

PSYC W3615 Children at Risk
Preliminary Seminar Course Outline
Spring 2008

Wednesdays 12:10 - 2, 200c Schermerhorn Hall

Dr. James P. Curley

jc3181@columbia.edu

Brief overview

This course considers contemporary risk factors in children's lives. We analyze the immediate and enduring biological and behavioral impact of risk factors, their interaction, and child characteristics that modify their effects. The course is organized developmentally. It begins with a discussion of prenatal development and prenatal hazards, such as mother's drug use, and ends with adolescent risks. We examine risks originating inside (e.g., family violence) and outside (e.g., poverty, racism) the family and explore both traumatic and chronic stressors. We end with a discussion of why some children survive extreme adversity and why some intervention programs work. The course will attempt to bridge the areas traditionally covered by developmental and abnormal psychology.

Prerequisites: The instructor's permission and PSYC W1010 or W2280 or W2620 or W2680 or an equivalent course.

Course requirements include regular attendance and participation, co-leadership of two discussions, a written essay paper on a topic of the student's own choice, and a brief oral presentation of this paper.

Evaluation:

40% - Student's leadership of weekly topic discussion

40% - Essay Paper & oral presentation

20% - Attendance and Seminar Participation

Seminar participation

All assigned readings should be read before each seminar to facilitate discussion of each topic. Before noon on the Tuesday before each seminar, students should post questions relevant to the readings on courseworks. Students should post approximately two unique questions per readings that will be discussed during the seminar. Seminar participation will make up 20% of the final grade and each student's leadership of weekly discussions shall constitute 40% of the final grade.

Essay paper:

Students shall submit an essay paper on a topic of their choice related to the seminars, that is due by noon on May 7th. The essay topic must be approved by the instructor by February 25th. Students shall meet with the instructor thereafter to discuss the paper outline and reading lists. This paper should follow APA format. During the last seminar, each student shall give a 10 minute oral presentation of their paper. The essay paper and oral presentation shall constitute 40% of the final grade.

Children at Risk: At a glance overview

Week 1 – At risk for what? General Background

Week 2 – Prenatal Risk Factors

Week 3 – Early brain development

Week 4 – Caregiver-infant attachment

Week 5 – Child abuse & neglect

Week 6 – Adolescent parenting

Week 7 – Child malnutrition

Week 8 – Parental mental health

Week 9 – The family context

Week 10 – Adolescence and peer-peer interactions

Week 11 – The community context

Week 12 – Children at risk across cultures

Week 13 – Vulnerability & Resilience

Week 14 – Paper presentations

Weekly Reading Assignments (subject to revision)

Week 1 – At risk for what? General Background

This week I shall give an introduction to the seminar series and provide an overview of the topics to be covered. We shall also view the documentary ‘Children at Risk’.

Bronfenbrenner, U, 1986, Ecology of the family as a context for human development research perspectives, *Developmental Psychology*, 22, 723-742.

Shonkoff JP & Phillips D, 2000, *From neurons to neighborhoods: the science of early child development*, National Academy Press.

Week 2 – Prenatal Risk Factors

What risk factors are there for children before birth? How great is the risk posed by malnutrition, drinking, smoking & the taking of drugs during pregnancy? What is the prevalence in Western societies for these effects? What can be done to prevent these risks?

Barker DJP, 1998, *Mothers, babies & health in later life*. Churchill Livingstone. Chapters 1-3.

Califano JA, 2005, Chapter 5: “Pregnancy & Substance Abuse” In: ‘Women Under the Influence: The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University’. John Hopkins University Press.

Week 3 – Early brain development

How does the brain develop normally and what consequences are there for the long-term health and behavior of the child when there are disruptions to this normal development?

Shonkoff JP & Phillips D, 2000, *From neurons to neighborhoods: the science of early child development*, National Academy Press. Chapter 8 – ‘The Developing Brain’.

Chungani HT *et al.*, 2001, Local brain functional activity following early deprivation: a study of postinstitutionalized Romanian orphans, *Neuroimage* 14: 1290-1301.

Peterson BS *et al.*, 2000, Regional brain volume abnormalities and long-term cognitive outcomes in preterm infants, *J.A.M.A.* 284: 1939-1947

Week 4 – Caregiver-infant attachment

When, how and why do children attach to care-givers? What are the antecedents to the quality of the caregiver-child relationship? In what ways does the quality of these attachments have long-term consequences for the child?

Sroufe LA, Egeland B, Carlson EA & Collins WA, 2005, *The Development of the Person: The Minnesota Study of Risk and Adaptation from Birth to Adulthood*, Guilford Press.

Sroufe LA, Egeland B, Carlson EA & Collins WA, “Placing early attachment experiences in developmental context: The Minnesota Longitudinal Study”, Chapter 3. In, ‘Attachment from Infancy to Adulthood: The Major Longitudinal Studies’ eds. KE Grossman, K Grossman & E Waters. Guilford Press.

Week 5 – Child abuse & neglect

What is the difference between abuse and neglect? What types of abuse or neglect do children face? What are the antecedents of abuse or neglect? What consequences for child’s behavior? What consequences for child’s brain development?

Widom, C.S. (1989). The cycle of violence. *Science*, 244, 160-166.

Hobbs CJ, Hanks HGI & Wynne JM, Chapters 1 & 2. *Child Abuse & Neglect: A clinician’s handbook*. Churchill Livingstone.

MacLean, K. 2003 The impact of institutionalization on child development. *Dev Psychopathol* **15**, 853-84.

Terr, L. (1991). Childhood traumas: An outline and overview. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 148, 10-20.

Week 6 – Adolescent parenting

Which individuals are likely to be young parents? Is young parenting associated with increased risks for children? What other risk factors do children of young mothers face? Is being a teenage parent itself a risk factor for later psychopathology?

Levine JA, Emery CR, & Pollak H., The Well Being of Children born to Teen Mothers, 2007, *Journal of Marriage & Family* 69: 105-122.

Borkowski JG, Whitman TL, & Farris JR. 2007. Adolescent Mothers and their Children: Risks, Resilience & Development. In. JG Borkowski, JR Farris, TL Whitman, SS Carothers, K. Weed & DA Keogh (eds.) 'Risk and Resilience: Adolescent mothers and their children grow up.' Routledge.

Furstenberg FF, Levine JA & Brooks-Gunn J, The children of teenage mothers: patterns of early childbearing in two generations, *Family Planning Perspectives* 22: 54-61. 1990.

Week 7 – Child Malnutrition

What different types of child malnutrition exist? How many children go hungry in developing and developed countries and why does this happen? What are the short and long-term consequences of child malnutrition for health and behavior?

Kleniman RE et al., 1998, Hunger in children in the United States: potential behavioral and emotional correlates, *Pediatrics* 101: 1-6.

Grantham-McGregor, S., 1995, A review of studies of the effect of severe malnutrition on mental development, *J. Nutrition* 125: 2233S-2238S.

Wagstaff A., et al., 2004, Child Health: Reaching the poor, *Am J Public Health* 94: 726-736.

De Onis, M., Frongillo EA & Blossner, M., 2000, Is malnutrition declining? An analysis of changes in levels of child malnutrition since 1980, *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 78: 1222-1233.

Liu J et al., 2004, Malnutrition at age 3 years and externalizing behavior problems at ages 8, 11 and 17 years, *Am J Psychiatry* 161: 2005-2013. (see comments in *Am J Psychiatry* 162: 1760-1).

Week 8 – Parental mental health

What is the prevalence for children to grow up in a family with mental health issues? What are the risks & consequences for children growing up in families with mental health? What are the routes through which the mental health of a family member can affect the child?

Oyserman, D. et al. 2000. 'Parenting among mothers with a serious mental illness', *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 70(3), 296-315.

Zahn-Waxler C, Duggal S. & Gruber, R. 2002, “ Parental psychopathology”, In, ed. M. Borstein, ‘Handbook of Parenting. Volume 4: Social conditions and applied parenting’. Lawrence Erlbaum.

Luthar, S.S., & Sexton, C. C. (2007). Maternal drug abuse versus maternal depression: Vulnerability and resilience among school-age and adolescent offspring. *Development and Psychopathology*, 19, 205-225.

Week 9 – The family context

How do the relationships between other family members directly and indirectly impact upon the child?

Masten AS & Shaffer A, How families matter in child development: reflections from research on risk and resilience, Chapter 1. In A. Clarke-Stewart & J. Dunn (Eds) ‘Families Count: Effects on child and adolescent development’ Cambridge University Press.

Amato PR, Marital discord, divorce, and children’s well-being: results from a 20-year longitudinal study of two generations, Chapter 8. In A. Clarke-Stewart & J. Dunn (Eds) ‘Families Count: Effects on child and adolescent development’ Cambridge University Press.

Sameroff A, Identifying risk and protective factors for healthy child development, Chapter 3. In A. Clarke-Stewart & J. Dunn (Eds) ‘Families Count: Effects on child and adolescent development’ Cambridge University Press.

Week 10 – Adolescence and peer-peer interactions

What factors shape the way that children interact with one another and what risks do adolescents face?

Eccles, J.S., Midgley, C., Wigfield, A., Buchanan, C.M., Reuman, D., Flanagan, C., & MacIver, D. (1993). Development during adolescence: The Impact of stage-environment fit on young adolescents' experiences in schools and in families. *American Psychologist*, 48 (2), 90-101.

Burton, L.M., Allison, K.W., & Obeidallah, D. (1995). Social context and adolescence: Perspectives on development among inner-city African-American teens. In L.J. Crockett & A.C. Crouter (Eds.), *Pathways through adolescence: Individual development in relation to social contexts* (pp.119-138).

Parker & Asher (1987), Peer relations and later personal adjustment: are low-accepted children at risk?, *Psychol Bull* 102 (3): 357-389.

Rich-Harris, J., 1999, *The nurture assumption: why children turn out the way they do*, Simon & Schuster.

Week 11 – The community context

Why does being born into poverty put children at risk? What about being born into affluence? What risks are posed to children by the neighborhood and social environment that they live in?

Luthar, S. S., & Latendresse, S. J. (2005). Children of the affluent: Challenges to well-being. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 14, 49-53.

Leventhal, T. & Brooks-Gunn J, 2000, The neighborhoods they live in: the effects of neighborhood residence on child and adolescent outcomes, *Psychological Bulletin* 126: 309-337.

Evans GM, 2004, The environment of childhood poverty, *American Psychologist* 59: 77-92.

Duncan GJ, Yeung WJ, Brooks-Gunn J & Smith JR, 1998, How much does childhood poverty affect the life chances of children?, *American Sociological Review* 63: 406-423.

Week 12 – Children at risk across cultures

How does children's risk vary across cultures both outside and within the United States? How does immigration affect risk? Through what pathways do cultural factors influence child development and risk?

Quintana et al., 2006, Race, ethnicity and culture in child development: contemporary research and future directions, *Child Development* 77: 1129-1141.

Walker SP et al., 2007, Child development: risk factors for adverse outcomes in developing countries, *The Lancet*, 369: 145-157.

Fulgini AJ, 1998, The adjustment of children from immigrant families, *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 7: 99-103.

Gunnar MR et al., 2000, International adoption of institutionally reared children: research and policy, *Development & Psychopathology* 12: 677-693.

Week 13 – Vulnerability & Resilience

Why are some children more vulnerable or resilient to equivalent risks? Why are resilient children not resilient to all risks?

Luthar SS, 2006, “Resilience in Development: A synthesis of research across five decades” Chapter 20 In, D. Cicchetti & D. J. Cohen (Eds.), *Developmental Psychopathology: Risk, disorder, and adaptation* (pp. 740-795). New York: Wiley.

Luthar SS, Cicchetti D & Becker B, 2000, The construct of resilience: A critical evaluation and guidelines for future research, *Child Dev.* 71: 543-562.

Freitas AL & Downey G, 1998, Resilience: A Dynamic Perspective, *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 22: 263.

Week 14

Essay paper presentations.