

Newsletter

Lifespan Research Group

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Health &
Social Care



Royal Holloway - Bedford Square, University of London

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The Lifespan Research Group

Lifespan provides research and consultancy in health and social care including:

- **Service evaluations**, training in interview assessments, research consultancy, research capacity building, research dissemination, research collaboration.
- **Research applied to practice** - service evaluations, training in assessment techniques, practitioner research and professional development in social care and health.
- **Academic research** - causal factors in mental health; investigation of lifespan and intergenerational transmission of risk for social exclusion and mental health problems. Measurement design and training for researchers.
- **Knowledge exchange** from universities to public services (social services and health) and voluntary services. We are members of WestFocus, a consortium of seven universities.

What is WestFocus?

A knowledge-exchange network made up of seven universities in the West and South-West of London. These work collaboratively to establish university links with the community to enhance health and social inclusion. The good news is that HEIF3 have provided re-funding for WestFocus for two further years until 2008.

<http://www.rhul.ac.uk/Health-and-SocialCare/Research/LRG.html>





Combating social exclusion

WestFocus Social Inclusion Network
www.westfocus.org.co.uk/SocialInclusion



Journal papers accepted

Davidson J, Bifulco A, Thomas G & Ramsay M (*in press*). Child victims of sexual abuse: Children's experience of the investigative process in the criminal justice system. *Practice*.

WestFocus Workshop

'Engaging Child Victims' University of Westminster & RHUL: June 21st; 11 Bedford Square. Contact: **Margaret.Ramsay@rhul.ac.uk**

Training courses in ASI-AF for practitioners

3,4,5 & 30 October, London; 6,7,8 Nov, 11 December, York. Contact: **Catherine.Jacobs@rhul.ac.uk**

Conference in ASI-AF

Use of the ASI in adoption & fostering 27 September, Manchester

St Christopher's Workshop

A workshop was held on 21st March to explain Lifespan Assessment techniques for managers of residential homes at St Christopher's offices in Putney.

Child victims of sexual abuse – Research with the Metropolitan Police

Lifespan are working in partnership with the University of Westminster to examine the experiences of child victims of sexual abuse who go through police and court procedures.

The Metropolitan police approached the WestFocus team to ask if we could evaluate procedures in interviewing child victims and getting the child's views of the experience. Lifespan has completed the first phase of the study that has examined police records of cases of intrafamilial abuse and whether these have resulted in convictions or not. The team have also interviewed police officers involved in the service to

get their views on whether they have sufficient training in interviewing vulnerable children. The literature review undertaken for this study has been accepted by Practice journal for a special edition of experiences of victims. Contact: **Margaret.Ramsay@rhul.ac.uk**

Funding application

A joint application has also gone into the Nuffield Foundation by both universities to get funding to continue the work, extending it to other authorities and by undertaking evaluation interviews with the children themselves.

The Attachment Style Interview for Adoption and Fostering (ASI-AF)

WestFocus has been funding the development of the ASI as an assessment tool for use in Social Work over the last two years. In that time Lifespan has developed and tested a training package, and we have now trained 264 social care and psychologist practitioners.

This month Lifespan has finalised a licensing agreement with the Child and Family Network to roll out the training for us on a national basis. We have therefore spent the last 6

months training the members of the group who are now ready to conduct training of their own. Lifespan still plans to run up to two training courses per year held in London. The rest will be undertaken by Liza Bingley-Miller and her team of trainers. Lifespan is in the process of setting up a website for the ASI-AF in order to facilitate booking training courses and ordering interview packs.

Contact **Catherine.Jacobs@rhul.ac.uk**

Partnership with St. Christopher's Fellowship

Lifespan has become involved in an exciting new intervention planned for young people with complex needs in residential care. The project run by St Christopher's foundation – a voluntary organisation – aims to set up 4 homes using a Social Learning intervention to help teenagers with behaviour problems. Lifespan will provide intensive assessments of the young people before and after the interven-

tion, as well as advise on the Carers Daily Report contents and provide workshops for the staff in both Social Learning and Attachment theory and practice.

Toni Bifulco travelled to the Isle of Man on 24th March to help present the intervention project to service managers.

Contact: **A.Bifulco@rhul.ac.uk**

Well-being across the Lifespan

WestFocus Health Network
www.westfocus.org.co.uk/health



Solutions on Stress (SOS): For young people in schools

All too often research shows that children and young people experience high levels of stress but too little is done to manage stress in school populations. The WestFocus Health Network's Solutions on Stress (SOS) project aims to put this right.

SOS, led by Lifespan at Royal Holloway, University of London, and Thames Valley University, is exploring how stress can be controlled in schools. In 2005 the WestFocus Health Network ran a series of listening events in two Ealing secondary schools to find out what might help teenagers control the stress they experienced. The Health Network used these meetings to devise six stress-management workshops for 16 to 18 year olds. The sessions, held weekly

after school, teach young people about the causes and effects of stress on themselves and others.

The sessions are built round practical stress-management tools the young people can use after the course. They include some complementary and psychological approaches to stress: cognitive behavioural techniques, Indian head massage, aromatherapy, breathing techniques and the resources available to support them.

After assessment of the SOS pilot, the WestFocus Health Network hopes to roll the package out to other schools in London and beyond. It might be used to help teachers too!

Contact:
Amanda.Bunn@:rhul.ac.uk



The West Focus SOS team:
(l-r back row) Nicky Robinson, Toni Bifulco, Adina Rusu
(l-r front) Ava Lorence, Emma Govan, Michelle Wood & Amanda Bunn

Wellbeing in older age groups

A WestFocus project developing assessments for older age people is underway in collaboration with the University of Westminster and Kingston University. Lifespan is providing the element to assess attachment style. This project looks at a range of psychosocial and cognitive assessments as well as cortisol to measure stress levels and actigraphs to assess levels of activity at different times of day and night. Contact:

Catherine.Jacobs@rhul.ac.uk

Wellbeing for Carers

Lifespan is beginning a project with Kingston University and St George's University of London joint faculty to look at stress amongst care workers in care homes for older people. A focus group is planned to assess the needs of carers in their work roles in stress management and reduction. It is hoped a package of stress reduction to aid well being can be introduced.

Event for Carers:

A focus group will be held for Wimbledon Nursing Home Care workers on 25 May.

Upcoming events SOS

- Workshops for AS students, 28 June at TVU Ealing
- WestFocus conference at Kempton Park, 8 May
- Meeting with local healthy schools representatives, 28 April

Contact:
Amanda.Bunn@rhul.ac.uk

Partnership with Surrey Social Services



Surrey Services Evaluations

Lifespan has been working with Surrey Children's services in adoption and fostering for nearly three years. This has involved helping with assessment around record keeping of information about children placed in Surrey. It has also involved evaluating the Attachment Project (TAP), a new service to help with both Family Finding and Placement Stability.

In addition Lifespan has trained all 45 Surrey practitioners in the service in the Attachment Style Interview (ASI) which is to be used in regular assessment procedures for carers involved in the service. This will gauge carers' risks and resilience in terms of seeking support and dealing with stress. Information from the ASI can then be used for matching carers to children to enable greater placement success.

Surrey Asylum-seekers and Out-of-hours emergency service project

Lifespan has been awarded a new grant to run for six-months from April to October to evaluate new service provision for post-placement adoption families. The aim of the service is to create new provision for asylum seeking children in Surrey, but also to provide an out-of-hours emergency advice centre for families in crisis.

This is based on an in-house survey showing that most emergencies in adoption or fostering placements occur in the evenings, when carers require immediate advice on how to contain the problem. In addition there are a growing number of asylum seeking children in Surrey, but little documentation on where they are or what their specific needs are. The new worker aims to become a repository of expertise on issues surrounding legal, cultural, religious and discriminatory issues around asylum seeking children.

Comparing attachment assessments ASI and AAI

Two different established assessment tools on attachment -the ASI and Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) are being used together for the first time to aid in adop-

tion fostering. An exciting new development has been collaboration with Dr Steve Farnfield from Reading University who is currently evaluating the use of the AAI with prospective Surrey Carers. This interview is a psychodynamic assessment of attachment style, which utilises information about the person's early childhood to gauge security of attachment currently.

We know that Lifespan's own ASI works well in this context by gauging ability to access and utilise support and thus protect against depressive reactions to stress involved with placing a child with complex needs. This is the first time to our knowledge that the two measures will be used together for a full assessment of carers who have a child placed with them. The aim is to examine the correlation between the two assessments, but also to see if they can predict stability of placement over a 6 months to 1 year period. Lifespan is seeking a grant to undertake a full analysis of ASI reliability and predictive relevance to the services.

The Attachment Project Update

Lifespan has been awarded a grant to continue with the evaluation of TAP into its third year from September 2006 to September 2007. This is a great opportunity to see how this exciting new service based entirely on attachment theory and principles will provide extra help to children and families in Surrey. The Attachment Project seeks to increase stability of placement for children who are adopted or fostered by supporting carers, offering direct work with the children, and improving matching of child to carer in initial placement. The service consists of a multi-agency consultation panel which can provide additional diagnostic advice on problems with recommendations and fast tracking through services. In addition the service provides direct work with children using life stories and therapy, as well as additional support for parents. Lifespan research group has provided training in the ASI as an additional assessment for gauging carers' support needs to promote resilience.

Contact: Margaret.Ramsay@rhul.ac.uk

Academic research

Lifespan psychosocial risk factors and mental health



Qualitative intergenerational lifespan data and analysis

A wealth of narrative material on people's lives was collected in the two MRC programme grants on three generations of women – older age, mid-life and young people. This consisted of a paired series of mothers and their sons and daughters. Lifespan is publishing the quantitative results generated by this 10 year data programme. But in addition a large project is currently being undertaken to convert the valuable qualitative information held in paper records to electronic format. The aim is to make this impressive narrative archive an easily navigable source for the researcher as well as to publish the contents in qualitative form. The archive is of interest to a broad range of research disciplines, but most recently we have begun to exploit its social history potential. Case studies from lives in the 1930s through to those in the 1980s offer scope for generational comparison and include accounts of experience during World War 2, the 1960s and more recent experiences.

Contact Leonie.Hannan@rhul.ac.uk

Cross-Cultural Collaborations

Portugal: A joint publication on teenage pregnancy and attachment style, using the ASI, has been accepted for publication. This shows that pregnant teenagers have higher rates of insecure attachments than the adult women and this accounts for their depressive risk.

Figueiredo B, Bifulco A, Pacheco A, Costa R, Margarinho R (in press) Teenage pregnancy, Attachment Style and Depression: A comparison of teenage and adult pregnant women in a Portuguese series. *Attachment and Human Development*.

France: A joint publication on attachment style and therapeutic alliance has been submitted for pub-

lication. This shows that those with insecure styles are more likely to drop out of services.

Guedeney, N, Bifulco, A., Fermanian, J (submitted) Attachment Insecurity and the quality of the practitioner-client alliance in a French primary care setting. (*Psychology & Psychotherapy: Treatment & Practice*).

Transcultural study: An EU funded project on harmonising assessment tools across several EU sites has yielded a new analysis involving data on maternal attachment and mother-child interaction from 4 sites (Bordeaux, Oporto, Zurich, Vienna).

Conference: A transcultural study of maternal attachment style and mother-infant interaction was given as a paper at the Association of European Psychiatry in Nice March 6-8.

Korea: A joint publication shows that perceived criticism in marital relationships predicts relapse in depressed patients. Lifespan marital interviews utilised.

Kwon, J-H, Yuri, L, Lee M-S & Bifulco A (in print) Perceived Criticism, Marital Interaction, and Relapse in Unipolar Depression – findings from a Korean sample. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*.

Quantitative analysis of Lifespan data

Analysis and publication of this large programme data set is continuing.

Bifulco A, Moran P, Jacobs C & Bunn A (submitted) Problem partners and parenting: the impact on maternal insecure attachment style and neglect/abuse of children. (*Attachment and Human Development*).

Bifulco A, JH Kwon, Jacobs C, Moran PM & Bunn A (submitted) Adult attachment style as mediator of childhood neglect/abuse and adult depression and anxiety. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*.

International Training Courses: Childhood Experience of Care & Abuse (CECA)

CECA is a retrospective interview of adversity in childhood for adults and adolescents.

Belgium: Collaboration with a forensic psychology group studying childhood experience of juvenile sex offenders using the CECA. Training sessions are held yearly in Belgium for French-language researchers to learn the CECA. The most recent CECA training was held at Mons University, 3-6 April.

Italy: Following a successful conference in Palermo in

October on the CECA and trauma, two requests for training Italian psychodynamic researchers in the CECA have resulted in two courses being planned. Discussions are being held for an Italian translation of Wednesday's Child (Bifulco & Moran, 1998).

- Rome University, CECA training, 5-7 May
- Palermo University, Sicily, CECA training, 8-10 May

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