



The California  
Professional Society  
on the Abuse of Children  
*Strengthening Practice Through Knowledge*

# THE CONSULTANT

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## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS: CAPSAC MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS - *THE CONSULTANT*

Share your achievements with your fellow CAPSAC members! Did you win an award? Start a new project? Plan an exciting event? Want to recognize another colleague who is also a member of CAPSAC? We will feature some in upcoming issues of *The Consultant* to help share information on the exciting work being done across the state. **Please note:** Space is limited so we reserve the right to edit your submission, and cannot guarantee all submissions will make it in the issue. Visit (<https://cirinc.wufoo.com/forms/capsac-member-spotlight-call-for-submissions/>) to submit your ideas for CAPSAC Member spotlights.



## Dr. Tom Lyon Receives CAPSAC's Karen J. Saywitz Legacy Award



Thomas J. Lyon, J.D., Ph.D. was the 2022 recipient of the Karen J. Saywitz Legacy Award at the CAPSAC awards ceremony on April 20, 2022. Dr. Lyon is the Judge Edward J. and Ruey L. Guirado Chair in Law and Psychology at the University of Southern California Gould School of Law, and one of the preeminent researchers in the field of forensic interviewing. He directs the USC Child Interviewing Lab, which conducts research and forensic interviews with children who have been victims of maltreatment or who have witnessed violence. Dr. Lyon is past president of the American Psychological Association's Section on Child Maltreatment (Division 37) and a former member of the Board of Directors of the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children.

A magna cum laude graduate of Dartmouth College and Harvard Law School, Dr. Lyon received his Ph.D. in developmental psychology from Stanford University. He was an attorney for the Children's Services Division of the Los Angeles County Counsel and a research associate at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center prior to joining USC Law in 1995. Drs. Lyon and Saywitz were frequent research collaborators.

Among her many accomplishments and interests, Karen Saywitz, Ph.D. pioneered work that has guided forensic interviews for the past 30 years. Much of her work was designed to identify the most appropriate questions for eliciting essential information without increasing error. As a part of the Saywitz Legacy award, the award recipient provides a lecture. Dr. Lyon's lecture, "Happy Mediums in Child Interviewing" explored how the field has moved toward identifying the right balance between questions that are too specific and potentially leading, and questions that are too broad and potentially misleading.

This was the second time the Karen J. Saywitz Legacy Award was given by CAPSAC. In 2021, it was given to one of Dr. Saywitz's earliest and longest collaborators, Gail Goodman, Ph.D. of UC Davis. Dr. Goodman's lecture was titled, "Interviewing Children and Adults about Childhood Traumatic Touch: A Tribute to Dr. Karen J. Saywitz".



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# Paul Crissey Award for Outstanding Graduate Student Research

## Socioeconomic Correlates of Childhood Neglect

BY MAHA AL-SUWAIDI, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LOS ANGELES

Adverse childhood experiences are associated with a widely dispersed pattern of negative health outcomes across the lifespan. In particular, maltreatment, which consists separately of physical and emotional abuse as well as neglect, reliably predicts negative academic, social, occupational, and health outcomes. Despite their separability, far less research has differentially considered hypothesized sequelae from abuse vs. deprivation-related experiences such as neglect.<sup>1</sup>



Importantly, neglect is the most common concern among Child Protective Services (CPS) investigations, constituting over 75% of reported cases in 2020.<sup>2</sup> **Despite neglect being the most ubiquitous concern reported, the association of childhood neglect with psychopathology lacks rigorous characterization.** This partly reflects the variability in its operationalization as well as the heterogeneity of the experiences of neglect by different groups of people. Neglect broadly refers to a lack of adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, caregiver supervision, emotional nurturance, or not meeting educational needs.<sup>3</sup> It is associated with an increased risk of internalizing and externalizing problems, socio-emotional deficits, substance abuse, and sexual risk-taking.<sup>4</sup>

Given that neglect is partially defined by deprivation of material needs, it is unclear the extent to which neglect *uniquely* predicts mental health outcomes beyond important socioeconomic correlates, including poverty.<sup>5</sup> More broadly, vulnerability to and the experience of neglect is correlated with other familial and demographic factors. Notably, Black children are overrepresented among investigations of child neglect.<sup>6</sup> These patterns likely reflect racial bias and concentrated risk factors that result from systemic racism and poverty. Systemic racism has created inequities in access to fundamental resources essential to one's well-being, such as housing, neighborhood and educational quality, and employment.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> McLaughlin, K. A., Sheridan, M. A., & Lambert, H. K. (2014). Childhood adversity and neural development: deprivation and threat as distinct dimensions of early experience. *Neurosci Biobehav Rev*, 47, 578-591.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Child Maltreatment. (2020). Retrieved from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/cm2020.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Logan-Greene, P., & Semanchin Jones, A. (2018). Predicting chronic neglect: Understanding risk and protective factors for CPS- involved families. *Child & Family Social Work*, 23(2), 264-272.

<sup>4</sup> Gilbert et al., 2009; Stoltenborgh et al., 2013, as cited in Bland, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Font, S. A., & Maguire-Jack, K. (2020). It's not "Just poverty": Educational, social, and economic functioning among young adults exposed to childhood neglect, abuse, and poverty. *Child Abuse Negl*, 101, 104356.

<sup>6</sup> Lanier, P., Maguire-Jack, K., Walsh, T., Drake, B., & Hubel, G. (2014). Race and ethnic differences in early childhood maltreatment in the United States. *J Dev Behav Pediatr*, 35(7), 419-426.

<sup>7</sup> Williams, D. R., & Mohammed, S. A. (2013). Racism and Health I: Pathways and Scientific Evidence. *The American Behavioral Scientist*, 57(8). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764213487340>

Childhood neglect is associated with increased risk for housing and financial insecurity in adulthood,<sup>8</sup> thus entrenching cycles of poverty and concentrated disadvantage. Furthermore, Black children are 45 percent more likely than white children to be exposed to major traumatic events and are at heightened risk for negative health outcomes; exposure to such events are also strongly associated with lower socioeconomic status.<sup>9</sup>

Taken together, the lifelong and persistent effects of systemic inequality, such as poverty, and child neglect—as well as their disproportionate impact on racial and ethnic minorities—require further interrogation. This study examines the relative associations of socioeconomic disadvantage to risk for children experiencing neglect, including potential moderation by race/ethnicity.

**Proposed study:** This study will use data from the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) study, an ongoing nationally representative cohort of American youth ( $N = 11,877$ ), allowing for well-powered subgroup tests of demographic variables such as race. Given scarcity of research on the economic impact of structural racism on racial/ethnic minorities within clinical psychological research, using a nationally representative sample is critical to examining the degree to which race may account for the relationship between socioeconomic factors that correlate with child neglect. This work will deepen understanding of racial disparities by describing how systemic issues impact child wellbeing and significantly inform future research and intervention strategies.

**Aim 1.** We examine socioeconomic factors (i.e., parental employment and income) correlates of childhood neglect and their potential moderation by race/ethnicity.

**Aim 2.** Second, we will examine socioeconomic factors (i.e., parental education and income) as moderators of the association between childhood neglect with youth internalizing problems (e.g., depression, anxiety).

**Method:** Both aims 1 and 2 will use ABCD data collected concurrently when youth were 9–10 years old. Socioeconomic factors will be tested both simultaneously using multiple regression and stepwise regression to discern their collective and independent association with neglect.

**Aim 1. *Demographic predictor variables.*** Measures of socioeconomic factors are household income, parental employment and educational attainment, available in the ABCD Parent Demographic Survey. Moderators of race/ethnicity were reported as categorical. We are particularly interested in how identification as Black/African American and mixed-race with Black moderates the relationship between socioeconomic correlates and neglect.

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<sup>8</sup> Schuck, A. M., & Widom, C. S. (2021). The roles of housing, financial, and food insecurities in understanding the relationship between childhood neglect and violence in adulthood. *PLoS One*, 16(3), e0246682.

<sup>9</sup> Morsy, L., & Rothstein, R. (2019). Toxic stress and children's outcomes. 33.



In supplementary analyses, we will also consider other systemically disadvantaged racial/ethnic groups that align with the National Institute of Health's designated health disparity populations, including American Indians/Alaska Natives, Hispanic/Latinx, Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders. Outcome. Neglect will be measured using total score on the Multidimensional Neglectful Behavior Scale, which is an 8-item youth report on parent neglectful behaviors. Analytic strategy. Multiple regression and stepwise regression analyses will be conducted to assess the independent and collective association of household income, parental employment and education with neglect. Moderation analyses will be conducted to assess whether race and ethnicity moderate this effect, particularly focused on identification as Black/African American while also exploring if this holds for other systemically disadvantaged racial/ethnic groups.

**Aim 2. Child outcomes.** Diagnoses of depression and anxiety will be captured by the ABCD Youth Diagnostic Interview for DSM-5. Symptoms of depression and anxiety will be assessed by the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale. Analytic strategy. Moderation analyses will be conducted to assess whether socioeconomic correlates moderate the relationship between neglect and depression and anxiety (diagnoses and symptom severity). Logistic regression will be used for the outcomes of diagnoses of depression and anxiety. Multiple regression analyses will be used to assess the association between neglect and outcomes of symptoms of depression and anxiety.

**Innovations and Implications:** This study importantly contributes to a gap in the literature on the differential impact of child neglect on outcomes for minoritized youth. It also serves to highlight how socioeconomic factors may have downstream effects that contribute to a form of child maltreatment and residual lifespan negative outcomes for the youth impacted. Given racial differences in the youth assessed for and found to experience neglect by CPS, this work also contributes to increasing understanding of how systemic inequalities also differentially burden parents and youth of racial and ethnic minority groups.



## David Love Receives the Neal Snyder Outstanding Service Award



David Love was nominated by Sue Hardie and presented with the CAPSAC Neal Snyder Service Award at the CAPSAC awards ceremony on April 20, 2022. Mr. Love is the Executive Director and Founder of Valley Community Counseling Services, Inc. in Stockton, CA. He designed and directed the first Sexual Abuse and Sex Offender Treatment Programs in San Joaquin County. He developed a program that places therapists on 80 school campuses per week providing mental health and child abuse therapy reducing barriers to treatment.

As a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Mr. Love has provided treatment of sexual assault victims and offenders since 1979. He has over forty years of experience screening and treating both youthful and adult sex offenders. He has also been an educator at the University of San Francisco, California State University Sacramento, University of the Pacific, and California State University Sonoma where he taught graduate and undergraduate courses on dynamics and treatment of sexual assault.

Many know him through his numerous outstanding CATTA trainings and presentations at APSAC conferences. He has been providing expert witness testimony to the courts for 30+ years in the areas of child sexual abuse, rape and domestic violence. Mr. Love excels as a leader, clinician, educator and mentor. Despite his achievements, he is humble and approachable, and always willing to share information and help.

Mr. Love has successfully reduced barriers to care for children and families; making a significant difference in his community. He started one of the first child sexual abuse treatment programs in California that treats an average of 500-800 abused children per year. Under Mr. Love's leadership, Valley Community Counseling Services provides a suicide intervention team to nine school districts.

In addition to the hundreds of professionals and students he has trained and mentored, Mr. Love is a role model for high risk youth in a program by the Experimental Aircraft Association, called Young Eagles, where young people are exposed to careers in aviation and provided their first flight in an aircraft. He has provided over 300 flights in his Glasair II airplane and was awarded the Horizon Award by EAA for his contribution and mentorship.

There is no one specific event that prompted this nomination of Mr. Love. Rather it is the recognition of his longtime, undaunted dedication to the well being of children, the expert care of abused children and their families, and the prevention of child abuse.





# Paul Crissey Award for Outstanding Graduate Student Research

## Foster Children's Placement Preferences: The Roles of Kin, Siblings, and Age

BY SHREYA MUKHOPADHYAY, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA IRVINE

Child abuse and neglect is one of the nation's most serious concerns with close to 3.5 million children being referred to Child Protective Services and more than 140,000 of these children being placed in out-of-home care due to severe maltreatment, each year<sup>1</sup>. Placement decisions are complicated. A myriad of factors including caregiver availability, needs, potential stability, and so on guide these decisions. In few states, children's own desires are also considered, although this is primarily when they are 12 years or older and presumed capable of expressing a reasonable preference<sup>2</sup>. Yet, involving foster children in placement decisions, even at least those 12 years and older, is heavily debated<sup>3</sup>. Some scholars argue that knowledge regarding children's preferences may help guide services in ways that facilitate adjustment and enhance their feelings of control or empowerment<sup>4</sup>; yet others contend that children's preferences are not equivalent to their best interests, and children may not be sufficiently capable of evaluating what is best for them<sup>3</sup>. One way of addressing these debates is by examining whether, across age, foster children's placement preferences map onto evidence-based legal recommendations that prioritize placements with kin and siblings<sup>2</sup>.



<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2022). Child Maltreatment 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/data-research/child-maltreatment>.

<sup>2</sup> Child Welfare Information Gateway.(2020). Determining the best interests of the child. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. Retrieved from: [https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/best\\_interest.pdf](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/best_interest.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Warshak, R. A. (2003). Payoffs and pitfalls of listening to children. *Family Relations*, 52(4),373-384. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3729.2003.00373.x>

<sup>4</sup> Merritt, D. H. (2008).Placement preferences among children living in foster or kinship care: A cluster analysis. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 30(11), 1336-1344. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2008.04.002>

Consistent evidence indicates links of placement with kin and siblings with positive placement perceptions and preferences<sup>5-9</sup>. Yet, whether all children uniformly prefer placements with kin and siblings is not entirely clear. First, it is important to evaluate whether there are any age differences in children's preferences reflecting that only older children's expressed preferences map onto evidence-based trends, but not those of younger children. This would shed light on whether the 12-year age cut off for legal competency to consider children's preferences indeed serves the purpose it is intended to. Second, considering possible concerns about race and ethnicity in children's out-of-home placement experiences<sup>10,11</sup>, it would be valuable to ascertain whether racial match between children and their unrelated caregivers influence children's preferences. In addition to these, past studies have mostly asked yes/no questions (E.g., "Do you like your current placement?", "Do you want your current placement to be permanent?") to examine placement perceptions and preferences. Potential response biases (e.g., yeah saying) and restricted response options limit children's ability to freely express their preferences in response to closed-ended yes/no questions<sup>12</sup>. In fact, using open-ended questions to solicit reliable information has been long emphasized in forensic interviews with minor abuse victims<sup>12</sup>. Hence, it is important to use such effective questioning strategies to solicit vulnerable children's placement preferences and desires as well.

In this study, I addressed these gaps by assessing children's placement preferences across age via both open- and closed-ended questions. I specifically studied whether children's placement preferences are shaped by (a) their out-of-home placement type (kin versus non-kin) and sibling presence, (b) whether or not their race matches their non-kin caregivers' race, and (c) children's age. I relied on a nationally representative longitudinal dataset of foster children and their families, National Survey for Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW)<sup>13</sup>. NSCAW includes a Child Protective Services (CPS) sample, comprised of children living in out-of-home care for only a short length of time and a Long-Term Foster Care (LTFC) sample, comprised of children removed from home for longer periods of time (12 months, on average).

<sup>5</sup> Chapman, M. V., Wall, A., Barth, R. P., & National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being Research Group. (2004). Children's voices: The perceptions of children in foster care. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 74(3), 293-304. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0002-9432.74.3.293>

<sup>6</sup> Dickerson, K. L., Lyon, T. D., & Quas, J. A. (2021). The role of kinship and siblings in youngchildren's placement preferences. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(17-18), NP9299-NP9316. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260519854560>

<sup>7</sup> Dunn, D. M., Culhane, S. E., & Taussig, H. N. (2010). Children's appraisals of their experiences in out-of-home care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 32(10), 1324-1330. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2010.05.001>

<sup>8</sup> Hegar, R. L., & Rosenthal, J. A. (2009). Kinshipcare and siblingplacement: Child behavior, family relationships, and school outcomes. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 31(6), 670-679. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2009.01.002>

<sup>9</sup> Hegar, R. L., & Rosenthal, J. A. (2011). Foster children placed with or separated from siblings: Outcomes based on a national sample. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33(7), 1245-1253. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2011.02.020>

<sup>10</sup> Barn, R., & Kirton, D. (2012). Transracial adoption in Britain: politics, ideology, and reality. *Adoption & Fostering*, 36(3-4), 25-37. <https://doi.org/10.1177/030857591203600304>

<sup>11</sup> Johnson, F. L., Mickelson, S., & Davila, M. L. (2013). Transracial foster care and adoption: Issues and realities. *New England Journal of Public Policy*, 25(1), 5. <https://scholarworks.umb.edu/nejpp/vol25/iss1/5>

<sup>12</sup> Lyon, T. D. (2014). Interviewing children. *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, 10, 73-89. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-lawsocsci-110413-030913>

<sup>13</sup> Dowd, K., Kinsey, S., Wheelless, S., Thissen, R., Richardson, J., Suresh, R., ... & Smith, K. (2004). National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW)-Combined waves 1-4 data file user's manual restricted release version. University of California at Berkeley.



All children were asked an open-ended question (“If you could live with anyone, who would it be?”); responses were coded as desire to live with biological parents, in their current placement, or with someone else; and a closed-ended question (“Do you want this [your current placement] to be your permanent home?”); responses were coded as no/yes. Information about demographics, placement type (kin vs non-kin), and sibling presence in the placement were also collected.

Across samples and waves of data collection, 1565 responses from 1033 children (6–14 years at Wave 1,  $M_{\text{age}}=10.26$  years,  $SD_{\text{age}}=3.07$  years; 54% female; 72% CPS sample) were analyzed. Statistical models (multinomial and binary logistic regressions) tested factors that predicted placement preferences. Factors of interest included placement type (kin vs. non-kin), sibling presence in the placement, and child age (below or above the age of 12) for all children, and whether the child’s and caregiver’s race matched or not only for preferences of children in non-kin care.

First, results revealed a strong preference for kin, but primarily among children removed for a shorter rather than longer period. The latter children were more likely to prefer their current placement, perhaps showing a desire for placement stability. Second, only younger children preferred placements with siblings over placements without sibling. This age difference suggests that perhaps younger children rely on sibling’s physical presence, but older children might rely more on psychological closeness or maybe strive for age normative independence and autonomy. Additional research to assess reasons why children prefer kin and siblings would be enormously valuable to understand children’s desires better.

Third, racial match with non-kin caregivers did not predict children’s placement preferences. Perhaps family networks (kin and siblings) override children’s need for cultural similarities and they are keener on maintaining family ties and maybe even stability instead.

Finally, age differences only emerged in children’s preferences for placement with siblings but in fact younger children’s preferences mapped onto evidence-based recommendations. Moreover, across age children preferred kin and perhaps also placement stability. Thus, we did not find evidence for the 12-year age cut-off for legal competency for when children’s preferences could be solicited. Instead, all children’s preferences provide valuable insight about their knowledge and desires, and potentially convey the message that their voice matters in decisions that profoundly affect their lives and futures.

In closing, the study offers clear recommendations for social service and legal professionals in dependency cases. Children can and should be asked about their placement preferences. Questions must be phrased in an open-ended manner, perhaps accompanied by clear explanations regarding the purpose of the questions<sup>12</sup>. Children should be explained that their preferences are not the only consideration but are still important and valuable. By involving children in the process, along with considering safety, resources, ability to meet the child’s needs, and so on, placement decisions and child outcomes can be significantly improved.

# Save the Date!

## Finding Common Ground on Child Psychological Maltreatment

Join CAPSAC, the Psychological Maltreatment Alliance (PMA), the New York Foundling, CATTA, and a panel of national experts to discuss the emerging consensus on child psychological maltreatment and its implications for Children's Advocacy Centers and multi-disciplinary teams. Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions and develop a plan to help them serve children experiencing psychological maltreatment.

**September 14, 2022 • 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM (PT) • Via Zoom**

**Presenters:** Marla Brassard (Columbia University), Stuart Hart (International Institute for Child Rights and Development), Helen Wyman (University of Southern California)

**Who should attend:** Members of multidisciplinary centers and teams who investigate cases of child maltreatment. **CEUs will be offered for MFTs and LCSWs.**

**Learning objectives:** By the end of this training, participants will be able to:

- Analyze and apply current definitions of child psychological maltreatment
- Practice discriminating between poor/inadequate parenting and CPM
- Apply “upstander” behavior to formulate “soft start-up” engagement
- Plan three action steps to improve their agency's response to child psychological maltreatment



**Register Here:**

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