



MT. HOPE FAMILY CENTER

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Background Information:

People who experience maltreatment in childhood are more likely to become involved in romantic relationships with high conflict and aggression in adulthood.

However, this is not the case for all people who experience maltreatment.

In fact, maltreatment can vary a lot from family to family, both in terms of the type of abuse or neglect and how long it lasts.

Differences in children's exposure to maltreatment may explain why some people are more or less likely to have difficulty with romantic relationships.

What are the CAMP and SOLAR studies?

SOLAR is a follow-up study of kids who participated in a summer research camp when they were 10-12 years old. 398 participants were re-contacted when they were about 20 years old. 78% were Black and about half had a history of child maltreatment. The goals of this study were to:

- 1) Learn whether certain patterns of child maltreatment set the stage for difficulties in romantic relationships in young adulthood
- 2) Identify the reasons why this happens
- 3) Understand whether this tendency for romantic relationship difficulty as a result of maltreatment is the same for men and women.

Here's a quick summary of what we found:

- Long lasting (chronic) maltreatment that takes many different forms (for example physical abuse and neglect) is the most common experience of children involved with CPS. The least common experience of children involved in CPS is an isolated exposure to abuse such as a single occurrence of sexual abuse.
- The experience of chronic and multifaceted maltreatment led to higher physical aggression and impulsivity among children at age 10-12, more so than other patterns of maltreatment exposure.
- Higher physical aggression in childhood was found to be one reason why exposure to ongoing maltreatment that takes many forms can lead to involvement in violent and high conflict romantic relationships in adulthood. This was true for both men and women.

Why does this research matter??

- This study highlights the importance of both prevention and early intervention. We found that maltreatment experienced in childhood can set the stage for aggressive high conflict relationships in the future. We learned that one reason for this is the increase in aggression during childhood that results from maltreatment. In addition to preventing maltreatment, support services aimed at reducing aggressive behavior in childhood may stop the development of problems in adulthood and may stop the intergenerational occurrence of violence within families.
- Chronic maltreatment that takes many different forms is the most common experience of children involved with CPS which emphasizes the urgent need for widely available and on-going support services for families.
- Children and families of color are disproportionately and differently affected by the child welfare system. In addition to the trauma of maltreatment, it is important to underscore that most of the people in this study also experienced the added ongoing trauma of discrimination and marginalization.

WANT TO LEARN MORE? READ:

Patterns of Child Maltreatment and the Development of Conflictual Emerging Adult Romantic Relationships: An Examination of Mechanisms and Gender Moderation by Liz

Handley, Justin Russotti, Jen Warmingham, Fred Rogosch, Jody Todd Manly, and Dante Cicchetti