It was about 15 years ago that a similar interest came together in two different university research groups from both sides of the Atlantic (the research group of Micki Friedlander at the University at Albany/SUNY -USA-and our group at the University of A Coruña -Spain). We wanted to study one of the main queries of family therapy practitioners: What makes good therapy good? (Is it the treatment model? Specific use of techniques? A charismatic therapist? The appropriate client attitude?). Outcome research offered a positive response about the efficacy of family therapy, and some (but not many) indications about which therapies tend to outperform others for some specific client problems. So our interest was not so much which model worked better but rather to explore 'how does family therapy work?' A continued formal collaboration and exchange program between our universities has allowed us to advance that aim. The building of specific hypotheses to study the process of family therapy led us to understand that the best questions have to do with common factors in psychotherapy and especially to examine how the therapeutic alliance is built in couple and family therapy. Since the therapeutic alliance is the best predictor of treatment retention and outcome create a conceptual framework and a specific methodology to study therapeutic alliances in conjoint couple and family therapy. The result of that endeavor was the SOFTA (System for Observing Family Therapy Alliances -created simultaneously in English and Spanish), which represents a conceptual model as well as set of observational and self-report tools to evaluate four dimensions of the alliance in conjoint therapy: Engagement in the Therapeutic Process, Emotional Connection with the Therapist, Safety within the Therapeutic System, and Shared Sense of Purpose within the Family. During the past 15 years, our international (cross-Atlantic) line of research has evolved in five stages: (1) Creating the SOFTA in the context of 'putting practice into research'; (2) Applying the SOFTA to explore relations between alliance-therapist behaviors in session and early and late improvement; (3) Intensive therapy case/session analysis: learning by observational and qualitative analysis of instances of alliance rupture and repair, as well as relevant examples of engagement shifts; (4) Applying our research knowledge about the alliance to train therapists in alliance-fostering skills; and (5) Approaching the dilemma of manualizing family therapy based on evidence about the efficacy of empowering family alliances. We think that our journey studying the conjoint therapy process has given us a better idea of "what makes a good therapy good": building a good therapeutic alliance.
Terje Ogden (PhD) is research director at the Norwegian Center for Child Behavioral Development, Unirand and professor at the Institute of Psychology, University of Oslo, Norway. The aim of the Center is to integrate research and practice in order to increase multi-disciplinary knowledge and enhance clinical competence in the prevention and treatment of serious behavior problems among children and youth. Since 1998 he has been the director of the research program on the national implementation and evaluation of empirically supported programs for the prevention and treatment of serious behavior problems in children and youth in Norway. The model treatment programs include the Oregon Model of Parent Management, Training, Multisystemic therapy and later on also Functional Family Therapy and Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care. Norwegian program adaptations include PALS which is a school-wide intervention program based on the Positive Behavior Support model and TIBIR a Norwegian acronym for Early Intervention for Children at Risk. PMTO, MST and TIBIR have been tested in randomized effectiveness trials at termination of treatment and also in follow up studies. The research designs have included analyses in order to identify moderating variables and mediators as change mechanisms. Additionally, a PMTO prediction study has been carried out in order to identify child, family, therapy and contextual factors that predict changes in child and parent behavior following therapy. Several of the evidence based programs have been scaled up in a national implementation project, across all regions of Norway. The large scale implementation of MST and PMTO has been the topic of several retrospective articles and a study of implementation components and profiles. Ogden is also the project leader of a longitudinal prospective study of the social development of children in which the development of approximately 1200 children are followed from 6 months to 7 years of age (The Behavior Outlook Norwegian Developmental Study – BONDS) in order to determine the early development of externalizing behavior problems and social competence. Norwegian developmental data will contribute to the refinement of existing treatment programs, and also to the development of new preventive and early interventions.

Recent English Publications from Dr. Ogden


Sue Johnson, Ph.D.

Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy (EFT; Johnson 2004), a couple intervention that is based on a humanistic, experiential perspective that values emotion as an agent of change and on an attachment orientation to adult love relationships, was formulated in the early 1980’s and now has a considerable body of systematic research attesting to its efficacy. A meta-analysis of the four most rigorous studies (Johnson, et al, 1999) found a 70-73% recovery rate for relationship distress (86% significant improvement over controls) and an effect size of 1.3. Results have been found to be stable, even with couples who are at high risk for relapse. Process studies of how change occurs suggest that the active ingredients of change fit with EFT theory. They are depth of emotional experience in key sessions and the shaping of new interactions where partners are able to clearly express attachment fears and needs and be responsive to the other. EFT is the only approach to couple intervention based on a rich, broad and tested theory of adult love relationships. The empirical base of attachment as a model of intimate relationships is substantial (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). EFT, focusing as it does on affect regulation and the creation of a secure bond that fosters resilience is particularly applicable to couples whose relationship is impacted by traumatic stress (Johnson, 2002). A series of relatively small studies find consistently positive results.

More recent research has focused on the generalization of EFT to different populations, especially couples facing depression (3 formal studies) and PTSD (4 formal studies with different kinds of trauma). EFT research has also focused on specific clinical issues such as the steps in the process of forgiving these injuries were outlined and one study (Makinen & Johnson, 2006) found that in a brief EFT intervention 63% of all distressed injured couples moved out of distress and were able to forgive the injury and complete key bonding events that predict success in EFT. Results were stable over three years. Recent research is focusing on establishing the efficacy of the relationship education program Hold Me Tight: Conversations for Connection and FMRI research into how changing a partner’s felt sense of secure connection directly impacts this partner perceived levels of threat and stress.

The EFT program of research is part of the new science of relationships and integrates new empirical insights from research into the nature of emotion, the nature of adult attachment and sexuality and adult bonding. The study of treatment outcome is now moving beyond a concern with relationship satisfaction to a focus on the creation of the safe attachment bonds that are associated with resilience and health in partners and in families. www.iceeft.com (see a list of EFT publications and studies).

Research Recruitment Notices Wanted

As IFTA members within the research community, we recognize the value of collecting data in a wide variety of forms and from a diverse population. One of the challenges, however, lies in the ability to recruit appropriate research participants. Networking options such as web-based discussion boards and listservs have allowed us to sample a wider population at a lower cost. In order to assist the research community, consider posting your links to recruitment for ongoing research within our Research E-forum. Please provide a brief description of the study, indication of its IRB approval, and information on how potential participants can take part. We appreciate your willingness to build a stronger research community!
**Journal of Family Psychotherapy**

Edited By:
Terry S. Trepper, Ph.D.

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**Essay on Family Psychotherapy**


The solo note: Therapy with one spouse through systemic individual marital therapy (SIMT). Anisha Shah and Veena A. Satyanarayana.

**Intervention Interchange** edited by
Thorana S. Nelson, Ph.D.

Using metaphor to help couples rebuild trust after an affair. Kennon V. Rider.

The use of externalizing perfectionism to assist collegiate student-athletes. Laura Sudano.

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**XX World Family Therapy Congress**

The 20th World Family Therapy Congress will be held March 21 - March 24, 2012 in Vancouver. We invite you to join colleagues from around the world at the Sheraton Wall Centre, Vancouver, Canada. The 2012 Congress has as its theme: New Methods for Treating Couples. The Congress will focus on the latest treatment techniques in couples therapy as well as presenting approaches to a variety of problems and ways of coping with them. The congress aims to help heal hurting couples and families in various cultures.

The deadline for submissions has been extended to **OCTOBER 15, 2011**!

If you have further questions, please visit the conference website at: [http://www.iftacongress.org/](http://www.iftacongress.org/)

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**Nominate someone to be featured in a future issue!**

This newsletter is designed to let you know what is going on with the IFTA and also to let you know what research is happening within the community. What research have you been working on? We want to know! Have you been involved in something noteworthy within the family therapy field? Tell us about it! If you want to be featured in one of our future newsletters, or if you know someone that should be featured in one of our future newsletters, please send information to:

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