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 & Thorton, 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
  – 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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wave 1 percent</th>
<th>Wave 2 percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth religious attendance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rarely</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 or 2/month</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weekly</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth religious importance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not important at all</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>only a little important</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>somewhat important</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very important</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caregiver religious attendance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rarely</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 or 2/month</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weekly</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend religious service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with caregivers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Placement Type</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>1 or 2/mo</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BIO n=516</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIN n=110</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFC n=79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend:
- Purple: weekly
- Green: 1 or 2/mo
- Red: rarely
- Blue: never
Relationship between youth and caregiver attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caregiver Attendance</th>
<th>Youth attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>never n=200</td>
<td>Youth never n=92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rarely n=229</td>
<td>Youth rarely n=78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 or 2/mo n=205</td>
<td>Youth 1 or 2/mo n=117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weekly n=255</td>
<td>Youth weekly n=196</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wave 1</th>
<th>Wave 2</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>Not Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Weekly</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>34%</strong></td>
<td><strong>66%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
W2 and w2 youth weekly attendance by move type

- **bio stay n=453**
- **bio move n=41**
- **foster-bio n=39**
- **same foster n=102**
- **move foster n=25**
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

Regnerus and Uecker, 2006
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 homogeny or heteronomy 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

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

*** 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