

Book reviews

Fitzpatrick, Mary Anne (1988) *Between Husbands and Wives: Communication in Marriage*, Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications; pp. 281.

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Decades of research on marriage have revealed the varied and complex nature of marital relationships. The studies reported in Mary Anne Fitzpatrick's *Between Husbands and Wives* send the clear and important message that married couples are not all alike; they vary with respect to a number of dimensions, including the criteria for satisfaction. Beginning with an overview of marital interaction research, Fitzpatrick provides us with the conceptual background and framework for the development of marital types. She thoroughly describes the dimensions that characterize the Traditional, Independent and Separate couple types and how the categories came to be identified. She predicts how the types will differ with respect to their use and interpretation of a wide variety of communicative behaviors and describes how the predictions were tested in a series of studies. The reader who seeks a well organized and cohesive summary of research on Fitzpatrick's typology will consider this book extremely valuable.

In her critique of marital satisfaction research, Fitzpatrick convincingly argues that in descriptive measures of marital satisfaction, 'the researcher makes many assumptions about what makes a marriage happy' (p. 34) and that 'these factors do not necessarily work in the same manner for all couples' (p. 35). Researchers of relationships would not deny this, and several who are not mentioned even promote the idea (e.g., Barbara Montgomery). They may, however, be dismayed to learn that, 'in many ways, social scientists approach marital relationships in the manner of 1940s movies, in which marriage was the enouement; as the music welled up and the credits began to roll, the couple walked off into the sunset and "lived happily ever after"'. Some theorists consider that couples might also live unhappily ever after, but that was the extent of it' (p. 59). Who are these social scientists that take such a simplistic view of marriage? There must be some literature that this reviewer has missed, because most studies of marriage seem to reveal the complexity of relationships, rather than their simplicity.

Fitzpatrick also argues that by focusing only on those marriages with spouses who 'agree that they are either happily or unhappily married' (p. 36), marital satisfaction research often ignores those couples with partners who disagree or are in the middle range. Paradoxically, in attempting to redress this imbalance, Fitzpatrick finds a much clearer and more cohesive picture of the marriages with spouses who agree that they are either Traditionals, Separates, or Independents than with those who disagree. As in some of the studies criticized, we are unfortunately left with quite a large group of couples (at least 40 percent; pp. 78-9, 83), who, while not totally ignored, are not very well understood.

Despite Fitzpatrick's disparaging view of other marital interaction research, a reader cannot help but be impressed by the broad range of methodologies approached, statistical techniques applied and the domains of communication researched in her program of research on marital types. Through the use of 'perceptual tests and questionnaires, direct observations of verbal and nonverbal communication both in laboratories and in homes, and comparisons of spouse and stranger interactions' (pp. 256-7), Fitzpatrick has fulfilled the main objective of her research

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program, namely, 'to demonstrate that couples can be categorized and such categorizations predict communication behaviors and outcomes' (p. 257).

By categorizing couples, Fitzpatrick also aims to demonstrate that marital satisfaction (or 'success') should not be the only criterion by which we classify couples and that patterns of behavior that satisfy some couples may not be satisfying to others. These aims are accomplished, for the most part. In only a few noteworthy cases does she appear to ignore her own message. Predicting how couple types differ according to Spanier's Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), Fitzpatrick writes, '... we expect Traditional couples to have higher dyadic adjustment scores than other couple types because of the bias of the scales' (pp. 101–2). Later, she asks, 'Who is the happiest of them all? The unambiguous answer to this question is that the Pure-type Traditionals experience the highest levels of dyadic adjustment of all the types of couples in the typology' (p. 107). The Traditionals live 'happily ever after' without a word about the bias of the scales again. What begins as a question of validating the typology and predicting ways in which the types may differ on the DAS concludes with a statement about marital happiness that does not seem compatible either with her critique of the scale or with the purpose of the studies.

Likewise, Fitzpatrick states that, contrary to post-1960s beliefs about relationships, research with the typology 'clearly indicates that openness in disclosing oneself to the spouse is not an effective marital communication strategy for all couples' (p. 201). She then concludes, 'Moderation in the degree and kind of self-disclosure seems to lead to more satisfaction in marriage' (p. 202). Aside from the fact that other unnamed reviewers of the self-disclosure literature reach the same conclusion, she again begins with the task of distinguishing the marital types and ends with a prescription for marital satisfaction.

Although the research fulfills the author's primary goals, the book could have been edited with more care. It's curious that such important contributions as David Kenny's Social Relations Model and Sally Planalp's relational schemata are listed in the references but are not found in the text that relates to them. This is particularly unfortunate considering the originality of their contributions. Other examples of an inattentive editorial hand are several tables (Tables 3.2, 7.2, 7.8, 7.9, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4) which are only alluded to in the text, the assimilation of which is left as an exercise to the reader.

Apparent contradictions and editorial oversights aside, the more substantive critique of Fitzpatrick's typology is made by the author herself. She admits, 'Although strong in description and prediction, the typology has been less useful in explaining the nature of marriage' (p. 253). As such, the purpose of the book's Epilogue is to 'offer an explanation of marriage based on this typology' (p. 254). In it, she suggests treating the basic marital orientations as 'marital schemata', knowledge structures that represent the external world of marriage and provide guidelines about how to interpret incoming data' (p. 255). Offering what appears to be an explanation using this approach in a previous section, Fitzpatrick states, 'The Separates are the least accurate in decoding the emotional communications of their spouses because close emotional connections are not part of the Separate schema of marriage' (p. 213). That is almost like saying Separates are the least accurate because they are Separates. Although Fitzpatrick's theoretical extension provides several good arguments for adopting a social cognitive approach, it seems more like another way to assign yet another set of labels to the marital types than an explanation of marriage.

In the Foreword, David Reiss also points to the need for explanation when he

poses the unanswered questions, '... where do these schemata come from? And how do prospective marital partners select from among them the regnant schema to guide the evolution of their own relationship?' But, he counters, 'It is the function of a good scientific story to raise questions, not to answer them' (p. 17). Fitzpatrick concurs by stating that 'the scholar must have a sense that additional work on the typology will expand what we know about marital and family processes. I believe that the marital typology has this heuristic potential' (p. 257). That is, perhaps, the greatest strength of the typology. Not only does it raise vital and profound questions, but in constructing it, Fitzpatrick has also provided us with the tools to answer them. In this sense, Fitzpatrick's accomplishments far surpass her stated goals.

L.K.A.

Noller, P. & Fitzpatrick, M.A. (eds) (1988) *Perspectives on Marital Interaction*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd, pp. x + 406.

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This is a fine collection of essays on marital interaction. The volume brings together different disciplines, approaches and methodologies and yet the product is cohesive and integrative. Noller & Fitzpatrick's book evolved from an acquaintance made at one of the Conferences on Personal Relationships and the book reflects the sort of international and interdisciplinary collaboration that such conferences and the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* have hoped to inspire. The chapters consist of research monographs which describe various authors' programmatic work. The authors in the volume share a common interest in interaction processes, specifically referring to such factors as self-disclosure, emotional expression, conflict, nonverbal communication and interpersonal perception. Although different methodologies are represented (i.e. self-report and observational), the emphasis is on quantitative interaction analysis, for example, the type of work for which Harold Raush and John Gottman are well known.

The book is accessible to the widest possible audience. It provides enough basic background to be usable as an advanced text, it has appropriate detail for a reference book, it makes clear theoretical and methodological arguments, and it gives special attention to clinical practice and other applied situations. Although it is a good source book for specialists, the authors treat the average reader kindly. The chapters contain useful summaries, have extended introductions, and conclude with practical implications. Although methodological as well as content issues are discussed, the chapters are not overburdened with methodological detail. For an edited volume, the book is surprisingly coherent. This results from the readability and parallel organization of the chapters, frequent cross-referencing among authors, a strong overlap in the research questions investigated, the encompassing overview of marital research provided by Fitzpatrick and the useful synthesis of the book's content by Noller.

Several of the chapters describe interaction patterns associated with marital adjustment, sex and other factors. For example, a chapter on conflict resolution by Schaap, Buunk & Kerkstra examines conflict styles through a triangulation of methods, including self-report scales, sequential analysis of observed discussions,