Development and treatment of psychosocial problems
(2017)

M. Deković & A. L. van Baar
1/ Manifestations, development and determinants of child psychosocial problems

Early development

- Early developmental assessment instruments (e.g. Bayley III, ASQ)
- Moderate preterm birth needs attention also at school age
- Behavioral inhibition and anxiety in young children

Personality, temperament, and adjustment

- Development of personality, parenting and problem behavior
- Children’s differential susceptibility to parenting: Putting ‘for better and for worse’ to the test

Psychopathology

- Preschool children with ADHD and DBD: Longitudinal study of executive control disturbances
- The Child Behavior Checklist Dysregulation Profile in childhood and adolescence
- Development of infant self-regulation within the early caregiver relationship: A cascade model
- The reciprocal relationship between information processing biases and dysfunctional emotion
- The development of emotional dysregulation in preadolescents: Macro- and micro-level relations between parenting and emotional dysregulation as predictors of psychosocial problems
- Development of children adopted from Poland: The role of early life risk factors, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders and parenting

Family relations, parenting

- Development of a multi-domain parenting questionnaire for parents of infants, toddlers and preschoolers
- Sibling, peer and parent-child relationships and child and adolescent development
- Family break-up, system break-down: Dynamic post-divorce processes and child adjustment over time
- Families adjusting to adversity: Individual and family-level variables affecting emotional distress following stressful life event

Peer relations

- Bullying contextualized: A longitudinal study of its change and stability
- Coercion and prosociality: strategies for resource control in children and monkeys

Media

- Family and media
Sexuality and gender

- Sexual development in context: The role of family and peers (project STARS)
- Biosocial influences on child and adolescent gender development

2/ Interventions aimed at reducing psychosocial and childrearing problems

Externalizing (aggression, delinquency)

- Prevention of externalizing problem behavior in school age children: Effectiveness of Alles Kidzzz
- A computer training for positive attention and interpretations aimed to decrease aggressive behaviors in children
- Solid as a rock, flexible as water? Improving students’ psychosocial wellbeing in prevocational schools

Internalizing (depression, grief)

- Effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of a Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) program in clinically depressed adolescents; individual CBT versus care as usual
- Development and evaluation of a cognitive behavioral therapeutic intervention for bereaved children and their parents
- Development and evaluation of a cognitive behavioral therapeutic intervention for bereaved children and their parents
- Core elements of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) in preventing depression in adolescents: Does the type, sequence and dosage of elements matter?
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) for parents and youth
- Anxiety and depression consortium
Early development
Early developmental assessment instruments

Researchers: Anneloes van Baar, Marjolein Verhoeven,
Funding: PhD project (grant ZonMw)
Website: www.uu.nl/onderzoek/opmaat

Summary
In order to identify developmental problems and to evaluate intervention programs, standardized diagnostic instruments for infants and toddlers with appropriate Dutch norms are necessary in the Netherlands. Worldwide, including in the Netherlands, the Bayley Scales of Infant and Toddler Development are frequently used for these purposes (Bayley, 2006). In 2006 a new version was published, the Bayley III. The Bayley III now consists of five subscales regarding the development of cognition, language comprehension, language expression, fine motor skills and gross motor skills. A parental questionnaire was added regarding socio-emotional development and adaptive functioning. This version is an adaptation of the earlier editions, which resulted in a better and more differentiated assessment of the developmental level of infants and toddlers. This has increased the diagnostic potential of the scales. We performed a study to create a Dutch version, the Bayley III-NL. In November 2014 the manuals and the Dutch norms for the new Bayley III-NL have been published. Data have been collected of 2100 children between 1 and 43 months old. A reliability study and a validation study were also included. The sample was representative for the Dutch population with regard to level of parental education, ethnicity and region. In addition, parents are asked to complete parental questionnaires on parenting, personality, child development including social-emotional development and family background characteristics.
As part of this project also the Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ3) and Ages and Stages Questionnaires; Social Emotional (ASQ;SE) were used. These are screening questionnaires for parents have 21 and 9 age appropriate versions for children between 2 months and 60 months of age. The ASQ3 informs on gross and fine motor development, problem solving, communication and personal social behavior. The ASQ;se informs on social emotional development, concerning self-regulation, compliance, communication, adaptive behaviors, autonomy, affect, and interaction with people. These instruments still need to be optimized for the Dutch population.

Keywords: Infants, Toddlers, Developmental assessment, Bayley III, ASQ3, ASQ;se

Publications
Moderately preterm children need attention!

**Researchers:** Lilly Bogičević, Marjanneke De Jong, Marjolein Verhoeven, Anneloes van Baar

**Period:** September 2010 – November 2020

**Funding:** PhD Project (grant UU)

**Website:** [www.stapproject.nl](http://www.stapproject.nl)

**Summary**

Every year 11,000 children (6.3% of all births) are born with a gestational age of 32–36.6 weeks (moderately preterm) in the Netherlands. Little is known about the consequences of moderately preterm birth, although there are indications that these children are at risk for developmental problems. A Dutch study (van Baar et al., 2009) showed that moderately preterm children at school age (7–9 years) have more attention and concentration problems than term born children. In the current project a group of moderately premature children and a group of full term peers are followed from infancy through school age.

Main aims of the current project are: (1) to compare behaviour and neurodevelopment of a group of moderately preterm children with a group of full term peers; (2) to examine how moderately preterm children develop over time on various domains, i.e. general cognition, attention capacities, processing speed and behaviour; (3) to investigate how to identify early on which children are at an increased risk for developmental problems by the time they reach school age. A collaboration with eight hospitals in the neighborhood of Utrecht has been organized for the acquisition of participants. Participating hospitals are: Meander Medisch Centrum (Amersfoort), St. Antonius Ziekenhuis (Nieuwegein), Amstelland Ziekenhuis (Amstelveen), Flevoziekenhuis (Almere), Diakonessenhuis (Utrecht), Ziekenhuis Gelderse Vallei (Ede), Tergooiziekenhuizen (Blaricum) en Zuwe Hofpoort Ziekenhuis (Woerden) and Universitair Medisch Centrum Utrecht. Around 200 term and moderately preterm participants have been included; a subgroup of extreme preterm children is studied as well with the same protocol.

The project has included five waves of data collection at 12, 18, 24, 36 and 72 months of age (corrected for prematurity). At each wave, parents answered several questionnaires on the development of their children and their parenting behavior. In the second wave, attention and concentration capacities of the children were assessed using eye tracker technology. In addition, mothers and their children were observed while playing together. During the third wave, the children’s cognitive, language and motor development was assessed using the third version of the Bayley Scales of Infant and Toddlers Development. As the children have now reached school age, currently data is being collected for the fifth wave. Again attention capacities and mother-child interaction are studied, next to the children’s intelligence levels and behavior problems, as well as parenting habits in their families.

**Keywords:** Prematurity, Childhood, Attention, Longitudinal

**Publications**


Prematurity stereotypes in parents of a premature baby and professionals working with premature babies

Researchers: Joyce Endendijk, Anneloes van Baar
Period: 2016-
Funding: Research project based on bachelor and master thesis research

Summary

Several studies show that non-optimal parenting for a part explains negative development of prematurely born children. We do not know however, why some parents use non-optimal parenting strategies with their prematurely born children and others do not. In this study we will examine prematurity stereotypes (i.e., biased views about the development of premature babies) as a mechanism explaining individual differences in responses to/parenting of premature babies. To this end we will have to further validate our newly developed prematurity stereotypes Implicit Association Test (IAT).

For this thesis project participants (e.g., mothers, fathers, professionals working with premature babies) have yet to be recruited to take part in an online survey (containing the prematurity stereotypes IAT and some questionnaires).

Possible research topics are:

- The relations between perceived child vulnerability, prematurity stereotypes, parenting practices and child development
- Are prematurity stereotypes malleable by the information that is presented about the development premature babies (negative, neutral, positive)
- Differences in prematurity stereotypes between parents with or without a prematurely born child, professionals working with premature babies, and adults without a child
Behavioral inhibition and anxiety in young children

**Researchers:** Leonie Vreeke, Anneloes van Baar

**Period:** 2015-

**Funding:** Research project based on bachelor and master thesis research

**Summary**

Anxiety disorders belong to the most prevalent types of psychopathology among children and adolescents: about 5% of all youths meet the diagnostic criteria of an anxiety disorder and cumulative figures indicate that almost 20% suffer from a clinically significant anxiety problem before the age of 16 (Costello, Mustillo, Erkanli, Keeler, & Angold, 2003; Verhulst, van der Ende, Ferdinand, & Kasius, 1997). However, the internalizing nature of anxiety means that this problem often remains hidden, thereby hindering referral to clinical treatment settings (Angold, Costello, Farmer, Burns, & Erkanli, 1999). Nevertheless, there may be clear markers of anxiety problems that are already visible during the early stages of development. One important candidate in this regard is behavioral inhibition, which refers to the temperament characteristic of being unusually shy and withdrawn when confronted with new and unknown stimuli and situations (Kagan, 1994).

While it is clear that behavioral inhibition is associated with a heightened risk for developing anxiety pathology, it is also true that not all temperamentally vulnerable children develop anxiety problems. For example, in a study by Biederman et al. (1993), a clear majority of the inhibited children did not develop this type of psychopathology. This fits nicely with recent etiological models of childhood anxiety which stress the importance of an interplay between child temperament and environmental risk factors (e.g., Lahat, Hong, & Fox, 2011; Muris, 2007; Rapee, 2001; Rubin, Coplan, & Bowker, 2009). One of the environmental risk factors thought to be involved in the pathogenesis of childhood anxiety is parenting behavior such as overprotective, overcontrolling parenting. Parents with this parenting style try to shield their child from potential danger and distress by intrusively providing unnecessary help to the child and restricting its exposure to a broad range of situations. The net effect is that the child’s fear and anxiety are enhanced because parents increase the awareness of danger, reduce the level of perceived control, and promote avoidance behavior in their offspring (Rapee, 1997).

In this project we further examine the relation between parenting behaviors and anxiety development.

**Keywords:** Behavioral Inhibition, Anxiety, Parenting behaviors

**Publications**


Personality, temperament, and adjustment
Development of personality, parenting and problem behavior

Researchers: Maja Deković, Peter Prinzie (PI, Erasmus University), Amaranta De Haan (Erasmus University)
Funding: partly UU

Summary

One fundamental challenge for psychological science is to explain why different individuals progress along different life trajectories. In contrast to earlier theories about socialization and child development, which emphasized only parents’ effects on child development, current theories and models on child development emphasize that children and their environment form a system with continuously ongoing, bidirectional processes of interaction (e.g., Sameroff, 2010). Transactional models, which integrate parent and child effects, may be especially successful in describing and explaining an (un)successful development in children and adolescents.

In line with this perspective, the Flemish Study on Parenting Personality and Development (FSPPD, Prinzie et al., 2003), a longitudinal study with 7 waves, addresses a fundamentally important question: how do parents and children jointly shape the development of personality and problem behavior from early childhood to emerging adulthood? In addition, the FSPPD attempts to explain parent and child effects via the search for theoretically relevant mediators, rather than simply documenting effects.

The FSPPD started in 1999 with four different age cohorts (4, 5, 6, and 7 years of age at the initial assessment). Data are available for seven measurement times (1999, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2009, and 2012). The inclusion of different informants and the use of comprehensive Big Five instruments to measure child and parent personality (see measures) make the data of this longitudinal study unique. At Time 1, 592 families participated (50% boys), at Time 7 460 participants were involved.

Measures

Personality. Child as well as parent personality characteristics are measured with comprehensive Big Five instruments. Child personality is measured with the Hierarchical Personality Inventory for Children (HiPIC) by both parents, the teacher and the child. The HiPIC assesses five dimensions: Extraversion, Benevolence, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability and Imagination, which are further subdivided into 18 facets. Parent personality is measured by the Five-Factor Personality Inventory (FFPI).

Problem Behavior. In all waves, children’s externalizing and internalizing behavior is rated by parents using the Dutch translation of the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL), and by teachers using the Teacher Report Form (TRF). From 2007 on, children’s reports, Youth Self Report (YSR), are available.

Parenting, parental competence, and closeness. Both negative (Overreactivity, Overprotection) and positive parenting (Warmth, Autonomy support) as well as parental competence and closeness are measured by mothers, fathers and adolescents.

Keywords: child personality, parent personality, parenting, externalizing and internalizing problems,

Publications


Children's differential susceptibility to parenting: Putting ‘for better and for worse’ to the test

Researchers: Meike Slagt, Judith Dubas, Marcel van Aken, Maja Deković
Period: 2012 – 2016
Funding: NWO

Summary:
The overarching aim of this PhD-project is to examine whether children (n = 280; 49% girls, Mage = 4 years 9 months) vary in their susceptibility to rearing, both for better and for worse. Traditional notions about children’s differing responses to rearing experiences usually describe vulnerable children as being disproportionally affected by adverse experiences (the so-called diathesis-stress model); the differential susceptibility hypothesis instead postulates that children vary more generally in their susceptibility to parenting. Moreover, the same children that are most vulnerable to harsh parenting are thought to profit most from supportive parenting (“for better and for worse”). In this project we use children’s temperament (negative emotionality and surgency) as a marker of susceptibility.

First, with an experiment we test whether those children that are most affected by parents’ negative feedback, are also the ones that profit most from parents’ positive feedback. Second, through microlevel observations of parent-child interactions we examine whether children differ in their emotions and behaviors towards parents, depending on their temperamental susceptibility. Finally, using a longitudinal survey, we study whether children’s (emotional) reactions to parents within parent-child interactions can serve as a mechanism linking children’s temperamental susceptibility to their long-term development.

Keywords: differential susceptibility, person-environment interactions, temperament, parenting

Publications
Psychopathology
Preschool children with ADHD and DBD: Longitudinal study of executive control disturbances

Researchers: Maja Deković, M., Kim Schoemaker (Free University, Amsterdam), Walter Matthys (PI, emeritus)
Period: 2007-2013
Funding: PhD project (grant UU)

Summary
Impairments in executive functions are consistently associated with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and to a lesser extent, with disruptive behavior disorder (DBD), i.e., oppositional defiant disorder or conduct disorder, in school-aged children. Recently, larger numbers of children with these disorders are diagnosed earlier in development, yet knowledge about impairments in clinically diagnosed preschool children and the role of co-morbidity is limited. Therefore, the aim of the current study is to examine executive functions in clinically referred preschool children with a clinical diagnosis of ADHD, DBD, and ADHD+DBD. A second aim is to study the longitudinal development of executive functions in this clinical sample and examine if executive functions are a risk factor for an ADHD and/or DBD diagnosis at early school-age.

For the present study children were referred to the outpatient clinic for preschool children with behavior problems at the Child and Adolescent psychiatry department of the University Medical Center Utrecht. At the psychiatric assessment children were diagnosed with ADHD and/or DBD, additionally, a typically developing group was included. Children were between the ages of 3 ½ and 5 ½ years at the first assessment, followed by two assessments 9 and 18 months later. A battery of executive function tasks was administrated, aimed to measure working memory, inhibition and cognitive flexibility. Furthermore, environmental risk factors (parental practices, including observations, parental distress, depression and impulsivity with the parent and level of education) associated with ADHD and DBD were assessed.

Keywords: behavior problems, executive functions, parenting, observations

Publications
The Child Behavior Checklist Dysregulation Profile in Childhood and Adolescence

Researchers: Marike Deutz, Anneloes van Baar, Maja Deković, Peter Prinzie, Helen Vossen.
Period: 2012–2016
Funding: NWO

Summary:
Co-occurrence of different types of behavior problems (e.g. internalizing and externalizing) is relatively common in children with behavior problems, yet research into the etiology of co-occurring problems is limited. Co-occurring behavior problems have been associated with mood lability and have been proposed to be underlain by emotional regulation problems.

Recently, one way to operationalize regulation problems has been termed the CBCL-Dysregulation Profile (CBCL-DP), as it can be measured with the commonly used Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL). The CBCL-DP reflects co-occurring elevated scores on three scales which each measure a component of self-regulation. Attention problems are thought to reflect cognitive dysregulation, aggressive behavior would refer to behavioral dysregulation and anxious/depressed behavior would consider affective dysregulation. Therefore CBCL-DP has been described as a broad disorder of self-regulation.

The first aim of this project is to examine the structure of the CBCL – Dysregulation Profile. The second aim is to examine the development of CBCL–DP from childhood to adolescence, and its relations to personality (pathology), and executive functioning in both community and clinical samples. The aims will be examined across different developmental periods (from toddlerhood to emerging adulthood). Within a transactional model, precursors and consequences from both the child, peer, and parental domain will be examined.

Keywords: behavior problems, dysregulation, personality (pathology), parenting, self-regulation, executive functioning

Publications

Development of infant self-regulation within the early caregiver relationship: A cascade model

**Researchers:** Sanne Geeraerts, Maja Deković, Jorg Huijding  
**Period:** 2014 – 2019  
**Funding:** NWO gravitation program

**Summary:**

Self-regulation, defined as the ability to modulate cognitions, affect, and behavior, is found to be predictive of numerous adaptive and non-adaptive outcomes across the life-span, including academic achievement and externalizing and internalizing problems. However, the precise road from early forms of self-regulation to future adaptation is still poorly understood.

Self-regulation develops through interactions with others, and it is considered to be an essential milestone for 2- to 3-year old children. Before self-regulation emerges, infants already have some elementary behaviors at their disposal which aid to the regulation of negative emotions such as anger and fear. As infants also need to rely on parental support to regulate these negative emotions, infants are considered to be mainly capable of co-regulation instead of self-regulation.

In the present study we will examine the early development of self-regulation from infancy to toddlerhood and the processes through which the early development of infant self-regulation within the proximal caregiver relationship influences the broad socio-emotional adaptation over time, as proposed by a developmental cascade model. We will also examine the buffering role of parental self-regulation in this cascade model.

Questions will be studied by using both macro-approaches, micro-approaches (by conducting an observational study to investigate real time interactions) and eye-tracking data.

**Keywords:** Self-regulation, attention, early caregiver relationship, infancy, observations

**Publications**
The reciprocal relationship between information processing biases and dysfunctional emotion

Researchers: Jorg Huijding, J., Bouwmeester, S. (Erasmus University Rotterdam)
Period: 2015 -
Funding: Research project based on bachelor and master thesis research

Summary
Cognitive models of psychopathology assume that biases in information processing play an important role in the onset and maintenance of disorders. How exactly cognitive biases are involved in the exacerbation of internalizing and/or externalizing emotional problems over time is rarely made explicit, however.

In a recent line of studies in children and students, we have tried to model the interaction between cognitive biases and anxiety over time, during a computer task in which participants gather information about a novel situation. During this task fear / anxiety regarding the new situation and biases in cognitive information processing regarding the situation were repeatedly assessed. The resulting time series of data were used to test the existence of a reciprocal relationship between cognitive biases and anxiety using various statistical techniques.

Results consistently show that there is indeed a reciprocal relationship between anxiety and biases in attention, interpretation and information seeking (confirmation bias). Many questions remain however. For instance, how this reciprocal relationship is controlled in most and why it runs wild in some children. Addressing such questions is the focus of the present project.

Depending on the interest of the participating student(s) we can also target on another type of emotional problems (e.g. anger / aggression), other types of information processing, and novel techniques for assessing cognitive bias (e.g. eye-tracking).

Keywords: Psychopathology, information processing, reciprocal relationship, emotional problems.

Publications
The development of emotional dysregulation in preadolescents: Macro- and micro-level relations between parenting and emotional dysregulation as predictors of psychosocial problems

Researchers: Soundry Staats, Jorg Huijding, Maja Deković
Period: 2016-2021
Funding: YouTH court, NWO_Gravitation program

Summary:
Research has shown that patterns of emotion dysregulation (EDR) in children and adolescents are associated with concurrent and later psychosocial problems. In addition, it is clear that parenting is related to the EDR. However, the mechanisms underlying these relationships are largely unknown. Particularly in preadolescence, it is still unclear whether the relationship is characterized by effects of parent behaviour on child EDR, effects of child EDR (and resultant behaviours) on parent behaviours, or that effects in both directions operate in some kind of interactive process. Similar unclarity exists with respect to the relation between EDR and psychosocial adjustment. In addition, studies examining the relationships between parenting and EDR are usually cross-sectional or prospective studies with relatively large periods of time between assessments. Although the latter type of studies allows conclusions about the development of EDR in developmental time (macro- approach), it tells little about the transactions between parenting and EDR in real time interactions (micro approach). It might well be that meaningful differences in micro patterns of dyadic behaviours exist that are indicative or predictive of macro-developmental outcomes. For this reason, an important aspect of the current project is that bidirectional relations between parenting and adolescent emotion (dys)regulation are assessed at the level of developmental time (macro approach, two waves 3 year apart), as well as during real time interactions (micro-approach) at each assessment wave.

Keywords: Emotion (dys)regulation, parenting, psychosocial problems, observations

Publications
Development of children adopted from Poland: The role of early life risk factors, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders and parenting

Researchers: Sandra Knuiman, Kathinka Rijk (Thomas More University College of the Catholic University of Leuven), René Hoksbergen en Anneloes van Baar

Period: 2008–2017

Funding: PhD project (grant UU)

Summary
Annually, 300 to 400 Polish children are adopted internationally. Prior to adoption, most of these children were exposed to circumstances which could harm their development, for example, deprivation or prenatal exposure to alcohol. Our study was initiated because of indications from the Dutch adoption agency that many behavioural problems were present in the group of children adopted from Poland.

The aim of this study is to examine the development and behaviour of Polish adoptees after adoption in relation to early life risk factors. Key topic throughout the study is fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD), because of the suspicion that many children in our research group were affected by exposure to alcohol during pregnancy. We investigate the occurrence of FASD and to what degree diagnosis or suspicion of FASD was associated with developmental outcomes in these children. The relation between behavioral problems and parenting is studied as well.

Participants are Dutch families of 133 children adopted from Poland between 1999 and 2006 (response rate is 73%). On average, the children were 3.0 years old at adoption. Average age at time of the study was 8.7 years. Adoptive parents completed a questionnaire concerning background variables of the child, functioning and behaviour of the children and the family situation.

Keywords: Adoption, early life risk factors, behavior, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, parenting

Publications


Family relations, parenting
Development of a multi-domain parenting questionnaire for parents of infants, toddlers and preschoolers

Researchers: Marjolein Verhoeven, Anneloes van Baar, Maja Deković, Denise Bodden

Period: 2010-

Funding: Research project based on bachelor and master thesis research

Summary

Parenting practices play a significant role in young children’s development. For example, there is growing evidence that positive, supportive parenting practices facilitate early childhood cognitive and social-emotional development. In contrast, harsh and inconsistent parenting practices have been repeatedly associated with the development of children’s problem behavior (e.g., oppositional behavior, aggression). As parents play such a central role in children’s lives, it is important to gain more insight in specific parenting practices and how and why they are associated with child development. One of the most efficient ways to gain more insight in how parents behave towards their children is by using self-reported questionnaires. However, there seems to be a lack of parenting assessment instruments for parents of young children (0-4 years). The parenting questionnaires that do exist generally center on the emotional bond between parent and child and the parents levels of emotional supportive behaviors (e.g. responsiveness, sensitivity), or they are concerned with problematic parenting practices only. In this way, such measures fail to capture the broad range of potentially important parenting behaviors. The goal of this project is to develop a multi-domain parenting questionnaire for parents of infants, toddlers and preschoolers that is relevant to professionals across research and applied settings.

Keywords: parenting, young children, assessment

Publications

Summary

An important subject within our research programme is the different contexts and their differentiated and combined impact on child and adolescent adjustment. Much is known about the effects of parent-child and peer relationships on child development, but much less known about the relationship between sibling relationship quality and child adjustment. Additionally, it is important to consider the differential and combined influences that these different social relationships may have on positive as well as negative child outcomes (competence vs. problem behaviour).

Within the current project we have conducted several large-scale cross-sectional questionnaire studies with 10- to 12-year old children concerning the sibling and parent-child relationships (e.g., child-rearing practices) and their association with personality, social development and problem behaviour.

Each year, bachelor-students have visited elementary schools. Children in grades 7 and 8 were asked to participate in the study. They filled out questionnaires concerning sibling relationship quality, parental differential treatment, parent-child relationship quality, parental child-rearing behaviour, peer relationship quality, sociometric status, personality, problem behaviour (internalizing and externalizing problems), and competence (academic, social, and general). This study has yielded data for a total of 2374 children. In addition, in 2008 we also asked parents of the participating children to fill out similar questionnaires, which yielded data of about 200 parents.

In a similar project, in January 2008 we started a longitudinal questionnaire study with 12- to 14-year old children. Master-students yearly visited a large school for secondary education. We also asked siblings of the participating adolescents to fill out the same questionnaires. These same pupils (and siblings) have been asked to participate in follow-up data collection each year until 2013. A total of 174 pupils have participated in at least the first three measurement waves. This longitudinal data was supplemented by cross-sectional data from first-year pupils from four other schools, yielding data for 892 first-year pupils and 205 siblings.

Besides adolescents, we also focus on sibling relationships of children at school entry. In a large-scale cross-sectional questionnaire study, we invited parents of one child at school entry (age 4-6) and at least one other child to fill out online questionnaires about parenting, sibling relationships, temperament, problem behavior, social competence and the marital relationship. So far, 1047 mothers and 510 fathers have participated in the study.

Culture is also an important context within our research programme. It is important to examine the universality of social processes and the importance of sibling, peer and parent-child relationships for child competence and problem behavior. In collaboration with Jnana Prabodhini Institute in Pune (India) we collected data on these concepts. A total of 602 Indian school children have participated in a cross-sectional study, with data collections in 2008, 2009 and 2010. The questionnaires that these Indian school children filled out were the same as used in the first above-mentioned Dutch study. Additionally, in 2014 a similar project with the same methodology and questionnaires was conducted in collaboration with the Institute of Psychology, Eotvos Lorand University in Hungary, yielding data from 294 school children. By combining the data of the Indian, Hungarian and the Dutch sample, we can compare the links between social relationships and child adjustment for these different countries.

One of the projects I am currently involved in concerns families in which one of the parents has cancer. These families are facing many challenges: Parents are dealing with their own or their partner’s health and related psychosocial problems. It is yet unclear how this situation affects their
parenting. Additionally, children are confronted with the physical and psychological vulnerability of their parents. In such families, the risk for psychosocial problems is strongly increased and benefit immensely from interventions aimed specifically at the difficulties they face. Research focusing on the individual, dyadic and family processes in these families (compared with families without stressful circumstances) would provide crucial insights for the fine-tuning of these interventions. In the context of families facing difficulties, hardly any attention has been given to the sibling relationship (with the exception of parental divorce). However, there could be tremendous beneficial effects of a supportive sibling relationship in times of need and stress. On the other hand, an unsupportive or conflictive sibling relationship could be a complicating factor in these specific situations. At the present, no interventions are known that focus on this aspect of family functioning. Research about the potential beneficial and complicating effects of sibling relationships is therefore sorely needed. We need to know more about whether siblings can help or hinder each other, but also how these processes work exactly. Data collection started in 2015, so far 15 families with parental cancer and 55 families without parental cancer have participated in the study. More data will be collected during the next year(s).

**Keywords:** siblings, parenting, family relations, middle childhood, early adolescence, culture

**Publications**


The interplay between parental self-efficacy, parental attributions, and parenting behaviors and their relation with child outcomes.

**Researcher:** Marjolein Verhoeven, Jorg Huijding  
**Period:** 2015 -  
**Funding:** None, research project based on bachelor and (research)master thesis research

**Summary**  
Parental self-efficacy (PSE) is defined as parents’ sense of competence in raising their children. Research has shown that parents with high PSE tend to use positive parenting behaviors (e.g., are responsive, accept their child the way it is, show warmth), which are associated with positive child outcomes. In contrast, parents who report low PSE tend to use more negative parenting behaviors (e.g., harsh discipline), which are associated with negative child outcomes.  
Interestingly, PSE also appears to be a predictor of the attributions parents make behaviors of their child. In addition, such attributions are found to be related parenting behaviors. That is, negative attributions are related to negative parenting behaviors. This seems to suggest that there is a (potentially dynamic) interplay between parental self-efficacy, parental attributions, and parenting behaviors. To date there is no research, however, that addressed the nature and dynamics of this interplay, nor how this interplay is related to child outcomes. In this research line we attempt to fill this gap in our knowledge.

**Keywords:** parental self-efficacy, parental attributions, parenting behaviors

**Publications**
Family break-up, system break-down: Dynamic post-divorce processes and child adjustment over time

Researchers: Rianne van Dijk, Inge van der Valk, Susan Branje, Maja Deković
Period: 2015 - 2020
Funding: PhD Project (grant UU)
Website: www.uu.nl/onderzoek/gezinsrelaties-na-scheiding (will be launched march/april 2016)

Summary
Yearly, approximately 70,000 Dutch children are confronted with a parental divorce or separation. Compared to those from intact families, children from divorced families are prone to developing adjustment problems that may persist well into adulthood. Yet, large individual variability in children’s response to divorce is acknowledged. Rather than examining how divorce is related to child adjustment, previous research has focused mainly on group differences between children from intact and divorced families. In contrast, the overarching aim of the envisaged project is to examine processes that explain how and under what circumstances family disruption affects children’s post-divorce adjustment.

In order to effectively support children and their families, we need theory-based research on how and under what circumstances post-divorce disruptions in family functioning affect children’s social, behavioral, and academic adjustment. However, research on recently divorced families is scarce, even though the first two years after divorce is an especially sensitive period of high turbulence. Additionally, previous research often included only one subsystem, either the parental dyad or the parent (mostly mother)-child system. Moreover, studies on divorce have mainly included adolescents, despite the fact that approximately 65% of the Dutch parents separate before the child is 14 years old. Based on family systems theory, this project aims to extend previous research by examining multiple interrelated processes of all family subsystems (i.e., parental, mother-child, father-child, siblings) in recently divorced families over time.

We will include 120 families with at least one, but preferably two children of 8-14 years old, that have experienced divorce 1 to 6 months prior to recruitment. To obtain a detailed analysis of post-divorce family processes over time, we will employ an innovative methodology: A full-family, longitudinal, and multi-method design. At three different time points (i.e., directly after divorce, 1 year later, and another year later), data will be collected through observations (home visits), daily diaries, and multi-informant surveys (questionnaires). By linking behaviors on a micro-(observations), meso- (daily diaries), and macro-timescale, our longitudinal study is able to bridge the gap between divorce-related assumptions made in clinical practice and empirical research.

Keywords: recent divorce, post-divorce family dynamics, child adjustment
Families Adjusting to Adversity: Individual and Family-level variables affecting emotional distress following stressful life events

Researchers: Dineke Verkaik, Mariken Spuij, Trudy Mooren, Paul Boelen, Anneloes van Baar
Period: October 2015 – February 2021
Funding: Pink Ribbon (part)

Summary
Families have to deal with serious stressors when a parent is diagnosed with cancer. Parents and children have to cope with illness related demands and at the same time perform parental and developmental tasks. The quality of life of that parent him- or herself is affected, but also the quality of life of the other family members is threatened. Little is known as yet of the intra- and interpersonal factors that are involved in the adaptation during this process. Knowledge of such factors is needed in order to design potentially effect full intervention programs to support these families and prevent and later problems.

In this study we used a multi-method approach to collect both qualitative data by performing focus groups of parents, children and caregivers and quantitative data by a longitudinal questionnaire study. We aim to collect data from 100 families with children aged 0 – 18 year.

The aim of this study is to investigate which factors are related to adjustment of parents and children, expressed in the valuation of quality of life, satisfaction with life and post traumatic stress symptoms. We will take into account the effect of the illness-stage and characteristics of parents and children (moderator effects) and examine whether the outcome measures are mediated by parenting style, family functioning, emotion regulation, negative cognitions and brooding. Additionally, family members and caregivers provide information about the adaptation process and express their needs in the focus groups.

Keywords: adjustment, chronic disease, parenting, stress, quality of life
Peer relations
Bullying contextualized: A longitudinal study of its change and stability

Researchers: Albert Reijntjes, Marjolijn Vermande
Period: Nov 2010 – Aug 2014
Funding: Postdoc project (NWO)

Summary
Bullying, which is typically unprovoked and deliberate, is a subtype of aggressive behavior in which an individual or a group of individuals repeatedly attacks, humiliates, and/or excludes a relatively powerless person. The prevailing view on bullying, supported by theories based on the social skills deficit model, has long been that the typical bully is a powerful but ‘oafish’ person with little understanding of others, lacking empathy, and deficient in the adequate regulation of negative emotions. More recently, based on the conceptualization of bullying as proactive aggression and Hawley’s (1999, 2007) Resource Control Theory (RCT), it has been increasingly acknowledged that bullying behaviour is functional behavior motivated by the bullies’ pursuit of high social status and a powerful, dominant position in the peer group (Salmivalli & Peets, 2009). However, research examining this view is relatively scarce, and the field lacks unequivocal conclusions.

In the current project, the longitudinal relationship between bullying and social status is examined in a large sample (N > 1200) of elementary school-aged children, during a four year period. At each of the four assessment points, multiple informants (participants, teachers, peers) provide data on a large battery of relevant variables, including bullying, social status, resource control, psychological well-being, friendship, hostility, and aggression.

Research questions concern, among others, (a) the longitudinal relations between bullying and RCT strategies, social status, and dominance ambition, (b) the effect of the transition to secondary school on bullying, (c) individual, dyadic and group level contributors to the development and change of bullying, (d) longterm benefits and costs of being a bully, and variables that may moderate these effects.

Keywords: peer relations, victimization, bullying,

Publications

Coercion and prosociality: strategies for resource control in children and monkeys

Researchers: Reijntjes, A. H. A., Vermande, M. M.
Funding: Youth and Identity; NWO

Summary
Resource control (i.e., access to scarce assets such as food, toys, partners) is a crucial outcome of primate and human social behavior. The latest insights in human research relate it not only to coercive, but also to prosocial behavior. Also within primate research, the realization is emerging that social processes encompass both coercion and prosociality, yet the link with resource control is unclear. Importantly, effectively combining coercive and prosocial strategies may be the most successful way to acquire high levels of resource control, and it can be expected that successful resource control is well served by good social skills. This innovative research aims to investigate the link between the use of coercive and prosocial strategies, social skills and resource control. Among young adolescents and primates, both short-term longitudinal (observations and surveys) and experimental designs will be used. This research will shed a light on the evolutionary continuity of social strategies. The comparative framework can serve to assess the required social skills and obtained benefits of different social strategies across species.

Keywords: coercive and prosocial behavior, resource control, popularity, leadership, young adolescents, primates
Media
Family and media

Researchers: Helen Vossen
Period: 2016-
Funding: Research project based on bachelor and master thesis research

Summary
Media play a central role in the lives of children and their family. Children spend several hours a day using media. Many researchers (including myself) have focussed on the effects of media use on child behaviour. Studies have shown that certain types of media (e.g. violent media) can have an augmenting effect on aggressive behaviour and ADHD-related behaviour. But media can also help in practicing certain social skills (e.g. empathy or social competence).

However, children’s media use does not occur in a vacuum and therefore studying the role of media in the social context of children is equally important. There is ample research on how parents deal with the media use of their children, but knowledge about how media influences parenting and the relation between parent and child is scarce. Also research is often conducted from the perspective that media is a negative influence. Finally, the role of siblings in media use and effects often neglected. The goal of this new project (start 2016) is to have a clearer understanding of the positive and negative roles of media in parenting and the family context. What challenges and opportunities do media offer?

Within this project we will first develop surveys for parents, informed by qualitative interviews. In the next step the surveys will be used for data collection.

Keywords: media, children, parenting, parent-child relation

Publications:
Sexuality and gender
Sexual development in context: The role of family and peers (project STARS)

**Researchers:** Ellen Reitz, Daphne van de Bongardt (University of Amsterdam), Maja Deković

**Period:** Dec 2010 – Jan 2015

**Funding:** PhD project (NWO)

**Website:** www.projectstars.nl

**Summary**

Research on youth sexuality has been largely descriptive, cross-sectional, and a-theoretical. It often views adolescent sexuality narrowly (timing of coital debut) and problematically (emphasizing risk behaviour). In addition, it generally lacks attention for the (social) context in which adolescents develop their sexuality, including family and peers. The present project is one of four subprojects of a large study on adolescent sexuality in the Netherlands.

The aim of the present project was to investigate how behavioral, cognitive, and emotional aspects of adolescents’ developing sexuality are intertwined over time with adolescents’ relations with parents and peers. Four research questions were examined:

1) How do factors from the parent and peer context compare to each other and to individual factors (e.g., self-esteem) in their over-time associations with adolescents’ developing sexuality?
2) How are various aspects of adolescents’ relations with parents associated over time with developing sexuality, and to which extent are these associations indirect (e.g., through self-esteem) or bidirectional?
3) How are various aspects of adolescents’ relations with peers, such as sexual peer norms, associated over time with developing sexuality, and to which extent are these peer norms interactively construed during normative or deviant peer interactions?
4) How do factors from the parent and peer context interact with each other in their over-time associations with adolescents’ developing sexuality (thus creating combined effects)?

A multi-method approach was utilized by using longitudinal questionnaire data, observation data, and meta-analytic data. Longitudinal questionnaire data were collected from adolescents (N = 1297) four times every six months. The sample consisted of five age cohorts (10-18 years at wave one), and is diverse in gender, ethnic background, and educational level.

**Publications**


Peer and parenting influences on gender development of adolescents and young adults

**Researchers:** Joyce Endendijk, Anneloes van Baar  
**Period:** 2015-  
**Funding:** partly UU, partly based on bachelor and master thesis research

**Summary**  
Gender development is a broad construct which includes amongst others, the development of gender differences in social and emotional behavior, the learning of social conventions about appropriate gender-role behavior, and gender identity development. To date, research on gender development has been primarily conducted from a biological or social perspective. However, research on the interplay between parental or peer socializing influences and cognitive factors, such as gender identity and gender stereotypes, is essential for the understanding of youth gender development. However, in the child development literature there are few studies empirically testing the combined influence of cognitive factors and socialization influences. From a socio-cognitive perspective it is especially interesting to study gender development in adolescence/young adulthood, because identity development is an important milestone in this age period.

Together with researchers from Arizona State University, we have conducted a study on the influence of peers and parents on college students’ gender identities and gender-related attitudes, in relation to the formation and quality of romantic relationships and friendships with own- and other-gender peers, self-esteem, body image, and socio-emotional functioning. Data is now ready to be analyzed and cross-cultural comparisons are possible.

**Keywords:** gender socialization, peers, parents, gender development

**Publications**  
The neural basis of mothers’ implicit gender stereotypes

Researchers: Joyce Endendijk, Peter Bos (experimental psychology), Anneloes van Baar
Period: 2016-
Funding: partly UU, partly based on bachelor and master thesis research

Summary

Gender stereotypes are widely held beliefs about the characteristics, behaviors, and roles of males and females. Theoretically it is assumed that there is a close link between a person’s stereotypes and his or her behavior (Ajzen, 1985). Surprisingly, there is only a small body of literature demonstrating the link between mothers’ gender stereotypes and the way they behave towards their own sons and daughters.

Therefore, the aim of the current study is to examine brain activity (ERPs) of mothers completing a gender-stereotype task (IAT), and relating this activity to mothers’ IAT scores and observed gender talk with their child. To this end, we will acquire EEG data and behavioral responses of mothers with a child aged between 2 and 6 years old (N=40) in one lab session.

Knowledge about the neural basis of mothers’ gender stereotypes is important for explaining individual differences in parents’ behavior towards their sons and daughters (e.g., gender talk), and can subsequently aid in the understanding of the parental influence on the development of gender differences in child problem behavior. Data is now collected and ready to be analyzed.

Possible research topics are:

- Differences in mothers’ gender talk with boys and girls
- Associations between brain activity and mothers’ gender stereotypes and gender talk with their child
- Associations between mothers’ gender talk and gender differences in children’s problem behavior (internalizing/externalizing)
Interventions: Externalizing (aggression, delinquency)
Prevention of externalizing problem behavior in school age children: Effectiveness of Stay Cool Kids (Alles Kidzzz)

**Researchers:** Sabine Stoltz, Monique van Londen, Maja Deković  
**Period:** 2007 – 2012 (PhD project), 2012 – 2014 (Postdoc project)  
**Funding:** ZonMw

**Summary**
Stable externalizing behavior in childhood places children at risk for the development of a chronic and persistent pattern of externalizing behavior problems. Therefore, preventive interventions aimed to interrupt this developmental trajectory are crucial. Although the need for such an intervention is high, as externalizing problems have negative effects at the school system, peers, and the child itself, until now, no evidence-based indicated intervention for children with elevated levels of externalizing behaviors existed in the Dutch school context. Stay Cool Kids, developed by preventive mental health trainers, seemed to be a promising existing preventive intervention to fill this gap. This study is a cluster Randomized Controlled Trial with 48 elementary schools in the Netherlands. Fourth grade teachers selected children with elevated levels of externalizing behavior for participation in the study. Teachers, children, mothers and fathers filled out questionnaires prior to the beginning of the intervention, at intervention termination (after 11 weeks), at 6-months and at 12-months follow-up when children were in 5th grade. The aim of the current project is to study the effectiveness of Stay Cool Kids and to examine for whom and how the intervention works. A second goal of this project is to extend knowledge about effectiveness by examining treatment integrity and implementation process.

**Keywords:** externalizing behavior, preventive interventions, effectiveness

**Publications:**


A computer training for positive attention and interpretations aimed to decrease aggressive behaviors in children

Researchers: Jorg Huijding, Bram Orobio de Castro, Moghrabi, N. (Erasmus University Rotterdam)
Period: 2015 -
Funding: PhD project (Government Grant Saudi Arabia)

Summary

Aggressive behaviors are common and cause much damage to individuals and materials. It is assumed that what we attend to in social situations and how we interpret ambiguous social information plays a crucial role in generating aggressive behaviors.

In this project we will evaluate whether a computer training, that was shown to be effective in decreasing aggression related attention and interpretations in unselected primary school children, decreases aggressive behaviors in children with externalizing behavior problems. Participating children will be randomly assigned to either a placebo or an active training. The training consists of 5 sessions. During each session children in the active condition will complete a computer task in which they are trained to attend to prosocial aspects of social situations and interpret ambiguous situations in prosocial manner. The effects of the training are assessed by means of parent and teacher ratings of aggressive behaviors.

Keywords: aggressive behaviors, information processing, cognitive bias modification.

Publications
Solid as a rock, flexible as water? Improving students’ psychosocial wellbeing in prevocational schools

Researchers: Esther Mertens, Ellen Reitz, Monique van Londen, Maja Deković
Period: 2016-2020
Funding: ZonMw

Summary:
In this project we aim to examine whether the Rock & Water (R&W) program contributes to increases in resilience, psychosocial wellbeing, social safety, and sexual health of prevocational boys and girls with different ethnic backgrounds. An RCT-design will be used to study whether the program is ‘solid as a rock’ (does it work?) and which elements are ‘flexible as water’ (working elements). The study examines under which condition the program is effective: 1) “R&W light” (training core-team); 2) “R&W Standard” (training core-team and whole school team); and 3) “R&W Plus” (training core-team, whole school team and parent participation). Characteristics of youth and trainers are taken into account (moderator effects). It is further examined whether effects of R&W are mediated by increases in self-control, self-reflection, and self-esteem of youth. In addition, it is investigated whether communication style of youth within the classroom (decreases in norm deviant talk) mediates the effects of R&W on social safety. Finally, youth themselves are given the opportunity to indicate their need for care, to be able to change care facilities for youth.

Keywords: effectiveness; Rock & Water; RCT-design; prevocational youth; working elements;

Publications
Internalizing (depression, grief)
Effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of a Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) program in clinically depressed adolescents; individual CBT versus care as usual.

Researchers: Yvonne Stikkelbroek, Denise Bodden, Anneloes van Baar
Funding: ZonMw
Website: www.doepressie.nl

Summary
Depression in adolescents is a huge societal problem because of the prevalence, the burden of the illness, the chronicity, the comorbidity and the high number of suicides. Therefore, an effective intervention for clinical depression seems necessary. International studies have shown that CBT is effective in reducing depressive symptoms. However, in the Netherlands, no effective intervention for clinical depression in adolescents is available. The D(o)epressie course is a individual Cognitive Behavioural Therapy program which is developed specifically for adolescents with a clinical depression.

In this multi-centre trial, a randomised controlled trial was executed in which individual CBT (D(o)epressie) was compared to care as usual. In total, 88 clinically depressed adolescents were included and 4 assessments were conducted. The pre-test assessment took place immediately prior to the beginning of treatment, post-test assessment took place immediately after treatment, and follow up assessments were conducted 6 months and 1 year after the end of treatment. Besides the effectiveness, the cost-effectiveness of individual CBT will be investigated. Furthermore, a cost-of-illness study will be conducted in adolescents with a clinical depression and moderators (comorbidity, severity, age, ethnicity, gender, income and psychopathology of the parents) and mediators (negative automatic thoughts, cognitive emotion regulation and attribution style) are investigated.

Keywords: depression, randomised controlled trial, D(o)epressie

Publications:
Development and evaluation of a cognitive behavioral therapeutic intervention for bereaved children and their parents

Researchers: Mariken Spuij, Paul Boelen, Maja Deković
Period: Februari 2008 - September 2014
Funding: ZonMw

Summary
The death of a loved one is one of the most distressing and prevalent events that children (8-17) can experience. Children suffering loss have an increased chance of developing psychosocial problems. It is useful to develop interventions that are aimed at the prevention of such problems. Thus far, no such interventions are available.

The mean aim of this study is to develop an intervention for bereaved children. This will be done in three research projects:
1. The first research project examines the feasibility of a cognitive behavioral therapeutic intervention for bereaved children and their parents (Rouwhulp). A multiple baseline design will be used and six children and their parents will be included.
2. The primary objective of the second research project is to get an impression of the effectiveness of a low-threshold, accessible cognitive behavioral therapeutic intervention for grieving children and their parents (Rouwhulp). This project is a pilot study. In this study we aim to include 15 children and their parents.
3. Third, a Randomized Controlled Trial will be done to examine the effect of ‘Rouwhulp’ – a cognitive behavioral treatment for children with emotional problems following the death of a loved one. Participants are randomly assigned to two treatment conditions: (1) the experimental treatment (Rouwhulp) or a control treatment consisting of supportive counseling. Participants are asked to complete questionnaires before and after treatment, and at three follow-up assessment points.

In this study we aim to include 140 children (and their parents) aged 8-17 years, who all suffered the loss of a loved one at least 6 months prior to inclusion into the study. Only children who seek help for problems with coming terms with loss will be invited to participate.

Keywords: bereaved children, grief, effectiveness, randomised controlled trial

Publications:

**Book Chapters**


Core elements of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) in preventing depression in adolescents: Does the type, sequence and dosage of elements matter?

Researchers: Marieke van den Heuvel, Denise Bodden, Rutger Engels, Yvonne Stikkelbroek
Period: 2016-2019
Funding: ZonMw

Summary
Depression during adolescence is a major public health concern, because of its high prevalence, association with suicide, comorbid psychiatric diagnoses and high treatment costs. Even sub clinical levels of depressive symptoms put adolescents at risk for several negative outcomes. Therefore, it is important that depression is detected at an early stage and is treated preventively. Prevention programs based on the principles of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) has proven to be most effective and most applied in preventing depression among adolescents. Thus far, research has mainly focused on effectiveness of “prevention packages” consisting of multiple CBT-elements. It is unclear which elements contribute to the positive prevention outcomes and how these elements should be offered (i.e., what their optimal sequencing and dosage is). This study is aimed to evaluate the (cost-) effectiveness of different types, sequences and dosages of CBT-elements (i.e., cognitive restructuring, behavioral activation, relaxation and problem solving skills) in the prevention of depression in adolescents. In addition, it will be explored for whom (i.e., moderation) and how (i.e., mediation) a given element, or set of elements, is most effective.

The potential value of the study is that we gain insight in the effectiveness of the most commonly used CBT-elements in the prevention of depression among adolescents, and in their most optimal sequence and dosage. This knowledge can be used for evidence-based recommendations for optimizing the preventive treatment of adolescents with depressive symptoms.

Keywords: depression, adolescents, prevention, cognitive behavioral therapy, core elements
**Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) for parents and youth**

**Researchers:** Denise Bodden  
**Period:** 2010-  
**Funding:** Research project based on bachelor and master thesis research

**Summary**

Recently, Acceptance and Commitment therapy (ACT) has been receiving more attention in the clinical practice. ACT was originally developed to treat adults, is focused on individual problems (e.g., anxiety or depression symptoms) and is often employed as a prevention program. In a meta-analysis on 18 RCT’s in adults, ACT was found to be more effective than control conditions (waitlist, placebo and CAU) and equally effective compared to established interventions such as CBT and IPT (Powers et al., 2009).

In this study, ACT is delivered as a parent counseling therapy in order to provide the parents new skills in dealing with their children’s interaction problems, to teach them new parenting strategies and enhance parental competence by increasing psychological flexibility. Previous research on the effectiveness of ACT as a parent counseling therapy is scarce. The hypotheses of this quasi experimental research are that after ACT parent counseling, psychological flexibility, parental competence, positive parenting skills and the quality of the parent-child interaction would increase. The design consisted of a pre-, post – and 6-month follow-up analyses. Parents’ self-reports were employed.

Besides this study, we have developed an individual ACT protocol for adolescents. A pilot study on the effects of this protocol will be conducted as well.

**Keywords:** ACT, parents, adolescents, effectiveness

**Publications**


Anxiety and depression consortium

**Researchers:** Denise Bodden, Yvonne Stikkelbroek, Rutger Engels e.a.

**Period:** 2016-

**Funding:** ZonMw

Summary

Anxiety and depression are the most prevalent psychological problems in youth and they have severe consequences for the child’s wellbeing on short and long term and lead to high societal costs. Effective interventions are needed. The past years, a lot of prevention and intervention programs have been developed. This warrants a critical investigation of the content, quality, clinical utility, the degree of overlay, and the distinctive character between these programs. The ultimate goal of this study is to reduce the number of intervention programs to a set of interventions that is evidence-based, complementary, and useful in clinical practice. In the anxiety and depression consortium we will perform four substudies; (1) an overview of all anxiety and depression interventions including information on the different elements of an intervention, (2) a Mega-analysis using original national and international datasets providing information on subsamples, moderators, mediators and intervention elements, (3) microtrials on intervention elements (sequence and dosage of modules), and (4) cost-effectiveness studies.

**Keywords:** depression, anxiety, children, adolescents, prevention, intervention