

EDITORIAL

Developmental approaches to substance use and abuse

DANTE CICHETTI^a AND SUNIYA S. LUTHAR^b

^a*Mt. Hope Family Center, University of Rochester; and* ^b*Teacher's College, Columbia University*

In 1996 the Institute of Medicine (IOM, 1996) issued a report on pathways to addiction. Although focused on the use of illegal drugs, the recommendations of the committee are equally applicable to more socially condoned, but still addictive, substances such as alcohol. The IOM (1996) report articulated the types of research that would be needed to expand the understanding of the etiology of drug use disorders, including the following: (a) multidisciplinary research to investigate the combined effects of biological, psychosocial, and contextual factors as they relate to the development of drug use, abuse, and dependence; (b) studies of sufficient duration to enable follow-up of participants in determining the role of risk and protective factors related to the transition from drug use to abuse to dependence; (c) research investigating the role of family factors in the etiology of drug use and abuse; (d) examination of psychopathology as a precursor to drug use and abuse in adolescents and adults; (e) studies of risk and protective factors related to drug use and abuse, especially during discrete developmental stages; and (f) investigation of childhood risk and protective factors that are associated with drug abuse and dependence. In reflecting on these comprehensive goals, striking similarities emerge with respect to these research foci and the field of developmental psychopathol-

ogy (Cicchetti & Cohen, 1995; Cicchetti & Toth, 1991). Specifically, the principles that guide inquiries conceptualized within a developmental psychopathology framework can be applied toward the conduct of studies designed to address the agenda generated by the IOM (1996) report on substance abuse.

Developmental psychopathology, with its life-span perspective, has the potential to unite the various conceptual approaches to substance use and abuse that have historically emanated from multiple fields of inquiry (Cicchetti, *in press*; Glantz, 1992). As such, progress can be made toward understanding substance use and abuse and their determinants, pathways, sequelae, prevention, and treatment by integrating knowledge from diverse disciplines. Rather than focusing solely on the incidence and prevalence of substance use and abuse, a developmental psychopathology perspective maintains that an articulation of the processes whereby substance use evolves into abuse and why this occurs in some individuals but not in others is of paramount importance (Cicchetti, *in press*; Glantz, 1992; Luthar, Cushing, & McMahon, 1997). An elucidation of evolving capacities and limitations that characterize varied stages of development (Sroufe & Rutter, 1984) also has the potential to more clearly portray why some individuals divert from substance use into abuse and dependence whereas others never engage in addictive behavior. Moreover, understanding what enables some individuals who have engaged in addictive behavior to resume nonad-

Address correspondence and reprint requests to: Dante Cicchetti, Ph.D., Mt. Hope Family Center, University of Rochester, 187 Edinborough Street, Rochester, NY 14608.

dictive life styles is especially compelling for informing intervention and prevention efforts. In order to fully comprehend substance use and abuse, it is necessary to consider multiple pathways to abstinence, as well as to adaptive and maladaptive substance use. As such, developmental variations in cognitive, representational, interpersonal, and social-cognitive capacities, in conjunction with genetic factors and biological domains of functioning, must be addressed (Cicchetti & Rogosch, 1999; Glantz, 1992; Sroufe, 1997).

A developmental psychopathology analysis also must seek to elucidate how prior sequences of adaptation or maladaptation contribute to current functioning (Kandel, 1978). For example, factors that contributed to the initiation of substance use and abuse are not necessarily the same as those factors that maintain a persistent pattern of abuse. Individual differences analyses also are likely to be necessary in order to understand varied trajectories of functioning from use to abuse and from persistent to limited abuse across individuals with seemingly similar experiences. The importance of integrating biological, psychological, and contextual perspectives in or-

der to allow for a sufficiently complex portrayal of these diverse pathways cannot be emphasized enough (see Cicchetti & Aber, 1998).

In this Special Issue, we invited contributors to draw from their work in the area of developmental psychopathology in order to move toward an understanding of the processes and mechanisms that contribute to substance use and abuse, as well as to try to articulate factors that may protect seemingly high risk individuals from engaging in the abuse of substances (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, in press). We also requested contributors to consider the implications of their work for prevention, intervention, and social policy. We believe that the papers contained in this Special Issue represent an important step toward realizing the goals articulated in the IOM (1996) report. Moreover, we maintain that, by incorporating the principles embodied by developmental psychopathology into investigations of substance use and abuse, progress in more fully understanding and addressing the potentially destructive misuse of substances can be made and sustained (cf. Cicchetti, in press; Cicchetti & Rogosch, 1999).

References

- Cicchetti, D. (in press). A developmental psychopathology perspective on drug abuse. In M. D. Glantz & C. R. Hartel (Eds.), *Drug abuse: Origins and interventions*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Cicchetti, D., & Aber, J. L. (Eds.), (1998). Contextualism and developmental psychopathology [Special issue]. *Development and Psychopathology*, 10(2).
- Cicchetti, D., & Cohen, D. J. (1995). Perspectives on developmental psychopathology. In D. Cicchetti & D. J. Cohen (Eds.), *Developmental psychopathology: Vol. 1. Theory and methods* (pp. 3–20). New York: Wiley.
- Cicchetti, D., & Rogosch, F. A. (1999). Psychopathology as risk for adolescent substance use disorders: A developmental psychopathology perspective. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 28, 355–365.
- Cicchetti, D., & Toth, S. L. (1991). The making of a developmental psychopathologist. In J. Cantor, C. Spiker, & L. Lipsitt (Eds.), *Child behavior and development: Training for diversity* (pp. 34–72). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Glantz, M. (1992). A developmental psychopathology model of drug abuse vulnerability. In M. Glantz & R. Pickens (Eds.), *Vulnerability to drug abuse* (pp. 389–418). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Institute of Medicine (1996). *Pathways of addiction: Opportunities in drug abuse research*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Kandel, D. (1978). Convergences in prospective longitudinal surveys of drug use in normal populations. In D. Kandel (Ed.), *Longitudinal research on drug use* (pp. 3–38). Washington, DC: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation.
- Luthar, S., Cicchetti, D., & Becker, B. (in press). The construct of resilience: A critical evaluation and guidelines for future work. *Child Development*.
- Luthar, S. S., Cushing, G., & McMahon, T. J. (1997). Interdisciplinary interface: Developmental principles brought to substance abuse research. In S. S. Luthar, J. A. Burack, D. Cicchetti, & J. R. Weisz (Eds.), *Developmental psychopathology: Perspectives on adjustment, risk, and disorder* (pp. 437–456). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Sroufe, L. A. (1997). Psychopathology as an outcome of development. *Development and Psychopathology*, 9, 251–268.
- Sroufe, L. A., & Rutter, M. (1984). The domain of developmental psychopathology. *Child Development*, 55, 17–29.