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Family relationships and adolescent development

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This article presents the most important findings from research carried out in recent decades on adolescent development in the family context, special attention being paid to two main topics: changes in family relationships with the arrival of adolescence and family influences on teenagers' development and adjustment. Following a dimensional approach, key elements of parent-adolescent relationships such as affect, communication, conflict, control and the granting of autonomy are analysed. Empirical research on this topic shows that adolescents benefit from having parents who are warm, communicative and who promote autonomy. Control and conflict could also be considered as exercising a positive influence but, in this case, the consequences are less evident. At all events, the available data do not support a catastrophic view of parent-adolescent relationships. With the exception of early adolescence, when conflicts are more frequent, parent-adolescent relationships are usually positive and satisfactory. Finally, the importance of providing parents with appropriate guidance and resources in order to help them in exercising the parental role is discussed.

Key words: parent-adolescent relationships, parenting style, adolescent adjustment, family.

The easyness of parent-child communication in adolescence: gender differences and time trends observed in Spain

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This paper basically tries to answer one question: Do today's adolescents have greater communication difficulties with their parents than did adolescents from ten or twenty years ago? A sequential cross-sectional design was used to analyse time trends in the ease of parent-child communication in adolescence for the period 1986-2002. To this end, data were collected in four subsequent years (1986, 1990, 1994 and 2002) using representative samples of school-children in Spain. The sample comprised 14,578 subjects aged 11, 13, 15 and 17. Girls aged 15 were found to have greater communication difficulties with their fathers in 2002 as compared to 1994, whereas among 15-year-old boys the inter-annual evolution in this regard was relatively stable. As regards communication with mothers, 15-year-old boys generally showed greater difficulty in 2002 than in 1994. Among other implications, this may mean that gender differences are becoming more pronounced in communication with parents during adolescence.

Key words: family relationships, parent-child communication, adolescents, time trends, sequential cross-sectional design, students, Spain.

Marital conflict, parental support and school adjustment in adolescents

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This study analyses the influence of marital conflict (breaking-up and violence as conflict resolution strategies) and parental support on school adjustment by considering their relationship to social self-esteem and school-based violence among adolescents. Participants were 733 adolescents from four schools in the region of Valencia, their ages ranging from 11 to 16 years old. Data were analysed by means of a structural equation model. The results showed that marital conflict and parental support (father and mother) are indirectly related to school adjustment through their relationship to social self-esteem and school-based violence. In particular, support from both parents was related to social self-esteem, whereas maternal support and marital conflict were related to school-based violence. The findings and their possible implications are discussed.

Key words: marital conflict, parental support, social self-esteem, school-based violence, school adjustment.

The influence of personal and contextual characteristics on lifestyle in adolescence: applications for intervention in situations of psychosocial risk

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This paper has two objectives that are addressed from a developmental contextual perspective which relates developmental transitions, developmental tasks and skills in adolescence. First, a study is presented in which adolescents' reports on their contextual and personal functioning, obtained from a sample of 1433 adolescents aged 13 to 17 years, were related to their lifestyle. In particular, we sought to examine how lifestyle patterns were related to adolescents' functioning in peer, school and neighbourhood contexts, as well as to their personal characteristics such as internal locus of control, personal achievement and behavioural problems associated with self-regulation. The results revealed a close correspondence between contextual adjustment, personal characteristics and health-related patterns. Second, a prevention program, "Construyendo mi futuro" (Building my future), aimed at supporting vulnerable adolescents through their developmental transitions is described. According to the above framework the program promotes the learning of individual, interpersonal and group skills in the actual life contexts where the adolescents' development takes place. A detailed description of the program's aims, characteristics, content, methodology and evaluation design is provided. Finally, preliminary results regarding the program's efficacy are also presented.

Key words: adolescence, life styles, adolescents in risk situation, school adjustment, family relationships, peer relationships, neighborhood violence, preventive programs.

Interaction group analysis: SOCIOS, the system data processing

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'Interaction' is the key concept in Social Psychology. In groups and organizations, Social Psychology bases its explanations of phenomena on the systems of 'reciprocal influence' that emerge between the various components. Bringing together individual information in integrated systems requires the use of specific techniques of analysis that are not always accessible. The new realities of generalized social interaction, in the shape of 'social networks', show an urgent need for updated tools. An example of the type of instrument required is the SOCIOS system, which has been tested over the twelve last years at the Social Psychology Laboratory of the University of Barcelona and on the Master's course "Group Analysis and Leadership". This system provides professionals and researchers with an integrated set of data processing applications. Its objective is to broaden the possibilities of scientific analysis and results exchange and to contribute to theoretical advances and improvements in the diagnostic strategies and in the evaluation of interventions in groups.

Key words: interaction-analysis-software, group-structures, group-processes, social-networks, correspondence-analysis, context-analysis, sociometry.

The evaluation of the group activity. The AAG and the data processing: DSCLIMA of SOCIOS

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Professionals in groups require a mastery of specialized methodologies, strategies and techniques for the description and analysis of group interactions and processes. Given the complexity of group analysis, the search for simple, easy-to-apply instruments with little demand for resources is intense. In this study we apply the DSCLIMA module (from the SOCIOS applications system for group interaction analysis) in a group evaluation protocol (AAG). This multiple longitudinal study comprises 16 meetings with different observation focuses. Here we present technical information on the procedures used. The "Analysis of group activity" protocol (AAG) was produced at the Social Psychology Laboratory at the University of Barcelona, as an evaluation instrument based on Munné's group activity model (1985) and Osgood's Semantic Differential. This instrument is of interest for research and intervention in both cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses. Numerical and graphic results of individuals, subgroups, group and meetings are obtained. The application is rapid and obtains a wealth of useful information.

Key words: group activity evaluation, data analysis software, semantic differential, group-structures, group processes, longitudinal-analysis, cross-sectional-analysis.