before marriage can be done responsibly under the right circumstances and that good parenting does not necessarily require two married biological parents. Of course, "red" and "blue" are just brief descriptors and individual views on sex, marriage, and parenthood are more nuanced. Ironically, the highest rates of divorce and single parenthood occur in "red" states, and "blue" states tend to do better on indices of family health.

The best way to improve the welfare of American families, Cahn and Carbone argue, is to stop debating areas of disagreement and to look for areas of agreement, such as talking about marriage education instead of sex education, and talking about contraception instead of abortion. Sex education has become polarized in the United States with some favoring abstinence education and others favoring comprehensive education. Instead, Cahn and Carbone argue that marriage education can focus on what is already known about successful marriages. Although not covered in detail in their book, premarital education (involving 8 to 20 hours of education on communication and problem solving skills) tends to improve the quality of relationships and communication skills (Hawkins, Blanchard, Baldwin, & Fawcett, 2008; Stanley, Amato, Johnson, & Markman, 2006) and the benefits tended to be universal (i.e., improvement occurs among both couples who start with either good or bad communication skills).

A second recommendation is to move the debate about reproduction away from abortion and on to family planning, including access to and education about contraception. The United States has the highest rates of unplanned teen pregnancies in the industrialized world. Poor women, who have the highest rates of unplanned pregnancies among Americans, often lack even basic information about birth control or access to it. Also unwanted pregnancies often derail efforts for education that would get young women out of poverty. Children of middle class parents, however, have much more education about and access to contraception, and they see unwanted pregnancies as interrupting their positive life goals. "A bright future is the best contraceptive."

In *The Marriage-Go-Round,* sociologist Andrew Cherlin notes that Americans tend to marry earlier (the average age of marriage in the United States is 25, compared to 29 in Italy, 30 in France, 31 in Sweden, 32 in Germany, etc.), and have higher rates of marriage, cohabitation, and divorce than Europeans, resulting in the "marriage-go-round." He attributes this, in part, to two competing trends in American life: veneration for marriage as an institution, and the importance of individual self-fulfillment. He claims that American religion plays a role in promoting both. Churches tend to promote marriage as an institution and some support "prosperity theology," which rests on a belief in individual fulfillment and entitlement.

Cherlin also notes the "M-factor," or the finding that divorce rates tend to be higher in areas of the country where there is greater mobility. The reasons are not clear. Perhaps these areas attract individuals who have more pre-existing vulnerabilities in their marriages. Or perhaps the lack of external social support (such as the close availability of immediate family) places a strain on the marriage.

Each book has additional information not covered in this review. For example, Cahn and Carbone detail recent trends in American marital, contraceptive, and abortion law, and Cherlin describes the history of marriage and divorce in the United States.

Of course, the success of any marriage is multi-determined, including whether the parents of the spouses had divorced, whether the couple attends religious services regularly, the nature of their communication, and so on. Each of these factors alone accounts for only a portion of the variance. However, for me these books highlighted the influence of financial stability, geographic mobility, and premarital education on family strength. The robust relationship between education (income) and marital satisfaction may be underappreciated in the psychological literature. Couples without economic stability will experience stressors that may tax their abilities to maintain a family. Cherlin's point on the "M-factor" suggests that psychologists need to consider the lack of external social supports and its relationship to marital strain.

Finally, Cahn and Carbone highlight directly (and Cherlin supports indirectly) the importance of premarital education and thinking through marital decisions carefully. Cherlin's advice on marriage is to "slow down." Psychologists have a lot to offer educationally in terms of helping people make decisions about whether to marry, whom to marry, or how to prepare for marriage.

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A Year of Trying to Live Happily

A Review of *The Happiness Project*, by Gretchen Rubin

Samuel Knapp, EdD, ABPP

Gretchen Rubin is a professional writer who spent one year trying to increase her happiness. The book is constructed around 12 chapters, each representing a month of her happiness project. For example, in January her project was to boost energy; in February it was to remember love; in March it was to aim higher. She used a "resolutions chart" to remind her of steps she intended to take.

The book has a ring of authenticity to it, in that she reveals her weaknesses and shortcomings, but also does not engage in false modesty about her strengths either. She includes e-mails and comments sent to her from those who posted on her happiness blog. She quotes philosophers, psychologists, writers, and others selectively and appropriately. She uses this knowledge to guide her particular projects and to interpret her experiences.

Near the beginning of the book she lists 12 commandments for happiness and 20-plus "secrets of adulthood." These brief aphorisms have little value standing alone in a list (e.g., "Be Gretchen," "Enjoy the process," or "Do it now"). However, she gives them life by linking them to specific situations. For example, when preparing for her child's birthday party starts to stress her out, she reminds herself to "enjoy the process," thus converting an annoying chore into a nice experience.

She has two difficult tasks at the beginning of the book. First she needs to define happiness. On the one hand it would seem important to address the definition of happiness in some detail. On the other hand, she risks boring the reader if she reviews too deeply the thousands of philosophical, literary, and psychological commentaries on this topic. I think she handled this issue adequately by accepting the sense of happiness as it is ordinarily used in everyday conversation.

The second difficult task it to explain why she chose this project. She started the year as a reasonably happy and blessed woman with a good family, good health, and a successful career. So the question arises as to why to start a happiness project. She does this well by explaining that she "wanted to perfect my character" (p. 5) and "to conquer my particular faults and limitations" (p. 4). Later she expands on this idea.

> Striving to be happy isn't a selfish act. After all, one of the main reasons that I set to become happier in the first place was that I figure that I'd have an easier time behaving myself properly if I felt less anxious, irritated, resentful, and angry; when I reflect on the people I knew, the happier people were more kind, more generous, and more fun. By being happy myself, I'd help make other people happy (p. 148).

In a manner similar to Thoreau on Walden Pond, she is trying to live mindfully and deliberately.

Two of her happiness activities struck me as particularly interesting. In one, she gives high praise for the parenting books of Adele Farber and Elaine Mazlish for giving her strategies for helping her children, and examples where they helped her frame more positive responses to situations involving them. My sense is that high quality parenting books of this nature can help good parents become even better parents. One of the key strategies used was to express empathy with children and to help them accurately identify their feelings.

The second strategy that struck me was that of savoring happiness. She notes that the grief stages developed by Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross are well known. "By contrast, I realized happiness has four stages. To eke out the most happiness from experience we must *anticipate* it, *savor* it as it unfolds, *express* happiness, and *recall* a happy memory" (p. 108). I am sure other readers would find other activities of hers as particularly appealing to them. Other readers may find different events or strategies that were particularly meaningful for them.

Some reviewers on the Amazon website expressed dislike for her structured and methodical approach to happiness. However, her goal is to describe her experiences, not to create a model for everyone to follow. Others were bothered because some pre-release articles about this book and author noted that Ms. Rubin comes from a family with considerable wealth. This does not bother me either, as she correctly notes, after basic living standards are met, the relationship between wealth and happiness is low. In hindsight, however, it might have been desirable for her to address this issue more directly.

This is not a hedonic romp of self-indulgence. Many activities are designed to strengthen her relationship with her husband and children and to become more efficient in her work. Her activities did not always work. For example, writing in a gratitude journal was not successful. "It started to feel forced and affected" (p. 205). There were several days in July where she questioned the wisdom of the whole project.

Striving for happiness didn't always feel good either. "In some ways, in fact, I had made myself less happy; I'd made myself far more aware of my faults, and I felt more disappointment with myself when I slipped up" (pp. 163-164). At one point she wrote "my happiness project was making me feel worse, not better. I was acutely aware of all the mistakes I was making" (p. 192).

So what did she learn from this happiness project? She renewed her appreciation of what she had ("I was struck by my good fortune in life," p. 136); began to savor moments of happiness ("As I become more aware of the preciousness of ordinary life, I was overwhelmed by the desire to capture the floods of moments that passed practically unnoticed," p. 198); increased her self-knowledge ("One of the biggest surprises of the happiness project was just how hard it was to know myself," p. 288); and became a better person ("I had to build happiness on the foundations of my character," p. 288). However, most importantly, she noted that "my Resolutions Chart is really my conscience" (p. 289). I sense that she might have entitled this book "The Virtue Project" and the content would have been similar.

I must remember to write a thank-you note to Gretchen Rubin in my gratitude journal.

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Moving Toward a Reflective Practice

A Review of *How Doctors Think*, by Jerome Groopman

Samuel Knapp, EdD, ABPP

Through a series of moving stories, Dr. Jerome Groopman describes the real thinking processes of physicians. The practice of medicine is an art as well as a science, meaning that all physicians need to use their individual judgment in deciding how to proceed in difficult or ambiguous cases. Even though the lay public is used to thinking of X-rays or other diagnostic tests as providing definitive proof of the existence of (or lack of) an injury or illness, Groopman cites studies that challenge this idea. (For example, even the best radiologists had a diagnostic accuracy rate of 95%; and radiologists will even disagree with their own earlier determination on a case 5% to 10% of the time.)

According to Groopman, many diagnostic errors are due to the inadequacy of diagnostic tests or the lack of scientific data to guide decision-making. However, other diagnostic errors occur because physicians, like all of us, are vulnerable to certain types of thinking errors or cognitive mistakes that reside "below the level of conscious thinking" (p. 263). Although most medical decisions are fairly routine, in difficult cases, "the physician's inner state, his state of tension, enters into and strongly influences his clinical judgment and actions" (p. 36).

Groopman describes these thinking errors by referencing the work of psychologists Daniel Kahneman, Amos Tversky, and others who identified thinking habits, shortcuts, or heuristics, that all people engage in such as the availability heuristic ("the tendency to judge the likelihood of an event by the ease with which relevant examples come to mind," p. 64), anchoring (being unduly influenced by an arbitrary starting point), or the confirmation bias ("confirming what you expect to find by selectively accepting or ignoring information," p. 65). These thinking habits sometimes cause thinking errors.

He describes examples where the thinking errors led to a misdiagnosis, but also where physicians were able to compensate for such thinking errors, leading to good outcomes. In reading this book, I found myself involved in the lives and health issues of the patients described. I was also moved by the acts of kindness and competence that Groopman described, such as the oncologist who "feels a desperate urge to always do the right thing" (p. 250), or the busy and renowned specialist who insisted that the discouraged patient take her time in telling her entire story ("I want to hear your story, in your own words," p. 12). This is an engaging way to learn about thinking errors and the practice of medicine as well.

Furthermore many parallels exist between the demands placed on psychologists and those on physicians. For example, physicians (and psychologists) may be influenced by the confirmation bias or by the affective error, which is "a wish for a certain outcome" (p. 66). That is, "we tend to prefer what we hope will happen to the less appealing alternatives [and] . . . lull ourselves into thinking what we wish for will occur [and over-] value information highly that fulfills our desires" (p. 47). Or physicians may be influenced by search satisfaction, which is "a natural cognitive tendency to stop searching, and therefore stop thinking, when one makes a major finding" (p. 185).

Physicians are taught that medical treatment goes on a linear path from diagnosis to treatment and to rely on algorithms or decision trees for accuracy in making many diagnoses. In getting that diagnosis they are taught "Occam's razor" (i.e., look for the simplest explanation that can explain symptoms), and the adage that when you hear hoofbeats, don't think of zebras (i.e., look for the most common sources of a symptom instead of pursuing esoteric or rare disorders). However, Groopman notes that the diagnostic process is not always linear and that failed treatments sometimes provide the information necessary to reach the correct diagnosis. Occam's razor does not always apply (the simplest explanation is wrong); and sometimes hoofbeats do mean zebras (the rare diagnosis is the correct one).

Groopman's work has triggered introspective accounts from physicians on how to mitigate the impact of these thinking errors (see, for example, Pauker & Wong, 2010). Although subsequent researchers may disagree with some of Groopman's conclusions concerning the impact of heuristics on medical decision-making, all should agree with his emphasis on reflectivity, a willingness to rethink diagnoses and treatment plans in light of new information, and the importance of considering context (the individual patient and other interacting characteristics of the case).

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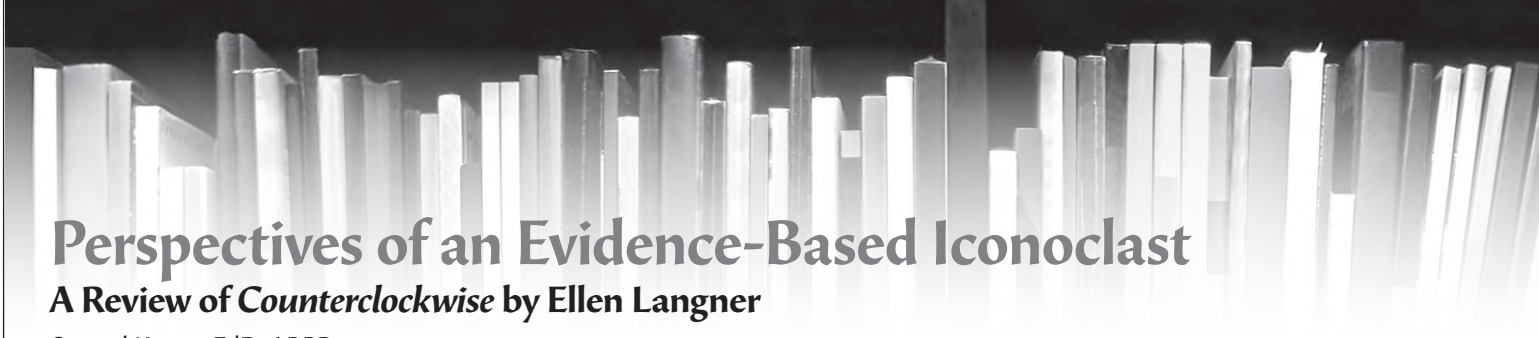

Perspectives of an Evidence-Based Iconoclast

A Review of *Counterclockwise* by Ellen Langner

Samuel Knapp, EdD, ABPP

Psychologist Ellen Langner is well known for her research on mindfulness, and also for her work with Judy Rodin in nursing homes, where the sense of life satisfaction, control, and well-being increased when residents were given more choices, in even minor details of their lives. In this book she describes another experiment from the late 1970s in which two groups of older men went away for a weekend and then relived a week as if it were 1959. One group was told to act as if it were 1959, another group just reminisced about 1959. At the end of the week, the group who acted as if it were 1959 (when they were 20 years younger) was more active and looked younger than the other group. Both of these experiments illustrated that "small changes can make large differences" (p. 15).

In this well written and well organized book, Langner uses this study (as well as other research, anecdotes, and her experiences with her own parents) to introduce the "psychology of possibility," or the psychology of what could be. "Knowing what is and knowing what can be are not the same thing" (p. 15). For example, the notion that severe limitations are inevitable among older adults is the result of culturally pervasive, but often factually inaccurate, assumptions. We internalize expectations of society and limit their worldviews and life potential.

The psychology of possibility first requires that we begin with the assumption that we do not know what we can do or become. Rather than starting from the status quo, it argues for a starting point of what we would like to be. From that beginning, we can ask how we might reach that goal or make progress toward it. It's a subtle change in thinking, although not difficult to make once we realize how stuck we are in culture, language, and modes of thought that limit our potential (p. 15)

She cautions against accepting without question the findings of science or the opinions of experts on the presumed limited capacities of all older adults. She reviews the nature of scientific research (covering correlations, regression to the mean, subject recruitment, external validity) and notes how research involves numerous "hidden decisions" (how subjects are chosen, how issues are framed, under what circumstances the experiment is conducted, etc.) that can impact outcomes substantially. In addition, most science looks for group means (averages) and does not count on individual variation. Often it relies on observational data or correlations. However, "None of us is 'us' " (p. 55), meaning none of us fit the group average on all dimensions and we all have areas of individual variation.

Also, scientists and physicians, like all of us, are vulnerable to thinking errors, such as the confirmation bias, thus slanting the results and interpretation of scientific data. For example, the impact of anchoring on medical decisions was illustrated in an experiment when two diagnostic options were presented. The option labeled as a second opinion was accepted as valid as 2.5 on a scale of 1 to 10. But if two of the opinions were presented without being labeled, the same opinion will be accepted as a 5. The net effect, she warns, is that data that should more appropriately be presented with caveats indicating that it is likely to be true, true for many individuals, or possibly true in certain contexts gets treated as absolute infallible truths. Consequently, we need to avoid the "mindless consumption of health information" (p. 56).

Based in part on misrepresentations of science, Langner claims that our culture has implicit assumptions that health is entirely a medical phenomenon and physicians alone should direct health care. Although she appreciates the medical profession (to a certain point), she also recognizes its limitations if it does not consider the unique experiences and strengths of the patient. Labels or roles, such as assistant or patient, tend to undermine perceived competence and create a self-induced dependence. Diagnoses are not worthless, but they should not override or dictate our experiences.

There is the danger of accepting limitations without thinking. Contexts may incline primes that trigger stereotyped ideas about aging, such as passivity, dependency, or disability. "If we are in contexts that prime old age, we will age more quickly" (p. 121). Without awareness we may accept negative stereotypes about aging to the point they become self-fulfilling prophecies. Health professionals may treat illnesses less aggressively ("If the old are expected to decline physically, it is unlikely they will be given the extra medical attention that could make a difference," p. 167), and older adults may accept the loss of control over their lives too quickly.

This provocative book is well worth reading.

References

Langner, E. (2009). *Counterclockwise*. New York: Ballantine.

What Are the Real Sources of Love, Character and Achievement?

A Review of *The Social Animal*, by David Brooks

Samuel Knapp, EdD, ABPP

David Brooks, a *New York Times* columnist, follows the fictional characters of Erica and Harold throughout their lives. He goes beyond the surface story of what they did and whom they met, and explains the deeper story of the social and psychological forces that influenced them. According to Brooks, "the unconscious matters most." However, Brooks uses the word "unconscious" in a unique way to refer to anything outside of conscious awareness including social pressures, intuitive reactions, or preconscious thoughts.

The purpose of the book is to help people develop a more sophisticated and in-depth understanding of human nature. Most people, including policymakers, have a view of human nature that is overly simplistic. They think primarily in terms of punishment and rewards and fail to see the complexity of factors that influence human behavior, including drives for affiliation, competence, or virtue.

The topics covered parallel those in a good lifespan psychology textbook, such as the development of empathy (including mirror neurons); mate choice and marital success; impact of poverty on intellectual and social development; parenting (attachment theory and Mary Ainsworth's work); factors related to academic success (including Carol Dweck's theories on incremental intelligence); the impact of childhood temperament on personality; "bounded rationality"(Kahneman's work on cognitive heuristics); the impact of culture on behavior; and other topics. Brooks was up-to-date and accurate in his descriptions of the science of psychology, although there were some times that I wished he had added some caveats about the limits of a particular finding.

One example of what I found useful dealt with the review of the pervasive impact of the culture of poverty on individual destiny. In hindsight, Brooks didn't say much that I didn't already know. But he integrated the data very well and helped me think through my attitude towards poverty. As noted in the review of books on marriage, poverty, or diminished economic expectations have a serious and negative impact on marriage.

He refers to poverty as an "emergent system," meaning that it is the result of the interaction of many different individual factors that produce something greater than its individual parts. Poverty could be explained (in part at least for some people) by discrimination and stigma, lack of social connections, poor work habits, bad luck, government policies, lack of access to adequate health care, increased stress, disorganized and unsafe neighborhoods, bad parenting and exposure to abuse, poor nutrition, lack of intelligence, or lack of adequate schools. Addressing one of these factors, in isolation, will reduce poverty for some people, but not for most.

For many people education can be a gateway out of poverty. But children from educated families enter school with a higher level of educational preparedness, probably reflecting the different ways that educated families raise their children. For example, educated parents speak far more to their children than less educated families. They take special efforts to enrich their lives through educational trips, summer camps, enrichment programs, music lessons, or other activities. (Brooks suggests that at times they may over do it.) As a result 8.6% of children from the bottom quarter of the population in terms of income go on to earn a college degree, compared to 75% of children from the top quarter.

I would recommend this book to friends who want to learn something current about basic psychology. I could see this book being used as an adjunctive text in an introduction to psychology or lifespan psychology course. Finally, I think that I benefited from reading the book because it reintroduced me to fields of psychology that I had not thought about for a while; also the integration of information on certain topics (such as on poverty) was helpful.

References

Brooks, D. (2011). ***The social animal: The hidden sources of love, character, and achievement.*** New York: Random House.

Classifieds

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PHOENIX THERAPY SERVICES is a Behavioral Health Organization, primarily serving the needs of the geriatric population. Our patients are residents in a variety of living environments, and are in need of services to help them through adjustment issues, depression, early signs of dementia as well as other behavioral health issues.

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Award Winners

The 2011 winners of several student awards and poster session awards were honored at the PPA convention in June.

▲ *The winners of the Community Service Project Award, sponsored by PPAGS, were four students from Chestnut Hill College and their advisor, Dr. Ana Caro. PPAGS chair Amy André McNamee presented the award. Pictured left-to-right are Ms. McNamee, Aliece Chen, Margarita Saenz, Dr. Caro, Nouf Zarie, and Elzbieta Jarzabek. Their project was entitled "Immigration, Acculturation, and Parenting: Bridging the Gap Between Immigrant Parents and Their Children."*

Drs. Eric Affsprung (left) and William Harrar, along with Dr. Jeffrey Long (not pictured) of Bloomsburg University, won the Science-Practice Research Poster Session Award. Their work was entitled "Assessing Campus Counseling Needs." ▸

Dr. Mark McGowan, left, presented the Student Research Poster Session Awards to Parin Patel, a graduate student at Chestnut Hill College, and Stephanie Mannon, an undergraduate at Lebanon Valley College, joined by her professor, Dr. Louis Laguna. Ms. Patel's poster was entitled "Measuring the Concurrent, Convergent, and Incremental Validity of a New Adult ADHD Symptom Measure." Ms. Mannon's poster was entitled, "Pre-Employment Screening of Police Officers: Is the MMPI-2-K-Scale a Useful Predictor of Performance?"

In Memoriam

DR. WILLIAM E. WILSON, of Butler County, died in September at age 85. Dr. Wilson had served as President of PPA in 1978–79, as the representative from Pennsylvania to the APA Council of Representatives from 1980 through 1982, and on the PennPsyPAC Board of Directors from 1983 to 1990. He received PPA's Award for Distinguished Service in 1979 and was nationally recognized for his advocacy work for psychology with the Karl F. Heiser Award in 1997. Dr. Wilson had been especially active in the effort for psychologists to win "freedom of choice" under state insurance policies (which allowed patients access to psychological services in their health care plans) and in the effort for psychologists to gain eligibility for reimbursement under Medicare. He had been a member of PPA since 1954. He earned his PhD degree in clinical psychology from Penn State in 1962. Dr. Wilson had been in independent practice for many years and only discontinued his practice a few years ago. Earlier in his career he worked at Torrence State Hospital and the Butler County Mental Hygiene Clinic. He was known for his kindness, intelligence, and belief in the ability of psychological services to improve public welfare. He will be greatly missed.

DR. MILDRED GORDON died in August in Reading, where she had lived and worked for many years. She earned her PhD in psychiatry and psychology from the Medical College of Pennsylvania in 1972. She worked at the Reading Hospital and Medical Center ever since then and maintained a part-time private practice as well. She was also an assistant professor of psychiatry at Temple University Medical School. Prior to her doctorate she taught Latin, French, German, chemistry, math, and physics at the secondary school level. She had been a member of PPA since 1974.

Nominations Needed For Four Awards

Criteria and applications for these awards are available on the PPA website, www.PaPsy.org.

Several PPA committees are still seeking nominees for awards for 2012. For each nomination you would like to make for the categories below, please prepare a one-page narrative describing the person's contributions and send the information by the deadline listed to the PPA office.

Award for Distinguished Contributions to School Psychology: The School Psychology Board nominates a candidate annually for this award. Deadline for entries is **December 31, 2011.**

Psychology in the Media Award: Members of the Pennsylvania Psychological Association and members of the media in Pennsylvania who have presented psychology and psychological issues to the public are encouraged to apply for the 2012 Psychology in the Media Award. Applicants who have received this award in the past are not eligible. Deadline for entries is **December 31, 2011.**

Early Career Psychologist of the Year Award to be given to a Pennsylvania early career psychologist (ECP) who, in his or her practice, is making a significant contribution to the practice of psychology in Pennsylvania. Deadline for entries is **January 31, 2012.**

Student Multiculturalism Award to be given to a psychology student who is attending school in Pennsylvania and who produced a distinguished psychology-related work on issues surrounding multiculturalism, diversity, advocacy, and/or social justice. Deadline for entries is **January 31, 2012.**

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2011/12 CE Calendar

The following programs are being offered either through co-sponsorship or solely by PPA.

November 3 – 4, 2011
Fall Continuing Education and Ethics Conference
Exton, PA
Marti Evans (717) 232-3817

March 1 – 2, 2012
Spring Continuing Education and Ethics Conference
Lancaster, PA
Marti Evans (717) 232-3817

June 20 – 23, 2012
Annual Convention
Hilton Harrisburg
Harrisburg, PA
Marti Evans (717) 232-3817

Podcast
A Conversation on Positive Ethics with Dr. Sam Knapp and Dr. John Gavazzi
Contact: ppa@PaPsy.org

For CE programs sponsored by one of the Regional Psychological Associations in Pennsylvania, visit http://www.PaPsy.org/resources/regional.html.

Registration materials and further conference information will be mailed to all members.

If you have additional questions, please contact Marti Evans at the PPA office.

also available at www.PaPsy.org – HOME STUDY CE COURSES

*Ethical Practice Is Multicultural Practice** – NEW!
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*Ethics and Boundaries**
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Readings in Multiculturalism
4 CE Credits

*Pennsylvania's Psychology Licensing Law, Regulations and Ethics**
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***This program qualifies for three contact hours for the ethics requirement as mandated by the Pennsylvania State Board of Psychology.**

For all Home Study CE Courses above contact: Katie Boyer (717) 232-3817, secretary@PaPsy.org.