



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION, COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

TRANSITIONING HOME

Military Couples May Face Unexpected Challenges in Their Relationship After Deployment

Troops overseas often want nothing more than to get back home to loved ones—but the re-union period can be more emotionally taxing than the deployment itself.

Professor Leanne Knobloch studies how people communicate within close relationships. More specifically, she examines how people's communication both shapes and reflects the ways they think about their relationships. Her research has focused on times of transition because individuals are more aware of their relationships when those relationships are in flux.

Her most recent work focuses on how military families communicate after being reunited following deployment, and how romantic couples communicate following a depression diagnosis. Both lines of research provide important insights into how to help people have more satisfying relationships.

Returning service members are at a greater risk of both depressive symptoms and relationship distress, and research shows the two often go together. According to Professor Knobloch, "That's not a good thing, because individuals suffering from depressive symptoms really need the support of their romantic partner."

Knobloch and her colleague, Dr. Jennifer Theiss from Rutgers University, conducted two recent studies to identify the communication patterns that help military couples adjust more smoothly.

Participants were solicited through fliers circulated at reintegration workshops, through online forums, and through contacts with military chaplains, family readiness officers and

other military personnel. Couples were eligible for the study if one or both partners had returned home from deployment in the past 30 days. They completed an online questionnaire to report their experiences during reunion.

The findings, published in August 2011 in a special issue on military families in the *Journal of Family Psychology* and in an upcoming



Depressive symptoms and relationship troubles are both risks for returning service members; a study co-written by communication professor Leanne Knobloch suggests ways for preserving healthy relationships. (Photo by L. Brian Stauffer.)

ing article in the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, offer some advice for returning service members: 1) recognize the uncertainties you might have about the relationship and address them; and 2) anticipate sources of interference from your spouse or partner in everyday life and routines, and attempt to resolve them.

For example, just adjusting to being back among family members was challenging because the at-home partner learned to absorb the role responsibilities associated with parenting or managing household affairs. In short,

the returning service member may feel like a stranger in his/her own household and family.

Service members know that their absence has left a void during deployment, but the family has carried on, so to speak, during that absence. The "life" of the family continues: children grow and develop, partners become more independent, etc. The returning service member may feel different, due to their experiences during deployment, but not ready to reveal "what really happened" or even know how to deal with any ordeals associated with deployment. At-home partners, too, change as a result of their time apart, causing stress on the relationship and in the family. Trying to co-parent again may also be a surprising challenge for the family, who may experience difficulty meshing their unique parenting styles.

Finally, partners may interfere with the routines that have been established during the deployment. Trying to "fit in" again, and making a place for the returning service member, was a cause for tension between partners. Trying to get back to "normal" within a family, where the "normal" has changed both during deployment and then again, once the service member re-entered the family full-time, seems to underlie the challenges reported by the service members and their partners.

The study's conclusions fit with a model of relational turbulence that Knobloch and others have created to understand transitions in relationships. Interestingly, she found that distress in the relationship was no more or less likely for couples who had been through

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headlines . . .

STUDYING AT A RESEARCH UNIVERSITY



David Tewksbury shows the image of his new office space in Lincoln Hall on his computer.

Spring is the time of year when millions of high school seniors in America are contemplating their future at a college or university. They have many factors to consider: the distance they want to travel from home; what's affordable for the family; the field of study they wish to pursue; and even, whether they will make new friends easily.

Among the issues they must ponder is whether they see themselves thriving at a research university or an institution with an exclusive focus on teaching, which likely translates into size of the institution. The University of Illinois is unabashedly a large research university. Students choosing to study here are making the choice to become part of the research enterprise. Sometimes, I wonder how much they think about that as they assemble their plans for study.

Indeed, attending a research university puts students squarely in the middle of the research process. I see this every day. Maybe the fact that we are a "Research One" institution is not the lure for incoming freshmen (or even that they know what that is). Once they are here, though, our hope is that they learn the unique value of studying at a research university.

On a relatively general level, I think our undergraduate students benefit from the fact that their teachers at Illinois are leaders in research. Our faculty and instructors are publishing today the research studies that will soon be in the curriculum of courses across the country and world.

Our students benefit from learning that new knowledge firsthand.

In addition, our students benefit from actively participating in research. They complete research projects for classes and they serve as assistants with professors and advanced PhD students.

Our faculty and graduate students today are studying issues as diverse as the institutional forces that affect the actions of emergency first responders, the verbal and visual elements of presidential rhetoric, and the factors that increase public participation in organ donor registries. They bring the ideas and energy that animate their research with them into the classroom every day.

In the Department of Communication, we are working to increase undergraduate participation in research. Our faculty and graduate students form research mentoring partnerships with interested undergraduates, providing valuable experiences for all concerned.

In these collaborations, our undergraduate students are helping with projects that include examination of the role of family communication in youth substance abuse, the quality of inter-racial interactions in primetime television programming, and the ways that people experience uncertainty in their intra-family relationships.

It is important to note that research often takes place outside of laboratories and by people who rarely wear white coats. Research within humanities and social science departments like ours has an unusually direct connection to the lives of our students. In communication, we study the mental, social, and cultural milieu in which we all live.

As a world leader in communication research, we think our students are uniquely well prepared to face the challenges of contemporary society.

David Tewksbury
Department Head

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Speaking of...Communication

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College of
Liberal Arts & Sciences
AT ILLINOIS

Website Facelift + Return to Lincoln Hall = Department Makeover

Our department has a new “FACE”! You may have noticed that the Web presence of the department has changed, dramatically. During the past year Professor Michelle Shumate has worked tirelessly with Web designers and a committee of faculty and students to develop a website that represents the array of things going on in the department, has a contemporary look, and is easy to navigate.

You will notice the “signature” orange and blue colors that student focus groups really liked. We have also introduced video clips of faculty, students and alumni talking about their experience(s) within the department.

We have engaged the help of current undergraduate students, under the direction of Professor Leanne Knobloch, who are providing up-to-date assistance with social media so that the website is current.

In a similar fashion, our three-year hiatus from Lincoln Hall will have come to an end, hopefully by the time you are reading this. After three years out of the building, along with more than a decade before that of planning and designing, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the departments of Sociology and Communication will move back to Lincoln Hall this summer. The new and improved building will have familiar features for those of you who remember it: Lincoln’s nose at the top of the stairs on the way to the Lincoln Theatre, the theatre itself, and the marble foyer. The good news is you can now walk all the way around on any floor, including the fourth!

The first floor is home to only classrooms now: all are technology equipped. The department (faculty offices, classrooms,

meeting rooms, and research labs) will occupy the entire fourth floor (the old World Heritage Museum space) and a portion of the third (was previously classrooms and home to the Departments of Sociology and Political Science). Our graduate students will no longer have to “serve” their graduate school time in the basement of Lincoln Hall. There will even be a coffee shop in the space underneath the theatre, previously occupied by the sociology TAs.

We hope you will peruse our new website and actually come to visit us this fall in our new offices and building. We will host a morning coffee October 27 during Homecoming, but we would welcome your visit any other time, too. By now you should have received a postcard asking for your stories/memories of the department and Lincoln Hall. Please see page 7 for more



See the department’s new website at www.communication.illinois.edu. At the end of June, the department will also be settling back into its home in the newly renovated Lincoln Hall.



A shot of Lincoln Hall before the renovation work began.

information about the raffle drawing coming in October.

It is an exciting time for the Department of Communication. As we rely on you to help us preserve our history, we want you to continue to be part of all that lies ahead in our “new and improved” future. ■

DEPARTMENT WELCOMES NEW PROFESSORS

Kam Researches Perceived Discrimination and Health Outcomes in School, Surveys Students on Intervention, Teaches Risk Communication

Jennifer Kam

joined the Department of Communication in August 2011. It would seem she “hit the ground running,” so to speak, and from her accomplishments here in only a few months, you might assume she had been here much longer.

Kam earned her PhD in communication from the Pennsylvania State University in 2009, but came to us from the School of Communication at the Ohio State University, where she was an assistant professor. During her time there, Dr. Kam worked with the Central Ohio Latino community to understand how perceived ethnic/racial discrimination and language brokering affected mental health and substance use outcomes among Latinos.

She is currently working on a longitudinal survey study with Illinois middle schools to extend her research on perceived ethnic/racial discrimination, language brokering, and health outcomes. Recently, she also received a Campus Board Research Award to examine content-specific messages that high school students employ to discourage their friends from using substances, while maintaining positive impressions and friendships. To learn more about this interpersonal prevention/intervention process, Dr. Kam and her research team are working with several local high schools to conduct semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and surveys with adolescents.

This year she has taught an advanced course entitled “Risk Communication.” This course is designed for students who are interested in theory and research



related to (but not limited to) agricultural, environmental, health, and safety risks. Students learn about a number of issues such as risk assessment, risk perception, message design, media options, and barriers to effective risk communication. Across all topics, students are encouraged to consider how access to risk information, perceptions of risk, and reactions to risk messages vary depending on the audience.

Why Illinois? “Initially, I wanted to join the U of I because of its reputation for having one of the top communication departments in the nation,” Kam said. “I quickly learned that the department and the university have much more to offer than just reputations. In particular, I was blown away by how friendly, supportive and humble the faculty is in and outside of the department. (I feel) this active and energetic department will inspire me to succeed. In addition, I look forward to developing collaborative relationships through opportunities for interdisciplinary research.”

Lee Researches the Influence of Media Exposure on Community’s Social Environment and the Role of the Internet in the Health Care System

Chul-joo “CJ” Lee will join the department’s faculty in August 2012. His research mainly focuses on how media exposure manifests its influences in the context of the community’s social environment, including social and interpersonal communication networks, as well as the community’s physical environment, social structure, and social cohesion (e.g., social capital).

“CJ” earned his PhD from the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. He has been a faculty member at the School of Communication at the Ohio State University since 2009. He has explored how individuals’ use of media for



health information and interpersonal health communication interact and jointly influence healthy lifestyle behaviors. Using a nationally representative survey, he found that the associations between television and Internet use and healthy lifestyle behaviors were larger for those who less frequently talk about health issues with their family and friends. Building on this study, he currently is examining the interactive effects of media exposure and social capital at both individual and community levels on interpersonal health communication and healthy lifestyle behaviors. He believes that his research program contributes to the disciplines of communication, public health, and medical sociology.

In his second line of research, he investigates the roles that the Internet, one of the newest sources of information about health, may play in the evolving U.S. health care system. His research led him to contend that the Internet contributes to narrowing the gaps in user’s sense of cancer fatalism, whereas it contributes to widening the gaps in health and information seeking and knowledge. In addition, he has explored the effects of Internet use on doctor-patient interactions using state-wide representative data from surveys with cancer patients. He found that Internet use led cancer patients to prefer a more active role in medical decision making.

He plans to teach graduate level research methods this fall and an undergraduate course entitled, “eHealth Communication”.

Why Illinois? “I am extremely honored and thrilled to join the U of I Department of Communication this summer. I have had the highest respect for the U of I Department of Communication since I started my graduate training in communication. In addition, during my campus visits last winter, I was deeply impressed by the collegiality among the faculty members, staff members, and students in this department.”

We are pleased to welcome both Professors Kam and Lee and hope this will be the beginning of a long relationship. ■

Health Communication Online Master's Program Expands, Congratulates First Graduating Class

The Health Communication Online Master's (HCOM) Program has experienced immense change in the past year. Last year at this time, the program consisted of one cohort of ten students; this year we admitted two new cohorts (Fall and Spring) adding 22 students to the program. We are thrilled to be admitting our fourth cohort this Fall.

As HCOM continues to expand, we also have the pleasure of witnessing our first graduating class this summer. We could not be prouder of our first cohort, who entered HCOM in Fall 2010, as they complete their degrees.

The accelerated growth of HCOM has been wonderful. Inquiries into the program have more than doubled in frequency in the past year, and over 5,000 new people have visited our website by clicking our Google ad in the past six months.

Accommodating the needs of an increasing number of current and prospective students presented a variety of challenges and learning opportunities. The curriculum needed to be adjusted for a "Spring-admission-track," faculty members taught multiple sections of their courses to accommodate more students, and elective courses began development to expand the curriculum. Additional challenges included helping students maintain connections with each other, both within and across cohorts. HCOM now has Facebook and LinkedIn pages allowing current and prospective students to meet and socialize outside of the classroom. If you have an interest in health communication, the pages are open to all, so feel free to join the HCOM network!

For more information about the HCOM program, please visit our website at www.communication.illinois.edu/healthcomm or email health-comm@illinois.edu. ■



The first class of MS health communication students were present in May for graduation and actually met for the first time, in person. From left: Sean Williams, Donna Trader, Whitney Hayes, Mary Van-Hoozer, Jessica Schanilec, and Garrett Pauley. (Graduates not pictured: Megan O'Meara Caldwell, Kellee Watkins, and Eirian Johnson.)



Congratulations Graduates!

Top: Like mother, like daughter! Molli Warsh (AB'12, communication) earned Bronze Tablet honors just like her LAS alumna mother, Debbie Wigod Warsh (AB'82, English), did.

Bottom: Head of the department David Tewksbury stands last year with 2011 graduate (now alumna) Lee Ann Sangalang, and the alumni convocation speaker, Michael Kosta (AB'02, now a comedian).



Susana Vazquez Weigel Retires

If you taught SPCOM/CMN 101 or took public speaking in our department since 1989, you undoubtedly have been affected, either directly or indirectly, by the work of Susana Vazquez Weigel. You might also remember the media lab adjacent to the department office (244 Lincoln Hall) where you could watch your speech or a movie you missed in class, view or listen to research tapes for coding, check out equipment. This was Susana's domain. At the end of December 2011, Susana Vazquez Weigel retired.

In addition to many other responsibilities in the department, Susana Vazquez Weigel's primary duties have been to manage the numerous pieces of instructional equipment used in our public speaking courses. She has made sure that television monitors, DVD players, video cameras, VCRs (even Beta format), were in cabinets secured with combination locks and in working order on a daily basis. She has also assisted instructors and faculty with temperamental LCD projectors. Even as the nature of technology changed and the demands increased for its usage across all

of our courses, Susana seemed to accept new challenges in stride, always advocating for what was best in the classrooms in order for our instructors to have what they needed.

Anyone who ever met Susana knows that her willingness to help always went above and beyond what was requested and she was truly genuine in her efforts to help. She always had a smile and was concerned that the equipment was in working order. As the years went by, Susana was requisitioned a pager, at her request, so that she could be where she was needed, even if she was not accessible at the end of her office phone.

Barbara Wilson, department head from 2002-2008, described her as having a "can-do attitude about problems. No matter how challenging the task or how difficult the equipment needs, she embraced the challenge with grace, energy and optimism."

We suspect that most of you who knew Susana rarely found an "equivalent" staff person as service-oriented at your place of employment upon leaving Illinois. What defines Susana was her positive attitude, always

Susana Vazquez Weigel is honored by the Department of Communication at her retirement luncheon. She served the department for 23 years.

going above and beyond what was expected of her, and the fact that everyone was treated with respect and always with a smile. She truly liked her job and enjoyed being at work each day, knowing that someone would need her help.

After 23 years, we said good-bye to Susana at the annual department holiday luncheon in December, attended by faculty, graduate students, and staff. We wish her and her husband Ron well as they begin this new chapter in their lives. Her presence will be missed each and every day along with the services which she provided and the positive attitude with which she provided them.

If you would like to drop a note to her, please feel free to send something to the department, and we will forward it to her. ■

TELL US A STORY...
AND SIGN YOUR NAME IN STONE



"There are two wonderful memories I have of Lincoln Hall. The first of which was meeting my soon-to-be wife for the first time.... We had a speech communication class together. We shared glances for the first few days, and then as luck/fate would have it, we were placed into the same group for our semester-long project..."

—Paul Mosher, AB '00, speech communication
www.lincolnhall.illinois.edu/storyography

BE PART OF HISTORY BY SHARING YOURS

Submit your story for a chance to win a paver!

The Department of Communication soon returns to a renovated Lincoln Hall. But we want to keep the old memories alive.

Tell us your memory of (Speech) Communication or of Lincoln Hall! Your story will be included as we document our history, and we will enter your name in a random drawing to win a paver stone—engraved with any name you wish—to be set in the courtyards of Lincoln Hall.

Deadline for Entries: August 31, 2012*

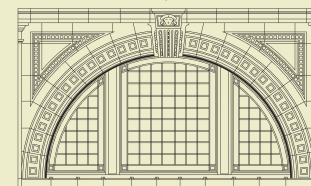
Submit your story online:
www.communication.illinois.edu

or mail it to:
Alumni Stories
Dept. of Communication
702 S. Wright St.
Urbana, IL 61801



*One submission per alumna/alumnus. Previous submissions to U of I's Storyography project are automatically entered into the contest.

A GIFT FOR THE AGES THE LINCOLN HALL PROJECT



A LEGACY HONORED. A FUTURE PRESERVED.

LINCOLN HALL OPEN HOUSE

Come see the Department of Communication's new home! The campus will celebrate the renovation of Lincoln Hall with an Open House on Homecoming weekend 2012. This family-focused, lively event will be worthy of a century in the making.

Mark your calendars!

Saturday, October 27, 2012

www.lincolnhall.illinois.edu

INVEST IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION'S FUTURE

Ensure continued excellence in teaching, research, and public engagement by supporting the Department of Communication with a gift!

You can designate your gift to:

- Communication Annual Fund, which supports an array of activities
- Ruth Anne Clark Student Scholar Award Fund
- Brant R. Burleson Memorial Fund
- Dale Brashers Memorial Fund

You can also boost your gift:

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Transitioning Home...

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multiple deployments than those who had been through just one. “Military couples often say that every deployment is different,” noted Knobloch.

She did find, however, that distress was more likely among those in the latter part of their six months after return, which fits with research by others. “These findings are important because returning service members and their partners sometimes think that the transition home is going to be a honeymoon period where everything is just romance and roses,” Knobloch said. “They can be disillusioned if they run into obstacles.”

They might be better prepared for the potential upheaval, however, “if they recognize that it’s a normal part of the process, that many couples go through it, and it doesn’t mean your relationship is not good,” she said.

“Depression is a really hard thing, and if people can separate their relationship problems from the depression itself, then they’re a step ahead,” Knobloch said. “We believe the results provide important information to help military couples and their children have more satisfying relationships.”

When asked how she came to choose this line of research, Professor Knobloch responded

with this explanation: “My grandfather served in the Marines in WWII, so I’ve always been interested in military life, but my scholarly work on the cycle of deployment and reunion came about because it was a perfect fit for applying the theory I’m developing about romantic relationships in transition. After examining some other transitions that romantic partners negotiate (including the transition to a mutually exclusive dating relationship, the transition to marriage, and the transition to a depression diagnosis), I wanted to investigate a transition that involves separation and reunion. The deployment cycle was a natural fit. Now that I’ve started on this research, I’ve fallen in love with it, and it’s a way for me to use my expertise to help the men and women who serve our country so generously every day.”

The next step in this line of research is to follow military couples over time. To help accomplish that task, Knobloch recently received a \$15,000 seed grant from the U of Illinois Family Resiliency Center to follow military couples once per month for three consecutive months upon reunion. She also will be interviewing adolescents about their experiences during a family member’s deployment. Stay tuned for those results! ■

GOT INTERNSHIPS?

Communication students are eager for real-world experience. We offer our students class credit for interning with organizations that put them to work in a supervised learning setting.

Employers who partner with us report that they benefit from our students’ communication skills and gain from evaluating the on-the-job performance of potential employees. Communication interns are eager to apply what they have learned to the work world.

If you have internship opportunities to offer or would like more information, please contact Dr. Shirley Faughn via email: comm-internships@illinois.edu.

Communication Alumni: Let Us Know What You Are Doing

Please include your contact information along with a list of your accomplishments or personal news from the past year. Send us an email: communication@illinois.edu.