



NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY OF FAMILY PSYCHOLOGY

No. 23, April 2004

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

This issue of the IAFP Newsletter covers various interesting topics, namely, one article focusing on family psychology as a laboratory method and another one describing the use of the Family System Test (FAST) for the evaluation of families in the context of poverty. Furthermore, an interview with the prominent British family researcher Judy Dunn conducted by Peter K. Smith and information about British and German family research programs are provided. Finally, congress reports, a book review and publications from the field of family psychology are included, followed by a list of forthcoming conferences and books received.

The contribution focusing on family psychology as a laboratory science summarizes about forty years of development of this method, from psycho-diagnosis to recent Internet applications through distance writing. This approach minimizes talk and relies mainly on cost-effective, mass-produced, and easily replicable operations, providing possible data bases for future research.

The main objective of the second brief report is to present preliminary results, which contribute to the construct validity of the FAST in evaluating structural characteristics of poor urban families. It is described, how offspring from economically disadvantaged and middle-class families in Brazil and Turkey perceive their family structures and to what extent the respective patterns are consistent with findings from previous research, including respondents from rich western and Asian middle-class societies.

The *Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children* (ALSPAC) has been running in the Bristol area (UK) since 1990. The different aims of this population-based study, which investigates environmental, genetic and psychosocial influences on the health and development of children and their parents, are presented. In addition, the new priority program of the German research council entitled, *Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationship and Family Dynamics* (PAIRFAM) is briefly described.

We are sure, that the present Newsletter will help to improve communication between IAFP members. We look forward to contributions from different professional perspectives, which can be submitted to us. We welcome various forms of contributions such as news of member's interests, new research activities, congress reports, reviews of family psychology in particular countries, interviews, reviews of books, letters and debates on important issues.

Zurich and London

Thomas M. Gehring, Peter K. Smith

From the President's Desk

Sabine Walper

Welcome to our new IAFP members and greetings to all readers! Family Psychology is a very active field of research and practice linking issues of social, personality, developmental, and clinical psychology with insights from sociology, demography, medical science and many other disciplines. While emphasizing the psychological perspective in addressing family issues, IAFP seeks to encourage interdisciplinary exchange across national borders. As family life is embedded in socio-cultural and economic contexts, a broad social science approach and an internationally comparative perspective are particularly suitable for understanding current challenges to families across the world.

Language barriers often prevent access to relevant publications from other countries. We strongly encourage our readers to help us climb these barriers. An easy means is to contribute to the IAFP Newsletter by providing book reviews and information about ongoing research in one's country. This information is particularly valuable for all those involved in cross-cultural research and may help to develop international research networks. Promoting such networks is the major aim of IAFP.

In order to allow for easier communication among IAFP members, a forum has now been established at our website (see www.iafpsy.org). You may enter your questions there and contribute to discussions or ask our secretary to send your questions out via the IAFP mailing list (Email contact: secretary@iafpsy.org). Enjoy the advantages of the world wide web and make the forum a lively and active discussion board!

Family Psychology as a Laboratory Science: Method over Myth?

Luciano L'Abate

It is now about forty years since an attempt was made to reconcile clinical practice with research through the laboratory method (L'Abate, 1964, 1968a, 1968b, 1968c, 1971, 1973). A great many changes and much growth has taken place in the profession, expanding from a

psychodiagnostic specialty, usually ancillary to psychiatry, to an independent involvement in private practice and especially in psychotherapy (L'Abate & De Giacomo, 2003).

The purpose of this paper is to illustrate how the laboratory method is still alive and well not only in psychodiagnosis but also in interventions with children, adults, couples, and families. The laboratory method means using standard operating procedures that are repeatable from one clinician to another and from one clinical setting to another. These procedures are administered by paraprofessional, technical-level intermediaries with a college degree and personal qualities (warmth, regard, and empathy), who are directed and supervised by a full-fledged clinical psychologist at the doctorate-level. Hence, in this method, professionals work at a distance from respondents, often times without ever seeing them face-to-face. Paraprofessionals as intermediaries between respondents and supervising professionals, however, have been replaced by computers and the Internet.

Psychodiagnosics

The laboratory method started as an innovation at St. Louis Children's Hospital. Limited in financial resources, this writer started to use a graduate student to administer intelligence tests and projective techniques and volunteer part-time women to administer Level C tests, like the Draw-A-Person, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, the Bender-Gestalt, and similar others not requiring professional training. The cost of psycho-diagnostic evaluation was brought down from \$120.00 per child to \$34.00 (costs at the time, not at present). By now thousands of children have been evaluated in this laboratory, with a full-time director and two full-time technicians, which, as far as I know, is still functioning.

After my move to Atlanta and the Department of Psychiatry at the Emory University School of Medicine, two other psycho-diagnostic laboratories were founded, one in the Department of Pediatrics and another at Aidmore Children Hospital. With my move to Georgia State University, the laboratory from the Psychiatry Department was transferred to the Psychology Department. In this fashion, I was able to evaluate an average of ten children a week in one day of my time. An analysis of reports based on contact between a child and the professional was not able to discriminate those reports from reports written without ever seeing the child (L'Abate, 1969).

Play Therapy

From psycho-diagnostics, the laboratory method was expanded to an automated playroom that allowed to monitor everything the child did in a two room environment, one for aggression and the other for construction (L'Abate, 1964, 1971, 1973). Results from this application were reported in 1979 and have been summarized in a recent paper (L'Abate, 2003). A doctoral dissertation related the dialogue between children and therapists to objective results derived from standard pre-and post-psycho-diagnostic evaluations.

Finding that accepting the child in play therapy stigmatized him as the "identified patient," and would diminish the family's involvement in therapeutic interventions, with the advent of family therapy in the early 70s, both rooms were transformed into family therapy rooms. With the advent of virtual reality, however, it is now possible to reconstruct a playroom that would contain both aggressive and constructive toys and games at various developmental levels (L'Abate, 2003).

Enrichment Programs

To train graduate students to deal with multi-relational systems, as in couple and family therapy, instructions were written down to follow verbatim in dealing with either mock couples and families through role playing or with volunteer couples and families who did not need therapy but who could use "booster shots" in the form of "enrichment" (L'Abate & Weinstein, 1987; L'Abate & Young, 1987). This approach allowed the writer to reach and help around 300 couple and families using graduate students as intermediaries, with a very small number of drop-outs, and train quite a few graduate students. Various dissertations stemmed from this approach (L'Abate & De Giacomo, 2003).

Programmed Writing and Self-help Mental Health Workbooks

By relying more and more on the written medium at a distance from the professional rather than talk, using systematically written home-work assignments (L'Abate, 1986, 1990, 1992, 2001, 2002, 2003b, in press a, in press, b, 2004; L'Abate & De Diacomio, 2003), I was able to expand clinical practice beyond the confines of the professional office and indicate how it is possible to help through the infinite possibilities of the Internet. Workbooks, conceived a secondary prevention because of their targeted nature, can be administered to addition or solely in primary prevention, and in conjunction with crisis interventions, psychotherapy, and medication. A meta-analysis of mental health workbooks versus physical health workbooks produced a medium effect size of .44 for workbooks and

a low effect size of .25 for physical health workbooks (Smyth & L'Abate, 2001).

Summary

This paper has summarized about forty years of expansions for the laboratory method, from psychodiagnosis to recent Internet applications through distance writing. This approach minimizes talk and relies mainly on cost-effective, mass-produced, and easily replicable operations that can serve as data bases for research purposes. Hence, the laboratory method allows one to be a responsible clinician and at the same time to be a researcher, bridging the considerable gap that exists between these two fields.

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Evaluation of Economically Disadvantaged Families: The Family System Test (FAST)

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The widely used theoretical approaches to conceptualize the development of family systems and its members include a psychological or sociological perspective. From a strictly psychological approach the family is explained by analyzing individual features, whereas the sociological perspective stresses societal aspects such as socio-economic determinants. It can be assumed that family development and the quality of economic conditions are intertwined, and therefore, both individual and environmental aspects should be taken into account. However, with the exception of some distinct cross-cultural and sociological studies, empirical research is strongly westernized and focuses predominantly on modern middle-class families. As a consequence, our knowledge of economically disadvantaged populations is still very limited. This is a shortcoming because family characteristics in a significant part of the world need to be understood. In particular, we need more differentiated knowledge of interpersonal constructs of children from poor societies. This is also important to evaluate whether conclusions drawn from the many studies including families of highly industrialized western countries can be generalized.

Beside academic significance, empirical research on individual and family development in the context of poverty could enhance our understanding of risk and protective factors in economically disadvantaged areas. This is a prerequisite to design sustainable empowerment programs for

populations who suffer under severe stress and privation. The few existing studies focusing on poor urban areas show that there is a correspondence between family variables such as parenting style and offspring outcomes (DuBois et al., 1994; Felner et al., 1995). Convergent with findings from western middle-class samples, it was reported that perceived support, positive affect from family members and parent-child relational quality are significant factors contributing to successful adjustment of poor youth.

From a cross-cultural perspective, the lack of quantitative family research data in economically underprivileged contexts gives rise to several questions. For example, it should be clarified to what extent economic hardship is perceived as a source of stress by family members and how this affects their interpersonal constructs. The main objective of this brief report is to present preliminary results contributing to the construct validity of the Family System Test (FAST, Gehring 1998) in evaluating structural characteristics of poor urban families. We describe how offspring from economically disadvantaged and middle-class families in Brazil and Turkey perceive family structures and to what extent the respective patterns are consistent with findings from previous research.

The Family System Test (FAST)

The FAST is a figure placement technique designed to assess cohesion and hierarchy structures governing relations in the family and its subsystems in typical, ideal and conflict situations (see www.fast-test.com). Cohesion is measured by the distance between figures representing the family members and hierarchy by differences in number and height of blocks used to elevate the figures.

Using western middle-class families, the FAST demonstrated good psychometric properties and construct validity (Gehring, 1998). Evaluation of the FAST showed independence of cohesion and hierarchy dimensions, test-retest reliability and validity assessed by FACES III (Olson, Portner & Lavee, 1985) and FES (Moos & Moos, 1974) as external criteria. Construct validity of the FAST was supported by the fact that convergent with predictions from structural theory, family representations varied according to the situation depicted (Gehring & Page, 2000; Gehring & Marti, 2001; Marti & Gehring, 1992). In particular, typical family relations were portrayed as cohesive and as moderately hierarchical. Compared to typical representations, the portrayal of ideal situations showed stronger cohesion and less marked hierarchical structures. Conflict portrayals in general were characterized by low cohesion and low hierarchy and with unclear generational boundaries (i.e., unbalanced structures). Based on samples of families with a mentally ill member and controls, typical and ideal FAST representations showed significant clinical validity. Members of

distressed families were less likely to represent their typical structures as cohesive and moderately hierarchical and as having clear generational boundaries (i.e., the father-mother dyad is more cohesive than cross-generational dyads and the parental power surpasses that of offspring). Furthermore, ideal family constructs of child psychiatric patients displayed less cohesion than those of their non-clinical counterparts. In contrast, conflict representations of both distressed and non-distressed family members were characterized by unbalanced structures.

FAST studies with Chinese and Japanese middle-class samples showed that there exist differences in perception of family structures between Asian and western samples (Ikeda & Hatta, 2001; Shu & Smith, 2001). For example, Asian respondents portrayed their typical relationships as unbalanced, that is more cohesive and having less often clear generational boundaries in terms of cohesion than their western counterparts.

Family constructs of poor urban children and adolescents from Turkey and Brazil

As in almost all societies, the demographic situation of families in developing countries changed over recent decades. Since world war two a great shift from a predominantly agriculture-based economy towards modern industrialization took place. Eryuksel and her colleagues (under review) investigated first to ninth graders from two-parent families of Izmir with the FAST. Participants were recruited from families with high and low socio-economic status. Parents of respondents from low SES families (i.e., "gecekondu") migrated from under developed rural parts of Turkey in the city. Respondents were asked to portray individually their typical and ideal family relationships. Results were consistent with assumptions from family systems theory and reflected socio-cultural characteristics of Turkish families. Typical family portrayals showed less cohesive and more hierarchical patterns than ideal representations. Among the demographic variables, socio-economic status appeared as significant factor, affecting both cohesion and hierarchy structures in the two representations. Notably, respondents from poor families depicted less cohesion and more hierarchy between parents and children (i.e., unbalanced structures) than their economically privileged counterparts. The effects of socio-economic status, however, tended to disappear with increasing age.

In a similar study K ppler et al. (under review) compared typical and ideal FAST representations of children and adolescents from the urban middle-class area and the favelas of Belo Horizonte (Brazil). Results again indicated that FAST portrayals were influenced significantly by socio-economic status. Offspring from the favelas showed less cohesive family relationships in their typical and ideal family portrayals. Furthermore,

offspring from poor families more often displayed unclear generational boundaries in terms of cohesion and hierarchy than their counterparts from middle-class families.

In both studies, in general, the patterning of cohesion and hierarchy structures was similar to those including western samples. Children and adolescents from Brazil and Turkey represented their family constructs similar to respondents living in Europe or the USA. However, comparing samples from extremely poor and rich urban areas in Turkey and Brazil, it could be shown that FAST portrayals are likely to differ as a function of socio-economical status. The fact that offspring of disadvantaged families in these countries represented interpersonal structures as unbalanced, a structure that is indicative for significant levels of stress and restraint, deserves special attention. It provides further evidence for the need of increased research efforts focusing on risk factors for problematic individual and family development in economically underprivileged societies.

Concluding remarks

Due to their non-verbal character, figure placement techniques are useful tools for studying families from non-western and economically disadvantaged societies. The FAST, which has been used predominantly with respondents from highly industrialized western middle-class societies, has the potential to promote research efforts on the linkage between perceived interpersonal structures and personal development among poor families. Our preliminary findings suggest that for economical reasons, offspring from poor urban areas are likely to be exposed to increased levels of privation and psychological stress, which presumably may negatively affect their developmental processes, and thus hinder healthy psychosocial outcomes. Notably, a study in progress comparing family constructs of wealthy and poor Brazilian mothers yielded similar results. Because the samples of the presented research were not representative and the observed patterns based only on respondents from urban areas, there is a need to replicate these preliminary findings for example in rural environments.

Figure placement techniques like the FAST have the potential to stimulate reflection about family relationships in a playful manner and can also be used with low educated people because they do not require reading or writing skills. As representations of family constructs are language independent, they are well suited for cross-cultural research. Future studies should include multi-respondent data and be based on a longitudinal design including external outcome measures such as psychosocial well-being of parents and children and thus provide a more complete picture of the yet neglected research area of family development in the context of poverty.

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Interview with Judy Dunn by Peter K. Smith

London, March 2004

Professor Judy Dunn is at the Social, Genetic and Developmental Psychiatry Centre, King's College, London, England. Author of many books and articles, she has research interests in children's social emotional and socio-cognitive development; parent - child, sibling and peer relationships; development of language and communication abilities; adjustment and development of children in step families.

PKS: Judy, you have been carrying out widely known and influential research on families for a considerable period. What started off your interest in this?

JD: I'd become interested in ethology when I was an undergraduate student at Cambridge [my first degree was in Natural Sciences B — a combination of Physiology, Chemistry, Zoology - and I specialised in Zoology for the last year]. I started doing a PhD in animal behaviour — then I had to interrupt this because my husband went to Berkeley for his research, and I found I was pregnant; so I decided to 'intermit' my own work, go to the US, and pick up on the research when I returned to Cambridge. However, by the time I returned I not only had a baby girl, but was pregnant with twins — so this delayed my going back to research further!

With three children under 18 months, I found I was much more interested in doing research on children than pursuing my original project (on rat maternal behavior!). I was very struck by the personality differences

between my children, and by the differences in the ways everyone interacted with them. So with this rather checkered history I eventually began doing research with Martin Richards in Cambridge, on individual differences in children at birth and patterns of parent-child interaction during the infancy of the children.

The project was based on naturalistic observations at home (both Martin and I shared a background in ethology), and was ambitious in scope: we observed the babies and their families (a sample of 80 families) five times in the first 10 days of life, then followed them up quite intensively over the next 14 months. In terms of your question, then, the experience of having my own three babies, who differed strikingly in temperament from one another (the twins were fraternal not identical) was key to the decision to study children rather than rats--but the general idea of studying them in their own world, with naturalistic observations came from my training in ethology, as well as from my belief that we could learn from studying the babies in the setting of their own families. We followed up these children until they were five, and it was a wonderful learning experience.

PKS: Yes, I remember that in the 1970s there was quite an input of ethological ideas in developmental psychology. In my own case it took me into peer relationships in preschool and school, but you took it into families. And I agree, you learn a lot personally through these systematic observations of different children in their different family or school settings.

Well, the family setting seems to me to be particularly challenging for observational work, as the family is a more private venue than a school or kindergarten. Did you face problems in that respect? And what were the payoffs – what do you feel you learnt that you would not have done through questionnaires and interviews?

JD: I agree that there are obvious difficulties in observing families at home and expecting them to behave as if you were not there. We've attempted to minimize the disruption by being around for long periods, and not attempting to be completely 'non-participant'. And certainly not being there as 'assessors' or testers, but as people who want to learn from the families themselves. We found that mothers were very relaxed about our hanging around watching their children – incidentally fathers tended to be more self-conscious. We've also always used questionnaires and interviews in addition to the observations, because I think we learn from each technique.

The advantage of naturalistic home observations is especially clear with babies and preschoolers, where family interaction is often quite an

emotional drama, which you could not 'set up' in a standard way, and from which you can learn so much about children's emotional understanding and responsiveness. I think we have learned enormously from such observations about early social understanding, about the quality of family relationships and how they change as children grow up, as well as about children's communication skills and their relation to emotional development. Naturalistic observations have really changed the view of children's social understanding that was based on standard tests, but of course both techniques are useful.

I think the problems with using such observations with older children are much greater. They are so much more self-conscious. More useful with them are unstructured interviews (as well as the standard interviews and questionnaires), which we have found go very well.

PKS: Earlier you mentioned that you were interested in patterns of parent-child interaction, when you started studying and observing families. But perhaps the work you are best known for from the 1980s is your writing on sibling relationships. I'm thinking for example of your 1982 book with Carol Kendrick, *Siblings: Love, Envy and Understanding*. Was that a planned interest in sibling relationships, or did it emerge serendipitously?

JD: My interest in siblings emerged partly through the observations of mothers-and-children in their families, during which I noticed lots of interesting things happening between the children and their siblings, and partly through what I saw happening between my own children. It set me off on two rather different research directions.

One was the issue of the early development of understanding others: observing siblings gives one a very different perspective on what children understand about other people — teasing, comforting and deception for instance were seen between siblings very much earlier than would be expected on some 'textbook' accounts of children's early cognitive development. These each illustrate some powers of understanding others' feelings (what will annoy, or upset others and what will comfort) and intentions, as well as the sophistication of children's attempts to shift the blame for naughtiness onto their siblings, and to get out of trouble with their parents. I set out to study the early development of emotion understanding and of 'mind reading', systematically, by combining naturalistic family observations and more standard cognitive assessments, and have done a number of longitudinal studies in the US and the UK. This research raised many questions of how emotion and cognition are linked in development.

The second research direction concerned the question of why siblings within the same family turn out to be so different from one another — and that got me interested in how family experiences can be very different for children growing up together, and in how behavioural genetics can provide a helpful framework for studying these differences.

PKS: Yes, and both themes have had a lot of impact. The intensity of sibling relationships, and the implications for social-cognitive skills, are well brought out in your research, and in books such as your *The Beginnings of Social Understanding* (1988). And of course the behaviour genetics work is 'in the family' so far as you are concerned, a seminal article being Plomin and Daniels *Why are children of the same family so different from each other?* published in BBS in 1987. And that led on in part to the controversy epitomised in Judith Harris' book *The Nurture Assumption*, in 1998, where she suggests non-genetic family influences are limited to the home environment in the early years, and that the peer group is the dominant determinant of individual development in many domains.

I have not seen you address that particular controversy in print, unless I have missed it. What are your views on the relative importance of parents and peers once children have reached school age?

JD: I think that Judith Harris made some serious and useful points about how research on parents didn't take account of the possibility of genetics contributing to the patterns of association between parent variables and child outcome. One problem is that much of the data on the significance of peers (including what she cites to support her case) falls into the same trap — only now are we getting research on peer influence that is framed in a genetically sensitive framework. Some of what influences who children make friends with (do they hang out with deviant peers, for example?) may be influenced by genetics, and linked to their parent-child relationships that way. We need research that can tease apart these issues.

I don't think it makes sense to frame questions about parents and peers in 'relative importance' terms. Clearly both can be important, and the interesting (and relatively neglected) questions are about how these two sources of influence are linked, or independent. It is a challenge that we don't have simple answers to as yet. The research that looks 'within families' tries to capture how some aspects of parent-child relationships are common to all the kids in the family, and some are child-specific is going in the right direction, but is hard to do. Once this approach is better understood it can include looking at peer relationships too.

PKS: We've raised the topic of parents and families – but recently, you have been writing about grandparents. That adds yet another dimension of complexity in relationships, doesn't it? How did you get into this work, and what are your reflections on this area so far?

JD: We've been looking at children's relationships with their grandparents in the context of a study of family transitions – a longitudinal study of children whose parents separate – and it was the children's accounts of who they talked to when their parents separated that highlighted for me how important grandparents might be. We asked the children whether and who they talked about their concerns and worries with, and found that top of the list were their maternal grandparents (intimate confiding to grandparents was more frequent than such confidences with mothers, siblings or fathers).

So we looked in detail at the children's closeness and contact with their grandparents, and found that those who were close to their maternal grandparents in fact were doing better in terms of adjustment. We also found as others have reported, that for many paternal grandparents, parental separation means a sharp loss of contact with their grandchildren – a very poignant situation for many families. We've now followed up the families and find the same pattern two years later. And most interesting, there are systematic connections between how children get along with their maternal grandparents, and how their *mothers* got along with their own parents in childhood. So the associations between relationships are crossing generations in quite complex ways. Grandparents deserve much more attention from researchers, I think – and I'm sure you'll agree as you are one of the few psychologists in the UK carrying out such research!

PKS: Yes, I do agree! Linda Drew (now in the USA) and I did some work on the effects of parental separation on grandparent-grandchild contact a few years ago, and the longitudinal work you describe above is taking this further in fascinating ways. And in families generally, most children have grandparents through into early adult life, and most adults are grandparents for the last 20 or 30 years of their lives. So it's a large part of the human and family life cycle that has not perhaps had the attention it deserves.

Your last comments about the complexity of inter-generational relationships made me think of attachment theory, and earlier you mentioned work in behaviour genetics. And we touched on what Judith Harris calls 'group socialisation theory'. On the other hand, we started with the importance of naturalistic observations and an ethological approach – which can be seen as arguing that we should not be overly theoretical in our data gathering (and thus limiting our perceptions). Do you see a tension between the need for theoretical guidance in our

research, and the need to be open to new data and new interpretations? How do you see the field of family research currently in this frame, and what do you think are promising ways forward?

JD: We have to remember that all observational work is based on 'implicit' theories, even if it purports to be 'objective'. So we are misleading ourselves if we assume that we can altogether avoid the pitfalls of too rigid a theory, through watching children in their families - what we 'see' will be closely influenced by our own theories. However, it is clearly crucial that we should be open to possibilities that are not part of our pet theories, or incidents that do not fit with current theories.

Within families, I think there has been what is perhaps too heavy or narrow an adherence to attachment theory, which has meant that other aspects of parent-child and sibling and grandparent-child relationships have not been given sufficient attention. And I am very conscious that there is a 'mother-blaming' tendency in some theoretical approaches, which given the huge impact on parents of individual differences in children is not appropriate. In this sense I'd welcome a more flexible and open approach to family research, and as far as possible a longitudinal approach — there is still so much that we do not understand about how families change with children's development, and vice versa. I also think taking a 'child's perspective' could be more widely used, as children can very early give us a clear picture of some aspects of their family experiences, and new techniques are now becoming available to give us access to these, such as the Berkeley puppet procedures. It is a good time to be taking family research forward, and I'm optimistic!

PKS: Judy, thank for sharing your thoughts and experiences with our Newsletter audience!

Investigating Child Health, Behaviour and Development across Time: The ALSPAC Study

Andrea Waylen, Jean Golding and the ALSPAC Study Team

A vast amount of psychological knowledge, generally accepted as the foundation of modern psychology, has been gathered using cross-sectional experimental and observational studies, in part because they facilitate reliable testing and acceptance or rejection of scientific hypotheses but also because they are cost-efficient. Cross-sectional

research allows one to determine effects on and associations between variables but it is less useful if one wants to investigate causal direction – longitudinal studies are one (more complicated) way of achieving this end.

The ALSPAC Study: where, what and how?

The ALSPAC study (Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children) has been running in the Bristol (UK) area since 1990. It is a population based study which investigates a wide range of environmental, genetic and psychosocial influences on the health and development of children and their parents (Golding, Pembrey, & Jones, 2001). Eligible pregnant women living in the former Avon Health Authority (estimated to have delivery dates between 1st April, 1991 and 31st December, 1992) were recruited in a variety of ways including media coverage, interviews with midwives and posters displayed in GP surgeries. Almost 85% of the eligible population enrolled producing a cohort of 14, 893 pregnancies (there were 13,971 live births where the children survived to at least 1 year: of these, 384 children were (192) twin pairs born after 33 weeks gestation). Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the ALSPAC ethics committee and local ethics committees from United Bristol, Southmead and Frenchay Health Care Trusts. The intention of the study was to recruit a sample which, as far as possible, was representative of the Bristol area: when compared to 1991 National Census Data, it turned out that the ALSPAC sample was found to be similar to the UK population as a whole, having only a slightly higher proportion of married or cohabiting mothers who were owner-occupiers and who had a car in the household. There was also a slightly smaller population of mothers from ethnic minorities.

The main aim of the ALSPAC study is to understand the ways in which the physical and social environment interact, over time, with genetic inheritance to affect the child's health, behaviour and development. To this end, during pregnancy, detailed information about the mothers and their partners was collected via questionnaire. This included the collection of accurate data on medication, symptoms, diet and lifestyle, attitudes and behaviour and social and environmental features at 8, 18 and 32 weeks gestation. From 4 weeks after the birth of the child, mothers completed questionnaires about the child's health, development and his or her environment (biannually on average), together with continuing (often repeated measures) data about themselves (annually). Partners also completed similar questionnaires about their own health and lifestyle (if the mothers had recruited them into the study). As the children got older, they also started to complete self-report questionnaires and, once they started school, their teachers were asked to provide data about the study children and the schools they attended.

In addition to these self-report data, biological samples (placentas, umbilical cord samples, bloods, teeth, hair, nails, saliva, sebum, urine)

have been collected regularly and a random sample of those children born in the last 6 months of the recruitment period (approximately 10% of the full sample) were selected to take part in a sub-study known as Children in Focus: these children had a variety of "hands-on" physical and developmental measures taken approximately every 6 months at a research clinic. Since the age of 7 years, all study children have been invited to attend the research clinic on an annual basis. As a result of the study being based in one geographical area, attendance at such clinics is feasible and facilitates high quality control; the specific geographical location also means that it is possible to link the data collected in the study to both medical and educational records if appropriate. In 2003, a new DNA bank and population genetics laboratory was opened which allows the production of immortalised lines from blood cells.

The ALSPAC Study: psychosocial data

The ALSPAC Study has been the source of comprehensive and wide ranging research including medical, nutritional, epidemiological and environmental work together with a broad range of psychosocial work. This paper contains a summary of only a few of the psychological findings to date: further information on research topics and publications can be found on the Study website (www.alspac.bris.ac.uk).

Psychosocial areas covered by the ALSPAC study include the mental health of parents, the development, temperament and behaviour of the study child and the influence of family factors on these and other outcomes. Comprehensive measures of parental affect have been administered since pregnancy: both mother and her partner (if she chose to enrol him / her) have regularly completed both the EPDS and the Crown-Crisp Experiential Index (Cox, Holden, & Sagovsky, 1987; Crown & Crisp, 1979). Thorpe (1993) used the EPDS to assess the feasibility of postal completion of questionnaires measuring affect and also the acceptability of the EPDS to both mothers and fathers outside the post-partum year. She concluded that the scale was acceptable outside this time period to both parents and that postal administration was satisfactory. The effects of ante- and post-natal depression on children's behavioural and emotional problems were reported by O'Connor et al., (2002). They concluded that ante-natal anxiety in late pregnancy and also post-natal depression at 8 weeks and 8 months were associated with emotional and behavioural problems in offspring.

The ALSPAC Study has also been used in the examination of the development of language using twin studies (Thorpe, Rutter, & Greenwood, 2003). It was found that maternal factors concerned with interaction are associated with language development in childhood whereas parental depression, family size and sibling interaction had no

significant role to play. Family factors have been found to be important in various other areas including childhood adjustment and prosocial behaviour (Dunn et al., 1998). Children with adjustment problems and low levels of prosocial behaviour were more likely to live in single or step-families but this was mainly accounted for by factors including negativity in family relationships, maternal age and education level and the family's current financial and housing circumstances. Children in step-families were also found to have an increased risk of accident involvement and were more likely to be hospitalised / receive medical treatment for physical illness (O'Connor et al., 2000).

Gender role behaviour has been (and is continuing to be) comprehensively studied in the ALSPAC cohort (Hines et al., 2002). They found that maternal levels of testosterone (sampled in pregnancy from a sub-group) were linearly related to gender role behaviour in preschool girls but not boys: the greater the level of maternal testosterone, the more likely it is that preschool girls will display more "boy-like" behaviour. There were no associations between gender role behaviour (in either boys or girls) and the presence of older siblings or a male partner in the home or with parental adherence to traditional sex roles.

This is only a brief summary of a sample of the psychosocial papers which report findings from the ALSPAC Study. The database also includes parental data (both mother and partner) on substance use and addictive behaviour, interpersonal relationships and social support, exposure to chemicals and medications and employment history. Child data provided by the mother or collected in the clinic includes detailed information about regulatory (sleeping, eating crying) behaviours, temperament and discipline, childcare, IQ, visual, auditory and language development, co-ordination, anti-social, impulsive and hyperactive behaviours, peer relationships, affective disorders, self-esteem and pubertal staging. The study children are currently in their 12th year and are increasingly providing their own self-report data. In the present session (started in February, 2004), child self-report data includes information on psychotic symptoms and the development of opposite-sex romantic relationships, reading skills and parental monitoring.

The ALSPAC Study: collaboration

It can be seen that, with the broad span of the topics listed above and the genetic and biological samples which are continuing to be collected, the ALSPAC Study provides a unique longitudinal and prospective resource. Collaboration with external researchers is encouraged and should be pursued via initial informal discussions with the Study Director, the submission of a proposal for approval by the ALSPAC Scientific Advisory and Ethical Committees and, ultimately, successful funding from external

bodies. Successful funding has previously been received from bodies including the ESRC, Wellcome, MRC, NIH and the National Lottery. Projects have been composed of questionnaire studies alone, combinations of questionnaire and physical data; some have collected data from the whole sample – others have run smaller sub-studies on a restricted sample of the cohort. Collaborators have used adult data, child data or a combination of both: the ALSPAC Study contains a vast amount of collected data and the potential to collect far more: what is needed now is the enthusiasm and expertise of experienced collaborators.

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A New Priority Program of the German Research Council: „Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationship and Family Dynamics (PAIRFAM)“

Sabine Walper

During the last two decades, substantial theoretical, empirical, and methodological progress has been made in describing and explaining the dynamics of intimate relationships and family systems. Superseding cross sectional methods of analysis by cohort and life course analysis was decisive for this development. While the theoretical and methodological potential of current longitudinal research has not yet been exhausted, limitations of existing research on intimate relationships and families are apparent. A new priority program, funded by the German Research Council, shall overcome those limits by starting a panel study of the dynamics of intimate relationships and families in Germany.

Research within the priority program PAIRFAM is based on a multi level theory of individual behaviour. Intimate relationship and family dynamics are studied as an integrated part of a multidimensional individual life course. The approach is multidisciplinary and spans the disciplines Sociology, Psychology, Demography, and Economics. This multidisciplinary access shall guarantee that the different levels of analysis and systems of influence can be included reasonably – from the macro level of social structure and labour market factors to the micro level of social relations in single contexts and social networks down to the personal level of individual dispositions.

In particular the following closely related aspects shall be modelled and empirically analysed:

- Establishment and development of intimate relationships
- Family formation and fertility
- Intergenerational relations
- (In-)stability of couple and family relations.

Empirical background data of the priority program PAIRFAM are currently changing patterns of living arrangements, a decline in marriage and fertility rates as well as increasing instability in marital and non-marital unions. Accordingly, major research questions will focus on factors influencing the choice of partner and living arrangement, the decision to become a (multiple) parent, the qualitative structuring of partners' and parent-child relationships as well as the stability of partner relations. In order to model and explain mutual influences in actors' life courses

adequately, individual decision-making and developmental processes have to be traced over time, including their motivational and contextual conditions and their consequences for future action. As intimate relationship and family dynamics can only be adequately reconstructed if their embedding in other life matters and social networks is taken into account, an analysis of the entire life course and multiple social contexts will be conducted. Finally, the developmental conditions of the next generation will be addressed as influenced by the biographical background of its parents, their current resources and options, structures of social inequality, and the quality of family relationships.

The required prospective longitudinal data will be provided by a large long-term panel survey. During the first four years of the priority program PAIRFAM, starting in May 2004, several projects will prepare the large panel survey theoretically as well as methodically by developing new survey instruments with regard to different substantive issues. By means of a three wave "Mini-Panel", support in data collection for the concomitant projects shall be provided. Furthermore, this allows to evaluate the research design and gives an opportunity for realistic tests of suitability in a panel study.

The planned panel study will be launched in the fifth year of the priority program. A substantial sample size of about 12,000 target persons will allow to study relatively rare life events. Members of three birth cohorts' will be investigated as target persons: adolescents aged 15 to 17, young adults aged 25 to 27 and adults aged 35 to 37. In addition, their partners and – in case of the youngest cohort – their parents or – in case of the older cohorts – their children will also be included in the survey. Strong emphasis is put on the social networks of the target persons and their partners.

Initiators

Johannes Huinink, Hartmut Esser, Josef Brüderl, Bernhard Nauck, Sabine Walper. For further information, please contact Johannes Huinink (huinink@empas.uni-bremen.de) or Sabine Walper, President IAFP (walper@edu.uni-muenchen.de).

Congress Report: Attachment from Infancy and Childhood to Adulthood

International conference at the University of Regensburg, Germany,
July 11-13, 2003

Well organized by Klaus and Karin Grossmann and their team, the conference aimed at presenting an overview and results on the most important longitudinal studies dealing with the role of attachment across the life span. Attachment research has come to maturity. So, this conference offered the chance to listen to, and meet personally many of the internationally well known attachment researchers: Robert Hinde, Mary Main and Erik Hesse, Marinus van Ijzendoorn, Judith Crowell, Joan Stevenson-Hinde, Jay Belsky, Abraham Sagi-Schwarz and Ora Aviezer, Inge Bretherton, Miriam Steele, Alan Sroufe, Isabel Soares and several German discussants. They presented results and conclusions from their ambitious enterprises, which are longitudinal studies on pathways of attachment quality from infancy to adulthood. Issues of stability, conditions of continuity, lawful change, the role of the "internal working model of attachment" construct in organizing the psychological adaptability of a person, and additional factors like temperament, family and social environment were presented.

250 researchers and practitioners participated. They all appreciated this exciting meeting to up-date their knowledge on the growing field of attachment research. The presentations will be published in a book by Guilford Press, Everett Waters will be the editor.

Gabriele Gloger-Tippelt, Ph.D., University of Düsseldorf, Germany

International Roving Reporter

Florence Kaslow, Ph.D., ABPP
Past President, IAFP

A Sojourn in Slovenia

Early May 2003 took us to Slovenia for the 2003 IFTA (International Family Therapy Association) Conference. This fascinating conference, entitled "Resisting Abuse", was sponsored by the Slovene Society of Family Therapy and the University Psychiatric Hospital of Ljublanja. IFTA was pleased to be a co-sponsor. Many of the almost 200 participants were from Eastern Europe, particularly Slovenia and other parts of the former Yugoslavia. Slovenia, which is in the northern portion of what used to be Yugoslavia, seceded in 1991 and is now a proud and independent country. Nestled in the foothills of the Austrian Alps, this is a beautiful and serene area. The Congress was held at the Conference Center in Lake Bled and our residence for the five days of the conference (and a few extra for just vacationing) was at Grand Hotel Toplice, which fronts on Lake Bled. From the balcony of our room we could see the Castle that sits atop the hill on the other side of the Lake, and an Island, to which we took a large gondola-type boat to see the famous Church. It was all very picturesque and is an idyllic locale for such a conference.

Most of the IFTA Board were present, which brought participants from Argentina, Iceland, Israel, Hungary, Canada, South Africa, Finland, Sweden, the United States, United Kingdom, etc. There were also attendees from Belgrade and Croatia, as well as the other aforementioned countries. As always, it was fascinating to be part of panels and dialogues with people from other lands whose life experiences and traditions have been markedly different. This was particularly evident when engaging in conversations over dinner with an Arab woman who resides in Israel and who teaches in an Arabic studies program in northern Israel. It was heartening that she was willing and able to attend, invited and encouraged by IFTA President, Dr. Chana Winer. At this micro-level, I certainly see efforts at understanding, and that some collaboration is possible. This is most heartening.

However, no matter how lovely the setting and how fine the facilities at Lake Bled, it was distressing to hear how prevalent abuse is, and it seems to be all over the world! Our Arab participant spoke of her research with abused Arab girls and women – and how difficult it is to reach and help these women, given the traditional patriarchal family structure and community mores. Under Israeli law, as in the U.S.A. and other Western

societies, reporting of child abuse by professionals is mandatory. However, such reporting violates the strong family prohibition against dishonoring the family by making its private travails public. If the situation is reported, the girl may be removed from her home, causing further shame to the family. It seems no one supports her and they may not visit her. Often she remains in institutional care until age 18 years, and then has no where to go, as everyone in the extended family has shared in the humiliation and there seems to be no forgiveness. As a single woman with no active family ties, she has no status in the community and is left to make it on her own, which is very hard to do.

The alternative method of dealing with this noxious situation that the Arab professor and her colleagues are recommending is for the therapist to whom the abuse is reported to determine with the girl, and perhaps her mother, who the most powerful and respected man, other than the father, is. The situation is explained to him and he is asked if he will become involved so that the family can deal with the crisis itself, protect the girl from further abuse, and avoid shame and loss of family "honor". He is coached to convene a group, usually of the important men in the family system, and together they confront the perpetrator, hold him responsible for his behavior, and warn him against repeating the actions and bringing shame on the family. They set up a system for monitoring his behavior. This approach clearly has advantages if it protects the girl from further harm, assures her the family will take care of her instead of blaming and isolating her, and strengthens the family (as the bulwark of society). However, one needs a way to reconcile this kind of family resolution of its errant member's misbehavior, with guidance from a professional, with the legal requirements of reporting.

This more benign approach seems to me to have much merit and perhaps could be tried in other places where a network of key extended family members can be convened and activated. Perhaps we could report and ask that a period of time be granted for the family to take action, if an appropriate leader, who is willing to intervene, can be located. The family can report through him to the therapist, and if the situation seems to be remedied, nothing further will need to be done. However, if the family's efforts prove inadequate or ineffective, then the Protective Service Agency can be notified and get involved. This approach bears similarities to the Network Therapy of Ross Speck and Caroline Attneave (1972), and Uri Rueveni (1975), and the link therapy of Landau (1990). Going back to the future may provide a valuable approach to helping families marred by abuse to find (and perhaps re-engage with) the resources within the extended family to strengthen their coping abilities and increase their sense of security and competence. This strategy curtails blaming the victim, by squarely placing the responsibility on the perpetrator, and

offers the family a secure and more private holding environment in which to resolve its problems. Clearly this approach, like all others, would not be the treatment of choice for all families in which abuse occurs, but should be tried with families whose structure, dynamics and members would be receptive to it.

There were many other excellent and informative presentations, and it was interesting to learn about family therapy in Slovenia. In addition, I particularly enjoyed hearing Drs. Jill and David Scharff talk about their psychodynamic model of couple therapy, using a pleasing tandem dialogue format of presentation.

However, the highlight for me occurred at the Saturday night banquet. The IFTA Board used this as the opportunity to make a very elaborate and moving testimonial to my having been founding President of IFTA (1987-1990) and my having served diligently for 16 years on the IFTA Executive Board. As this seems long enough to occupy such a position on any Board, I had tendered my resignation in Slovenia. That Chana Winer and all of the other assembled Board members made this such a special occasion with a beautiful gift and individual tributes made it an event I will long remember.

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APA Division of Family Psychology International

Committee Presentation

A panel entitled *Family Psychology Around the World* was presented at APA in Toronto in early August. Due to illness and fear of SARS, several of our originally scheduled speakers had to cancel, including Dr. Eugenia Scabine, our member representative from Italy. Nonetheless, two of our original invitees, Dr. Natividad Dayan from the Philippines (also an IAFP representative), who is President Elect of the International Council of Psychologists, and Dr. Jose Torro-Alfonso, Past President of the Puerto Rican Psychological Association, both came and gave informative and

challenging presentations on the state of the art of family psychology specifically, and psychology more generally, in their countries. Dr. Luciano L'Abate (Founding President of IAFP) kindly filled in for Dr. Scabini, and offered a scintillating update on developments in his country of origin. As he had only recently returned from a 3-week speaking tour there, his comments were definitely contemporaneous. Dr. David McGill (one of our representatives on the IAFP Board from the U.S.) graciously agreed to talk about his involvement in family psychology in Japan, and was unexpectedly joined by my good friend, Dr. Kenji Kameguchi from the University of Tokyo, who is the immediate Past President of the Japanese Family Psychology Association and Past Vice President of IAFP. I chaired and tried to draw parallels between and among the countries and also to highlight major areas of divergence, in particular on the status of women in the family, and society. In summarizing and giving a brief overview of family psychology in the United States, I talked mostly about professional developments like APA recognition of our specialty American Board of Family Psychology expansion, and the Division's Research Conference. As you can see, IAFP was well represented.

Division Award for Distinguished Contribution to International Family Psychology

It was a surprise and sheer joy to be presented with Division #43's first International Award at President David Hargrove's party/reception in Toronto. This marks the Division's truly embracing international family psychology. And to have the award named after me was amazing, and truly wonderful. There are many other worthy future recipients in the Division, so I trust this award will live on and grow in importance. I hope IAFP will begin to establish an awards structure, also.

IFTA World Family Therapy Congress

Istanbul, Turkey, March 23-27, 2004

Turkey is an exciting, colorful country with much variety and spice to offer. The *XIV IFTA World Family Therapy Congress*, which was jointly organized by The International Family Therapy Association (IFTA) and The Turkish Association of Marital and Family Therapy (TRAMFT) was held in Istanbul, Turkey, between March 24-27, 2004.

The aim of this congress was to bring together colleagues who participate in academic or clinical studies about family and marital therapies and who are interested in the field. The theme of the congress was *Families in a Time of Global Crisis*.

The IFTA congress attracted therapists and academicians as well as researchers from all over the world. The formal (session) and informal

(mealtime, hallway) discussions and activities were fascinating, as was the true multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-racial ingathering. The atmosphere and interactions were similar to those we have experienced at IAFP congresses. I was presenting a pre-conference workshop on March 23rd. This was the 14th successive IFTA conference I have attended and at which I have presented, and each has been unique and outstanding.

For further information you may want to contact:

Murat Dokur, M.D., President of TRAMFT (Local Organizing Committee) or Dr. Terry Trepper, Executive Secretary, Director of the Family Studies Center, Purdue University Calumet, Hammond, IN 46323-2094 (E-mail: trepper@calumet.purdue.edu).

Forthcoming Congress

2004 Family Science Association & Northwest Council on Family Relations Joint Conference, June 16th-19th, 2004 in West Yellowstone, Montana: *Sharing Information about International Families through Teaching and Research.*

While proposals of any teaching or research related topics will be considered, proposals focusing on the theme of "sharing information about international families through teaching and research" are especially sought. Conference sessions are generally interactive in nature. Proposals will be blind peer reviewed on the basis of clarity, relevance, and evidence of participant involvement. Sessions are expected to be about 40 minutes in duration. Address any questions to Dr. Bailey at baileys@montana.edu.

2nd Congress of the European Society on Family Relations (ESFR)

September 30 – October 2, 2004 in Fribourg, Switzerland.

The organizer would like to call your attention to the event, which will take place at the end of September 2004 at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland. For the organisation committee the most important goal of this meeting is to bring together excellent family researchers from Europe. The interaction between representatives of family research from the different parts of Europe was rather poor until now. The ESFR should stimulate this communication. The congress offers different possibilities for communication and exchange. For more information, please see the attachment as well as the congress website (www.unifr.ch/psycho/ESFR).

Keynote Speakers (ESFR)

Hans Bertram: *"Families in big cities: Everyday life, time and social Support from and for families in urban areas."*

Carolyn Cowan & Philip Cowan: *"What an intervention design reveals about how parents affect their children's academic achievement and behaviour problems."*

Jan Gerris: *"Personality and Family Relations."*

Marinus H. van IJzendoorn: *"Intergenerational transmission of attachment from a cross-cultural point of view."*

Prof. Dr. Jean Kellerhals: *"Social stratification, cohesion and conflict in contemporary families"*

Klaus A. Schneewind: *"Work-family balance: Recent advances in theory and research."*

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Book Review

Florence Kaslow, Ph.D., ABPP
Past President, IAFP

S. Lancaster (Ed.) (2003). *Depression: Psychologists Work with Depression Across the Lifecycle*. Brisbane: Australian Academic Press (ISBN 1 875 37847 2).

This handy little paperback book is jam packed with useful information and seems to reveal, perhaps unintentionally, that the symptoms, expressions of and behaviors associated with depression are quite universal, no matter what cultural expectations may dictate. This pithy volume is the outgrowth of a project undertaken by members of the Australian Psychological Association several years ago. These clinical psychologists, all of whom hold a broad, development perspective, "share a view of depression as a double-edged experience, wherein the deep distress involved might also contain the seeds of creative personal growth and more productive relationships with others" (Preface).

For several years they presented a series of seven workshops in collaboration with some general medical practitioners, and other

psychologists, geared to promoting understanding and the best possible interventions for treating people experiencing depressions at any stage of the life cycle. These workshops provided the impetus for this book.

Their broad, yet inclusive, concerns and foci are amply demonstrated in the titles of the seven chapters, recapitulated below:

Chapter 1 – The Experience of Postnatal Depression

Chapter 2 – What Happened in the Beginning? Some Thoughts on the Genesis of Depression, the Voice, and Melody

Chapter 3 – When There Are No Words: Infant Depression

Chapter 4 – The Individual Child's Experience of Depression: Assessment and Treatment Planning

Chapter 5 – Disengaging Depression by Building Resilience, and Supporting and Educating Families

Chapter 6 – Adolescents and Depression: The Moody Blues or Endless Black?

Chapter 7 – Family Therapy Approaches with Depressed Older Persons.

Some of the important issues and facts which emerge are: that there is under diagnosis of depression in the infancy and childhood years; that lack of adequate mother (parent – added here) child bonding can contribute to an attachment disorder that can be a precursor to depression; that adolescent depression and suicide rates have risen sharply in Australia (and many other countries) in recent years; and that depression in the elderly has been a neglected topic of concern and therefore has not received much attention from researchers. Neil points out, wisely, in her Chapter 5 on "disengaging depression" that it is the "placator stance", her words for a defensive posture derived from the earlier work of Satir, that characterizes most depressed people, and that the risk of suicide escalates for those who chronically placate others and rarely try to satisfy their own needs. Translated into the language used in the co-dependency literature, these would be the self-effacing "people pleasers".

Rich in citations about assessment instruments and treatment strategies, the authors provide good back-up data from the literature and in their individual reference lists. The reiteration across several chapters of the importance of identifying strengths and areas of resiliency is in keeping with the contemporary thrust toward positive psychology and away from over pathologizing.

This book is a fine primer on depression, while also providing an in-depth view of the various topics which typify each developmental phase. I personally would have liked a closing chapter that summarized the common themes that emerged, which cut across the various life stages

and the several theoretical perspectives of the different authors. Nonetheless, this is very worthwhile reading for academics, graduate students, and clinicians, living everywhere, since most of what is conveyed is universally applicable.

Materials received

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