

SEXUAL ABUSE

Ethnic Group Differences in Adjustment Following Sexual Abuse Discovery Examined

This study explored ethnic group differences in abuse characteristics, appraisal processes, primary caregiver support, and adjustment following sexual abuse discovery. 130 sexually abused children (aged 8-15 yrs) from Black, White, and Hispanic families completed interviews within 8 weeks of abuse discovery and at 1-yr follow-up. Results show that Hispanic Ss reported longer duration of abuse by a parent figure and were more often living with the perpetrator. White Ss reported more internal attributions for the abuse. For White Ss, but not for Hispanic or Black Ss, high abuse severity predicted higher levels of shame and a pessimistic attributional style. For Hispanic Ss only, high abuse severity was related to lower levels of satisfaction with primary caregiver support. Results highlight the importance of understanding the role of ethnicity when examining outcomes associated with sexual abuse.

Feiring, C., Coates, D.L., & Taska, L.S. (2001). Ethnic status, stigmatization, support, and symptoms development following sexual abuse. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 16*(12), 1307-1329.

Variations in Sexual Abuse Experience Linked With Acute and Long-term Outcomes

Examined short- and long-term maladaptive outcomes (e.g., aggressive behavior, depression, dissociation, and low self-esteem) in a sample of 158 sexually abused females and a comparison group. Outcomes were assessed at two time points, entry into the study and approximately seven years later. Findings address two specific questions: (1) whether subgroups or profiles, based on the specific characteristics of the sexual abuse experienced, can be identified in this sample of abused females; and (2) whether these profile groups predict different patterns of adverse short- or long-term outcomes. Results indicate that differences in the abuse experience are shown to be important to understanding both acute and long-term behavior problems and adjustment.

Trickett, P.K., Noll, J.G., Reiffman, A., & Putnam, F.W. (2001). Variants of intrafamilial sexual abuse experience: Implications for short- and long-term development. *Development & Psychopathology, 13*(4), 1001-1019.

Mental Health Consequences of CSA and Multiple Trauma Exposure Explored

Exposure to multiple traumas as mediators of the relationship between childhood sexual abuse and negative adult mental health outcomes was examined. Participants were 174 women interviewed in the third wave of a longitudinal study of the consequences of child sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse victims reported a lifetime history of more exposure to various traumas and higher levels of mental health symptoms. Exposure to traumas in both childhood and adulthood mediated the relationship between child sexual abuse and psychological distress in adulthood.

Banyard, V.L., Williams, L.M., & Siegel, J.A. (2001). The long-term mental health consequences of child sexual abuse: An exploratory study of the impact of multiple traumas in a sample of women. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 14*(4), 697-715.

Childhood Sexual Abuse Prevention Programs: Strengths and Challenges

Examined data from 87 child sexual abuse prevention programs to

explore how these programs function in their community contexts. Prevention leaders indicated that program continuance is affected by factors such as adequate and secure funding, competing agendas, and community collaboration. This study also documents that programs are responding to challenges in the literature to improve prevention program components.

Plummer, C.A. (2001). Prevention of child sexual abuse: A survey of 87 programs. *Violence & Victims, 16*(5), 575-588.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Potential Mediators of Physical Abuse and Children's Social and Affective Status Examined

This study examined a model explaining the association between physical abuse of children and children's social and affective status. Participants included 100 physically abused children (aged 9-12 yrs) and 100 case-matched classmate nonabused comparison children. Children's social expectations regarding peers, and 2 social behaviors (i.e., aggressive behavior and prosocial behavior) were found to mediate between abuse and positive and negative social status, as well as between abuse and positive and negative reciprocity. Social expectations and withdrawn behavior mediated between abuse and positive social status, but only where withdrawn behavior was a function of social expectations. Social expectations were generally found to mediate between abuse and internalizing problems. Peer rejection added to social expectations in producing internalizing problems.

Salzinger, S., Feldman, R.S., Ng-Mak, D.S., Mojica, E., & Stockhammer, T.F. (2001). The effect of physical abuse on children's social and affective status: A model of cognitive and behavioral processes explaining the association. *Development & Psychopathology, 13*(4), 805-825.

Study Found Physical Abuse and Lifetime Psychopathology Vary by Gender

The authors assessed lifetime psychopathology in a general population sample and compared the rates of 5 psychiatric disorder categories between those who reported a childhood history of either physical or sexual abuse and those who did not. Those reporting a history of childhood physical abuse had significantly higher lifetime rates of anxiety disorders, alcohol abuse/dependence, and antisocial behavior and were more likely to have one or more disorders than those without such a history. Women, but not men, with a history of physical abuse had significantly higher lifetime rates of major depression and illicit drug abuse/dependence than did women with no such history. The relationship between a childhood history of physical abuse and lifetime psychopathology varied significantly by gender for all categories except for anxiety disorders.

MacMillan, H.L., Fleming, J.E., Streiner, D.L., Lin, E., Boyle, M.H., Jamieson, E., Duku, E.K., Walsh, C.A., Wong, M.Y., & Beardslee, W.R. (2001). Childhood abuse and lifetime psychopathology in a community sample. *American Journal of Psychiatry, 158*(11), 1878-1883.

Differential Pathways to Disruptive and Delinquent Behavior Among Maltreated Boys

Data from a longitudinal, inner-city community sample were used to examine the prevalence of child maltreatment in 506 males and to relate this to disruptive and delinquent child behavior. By age 18 yrs, almost one fourth of the families had been referred to Children and Youth Services (CYS). Investigation by the CYS resulted in substantiated maltreatment of 10% of the Ss, mostly for physical abuse and neglect.

Maltreatment was related to the boys progressing on 3 pathways

in disruptive and delinquent behavior: authority conflict pathway, overt pathway, and covert pathway. Victims were more likely to have engaged in behaviors characteristic of the authority conflict and the overt pathways but less strongly engaged in behaviors associated with the covert pathway. Victims were also more likely to have a referral to juvenile court.

Stouthamer-Loeber, M., Loeber, R., Homish, D.L., & Wei, E. (2001). Maltreatment of boys and the development of disruptive and delinquent behavior. *Development & Psychopathology*, 13(4), 941-955.

**OTHER ISSUES IN
CHILD MALTREATMENT**

**Regular Supervision Improves the Quality of
Investigative Interviews**

This study examined the use of focused and open-ended prompts in forensic interviews conducted by eight trained investigative interviewers in the months preceding and immediately following termination of regular supervision and intensive individual feedback. A matched group of 74 alleged victims of sexual abuse (aged 4-12 years) were interviewed using the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development investigative interview guide by a group of experienced forensic interviewers pre- and post- completion of the supervision and feedback phase. After the supervision ended, interviewers used fewer open-ended prompts and relied more heavily on option-posing and suggestive prompts, which are less likely to elicit accurate information. These results suggest that ongoing supervision and feedback may be necessary to maintain desirable interview practices.

Lamb, M.E., Sternberg, K.J., Orbach, Y., Esplin, P.W., & Mitchell, S. (2002). Is ongoing feedback necessary to maintain the quality of investigative interviews with allegedly abused children? *Applied Developmental Science*, 6(1), 35-41.

**Child Abuse Research Recruitment and
Maintenance Strategies Explored**

This article delineates the results of strategies used in a longitudinal study of child abuse. Participants included a group of abused children (aged 7-11 yrs) and their mothers and a matched comparison group of nonabused children and their mothers. Consent rates were lower for abusing families than for nonabusing comparison families. Among abusing families, those in the sexual abuse group were more difficult to recruit than those in the physical abuse or neglect groups. Retention over time was highly successful as a result of considerable efforts to maintain contact with respondents.

Kinard, E. M. (2001). Recruiting participants for child abuse research: What does it take? *Journal of Family Violence*, 16(3), 219-236.

**Psychometric Properties of a Childhood Trauma
Measure Examined in a Community Sample**

This article explored the factor structure and reliability of the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ) in a community sample of adults aged 18-65 yrs and calculated normative data. Consistent with previous literature, a 5-factor model best described the CTQ, with a hierarchical model also providing excellent fit. Additionally, the CTQ demonstrated acceptable internal consistency. Overall, findings suggest that the CTQ is appropriate for use in a community sample.

Scher, C.D., Stein, M.B., Asmundson, G.J.G., McCreary, D.R., & Forde, D.R. (2001). The Childhood Trauma Questionnaire in a community sample: Psychometric properties and normative data. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 14(4), 843-857.

**Impact of Maltreatment and Symptomatology on
Neuroendocrine Functioning Investigated**

Cortisol regulation was investigated in a sample of school-aged maltreated (n=167) and demographically comparable low-income nonmaltreated (n=204) boys and girls in the context of a day camp research program. Maltreated children with clinical-level internalizing problems were distinguished by higher morning, afternoon, and average daily cortisol levels across the week of camp attendance. In contrast, nonmaltreated boys with clinical-level externalizing problems emerged as distinct in terms of low levels of morning and average daily levels of cortisol. Maltreated children with comorbid clinical-level internalizing and externalizing problems were less likely to show the expected diurnal decrease in cortisol.

Cicchetti, D., & Rogosch, F.A. (2001). The impact of child maltreatment and psychopathology on neuroendocrine functioning. *Development & Psychopathology*, 13(4), 783-804.

**Study Examines Buffering Effects of Vagal
Tone on Interparental Conflict**

Physiological regulation, as indexed by baseline vagal tone and delta vagal tone, was examined as a moderator in the relations between exposure to verbal and physical parental marital conflict and children's adjustment and physical health. Higher vagal tone was posited to serve a protective function for children exposed to higher levels of marital conflict. 75 children (aged 8-12-yrs) and their mothers completed measures of parental conflict, and children's adjustment and physical health. Results indicate that higher vagal tone buffered children against increased externalizing, internalizing, and health problems related to exposure to more frequent marital conflict, especially verbal conflict. Further, higher levels of delta vagal tone protected boys against externalizing problems associated with verbal conflict, and health problems associated with physical conflict.

El-Sheikh, M., Harger, J., & Whitson, S.M. (2001). Exposure to interparental conflict and children's adjustment and physical health: The moderating role of vagal tone. *Child Development*, 72(6), 1617-1636.

**Psychologists' Understanding and Opinions of
Mandated Child Abuse Laws Examined**

A sample of licensed psychologists were surveyed and reported being relatively well-informed about mandated child abuse reporting laws. However, their performance on a knowledge measure suggests knowledge deficits and a tendency to overreport. Legal considerations encourage reporting, whereas beliefs that one can provide client treatment deter reporting. Opinions of the laws were generally favorable, with some concerns about child protection systems and the impact of reporting on the therapeutic alliance. Practice and policy implications are discussed.

Renninger, S.M., Veach, P.M., & Bagdade, P. (2002). Psychologists' knowledge, opinions, and decision-making processes regarding child abuse and neglect reporting laws. *Professional Psychology: Research & Practice*, 33(1), 19-23.

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 6 months) along with a two- or three-sentence review to Ernestine C. Briggs, Ph.D., Duke University Medical Center, Trauma Evaluation, Research and Treatment Program, Center for Child and Family Health - North Carolina, 3518 Westgate Drive, Suite 100, Durham, NC 27707 (Fax: 919 419-9353).