Introduction

The Jacobs Foundation hosts a series of conferences on topics that concern the risks and protective factors affecting the development of children and young people, in which experts from around the world discuss recent research findings, approaches to the prevention of problems and intervention, and the efficacy of different policies. In 2003, the conference focused on the question of how families matter in young people's development – a question of obvious interest and importance to a wide range of readers, with serious policy implications.

Recently, there have been strong claims made that suggest that how children are reared in families is of little consequence, on the grounds that most of the supposed environmental effects are actually genetically mediated, or that the important environmental effects derive from the peer group rather than the family. In addition, there were earlier claims that many of the parenting-child behavior associations represented children's effects on their parents rather than the effects of socialization experiences. The purpose of this conference was to consider how much this rejection of environmentally mediated family influences is warranted and what can be concluded about such influences in relation to different aspects of psychosocial development.

The book that has resulted takes a series of current topics concerning families and presents lively consideration of the most recent research findings by the top international scholars in the field. These topics include the key risks in families that affect children and account for individual differences in their resilience, the links between the influences of families and peers (for protection or for problems), the connections between parental work and children's family lives and outcomes, the issue of the impact of child care on children's development, what we know about the impact of divorce and parental separation on children, the significance of grandparents for children's well-being, and the impact of new family forms such as lesbian- and surrogate-mother families. In one volume,

the book brings together the latest research findings on these key aspects of family influence, with discussions of the policy issues raised by the research. The lessons learned are succinctly and clearly presented, and the questions raised are important and sometimes controversial. The research is current and rigorous; the researchers, the most distinguished in their fields.

PART ONE

RISK AND RESILIENCE

1

How Families Matter in Child Development

Reflections from Research on Risk and Resilience

Ann S. Masten and Anne Shaffer

Throughout the history of child development, the family has played a ubiquitous role in theory, research, practice, and policy aimed at understanding and improving child welfare and development. From grand theories to heated controversies, family processes and roles have been invoked in numerous ways in developmental science over the past century to explain or debate whether and how families matter (Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington et al., 2000; Maccoby, 1992). Psychoanalytic theory (Freud, 1933/1964; Munroe, 1955), attachment theory (e.g., Bowlby, 1969, Carlson & Sroufe, 1995; Sroufe & Waters, 1977), ecological and developmental systems theory (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Ford & Lerner, 1992; Sameroff, 2000), family systems theory (Davies & Cicchetti, 2004; Fiese, 2000; Fiese & Spagnola, in press), social learning and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977, 2001; Gewirtz, 1969), coercion theory (e.g., Patterson, 1982), parenting styles theory (Baumrind, 1967, 1973), and a variety of other influential frameworks have emphasized the family in diverse ways. Theories about the origins of competence and about the origins of psychopathology also have focused on family roles and processes (Cummings, Davies, & Campbell, 2000; Fiese, Wilder, & Bickham, 2000; Masten & Coatsworth, 1995; Masten, Burt, & Coatsworth, in press). Family-based adversity in many forms, including loss (Bowlby, 1980; Brown & Harris, 1978, Sandler, Wolchik, Davis, Haine et al., 2003), deprivation and institutional rearing (Rutter, Chapter 2 in this book; 1972; Zeanah et al., 2003, Zeanah, Smyke, & Settles, in press), divorce (Amato, Chapter 8 in this book; Hetherington, Chapter 9 in this book; Hetherington, Bridges, & Insabella, 1998; Walper, Chapter 10 in this book), interparental conflict or domestic violence (Cummings & Davies, 2002; Graham-Bermann & Edelson, 2001; Wolfe, Crooks, Lee, McIntyre-Smith et al., 2003), maltreatment (Belsky, 1984; Cicchetti & Carlson, 1989), and poverty (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Luthar, 1999; McLoyd, 1990), has been the focus of extensive study, often with the goal of learning how to prevent or ameliorate the impact of such adversity on

children. Not surprisingly, families also have been the target of many kinds of interventions aimed at altering family interaction or parenting behavior in order to change the course of child development (Albee & Gullotta, 1997; Szapocznik & Williams, 2000; Cicchetti & Hinshaw, 2002; Masten et al., in press; Weissberg, Kumpfer, & Seligman, 2003).

As developmental psychopathology emerged over the past four decades, family functioning has played a central role in theory and research on competence, risk, and resilience, reflecting the salience of family-oriented concepts and intervention strategies in the disciplines from which developmental psychopathology evolved: child development, psychiatry, pediatrics, and related social sciences (Cicchetti, 1990; Cummings et al., 2000; Fiese & Spagnola, in press; Luthar, 2003, in press; Masten, 2001; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Masten et al., in press; Rutter, 1990; Sameroff & Chandler, 1975; Sroufe, Carlson, Levy, & Egeland, 1999). In developmental psychopathology, the role of family in development has been particularly salient in the study of risk and resilience. For this reason, and because developmental psychopathology is such a broad and integrative approach to understanding and attempting to redirect development, we believe the research focused on risk and resilience in developmental psychopathology can provide a useful lens through which to consider the broader mission of this volume to delineate the case for how "families count" for development in childhood and adolescence. Based on the studies of risk and resilience, we aim in this chapter to frame how one might think about the diverse ways families could matter in human development.

Basic Models of the Ways Families Matter

Perusing the evidence in studies of risk and resilience, it is clear that there are several key ways that families may matter, including the fundamental fact that parents pass their genes on to their biological children (cf. Grant, Compas, Stuhlmacher, Thrum et al., 2003; Luthar, 2003, in press; Masten, 2001; Masten et al., in press; Repetti, Taylor, & Seeman, 2002). In Figure 1.1, we illustrate some of the basic models of family effects on child behavior and development. These are described generally here, with elaboration and examples to follow in this chapter.

Families can function as direct influences on child behavior, in positive or negative ways (Figure 1.1A). When a direct family effect is positive on desired child outcomes, the family effect is described as *promotive* (see discussion by Sameroff, Chapter 3 in this book) or the feature of the family under observation is termed a *resource* or *asset* for children. On the other hand, if a family attribute predicts psychopathology or negative outcomes on a desired child behavior such as academic achievement, it could be described as a *risk factor*. Sometimes positive family effects are viewed as

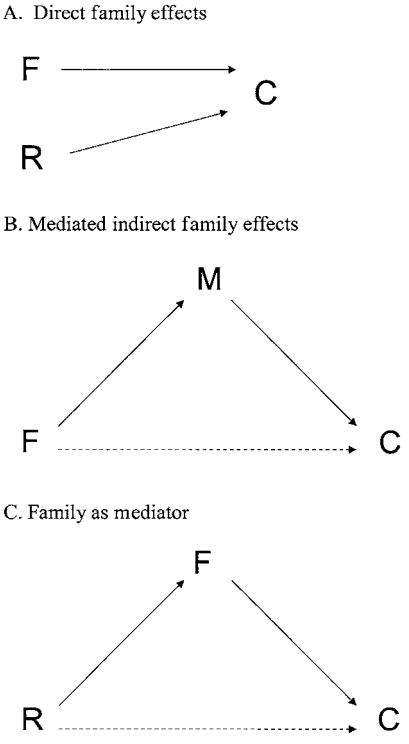
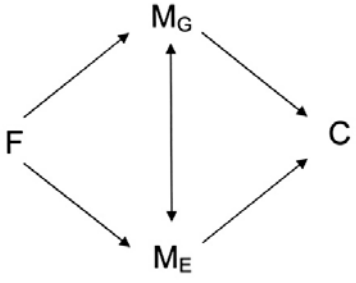


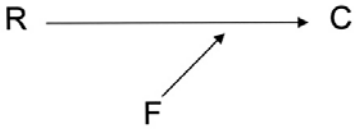
FIGURE 1.1. Basic models of family effects on child behavior [Note. R = Risk Factor; F = Family; C = Child behavior; M = Mediator (M_G = Geneticmediator; M_E = Environmental mediator).]

counterbalancing the effects of independent risk factors (R in Figure 1.1A), such as bad neighborhoods or deviant peer influences; in this case, the positive family effect is sometimes termed a *compensatory factor*. These are all relatively simple, additive models about how families matter, although the processes accounting for these influences could be very complex in nature. More complex variations of this model include more family factors or more additional risk factors. *Cumulative risk models*, for example, often include multiple features of the family or environment that are composited into a global index of overall riskiness for child behavior or development (see Sameroff, Chapter 3 in this book). Scores on composited risk indices of this kind typically indicate that child problems increase as a function of the number of risk factors, forming a *risk gradient*. Nonetheless, even cumulative risk models, which could reflect enormously complex processes, are variations on this basic model of direct influences.

D. Complex mediated family effects



E. Family as moderator



F. Transactional family-child effects

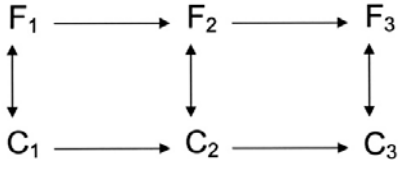


FIGURE 1.1. *continued*. Basic models of family effects on child behavior [Note. R = Risk Factor; F = Family; C = Child behavior; M = Mediator (M_G =Geneticmediator; M_E = Environmental mediator).]

The influences of families on child outcomes can also be indirect. Figure 1.1B illustrates a simple indirect effect of some family feature on a child outcome, where the effects of family on child are entirely mediated by some intervening factor and the processes the factor represents (which are often unknown). The mediator could be a feature of the child, the child's diet, the school, neighborhood, or health care system, or any other system that influences a child's behavior. A parent's income, for example, can influence where the family lives, which determines many features of a child's day-to-day context, including the quality of the school the child attends and how much violence the child observes in the surrounding environs. Families, of course, can influence many aspects of a child's life, at many levels. Thus, the same family could produce all kinds of risks, assets, and opportunities

to the same child over the course of development, varying from genes to nice neighbors to actions resulting in tutors or college admission. Model D in Figure 1.1 illustrates a more complex variation on the indirect model, where family effects are mediated by both genes and environment and the interaction of those mediators.

Family can also function as the mediator of more distal conditions on children, as illustrated in Figure 1.1C. In this model, a risk factor alters family functioning (e.g., parenting) in some way, which in turn affects the child. Many models of distal risk factors such as social class or economic hardship are thought to be mediated by their effects on parents.

There are also models of family in a moderating role, where something about the family alters the impact of a risk factor on a child, as shown in Figure 1.1E. In this case of family as *moderator*, family alters the effect of another condition or factor on the child, in either a negative or a positive way. When the effect is positive, the family role is called a *protective factor*. Protective processes can be activated by adverse events, in much the way that an airbag is triggered by the impact of an automobile accident; analogously, parents may be spurred to protective action by perceived threats in the lives of their children. These moderating roles all imply some kind of interaction, where the influence of adversity depends on the family in some way. Families have been implicated in many studies as protective factors when child development is threatened by adversity of some kind (discussed further below and by Rutter, Chapter 2 in this book). Of course, families may also exacerbate negative effects, boosting the negative impact of a risk factor.

There are also models of more dynamic, complex interaction over time. A relatively simple example of a transactional model is illustrated in Figure 1.1F (adapted from the seminal work of Arnold Sameroff). In this model, ongoing interactions of child and family influence the family, the child, and their future interactions. Transactional models are based on systems theory, in which changes in one system (such as the family) can lead to changes in all other systems connected directly and indirectly to a family. There have been many elaborations on how this may work in development among systems theorists (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Ford & Lerner, 1992; Sameroff, 2000; Thelen & Smith, 1998). All these models posit that many interactions among many systems at multiple levels (e.g., genes, central nervous system, peers, family, school, neighborhood, culture) give rise to child development, with bi-directional influences connecting multiple levels.

Intervention can also be conceptualized and modeled in relation to these basic models of family influence on children. If the family is the target of intervention, then the intervener must have a model of how the intervention will change the family (a theory of intervention) and how that in

turn will change the child (a theory of family influence). As described later, a number of preventive interventions are designed to support positive parenting as a mediator in order to protect a child from the potentially deleterious effects of a risk factor such as divorce or poverty. In such cases, the intervention can be viewed as an effort to alter the mediator. Holmbeck (1997) illustrated such a model in his depiction of a moderated mediational model. In a family systems therapy model, in contrast, the intervention could be directed at the child, the parent, or their interaction, because changing any part of the system would theoretically change the other parties of interaction; in this case, the chosen target for change might be based on a theory about where in the family the intervener believes there is the greatest motivation or leverage for change.

In the following sections, we highlight examples of models of how families matter based on findings from the literature on risk and resilience. We focus particularly on models of families as adaptive systems for human development, as mediators and moderators of change, and as targets of intervention.

Families as Major Adaptive Systems for Human Development

In the risk and resilience literature, quality of parenting and the parent-child relationship have been implicated over and over again as correlates of positive development, both in normative situations and under adverse conditions, leading to the observation that families and parenting comprise a complex and fundamental system for human development, biologically and culturally evolved to promote and protect development (Masten, 2001; Fiese & Spagnola, in press). Effective parenting is pervasively associated with positive adjustment, in both normative and high-risk situations (Damon & Eisenberg, 1998; Fiese & Spagnola, in press; Luthar, in press; Maccoby, 1980; 1992; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). In the resilience literature, relationships with competent and caring adults, who function in parenting or mentoring roles, top the list of the most widely observed correlates of good adaptation among children in risky or hazardous rearing environments or among children enduring or recovering from trauma (Luthar, 2003, in press; Masten & Powell, 2003; Masten & Reed, 2002; Wright & Masten, 2005). Moreover, moving a child from a context with poor caregiving to one with good caregiving, as happened with many Romanian orphans adopted around 1991 following the fall of the Ceausescu regime, has been followed in many cases by dramatic improvements in development (Rutter, Chapter 2; Rutter & the English and Romanian Adoptees (ERA) Study Team, 1998).

Families are charged by most societies with the job of socializing children to live in the society, and hence function as conduits of culture and standards of behavior. Other people, including teachers or mentors, certainly

play important roles in a child's life, but parents typically have the primary role in child socialization, particularly early in development when children depend on adults for satisfying many needs and spend most of their time with family or designated surrogate caregivers. Some of the key debates and issues of the past few decades have focused on the importance of how well parents do this job or delegate it to others – whether or not, for example, day care or divorce is detrimental to child development. Parent-child relationships also are viewed as key regulators of child behavior, through such actions as soothing, monitoring, or providing security. Although the general aim of these regulatory functions to help children regulate their emotions and behavior may be similar over time, the actual behavior and function of families in this regard should change with development, as children grow up, because what is appropriate and effective for an infant, toddler, or adolescent may be vastly different and require very different kinds of parental behavior.

Attachment and Family Functions. Attachment relationships are fundamental to the role of the family as an adaptive system and to the development of emotion regulation as outlined earlier. The multiple functions of attachment relationships have been delineated by numerous scholars (Carlson & Sroufe, 1995; Sroufe & Waters, 1977; Cicchetti, 1990; Maccoby, 1980; Waters, Vaughn, Posada, & Kondo-Ikemura, 1995) since John Bowlby (1969) so eloquently described the nature of human attachment in terms of adaptive functions. In attachment theory, as in the empirical work supporting this theory, the special relationship initially formed between a child and primary caregiver can influence learning, reactions to threat, exploration, and many other behaviors associated with competence and maladaptation. Children who form insecure attachments or who do not have the opportunity to form such a relationship in early development because of severe privation or impaired functioning exhibit major developmental problems, and these findings have been replicated in studies of primates as well as humans (Cicchetti & Carlson, 1989; Hinde, 1974; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Suomi, 2000; Zeanah, Smyke, & Settles, in press).

Family as Regulator. The attachment relationship and the larger family context serve regulatory functions of diverse kinds (Fiese & Spagnola, in press; Gunnar, in press; Sroufe, 1996). Arousal regulation is provided by the parent who soothes a fussing baby, comforts a frightened child, or encourages an adolescent to try something new. Under high threat conditions, separation from the attachment figure(s) is associated with high levels of distress in children, as observed long ago by Bowlby (1969), Spitz (1945) and others, and also, more recently, in systematic studies of children following traumatic life events, ranging from war and terrorism to hospitalization and natural disasters (Garmezy & Rutter, 1983; Pine, Costello, &