

# Intervention with Children and Adolescents: New Hope and Enduring Challenges

Based on the work of  
Mark W. Fraser

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Paula Allen-Meares  
University of Michigan

Presentation developed by Zach Addison, MSW student

UNC SSW, Research to Teaching  
Copyright 2004, Fraser & Allen-  
Meares

# Overview

This presentation draws from the final chapter of *Intervention with Children and Adolescents: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*. It provides an overview and assessment of the current state of programs and interventions addressing social problems of children and adolescents.

# Commonalities of Current Programs

- Growing agreement on standards of evidence for rating program
  - There must be a pattern of evidence and not simply a single finding to elicit “promising,” “exemplary,” or “model” rating
- Most programs produce diverse positive outcomes
- Many programs have unintended positive outcomes and address several issues simultaneously
  - Likely due to high correlation of certain risk factors e.g. drug use, academic failure, sexual activity

# Commonalities of Current Programs cont.

- Programs include a variety of kinds of services, usually:
  - ✓ Behavioral child management training for parents and teachers
  - ✓ Problem-solving training, anger management, impulse control, and general self-regulation for children
  - ✓ Restructuring of the environment e.g. changing size and/or character of classroom

# Developing Practice Strategies

Research shows:

- There are identifiable risk factors for social and health problems
- Risk factors range from constitutional to environmental factors
- Cumulative risk is generally more important than any single risk factor
- Some risk factors are malleable (i.e. responsive to specific change strategies)
- When malleable risk factors are changed, developmental trajectories change

# Implications of Research Findings

Interventions should serve two general goals:

1. Reduce risk
2. Promote protection

# Risk and Protective Factor Perspective

Risk and protective factor perspective is of value because it provides a multidisciplinary, cross-problem conceptual framework for intervention

# Terminology

- Promotive factors: promote positive developmental outcomes in the face of risk
- Protective factors: moderate risk and operate more strongly in the presence of adversity
- This distinction is not yet widely used

# Considerations of This Perspective

- Growing agreement that consideration of risk and protective factors should inform intervention
- Less agreement on how various types of moderating and mediating protective effects should be defined and labeled
- Net influence of risk, promotive factors, and protective factors varies by gender, race, and sexual orientation

# Gender Considerations

- Interventions should acknowledge different developmental trajectories for boys and girls, as well as the gender component of certain risk factors
- Girls more at risk for sexual assault, mental health problems (e.g. depression, anxiety), attempting suicide, and eating disorders (Potter, 2004)
- As girls are more relationally oriented, strategies that incorporate verbal problem-solving may be more effective with them

# Considerations for Race, Ethnicity, and Culture

Race, ethnicity, and culture alter developmental outcomes in three ways:

1. As economic inequality is related to these dimensions, they partially determine the depth and diversity of resources available to children
2. Socialization practices vary and may buffer against risks and strengthen outcomes differently
3. Stigmatizing social processes effect opportunities and self-efficacy

(Barbarin, McCandies, Coleman, Atkinson, 2004)

# Race and Resiliency

- Certain aspects of race, ethnicity, and culture promote resiliency:
  - ✓ Racial identity (Laursen & Williams, 2002; O'Brien-Caughy, Randolph, & O'Campo, 2002)
  - ✓ Culture-based aspects of family life (Vega, Gil, & Wagner, 1998)

# Considerations for Sexual Orientation

- Less is known
- Process of coming out is usually painful and difficult
- More supportive and gay-affirming services are available now than has previously been the case

# Considerations for Sexual Orientation cont.

- Certain issues may need to be addressed when working with gay, lesbian, and bisexual children, such as:
  - ✓ Level of homophobia in the community
  - ✓ Isolation
  - ✓ Harassment of peers

(Longres & Etnyre, 2004)

# Role of Context

- “The context” includes:
  - ✓ Environmental factors e.g. poverty, hostile neighborhoods, inadequate schools
  - ✓ Biological risks e.g. exposure to lead
- Recent research suggests the influence of “the context” has been vastly underestimated
- There is still a need to develop a precise understanding of the relationship between these and family and individual factors
- Context may potentiate or exacerbate individual effect

# Multiproblem Concept

- The following evidence suggests a common mechanism may underlie seemingly dissimilar problems:
  - ✓ Interventions that address both individual and contextual risks show a range of positive outcomes
  - ✓ Many family and peer influences elevate the odds for certain social and health problems

# Multiproblem Concept cont.

- Ary, Duncan, Biglan, Metzler, Noell, and Smolkowski (1999) created a composite “problem behavior” index because of the high correlation of the following:
  - ✓ Antisocial behavior
  - ✓ Sexual activity
  - ✓ Academic failure
  - ✓ Marijuana, tobacco, and alcohol use

# Multiproblem Concept cont.

Precursors to scoring on the multiproblem index in three steps:

1. Family conflict led to poor family involvement
2. Poor family involvement led to inadequate parental monitoring
3. Inadequate parental monitoring led to association with substance abusing peers and high scores on problem index

# Research Findings on the Applicability of the Multiproblem Concept

- Applies across the following ethnic groups:
    - ✓ European American
    - ✓ Mexican American
    - ✓ American Indian
  - Applies to both genders
- (Biglan & Smolkowski, 2002)

# Research Findings on the Applicability of the Multiproblem Concept cont.

➤ Core elements of model predict delinquency in the following adolescent groups:

- ✓ African Americans
- ✓ European Americans
- ✓ Latinos

(Henry, Tolan, & Gorman-Smith, 2001)

# Family and School-Based Interventions

- Family and school-based interventions have been effective
- Developmental trajectories that lead to social problems can be changed if:
  - ✓ Teachers are better trained
  - ✓ Social skills are infused into core curricula
  - ✓ Families are involved in parent-classroom partnerships

(see e.g. Jalongo, Poduska, Werthamer, & Kellam, 2001; Lonczak, Abbott, Hawkins, Kosterman, & Catalano, 2002)

# Limitations and Future Challenges

- Effect sizes observed in intervention studies continue to be modest due to those who
  - ✓ Don't respond to recruitment
  - ✓ Drop out during the intervention
  - ✓ Are targeted too late when development trajectories are firmly established

# Limitations and Future Challenges cont.

- More intervention studies are needed to
  - ✓ Identify innovative ways to recruit children and families into prevention services
  - ✓ Alter negative family and peer processes
  - ✓ Infuse school curricula with social developmental content
  - ✓ Strengthen protective mechanisms related to culture, religion, and neighborhood

# Limitations and Future Challenges cont.

- Little is known about effects of protection
- Interventions targeting contextual risk may be more effective than individual- or family-centered interventions, but there are few studies of this at the neighborhood and community level
- Systems that serve children (e.g. child welfare, education, juvenile justice) lag behind available knowledge and are not informed by the risk and protective factor perspective (Burns, Landsverk, Kellsher, Faw, Hazen, & Keeler, 2001)

# References

- Ary, D.V., Duncan, T.E., Biglan, A., Metzler, C.W., Noell, J.W., & Smolkowski, K. (1999). Development of adolescent problem behavior. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 27*, 141-150.
- Barbarin, O., McCandies, T., Coleman, C., Atkinson, T. (2004). Ethnicity and culture. In P. Allen-Meares & M.W. Fraser (Eds.), *Intervention with children and adolescents: An interdisciplinary perspective* (pp. 27-53). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

# References cont.

- Burns, B.J., Landsverk, J., Kelleher, K., Faw, L., Hazen, A., & Keeler, G. (2001). Mental health, education, child welfare, and juvenile justice service use. In R. Loeber & D.P. Farrington (Eds.), *Child delinquents: Development, intervention, and service needs* (pp. 273-303). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Biglan, A., & Smolkowski, K. (2002). Intervention effects on adolescent drug use and critical influences on the development of problem behavior. In D.B. Kandel (Ed.), *Stages and pathways of drug involvement: Examining the Gateway Hypothesis* (pp. 158-183). New York: Cambridge University Press.

# References cont.

- Cadoret, R.J., Yates, W.R., Troughton, E., Woodworth, G., & Stewart, M. (1995). Genetic-environment interaction in the genesis of aggressivity and conduct disorders. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 52, 916-924.
- Duncan, G.J., & Raudenbush, S.W. (2001). Neighborhoods and adolescent development: How can we determine the links? In A. Booth & A.C. Crouter (Eds.), *Does it take a village?* (pp.105-136). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

# References cont.

- Duncan, S.C., Duncan, T.E., Biglan, A., & Ary, D. (1998). Contributions of the social context to the development of adolescent substance use: A multivariate latent growth modeling approach. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence, 50*, 57-71.
- Evans, G.W., & English, K. (2002). The environment of poverty: Multiple stressor exposure, psychophysiological stress, and socioemotional adjustment. *Child Development, 73*(4), 1238-1248.

# References cont.

- Fraser, M.W. (Ed.). (2003). *Risk and resilience in childhood: An ecological perspective* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: NASW Press.
- Fraser, M.W., Kirby, L.D., & Smokowski, P.R. (2003). Risk and resilience in childhood. In M.W. Fraser (Ed.), *Risk and resilience in childhood: An ecological perspective* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: NASW Press.

# References cont.

- Fraser, M.W., & Allen-Meares, P. (2004). Intervention with children and adolescents: New hope and enduring challenges. In P. Allen-Meares & M.W. Fraser (Eds.), *Intervention with children and adolescents: An interdisciplinary perspective* (pp. 532-544). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

# References cont.

- Hawkins, J.D., Catalano, R.F., Kosterman, R., Abbott, R., & Hill, K.G. (1999). Preventing adolescent health-risk behaviors by strengthening protection during childhood. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, 153, 226-234.
- Henry, D.B., Tolan, P.H., & Gorman-Smith, D. (2001). Longitudinal family and peer group effects on violence and nonviolent delinquency. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 30(1), 172-186.

# References cont.

- Jessor, R., & Jessor, S.L. (1997). *Problem behavior and psychosocial development: A longitudinal study of youth*. New York: Academic Press.
- Laursen, B., & Williams, V. (2002). The role of ethnic identity in personality development. *Paths to successful development: Personality in the life course* (pp. 203-226). New York: Cambridge University Press.

# References cont.

- Lonczak, H.S., Abbott, R.D., Hawkins, J.D., Kosterman, R., & Catalano, R.F. (2002). Effects of the Seattle Social Development Project on sexual behavior, pregnancy, birth, and sexually transmitted disease outcomes by age 21 years. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, 156, 438-447.

# References cont.

- Lonczak, H.S., Huang, B., Catalano, R.F., Hawkins, J.D., Hill, K.G., Abbott, R.D., Ryan, J.A., & Kosterman, R. (2001). The social predictors of adolescent alcohol misuse: A test of the Social Development Model. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 62(2), 172-189.

# References cont.

- Longres, J. & Etnyre, W. (2004). Social work practice with gay and lesbian children and adolescents. In P. Allen-Meares & M.W. Fraser (Eds.), *Intervention with children and adolescents: An interdisciplinary perspective* (pp. 80-105). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

# References cont.

- Luthar, S.S., Cicchetti, D., & Becker, B. (2000). The construct of resilience: A critical evaluation and guidelines for future work. *Child development, 71(3), 543-562.*
- Lynam, D.R., Caspi, A., Moffitt, T.E., Wikstrom, P.H., Loeber, R., & Novak, S. (2000). The interaction between impulsivity and neighborhood context on offending: The effects of impulsivity are stronger in poorer neighborhoods. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 109(4), 563-574.*

# References cont.

- McLoyd, V.C. (1998). Socioeconomic disadvantage and child development. *American Psychologist*, 53(2), 185-204.
- Metzler, C.W., Taylor, T.K., & Eddy, J.M. (2002, May). *Finding common ground among best practice lists: The evidence base and program elements of top family-focused and school-based programs*. Presentation at the annual meeting of the Society for Prevention Research, Seattle, WA.

# References cont.

- O'Brien-Caughy, M., Randolph, S.M., & O'Campo, P.J. (2002). The Afrocentric Home Environment Inventory: An observational measure of the racial socialization features of the home environment for African American preschool children. *Journal of Black Psychology, 28*(1), 37-52.

# References cont.

- Patterson, G.R., Dishion, T.J., & Yoerger, K. (2000). Adolescent growth in new forms of problem behavior: Macro- and micro-peer dynamics. *Prevention Science*, 1(1), 3-13.
- Potter, C. (2004). Gender differences in childhood and adolescence. In P. Allen-Meares & M.W. Fraser (Eds.), *Intervention with children and adolescents: An interdisciplinary perspective* (pp. 54-79). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Reid, J.B., Patterson, G.R., & Snyder, J. (2002). *Antisocial behavior in children and adolescents*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

# References cont.

- Rutter, M. (2000). Resilience reconsidered: Conceptual considerations, empirical findings, and policy implications. In J.P. Shonkoff & S.J. Meisels (Eds.), *Handbook of early childhood intervention* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 651-682). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Sampson, R.J., Morenoff, J.D., & Earls, F. (1999). Beyond social capital: Spatial dynamics of collective efficacy for children. *American Sociological Review*, 64, 633-660.

# References cont.

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2001). *Youth violence: A report on the surgeon general*. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Mental Health Services; and National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Mental Health.

# References cont.

- Vance, J.E. (2001). Neurobiological mechanisms of psychosocial resiliency. In J.M. Richman & M.W. Fraser (Eds.), *The context of youth violence: Resilience, risk, and protection* (pp.43-81). Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- Vega, W.A., Gil, A.G., & Wagner, E. (1998). Cultural adjustments and Latino adolescent drug use. In W. Vega & A.G. Gil (Ed.), *Drug use and ethnicity early adolescence* (pp. 125-148). New York: Plenum Press.