The Wiley-Blackwell Handbook of Family Psychology

Edited by

James H. Bray and Mark Stanton

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Preface

Family psychology is a recognized specialty and has a growing number of doctoral and post-doctoral training programs. Family psychology has made great strides from its early beginnings as a part of the family therapy movement. The development of this Handbook comes from many years of study, teaching, and clinical practice in understanding and helping couples and families. The journeys of the editors took different paths, but led to a common goal: to provide the field with an overview of the field of family psychology.

James Bray first encountered family psychology in the late 1970s during his graduate training in clinical psychology at the University of Houston. The Houston-Galveston mental health community was one of the "hotbeds" of family therapy training and development. While this training was multi-disciplinary and included psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and nurses, some of the leading figures that later developed the specialty of family psychology were in the area. Harry Goolishian, Donald Williamson, and others were nationally recognized leaders and developing their unique brands of family therapy and psychology. In addition, the Houston-Galveston Family Therapy Consortium was an association of six institutions that sponsored workshops by the creators of the family therapy movement that included regular visits by Haley, Watzlawick, Weakland, Whitaker, Minuchin, McGoldrick, Boscolo, Cecchin, and many others.

As chance would have it, James Alexander, the creator of functional family therapy, interviewed for the director of clinical training at the University of Houston. James Bray was the graduate student on the search committee and had the opportunity to talk with Dr Alexander about his research and the burgeoning field of family psychology. James was unclear whether to focus on adults or children in his research and clinical work. Dr Alexander wisely told him that he should consider studying and working with families because one could work with both adults and children with this perspective. Because of this advice and the wonderful training offered by professionals in the Houston-Galveston

Family Therapy Consortium, such as Walter DeLange, Patrick and Carol Brady, Barbara Hoek, Donald Williamson, Harry Goolishian, and others, James decided to do both his pre-doctoral internship and post-doctoral fellowship in Houston. During these experiences he developed clinical and research collaborations with Donald Williamson and Harry Goolishian that strongly influenced his choice to focus on family psychology.

Mark Stanton was introduced to ecological systems theory and systemic thinking through the work of Urie Bronfenbrenner. Mark readily found a resonance with systemic concepts and quickly identified as a systemic thinker. While completing his doctoral degree in the School of Psychology at Fuller Seminary in the 1980s he was exposed to the work of the early leaders in the family systems movement under the tutelage of Dennis Guernsey, Jack Balswick, Cameron Lee, and Judy Balswick. Significant emphasis was placed on theory in his program, including sociological models as well as psychological theory, social work frameworks, and family systems conceptualization. He was influenced by a shift in the late 1980s away from the sole focus on families in the family therapy movement to create a more balanced model that included individual, interpersonal, and environmental factors (see Chapter 1). This is family psychology.

Mark's graduate clinical training included couples therapy and substance abuse treatment, creating in him an ongoing interest in each and in the intersection of the two. He was an early adopter of the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory, an assessment of individual personality and psychopathology, but used it in the treatment of couples. He led family group therapy (groups of 3–5 families at a time) and an aftercare group in an outpatient substance abuse treatment center for several years and soon began to provide couples therapy for partners where one or both abused substances. A licensed psychologist, Mark was board certified in family psychology by the American Board of Professional Psychology in 2003.

Mark entered academia upon receipt of his doctorate. Recognizing the scarcity of graduate training in family psychology, he soon helped his university develop a doctoral degree in clinical psychology with an emphasis in family psychology and achieve American Psychological Association (APA) accreditation. He served as director of the program for over 10 years and developed an interest in graduate education in family psychology, interacting with other program leaders to identify programs with a track or strong emphasis in the specialty.

The editors have been involved in the development of family psychology through work in the APA's Society of Family Psychology (Division 43). James was an early leader within Division 43 and served as the 1995 president. Mark began as chair of the membership committee and then served as the editor of the division bulletin, *The Family Psychologist*, for five years, becoming acquainted with many of the leaders in family psychology as they contributed articles. He was president of Division 43 in 2005. It is in the Society of Family Psychology that James and Mark met and developed a professional relationship that led to co-editing this Handbook. Both of them share a passion for innovation and applying the systemic principles of family psychology in their research, teaching, and clinical work.

There are many people that we would like to thank who contributed to the development of the Handbook. Together, we thank the nearly 100 authors who contributed to

the 54 chapters of the Handbook. We are privileged that these experts in the various aspects of the specialty have contributed the most recent research and detail for the Handbook.

James would like to thank his colleagues in Division 43 and at Baylor College of Medicine for their support over the years in developing family psychology theory and research and applying it in a variety of mental health and primary care settings. He is also appreciative of the support and encouragement of his wife, Elizabeth, and his children, Lindsey, Jessica, and Matthew, in teaching him about the personal side of family systems. We acknowledge the contributions of Jessica Bray and Robert J. Marker, Jr., in creating the indices for the book.

Mark would like to thank his executive assistant, Candi Adermatt, and doctoral research assistant, Teresa J. Hooker. Both read various chapters and provided valuable comments regarding APA style, references, grammar, syntax, and meaning. In addition, Candi facilitated communication with the chapter authors while Teresa helped with the details of chapter author information. Finally, of course, it is appropriate in a family psychology text to recognize the support and encouragement of his wife, Kathleen, and his children, April, Erin, Chelse, and Sean, over the course of completing the Handbook.

James H. Bray
Mark Stanton

Part I

Foundations of Family Psychology

Introduction

Any construction relies upon a solid foundation in order to build an enduring structure. This part of the Handbook describes the foundations of contemporary family psychology, including a focus on the epistemology and theory, history, demographics, diversity, research methods, competencies, and education that underlie the specialty. This part is placed first in the Handbook because we believe it is important to understand the foundations of the specialty before moving to treatment applications or particular areas of importance.

The specialty of family psychology is distinctive because it is founded on systems theory and a systemic epistemology is evident in the origins and evolution of the specialty. Chapter 1 describes the systemic epistemology of family psychology and the importance of systemic conceptualization for family psychology research design and clinical intervention.

The history of the evolution of systemic models of psychotherapeutic intervention is presented in Chapter 2. Many of these models originated with strong, charismatic individuals who championed particular ways of working with individuals, couples, and families, but the chapter describes a progression over time to more integrated and sophisticated models that rely on scientific evidence and outcomes more than individual personality.

Many theories may be understood to contribute to family psychology, and Chapter 3 provides an introduction to the meaning and purpose of theory and to several theories that are salient to a systemic perspective. Countering the rush to therapeutic intervention, the chapter stresses the importance of theory to provide adequate conceptualization to shape questions that result in beneficial applications and interventions.

The demographics of American family life have changed significantly in recent years, and Chapter 4 examines the sociodemographic trends that surround the practice of family psychology. For instance, the delay in marriage and the increase in cohabitation significantly impact society and psychotherapy, so the demographics provide a foundation for many chapters that follow in the Handbook. Chapter 5 continues this theme with a synopsis of diversity issues in family psychology, focusing especially on ethnic diversity

to examine varying marriage and family patterns, as well as crucial sociocultural dimensions that may be considered for culturally appropriate psychotherapeutic intervention.

The relationship of research and research methods and the challenges to linking family psychology research and practice are addressed in Chapters 6 and 7. Family psychology emphasizes the science of psychology, and these chapters note the importance of solid research methodology and respect for research findings in the practice of family psychology. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are salient for understanding systemic dynamics.

The recent focus on the core competencies necessary for family psychology practice is underscored in Chapter 8 with delineation of the systemic elements of such competencies. Developmental markers are clarified and key aspects of competency are specified in the chapter.

Finally, Chapter 9 provides a review of contemporary graduate education in family psychology in the United States and the United Kingdom. Ultimately, education and training are the lifeblood of a specialty and this chapter details the contemporary trends and foci.

These topics constitute the foundation for the specialty and this Handbook. Students and clinicians may turn first to the clinical chapters or the chapters on specific dimensions of the specialty, but we hope that all will turn eventually to these chapters that address the foundations of the specialty.

1

The Systemic Epistemology of the Specialty of Family Psychology

Mark Stanton

Family psychology is a broad and general orientation to psychology that utilizes a systemic epistemology to provide an alternative to the individual focus of many psychological orientations (Nutt & Stanton, 2008). Although the specialty is sometimes confused with the practice of family therapy, family psychology is a broader term that recognizes that human behavior occurs within a contextual matrix of individual, interpersonal, and environmental or macrosystemic factors (Robbins, Mayorga, & Szapocznik, 2003; Stanton, 1999). A systemic epistemology includes systemic thinking (inculcation of systemic concepts and use of a systemic paradigm to organize thoughts) and application to clinical practice and research. A systemic epistemology provides a framework for the general conceptualization of human behavior and for psychological assessment, psychotherapeutic intervention, and family psychology research.

This chapter provides an introduction to the systemic epistemology of family psychology, including a definition of epistemology, the importance of an epistemological transformation to shift from an individualistic approach to a systemic approach to psychology, the delineation of a family psychology paradigm, and a description of important systemic factors. Finally, this systemic epistemology is applied to psychotherapeutic intervention and family psychology research.

Definition of Epistemology

We use the term epistemology here in a manner consistent with the work of Auerswald and Bateson (Auerswald, 1990; Bateson, 1972): a set of pervasive rules used in thought by large groups of people to define reality. Epistemology is a branch of philosophy

that focuses on knowledge and the justification of knowledge by examining the origins, nature, and methods of knowledge. Understood more broadly, epistemology has "to do with the creation and dissemination of knowledge in particular areas of inquiry" (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, n.d.). More simply stated it is "how we know what we know." Epistemology often involves creation and use of a paradigm to organize information and knowledge.

The crucial issue for family psychologists is the role of one's epistemology in determining the sources and organization of knowledge, as these constitute what we know and believe to be true. In that sense, "reality" is a construct, based on what our rules say is real or not real. For instance, is the sound of a dog whistle "real"? Most humans cannot hear the sound, so if our rules limit reality to those things that can be directly experienced by human senses (i.e., sight, hearing, touch, feel) in an anthropocentric manner, the sound of the dog whistle is not real. This is problematic, because we can observe that when we blow the whistle all the dogs in the area respond, and we have learned that there are high-frequency sounds beyond our auditory range, so our rules may be challenged by other experiences or knowledge. If so, do we change our rules, or do we hold to them stubbornly because we "know" they are right? Rules may preclude consideration of novel ideas or exclude options without deliberation because they do not fit our "reality."

Many people have given little thought to the rules they follow in thinking. Most do not face an ambiguous situation, stop, determine the rules we intend to use to conceptualize that situation, and then address it. Instead, we automatically follow the rules into which we have been socialized. Family psychology challenges us to understand how we have been socialized and educated to think, and to consider new methods.

The Cartesian Method

Many people educated in the United States and Europe have inculcated the scientific method espoused by Rene Descartes in 1637 (Capra, 2002; Nutt & Stanton, 2008). The Cartesian method of critical thinking is so intrinsic to western thought that most of us use it automatically when we think, with little or no awareness that our methodology influences our thoughts and interpretations (see Nisbett, 2007, for a detailed depiction of the differences between eastern and western thought processes). There may be an implicit assumption in western psychology that this is the only way to think about issues and problems.

Elements of Descartes' model

Essential elements of the Cartesian model to be used in solving problems, drawn from Descartes' *Discourse on Method* (Descartes, 1999), include: (a) Cartesian doubt (i.e., seeking convincing evidence for every thought; never accepting anything as true without manifest knowledge that it is true); (b) dividing the whole into parts (i.e., breaking any problem

down into as many parts as needed in order to solve it); (c) creating an orderly thought process by beginning with those aspects of the problem easiest to understand and ascending in steps to understand the most complex parts, without trying to follow any natural relationship between the parts; and (d) being thorough to ensure that nothing was left out.

In practice, these rules led to substantial scientific accomplishments (e.g., advances in medicine and other disciplines that enhance human experience) and the development of modern society. They also prove helpful in tackling problems. For instance, the challenge of writing a graduate term paper may be so daunting that students feel overwhelmed and unable to proceed. However, if they are encouraged to "break it down into sections," "create an outline," and "start with the section you know the most about," they are often able to accomplish the task.

Errors of Cartesian extremism

Extreme individualism. Alternatively, when taken to an extreme, these rules have fragmented the whole to the extent that the natural connection between parts of the whole is lost. In practice, Cartesian methods have resulted in extreme individualism (the tendency to frame reality through the lens of the individual rather than the collective whole). We see this in western psychology, where many theories and approaches to psychological intervention are focused on the individual as if she or he were entirely independent of any social system. These models of psychology minimize the attention provided to interpersonal and environmental factors in human behavior, focusing almost exclusively on the intrapsychic or individual psychological factors. These approaches tend "to study the individual by removing the person from the context of his or her life" (Cervone, Shoda, & Downey, 2007, p. 4).

Reductionism. Cartesian rules have also promoted reductionism (the idea that a complex system is only the sum of its parts, so it is possible to break any system down to its elementary levels for analysis, understanding, and problem solving) in a manner that limits our ability to understand the complexity of the whole. For instance, reductionistic thinking in psychology may result in a fragmented understanding of human behavior as particular psychologists focus only on the part of that behavior in which they specialize (e.g., some cognitive psychologists focus solely on mental representations, dismissing or discounting other factors, such as affect). The insight gained from such sole focus may be helpful, on the one hand, but ultimately misleading because it suggests that other factors are unrelated or unimportant. When reductionistic solutions are applied to complex phenomena, the solutions ultimately fail to address the complexity of the behavior. For example, there was a campaign some time ago to reduce the number and severity of automobile accidents. The thrust of the campaign was a slogan that encouraged drivers to leave one car length between them and the car ahead for every 10 mph of their driving speed. At initial glance, the simple logic of this suggestion makes sense; six car lengths at 60 mph allow plenty of room to stop or avoid an accident. In fact, this solution may make sense on a single-lane road. However, the solution is reductionistic when applied to the real world of multiple-lane highways traveled by most suburban and urban

drivers. In that case, if one leaves significant space between cars it often results in other cars "cutting in front" of your car, increasing the potential for an accident. Reductionism may appear to solve a problem, but miss the complexity of an interactive system around the problem. This is similar to what occurs when a complex issue like substance abuse is understood as entirely an individual issue and the addict is treated on an inpatient unit until sobriety is achieved, then returned to the home and social environment in which the problem originated, only to relapse because the treatment did not address the complexity of the problem.

Linear thinking. In addition, Cartesian logic often leads to linear thinking (the idea that there is a simple cause-and-effect mechanism that may explain most acts as one explores them using logical, rational analysis). Such thinking typically excludes synergistic thinking (the understanding that combined effects are greater than the sum of individual effects) and integrative processes (the ability to join parts into a larger whole) that recognize the creative, complex, and unexpected pathways surrounding human acts. Linear thinking alone may be inadequate to understand and address life issues and circumstances.

Extreme objectivism. Similarly, Descartes' focus on objectivity is misleading, when taken to an extreme. When Descartes conceptually divided mind and matter he argued that a human scientist could observe the world objectively. Many contemporary scientists agree with him; they eschew any form of subjectivity in research. Only that which can be known through the scientific method, narrowly interpreted, is reliable knowledge. However, Capra (2002) argues that discoveries in quantum physics and theories of cognition overrule such an extreme focus on objectivity to recognize that science may be rigorous and disciplined without excluding the subjective dimension. A systems epistemology avoids the error of extreme objectivity, noting that all forms of knowledge may contribute to healthy functioning. This has important ramifications for psychotherapy and psychological research (e.g., the legitimacy of qualitative methods).

The legacy of Descartes is substantial and we would not easily discard his rules. When taken to an extreme, the Cartesian method lacks balance and requires reconsideration. There are systemic ways to conceptualize human behavior that are amenable to complexity and context; these may complement Cartesian methods.

Epistemological Transformation

Because many people have never considered the rules they observe automatically in their thought processes, it is difficult to change those rules. Mary Catherine Bateson (Gregory Bateson's anthropologist daughter and collaborator until his death) suggests that we need an "epistemological shock" to challenge our worldview and the fundamental framework we use to perceive the world (Bloom, n.d.). The Batesons used a variety of literary forms (e.g., metalogues: conversations that stretch our thinking), life examples, and arguments to help us break out of our assumptions to consider different ways of thinking.

Learning to learn

Gregory Bateson (an early leader in systemic conceptualization; 1972) provided a classic example of the struggle to comprehend new structures of thinking when he described a porpoise that was frustrated while learning to demonstrate new behaviors under the guidance of a trainer. The trainer put the porpoise through a series of presentations in which only one new noteworthy behavior was rewarded (by a whistle and food) in each session. This resulted in a pattern over 14 episodes: the porpoise would repeat the behavior rewarded in the prior session but go unrewarded until it evidenced some new behavior, not previously demonstrated, which would then be rewarded. But during the break between the fourteenth and fifteenth sessions, the porpoise was very excited and "when she came on stage for the fifteenth session she put on an elaborate performance including eight conspicuous pieces of behavior of which four were entirely new – never before observed in this species of animal" (p. 277). The porpoise finally understood that the trainer desired entirely new behaviors. She saw beyond each separate session to the pattern across all presentations. Bateson termed this "deutero-learning" or "learning to learn." It is at the core of an epistemological transformation.

According to conceptual change theory, there are several characteristics needed in the ecological surround to support change in one's worldview: (a) dissatisfaction with existing conception, (b) an intelligible new conception, (c) an initially plausible conception, and (d) the new conception holding the possibility of solving future problems (Gregoire, 2003; Sandoval, 1996).

The process of change involves identifying existing beliefs, making these tacit beliefs available for deliberate reflection, and systematic refutation of misconceptions. Conceptual change may be enhanced through the use of analogies, especially those generated by the changing individual (Duit, Roth, Komorek, & Wilbers, 2001). For example, when individuals are asked to work in groups to identify systemic metaphors or analogies, it often results in enhanced understanding of systems theory as an epistemology. They end up identifying natural or mechanistic systems all around them that evidence the qualities of a system (see below), such as the interactive parts and processes of the human body or the intricacies of a functioning automobile.

The disequilibrium created in the epistemological change process may result in negative affect for the person being challenged to change, so a supportive environment is needed (Demastes, Good, & Peebles, 1995; Gregoire, 2003). It is uncomfortable to find one's foundations of knowledge cracking or crumbling.

Paradigm shift: from individualistic approach to systemic

Family psychology requires a fundamental paradigm shift from western individualism to systemic complexity (Stanton, 2005). If we want to understand and treat individuals, couples, families, and larger social groups effectively, we need to conceptualize cases within the system in which they exist (the context and the meanings attributed to the context), assess the salient factors in the system, and intervene at identified points across the system.

This means that we need to "see" the system in which human life is embedded. One noteworthy metaphor comes from the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979), the author of the idea of development in ecological context. Bronfenbrenner suggested that the individual grows and develops within a nested structure of environments, comparing such context to the sets of Russian dolls that nest inside each other, with each one opening to reveal another level inside. Bronfenbrenner (1979) coined the terms microsystem (the immediate setting of development), mesosystem (the interrelationships between microsystems), macrosystem (higher-level systems), exosystem (settings beyond the immediate experience of the individual that influences development), and chronosystem (the evolving interconnected nature of the person, environment, and proximal processes over time) (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) to identify various levels and types of systemic context in which human life occurs.

Transformation in personal thought process for the psychologist usually requires facing the complexity of a clinical case or research question and finding reductionistic solutions inadequate. For instance, early conceptualization of child development and attachment focused on qualities of the mother in a somewhat unidirectional manner (i.e., how the mother influences child attachment). However, as research progressed, it became clear that there was a reciprocal interactive process between an individual child and the mother (i.e., the child evoked responses and responded to evocations from mother). In fact, mother–child relations may differ between the same mother and each of her children. Fathers eventually were included in the conceptualization of attachment etiology, at first primarily through their interaction with mother and later through the complexity of the mother–father–child system. Finally, other caregivers were understood to contribute to the development of internalized attachment, including members of the extended family and child-care providers (see Schermerhorn, Cummings, & Davies, 2008, for a review of the evolution of thinking about child development). The "old" idea of maternal influence on the child alone is no longer sufficient for understanding child development.

As one begins to see the system at work, the individualistic paradigm breaks down and there is room for the systemic paradigm. Apparently simple cause-and-effect explanations are demonstrated to be insufficient and more complex, systemic rationales evolve to take their place.

Once the transformation takes place, it is impossible to see things in the old way. Even if a clinician elects to work exclusively with individuals in clinical practice, the approach will be different because he or she will see the system in which the person lives and interacts. Of course, many such clinicians will now feel more comfortable working with couples, families, and larger social organizations because they have the framework to understand, assess, and intervene in the system. Additional training in systemic assessment devices, techniques, and evidence-based approaches enhances the assessment and intervention competencies, but they are founded on systemic thinking.

Delineation of a Systemic "Family Psychology" Paradigm

An epistemological transformation requires a new framework to organize knowledge. Typically, epistemological rules lead to structures that are used to arrange, categorize, and

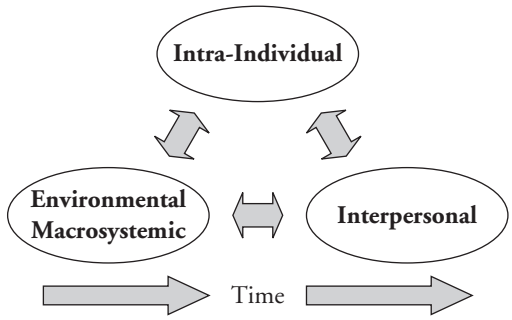

Figure 1.1 Systemic paradigm of family psychology

classify information. For example, when people in the western world consider human relations in the workplace, the Cartesian epistemology manifests itself in adoption of a hierarchical organizational chart. Such charts are familiar in the west because they evidence the hierarchical and linear individualism that results from excessive adoption of the Cartesian method. In these models, communication and decision-making flow from top to bottom, and individual components relate to others in a linear fashion, with power and status locked into roles within the hierarchy. The general focus of the organization is on individual building blocks (e.g., defining individual roles, responsibilities, and reporting relationships) rather than the whole.

By contrast, a systemic paradigm recognizes the dynamic reciprocity between individual, interpersonal, and environmental or macrosystemic factors over time in human behavior (Liddle, Santisteban, Levant, & Bray, 2002; Robbins et al., 2003; Stanton, 1999). Figure 1.1 presents this paradigm.

A systemic paradigm is helpful in psychology because it provides a framework for conceptualizing, assessing, treating, and researching human behavior. A family psychologist is one who internalizes this type of paradigm to the point that thinking is organized by it. The paradigm becomes a conceptual map that allows the family psychologist to navigate the system. For instance, a family psychologist automatically considers the variety of factors in these categories when commencing psychotherapy or consultation with an individual, couple, family, or larger social system. All factors apply regardless of the modality of treatment (e.g., interpersonal and macrosystemic factors are included in the treatment of an individual, even if other family members never come to treatment). The factors serve as a framework for conceptualization, assessment, and intervention.

Individual factors

Family psychology does not ignore the individual (Nichols, 1987). Intrapsychic and individual factors are an important part of understanding individual, couple, or family dynamics. A variety of individual factors may be considered salient to a particular situation (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Individual, Interpersonal, and Macrosystemic Factors

Individual factors	*Interpersonal factors*	*Macrosystemic/Environmental*
• Individual development in context • Cognitive process and intelligence • Attachment and/or intrapsychic structures • Personality • Gender, age, sexual orientation, physical factors • Psychobiology • Neuropsychology • Personal strengths • Psychopathology • Personal beliefs or convictions	• Family development • Family life-cycle stage • Couple relations • Parent–child relations • Sibling relations • Family process • Family strengths • Family constructs • Social network relations (including social support)	• Socioeconomic status • Work • Cultural differences • Politics – political forces • Medicine, healthcare, health insurance • Physical environment • Safety: crime, terrorism • Community organizations • Religion – religious organizations • Media (internet, TV/cable, newspapers, magazines)

Any or all of these individual factors may be important to the etiology, progression, or treatment of issues presented in psychotherapy. There is substantial psychological research literature in each of these areas, often with clear treatment implications. Family psychologists consider these factors to determine which may be relevant to the presenting issue(s), assess them, and focus interventions on them. Family psychologists understand that change is initiated and maintained by individuals.

However, family psychologists consider individual factors as part of the interactive system with interpersonal and macrosystemic factors rather than as self-contained or stand-alone factors (see Chapter 11, this volume). Advances in the conception of individuals suggest that what had previously been considered a personality characteristic of the individual (e.g., conscientiousness) may not exist within the person but as "an emerging phenomenon that reflects the interplay among the components of the system that is a person" (Shoda, 2007, p. 331). Individual behavior reflects the manner in which the individual responds to a particular circumstance or context, not an isomorphic portrayal of an individual trait. This is so much so that personality varies across contexts or interpersonal circumstances; "an individual's 'personality signature' represents his or her variability across situations and reflects the patterning of the individual's responses while also being stable over time" (Andersen, Thorpe, & Kooij, 2007, p. 177). So, family psychologists consider personality, but not as a static, internal construct; family psychologists regard the interaction of personality (and other individual factors) with the interpersonal and environmental context.