

## **IUPsyS Capacity Building Workshop**

### **“Intervention following Bereavement: Application & Training”**

**Jena, Germany**

**October 18 – 22, 2010**

#### **Background**

Following the 2008 Russian–Georgian armed conflict, Professor Irakli Imedadze, Director of Uznadze Institute of Psychology and President of the Georgian Psychological Society issued an urgent request to psychologists world-wide to provide support for Georgian psychologists’ work with internally displaced persons. Following this request, the President of the International Union of Psychological Science (IUPsyS), Professor Rainer K. Silbereisen (University of Jena) made contact with Professor Imedadze that ultimately led to a proposal being submitted to the German Exchange Service (DAAD) for funding to hold a workshop on 'Bereavement, Research and Practice' focusing on the Georgian region that would be organised under the auspices of the IUPsyS capacity-building program. Support was received from the DAAD on the understanding that the workshop would form part of a series under the heading of “Conflict Prevention in the South Caucasus Region,” that several Caucasus countries must participate, and that funding would only relate to participants/faculty from the Caucasus countries and Germany. The workshop scope was therefore extended to include psychologists from Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as from Georgia. Given the topic and our overall aims, we needed to invite an international faculty, including members from outside Germany, so that additional support was a prerequisite. This was provided by IUPsyS, which offered financial support related to the participation of workshop faculty members not covered by the DAAD grant, and by the University of Jena, which provided organising staff and office facilities.

The first workshop, ‘Bereavement Research and Practice’ was held in Jena, Germany in 2009 and focused on the topic of bereavement from a theoretical perspective (including models and theories on bereavement after normal lifespan-related loss of family and friends, after loss due to accidents and natural catastrophes, and after loss caused by armed conflicts). The workshop was evaluated by the participants and faculty as very successful. Planning began immediately for the second workshop that would continue the topic of bereavement. The main aim for this workshop was to have a much stronger applied perspective on bereavement and to include training related to the actual treatment of bereavement. An application for funding was submitted to the DAAD and was granted on the same grounds as for Workshop 1.

#### **Planning the 2010 Workshop**

As for the 2009 workshop, the organising team for Workshop 2 comprised Professor Rainer K. Silbereisen (as President of IUPsyS and Head of the Department of Developmental Psychology and Director of the Center for Applied Developmental Science, University of

Jena, Germany), Professor Wolfgang Miltner (Head of the Department of Clinical and Biological Psychology, University of Jena, Germany), Dr. Sebastian Grümer (University of Jena, Germany), and Dr Verona Christmas-Best (University of Jena, Germany).

To identify participants for the new workshop, we informed participants of Workshop 1 and asked them to nominate other psychologists in their country who were working in the field of clinical psychology and related fields, who might be interested, and who would benefit from participating. Nominations received (including self-nominations) resulted in a database of more than 80 possible candidates from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia working and/or studying in the field.

Once our application for funding was granted, a call for application, including the full outline of the workshop and a draft program, was sent to the 80 contacts (comprising mainly young scientists, but also senior professors). Potential participants were asked to send us their CV along with the abstract of a poster about their work that, if selected, they would present during the workshop. This selection procedure was to establish the suitability of each nominee's participation in the workshop and to help ensure a comprehensive coverage within the workshop with regard to area of research interest. In total, we received 36 applications, which was a tremendous increase in comparison to the first workshop, when contact to psychologists in this region was extremely difficult. Based on the quality and suitability of the abstract and their CV submitted, the organizers invited 25 applicants to take part in the workshop. Out of these, 14 applicants and thus more than 50% were new participants who have not taken part in the first workshop.

As for Workshop 1, we wanted to secure faculty members of the highest calibre. To this end, and for the benefit of continuity, we invited three faculty members from the first workshop to attend again. This time they were each asked to hold a full training day, including practical advice and training sessions on interventions related to bereavement. We also sent letters of invitation to other internationally renowned experts working in the field of bereavement who would become part of the faculty supporting the non-training days of the workshop. They were asked to make a 45 minute presentation on their work, to hold a question and answer session following their presentation, and to provide advice and support for the participants' poster presentations. From this process, the following agreed to participate and to present on the topic shown:

- Professor Frank Neuner, University of Bielefeld, Germany:  
Presenter and trainer on "Narrative exposure therapy in the treatment of victims of war, torture, and natural disasters"
- Professor Martin Hautzinger, University of Tübingen, Germany:  
Presenter and trainer on "Depressive disorders and their treatment"
- Professor Hansjörg Znoj, University of Bern, Switzerland:  
Presenter and trainer on "Psychotherapeutic methods in the case of complicated bereavement"
- Professor Marinus van IJzendoorn, University of Leiden, Netherlands:  
Presenter on "Attachment, loss, and trauma"

- Professor Gabriele Wilz, University of Jena, Germany:  
Presenter on “Bereavement and grief while a person is alive?”
- Professor Gerard Jacobs, University of South Dakota, USA  
Presenter on “Grief and bereavement in the aftermath of disasters”
- Professor Pierre Ritchie, University of Ottawa, Canada  
Presenter on “International networks of psychological science”

In addition to the workshop faculty, other presenters were invited to give an evening talk during dinner. These were intended to be short presentations on topics of interest to the workshop participants, but not directly related to the topic of interventions following bereavement. These evening talks were given by the following:

- PD Dr. Thomas Straube, University of Jena, Germany  
Presenter on “Functional neuroanatomy of anxiety”
- Professor Martin Fischer, University of Jena, Germany  
Presenter on “Evolutional aspects of bereavement”
- Professor Michael Fritsch, University of Jena, Germany:  
Presenter on “The entrepreneurial process: economics, education, and psychology”

### **The Workshop**

The workshop started on October 18, 2010 (arrival October 17) and lasted until October 22 (departure October 23). In all there were 24 participants from the Caucasus region – we had invited and expected 25, but at the very last minute one participant withdrew her invitation due to severe family problems, sadly leaving us no time to invite a possible replacement.

As already mentioned, the main focus of this workshop was to present an applied perspective on bereavement and to include training related to its treatment, especially on handling cases of complicated bereavement. However, we also wanted to continue addressing bereavement from the theoretical level, which had been the main focus of Workshop 1. This dual approach was reflected in the format of Workshop 2: The first three days were training days, where faculty presentations containing practical advice and patient case studies were followed by exercises on how to deal with particular aspects of bereavement and associated complications, such as depression or PTSD. The theoretical level was the focus of the last two workshop days and comprised plenum presentations, discussions, and poster presentations by the participants.

**Training Days:** Each training day started with a 60 minute introduction to topic of the day by the presenter and trainer. After a short break, participants were placed into groups of approximately 5 members based on a grouping exercise to ensure random membership. In these smaller working groups, participants were asked to work on tasks, such as to evaluate a given clinical case or to practice specific therapeutic methods. The working groups were attended and supervised by the faculty. One hour was allocated to this activity, followed by a half an hour plenary session for groups to report back, present their experiences and ask

questions. The afternoon sessions on the training days mostly mirrored the course of the morning sessions with a short theoretical presentation, one to two smaller working group assignments, and a reporting back to the plenum with a discussion on the given tasks.



Participants and Faculty outside the CADS on day 4 of the workshop

During these training days, the participants learned about different models and concepts of complicated bereavement and disorders following traumatic events. They became acquainted with and experienced several methods and techniques of how to work with a client or patient in various stages of bereavement. The methods and techniques shown were mostly based on cognitive behavioural therapy and dealt with how to build a trusting relationship with a patient and how to identify the main symptoms and syndromes related to bereavement, so as to be able to make a correct diagnosis. A good example of this process was Professor Frank Neuner's training day on "Narrative Exposure Therapy in the treatment of victims of war, torture, and natural disasters." Following his presentation, he organised several small-group exercises where the participants could practise parts of Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET), which is a well-validated and standardized short-term therapy to treat survivors suffering from traumatic stress and post traumatic stress disorders. The exercises dealt with the construction of a detailed chronological narrative of a patient's biography to reduce symptoms of the disorder by confronting the patient with memories of the traumatic event.

During the other two training days - Professor Martin Hautzinger on "Depressive disorders and their treatment" and Prof. Hansjörg Znoj on "Psychotherapeutic methods in the case of

complicated grief” - the participants learnt to diagnose correctly under which circumstances the same depressive symptoms are to be regarded as part of a normal grief process, as part of a complicated grief process, or as part of a depressive disorder. The subsequent small-group assignments were closely supervised by the faculty and were very effective at enabling participants to understand how the knowledge they had gained could be applied to different situations, as well as enabling them to practise the techniques discussed in the lectures.



Professor Neuner interviewing a workshop participant as part of the Narrative Exposure Therapy

**Non-training days:** For the remaining two “non-training” workshop days, the format was to start with a 45 minute presentation by a faculty member followed by 30 minutes of questions and answers, and concluding with a general discussion. This was followed by a short break and a poster presentation session. In each session, approximately six posters were presented, with each presenter having roughly 10 minutes to present their work and to discuss it with faculty members and fellow participants. All poster presentation session concluded with an open discussion plenary session. On these days, the afternoon sessions

had a similar format to the morning sessions with a 45 minute presentation by a faculty member, 30 minutes of discussion on the presentation, a short break, then two hours of poster presentations and following discussions.



Prof. Znoj and Prof. Silbereisen working with a group during an assignment

The presentation of the participants' posters and the in-depth discussion their work was very well received by all involved. The participants particularly seemed to value the advisory support that these sessions brought as it seems that such practices are very seldom experienced by the participants. Through these poster discussions they also learned about better ways to use data for testing their propositions and hypotheses. In fact, participation in the discussions after the poster sessions was so lively that the ensuing discussions continued throughout the various comfort breaks and even on into dinner. From these discussions, it would seem that many problems related to their research and work lie with their scientific training and it was clear that there is a strong need for a workshop such as this.

The workshop also addressed capacity building at the organizational level. This approach was mostly evident on the last workshop day in the talks by Professors Gerard Jacobs and Pierre Ritchie. Professor Jacobs is one of the most internationally well-renowned experts on providing psychological support for disaster relief workers and first responders (including fire service, rescue service, and emergency medical personnel). His presentation on "Grief and bereavement in the aftermath of disasters" dealt with the broader perspective and logistics

of support endeavours following natural disasters and catastrophes, and as such complimented the former talks mainly dealing with the individual experience of bereavement. Professor Pierre Ritchie, as both trained clinical psychologist and secretary-general of IUPsyS, was able to extend the bridge between the individual and organisational level of capacity building further. His talk on “International networks of psychological sciences” dealt with the topic of how to build and maintain an academic-professional organization of psychology. In the long term, this is aimed at increasing the impact of psychological research and subsequent new insights and approaches on the well-being of individuals and countries.



Professor Silbereisen with Professor Gogotishvilli from Tbilisi State University during a poster presentation

### **Workshop Evaluation**

Before and after the workshop, a specially designed evaluation questionnaire that examined various aspects of the workshop experience was given to the participants. Before the workshop 75% of participants ( $N = 17$ ) filled out the questionnaire, after the workshop all participants ( $N = 24$ ) completed the questionnaire.

The pre-workshop questionnaire comprised 20 items to be answered on a 5-point Likert scale (1 “does not apply at all” to 5 “fully applies”). Topics of the questionnaire were expectations regarding the workshop objectives, the instructors, and their presentations. Furthermore, the questionnaire included two open-ended questions regarding participants’ overall expectations of the workshop and concerning the particular topics they hoped to find included. All items from the pre-workshop questionnaire were used in the post-workshop

questionnaire as well as additional questions regarding their satisfaction in different domains and whether their goals and expectations had been fulfilled. In total, the post-workshop questionnaire comprised 31 items. Note that we used a slightly different wording with regard to the pre- and post-workshop questionnaires. Whereas the pre-workshop items dealt with the expectation and wishes of the participants (e.g., “Instructors should use a variety of teaching techniques”), the post-workshop items dealt with the actual fulfillment of their wishes (e.g., “Instructors used a variety of teaching techniques”). Please refer to Table 1 at the end of this report for an overview of the items used in the evaluation.

Judging by the mean levels of the pre-conference items, the greatest expectations of the participants were, first, for a high level of quality regarding the presentations (e.g., “Instructors should display a thorough knowledge of the subject matter”) and second, to be able to link the workshop topics to actual demands of professional work as psychologists (e.g., “Instructors should relate course materials to practical situations”). Taken together, all items were answered well above their scale mean and ranged between  $M = 3.65$  and  $M = 4.59$ , indicating no great variation in the expectation concerning specific workshop details. Furthermore, there was no substantive variation in the answers to the open-ended question concerning the topics participants wanted to see covered by the workshop. Close to all participants named topics on a very general level, all of which were already to be covered in the workshop (such as “learning how to treat people suffering from bereavement”). This might be due to the fact that we had more than 50% new participants who have not taken part in last year’s workshop and as such were not well acquainted to the topic of the workshop. However, two participants stated explicitly that they hoped to learn about new research methods for conducting clinical studies.

Looking at the ratings of post-workshop evaluations, the workshop was very well received. As can be seen in Table 1 (given at the end of this report), all items were again answered well above their respective scale mean. This applies especially to items referring to the quality of the presentations and presenters (e.g., “Instructors communicated his/her subject matter well” [ $M = 4.54$ ] or “Instructors displayed a thorough knowledge of the subject matter” [ $M = 4.58$ ]). Equally highly rated were items referring to the atmosphere of the workshop (“Instructors maintained an atmosphere that actively encouraged thinking and learning” [ $M = 4.14$ ]) and the accordance between their own expectations and the actual workshop (“My personal goals for attending the workshop have been fulfilled” [ $M = 4.42$ ]). Taken together, the workshop was very well rated, which also is manifested in the high level of satisfaction concerning the workshop ( $M = 4.67$ ), its organization ( $M = 4.46$ ), and the training days (ranging from  $M = 4.13$  to  $M = 4.79$ ).

The statistical comparison of the pre- and post-conference evaluation also supports this overall positive conclusion. With the exception of two items, there were no statistical differences between the pre- and post-conference items. Two items were even more positively answered after the workshop (“Instructors included recent developments in this field” and “Instructors related the subject matter to actual situations”). This supports the general positive evaluation of the workshop and leads us to conclude that the workshop met the expectations of our participants.

Looking at the open-ended items in the post-conference evaluation, both the practical training in small groups and the poster presentation sessions were frequently named as highlights of this year's workshop. From the responses, we were also interested in how to improve future workshops: Some participants would have liked more time to go deeper into the training sessions and for them to be more practical and case-oriented. Others suggested having specific lectures and sessions on improving scientific and academic skills, such as statistical and methodological seminars or sessions on how to write empirical articles. We will look to see how these suggestions may be incorporated into the planning of our next workshop. It is already clear, however, that the next workshop will focus largely on the development of curricular elements for academic education related to bereavement, whereby the development of academic and methodological skills will surely play an important role.

To conclude, the evaluation of the current second workshop indicates that the workshop was very successful, even exceeding the very positive evaluation of last year's workshop.

### **Future plans**

The last session of this year's workshop comprised a presentation and discussion concerning the planned third workshop, its potential aims, and possible location. As stated in the original agreement with the DAAD, the workshop series would comprise three steps – first a workshop exploring the theoretical aspects of bereavement and approaches to dealing with it, followed by a workshop focussing on conception and training of practical means to treat bereavement, and finally a workshop concentrating on implementation. The aim of this last step is to develop curricular elements in the training of psychologists in the region, to help in implementation, and in general to establish measures for institutionalizing such developments. Due to one of the main aims of this workshop series being to contribute to the development and dissemination of relevant curricula for academic programs in psychology in the Caucasus, it is proposed that the 3rd workshop in the series takes place in the region, but that it should be planned as a multi-site workshop, with a main venue in one country and smaller venues in one of the other two countries. A possible location for the main venue might be Tbilisi state university due to its long-term partnership (since 1966) with the University of Jena, and preliminary discussions between the Jena organizers and possible organizers in Tbilisi have begun so that a proposal for the next workshop can be formalised and submitted. At this time we also began to think about the possibility of an additional workshop with the aim of outreach and dissemination of insights to countries in the region that were not involved thus far.

### **Additional activities**

Due to the heavy workshop schedule this year there was no time for a formally planned excursion into the surroundings of Jena, although participants had one evening free to explore the local area on their own. However, based on our good experience last year, this workshop also concluded with dinner at the home of Rainer Silbereisen. This was highly appreciated by all who attended, especially due to the excellent food and for the piano waiting to be played. Just like last year, the evening became very lively when several participants played and sang Georgian, Armenian, Russian, and English folk songs. This of course added to the fun of the evening as well as providing a very appropriate way for the

workshop to end – once again, we experienced international harmony not just through work but also through pleasure.



Farewell dinner at Prof. Silbereisen's home

Table 1: Overview about evaluation items, descriptive analysis and mean differences

		<i>M (SD)</i> Pre	<i>M (SD)</i> Post	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> <sup>2</sup>	$\eta^2$
[Pre / Post] <sup>1</sup>	Lectures, discussion and activities were relevant to workshop objectives	4.53 (.51)	4.38 (.71)	.58	1	n.s.	.19
[Pre / Post] <sup>1</sup>	Instructors displayed a thorough knowledge of the subject matter	4.59 (.51)	4.58 (.50)	.01	1	n.s.	
[Pre / Post] <sup>1</sup>	Instructors included recent developments in this field	4.41 (.51)	4.83 (.38)	9.26	1	*	
[Pre / Post] <sup>1</sup>	Instructors provided useful factual knowledge and demonstrate content competence	4.47 (.51)	4.50 (.66)	.02	1	n.s.	
[Pre / Post] <sup>1</sup>	Instructors related course material to practical situations	4.53 (.62)	4.25 (.68)	1.81	1	n.s.	
[Pre / Post] <sup>1</sup>	Instructors discusses topic in sufficient depths	4.29 (.47)	4.46 (.51)	1.10	1	n.s.	
[Pre / Post] <sup>1</sup>	Instructors demonstrated the significance of workshop topics	4.06 (.56)	4.25 (.68)	.92	1	n.s.	
[Pre / Post] <sup>1</sup>	Workshop encouraged understanding of concepts and principles	4.18 (.99)	4.54 (.59)	2.12	1	n.s.	
[Pre / Post] <sup>1</sup>	Instructors clarified the relationships among various topics covered in the workshop	3.82 (.73)	3.96 (.75)	.33	1	n.s.	
[Pre / Post] <sup>1</sup>	Instructors distinguishes between major & minor topics	3.65 (.70)	4.13 (.61)	5.37	1	n.s.	
[Pre / Post] <sup>1</sup>	Instructors related the subject matter to actual situations	3.76 (.56)	4.37 (.58)	11.40	1	*	.23
[Pre / Post] <sup>1</sup>	Instructors presented examples to clarify abstract concepts	4.53 (.51)	4.38 (.50)	.94	1	n.s.	
[Pre / Post] <sup>1</sup>	Instructors integrated lectures, break-out groups and other assignments	4.13 (.89)	4.08 (.88)	.02	1	n.s.	
[Pre / Post] <sup>1</sup>	Instructors used a variety of teaching techniques	4.19 (.75)	3.50 (.89)	6.52	1	n.s.	
[Pre / Post] <sup>1</sup>	Instructors maintained an atmosphere which actively encouraged thinking and learning	4.35 (.79)	4.17 (.76)	.58	1	n.s.	
[Pre / Post] <sup>1</sup>	Instructors selected relevant examples	4.29 (.47)	4.58 (.50)	3.47	1	n.s.	
[Pre / Post] <sup>1</sup>	Instructors communicated his/her subject matter well	4.29 (.77)	4.54 (.59)	1.36	1	n.s.	
[Pre / Post] <sup>1</sup>	Instructors encouraged question & discussion	4.18 (.73)	4.50 (.59)	2.47	1	n.s.	
[Pre / Post] <sup>1</sup>	Instructors encouraged differing points of view	4.76 (.90)	4.33 (.70)	5.15	1	n.s.	
[Pre / Post] <sup>1</sup>	Instructors helped clarify difficult material	4.18 (.73)	4.38 (.71)	.76	1	n.s.	

Table 1 continues on next page

Continuation Table 1

[Post]	Overall satisfaction 1 <sup>st</sup> training day	/	4.79 (.41)				
[Post]	Overall satisfaction 2 <sup>nd</sup> training day	/	4.17 (.56)				
[Post]	Overall satisfaction 3 <sup>rd</sup> training day	/	4.13 (.80)				
[Post]	Overall satisfaction with the organization	/	4.46 (.59)				
[Post]	Overall satisfaction with the workshop	/	4.67 (.48)				
[Post]	The workshop met my expectation	/	4.37 (.64)				
[Post]	I learned things I did not expect to learn	/	3.67 (.92)				
[Post]	I learned a lot from other participants	/	3.42 (.97)				
[Post]	Everyone had a change to participate	/	4.63 (.58)				
[Post]	I will be able to apply what I learned	/	4.38 (.50)				
[Post]	My personal goals of attending the workshop have been fulfilled	/	4.42 (.58)				

Note: *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation; <sup>1</sup> different wording for pre-workshop items; <sup>2</sup> Bonferroni adjusted level of significance