

THE IMPACT OF HOUSING INSTABILITY ON SUBSEQUENT CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT AMONG HIGH-RISK FAMILIES: DIFFERENCES BY DEVELOPMENTAL TIMING AND SUBTYPE

Meghan Evans,¹ Miguel Villodas,¹ and Kelly Cromer²

¹San Diego State University, ²Florida International University

Objective

HOUSING INSTABILITY AND CHILD WELFARE INVOLVEMENT

- Increased prevalence of housing difficulties among families under investigation for child abuse and neglect (Font & Warren, 2013; Fowler et al., 2013)
- Housing instability includes (Courtney, McMurtry, & Zinn, 2004; Dworsky, 2014):
 - Unsafe housing conditions
 - Housing mobility and eviction
 - Overcrowding and doubling-up with other families
 - Homelessness

UNCLEAR ASSOCIATION

- Despite growing evidence of an increased prevalence of housing instability among child welfare-involved families, the direction and nature of the association is unclear

PRESENT RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Does housing instability predict subsequent reports maltreatment subtypes?
- Is this association specific to developmental periods?

Methods

PARTICIPANTS

- 1354 caregiver-youth dyads who participated in the Longitudinal Studies of Child Abuse and Neglect (LONGSCAN):
 - A consortium of prospective studies initiated in 1990 collecting data on at-risk youth from five sites in regions across the U.S. (Northwestern, Southwestern, Eastern, Southern, and Midwestern)
 - Examining the antecedents and consequences of childhood maltreatment

PROCEDURE

- Caregivers annually reported four indicators of housing instability when youth were between 6 and 18 years old which were summed to create a Housing Instability Score:
 - Child and family moved together
 - Child moved separately from the family
 - Family evicted
 - Child homeless
- CPA records coded for five types of maltreatment allegations in two-year intervals between birth and 18
 - Physical abuse
 - Sexual abuse
 - Emotional maltreatment
 - Physical neglect
 - Supervisory neglect

Results

- Latent growth curve models were estimated to examine the time-varying cross-lagged relationship between housing instability in each two-year interval and risk for maltreatment during each subsequent two-year interval
- Controlled for time-invariant (i.e. early childhood maltreatment, child gender, and race/ethnicity) and time-variant (i.e. family income and number of people in the household) covariates

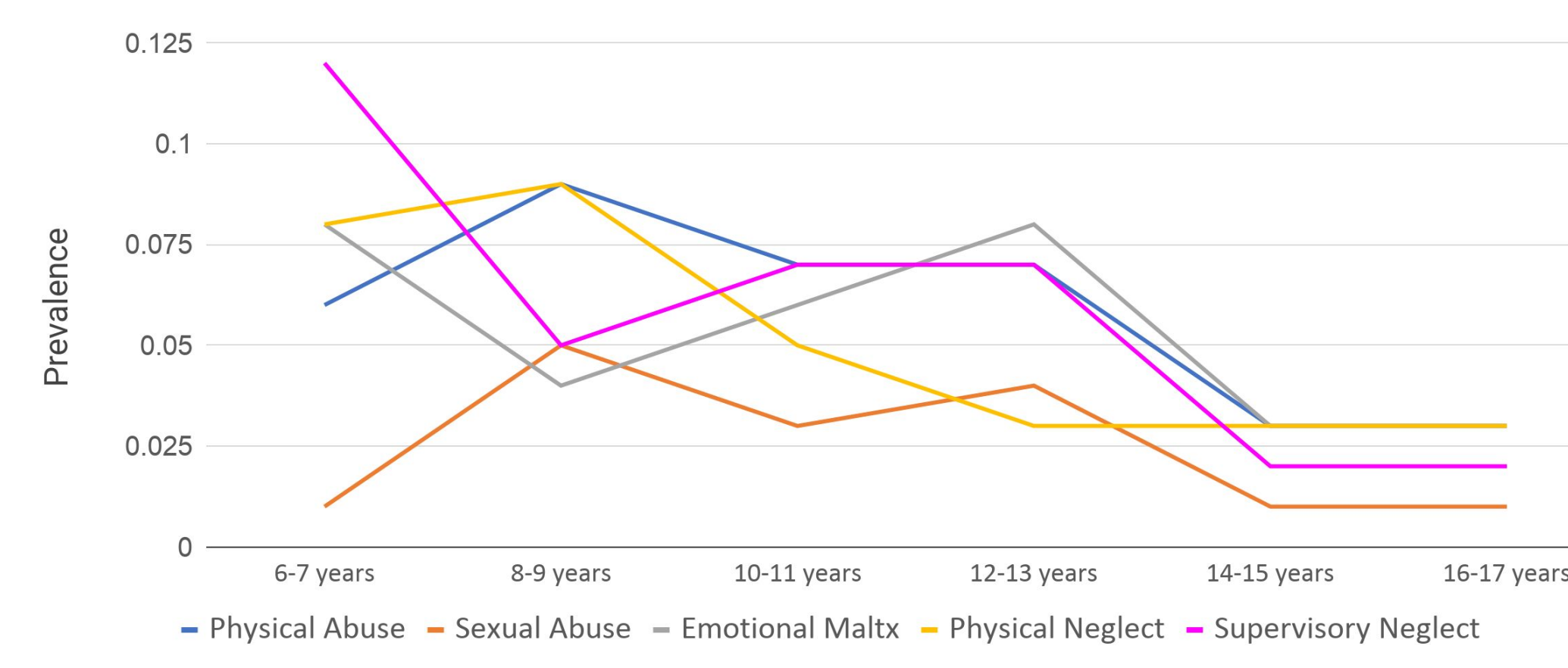
Table 1: Demographics of Sample

	n (%)	Total Sample
Female		1354
		51.5%
Race		
Caucasian	(%)	26.1%
Black	(%)	53.2%
Hispanic	(%)	7.2%
Mixed race	(%)	11.9%
Other race	(%)	1.6%
Family Income		
<=\$14,999	(%)	58.7%
\$15K-\$24,999	(%)	19.2%
\$25K-\$39,999	(%)	11.3%
\$40K-\$49,999	(%)	3.2%
\$50K or more	(%)	5.1%
Maltx Prevalence at Baseline (between birth and age 6)		
Physical Abuse	(%)	28%
Sexual Abuse	(%)	11%
Emotional Maltx	(%)	29%
Physical Neglect	(%)	50%
Supervisory Neglect	(%)	38%

Table 2: Conditional Intercepts and Slopes

	Physical Abuse		Sexual Abuse		Emotional Maltx		Physical Neglect		Supervisory Neglect	
	Intercept	Slope	Intercept	Slope	Intercept	Slope	Intercept	Slope	Intercept	Slope
Female (vs. Male)	-.25*	.07*	.02	.11	-.15	.15	-.12	.07	-.13	.05*
Race										
Black (vs. White)	-.12	.02	-.31*	.03	-.05	-.15	-.05	-.13	-.01	-.01
Other (vs. White)	.03	0	-.24	.07	.11	-.07	-.15	-.06	-.07	.02
Prior Report	.46*	-.07*	.61*	-.11*	.42*	.06	.61*	<-.01	.4*	-.08*

Figure 1. Prevalence of maltreatment subtypes across development



Results

Table 3: Relationship between Housing Instability and Maltreatment Subtypes

	Physical Abuse	Sexual Abuse	Emotional Maltx	Physical Neglect	Supervisory Neglect
Effects of Housing Instability on Maltx at age:	OR [95% CI]	OR [95% CI]	OR [95% CI]	OR [95% CI]	OR [95% CI]
6-7 Years	1.38 [1.21, 1.55]	1.20 [1.01, 1.42]	1.23 [1.06, 1.45]	1.19 [1.04, 1.35]	1.19 [1.04, 1.34]
8-9 Years	1.15 [1.02, 1.30]	1.21 [0.97, 1.51]	1.30 [1.02, 1.65]	1.21 [0.97, 1.49]	1.08 [1.00, 1.19]
10-11 Years	1.14 [1.01, 1.28]	1.07 [0.83, 1.38]	1.60 [0.95, 2.69]	1.65 [0.99, 2.75]	1.16 [1.06, 1.27]
12-13 Years	1.11 [1.00, 1.21]	1.19 [0.89, 1.58]	1.82 [0.81, 4.14]	2.12 [0.80, 5.64]	1.12 [1.04, 1.21]
14-15 Years	0.98 [0.87, 1.09]	0.90 [0.63, 1.30]	1.28 [0.66, 2.51]	1.17 [0.66, 2.08]	1.06 [0.99, 1.14]
16-17 Years	1.03 [0.87, 1.13]	1.05 [0.85, 1.31]	1.36 [0.65, 2.86]	1.77 [0.30, 10.49]	1.01 [0.95, 1.07]

- More housing instability significantly increased the risk of child maltreatment, specifically physical abuse and supervisory neglect over time between ages 6 and 14, but not between ages 14 and 18
- For example:
 - Odds of physical abuse between ages 6-7 were 1.38 times greater for every housing instability indicator experienced between ages 4-5
 - Odds of supervisory neglect between ages 10-11 were 1.16 times greater for every housing instability indicator experienced between ages 8-9
 - Odds ratios for physical abuse and supervisory neglect did not remain significant between ages 14-18
- Analyses revealed a less consistent prediction of physical neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional maltreatment by housing instability
 - Odds ratios were initially significant but did not remain significant over longer developmental periods

Conclusions

- Housing instability places children at increased risk for maltreatment, particularly physical abuse and supervisory neglect during childhood and early adolescence
- Vulnerability during these time periods may be heightened due to limited autonomy, independence, and capacity for self-protection
- Housing instability is not necessarily indicative of physical neglect but could limit caregivers' capacity to properly supervise children
- Stress associated with housing difficulties could increase frustration and conflict with children
- Investigators should consider the broader context of housing instability in determining children's safety
- Provision of family services, in addition to housing assistance, could prevent maltreatment