

## Clinical application No. 12

### Problem-resolving styles in family and adjustment of children

**Reference:** Hetherington, E. M. (2006). The influence of conflict, marital problem solving and parenting on children's adjustment in nondivorced, divorced, and remarried families, in Clarke-Stewart, A. & Dunn, J. (Eds.). *Families Count: Effects on Child and Adolescent Development*, 203-229.

#### Accompanying student's website:

<http://www.iianthropology.org/psychologychildrensadjustment.html>

#### 1. Brief synopsis

1.1. **Data base:** longitudinal studies on 1,400 families and 2,800 children (p. 205)

Theory: Problem-solving styles (Hostile-confrontational, hostile-withdrawn, engaged and avoidant), spilling effect, statistics, etc.

1.2. **Target age:** Early to mid-adolescence.

1.3. **Problem:** How marital conflict, divorce, and remarriage affect parenting, parent-child and sibling relationships, and the adjustment of children as they move from early to mid-adolescence.

#### 1. Conclusions:

1.1. Diversity of responses;

1.2. Hostile patterns – more deleterious to the adjustment of children.

1.3. The marital hostility is destructive; the child's response – low social responsibility, cognitive agency, and high externalizing (non-compliance, norm breaking, impulsivity, and aggression); differential effect – adolescent internalizing (elevated anxiety and depressive symptoms); lack of behavioral control and lack of emotional regulation; models of adjustments are similar.

- 1.4. Risk factor - coercive conflicting parenting (more likely for discordant, unsatisfying, hostile marital relationships); protective factor – authoritative parenting;
- 1.5. Both biological and social factors – important in understanding parent child relationships and child adjustment (biologically unrelated parents and children – more difficult to form involved, close, affectionate ties, but  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the adolescents described their relationships with their stepparents as “close” and “very close”).
- 1.6. Laudable social goal - strengthening and promoting positive family relationships.

## **2. Applications**

- 2.1. I found the work of E. Hetherington useful because of the new theoretical information I had learned. I has not taken a statistics course yet, so I was not able to evaluate the case studies and to read critically the published diagrams.
- 2.2. The conclusions about the biological and social factors would be very essential for MFT.
- 2.3. The author makes certain conclusions about the interrelations between the problem-solving styles and the adolescents' adjustments, but he also points to the diversity of responses and differential effect, as well as on protective factors like authoritative parenting.
- 2.4. The policy/practice application makes me think that the big companies and institutions should provide family consultants for their employees that would help promptly either in family crisis or to prevent such. Following the spilling effect – hostile family relationships influence the quality of work.