



# 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](http://www.iafpsy.org)) and the editors: Thomas M. Gehring, Ph.D. ([tmgehring@bluewin.ch](mailto:tmgehring@bluewin.ch)) and Peter K. Smith, Ph.D. ([P.Smith@gold.ac.uk](mailto:P.Smith@gold.ac.uk)).

## Editorial

Families are part of the global system and, therefore, family and socio-economic changes in the world are interdependent. This issue of the IAFP Newsletter focuses on two main topics. First, a "glimpse of family life in Eastern Europe" including Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, and Hungary is provided by Florence Kaslow. In the second contribution Daniel Marti and Thomas M. Gehring describe the impact of various stress sources like physical and mental diseases or economic hardship on family functioning based on data from families of Europe, Brazil and Turkey.

We look forward to our Newsletter is stimulating creative 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 see you in Cardiff!

Zurich and London

Thomas M. Gehring and Peter K. Smith

### Note

IAFP Conference, 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting in Cardiff, Wales (June 10-13<sup>th</sup>, 2006):

**The deadline for submissions extended until February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2006!**

Information on the program and registration is available at  
[www.iafpsy.org](http://www.iafpsy.org)

## INTERNATIONAL ROVING REPORTER

Florence W. Kaslow, Ph.D., ABPP  
Past President, IAFP 1996-2000

### *A Glimpse of Family Life in Eastern Europe: August-September, 2005*

Recently we took a cruise on the Danube River, sailing from Bucharest to Budapest, on a River Boat holding about 150 passengers. It turned out to be an excellent, convenient way to travel in order to visit small towns and villages and engage in close cultural contacts with the local people. We met and talked with local guides, walked through villages ravaged by war a mere decade ago, made home visits for lunch with local host families, and had university professors and other knowledgeable people from the specific locales come to deliver lectures and answer questions aboard ship – all as part of familiarizing us with the five countries we were visiting: Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, and Hungary.

After a day or two, I realized I needed a framework around which to absorb, organize, and try to comprehend all the material I was hearing, observing, sensing, and reading. What tumbled back into memory was a paradigm learned many years ago in a basic sociology course, used periodically since – and elaborated slightly below (the portions after the slash marks represent the additions).

Each society is made up of *five basic interlocking and independent institutions*:

1. Family
2. Political/Government/Military
3. Economic/Financial
4. Religious
5. Educational/Cultural.

As one institution changes, all of the others change reactively – just as is true in family systems. For example, when communism became the dominant political ideology, force and political system in Eastern Europe in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, almost all vestiges of free enterprise disappeared and the state controlled all business and agricultural ventures. The USSR and its politburo determined who could study what and where, what they would be paid, and demanded that one's primary loyalty be to the Communist Party, not to one's family, one's God or religion. Since religion was seen as offering a system of beliefs and guideposts for living

that gave different and competitive meanings and values to life than communism did, attendance at and involvement in church (or synagogue) was actively discouraged and held to be suspect. Church attendance dropped off sharply, churches fell into disrepair, and priests and ministers could no longer exert much influence over non-existing congregations nor speak out publicly on behalf of humanitarian values without being imprisoned. Values were instilled by "the party"; the family and its influence was relegated to a low second place. If need be, one would turn against a family member on behalf of the party.

Now that the Communist stronghold has crumbled, a new and more variegated phoenix is arising in each of the break-away countries. Each has turned westward toward the European Union. Each country has recently joined NATO, and Hungary, which is the most prosperous, sophisticated and westernized of these five countries, is already a member of the EU. The other four countries are all preparing for entry, and have tentative acceptance dates ranging from 2007 to 2010. There have been various conditions placed upon acceptance that are the same for all countries, and which include the cessation of graft and corruption. For instance, we did not see any of the black market money exchange practices that were easy to come by in our prior visits to Budapest in the early and mid-1980s. This is now all well regulated; there is also now much less bargaining with street vendors.

In light of my continuing special interest in *International Adoption* (Schwartz & Kaslow, 2003), I used the opportunity I had in Bucharest, Romania to query several knowledgeable lecturers and guides about the changing picture of Romanian orphans and the Romanian orphanages. The EU has told Romania unequivocally that it must be able to take care of its own children and not permit them to be adopted by families from overseas who sometimes pay exorbitant fees to a variety of people, like facilitators, for them (i.e., no more "selling" of children), a picture everyone is reluctant to acknowledge actually transpired. When I asked what has happened to the children, I was given two explanations: 1) The women are no longer having as many children; and 2) Romanian families are coming forward to adopt them. I could not get an explanation as to how the birth rate could have dropped so substantially so rapidly, nor where all of these Romanian families were coming from now when they had been non-existent or unavailable formerly. But this is definitely a qualification the EU has set for admission, and one the Romanian government and people are determined to meet. This was one of the few issues about which I found my questions evoked resistance to answering, so obviously it is a raw and sensitive one.

Generally, they see many benefits to becoming part of the EU. However, on the local level, *families engaged in cottage industries* are frankly worried that they cannot compete. As malls come to their areas and super markets

a la Wal-Mart penetrate their local economies, they realize they will have difficulty marketing their wares. Those in Croatia who returned to their destroyed homes after what they called *The Homeland War* of 1991-1995, have been rebuilding their bombed-out, shrapnel-pierced homes on the small parcels of land returned to them, as close to the road as possible so that they can maximize the amount of ground used to grow fruits and vegetables – for their own consumption, and to sell whatever extra they can produce at a local market. They fear the *encroachment of supermarket giants* and already are competing with imports from Western Europe.

In Croatia our group was subdivided into small groups of 6 and 8 so we could go to private homes for lunch. Families there had responded to an advertisement; being selected for this program after careful inspection for cleanliness, excellent culinary skill, gracious hospitality, and some English-speaking ability was an honor. They are all given the same basic menu to prepare, and then can embellish it as they choose. They are licensed and compensated, and this has become a way of supplementing their meager incomes as well as of reconnecting with the outer world and telling their stories. Some have become what we would call licensed Bed and Breakfast Inns, new to their country, and part of the vanguard of what should become a fine tourist industry in this lovely Croatian countryside. Our hostess, Eva, cooked a marvelous lunch and had made her own slivovitz, an Eastern European brandy imbibed before meals, and a light cherry wine. She also had wine and other cooked goodies for sale, which we purchased. What she exemplified to us was the resilience and courage we saw and heard from everyone we spoke to. *She emphasized how her family had clung together* during the long years of the war and deprivation—hiding out together, sharing whatever they had in a 4-generation extended family. Now they continue living close to one another, and together when need be, as her mother and grandmother had done with her and her husband until they died. It truly is an *all-for-one and one-for-all family mind set*, and from this they draw strength. Any thought of labelling this “enmeshment” would be so erroneous.

In Serbia there is a different version of the war of the 1990s. Much sadness remains about the horrible conflagration. In many of their families, the ethnic strife was *internal*. To illustrate, the story one of our guides told was fairly typical of what we heard. Her mother was Catholic and born in Belgrade, which was then Yugoslavia. Her father was Eastern Orthodox, and born in what is now Croatia. One grandparent was Jewish and came from Hungary. All of the ethnic diversity had coexisted *intrafamilial* without problems for decades. During the war they had to choose sides, and the turmoil and inner struggle was intolerable. No matter the choice, some loyalty was breached, some hearts were broken. These wounds are still healing, as are the bullet and shrapnel wounds.

Yet beauty also is blossoming again. In the Bohemian artists' quarter, where good restaurants abound, we ate across from this trellis-covered bistro. Many outdoor patios adorn this thoroughfare and the music of Eastern European composers is heard as one strolls by. The culture of the centuries lives on.

There is so much more to say, but space does not permit. In closing, I return to the original paradigm as it is generically applicable to the five countries today. The *family* seems to be *cherished* as the keystone of each society. The *political* systems are becoming increasingly democratic, and therefore the corresponding *economic systems* are more and more entrepreneurial and engaged in *free market enterprise*. Churches are being refurbished, and a variety of denominations are flourishing; people are not afraid to go to church and practice their *religion*. Conversely, those who are agnostics and atheists are free to pursue their own beliefs. *Education* is highly valued and everyone we met is pursuing the best possible education they can get for themselves and their children. They study hard and long hours, and see education as the way to be upwardly mobile financially. Many hope to be able to go to Western Europe or the United States to get a college education. They have many wonderful dreams and are doing all they can to fulfill them. And families help each member to get their turn to reach that elusive goal. Culture abounds with theatres, opera houses, concert houses and schools for the arts in every city and town and many excellent companies rendering performances.

If you have not been to these countries since the dawning of the millennium, they have much to offer that is informative and provocative. This trip gave a big boost to my resilience, also.

### Notes

(1) A similar article has been submitted to *The Family Psychologist*, the publication of the American Psychological Association's Division of Family Psychology.

### References

Schwartz, L.L. & Kaslow, F.W. (2003). *Welcome home: An international and nontraditional adoption reader*. New York: Haworth Press.

## THE IMPACT OF HEALTH-RELATED AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRESS ON FAMILY FUNCTIONING

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Consensus exists among professionals from various fields that stress and stress-related problems constitute an important issue facing today's families. The importance of stress as a family psychology issue is widely recognised, even in the absence of an agreed-upon definition and operationalisation of this construct. There is large empirical evidence demonstrating that stress is associated with adverse physical and mental health outcomes such as depressive symptoms (Gehring, Aubert, Padlina, Martin-Diener & Somaini, 2001). Furthermore, it is well known that individual and family development is related to the quality of interpersonal structures and life cycles as well as to contextual living conditions. Using the Family System Test, the purpose of this brief report is to show how various stress sources such as mental and physical disease or severe economic hardship are reflected in the family representations of parents.

### *Stress is significant for family development*

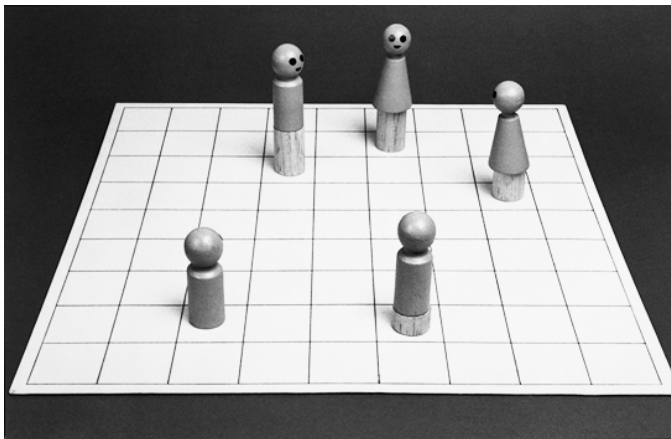
Individual and family development are influenced by normative stress and critical life events. Coping with trouble rather than freedom from problems is a crucial prerequisite for individual and family growth. Family members interact with one another in the home and are also affected by interactions with external systems (peers, work environment, school etc.) on a daily basis. Therefore, family systems are confronted with many various stress events on the micro and macro level.

Previous research has shown a significant relationship between health-related and socio-economical status and family development. However, it should be determined more specifically how various sources of stress affect family functioning. For example, it needs to be further clarified whether a psychiatric illness of a parent or an offspring have a distinct impact on the patterning of family structures. This is a requirement of specific therapeutic interventions and evaluation procedures.

### *Family System Test (FAST)*

The FAST is a figure placement technique evaluating cohesion and hierarchy structures in the family (Gehring, 1998). Due to its non-verbal

character, figure placement techniques are useful tools for clinical as well as cross-cultural family research including samples from economically disadvantaged societies (Qian Wang, Gehring & Wang Qian, 2005). The theoretical concept, validity and application of the FAST including various contexts as well as clinical and non-clinical samples have been reported in any detail by Gehring, Deby & 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 middle-class families display their interpersonal structures as *balanced* (i.e., cohesive and moderately hierarchical). Figure 1 shows the representation of an unbalanced family structure with the FAST.



*Figure 1*  
FAST- representation of an unbalanced family structure in a family of five

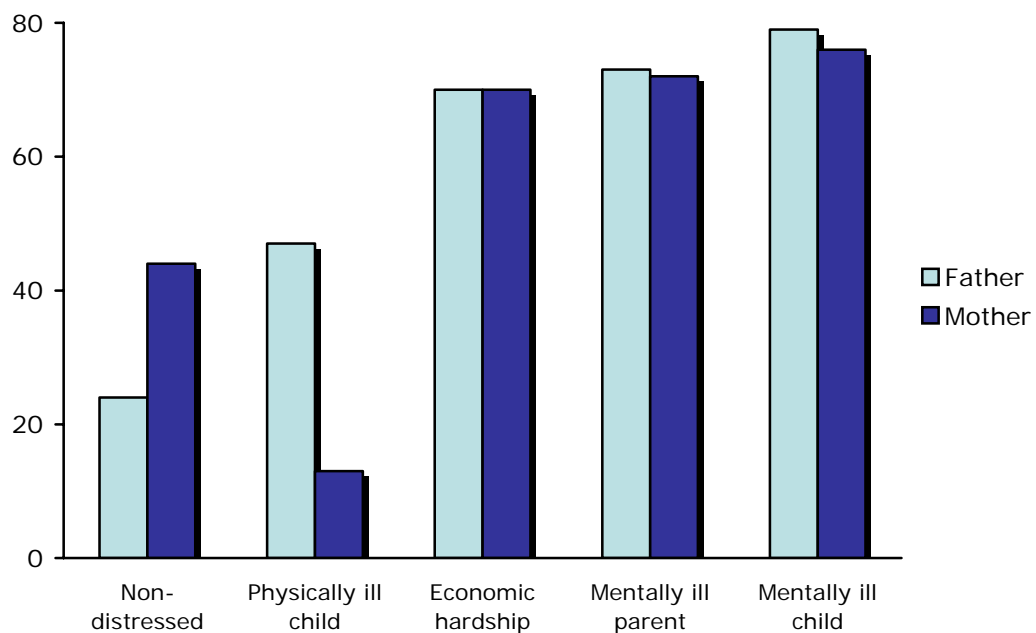
#### *Different stress sources yield different family outcomes*

In the following section we evaluate the impact of health-related and socio-economic stress sources on family functioning. We compare parental FAST-representations of *non-distressed* middle-class families and *clinical* families affected by (a) a physically ill child (cancer), (b) a mentally ill parent (alcoholism, depression) or (c) a mentally ill offspring (eating disorder, behavioral problems). The *socio-economically disadvantaged* group includes Turkish and Brazilian families living in urban slums (i.e., *gecekond*, favelas).

Results clearly indicate that parental FAST-representations varied as a function of health and socio-economic status (see Fig. 2). In particular, parents from both well-adjusted families and those with a cancer patient represented interpersonal structures significantly less often as unbalanced than parents of mentally and socio-economically distressed families.



However, whereas in well-adjusted families, mothers evaluated the family less functional than fathers, in families with a child suffering under cancer a reverse pattern was found. This could be interpreted in the context of traditional gender roles, with mothers being more engaged in the daily family business than fathers. As a consequence, in non-clinical families, mothers are more exposed to daily hassles than fathers and thus might experience increased family-related stress. In contrast, it can be assumed that mothers of families with a physically ill child may interpret their extended parenting role (e.g., health-related care) as a rewarding challenge and thus not as stressful per se.



*Figure 2* Unbalanced family structures in parental FAST-representations as a function of health-related and socio-economical stress (Data in percentages)

Notably, parents form poor families as well as from families with a psychiatric ill parent or child both represented predominantly unbalanced interpersonal structures, a pattern which have previously been shown to be indicative for critical developmental outcomes. This provides further evidence that families confronted with severe economical hardship and social adversity are likely to be at great risk for various biopsychosocial distress including psychiatric diseases like alcoholism and depression.

#### *Suggestions for future research*

Our brief report shows that there is a need for additional research focusing on health-related and socio-economic risk factors for individual and family development in various stressful contexts. Future studies should include

parents as well as children and be based on a longitudinal design, which also includes outcome measures such as psychosocial well-being and health-related quality of life. Such studies would provide a more complete picture of family development under adverse living conditions and in addition could help to design evidence-based preventive and empowerment actions.

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## Book Reviews and Announcements

### ***IAFP Conference in Cardiff, 10-13th June 2006***

An international panel comprising Dr F. Kaslow (USA), Prof. T.M Gehring (Switzerland) and Dr S.E. Neil (Australia) will be discussing and relating methods, techniques and patterning in family and psychological therapy. The panel of experienced clinicians and educators has collective experience to run a dynamic session for experienced practitioners.

### ***New Books on the Market***

Kazantzis, N. & L'Abate, L. (2006). *Handbook of Homework Assignments in Psychotherapy. Research, Practice and Prevention*. New York: Springer. (ISBN 0-387-29680-8). For more information: [www.springer.com](http://www.springer.com).

#### *The Family System Test (FAST-Manual) – Czech translation\**

I am very pleased to inform my colleagues and members of the International Academy of Family Psychology that the Family System Test FAST has a totally new Czech version. I have been working on it since 2002 when the conference in Heidelberg was held. I had a possibility to see the FAST there and to discuss about the possible translation with Thomas M. Gehring, the author of the test.

I would like to express my appreciation to four colleagues who were in charge of administering the FAST to the respondents: Dr. Lucia Lackova and Dr. Radko Oberiegneru from the Department of Psychology, Palacky University in Olomouc and Dr. Lenka Lacinova and Jan Vancura from the Research Institute of Children, Youth and Family at the Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University in Brno.

We included two original parts in the Czech manual of the test. First, the preliminary results from three Czech pilot studies. The FAST was administered as an individual test to thirteen years old children from non-clinical families (N=52); to university students of the average age of 22 years (N=73); to children after severe somatic illness (leucemia), the average age of 12.5 years (N=50) and mothers of these children (N=27).

Secondly, we suggested instructions for children which are easier and more comprehensible than the general instructions for adults. The modification may be useful especially for younger children.

The Czech version of the FAST was published 2005 by Testcentrum Praha which is a member of the Hogrefe Group (<http://www.testcentrum.com>). I believe that the FAST will be an important contribution for the field of family psychology in the Czech Republic as it has a tremendous research and clinical potential.

\*Irena Sobotková, Ph.D., is Associate Professor at the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Arts, Palacký University in Olomouc, Czech Republic and National Representative of the IAFP.

## Book Review

**Book Reviews by Dr Sandra E. S. Neil, Australia** (icp@netspace.net.au)

Erica Frydenberg (2005). *Morton Deutsch: A Life and Legacy of Mediation and Conflict Resolution*. Brisbane: Australian Academic Press.  
(ISBN 1-8753-7855-3)

This book is a magnificent, carefully woven work of art involving written scholarship, and significant interviews with Morton Deutsch. The way Dr Erica Frydenberg pens this book is to crown Morton Deutsch with humility and freedom of the soul. The book itself is a history of man, of a psychologist who lived a free life.

Morton Deutsch is a unique and influential figure in social psychology. He is one of the finest theorists in modern social psychology. His theorizing on cooperation and competition, conflict resolution, distributive justice, and overcoming oppression are all of great importance. He is also a landmark researcher who has made methodological contributions to conducting experimental research on complex social issues such as cooperation and competition, trust, conflict, and distributive justice. His use of the prisoner's dilemma game in the 1950s, for example, instigated the use of the game in thousands of studies in 1960s to the present day. Dr Deutsch has a history of social action, as he was one of the first psychologists to focus social science knowledge on promoting world peace and resolving international conflicts. This combination of theorizing, creative research methodology, and concern for broad social issues makes him one of the premiere social psychologist of all time.

Without in any way lessening the impact of the work, if one just reads the Introduction, "Working for Peace and the Resolution of Conflict", (pp 1– 17) and "Theorist First and Foremost" (pp 138-139), you can get a taste of the dedicated way in which Erica Frydenberg has written this book. The theoretical issues Deutsch relates with establishing Co-operative Relations after destructive conflict, briefly include:

- Establish mutual security; mutual respect
- Humanization of the other
- Fair rules for managing conflict
- Curbing the extremists on both sides
- Gradual development of mutual trust and co-operation

Morton Deutsch was born in early 1920 into middle class circumstances in the Bronx, and the book reflects a love affair with New York City. His family life is well depicted and I leave it to the reader of this review to explore that.

Dr Frydenberg describes the shaping of Morton Deutsch as a psychologist as "light bulbs going on in the mind" from an early age. His wartime experiences were in the U.S. Air Force. He studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the MIT Research Centre, and later as a teacher. Dr Frydenberg describes him as great mentor. Many of Deutsch's students became prominent, for example Michelle Fine at the University of Pennsylvania, expert in victims of injustice; and Janice Steil at Teachers College, Columbia University, expert in family relationships

On Page 77, she writes:

*"Mort's patience and large-heartedness were able to turn some indifferent students into first-class psychologists who produced excellent dissertations... I worked with students who had some independence and some initiative" he said. "With such students I felt I could play a very important role in helping to extend their range".*

Great teachers with superb teaching abilities realize that mentoring students is one of their most important tasks.

In the definitive Chapter Four 'Theorist First and Foremost', come issues relating to the establishing cooperative relations after destructive conflict.

I would recommend to psychologists in academia or in clinical practice take time to read this important and rigorous theoretical analysis which drives practical research and applications. Dr Frydenberg's book brings the man to light and presents his work as a calling.

*"There is no doubt that the life and legacy of Morton Deutsch will continue to influence theoreticians, practitioners and researches for years to come",* Frydenberg (p. 208). The book is a marvellous and fascinating read.

Dr Sandra E. S. Neil, Australia

Pittu Laungani & John D.Morgan (2005). *Death and Bereavement Around the World (Vol. 4): Death and Bereavement in Asia, Australia and New Zealand*. Amityville (NY): Baywood Publishing Company Inc. (ISBN 0-89503-2341-1)

This is the most recent in the series, Volume 4, of "Death and Bereavement Around the World". The last volume I reviewed was of South America and this volume looks at it in the Southern Hemisphere, in Asia, Australia and New Zealand. Pittu Laungani has written a learned introduction to this book and themes that were followed in the last book

are followed by contributors from Australasia. "This books invites us", Dr Laungani says, "to take a journey from Japan to Korea, New Zealand, Australia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, India and Israel".

In New Zealand, Dermot Buchanan gives us an economic history of New Zealand, its rural and their urban influences, the impacts of the two World Wars on death, dying and bereavement, and he also explains singular importance of Anzac Day as the most solemn day in New Zealand's calendar year. A further chapter is written from a Maori perspective.

Dr Laungani in his chapter "Cultural Considerations in Hindu Funerals in India and England", adopts a comparative approach, and differences in beliefs and practices between eastern and western cultures are explained on a conceptual model of cultural differences.

The chapter "The Sacred and the Secular: The Changing Face of Death, Loss and Bereavement in Israel" looks at the experience of loss and bereavement in Israeli culture and further vignettes that highlight religious and secular influences on the experience of Jewish loss in Israel.

Then, looking to China, Jiakang Wu addresses whether the Chinese talk about death and how they mourn. This is a fascinating chapter to read.

Further, we look at writings on death in Japan. The chapter "Japanese Religion in Changing Society: The Spirits of the Dead" has a fascinating tale about the rising sun, and how ancestors come to take us to the 'other world'. There is a further chapter from Japan which looks at hospices and the relative lack of communication between doctors and patients.

Korean death practices include looking at how Shamanism, Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism all work on the social and familial life of Koreans and their death practices. Death is seen in Korea as a continuation of life.

In the chapter on Australia, Allan Kellehear discusses the change in the faith of death. He discusses the high suicide rate in Australia and we are shown through that much is made of death in more and more memorials to white Australians, but there is no corresponding tribute paid to the Australia's Aboriginal people.

The last chapter entitled "Dying, Death, and Grief: Glimpses in Hong Kong and Taiwan" once again looks at three major religions: Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism and is often to demonstrate the significant impact of religion on the dying person, the family and the community, and the development of the hospice movement for care workers in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

The book looks at completely different religious structures and different methods of bereavement and different processes. Actually, I think is one book that is almost essential for any therapist who works with grief and families because it gives them a fuller understanding of almost every culture, religion and area in Asia, Australia and New Zealand. I commend the writers of this incredible work and would like to add that there are some specific procedures depending in Australia on the particular culture those people come from, and many of them are a combination of the Australian ways and Christian way, but the nation here is definitely made up of a multi-cultural mix, so this book will be excellent for anyone who is dealing with death, dying and grieving. I would like to recommend this to the international community and to therapist, health practitioners, academics, counsellors and particularly at the moment to the Immigration officers and Legal Immigration people. It should be essential reading.

I recommend this book to psychologists, counsellors and doctors from anywhere who wish to understand death and bereavement. It casts light upon the importance of humanness of the process of dying. The practitioner can grow in understanding as one reads about the world practices the book outlines. Many thanks to the illustrious John Morgan and Pittu Laungani for undertaking this momentous work.

I was informed that John Morgan passed away in early June 2005. The world will be a lesser place without his everlasting writings.

Dr Sandra E. S. Neil, Australia

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