



NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY OF FAMILY PSYCHOLOGY

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Edited by Thomas M. Gehring and Peter K. Smith

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IAFP publishes a newsletter which is mailed out by e-mail about every six months. Sample issues can be downloaded from the IAFP homepage or may be obtained from your national representative (www.iafpsy.org) and the editors: Thomas M. Gehring, Ph.D. (tmgehring@bluewin.ch) and Peter K. Smith, Ph.D. (P.Smith@gold.ac.uk).

Editorial

There is a continual need for further differentiation in our knowledge of family systems around the world. The evaluation of family development is a useful addition to the more widely used individual perspective on risk factors and pathology. The integration of both perspectives including the various forms of family life in different cultures allows a more differentiated view on the complexity of human development. As a consequence, health care will be improved by an enhanced evaluation of individual and family processes as well as by resources that permit evidence-based interventions and public health programs.

This issue of the IAFP Newsletter opens with a welcome from our new President, Greg Jurkovic, and notes from our Past President, Sabine Walper. It then focuses on three topics. First, Bogusława Lachowska delineates the development and current state of family psychology in Poland with special emphasis on main research areas and their changes during the last decades. In the second contribution, Lisa Hermann-Green and Thomas M. Gehring describe psychological, legal and socio-economical aspects of family development of lesbian-headed families in Europe. Finally, Florence Kaslow reports from the International Academy of Family Psychology's 5th Quadrennial Conference which was completed in Wales in June 2006 and provides interesting impressions from a journey in Argentina including comments on the family therapy scene in this country.

We look forward to our Newsletter stimulating interesting communication between IAFP members all over the world, and hope that contributions from distinct professional perspectives will be submitted to us in the near future. We welcome diverse forms of contribution: News of member's interests, new research activities, reports from relevant conferences, reviews of family psychology in particular countries, reviews of books, letters and debates on important issues.

We hope to hear from you!

Zurich and London

Thomas M. Gehring and Peter K. Smith

Welcome Address of the New President

Gregory J. Jurkovic, Ph.D.

Let me begin by saying that it is truly an honor to serve as President of IAFP. As I said in my remarks at the closing session of our recent conference in Cardiff, I am both enthusiastic about and committed to building on the excellent work of my esteemed colleagues who served before me. It is my intent here to share with you my vision of our future as an organization, along with plans for realizing that vision. My ideas have been shaped by discussions, often lively ones, with many of you either individually or in various groups and meetings. They also draw on the new directions that were successfully pursued at the Cardiff conference under the guidance of the program coordinator, Dr. Gordon Harold, and associates.

We are a relatively young organization with a small but dedicated membership of scholars committed to expanding psychology as a field to include the transaction of individuals and their families, broadly defined, across different nations and cultures. Given our limited budget and size, it is remarkable that we have accomplished as much as we have over the years meeting regularly, publishing a newsletter, attracting new members, and collaborating on research. We, however, have reached a critical point if we are to continue to grow our mission, our membership, and our meaningful interactions with one another.

The theme of our meeting in June linking research and policy provided us with a compelling sense of direction for the future. Building on the momentum of the conference, I would like to see us actively broaden our mission to include (1) translating research in family psychology and related disciplines into policy as well as practice at all levels (primary, secondary, and tertiary intervention) and, reciprocally, (2) expanding our research to respond to the needs and feedback of policymakers and practitioners. How can we do this?

At a minimum, we should continue to organize our conferences around the multifaceted mission of linking research, practice, and policy. Following Cardiff, in addition to presentations of basic research, we should hear from policymakers and practitioners. To facilitate the exchange of ideas, both research and applied workshops and discussion groups should be part of the format.

To foster more scholarly interaction within our membership, I also plan for us to form focal interest groups (FIGs) reflecting our specialized resources, talents, and interests. For example, these groups, which will meet at our conferences and continue to function between conferences, might organize around such topics as research methodology, family transitions, disaster and trauma, family therapy, assessment, ethics, or policy. The FIGs could conduct cross-national and cross-cultural studies, sponsor presentations at our conferences, and pursue other activities and outcomes at the group's discretion. The next conference will include designated times for the FIGs to meet and to report on their work.

Following the suggestion of Dr. Sabine Walper, we should also pursue developing a working relationship with the United Nations Committee on Families. We have the interest and expertise within our organization to help shape global policies and initiatives affecting families. I have already asked Dr. Walper to help spearhead our efforts along these lines.

It is also critical that we not only work to retain our current members but also to expand our membership, especially in countries where we have little or no representation. At our last conference we elected a Membership Coordinator, Dr. Michiko Ikuta, who will help with these tasks. All of us, however, should be mindful of our need for continued membership retention and growth and actively invite our colleagues to consider joining IAFP.

Another concern discussed at our last conference was our need for more publication outlets for our scholarly activities. Although we are not in a position to sponsor our own journal, we should develop relationships with major publishing houses and journals to educate them about the nature of our scholarship and to facilitate publication of our manuscripts.

For these ideas to take root, as we discussed in Cardiff, we as an organization must meet on a more regular basis. Consequently, within the next five years we will transition to meeting every other year instead of every four years. Our next conference will be held in 2009 followed by bi-annual conferences thereafter. Lori Jurkovic is coordinating our next conference and has already begun negotiations— subject to approval by the board— with the conference center at Pepperdine University in Malibu, California. The facilities, which are situated high in the bluffs overlooking the Pacific Ocean, are beautifully appointed and designed to maximize both productive and leisurely interactions among conferees.

In addition, if IAFP is to make significant strides in the coming years, it will be necessary for more of us to be involved in IAFP's activities between conferences. Toward this end, I will be asking many of you to lead or serve

on subcommittees pertaining to the ideas and initiatives that I have discussed here.

Please contact me with your comments and ideas (gjurkovic@gsu.edu). Be assured that they will be seriously considered. You may very well be asked to assist directly in their implementation.

The New Board and a Look Back at the Cardiff Conference Notes from the Past President

Sabine Walper, Ph.D.

2006 has been an important year for IAFP: Our fifth conference took place in Cardiff, Wales, and as part of that meeting, the IAFP Board has been newly elected. A strong and competent team took on the task of directing the academy in the next three years to come: Greg Jurkovic as president (former vice-president) and Gordon Harold as secretary (as before) can both build on their experiences in the previous Board, Greg as long-term guiding member of IAFP from its beginnings, and Gordon as successful organiser of the Cardiff conference. Thomas Gehring and Peter Smith will continue to edit the newsletter and received grateful applause for the excellent job they have done in the past. Beate Minsel took on the role as treasurer, and Michiko Ikuta will support the Board serving as membership coordinator, a newly created position. After many years of dedicated work for IAFP, Florence Kaslow, our former past president, rotated off the Board as did Harald Werneck, our former treasurer. We are grateful for their contributions to promoting international family psychology, not only, but particularly within our organisation. As past president, I feel honoured to cooperate with the new team on the many tasks ahead.

The Cardiff conference was a wonderful opportunity to meet colleagues from all over the world and discuss the excellent presentations. Although – or maybe because – small in size, the conference was highly stimulating and covered many focal issues in family psychology. Following the welcome addresses, Gordon Harold opened the scientific program with his key note lecture on “Family Psychology in the U.K.” which provided interesting insight in the state of the art as well as future directions for family research in the hosting country. The second day, Jan Pryor (New Zealand) addressed the complexities of relationships in stepfamilies. Her keynote address “Stepping back from stepfamilies: What we know and what we need to know” gave a comprehensive overview of issues and findings in current research on this increasingly prevalent family type. In the afternoon, Paul Amato (U.S.A.) focused his keynote lecture on “Strengthening marriage as a context for child development: The potential of recent interventions in the U.S.A.”, informing about current family policies in the U.S. and their

potential for improving family living conditions as well as social science knowledge derived from related evaluation research. The third day started with the keynote address presented by Mervin Murch and Lesley Scanlan (U.K.) on "Children and 'intractable' parental disputes: Can we apply cognitive developmental psychology to the family justice system of England and Wales?", a lecture which focused on linkages between family research and the legal system, pointing to the demand of psychological expertise in adjusting court procedures to children's needs.

In the last two keynote lectures, the focus shifted to cross-cultural and international approaches in family research. Birgit Leyendecker and Axel Schoelmerich (Germany) presented their research on "Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Parenting" addressing issues of culture-dependent similarities and differences in parenting which gain increasing importance in the context of international migration. Finally, Greg Jurkovic shared his insights in challenges and pitfalls of "International family research", highlighting the unexpected discoveries as well as ethical demands involved in studying families in different national, cultural, and ecological contexts. These keynote lectures were each discussed by an additional expert in the field, balancing research presentations with clinical experiences or vice versa, providing "outside" perspectives from other countries or disciplines, and broadening the scope of questions addressed. Furthermore, a series of more or less related symposia and paper sessions followed up on the issues presented in this keynote lectures. It was a pleasure to be there! More can be read about the conference in Florence Kaslow's report below.

As pointed out by Greg Jurkovic (above), a number of changes have been discussed during the Cardiff conference to strengthen IAFP as an attractive and efficient organisation. Firstly, family science is basically interdisciplinary. While IAFP has its roots in psychology, it also links to other disciplines, particularly sociology, education, and the health sciences. This was not only evident during our past conferences, but can also be seen in the composition of our membership. Given that many themes in family research cut across disciplinary boundaries, it might prove fruitful to facilitate more interdisciplinary exchange within IAFP. Secondly, family science addresses many applied issues with implications for policy and/or practice – a field which deserves even more attention. Adopting an international perspective in applied family research may at first sight seem unnecessarily demanding and complex since specific contextual knowledge is clearly required for an appropriate understanding of the problems at hand. At the same time, however, international comparisons may alert to alternative approaches, as particularly evident in family policy and family law. IAFP may thus seek to strengthen its focus on links between family research, policy, and practice. Thirdly, family scholars are likely to profit from better coordination among professional organisations. Up to now, IAFP conferences have been held in the same year as the biennial meetings

of the European Society on Family Relations (ESFR). Planning for the next IAFP conference in three years from now allows rotating off this schedule so both conferences will take place in alternating years. Both organisations advocate stronger cooperation and exchange as was discussed during the ESFR-meeting held in Darmstadt, Germany in September 2006.

In a few years, IAFP will celebrate its 20th birthday. We hope you support its passage through the "late teen years" as active member.

Family Psychology in Poland: Main Areas of Interest and their Changes

Bogusława Lachowska, Ph.D.
Catholic University Lublin, Poland

The present report consists of three parts. In the first part, an image of the Polish family and its changes within recent years is presented. The relationship between these social changes and the efforts undertaken in family research are shown. Notably, the first family sociology program in Poland was formed at the Catholic University of Lublin by F. Adamski, L. Dyczewski and J. Turowski 1971. Ten years later the first department of family psychology was created at the Catholic University of Lublin by Maria Braun-Gałkowska. However, regular courses covering the scope of problems concerning family research have been conducted since 1973. In the second part of this paper, the development and the current state of art of family psychology in Poland are described. In the third part, studies conducted at the Department of Family Psychology at the Catholic University in Lublin are presented.

The contemporary Polish family is shaped by four factors (Tyszka, 2003). The first concerns the reforms which cover the whole Europe, connected with the transition of the societies towards the post-industrial epoch. This opens many possibilities for a family to improve its situation, but simultaneously may cause many threats and difficulties associated, for example, with the necessity to adjust to the new conditions. The second factor concerns the many-year tendencies observed with respect to population processes, such as decrease in birth rates. The cultural tradition of Polish society also exerts an effect on the family image. This tradition, as emphasized by sociologists, during the time of the socialist political system decided about the subjectivity of a family and contributed to the fact that it was not passively subject to external influences, but was an active element in the process of changes (Tyszka, 2003). The subsequent factors influencing the shape of a family are the social, economic and political

reforms observed in Poland. Generally speaking, these changes consist in transition from the society of the socialist regime towards a market economy. The year 1989 may be adopted as the beginning of reforms. These reforms are associated with many factors exerting an effect on the processes within the family (Tyszka, 2003; Dyczewski, 1994; Kryczka, 1997). The factors associated with transformation are: lack of economic and political stabilization, setting back of economic development, high unemployment rates, decrease in living standard among the unemployed, economic stratification of society and expansion of poverty zone, poor possibilities of economic promotion of the unemployed, intensification of spatial mobility of the populations for earning purposes, liberalisation of standards regulating social life. Due to the effect of these factors, a large and an increasing part of families perceive this new situation as threatening its existence, has a feeling of being placed on the margin and social isolation, lack of prospect for the future. Many families experience separation connected with migration for earning purposes, which causes the breaking of ties, lack of social support, and the feeling of being uprooted.

In making an attempt to define a typical Polish family, it may be stated that the direction of its changes is similar to the direction of family changes in the whole Europe. This direction, however, possesses its own specific features associated with political reform and cultural traditions. From many aspects, the Polish family is similar to a typical contemporary family in Europe, but it also differs in some respects.

In searching for the similarities, it may be indicated that a contemporary Polish family, similar to a family in Europe, is a small, two-generation family consisting of parents and dependent children (Fig. 1). Although the percentage of cohabitant relationships is small - not exceeding 2%, the acceptance of such relationships is increasing, especially among young people. The percentage of single mother and single father families in Poland is relatively small, for example, in 2002 every fifth family was a single parent family. However, over the years the percentage of this type of family in the general population of families is constantly increasing. For example, in 1978, it was 12.3% of the total number of families, while in 2002 this percentage increased to the value 18.5% (Lachowski & Lachowska, 1994; Statistical Yearbook 2003).

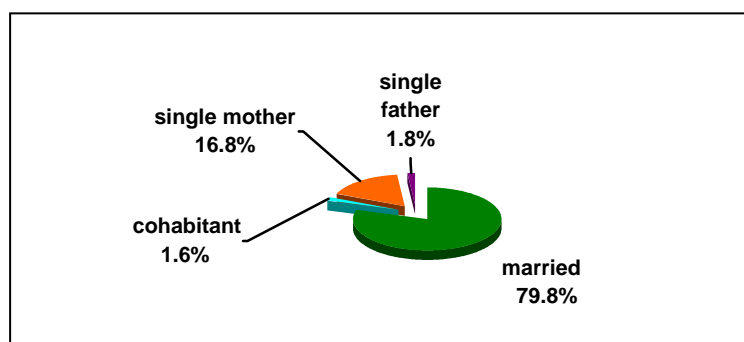


Figure 1
Families with children
up to age 24

In the Polish family, similar to a family in Europe, a decrease is observed in the number of children being reared (Fig. 2). Currently, 80% of families in Poland have one or two children. In recent years, the number of children born decreased, and currently is below the level of generation replacement. Females increasingly more often postpone the decision about having a child until the age of over 30 (Rodzina & Polsce, 1994). Simultaneously, among the total number of children born, increasingly more children come from extramarital relations.

Already 30 years ago, sociologists confirmed that in Poland, being a family with many children lost its importance as a social standard (Graniewska, 1997). Currently, only every twentieth family is a family with four or more offspring. Although recently the rate of families with many children has been increasing; however, this was caused by the prolongation of the period of adult children being maintained by their parents, in connection with a prolonged period of their education, unemployment, and unwillingness to become independent, which is increasingly more often observed among young people (Graniewska, 1997).

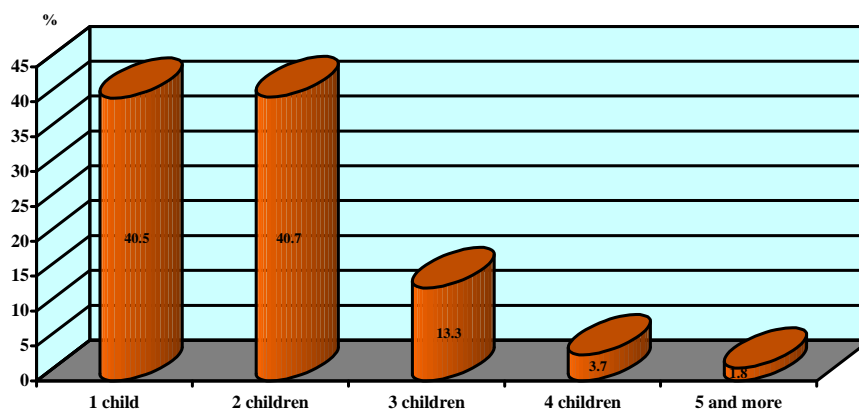


Figure 2 Families by number of children

The subsequent tendency is a decrease noted in the number of newly contracted marriages. This phenomenon has been observed in Poland since the beginning of the 1990s. In 1993, for the first time, the number of marriages dissolved was greater than those contracted (Statistical Yearbook 1994). Young people increasingly more often decide not to build a family.

What could be considered as the typical features of a Polish family? In our opinion, here it may be mentioned that a traditional family is still perceived as the most desired form of family life and occupies a high place in the hierarchy of values (Rodzina & Polsce, 1994; Wierzchoślawski, 1997). Apart from this, although being a small family, which preserves its distinctive character and identity, it is connected by many emotional social ties with the generation of grandparents, other relatives and acquaintances. Twenty-

three percent of adolescents aged 15-21 indicated grandparents as people important for them (Dyczewski, 1994).

Unfortunately, the phenomenon of excessive mortality rate among men may also be considered as characteristic of a Polish family (Fig. 3). For instance, among people aged 40-44 there are 100 males per 100 females, but at the age from 55-59, per 100 males there are 112 females, at the age group of 65 and over, per 100 males there are 165 females. The main cause of high mortality rates among males are civilisation diseases, such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, accidents and occupational diseases (Rodzina & Polsce, 1994).

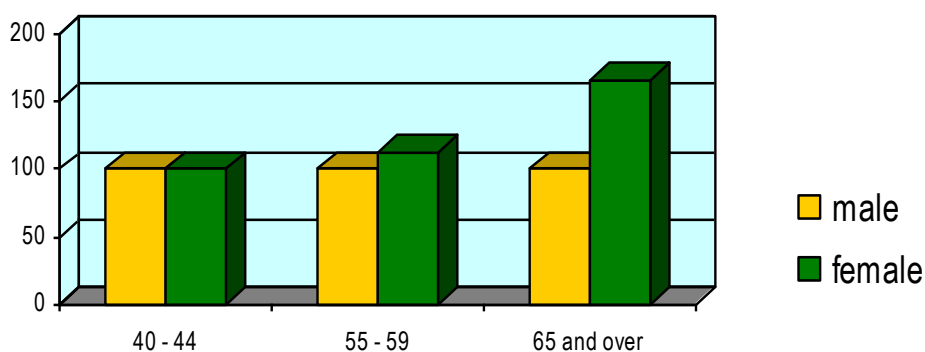


Figure 3 Mortality rates

Due to the phenomenon of excessive mortality among males, among dissolved marriages, a three times greater number of marriages are dissolved by death than through divorce (Fig. 4).

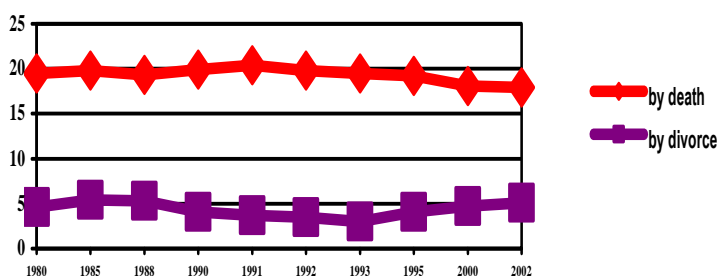


Figure 4 Marriages dissolved by death and divorce (per 1000 existing marriages)

Having presented briefly an image of a family being the subject of interest for researchers, I would also like to present the state of art of family studies in Poland. In the Polish literature there is a lack of synoptic reports

describing family research, therefore the analysis presented may be the first attempt of this type.

The family is a complex system to study, therefore it is an object of interest for many social sciences (sociology, psychology, pedagogy, economy). Each of them analyses the family from a different aspect. This is justified and advantageous, but accompanied by the risk of the segmentation of knowledge about a family and its isolation. For this reason, 20 years ago some researchers (e.g., Kukołowicz, 1984) indicated the need for conducting multidisciplinary family research. Family studies from the point of view of sociology were undertaken most early on and a great number of projects were realized. The first family sociology program was formed at the Catholic University of Lublin and a short time later the handbook entitled 'Family Sociology' was published by Tyszka (1974). For a long time, family sociology in Poland had the status of a separate discipline. This is different in the case of family psychology, which only recently received the status of a separate branch of psychology. Even today, family research is being conducted within such branches as educational, developmental or clinical psychological etc. The reflection of the complexity of family systems as an object of research may be the reason that two different trends have been established in its study (Fig. 5).

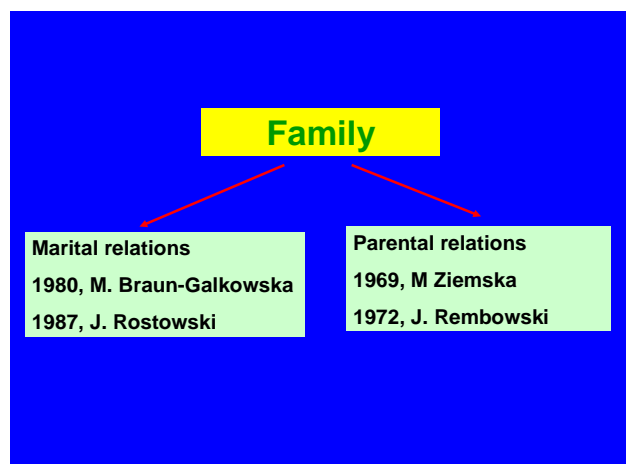


Figure 5
Different levels of family research

The psychological studies of parental relations, concern mainly the relation between mother and child. Researchers have clearly neglected, and are still neglecting, the father-child relationship. The first articles within this trend were published by Rembowski (1972) and Ziemska (1969). The other research trend concerns studies of marital relations. The first studies of marital relations were conducted in 1980 by Braun-Gałkowska at the Catholic University in Lublin. In 1987, an university handbook entitled "Outline of marriage psychology" was published by Rostowski. In the handbook, the author underlines that the object of his interest is the scope of problems concerning marriage handled as a study object, independent of

the family. With respect to the psychology of marriage, it may be stated that these studies concentrate on the issue of the quality of relation and its conditioning. In the studies of the quality of marital relations, they were approached mainly as a dependent variable and its conditioning was sought for. The relationship between the quality of marital relations and the personality of spouses, and type of parental relationships, including grandparents was evaluated. In selected studies, the quality of marital ties was handled as an independent variable. The object of such studies is, for example, an analysis of the relationship between marital relations and the quality of relations of the spouses with their children (Dakowicz, 1995), or an analysis of the relationship between the quality of marital relations and the level of functioning of young adults (Gałkowska, 1997).

The family research approach used the concept of the family as a small social group. Attempts were undertaken to measure interactions between family members and its basic dimensions were searched for. However, this was limited to the relationship between parents and children. Ziemska (1969) developed a concept to study interactions between parents and children which covers the two dimensions distance and domination (Fig. 6).

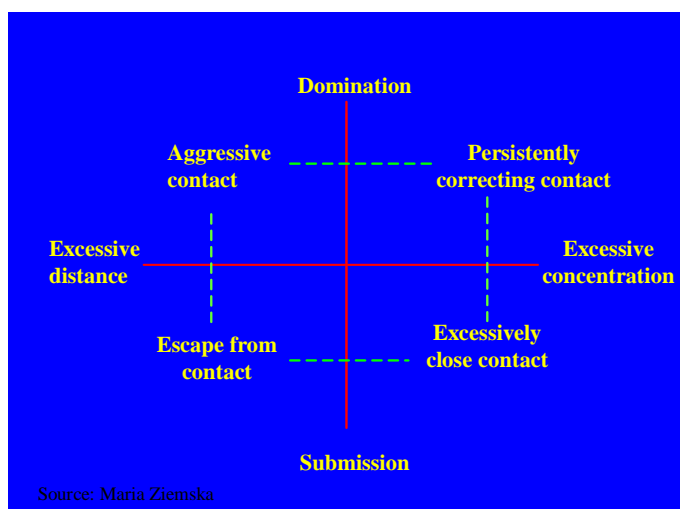


Figure 6

Model of basic dimensions of interaction between parents and children by Ziemska (1975)

The family was the object of interest mainly as the environment which influences the personality of a child but not the one of the parents or grandparents. In research programmes, the indicators characterizing the family, generally, were an independent variable, i.e. a variable shaping a child's personality. Basically, there is a lack of studies in which the type of interactions within a family would be a dependent variable, i.e. a variable shaped by the properties of its members; for example, a child's success at school. Studies in which the interaction is handled as a dependent or independent variable appeared as late as the end of the 1980s, together with the popularisation of a systemic approach to the family. An example of this type of research is the project realised by Gała (2002) from the

Department of Family Psychology at Catholic University of Lublin. He studied the effect of children's school problems on family relations. At this time several efforts for distinguishing the key dimensions of interactions between any of the family members were undertaken (Lachowska, 1988; de Barbaro, 1992, Górnjak & Józefik, 2003); thus, not only interactions between mother and child, but also between the spouses and siblings were evaluated. The first research attempt in this area was based on the model developed by Braun-Gałkowska, including the dimensions: affection, assistance, directing and requirements (Fig. 7). It is possible to measure their intensity, which ranges from excess to insufficiency. Both excess and insufficiency were considered as dysfunctional. The optimum intensity with respect to each of the dimensions is related to the age of people and the situation in which they occur.

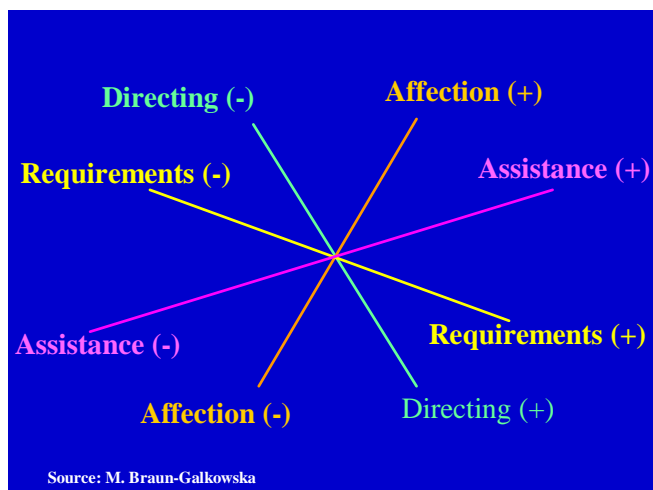


Figure 7
Model of family relations by
Braun-Gałkowska

At the end of the 1980s, there appeared reports from studies in which the Circumplex Family Model developed by D. H. Olson was applied. The first studies in Poland using this model were carried out by Radochoński (1987), Zwoliński (1992a; 1992b), Gaś (1994), Margasiński (1996) and Lachowska & Lachowski (2006). Currently, at the Catholic University of Lublin a family research project focusing on work-life balance including the FACES IV is completed by Lachowska (2006). FACES IV is the latest version of a family questionnaire designed to assess cohesion and flexibility (Olson, Gorall & Tiesel, 2006). It attempts to differentiate between types of relationships occurring in normal families and problem families suffering under various stress sources. A family with a lack of pathology or dysfunctions is considered as a normal family. The many studies focus on families of people with somatic diseases (Radochoński, 1987), families of patients with diagnosed schizophrenia or neurotic problems (Czabała, 1988), changes concerning family relations in families participating in therapeutic process (Pohorecka et al., 1992), families of satisfied and dissatisfied spouses (Braun-Gałkowska, 1992), single mother and single father families

(Lachowska, 1998; Lachowski & Lachowska, 1994), families of alcohol addicted people (Margasiński, 1996), families with a terminally ill child (Buczyński, 1999), families in the face of unemployment (Skwara, 2000), families of creative people (Mendecka, 2003), rural families in which children are engaged in work on family farms (Lachowska & Lachowski, 2006).

In the last decade, increasingly systemic studies including a resource-oriented approach have been completed including healthy families and families with ill members (Kosinska-Dec, Jelonkiewicz & Muraszekiewicz, 1999; Zwolinski, 2000). This research considers within and cross-generational relationships, communicational styles and selected aspects of personality and values as well (Rostowska, 1993). Recently, the first handbook of family psychology entitled "Family Psychology" was published in Poland by Plopa (2005).

The Family System Test (FAST) manual has been translated into Polish by Maurer and her colleagues (2006). The FAST (www.fast-test.com) is a figure placement technique designed by Thomas M. Gehring (1998) to assess cohesion and hierarchy structures governing relations in the family and its subsystems in typical, ideal and conflict situations. The theoretical concept and validity of the FAST as diagnostic and therapeutic tool as well as various studies including clinical and non-clinical samples have been reported in any detail by Gehring, Debry & Smith (2001). For example, it has been reported that mentally disturbed children and those from economically disadvantaged families represent their family structures predominantly as unbalanced (i.e., low cohesion and low or high hierarchy) and thus as dysfunctional. In contrast, non-distressed offspring from well-functioning families display their interpersonal structures as balanced (i.e., cohesive and moderately hierarchical). Figure 8 shows the representation of an unbalanced family structure with the FAST.

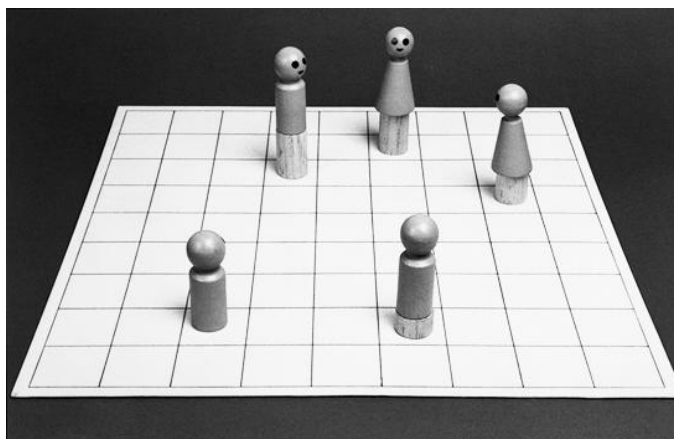


Figure 8
FAST- representation of an
unbalanced family structure
in a family of five

The first Department of Family Psychology in Poland was founded 1981 at the Department of Educational Psychology of the Catholic University of Lublin. The research activities focused on the quality of marital relations and their conditioning, and the relationship between the quality of marital relations and the quality of other relations. With respect to the conditioning of the quality of marital relations, the personality of spouses and type of relations with the family of origin were considered. Several research projects were devoted to the analysis of the effect of television and computer games on family development. First studies pertaining to this scope of problems were carried out by Braun-Gałkowska (1967). Systemic family studies including coping styles and interpersonal resources were conducted with various types of families such as families of spouses satisfied and dissatisfied with their marriages (Braun-Gałkowska, 1992), families with both parents, as well as single mother and single father families (Lachowska, 1995; Lachowski, 1996), and families with a terminally ill child (Buczyński, 1999). These studies generally based on multi-system-level designs and projective methods have been applied simultaneously with questionnaire methods. For example, the family drawing method developed by Braun-Gałkowska (1985), a modification of the earlier version of the drawing technique designed by Corman & Minkowska, was applied in order to evaluate the subjective ways of experiencing family reality by various family members, both children and adults.

Recently our research team completed multi-respondent projects, where various indicators of anxiety, aggression and self-constructs were analysed (Braun-Gałkowska & Steuden, 1985; Braun-Gałkowska & Lachowska, 2003; Lachowska & Łaguna, 2002, 2003). The results of these studies helped us to design three programs, aimed at the prevention of disturbances in family life. They were developed under the supervision of Braun-Gałkowska. The first program entitled 'In the same direction' (Braun-Gałkowska, 1994) is addressed to adolescents at school age and it is realized during regular school hours. The second program is designed for young adults and aims at an optimal preparation for marriage (Gutowska, 2002), and the most recent one was developed with the intention to improve psychological and communicational skills of teachers working with adolescents.

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Some Thoughts on Parenthood by Lesbian Mothers

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Families are organizations which develop in changing socio-economic, cultural and political contexts (Gehring, Debry & Smith, 2001). Over many decades, the most common form of the family consisted of father, mother and offspring. Legal or blood ties were the bonds that constituted these nuclear families. Various forms of family life (e.g., single parent families, cohabiting couples with children from previous marriages, lesbian-headed families) have since become more frequent, so that traditional definitions have become inappropriate, and the conceptualization of the meaning and functions of the family has become a complex issue. As a consequence, the question of what constitutes a family has become increasingly controversial. However, no matter how appropriately a family is judged from a certain perspective, its definition should nonetheless take into account the growing diversity of family concepts, organizations and life styles.

Creating a family by bringing children into a loving couple relationship is no longer the domain solely of married heterosexual partners. Increasingly, lesbian couples are joining the realms of those actively involved in the process of family building and parenting. Though lesbian families are often considered a recent phenomenon, the existence of lesbian mothers is not new. In fact, there have always been lesbian mothers throughout history. What is recent, however, is that more and more lesbians are choosing to parent in their lesbian relationships or alone. In fact, the increase of lesbians choosing to parent has led several authors to speak of a "lesbian baby boom" or "gayby boom" (Patterson, 1994; Pies, 1988, 1990).

Although there are a relatively large number of lesbian couples and lesbian-headed families in western nations, family psychology has not considered this family form extensively. Due to current legal situation in many countries, lesbian-headed families still experience discrimination regarding them. They are legally and socio-economically disadvantaged compared to heterosexual families in the same culture. Additional information through increased research may help put an end to this unsatisfactory situation. This article focuses on two aspects, namely, the current state of research

on lesbian families, and their legal situation in Europe, particularly with respect to Germany.

Lesbian couples have begun creating families in increasing numbers over the last years via adoption, foster parenting and, most commonly, by conception. Lesbians becoming parents by conception may inseminate sperm obtained from a sperm bank or a male friend (*donor insemination* [DI]) or, less commonly, conceive via heterosexual sexual relations. The child or children are thus born into a family of origin with a mother or mothers who identify as lesbian from the start and may or may not have additional parents such as a known biological father. These planned lesbian families are characterized by maternal lesbian identity and a high intentionality to parent (Glombok et al, 1996).

Research on Lesbian Families

Research that has studied planned lesbian families has focused on the relationship between the families' structure and family functioning. Groups that have been chosen for comparison include single heterosexual women and heterosexual couples, who became parents via natural conception, DI or adoption, as well as, lesbian adoptive parents. Mainly the following aspects of lesbian parenting function were investigated:

- Parental division of labor
- Parenting goals
- Nurturance
- Parent-child interactions
- Cognitive, social, emotional, and gender development
- Psychological adjustment of the children
- Offspring social interactions outside of the nuclear family
- Experiences with disclosure of family form to peers.

These studies consistently report more similarities than differences between lesbian families and the comparison groups (Green, 2006). Furthermore, it could be shown that lesbian and heterosexual couples pursue parenthood for similar reasons such as happiness that parenthood would provide (Siegenthaler & Bigner, 2000). It appears that family structure per se is not the mediating variable determining quality of any families' functioning. However, research clearly documents the viability of the lesbian-headed family unit in a cultural climate that denies them equality and is still likely to stigmatize them.

Investigations of the factors that influence lesbian and gay couples' inclinations to make parenthood part of their lives are limited. Research on the family building process of lesbian-headed families is limited to *The National Lesbian Family Study* (Gartell et al., 1996, 1999, 2000, 2005). This study has provided longitudinal, descriptive data on a sample of 84 DI

two- and single-parent families residing in the USA while the index birthmother was inseminating or pregnant and when the index child was two years, five years and ten years old. Results of interviews showed that prospective parents described themselves as monogamous and expressed concern over the potential effect of a baby on their relationship. The participants had strong lesbian identities and a solid social network including families of origin and friends. They reported varied length of desire to become a parent and no gender preference for their child. Equal numbers chose a known or unknown donor, though most were not expecting the donor to be involved in their family. The participants expressed concerns with raising children conceived by DI in a non-traditional family in a homophobic and heterosexist world.

When the index child was five years old, nearly one third of the couples had separated but almost all of them continued shared parenting. The continuous couples reported that the child was equally bonded to both mothers. Interviews with 10 year old index children showed that offspring had a similar prevalence of developmental disorders and were comparable in their psychosocial development to children from heterosexual families. In contrast, the prevalence of physical and sexual abuse in the lesbian families was much lower than national rates. The psychological functioning of the children did not differ on the basis of whether or not they knew their donor. Experiencing homophobia was, however, related to psychological distress.

Lesbian Family Formation via Donor Insemination (DI)

The uniqueness of lesbian DI family formation in comparison to family building for heterosexual couples lies in the coming-out, the conscious and active decision-making phase and the insemination phase in order to achieve pregnancy. In contrast, heterosexuals do not generally need to pass through a phase of heterosexual identity development as this is the norm. Though heterosexual couples may also make active and conscious family planning efforts these are voluntary and usually characterized by hindering conception. Heterosexual couples only enter an insemination phase if they have infertility or hereditary disease issues. Lesbian parents re-engage in the unique phases of decision-making and insemination for sibling children which may include a role switch between partners, so that the social mother of the firstborn may become the birthmother to the sibling child. Once pregnancy is achieved, the lesbian couple is absorbed by the same series of events dictated by biology and subsequent development of their children as heterosexual parents (Green, 2006).

A prerequisite of lesbian parenting is the acquisition of a lesbian identity, also known as "coming-out". The term "coming-out" describes the process by which a person acquires lesbian or gay male sexual orientation and

identity. Secondly, it describes the act of disclosing this personal information to others. This act of disclosure is necessary since lesbians and gay men are otherwise presumed to be, or are treated as if they were, heterosexual. The other prerequisite of lesbian parenting includes lesbian couple formation, if parenting is pursued as a couple. These phases are followed by the "Kinderwunsch" planning and insemination processes. The German term "Kinderwunsch" means "child wish" and entails the combined meaning of wishing to become a parent and wanting to have a child. What constitutes the beginning of the planning phase is unclear. Its end, however, is marked by the beginning of the insemination phase. If conception proves difficult or the couple is not satisfied with their insemination procedure or donor choice or if the insemination phase is disrupted in some other way, they may return to the decision-making phase before proceeding with inseminations.

Legal Context for Lesbian and Gay Couple Relationships in Europe

The legal situation in a particular country also shapes the creation of lesbian DI families. Laws impact families profoundly by determining whether or not legal options are available to secure the couple, legal parenthood for social parents, and by controlling their access to reproductive medicine.

In 1989, Denmark surprised the world by being the first country to offer LG couples a state sanctified legal institution for their relationships analogous to marriage. Since then, 18 European countries and 12 of the 15 "old" or original European Community countries have followed suit. In general, the institutions offered to the lesbian and gay community fall into four categories: marriage, marriage minus adoption, registered life partnerships, and domestic partnership (Braun, 2006).

Four countries in the world have opened the institution of marriage to their lesbian and gay community: The Netherlands (2001), Belgium (2003), and Canada and Spain (2005). Married lesbian and gay couples enjoy all of the same rights as heterosexually married couples in these countries.

Seven European nations have created a special legal institution for lesbian and gay couples similar to marriage. In 1989, Denmark created the *Registreret Partnerskab* that included all the rights of heterosexual marriage without the right of (joint) adoption of children. The other Scandinavian countries - Norway (1993), Sweden (1994), Iceland and Greenland (1996), and Finland (2002) - adopted the Danish model. In 2005, the UK created *Civil Partnerships* that also includes almost all rights of heterosexual marriage. Even though adoption is excluded, it is allowed based on another law.

The countries in the next category developed an alternative legal institution for lesbian and gay couples with reduced rights compared to heterosexual marriage. In 1999, France instituted the *Pacte Civil de Solidarité (PaCS)* which is open to both heterosexual and homosexual couples. Luxemburg instituted an institution similar to the French model *Loi Relative aus Effet Légaux de Certains Partenariats* also open to both LG and straight couples in 2004. In 2001, Germany created *Eingetragene Lebenspartnerschaften* for same sex couples only, which was expanded in January 2005 to include more rights. In 2005, Switzerland held a national referendum in which the public voted on whether or not registered life partnerships for gay and lesbian couples should be created. It passed with an overall 58% vote of "yes" votes and will take effect in 2007. The Czech Republic passed their similar law in 2005.

Domestic partnership laws in Hungary (1996), Portugal (2001), Croatia (2003), and Slovenia (2005), which are also open to heterosexual couples, offer very minimal rights and protection to cohabitating gay and lesbian couples.

The Situation in Germany

In August 2001, the German parliament instituted "registered life partnerships" for lesbian and gay couples in Germany. The life partnership law began in 2001 as a compromise and offered minimal rights and all of the responsibilities of marriage to those who choose it. It offered lesbian or gay couples a first degree relationship status (important in case of, for example, hospitalization or death) and the opportunity of the life partners to be covered by each other's medical insurance and to carry one of the two people's last names. Critique focused on the financial disadvantage it imposed on the couple since their income was considered combined as regards social law but separate for tax purposes. Thus they were denied access to the tax breaks that heterosexually married couples enjoy, even though the life partners are financially responsible for each other. Often this distinction was justified by the fact that married couples have children and need special treatment to help them with this financial burden while homosexual couples are not procreative (Siegfried, 2001).

In January 2005, the life partnership law was extended to include equal access to social security benefits, extension of name changes to biological children and 'stepparent' adoption (analogous to second parent adoption in the USA) of biological children of the life partner. As it currently stands, the life partnership law entitles lesbian and gay couples to all of the rights of legal marriage with the exception of the tax related laws and the right to jointly adopt children.

The legal situation negatively impacts lesbian access to reproductive medicine in Germany. Insemination with donor sperm has been accepted

as a medical treatment in Germany only since 1973. The Embryo Protection Act of 1991 does not regulate access to assisted conception services. However, guidelines for medical professionals, which reserve DI for married heterosexual couples only, do (Thorn, 2003). It is therefore not illegal *per se* for physicians to inseminate lesbian women but, by doing so, they would be in violation of their professional guidelines. German lesbians must, therefore, look internationally to obtain DI services or self-inseminate with a known donor or imported frozen sperm. Interestingly, the treatment of DI for single or lesbian women is entangled with a contradiction in German DI usage. On the one hand, a court decision in 1994 upheld a child's right to knowledge of its descent, yet only anonymous donors are used in DI treatment.

Final Comments

The legal situation in numerous countries still complicates family planning for lesbian couples. For example, in Germany, prior to 2001 lesbian couples could not create legally sanctified relationships, and prior to 2005 they could not create a legal bond between the social mother and her child. The professional guidelines for physicians hindered lesbian women's access to reproductive medicine in this country. They had to obtain DI services abroad or use a known donor; the former option is extremely cost intensive and may require a lot of traveling and the latter has an inherent health risk factor, particularly if the donor does not get tested for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. Due to differential taxing of income of same-sex and heterosexually married couples, mothers in lesbian-headed families have less of their income available to them than does a heterosexual parent family. However, the recent introduction of stepparent adoption in connection with registered life partnerships has improved the legal situation greatly for lesbian-headed families in Germany.

Increased knowledge based on longitudinal research is needed to better understand lesbian-headed families as they progress through the family life cycle, in particular, for professionals such as teachers that interact regularly with these families and policy makers. Such research would also be helpful for lesbian couples while making important parenting-related decisions. For example, the impact of donor type choice on the family should be studied. As it currently stands, mothers must make a choice for their children and families based on very little evidence-based information without knowing what the future may bring and how attitudes, opinions and values in the society will change. This is a problematic situation since the actual long term impact of a donor type may vary greatly from expected impact. A recent study (Hermann-Green & Gehring, in press) attempts to contribute to the knowledge about the process by which lesbian women become parents through donor insemination by systematically describing the early family formation phases of coming-out, lesbian relationship, and decision-making for these families. It aims to

explore the roles of biological and social mother in the initial family planning stages and the cognitions and processes that result in their donor choice.

In sum, current research documents the viability of lesbian-headed families despite the challenges of societal homophobia and heterosexism. Nonetheless, further research efforts are necessary in order to enable lesbian couples to make informed decisions regarding family planning and to evaluate the influence of these processes on family development and health. Finally, information gathered by this and future research is important for all family-oriented resources and policy makers, so that they may respond to these families' needs appropriately.

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INTERNATIONAL ROVING REPORTER

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Part I - International Academy of Family Psychology's 5th Quadrennial Conference, Wales – June 10-13, 2006

Cardiff, Wales is an interesting city and proved to be a fine locale for the Congress. Cardiff is the fastest growing city in the United Kingdom, and is a wonderful admixture of old and new. A half day spent touring historic, regal Cardiff Castle conjures up visions of jousting knights and splendid balls. Today Welsh banquets and folklore shows are held nightly for visitors, and private functions are held in the grand ballroom – so the Castle is still very much in use.

By contrast, much of the land in the Cardiff Bay area has been filled in within the past decade and this is now an area that is a major attraction for tourists and locals alike. Filled with many ethnic restaurants reflecting Wales' conglomerate multicultural population, boutiques, lively pubs, and the handsome, spacious multipurpose Millennium Opera Center, we found much to do there in the evenings. One night we saw a marvelous show of

female singers in their 60s-plus, and a troupe of male Zulu dancers from South Africa. Another night we departed from our typical, more conservative choices and went to see "Jerry Springer – The Opera", which had received raves at a London West End theatre. To our surprise, despite the repetitiously boring use of the f-word, the singing was excellent, the story well written, the spoof on Springer engaging, and the plot provocative. Cardiff is well worth a visit; one sees the streets teeming with scantily clad teenagers drinking beer outside the local pubs juxtaposed with many Muslim families fully garbed walking nearby. TV programs in English have subtitles written in Arabic, and there are also Arab language channels. As Wales, like so many other countries, has become a country that is now "home" to many new and different immigrant populations, we also became aware of a large Somali community currently being highlighted in an exhibit at the National museum. Cardiff Castle still stands proudly near the University, offering its majestic touch to the landscape. This then, and the Cardiff University Psychology Department, were the context of the conference.

This was the smallest of the five Congresses held to date by IAFP, and as such some of the usual enthusiasm was missing. Various reasons were given, primarily that family psychology, per se, does not exist as a separate discipline in the United Kingdom and some of the other countries of Western Europe. Not all agree that this is the case or the reason; for example, family psychology is a very popular major in Italy. Nonetheless, there were participants present from Austria, Australia, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Poland, Romania, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the USA (and perhaps one or two other countries I missed).

Major foci were on parenting issues, attachment issues, child development, delinquency and youth detention; maternal stepfamilies, with some separate attempts to stress the importance of fathering which apparently is often overlooked, or denigrated; and school/family collaboration. Assessment techniques also received attention – most notably the *Family System Test (FAST)*, the *Family Chess Board*, the *Family Image Test (FIT)*, and (my) *Projective Genogramming*.

The Family Psychology contingent from the U.S.A. was rather small – Andy Horne, Brian Glaser and a third colleague from the University of Georgia; Greg Jurkovic from Georgia State, the incoming President; Florence Kaslow, rotating off the Board as immediate Past President; and John Thoburn, a new IAFP member. Both Drs. Jurkovic and Thoburn talked about natural disasters and people-made disasters, both of which induce wide scale trauma and can occur anywhere around the world, and the role of psychologists in dealing with such sudden trauma and teaching others how to do so – an area in which both have been very much involved.

Our European colleagues who have been involved in IAFP leadership in the last half dozen years seem much less structured than Americans are about following organizational protocols like by-laws, election procedures, and other formalities. For example, having a parliamentarian at meetings as we do at APA would have been unacceptable. At times at this conference I felt like *Alice in Wonderland* – the terrain was familiar, yet very, very strange.

Our thanks go to Drs. Harold Werneck and Gordon Harold and his assistants at the University of Cardiff, and to Dr. Sabine Walper, outgoing President, for bringing this interesting conference together successfully. As I have indicated before, being active internationally is exciting, stimulating, challenging, and sometimes confusing – yet always enlightening, enriching, and worthwhile.

Part II – Impressions from Argentina

November, 2006 took us to Buenos Aires, followed by a few days in the Patagonia region, a scenic wonderland of magnificent snow-capped mountains surrounding beautiful lakes, stretching past Barriloche almost to the border of Chile. Traveling on Lago Nahuel Huapa by boat, the splendid scenery was similar to what one beholds when cruising the fjords in Norway. We could not help but wonder as we traversed thousands of gorgeous acres of unpopulated forests and terrain engulfing the lakes, akin to what exists in some still pristine areas in many regions, why so many people live huddled in crowded, densely populated, polluted cities. What a strange conundrum.

This geographically huge country experienced a major economic, political, and social crisis in 2001-2002 which reverberated in every aspect of family and community life, and left everyone reeling. Briefly, initially the peso was equivalent to one dollar. But when the peso was devalued to three pesos to the dollar, the banks were completely unable to repay their depositors in dollars. Everyone was furious at the Government and the banks. The International Monetary Fund declared Argentina in default in repayment of its loans. No more international credit was extended from anywhere. No one wanted to assume leadership of the chaotic, bankrupt country. There were four Presidents within one year. The country was on the verge of civil war, and the impact on families was disastrous. Unemployment was rampant at about 20%. There was, and still is, no system of unemployment compensation. The social service network collapsed. Poverty and violence became near epidemic. On the plus side, free medical and hospital care remained available.

Surprisingly, in the last four years a new Government has been able to stabilize the economy internally and renegotiate the debts. It has managed

to keep inflation under control. By 2006 unemployment dropped to 10% and the GNP was reported to have climbed to 8%. Some aspects of family life have progressively normalized. Nonetheless, as in many other countries, many more families must now rely on two incomes for their financial viability. There are substantially more women in the work force than before the 2002 crisis, and this has altered family dynamics and functioning.

Against this backdrop, we now turn our attention to the family therapy scene in Argentina. The journal, *Terapia Familiar*, continues to flourish and boasts an international editorial board. Although its contributing authors are mainly Argentinian, there are often one or two articles from well-known practitioners from other countries in each issue. These are translated into Spanish and provide ongoing exposure to the wider world of family therapy/psychology. The Argentines have been active in their own national family therapy associations; they have several, based on different theoretical orientations, as well as in AFTA and IFTA, but unfortunately less so in IAFP.

During this trip I met with Carlos Diaz Usandiveras, M.D., a family psychiatrist who directs the *Instituto de la Familia* which provides therapy, group services for youth in the community, two-year training programs for those from Latin American countries outside of Argentina, and a four-year program for Argentinians. Considerable time was also spent with Pedro Herscovici, M.D. and Cecile Herscovici, Ph.D., Co-Directors of another Institute for training and treatment in Buenos Aires. The Herscovicis both did part of their training at the Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic during its golden era when it was under the directorship of Dr. Salvador Minuchin. Dr. Cecile is a past editor of *Terapia Familiar*, and has served on the IFTA Board. They all reported that people in their country have become increasingly violent, and that they are seeing and treating more violence in the family, the community, in sports, and in government - and at all socioeconomic levels. Other problems frequently addressed in therapy are depression, marital conflict, parent/adolescent conflict, and eating disorders.

As to therapist orientation there in the current century - about 45% are psychodynamically oriented; 35% practice an integrative mixture, including narrative, social constructionism, and post-modern therapies; about 12% are structural/systemic; and 8% lean toward cognitive/behavioral.

Divorce rates have climbed to about 33%, and although this is still lower than in much of the western world, it is a substantially higher figure than a decade ago. Despite the fact that Argentina has a predominantly white, Catholic population, the number of unmarried young couples living together has also spiraled upward. Both Drs. Usandiveras and Pedro Herscovici attended the divorce mediation trainings I gave in Buenos Aires in the early

1990's and teach in the family and divorce law sequence at the law school. They had had high hope for mediation there, but the lawyers have been successful in opposing its widespread adoption. While there, I introduced them to the idea of collaborative divorce, which they hope to pursue.

Ruth Casabianca, a professor at the University of Santa Fe, who I saw in Reykjavík when she co-chaired the IFTA Conference in Iceland (October 2006), and who will be presenting with me on the *Family Psychology Around the World Panel* at APA in August, 2007, is in the process of establishing a graduate program in family psychology/therapy at her university. As elsewhere, increasingly training is being added in universities and is occurring less and less at non-degree granting institutes, no matter how good these may be. Private practice is again viable for those who are well known, but fees have stabilized at a rather low level compared to those in the U.S.A., but in keeping with the lesser cost of living there.

Argentina remains an exciting, bustling country with an optimistic spirit. It is delightful to see it thriving once more, and to once again have mutually informative professional exchanges, such as those on which this article is predicated.

Member News

Florence Kaslow, Ph.D., ABPP, immediate Past President of IAFP, has a new book, *Handbook of Family Business and Family Business Consultation: A Global Perspective*, due for publication in August 2006 by Haworth Press. This eagerly awaited edited volume includes chapters on the history of the field of family business consultation, several major extant models of consultation, current practice in 13 different countries, globalization of family businesses and wealth, family offices and much more – all written by acknowledged leaders in the field, and certain to be of interest to many members of IAFP. Florence Kaslow was lecturing on this and other family related topics in Wales in June, at APA in New Orleans in August, and in Iceland in October.

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