

Advice from the Experts: Creating Open Resources in Relationship Science

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Overview

Personal relationships (e.g., parent-child, friendship, romantic) are an integral part of our lives and are associated with physical and mental health (Umberson & Montez, 2010), as well as career success (Thomas, Liu & Umberson, 2017). Stakeholder feedback indicates a strong need for crisis and life skills capacities. Employers look for graduates who understand real-world situations and problems. We conducted interviews with relationship 'experts' (i.e., academics and practitioners) to develop a series of open resources that highlight key theoretical developments, empirical findings and their application in everyday relational situations. The project allows us to link students to the professional behind the information they are learning. By converting expert interviews into Open Educational Resources (OERs), we 'bring the experts to the students' in an open and accessible way.

Project Goals

1. Create and implement course assignments where students research an expert and conduct interviews with experts in fields related to relationships science; and
2. Create a series of open resources that highlight key theoretical developments, empirical findings and their application to everyday relational situations.



Source: Samantha Bockhold, video creator

Method

- The project team contacted experts in relationship science to request participation in the project.
- An assignment was created for Family Studies and Sociology courses which involve students interviewing experts who agreed to participate.
- Students and research assistants made videos using only Creative Commons sources based on the interviews.
- Completed videos are shared with the experts for final approval before publication.
- To date 21 experts (both academic and practitioner) have participated.

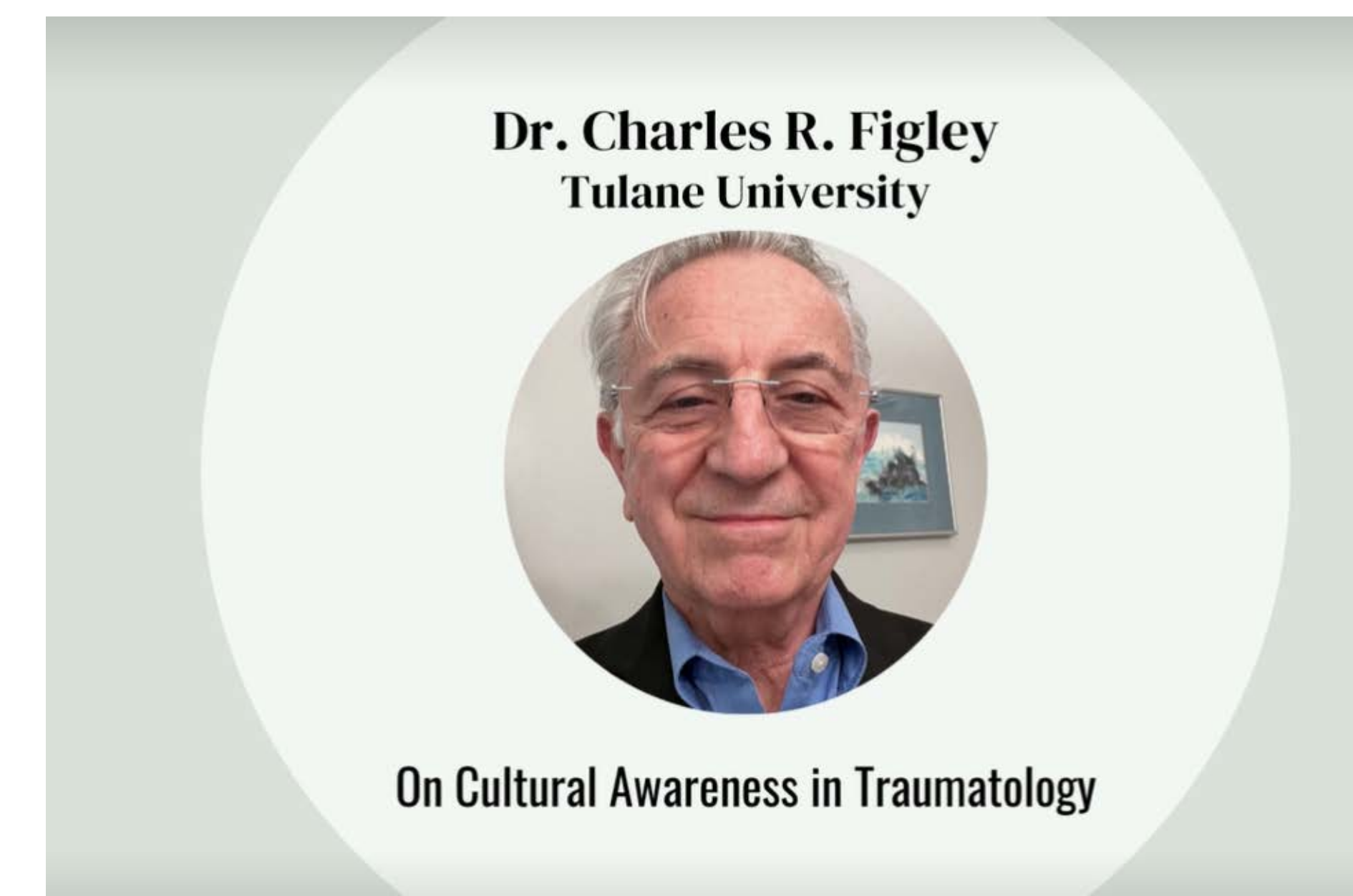


Source: Kirsten Wesselow, video creator

Sample Topic Areas

- Neural/physiological correlates of attachment
- Romantic competence
- Loneliness
- Same sex marriage
- Foster care reunification for rural families
- Treating trauma
- Cultural awareness in research
- Relational risk factors for dating violence
- Body image, pornography and sexual activity
- Masculinity, online dating and self-help
- Family changes and public policy
- Cohabitation and the future of families

Working in Diverse Contexts



Source: Kirsten Wesselow, video creator

“Just be respectful and soak it up and ask questions as appropriate in the right context.”

- Dr. Charles R. Figley, PhD, interviewee, on conducting culturally respectful research

“I feel like we’re chartering new territory. Researchers are starting to navigate into the world of online methods like examining how people respond to others on Facebook, or the size of their social networks, [and] online dating. And I feel like as a field we’re becoming a lot more flexible and realizing the importance of inclusion and diversity in the stimuli that we use, the information that we present, and the sampling methods that we use.”

– Dr. Bianca Acevedo, PhD, interviewee

Application to Career

In conducting the project, experts shared a common sentiment about how many careers are possible in relationship science.

“The courses that I teach are in interpersonal and relational communication. I was the student as an undergrad coming into those kinds of classes. I thought it was fun, but I didn’t necessarily see a career path associated with it, but now being on the other side, [...] there is so much that you can do with it: you can go onto user experience research, you can work at a tech company, you can go work at an online dating company, you can help with product design. There’s lots of opportunities there that people don’t often realize”

– Dr. Liesel Sharabi, PhD, interviewee

Future Work

Next steps are to use our created video resources to develop open course modules that could be adapted and used independently in a range of UBC courses and integrated into an open course with credit and no-credit options.

References

- Umberson, D., & Montez, J. K. (2010). Social relationships and health: A flashpoint for health policy. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 51, S54–S66. doi:10.1177/0022146510383501
- Thomas, P. A., Liu, H., & Umberson, D. (2017). Family relationships and well-being. *Innovation in Aging*, 1(3, 1-11). <https://doi.org/10.1093/geroni/igx025>

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