COUPLE’S DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES INVOLVED IN THE FORMULATION OF A LONG TERM HOUSEHOLD BUSHFIRE PLAN

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COMMUNICATING RISK: HUMAN BEHAVIOR UNDER STRESS (2)

AIM
To identify significant couple/marital judgment and decision-making processes which influence survival-related decision making in forming a bushfire plan. These processes involve long-term planning and preparation decisions, rather than decisions made under imminent bushfire threat.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
Broad-spectrum question:
What kind of decision-making processes are involved in couples’ long-term bushfire planning and preparation?

That is:
ixels What psychological processes are involved in decision making by couples about long-term planning and preparation to survive bushfire threat?
ixels What are the key relational dynamics which sustain couple’s long-term planning and preparation decisions about bushfire safety?
ixels What kinds of relational, cognitive, and affective processes are likely to compromise survival-related decision making processes in formulating a family bushfire plan?

RESEARCH
Relevant factors to be examined:
ixels Bushfire risk perception and engagement
ixels Affective and relational processes
ixels Decision-making styles
ixels Couples’ relationship: Attachment and Quality
ixels Gender Role Preferences

METHODOLOGY: the research in three studies

STUDY 1 METHOD: Content analysis of 40 transcripts of Lake Clifton interviews

STUDY 2 METHOD: On-line (or postal) self-report questionnaire ...
... incorporating measures of each of the constructs to be investigated:
✓ Decision making styles
✓ Attachment styles
✓ Quality of relationship
✓ Gender role preferences

STUDY 3 METHOD: Observation of joint decision-making tasks

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STUDY 1
• Analysis of reported couples’ bushfire safety decision-making by couples who were threatened by bushfires

STUDY 2
• Surveys of members of couples in at-risk communities and analysis of associations among variables

STUDY 3
• Couple study – Risk perception and relational dynamics in bushfire planning

Major findings of Study 1
ixels Awareness about the risk but only moderate level of concern
ixels Only few couples planned; many made some ad hoc preparations
ixels Rather than “WAIT AND SEE” some “WENT TO SEE” what the fire was like
ixels Long term preparation focused narrowly on protection of the house
ixels Household bushfire preparation mainly managed by husbands
ixels If threatened by a bushfire in the future, most of these couples would act in the same way as they had on the day of the fire

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