Exploring Variability in Social & Behavioral Adjustment Among Children in Head Start Experiencing Homelessness

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No surprise to you...

...there is wide variability in adjustment of young children who experience homelessness.

Many seem to be doing well despite tough family situations and unstable housing.

What is “resilience”? 
“Psychologists define resilience as the process of adapting well in the face of adversity... As much as resilience involves “bouncing back” from these difficult experiences, it can also involve profound personal growth.”

—American Psychological Association
Our Purpose:
Identify factors that account for differences among children who are doubled up
Participants

Head Start CARES

321, 4-year old children doubled up with others

- Hispanic 46.3%
- Black 32.7%
- White 12.5%
- Other 5.9%
Children’s adjustment

Behavior Problems Index
- Internalizing
- Externalizing
- Hyperactivity

Social Skills Rating Scale
- Cooperation
- Assertion w/peers
- Self-control

Cooper-Farran Behavior Rating Scale
- Interpersonal skills
### Four unique “profiles” (subgroups)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profile</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Functioning</td>
<td>Highest social skills; lowest behavior problems</td>
<td>68.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanging in There</td>
<td>Slightly elevated externalizing, internalizing behaviors, and hyperactivity; better social skills than other risk groups</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Risk</td>
<td>Elevated externalizing &amp; internalizing behaviors, and hyperactivity; lowest social skills</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggling</td>
<td>High externalizing; moderate internalizing &amp; hyperactivity; social skills difficulties</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Factors that account for differences among subgroups

- Maternal Education
- Maternal Distress (K6)
- Emotional Climate (CLASS)
- Student-Teacher Relationship (STRS)
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Quality of teacher-student relationship

Conflict
“ This child easily becomes angry with me.”

Closeness
“I share an affectionate, warm relationship with this child”
Implications?

For practice

For policy

How can the findings be used in your work?
Thank you!

Check the WSJ for article by Susan Pinker on March 27. Marsha Basloe and Barbara Duffield contributed.