A Psychoeducational Workshop for Young Women on the Effects of Paternal Alcoholism

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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Marriage and Family Therapy

By

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Abstract

A Psychoeducational Workshop for Young Women on the Effects of Paternal Alcoholism

By Kayanna Campana

Master of Science in Counseling
Marriage and Family Therapy

A psychoeducational workshop created to educate and inform young women ages eighteen to twenty-five who have grown up with an alcoholic father. The purpose of the workshop is to increase their understanding of the relationship with their father as well as encourage them to utilize help and resources in order to help develop them into more resilient individuals. Research in the area of alcoholic family systems has suggested that the impact on the ACoA is highly gender specific and that daughters of male alcoholics seem to display higher levels of emotional difficulties. There is a growing number of young adults who are entering society without any understanding of how their upbringing has affected themselves, their emotional growth, and relational needs. This apparent deficit in education surrounding young adult ACoAs today calls for a new approach towards helping these individuals and providing them with access to information that may be useful to them. Given the growing literature on the usefulness of group therapy and psychoeducation, it is proposed that a psychoeducational workshop be used as an effective means to help these young ACoAs. The following literature review and workshop outline includes an summary of Adult Children of Alcoholics, important aspects of the father-daughter relationship, effects of paternal alcoholism on the daughter, protective and resiliency factors, and current resources available to women who have grown up in a home with an alcoholic father.
Chapter One: Young Women and the Effects of Paternal Alcoholism

According to Kelley et al. (2008), Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACoAs) are characterized by specific behaviors that have resulted from growing up in chaotic and unpredictable home environments that stem from a parent’s alcohol abuse. This type of dysfunctional environment interrupts many of the necessary developmental tasks required to grow into a healthy and mature adult (Ackerman, 2002). Dehn (2010) notes that clinical research in the 1970’s began to show that children being raised in families where alcoholism is present are susceptible to more problems. In the United States today, according to the National Association for Children of Alcoholics (1998), parental alcoholism is a country-wide epidemic, having been estimated that every one in five children live in a home with an alcoholic parent. In the past few years the plight of ACoAs has been highly researched. However, Kearns-Bodkin and Leonard, contend that little investigation into the specific impact on male and female children based on the alcoholic parent’s gender has been done. Yet, as Ackerman (2002) suggests, the specific relationship dynamics created between the alcoholic father and his daughter are an issue worth addressing.

Statement of Need

Today, there is a large variety of self-help books and support groups that have blossomed out of the growing awareness of issues facing ACoAs. Although these resources are readily available, they are not commonly accessed by today’s youth and young adults. As a result, there are a growing number of young adults who are entering society without any understanding of how their upbringing has affected themselves, their emotional growth, and relational needs. According to Dehn (2010), quite often these
individuals will enter a treatment program for other various forms of addiction without any awareness of how this might relate back to their upbringing and the fact that they are an ACoA. This apparent deficit in education surrounding young adult ACoAs today calls for a new approach towards helping these individuals and providing them with access to information that may be useful to them. Given the growing literature on the usefulness of group therapy and psychoeducation, it is proposed that a psychoeducational workshop be used as an effective means to help these young ACoAs gain access to current research on the effects of growing up with an alcoholic parent and resources that may be available to them (O’Farrell & Clements, 2012).

**Statement of Purpose**

Research in the area of alcoholic family systems has suggested that the impact on the ACoA is highly gender specific, although a higher amount of empirical research is needed in the area in order to substantiate these claims (Jarmas & Kazak, 1992). Current research does show, however, that maternal and paternal use have different effects on both male and female children (Berkowitz & Perkins, 1998). The more common parental figure known to suffer from alcoholism in most homes appears to be the father (Dehn, 2010). Studies have shown that male offspring of alcoholics are more likely than their female siblings to become alcoholics themselves which could very possibly be a contributing factor to the prevalence of paternal alcoholism (Jarmas & Kazak, 1992). Berkowitz and Perkins (1988) research indicated daughters of male alcoholics seemed to display higher levels of emotional difficulties. For the purpose of this workshop it seems pertinent to further explore the unique relationship developed between a father and a daughter and the impact of alcoholism on this dyad.
In order to gain a greater understanding of the need for a workshop addressing the daughter of an alcoholic, it is first important to understand her needs and wounds. This is done through having a comprehensive understanding of the father-daughter relationship and its effect on a woman’s identity and her ability to engage in relational intimacy. Moreover, it is critical for this audience to also have an understanding of how the daughter is specifically affected by paternal alcoholism and the developmental inhibitions it can create, common coping mechanisms, her exposure to increased risk, and potential protective factors. The purpose of this project is to develop a workshop for daughters of alcoholics that focuses on the effects of paternal alcoholism on women and to provide psychoeducational information in regards to effects, coping, and resources available to these women.

Terminology

For the purposes of understanding the issues presented in this project, the following terms need to be understood:

*Alexithymia* - According to Sifneos (1973) a personality construct characterized by the sub-clinical inability to identify and describe emotions in the self. The core characteristics of alexithymia are marked dysfunction in emotional awareness, social attachment, and interpersonal relating (1973).

*Developmental Tasks* - The eight stages defined by Erikson (1964) through which a healthily developing human should pass from infancy to late adulthood.

*Orbital Frontal Gyrus* - is a region in the prefrontal cortex in the frontal lobes of the brain which is involved in the cognitive processing of decision-making (Heitzeg, Nigg, Yau, Zubieta & Zucker, 2008).
In order to better understand these issues and gain an awareness of the need for such a workshop for women, it is important to delineate the issues facing Adult Children of Alcoholics and the approaches that can be used to help them overcome these issues, which will be covered in the following chapter.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

The bond between father and daughter is unlike any other familial relationship. Fathers have a profound impact on the lives of their daughters yet the majority of research has been spent on the bond between mothers and daughters. According to Allgood, Beckert and Peterson (2012), developing an understanding of how the relationship with her father affects her can help each woman come to acceptance of herself and her life in order to move forward with the growth and progress towards becoming her fully realized self. In their research conducted on the subject of adult children of alcoholics, Kelley et al. (2008) indicate that women with alcoholic fathers are prone to a series of negative life outcomes involving relational, psychological, and even physical well-being. The following review contains a brief summary of the literature regarding alcoholism and adult children of alcoholics, the father daughter relationship, the effects and potential protective factors relating to paternal alcoholism and common resources and interventions that are available to ACoA daughters.

Alcoholism and Adult Children of Alcoholics

Alcoholism, which is considered to be a medical condition, is defined by Merriam-Webster (2014) as a disease, in which someone too frequently drinks alcohol in large quantities and is unable to live a healthy and normal life. Alcoholism is recognized by the American Medical Association (AMA) as a progressive disease that is incurable but can be treated. However, as long as the alcoholic participates in the consumption of alcohol their drive to drink will get worse (Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, 2003). If left untreated alcoholism can have devastating results, including death. Additionally, as
cited in the Al-Ateen literature (2003), the AMA states that the only proven method preventing the negative progression of the disease is complete abstinence.

Symptoms of alcoholism include loss of control, dependency, withdrawal symptoms, personality change, and loss of memory also known as blackouts. The progressive nature of the disease results in a sense of loss of control relating to the consumption of alcohol and an increased dependence on drinking in order to function. If an alcoholic stops drinking they may suffer from symptoms such as nausea, headaches, physical tremors and even convulsions (Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, 2003).

Interest in adult children of alcoholics in clinical settings was instigated in the 1970’s and 1980’s through the growing prevalence of the self-help and support group movement (Lewis Harter, 2000). This was closely related to the broader description of a “codependent” which was associated as a distinct population of family members of alcoholics. ACoAs were argued to have specialized needs for treatment as it was being recognized as a distinct population within the nation (Lewis Harter, 2000). The discussion regarding the ACoA experience and the families of alcoholics has played a major role in integrating a family systems approach with traditional alcoholic treatment programs (Goodman, 1987). As a reflection of the now recognized systemic nature of alcoholism, an ACoA family is sometimes referred to as an alcoholic family (Polak, Puttler & Ilgen, 2012).

Hall and Webster (2007) noted that early literature regarding family structure in alcoholic family systems emphasized several stereotypical roles that children assumed within the family. These roles include the scapegoat, peacemaker, hero, the caregiver, mascot, arguer, conflict resolver, rescuer as well as the lost child. These initial typologies
provided a framework through which one could begin to understand the environmental pressures within the alcoholic home despite the fact that subsequent research has not always supported the stereotypical presence of these roles (Hall & Webster, 2007). However, it must be noted that these are considerable oversimplifications of a rather complex family system (Goodman, 1987). As the alcoholic family system was studied further, basic rules of operation were highlighted within the alcoholic home. These rules, as highlighted by Ruben (2001) are as follows:

1) *Don’t talk about family problems.* It is common for alcohol abuse problems to go unnoticed by close family and friends as there is typically an unspoken rule that the family’s problems stay within the nuclear family.

2) *Do not express feelings openly.* Open expression of feelings is not commonly allowed within the alcoholic family system.

3) *Limit communications.* Communication outside of the home is not often typical for a child of an alcoholic family system. This is necessary in order to preserve the family secrets. Additionally, the unpredictability of the environment makes it difficult for the child to know if their communication will result in a positive or negative response, often resulting in minimal communication.

4) *Nothing is ever good enough, but you are still expected to strive for unattainable perfection.* Polarization is common within these home environments which can result in high tendencies toward feelings of guilt and perfectionism.

5) *You can’t be selfish.* The family is centralized around the alcoholic which teaches a child of an alcoholic family system that their own needs and wishes are inappropriate.
6) “Do what I say, not as I do.” Alcoholic parents are often aware of the dangers of the behavior that they model and so they may encourage their children not to participate in similar behaviors.

7) *Play is not something you do.* The ACOA may have difficulty relaxing and finding enjoyment in activities as their self-worth often feels predicated on their accomplishments resulting from a need to “prove” their worth. The chaos of their family of origin’s home environment may also have taught them that if they let their guard down something bad might happen to them.

8) *Avoid conflict.* Conflict can result in unpredictable parental behavior and punishment. Children learn to avoid situations that may result in confrontation and often are not taught conflict resolution skills. Also, children may want to avoid feeling like they are reinforcing their parent’s need to drink as a result of conflict.

Children that are raised in homes with an alcoholic parent swiftly learn that they are responsible for their alcoholic parent, confused by the unpredictability of their behavior, which ends in them learning not to trust anyone or anything, including the complicated family rules seen above, as they are never clear cut and always highly variable (Ruben, 2001). However, Goodman (1987) advises that it is not wise to assume that all children of alcoholic families have negative experiences, are affected the same way, and/or as adults are unable to adjust without need for counseling or recovery programs. Furthermore, Ackerman (2001) highlights that it is crucial to take into account the subjective experience of each individual that comes from these systems. Overall
adjustment outcomes are related to many factors including severity of the alcoholism, psychiatric comorbidity, and the age of the child and their perceptions of the alcoholism.

**The Father-Daughter Relationship**

“The father who drifts or veers away when a daughter grows and changes can leave a lethal effect on her aggression, her ambition, her feel for power.” (Harris, 2008).

Sharpe (1994) frames the picture of what it means to look into the dynamics between fathers and daughters and the impact of the father’s presence on his daughter’s life. The father-daughter relationship dyad is unique in representation as it outlines a sense of differentness and separation unlike same-gender parent-child relationships. This is further complicated by a history of cultural rules and expectations that dictate fatherhood. Historically being viewed with more power, fatherly presence is often assumed to be equally powerful as that of the mother’s in the lives of their children (Sharpe, 1994). Multiple studies have shown that it is the perception of the father’s presence that ultimately makes a difference in the lives of his children. Perception of the quality of the father-daughter relationship and resulting influence on the life of the daughter have a direct impact on their perception of self and capacity for relational intimacy.

Way and Gillman (2000) note that in a study conducted in 1985 by Youniss and Smollar a majority of adolescents labeled their relationships with their fathers as uncomfortable, withdrawn, distant, and lacking. This led the researchers to elect to describe the father-child relationship as not relational in comparison to the mother-child relationship. Although the adolescents did not view this decrease in interaction as desirable the researchers noted this decrease in intimacy was common between fathers
and their children once the child entered adolescence. They found that the dyad most distinguished by low level of interaction was the father-daughter relationship (Way & Gillman, 2000). Furthermore, they also found that parent relationship status and actual presence of the father did not seem to create variance in the interactions between daughters and their fathers. They almost always avoided sharing intimate concerns with their fathers suggesting a societal and or cultural dictate of father-child interaction and bonding.

Exploration of paternal bonding has shown that the perceived bonds a child has with her father can have a major influence on her later in life. Parker, Tupling and Brown (1979) who created a parental bonding instrument categorized parental bonding into two dimensions. The first dimension, care, refers to behaviors and attitudes of the parents such as affection, warmth, and sensitivity. The second, overprotection, is viewed as behaviors and attitudes such as strictness, control and intrusion (Parker, Tupling & Brown, 1979). Four different types of parenting emerge from their research on care and overprotection. The first, and most optimal, is high care and low overprotection. Second, known as affectionate constraint is high care and high overprotection followed by affectionless control which is low care and high overprotection and, lastly, absent bonding which is low care and low overprotection. Studies have found that women who reported being raised by fathers that fall into any of the parenting types with low care experienced a negative perception of self (Parker, Tupling & Brown, 1979). These results also suggest that caring but overprotective fathers may intensify the negative effects of body surveillance and shame in the life of their daughters (Miles-McLean, Liss & Erchull, 2014). Scheffler and Naus (1999) found in a study they conducted that girls who
perceived their father as being warm and supportive reported higher levels of self-esteem. This study accounted for and eliminated any relation to the perceptions of their experience of received mothering, supporting evidence for a direct link between the father’s relationship to self-perception in women (Scheffler & Naus, 1999).

A 2001 study conducted by Perkins found similar father-daughter relationship dynamics (Perkins, 2001). This study took the responses of ninety-six college women in a study employed to measure assertiveness, relational needs, negative self-image and ego states. They responded to a father-daughter questionnaire designed by Perkins which identified six distinctive father-daughter relationships. These were as follows: a doting father, distant father, demanding yet supportive father, domineering father, seductive father, and an absent father. They found that the relationship with the most ideal outcome was that of the demanding yet supportive father who valued them but also gave them permission to be different from their fathers. It was found that the daughter of a distant father will often align with the father’s distance and also distance herself from the family in order to protect the father. Daughters of domineering fathers can maintain a rational relationship with their fathers but feel cut off from them emotionally. Daughters with absent and seductive fathers viewed themselves as significantly more relational and self-assured than their fathers and how they felt their fathers viewed them. Leaving daughters from both these types of fathers feeling separated and misunderstood from their fathers. Overall, the results suggested that the ongoing relationship between the daughter and her father impacted her lifestyle and self-perception (Perkins, 2001).
Identity Development.

Leonard (1983) asserts that a father is uniquely responsible for shaping a woman’s perception of self and her individuality. Allgood, Beckert, and Peterson (2012) indicate that healthy outcomes for daughters are directly related to paternal involvement. They have found that a father’s level of engagement and his accessibility directly impact the self-esteem of their daughter. Engagement is the father’s direct level of contact with his child. Accessibility refers to a father’s mental and physical availability to his child. Each of these behaviors are directly related to the daughter’s perception of self (self-esteem) and their overall report of life satisfaction. There is also research that further supports the idea that the presence or lack thereof these aspects in the father daughter relationship directly influence a daughter’s psychological well-being (Allgood et al., 2012).

Brown, Thompson and Trafimow (2002) state that positive relationship experiences between children and their fathers result in healthier emotional well-being and scholastic achievement. In a literature review performed by Kiernan (2006) it was found that fathers active in the lives of their children positively impacted their infants’ growth on both cognitive and social levels. The child’s acquisition of social, intellectual and language skills around ages three to five were also directly influenced by the presence of their fathers. This advantage continues into school-age where children tend to be more successful in their social, academic and athletic pursuits as well as being better adjusted individuals with greater self-esteem (Kiernan, 2006).

Daughters of alcoholic fathers typically are missing a level of psychological and likely even physical accessibility to their father which directly impacts their identity.
Kelley et al. (2008) conducted a study comparing parent-child attachment in 89 American female Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOAs) with that of 201 non-ACoAs. Participants categorized as ACoA reported significantly more negative affect and less support from their fathers as indicated on the Parental Attachment Questionnaire (2008). Adult daughters of alcoholics, referred to by Ackerman (2002) as “perfect daughters”, operate from a base of unforgiving and restrictive views of themselves and the world. These daughters learn that they are not as important as the alcohol which leads to the thinking that it is not who they are that is important but what they do is. They are forced to grow up quickly without experiencing the emotions of their childhood. This leads to feelings of being unlovable and their identity is often confused as they find it hard to develop a sense of belonging (2002). Rangarajan and Kelly (2006) surveyed the role of perceptions of family environment and family communication as intermediaries of the effects of parental alcoholism on the self-esteem of adult children of alcoholics. Results pointed towards a negative relationship between the seriousness of both maternal and paternal alcoholism and self-esteem (2006).

**Relational Intimacy.**

Leonard (1983) postulates that how the father, as a male, tends to highlight a woman’s differentness and how he relates to her femininity will outline how she views herself as a woman and, furthermore, how she relates to men. Haaz, Kneavel and Browning (2014) infer from research that high levels of paternal involvement were indicative of high levels of intimacy, commitment and trust in young adults’ intimate relationships whereas low levels of paternal involvement were predictive of high levels of insecure attachment styles in their intimate relationships (Haaz, Kneavel & Browning,
Secunda (1992) stressed that women tend to respond to men in their lives the same way they responded to their father. If this parental relationship was elusive or lacking, the women might seek intimacy unable to fully trust the relationship (Secunda, 1992). A woman’s perceived affirmation from her father also correlates with higher feelings of security within intimate relationships (Secunda, 1992).

Father absence and its impact on early sexual activity was explored in longitudinal studies in the United States and New Zealand (Ellis, Bates, Dodge, Fergusson, Horwood, Pettit, & Woodward, 2003). The study followed a small sample of girls from the ages of 5 until 18. It was discovered that higher exposure to father absence was linked to elevated risk for early sexual activity and adolescent pregnancy (Ellis, et al., 2003).

According to Ackerman (2002), daughters of fathers who are alcoholics are drawn to chemically dependent men and are more likely to become addicted themselves. A study by Kearns-Bodkin and Leonard (2008), found lower marital intimacy rates for women who grew up with an alcoholic father. Domenico and Windle (1993) also found that female ACoAs reported lower levels of marital satisfaction and higher levels of marital conflict. These women reported lower amounts of perceived social support and indicated having more parental role distress, while often viewing themselves as unable to control their children. Hetherington (1972) found that if a woman had a father who was either emotionally or physically absent, disruptions in interactions with the opposite sex occurred. These disruptions exhibited themselves as either attention seeking behaviors from males and early sexual behavior or the opposite could also occur and the women
would exhibit avoidance and restraint around males. The earlier the absence of the father was experienced the more severe the effects were on those behaviors (1972).

In correlation with these findings, Jaeger, Hahn and Weinraub (2000) conducted a study examining the attachment styles of daughters raised by alcoholic fathers, and found that these women were more likely to have insecure attachment styles than women who were not raised by an alcoholic father. Attachment styles, first identified by John Bowlby, are replications of the expectations and beliefs people have formed about themselves and their close relationships on the basis of their caregiving history (1982). They create a working model as to how individuals approach and view all other relationships (Jaeger, Hahn & Weinraub, 2000). In their study of Bartholomew's four-category view of adult attachment styles, Brennan, Shaver and Tobey (1991) indicated that more females than males were fearful-avoidants. ACoAs scored high on both the anxious-ambivalent and avoidant scales of Hazan & Shaver's measure, and fell primarily into Bartholomew's fearful-avoidant class. These children were most commonly found in families troubled by parental alcoholism, depression and abuse (1991).

The father-daughter relationship can only be summarized as complicated. Parent-child relationships, specifically the father-daughter dyad, are challenging to research as there is a plethora of taboos relating to sexuality and emotional intimacy that create a general sense of unease when approached for observation (Sharpe, 1994). Russell and Saebel point out that sex differences in parental-child relationships in the interpersonal domain can be small and, therefore, variable. They further argue that some differences between genders may only be resultant out of specific conditions as suggested by research on particular populations. Additionally, there is difficulty in most research
instruments in detecting specific differences between the relationship dyads (Russell & Saebel, 1997). Although it can be difficult to extrapolate the pure effects of the paternal relationship with the daughter, it can be seen through the research that the father’s level of engagement in his daughter’s life has a lifelong impact on the daughter.

**The Effects of Paternal Alcoholism on the Daughter**

**Developmental inhibitors.**

Ackerman (2002) postulates that for a woman who has a father who is inconsistent in her life, unpredictable, or absent, she is often lacking the developmental skills typically acquired for women who have a father that is present and attentive. The researcher argues that this particular lack of developmental skills is common in the lives of women who have been raised in homes with an alcoholic parent- specifically for those with an alcoholic father. Ackerman is not alone in his investigation into the effects of paternal absence on daughters. Using Erikson’s developmental tasks as a measure, Ackerman indicates that eight developmental interruptions occur in the lives of children of alcoholics (2002). According to Harter (2000), these interruptions leave ACoAs with a disturbed relationship to initiative, identity confusion, an inability to accept reality, and low self-esteem.

According to Ackerman (2002), the first stage of development, Trust vs. Mistrust, is primary to the foundation of the rest of the child’s development and is typically the most skewed in these children. The child becomes fearful of trusting anyone as they might accidentally disclose too much which could potentially be used to hurt her in the future (2002). Dehn reveals that ACoAs overall achievements often lag behind those of non-ACoAs as do their overall rate of employment and socioeconomic status. This
researcher presented a study by Jacob and Windle which examined one hundred and twenty eight ACoAs, sixty seven of them being women, and revealed that ACoAs tend to be more vulnerable to behavioral problems in school. Dehn suggests that to some degree this is due to a neurocognitive impairment from alcoholics that is transmitted to their children and as a result the achievements of their children could be minimized (2010).

**Coping Mechanisms.**

According to Dehn (2010), the alcoholic family system is set up in a manner that controls the actions and the emotions of each of its individual members, resulting in an overall unhealthy family system that can lead to abuse. The types of abuse they face can be emotional, physical, sexual, and even spiritual (2010). Harlow (1999) highlighted a research study conducted by the United States Department of Justice on children who had a parent in state prison. 67% of the ACoA women in the study reported having experienced childhood abuse from their fathers. Such types of abuse and neglect result in different coping methods and mechanisms in the lives of the ACoA daughter. Hall and Webster (2007) found research that supported the position that numerous stressors in the life of children increase their vulnerability to adjustment and coping difficulties. This makes children growing up in an alcoholic home that face other forms of abuse or neglect more so predisposed than their simple single stressor ACoA counterparts.

The ACoA’s home environment as a child directly impacts their learned ability to cope. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) state that coping mechanisms are any effort directed toward stress management; they are the factors that enable an individual to regain emotional balance after a stressful experience. The forms of coping developed in the lives of ACoAs can prove to be maladaptive once the child leaves the home. Ackerman (2002)
points out that many daughters’ of alcoholic fathers developed coping mechanisms that had them feel they must function perfectly under the assumption that if they do so an unpleasant situation will be avoided. Prevalent forms of maladaptive coping include defense mechanisms such as refusing to think back on negative events, known as thought stopping, and avoidance. ACoAs learn to avoid situations and thoughts that might bring to light negative feelings, which in effect restricts the range of emotions they allow themselves to express and experience (Hall & Webster, 2007). As a result of this, conflict becomes an area of contention in the life of an ACoA. The overwhelming experience of emotions that can occur make the ACoA more likely to utilize avoidance techniques. In childhood, this typically serves as a protective measure to ensure that the child did not become entangled in the overwhelming nature of the family dynamics (Hall & Webster, 2007).

Domenico and Windle (1993) found that ACoA’s were also more likely to drink for coping purposes but their overall level of alcohol consumption did not differ from that of non-ACoA’s. Yet, for many individuals who do misuse substances, their current problems can be traced back to adverse childhood experiences which leave them poorly prepared to provide a safe and stable environment for their own children (Dehn, 2010).

**Increased Risk.**

In a study by Coleman and Frick (1994), ACoAs were found to have a higher risk for anxiety, depression, and psychotic symptoms. Harter (2000) indicates that ACoAs also appear at increased risk for an assortment of negative outcomes, including, substance abuse, antisocial or under-controlled behaviors, depressive symptoms, anxiety disorders, low self-esteem, difficulties in family relationships, and generalized distress and
maladjustment. In addition, ACoA’s have also been found to have a cultural and potentially biological predisposition towards alcoholism (Harter, 2000). Kumpfer postulated that the highest risk group of children to become addicts is children of addicted parents (1999). This is as a result of both environmental and genetic family factors (Kumpfer, 1999). Likewise, Dehn (2010) asserts that this leaves ACoA’s approximately four times as likely to become an alcoholic than non-ACoAs.

An additional environmental effect on ACoAs is the high prevalence of alexithymia, especially in women, as they are more likely to internalize their emotions when they feel it is unsafe to express them as they are unable to know how they will be received (2010). The reduced awareness of emotions is occasionally even accompanied by dramatic outbursts thought to be as a result of extreme attempts to control emotions (Harter, 2000). Interestingly, Dehn (2010) indicates that ACoAs often suffer from somatic symptoms. This is thought to be as a result of the chronic stress associated with their upbringing but it is also possibly a result of the internalization of one’s emotions (2010).

In a sample of children hospitalized for psychiatric disorders over fifty percent were found to be children of one or multiple addicted parents (Dehn, 2010). Coleman and Frick (1994) compared 69 adult children of alcoholics (ACOAs) with 30 control college students on scales from the revised Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-2). ACOA subjects could be distinguished from control subjects on multiple scales, many of which differentiate alcoholic from nonalcoholic samples. ACoAs indicated higher rates of depression, anxiety, and forms of psychopathic deviance leaving them at risk for many types of adjustment difficulties in their adult life (1994). In their study, Byrd-
Craven, Auer, Granger, and Massey (2002) found a physical effect on the female ACoAs stress response. They found that the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis of the brain is over stimulated by perceived negative father-daughter relationships. This overproduction of cortisol results in emotional and cognitive dysregulation later in life (2002).

**Protective Factors and Resiliency**

Despite the increased risk and the potential for many negative outcomes growing up in a home with an alcoholic father can produce, there still are those children that go on to live moderately healthy and successful lives. The risks outlined above would be considered vulnerability factors which feature an increased likelihood that negative outcomes will result from a specific stressor. Opposing this, protective factors reduce the effect of the stressor (Menees, 1997). Garmezy (1991) separated protective factors into three categories: intra-personal protective factors, social factors, and environmental factors. The intra-personal factors include personal attributes such as gender, temperament and personality, birth order, and intelligence. It also includes components such as coping style and self-esteem and overall mastery of one’s beliefs. The second group, the social factors, includes the relationship with the primary caregiver(s), specific positive qualities of the family system, and other significant family members. The last category includes external support factors such as environmental resources and the ability of the individual to access help (Garmezy, 1991). In essence, protective factors are linked with adaptation and competence and can protect against the effects of growing up in an alcoholic home and, additionally, can foster resilience in children raised in these homes (Coombes & Anderson, 2000).
The topic of resiliency, which the study of protective factors is based on, has been examined in a variety of high-risk individuals, and specific resiliency traits of women raised by an alcoholic father and ACoA’s in general have been identified (Coombes & Anderson, 2000). Resilience does not directly imply, however, that there are specific tasks one must do or not do in order to achieve competency or appropriate coping skills. Moreover, resiliency is a form of flexibility that an individual possesses that allows them to assess situations and implement appropriate strategies to handle various life stressors as they occur. It is preparing oneself to meet challenges in a positive manner without being rigid, or set in one way of approach (Hall & Webster, 2007). Resiliency and how it relates to daughters affected by paternal alcoholism can also be separated into three separate categories of adaptive behavior- intrapersonal, social and environmental.

Werner (1986) found in a longitudinal study examining resilient offspring of alcoholics that one of the primary indicators of a child’s overall resilience was having an agreeable temperament described as “cuddly and affectionate” that prompted positive attention from primary caretakers (Werner, 1986). Furthermore, approximately three-fourths of the identified “resilient” offspring in the study were females. The group as a whole reported a healthy sense of well-being and overall psychological health (Werner, 1986). In a similar study Werner and Johnson (2004) noted that the same type of resilient children were active and sociable as infants who did not distress during feeding or sleeping and they went into middle childhood eliciting positive responses from a wider network of caring adults (Werner & Johnson, 2004). For the women in this study, this type of social temperament was linked with positive outcomes by the age of 32. Many of the children from the study by age 32 had left the adverse conditions of their homes after
completion of high school in order to seek environments that would reduce the impact of the alcoholism and would open up opportunities (Werner & Johnson, 2004).

Positive coping strategies have also been identified as a protective factor for ACoA’s (Menees, 1997). ACoA’s that showed a level of adaptability and flexibility in their coping skills and competencies were more likely to be classified as resilient (Coombes & Anderson, 2000). In an exploratory study Hall (2007) discovered that ACoAs have a higher level of positive reappraisal coping responses than non-AcoAs. Positive reappraisal is an adaptive meaning-based coping response where the individual reconstructs stressful events into a more beneficial understanding (Hall, 2007). Menees (1997) discovered that ventilation, the ability to express emotions regarding the stressful event, acted as a moderator between parental alcoholism and their offspring’s self-esteem. Werner (1986) found that there was a high correlation between self-esteem and offspring of alcoholics that did not develop serious coping problems. Adaptive distancing, or the establishment of a sense of autonomy in the life of the ACoA was also found to serve as protective factor as children were able to separate themselves from their parent’s illness. An inability to separate oneself from the alcoholism of a parent was found to aid in the development of psychopathology in the life of a child of an alcoholic (Mylant, Ide, Cuevas & Meehan, 2002).

In a preliminary examination of brain circuitry Heitzeg et al. (2008), learned that resilient children of alcoholic parents have increased monitoring of emotionally charged stimuli compared to typically developing youth. Through activation of their orbital frontal gyrus in the brain, researchers were able to get a clearer understanding of why some children of alcoholics are not inclined towards early problem drinking. These same
resilient youth revealed that they had increased flexibility in how they processed emotional and social behaviors. These individuals were able to respond to varied emotional stimuli with increased monitoring that potentially would allow for the reduction of inappropriate responding as they had given themselves a greater amount of time to develop a flexible response (Heitzeg, Nigg, Yau, Zubieta & Zucker, 2008). This confirmed a similar postulation formed by Hall (2007) and previous studies which suggested that ACoA’s were more likely to interpret and restructure a situation in a positive light while still recognizing the reality of the problem, also known as positive reappraisal coping (Hall, 2007).

Ackerman (1987) reported positive adjustment in individuals who possessed an average level of intelligence, who were oriented towards achievement, had sufficient communication skills, a positive concept of their own self, and an internal locus of control. He also identified birth order, personality, temperament, and overall intelligence as factors that contributed towards resilience in ACoAs. Similar research revealed that in ACoA women, the most resilient were those that fully utilized their abilities and as a whole enjoyed school even if they were considered exceptional or not (Mylant, Ide, Cuevas & Meehan, 2002). Reuben (2001) postulates that it is possible for children who select academic and extracurricular achievement as an area of interest to develop a support system outside of the home environment. A child who excels in one or many particular areas is able to gain status and receive validation and attention which can provide oneself with personal worth and social support.

Social support has been one of the key factors identified in resiliency for ACoA’s. Adult children of alcoholics reported fewer drinking problems, higher self-esteem,
increased expression of feelings, and higher rates of intimacy when they received strong social support as children into adolescence and early adulthood (Hall, 2007). Werner and Johnson (2004) discovered that daughters of alcoholics were more likely than their male counterparts to turn towards caring adults for help and support in childhood. For all of the resilient offspring in their study, they found that each ACoA had a minimum of one supportive person in their life that provided them with unconditional acceptance (Werner & Johnson, 2004). The majority of both sons and daughters of alcoholics that adapted well in their adult lives reported having either a supportive grandparent, or aunt or uncle by whom they could rely on and receive support from. Approximately half of the same children had a least one teacher or significant non-familial individual who served as a positive role model in the life of the ACoA (Werner & Johnson, 2004).

Additionally, close association with a friend and families that were perceived as stable and non-alcoholic helped the COA (child of an alcoholic) gain perspective and maintain a helpful distance between themselves and their unruly home environment. A large percentage of ACoAs that developed into helpful and responsible adults selected long-term friends for a spouse (Werner & Johnson, 2004). These long-term friendships often provide the ACoA with an accepting and understanding partner, which left the ACoA feeling wanted and loved (Coombes & Anderson, 2000). Female ACoAs were also more likely to develop and maintain a positive relationship with their in-laws and utilize the relationship similar to having substitute parents (Werner & Johnson, 2004).

For those children with another parent in the home, the support and care received by a nonalcoholic parent can prove to be a critical variable in the impact alcoholism has on the family (Coombes & Anderson, 2000). The more supportive atmosphere created by
the parent increases the likelihood that the child will be nurtured and receive protection and guidance which aids in the child’s development. The bond the child experiences with their mother and the level of satisfaction from that relationship is important as it increases healthy independence and the satisfaction of peer relationships (Grzegorzewska & Cierpialkowska, 2011). With this a positive atmosphere can be created where children are more likely to have access to supplemental parents and role models (Werner & Johnson, 2004). In most observed cases of resilient ACoA’s the pillar of strength in the family was a nonalcoholic mother. A higher level of attention was typically received from their mothers during the resilient offspring’s first year of life, which differs from ACoA children that develop problematic coping responses (Werner & Johnson, 2004). Further research has revealed the early years of development as critical in the lives of resilient and non-resilient children. Additional environmental factors found to be true of the caretaking environment for resilient offspring included no additional births in the family and the absence of conflict within the home both during the child’s first two years of life (Werner, 1986).

In majority of these homes a higher portion of resilient ACoA offspring had received positive attention from their mothers during the early years of life and also received great amounts of support from siblings who were willing to care for one another (Werner & Johnson, 2004). Werner and Johnson (2004) discovered a link between the role as the eldest child in the family and oldest daughters as they were more inclined to take on parental responsibilities and put off other pursuits in order to help maintain stability within their home. Many of these sibling-caretakers entered professions later in life that paralleled the role they held in their family by working within helping
professions such as educators, nurses, and mental health workers. Coombes and Anderson (2000) suggest that these children who grow up in an alcoholic family environment, despite the potential for problematic coping responses, tend to contribute positively, rather than negatively, to the helping professions.

Additional protective environmental and social factors include access to resources such as faith communities, mental health and social services, as well as basic drug and alcohol education. Mylant et al. (2002) noted that ACoAs that are aware of the risk associated with their familial upbringing are less likely to abuse alcohol and other substances than ACoAs who are unaware of the risk. Access to resources informing children and young adults about the potential risk through educational programming or even group or individual counseling or therapy helps raise conscientiousness in the life of the child and proves as a protective factor for negative coping behaviors (Coombes & Anderson, 2000). Moreover, involvement and access to community and faith organizations have been shown to provide ACoAs with caring and supportive relationships that encourage healthy self-esteem and belief in oneself. These communities also have shown to provide these individuals with faith and beliefs that help enable them to better cope with challenging circumstances (Coombes & Anderson, 2000).

As evidence continues to arise in how adjustment and resiliency factors can protect ACoA’s against negative outcomes, the more readily available this information and additional resources will become for these individuals that come from this type of home environment. An increase in available information would work to decrease the overall negative impact on a child growing up in a home with an alcoholic. Although
Current access to these types of resources is limited, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the benefits that can arise from utilizing these resources can be life changing.

**Current Resources Available to the ACoA Daughter**

**Self-help literature.**

There is an abundance of self-help literature that covers useful information and strategies for better understanding one’s childhood and the effects of paternal alcoholism. The literature specific to ACoA daughters is limited in comparison to the general ACoA population but includes the aforementioned works of Ackerman (2002) and Leonard (1983). Furthermore, there is a great quantity of self-help literature for ACoAs based on the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) movement such as *The Twelve Steps for Adult Children* by Friends in Recovery (1996) as well as books directly published from AA such as *Alateen: Hope for Children of Alcoholics*. The latter two offer a specific format for dealing with feelings of anger, guilt, fear & despair. They emphasize an evaluation of the past and opening up to the present in order for the individual to see their own worth.

**Psychotherapy.**

Psychotherapy can be a supportive resource for women coming from homes with an alcoholic father (Coombes & Anderson, 2000). It can help illuminate relational history and the effects of the alcoholism on the life of the daughter. Acknowledgement of the child’s pain can be one of the most moving aspects of recovery. Dehn (2010) contends that their pain can be so difficult to relieve that the alcoholic parent may try to deny the pain and their children pick up on this and deny it as well. A large amount of ACoAs seek counseling services for issues likely related to being an ACoA, even though they might not relate these directly to their experiences as the child of an alcoholic parent.
However, being in a supportive and safe environment provided by a therapist can be an ideal situation for an ACoA daughter to begin to explore the impact of her upbringing and relational histories and how that is impacting her present self (Dehn, 2010). Intervention in this form may work to improve the ACoA daughter’s overall sense of well-being as individual and family based treatment can work to increase protective factors. Psychotherapy can add to the competencies of the ACoA as well as increase their feeling supported (Werner, 1986).

**Support Groups.**

Support groups are important resources in that they can help the ACOA daughter know that she is not alone and she can use her experience as something from which she can learn and grow. The largest network of support of ACoAs is run through Adult Children of Alcoholics World Service Organization (2013), which is an anonymous group that follows the twelve step practice of an Alcoholics Anonymous group. It is a worldwide organization that has meetings in most major towns and cities. These groups provide an environment for individual ACoAs to share their stories, explore their hurt, and know that they are not alone (2013).

**Conclusion**

Room and Greenfield (1993) stated that in the 1990 US National Alcohol Survey, respondents were questioned about lifetime attendance and employment of support resources available to them as well as support or therapy groups and individual counseling for non-alcohol problems. Of the US population, 13.3% indicate ever attending a 12-step meeting which includes the non-alcohol-oriented groups. During the prior year a further 2.1% used other therapy groups and 5.5% sought individual therapy
for personal problems other than alcohol (1993). The lack of utilization of these types of resources present in the United States is problematic. The purpose of this workshop will be to create awareness and emphasize the need for this type of support, however, it is possible that attendance to such a workshop might replicate the same numbers summarized above.

Overall, the alcoholism of the parent has a great impact on the daughter and her perception of self, her emotional and physical well-being. Further research in the relational dynamics created and the effects of paternal alcoholism on the daughter are needed in this field of study. Research does indicate that there is a definitive impact that paternal alcoholism has on ACoA daughters yet, research is lacking specifically on this topic. It can be seen that there is a significant impact on the daughter who is raised by an alcoholic father, and this indeed differs from the relationship between an alcoholic mother and her daughter. However, lack of awareness regarding resources available to these women and possibly the lack of initiative to access them by younger women result in a misrepresentation in the need for more of these services. A workshop addressing the overall issue relating back to the impact of the father daughter relationship and paternal alcoholism would help provide these individuals with an awareness of the impact of this issue on their lives. Furthermore, it would ideally promote the use and utilization of existing resources and potentially the creation of newer ones.
Chapter Three: Workshop Format

Target Population

The primary focus of this workshop will be for young women ages 18-25 that have been raised by an alcoholic and substance abusing father. This criterion is important as the psychoeducational portion of the group will involve literature primarily addressing this population. Each of these women are likely to also be experiencing new life changes and transitions whereas new awareness as to how they relate to others and the impact of their upbringing will be coming to light. It is also important that the workshop attendees are no longer considered minors as they are more likely to be living outside of the home and the participants will be able to somewhat remove themselves from the ongoing dynamics that are present in a home with a substance abusing parent. This is also useful to minimize potential reporting instances for the workshop facilitator in order to maximize the protection of confidentiality.

Special Considerations

When working with any population there are risks and special considerations that are specific to working within that population. In working with young adult women who have come from a home with a substance abusing father it is important to also consider the likelihood that they have experienced some form of trauma likely resulting from abuse and or neglect. This is an important consideration as some of the material of the workshop may contain potential traumatic triggers. Concurrently, women that have undergone this type of trauma often develop a pattern of victimization repeating, in some ways, the abuse that was done to them (Leonard, 1983). If the facilitator was to adopt a victim approach or stance towards these women’s experiences it is also likely to
villainize the father. Each facilitator should be aware of this possible dynamic and know that it should be addressed and avoided if it begins to become an issue in the workshop. Another very important consideration should be cultural differences between workshop attendees. Seeing as parental alcoholism is a country-wide epidemic, with it being estimated every one in five children are living in a home with an alcoholic parent, it is important to know that although each member will be able to relate through this common factor, they may live varied and diverse lives outside of this (National Association for Children of Alcoholics, 1998). Cultural issues and interpretations and possible misinterpretations should be addressed sensitively without being avoided (Jacobs, Masson & Harvill, 2009).

**Workshop Format**

As there are ACoA groups that have surfaced over the years it has been identified that a more useful approach, presumably, for this population would be a leader-led psychoeducational workshop (Jacobs, Masson & Harvill, 2009). The one-day workshop will consist of two two and half hour long sessions with an hour lunch break in order to ensure maximum attendance due to the minimal commitment and attention manageability. The workshop should be held in a spacious environment where the participants are able to comfortably take notes as well as participate in discussion with one another. There is no minimum or maximum amount of attendees for this workshop as its primary purpose is to provide information regarding the subject.

**Presentation Format**

The workshop shall be presented in a PowerPoint format to the audience while still allowing breaks for group participation. Savoy, Proctor and Salvendy (2009)
executed a research study on the efficacy of PowerPoint presentations and found that although there is no significant difference between PowerPoint and traditional lecture style type presentations in terms of material retention there are specific advantages to utilizing a presentation slide format. Some studies have shown that PowerPoint may have a positive impact on a student’s attitude during lecture presentations. Most students felt as though identification of important information was easier when listening to a presentation via use of PowerPoint slides.

Moreover, because of the ease of use of PowerPoint in today’s setting it was determined an effective presentation resource for the workshop. It is important to note, however, that specific tips and guidelines were followed in the creation of the PowerPoint presentation. Following Mayer’s theory of multimedia learning the PowerPoint presentation has a limited amount of information on each slide as it is assumed that individuals only process a few items at a time and including multiple facts or data on one slide will not be fully absorbed by the attendee (Savoy, Proctor, & Salvendy, 2009). Furthermore, Lim also (2012) recommended utilizing large fonts to increase the potential for information absorption and also recommended utilizing breaks from the technology in order to incorporate other methods of teaching which will also be utilized in the course of the workshop.

**Facilitator Qualifications**

Another important element in effectively overseeing the workshop would be the qualifications of the facilitator. They must have extensive knowledge about alcoholism and its effects not only on the alcoholic but also on family members, most specifically that being of the daughter. They should have an adequate understanding of major issues
that will arise such as trust, abandonment, shame, guilt, and intimacy. In order to have this type of understanding one must either be an ACoA daughter herself or spent a sufficient amount of time researching and studying the topic. Necessary to the time spent researching the topic the facilitator would also need to be familiar with each of the cited sources in the workshop. If the facilitator is an ACoA herself it would be necessary that she has previously worked through her own triggers and difficulties regarding the subject so that she does not create any bias in the presentation of information.

6 Part Overview of the Workshop

1. Part One

   a. Goal: The primary goal of this hour is to create credibility and rapport and provide an introduction to the workshop. Credibility and rapport need to be established between the workshop facilitator and each of the attendees as it will impact the overall reliability of the educational information. Important issues such as confidentiality between shared stories and diversity are to be discussed and a brief overview of the workshop will be presented along with a brief introduction to the topic.

   i. Part One Breakdown

      1. 20 minutes: Introduction

         a. Introduction of the facilitator, discussion of confidentiality and addressing any obvious diversity issues.

         b. Brief explanation of the topic and the need for its exploration, followed by a description of the general
workshop format, and the outline of topics to be discussed.

2. 5 Minutes: Getting to Know Each Other
   a. Dyads: Leader will engage the attendees in introductions by asking each participant to share a brief bio and their interest in the topic with an individual nearby. Leader can ask each member to answer a series of questions such as:
      i. What is your name?
      ii. How old are you and what do you do? (not required)
      iii. What is something interesting about you?
      iv. What brought you here today?

3. 25 Minutes: Psychoeducation
   a. Presentation of information about alcoholism, statistics on ACoA’s, effects of paternal alcoholism on daughters.

4. 10 Minutes: Q & A and reflection
   a. The facilitator will give the participants a few minutes to ask any questions regarding the material thus far.
   b. If no questions are asked a brief moment of time to reflect on the material will be given to participants.
i. What stood out to you?

ii. Was there anything that surprised you to learn?

2. Part Two

   a. Goal: The goals of this section is to introduce the significance of the father-daughter relationship and the father’s influence on the daughter.

   i. Breakdown

      1. 30 Minutes: Psychoeducation

         a. Presentation of information regarding the father-daughter relationship and its significance.

      2. 10 Minutes: Q & A

         a. Facilitator will set aside a few minutes to answer any questions that may arise during this portion of the presentation of material.

      3. 10 Minutes: Brief Break

         a. A brief break will be given in order to access refreshments or restrooms.

      4. 30 Minutes: Psychoeducation

         a. Facilitator will continue speaking on the father-daughter relationship and the impact on identity development and relational intimacy.

      5. 10 Minutes: Q & A and Reflection
a. The facilitator will give the participants a few minutes to ask any questions regarding the material thus far.

b. If no questions are asked a brief moment of time to reflect on the material will be given to participants.
   i. What stood out to you?
   ii. Was there anything that surprised you to learn?

c. Participants will be dismissed for one hour lunch break.

3. Part Three

   a. Goal: This sections goal is to increase the attendee’s knowledge of the effects of paternal alcoholism on the daughter.
      i. Breakdown
         1. 5 Minutes: Greeting and brief recap of what has been covered thus far.
         2. 30 Minutes: Psychoeducation
            a. Effects of paternal alcoholism on the daughter will be covered including topics of developmental inhibitors and coping mechanisms.
            3. 10 Minutes: Q & A
a. Facilitator will set aside a few minutes to answer any questions that may arise during this portion of the presentation of material.

4. 30 Minutes: Psychoeducation
   a. Increased risk for women who have grown up in homes with alcoholic fathers will be covered.

5. 10 Minutes: Brief Break
   a. A brief break will be given in order to access refreshments or restrooms.

4. Part Four
   a. Goal: The goal of this session is to inform the attendees of potential protective factors that may arise in the life of the ACoA daughter as well as equip them with useable resources and conclude the workshop.
      i. Breakdown
         1. 10 Minutes: Recap and Q & A
            a. Brief recap of previously covered material.
            b. Allows participants to ask any unanswered questions about material thus far.
         2. 35 Minutes: Psychoeducation
            a. Facilitator will cover potential protective factors for ACoAs and female ACoAs.
         3. 15 Minutes: Resource Information
a. Facilitator will provide attendees with information on resources available to female ACoA’s.

4. 15 Minutes: Summary of Workshop
   
   i. Facilitator summarizes what was said and learned
   
   ii. Closure of workshop and information on further workshops or availability of resources/ materials given in workshop.
Chapter Four: Summary, Discussion and Recommendations for the Future

Summary

As alcoholism becomes increasingly recognized as an epidemic in our society today it is ever more so important that the effects of parental alcoholism on the children are studied and taken into consideration. As knowledge in the area grows it is imperative that this information is passed on to those most immediately affected by the epidemic. It can be argued that if methods of survival and resilient ACoAs exist then it possible to teach those that may not have had the same protective factors in place. Many children that are exposed to this type of familial behavior are lacking in basic information regarding drugs and alcohol and the disease model of alcoholism (Mylant, Ide, Cuevas & Meehan, 2002).

Utilization of a psychoeducational workshop that informs and educates female ACoAs as well as those that may encounter female ACoAs in their life will leave these individuals better informed about the importance of the father daughter relationship, the perils that an ACoA daughter with an alcoholic father faces, as well as protective factors and resources for further research and learning. It is the goal of this workshop is to provide these individuals with an additional resource that will better prepare them for the journey of understanding and healing they will embark on.

Discussion and Recommendations for the Future

As mentioned above, further research in the specific area of father-daughter dynamics and the affects paternal alcoholism has on the daughter needs to occur. While there is some literature on the subject, sufficient evidence-based research over a wide variety of demographics is needed. Moreover, little is known about the weight of the
father’s impact on the daughter outside of high sensationalized areas of interest such as sexuality. A broader level of exploration and research on the father’s impact on a daughter’s development would help create a better-founded research base for this workshop.

Additionally, details covering the execution of the workshop were covered in the chapter above yet little is known regarding the actual execution of the workshop. Sufficient marketing analysis would need to take place in order to best understand how to reach the target demographic of the workshop. This would vary based on each separate location that the workshop would be held. It is possible to try and reach this demographic through advertising in college campuses, community centers, and even psychotherapy offices, yet again which is all dependent on the location the workshop is to be held at and the forms of advertisement that might best meet the demographic in each area.
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Appendix

Young Women and the Effects of Paternal Alcoholism

Introduction to ACoA’s

- Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACoAs) are characterized by specific behaviors that have resulted from growing up in chaotic and unpredictable home environments that stem from a parent’s alcohol abuse (Kelley et al., 2008).

- Clinical research in the 1970’s began to show that children being raised in families where alcoholism is present are susceptible to more problems (Dehn, 2010).
Introduction to ACoA’s

- National Association for Children of Alcoholics estimates that every one in five children live in a home with an alcoholic parent (NACA, 1998).
- Many individuals will enter a treatment program for other various forms of addiction without any awareness of how this might relate back to their upbringing and the fact that they are an ACoA (Dehn, 2010).

Introduction to ACoA’s

- Research in the area of alcoholic family systems has suggested that the impact on the ACoA is highly gender specific, although a higher amount of empirical research is needed in the area in order to substantiate these claims (Jamas & Kazak, 1992).
- Current research does show, however, that maternal and paternal use has different effects on both male and female children (Berkowitz & Perkins, 1998).
Introduction to ACoA’s

- The more common parental figure known to suffer from alcoholism in most homes appears to be the father (Dehn, 2010).
- Studies have shown that male offspring of alcoholics are more likely than their female siblings to become alcoholics themselves which could very possibly be a contributing factor to the prevalence of paternal alcoholism (Jarmas & Kazak, 1992).

Introduction to ACoA’s

- Berkowitz and Perkins (1988) research indicated daughters of male alcoholics seemed to display higher levels of emotional difficulties.
- For the purpose of this workshop it seems pertinent to further explore the unique relationship developed between and father and a daughter and the impact of alcoholism on this dyad.
- Women with alcoholic fathers have been found to be prone to a series of negative life outcomes involving relational, psychological, and even physical well-being (Kelley et al., 2008).
Introduction to Workshop

- In order to gain a greater understanding of the impact of paternal alcoholism on the daughter, it is first important to understand her needs and wounds established in the relationship with her father.

- This includes gaining an understanding of how the daughter is specifically affected by paternal alcoholism and the developmental inhibitions it can create, common coping mechanisms, her exposure to increased risk, and potential protective factors.

Purpose

- The purpose of this workshop is to create a basis of understanding for daughters of alcoholics that focuses on the effects of paternal alcoholism on women and to provide psychoeducational information to an audience in regards to effects, coping, and resources available to these women.
Alcoholism

- Alcoholism, which is considered to be a medical condition, is defined by Merriam-Webster (2014) as a disease, in which someone too frequently drinks alcohol in large quantities and is unable to live a healthy and normal life.
- Alcoholism is recognized by the American Medical Association (AMA) as a progressive disease that is incurable but can be treated.

Alcoholism

- If left untreated alcoholism can have devastating results, including death.
- AMA states that the only proven method preventing the negative progression of the disease is complete abstinence (2003).
- As long as the alcoholic participates in the consumption of alcohol their drive to drink will get worse (Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, 2003).
Symptoms of Alcoholism

- Symptoms include loss of control, dependency, withdrawal symptoms, personality change, and loss of memory also known as blackouts.

- If an alcoholic stops drinking they *may* suffer from symptoms such as nausea, headaches, physical tremors and even *convulsions* (Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, 2003).

Alcoholism and ACoAs

- Interest in adult children of alcoholics in clinical settings was instigated in the 1970’s and 1980’s through the growing prevalence of the self-help and support group movement (Lewis Harter, 2000).

- Closely related to the broader description of a “codependent” which was associated as a distinct population of family members of alcoholics.
Alcoholism and ACoAs

- ACoAs were argued to have specialized needs for treatment as it was being recognized as a distinct population within the nation (Lewis Harter, 2000).

- As a reflection of the now recognized systemic nature of alcoholism, an ACoA family is sometimes referred to as an alcoholic family (Polak, Puttler & Ilgen, 2012).

Alcoholism and ACoAs

- In early research, several stereotypical roles were identified that children assumed within the family.

- These roles include the scapegoat, peacemaker, hero, the caregiver, mascot, arguer, conflict resolver, rescuer as well as the lost child.
Alcoholism and ACoAs

- As the alcoholic family system was studied further, basic rules of operation were highlighted within the alcoholic home.
- These rules, as highlighted by Ruben (2001) are as follows:

Alcoholic Family System Rules of Operation

- **Rule One: Don’t talk about family problems.** It is not uncommon for alcohol abuse problems to go unnoticed by close family and friends as there is typically an unspoken rule that the family’s problems stay within the nuclear family.
Alcoholic Family System Rules of Operation

- **Rule Two:** *Do not express feelings openly.* Open expression of feelings is not commonly allowed within the alcoholic family system.

- **Rule Three:** *Limit communications.* Communication outside of the home is not often typical for a child of an alcoholic family system. This is necessary in order to preserve the family secrets. Additionally, the unpredictability of the environment makes it difficult for the child to know if their communication will result in a positive or negative response, often resulting in minimal communication.
Alcoholic Family System Rules of Operation

- **Rule Four:** *Nothing is ever good enough, but you are still expected to strive for unattainable perfection.* Polarization is common within these home environments which can result in high tendencies toward feelings of guilt and perfectionism.

- **Rule Five:** *You can’t be selfish.* The family is centralized around the alcoholic which teaches a child of an alcoholic family system that their own needs and wishes are inappropriate.

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Alcoholic Family System Rules of Operation

- **Rule Six:** *“Do what I say, not as I do.”* Alcoholic parents are often aware of the dangers of the behavior that they model and so they may encourage their children not to participate in similar behaviors.
Alcoholic Family System Rules of Operation

- **Rule Seven**: *Play is not something you do.* The ACOA may have difficulty relaxing and finding enjoyment in activities as their self-worth often feels predicated on their accomplishments resulting from a need to “prove” their worth. The chaos of their family of origin’s home environment may also have taught them that if they let their guard down something bad might happen to them.

Alcoholic Family System Rules of Operation

- **Rule Eight**: *Avoid conflict.* Conflict can result in unpredictable parental behavior and punishment. Children learn to avoid situations that may result in confrontation and often are not taught conflict resolution skills. Also, children may want to avoid feeling like they are reinforcing their parent’s need to drink as a result of conflict.
Alcoholic Family System Rules of Operation

- It’s important to not assume that all children of alcoholic families have negative experiences, are affected the same way, and/or as adults are unable to adjust without need for counseling or recovery programs (Goodman, 1987).

- Overall adjustment outcomes are related to many factors including severity of the alcoholism, psychiatric comorbidity, and the age of the child and their perceptions of the alcoholism (Ackerman, 2001).

The Father-Daughter Relationship

"The father who drifts or veers away when a daughter grows and changes can leave a lethal effect on her aggression, her ambition, her feel for power."

(Harris, 2008).
The Father-Daughter Relationship

- Historically being viewed with more power, fatherly presence is often assumed to be equally powerful as that of the mother’s in the lives of their children (Sharpe, 1994).

- Perception of the quality of the father-daughter relationship and resulting influence on the life of the daughter have a direct impact on their perception of self and capacity for relational intimacy.

The Father-Daughter Relationship

- A study conducted in 1985 by Youniss and Smollar found that a majority of adolescents labeled their relationships with their fathers as uncomfortable, withdrawn, distant, and lacking.

- Although the adolescents did not view this decrease in interaction as desirable the researchers noted this decrease in intimacy was common between fathers and their children once the child entered adolescence.
The Father-Daughter Relationship

- The perceived bonds a child has with her father can have a major influence on her later in life.

- Parker, Tupling and Brown (1979) identified four parenting types based out of two dimensions: Care and Overprotection.
  - Care: Behaviors and attitudes of the parent such as warmth, affection and sensitivity.
  - Overprotection: behaviors and attitudes such as strictness, control and intrusion.

The Father-Daughter Relationship

- Four types of parenting emerged from the research on care and overprotection.
  - High Care/ Low Overprotection: Most optimal
  - High Care/High Overprotection: Affectional constraint
  - Low Care/ High Overprotection: Affectionless control
  - Low Care/Low Overprotection: Absent Bonding
The Father-Daughter Relationship

- Women who reported being raised by fathers that fall into any of the parenting types with low care experienced a negative perception of self (Parker, Tupling & Brown, 1979).

- Studies also suggest caring but overprotective fathers may exacerbate the negative effects of body surveillance and shame in the life of their daughters (Miles-McLean, Liss & Erchull, 2014).

The Father-Daughter Relationship

- Scheffler and Naus (1999) found in a study they conducted that girls who perceived their father as being warm and supportive reported higher levels of self-esteem.

- This study accounted for and eliminated any relation to the perceptions of their experience of received mothering, supporting evidence for a direct link between the father’s relationship to self-perception in women (Scheffler & Naus, 1999).
Perkins Study

- In 2001, Perkins identified six distinctive father-daughter relationships.
- These were as follows: a doting father, distant father, demanding yet supportive father, domineering father, seductive father, and an absent father.

Perkins Study Findings

- The relationship with the most ideal outcome was the demanding yet supportive father who valued them but also gave them permission to be different from their fathers.
- The daughter of a distant father will often align with the father’s distance and also distance herself from the family in order to protect the father.
Perkins Study Findings

- Daughters of domineering fathers can maintain a rational relationship with their fathers but feel cut off from them emotionally.
- Daughters with absent and seductive fathers viewed themselves as significantly more relational and self-assured than their fathers and how they felt their fathers viewed them.
- Both these types of daughters felt separated and misunderstood from their fathers.

Father’s Impact on Identity Development

- A father is uniquely responsible for shaping a woman’s perception of self and her individuality (Leonard, 1983).
- Allgood, Beckert, and Peterson (2012), indicate that healthy outcomes for daughters are directly related to paternal involvement.
Father’s Impact on Identity Development

- They have found that a father’s level of engagement and his accessibility directly impact the self-esteem of their daughter.
  
  - **Engagement**: the father’s direct level of contact with his child.
  
  - **Accessibility**: a father’s mental and physical availability to his child.
  
- These create the daughter’s perception of self (self-esteem) and their overall report of life satisfaction (Allgood et al., 2012).

Father’s Impact on Identity Development

- Positive relationship experience between children and their fathers result in healthier emotional well-being and scholastic achievement (Brown, Thompson and Traftimow, 2002).
  
- Kiernan (2006) found that fathers active in the lives of their children positively impacted their infants’ growth on both cognitive and social levels.
Father’s Impact on Identity Development

- The child’s acquisition of social, intellectual and language skills around ages three to five were also directly influenced by the presence of their fathers.

- This advantage continues into school-age where children tend to be more successful in their social, academic and athletic pursuits as well as being better adjusted individuals with greater self-esteem (Kiernan, 2006).

Father’s Impact on Identity Development

- Daughters of alcoholic fathers typically are missing a level of psychological and likely even physical accessibility of their father which directly impacts their identity.

- Rangarajan and Kelly (2006) found a negative correlation between the role of perceptions of family environment and family communication in alcoholic families and self-esteem of the children.
Father’s Impact on Identity Development

- Kelley et al. (2008) conducted a study conducted comparing parent-child attachment in 89 American female Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOAs) with that of 201 non-ACoAs.
- Participants categorized as ACoA reported significantly more negative affect and less support from their fathers as indicated on the Parental Attachment Questionnaire (2008).

Father’s Impact on Identity Development

- Daughters of alcoholics are prone to perfectionism as an overarching behavior (Ackerman, 2002).
- They learn that they are not as important as the alcohol which leads to the thinking that it is not who they are that is important but what they do is.
- They grow up quickly without experiencing the emotions of their childhood which leads to feeling unlovable as they find it hard to develop a sense of belonging (2002).
Father’s Impact on Relational Intimacy

- The father, as a male, tends to highlight a woman’s differentness and how he relates to her femininity will outline how she views herself as a woman and, furthermore, how she relates to men (Leonard, 1983).

- High levels of paternal involvement = high levels of intimacy, commitment and trust in offspring’s intimate relationships.

- Low levels of paternal involvement = high levels of insecure attachment styles in their intimate relationships (Haaz, Kneavel & Browning, 2014).

Father’s Impact on Relational Intimacy

- Secunda (1992) stressed that women tend to respond to men in their lives the same way they responded to their father.

- If this parental relationship was elusive or lacking the women might seek intimacy unable to fully trust the relationship.

- A woman’s perceived affirmation from her father also correlates with higher feelings of security with intimate relationships.
Father’s Impact on Relational Intimacy

- Father absence and its impact on early sexual activity was explored in longitudinal studies in the United States and New Zealand (Ellis, Bates, Dodge, Fergusson, Horwood, Pettit, & Woodward, 2003).
- The study followed a small sample of girls from the ages of 5 until 18.
- The study found that higher exposure to father absence was linked to elevated risk for early sexual activity and adolescent pregnancy.

Father’s Impact on Relational Intimacy

- According to Ackerman (2002), daughters of fathers who are alcoholics are drawn to chemically dependent men and are more likely to become addicted themselves.
- A study by Kearns-Bodkin and Leonard (2008), found lower marital intimacy rates for women who grew up with an alcoholic father.
- Domenico and Windle (1993) also found that female ACoAs reported lower levels of marital satisfaction and higher levels of marital conflict.
Father’s Impact on Relational Intimacy

- ACoA women reported lower amounts of perceived social support and indicated having more parental role distress, while often viewing themselves as unable to control their children.

Father’s Impact on Relational Intimacy

- Hetherington (1972) found that if a woman had a father who was either emotionally or physically absent, disruptions in interactions with the opposite sex occurred.

- These exhibited themselves as attention seeking behaviors from males and early sexual behavior or the opposite could also occur and the women would exhibit avoidance and restraint around males. The earlier the absence of the father was experienced the more severe the effects were on those behaviors (1972).
Father’s Impact on Relational Intimacy

- **Attachment styles**, first identified by John Bowlby, are reflections of the expectations and beliefs people have formed about themselves and their close relationships on the basis of their caregiving history (1982).

- They create a working model as to how individuals approach and view all other relationships (Jaeger, Hahn & Weinraub, 2000).

Father’s Impact on Relational Intimacy

- Jaeger, Hahn and Weinraub (2000) conducted a study examining the attachment styles of daughters raised by alcoholic fathers, and found that these women were more likely to have insecure attachment styles than women who were not raised by an alcoholic father.
Father’s Impact on Relational Intimacy

- Brennan, Shaver and Tobey (1991) indicated that more females than males were fearful-avoidants.

- ACoAs scored high on both the anxious-ambivalent and avoidant scales, and fell primarily into Bartholomew's fearful-avoidant class.

- These children were most commonly found in families troubled by parental alcoholism, depression and abuse (1991).

Father’s Impact on Relational Intimacy

- The father-daughter relationship can only be summarized as complicated.

- This dyad is challenging to research as there is a plethora of taboos relating to sexuality and emotional intimacy that create a general sense of unease when approached for observation (Sharpe, 1994).
Father’s Impact on Relational Intimacy

- It can be argued that some differences between genders may only be resultant out of specific conditions as suggested by research on particular populations.

- Additionally, there is difficulty in most research instruments in detecting specific differences between the relationship dyads (Russell & Saebel. 1997).

Father’s Impact on Relational Intimacy

- Although it can be difficult to extrapolate the pure effects of the paternal relationship with the daughter it can be seen through the research that the father’s level of engagement in his daughter’s life has a lifelong impact on the daughter.
The Effects of Paternal Alcoholism on the Daughter

Developmental Inhibitors

- For a woman who has a father who is inconsistent in her life, unpredictable, or absent, she is often lacking the developmental skills typically acquired for women who have a father that is present and attentive (Ackerman, 2002).

- Using Erikson’s developmental tasks as a measure, Ackerman indicates that eight developmental interruptions occur in the lives of COAs (2002).

- These interruptions leave ACoAs with a disturbed relationship to initiative, identity confusion, an inability to accept reality, and low self-esteem.
Developmental Inhibitors

- The first stage of development, *Trust vs. Mistrust*, is primary to the foundation of the rest of the child’s development and is typically the most skewed in these children (Ackerman, 2002).
- They become fearful of trusting anyone as they might accidentally disclose too much which could potentially be used to hurt her in the future (2002).

Developmental Inhibitors

- Dehn reveals that ACoAs overall achievements often lag behind those of non-ACoAs as do their overall rate of employment and socioeconomic status.
- A study by Jacob and Windle examined 128 ACoAs, 67 of them being women, and revealed that ACoAs tend to be more vulnerable to behavioral problems in school.
- Dehn suggests that to some degree this is due to a neurocognitive impairment from alcoholics that is transmitted to their children and as a result the achievements of their children could be minimized (2010).
Coping Mechanisms

- The alcoholic family system is set up in a manner that controls the actions and the emotions of each of its individual members, resulting in an overall unhealthy family system that can lead to abuse (Dehn, 2010).

- The types of abuse they face can be emotional, physical, sexual, and even spiritual.

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Coping Mechanisms

- Harlow (1999) highlighted a research study conducted by the United States Department of Justice on children who had a parent in state prison.

- 67% of the ACoA women in the study reported having experienced childhood abuse from their fathers.

- Such types of abuse and neglect result in different coping methods and mechanisms in the lives of the ACoA daughter.
Coping Mechanisms

- The ACoAs home environment as a child directly impacts their learned ability to cope.
- Coping mechanisms are any effort directed toward stress management; they are the factors that enable an individual to regain emotional balance after a stressful experience.
- The forms of coping developed in the lives of ACoAs can prove to be maladaptive once the child leaves the home.

Coping Mechanisms

- Ackerman (2002) points out that many daughters’ of alcoholic fathers developed coping mechanisms that had them feel they must function perfectly under the assumption that if they do so an unpleasant situation will be avoided.
- Domenico and Windle (1993) found that ACoA’s were also more likely to drink for coping purposes but their overall level of alcohol consumption did not differ from that of non-ACoA’s.
- For many their current problems can be traced back to adverse childhood experiences which leave them poorly prepared to provide a safe and stable environment for their own children (Dehn, 2010).
Increased Risk

- ACoAs have been found to have a higher risk for anxiety, depression, and psychotic symptoms (Coleman and Frick, 1994).
- ACoAs also appear at increased risk for a variety of negative outcomes, including, substance abuse, antisocial or under-controlled behaviors, depressive symptoms, anxiety disorders, low self-esteem, difficulties in family relationships, and generalized distress and maladjustment (Harter, 2000).

Increased Risk

- ACoA’s have also been found to have a cultural and potentially biological predisposition towards alcoholism (Harter, 2000).
- Kumpfer postulated that the highest risk group of children to become addicts is children of addicted parents (1999).
  - This is as a result of both environmental and genetic family factors (Kumpfer, 1999).
- ACoA’s approximately 4 times as likely to become an alcoholic than non-ACoAs (Dehn, 2010).
Increased Risk

- There is also a high prevalence of alexithymia as they are more likely to internalize their emotions when they feel it is unsafe to express them as they are unable to know how they will be received (Dehn, 2010).

- The reduced awareness of emotions is occasionally even accompanied by dramatic outbursts thought to be as a result of extreme attempts to control emotions (Harter, 2000).

Increased Risk

- ACoAs often suffer from somatic symptoms (Dehn, 2010).

- This is thought to be as a result of the chronic stress associated with their upbringing but it is also possibly a result of the internalization of one’s emotions.
Increased Risk

- In a sample of children hospitalized for psychiatric disorders over fifty percent were found to be children of one or multiple addicted parents (Dehn, 2010).

- ACoAs indicated higher rates of depression, anxiety, and forms of psychopathic deviance leaving them at risk for many types of adjustment difficulties in their adult life (Coleman & Frick, 1994).

Increased Risk

- In their study, Byrd-Craven, Auer, Granger, and Massey (2002) found a physical effect on the female ACoAs stress response.

- They found that the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis of the brain is overstimulated by perceived negative father-daughter relationships.

- This overproduction of cortisol results in emotional and cognitive dysregulation later in life (2002).
Protective Factors and Resiliency

Despite the increased risk and the potential for many negative outcomes growing up in a home with an alcoholic father can produce, there still are those children that go on to live moderately healthy and successful lives.

Protective Factors

- **Protective factors** reduce the effect of the stressor (Menees, 1997).
  - Protective factors are linked with adaptation and competence and can protect against the effects of growing up in alcoholic home and, additionally, can foster resilience in children raised in these homes (Coombes & Anderson, 2000).
  - Garmezy (1991) separated protective factors into three categories: intra-personal protective factors, social factors, and environmental factors.
Protective Factors

- **Intra-personal factors**: personal attributes such as gender, temperament and personality, birth order, intelligence, coping style, self-esteem and overall mastery of one’s beliefs.

- **Social factors**: the relationship with the primary caregiver(s), specific positive qualities of the family system, and other significant family members.

- **Environmental Factors**: external support factors such as environmental resources and the ability of the individual to access help (Garmezy, 1991).

Resiliency

- **Resiliency**, which the study of protective factors is based out of, has been examined in a variety of high-risk individuals, and specific resiliency traits of women raised by an alcoholic father and ACoA’s in general have been identified (Coombes & Anderson, 2000).

- Resilience does not directly imply that there are specific tasks one must do or not do in order to achieve competency or appropriate coping skills.
Resiliency

- Definition of Resiliency: a form of flexibility that an individual possesses that allows them to assess situations and implement appropriate strategies to handle various life stressors as they occur.

- It is preparing oneself to meet challenges in a positive manner without being rigid, or set in one way of approach (Hall & Webster, 2007).

Resilience in ACoA’s

- Werner (1986) found in a longitudinal study examining resilient offspring of alcoholics that one of the primary indicators of a child’s overall resilience was having an agreeable temperament described as “cuddly and affectionate” that prompted positive attention from primary caretakers.

- Approximately 3/4ths of the identified “resilient” offspring in the study were females.
Resilience in ACoA’s

- Werner and Johnson (2004) noted that the same type of resilient children were active and sociable as infants who did not distress during feeding or sleeping and they went into middle childhood eliciting positive responses from a wider network of caring adults.

Resilience in ACoA’s

- For the women in this study, this type of social temperament was linked with positive outcomes by the age of 32.
- Many of the children from the study by age 32 had left the adverse conditions of their homes after completion of high school in order to seek environments that would reduce the impact of the alcoholism and would open up opportunities (Werner & Johnson, 2004).
Resilience in ACoA’s

- Positive coping strategies have also been identified as a protective factor for ACoA’s (Menees, 1997).
- ACoA’s that showed a level of adaptability and flexibility in their coping skills and competencies were more likely to be classified as resilient (Coombes & Anderson, 2000).

Resilience in ACoA’s

- Hall (2007) discovered that ACoAs have a higher level of positive reappraisal coping responses than non-AcoAs.
- Positive reappraisal is an adaptive meaning-based coping response where the individual reconstructs stressful events into a more beneficial understanding (Hall, 2007).
Resilience in ACoA’s

- **Ventilation**, the ability to express emotions regarding the stressful event, acts as a moderator between parental alcoholism and their offspring’s self-esteem (Menees, 1997).

- **Adaptive distancing**, or the establishment of a sense of autonomy in the life of the ACoA was also found to serve as protective factor.

- An inability to separate oneself from the alcoholism of a parent was found to aid in the development of psychopathology in the life of a child of an alcoholic (Mylant, Ide, Cuevas & Meehan, 2002).

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Resilience in ACoA’s

- In a preliminary examination of brain circuitry Heitzeg et al. (2008), learnt that resilient children of alcoholic parents have increased monitoring of emotionally charged stimuli compared to typically developing youth.

- Through activation of their orbital frontal gyrus in the brain, researchers were able to get a clearer understanding of why some children of alcoholics are not inclined towards early problem drinking.
Resilience in ACoA’s

- These same resilient youth revealed that they had increased flexibility in how they processed emotional and social behaviors.
- They were able to respond to varied emotional stimuli with increased monitoring that potentially would allow for the reduction of inappropriate responding as they had given themselves a greater amount of time to develop a flexible response (Heitzeg, Nigg, Yau, Zubieta & Zucker, 2008).

Resilience in ACoA’s

- This confirmed a similar postulation formed by Hall (2007) and previous studies which suggested that ACoA’s were more likely to interpret and restructure a situation in a positive light while still recognizing the reality of the problem, also known as positive reappraisal coping.
Resilience in ACoA’s

- Ackerman (1987) reported positive adjustment in individuals who possessed an average level of intelligence, who were oriented towards achievement, had sufficient communication skills, a positive concept of their own self, and an internal locus of control.

- He also identified birth order, personality, temperament, and overall intelligence as factors that contributed towards resilience in ACoAs.

Resilience in ACoA’s

- Similar research revealed that in ACoA women, the most resilient were those that fully utilized their abilities and as a whole enjoyed school even if they were considered exceptional or not (Mylant, Ide, Cuevas & Meehan, 2002).
Resilience in ACoA’s

- Reuben (2001) postulates that it is possible for children who select academic and extracurricular achievement as an area of interest to develop a support system outside of the home environment.

- A child who excels in one or many particular areas is able to gain status and receive validation and attention which can provide oneself with personal worth and social support.

Resilience in ACoA’s

- Social support has been one of the key factors identified in resiliency for ACoA’s.

  - Adult children of alcoholics reported fewer drinking problems, higher self-esteem, expression of feelings, and intimacy when they received strong social support as children into adolescence and early adulthood (Hall, 2007).
Resilience in ACoA’s

- Werner and Johnson (2004) discovered that daughters of alcoholics were more likely than their male counterparts to turn towards caring adults for help and support in childhood.

- For all of the resilient offspring in their study, they found that each ACoA had a minimum of one supportive person in their life who provided them with unconditional acceptance.

Resilience in ACoA’s

- The majority of both sons and daughters of alcoholics that adapted well in their adult lives reported having either a supportive grandparent, or aunt or uncle by whom they could rely on and receive support from.

- Approximately half of the same children had at least one teacher or significant non-familial individual who served as a positive role model in the life of the ACoA (Werner & Johnson, 2004).
Resilience in ACoA’s

- Close association with a friend and families that were perceived as stable and non-alcoholic helped the COA gain perspective and maintain a helpful distance between themselves and their unruly home environment.

Resilience in ACoA’s

- A large percentage of ACoAs that developed into helpful and responsible adults selected long-term friends for a spouse (Werner & Johnson, 2004).

- These relationships often provide the ACoA with an accepting and understanding partner, which leave the ACoA feeling wanted and loved (Coombes & Anderson, 2000).

- Female ACoAs were also more likely to develop and maintain a positive relationship with their in-laws and utilize the relationship similar to having substitute parents (Werner & Johnson, 2004).
Resilience in ACoA’s

- For those children with another parent in the home, the support and care received by a nonalcoholic parent can prove to be a critical variable in the impact alcoholism has on the family (Coombes & Anderson, 2000).

- The more supportive atmosphere created by the parent increases the likelihood that the child will be nurtured and receive protection and guidance which aids in the child’s development.

Resilience in ACoA’s

- The bond the child experiences with their mother and the level of satisfaction from that relationship is important as it increases healthy independence and the satisfaction of peer relationships (Grzegorzewska & Cierpialkowska, 2011).

- With this a positive atmosphere can be created where children are more likely to have access to supplemental parents and role models (Werner & Johnson, 2004).
Resilience in ACoA’s

- In most observed cases of resilient ACoA’s the pillar of strength in the family was a nonalcoholic mother.
- A higher level of attention was typically received from their mothers during the resilient offspring’s first year of life, which differs from ACoA children that develop problematic coping responses (Werner & Johnson, 2004).

Resilience in ACoA’s

- Further research has revealed the early years of development as critical in the lives of resilient and non-resilient children.
- Additional environmental factors found to be true of the caretaking environment for resilient offspring included no additional births in the family and the absence of conflict within the home both during the child’s first two years of life (Werner, 1986).
Resilience in ACoA’s

- In majority of these homes a higher portion of resilient ACoA offspring had received positive attention from their mothers during the early years of life and also received great amounts of support from siblings who were willing to care for one another (Werner & Johnson, 2004).

- Werner and Johnson (2014) found that oldest daughters were more inclined to take on parental responsibilities and put off other pursuits in order to help maintain stability within their home.

Resilience in ACoA’s

- Many of these sibling-caretakers entered professions later in life that paralleled the role they held in their family by working within helping professions such as educators, nurses, and mental health workers.

- Coombes and Anderson (2000) suggest that these children who grow up in an alcoholic family environment, despite the potential for problematic coping responses, tend to contribute positively, rather than negatively, to the helping professions.
Resilience in ACoAs

- Additional protective environmental and social factors include access to resources such as faith communities, mental health and social services, as well as basic drug and alcohol education.

- Mylant et al. (2002) noted that ACoAs that are aware of the risk associated with their familial upbringing are less likely to abuse alcohol and other substances than ACoAs who are unaware of the risk.

Resilience in ACoAs

- Access to resources informing children and young adults about the potential risk through educational programming or even group or individual counseling or therapy helps raise conscientiousness in the life of the child and proves as a protective factor for negative coping behaviors (Coombes & Anderson, 2000).
Resilience in ACoAs

- Involvement and access to community and faith organizations have been shown to provide ACoAs with caring and supportive relationships that encourage healthy self-esteem and belief in oneself.

- These communities also have shown to provide these individuals with faith and beliefs that help enable them to better cope with challenging circumstances (Coombes & Anderson, 2000).

Resilience in ACoAs

- As evidence continues to arise in how adjustment and resiliency factors can protect ACoAs against negative outcomes the more readily available this information and additional resources will become for these individuals that come from this type of home environment.

- An increase in available information would work to decrease the overall negative impact growing up in a home with an alcoholic can have on a child.

- Although current access to these types of resources is limited, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the benefits that can arise from utilizing these resources can be life changing.
Current Resources Available to the ACoA Daughter

Self-Help Literature

- There is an abundance of self-help literature that covers useful information and strategies for better understanding one's childhood and the effects of paternal alcoholism.
- The literature specific to ACoA daughters is limited in comparison to the general ACoA population but includes the following:
Perfect Daughters

By Robert Ackerman

Perfect Daughters identifies what differentiates the adult daughters of alcoholics from other women. He helps the reader explore and begin to conquer issues associated with this upbringing.

The Wounded Woman: Healing the Father-Daughter Relationship

By Linda Schierse Leonard

“A father wounded in his psychological development, Linda Leonard believes, cannot often give his daughter the care and guidance she needs. Leonard charts paths toward psychological transformation and a fruitful, caring relationship between men and women, fathers and daughters—one that honors both the mutuality and the uniqueness of the sexes.”
12 Steps for Adult Children
By Friends in Recovery
Self-Help literature for ACoAs based directly out of the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) movement.

Alateen: Hope for Children of Alcoholics
By Alcoholics Anonymous
A self-help book directly from AA itself which explains alcoholism and the effects it can have on children of alcoholics as well as information on where to find meetings, etc.
Recovery: A Guide for Adult Children of Alcoholics
By Herbert Gravitz and Julie D Bowden

Recovery explores the secrets, fears, hopes and issues that confront adult children of alcoholics.

Psychotherapy

- Psychotherapy can be a supportive resource for women coming from homes with an alcoholic father (Coombes & Anderson, 2000).
- It can help illuminate relational history and the effects of the alcoholism on the life of the daughter.
- Acknowledgement of the child’s pain can be one of the most moving aspects of recovery.
Psychotherapy

- Dehn (2010) contends that the pain of the alcoholic parent may be so difficult to relieve that they may try to deny the pain and the children pick up on this and deny it as well.
- A large amount of ACoAs seek counseling services for issues likely related to being an ACoA, even though they might not relate these directly to their experiences as the child of an alcoholic parent.

Psychotherapy

- However, being in a supportive and safe environment provided by a therapist can be an ideal situation for an ACoA daughter to begin to explore the impact of her upbringing and relational histories and how that is impacting her present self (Dehn, 2010).
- Intervention in this form may work to improve the ACoA daughter’s overall sense of well-being as individual and family based treatment can work to increase protective factors.
- Psychotherapy can add to the competencies of the ACoA as well as increase their feeling supported (Werner, 1986).
Support Groups

- Support groups are important resources in that they can help the ACOA daughter know that she is not alone and she can use her experience as something from which she can learn and grow.

- The largest network of support of ACoAs is run through Adult Children of Alcoholics World Service Organization (2013), which is an anonymous group that follows the twelve step practice of an Alcoholics Anonymous group.

- It is a worldwide organization that has meetings in most major towns and cities.

- These groups provide an environment for individual ACoAs to share their stories, explore their hurt, and know that they are not alone (2013).

Conclusion

- In the 1990 US National Alcohol Survey, respondents were questioned about lifetime attendance and employment of support resources available to them as well as support or therapy groups and individual counseling for non-alcohol problems (Room & Greenfield, 1993).

- Of the US population, 13.3% indicate ever attending a 12-step meeting which includes the non-alcohol-oriented groups.

- During the prior year a further 2.1% used other therapy groups and 5.5% sought individual therapy for personal problems other than alcohol (1993).
Conclusion

- Overall, the alcoholism of the parent has a great impact on the daughter and her perception of self, her emotional and physical well-being.
- Further research in the relational dynamics created and the effects of paternal alcoholism on the daughter are needed in this field of study.

Conclusion

- Research does indicate that there is a definitive impact that paternal alcoholism has on ACoA daughters yet, research is lacking specifically on this topic.
- It can be seen that there is a significant impact on the daughter who is raised by an alcoholic father, and this indeed differs from the relationship between an alcoholic mother and her daughter.
References


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