

Descriptions of NICHD Career Development Projects related to Child Abuse, Child Maltreatment, and Child Violence

Project Title: Income, Material Hardship, and Child Neglect

Principal Investigator: Kristen Shook Slack

Number: 5 K01 HD041703-02

Description:

The majority of children become involved with child protection systems for reasons of neglect. Yet, this form of maltreatment is significantly understudied relative to the attention given to child physical and sexual abuse. Furthermore, despite the close associations between child neglect, poverty, and welfare use, there are many unanswered questions about why and how poverty or welfare use may matter in the etiology of different forms of child neglect. Understanding the “within-group variation” of families with low-incomes, especially those who receive welfare benefits, is critical for prevention efforts to succeed.

This research takes place in the context of a larger study, the Illinois Families Study-Child Well-Being Supplement (IFS-CWB), funded by the National Institutes of Health (R01HD39148). The IFS-CWB is designed to explore the etiology of different forms of child neglect (i.e., supervisory, environmental, and medical) within a population of welfare-receiving families with young children. Six years of longitudinal survey data, linked with administrative data from public and child welfare systems and medical chart reviews of children, will be used to conduct analyses predicting various forms of child neglect.

This study has the following specific objectives:

- Determine whether the risk of child neglect is affected by changes in family income stemming from changes in employment and welfare use;
- Explore whether there are material hardships that mediate or moderate the effects of family income changes on child neglect;
- Explore whether there are psychosocial factors that mediate or moderate the effects of family income changes on child neglect; and
- Develop policy recommendations, drawing on findings from these analyses, that will help policy makers address the potential effects of welfare reform policies on children and families, and on the public systems that serve them.

Multivariate analyses with the longitudinal data will incorporate “lagged” values of key variables (i.e., independent and dependent) to predict child neglect during subsequent years. Additional analyses to predict formal involvement with the child welfare system will be conducted.

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Project Title: Offspring of Maltreated Mothers: Prenatal and Infant Health

Principal Investigator: Jennie G. Noll

Number: 5 K01 HD041402-06

Description:

This project utilizes data collected in a 13-year prospective, longitudinal study of the impact of sexual abuse on female development and to further assess the prenatal and postnatal complications experienced by participants who have become mothers. The specific aims are to establish a link between the trauma of childhood sexual abuse and subsequent labor, delivery, and postnatal complications and to ascertain the pre-pregnancy factors (both physiological and psychological), prenatal factors (such as prenatal care, pregnancy intendedness, social support, stress, and substance used, and contextual factors (such as ethnicity, socio-economic status, age at conception,, and subsequent traumas) that mediate the relationship between childhood trauma and obstetric risk.

A second effort will serve as a pilot study of the long-term effects of labor, delivery, and postnatal complications on the development of children. Specifically, this pilot study will ascertain the extent to which children who are identified as maltreated also experienced prenatal and postnatal complications while taking into account intervening variables such as caregiver factors (such as parenting style, dissociation, anxiety, and depression) and child factors (such as perceived competence, relationship quality, behavior problems, and cognitive abilities).

This project will also provide extensive retraining in the areas of behavioral endocrinology, and high-risk obstetrics. The training component will involve extensive independent reading, coursework, seminars, conferences, and concentrated time with mentors.

Descriptions of NICHD Career Development Projects related to Child Abuse, Child Maltreatment, and Child Violence

Project Title: Foster Care Youth: The Consequences of Abuse and Neglect

Principal Investigator: Justeen Hyde

Number: 5 K01 HD043259-04

Description:

This project supports education and research activities to will prepare the researcher to examine the consequences of child abuse and neglect among adolescents in the foster care system in Los Angeles. Previous research has identified children in foster care with histories of abuse and neglect as a population at high risk for a number of developmental and behavioral problems. Researchers, child welfare advocates, and journalists have demonstrated that child welfare programs often fail to address the complex needs of maltreated youth. Given the scarcity of published data on adolescents in foster care, these research and education activities are designed to build a foundation of knowledge about the experience of foster care from multiple perspectives.

Education and training activities include: coursework in child/adolescent development, public policy making, and quantitative research methods; participation in formal trainings offered to social workers and foster parents/guardians; and one-on-one mentorship provided by an interdisciplinary group of advisors at the University of Southern California, among others. These activities will prepare the researcher to conduct an ethnographic study of young adolescents, ages 12 to 15, entering foster care for the first time.

The specific aims of the proposed research are to:

- Document the histories of maltreatment among adolescents entering foster care for the first time, particularly the age at which maltreatment was first experienced and the types and frequency of abuse;
- Characterize maltreated adolescents' experiences entering and adapting to foster care;
- Identify mediating factors among maltreated adolescents that influence variations in behavioral, emotional, and psychological adaptations to foster care placements over time; and
- Explore, from multiple perspectives, the most pressing needs of adolescents entering foster care for the first time and appropriate strategies for addressing these needs.

A total of 30 adolescents will be recruited from two types of placements and interviewed at three points in time over a 6-month period. A subsample will be recruited for in-depth case studies, which include interviews with case managers and guardians. This project will provide depth to current understandings of the consequences of abuse and neglect on adolescents in foster care. Study findings will be widely disseminated to a range of key stakeholders.

Descriptions of NICHD Career Development Projects related to Child Abuse, Child Maltreatment, and Child Violence

Project Title: Paths from Abuse to Maladjustment during Entry to School

Principal Investigator: Mary E. Haskett

Number: 5 K01 HD043299-04

Description:

This project aims to provide the researcher with the knowledge and experience necessary to advance her research beyond single-factor, static models of developmental consequences of abuse. Knowledge will be acquired through participation in formal courses, attendance at seminars, and directed readings. Experience will be gained through the process of collaboration with the mentoring team and in the context of completion of the proposed research project under supervision of the mentors. It is anticipated that knowledge gained from the proposed research will inform intervention efforts for abused children and their families and will advance the articulation of socialization models of developmental psychopathology.

The first aim of the study is to examine possible pathways from abusive parenting to children's social and academic adjustment in the school environment. The pathways to be examined are based on socialization theories of child psychopathology and include attachment theory and a social information processing framework. This aim represents the group-oriented approach to understanding sequelae of abuse.

The second aim of the proposed research is to identify factors associated with stability and malleability of adaptation as children negotiate the transition from childcare settings to a formal schooling environment. The degree to which the salience of specific protective and risk factors change as the child progresses through that stage-salient task will be investigated. This aim represents a person-oriented level of analysis of maltreated children.

Participants will include 90 abused children, who will enter the study in the middle of their final year of preschool and will be followed to first grade.

Descriptions of NICHD Career Development Projects related to Child Abuse, Child Maltreatment, and Child Violence

Project Title: Risk Factors for Fatal Child Abuse and Neglect

Principal Investigator: Patricia G. Schnitzer

Number: 5 K08 HD001377-03

Description:

For the initial research, the researcher is using population-based data on all deaths among children in Missouri during an eight-year period to:

- Calculate the incidence of fatal child abuse and fatal neglect (separately) among children younger than 5 years old.
- Conduct a case-control study to evaluate the association between household composition and fatal physical abuse and fatal neglect, separately.
- Refine a classification scheme for childhood injury deaths based on the behavioral and environmental circumstances of the death. Then, the researcher will apply the classification to all the childhood deaths, conduct a descriptive analysis of the deaths, and compare the assigned classification to the cause of death listed on the death certificate.

The data for this research are existing data that will be obtained from the Missouri Child Fatality Review Panel (CFRP) program, vital records, and the Department of Family Services. The CFRP data include detailed information on every child death in Missouri including information on household members and their relationship to the decedent at the time of death, and each injury death includes details on the circumstances of injury.

These unique data provides the opportunity to study individual and family risk factors for fatal child abuse and neglect while controlling for confounding factors and minimizing the potential for misclassification and underreporting that plague studies based on vital records or samples of abused children from child welfare agencies. The use of all eight years of available data will ensure that there are sufficient numbers for evaluation of fatal physical abuse and fatal neglect, separately, as well as evaluation of interaction effects.

With these strengths, this research will provide new insights into the relationship between household composition and fatal child abuse and neglect, and provide a foundation for future research on the antecedents if child abuse and neglect.