

Evaluating Development Programs for Parents of 0-4 Year Olds: Impacting Parental Stress and Confidence

Anne Hill (hilla@families.org.au)

Focus on the Family Australia
Clayton VIC 3156 Australia

Railton Hill (rhill@swin.edu.au)

Faculty of Business and Marketing
Swinburne University of Technology, Hawthorn VIC 3122 Australia

Abstract

The paper argues for particular multi-dimensional measures of the constructs 'parental stress' and 'parental confidence' as appropriate criteria for evaluation of the impact of development programming for parents of 0 – 4 year old children. Limited research has been reported concerning the impact of education based parenting interventions in alleviating parental stress and building parental confidence, consistent with the limited amount of effective evaluation reported overall in the area of parenting programming. We discuss the conceptual basis and measurement of parental stress and parental confidence, and propose a simple integrative model of parenting development. It is suggested that the constructs can be operationalized in a manner which harmonizes many extant variables and measures, taking in dimensions of 'cognitive', 'affective' and 'conative' domains. We further propose a broad program of research incorporating aspects of best practice, aimed at evaluation of the impact of education based parenting development programs on levels of parental stress and confidence. The paper builds both on evidence from the literature, and on a preliminary series of focus group interviews conducted with parents

Keywords: *Parental Stress; Parental confidence; parenting development; Children.*

Introduction

Parents undertake the challenging task of transferring values and beliefs and setting in place patterns of behaviour in children. These values, beliefs and behaviours form the basis of the child's character development and conduct. They include templates for relationship building which become part of the child's adult personality. However, recent research found that more than half of parents 'lack confidence in their parenting', and that eighty per cent 'want more information and support on parenting issues' (Tucci, 2004). A number of education based interventions with objectives of enhancing the parenting experience and the outcomes for children have been reported. A key deficit in the literature on such programs however, is effective evaluation (Bowes, 2000).

The purpose of this paper is firstly, to conceptualize two constructs, *parental confidence* and *parental stress*. We see the achievement of positive impact on these constructs as an outcome appropriate for programs of parental development. Secondly, we propose a program of research, and suitable methodologies, which evaluate the impact of education based programming targeting parents of 0-4 year old children on these constructs. Our focus is on *proactive* parent development programming, aimed at the enhancement of parenting within the general community, rather than at *reactive* programming designed to overcome existing problems. Nevertheless, the conceptualization and agenda offered is likely to have application within both types of programming. This is a conceptual paper setting out a specific and much needed research agenda.

Parental Confidence

The literature is replete with a number of constructs which seem to take in or be related to aspects of *parental confidence*. These include parenting *efficacy*, (Bugental, 1987; Bugental & Shennum, 1984; Tucci, 2004) *well being and optimism*, (Baker, Blacher, Crnic, & Edelbrock, 2002) *satisfaction*, (Johnston & Mash, 1989). *competence, and self esteem* (Crnic & Booth, 1991; Crnic & Greenburg, 1990). The conceptual domains of these constructs all appear to be linked, and in fact to overlap considerably.

Baker, Blacher and Olsson (2005) assume that mothers' *optimism* is a subset of *well-being*, offering components of positive management strategies for child behaviour change, and a focus on parents' belief systems. Optimism has been defined as 'generalized positive expectancies' which promote psychological well-being (Scheier & Carver, 1985). A disposition towards optimism draws on broader beliefs and life values. The parent's personality and predisposition to optimism/pessimism influences their well-being, especially in mothers. An optimistic predisposition is seen as having a moderating effect on parental stress in the presence of challenging child behaviour (Baker, Blacher, & Olsson, 2005). It also offered mothers better coping capabilities and helped abate feelings of vulnerability, linking to *confident parental responses*

(Clarke & Beck, 1999). For mothers, the higher the optimism, the more positive were measures of parental well-being over time.

There is considerable evidence that optimism is beneficial, and stress is detrimental, to health (Aspinwall & Brunhart, 2000; Peterson, 2000). An implication for parent programs is to include not only an emphasis on child behaviour management strategies, but also a focus on belief systems and values reflecting optimism (Baker, Blacher, & Olsson, 2005).

Although parenting may involve the negative experience of excessive stress (discussed below), it is nevertheless essentially one of the most fulfilling life experiences, with many overwhelmingly positive moments. Parenting role *satisfaction* and the feeling of contentment or gratification towards the child has been considered as a discrete area of satisfaction, separate from other human experiences (Chillman, 1980). This has been conceptualized as an affective dimension, reflecting attitudes and beliefs. The Clemenishaw-Guidubaldi Parent Satisfaction Scale (CGPSS) was designed specifically to measure parenting satisfaction (Guidubaldi & Clemenishaw, 1985).

Parental confidence has also been seen as a subset of parental *well-being* (Bugental, 1987). It includes both the *parenting self esteem* felt, and a parent's sense of *satisfaction* in the parenting role. It also reflects the degree to which a parent feels both *competent* (skills based) and *confident* (emotions based) in handling child problems. Many links have been drawn between parental stress and suboptimal family functioning. Confidence/ security is part of the buffering system helping parents mediate parental stress (Crnic & Greenburg, 1990).

We offer a reconceptualised construct of 'parenting confidence' which we suggest captures key elements of each of the constructs discussed above. We suggest that the way to capture these elements is to incorporate *cognitive*, *affective* and *conative* (action based) dimensions within the parenting confidence construct.

The *cognitive* dimension of parental confidence reflects what the parent knows and understands about parenting, what they have learnt about a child's developmental milestones and child behaviour, and parental thinking about such matters as parental morality, responsibility and recognition of their child's individuality. Various types of parental cognitions contribute to a rich picture of the construct 'parental confidence': reasoning (Newberger & Cook, 1983), self-perceptions (Williams et al., 1987), expectations (Azar, Robinson, Hekimian, & Twentymann, 1984), information processing (Wahler & Dumas, 1984) and belief systems (Sigal, 1985). These can be expected to be reflected in their parent-child interactions. However any measure of confidence based only on the cognitive dimension of parental confidence, in isolation to the emotional and skills based dimensions, seems one dimensional.

The parents' experience of being parented, what they bring to parenting themselves, and how well this compliments or challenges the parenting partner's experience, is important. This can be very emotionally charged, values laden and reflective of very personal belief systems (Baker, Blacher, & Olsson, 2005). Hence parenting confidence has a complex *affective* dimension.

Parents also 'do' things, such as changing nappies, playing with their children, communicating and establishing appropriate networks. This is a 'conative' dimension of parental confidence.

In addition to providing a way to synthesize together aspects of parental experience such as 'optimism', 'well being' and the like, the proposed dimensions of cognition (thinking), affection (feelings/emotions) and conation (action/behaviour) appear to be roughly equivalent of the familiar 'knowledge, practices and attitudes' (KPA) approach to program evaluation, although a more complete understanding of 'attitudes' traditionally takes into consideration an element of value systems and beliefs as well as feelings/emotions. Thus:

- *cognitive* (thinking) dimension = *knowledge (K)*
- *affective* (feeling/emotional) dimension (plus beliefs/values) = *attitudes (A)*
- *conative* (action/behaviour) dimension = *practices (P)*

Intuitively, it seems reasonable that parents 'know' things about parenting (e.g. that 'children benefit from having some boundaries established'), 'feel' or 'value' things (e.g. a level of comfort or discomfort in their parenting role, or a sense of selflessness or kindness in their child's reactions), and 'do' things (e.g. use play as an opportunity to communicate with their child, hug their child often). All these elements meld together into our proposed construct of 'parental confidence'.

Parent Development Programming: Evaluation

Educational interventions have been offered to parents by a range of agencies. Typically these occur in response to children being perceived to be 'at risk' in some way, or where there is an existing perceived 'problem', such as poor child behaviour (Mouton & Tuma, 1988), a parental deficit of some sort ('not coping', prone to violent responses etc) (Wolfe & Hirsch, 2003), or particular disadvantage or disability, or developmental delay (Baker, Blacher, & Olsson, 2005). Such programs are 'treatment' motivated, reactive rather than proactive. As indicated, our research interest is rather in proactive programs offered to the general community, where parents typically self select for participation. The objective is to enhance both the experience of parents and the outcomes for children, whether or not an existing 'problem' has been identified.

There is research evidence for the benefits of parental development training, although this is most easily demonstrated where interventions improve child-rearing in families where disruptive and behavioral issues exist. Proactive programming, aimed at the enhancement of all parenting within the general community, is more rare, and of course, so are reports of its evaluation.

Positive benefits have been experienced when family relationships are enhanced through parenting education (Wilczak & Markstrom, 1999). The family 'tone' is influenced and families are more able to 'work together' as a unit (Eastman, 1989). Parents can learn from parent education programs to alter their ways of parenting. This can mean positive behaviors in their young children such as positive responses to, and cooperation with, others and reduced aggression (Bogenschneider, Riley, Morgan, & Lundeen, 1994; Eastman, 1989).

Programs which highlight a *holistic* approach to family functioning are reported to be the most effective. Holistic programs offer consideration of how the family works together as a whole. Evidence also suggests that programs which include practical aspects of parenting supported by research and policy are effective (Taylor & Biglan, 1998). For example, Haessly (1994) reports two types of parenting programming addressing parental stress, a 'cognitive-behavioural *and* child behaviour management' program, and a 'behaviour management *only*' program. These were examined for the relative differences in stress reduction in parents and conduct disorder in children.

Haessly's study showed that the magnitude of change was greater in the 'cognitive-behavioural *and* child behaviour management' group than the 'behaviour *only*' group. This points to the reduction of parental stress being more complex than just child behaviour management. A holistic approach to the family system is needed. This should address family environments, the adequacy of physical and social support, and emotional factors such as marital relationship problems. Parenting programming, and our evaluation thereof, needs to address more than just adequate child management skills (Haessly, 1994).

Tully (1992) suggests there are four different types of parent interventions addressing parental stress: (i) print based information only (books and magazines) (ii) parent education groups (face to face groups with peers) (iii) caregiver focused interventions (e.g. consultations with professionals for 'treatment' of child conduct disorders) and (iv) parent-infant interaction groups (e.g. first mothers' groups conducted through Maternal and Child Health Local Government services). Tully examines a print information based intervention, finding some improvement in stress levels in mothers participating in a parenting intervention consisting of the reading of print materials (magazines), but only where the mother was experiencing high previous stress

levels as measured by the PSI (Abidin, 1990) pre and post intervention.

The Tully (1992) study did not address parental stress with full understanding of its complex determinants. As is common, only mothers' responses are measured. None of the parent domain variables of the PSI (e.g. relationship with spouse, parental depression, social isolation and parent health) were addressed by the intervention. The *knowledge, practices and attitudes* (KPA) triad requires an examination of not just the *knowledge* component which may be met when a print based information intervention, but for *practices and attitudes* to be addressed also (for example, see Amal et. al. 2002).

Although there is significant evidence to support the value of parenting programs, it is also apparent in the literature that program evaluation has been weak in the past. Only limited information has been collected from parents during and after their participation in parenting programs (Bowes, 2000). A number of researchers have provided recommendations for the effective evaluation of parenting education programs. Effective evaluation occurs where evaluators:

- use an appropriate model to guide the evaluation process
- discover what parents want in a parenting education program before program design
- explore how parents have been impacted and their parenting behavior changed as a result of parent education programs
- consider which parents, families and children gain most and least from programs
- consider the effects of programs for differing cultural groups (Bogenschneider, Riley, Morgan, & Lundeen, 1994)
- explore the involvement of fathers in parenting programs, and fathers' responses to parent education and family support programs where fathers have been involved as well as mothers (Bowes, 2000).
- assess how well targeted programs are to specific ages
- assess the effects of program interventions at critical life transition points (e.g. during the first year of the child's life)
- consider the effects of programs in terms of the encouragement of relationships and collaborations with community groups and systems of referral (Bogenschneider, Riley, Morgan, & Lundeen, 1994).

Focus Group Study

Researchers conducted a series of focus groups with parents of 0-4 year old children in Melbourne, Australia. The parents were drawn from various socio-economic demographics on a purposive basis via postcode and using the Social Atlas of Melbourne (ABS, 2006). Four groups were conducted, located in a

Table 1: Focus groups conducted

Group no.	Setting	No. of participants	Gender of participants	Participant's socio-economic groupings (SEG)
1	playgroup	9	mothers	Lower SEG
2	playgroup	4	mothers	Lower SEG
3	special purpose	15	mothers & fathers	Middle SEG
4	special purpose	6	fathers	Middle – upper SEG

number of settings. These included (two) established playgroups (one of nine and one of four mothers) from different socio-economic areas chosen by postcode.

Two of the groupings interviewed were purpose-formed: a group of (five), professional fathers (selected on a convenience basis), and one of 15- both mothers and fathers- incorporating a cross section of married and single parents, diverse nationalities and discrete family cultures: specifically, parents from European multigenerational households, and from Asian countries. The groups addressed in a semi-structured way the broad question 'what do parents of 0-4 year old children want to gain from a parent development program'?

These group discussions were tape recorded and transcribed, Analysis was undertaken by standard manual content analysis methods (Kassarjian, 1977) with at least two researchers reviewing the transcripts.

By this means categories of comment were developed, which were in turn collapsed into broader statements summarizing what parents themselves believe they would seek in a training program.

This analysis revealed that parents seek: a strong desire for specific knowledge concerning children's needs, parent's needs, and options for parents. They have a desire to feel confident, and to have specific skills, such as how to set boundaries for behaviour, methods of correction and how to encourage positive communication with their children.

These themes were common across all groups, and they clearly reflect elements of knowledge, practices (behavioural outcomes) and attitudes (including emotional responses), as captured within our proposed three dimensional conceptualization of 'parental confidence'.

In addition to this qualitative input, researchers were able to draw on previous very extensive experience working with parents. Hence, exploratory qualitative research with a wide cross section of parents of 0 – 4

year olds, as well as the literature, supported both the importance of parental confidence to parents, and the proposed three dimensional conceptualization as discussed. We propose 'parental confidence' as a key goal of parenting programming interventions, and measurement of this construct as a key aspect of parenting program evaluation.

Parental Stress

Parental stress has been defined as 'the perception of extra tension in the family network that upsets the family balance'(Lazarus, 1966). It influences parental behaviour and is an antecedent of dysfunctional parenting (Abidin, 1992; Belsky, 1984; Rodgers, 1993). In a study of Swedish mothers of newborn babies, Sepa, Frodi and Ludvigsson (2004) found that high level parenting stress was significantly influenced by lack of support and lack of confidence/security.

Parental stress often accompanies high levels of control-oriented, or authoritarian parenting. This is exacerbated by non-compliant and oppositional child behaviour (Haessly, 1994). Parent-child conflict which causes stress reflects the child's developing temperament and how this interacts with a parent's personality (Pesonen et al., 2005). The literature supports both a unidirectional influence of parental stress on child conduct (Jourilles & Farris, 1992) and a reciprocal influence between parental stress and child conduct (Haessly, 1994). That is, there is contention as to whether parental stress is the cause of oppositional child behaviour, or whether they both influence each other in a reciprocal fashion.

Frequent or intense parent-child conflict is one aspect of a broader construct of parental stress which, like parental confidence, involves behavioural, cognitive and affective components (Mash & Johnston, 1990). Raikonen et al. report this broad construct may include elements of parental anxiety or depression,

dysfunctional marital interaction and poor parental psychological well-being (Raikkonen et al., 2006).

It is difficult to extract the definition of parental stress from its possible causes or determinants. The behavioural, cognitive and affective components reported in Mash and Johnston (1990) include characteristics of the environment, and characteristics of both the child and parent. Although the Mash and Johnston study highlights stress effects within families of hyperactive or physically abused children, the behaviours in the control group where children were not hyperactive or physically abused did not differ significantly. This suggests that parental characteristics are a key factor in the experience of parent stress (Floyd & Gallagher, 1997).

Environmental factors influencing parental stress include insufficient supportive and positive social support and immediate relationships. Research indicates the influence of the marital relationship on stress and outcomes in family life (Doherty et al., 2004; Zubrick, 1995). Other environmental factors include the presence of daily irritations or care giving problems such as 'fussy eater' or non sleeping child behaviour. Major adverse life events such as bereavement, ill health and job loss are also counted as determinants of parental stress.

Child characteristics, including the child's developing temperament and the interaction of this with the parents' personality, can be key stressors (Capsi, 2000; Rothbart, Derryberry, & Hershey, 2000). The 'goodness of fit' between the parent's personality and the child's temperament may ameliorate or exacerbate parental stress (Buss & Plomin, 1984). Deficits in the child's cognitive and physical ability at various developmental stages are potential antecedents to stress for parents.

These factors influencing parental stress are all indirectly mediated by the parent's internal characteristics and his/her cognitive, affective and conative (skill) ability to process and respond to information. The parent's cognitive ability includes his or her problem solving ability, basic intellectual level and attitudes and beliefs.

A parent's sense of locus of control is another determinant of parental stress. This is the perception by parents of the child's behaviour being attributed to external or internal influences. Perception of locus of control governs how parents may perceive their child's response to task oriented requests. For example, parents of compliant children may consider successful positive attributes to have a locus of control within the child, such as high level intelligence, or positive personality traits. Negative child responses for these parents are considered to be the result of external influences such as the child's lack of sleep or the degree of task difficulty (Dix & Grusec, 1985; Gretarsson & Gelfand, 1988).

Parental and life attitudes and beliefs, including a parent's own history and experience of being parented, positive or otherwise, influence the child rearing standards and values a parent brings to his parenting.

There are many studies conducted amongst mothers and their children which examine parental stress (Mash & Johnston, 1990; Mouton & Tuma, 1988; Ostberg, Hagekull, & Wettergren, 1997; Wolfe & Hirsch, 2003). Mothers are typically considered the primary care givers and are involved in requiring task oriented responses from their (young) children more consistently than are fathers. It is in association with child non-compliance that parental stress is most keenly felt. Stress is not evident in the same way during unstructured play (Mash & Johnston, 1990).

There is a demonstrated link between child conduct/behaviour and parental stress (Haessly, 1994). For this reason, as well as the positive benefits to children which may result from reductions in parental stress, we suggest that a second aim of parenting development programming (the first being the enhancement of parental confidence) should be to reduce parenting stress.

Measuring Parental Stress

The literature provides a number of scales used for the measurement of parental stress. Some of these measure dimensions of both parent stress and child stress. The measurement of child conduct as an evaluative criterion for parent programming is problematic. Such measurement would require close and sustained child observation fraught with logistical difficulty. Such observation is also likely to have significant researcher artifacts. Where the program intervention is reactive, such as where children are deemed to be 'at risk', and where sufficient resources are made available, such observation may become possible and defensible, but would likely still be subject to researcher artifacts.

Our research interest, however, is in proactive programming aimed at the general population. Where program participants are self selecting it is unlikely that invasive observation of child behaviour will be wanted, or even appropriate. Parent assessment could be used, an indirect measure, but only if it was felt that such measures were valid and reliable given the highly sensitive nature of such assessments by parents. Given these issues, and the complex etiology of parent stress (Haessly, 1994), we argue that programming evaluation needs to have a clear aim of measuring impact on parental stress, rather than attempting to measure child stress.

As noted, the reciprocal nature of parental stress and child conduct disorder has been acknowledged in the literature by the development of measures of dual domains: a) the parent domain and b) the child domain. The Parenting Stress Index (PSI) (Abidin, 1990), and the Swedish Parenthood Stress Questionnaire (SPSQ)

(Ostberg & Hagekull, 2000) are instruments which address the parent domain.

The PSI is a self-report questionnaire measuring variables on three subscales. These have been evaluated positively for reliability (Abidin, 1990). Its subscales evaluate (i) parental distress, (ii) parent-child dysfunction

Towards A Model For Testing

Incorporating *parental confidence* and *parental stress*, as conceptualized, as the desired outcomes (dependent variables: DVs) of parent development programming, along with other antecedents of stress (and of confidence) we arrive at the following proposed model. Note that the only independent variable (IV) included in the program of research we propose is participation in face-to-face peer parent development programming.

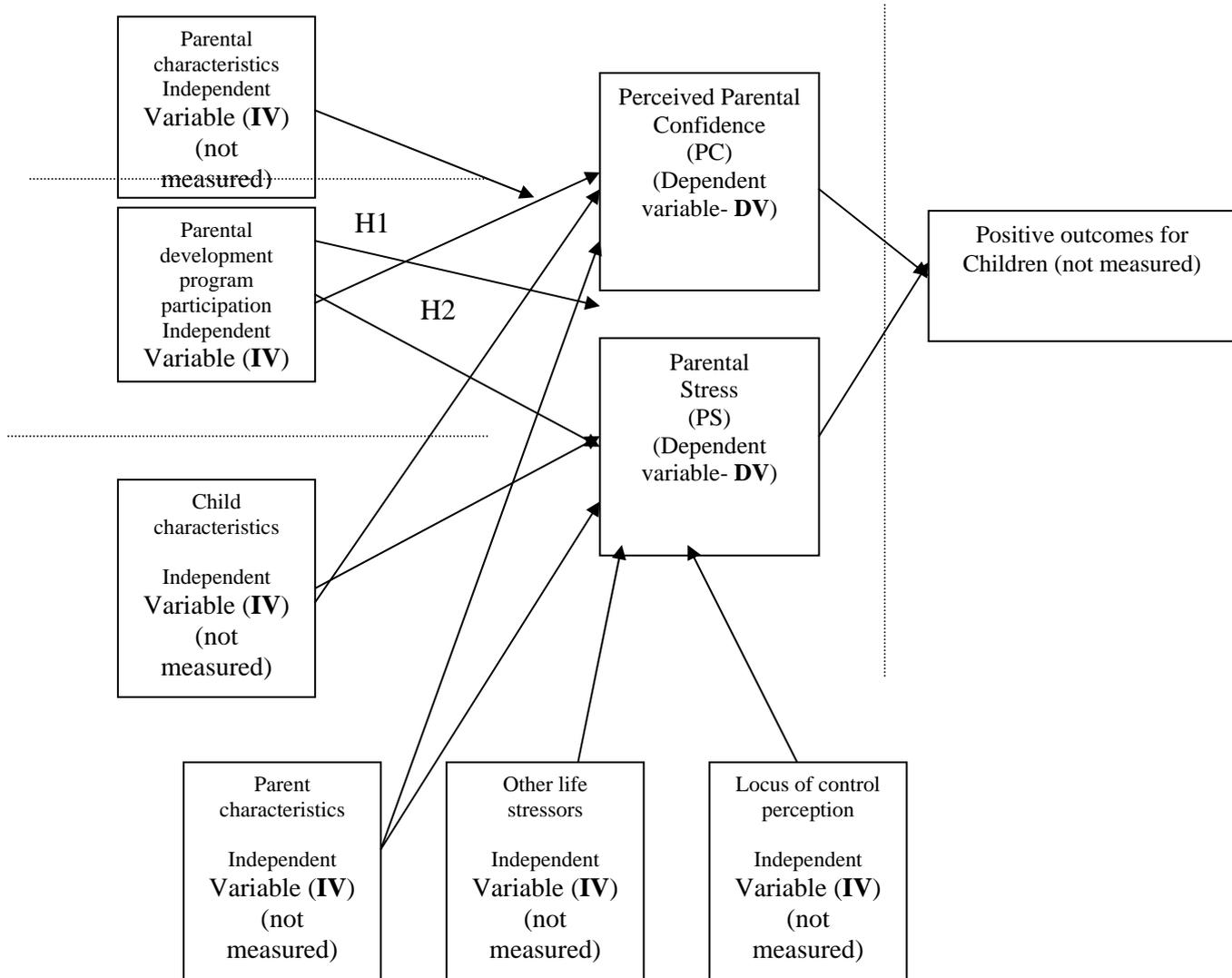


Figure 1: Parenting Development Programming, Perceived Parent Stress and Confidence: Proposed Model

A Proposed Research Program

It is proposed to undertake two research projects, simultaneously, in the context of the evaluation of a new Australian community based parenting development program. The first project will focus specifically on evaluation of the parental learning which is the goal of the whole endeavor, and is the focus of this paper. This will be framed by approaches to evaluation of both processes and outcomes relating specifically to parents undertaking the program. This paper relates to the 'outcome' aspects of this study. The second project specifically addresses the application of social marketing planning and implementation in the context of non-profit community development. As noted, 'education' aimed at parental development is a service 'product' in this case. Hence a cross disciplinary approach combining psychology and marketing is most desirable. Research addressing the second area of program evaluation, that of the social marketing/social entrepreneurship involved in launching successful community based parenting programming, is beyond the scope of this paper, and will not be discussed further.

We have endeavored to incorporate elements of best practice into the design and data gathering time sequence outlined in Figure 2. For example, in terms of program outcomes, as discussed, the use of direct observation in the home is not readily an option. Hence we propose the use of questioning of respondents, both verbal and written (questionnaires) and the collection of third party observations from another responsible and closely placed adult. In most cases this will be the other parent and/or spouse.

The research design includes a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. It also aims to provide a longitudinal rather than a cross-sectional evaluation, with measures taken pre-training, immediately after completion of training and approximately six months post program. The use of a

control group of non participants, with the pre and post course measures, enables a quasi-experimental design.

Data is to be collected concerning independent variables such as demographic characteristics of participants and the extent of participation in the program (number of sessions attended) and dependent variables (outcomes) of parental confidence and parental stress. Data collection and analysis will combine a range of techniques and activities including:

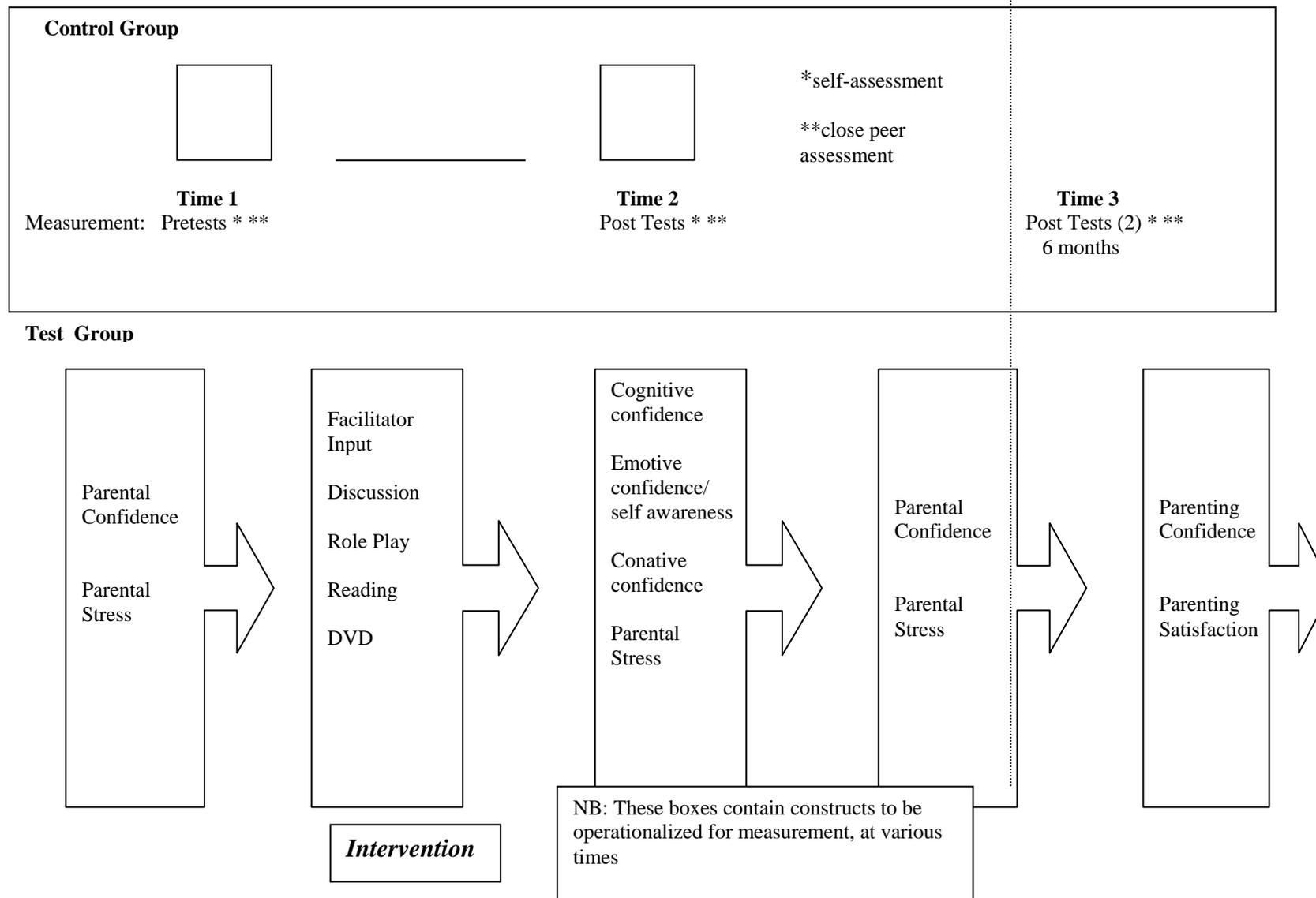
- Pre and immediate post course self-assessment surveys with participants
- Follow up self-assessment questionnaires with participants at six months post course
- Possible immediate post course interviews with a purposively stratified sample of participants, probing in greater depth than is possible in the questionnaires
- Self assessment questionnaires of a control group of people who have not undertaken the program pre-course and at a point equivalent to the post course surveys
- Follow up interviews with a purposively stratified sample of participants at six months post course
- Duplicate surveys and possibly interviews with spouse/ other parent/ another 'close' adult for comparison with the self assessed responses

The survey data is mainly quantitative in character, and will be empirically assessed using standard descriptive and analytical statistical methods. The qualitative data from interviews and open questions on the surveys will add great richness and interpretive value to the research. Hence, we propose a strong design combining:

- observation, interview and self assessment,
- qualitative and quantitative elements within a
- longitudinal and
- quasi-experimental design

Further, the research approach proposed chosen should operate within an 'action learning' approach with the parenting program provider. This will provide immediate implementation of learning gained with iterative refinement possible over time.

Figure 2: Proposed evaluation design: parental development



Conclusion

This research design seeks to effectively evaluate a parenting initiative seeking to influence the constructs of *parental stress* and *parental confidence*. We see the impact of cognitive, affective and conative dimensions of these constructs. The next steps are to develop multi-item instruments which capture these dimensions, along with relevant demographic and other data.

The literature reveals the multi factorial etiology of parental stress. It also reveals how parental confidence may ameliorate parental stress, and how both these constructs are influenced by, and have an influence on, child behaviours. We have presented a model for testing concerning the efficacy of parenting interventions. Our model paves the way for rigorous evaluation of such programs. This should enhance the accountability of such programming as it competes for scarce funding.

In proactive programs, parents can examine their parenting role before family functioning might be disrupted by child oppositional behaviours. The role of fathers in parenting is still strongly underrepresented in the literature. Future studies do well to evaluate a joint approach to ameliorating parent stress which embraces the challenges and satisfactions associated with co-parenting and the outcomes of father involvement on parental confidence.

The program of research proposed is important because of its potential to enhance the experience of parenting for parenting, while also benefiting children.

References

- Abidin, R. R. (1990). *Parenting Stress Index short form*. Charlottesville, VA: Pediatric Psychology Press.
- Abidin, R. R. (1992). The determinants of parenting behaviour. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 21*, 407-412.
- Aspinwall, L. G., & Brunhart, S. M. (2000). *What I do know won't hurt me: optimism, attention to negative information, coping, and health*. Philadelphia, PA: Templeton Foundation Press.
- Azar, S. T., Robinson, D. R., Hekimian, E., & Twentyman, C. T. (1984). Unrealistic expectations and problem solving ability in maltreating and comparison mothers. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 52*, 687-691.
- Baker, B. L., Blacher, J., Crnic, K. A., & Edelbrock, C. (2002). Behaviour problems and parenting stress in families of three-year-old children with and without developmental delays. *American Journal on Mental Retardation, 107*, 433 - 444.
- Baker, B. L., Blacher, J., & Olsson, M. B. (2005). Preschool children with and without developmental delay: behaviour problems, parents' optimism and well-being. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, 49*(8), 575 - 590.
- Bates, J. E., Freeland, C. A. B., & Lounsbury, M. L. (1979). Measurement of infant difficulties. *Journal of Child Development, 50*, 794-803.
- Belsky, J. (1984). The determinants of parenting: A process model. *Child Development, 55*, 83-96.
- Bogenschneider, K., Riley, D., Morgan, K., & Lundeen, S. (1994). *Can government promote competent parenting?* Paper presented at the Wisconsin Family Impact Seminar Briefing Report 3, Madison, WI.
- Bowes, J. (2000). Parents' Response to Parent Education and Support Programs. *National Child Protection Clearing House, 8*, 12-22.
- Bugental, D. B. (1987). *Caregiver attributions as moderators of child effects*. Paper presented at the Society for Research in Child Development, Baltimore.
- Bugental, D. B., & Shennum, W. A. (1984). "Difficult" children as elicitors and targets of adult communication patterns: an attributional-behavioural transactional analysis. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 49* (1, Serial No. 205).
- Buss, A. H., & Plomin, R. (1984). *Temperament: Early Developing Personality Traits*. New Jersey: Hillsdale.
- Capsi, A. (2000). The child is father of a man: personality continues from childhood to adulthood. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 78*, 158-172.
- Chillman, C. (1980). Parent satisfactions, concerns and goals for their children. *Family Relations, 29*, 339-345.
- Clarke, D., & Beck, A. (1999). *Scientific Foundations of Cognitive Theory and Therapy of Depression*. New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Crnic, K. A., & Booth, C. L. (1991). Mothers' and Fathers' perceptions of daily hassles of parenting across early childhood. *Marriage and the Family, 53*, 1042-1050.
- Crnic, K. A., & Greenburg, M. T. (1990). Minor parenting stresses with young children. *Child Development, 61*, 1628 -1637.
- Dix, T., & Grusec, J. E. (1985). *Parent attribution processes in the socialization of children*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Doherty, W. J., Galston, W. A., Glenn, N. D., Gottman, J., Markey, B., Markman, H. J., et al. (2004). *Twenty-one reasons why marriage matters*. Wollongong, NSW: National Marriage Coalition.
- Eastman, M. B. (1989). *Family the Vital Factor*. Melbourne: CollinsDove.
- Floyd, F. J., & Gallagher, E. M. (1997). Parental stress, care demands, and use of support services for school-age children with disabilities and behaviour problems. *Journal of Family Relations, 46*, 359-371.
- Gretarsson, S. J., & Gelfand, D. M. (1988). Mothers' attributions regarding their children's social behavior and personality characteristics. *Developmental Psychology, 24*, 264-269.
- Guidubaldi, J., & Cleminshaw, H. K. (1985). The development of the Cleminshaw-Guidubaldi Parent Satisfaction Scale. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 14*, 293-298.

- Haessly, J. E. (1994). *An evaluation of the effectiveness of two parenting programs for reducing parenting stress and child conduct problems.*, University of Wisconsin, Madison.
- Johnston, C., & Mash, E. J. (1989). A Measure of Parenting Satisfaction and Efficacy. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 18(2), 167 - 175.
- Jourilles, E. N., & Farris, A. M. (1992). Effects of marital conflict on subsequent parent-son interactions. *Journal of Behavior Therapy*, 23, 355-374.
- Kassarjian, H. H. (1977). Content Analysis in Consumer Research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 4, 8-18.
- Khoury, A., Hinton, A., Mitra, A., Carothers, C., Foretich, C. (2002) 'Improving Breastfeeding Knowledge, attitudes and Practices of WIC Clinic Staff', *Public Health Reports*, Sept - Oct. Vol. 117, 453 - 463.
- Lazarus, R. S. (1966). *Psychological stress and the coping process.* New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Mash, E. J., & Johnston, C. (1990). Determinants of Parenting Stress: Illustrations from Families of Hyperactive Children and Families of Physically Abused Children. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology Behavior Therapy*, 19(4), 313-328.
- Mouton, P. Y., & Tuma, J. M. (1988). Stress, Locus of Control, and Role Satisfaction in Clinic and Control Mothers. *Journal of Child Psychology*, 17(3), 217-224.
- Newberger, C. M., & Cook, S. J. (1983). Parental awareness and child abuse: A cognitive-developmental analysis of urban and rural samples. *American Journal of Ortho-psychiatry*, 53, 512-514.
- Ostberg, M. (1998). Parental stress, psychological problems and responsiveness in help-seeking parents with small (2-45 months old) children. *Acta Paediatrica*, 87, 69-76.
- Ostberg, M., & Hagekull, B. (2000). A Structural Modeling Approach to the Understanding of Parenting Stress. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 29(4), 615-625.
- Ostberg, M., Hagekull, B., & Wettergren, S. (1997). A measure of parental stress in mothers with small children: dimensionality, stability and validity. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 38(3), 199.
- Pesonen, A.-K., Raikkonen, K., Heinonen, K., Komsu, N., Strandberg, T. E., & Jarvenpaa, A.-L. (2005). Continuity of maternal stress from the pre- to the postnatal period: associations with infants' positive, negative and overall reactivity. *Journal of Infant Behavior and Development*, 28, 36-47.
- Peterson, C. (2000). *The Science of Optimism and Hope: Research Essays in Honor of Martin E.P. Seligman.* Philadelphia, PA: Templeton Foundation Press.
- Prior, M. (1992). The Australian Temperament Study. *Journal of Child Psychol. Psychiatry*, 33(1), 249-279.
- Raikkonen, K., Pesonen, A.-K., Heinonen, K., Komsu, N., Jarvenpaa, A.-L., & Strandberg, T. E. (2006). Stressed Parents: A Dyadic Perspective on Perceived Infant Temperament. *Infant and Child Development*, 15, 75-87.
- Rodgers, A. Y. (1993). The assessment of variables related to the parenting behavior of mothers with young children. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 15, 385-402.
- Rothbart, M. K., Derryberry, D., & Hershey, K. (2000). *Stability of temperament in childhood: laboratory infant assessment to parent report at seven years.* Mahwah, NJ, US: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Scheier, M. F., & Carver, C. S. (1985). Optimism, coping, and health: assessment and implications of generalized outcome expectancies. *Health Psychology*, 4, 219-247.
- Sigal, I. E. (1985). *Parental belief systems: The psychological consequences for children.* Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Taylor, T. K., & Biglan, A. (1998). Behavioral Family Interventions for Improving Child-rearing: A Review of the Literature for Clinicians and Policy Makers. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 1(1), 41-60.
- Thomas, A., Chess, S., Birch, H. G., Hertzog, M., & Korn, S. (1963). *Behavioral individuality in early childhood.* NY: New York University Press.
- Tucci, J. (2004). *The Concerns of Australian Parents.* Sydney: Australian Childhood Foundation.
- Tully, N. J. (1992). *The differences in maternal stress levels between participants and non-participants in formal parent education programs.*, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, Indiana.
- Wahler, R. G., & Dumas, J. E. (1984). *Changing the observational coding styles of insular and noninsular mothers: A step toward maintenance of parent training effects.* New York Guildford.
- Wilczak, G. L., & Markstrom, C. A. (1999). The Effects of parent education on Parental Locus of Control and Satisfaction of Incarcerated Fathers. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 43(1), 90-102.
- Williams, T. M., Joy, L. A., Travis, L., Gotowiec, A., Blum-Steele, M., Aiken, L. S., et al. (1987). Transition to motherhood: a longitudinal study. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 8, 251-265.
- Wolfe, R. B., & Hirsch, B. J. (2003). Outcomes of Parent Education Programs Based on Reevaluation Counseling. *Journal of Child and Family Studies.*, 12(1), 61-76.
- Zubrick, S. R. (1995). *Western Australian Child Health Survey: Developing Health and Well-being in the Nineties.* Perth: Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Institute for Child Health Research.

Correspondence to: Anne Hill
Focus on the Family Australia
Clayton VIC 3156 Australia
(hilla@families.org.au)

Research Profiles

Anne Hill holds a Graduate Diploma in Health Science (Health Promotion and Health Education) a Diploma of Applied Science (Dental Therapy) and a Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment. She currently works for Focus on the Family Australia as Program Manager and Trainer for Starting Points, a skills development program for parents and caregivers of 0-4 year olds. She also has extensive experience in program planning and implementation, service delivery, team building, conflict resolution and related management fields. Her professional memberships include the Australian Health Promotion Association. Anne's research interest is in the area of parenting, mental health and outcomes in child behaviour and development. She is passionate about family life and community development.

Dr. Railton M. Hill holds qualifications in social science, marketing, both general and industry education, and media. His PhD is in marketing. Currently he is Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Business and Enterprise at Swinburne University of Technology, researching in the areas of services, social marketing and education.. He has published and presented widely and actively pursues research collaborations with profit both commercial and non-profit organisations. He has facilitated development programming for parents and men within the Salvation Army.