

Resilience Factors That Affect Adolescents At Risk: Empirical Findings From A Rural Study In Punjab

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The relation between family inadequacies and poor outcomes of children is not deniable, yet, only some of the children succumb to the adverse conditions. There are children from risk settings who develop into well functioning individuals. These resilient children must have some protective mechanism in their environment that allows them to resist to some extent, the negative effects of the stressors they experience. It becomes pertinent to understand why some children yield to risk, whereas, others successfully resist the negative effects of risk factors. In a recent study (Gulati, 2001) it was hypothesised that economic adversity has an impact on family processes that affect child outcomes. It was further hypothesized that parental frustrations and distress arising out of financial problems influence marital relations between spouses. Distressed parents adopt different coping styles and parenting strategies thus affecting the development of children. Harsh and inapt parenting practices might mediate the effects of various risk factors and stressors on children's adjustment; similarly, positive parenting strategies can moderate the negative effects of otherwise stressful home environment. This paper examines the role of parenting strategies adopted by mothers of at-risk children as protective factors that assist in developing resilience among them despite experiencing persistent poverty and related stressors.

Orphaned by the State: Children of prisoners and the policy vacuum

Terry Hannon B.Sc. (Psych. Honours)

Nearly five per cent of all Australian children today have experienced the loss of a parent due to imprisonment. Considerable research is available both in Australia and internationally detailing the adverse effects of parental imprisonment on children, however very little information exists about the policy and legislative context in which these adverse effects occur. The aim of the project 'Children: Unintended Victims of Legal Process' was to examine the criminal-legal legislative and policy environment and its impact on children that currently have a primary caregiver in prison. The findings from a review of police, court, prison, parole, and child protection policies, protocols and legislation, suggest that these children are rarely acknowledged in legal processes and are consequently often left at risk in various ways by their primary carer's removal to prison. This situation is not unique to Australia, but is repeated with variations across almost all Western jurisdictions. The research involved a series of qualitative interviews with 15 mothers in prison and post release, their arresting police officers, their defence counsel, their sentencing judges, and the interim carers of their children. This gave some insight into the experience of operating in a policy and legislative vacuum for those involved. The results will be presented in this paper, along with suggestions for the development of holistic interdepartmental policies and protocols that provide a safety net for dependent children throughout the criminal legal processes of their primary carers.

Social Work and the Indigenous Community: An historical perspective

Meaghan Harris

This presentation will outline the process of research and the collaborative journey of a non Indigenous social worker exploring the complex history of social work and the local Indigenous community situated in Australia. This will include an analysis of the role played by Social Workers in the implementation of policies of oppression and displacement, and the impact this has had on the Indigenous community and the social worker profession historically and contemporarily. This paper will focus on the strengths of learning gained by this acknowledgment of history and positive ways this can inform policy development and practice. Whilst this focus is a particular community within Australia, it is felt the learnings of collaboration and respect can inform practice in a variety of settings.

A Strength-Based Approach to Adolescent Career Development

Ms Christina Hully, Dr Stephen Larmar

Theory and practice, alike, acknowledges that career education and career development are lifelong processes (Haines, Scott & Lincoln, 2006). This paper reports on a strength based approach to career development for young people. The major thrust for career guidance practitioners working in secondary school contexts continues to be focussed on the transition from formal secondary education to employment or further education. While this enables students to develop skills necessary to make well-informed career focused decisions, there needs to be a more holistic approach involving all aspects of the curriculum. Within curriculum systems that are driven by formal assessment, there is little flexibility to acknowledge the inherent career information and development of self-knowledge and career decision-making skills that students are exposed to. Therefore, the development of innovative and flexible approaches to career education are necessary to support the developmental process as young people gain employability skills in a context that is relevant to the changing characteristics of youth, education and society. This paper describes and critically examines a recently implemented innovative career development program founded on strength-based principles. The program emphasises and utilizes the student's individual capacities, the accumulation of competencies and the resources that exist within the individual student, their family and community. Further, the paper examines the program's capacity to be implemented across a range