



Newsletter

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From President's Desk

The 2022 Conference of the IAFP has successfully concluded. At this conference, New Board Members of the IAFP had been selected. Please see below for details.

President:

Koubun Wakashima, Ph.D., Professor, Tohoku University

Vice-President:

Paula Mena Matos, Ph.D., Associate Professor, University of Porto

Secretary:

Christy M. Buchanan, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Wake Forest University

Treasurer / Newsletter Editor:

Gen Takagi, Ph.D., Assistant professor, Tohoku Fukushi University

Membership Chair:

Stepanka (Steffi) Kadera, Ph.D., Ludwig-Maximilians-University (LMU)

Next, we introduce the contents of this newsletter. In this newsletter, we have received a contribution about the 2022 conference from Dr. Sabine Walper, our past president and the 2022 conference chair. We also received contributions from Ms. Seki Fumi and Dr. Sakamoto Sakamoto, who reflected on their participation in the 2022 Conference. Please note that the next conference of the IAFP will be held in Sendai, Japan in 2025. Please check the end of this newsletter for information on the next conference.

The IAFP provided nominal support for two workshops in 2022-2023. We received contributions of manuscripts about the workshops from participants in each workshop. Thus, in this newsletter, we report on activities in which IAFP was involved.

That is not all. The IAFP's newsletter also introduce family research from around the world. In this issue, Dr. Saeko Kamoshida introduce us to her

research on the effect of a child's depression label on prenatal communication. We believe it is important to continue to promote family research by introducing research being conducted in various parts of the world in our newsletters, thereby encouraging interaction among family researchers around the world. If you would like to introduce your research in our newsletter, please feel free to contact newsletter editor, Gen Takagi (g-takagi@tfu.ac.jp).

Koubun Wakashima, Gen Takagi

Review of the 2022 Conference of the IAFP

Celebrating 30 years IAFP –
The 2022 Conference of the International Academy of Family Psychology
October 10-12 2022

Sabine Walper

German Youth Institute, Past President

Families in Difficult Times: Conflict, COVID, and Cyberspace

The International Academy of Family Psychology (IAFP) was founded in 1990, and accordingly, the anniversary conference celebrating 30 years of IAFP should have been held in 2020. But the COVID-19 pandemic changed everything. Although we waited two years hoping that we would be able to meet in Munich, Germany, the pandemic still limited travel opportunities in 2022. Therefore, an online conference was the best solution to discuss current pressing issues and related new research findings with our IAFP members and other interested scholars of family psychology and other areas of family science around the world. The meeting was held from October 10 to 12, 2022, and attracted participants not only from European countries, but also from Japan, the USA, China, Australia, and Kenya.

In view of the difficult times, the theme of the meeting was more than obvious: The conference program foregrounded issues of family stress and coping, addressing the stress of war and forced migration, the still prevailing constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic, but also the problems in high-conflict separated families as well as chances, challenges, and strains of increasing digitization. In addition to these four focal themes, the conference program comprised a variety of other papers with coparenting and the role of family support services standing out as a fifth thematic strand.

The conference was opened by Sabine Walper, by then president of IAFP and conference organizer, who welcomed all participants on behalf of IAFP and the co-organizing institutions Ludwig-Maximilians-University and German Youth Institute, both in Munich, Germany. She reminded of the organization's anniversary, and gave a short introduction to the topics of the conference.

Program Focus 1: War, Flight, and Trauma

The program started with the first of five invited keynotes (see the list of keynotes below). In her talk about *"Supporting Traumatized Children and Youth after Flight of Displacement"*, Rita Rosner, professor of Clinical und Biological Psychology at the Catholic University Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Germany, drew on her rich clinical experience in working with traumatized young people, mostly refugees, and her prominent research in evaluating clinical interventions this domain. This keynote set the stage for the topic of the day. It was followed by a symposium on *"Psychoeducation in Distasters"* (chaired by Koubun Wakashima, incoming president of IAFP) which presented psychoeducational approaches for people affected by disasters. The three presentations focused such approaches developed and implemented in Japan, which targeting individuals, families, and

communities. The papers were discussed by Koubun Wakashima together with Michiko Ikuta.

A further highlight was the invited symposium on “*War, Trauma, and Flight: an Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Consequences for Affected Families*”, organized by Tobias Hecker, professor of Clinical Developmental Psychopathology and head of the Emmy Noether Junior Research Group at University Bielefeld, Germany. Based on four international contributions from various zones of war and conflict of this planet, this symposium provided rich insight into factors which affect mental health and wellbeing among young people. The presentations were discussed by Laura K. Taylor, professor at the School of Psychology at UC Dublin and expert in Peace Studies.

In the early evening, the keynote by John Thoburn (former president of IAFP and Professor Emeritus at the Department of Clinical Psychology at the Seattle Pacific University) and Myroslava Muchkevych (head of the Medical Psychology and Life Safety Department at Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University in Ukraine) was the final highlight of this thematic focus. They reported on their most recent experiences with *Mental Health Support Training in Ukraine* aiming to reduce the psychological burden brought about by this war. This training, organized by John Thoburn as part of Psychological Support International, a non-profit organization, was provided in July 2022. It reached over 450 Ukrainians, including first responders, mental health providers, professors, NGOs, military leaders, and others. Their joint talk provided an impressive final presentation for this thematic strand of the meeting.

Keynote lectures

Rita Rosner:

Supporting Traumatized Children and Youth after Flight or Displacement

John Thoburn & Myroslava Muchkevych:

The PsyCorps Model of Mental Health Support Training – Experiences from Ukraine

Sonia Livingstone:

Opportunities and Challenges of Digitization for Family Life

Irwin Sandler & Karey O’Hara:

Promoting Resilience for Children Exposed to Post-Separation/Divorce Interparental Conflict: Theory and Intervention

Anna Rönkä:

Family Services and Social Networks in Supporting Coparenthood among New Parents

During this first day, parallel paper sessions addressed family conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic, issues around clinical interventions, and issues of separation/divorce, which were further followed up during the next two days.

Program Focus 2: Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic

As indicated, the program for the first day of the conference already introduced issues of the corona pandemic. A paper session on “*Parents in the COVID-19 Pandemic*” (chaired by Harald Werneck) provided the overture to this thematic strand, comprising three

presentations. The first addressed the double burden of work and childcare and its consequences for work-family conflict, followed by a paper on links between daycare closure and parents' wellbeing based on multiple-wave longitudinal data, and the third paper investigated couple functioning during and after the lockdowns, comparing weekdays and weekends.

The second day started with a symposium focusing "*Family Changes in the COVID-19 Pandemic*" (chaired by Koubun Wakashima and jointly discussed with Michiko Ikuta). Based on findings from Japan, it addressed effects of the pandemic on family functioning and the role of family therapy in coping with the expanding pandemic. It was later followed by a paper session which also addressed the situation of "*Families in the COVID-19 pandemic*" and presented findings on family coping strategies as identified in a large multinational Latin American study, and a study by an Italian research team which investigated resources and vulnerabilities of adoptive families in the prolonged pandemic.

Shifting from families to the situation of children and youth, a paper session on "*Young People in the COVID-19 Pandemic*" (chaired by Susan Branje) comprised four contributions from Kenya, Portugal, Slovenia, and Germany, thus providing rich opportunities for comparative discussions.

Finally, the third day of the conference started with a symposium on "*The COVID-19 Pandemic: The Impact on Adolescents, Parents, and Gender Equality*" (chaired by Silje Baardstu and discussed by Mona Bekkhus) which brought together three presentations from research in Norway and the Netherlands. The papers addressed personality differences in adolescents' stress, their relationships with parents and mental health, profiles and predictors of parenting stress during the pandemic, and issues of labor division with a focus on gender equality. Overall, these sessions provided rich insight into the consequences of the pandemic for families and young people under varying conditions in the different countries.

Program Focus 3: Coping with Separation, Divorce and Interparental Conflict

Our third theme was introduced during the first day of the conference by a symposium which presented finding of the *Norwegian Dynamics of Family Conflict (FAMC) Study* (chaired by Linda Larsen, Maria Morbeck & Olav Tveit). The three presentations of this symposium drew on one large longitudinal study on cohabiting and separated families, foregrounding children's experiences and agency in shared parenting arrangements and children's coping with interparental conflict. Children's wellbeing during the COVID19 pandemic was addressed, too.

The second day included three symposia on divorced and separated families, each chaired by Inge van der Valk (professor at Utrecht University, the Netherlands) and colleagues. The first focused "*Divorce, Parental Conflicts, Coparenting & Adolescent Adjustment*" (chaired by Rianne van Dijk & Inge van der Valk) with three papers, including an updated meta-analysis on children's adjustment in divorced or separated families, a meta-analysis on interparental conflict, parenting, and child adjustment in divorced families, and a paper on postdivorce coparenting patterns and their links to adolescents' wellbeing.

The second symposium dealt with "*Custody Arrangements, Shared Parenting, and Child Adjustment After Divorce*" (chaired by Inge van der Valk & Zoë Rejaän) with four papers from Norway, Germany, the Netherlands, and Austria. Quite clearly, shared parenting proved to be a prominent issue, particularly in Germany and Austria, where data are scarce and legal regulations are still lacking. The third of Inge's symposia combined this program focus with the fourth program focus on digitization and digital tools to improve family life

(see below). Finally, specialized services for separated families were addressed in a symposium of the fifth thematic strand of this conference, focusing coparenting and the role of family services (see below).

The second day ended with a keynote on *“Promoting Resilience for Children Exposed to Post-Separation/Divorce Interparental Conflict: Theory and Intervention”*, presented by Irwin Sandler, Regents Professor Emeritus and Research Professor at the REACH Institute at Arizona State University, internationally renowned researcher on children in divorced families, and Karey O’Hara, professor at the REACH Institute at Arizona State University. They provided rich evidence from own and other research on “what works” for improving children’s resilience in the face of interparental post-separation conflict with online programs proving similarly successful as offline programs. Addressing online interventions, this talk also linked to the fourth thematic strand of this conference:

Program Focus 4: Families in the Digital Age

This program focus started with a keynote by Sonja Livingstone, Professor of Social Psychology at the Department of Media and Communication at the London School of Economics and Political Science and highly reputed advisor of the UK government, European Commission, European Parliament, Council of Europe, OECD and UNICEF. Her talk addressed *“Opportunities and Challenges of Digitization for Family Life”*, covering a broad range of changes in parents’ and children’ life due to the increased availability and constant further development of digital tools for communication, work, learning, and everyday family practices.

Examples of how digital tools can be used in family psychology were presented in the symposium on *“Screening Instruments and Digital Platforms in Interventions for Divorced and Separated Parents”*, chaired by Inge van der Valk, Mariska Klein Velderman and Sabine Walper. Four papers informed about digital assessment tools, screening and evaluation instruments for post-separation interventions, as well as digital information and intervention platforms addressing separated families.

Furthermore, an invited workshop by Lynda Sagrestano (German Youth Institute, former Director of the Center for Research on Women, and Professor of Psychology at the University of Memphis) informed about her *“Landscape Analysis of the Content and Delivery of Online Parenting Programs for Separated and Divorcing Families in the US”*. This workshop provided not only detailed information about the design of these online programs, but also allowed for more interaction among the participants.

Finally, a symposium addressed *“Post-Separation Parenting Smartphone Apps: Can they help Families Avoid Conflict?”* (chair: Leanne Smith). This symposium comprised three presentations by Bruce Smyth and Jason L. Payne from Australia, who jointly discussed findings on family law professionals’ views on post-separation parenting apps, findings from and evaluation of such apps using human computer interaction methods, and separated parents’ experience with such apps. Overall, although family law professionals seem to recommend such apps, these also include various pitfalls and may be less successful in avoiding conflict than assumed.

Program Focus 5: Coparenting and the Role of Family Services

The keynote of the last day of this conference was held by Anna Rönka, Professor of Education and Adult Education at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, nationally and internationally recognized expert on daily family life, parenthood, and coparenthood, especially in the context of the 24/7 economy. Her talk addressed *“Family Services and Social Networks in Supporting Coparenthood among New Parents”*. She highlighted the

challenges of the transition to parenthood and the demands of successful coparenting, emphasizing the role of family services in support of this transition and subsequent family functioning.

This keynote was followed by two parallel symposia, one focusing coparenting while the other addressed interventions to improve family life. The symposium on *“Coparenting as a Family and Social Backbone: Meanings, Outcomes and Change”* (chaired by Marisa Matias and Paula Mena Matos) comprised four papers. It included qualitative cross-national research on expectations regarding labor division among parents-to-be at the transition to parenthood, research on the role of coparenting in father involvement and maternal stress, findings from an evaluation of a family program in Brazil, and research on children’s adjustment in high-conflict separated parents.

The symposium on *“Interventions to Support Positive Coping with Parental Separation”* (chaired by Mariska Klein Velderman, with Inge van der Valk as discussant) followed up on the third theme of this conference. It provided findings on three group intervention programs which aim to facilitate positive coping, conflict reduction and improved coparenting among separated parents: the post-separation preventive group intervention Divorce ATLAS from the Netherlands, the program “Kinder im Blick” (Looking out for our Kids) from Germany, and the Dutch program “Ouderschap Blijft” (parenthood continues). A paper session on *“Family Relations and Support Services”* (chaired by Johanna Löchner) comprised four papers from Germany, China, and Austria which also highlighted family diversity. These included a real-time assessment approach of parenting stress at the transition to parenthood, a study on work-family conflict among first time Chinese fathers, research on the use of preventive services among diverse family types (nuclear, single parent, and stepfamilies) with and without welfare receipt, and a study on legal vulnerabilities of same-gender parent families.

Finally, a symposium on *“Risk Assessment in Child Protection”* (chaired by Judith Iffland and Susanne Witte) highlighted links between family psychology, social work, and family law. It addressed ways of risk assessment of male guardians with sex offences in family law proceedings, the evaluation of pornography consumption as a risk factor in family assessments, and findings from a cross-national study in England, the Netherlands, and Germany which compared risk assessments in official investigations into suspected child maltreatment. In the future, such topics at the interface of family psychology and child protection services deserve further attention.

... and More: Clinical Interventions and a Variety of Poster Presentations

Although clinical interventions – aside from trauma therapy – were a less prominent issue at this conference than at other, specialized meetings of clinical psychologists and psychiatrists, they also had their place at the first day. A paper session on *“Clinical Interventions”* (chaired by Beate Ditzen) included three presentations. The first paper investigated the role of parenting styles and emotional dysregulation in eating disorders among Chinese youth. The second paper presented research on the development of a preventive blended care parenting intervention for parents with PTSD and its evaluation in a randomized controlled trial. And the third paper investigated the feasibility and effectiveness of CBASP@YoungAge, a modular treatment program for children and adolescents with depression and interpersonal problems.

Last, but not least, two poster sessions were included in the program. Eight posters presented research on a broad range of topics. They included issues of burnout in family caregivers of persons with dementia, family resilience in families of children with

developmental disabilities, relationship satisfaction and health among older adults in a Burkinabe population in Africa, family counseling outside of therapeutic setting, attachment in German and Israeli couples, and young people's negative experiences in the internet. A scoping review of psychological family studies in Austria was also presented.

The Final Farewell and Start of the New Board of IAFP

The final farewell included a big thank you to all presenters, chairs, discussants, and interested participants of this conference. Special thanks also went to the organizing team, particularly to Julia Reim, Annika Schunke and Christine Entleitner-Phlebs who took such excellent care of all matters including the collection of submissions, mailings with the participants, and supervising the online sessions. Special thanks also went to the Exxib and the two technical experts who managed the online sessions. And the IAFP Board thanked Matthias Hoffjan for managing the online election of the new board.

The end of the conference also marked the start of the new board. Koubun Wakashima, professor at Tohoku University in Japan, took over the position as president of IAFP and introduced himself to the audience, sending warm greetings and expressing his strong commitment to IAFP. He announced that the next IAFP meeting will be held in Japan in 2025. Paula Mena Matos (University of Porto, Portugal) supports him as vice president, together with Christy M. Buchanan (Wake Forest University, USA) as IAFP secretary, Gen Tagaki (Tohoku University, Japan) as treasurer, and Stepanka Kadera (Ludwig Maximilians University Munich, Germany) as membership chair. We have a strong new Board!

In Sum:

The 9th conference of the International Academy of Family Psychology provided a rich program with many topics which are at the heart of family psychology. It comprised excellent presentations on highly topical issues reflecting current innovative research at numerous parts of the world, often involving large research teams, several with international collaborations. We hope that this meeting was successful in strengthening international exchange in the field of family psychology and even might have provided a basis for building new collaborations.

Of course, online meetings cannot compete with meetings in personal presence when it comes to networking. Furthermore, international online meetings provide special challenges. Sorting out a suitable timetable for presenters from different time zones was hard to achieve. When participants from very distant parts of the world joined in the same symposium, some had to stay up very late or get up in the middle of the night. But all participants were highly committed and contributed to the success of this conference with their professional expertise and their dedication to promote family psychology. We are highly grateful and look forward to our next conference in 2025 – in presence in Japan!

Review of the 2022 Conference of the IAFP

What I learned through 9th Conference of the IAFP

Fumi Seki

Medical Corporation Wakeikai, Tanino Gozan Hospital

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to participate in the conference. I believe that my participation in this conference has given me a strong sense of the depth, interest, and potential of the field of study.

This year's conference focused specifically on family stress and coping, with keynote speeches and symposia covering topics such as families in times of war and forced migration, family life in the Covid-19 pandemic, and families facing high conflict after separation. The content was truly in line with the current times, and we learned a great deal about the Covid-19 pandemic and what family strengths are needed to survive the rough times of our times.

I also presented my own research at the poster session. This was my first presentation at an international conference, and I was worried about whether my thoughts and feelings would be conveyed to the audience, but I learned a lot from the questions and opinions I received about my presentation. I was very happy that the audience tried to understand what I wanted to say, and I was able to convey my ideas to them. I would like to start studying English little by little and share my thoughts with various people in the future.

Furthermore, in addition to the presentations, I had the opportunity to see poster presentations in a wide range of fields. I was stimulated a lot by the different contents and atmosphere of the presentations. Through the presentations, I was able to connect with participants from other countries and find new goals for myself. My presentation was based on the issue of how to reduce the burden of dementia family caregivers. With the current increase in the elderly population, caregivers are having difficulty accessing care resources due to various adverse factors such as time and social responsibilities. For this reason, we hope to contribute greatly to the future of healthcare for the super-aging society, which will create new care services that will allow caregivers to easily receive assistance.

Finally, the Covid-19 epidemic has changed the way we take the present for granted. With this change, the issues that need to be resolved for the future to be created are also becoming more complex. This conference has given me a chance to look again at the present and the future, to think about what we see as the challenges and how we can solve them. As a clinical psychologist, I aim to provide psychosocial support based on pragmatism. In aiming for such support, it is necessary to place great importance not only on whether evidence is good or bad, but also on whether it is effective or ineffective in providing support. Therefore, no matter how much evidence is obtained, it is meaningless if it does not solve the problems of those who actually provide support. In today's society, where problems are becoming increasingly complex, we feel that it is often difficult to provide effective solutions with only one academic discipline. Therefore, through this conference, I was able to see a wide variety of themes, both domestic and international, and was able to understand social needs and

gain perspectives on effective solutions through interaction with many people. I would like to use this experience to continue my efforts to generate support based on pragmatism.

Thank you very much for this valuable opportunity.

Disaster Psychoeducation in Japan

Kazuma Sakamoto

Miyagi Prefectural Education Center

As a symposium presenter at IAFP Conference 2022, I presented on disaster psychoeducation in Japan. Japan is one of the most disaster-prone countries. For example, the Japan Meteorological Agency reported that Japan experienced a total of 2,424 earthquakes in 2021. This means that Japan experienced 3 to 6 earthquakes per day. In addition, once every few years, a major earthquake occurs that causes casualties. Other disasters in Japan include tsunamis, windstorms, floods, and volcanic eruptions. Routine disaster preparedness and disaster psychoeducation are necessary to minimize physical and psychological damage. I experienced post-disaster chaos as a result of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. This experience was one of the events that led me to make the decision to become a clinical psychologist and one of the events that made me realize the importance of disaster psychoeducation. In the following, I will first share my local experience in 2011. I hope that I can convey some realistic post-disaster situations. Next, I will introduce the current status of disaster psychoeducation in Japan and the disaster psychoeducation program for families created by the Tohoku University team.

1. Experience in the Great East Japan Earthquake

The Great East Japan Earthquake occurred at 14:46 on March 11, 2011. At the time, I was a second-year high school student living in Hachinohe City, Aomori Prefecture, near the sea. The earthquake occurred during English class. It was the biggest quake I had ever experienced. I hid under my desk to protect myself, but if I did not hold on tightly, the desk itself seemed to blow away. The school building was cracked. I was overwhelmed by the situation, but at the same time I was very worried about the safety of my family. When I returned home, all the furniture had collapsed and my mother was at her wits' end cleaning up the house. Eventually my father rushed home as well. I remember feeling really relieved to know that my family was safe. Fortunately, the house was not badly damaged.

With the safety of my family temporarily secured, the next day I volunteered with friends to help remove debris from the coastal areas. We took a bus to an area near the ocean and saw the houses in the tsunami zone that had been badly destroyed. What was striking was that the houses that had been hit by the tsunami had been reduced to rubble, while those that had been hit by the tsunami were intact. Even in the same area, the boundary between houses that were damaged and those that were not was clearly highlighted, and the division of the community seemed to be visualized.

I was part of a group that removed debris from a house, and under the direction of the leader, we were clearing away the debris. Then the woman who owned the house said, "That's enough! Don't do anything! Stop it!" and started cursing the volunteers. I was a high school student, so I felt a bit irrational and wondered why I should be told such a thing, but I was so overwhelmed by the woman's distraught state and I couldn't say anything. The group leader calmed the woman down and we continued working. When it was time to finish our

work and we were about to get on the bus to leave, the woman who owned the house came up to us, shook our hands and said, "Thank you," while crying. I was astonished to see the complete opposite of what had just happened. At the time, I couldn't say anything back to her, all I could do was shake her hand and nod. On the bus ride home, I thought about how she felt as she saw off the bus. I understood that she must have been expressing her gratitude in the end, amidst her sense of loss, anxiety, depression, and anger, which she was unable to sort out, and I felt a desire to be close to her.

Now, 12 years after the Great East Japan Earthquake, I have become a clinical psychologist. I now understand that it was a natural psychological reaction to the disaster that she was so distraught when her house was suddenly destroyed and she did not know if her family was safe or not. Had I known about disaster stress reactions at the time, I might have been able to say something to her instead of being overwhelmed by her reaction. This experience made me realize the importance of disaster psychoeducation.

2. The Current State of Disaster Psychoeducation in Japan

In Japan, several organizations have already created disaster psychoeducation content. For example, a team from the Nagoya University Psychological Support & Research Center for Human Development has created and published psychoeducation content on disaster psychoeducation, including disaster safety behaviors, post-disaster stress reactions, and relaxation techniques. These contents have been made available to the public. These can be said to play an important role in enhancing individual resilience in the event of a disaster. On the other hand, a large-scale disaster destroys local communities and families. The feelings of loneliness and loss that arise from this can be very disruptive to disaster victims. In particular, children grow up in a family, where they are nurtured and maintained with psychological stability on a daily basis, so the disruption of the family is a major shock to them. Therefore, it is important for disaster psychoeducation to enhance the resilience of local communities and families in the event of a disaster.

3. Psychoeducation for Enhancing Family System Resilience

The Tohoku University team attempted to develop disaster psychoeducation content aimed at enhancing family resilience. In addition to the topics to enhance individual resilience, two disaster-related family topics were included: 1) how to respond to family members when they notice something unusual about them, 2) how to deal with the disaster experience as a family. When one family member experiences a change during a disaster, the members who notice it may also become upset, creating chaos in the entire family. This topic shows that any person can react unusually in times of disaster, and the importance of basic care involvement based on a solution-focused approach and seeking assistance from professionals outside of the family. In addition, talking about the disaster experience is sometimes taboo within the family and cannot be discussed with family members. To break this vicious cycle of communication within the family, communicating with extra-family members can be helpful (Wakashima, 2019). After providing examples of resources that can be used in such a situation, we designed a workpiece at the end of the session to allow participants to pre-assume a person who can communicate with an extra-family member. In the future, it will be necessary to verify the effectiveness of these contents.

The three-step model of brief therapy (Speaker: Koubun Wakashima)

Exploring the current state of international exchange and development in Chinese family therapy through the context of Professor Wakashima's brief therapy interchanges between China and Japan

Zixin Zhong, Thi Thuy Ngo, Xinhe Zhang

Faculty of Psychology, Southwest University

To foster global communication, facilitate the exchange of counseling theories and techniques, and broaden counseling practitioners' professional perspectives, the Faculty of Psychology at Southwest University arranged a virtual public lecture on January 8, 2023. Renowned expert Prof. Koubun Wakashima was invited to deliver a four-hour lecture on the topic of "The Three-Step Model of Brief Therapy." The event, organized by the Psychological Counseling Application and Research Center at Southwest University, was jointly supported by the Psychological Support Center of the Graduate School of Education at Tohoku University and the International Academy Family Psychology. Attended by approximately 200 individuals, including public members, and students and teachers from Southwest University's Faculty of Psychology, the lecture received positive feedback from all attendees, who expressed their appreciation for the valuable insights gained.

During the introductory remarks of the lecture, Professor Wakashima highlighted the fundamental elements of systematized therapy, emphasizing the necessity of a theoretical basis and the utilization of corresponding methods and techniques. As a result, the lecture on the three-step model encompassed three key components: comprehension of the theoretical framework, acquisition of the specific methods and techniques employed in each stage of the three-step model, and observation of its practical implementation through a case demonstration video.

During the morning session, Professor Wakashima provided an overview of current topics in psychology and psychotherapy by introducing two prominent figures, Inoue Enryo, and Morita Shoma. He delved into the theoretical foundations of hypochondriasis, natural healing, and self-organization. Of particular note, Professor Wakashima's presentation included numerous references to Japanese history and culture, such as demonology, which helped the Chinese participants grasp the distinct cultural context of Japanese psychological counseling. Additionally, by showcasing the incorporation and assimilation of Indian, Chinese, and Western medical theories in Inoue's book "Psychotherapy," the participants came to realize that, as Chinese counseling practitioners, the field of counseling not only draws from Western culture but also holds abundant resources within Chinese culture, waiting to be explored.

During the afternoon session, Professor Wakashima focused on demonstrating the practical execution of each step within the three-step model. Building upon the theoretical foundation established in the morning, the participants swiftly grasped the significance and implications of each step. The model effectively conveyed the principles of embracing natural healing, acknowledging the role of time, and trusting in the client's self-organization. These

concepts evoked parallels with the philosophical underpinnings of Chinese Taoist culture, particularly the notion of "Rule Through Non-action", creating resonance across diverse cultures. Furthermore, through the professor's case demonstration video, participants had the opportunity to observe the three-step model in action, thereby deepening their comprehension and sharpening their application of the model.

Towards the conclusion of the lecture, Professor Wakashima engaged in a question-and-answer session and facilitated a discussion with the participants regarding the lecture's content. A question that garnered considerable curiosity from many attendees pertained to why the professor utilized humor by joking about a monster with the client in the case demonstration video's concluding moments. In response, the professor elucidated that the ambiance of brief therapy counseling should foster comfort and incorporate humor to facilitate the "activation" of counseling. In fact, throughout the lecture, participants also noticed sporadic moments of humor in the professor's explanations. As the lecture drew to a close, numerous attendees expressed their appreciation to Professor Wakashima for creating an environment that facilitated relaxed and comfortable learning, acknowledging that they had gained substantial knowledge from the lecture.

In recent years, China has witnessed the emergence of Brief Therapy as a response to diverse psychological counseling needs. An example of China's commitment to learning from different prominent brief therapies and techniques through cross-country interactions can be seen in the invitation extended to Professor Koubun Wakashima. This trend extends to the realm of Family Therapy as well. A significant development occurred in May 2018 when the first consecutive training program on Brief Family Therapy was organized in China. This program was jointly sponsored by the American Mental Research Institute's Center for Brief Therapy (MRI) and the Shanghai Mental Health Center. Since then, Brief Family Therapy has been introduced to China, and the training program has been ongoing to this day.

Currently, Systemic Family Therapy, Structural Family Therapy, and the Satir Model remain the primary approaches dominating Family Therapy in China. Regarding training and education, the study of Family Therapy in China commenced over thirty years ago through the "Sino-German Class" psychotherapy continuous training program, a collaborative effort between China and Germany. This program primarily focused on teaching Systemic Family Therapy. Subsequently, the emergence of Structural Family Therapy, pioneered by Salvador Minuchin, and the Satir Model of Family Therapy gradually gained recognition and popularity within China.

Research investigations in the field of Family Therapy have placed significant emphasis on examining the effectiveness of the three aforementioned therapeutic approaches. Notably, a scrutiny of empirical studies conducted within the past three years, accessible through China's primary academic literature search platform, the National Knowledge Internet (CNKI), reveals the extensive application and research of these three therapies across various issues. For instance, Systemic Family Therapy has been explored in the context of addressing parent-child conflict, postpartum depression, and providing psychological support during the novel coronavirus epidemic. The Satir model has been utilized in cases related to bulimia nervosa, loneliness among the elderly, and school bullying. Additionally, Structural Family Therapy has found application in areas such as social withdrawal among children, role conflict with elderly individuals, and juvenile delinquency. On the other hand, limited empirical studies have been conducted on other therapeutic approaches, including Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) and Multidimensional Family Therapy (MDFT). The literature on Brief Family Therapy that can be searched in the past three years is only one review, but no empirical studies.

While there are mainstream genres in the field, the current perspective on the study and application of Family Therapy in China leans towards integration. In July 2018, Hangzhou Normal University hosted the International Symposium on Marriage and Family Therapy, focusing on the theme of "Marriage and Family Therapy Schools: Collision and Integration." The symposium invited Professor Douglas C. Breunlin from Northwestern University's Department of Clinical Psychology to deliver a presentation on the "Integrative Model of Family Therapy." Presently, Family Therapy training in China incorporates theories and methods from established schools like systemic, strategic, and structural approaches, as well as emerging techniques like Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) and Narrative Therapy. However, it is essential to recognize that these various schools of family therapy share numerous common theoretical foundations.

In training courses on family therapy offered by Chinese universities, such as Southwest University, the curriculum for undergraduate students begins by introducing fundamental theoretical foundations. These include systemic, cybernetic, psychoanalytic, social constructivist, and attachment theories, as well as essential concepts like family structure and the family life cycle. In terms of therapeutic approaches, students are exposed to various models such as structural family therapy, the Satir model, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and collaborative therapy. Similarly, Beijing Normal University offers a Family Therapy course that aims to provide an overview of the eight fundamental schools within the field of Family Therapy. The course emphasizes comparing the differences and commonalities among these schools. In both instances, students are encouraged to integrate multiple therapeutic genres into their practice, fostering a comprehensive and adaptable approach to Family Therapy.

In China's counseling profession, the mainstream theoretical approaches are still psychoanalytic and cognitive-behavioral therapies, followed by Family Therapy. However, in response to China's increased focus on adolescent mental health, there has been a growing recognition of the unique suitability of Family Therapy in addressing issues related to adolescents. As a result, it is anticipated that Family Therapy will gain broader acceptance and see increased utilization in the future.

Tips for Second order change (Speaker: Bernardo Paoli)

Review of participation in the "Tips for Second order change" lecture

Kohei Koiwa

Tohoku University

Summary

In the first segment of this lecture, the speaker elucidated a range of psychotherapeutic techniques and the "strategies for change" implemented in each therapy. For instance, hypnosis exerts a therapeutic effect by triggering a cathartic response or facilitating a gradual reaction, while psychoanalysis addresses psychological issues in patients through the integration of the unconscious. Additional therapies discussed included cognitive therapy, aiming to tackle irrational and dysfunctional beliefs, and behavioral therapy, which modifies behavioral patterns by endorsing adaptive behaviors. In the realm of humanistic psychology, the therapy goal centers on guiding patients to discover the purpose in their lives that they should pursue. Body therapy enhances harmony between body and mind by expanding body movements and increasing flexibility, whereas expressive (art) therapy endeavors to liberate the mind through the authentic expression of emotions. Image therapy deepens self-understanding via a dialogue with one's inner image, and Systemic Therapy resolves family issues through emancipation from the original family and familial myths. In mindfulness, the pursuit is towards mental stability through fully immersing oneself in the present moment. Within this context, the characteristics of brief therapy, which revolves around "acting in a feedback loop" to attain a resolution, are described.

In this lecture, the speaker utilized the MRI approach, a type of family therapy, to elaborate on the "feedback loop" for problem-solving. A specific example dissected during the lecture involved analyzing the behavioral patterns of a couple when watching TV. In the feedback loop that perpetuates the problem, the wife feels disrespected by her husband and manifests anger and frustration towards his habit of changing the TV channel without her consent. This leads the wife to feel inferior within their marital relationship and perceive their marriage as failing. Conversely, the husband remains indifferent to his wife's anger and demands, subsequently viewing her as irritating.

In contrast, within the feedback loop that leads to resolution, the wife re-evaluates her priorities and objectives. She strives to "earn some respect" and behaves as though "I am more interested in that TV show than you are". By doing so, she feels that she is steering their relationship towards improvement, prompting the husband to reflect on his wife's altered behavior and contemplate his own self-improvement. This example illuminates the importance of reassessing one's genuine goals and engaging in actions contrary to those originally taken, in order to establish a problem-solving feedback loop. In other words, comprehending one's true objectives and undertaking new actions in accordance with them can cultivate a fresh feedback loop conducive to problem resolution and the enhancement of the couple's relationship.

The lecture cites a quote from psychologist Paul Watzlawick: "Change is achieved by introducing the opposite elements that make a difference. This implies that things that aren't

working should shift in the opposite direction, while those that are working should progress towards the objective."

The following nine specific steps were proposed for acting in line with this philosophy:

1. Engage in an open discussion about the problem or goal
2. Clarify the problem or goal
3. Provide a systemic description of the problem or goal
4. Develop a cybernetic description based on ineffective strategies
5. Establish a cybernetic description based on effective strategies
6. Identify key psychological tendencies
7. Construct balanced experiences based on the symmetry of opposites
8. Validate the effectiveness of the balanced experiences
9. Continue the process until the problem is resolved or the goals are achieved

In the latter part of the lecture, questioning techniques were introduced to elucidate each step of goal attainment and problem-solving. To clarify problems and goals, telegram questions and tomorrow questions were suggested. In the stage of systemic description, questioning techniques regarding the involvement of others and the context-specificity of the problem were introduced. In relation to ineffective cybernetic behavior, questions about "how to make it worse" were recommended, and finally, during the cybernetic description stage based on effective strategies, the "questions we already know" and "~-intended" questions were introduced. At the conclusion of the lecture, a role-play was conducted and advice was offered on accomplishing these nine steps.

Impressions

Here are my impressions from this lecture: I found it profoundly valuable to learn directly from a practitioner working at the forefront of this field. His explanation of the relationship between feedback loops and goal setting, exemplified by a couple's destructive cycle of "seeking respect", was particularly impactful. I previously viewed MRI-style vicious cycle interventions and SFA-style goal setting as two separate concepts, but I came to comprehend that appropriate goal setting in itself serves as a vicious cycle intervention. Moreover, the novel questioning technique, "How can we make it worse?", which was unfamiliar to me, appeared both intriguing and meaningful. Additionally, the nine steps he introduced and the diversity of questioning techniques to accomplish them proved to be very practical in my daily clinical practice. I eagerly anticipate implementing these techniques in my practice tomorrow. This lecture served as an opportunity to expand my perspectives and foster my expectations for novel approaches.

Introduction of Research

The Effect of a Child's Depression Label on Parental Communication in the Short Term

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1. What is a depression label?

Research in family therapy has explored the dynamics between individuals with depression and their interactions with others for at least 5 decades. It is an interaction description in which the depressive communication of a depressed individual triggers latent avoidant communication with an intimate other, further exacerbating the depressive state. Coyne (1976) proposed that intimate others irritate, inhibit, and are increasingly burdened in depressed communication; they inhibit direct expression of annoyance and hostility toward the depressed individual. Instead, they provide verbal assurance of support and acceptance. However, verbal communication and communication about the communication between these individuals named metacommunication occur on different levels. Therefore, a growing discrepancy between the content and emotional tone of these responses validates the hypothesis that the depressed individual is not truly accepted and that further interaction is uncertain. This increases the level of depression and strengthens the pathogenic pattern of depressed behavior and the responses of others (Coyne, 1976). This is the hypothesis underlying Coyne's interactional description of depression. Coyne's interactional description of depression appears to be influenced by Haley's theory of paradoxical communication, which refers to conflicting directives that qualify each other, either simultaneously or at a different moment in time (Haley, 1963). Haley (1963) described the phenomenon by stating, "When messages qualify each other incongruently, then incongruent statements are made about the relationship" (p.8). Coyne (1976) references these statements by Haley, J. to support his argument.

Recently, Wakashima hypothesized that the latent avoidant communication of intimate others towards depressed individuals may stem from perceiving them as being depressed. This hypothesis, referred to as the "depression label" hypothesis, shares similarities with Coyne's description and is influenced by Haley's theory of paradoxical communication arising from symptoms. However, the depression label hypothesis focuses specifically on how others perceive depressed individuals, potentially causing paradoxical communication among others. Essentially, a depression label may trigger contradictory forms of communication among those interacting with depressed individuals. Therefore, this study examined the interactional dynamics of depression from the perspective of the depression label.

2. Effect of child's depression label on parental response in the short term

We examined the impact of a child's depression label on their parents' perception and supportive behavior towards them within a short time frame (Kamoshida & Wakashima, 2023). Parents of university-attending students were asked to evaluate how they would perceive their son or daughter's problem if they were to share it, considering factors such as the degree of seriousness, controllability of the problem, the child's responsibility, anger, and sympathy. One group listened to a depressed child without a depression label, while the other listened to a depressed child with a depression label. The results revealed that for the parents of children with a depression label rated their child's problems as serious, recognizing that the children could not help themselves. Therefore, the parents thought their children are less responsibility. The parents then sympathized with the child and helping. These are all results compared to the perceptions of parents of depressed children without a depression label. These results suggest that when a child is diagnosed with depression, a parent may understand and accept that the child cannot manage their own problems (Kamoshida & Wakashima, 2023).

Additionally, we interviewed three mothers of university students with depression (Kamoshida, 2023) to examine changes in their communication with their children before and after the children were diagnosed with depression. When the child did not have a depression label but still had problems, the mothers took a relatively optimistic view of their problems and communicated strictly, sometimes even scolding them. However, after the child was diagnosed with depression and labeled as such, the mothers increased the amount of time spent with the child, prioritized rest, and adjusted the level of emotional distance. Positive communication was observed, indicating that when a child is labeled as depressed, the mother's communication style tends to become more caring and kind. The preliminary results also indicated that children's depression labels could enhance parental cooperation in addressing their children's problems and strengthen family cohesiveness. These studies suggest that, within a short time, a child's depression label can influence parents' perceptions of their child, leading to more permissive attitudes and positive changes in communication with their children.

3. Challenges in completing the interactional description of depression through the use of a depression label

These studies indicate that depression labels have certain effects over a short period. However, they did not examine communication variables related to communication about communication, such as latent avoidant communication, which is included in Coyne's interaction description of depression. In contrast, the depressed label was associated with reduced depressed individual's responsibility, increased help for the depressed individual, and decreased anger in the parent. This suggests that, in the short term, the presence of a depression label may decrease the likelihood of holding or expressing anger or rejection towards the depressed person. However, this effect may change in the long term. Coyne highlighted that when receivers of messages from depressed individuals attempt to respond to their requests directly, a dilemma arises (Coyne, 1976). Therefore, in the case of a longer time span, a depression label does not always lead to considerate communication from others toward depressed individuals. It is presumed that help will continue to be given even if the individual feels angry because the depression label makes it difficult for the individual to attribute the cause of the problem solely to depression. Furthermore, it is assumed that the dilemma of continuing to help despite feeling angry is greater with a depression label than

with only depressive communication. In other words, the discrepancy in responses is expected to be greater when others experience conflicts due to long-term interactions with a depressed person with a depression label. Therefore, to fully understand the interactional dynamics of depression using a depression label, it is necessary to examine the effects over an extended time.

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Next Conference 2025

Information from the IAFP President regarding the next conference

Koubun Wakashima

Tohoku University

Dr. Koubun Wakashima, President of IAFP, provided the Newsletter with a slide presentation introducing the next IAFP conference to be held in Sendai, Japan in 2025. Please find this information below. We look forward to seeing you at the next conference.



International Academy
of Family Psychology

Next conference -2025, IAFP greeting and introduction

TOHOKU University
Professor Koubun Wakashima, Ph.D.

History of the IAFP conference

- 1st 1990 Showa Women's University, Japan
- 2nd 1994 University of Padua, Italy
- 3rd 1998 University of Georgia, USA
- 4th 2002 Heidelberg University, Germany
- 5th 2006 Cardiff University, UK
- 6th 2009 Pepperdine University, USA
- 7th 2013 International University of Health and Welfare, Japan
- 8th 2017 Northwestern University, USA
- 9th 2022 Munich, Germany
- 10th 2025 Tohoku University, Japan



People who have contributed to the IAFP



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Dr. John W. Thoburn, Ph.D.



Dr. Luciano L'Abate , Ph.D.



Dr. Sabine Walper, Ph.D.



Dr. Florence Kaslow, Ph.D.

Collaboration with the Japanese Association of Family Psychology in 2025



Trip to Sendai



We look forward to your participation !