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Book Review: Floyd, K. (2006). *Communicating Affection: Interpersonal Behavior and Social Context*. New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 222. ISBN: 978-0-521-73174-4

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“Oh, Lizzy! Do anything rather than marry without affection,” Jane famously said to her sister Elizabeth in the Jane Austin classic *Pride and Prejudice*. As Jane shows it is intuition, and most importantly research, that tells us that affection is key to strong and enduring relationships. Yet Kory Floyd argues in *Communicating Affection* that we lack a comprehensive and all-inclusive framework for studying affection, as previous research addresses only aspects of affection and fails to provide a theory that explains the phenomenon in its entirety. Floyd’s work synthesizes a broad corpus of literature to which he is a dominant contributor and identifies questions which have been previously unanswered and/or underanswered. Floyd thus argues for his tentatively named affection exchange theory (based on a neo-Darwinian framework) to address these under- and unanswered questions. In many ways this book is effective, yet in arguing for a comprehensive theory the work needs to be more reflective of the diversity of relational experiences, when giving illustrative examples to elaborate the finer points of theory.

Communicating Affection has eight chapters the first six of which are an *integrative review* of affection literature across disciplines and methodologies. The book falls into four two-chapter sections. Chapter 1 conceptually defines affectionate communication whereas Chapter 2 considers how various theories have operationalized affection in human experience. Chapters 3 and 4 examine how communication has been encoded and decoded, although Floyd notes the latter is less explored in the literature. Chapter 5 explores the benefits of expressing and receiving affection and Chapter 6 considers the risks. In Chapter 7, Floyd offers his neo-Darwinian theory which in Chapter 8 culminates in six “qualified conclusions” that aim to distill our understanding of affection. Floyd notes that the sum of this research constitutes data on more than 8,000 people, aged 12 to 96 years, and representing multiple ethnic, socioeconomic, relational, and educational experiences (p. xiv). However, although Floyd claims a diversity of relational experiences are represented, little attention is paid to homosexual relationships despite Floyd’s attention to homosexuality as a factor in other research writings. This critique will be explored in addition to an assessment of the book’s strength subsequent to a discussion of the chapters.

As expressed before, Chapter 1 provides a conceptual definition of affection, offers orienting questions for investigation of the topic, and provides a guide to the remaining chapters. Chapter 2 operationalizes how different bioevolutionary and sociocultural theoretical frameworks have measured and explained affection. Floyd argues that there are two problems with previous research efforts into affection. First, Floyd argues that many previous affection research studies have been exploratory and atheoretic and thus

have not advanced existing theories or established new theories of affection. The second portion of research studies, Floyd argues, use various theories to study different singular aspects of affection, so taken cumulatively, these studies fail to capture how affection operates as a whole. This chapter yields many opportunities for examples of what Floyd talks about in his argument on divided theoretical focus. For example, expectancy violations theory may predict whether an expression of affection is rewarded or punished but does not aim to explain why anorexics benefit from affectionate touch, though somatosensory affectional deprivation theory does. This is the beginning of his call for a higher order theory.

Chapter 3 examines how communication has been encoded. Floyd defines encoding in terms of nonverbal and verbal messages but also notes how social support is a significant means of encoding affectionate messages. An example of social support signaling affection could be that a father does not say "I love you" or express affection through physical action (e.g., hugging), but does make sure that his son gets to all of his baseball games. This discussion will resonate with readers who come from less emotionally expressive cultures. Chapter 4 focuses on how receivers decode affectionate messages. Floyd notes that less research is done on decoding than encoding, perhaps because people assume that messages are decoded congruent to how they are encoded. Despite having less research to work with, as in contrast with encoding literature, the chapter has content and depth on par with any other chapter of the book. Floyd is right to point out this shortcoming in the literature because (as many new students to communication will tell you) the only message that counts is the message that is received.

Chapters 5 and 6 consider the benefits and risks associated with communicating affection. The literature in these two chapters on the benefits/risks of affection will be most familiar to those teaching interpersonal, relational, or family communication as this is the literature most often cited in textbooks to affirm the connection communication and health. One omission in the risks chapter that could frustrate the critical reader is when the literature on HIV positive individuals is presented. This issue will be explored subsequently in this review.

Chapter 7 presents Floyd's affection exchange theory. He notes that this theory is neo-Darwinian because the theory assumes a modern reading of Darwin and does not directly apply the theory of natural selection though this theory is grounded in axioms from this body of thought. There are five postulates to this theory which are noted here and eight accompanying subpostulates which will I will leave unarticulated for the sake of brevity: (a) the need and capacity for affection are inborn; (b) affectionate feelings and affectionate expressions are distinct experiences that often, but need not, covary; (c) affectionate communication is adaptive with respect to human viability and fertility; (d) humans vary in their optimal tolerances for affection and affectionate behavior; and (e) conveying or receiving affectionate behaviors that violate one's range of optimal tolerance initiates noticeable sympathetic nervous system arousal and further initiates a cognitive appraisal of the same (Floyd,

pp. 161-184). The theory connects affection to survival and reproduction and in so doing establishes affectionate communication study as central to the human condition. Yet at the same time the book's emphasis on heterosexual reproduction places those outside of that experience (e.g., gays and lesbians) in a less articulated position. Chapter 8 effectively extracts six qualified conclusions which are in and of themselves a good way to connect students and novice readers to this literature base.

Floyd's work is significant for its careful synthesis of the literature and its willingness to address the gaps through theory creation. His questions, which are typed in bold, are as relevant to the greater study of human communication as they are to affectionate communication. For instance, in one question Floyd asks, "What factors influence people's decisions to convey affection through written versus spoken means?" (p. 32). A question such as this speaks to goals, motivations, processes of encoding/decoding, pragmatics, culture, and the mitigation of benefits and risks. Having questions that identify theoretical gaps be displayed so prominently will lead readers to consider why these questions have not been sufficiently explored and what that says about the assumptions and emphases of those actively studying affection within the discipline.

At the same time book also leaves unresolved questions in the mind of the critical reader. Much of the discussion of relationships happens within a heterosexual framework, even when situations call for the going beyond this experience. For example, in Chapter 6 a discussion of the "Risk of Disease Transmission" for senders and receivers speaks of how HIV-positive parents' fear of transmission might lead them to withhold affection for fear of transmitting the disease to children. This section should also note that HIV-positive individuals potentially risk losing relationships and affection on disclosing their HIV status to partners who might fear contracting the virus. Furthermore, given that physical health benefits are shown to come from receiving affection, how is the health of HIV/AIDS patients compromised when they do not receive adequate touch? Research shows that health professionals still harbor fears that could hinder their interactions with such individuals (Pilar Serrano-Gallardo & Giménez-Maroto, 2006). One is left to wonder how the deaths of countless AIDS victims, in particular those from the gay community, who Ehrenfeld (1991) argues were marginalized by mainstream society's misguided perception that they were somehow culpable for their condition, were hastened by the social and physical isolation that comes with marginalization. To only consider the risk that HIV positive individuals pose as potential transmitters of a virus overlooks how a group of people have been potentially, systematically denied affection.

The book also assumes heterosexuality on the part of characters in scenarios used to make points about expectancy violations theory and affection exchange theory. First, talking about men and affection Floyd notes, "Thus, a given behavior (e.g., bear hug) that represents and expectancy confirmation in one type of relationship (e.g., between brothers) may qualify as an expectancy violation in a different relationship type (e.g., between male friends; see Morman & Floyd, 1998)" (p. 143). This same hug would perhaps not be an expectancy violation between gay male friends. To name this action as a potential

expectancy violation assumes that both men are heterosexual and/or that there is a degree of homophobia operating in the background. Similarly, when discussing affection exchange theory Floyd states, "Thus, in this example, the same threshold-violating hug from Sarah's female friend Jill would not be expected to produce as intense a stress response, given the lesser general probability that Jill is romantically interested in Sarah than that James is" (p. 183). This example again assumes heterosexuality on the parts of Sarah, James, and Jill, because that is the premise on which the probability of a less stressful response seems to rest. Cumulatively, these examples are problematic because they assume subjects heterosexuality and do not directly name social forces (i.e., homophobia, assumptions of sexual orientation) that have significant bearing on how and with whom affection is exchanged. In addition, these examples obscure the fact that Floyd has examined the factor of homosexuality in affection research (Floyd, 2000; Floyd, Sargent, & Di Corcia, 2004)

With regards to Floyd's affection exchange theory, readers will appreciate that for those who do not couple bond with the goal of procreation, that this does not exclude them from the theory. As a precursor to the theory, Floyd notes that even if you do not or cannot reproduce it does not mean that your sex drive is maladaptive. Included as examples of those who do not reproduce are those who are celibate, sterile, or post-menopausal and one would also expect that gay and lesbian individuals who do not aim to have biological children would be included with this group, although they are not. Also, under postulate four, Floyd notes a plausible hypothesis suggested by sub-postulate 4B is that a child's possibility of reproducing is a predictor of the amount of affectionate communication that they receive from a parent (Floyd et al. 2004). This would seem to speak to the experience of gays and lesbians who report being rejected by parents. Perhaps, their parents perceive that they are being denied the chance at having grandchildren and do not recognize that many gays and lesbians do pursue parenthood. Many have argued that childless lesbians and gays serve an important role in the family as auxiliary child caretakers who help ensure the strength and continuation of their family lines. As this theory links the pursuit of affection in romantic relationships to the greater goals of procreation and survival it could be reasoned that childless gays and lesbians, who support their families' procreation and survival goals as caregivers, would seek out partners with a similar capacity for caregiving and affection. These critiques in no way are meant to diminish the work done by Floyd, for his research suggests that he is reflective of how factors such as sexual orientation affect the communication of affection even though they may not be elaborated as directly as they could be in this book. The theory, tentatively named affection exchange theory, has great value for resolving some of the nagging questions about human behavior and it works well to root affectionate communication as central to accomplishing core human goals. That said, I look forward to how elaborations of this theory will more explicitly handle and make a place for those that vary from the heterosexual relationship model. Also, the gaps identified in this review are from one reader's frame of

reference and as other critical readers engage with this work it can only strengthen the theory base in this subject.

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Charlés, L. L. (2008). *When the Shooting Stopped. Crisis Negotiation at Jefferson High School*. Lanham, MA: Rowan & Littlefield. pp. 144. ISBN: 978-0-7425-6088-8.

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Laurie Charlés's book on crisis negotiation is a very vividly written essay on the communication between the police and a hostage taker that happened during a high school hostage taking in the 1990s. Such hostage situations continue to be a tragic reality all over the world; following this incident at least more than 50 incidents have occurred in the United States alone (http://www2.indystar.com/library/factfiles/crime/school_violence/school_shootings.html).

This particular incident starts when a dropout student, named Lewis, decides to go on a rampage at his former high school out of revenge for failing to be awarded his high school diploma. His life has been a mess ever since: He lost his girlfriend and recently,