



The California
Professional Society
on the Abuse of Children™
an independent affiliate of APSAC
Strengthening Practice Through Knowledge

THE CONSULTANT

FALL 2023



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CAPSAC CRISSEY AND SNYDER AWARD APPLICATIONS AND NOMINATIONS ARE OFFICIALLY OPEN FOR 2024!

Each year, CAPSAC gives two awards to recognize those in the field who are making a difference. **The Paul Crissey Graduate Student Research Award** is given to a graduate student or early-career professional for notable research on child maltreatment or related topics. **The Neal Snyder Outstanding Service Award** recognizes professionals in the field who demonstrate extraordinary dedication and efforts on behalf of children. Award details can be found on pages 7 & 8.

HONOR A HERO IN CHILD MALTREATMENT PREVENTION

As the season of gratitude and giving approaches, please consider acknowledging a colleague for the work they do on behalf of children and families with a personal Hero or Thank You card from APSAC. For your donation of \$5, APSAC will send your selected electronic card to your individual hero and notify them that a donation has been made in their honor. Click [HERE](#) to learn more or to order your cards.

Are you an ACEs Health Champion?

Do you work to prevent or address the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and toxic stress? If you answered yes, please consider attending the **free** virtual Gatherings of the ACEs Health Champions Network.

The ACEs Health Champions Network (AHCN) is built upon the overwhelming success of the yearlong (2020-2021) CALIFORNIA ACES ACADEMY Grant collaboration with the state of California. The Network is a system of interconnected non-profit organizations (of which CAPSAC is a founding member), and continues to grow! These organizations share the mission to address and prevent the health effects of violence and abuse throughout the life course.

All AHCN Gatherings are recorded and available with slides/handouts at capsac.org or avahealth.org. To learn more about the AHCN, visit capsac.org or avahealth.org.

Join us for the next virtual Gathering!

ESCARS: The Future of Child Abuse Reporting and Investigation?

Presented by Bradley L. McCartt, JD

Friday, November 3, 2023

12:00 PM - 1:00 PM (PT) via Zoom



See You in Sunny San Diego!

Enjoy a **50% registration discount** for CAPSAC members only (enter code CAPSAC50 when you register) to the APSAC and New York Foundling's pre-conference institute Translating Child Sexual Abuse Research to Practice: Everything You Need to Know on Sunday, January 21, 2024 at The 39th Annual San Diego International Conference on Child and Family Maltreatment.

Join us immediately afterwards for complimentary refreshments at the CAPSAC reception to relax and network with fellow CAPSAC members as we celebrate 36 years of CAPSAC!



CAPSAC proud to honor four professionals with the Neal Snyder Outstanding Service Award



Heather Kregoski was one of four recipients of the CAPSAC Neal Snyder Service Award presented on April 12, 2023. Here are excerpts from her nomination by Rhiannon Grotke, “Heather is a CPS social worker with El Dorado County Child Protective Services, and is currently assigned to emergency response, as well as the Child Advocacy Center (CAC) Liaison at the CAC in Placerville, California. Her assistance and incredible dedication

helped the CAC achieve NCA accreditation in November 2022. Her dedication to ensuring children are protected and families are nourished and provided with appropriate services for continued growth and healing is unmatched. Each law enforcement member of our team trusts Heather implicitly and she is a go-to for law enforcement and CAC staff. She is extremely committed to working as a team, ensuring protocols are followed, and ensuring the absolute best, most trauma-informed practices are implemented for children and their families. Heather also works extremely well with our therapy partners to ensure wrap around services can be provided and appropriate trauma-informed care is referred based on individual and family needs. Her work is of the highest quality, her communication is outstanding, and her commitment to the CAC program and child welfare is admirable.

Marlene Sturm, M.D. was also presented with the CAPSAC Neal Snyder Service Award. Here are excerpts from her nomination by Steve Baron, “Dr. Sturm is Medical Director, Medical Clinic at the Children's Advocacy Center of Santa Clara County, Interim Medical Director SPARK Clinic: Supporting Protecting and Respecting Kids, and Chair, Child Abuse Prevention Council of Santa Clara County. Dr. Sturm has been a pediatrician for more than 30 years and was the initiator of the mission to create Santa Clara County's Children's Advocacy Center. In late 2019, Dr. Sturm took the lead in gathering and promoting stakeholder support for the development of a long overdue CAC in Santa Clara County including direct appeals to the County Board of Supervisors. In July of 2020, the Board of Supervisors approved \$6 million to fund this capital project and the Children's Advocacy Center of Santa Clara County opened doors on April 19th, 2021. From groundbreaking to opening ceremony, the CAC was completed in less than 10 months, during a pandemic and under budget. Not only did Dr. Sturm's vision and optimism overcome the burden of previous failed attempts to create a CAC, and not only did her motivational and collaborative skills mobilize the assistance of the stakeholders to get it done, her vision for a state of the art CAC continues to unfold. Her leadership, dedication, skill set, and role modeling have resulted in the recruitment and engagement of the highest quality medical, managerial, and support service professionals helping children and families who come to the CAC.”



Paul Crissey Award for Outstanding Graduate Student Research

Interpersonal Familiarity and Memory

BY YUERUI (JULIA) WU, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA DAVIS

Child victimization, such as child maltreatment, takes a heavy toll on children, as well as on society as a whole. In many cases, child victimization is perpetrated by adults with whom children have a relationship. For example, over 90% of child sexual abuse (CSA) is committed by relatives, neighbors, or authority figures—individuals who are well known to the children (DHHS, 2021). However, most memory studies test children’s memory for briefly seen strangers, with whom there is no prior relationship or knowledge base. Expert witnesses for the defense or prosecution testify on such laboratory findings in CSA trials, without considering that children typically have considerable familiarity with the perpetrators. Does such familiarity matter?



I examine how interpersonal familiarity relates to children’s and adults’ memory accuracy. Repeated exposure contributes to familiarity, which in turn is related to better memory for the to-be-remembered information (e.g., Woiwood et al., 2019). However, familiarity could create source-monitoring errors (e.g., recalling the wrong event due to shared event features; Roberts & Powell, 2006). Most prior studies on familiarity and memory concerned familiarity outside of the interpersonal domain (e.g., knowledge base about events rather than about people). The few extant studies on interpersonal familiarity and memory revealed that children who interacted with more familiar adults evinced more accurate event memories (e.g., Cordon et al., 2016). Important new theory is relevant to child abuse and memory. Adaptation-based theories suggest that children who grow up in threatening environments manifest specialized skills in survival-related domains (Ellis et al., 2020). For example, trauma symptoms are associated with less accurate memory for neutral content but more accurate memory for trauma-specific materials (Goodman et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2023). For individuals who experience harsh treatment or abuse, familiarity with sources of the hostile and/or punishing behaviors may lead to hypervigilance toward potential threats within social interactions, which in turn facilitates abuse related memory.

My dissertation project consists of two studies. In Study 1, I tested 5- to 9-year-old children’s memory for interactions with parents of varying familiarity. In Study 2, I replicated and extended Study 1 findings with an adult sample; these adults had been involved in child maltreatment investigations 20 years prior to the memory interviews. By focusing on a maltreatment sample, I offer additional insight into adults’ memory for trauma-related childhood events, including events that are relevant to actual legal cases involving child victimization (e.g., the Jerry Sandusky/Penn State prosecution, numerous priest legal cases).

Based on prior research (e.g., Bjorklund & Causey, 2017; Wu et al., 2023), I predicted that older age, more interpersonal familiarity, and increased exposure to threatening experiences (e.g., abuse) would be associated with better memory for events closely related to abuse. I briefly describe the studies next.

Study 1: Children's Eyewitness Memory

Fathers from diverse family backgrounds (e.g., divorced, single, or step-fathers) and their 5- to 9-year-old children (N = 97; M = 7.90 years; 50% female) participated in guided activities (e.g., Simon Says, Charades) via Zoom. Three weeks later, each of the children (individual testing, without parents present) was interviewed by a female researcher regarding the guided activities. Some interview questions were abuse-relevant (e.g., touching, hugging, picture taking). Demographic and individual difference data (e.g., parenting behaviors) were obtained from standardized, psychometrically sound questionnaires.

Results showed that familiarity was associated with enhanced memory in children who had experienced harsher treatment by their fathers (e.g., parenting behaviors that involved frequent verbal hostility and corporal punishment), but only for abuse-relevant information. The children's ages did not affect these findings. Familiarity with harsh parenting apparently made the children, regardless of age, hypervigilant about abuse-related actions. These results are consistent with the aforementioned ecological models that emphasize the role of adaptation in fostering specialized skills and knowledge bases for children growing up in threatening environments (Ellis et al., 2020). The findings also have important implications for child protection and child testimony.

Study 2: Adults' Long-Term Memory

Children (3- to 16-year-old; M = 8.04 years; 70% female; 64% African-American) were involved in a child maltreatment investigation and suspected of having experienced CSA (Time 1; 1995-97). Approximately 20 years later (Time 2; 2015-17), now as adults (N = 87), they were interviewed about the child maltreatment investigation, including (a) the target CSA (e.g., "What brought you to the forensic unit?"), (b) a medical examination that involved anogenital inspection (a standard part of the forensic unit's protocol, but similar to research by Saywitz et al., 1991), and (c) a neutral event (i.e., a game of tossing bean bags). Time 2 memories, coded against detailed Time 1 documentation, were examined in relation to Time 1 familiarity with the alleged CSA perpetrators (e.g., stranger, acquaintance/neighbor, immediate family members) and abuse severity.

Findings revealed that greater familiarity with the alleged CSA perpetrators and more severe abuse were associated with better memory for abuse-relevant content of the maltreatment investigation (e.g., what brought the children to the forensic unit and details of the anogenital inspection), but

not with memory for non-abuse content (e.g., the neutral event). These results emerged even with Time 1 age statistically controlled. Thus, adults with exposure to threatening childhood environments (e.g., maltreatment) developed long-term memory advantages regarding abuse-relevant information, and familiarity with the source of the threatening events (e.g., familiarity with the CSA perpetrator) also contributed to better abuse-relevant memory.

Conclusion

Debates about memory for childhood victimization continue to gain legal attention, with profound implications for psychological theory, law (including expert witness testimony), and public policy. My research offers scientific insight into children's and adults' abilities to provide accurate statements about abuse-related events with familiar people. Findings from the first study suggest that children who are treated more harshly by a familiar parent may be particularly accurate when answering abuse-relevant questions. The second study, with adults from documented maltreatment backgrounds, demonstrate that familiarity with the alleged CSA perpetrators and abuse severity both contribute to more accurate long-term memory for abuse related childhood events. Together, my findings highlight the importance of familiarity and abuse relevance when evaluating maltreatment-related information provided by children and adults about childhood experiences.



Crissey award recipient Katelyn Ray's research, "Examining the Relationship Between Maternal Childhood Maltreatment and Parenting Among First-Time Mothers" was featured in the Spring 2023 issue of *The Consultant*.



Call for Nominations: Neal Snyder Outstanding Service Award

CAPSAC established the Neal Snyder Outstanding Service Award in 2019 to recognize professionals who demonstrate extraordinary dedication and efforts on behalf of children.

Neal Snyder graduated Phi Beta Kappa from UC Berkeley with a BA and MA in sociology, and obtained his JD from Hastings College. As an attorney, he specialized in protecting children from abuse - an area he helped make a legal specialty - and became a role model for many others in the field. Neal worked for the CA Department of Social Services in day care licensing litigation. He was a co-founder of CAPSAC, drafted its initial bylaws and assisted with its incorporation. He continued to serve as a board member, supporter, and consultant to CAPSAC for the rest of his life. Neal was an intelligent, even-tempered, positive, athletic, and kind man who loved jazz, his wife, Yvonne Garcia, their annual visits to Thailand, his children and grandchildren.

Any professional in California may submit nominations. Nominees cannot be CAPSAC Board Directors or CAPSAC Executive Committee Members.



**SUBMIT NOMINATIONS @
CAPSAC.ORG/CAPSAC-AWARDS
BY MARCH 01, 2024**

Nominees should demonstrate the mission and goals of CAPSAC and exhibit outstanding service in the area of child maltreatment. They should also model outstanding professionalism and have made contributions in the area of child maltreatment.

- The mission of CAPSAC is to improve the effort and response of professionals working with children who have experienced abuse and neglect.
- The goals of CAPSAC are to promote collaboration among all disciplines working in the area of child protection, to promote education on child maltreatment of professionals and community members who work with children, to promote research on child abuse and neglect in the areas of prevention, identification, intervention, and treatment, and to promote appropriate and effective services to the children and families who have experienced child maltreatment.

The Neal Snyder Outstanding Service Award recipient will be selected from among the nominees by the CAPSAC Board of Directors and presented with the Neal Snyder Outstanding Service Award certificate as well as a one-year membership to APSAC/CAPSAC at a CAPSAC meeting or online training event in April 2024. Also, an article about the recipient will be published in the CAPSAC newsletter the Consultant and posted on the CAPSAC website capsac.org.

Call for Applicants: Paul Crissey Graduate Student Outstanding Research Award

The California Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (CAPSAC) annually awards a grant of \$750 for outstanding research by a graduate student (or early career professional up to one-year post MA/PhD) in the field of child maltreatment, child welfare, foster care, or a related topic. The recipient will also receive a one-year membership to APSAC (American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children) and CAPSAC.



The American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, founded in 1987, is a nonprofit membership society focused on meeting the needs of professionals engaged in all aspects of services for maltreated children and their families. Especially important to APSAC is the dissemination of state-of-the-art practice in all professional disciplines related to child abuse and neglect. To learn more about APSAC's publications, see www.apsac.org/apsacpublications

CAPSAC aims to provide additional support to California professionals working in the field of child abuse through training, consultation, advocacy, and networking. We also publish The Consultant, a professional newsletter highlighting relevant issues for our members.

Applicants Must:

- Be a graduate student within one year of completion (before or after) of a Master's or Doctoral degree from an accredited California educational program.
- Submit a one thousand-word summary of the research in progress or completed study in the field of child maltreatment.
- Submit one or two letters of recommendation from faculty members or academic readers who are familiar with your research.
- Be available to receive the award and present an overview of the study at a CAPSAC meeting or CAPSAC online event in April, 2024.
- Agree to the publication of the submitted summary in the CAPSAC newsletter, The Consultant, and/or posting on the CAPSAC website, capsac.org.



For consideration for the 2024 award, all materials must be received by March 1, 2024. For more information and to submit your application and letter(s) of recommendation, please visit:

capsac.org/capsac-awards

CAPSAC Welcomes Laurie Fortin, LCSW to the Board of Directors

CAPSAC is pleased to welcome Laurie Fortin, LCSW to the CAPSAC board of directors. Laurie brings rich experience from a career spanning over 30 years as an expert in child sexual abuse, working with victims, offenders, and families impacted by sexual abuse and the associated trauma.



Laurie began her social work career with CPS before transitioning to more clinical work with juvenile & adult sexual offenders in various settings, including private practice, residential treatment, and the military. In 2000, she switched her clinical focus to victims and began her work as a forensic interviewer at both of San Diego's Child Advocacy Centers, Chadwick Center and Palomar Health, as well as supervised the interviewing program and coordinated the county's Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT). She has conducted over 4,000 forensic interviews of children, adolescents, and adults with disabilities.

Laurie has been qualified as an expert witness in the area of child sexual abuse, testifying in over 100 court proceedings in military, juvenile, family, and criminal court settings, as well as for the Attorney General's Office and civil court proceedings.

Laurie has developed curriculum and delivered over 300 trainings in the area of child sexual abuse dynamics, child interviewing best practices, trauma-informed care, and secondary traumatic stress at local, state, and national levels for an array of multi-disciplinary professionals. She has also provided coaching/consultation services to San Diego Child Welfare services supporting best practice with children and families and remains a contract trainer for the child welfare workforce throughout California.

Laurie cherishes spending her free time with her husband and two sons, and enjoying the beach and all things outdoors – hiking, backpacking, camping, and riding motorcycles and dirt bikes. About serving on CAPSAC's board, Laurie says, "I remain as passionate and invested today as I did when I started this work 33 years ago!" and is excited to contribute her experience, insights, and skills to help further CAPSAC's mission.



CAPSAC Welcomes Dr. Jocelyn Wormley to the Board of Directors

CAPSAC is very pleased to welcome Dr. Joycelyn Wormley to its board of directors. Dr. Wormley is a distinguished social worker, educator, and advocate for social change who is passionate about social justice, equality, and healthy development of youth.



While working in an afterschool program, Dr. Wormley came to realize how much of a child's ability to learn was directly related to the child's home environment. With this new realization, she began work in residential treatment programs for emotionally disturbed youth. "Every child placed in a residential care setting had a disturbing story of child maltreatment," Dr. Wormley says, reflecting back on this time. After two years, she decided to work toward a Master's in Social Work (MSW) at California State University, Sacramento, and graduated in 2014. As part of her education, she developed a form to help mandated reporters include information about a family's strengths, and she'll be presenting a pre-conference session on this topic at the International Child Maltreatment Conference in San Diego in January.

Dr. Wormley has worked the entire span of the system, from the hotline to emergency response to adoptions, and she remembers one particular family especially well. "Two children were left without a caregiver due to parental substance abuse. This led to the decision to remove them from home." Knowing how traumatic removal can be, Dr. Wormley worked diligently to connect them with their adult sister. The case was transferred to another social worker and she lost contact with them. Years later, while working in the adoptions unit, she was assigned to complete the adoption for the adult sister and the two children she had removed years prior. "This was the only time I had ever seen the system work full circle," she says. "I remembered seeing the young children at the time of removal and how neglect caused several psychological and developmental challenges. By the time the adoption was completed, both children were happy, healthy and well adjusted. To top it off, the children did not experience the trauma of multiple caregivers because they were able to stay with their adult sister." She says she will never forget that family.

Dr. Wormley hopes to help CAPSAC partner with more Title IV-E programs that are designed to prepare social work students for the child maltreatment specialization. The students can then join CAPSAC at the student rate and reap the benefits of membership as they develop and grow in the field. Dr. Wormley believes she is uniquely designed for child abuse work. "Yes, it's hard work and I have certainly battled burn out, compassion fatigue, and frustration like many others." But she feels so passionately about reducing child maltreatment that she continues to put herself on the front lines. "Child Protective Services merely manages the problem. But I want to take it a step further. I want to educate professionals and be a part of the solution," and to prevent child abuse entirely. CAPSAC is extremely lucky to be working alongside Dr. Wormley in her life's work.

CAPSAC Welcomes Bradley McCartt, as the New Incoming President!



Bradley McCartt, JD has served as a Board member for the past 6 years and was moved to assume the Presidency position after being witness to the incredible accomplishments that have been made under previous Presidents, as well as by his desire to continue to grow to meet the needs of CAPSAC members and victims of child abuse. For those who don't know Brad, he is a pretty amazing guy who has contributed greatly to the field both at the micro and macro level. After graduating from Pepperdine University School of Law, he joined the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office in 1995. He has specialized in the prosecution of sex crimes and child abuse as well as sex offender registration law and sex offender recidivism for almost 30 years. He is currently assigned as the Deputy-In-Charge of Stuart House Children's Advocacy Center.

Mr. McCartt serves as a legislative resource for both the California District Attorneys Association (CDAA) and the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office. In 2023, he was appointed to the California Sex Offender Management Board representing all prosecuting attorneys in the state of California. He has also been appointed to the Cal OES State Advisory Committee (SAC) on Sexual Assault Victim's Services. In addition, he serves as the co-chair of CDAA's Sexually Violent Predator and Sexual Assault Committees. His article "Improving Public Safety Through Sex Offender Registry Reform: A Guide to SB 384 and the New Tiered System" was published in the Prosecutor's Brief.

When asked what keeps his passion alive for the work after all these years, Brad stated, "Victims keep me passionate and keep me going even when I think I can't do this work anymore. When you know it is in your power to make a difference in a child's life, it is impossible to give up. My father grew up in an orphanage and an abusive foster home. His experiences are always in the back of my mind."

In regards to the single most important thing he has done in his career, Brad stated, "Making a permanent difference in the entire state of California through the writing and passing of six legislative bills that have become law!" They include rewriting California's Sex Offender Registration Act, improving California's Sexually Violent Predator Act, and protecting the privacy rights of children who have been victims of sexual and physical abuse by mandating that recordings of forensic interviews be released only pursuant to a court order and protective order (SB 603).

In all his free time, Brad enjoys traveling (he has been to 54 countries!) and exploring the world and other cultures.



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CME and CE credits.
capsac.org/



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