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NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT IN MIDDLE CHILDHOOD:  
Objective and subjective assessment of executive and social functioning

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Clinical Psychology

at Massey University, Wellington,

New Zealand.

Kathryn Marie McLennan

2017
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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a research study that aimed to explore measurement issues in child neuropsychological assessment, within a NZ cultural context. Neuropsychological assessment tools should be developmentally and culturally appropriate, yet most measures used with NZ children have not been evaluated with this population. Further, both subjective and objective assessment tools have been developed, but it is unclear how information gained from these assessment tools relate to each other and inform clinical practice.

Child neuropsychology has undergone many changes in recent years. With an increasing understanding of autism spectrum disorders, new domains of functioning have been introduced in neuropsychological assessment instruments, notably, executive functioning (EF), theory of mind (ToM), and affect recognition (AR). Numerous similarities have been documented between these constructs however, making interpretation of assessment results complex. Though these constructs are thought to develop across middle childhood, this population is vastly understudied.

This thesis aimed to evaluate patterns of performance on the BASC-2, BRIEF and NEPSY-II measures with NZ school-aged children. Normative data for these measures is not available for NZ children, therefore this research aimed to evaluate the suitability of test norms for this demographic. Further, the thesis aimed to explore the relationship between parent and teacher reports of function and evaluate how subjective (broadband and narrowband) and objective measures of EF, ToM and AR are related. Participants were 241 children from schools within the Wellington and Hawke’s Bay regions, recruited as part of a larger study.
Ratings on the BASC-2 and BRIEF measures differed substantially from American norms, with parents and teachers tending to report fewer problem behaviours and more adaptive behaviours than their American counterparts. Results indicated a discrepancy between parent and teacher reports, and between the information gained from subjective versus objective measures. The results of this research have important clinical implications not just for the use and interpretation of these measures, but also for the neuropsychological assessment of EF, ToM and AR in NZ children.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements ii
Abstract iii
Table of Contents v
Table of Tables x
Table of Figures xi
Abbreviations xii

CHAPTER ONE
PREFACE 1

CHAPTER TWO
NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT 5
  Overview 5
  Neuropsychological Assessment 5
    Developmental Assessment 5
    Cultural Differences in Assessment 6
  Assessment Modalities 7
    Assessment of Cognition 8
    Assessment of Behaviour 9
  Summary 11

CHAPTER THREE
EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING, THEORY OF MIND AND AFFECT RECOGNITION 12
  Overview 12
  Executive Function 13
  Theory of Mind 15
  Affect Recognition (AR) 18
  Relationship between the Constructs 19
    EF and ToM 19
    EF and AR 22
    ToM and AR 22
  Measurement Issues 23
    Cultural appropriateness of EF, ToM and AR measures 23
    Individual differences in performance 24
    Developmental EF assessment 25
    Developmental ToM assessment 26
    Overlap in EF and ToM assessment 27
    Subjective versus objective assessment 28
  Summary 29
CHAPTER FOUR
THE PROPOSED RESEARCH
Gaps in the Current Literature 30
Aims 31
Significance of Research 33
Research Context 34

CHAPTER FIVE
METHOD 37
Procedure 37
Phase 1 38
Phase 2 39
Participants 39
Measures 43
Behavior Assessment System for children – 2nd edition (BASC-2) 43
Behaviour Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF) 46
Neuropsychological Assessment Measures 47
Developmental NEuroPSYchological Assessment (NEPSY-II) 49
Social perception subtests 50
ToM 50
AR 51
EF subtests 51
Inhibition 51
Animal Sorting 51
Stimulus Materials 52
NEPSY-II Scoring 52
Changes to Test Administration 53
Inter-Rater Reliability 54
Exclusion Criteria 54
Testing Environment 54
Compensation 55
Confidentiality 56
Feedback 56

CHAPTER SIX
PRELIMINARY ANALYSES 57
Overview 57
Data Collation 57
Testing Assumptions of Normality 58
Internal Consistency 59
Examiner Effects 59
CHAPTER SEVEN
STUDY ONE

Overview 61
Part One 61
  Overview 61
  Results 62
  Discussion 65
Part Two 66
  Overview 66
  Results 66
    Evaluation of the BASC-2 66
    Evaluation of the BRIEF 69
    Evaluation of the NEPSY-II subtests 72
  Discussion 73
Part Three 76
  Overview 76
  Results 76
    Gender comparisons 76
    Comparisons across decile 79
  Discussion 81
    Gender comparisons 81
    Comparisons across decile 81

CHAPTER EIGHT
STUDY TWO

Overview 83
Results 83
  Relationship between parent and teacher responses on the BASC-2 83
  Relationship between parent and teacher responses on the BRIEF 86
Discussion 88
  Relationship between parent and teacher responses on the BASC-2 88
  Relationship between parent and teacher responses on the BRIEF 89

CHAPTER NINE
STUDY THREE

Overview 90
Results 90
  Evaluation of BASC-2 ratings with NEPSY-II performance 90
  Evaluation of BRIEF ratings with NEPSY-II performance 92
Discussion

Evaluation of BASC-2 ratings with NEPSY-II performance
Evaluation of BRIEF ratings with NEPSY-II performance

CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings
Implications for Clinical Practice
Limitations and Future Directions

Sample characteristics
Decile distribution of the sample
Gender and ethnicity distribution of the sample

The measures
BASC and BRIEF questionnaires
NEPSY-II

Neuropsychological testing
Order effects
Assessment period
Testing environment

Conceptual Framework
Avenues for Future Research
Overview of Author Reflections
Conclusions

REFERENCES

APPENDIX A

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORMS

Parent Information Sheet
Parent Reply Form
Teacher Information Sheet
Teacher Consent Form

APPENDIX B

ADAPTIONS TO SELECTED MEASURES

Attachment to BASC-2 and BRIEF questionnaires

Table B1. List of cultural adaptations made to NEPSY-II ToM task

APPENDIX C

NON-PARAMETRIC STATISTICS

Table C1. Non-parametric analyses examining whether NEPSY-II scores differ as a function of examiner
Table C2. Non-parametric analyses examining whether BASC-2 and BRIEF scores differ from US norms
Table C3. Non-parametric analyses examining whether NEPSY-II scores differ from US norms
Table C4. Non-parametric analyses examining whether BASC-2 and BRIEF scores differ across categories of decile
Table C5. Non-parametric analyses examining whether BASC-2 and BRIEF scores differ as a function of gender

APPENDIX D
REFLECTIONS ON RESEARCH PROCESS AND ITS APPLICATION TO CLINICAL PRACTICE
Abstract
Introduction
Research Skills
Knowledge Gained Through Thesis Research
  Neuropsychological assessment
  Cognitive development
Working with children
Working with schools
Working in a team (multi-disciplinary)
Other learning
Discussion
References
# TABLE OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1</td>
<td>Demographic composition of sample by school</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2</td>
<td>Subtests administered during neuropsychological assessment</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3</td>
<td>Available n for comparison across measures</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4</td>
<td>Mean scores on NEPSY-II subtests by examiner</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5</td>
<td>Frequency of PRS and TRS Critical Items</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 6</td>
<td>One-sample t-tests comparing BASC-2 scores from NZ sample with US test mean of 50 (SD = 10)</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 7</td>
<td>One-sample t-tests comparing BRIEF scores from NZ sample with US test mean of 50 (SD = 10)</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8</td>
<td>One-sample t-tests comparing NEPSY-II scores from NZ sample with US test mean of 10 (SD = 3)</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 9</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics by gender</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 10</td>
<td>Correlations between decile/city and test scores</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 11</td>
<td>Correlation between parent and teacher ratings on the BASC-2</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 12</td>
<td>Paired samples t-tests for BASC-2 composites across parent and teacher raters</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 13</td>
<td>Correlation between parent and teacher ratings on the BRIEF</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 14</td>
<td>Paired samples t-tests for BRIEF composites across parent and teacher raters</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 15</td>
<td>Correlations of BASC-2 composite and content scales with NEPSY-II scores</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 16</td>
<td>Correlations of BRIEF composites with NEPSY-II scores</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>A brief depiction of progress to date for the larger study</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>Phases of the larger study</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>BASC-2 means for the total sample, compared to the U.S. norm</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td>BRIEF means for the total sample, compared to the U.S. norm</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td>NEPSY-II means by gender and total sample, compared to the U.S. norm</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**ABBREVIATIONS**

*Abbreviations are presented in order of appearance within the body of the text*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EF</td>
<td>Executive Function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ToM</td>
<td>Theory of Mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AR</td>
<td>Affect Recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFC</td>
<td>Prefrontal Cortex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADHD</td>
<td>Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASD</td>
<td>Autism Spectrum Disorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABI</td>
<td>Acquired Brain Injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOH</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEPSY-II</td>
<td>Developmental NEuroPSYchological Assessment, Second Edition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRIEF</td>
<td>Behaviour Rating Inventory of Executive Function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BASC-2</td>
<td>Behaviour Assessment System for Children, Second Edition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRS</td>
<td>Teacher Rating Scale (BASC-2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRS</td>
<td>Parent Rating Scale (BASC-2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDH</td>
<td>Structured Developmental History (BASC-2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBCL</td>
<td>Child Behaviour Checklist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDQ</td>
<td>Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WISC-IV</td>
<td>Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Fourth Edition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEA-Ch</td>
<td>Test of Everyday Attention for Children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>