



Religious Socialization of Maltreated Youth

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My Background

- Social Work
 - MSW Mental Health and Schools
- Former foster mother and adoptive mother of 3
- Graduate courses theology and religious studies
- Employed as a research specialist with the Children and Family Research Center



Presentation organization

- Adolescent religiosity
- Child Welfare
- Does maltreatment affect religious socialization
- Research questions
 - Does parental influence on religious socialization remain when the parents maltreat their children?
 - Do foster parents influence the religiosity of their foster children?
 - Is religious attendance affected by moves?
- Implications for research, policy, & practice



Increased adolescent religiosity improves a variety of outcomes

Meta analyses

- Decreased psychopathology Dew, et al., 2008
- Decreased behavioral problems Johnson et al., 2000
 - decreased delinquency
 - delayed sexual behavior
 - lessened substance use
- Decreased family conflict Mahoney, 2005
- Improved health Cotton, et al., 2006



Religion is especially important for disadvantaged youth

- The effects of religion are stronger for youth with low SES, bad neighborhoods and exposure to violence
 - Johnson et al, 2000
- Religiosity mitigates some of the negative effects faced by disadvantaged youth
 - Hill, et al., 2008
 - Office of Health Policy, 2009
 - Regenerus & Elder, 2003
 - Sullivan, 2008



Religious socialization

- In general population strong relationship between a parent's religion and child religion (Myers, 1996; Pearce & Thornton, 2007)
 - Poor quality parent family relationships and non-traditional families affect religious socialization
 - Disruptions (e.g. divorce) negatively affects religious socialization
- Two factors may affect religious socialization of maltreated youth
 - Experience of maltreatment
 - Displacement (or removal from family)



Few studies of religiosity of maltreated youth

- Two small regional studies found foster youth similar to youth in general population
 - Jackson et al. 2010
 - Scott et al. 2006
- 3 qualitative with foster parents
 - Buehler, Cox & Cuddeback, 2003
 - Coakley et.al. 2007
 - Lawrence-Webb & Okundaye 2007



Child Maltreatment

- History
 - In the early 20th Century: anti-cruelty agencies
 - “The Battered Child Syndrome” in 1962 (C. Henry Kempe)
 - Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act in 1974
- Definition
 - serious harm from physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect (both lack of supervision and lack of basic material needs) caused by parents or primary caregivers.



Government response: Child Welfare Agencies

- Receive and investigate reports of possible child maltreatment;
- Provide services to families who need assistance in the protection and care of their children;
- If children are not safe at home, arrange for children to live in substitute care (with kin or with foster families, group homes, or other residential facility)
- Arrange for reunification, adoption, or other permanent family connections for children leaving substitute care.



Child Welfare statistics in 2010

- 5.9 million children with reports
 - 60% investigated
- 695,000 cases were substantiated
- 216,000 children removed
 - 48% placed in traditional foster homes
 - 26% placed in kinship foster homes
 - 26% placed in institutions or group homes



National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-being (NSCAW II)

- Longitudinal, nationally representative sample
- Two stage sampling design
- 5,873 children with child welfare investigation
- First interviewed 4 months after investigation (2008/2009)
- Oversampled infants and sexual abuse cases
- Data sources: child, caregiver, teacher, caseworker and agency director
- 2 waves of data collection



Sample*

- 952 youth (63 missing data-less than 7%)
- Mean age 13.6 years old
- 61% female
- Race: 19% black, 44% white, 28% Hispanic, 9% other
- Abuse: 26% physical, 26% neglect, 10% sexual
- Caregivers mostly female over 50% less than federal poverty level

* All percentages are weighted and Ns are unweighted



	Wave 1 percent N=889		Wave 2 percent N=660	
		se		se
Youth religious attendance				
never	15%	2.3	17%	3.1
rarely	30%	3.4	32%	2.7
1 or 2/month	16%	2.0	17%	2.1
weekly	39%	3.2	34%	3.4
Youth religious importance				
not important at all	8%	1.3	10%	1.9
only a little important	9%	1.4	13%	2.6
somewhat important	36%	2.8	34%	3.0
very important	48%	3.3	44%	3.5
Caregiver religious attendance				
never				
rarely	26%	2.3		
1 or 2/month	24%	2.6		
weekly	25%	2.4		
	25%	2.3		
Attend religious service with caregivers				
no	60%	2.9		
yes	40%	2.9		

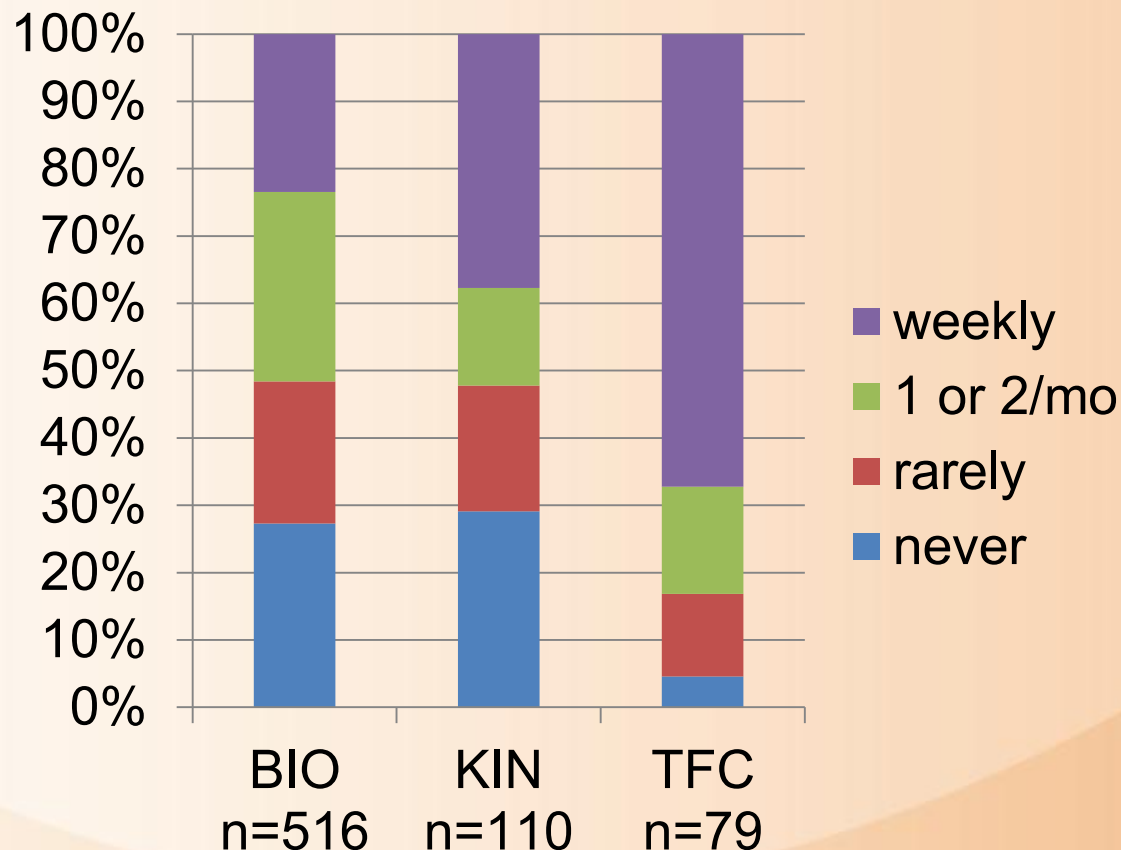


Percent of youth with weekly attendance by placement

- 36% of youth in biological placements
- 57% of youth in kinship foster placements
- 62% of youth in traditional foster placements
- *National Study of Youth and Religion, 41%*
 - Smith & Denton, 2005

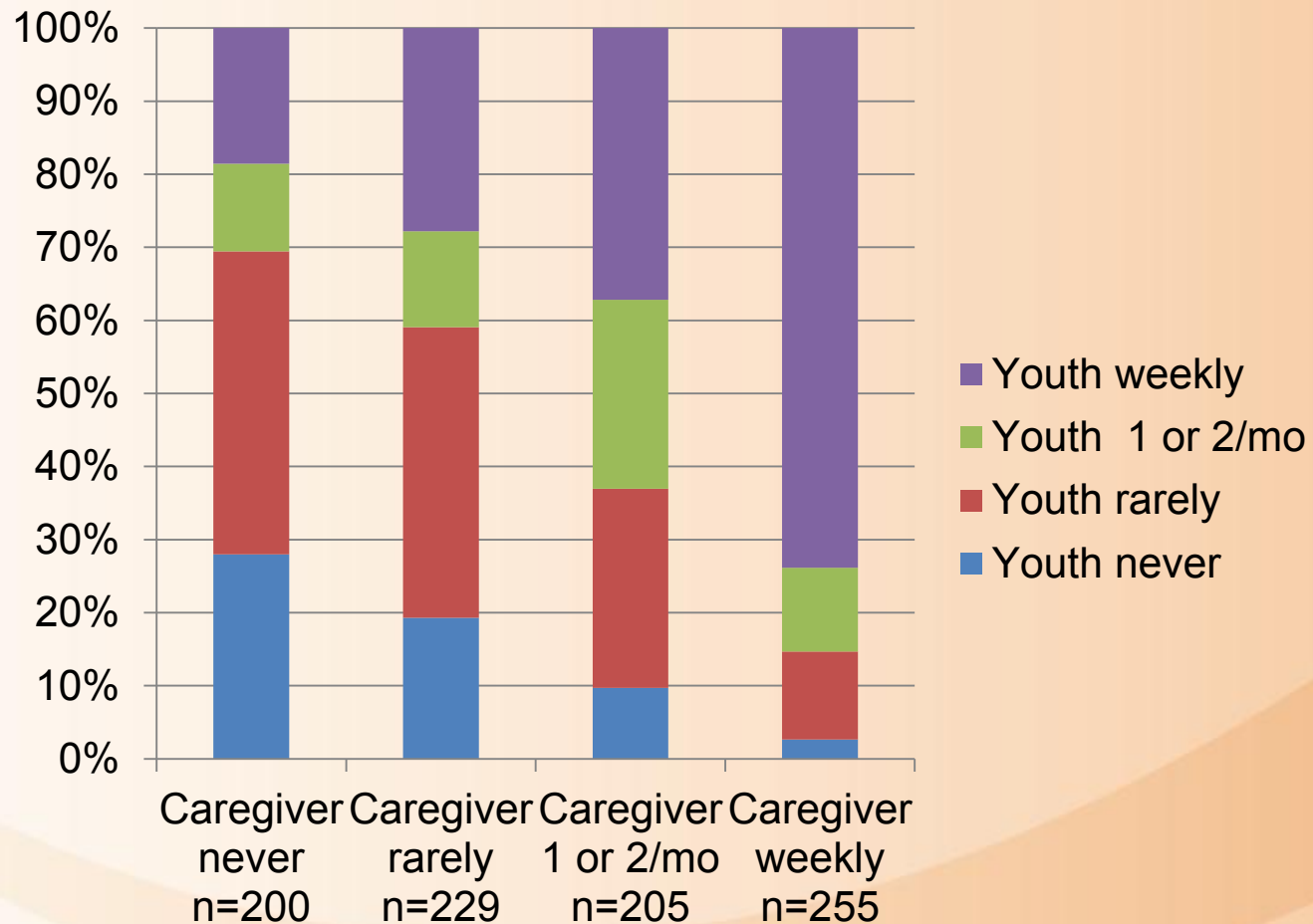


Caregiver religious attendance by placement type





Relationship between youth and caregiver attendance





Multivariate analysis: Predictors of Youth Weekly Attendance

Factors not correlated

- *Type of abuse*
- *Substantiation*
- *Youth age*
- *Youth race*
- *Caregiver poverty*
- *Caregiver education*
- *Caregiver age*

Predictors and odds ratios

- Parent attendance - 5 times
- Attend with parent-3 times
- Very important- 2-6 times



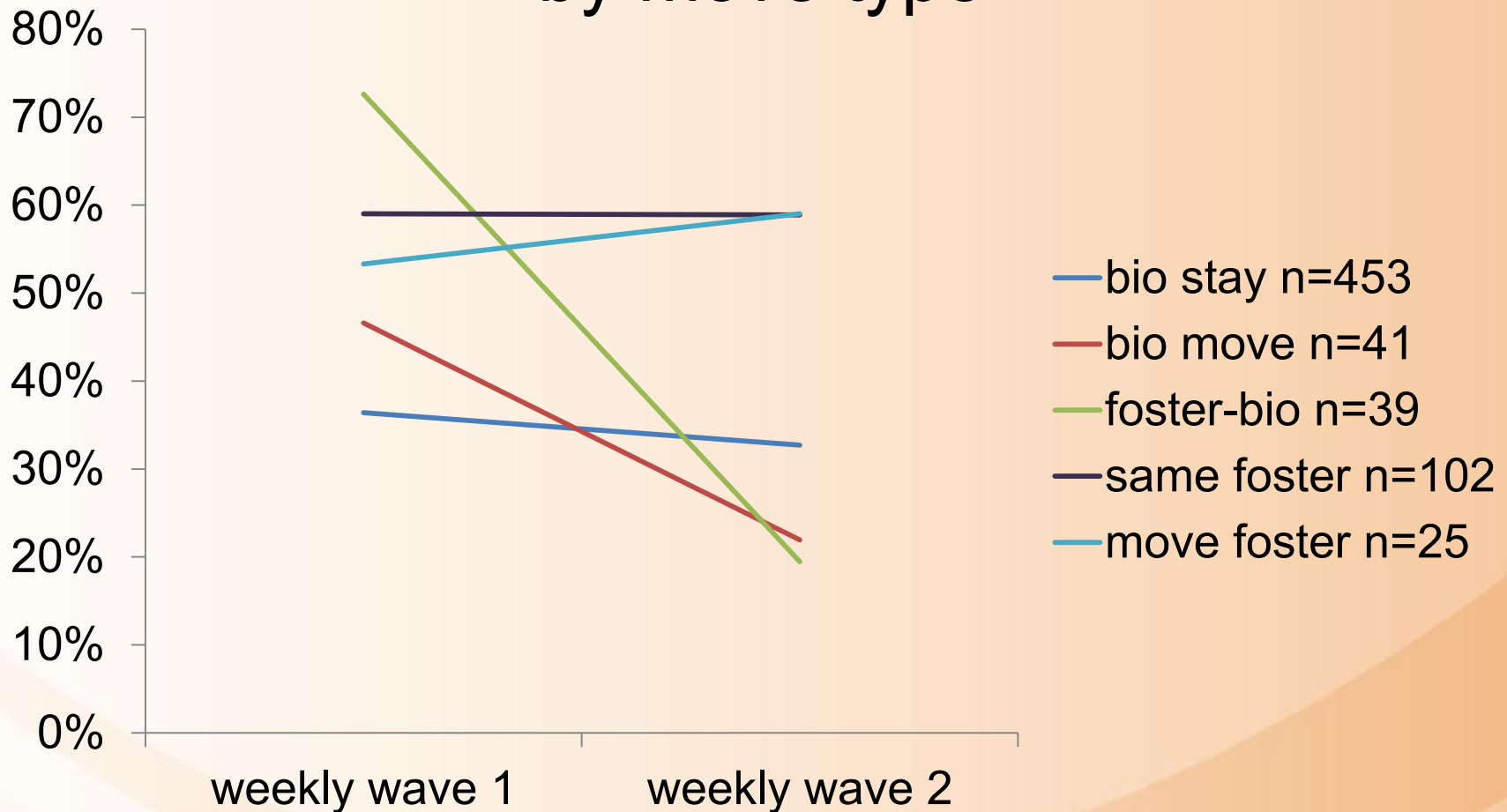
Change in weekly attendance from wave 1 to wave 2 (around 18 months)

- 75% did not change

	Wave 2		Total
	Weekly	Not Weekly	
<u>Wave 1</u>			
Weekly	24%	15%	39%
Not Weekly	10%	51%	61%
Total	34%	66%	



W2 and w2 youth weekly attendance by move type





Models for change in weekly attendance

- Decrease in religious attendance
 - predicted by move between biological parents and foster parents
 - no demographic factors
- Increase in religious attendance
 - No demographic factors
 - No move



Summary

- Foster parents have high attendance
- Maltreating parents have low attendance
- Maltreated youth attendance similar to national norms
- Odds of youth attendance increase with:
 - Parental attendance
 - Attending with parent
 - High youth religious importance
- Children who move between foster and biological homes decreased attendance



Limitations

- Only have global indices of religion in NSCAW-future research should include
 - Denominational affiliation
 - Religious beliefs
 - Religious behaviors



So what?

- Research next steps
 - Does youth religiosity affect outcomes?
 - Does caregiver religiosity affect outcomes?
 - Does religious homogeneity or heterogeneity affect outcomes?



Implications for Practice and Policy

- Religious matching would provide cultural continuity
- Better child welfare education on religion
 - Lack of religious training for workers means “...relevant day-to-day practice remains largely dependent on individual views and attitudes” Gilligan, 2009, p. 94.
- Christian dominance -Awareness of minority religions
- Area desperately in need of research



The End

Questions?



First Amendment :

“Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”

- Foster parents, foster children and biological parents all have religious freedom
- Foster parents are not agents of the state
- Child welfare agency workers are government employees.
 - However, the court has “recognized that it would be impossible for the state to be uninvolved in the religious upbringing of children in its custody” Corkran, 2005, p. 328.



Predictors of Youth Weekly Attendance

Odds Ratio Estimates		95% Wald	
Effect	Point Estimate	Confidence Limits	
BIO vs.TFC	0.72	0.39	1.35
BIO vs. KIN	4.32*	0.25	0.96
KIN vs. TFC	1.48	0.74	2.99
Caregiver weekly	4.86***	2.72	8.68
Y. attend with cg	2.68***	1.54	4.64
Cg. black vs. white	1.53	0.80	2.91
Cg. black vs. Hispanic	2.32	0.86	6.26
Cg. black vs. other	5.17**	1.64	16.29
Cg. white vs. Hispanic	1.52	0.57	4.03
Cg. white vs. other	3.38**	1.42	8.05
Cg. Hispanic vs. other	2.23	0.57	8.71
Y importance 4 vs 3	2.66**	1.43	4.94
Y importance 4 vs 2	2.80**	1.44	5.46
Y importance 4 vs 1	6.71***	2.419	18.61
Y importance 3 vs 2	1.05	0.43	2.58
Y importance 3 vs 1	2.52	0.86	7.44
Y importance 2 vs 1	2.40	0.73	7.85

*** p < .001, **p < .01, * p = .038



Theoretical Frameworks

- Religious Coping
 - beliefs (forgiveness)
 - practices (prayer, cleaning rituals, confessions, meditation)
- Attachment theory
 - Compensatory
 - Correspondence
- Social Learning Theory
 - Spiritual modeling
 - Spiritual Social Capital



Religion is important in child welfare

- Our understanding of family and parenting is shaped by our religion
- Historically child welfare began from religious impulses
- Foster parents and youth believe faith is important
- Many child welfare agencies are faith based
- Religiosity is associated with improved outcomes for adolescents in the general population