

CHILD ABUSE IN FOSTER CARE: RISK FACTORS

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**RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

In my research proposal I will attempt to explain the factors that contribute to child abuse in foster homes. I'm interested in this topic because in most cases children are the silent victims of abuse, ranging from physical to emotional abuse. I want to learn that possibilities of child abuse in foster homes. I will also research the effects children placed in foster home. Therefore, my research question is: What are the risk factors of child abuse in a foster care setting?

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

B.G. McGowan (2005). Historical Evolution of Child Welfare Services. In G. Mallon and P.

Hess (Eds.), *Child Welfare for the Twenty-First Century: A Handbook of Practices, Policies, and Programs* (p. 10-46). New York: Columbia University Press.

In “Historical Evolution of Child Welfare Services,” McGowan describes the historical evolution of Welfare Services such as foster care, and other services. McGowan first examines major trends and different ways society dealt with the dependent, neglected, and troubled children.

McGowan begins by describing how children were viewed in the 17th and 18th century (served as an economic asset to family). McGowan then describes how two types of groups emerged (orphans and the children of paupers) therefore creating different ways for these children to be handled by society (outdoor relief, farming out, almshouses, indenture and so on).

McGowan also describes the beginning of a foster care system that was first founded by Loring Brace. McGowan describes how Loring Brace believed that poor children can be saved from the evils of an urban life by sending them to a Christian home and learning good work habits.

Bruskas, D., (2008, May). Children in Foster Care: A Vulnerable Population at Risk. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing*, Volume 21, Number 2, pp. 70–77.

In “Children in Foster Care: A Vulnerable Population at Risk,” Delilah Bruskas, RN, MN describes the experience of children going in a foster care setting such as having difficulty transitioning into a new place that can create more trauma for a child.

Bruskas described mental health outcomes for children entering foster care such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, and so on. Bruskas described feelings children may experience while being separated from their parents (fear, confusion and sadness). Bruskas describes how this traumatic experience can lead to poor outcomes for foster care children.

Bruskas also describes educational outcomes for children in foster care. According to Bruskas, children in foster care have poor educational outcomes due to frequent moves in the foster care system. Bruskas describes how not having a stable foster home can create poor educational outcomes such less likely to finished high school.

CA U.S Department of Social Services (2007). Retrieved October 20, 2012 from

<<http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb/PG123.htm>>

This is a government website suited for many purposes such employment opportunities, career opportunities, hearing, appeals and other information regarding social services in California.

This website particularly offers information regarding how to become a foster parent or the process of becoming a process parent.

Child Welfare Information Gateway (July 2005). Foster Care. Volume 4, Part 1355, Section 57.

Retrieved from < <http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/foster.cfm>>

Child Welfare Information Gateway covers topics on child welfare, child abuse and neglect, out-of-home care, adoption, and so on.

Child Welfare Information Gateway is in conjunction with the Children's Bureau, U.S department of Health and Human Services as well as the Administration for Children and Families. It provides services such as prints, publications, and other tools for child welfare services. It also provides current statistics on foster care such as number of children placed in foster care, ethnic backgrounds, demographics, and so on.

Crosson-Tower, Cynthia (2008). *Understanding Child Abuse and Neglect*. Seventh Edition. p.10-11,100-101, 352-353. Pearson.

In "Understanding Child Abuse and Neglect," Cynthia Crosson-Tower writes about child abuse and neglect. This book has different topics such as how children were viewed in society in the past. Crosson-Tower described different topics such as family dysfunctions, bonding and attachment, and so on. I will briefly describe 3 sections I incorporated into my research.

Crosson-Tower also writes about how the case of Mary Ellen Wilson led to organized groups to combat child maltreatment. Mary Ellen lived with her mother and stepfather and was physically abused (beaten with a leather strap) by her parent. This case later led organized groups to combat child maltreatment. One organization in particular called the Society for the Prevention for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Crosson-Tower described different risk factors for child abuse and neglect such as child risk factors, parental risk factors, and so on.

Crosson Tower also described the therapeutic potential in foster care. Although children entering foster care can be a traumatic experience, it can also provide a therapeutic potential. Crosson-Tower describes that children can be assessed for developmental delays, language abilities and so on, which treatment can be provided.

Dougherty, Susan ( December 2004). *Child Safety: Curricula for Children*. *National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning*.

This article focused on child safety. This article highlights child abuse in foster care setting. Finally this article also provided different approaches to reduce child abuse in foster care setting such as recognizing abusive situations if possible and reports abuse if it occurs.

Goldman J., Salus K., Wolcott D., Kennedy K., (2003). *A coordinated Response to Child Abuse and Neglect: The Foundation Practice*. Child Abuse and Neglect User Manual Series.

In, " A coordinated Response to Child Abuse and Neglect: The Foundation Practice," Goldman, Salus and Kennedy write a manual that addressed the following topics: the definitions

abuse and neglect, causes and effects of child abuse and neglect, risk factors of abuse, how to report abuse and so on.

This Manual is intended for people working for child protective services such as caseworkers, professionals working with children and families and community members. This manual provides annual recollected date such as statistics.

Hobbs, Georgina F., Hobbs, Christopher J., Wynne, Jane M. (Dec. 1999) Abuse of children in foster and residential care. *Child Abuse & Neglect* Volume 23, Issue 12, p. 1239-1252.

In “ Abuse of Children in Foster and Residential Care,” Hobbs et al., described characteristics of physical and sexual abuse of children in foster and residential care settings and better ways to provide services to this abuse children

The method consisted of 158 children in foster or in residential care which pediatricians reported cases of alleged physical and sexual abused. This study was done in Leeds, England over a 6 year period from 1990-1995. The study included reason for placement, children’s physical and mental health, abuse characteristics; including perpetrator and case management were studied.

Hobbs et al found that 42 children were physically abused, 76 were sexually abused and 15 experienced both form of abuse in foster care setting. Some of the characteristics was the girls were more likely to be sexually abuse and boys physically abuse. Hobbs et al., also found that children with certain disabilities were more likely to be abused.

Lightfoot E., Hill K., LaLiberte T., (2011) Prevalence of children with disabilities in the Child welfare system and out of home placement: An examination of administrative records. *Elsevier Journal* (Volume 33, Issue 11, Pages 2069-2075). Retrieved from:

(<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S019074091100065X>)

In, “Prevalence of Children with Disabilities in the Child Welfare System and out of home placement: An examinations of Administrative Records,” Lightfoot, Hill and LaLiberte study the prevalence of children with disabilities within the child welfare system using Minnesota’s administrative data. Minnesota’s Social Service Information System (SSIS) has being collecting data since 2000 on 87 counties in Minnesota. The SSIS database has information regarding children’s age, race, ethnic background and disability.

To conduct their study, Lighfoot, Hill and LaLiberte used records from January 1, 2005-December 31, 2005 and included only substantiated cases of child maltreatment. The sample included 6270 children ages 0-18 all in Minnesota State.

The result demonstrated that 22% of the 6,270 children had reported a disability code. The study found that children with disabilities were male (55.8%), Caucasian (63.8%) and over the age of 5 (80.4%) than children without disabilities. The study also demonstrated that children

with disabilities are more likely to be placed in out-of-home placements. They found that 64.2% of the substantiated cases of maltreatment were children with disabilities.

McGuinness, Teena M., Schneider, Kristina. (2007). Poverty, Child Maltreatment, and Foster Care. *Journal of the American Psychiatric Nurses Association*.p. 296-303.

In "Poverty, Child Maltreatment and Foster Care," McGuinness and Schneider study the disadvantages experienced by young children in foster care. They study how children with history of low birth rate, prenatal substance exposure and prematurity can continue to affect them in foster care settings.

The study involved 75 cases, 43 girls and 32 boys who comprised of 56% African American and 43% Caucasians. This study demonstrated the great necessity in pre-screening children for any health problem as this may later cause other developmental delays for children in foster care.

Misguided 'orphan trains' idea rolls on. (1990). *New York Times*, p.26. Retrieved from

<http://ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/427911012?accountid=10362>

This newspaper was a letter to the editor, criticizing their article regarding children sent to farmers. This newspaper states that many of the children who boarded the train and then given to farmers, had actual living parents and not orphaned as Loring Brace had stated. According to this newspaper the children who were sent out in trains to farmers were the children of the immigrant poor, feared and despised by Charles Loring Brace.

Preperowlick (n.d) Rylia Wilson: One Short Life. Retrieved November 2, 2012 from

<http://socyberty.com/sociology/rylia-wilson-one-short-life/>

This website described the case of Rylia Wilson. Rylia Wilson was removed from her mother due to neglect. While placed in foster care she went missing. Florida's social services agency weren't aware of her disappearance until 15 months later. Sadly, like many other cases, Rylia's death was a result from the lack of supervision from her social worker and the lack of screening on her foster parents.

## INTRODUCTION

In 2001 Rilya Wylson only 4 years old, went missing from her foster home. Her foster parents did not report her as missing for the next 15 months. Unfortunately, Florida's Welfare Agency did not notice she was missing. Rilya's body was never found but her foster parents were convicted of murder. Rylia Wilson's is a tragic case that reflects the failure to provide and ensure safety to children being placed in foster care. According to the investigation, her social worker did not make sure to supervise her case during her foster care placement. Rylia's foster parent had a criminal record and a mental illness. Due to the lack of supervision from her social worker and lack of background check on the foster parents, Rylia was placed in an unsafe environment that resulted in her death. Sadly, this case illustrates the great risk children face placed in out-of-home placement such as a foster home. Foster homes are designed for children who have been abused or neglected. They are designed to protect youth but child abuse may still occur in foster care settings. This research paper attempts to answer the following question: What are the risk factors for child abuse in foster care? To answer this question I will look at different statistics regarding child abuse in the general population, I will also address some of the contemporary explanation of child maltreatment in the general population.

Each year 500,000 children are placed in foster homes (U.S Department of Health and Human Services, 2005). There are many reasons why a child may be placed in foster homes. Some of these reasons include: neglect, physical, and sexual abuse. To understand child abuse risk factors in the foster care system I would look at current statistics of children in foster care setting, the history of foster care, types of abuse, foster care process, problems with foster care, and finally child abuse risk factors .

## **STATISTICS**

According to the U.S Department of Health and Human Services, in 2003 there were about “523,000 children in foster care nationally, 46% were in non-relative foster family homes, 23% were in relative foster homes, 19% were in group homes or institutions, 5% were in pre-adoptive homes and 7% were in other placement types.” The U.S Department of Health and Human Services states that out of the “523,00 children in foster care, 39% were White/Non-Hispanic, 35% were black/Non-Hispanics, 17% were Hispanic, and 9% were other races/ethnic origins” (Child Welfare Information Gateway, July 2005). According to the code of federal regulations foster homes are define as a “24-hour substitute care for children outside their own homes” (Child Welfare Information Gateway, July 2005).

## **HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE**

To understand child abuse in foster care, I will begin by describing the history of child welfare services beginning in the 17th century. Apparently the child welfare system did not fully develop until the 1800's. According to McGOWAN, two-thirds of children died before the age of four (McWOGAN, 2005; 11). The surviving children were expected to start working at a young age. Boys worked the land, while girls helped their mothers around the house. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, there wasn't really a child welfare service system yet there were 2 types of groups: orphans and the children of paupers. There was a "high maternal mortality rates and high adult male death rates cause by the vicissitudes of life in the new world, large numbers of children were orphaned..." (McGowan, 2005; 11). Children of paupers were also given special attention because of their role in labor such as working in farms. Orphans were sent to poorhouse or almshouses or indenture (a placed where children were taught a trade in return for their loyalty, obedience and labor). The wealthy people were afraid of the poor as they perceived them as a threat to their wealth that leads to labor exploitation of children.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century marked the beginning of creating a foster care system. There were many social changes during this time such as the abolition of slavery, the end of civil war, immigrants and finally the industrial revolution. The end of the Civil War led to an economic growth which "helped expand the tax base and to free funds for the development of private philanthropies aimed at improving the lives of the poor" (McGowan, 2005; 12). Immigrants from other countries besides England led to more needy children from Jewish and Catholic background. The Industrial Revolution led to new types of equipment and labor that created a more hazardous environment for parents and children. Yet the most change was the increase in the number of

orphanages that led to putting children and dependent adults together. Later, this created pressure to find alternative means of care.

These problems led to the development of a foster care system. Reverend Loring Brace founded the New York Children's Aid Society in 1853. Reverend Loring Brace believed strongly in putting poor children in Christian's homes. According to McGowan, "consequently, Loring Brace recruited large numbers of free foster home in the Midwest and upper New York State and send trainloads of children to these localities (McGowan, 2005; 14). Once they arrived a committee would be held. Families would come and take some of these children to their homes. Families committed to provide education as well as to provide basic necessities. They also committed to provide a "Christian Home." The Children's Aid Society aim was to provide a safer home for the children.

Unfortunately, there were many flaws in their policies that many people criticized. One reason they were heavily criticized, it's that some of the children had living parents. According to the New York Times, "Thomas P. Norrie Presidents of the Board of Commissioners of Kings County complained that parents had been coerced into surrendering their children, and many were forced aboard the 'orphan trains' without the knowledge or consent of their parent" (New York Times, 1923; 26). Despite this, the Children's Aid Society did not make any attempts for reunification because many believed that if parents were unable to care for their children, they were morally inadequate and children were used for labor on the farm. Many of these children were exploited for labor. Immigrants were thought of as "lazy," therefore creating stereotypes. To teach them a work ethic, they were forced to work long hours on the farm. Also some of these children were immigrants who were feared by society and it was strongly believed that they were genetically inferior and can be "saved" by removing them from their parents. One must also take

into account that the Children's Aid Society was founded by Protestants. Another problem also emerged, which Catholics heavily criticized that children were raised in Protestant homes, which Catholics saw it as a threat to their religion. The Children's Aid Society was founded by mainly Christian's beliefs. Another concern was that the Children's Aid Society did not provide follow-up supervision after placement was made. These are some of the critiques that the Children's Aid Society received yet they made a huge impact on child welfare practice.

The development of Protective services can be said as a result of the emerging Industrial society. Many children were left homeless. Another problem was the concern regarding abuse and neglect of children. Mary Ellen Wilson, an eight year old girl, was the first case to received media attention and legal action. She was abused and neglected by her stepparents. Henry Bergh, who founded the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, directed his attorney to get custody of Mary Ellen Wilson. They succeeded because of the publicity this case received. The case of Mary Ellen Wilson leads to the passage of the New York Act of 1875. The case of Mary Ellen Wilson brought many changes such as combating child abuse (Crosson-Tower, 2008; 11). In 1870s movements were made to protect children from abusive homes.

## **TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE**

To protect children from abuse and neglect, children are placed in foster homes. Defining child abuse is a complicated issue. First, currently the United States does not have a standard definition of child abuse because each state has their definition. Definitions are different at the state and federal level. Child welfare agencies also may have different child abuse and neglect definitions. The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) define child abuse and neglect as

Any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker that result in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation; an act or failure to act that presents an imminent risk of serious harm  
(Child Abuse and Neglect User Manual, 2003; 13).

Although defining child abuse is complicated, there are four common types of abuse: physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and emotional abuse.

According to McGuinness, and Schneider, physical abuse is defined “as the act of causing physical injury, ranging from excessive discipline to beatings and scalding” (McGuinness and Schneider 2007; 298). McGuinness and Schneider define sexual abuse as “sexual acts that provide gratification to the perpetrator; molestation, prostitution, pornography, incest, and sexual exploitation of minors are included in this domain” (McGuinness and Schneider 2007; 298). As for neglect is define as “the failure to provide needed, age-appropriate care; additionally, neglect refers to failure to provide food, shelter, supervision, and medical attention” (McGuinness and Schneider 2007; 298). The following paragraphs described in depth the four common type of abuse.

First, let’s take a look of some the indicators of physical abuse. According to the Child Abuse and Neglect User Manual some indicators of physical abuse are: punching, beating,

kicking, biting, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, hitting with a hand, stick, strap, or other objects (Goldman, Salus, Wolcott, and Kennedy, 2003; 16). One major controversy is whether spanking can be a type of physical abuse. One problem in defining physical abuse is that culture plays a major role in defining this concept. Many cultural practices can cause physical abuse. For example, some cultures believe in certain types of treatment for diseases that may result in physical injury. Take for example the practice of “coining,” which is rubbing the body forcefully with a coin or a hard object. There are many practices that are accepted by cultures, but may be perceived by American culture as physical abuse.

The second type of abuse is sexual abuse. There are different types of sexual abuse such as intrafamilial abuse, and extra familial sexual abuse. Intrafamilial abuse refers to sexual abuse that occurs within the family and extra familial abuse refers to sexual abuse occurring outside the family. The Child Abuse and Neglect User Manual Series, describes child abuse as:

anal, or genital penile penetration, anal or genital digital or other penetration, genital contact with no intrusion, fondling of a child’s breasts or buttocks, indecent exposure, inadequate or inappropriate supervision of a child’s voluntary sexual activities, Use of a child in prostitution, pornography, internet crimes, or other sexually exploitative activities (Goldman, Salus, Wolcott, and Kennedy, 2003; 16-17).

This all constitute types of sexual abuse. Sexual abuse can be touching and non-touching offences.

The third type of abuse is neglect, which some studies suggest may be associated with poverty. There are many different types of neglect such as; educational neglect, abandonment, emotional, medical, nutrition, child endangerment, etc. Neglect is often associated with poverty because people in poverty often can’t provide the basic necessities to their children. Some of the reason for why neglect is more prevalent in the poor may be the high levels of stress parents are experiencing. Parents are often worried about trying to make ends meet such as putting food on

the table, paying their rent and so on that can lead to the neglect of their children. Some signs of neglect are malnutrition, lack of hygiene care, and so on. Minimum wage may not be enough to help working parents cover basic necessities and other needs. Neglect is the most reported abuse accounted for 57% of reported case (U.S Department of Health and Human Services, 2003).

## **FOSTER CARE PROCESS**

Before proceeding to child maltreatment in the foster care system, I will focus on the foster care process. Children are placed in foster home for many reasons, but primarily because many children are abused by their caregivers. The caregiver has put a child's life in danger therefore intervention is needed to protect the child. The most common type of abuse referred to child welfare services is neglect. Eventually, Child Welfare Agencies placed children in foster homes with the aim of reunification with caregivers.

Once the rights of the parents are terminated, the social worker is often the person who handles the case. There are many reasons for why a parent's rights are terminated. Termination of parental rights can be either voluntary or involuntary. According to Child Welfare Information Gateway, the court must decide whether parents are unfit to take care of child and if it's in the best interest of the child (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2012). When a parent puts a child's life at risk, immediate action must take place. There are different types of settings for abused children. These are pre-adoptive home, foster family home which can be relative or non-relative, group home, institutions, and independent living programs. I will briefly discuss one type of placement.

While at times, children are placed in a foster care setting, older children can be placed in group homes. Some children have special needs and may require a more structured setting. Group homes are licensed by community care facilities, which consist of six beds to larger institutions. For example, Family Care Network is an agency that serves thousands of children. Some of the children are placed in foster homes while others are placed in group homes. These group homes provide a structural environment. In-home counselors work in group homes. Some of the goals for in-home counselors are targeting behaviors that lead them to transfer positive

skills. In-home counselors serve as a positive role model for these children. In choosing foster parents they must carefully screened each person.

Moving from the topic of foster care process I will now proceed to the topic of foster parents' process. Before becoming a foster parent, they must get license. According to CA Department of Social Services, "The process requires a licensing worker to visit your home and meet with you and other family members. Minimum personal, safety and space requirements are required by law. Foster parents work with social services staff to decide the type of child best suited for their home" (Department Of Social Services, 2007). The agency is responsible for screening potential foster parents. As a foster parent, you get monetary compensation for taking care of a child. Unfortunately, this monetary compensation is not enough. While it may not be enough money, some only become foster parents for the money. The salary for foster parents range from \$400-\$800/month depending on the age of the child and at times may be different for children with certain disabilities (San Bernardino Children and Family Services).

## **PROBLEMS WITH FOSTER CARE**

Unfortunately, separation from parents can be detrimental for many children. It is obvious that foster care doesn't provide stability for children. The removal from home is a traumatic experience for children. Children need to adjust to a new way of life. According to Crosson-Tower, "Children must first adjust to separation, to a different lifestyle, new surroundings, possibly a new school, and the new parents' own children, neighbors, and friends" (Crosson-Tower, 2008; 352). Another issue in foster care is that children from another culture often lose their own culture making it more difficult for children to adjust to a new way of life. As you may recall, neglect is the most reported type of abuse and is often associated with poverty. Often immigrants may be the poor and when coming to this country are faced with a new way of life. Immigrant children who are removed from parents have difficulty adjusting to a new culture. This new culture may mean new food, new ritual or no ritual, a new religion, and so on. However, efforts are made to match children with foster parents of the same cultural backgrounds.

Another problem with the foster care system is often children bounce around different placements that can affect their education. According to Bruskas, "They will miss many school days while in transition from home to home in addition to facing the challenges of new schools; this will affect their attendance and comfort level, which in turn can impact their school experience as well as long-term performance outcomes." (Bruskas, 2008; 71). When children are placed in multiple foster care settings often school records get lost which can result in foster children losing school credits. According to the Washington State's Office of Children's Administration Research, "found that only 50% of foster children in the study graduated from high school or earned a general educational development (GED) credential. Results showed that

89% of foster children in this study obtained a GED rather than completing high school; the rates of GEDs of children in foster care versus that of the general population were about six times greater" (Bruskas, 2008;71). Children in foster care encounter educational problems and can also face problems when aging out of the system

When children are unable to return to their parents or be adopted, many foster children age out of the system. These children will encounter many problems such as having difficulty transitioning from foster care to young adulthood. Some may have difficulty finding jobs, homes, which can lead to homelessness. According to Calvin, 20 percent of the approximately 20,000 youth leaving foster care nationally each year end up homeless (Calvin, 2012; 1).

Children who aged out of the foster care system may find themselves with little support to no support which can lead to a sense of loneliness and hopelessness. The foster care system has little resources to provide for and prepare children who have aged out of the system. These are some of the negative effects of placing a child in foster care yet foster care can also provide therapeutic potential.

According to Crosson-Tower, there are several positive aspects for child in placement. While in foster care there are some potential advantages. One advantage is that "social workers can assess delay development and explore the children's language abilities... Based on these assessments, the workers can derive appropriate treatment plans" (Crosson-Tower, 2008; 353). After the social worker assesses the child, foster care provides the unmet needs of a child. These need include medical needs, nutritional needs, and so on. Another advantage is that foster care provides security to children. One must take into consideration that children come from a harmful environment that instills fear in children. When an agency does a good job of screening and matching children with foster parents, they are positive role models for these children. Foster

care may be positive or negative for some children but when placement does take place, a social worker must first consider other alternatives.

Before considering foster care as their last resort, child welfare services must consider the potential for placement in kinship care. Social workers must take into account natural support systems. I can personally think of one example from my own culture. In our Mexican culture, many parents baptize their children at a young age that involves asking other people to be *Padrinos* (Godparents) to their children. Godparents are basically second parents to the child. As a social worker, they must take into account that *Padrinos* may be an alternative to placement instead of foster care. In this sense, children can develop positive attachments more easily.

## CHILD ABUSE RISK FACTORS

Unfortunately foster care placement may be inevitable for these abused and neglected children. Before discussing risk factors of child maltreatment in the foster care system, I will address some of the contemporary explanation of child maltreatment in the general population. Although child maltreatment cannot be traced to one single cause there are some risk factors associated with child maltreatment. According to the Child Abuse and Neglect User Manual Series, there are some risk factors associated with child maltreatment. They examine four domains associated with child maltreatment which are:

Parent or caregiver factors	Family Factors	Child Factors	Environmental Factors
Personality characteristics and psychological well being	Family Structure	Age	Poverty and unemployment
History of maltreatment	Marital conflict and domestic violence	disabilities	Social isolation and social support
Substance abuse	Stress	Other child characteristics	Violent communities
Attitudes and knowledge	Parent-child interaction		
age			

The first domain is related to caregiver factors. Under this domain, personality characteristics and psychological well being of caregiver is listed as a risk factor. According to The Child Abuse and Neglect User Manual, there is no one single characteristic associated with child maltreatment. However, neglect and physical abuse are often associated with characteristics of, “low self-esteem, an external locus of control (i.e., belief that events are determined by chance or outside forces beyond one’s personal control), poor impulse control, depression, anxiety, and antisocial behavior” ( Goldman, Salus, Wolcott and Kennedy 2003; 28).

In regards to psychological well being, mental disorders are most common among abusive parents. Caregivers with history of maltreatment are also more likely to abuse their children. Some reasons maybe due to the lack of a positive role model as well as their needs not being met that result in creating the same cycle for their children. About one third of individuals who were abused will also abuse their own children. There is a risk of child abuse, if the caregiver as a child experiences abused or witnesses abused.

The first domain also states that those who are substance abusers and those with lack of knowledge of child development are more likely to abuse. According to The Child Abuse and Neglect User Manual Series, “Parental substance abuse is reported to be a contributing factor for between one- and two-thirds of maltreated children in the child welfare system” (Goldman, Salus, Wolcott and Kennedy 2003; 8). Unfortunately, there are many parents who don’t have the knowledge of child development. Parents’ expectations of child at a certain age may contribute to child maltreatment. Studies have found that mothers who are younger are more likely to physically abuse their children. This risk factor may be tied into caregivers’ lack of knowledge of child development. The first domain provides us with some risk factors in respect with the caregiver.

The second domain is family factors that consist of family structure, marital conflict and domestic violence, stress and parent child interaction. Neglect is often associated with poverty. McGuinness and Schneider, offer another explanation that is related to Socioeconomic Status. Families with low socioeconomic status may be unable to provide the basic necessities to their children. Another explanation is that low socio economic status is correlated to high levels of stress. Harsh parenting may be a result of high levels of stress. These are only some of the explanations under family risk factors.

The second domain also states that child maltreatment and the absence of a father figure may be correlated. According to The Child Abuse and Neglect User Manual “The rate of child abuse in single parent households is 27.3 children per 1,000, which is nearly twice the rate of child abuse in two parent households (15.5 children per 1,000)” (Goldman, Salus, Wolcott and Kennedy 2003, p.31). The following statistics shows the risk single parents home run:

77 percent greater risk of being physically abused 87 percent greater risk of being harmed by physical neglect, 16 percent greater risk of experiencing notable physical neglect, 74 percent greater risk of suffering from emotional neglect. (Goldman, Salus, Wolcott and Kennedy, 2003; 31).

This data demonstrated the high risk children run in single headed families. I also believe that children raised in single headed families run the risk of getting abused due to poverty which can create stress to the parent that can lead to neglecting the child. Often the parent may worry about basic necessities and neglect the child in other areas such as proper clothes, education, and so on.

The third domain gives several child risk factors that take into account age, disabilities and other child characteristics. Children with disabilities are at a higher risk to be maltreated. Infants are at higher risk due to the fact that they are more dependent on their caregivers. Caregiver’s who are inexperienced or lack knowledge of developmental years of infants is at a greater risk. According to Lighfoot, Hill and LaLiberte, children with disabilities are 3.4 times more likely to be abused than children without disabilities (Lighfoot, Hill, and LaLiberte, 2011; 2069). It is important to mention that children do not invite abuse but because some of the reasons that were given they are at greater risk.

The fourth domain is referred as environmental factors that included poverty and unemployment, social isolation and social support and violent communities. People, who are unemployed can’t provide the basic necessities for their children. Therefore, they are neglecting their children. Studies have shown that families who are socially isolated are more likely to

abuse their children because they lack social support. The National Incidence Studies of Child Abuse and Neglect have found that child neglect is 22 times more likely if family income is less than \$15,000 as compared to in families with an income of more than \$30,000” (Goldman, Salus, Wolcott, and Kennedy, 2003; 29). I’m not saying that poor people abuse their children but a combination of other risk factors such as depression, substance abuse, and social isolation can increase the likelihood of maltreatment (Goldman, Salus, Wolcott, and Kennedy, 2003; 33). These four domains offer some possible explanations for child maltreatment.

Although Goldman, Salus, Wolcott and Kennedy offered some possible risk factors for child maltreatment, one must also look into who are more likely to abuse. Certain studies have shown that parents who suffer from depression and personality disorders are more likely to abuse their children. According to a study done by Polansky, DeSaix, and Sherlin there are 5 types of neglectful mother, apathetic-futile, impulse ridden, mentally retarded, women in reactive depression, and women who are borderline psychotic (Crosson-Tower, 2008; 82). Women who are described as apathetic have flat affect, withdrawn, and emotionally numb. Women who are impulse ridden have low frustration tolerance, unable to wait for things, and poor judgment. The Mentally Retarded women, "without proper supervision and education, it is possible for neglect to become an issue" (Crosson-Tower, 2008; 85). The reactive depressive women had difficulty adjusting to life which can result in mother going through depression. Lastly a small percentage of women, who are psychotic, are at risk of abusing their children. According to Crosson-Tower, “Frequently the neglect stems from the parents' inability to see beyond their delusional world” (Crosson-Tower, 2008; 87). This risk factor may be explained because caregiver hasn’t reached a certain degree of social competence. Individuals who abused children are more likely to have low self-esteem.

After going over some of the possible risk factors for child maltreatment, let's now look at child maltreatment in foster care. Currently the foster care system is impacted by the thousands of cases of child maltreatment. The National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning, states that there were 542,000 children in substitute care in 2001 with 48% living in non-relative family foster homes and 24% in relative foster homes. Unfortunately, some data indicates that child abuse is occurring in out-of-home placement. Susan Dougherty, states that .5% of abuse cases, the perpetrator is a foster parent while only .2% of abuse cases occur in residential care. Children living in out-of-home placement are abused by birth parents, other birth relatives, and by other children in the home (Dougherty, 2004)

A study done by Georgina F. Hobbs, Christopher J. Hobbs, and Jane M. Wynne provides some risk factors for child abuse in the foster care system as well in the residential care. This study was done over a 6 year period involving 158 children who were assessed by a pediatrician either sexually and/or physically abused. This study took place in Leeds, England from 1990 to 1995. The results demonstrated that 42 children were physically abused, 76 sexually abused and 15 experienced both forms of abuse in foster care settings. The study also showed that 60% were sexually abused girls, and 60% were sexually abused boys. Foster parents perpetrated the abuse for 41%, natural parents on contact for 23% and other children 20% incidents (F. Hobbs, J. Hobbs, and Wynne, 1999; 1239).

F. Hobbs, J. Hobbs, and Wynne found that certain children are more vulnerable to maltreatment. They found that younger children, children with disabilities, and children with behavioral and emotional difficulties present "at risk" children for abuse. One of the problems facing foster parents is that some children "have already been harmed psychologically and emotionally and have developed difficult behaviors experienced as dysfunctional to new carers"

((F. Hobbs, J. Hobbs, and Wynne, 1999; 1240). F. Hobbs, J. Hobbs, and Wynne also state that foster parents who are taking care of more than one child with such difficulties are more likely to abused children. F. Hobbs, J. Hobbs, and Wynne found that some people seek for voluntary or occupational work that involved children. These individuals seek to exploit children and working in settings such foster care gives them access to children.

The pediatric follow up was done in the six year period from 1990 to 1995. F. Hobbs, J. Hobbs, and Wynne also found context of abuse and likely abuser. They found that:

41% of incidents took place in the foster home and the child was abused by the foster parents, 23.8% of incidents took place during contact with the parents of family of origin, 6.3% of incidents took place in the home of relatives of the family of origin, usually involved in kinship fostering, 20% of incidents involved another child as abuser. Of these: 53% of the abusers were other foster children, 31% of the abusers were siblings, 16% of the abusers were other foster children, and 7% of incidents were encountered where the identity of the perpetrator remained unknown.  
(F. Hobbs, J. Hobbs, and Wynne, 1999; 1243).

One interesting finding is that foster parents perpetrated the highest incident of child maltreatment. Another interesting result is foster parents child the perpetrators of abuse. These results produced by F. Hobbs, J. Hobbs, and Wynne support the likelihood of child maltreatment in foster care. Although research was done in Leeds, England such findings shed some light to possible solutions of child maltreatment in foster care.

These findings found by Hobbs and Hobbs shows that the four domains: parent or caregiver factors, family factors, child factors and environmental factors may be related to child maltreatment. Child risk factor states that because of certain characteristics, children are vulnerable to abuse. One risk factor under this domain is children with disabilities. Children with disabilities are the ones who require more care yet they are the most vulnerable to be abuse either by natural parents or foster parents. Another connection with the child risk factor domain is that

younger children are more likely to be abused. Infants are those who are more vulnerable to abuse because they require more care. Some families are more “at risk” to abuse their infants because they may not know child development.

## CONCLUSION

In my research paper I attempted to answer: what are the risk factors of child abuse in the foster care system. To answer this question I looked at the history of foster care, types of abuse, foster care process, problems with the foster and finally risk factors in the general population and foster care setting. The history of foster care can be said is a reflection of today's foster care system. Loring Brace send orphans to "Christians Home," yet there was a lack of supervision done by their part. This lack of supervision led to labor exploitation of children in the farms that can be compared to how the lack of supervision from welfare agencies can also lead to further abuse in foster care. These children are still enduring their traumatic experience from their homes, and may continue to face other challenges such separation from parents, educational problems and so on. The risk of child abuse in a foster care setting increase with the following risk factors: children with disabilities, other foster children, foster parents who are taking care of more than one child, and younger children. Unfortunately, abuse in foster care may not be the only challenge these children face but those who age out of the system also face other challenges such as likelihood of ending up homeless. Our foster care system needs a lot of repair in order to truly protect these children from further abuse. The challenges these children face while in foster care and exiting foster care are great.

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