

The Effects of Parental Dysfunction on Children

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Preface

The 1998 Banff International Conference on Behavioural Science addressed the topic of the effects of parental behavioral and emotional dysfunctions on children in the family. Recent experience with interventions designed to promote the well being of children and to prevent mental health problems has identified particular challenges in families with dysfunctional parents. These families are often very difficult to engage in mental health promotion and prevention programs, and they may be especially recalcitrant to intervention. The focus of this volume is to explore the current level of knowledge regarding the processes by which a number of parental dysfunctions influence the developmental outcomes of children.

Renowned scientist-practitioners from the United States, Canada, and Australia participated in the conference, and subsequently contributed 10 chapters based on their presentations to this volume. The major topics addressed by the conference were those of children growing up in families in which the parents suffer from major psychosocial difficulties, including schizophrenia, depression, alcoholism, drug addiction, anxiety disorders, intellectual disabilities, and antisocial personality disorder. This volume is divided into two sections. In the first section, two chapters provide scholarly descriptions of developmental models for conceptualizing the various risk and protective factors (genetic, biological, and environmental) that play critical roles in the transmission of the effects of parental dysfunction to the development of the child. In the second section, the remaining eight chapters focus on specific parental dysfunctions and their effects on children in the family. These chapters cover descriptive psychopathology, implications for intervention (both treatment and prevention), and descriptions of intervention procedures.

Part 1, 'Conceptual Overview,' begins with a chapter by Elaine F. Walker, who introduces the volume by presenting a developmentally oriented conceptual model for examining the risk factors that affect the children of dysfunctional parents, with an emphasis on prenatal factors that comprise fetal neurodevelopment and postnatal events that serve to trigger the expression of vulnerabilities. To illustrate the importance of focusing on developmental

pathways, Walker presents a multi-factor risk model to describe the epigenesis of vulnerability to schizophrenia, along with empirical evidence to support this model. In Chapter 2, Kathleen Ries Merikangas examines the role of familial factors in the development of dysfunction as well as potential mechanisms for familial aggregation, using substance use disorders as an example. She begins with a description of the goals and methods of genetic epidemiology. Using illustrative data from a high-risk study of substance use and anxiety disorders, Merikangas describes how genetic epidemiological methods can shed light on various methods of familial aggregation. She also presents implications for prevention and treatment.

Part 2, 'Parental Dysfunctions,' presents detailed expositions of specific parental dysfunctions and their effects on children in the family. In Chapter 3, Lisa A. Serbin and colleagues focus on the risk to offspring of parents from a prospective longitudinal study of individuals from inner-city Montreal with lower socioeconomic status backgrounds. The parents in this sample have been followed since they were elementary school children into parenthood. Within this sample of socially and economically disadvantaged young adults, intergenerational risk and prediction of problems in offspring were examined in relation to the parents' patterns of childhood aggression and social withdrawal. The complex, multiple challenges facing these individuals as they become parents are described. The focus of the chapter is on the prediction of adverse birth circumstances and parenting problems, which may predict risk and negative outcomes for a new generation of children. Implications of these findings for prevention and early intervention focusing on parents and their young children are also considered.

Two chapters focus on internalizing disorders. In Chapter 4, William R. Beardslee and colleagues describe their programmatic efforts to prevent depression in children through the promotion of resiliency. The Preventive Intervention Project works with families to prevent difficulties in children from homes in which there is parental affective illness by promoting resilient traits and modifying risk factors associated with parental affective illness. The chapter begins with a review of the risks associated with parental affective illness. Beardslee and colleagues then describe the theoretical framework and the content of this empirically validated, clinician-facilitated intervention.

It is well established that anxiety problems and disorders run in families. In Chapter 5, Mark R. Dadds reviews family processes implicated in the development, maintenance, and treatment of these problems in children and adolescents. Dadds focuses on how social learning processes may operate within variations in the quality of intimate relationships in the family to lead to anxiety disorders. He provides examples of how these processes can be contrasted and integrated at both clinical and theoretical levels.

Antisocial behavior causes great monetary and social costs to society. In Chapter 6, Paul J. Frick and Brian R. Loney examine heredity, observational learning, and disrupted socialization as possible mechanisms involved in the association between parent and child antisocial disorders. Based on their own programmatic research, they propose that parental antisocial behavior is

linked primarily to a subgroup of children with conduct disorders who also demonstrate high rates of 'callous-unemotional' traits. Ineffective parenting practices, which have been closely tied to the development of child conduct disorders, are less strongly associated with conduct disorders in these children. Instead, Frick and Loney speculate that a temperamental predisposition (low fearful inhibitions) may be an important intergenerational link between parental and child antisocial behavior.

The next three chapters focus on parental alcohol and other substance use. In Chapter 7, Hiram E. Fitzgerald, W. Hobart Davies, and Robert A. Zucker first review the findings from a prospective longitudinal study of children at high risk for the later development of alcoholism with high antisocial coactions. The developmental sequence for the emergence of such coactions is regulated by familial aggressive behavior, negative affect, and alcohol abuse, embedded within a genetic vulnerability for such attributes, and shaped by parents who model disorganized and addictive behaviors. Fitzgerald and colleagues then describe a parenting and communication skills-based intervention designed to benefit children growing up in an alcoholic home. The program is a behavior management and communication skills-based intervention that has been used to promote prosocial behavioral development and empower parents to deal with the development of antisocial behavior beginning during the preschool years.

Heather Carmichael Olson then describes the most recent research available on the range of possible consequences for children born affected by exposure to alcohol because of maternal drinking during pregnancy. She begins with an overview of diagnosis and terminology, incidence, and causal factors and mechanisms for the disabilities experienced by these children. Carmichael-Olson then describes a number of salient issues for clinical practice. She places special emphasis on the importance of early assessment and intervention procedures to deal with children experiencing fetal alcohol syndrome and related conditions

Risk factors for substance abuse that have been identified indicate that children of substance abusers are likely to be exposed to elevated levels of several of these risk factors. In Chapter 9, Richard F. Catalano, Kevin P. Haggerty, and colleagues review the scientific findings of the Focus on Families (FOF) Project. This intervention employs group training and home-based services aimed at reducing family-related risk factors, enhancing protective factors, and reducing illicit drug use among parents and their children. A proposed agenda for future research on processes of change among high-risk families is also outlined.

The final chapter in this volume focuses on children of parents with intellectual disabilities. As society moves towards supporting full inclusion of people with disabilities, questions are raised about parenting rights and competencies, and the impact of parental disabilities on offspring. Maurice A. Feldman provides an overview of the current state of knowledge on the development of children raised by parents with intellectual disabilities. He also reviews what is known about the effectiveness of child-focused intervention

projects, consisting of extensive day-care experiences with parent home-visiting. The chapter concludes with a review of research concerning the effectiveness of projects that focus on parents with intellectual disabilities.

THE BANFF CONFERENCES ON BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE

This volume is one of a continuing series of publications sponsored by the Banff International Conferences on Behavioural Science. We are pleased to join Kluwer Academic/Plenum Press in bringing this volume to an audience of practitioners, investigators, and students. The publications arise from conferences held each spring since 1969 in Banff, Alberta, Canada, with papers representing the product of deliberations on themes and key issues. The conferences bring together outstanding behavioral scientists and professionals in a forum where they can present and discuss data related to emergent issues and topics. As a continuing event, the Banff International Conferences have served as an expressive 'early indicator' of the developing nature and composition of the behavioral sciences and scientific applications to human problems and issues.

Because distance, schedules, and restricted audience preclude wide attendance at the conferences, the resulting publications have equal status with the conferences proper. Each presenter at each Banff Conference wrote a chapter specifically for the present volume, separate from his or her presentation and discussion at the conference itself. Consequently, this volume is not a set of conference proceedings. Rather, it is an integrated volume of chapters contributed by leading researchers and practitioners who have had the unique opportunity of spending several days together presenting and discussing ideas prior to preparing their chapters.

Our 'conference of colleagues' format provides for formal and informal interactions among all participants through invited addresses, workshops, poster presentations, and conversation hours. When combined with sightseeing expeditions, cross country and downhill skiing, and other recreational activities in the spectacular Canadian Rockies, the conferences have generated great enthusiasm and satisfaction among participants. The Banff Centre, our venue for the Conferences for more than 30 years, has contributed immeasurably to the success of these meetings through its very comfortable accommodation, dining, and conference facilities. The following documents conference themes over the past 33 years.

1969	I	Ideal Mental Health Services
1970	II	Services and Programs for Exceptional Children and Youth
1971	III	Implementing Behavioural Programs for Schools and Clinics
1972	IV	Behaviour Change: Methodology, Concepts, and Practice
1973	V	Evaluation of Behavioural Programs in Community, Residential, and School Settings
1974	VI	Behaviour Modification and Families and Behavioural Approaches to Parenting

1975	VII	The Behavioural Management of Anxiety, Depression, and Pain
1976	VIII	Behavioural Self-Management Strategies, Techniques, and Outcomes
1977	IX	Behavioural Systems for the Developmentally Disabled A. School and Family Environments B. Institutional, Clinical, and Community Environments
1978	X	Behavioural Medicine: Changing Health Lifestyles
1979	XI	Violent Behaviour: Social Learning Approaches to Prediction, Management, and Treatment
1980	XII	Adherence, Compliance, and Generalization in Behavioural Medicine
1981	XIII	Essentials of Behavioural Treatments for Families
1982	XIV	Advances in Clinical Behaviour Therapy
1983	XV	Childhood Disorders: Behavioural-Developmental Approaches
1984	XVI	Education in '1984'
1985	XVII	Social Learning and Systems Approaches to Marriage and the Family
1986	XVIII	Health Enhancement, Disease Prevention, and Early Intervention: Biobehavioural Perspectives
1987	XIX	Early Intervention in the Coming Decade
1988	XX	Behaviour Disorders of Adolescence: Research, Intervention, and Policy in Clinical and School Settings
1989	XXI	Psychology, Sport, and Health Promotion
1990	XXII	Aggression and Violence Throughout the Lifespan
1991	XXIII	Addictive Behaviours Across the Lifespan: Prevention, Treatment, and Policy Issues
1992	XXIV	State of the Art in Cognitive/Behaviour Therapy
1993	XXV	Anxiety and Depression in Adults and Children
1994	XXVI	Prevention and Early Intervention: Child Disorders, Substance Abuse, and Delinquency
1995	XXVII	Child Abuse: New Directions in Prevention and Treatment Across the Lifespan
1996	XXVIII	Best Practice: Developing and Promoting Empirically Validated Interventions
1997	XXIX	Stress: Vulnerability and Resiliency
1998	XXX	Children of Disordered Parents
1999	XXXI	Suicide: Prediction, Prevention, and Intervention
2000	XXXII	Resilience: Children, Families, and Communities
2001	XXXIII	Emotional Self-Regulation: Development, Successes, and Failures
2002	XXXIV	Adolescent Substance Abuse: Innovative Approaches to Prevention and Treatment

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