

Community Services Research to Practice Update

A regular update for staff on the latest national and international research

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Research Publications – What's New!

Research to practice

The Research to Practice Program provides an essential link between the latest research and Community Services staff.

As part of this important initiative, the Research to Practice Update encompasses a broad range of research publications and resources to reflect the diversity of Community Services staff.

If you have any comments or suggestions about how we could improve this Update to make it more useful or relevant to your work, please email the Research to Practice Team at:

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Early Intervention

SOCIAL: An integrative framework for the development of social skills

Beauchamp, M., & Anderson, V. (2010). *Psychological Bulletin*, 136(1), 39-64

Despite significant advances in the field of social neuroscience, much remains to be understood regarding the development and maintenance of social skills across the life span. Few comprehensive models exist that integrate multidisciplinary perspectives and explain the multitude of factors that influence the emergence and expression of social skills. Here, a developmental biopsychosocial model (SOCIAL) is offered that incorporates the biological underpinnings and socio-cognitive skills that underlie social function (attention/executive function, communication, socio-emotional skills), as well as the internal and external (environmental) factors that mediate these skills. The components of the model are discussed in the context of the social brain network and are supported by evidence from 3 conditions known to affect social functioning (autism spectrum disorders, schizophrenia, and traumatic brain injury). This integrative model is intended to provide a theoretical structure for understanding the origins of social dysfunction and the factors that influence the emergence of social skills through childhood and adolescence in both healthy and clinical populations.

Pairing nurses and social workers in schools: North Carolina's school-based Child and Family Support Teams

Gifford, E., Wells, R., Bai, Y., Troop, T., Miller, S., & Babinski, L. (2010). *Journal of School Health*, 80(2), 104-107

The article describes an innovative effort in North Carolina to help at-risk children thrive academically and remain with their families: the school-based Child and Family Support Team Initiative (CFST). Briefly the program consists of a school nurse and a school social worker in each of 101 schools with a large proportion of students at high risk of school failure or out-of-home placement. The workers coordinate services for the at-risk students among education, health, social service, and juvenile justice agencies. They engage with families who have been referred to the program, schedule and facilitate team meetings with parents, service providers, and community partners, and manage cases, and monitor students' progress. During the first 2 years of the program (the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 academic years), 15,680 students were referred to the program. Of the students referred, 73% had an academic problem, 56% a health problem, 49% a mental health, substance use, or developmental need, 65% a social service need, and 6% a legal need. The article concludes by saying that North Carolina's school-based CFST initiative allows schools to create coordinated health care plans so that every student receives the support she/he needs to achieve academic success.



Human Services
Community Services

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Endowments and parental investments in infancy and early childhood

Datar, A., Kilburn, M., & Loughran, D. (2010). *Demography*, 47(1), 146-162

This article tests whether parents reinforce or compensate for child endowments. The authors estimated how the difference in birth weight across siblings impacted specific parental investments: breast-feeding, well-baby visits, immunisations, and preschool attendance. Results indicated that normal-birthweight children are 5%-11% more likely to receive early childhood parental investments than their low-birth-weight siblings. Moreover, the presence of additional low-birth-weight siblings in the household increases the likelihood of investments such as well-baby visits and immunisations for normal-birth-weight children. These results suggest that parental investments in early childhood tend to reinforce endowment differences.

A complementary ecological model of the coordinated school health program

Lohrmann, D. (2010). *The Journal of School Health*, 80(1), 1-9

The influence of environmental factors within human ecology is acknowledged in health education and health-promotion theories and models. An example is the coordinated school health program (CSHP) which has shown a positive impact on both education and health indicators, including improved standardised test scores and graduation rates, decreased dropout rates, reduced juvenile crime rates, and substantial reductions in second pregnancies for teenage mothers. Given the success of the CSHP the authors propose an additional conceptual approach involving among other things greater emphasis on family and community involvement to further strengthen

the model. Spheres of ecological influences on child and adolescent health behaviour are also discussed.

How can parents get involved in preschool? Barriers and engagement in education by ethnic minority parents of children attending Head Start

Mendez, J. (2010). *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 16(1), 26-36

An intervention was developed to promote parent involvement with ethnic minority families of children attending Head Start preschool programs. Two hundred eighty-eight predominantly African American families from a small southern city in the U.S were included in this study. Parent satisfaction with the program was high, yet engagement was less than optimal. Some effects were found for the program, despite low levels of participation. Ethnic minority parents who received the intervention increased the frequency of reading to their child as compared with parents in a comparison group who did not receive the program. The quality of the parent-teacher relationship was significantly correlated with parental participation in the intervention. Program participation and the parent-teacher relationship were correlated with higher levels of children's school readiness abilities. Children in the intervention condition showed stronger end-of-year receptive vocabulary and parent-rated social competence as compared with children who did not receive treatment. This research documents the challenges involved in engaging parents in prevention programs. Strategies for maximising the benefits of preschool for ethnic minority families and their children are discussed.

Child Protection

Health consequences of childhood sexual abuse

Wilson, D. (2010). *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care*, 46(1), 56-64

This U.S article provides a summary for advocacy, court testimony, assessment, treatment, prevention, and further research studies in the field of childhood sexual abuse. A literature review identifies the psychiatric, social, and disease disorders to which this population is predisposed. Adult survivors experience more depression, obesity, autoimmune disorders (irritable bowel syndrome, asthma, fibromyalgia), eating disorders, and addictions. The article presents a holistic view in which to consider the health issues that emerge. In conclusion the article indicates that survivors are predisposed to numerous psychiatric and somatic disorders. This population is known to have increased vulnerability to stress and the subsequent health-deteriorating consequences of lifelong stress. The literature presented represents current and reliable findings that consistently show an effect on lifelong wellness for people who are sexually abused as children.

An exploration of the relationship between social and psychological factors and being bullied

Harlow, K., & Roberts, R. (2010). *Children & Schools*, 32(1), 15-26

Bullying in schools has received increasing attention since its implication in a number of school-based shooting incidents in the U.S. A number of protective factors have been identified as reducing risk behaviours such as substance abuse among adolescents. This framework, however, has not been examined with respect to bullying victims. The results of a survey of over 2,000 sixth-, eighth-, 10th-, and 12th-grade students from a school district in Texas and a school district in New

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Jersey suggest that the assessed protective factors associated with alcohol and drug misuse are also associated with bullying victimisation. Noted exceptions were sadness, difficulty making friends, a view that one will not succeed, and a sense of regret were associated with bullying victimisation but less associated with use of alcohol and drugs. This suggests the victims of bullying experienced an emotional vulnerability that was less evident in the alcohol and drug-using students in this respondent group. The findings do indicate however that interventions that strengthen these protective factors may reduce vulnerability of adolescents to victimisation by bullying as well as reducing drug and alcohol abuse.

Where self-control comes from: On the development of self-control and its relationship to deviance over time

Vazsonyi, A., & Huang, L. (2010). *Developmental Psychology*, 46(1), 245-257

The current study tested a set of interrelated theoretical propositions based on self-control theory (M. R. Gottfredson & T. Hirschi 1990). Data were collected on 1,155 children at 4.5 years, at 8.5 years (3rd grade), and at 10.5 years (5th grade) as part of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development longitudinal study over a 6-year period. The most significant findings were i) the parenting that children receive at a young age impacts the development of their self-control over time, and ii) the findings support the core theoretical prediction of the *developmental* link between the development of self-control and the development of deviance. The authors argue the findings do so with measures of the dependent and independent constructs that themselves are “independent” and not problematic as assessing the same thing. Findings are discussed in terms of their implications for self-control theory and future empirical work.

Toward an integrated gender-linked model of aggression subtypes in early and middle childhood

Ostrov, J., & Godleski, S. (2010). *Psychological Review*, 117(1), 233-242

An integrative model is proposed for understanding the development of physical and relational aggression in early and middle childhood. The central goal was to posit a new theoretical framework that expands on existing social-cognitive and gender schema models (i.e., Social Information-Processing Model of Children’s Adjustment [N. R. Crick & K. A. Dodge, 1994] and the Schematic-Processing Model of Sex Role Stereotyping [C. L. Martin & C. F. Halverson, 1981]). The proposed model suggests several individual- and group-level effects, including that children will have more knowledge about gender-typical subtypes of aggression than gender-atypical forms of aggression resulting in children associating female gender identity with relational aggression and male identity with physical aggression. In addition, children will recall more information about hypothetical scenarios, actual events, and specific behavioural descriptions for their gender-typical subtype of aggression than they should have for aggressive behaviours that do not fit with their gender identity and schema. In keeping with this prediction, children not only associate female gender status with displaying relational aggression and male gender with physical aggression but they also distort their actual memories of aggressive events to fit with their gender schemas. The available evidence for each of these hypotheses is discussed as are ways in which the proposed model may guide future research in the field.

Personal growth in the wake of stress: The case of mothers of preterm twins

Taubman-Ben-Ari, O., Findler, L., & Kuint, J. (2010). *Journal of Psychology*, 144(2), 185-204

In a longitudinal study conducted in Israel, the authors compared mothers of preterm twins ($n = 64$) with mothers of full-term single babies ($n = 75$) and twins ($n = 72$). The authors examined the contributions of internal resources (mother’s attachment style, mental health, sociodemographic characteristics), external resources (perceived maternal grandmother’s support, mother’s marital adaptation), and features of the event itself (infant temperament, additional stressful life events, mother’s feelings toward her baby or babies) in proximity to the birth, to personal growth 1 year following the birth. Although mothers of preterm twins reported the highest level of negative feelings toward their infants and the lowest level of mental health, they also experienced the greatest personal growth. Younger age and lower level of education, along with higher perceived support from maternal grandmothers contributed to higher personal growth. It seems that in the wake of stress, even mothers who display lower personal resources can rely on their environmental resources and experience personal growth.

Protection and access: To regulate young people’s internet use

Wold, T. (2010). *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics*, 6(1), 63-79

The focus for this article is the regulation of children and young people’s Internet use in public schools and libraries in Norway. In the laws concerning children and media, a two-sided picture emerges; laws designed to protect children from possible harm, and laws to secure children’s right to seek information. There is a

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consciousness in society at large that there are certain types of media content we do not want children to be exposed to. At the same time, it is important for youth to have a place where they can privately find information about difficult and potentially controversial issues. Among other concerns are whether children will believe everything they read on the Net (i.e. a continuation of the 'textbook hegemony' in schools) and the current trend of self-exposure.

Out-of-Home Care

Fostering solutions: Bringing brief-therapy principles and practices to the child welfare system

Flemons, D., Liscio, M., Gordon, A.B., Hibbel, J., & Gutierrez-Hersh, A. & Rebholz, C.L. (2010). *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 36 (1), 80-95

This U.S. article describes a 15-month university-community collaboration that was designed to fast-track children out of foster care in response to the dramatic increase in numbers of children in care. The developers of the project initiated resource-oriented "systems facilitations," allowing wraparound professionals and families to come together in large meetings to solve problems and find solutions. Families also participated in strength-based brief-therapy sessions. The authors describe the history, structure, and process of the project, and they provide a case study to illustrate the approach and exemplify the kinds of changes that occurred throughout the system. In the final section of the article, the authors reflect on what they learned about their university-community partnership and what they would do differently the next time.

Children with two homes: Creating developmentally appropriate parenting plans for children ages zero to two

Hartson, J.N. (2010). *American Journal of Family Law*, 23(4), 191-199

This U.S article draws on child development literature including attachment, object permanence, temperament, language development, understanding of time, and emotional development in discussing the most appropriate contact planning that needs to occur for the 0-2 years age group when parents divorce. The principles and ideas outlined however could equally be applied to contact situations involving carers and natural parents. The article provides different recommendations for 0 - 4mths, 4 - 8mths, 8 -12mths and 1yr - 2 yrs old.

Listening to the voices of children in foster care: Youths speak out about child welfare workforce turnover and selection

Strolin-Goltzman, J., Kollar, S., & Trinkle, J. (2010). *Social Work*, 55 (1), 47-53

Child welfare workforce turnover rates across private and public child welfare agencies are concerning. Although research about the causes of child welfare workforce turnover has been plentiful, empirical studies on the effects of turnover on child outcomes are sparse. Furthermore, the voices and experiences of youths within the system have been largely overlooked. The purpose of this U.S study was, first, to explore the experiences and opinions about child welfare workforce turnover and retention of youths in the child welfare system; second, to explore a relationship between the number of caseworkers a youth has had and his or her number of foster care placements; and third, to harness the suggestions of youths in

resolving the turnover problem. Youths in the child welfare system (N = 25) participated in focus groups and completed a small demographic survey. Findings suggest that youths experience multiple effects of workforce turnover, such as lack of stability; loss of trusting relationships; and, at times, second chances. The article concludes with suggestions for caseworkers, state trainers, local and state administrators, and social work researchers on engaging *with* youths in relationships that facilitate genuine systems change around social work practice and the child welfare workforce crisis.

Other

Testing a series of causal propositions relating time in child care to children's externalizing behavior

McCartney, K., Burchinal, M., Clarke-Stewart, A., Bub, K.L., Owen, M.T., Belsky, J. (2010). *Developmental Psychology*, 46(1), 1-17

Prior research has documented associations between hours in child care and children's externalising behaviour. In this U.S study a series of longitudinal analyses were conducted to address 5 propositions, each testing the hypothesis that child care hours causes externalising behaviour. Data from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network (NICHD) Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development were used in this investigation because they include repeated measures of child care experiences, externalising behaviour, and family characteristics. There were 3 main findings. First, the evidence linking child care hours with externalising behaviour was equivocal in that results varied across model specifications. Second, the association between child care hours

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and externalising behaviour was not due to a child effect. Third, child care quality and proportion of time spent with a large group of peers moderated the effects of child care hours on externalising behaviour. The number of hours spent in child care was more strongly related to externalising behaviour when children were in low-quality child care and when children spent a greater proportion of time with a large group of peers. The magnitude of associations between child care hours and externalising behaviour was modest. Implications are that parents and policymakers must take into account that externalising behaviour is predicted from a constellation of variables in multiple contexts.

A meta-analysis of interventions for bereaved children and adolescents

Rosner, R., Kruse, J., & Hagl, M. (2010). *Death Studies*, 34, 99-136

The main objective of this review was to provide a quantitative and methodologically sound evaluation of existing treatments for bereavement and grief reactions in children and adolescents. Two meta-analyses were conducted: 1 on controlled studies and 1 on uncontrolled studies. The 2 meta-analyses were based on a total of 27 treatment studies published before June 2006. Hedges's *g* and Cohen's *d* were used as measures of effect size and a random-effects model was applied. Results yielded small to moderate effect sizes. Interventions for symptomatic or impaired participants tended to show larger effect sizes than interventions for bereaved children and adolescents without symptoms. Promising treatment models were music therapy and trauma / grief-focused school based brief psychotherapy.

Being drunk to have fun or to forget problems? Identifying enhancement and coping drinkers among risky drinking adolescents

Kuntsche, E., Knibbe, R., Engels, R., & Gmel, G. (2010). *European Journal of Psychological Assessment*, 26(1), 46-54

Prevention programs in adolescence are particularly effective if they target homogeneous risk groups of adolescents who share a combination of particular needs and problems. This Swiss study identified and classified risky single-occasion drinking (RSOD) adolescents according to their motivation to engage in drinking. Two distinctive group emerged. The first, 'enhancement drinkers', who drink to better enjoy parties, to have fun, and to get drunk. This group also tend to have better social relationships, more drinking peers, and go out more frequently in the evenings. The second group concerns 'coping drinkers' who drink not to be rejected by others and to alleviate problems and worries. In contrast, they tend to be less satisfied with their social relationships, and often stay in and drink at home. Because of these differences, the authors suggest it might be more effective if enhancement and coping drinkers were targeted by distinct prevention programs that take into account their specific needs and problems. To conclude, the coding procedure appears to be a valid, reliable, and an easy-to-use tool that can help better adapt prevention activities to adolescent risky drinking motives.

Validating female psychopathy subtypes: Differences in personality, antisocial and violent behavior, substance abuse, trauma, and mental health

Hicks, B., Vaidyanathan, U., & Patrick, C. (2010). *Personality Disorders: Theory, Research, and Treatment*, 1(1), 38-57

Recent empirical investigations utilising male prisoners have begun to validate clinical conceptualisations of primary and secondary psychopathy subtypes. The authors extend this literature by identifying similar psychopathic subtypes in female prisoners on the basis of personality structure using model-based cluster analysis. Secondary psychopaths (*n*= 39) were characterised by personality traits of negative emotionality and low behavioural constraint, an early onset of antisocial and criminal behaviour, greater substance use and abuse, more violent behaviour and institutional misconduct, and more mental health problems, including symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder and suicide attempts. Primary psychopaths (*n* = 31) exhibited few distinguishing personality features but were prolific criminals especially in regards to nonviolent crime, and exhibited relatively few mental health problems despite substantial exposure to traumatic events. The results support alternative etiological pathways to antisocial and criminal behaviour that are evident in personality structure as well as gender similarities and differences in the manifestation of psychopathic personalities.

Reports

Growing Up in Australia: the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children 2008-09 Annual Report

In 2004, the parents of over 10,000 children around Australia agreed to take part in *Growing Up in Australia: the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)*. This longitudinal study involves two representative cohorts of children: approximately 5,000 infants aged approximately 0 to 1 years (B or infant cohort), and 5,000 children aged 4 to 5 years (K or child cohort), when the families agreed to take part in 2004. The study addresses a range of key questions about children's development and

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wellbeing. Information is collected on the children's physical health and social, cognitive and emotional development, as well as their experiences in key environments such as the family, community, child care, preschool and school settings. The 2008-09 Annual Report for *Growing Up In Australia: the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)* provides an overview of Wave 3 data and preliminary findings when study children were aged four to five years old and eight to nine years old. The report also includes articles about breastfeeding and infants' time use, child and infant outcomes, and stress and psychological distress in mothers of infants. The study is being conducted as a partnership between the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

<http://www.fahcsia.gov.au>

Family Violence Report. Improving responses to family violence in the family law system: An advice on the intersection of family violence and family law issues

Family Law Council - Family Violence Committee, December 2009.

This recently released report by the Family Law Council to the Federal Attorney-General is on the impact of family violence on children and on parenting - acknowledging the compounding issues of mental health problems and alcohol and substance abuse, as well as indigenous and cultural considerations. The report focuses on family violence if and when it becomes visible in the Family Law system in Australia. Of particular note are a number of reforms to improve co-ordination and collaboration between the state and territory child protection agencies, and the federal *Family*

Law Act, including: the transportability of state family violence injunctive orders; the establishment of a national register of family and violence orders; and the establishment of a network data base which records family violence orders, and a residual family court power to require state Child Protection Agencies to become parties to Family Law Court proceedings about children.

<http://www.ag.gov.au>

Websites/resources

Anxiety Online

Anxiety Online is an internet-based treatment clinic for people with anxiety problems. It is a world-first initiative of the National eTherapy Centre (NeTC) at Swinburne University of Technology and funded by the Federal Department of Health and Ageing. Anxiety Online comprises 3 main areas:

1. **Information:** High quality a comprehensive understanding of anxiety generally, and of anxiety disorders specifically.
2. **Clinical assessment:** Online psychological assessment program (e-PASS) enables completion of a comprehensive psychological assessment online providing feedback.
3. **Treatment programs:** Comprehensive and effective treatment programs are available for each of the specific anxiety disorders (Generalised Anxiety Disorder, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Panic Disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Social Anxiety Disorder).

The clinical treatment programs are available in two versions:

- (i) self-help programs for individuals with mild symptoms, offered free of charge, and

- (ii) therapist-assisted programs for individuals with moderate to severe symptoms, offered at a low cost. Therapist assistance is in the form of weekly email communication. This form of treatment has been proven more effective than purely self-help programs.

<http://www.anxietyonline.org.au>

KidsMatter

KidsMatter is the first national mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention initiative specifically developed for schools and has Australian government funding. KidsMatter aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of children, reduce mental health problems amongst children, and achieve greater support for children experiencing mental health difficulties, and their families. It includes KidsMatter Early Childhood, designed for implementation in preschools and long day care; and KidsMatter Primary Schools, designed for implementation in Australian primary schools. The site has information resources for parents and carers on a range of topics including child development, risk and protective factors for children's mental health, effective discipline, recognising mental health difficulties, ADHD, anxiety problems, depression, serious behaviour problems, and autism spectrum disorder.

<http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/>

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Keep Them Safe

This website is full of information for teachers, police officers, childcare workers and other mandatory reporters about the key changes that have recently taken place to the state's child protection system. These changes mark the beginning of a new era of collaboration and partnership between government, community organisations and the wider community.

[http://
www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au](http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au)

Conferences

Foster Carer Conference

The next NSW Foster Carer Conference will be held 28 and 29 May, Darling Harbour, Sydney. The Connecting Carers NSW (CCNSW) Project is funded by Community Services (CS), an agency of the NSW Department of Human Services.

[http://
www.connectingcarersnsw.com.au/](http://www.connectingcarersnsw.com.au/)

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