travaux de recherche, une quarantaine d’article scientifiques, concernent la neuropsychologie cognitive de l’autisme, et plus particulièrement sur la perception visuelle et auditive dans l’autisme.


PETER J. JAFFE, LINDA L. BAKER, and ALISON J. CUNNINGHAM (Eds.)
Protecting Children from Domestic Violence: Strategies for Community Intervention
New York: Guilford Press, 2004, 243 pages
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Concern about the effects of domestic violence on children has become one of the leading reasons for intervention by child welfare authorities and police across Canada. Over 21,000 cases of exposure to domestic violence were reported in 1998 to child welfare authorities across Canada, 15% percent of all reports of child maltreatment (Trocme et al., 2001; Table 3.8). In Ontario alone, the number of reports increased nine fold between 1993 and 1998 (Trocme, Fallon, MacLaurin, & Copp, 2002), and preliminary findings from the 2005 Canadian Incidence Study indicate that exposure to domestic violence continues to expand across the country. While professionals working with battered women have become keenly aware of the potential harm to the children involved, we are far less clear about how to respond to these situations in a supportive and effective manner. Peter Jaffe, Linda Baker, and Alison Cunningham’s new edited book, Protecting Children from Domestic Violence: Strategies for Community Intervention, provides the most up-to-date information about how best to respond.

The book emerged from the International Conference on Children Exposed to Domestic Violence that was held in London, Ontario in 2001. It begins with an excellent chapter by Jeffrey Edleson synthesizing the literature on the impact of exposure to domestic violence on children, stressing the interplay between risk and protective factors. While recognizing the critical role that child welfare authorities can play in responding to these situations, Edleson cautions that exposure should not automatically be defined as child maltreatment. He recommends that wherever possible children exposed to domestic violence and their families should be referred voluntarily to community services, and that a broader range of differential assessments and services be developed in those cases where child welfare authorities become involved. Edleson’s chapter is followed by two papers examining emerging assessments and treatment programs. B. B. Robbie Rossman and colleagues describe assessments, including measurement tools, and interventions for young children exposed to domestic violence, stressing the need to involve mothers. Diane Davis describes a treatment program for abusive male adolescents, which is grounded in cognitive-behavioural, social learning, feminist, developmental, and trauma theory.

The second section of the book addresses current thinking about individual and group intervention approaches. Chapter 5 by Sandra Graham-Bermann and Hilda Halabu discusses how to make intervention programs culturally relevant. They point, for example, to the importance of delivering public broadcast messages about domestic violence in different languages and involving community leaders in helping to challenge views that may minimize the scope of the problem. Chapter 6 by Jennifer Hardesty and Jacquelyn Campbell describes safety planning strategies with respect to both women and children. Chapter 7 by Lundy Bancroft and Jay Silverman explores tools for assessing risks that the offending parent poses to the nonoffending parent and their child(ren). Finally, Chapter 8 by Oliver Williams and his colleagues discusses the importance of the father’s role in the lives of their children and how this is often ignored.

The third section of the book examines broader system level responses. In Chapter 9, Melpa Kamateros discusses the challenges of increasing public awareness in a culturally diverse environment, describing in particular an outreach service for ethnic communities in Montreal. Chapters 10 through 12 examine responses from the courts and the police. Martha Shaffer and Nicholas Bala’s analysis of changes in family law in Canada provides a number of powerful examples of the challenges inherent in shifting public and legal attitudes towards woman abuse. Finally, in Chapter 13, Peter Jaffe, David Wolfe and colleagues examine the role of the education system in preventing violence. Arguing that schools need to focus on the “Fourth R” of relationships, the authors present the Stage-Based School Change Model as an alternative to the quick-fix zero tolerance policies that fail to address the needs of
the most vulnerable children.

In the final chapter, the editors synthesize the book’s key findings in terms of specific steps that can be taken by communities, service providers, and policy makers. They stress the importance of reaching out to families from diverse cultural backgrounds, involving fathers, and, most importantly, engaging communities.

This is a well-organized collection of papers that provides a good overview of the state of knowledge and innovative practice in an emerging field of practice. The book makes effective use of the available research, especially some of the more recent findings where “large-scale epidemiological studies are yielding new light on the interplay of the many risk factors that characterize homes touched by violence” (p. 224). The editors caution, however, that there is still limited research on effective practices with children exposed to domestic violence. As a result, a number of chapters primarily describe new programs that have minimal, if any, outcome results. The selection of chapters nevertheless provides a helpful framework for developing policies and practices in response to children’s exposure to domestic violence.

Although the editors stress that “children are best insulated from the effects of exposure to violence when their mothers can live safely and their fathers can function without violence” (p. 221), it is difficult, even in such a carefully organized selection of papers, to completely avoid the tensions that can arise between perceptions of what is in the best interest of children and what is in the best interest of their victimized mothers. The book delineates the need for intervention around the concept of “domestic violence,” a gender-neutral term that hides the fact that domestic violence pertains to woman abuse most of the time. The book would have been further enriched by addressing more explicitly the perspectives from advocates in the violence-against-women field and, in particular, the perspectives of victimized mothers.

The editors convey to the reader the importance of methodology to evaluation. The editors note that “the sophistication of research has increased from small-scale studies of at-risk samples (e.g., children in shelters) to include prospective studies and general population surveys” (p. 224). This strengthens their major point: Evaluation must be a part of “best practices.” The editors note, however, that “…there is insufficient research and evaluation to definitively conclude what is best” (p. 4) and conclude there is a “difficulty of attracting funding for rigorous evaluations” (p. 226). Therefore, the challenge is to implement rigorous research designs that will contribute to the empirical knowledge base within a system that lacks resources, which reduces the practical application of the book.

Protecting Children from Domestic Violence provides practitioners, policy makers, and researchers with an excellent overview of current knowledge and practices in working with children exposed to domestic violence. While stressing the need for more evaluation research, the book strikes a practical balance stating that “research-derived knowledge with that gained in the field informs interventions for children” (p. 224). Avoiding overly simplistic answers to these complex situations, the contributors challenge the assumption that interventions are required in all cases and emphasize broad-based services that address the problem at multiple levels.


Linda L. Baker is Executive Director of the Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System in London, Ontario. She has co-authored several resources for criminal justice professionals and educators, most recently Learning to Listen, Learning to Help: Understanding Woman Abuse and its Effects on Children (2005).

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References
