

*F*

And now, we are reprinting an article spoofing the way in which psychologists conceptualize behavior disorders. Some of you may have already read this, but for those of you who have not, read carefully; there is humor everywhere (even in the reference section!).

## The Etiology of Childhood<sup>1,2</sup>

By Jordan W. Smoller

**C**HILDHOOD IS A SYNDROME which has only recently begun to receive serious attention from clinicians. The syndrome itself, however, is not at all recent. As early as the eighth century, the Persian historian Kidnom made reference to “short, noisy creatures,” who may well have been what we now call “children.” The treatment of children, however, was unknown until this century, when so-called “child psycholo-

trained victims of severe childhood to sell lemonade.

with standard measures. Height was assessed by the “metric system” (see Ruler, 1923), and legume appetite by the Vegetable Appetite Test (VAT) designed by Popeye (1968). Moe et al. found that subjects improved uniformly on all measures. Indeed, in most cases, the subjects appeared to be symptom-free. Moe et al. report a spontaneous remission rate of 95 percent, a finding which is certain to revolutionize the clinical approach to childhood.

The recent results suggest that the prognosis for victims of childhood may not be so bad as we have feared. We must not, however, become too complacent. Despite its apparently high spontaneous remission rate, childhood remains one of the most serious and rapidly growing disorders facing mental health professionals today. And, beyond the psychological pain it brings, childhood has recently been linked to a number of physical disorders. Twenty years ago, Howdi, Doody, and Beauzeau (1965) demonstrated a six-fold increased risk of chicken pox, measles and mumps among children as compared with normal controls. Later, Barby and Kenn (1971) linked childhood to an elevated risk of accidents—compared with normal adults, victims of childhood were much more likely to scrape their knees, lose their teeth, and fall off their bikes.

Clearly, much more research is needed before we can give any real hope to the millions of victims wracked by this insidious disorder.

### References

- American Psychiatric Association (1985). *The diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders, 4th edition: A preliminary report*. Washington D.C.: APA.
- Barby, B., & Kenn, K. (1971). The plasticity of behavior. In B. Barby and K. Kenn (Eds), *Psychotherapies R Us*. Detroit: Ronco Press.
- Brady, C. & Partridge, S. (1972). My dad's bigger than your dad. *Acta Eur. Age*, 9, 123-126.
- Flintstone, F., & Jetson G. (1939). Cognitive mediation of labor disputes, *Industrial Psychology Today*, 2, 23-25.
- Fudd, E. J. (1972). Locus of control and shoe-size. *Journal of Footwear Psychology*, 78, 345-356.
- Gumbie, G., & Pokey, P. A cognitive theory of iron smelting, *Journal of Abnormal Metallurgy*, 45, 235-239.
- Howdi, C., & Doodi, C. & Beauzeau, C. (1965). Western civilization: A review of the literature. *Reader's Digest*, 60, 23-25.
- Moe, R., Larrie, T., & Kirly, Q. (1974). State childhood vs. trait childhood. *TV Guide*, May 12-19, 1-3.
- Moe, R., Larrie, T., Kirly, Q., & Shemp, C. (1984). Spontaneous remission of childhood. In W.C. Fields (Ed.), *New Hope for Children and Animals*. Hollywood: Acme Press.
- Popeye, T. S. M. (1957). The use of spinach in extreme circumstances. *Journal of Vegetable Science*, 58, 530-538.
- Popeye, T. S. M. (1968). Spinach: A phenomenological perspective. *Existential Botany*, 35, 908-913.
- Rogers, F. (1979). *Becoming My Neighbor*. New York: Soft Press.
- Ruler, Y. (1923). Assessing measurement protocols by the multi-method multiple regression index for the psychometric analysis of factorial interactions. *Annals of Boredom*, 67, 1190-1260
- Spanky, D., & Alfalfa, Q. (1978). Coping with puberty. *Sears Catalogue*, 45-46.
- Suess, D.R. (1983). A psychometric analysis of green eggs with and without ham. *Journal of Clinical Cuisine*, 245, 567-578.

A stereotype is a structure in memory that contains knowledge, beliefs and expectations about a group of people. Stereotypes are often inaccurate because they are made up of broad generalizations that rarely apply to all individuals within a group. Why do people rely on stereotypes if they are often inaccurate? To understand why people use stereotypes, it is important to examine when stereotypes are useful. Research in Cognitive Psychology suggests that stereotypes serve several different cognitive functions.

From a cognitive perspective, stereotypes may be beneficial because they can improve cognitive efficiency. Research has shown that individuals tend to use stereotypes when their cognitive resources are depleted in some way. For example, when people are tired or distracted, they are more likely to use stereotypes. Thus, using stereotypes preserves resources that

can be used for other more pressing cognitive tasks.

Stereotypes may also be beneficial because they allow a person to make predictions about how someone might behave. For example, if you want to make a good first impression with your boyfriend/girlfriend's father, you may not want to volunteer that you are a member of the Green Party if your boyfriend/girlfriend's father has just returned from playing a round of golf at the local country club. Hence, stereotypes can help to guide your behavior in social situations.

In addition, stereotypes help to organize our world, and tell us when things may be unusual or amiss. Interestingly, if we are not distracted or under time pressure, we seem to pay special attention to information that contradicts our stereotypes, signaling that maybe we need to change our

stereotypes. For example, after learning that your boyfriend/girlfriend's father just returned from playing golf, you might pay particular attention when he mentions that he is the president of the local chapter of the ACLU.

Stereotypes may even improve our ability to recognize faces. Research conducted in my lab suggests that assigning a stereotypical category label to a face may help to later recognize that face. A stereotypical label seems to be the most beneficial when the face is of another race. For example, both Caucasian and Asian participants remembered faces of African American males who were labeled as basketball players better than African American males who were labeled as tennis players. Interestingly, the labels did not seem to help African American participants remember other African Americans.

*(continued on Page 4)*

more information please call or write:

**Ramapo Anchorage Camp**

**P. O Box 266**

**RhinebeP. O BoxTw TD 0.1e0.3039 Tc 0.25BB5Tw -TD -0.353rage Camp2Tj -141 -12.082**

---

## Willamette University Psychology Department Quarterly Newsletter

Meredy Goldberg Edelson  
253 Smullin Hall  
503.370.6133

Allisa Jones  
321 Smullin Hall  
503.370.6961

**Please deliver to:**

*WHEN PSYCH PROFESSORS NEED A BREAK...*

[www.willamette.edu/cla/psychology](http://www.willamette.edu/cla/psychology)

---

# P

### **Meredy Goldberg Edelson**

Department Chair, Associate Professor  
253 Smullin Hall, 503/370.6133  
medelson@willamette.edu

Human Response to Stress, Internship/  
Thesis Orientation, Internship I/II.

### **Jim Friedrich**

Professor  
252 Smullin Hall, 503/370.6435  
jfriedri@willamette.edu

Research Methods & Analysis II, Judgment  
& Decision Making

### **Patricia Gribble**

Visiting Professor  
201 Smullin Hall, 503/370.6341  
pgribble@willamette.edu

Intro to Psychology, Theories of Personal-  
ity

**Note: Sue Koger and Mary Ann  
Youngren are on Sabbatical  
during 2000—2001.**

### **Deborah Loers**

Dean of Student Development/ Di-  
rector of Counseling  
Baxter Hall, Bishop Wellness Center  
503/370.6471  
dloers@willamette.edu

Cross-Cultural Communication, Psy-  
chology of Addiction Seminar

### **Larry McBride**

Associate Professor  
254 Smullin Hall, 503/370-6425  
(no email address)

Developmental Psychology: Adoles-  
cence, Psychology of Learning

### **Richard O'Grady**

Visiting Professor  
Office/Phone—TBA  
rogrady@willamette.edu  
Cognitive/Behavior Modification

### **Jack Palmer**

Visiting Professor  
259 Smullin Hall, 503/370-6427  
jpalmer@willamette.edu

Intro to Psychology, Evolutionary Psychol-  
ogy Seminar

### **Norman Reed**

Visiting Professor  
259 Smullin Hall  
nreed@willamette.edu  
Clinical/Abnormal Psychology

### **Karen Solomon**

Assistant Professor  
260 Smullin Hall, 503/370-6964  
ksolomon@willamette.edu

Intro to Psychology, Cognitive Processes,  
Memory Seminar

### **Mark Stewart**

Assistant Professor  
208 Smullin Hall, 503/370-6661  
mtstewart@willamette.edu  
Research Methods & Analysis I, Sensation  
& Perception

---