

Special Issue Editorial

Honoring the Contributions and Legacy of Thomas Dishion

Daniel S. Shaw¹ and Dante Cicchetti^{2,3}

¹Department of Psychology, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA, USA; ²Institute of Child Development, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, USA and

³Mt. Hope Family Center, University of Rochester, Rochester, NY, USA

It is not every day, year, or decade that the *Journal* dedicates an entire issue to honor the contributions of an individual scholar. There has been only one such issue in the *Journal's* history, to honor the work of Nicki Crick. For similar reasons, the current Special Issue is dedicated to the contributions of Tom Dishion, who like Nicki made enormous impacts to the field of psychopathology and sadly also was lost to us prematurely. Following an enormous sense of loss and appreciation for Tom's varied and significant contributions to developmental psychopathology, this volume was created in Tom's honor.

As suggested by the diversity of topics covered in the 24 papers of this volume, Tom's contributions covered the full gamut of developmental psychopathology. His theoretical interests spanned from social learning (e.g., coercion theory) to motivational processes, to dynamic systems theory, to evolutionary models. Tom also was always interested in developing new methods for measuring constructs of interest, especially those related to key social processes among family members or between peers. Within a Bronfenbrennerian ecological lens, he studied the contributions of youth (including psychophysiological processes), peers, and parents in contributing to children's and adolescents' problem behavior. He also demonstrated continued interest in culture, poverty, and other broader societal forces influencing youth development (e.g., the advent of social media). Finally, Tom was interested in prevention and developing new family-centered interventions that could activate parents to become more involved in their children's welfare, while being keenly aware of the potential iatrogenic effects that intervening with youth and families could have. Like a lot of great thinkers of our time, Tom was rarely satisfied with the status quo, always looking at novel ways of conceptualizing etiology and intervention (e.g., pathways to early adolescent substance misuse, motivating parents of adolescents with problem behavior to engage in parent management training), devising creative and innovative ways to capture phenomenon (preferably using observational methods), and generating novel approaches to engage families in preventive interventions.

Below we describe some of Tom's contributions in more detail and how papers in the current volume, heavily influenced by

Tom's theoretical and empirical work, follow in his footsteps to push the field of developmental psychopathology forward.

Social Processes and Psychopathology

Following the tradition of Gerald Patterson and colleagues at the Oregon Social Learning Center (OSLC), Tom was passionate in his interest of social processes, primarily focusing on the contributions of peers and parents to youth problem behavior (Dishion, Spracklen, Andrews, & Patterson, 1996; Patterson, Dishion, & Yoerger, 2000). Early in his career, Tom quickly became enamored with capturing novel social processes by developing observational coding systems. Regarding peers, in collaboration with anthropologist Jovanna Poe, he developed a theoretical model and related observational tasks and coding systems to capture *peer deviancy training*, which he linked to the development and maintenance of multiple types of problem behavior during adolescence. In the current volume, Allen, Narr, Loeb, and Davis (2019) push Tom's observations forward, demonstrating that affiliation with deviant friends during adolescence is predicted by coercive parent-teen interactions and independently predicts multiple types of problem behavior and poorer overall adjustment in adulthood. Ehenreich, Meter, Jouriles, and Underwood (2019), also heavily influenced by Tom's focus on deviant peer affiliation, extend this work to the context of texting, which has become an essential component of adolescents' social functioning. The authors demonstrate that youth's proportion of peers who exchange antisocial texts independently predicts rule breaking but not aggressive behavior, and that youth externalizing behavior predicts the proportion of adolescents' peer network who exchange antisocial texts. Using a rare siblings-reared-apart design in which children from the same biological parents are reared by either biological or adoptive parents, Leve and colleagues (2019) find that associations between adoptive parent hostility and peer problems during middle childhood were largely accounted for by a path from birth mother internalizing symptoms to low child inhibitory control, consistent with passive gene correlation. Handley, Russotti, Rogosch, and Cicchetti (2019) tested two prospective mediational pathways underlying the effect of child maltreatment on the development of negative interactional patterns with friends and romantic relationships emerging into adulthood. Their results suggest that children who are exposed to maltreatment face significant interpersonal challenges, within both the friend and the romantic domains, in early adulthood. The findings of Handley et al. are consistent with Dishion and Snyder's (2016) theoretical

Author for Correspondence: Daniel Shaw, Department of Psychology, University of Pittsburgh, Sennott Square, 3rd Floor, 210 South Bouquet Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15260; E-mail: danielshaw@pitt.edu; or Dante Cicchetti, Institute of Child Development, University of Minnesota, 51 E. River Parkway, Minneapolis, MN 55455; E-mail: cicchett@umn.edu.

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framework for understanding the development of coercion and aggression in relationships. Finally, extending the focus on peer influence to neurobiology, Kim-Spoon and colleagues (2019) show that neural processes related to risk processing and cognitive control play an integral role in linking adolescent risk taking to peer substance use and, eventually, to youth substance use.

Tom was socialized in the “home” of coercion at OSLC under the influence of Patterson and colleagues, and he continued to study coercion in multiple contexts, including in his intervention work using the Family Check-Up (Smith, Dishion, Shaw, & Wilson, 2015) and a recent edited volume with the late Jim Snyder on coercive relationship processes between parents, between parents and youth, as well as between peers (Dishion & Snyder, 2016). Tom also had a strong interest in the role of parental monitoring in influencing the regulation of adolescent problem behavior and affiliation with deviant peers. He developed theory (Dishion & McMahon, 1998) and an observational task (and coding system) to elicit youth to disclosure of activities engaged in without adult supervision, and parents to demonstrate their knowledge (or lack thereof) about their adolescent’s friends, activities, and locations where they spent time. Following up on Tom’s interest in the salience of monitoring, Racz, McMahaon, King, Pinderhughes, and Bendezu (2019), utilizing the Fast Track Project data set, identify several childhood antecedents of parental monitoring in adolescence, including early child conduct problems, parenting warmth/involvement, satisfaction, and efficacy, as well as parent–child relationship quality.

Other papers in this issue focus on related social processes. O’Hara, Sandler, Wolchik, and Tein (2019) examine the potential adverse effects of trajectories of exposure to parental conflict over a 6-year period following divorce, showing long-term effects on youth psychopathology for two high-conflict trajectories, and that adaptive youth coping strategies buffered these deleterious outcomes. Two of the contributions focus on conflict and coercive processes in romantic relationships in relation to intimate partner violence (IPV). Using the adult males from the Oregon Youth Study, Tiberio and Capaldi (2019) examine partners’ positive and negative affect during conflictual topic discussions as mediators of associations between partner’s trait hostility and IPV. For women but not for men, quicker negative affect reactivity partially explains this direct relation, whereas men are less likely to engage in negative reciprocity than women. Ha, Kim, and McGill (2019) find that although coercive processes in adolescent romantic relationships are not predictive of escalations in conflict, a higher likelihood to end dyadic positive behaviors mediates relations between initial levels of partner conflict and a latent construct of female conflict and IPV. Finally, bridging work on parental use of positive behavior support (PBS) in relation to the development of adolescents’ connectedness and subsequent development of deviant peer affiliation, antisocial behavior, and substance use in adolescence, Fosco and LoBraico (2019) find that on days when parents use more PBS, youth perceive higher levels of connectedness (termed PBS responsiveness), which in turn is related to lower levels of problem behavior. However, greater variations in daily use of PBS is related to greater fragility in connectedness, suggesting the importance of consistency and stability in caregiving.

Iatrogenic Effects of Group-Based Interventions for Treating Adolescent Problem Behavior

One of Tom’s most important traits was calling into question the status quo. This trait was most evident when he turned his

attention to studying intervention processes for treating adolescents with a history of antisocial behavior. In studying the effectiveness of his own Adolescent Transitions Program, he found that one of three conditions, a social skills group, led to *increases* in antisocial behavior and substance use; adolescents appeared to be teaching peers more refined ways of committing antisocial acts and using substances. Rather than downplaying these iatrogenic effects, he identified other researchers with similar findings, ultimately resulting in several publications with collaborators Ken Dodge, Joan McCord, and Francois Poulin (Dishion & Dodge, 2005; Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999; Dodge, Dishion, & Lansford, 2007), alerting the field to this potential hazard. Following up on Tom’s willingness to potentially throw oneself under the bus, in the current volume, Lochman and colleagues (2019) teamed up with Tom to examine potential iatrogenic effects of Lochman’s group-based Coping Power intervention. The authors find that aggressive youth with higher skin conductance reactivity and a variant of oxytocin receptor gene linked to hyperinvolvement in social bonding show less antisocial behavior if seen individually rather than in groups. In a related tangent, Howe (2019) describes the utility of assessing baseline target moderated mediation, where preventive interventions effects are mediated through change in specific targets and impacts vary across baseline levels of the target. A strategy for evaluating meaningful preventive outcomes is presented to efficiently determine thresholds for estimating indices of intervention effectiveness and prevent weak or potentially iatrogenic effects.

Taking an Evolutionary Perspective

Tom was a voracious reader across a broad array of disciplines, enjoying the challenge of incorporating seemingly disparate perspectives into his own research on the development of adolescent problem behavior. To that end, he integrated broad macromodels into his theoretical and empirical work, including life course history, ecological, and evolutionary perspectives, while continuing to study microprocesses within social interactions. One such interest was evolutionary theory (Belsky, Schlomer, & Ellis, 2012), how adaptive a fast-life course was for adolescents living in the confines of poverty and other chronic stressors. In the current issue, Biglan, Van Ryzin, Moore, Mauricci, and Mannan (2019) follow up on Tom’s work in evolutionary theory by focusing on the misalignment between modern human society and specific male phenotypes. Accordingly, the authors posit that the high frequency of developmental difficulties for many boys and young men can be accounted for by qualities that previously led to advantageous positions but are no longer adaptive in current society. Interventions and social policies that might lead to reductions of such developmental difficulties are recommended.

Intervention Development and the Family Check-Up

In addition to his long-standing interest in using parent management training methods for caregivers of youth demonstrating problem behavior based on his experiences at OSLC with colleagues Patterson, Marion Forgatch, Patti Chamberlain, and John Reid, Tom also became heavily interested in identifying novel ways to engage families reticent to seek support for their adolescents struggling with problem behavior (Shaw, Forgatch, Fishbein, & Sandler, 2018). Incorporating the principles of motivational interviewing that had previously been used to intervene with adults struggling with alcohol abuse (Miller & Rollnick,

2002), Tom created the Family Check-Up (FCU) for families with problematic adolescents (Dishion & Stormshak, 2007). As Miller and Rollnick had used motivational interviewing to generate internal dissonance between an individual's aspirations and current problems from alcohol misuse, Tom was able to translate this dissonance to parents concerned with the future welfare of their adolescents. He also located the FCU in middle schools to promote parent engagement. A few years later, he agreed to adapt the FCU to another developmental period of biological and social transition, the "terrible twos" (Dishion et al., 2008; Shaw, Dishion, Supplee, Gardner, & Arnds, 2006), and locate the service at a federally funded agency for families with young children at economic disadvantage: Women, Infants, and Children Nutritional Supplement Centers, making it possible to scale up the intervention nationally without having to create a new mechanism for the FCU's delivery. Ample empirical validation for the adolescent and early childhood versions of the FCU is evident, with follow-up outcomes extending more than 10 years for both versions (Connell, McKillop, & Dishion, 2016; Shaw et al., 2019).

Tom's interests in developing new interventions and exploring ways to identify new populations and contexts for testing existing models' effectiveness are well represented in the Special Issue. In Degarmo and Jones (2019), the authors examine an interactive online parent training program (Fathering Through Change) with a large sample of divorced or separated fathers, finding direct effects on the short term in child adjustment and father's use of coercive parenting, as well as an indirect effect from intervention to improved parenting to improved child adjustment. Luthar, Kumar, and Benoit (2019) present preliminary results from a short-term intervention for stressed mothers, the Authentic Connections Virtual group. This intervention was low cost, short term, and had very successful attendance. Luthar et al. suggest that their intervention could be applied to even more highly stressed mothers as well as their children. Moving to the primary school classroom, Musci and colleagues (2019) find that both peer contagion (i.e., higher levels of child aggression) and teacher emotional exhaustion contribute to lower implementation dosages of an established classroom-based intervention (i.e., Good Behavior Game), suggesting the need to consider such contextual factors when implementing the Good Behavior Game and other classroom-based models. Similarly, Gerwitz, Snyder, Zamir, Zhang, and Zhang (2019) test whether fathers with poorer emotional regulation would respond differentially to a group-based, postdeployment program for veterans with children. The authors find that fathers high on emotion regulation issues at baseline show reductions in distress avoidance compared to controls, which in turn is related to improvements in observed parenting and children's internalizing symptoms. Leijten and colleagues (2019) examine 10 trials of the Incredible Years intervention to test whether Incredible Years is reliably associated with changes in parental depression in addition to established effects on parenting and child disruptive behavior. They find that maternal depression does not reliably change in most latent classes of intervention effects over time, except in one class where child conduct problems and maternal depression were initially severe. Finally, Goodman, Dodge, Bai, O'Donnell, and Murphy (2019) test 2-year outcomes of Dodge's Family Connects program on child emergency room care, finding a 37% reduction in such care for families randomly assigned to Family Connects.

The final group of papers extends prior research on the Family Check-Up, using both early adolescent and early childhood

versions. Stormshak and colleagues (2019) introduce an eHealth version of the FCU to increase its accessibility for middle school families. Random assignment to the FCU Online program, with coaching support, is linked to short-term improvements in child emotional problems and both parental confidence and self-efficacy. Three other papers test new and established youth outcomes of the FCU with the Early Steps Multisite cohort, a randomized controlled trial of 731 families from three communities in the United States. Smith and colleagues (2019) examine intervention effects of the FCU on dysregulated irritability in early childhood, with improvements found from child ages 2 to 4, which in turn are linked to reductions in child problem behavior at age 10. Connell and colleagues (2019) document indirect effects of the FCU on suicide risk at ages 10 and 14, mediated by treatment-related improvements in child inhibitory control during middle childhood. Finally, Shaw and colleagues (2019) find FCU intervention effects on child conduct problems from ages 2 to 14, with those receiving the FCU more likely to show a persistently low versus persistently high trajectory of problem behavior. Furthermore, direct effects were moderated by genetic susceptibility in a manner consistent with differential susceptibility.

In closing, we believe Tom would be awfully proud of these tributes to the many ways he moved the field of developmental psychopathology forward. While the volume of papers is not exhaustive in recognizing some of Tom's many interests and contributions to the field (e.g., dynamic systems theory, ethical considerations in applying evidence-based practices, and organizing training and group activities to expedite the transfer and development of knowledge), we believe these papers capture and build upon many of his most notable achievements. Although Tom is dearly missed, it is clear his influence is very much alive and well and will continue to impact the field for decades.

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