

Intra-Family relations and willingness to support the ageing parents in a life span perspective: on differential treatment of children, mixed emotions and differing intentions

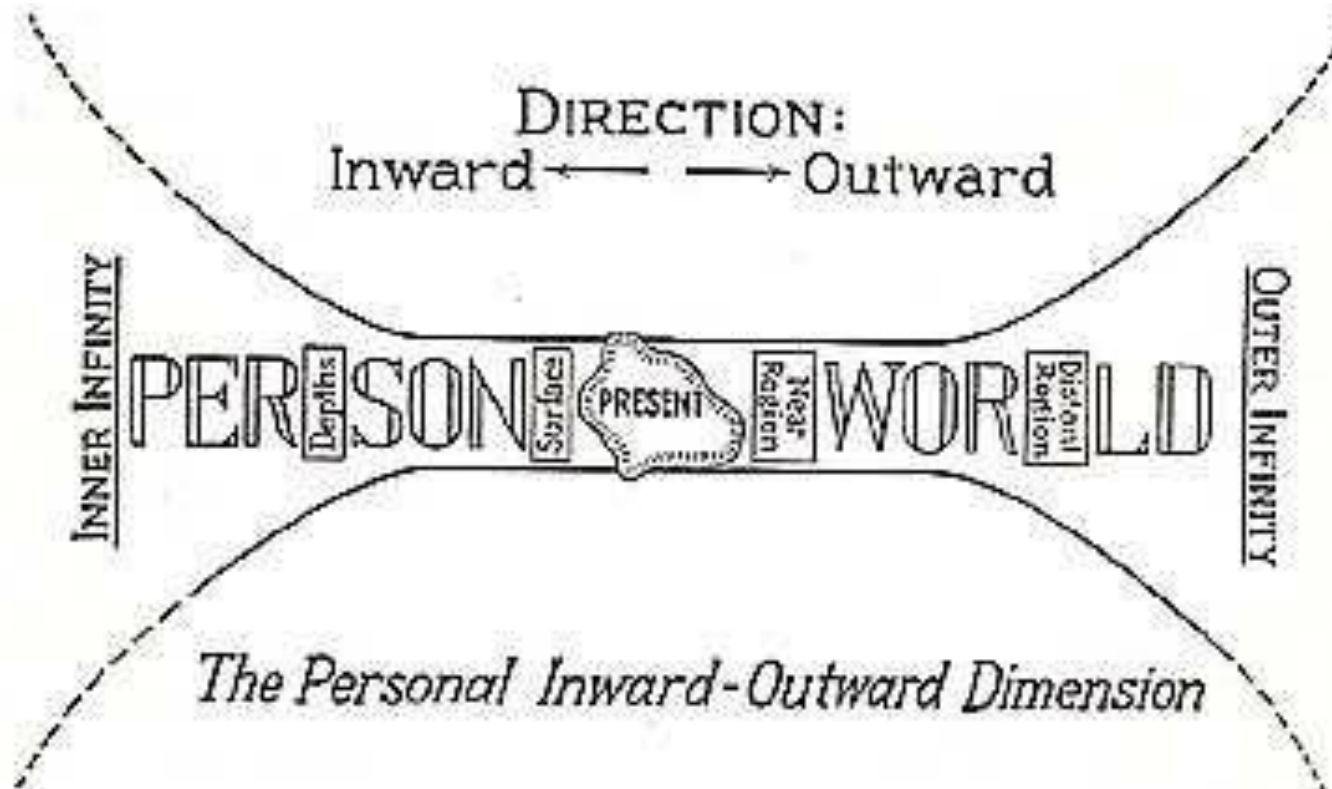
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University of Luxembourg

dieter.ferring@uni.lu

We have to start somewhere ...



William Stern
1871–1938



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INTEGRATIVE RESEARCH UNIT
ON SOCIAL AND INDIVIDUAL
DEVELOPMENT



Intra-Family relations and willingness to support the ageing parents in a life span perspective

I. A view from the OUTWARD – the phenomena

- The view of older adults on family and support
- The view of adult children

II. A view from the INWARD - Theoretical reconstruction of phenomena – and the „family in us“

A view from the OUTWARD

Phenomena – Older Adults

Ageing Well – European Study on Adult Well-being



Sweden



United Kingdom



The Netherlands



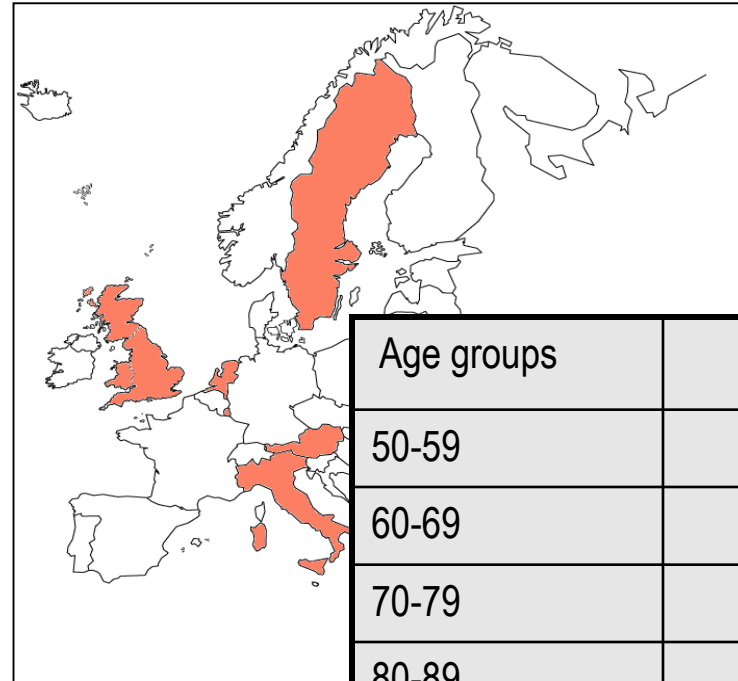
Luxembourg



Italy



Austria



Age groups	Total
50-59	4763
60-69	3612
70-79	2815
80-89	1288
Total	12.478

12.478 autonomously living older adults

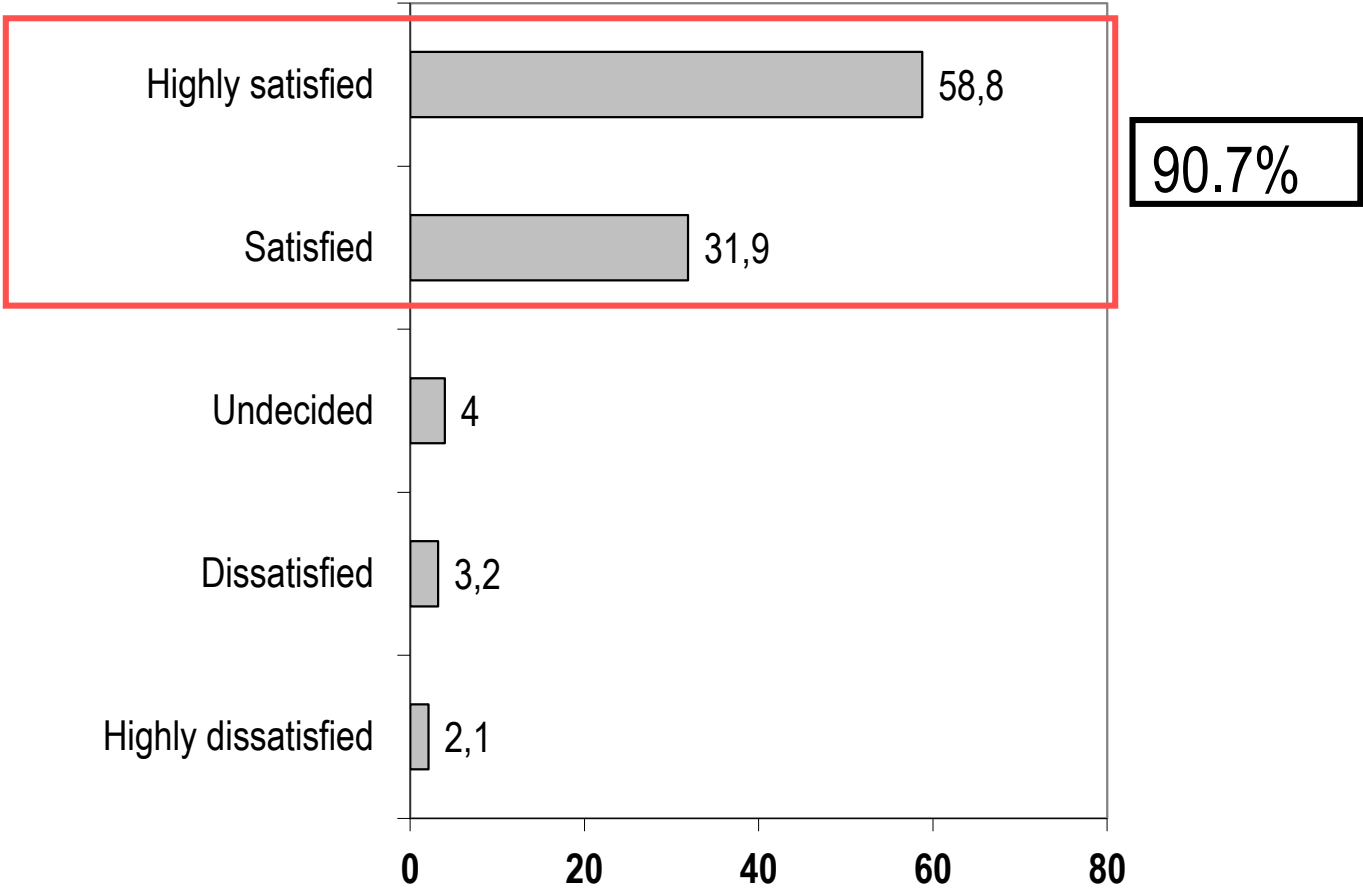
Giovanni Lamura (I); G. Weber (A); I. Rahm-Hallberg (S); V. Burholt & C. Wenger (U.K.); D. Ferring (L); F. Thissen (NL)

The view of older adults on family and support

- ... satisfaction with family relations
- ... perceived support in case of sickness and disability
- ... potential caregivers
- ... age differences

Satisfaction with Family Relations

How satisfied are you with your family relationships?

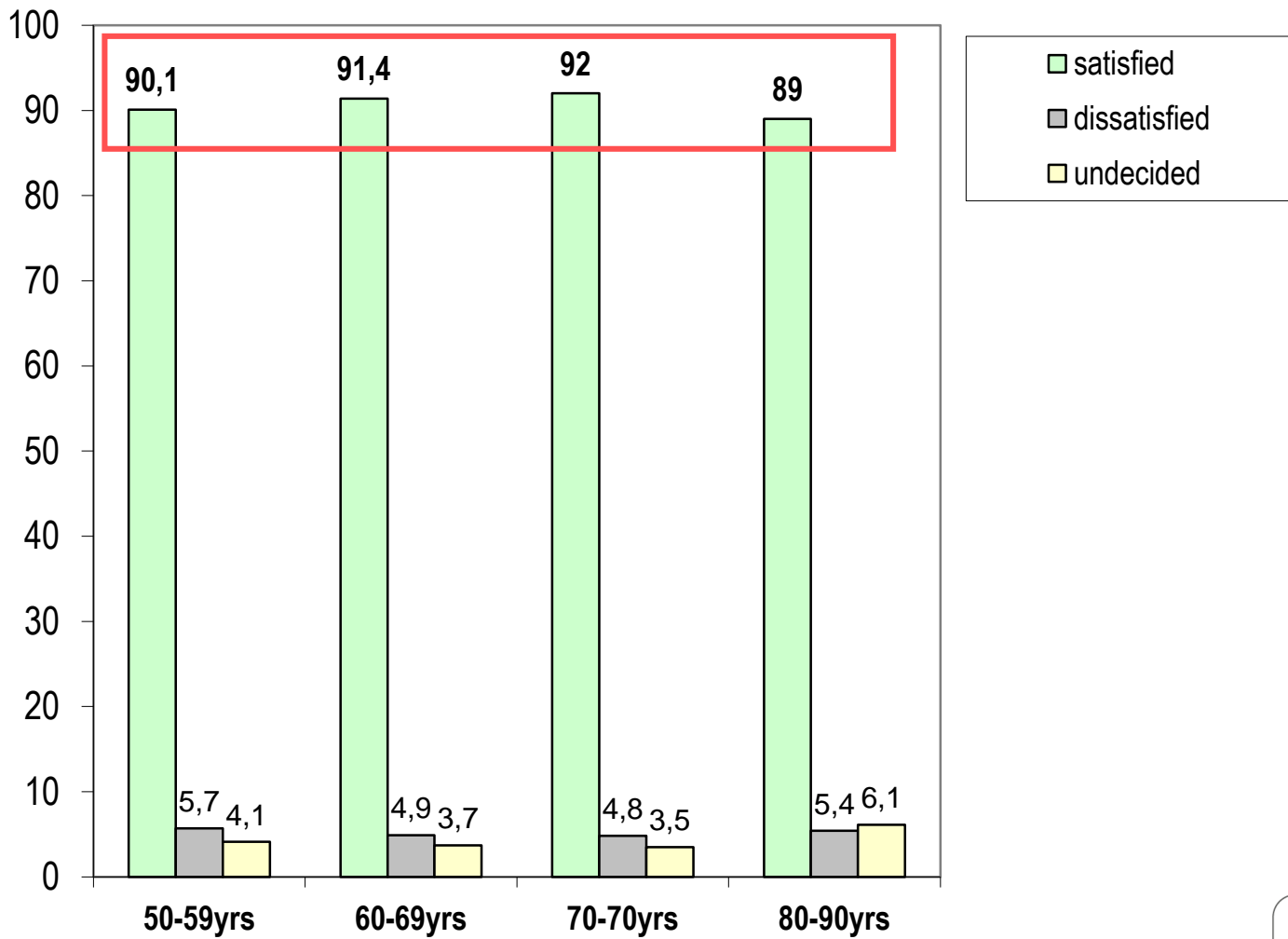


N=12.478

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Satisfaction with Family Relations – Age Group Differences



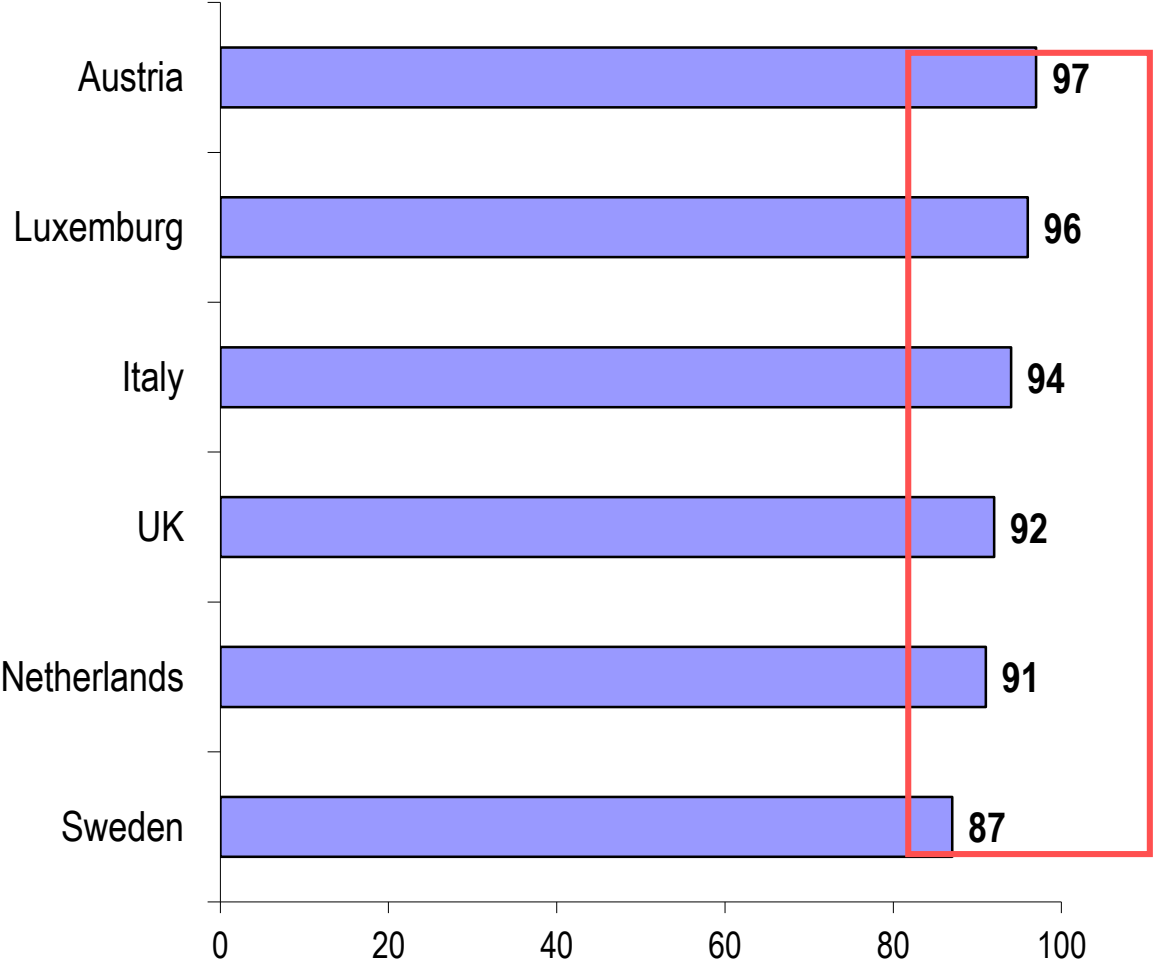
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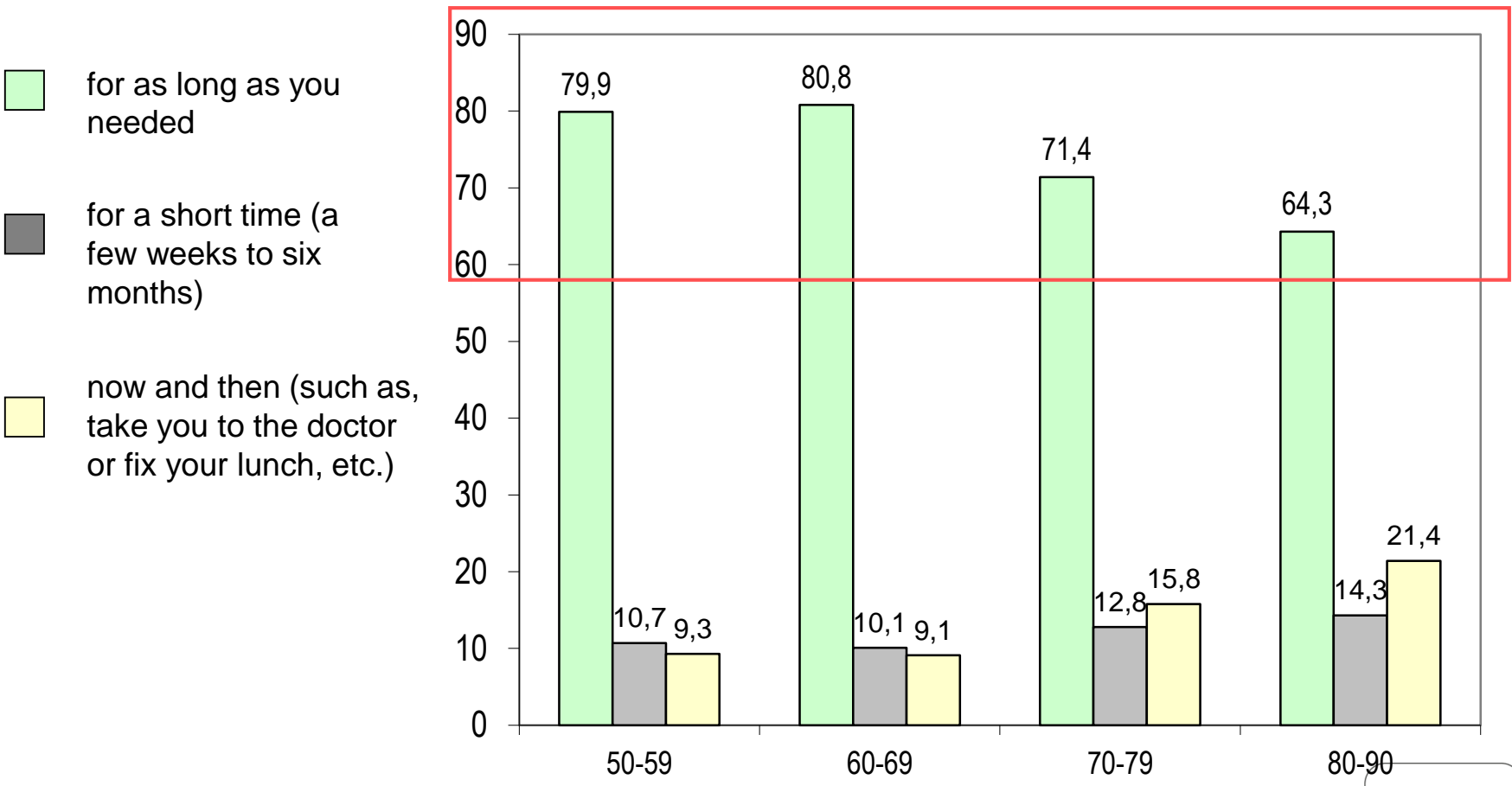
Perceived willingness to support ...

Is there someone who would take care of you if you were sick or disabled?



Extent of Support Provision ... Age Group Differences

Is there someone who would take care of you ...

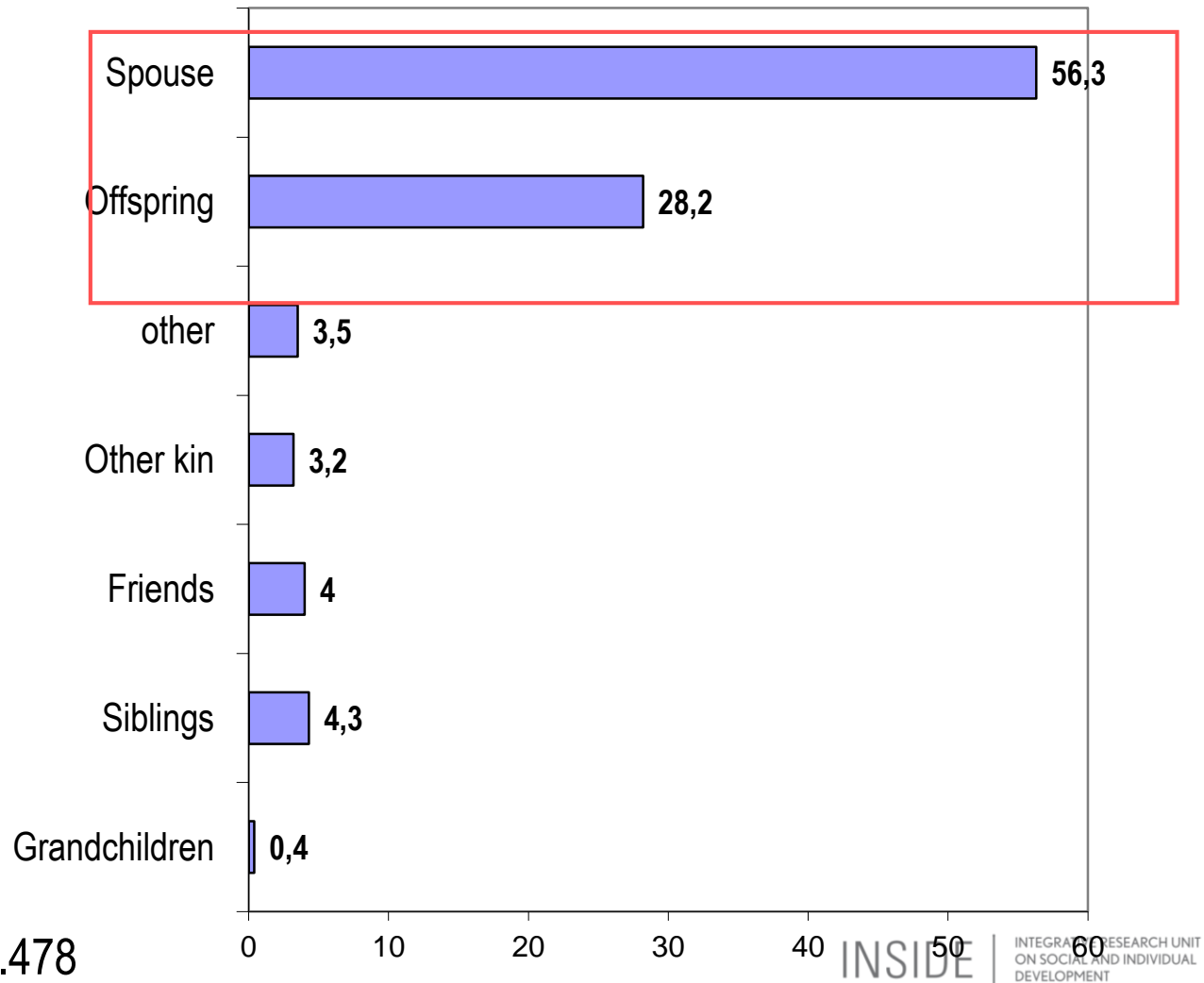


N=12.478 – Age Group Differences

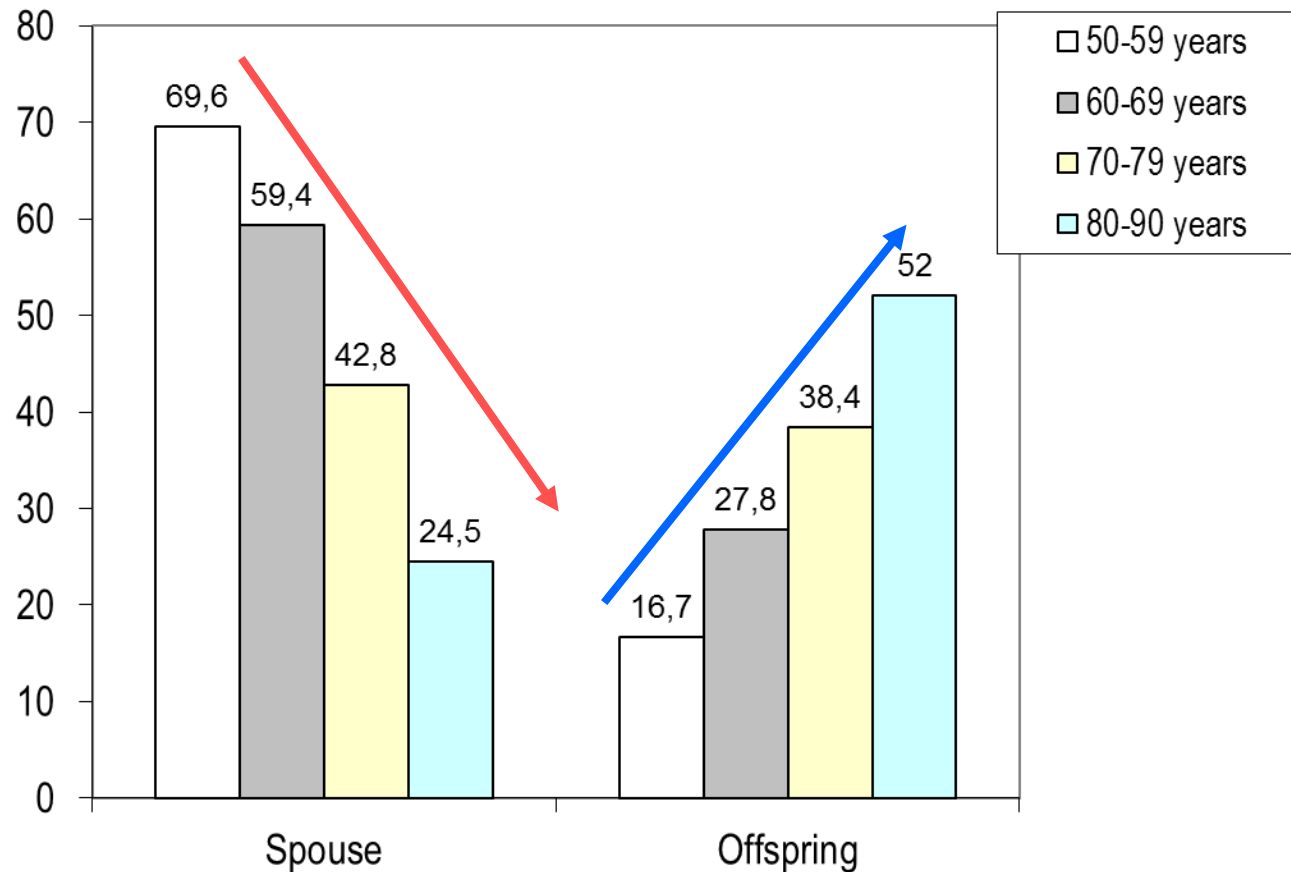
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Who will provide support ...



Who will provide support ... Age group differences



N=12.478

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The view of adult children

Differential parental treatment, relationship quality and willingness to support

Starting point

One might argue that whether older parents currently treat their children differentially in adulthood is no longer an important issue

....

or is it?

Lifestyle | Women

Politics | Work | Family | Sex | Life | Health | Columnists | Telegraph Dating

🏠 » Lifestyle » Women » Family

'I grew up knowing I was my mother's least favourite child'



Telegraph, August 31, 2016

Perceived Parental Differential Treatment of Siblings in Middle Adulthood

Projects:

“Structure and Consequences of Perceived Parental Differential Treatment of Siblings in Middle Adulthood,” (DFG; FE 502/2–1/2).

“Parental Differential Treatment in Middle Adulthood: Dyadic and Longitudinal Analyses” (DFG; FE 502/2-3);

Intergenerational relations in Luxembourg: Solidarity, Ambivalence, Conflict? (2007-2010)



Sample: 1.208 adults (482 men, 726 women; age: $M = 44.95$, $SD = 3.14$).

Measures: Need fulfillment by parents with reference to a focus sibling – relationship quality with parents and sibling – behavioral.

Parental behavior and personal needs

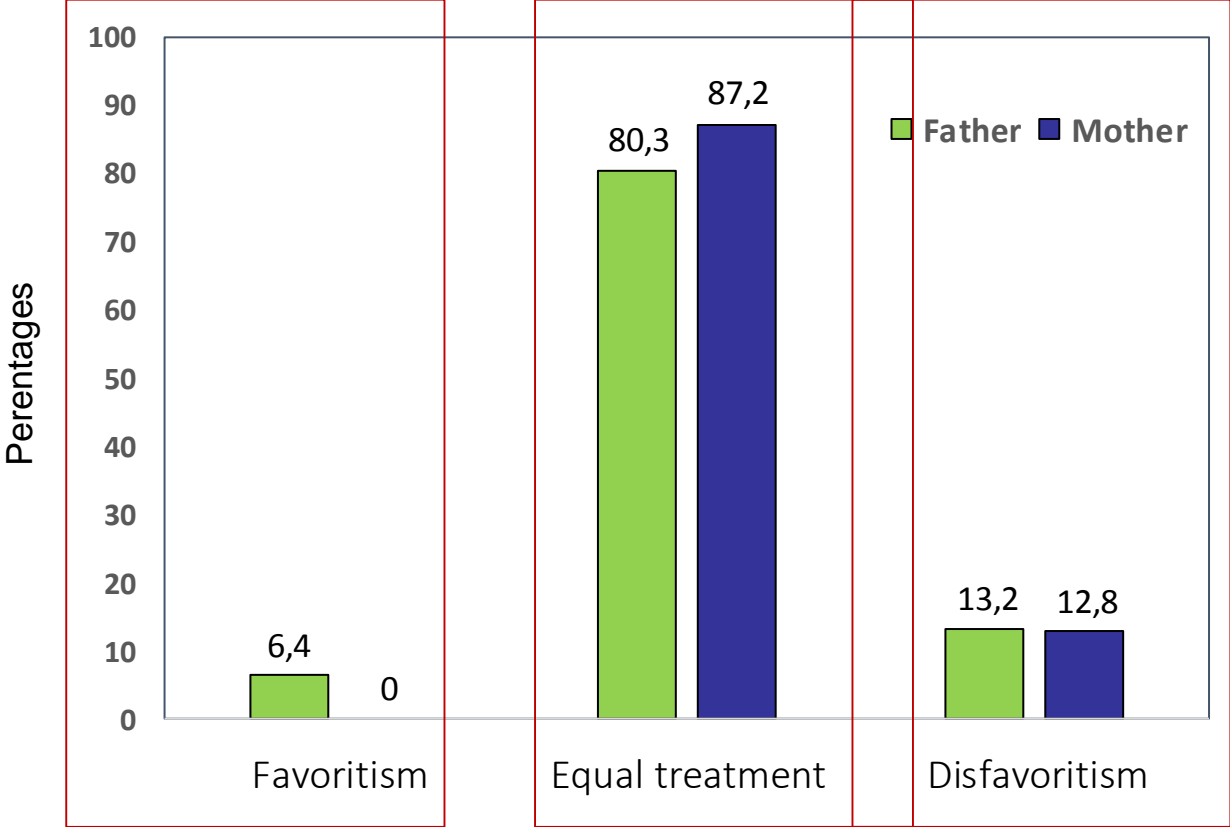
Parental behaviors (transformed into items) that could meet or frustrate the needs of adult children:

- (a) **mental and physical well-being** (e.g., “mother contributes to our wellbeing”),
- (b) **positive self-evaluation** (e.g., “mother shows us that she is proud of us”),
- (c) **individuality and self-determination** (e.g., “mother lets our opinion count”),
- (d) **parental affection** (e.g., “mother shows us her love”),
- (e) **filial responsibility** (e.g., “mother expects that we feel responsible for her”),
- (f) **avoiding criticism** (e.g., “mother tends to be critical toward us”), and
- (g) **material support** (e.g., “mother is very generous with her presents”).

Comparison with a focus sibling

Derived scales: **Recognition**, **Nurture** and **Demand for assuming filial responsibility** by mother or father

Differential parental treatment by father or mother



Children: 45-54 years

Relationship quality

Relationship quality of adult children with mother

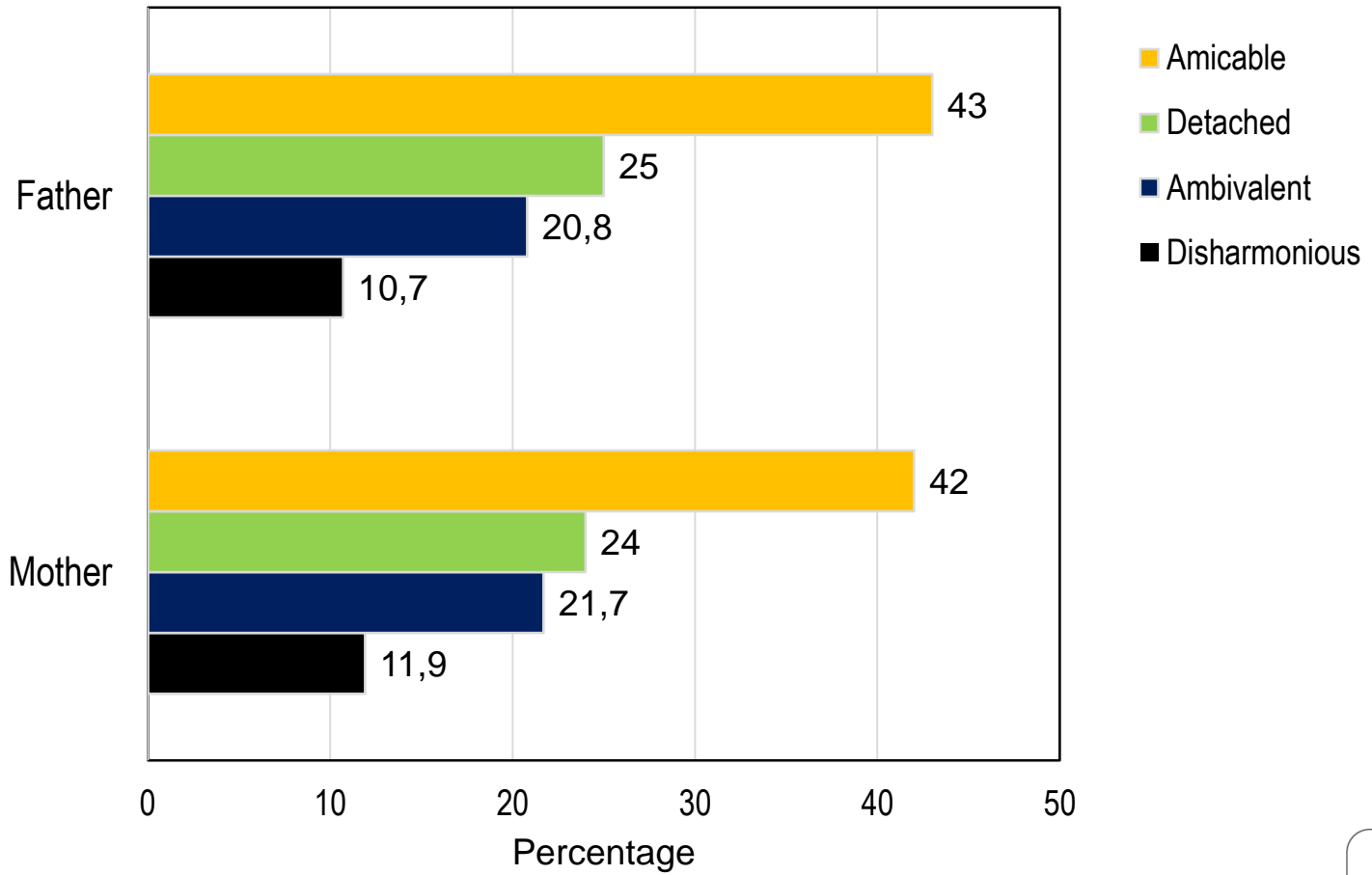


Hierarchical and non-hierarchical clusters analyses

Relationship quality of adult children with father



Allocation of relationship clusters



Differential treatment and relationship quality

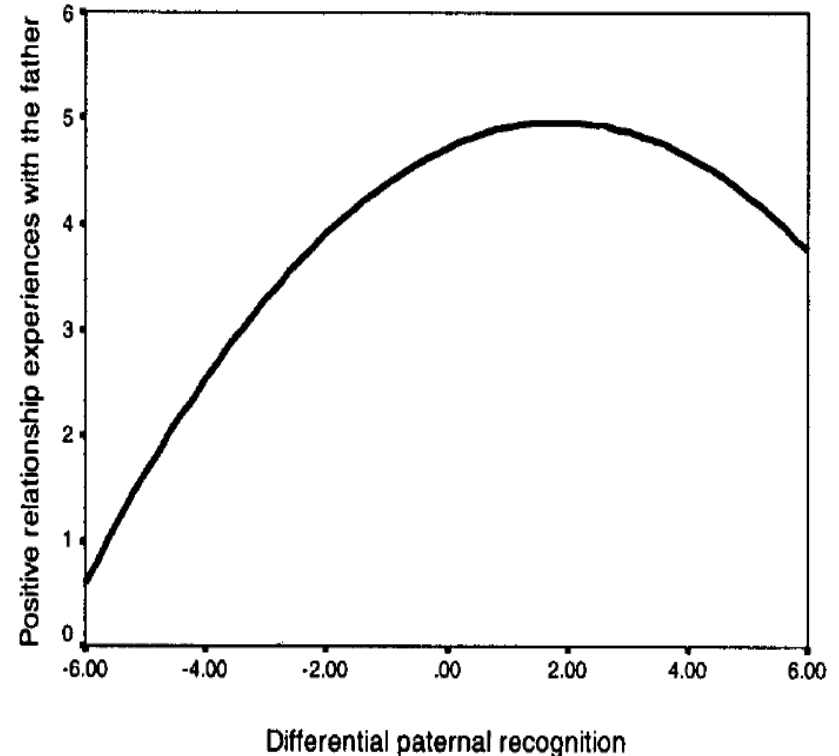
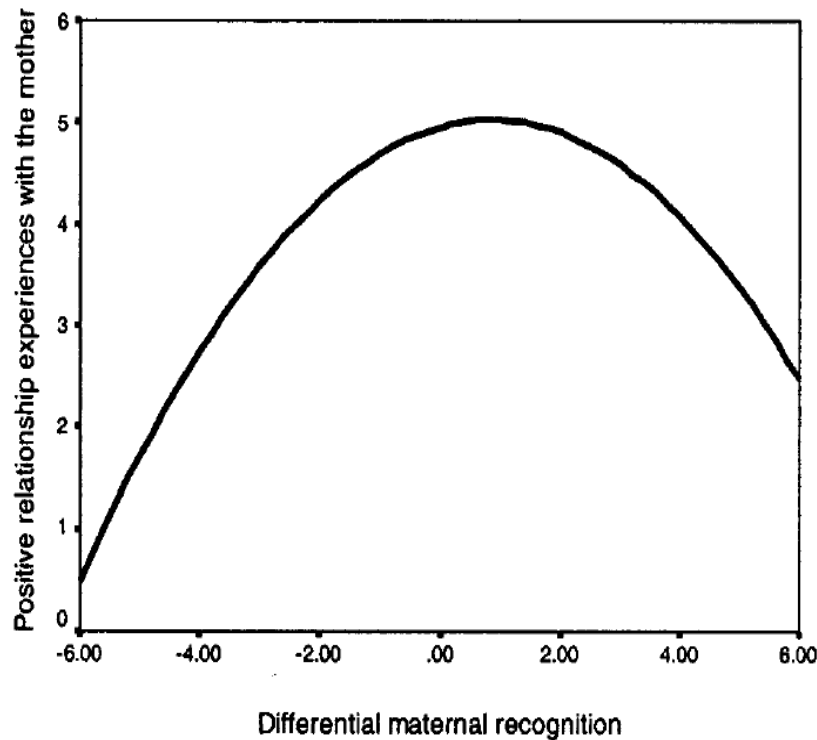
disfavorism

equal

favorism disfavorism

equal

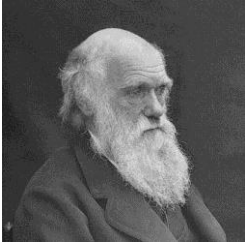
favorism



II. A view from the INWARD – Theoretical reconstruction of phenomena

„The family in us“

Dynamic systems – A selection of theoretical positions



Charles Darwin
1809-1882



William Stern
1871 –1938



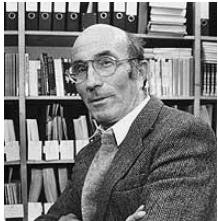
Kurt Zadek Lewin
1890 –1947



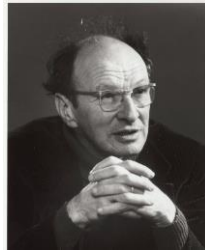
Burrhus F. Skinner
1904-1990



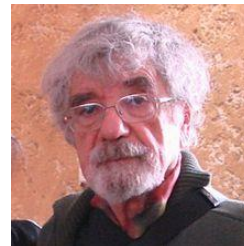
Erving Goffman
1922 – 1982



Niklas Luhmann
1927 – 1998



Urie Bronfenbrenner
1917-2005



Humberto Maturana



Francisco Varela

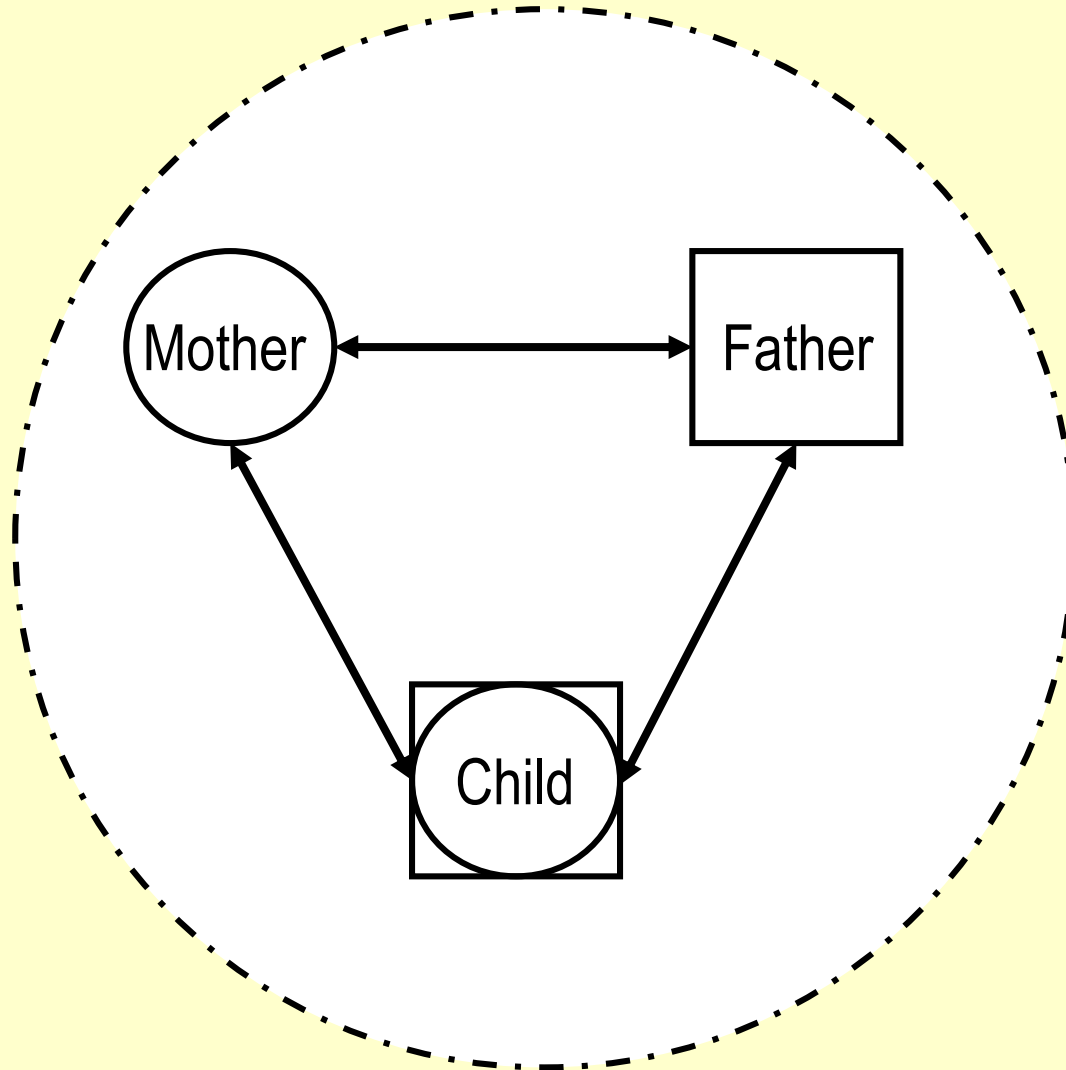


Jaan Valsiner

and so many others

Intra-family interactions – The exchange of meaning by signs

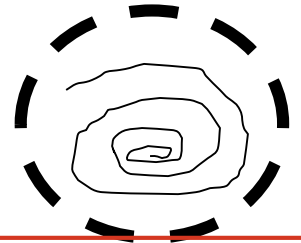
Socio-ecological and cultural context



The family as a system – three assumptions

System

... defined by its internal logic of functioning (-> identity) and its borders.



Autopoiesis / self-reproduction

Systems tend to reproduce according to their internal logic, i.e. producing components that produced these components. - > Families reproduce



Internal logic

Way of existence (i.e., leading ones life) serving adaptation and survival

Family and adaptation

- Family history is always “shared experience” between members of a family reflecting the adaptation to a given socio-ecological and cultural context at a given time.
- Experiences in dealing with the living context made by family members are evaluated – implicitly and explicitly – with respect to their adaptive value and are thus stored in “family memory”.
- Family values and norms originate from adaptation of the family system and they exert a lasting influence across and between the generations that constitute a family.

How do we communicate meaning - the use of signs and semiotic regulation

- Humans use ***social communication*** to convey meanings;
- Humans create **signs that** substitute “things” by verbal symbols or other semiotic forms and that enable us manipulating the world beyond what it is at the given moment;
- Signs convey meanings and have an impact on behavior;
- Signs comprise all forms of implicit and explicit communication.

Intra-family interactions - examples

What is happening
in interactions?



Baby is crying

F1: Both parents immediately
react rewardingly

F2: Father reacts, mother does not

F3: No reaction by both

F4: Parents both show an
aversive reaction

Repeatingly making specific experiences builds up a „habit“

Family experiences as frame of semiotic regulation

- The content of Intra-Family relations is the exchange of meanings via signs serving the reproduction and the adaptation of the system;
 - Signs (conveying meaning) originate from **the adaptation to shared or communicated experiences** leading to **specific values and norms** of the family system, having direct implications for behavior of the family members;
-
- Experiences of the family system take place in a given historical and socio-ecological context which defines their impact (e.g. being pregnant at the age of 18 today, or 1950, or 1900)
 - The structure of the family as well as prior adaptation of the family set the frame for experiences.

Family experiences as frame of semiotic regulation

- Families have a “memory store” comprising episodic, procedural and semantic knowledge originated from the adaptation to significant experiences (i.e., of adaptive value);

**Episodic -
Auto-noetic**

**Semantic-
noetic**

**Procedural-
anoetic**

- Families have a “historiography” communicating meanings and serving identity;
- Families have an identity (i.e., we are the “Millers”, “Smith” etc.) which reflects the the adaptation to these experiences.

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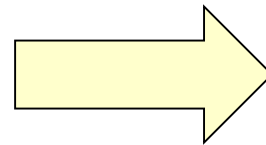
From the OUTWARD to the INWARD

Shared and communicated
adaptive experiences

Family memory

Values and norms within families

Semiotic regulation

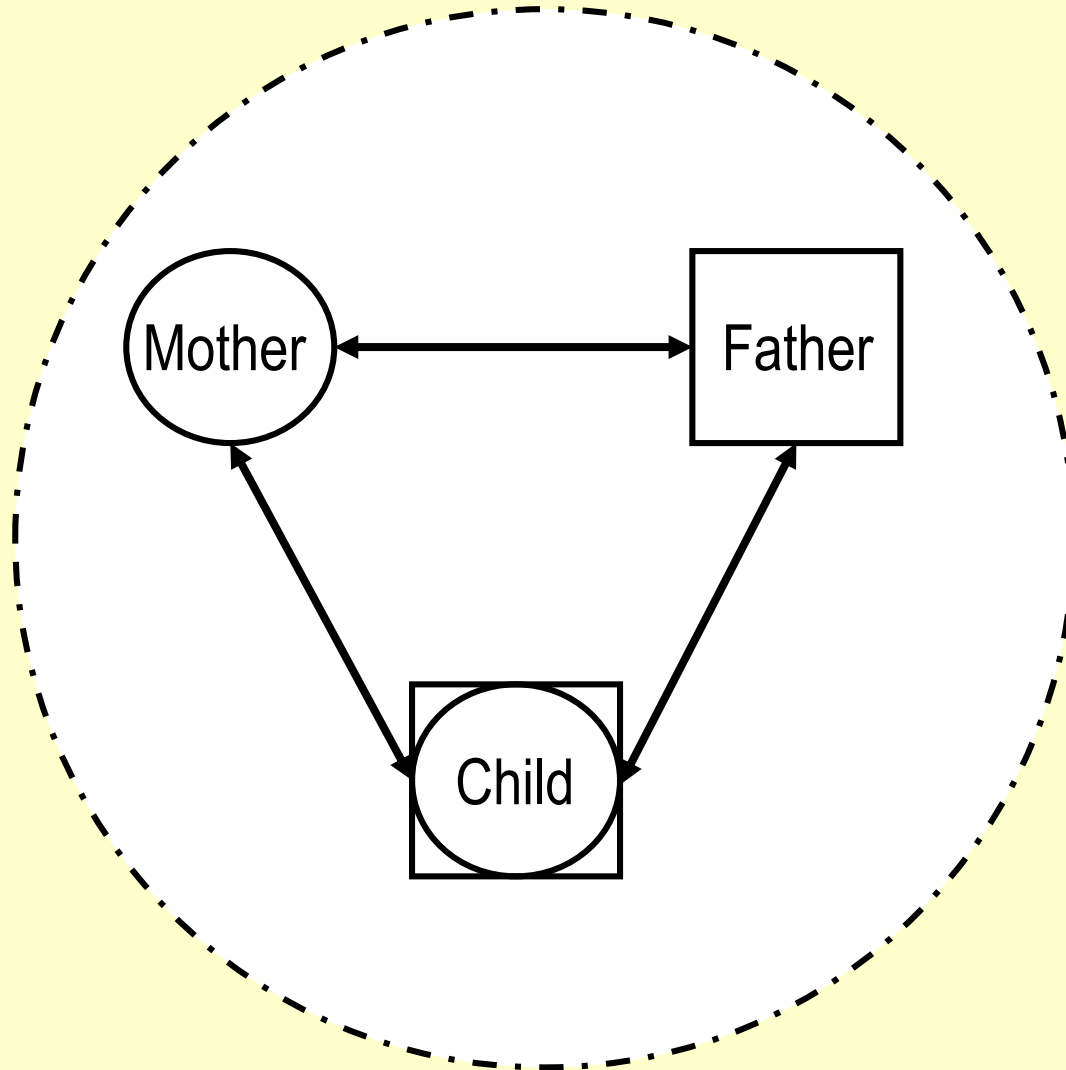


„The family in us“

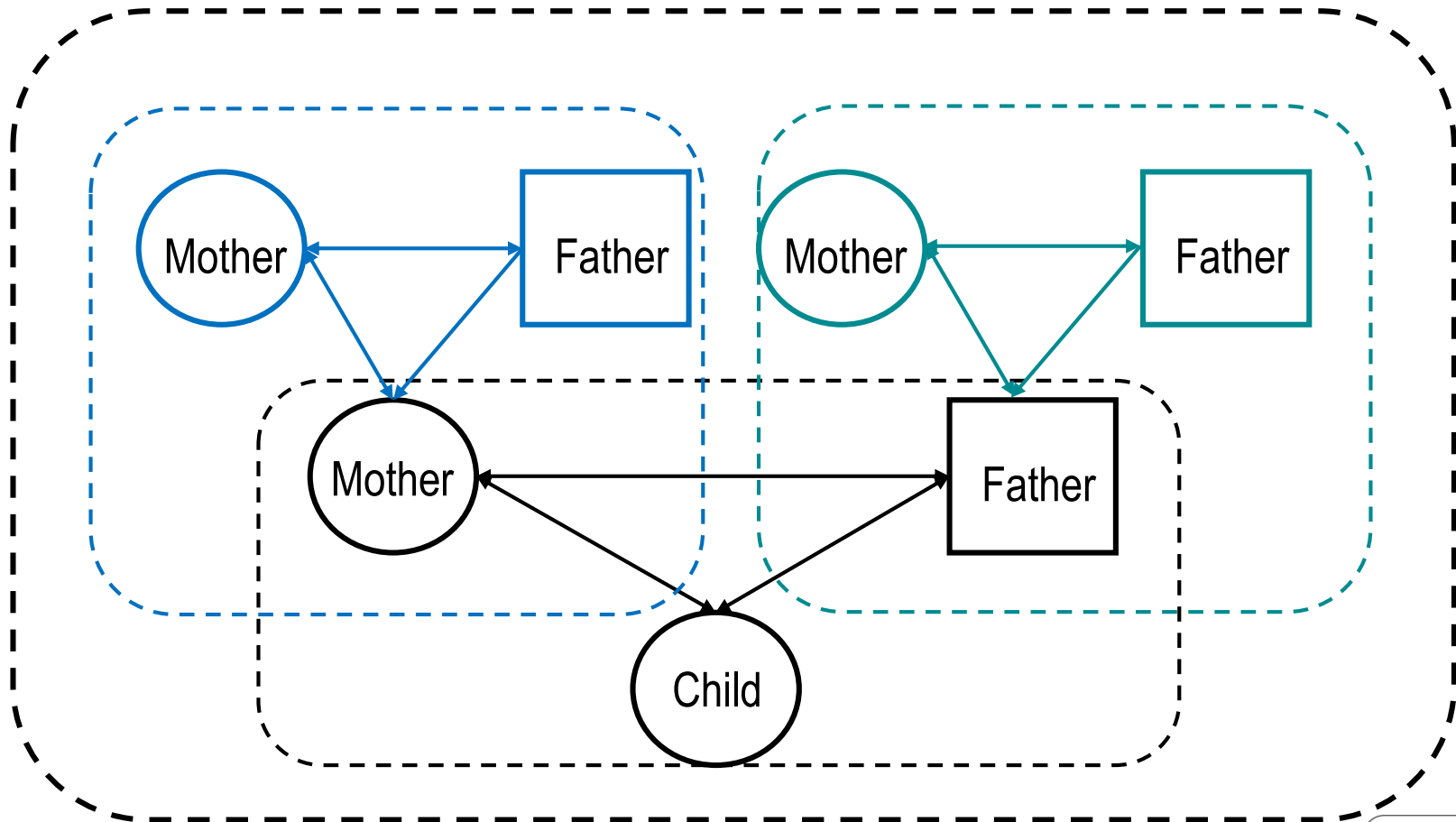
Examples

Intra-family interactions – The exchange of meaning by signs

Socio-ecological and cultural context

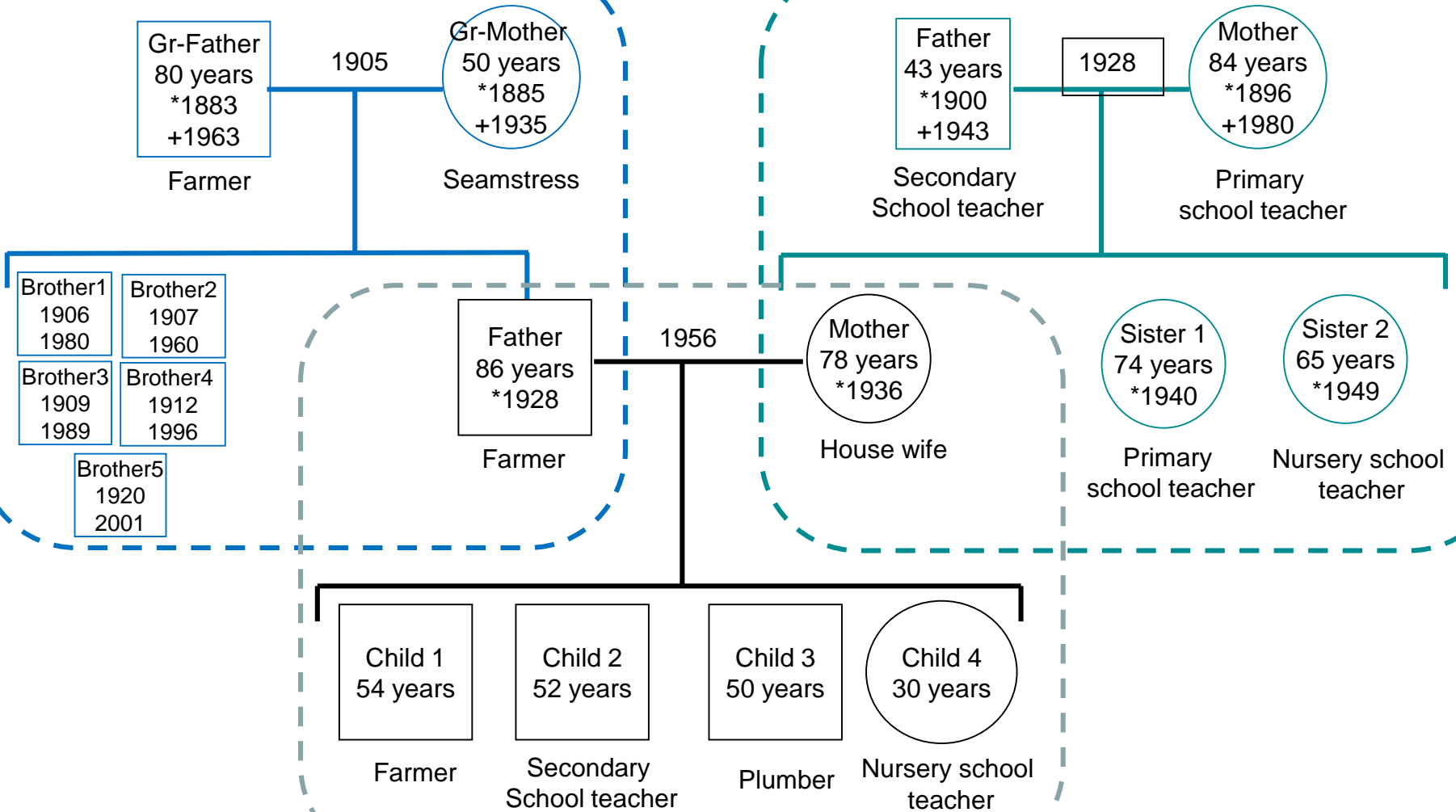


Intra-family relations and generations



Rural area

City

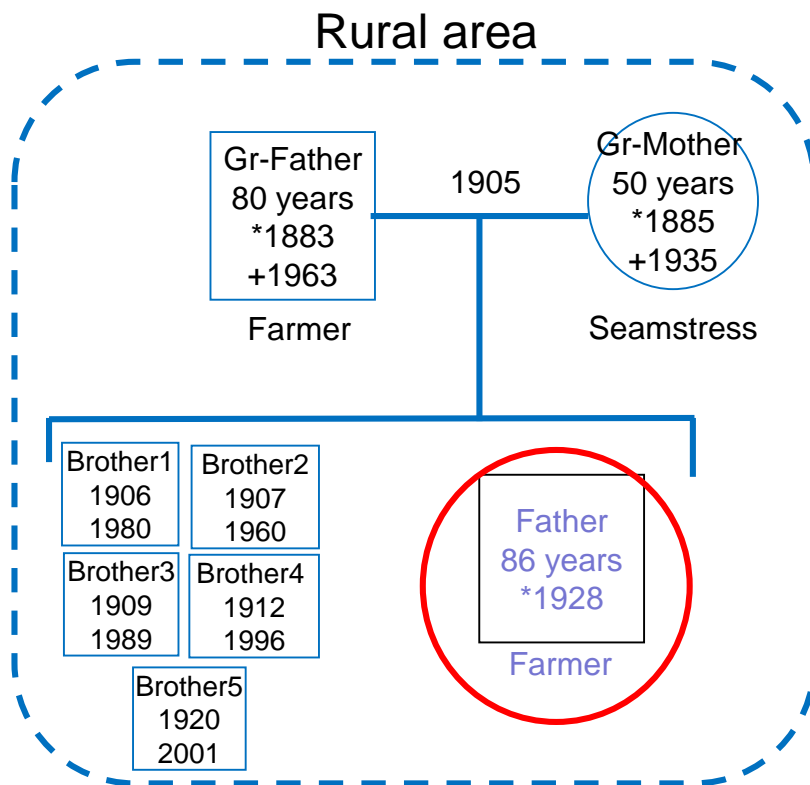


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Family A

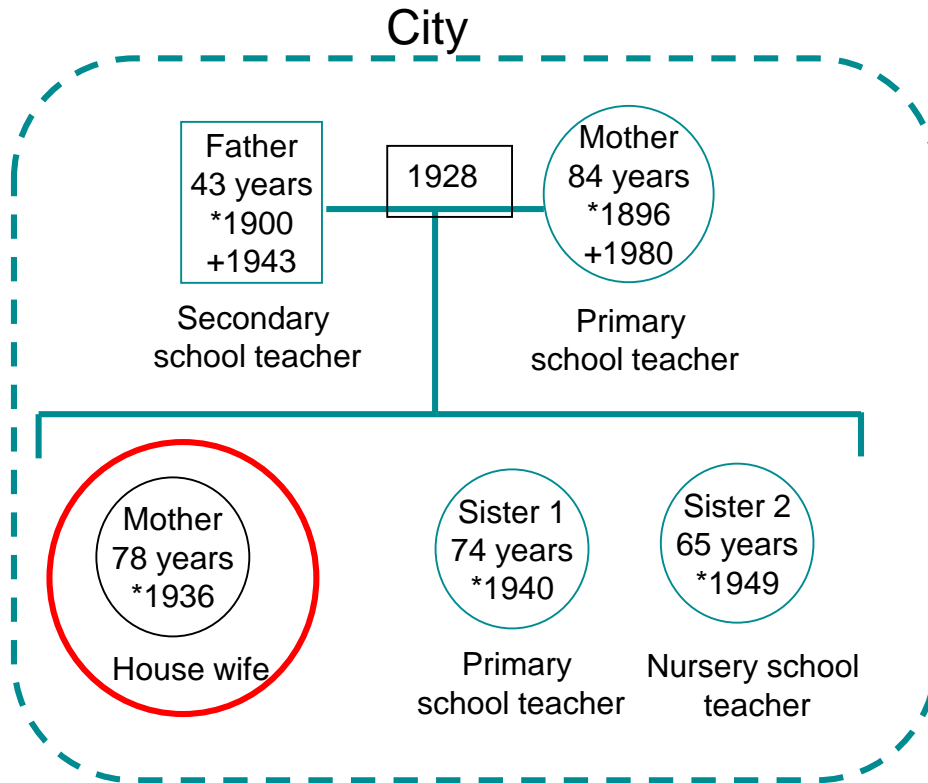


Observations

- Rural area
- Being a farmer
- Six boys rapidly born one after the other
- Loss of the mother ...
- The war ...

What will he teach his children?

Family B

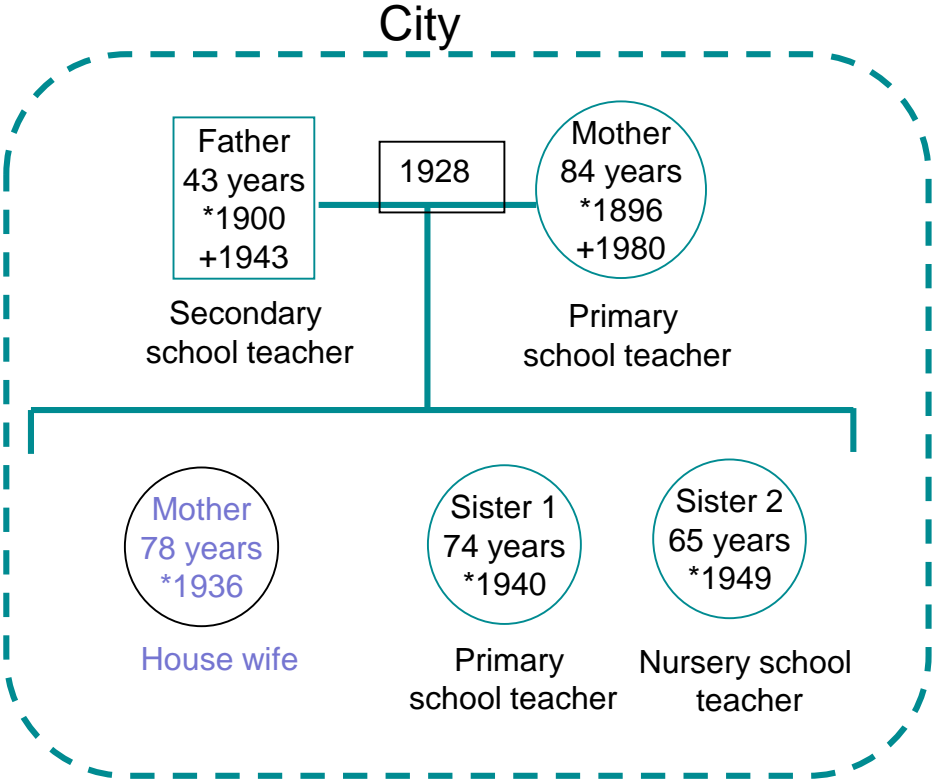


Observations

- ... urban environment
- ... being teachers at the primary or secondary school level,
- ... having three girls
- ... loss of the father
- ... the war

What will she teach her children?

Where to look at



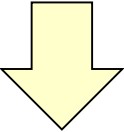
Historical-ecological cultural contexts

Material living conditions

Family size and composition

- Number and gender of children
- Sibling position
- Number of generations in the household

Critical life events

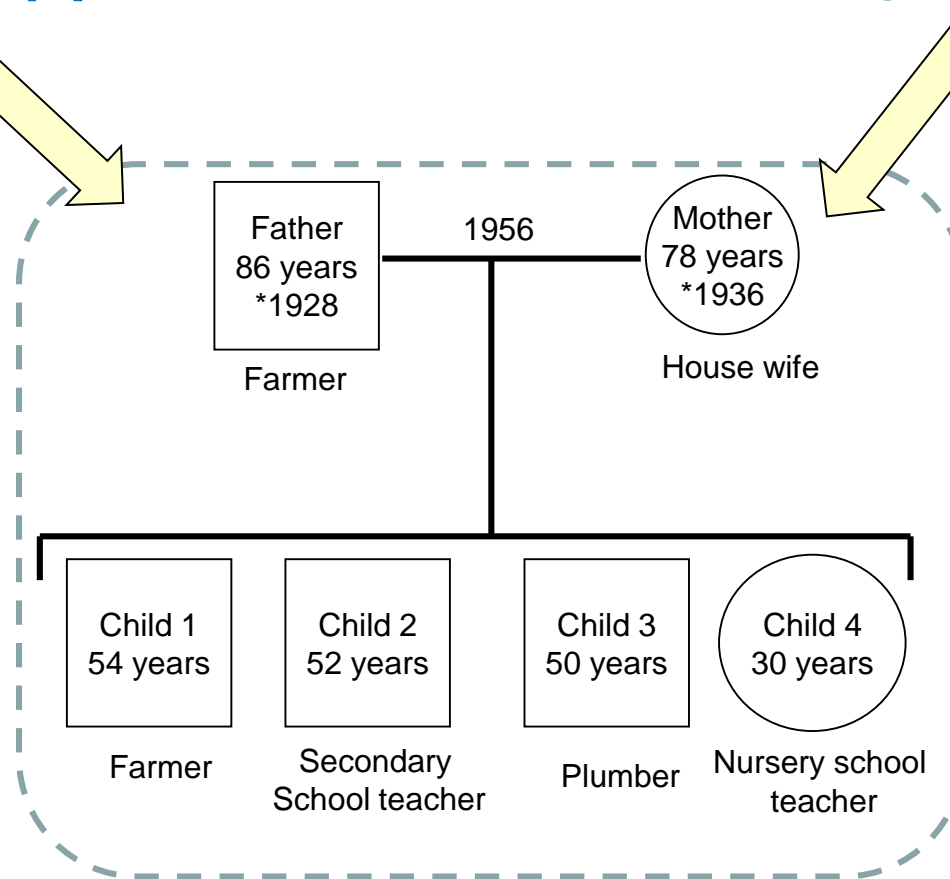


Values and norms

Values and norms of A and B

Family A

Family B



Intra-family relations and generations

- Families have „identities“ and „memories“
- Identity comprises values, norms, and behavior linked to family history described by the adaptation to significant experiences of the family;
- Identity takes place in everyday exchanges by semiotic regulation, i.e. the use of meaningful signs;
- Family is a „learning organism“ with a memory store of its own;
- Depending on the adaptive value of experiences –these may lead to contrast or assimilation effects in the intergenerational discourse.

Some last words

Thanks to my colleagues

Isabelle Albert

Stéphanie Barros-Coimbra

Thomas Boll

Elke Murdock

Isabelle Tournier

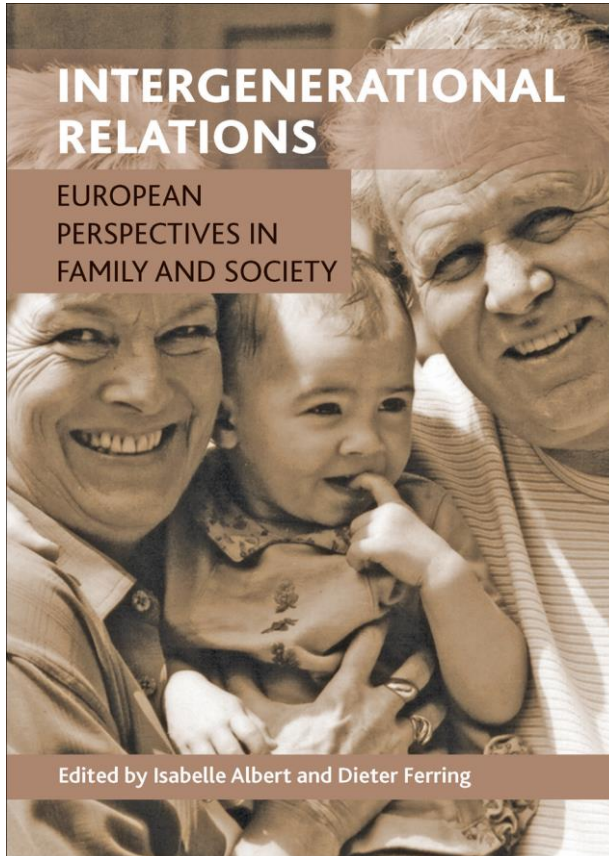
Sigi Filipp (University of Trier)

The screenshot shows the website for the University of Luxembourg, specifically the page for the Integrative Research Unit on Social and Individual Development (INSIDE). The header includes the university logo and the tagline "University of Luxembourg | Multilingual. Personalised. Connected." Below the header is a navigation menu with links for "Université", "International", "Recherche", "Centres", "Facultés", "Formations", "Étudiants", and "Contact". A search bar is also present. The main content area features a sidebar with a list of links: "Home INSIDE", "People", "News & Events", "Research Institutes", "Research Facilities", "Research Projects", "Teaching & Training", and "Videos". The main text area displays the title "INSIDE - Integrative Research Unit on Social and Individual Development" and a brief description of the unit's research focus. A video player is visible on the right side of the page, showing a person in a lab coat.

References

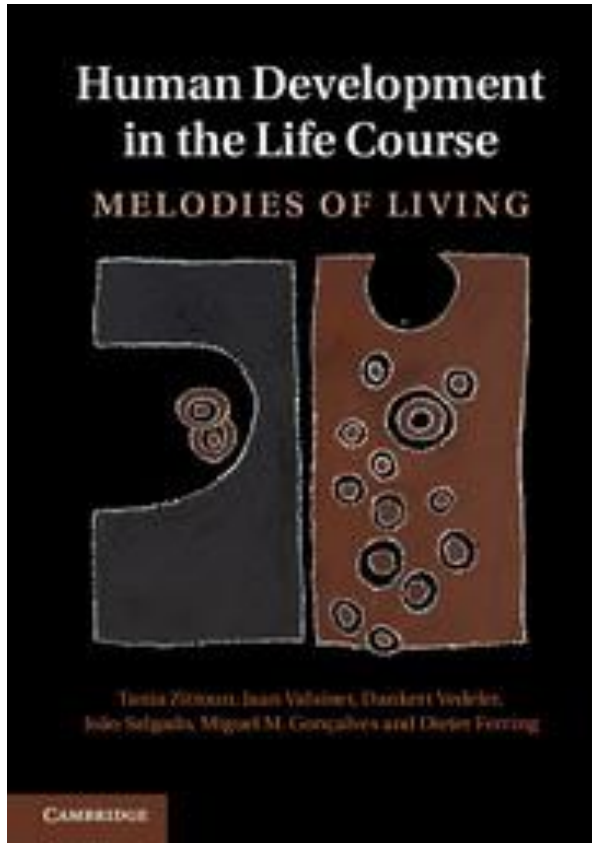
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Books



Albert, I. & Ferring, D. (Eds.). (2013). *Intergenerational relations. European perspectives on family and society.* Bristol: Policy Press.

Books



Zittoun, T., Valsiner, J., Vedeler, D., Salgado, J., Gonçalves, M. M., & Ferring, D. (2013). *Human development in the life course. Melodies of living*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Remember who you are and where you come from!

Thank you for listening!