Understanding the Link Between Income and Child Maltreatment

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Poverty 101
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Outline

• Poverty and child maltreatment: What we know, what we don’t know
• Poverty and child maltreatment: Recent evidence suggesting causal links between poverty and child maltreatment
• Project GAIN: Evolution of and early findings from a randomized control trial (RCT) providing economic support to prevent child maltreatment
What We Know

• Low-income families are over-represented in child protective services (CPS) and out-of-home care populations
• In U.S. National Incidence Studies (NIS-1-2-3-4), strong inverse correlation with income; strongest for neglect
• Child maltreatment report rates are greatest in communities with high poverty rates and high unemployment rates
• Receipt of public assistance (e.g., TANF, Food Stamps) predictive of CPS involvement
• Prior state-by-year level analyses suggest strong positive associations of poverty and economic hardship with CPS involvement
• Negative associations between social welfare benefit generosity and CPS involvement
What Else We Know

• Low-income/lack of resources/material hardship are the strongest and most consistent characteristics associated with CPS involvement across the developed countries.

• Both SES and parenting struggles predict maltreatment, particularly neglect; parenting characteristics do not appear to mediate (explain) the links between low SES and maltreatment.
  – Suggests independent effects of SES and parenting.

• Income (and changes therein) is also strongly associated with substandard parenting/maltreatment risk net of a host of potentially confounding factors.
  – Implies that higher rates of CPS involvement and out-of-home placement not solely due to monitoring, biases in system, etc.
U.S. Trends in Child Maltreatment Victimization by Maltreatment Type


Figure 1. U.S. Maltreatment Trends: 1990-2012

Note: Trend estimates represent total change from 1992 to 2012. Annual rates for physical abuse and sexual abuse have been multiplied by 2 and 3 respectively in Figure 1 so that trend comparisons can be highlighted.
Three Studies of Interest

Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing (FFCW) N=1,820
Healthy Families New York (HFNY) N=421
Illinois Families Study-Child Wellbeing (IFS-CWB) N=385

All three studies:
• involve probabilistic samples (or subsamples) of low-income families with young children
• involve prospective, longitudinal designs
• are able to distinguish neglect from other forms of maltreatment, and have two different measures of neglect outcomes
• share a relatively large set of common/approximate measures
Questions

• What predicts child neglect among low-income families with young children (0-5 years)?
  – What predicts involvement with child protective services (CPS) for reasons of neglect in three separate studies?
  – Do similar factors within separate studies predict both neglect-related CPS involvement and a validated (parental) self-report measure of child neglect?
  – Are there consistencies across studies in the predictors of both neglect outcomes?

(Full paper is published in the Children and Youth Services Review, Slack et al., 2011)
## Statistically Significant Predictors of Neglect

### CPS NEGLECT
- **HFNY:** public benefit receipt, material hardships, unemployment, depression, substance use
- **IFS-CWB:** public benefit receipt, material hardships, unemployment, (low) self efficacy, (low) involvement in child activities, spanking, parenting stress
- **FFCW:** material hardships, depression, parent health problems, (low) self efficacy, (low) involvement in child activities, parenting stress

### SELF REPORT NEGLECT
- **HFNY:** public benefit receipt, material hardships, spanking, (low) self efficacy, LBW (-)
- **IFS-CWB:** material hardships, (low) self efficacy, (low) involvement with child activities, parenting stress, domestic violence
- **FFCW:** material hardships, depression, parent health problems, child health problems, domestic violence, substance use
How Might Poverty Matter for CPS Involvement?

- Mental health and functioning (stress, Depression)
- Parenting quality
- Quality of the home environment

Potential risk or harm to child

Caregiver Characteristics

Poverty and Economic Hardship

Interface with reporters

CPS Report, Investigation, Finding, etc.
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Child Support Income and Child Maltreatment

• The study:
  – Tested whether exogenous (random) increase in income via full child support pass-through was associated with decreased CPS involvement
  – Employed Wisconsin Child Support Demonstration Evaluation (CSDE) data; implemented in 1997-98, followed 2-years post assignment
  – All TANF entering mothers of nonmarital children (N=13,652) assigned to E or C groups, with the E group receiving full pass-through of child support payments and the C group receiving the greater of $50 or 41% of child support payments

• Experimental group families were 10-11 percent less likely to have a screened-in report (p<.05)

(Full paper is published in the Social Service Review, Cancian et al., 2013)
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Project GAIN: Question of Interest

How much child maltreatment prevention can we “buy” with economic support interventions alone?
Project GAIN Model

Linking to Benefits and Economic or Material Resources

Population target: Families whose CPS case close after IA

Financial Decision-Making Assistance

One-time emergency assistance with economic needs

Referrals for other “non-economic” service needs

ECONOMIC SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES AT RISK
Menu of Services

• **Employment** – job search, licenses, resume building, practice interviews
• **Housing** – eviction prevention, homelessness, referrals for foreclosure prevention, home-ownership
• **Benefit Advocacy** – W2, Social Security, FoodShare, landlords
• **Education** – GED, CNA, MATC, UWM
• **Financial Decision Making** – taxes, credit repair, bill paying, reducing financial fees, debt and bankruptcy, banking, budgeting, legal issues, financial goal-setting
Engagement Rates

• October 18, 2011 – December 31, 2013 (~26 months)
  – Total referred = 1579 families, 489 enrolled (31%)
  – Initially Interested = 77% of total contacted
  – Completed Intake = 79% of those interested
Evaluation Parameters

- Approximately 4,200 families have been randomized into T and C groups since mid-2012
- Approximately 40% of families cannot be located at the point of case closure following an investigation
- Preliminary analyses followed families through December 2013
  - ITT effects null
  - TOT effects not finalized
  - Large subgroup effect: Families with a prior history of CPS involvement
Preliminary Findings for Families with History of CPS Involvement (~15%)
For reasons of poverty alone.....