Book Review

Parenthood and Parenting in Croatia: A Developmental and Socio-Cultural Perspective
Editors: Katica Lacković-Grgin (Department of Psychology, University of Zadar, Zadar, Croatia) and Zvjezdan Penezić (Department of Psychology, University of Zadar, Zadar, Croatia)

“Parenthood and Parenting in Croatia: A Developmental and Socio-Cultural Perspective” is a book that deals with the contemporary challenge of parenting in today's uncertain and rapidly changing world. Two basic aspects of parenting, including parental practice and the experience of parenthood, are discussed by eight prominent Croatian developmental psychologists who focus on diverse predictors, mediators and consequences of the parenting phenomenon. Their insights are products of their numerous, meticulous, evidence-based research which is interpreted within a framework of the most recent theoretical approaches to the parenting. In addition, the authors provide an analytical comparison of the particularities of Croatian parenting with findings from other cultures. This cross-cultural aspect is of particular significance because it reveals that although parenting is a universal phenomenon; nevertheless, it is actually sensitive to cultural and historical specificity. The authors study several important aspects of parenting, including: the influence of historical changes on parenting in Croatia during the last 80 years; special factors that influence the subjective well-being of parents and its consequences such as anxiety, depression and stress; the role of the partner in parenting, that is, how to develop the capacities required to be a competent partner and parent; the separate and distinct role of both mothers and fathers in explaining the psychosocial adjustment of adolescents, with special emphasis on the role of conflict between parents; the problems (social, financial, psychological) of parenting in single-parent families and how these problems affect child-rearing practice and children’s psychosocial adjustment; the mediating role of parenting in children’s coping with war and stress; the various determinants of fertility motivation in the context of the recent demographic trends in Croatia; and family relations among older people with an emphasis on the role of grandparents in their grandchildren’s psychosocial adjustment.

This book has many strengths. As the editors (K. Lacković Grgin and Z. Penezić) indicate, most of the presented empirical studies include whole families (mothers, fathers and children); all the findings are interpreted in light of contemporary developmental theories; and critical observations with regard to the presented research, as well as directions for future research are offered. This book represents a significant advancement in the field of developmental psychology due to its developmental and cultural dimensions in addition to its solid scientific theoretical and empirical basis. Generally, parenting is one of the biggest decisions we make in life, and being a parent is definitely our most challenging role. That is why this book gives an undoubtedly significant contribution to understanding how to facilitate this decision and become a more successful parent by clarifying many determinants and consequences of parenthood (in Croatia and beyond).

I find this book highly relevant for developmental psychologists, clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, students of psychology and psychiatry, professionals who deal with social and demographic policy, as well as for parents. I think the book is very valuable and interesting and that anyone who decides to read it will also be convinced.

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