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Using MAP in Different Cultural Contexts: An Italian Case Study

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Many childcare customs are influenced by culture, such as parents' responsiveness to their young children, and routines of sleeping and feeding (Bornstein & Cheah, 2006). Despite the cultural variability in child-rearing practices, much of the literature on caregiver-child interaction is heavily biased by a focus on North American culture (Fitzgerald, 2006). Most commonly used assessment tools reflect this bias, and thus may not be culturally appropriate. We discuss the use of an observational tool designed to assess parent-child interaction, the MAP, with an Italian group of preschoolers referred for oppositional behavior. The MAP program was conceived for systems at risk for parent-child relational disorders, and has been shown to be useful in addressing a variety of caregiving challenges. In this study, participation by both parents was deemed important for many reasons: the chances that one parent will undermine the intervention decreases, both parents take responsibility for the treatment, and inter-parent support increases (Hembree-Kigin, Bodiford McNeil, 1995).

We present a study to illustrate how MAP can be modified to facilitate the participation of both parents. Method: The following features of the caregiver-child relationship were evaluated in the assessment: sensitivity, role confusion, insensitivity, setting limits, withdrawal (Bohr et al., 2008). Our goal was to understand functional relations among parent's behaviors and children's reactions.

In order to do this, we identified the predictive power of parental behaviors on child functioning.

Sequential analyses show several significant associations, with differences noted between mothers' and fathers' influence, yielding potentially important implications for fathers roles .



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Using the PCIA-II MAP in Different Cultural Contexts: An Italian Case Study

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Conceptual Framework

- Much of the literature on the parent-child relationship highlights the connection between mother and child, and disregards the father's role as supportive or peripheral (Fegran, Helseth, & Fagermoen, 2008).
- Prior to the 1980's, the study of fathering was limited and focused on father absence, as well as the father's role in gender identity development (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004).
- Recently, a greater emphasis has been placed on more involved, nurturing fathering and paternal engagement, as men's roles have extended beyond providing financial support (Hall, 2005).



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Conceptual Framework

- Although research has focused on the maternal role in early child development, this study suggests that fathers are also important figures in children's lives.
- In Italy, the PCIA-II MAP is used with both parents, as fathers typically ask to be involved in the intervention process.



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Objectives:

- To examine differences and similarities in mother-child and father-child relationships among dysfunctional dyads using the Parent-Child Interaction Assessment-II (PCIA-II; Holigrocki, Kaminski, Frieswyk, 1999; 2002).
- To explore the potential strengths of father involvement with preschool-aged children.



Reasons for Joint Involvement

- The involvement of both mothers and fathers is seen as a strength for several reasons:
 - It can lead to a better understanding of the child's maladjustment.
 - The father and mother are both given responsibilities as parents, so they can act together to produce changes in their child's behaviour.
 - It captures the complexity of social interaction processes, as children interact in different ways with their mothers and fathers.



Participants

- Four children between the ages of 4 and 5, referred for infant mental health services because of oppositional defiant problems:
 - Cornelia
 - Anna
 - Frederica
 - Teo
- All mothers participating in the study wished to have more support from their partners and complained that fathers were “too weak” with their children.



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Procedure

- Parent-child dyads were asked to “play out” a trip to the zoo, and fifteen scenarios were filmed for later coding of parent and child behaviours.
- Mothers and fathers were both present at the sessions, but took turns participating in the scenarios.



Analysis

- All videos were transcribed and coded at 5-second intervals.
- A modified PCIA-II coding system that also incorporates features from the Atypical Maternal Behavior Instrument for Assessment /Classification (AMBIANCE; Bronfman, Parsons & Lyons-Ruth, 2004), was used to classify parent and child behaviours.
- As the AMBIANCE focuses on dysfunctional aspects of the caregiver's behaviour, dimensions were modified to include functional parent behaviours as well as child behaviours.



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Coding System

	Mother/ Father	Child
1	Sensitivity/ warmth	Affection/ clear cues
2	Negativity/ communicative errors	Distress/anxiety/ inhibition
3	Authoritativeness/ setting limits	Compliance
4	Role confusion/ disorientation	Hostility/bossiness
5	Distancing behaviors	Withdrawal



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Analysis


- Tables were constructed for each of the four participants, with the cells containing the frequencies of each observed behaviour per minute.
- A summary table containing the average frequency of each behaviour across all four participants was constructed:



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	Sensitivity/ Affection	Negativity/ Distress	Setting Limits/ Compliance	Role Confusion/ Hostility	Distancing/ Withdrawal
Mother	3.5	5.1	1.0	0.8	0.5
Father	4.3	4.2	0.9	2.1	0.7
Child/ Mother	2.7	3.8	1.4	1.3	2.7
Child/ Father	4.7	2.8	1.3	2.1	2.0





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Results

- It seemed there were two profiles that emerged from the data: insensitive, negative mothers, and powerless fathers.
- However, given the limited number of cases, the results needed to be verified for each individual case.
- In addition to looking at the overall quality of the relationship, we also explored functional relations between parent and child behaviours for each case.



Structure and Functional Relations

- Data were further analyzed according to Patterson's (1982) Structure and Functional Relations procedure.
- This procedure is used to analyze interactions and relationships, and examine coercive cycles of behaviour.
- According to this procedure, a social act is predicted by preceding social acts. Therefore, it is possible to predict behaviour when antecedent behaviours are taken into account.
- Is the antecedent behavior controlling the ongoing behavior or are the events merely associated? Which are predictive behaviors and which are not?



Structure and Functional Relations

- Using Patterson's procedure, we aimed to address the following questions:
 - What is the nature of the functional relationship between parents and children?
 - Do parent (antecedent) behaviors predict child (target) behaviors (or vice versa)?
 - How strong are the relationships between the antecedent and consequent behaviours?
 - Are the relationships between antecedent and target behaviours different for mothers and fathers?



Structure and Functional Relations

- In order to examine the structure of the interaction, separate matrices for mother-child and father-child interactions were constructed.
- Cells represented the probability values for all combinations of behaviours across the five parent and child dimensions.



Structure and Functional Relations

- Data were analyzed using the Patterson Cobb (1973) index:
 - Base rates for the target behaviours were calculated (simple p-values).
 - If the conditional value of the target behaviour exceeded base rate, it was assumed that there was a functional relationship between the antecedent and target events.
 - To assess the power of the antecedent to predict the target behaviour, each p-value for the target behaviour was multiplied by the base rate for the antecedent, and divided by the base rate of the target behaviour.
 - To estimate the power of the association, the authors used an arbitrary, conservative criterion of .40.



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Results

- **Cornelia:**
 - Mother's insensitivity predicted child's avoidance (.57) and distress (.58)
 - Father's role/boundary confusion predicted child's distress (.48)
 - Father's sensitivity predicted child's affection (.58)
- **Anna:**
 - mother's sensitivity predicted child's affection (.55)
 - mother's insensitivity predicted child's avoidance (.45)
 - Father's sensitivity predicted child's affection (.61)
 - Father's avoidance predicted child's avoidance (.40)



Results

- **Frederica:**

- mother's insensitivity predicted child's distress (.72)
- father's insensitivity predicted child's distress (.53)
- father's sensitivity predicted child's affection (.57)
- father's setting limits predicted child's compliance (.80)

- **Teo:**

- mother's sensitivity predicted child's affection (.70)
- mother's setting limits predicted child's compliance (.76)
- mother's role/boundary confusion predicted child's avoidance (.42)
- Father's insensitivity predicted child's affection (.56) and avoidance (.73)
- father's sensitivity predicted child's affection (.52)



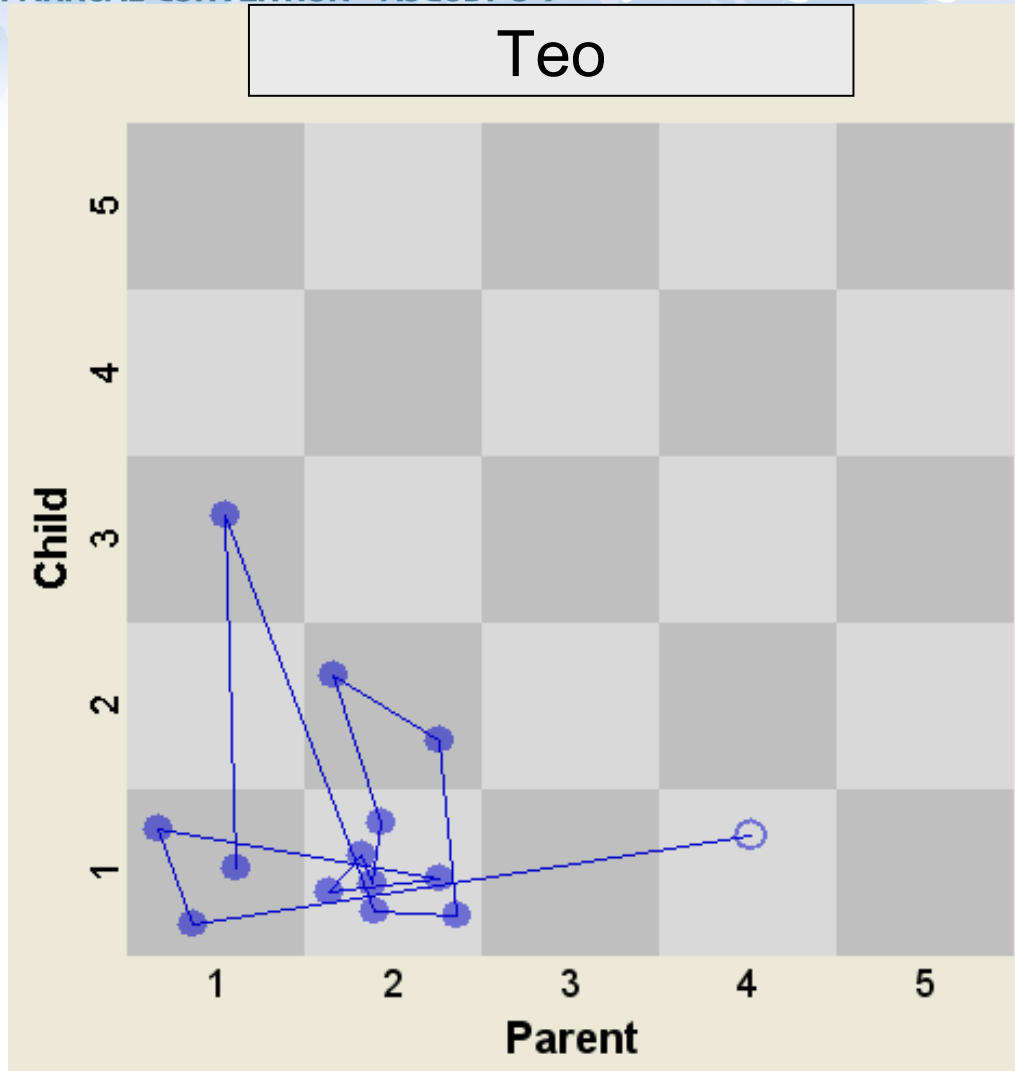
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Teo



Father
2 = Negativity

Child
1 = Affection

Lamey, Hollenstein, Lewis, & Granic (2004)



Conclusions

- Children showed high vulnerability to mothers' negativity.
- There was a strong link between fathers' avoidance or lack of power and children's distress.
- Mothers' sensitivity and affection was not consistently reciprocated by children.
- Fathers' sensitivity predicted affection from children in all four cases.
- There was a link between fathers' insensitivity and children's affection.
- Children reacted in different ways to their mothers and fathers.



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Thank You

