

JOURNAL HIGHLIGHTS

Edited by
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The purpose of *Journal Highlights* is to inform readers of current research on various aspects of child maltreatment. APSAC members are invited to contribute to *Journal Highlights* by sending a copy of current articles (preferably published within the past six months), along with a two- or three-sentence review to Ernestine C. Briggs, Ph.D., National Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center, Medical University of South Carolina, 165 Cannon Street, Charleston, SC 29425 (FAX 843 792-3388)

SEXUAL ABUSE

STUDY FINDS HIGHER LEVELS OF PTSD IN SEXUALLY AND PHYSICALLY ABUSED CHILDREN

Three groups of foster care children were compared in the present study to examine the relationship between child abuse and posttraumatic stress disorder. Participants included 50 sexually abused, 50 physically abused, and 50 nonabused foster care children. Results indicated that sexually and physically abused children endorsed higher levels of PTSD and preadolescents evidenced more severe PTSD than early adolescent children. The Modified Stroop Procedure, employed in this study, discriminated between the sexually and physically abused children with PTSD and those without PTSD.

Dubner, A.E., & Motta, R.W. (1999). Sexually and physically abused foster care children and posttraumatic stress disorder. Journal of Consulting & Clinical Psychology, 67(3), 367-373.

ADULT RAPE LINKED WITH CHILDHOOD ABUSE IN A STUDY OF FEMALE NAVY RECRUITS

To investigate the effects of childhood abuse on adult rape, 1,887 female Navy recruits were surveyed about their childhood sexual abuse (CSA), childhood physical abuse (CPA), and adult rape experiences. Over a third of the recruits had been raped and more than half had experienced CPA and/or CSA. Rape was 4.8 times more likely among women who had experienced CSA than among women who had not, when CPA was controlled. Alcohol problems and number of sexual partners also predicted rape independent of the effects of CSA. Despite ethnic group differences in the prevalence of victimization, the predictors of rape did not differ significantly across ethnic groups.

Merrill, L.L., Newell, C.G., Thomsen, C.J., Gold, S., Milner, J., Koss, M.P., & Rosswork, S.G. (1999). Childhood abuse and sexual revictimization in a female Navy recruit sample. Journal of Traumatic Stress, 12(2), 211-225.

THE PREVALENCE AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF CSA STUDIED IN A COMMUNITY SAMPLE OF LATINA WOMEN

This study examined the prevalence and circumstances of child sexual abuse in a community sample of Latina women. The sample included Latina women 18-50 years of age. Regardless of acculturation and citizenship status, one third of the sample reported an incident of sexual abuse and more than a third experienced revictimization. The findings also revealed that the majority of incidents occurred during early childhood and were perpetrated by young males known to the victims. Four women were forced to marry the perpetrators of their abuse. Implications for treatment and community-based interventions for Latina survivors of child sexual abuse were discussed.

Romero, G.J., Wyatt, G.E., Loeb, T.B., Carmona, J.V., & Solis, B.M. (1999). Prevalence and circumstances of child sexual abuse among Latina women. Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 21(3), 351-365.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CSA AND PARENTING ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR IS STUDIED.

This retrospective study examined two alternative hypotheses: (1) the relationship between child sexual abuse (CSA) and subsequent parenting attitudes and behaviors is a function of a 3rd variable, growing up experiences other than CSA; and (2) maternal depression mediates the relationship between CSA and parenting attitudes/behaviors.

The sample included 516 low-income, urban mothers (aged 17-52) with and without a history of childhood sexual abuse. The Parenting Competence Scale and the verbal and severe violence subscales of the Conflict Tactic Scale were used to assess parenting. The perceived parenting competence and severe violence results supported the 3rd variable hypothesis. The mediational hypothesis was not supported by any of the parental indicators assessed.

Zuravin, S.J., & Fontanella, C. (1999). Parenting behaviors and perceived parenting competence of child sexual abuse survivors. Child Abuse & Neglect, 23(7), 623-632.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES ASSOCIATED WITH CHILD MALTREATMENT IN LOW-INCOME WOMEN

This study sought to determine whether childhood physical and sexual abuse would explain variance in adult mental health after controlling for other childhood and adult risk factors. The sample included 518 low-income mothers (mean age 27.31). Analyses of women abused in childhood revealed that social support and a less external locus of control were protective in function. Depressive symptoms and self-esteem were found to vary significantly with childhood maltreatment. Implications for research and practice were discussed.

Banyard, V.L. (1999). Childhood maltreatment and the mental health of low-income women. American Journal

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of Orthopsychiatry, 69(2), 161-171.

DEPRESSION IN MOTHERS LINKED TO THOUGHTS OF HARMING THEIR INFANTS

This study examined the prevalence of thoughts of harming one's infant, fear of being with the infant, and inability to care for the infant, among 100 clinically depressed mothers with a child under 3 years of age. A control group of 46 nondepressed mothers was also included in this study. Results suggested that 41% of depressed mothers compared to 7% of control mothers admitted to thoughts of harming their infant. Fear of being alone with the infant and inability to care for the infant were less frequently endorsed by depressed mothers. More than half of the depressed mothers had problems in at least one of the three domains assessed. Demographic variables, psychosocial stressors, and psychiatric variables did not predict which mothers were more likely to experience thoughts of harm or fear of being alone. The authors described these cognitive and affective disturbances in terms of a pathway by which maternal depression affects infants.

Jennings, K.D., Ross, S., Popper, S., & Elmore, M. (1999). Thoughts of harming infants in depressed and non-depressed mothers. Journal of Affective Disorders, 54(1-2), 21-28.

STUDY FINDS LOWER LEVEL OF EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDREN OF MALTREATING MOTHERS

This study investigated emotional understanding in 22 physically abusive maltreating mothers and their 6-12 year old children and a matched control group to determine how a maltreating relationship may interfere with children's emotional development. Maltreating mothers, compared to controls, were less likely to engage in discussion reflective of emotional understanding and maltreated children demonstrated lower levels of emotional understanding. The findings also revealed significant relationships between maternal behavior (e.g., discussion of emotion) and children's understanding skills. The importance of social context in the development of children's emotional understanding skills was emphasized.

Shipman, K.L., & Zeman, J. (1999). Emotional understanding: A comparison of physically maltreating and non-maltreating mother-child dyads. Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 28(3), 407-417.

OTHER ISSUES IN CHILD MALTREATMENT

APA'S GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE IN CHILD PROTECTION MATTERS ARE PRESENTED

This paper presented the American Psychological Association's (APA's) guidelines for desirable professional practice in child protection matters. The guidelines were designed to promote proficiency in using psychological expertise in conducting psychological evaluations in child protection matters. The guidelines were intended to be aspirational and were developed as an adjunct to the APA's Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (APA, 1992).

Board of Professional Affairs Committee on Professional Practice & Standards (1999). Guidelines for psychological evaluations in child protection matters. American Psychologist, 54(8), 586-593.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE EXPLORES THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PARENTING PROGRAMS AIMED AT ABUSIVE AND NEGLECTFUL PARENTS

This article summarized the literature on the effectiveness of parenting programs aimed at abusive and neglectful parents. The authors tried to discern: (1) whether current parent training programs build on findings of earlier studies; (2) whether the outcome research on parenting programs has become more methodologically rigorous than in the past; and (3) whether there are training models that have been empirically validated that enhance parenting skills in abusive and neglectful families. The authors also addressed the question of whether parents who maltreat their children can be helped to become adequate parents.

Dore, M.M. & Lee, J.M. (1999). The role of parent training with abusive and neglectful parents. Family Relations: Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Studies, 48(3), 313-325.

STUDY FINDS INCREASED RISK FOR PTSD IN CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT VICTIMS

This prospective study described the extent to which childhood abuse and neglect increased one's risk for subsequent posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and determined whether this relationship persists after controlling for individual, family, and lifestyle characteristics associated with both childhood victimization and PTSD. The sample included a group of child abuse and neglect victims and a group of control children who were matched on several sociodemographic variables (i.e., age, sex, race, family SES) and followed prospectively into young adulthood (N=1,196). Childhood victimization was associated with increased risk for lifetime and current PTSD. Results also revealed that 37.5% of sexual abuse victims, 32.7% of physical abuse victims, and 30.6% of neglect victims met DSM-III-R criteria for lifetime PTSD. The relationship between childhood victimization and number of PTSD symptoms remained despite the introduction of covariates associated with risk for both. The author concluded that victims of child abuse and neglect are at increased risk for developing PTSD, but childhood victimization is not a sufficient condition.

Widom, C.S. (1999). Posttraumatic stress disorder in abused and neglected children grown up. American Journal of Psychiatry, 156(8), 1223-1229.