Longitudinal perspectives of youth with early childhood trauma: **UC** San Diego In their words



Lilliana R. Conradi, BA, Paige Milewski, BA, Danielle Fettes, PhD

Background

- Children exposed to domestic violence early in life have increased risk of emotional & behavioral concerns¹.
- Individuals who experienced maltreatment as children are at a higher risk of becoming parents who may also engage in maltreatment².
- Mi Escuelita, a therapeutic preschool for children exposed to domestic violence (DV), serves children and families in San Diego's South Region, a predominantly Hispanic and bilingual community characterized by high DV rates and economic disadvantage.
- The majority of children attending Mi Escuelita preschool are Hispanic, with an approximately equal split between male and female students.
- UCSD researchers have partnered with Mi Escuelita to ascertain the success of children (i.e., attaining emotional, social, and developmental milestones and achieving total kindergarten

Race and Ethnicity of Mi Escuelita Students





■ Above Average Readiness

- The Kindergarten Readiness Test (KRT) assesses skills for preschool children in preparation for elementary school.
- On average, students scored nearly 32 points on the KRT (mean=31.7, SD=5.8).
- The majority (82%) graduated from the program with average to above average readiness, 11 students considered prepared for kindergarten with the anticipated need of extra support, and one student considered "Not Ready" for kindergarten
- These data are from the Mi Escuelita 2020-2024 Outcomes Report.

readiness) who receive holistic services for early childhood trauma.

Method

- Qualitative interviews were conducted with parents & students enrolled in Mi Escuelita ~10 years prior.
- The purpose of the qualitative interviews was to \bullet assess the longitudinal impacts of Mi Escuelita on children who attended the school.
- The qualitative interviews were conducted with ten parents and seventeen youth (aged 12-20).
- The interviews are professionally transcribed, checked for accuracy, and imported into Atlas TI software. Team members used rapid analysis to summarize the transcripts. Atlas TI will be used for line-by-line coding using an a-priori code list developed from theoretical and conceptual considerations, as well as the initial reading of the transcripts.
- This poster presents preliminary results from youth interviews.

Trauma Histories of Mi Escuelita Students and Parents



- Pediatric ACEs (i.e., PEARL scores) greater than 4 are considered "High," and put children at risk for negative health, developmental, and academic outcomes in the future.
- The mean reported PEARL score was 4.3, with 60% of children scoring "High" (i.e., four or more).
- Of the 180 caregivers that responded to the ACE questionnaire, they reported having experienced, on average, 3.6 ACEs, with 49% reporting four or more.
- These data are from the Mi Escuelita 2020-2024 Outcomes Report.

ASQ and ASQ-SE2 Cutoff Groups at Program Start



- Ages & Stages Questionnaires® (ASQ®) provide reliable, accurate developmental and social-emotional screening for children between birth and age six. On average, students scored nearly 32 points on the KRT (mean=31.7, SD=5.8).
- The ASQ has been specifically designed to pinpoint developmental progress and catch delays in young children—paving the way for meaningful next steps in learning, intervention, or monitoring.
- ASQ scores highlight the developmental and emotional complexity of the children who attend Mi Escuelita preschool. Children demonstrate high levels of need from program start - requiring further evaluation in Communication, Gross Motor Skills, Fine Motor Skills, Problem Solving, and Personal Social Skills.
- These data are from the Mi Escuelita 2020-2024 Outcomes Report.



Conclusions

• The results indicate long-lasting, positive impacts – both socially and academically – for children who attended Mi Escuelita. Positive friendships, academic success, and understanding of healthy relationships are protective factors. Trust and

communication are building blocks for healthy relationships, and this knowledge equips these youth to break the cycle of violence.

- Within this population of children exposed to trauma at an early age, early intervention programs such as Mi Escuelita can aid in decreasing the risk of maladjustment, academic struggles, and social issues.
- A foundational understanding of healthy relationships is beneficial, particularly for children exposed to domestic violence, for multigenerational domestic violence prevention.



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- 2. Granner, J. R., Seng, J., & Lee, S. J. (2025). Families Optimizing Resilience via Trauma-Informed Father Involvement (FORTIFI) Theory Synthesis. Child Welfare, 102(6), 203-232. https://www.jstor.org/stable/48815058

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Male, 12

Healthy versus Unhealthy Relationships "Okay, so call me old fashioned, but I think, like, communication. *"For me, it would probably be"* "I say, when they don't have your back - Female, 12 communicating about our feelings a lot. So "You can't really talk to them sometimes and you guys argue a lot or like, if there's like an issue, I would want the about like anything. Like, you something. And you guys get into fights, person or partner that I have to be able to don't feel comfortable talking to yeah, not just argue, but like, hands express your feelings and feel comfortable *them*. "- Male, 13 versus hands and stuff. And I think enough to tell me it."- Female, 14 that's bad, yeah, " - Male, 11 Communication "Arguing. Being rude, really, like trying to weaken the bond, or like trying to separate **Physical** / Healthy the bond. Like, for example, if the bond's a **Emotional** noodle, they have a knife, like a butter knife, Relationships Abuse and they're trying to saw through the noodle. Unhealthy Well, let's say more like a rope." - Female, 11 Trust Relationships "I tend to find it healthy when I'm able to Lack of communicate with the person in an easy manner, Communication and then I also find it unhealthy when I find "I think definitely just having trust.... And also just, I miscommunication in a way that they won't bother



to understand me, or if I don't understand them. It goes both ways with both parties, along with the fact that there has to be a mutual trust with both parties in order to respect each other, and overall care for each other in a way that you can, you know, understand in a good way." - Female, 15

would say communication as well is really important one. You definitely want to communicate to one another about how you're feeling or just how your day is going in general. Just, I don't know, you always want to let it out, or even if you are bothered, just let them know. "- Female, 18

"Basically **fighting** and having a lack of communication with each other." - Female, 14