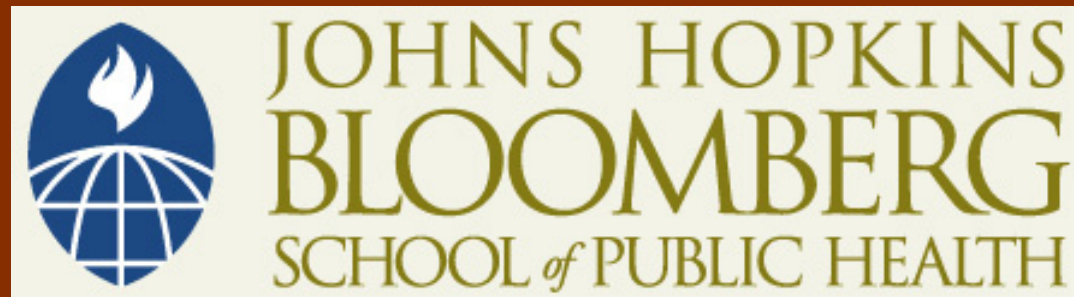


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JOHNS HOPKINS
BLOOMBERG
SCHOOL *of* PUBLIC HEALTH

Section B

Children in Conflict

Potential Protective Factors

- What are potential protective factors or processes that could help children exposed to war and conflict?

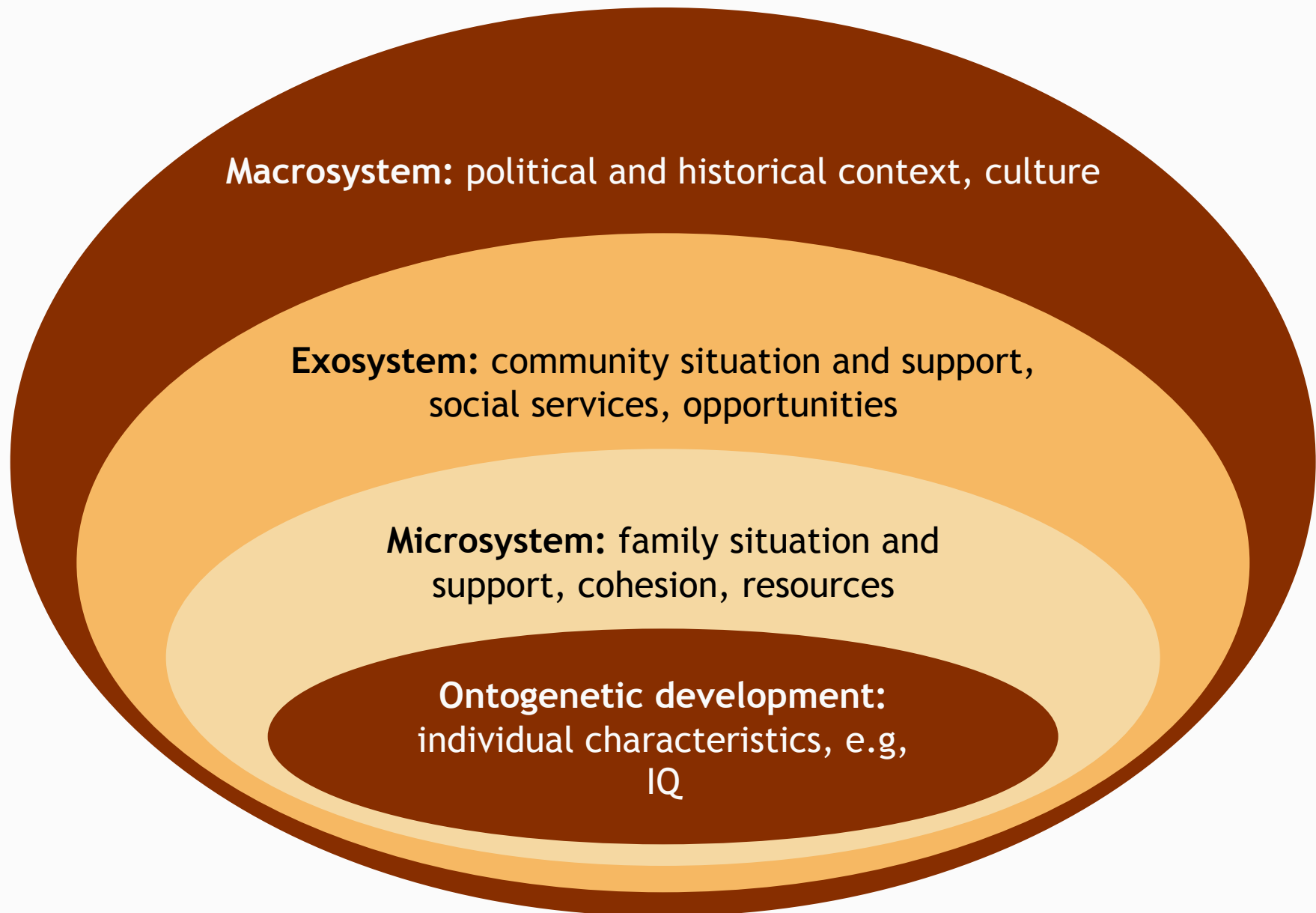


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The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children

- In modern wars, children and their families are targeted as civilians
 - Homelessness
 - Family separations
 - Injury and disablement
- Children are recruited as soldiers and members of rebel groups
- Survival is threatened, but so is developmental trajectory

Developmental Ecological View



Sources: Bronfenbrenner. (1979); Elbedour. (1993).

The Microsystem

- Family and immediate context



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Microsystems: Attachment Relationships

- Connectedness and trust with caregiver
 - “if bombings occur when small children are in the care of their own mother or familiar mother substitutes, they do not seem to be particularly affected by them” (Freud and Burlingham, 1943)
- Level of stress exposure may matter less than quality of close, nuclear relationships to provide support and comfort (Garbarino, 1991)

Microsystems: Social Support

- Eritrean orphans living in institutions where close relationships with staff and children were encouraged had lower levels of distress compared to similarly structured institutions where relationships with staff remained aloof
- Social support moderated the impact of exposure to violence on distress in Kuwaiti girls exposed to trauma during the Gulf War crisis
- Ongoing work in Rwanda shows that children in institutions are doing better than those who remained with their traumatized families

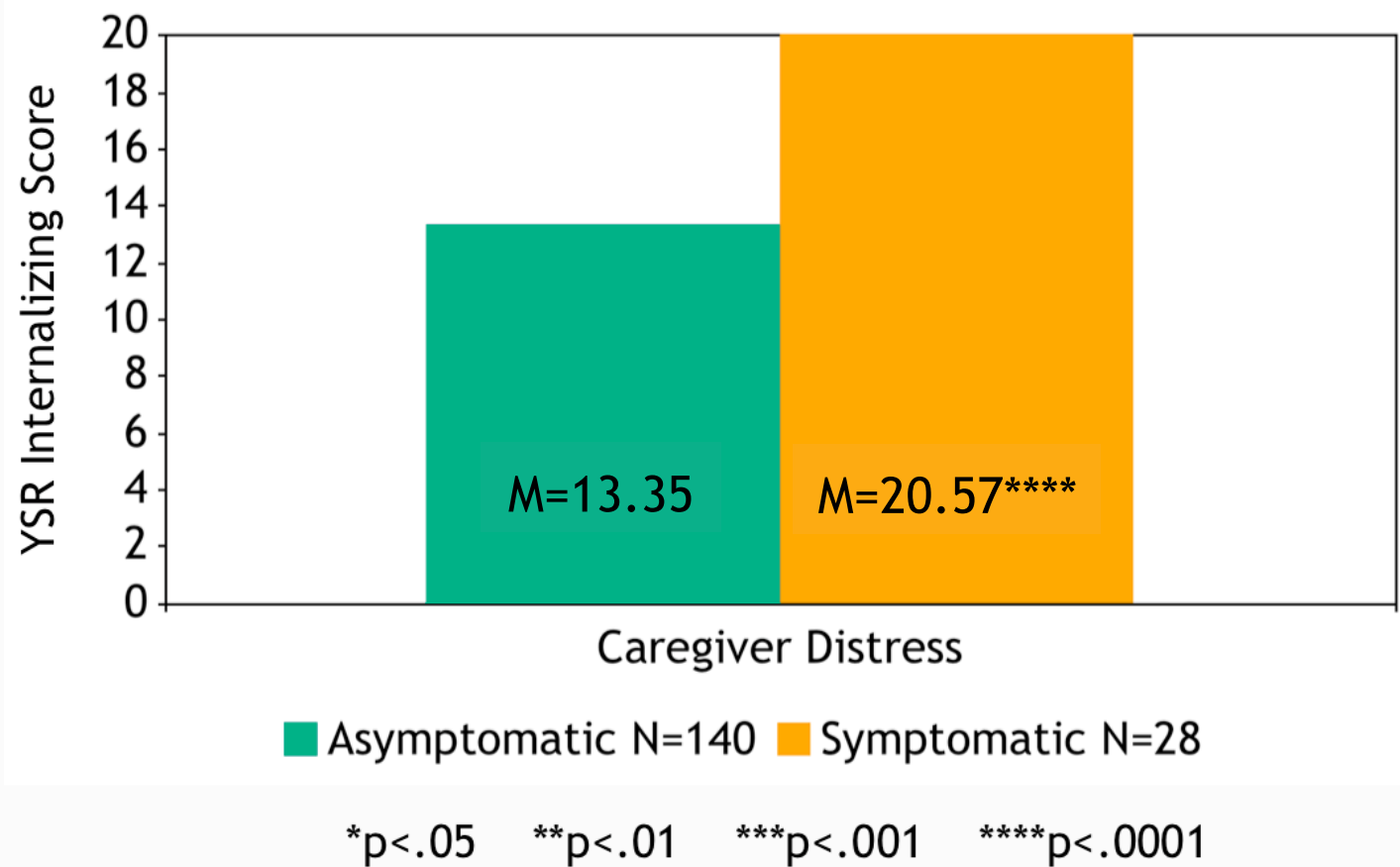
Microsystems: Parental/Caregiver Mental Health

- In a Bosnian study targeting mothers, children of mothers in the psychosocial program demonstrated improved weight gain, cognitive skills, and mother-reported emotional/behavioral adjustment compared with controls

Caregiver and Child Mental Health

- Caregiver and child mental health in Ethiopia's Walanihbiy Refugee Camp
 - Border war between Eritrea and Ethiopia began in 1998
 - Kunama (traditionally agro-pastoralists) living on both sides of the border caught between the warring sides
 - Walanihbiy refugee camp, pop. 4,332; many <18
 - Potentially traumatic experiences, loss (separations, lost loved ones, homes), dying culture and language
 - Goals: to describe nature of mental health problems in this population of adolescents; examine caregiver mental health in relation to child mental health

Internalizing Mental Health Symptoms by Caregiver Distress



Note: 33% of the respondents had a family member shot by a gun

Externalizing Problems by Caregiver Distress

