Methodological considerations in evaluating early childhood risk, resilience, and trauma: In and out of child welfare.

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Early Childhood Center (ECC)

- Outpatient child development and mental health services: evaluation and treatment
- Serving children 0-5 and their families
- Located in Bronx, NY (aka "The Bronx")
- High rates of numerous risk factors:
  - poverty, health problems, crime, and violence
- High levels of Child Welfare involvement
  - Approx. 30% in Foster Care

Demographics: Clinical Population

- 95% Medicaid recipients
- Race/Ethnicity
  - 62% Hispanic/Latino
  - 24% African American
  - 5% Caucasian
  - 9% Other
- Most frequent behavioral diagnoses
  - Disruptive behavior disorder
  - Adjustment disorder
  - Attention Deficit disorders
  - Parent-child interaction problems
  - Anxiety
  - Trauma

Categorization: Sample Population

Evaluation Methods

- Leverage existing resources
- Minimize consumer burden
- Minimize staff burden
- Tools must have clinical utility
- Information Management System
- Efforts to Outcomes
Methodological Considerations: Resilience
Family Supports

• Are family supports a meaningful construct to evaluate resilience and or strengths in our population and/or sub-populations?
• Can the Family Support Scale be used as a reliable and valid quantitative measure?

The Family Support Scale (FSS)
(Dunst, et al, 1996)

• Measures:
  – number of social supports
  – satisfaction with existing support
  – degree of perceived helpfulness.
• Lower risk for depression and psychological distress for those who enjoy greater social support (Stansfeld & Sprooton, 2002)

The Family Support Scale: Reliability

• Total Sample
  – Cronbach’s Alpha = .785
• Children residing with family of origin
  – Cronbach’s Alpha = .760
• Children involved in the Child Welfare System
  – Cronbach’s Alpha = .808

Methodological Considerations: Trauma
PTSD

• In evaluating clinical constructs in preschool aged children such as PTSD what is the value of incorporating additional diagnostic criteria, such as DC: 0-3?
• Is the CBCL-PTSD scale a valid and reliable instrument in identifying PTSD in a clinical preschool population?
• Does placement in foster care itself represent a unique form of trauma?
CBCL Preschool PTSD Scale (Dehon & Scheeringa, 2005)

- 15 Items from the Child Behavior Checklist reflecting symptoms associated with Trauma Exposure
- Child Behavior Checklist is an existing part of our intake protocol
- Difficulty with current diagnostic criteria for PTSD in early childhood

CBCL Preschool PTSD Scale: Reliability

- Total Sample
  - Cronbach’s Alpha = .784
- Children residing with family of origin
  - Cronbach’s Alpha = .751
- Children involved in the Child Welfare System
  - Cronbach’s Alpha = .810

CBCL Preschool PTSD Scale: Percent of children meeting cut-off for PTSD

- Criteria Met (>8) for CBCL-PTSD
- (all comparisons = ns.)

Methodological Considerations: Trauma PTSD

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Methodological Considerations: Risk Psycho-social and Environmental Stressors

- What are the advantages of examining acute vs. cumulative circumstances?
- For children residing in child welfare, what are the most reliable ways to collect acute and historical information?
- What are some ecologically sound methods of improving clinician inter-rater reliability in recording psychosocial and environmental stressors?
- How might risk factors be reliably differentiated from Trauma?

Psycho-social and environmental stressors
DMS IV / DC: 0-3

- Comprehensive classification system
- Stakeholders’ interests
- Encouraged by Early Childhood community (0-3)
- Staff familiarity
- Least burdensome
Psycho-social and environmental stressors

**DSM-IV / DC:0-3**

**Total Psychosocial & Environmental Stressors**

- 0% - 10%
- 10% - 20%
- 20% - 30%
- 30% - 40%
- 40% - 50%
- 50% - 60%
- 60% - 70%
- 70% - 80%
- 80% - 90%
- 90% - 100%

**Number of Stressors**

- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15+

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**Psycho-social and environmental stressors: Total Sample**

**Axis IV: Psychosocial and Environmental Stressors at Intake**

- Service Type
- Percentage of Cases with Stressors

**Stressor Type**

- Primary Support Group
- Social/Environmental
- Occupational
- Educational
- Healthcare Access
- Housing
- Economic
- Health of Child
- Legal
- Other

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**Psycho-social and environmental stressors: In and Out of child welfare**

**Mean Number of Stressors**

- Total Challenges
- Primary Support Group

- Out of CWS
- In CWS (-kinship)
- In CWS (+kinship)

**Methodological Considerations: Risk**

**Psycho-social and Environmental Stressors**

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**Methodological Considerations: Resilience**

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**Methodological Considerations: Trauma**

**PTSD**

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