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The Pattern of Chronic Maltreatment: A Latent Growth Curve Analysis Saijun Zhang Ph.D. Tamara Fuller Ph.D. The 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Society for Social Work Research, San Diego, January 16-20, 2013

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## **Chronic Maltreatment**

- The issue of child maltreatment recurrence
   A primary child safety indicator
- Definition of chronic maltreatment

   Three and more incidents in a row

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- Why chronic maltreatment a special concern?
  - Imposes persistent harm to children
  - consumes disproportional child welfare resources
  - challenges current intervention strategies

# Prevalence of Chronic Child Maltreatment

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- 11% of cases in 3 years follow-up using data from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (Fluke et al., 2005)
- 24% of studied families that involved in a statewide large family preservation and support program (Chaffin et al, 2011)
- 42% of studied families in a 4 years follow-up period in Missouri, and 19% studied families in a 27 months follow-up period in a county in Minnesota (Loman, 2006).

# Research Base for Chronic Maltreatment

Recurrence research

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- Majority research focuses on one single recurrence
  - Prevalence of recurrence
  - Pattern of recurrence (recurrence trend over time)
  - Factors predicting recurrence
- Some studies describe chronic maltreatment
- A few studies distinguish chronic maltreatment cases from one single recurrence cases (Bae, et. al; 2009)

# Research In Chronic Maltreatment (cont.)

- Increasing interest in the trajectory of chronic child maltreatment
  - Identify case trajectories based on maltreatment risk/protective scores over time (Chaffin, et. al, 2011)
  - Identify case trajectories based on recurrence pattern over time: no re-reports, continuous rereports, intermittent re-reports, and early rereports (Proctor, et. al, 2012)

## Limitation of Previous Research

- Most recurrence studies focus on one single recurrence
- A few studies concerning maltreatment trajectories emphasize on classifying cases
- No study examines the change of maltreatment intensity over time

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#### **Research Question**

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 What is the trajectory of maltreatment frequency among chronic maltreatment cases across multiple sessions?

### Methods

- Data
  - The Illinois Child Abuse and Neglect Tracing System (CANTS), the state administrative dataset that records all child maltreatment reports and subsequent investigation procedures and findings
- Sample (N=2,781)

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- Had at least one maltreatment report in the one year period before the 2 year studied period (July 1<sup>st</sup> 2009 to June 30<sup>th</sup> 2011)
- Had at least two re-reports
- Had no foster care experience



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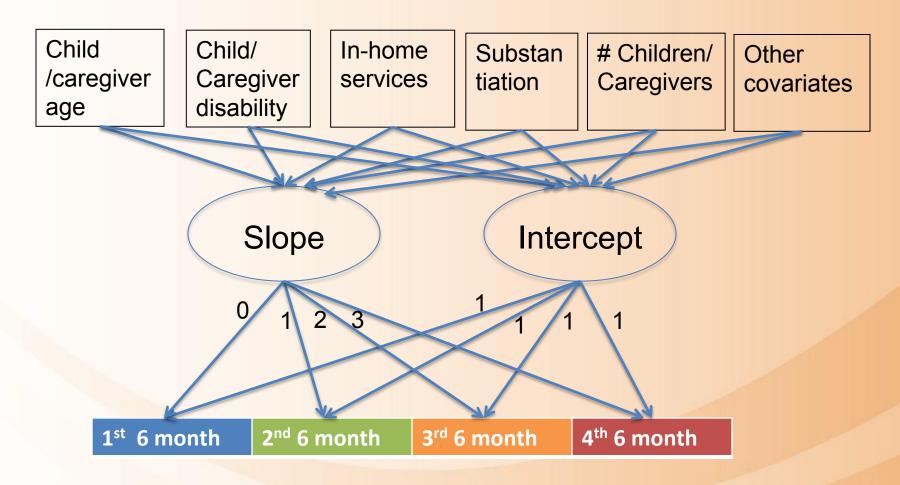
# Methods (cont.)

- Measures
  - Outcome variable: number of maltreatment
     reports in four 6-month consecutive sessions (0, 1,
     2 and more re-reports)





# **Model Illustration**



# Measures (cont.)

Covariates

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 Child/caregiver age, race, gender, child/caregiver disability, initial maltreatment types, substantiation status, number of children/caregivers at home, and caregivers' relationship with the children

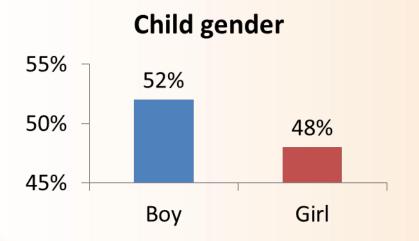
### **Model Fit**

Model has a good fit

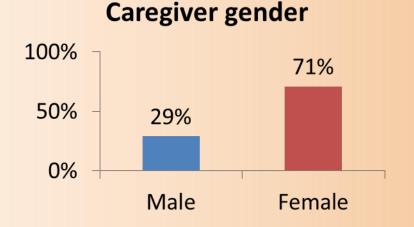
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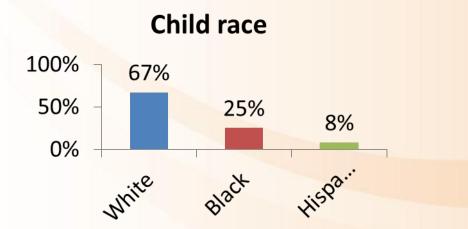
- Chi-square (df=35, n=2781) =62.48, p<.01</p>
- Comparative fit index=.97
- RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) = .02

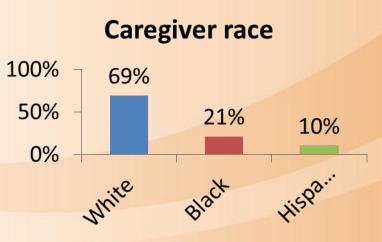
#### **Sample Characteristics**



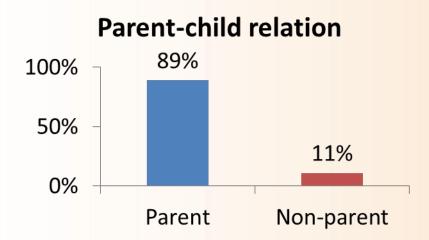
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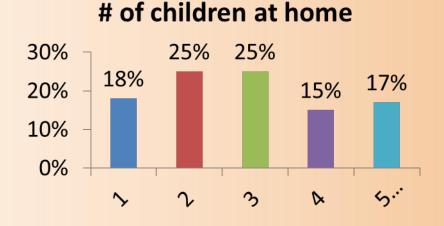


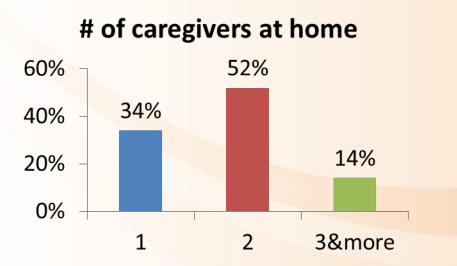


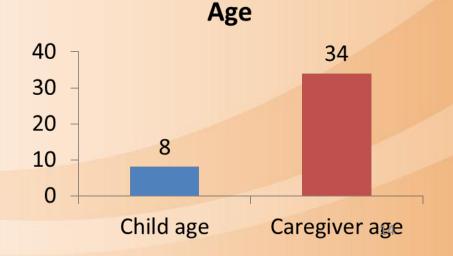
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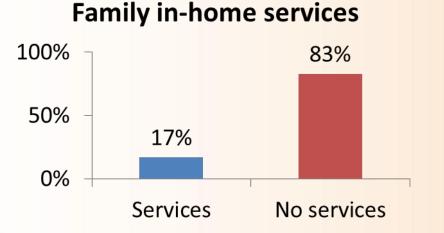
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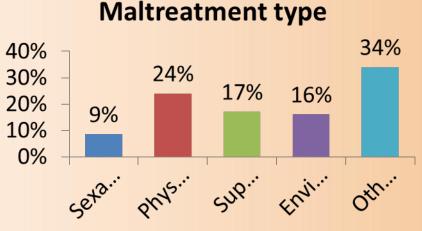


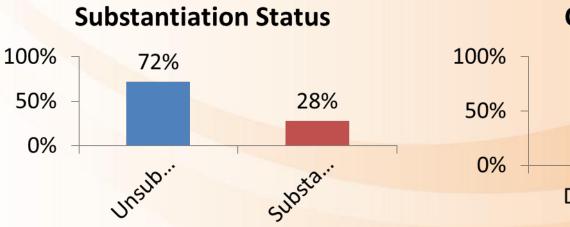


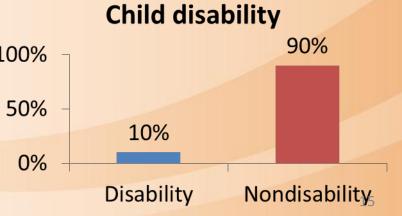


# Sample Characteristics (cont.)











# Sample Characteristics (cont.)

Frequency of re-reports over the four sessions

# of reports	1 <sup>st</sup> 6 months (%)	2 <sup>nd</sup> 6months (%)	3 <sup>rd</sup> 6 months (%)	4 <sup>th</sup> 6 months (%)
0	46	49	57	62
1	23	24	20	17
2 & more	31	27	23	21



#### Results

• Mean growth trajectory for maltreatment frequency is -.43, indicating decrease in intensity over the four observational sessions



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# Results (cont.)

Factors predicting the slope (change magnitude)

Covariates	Slope (b)	
Child age	.013**	
Caregiver age	.005*	
Child disability	16**	
In-home services	.28***	
substantiated	09**	
Environmental neglect (vs. Other)	017**	

#### Discussions

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- Advance knowledge of chronic maltreatment in terms of the change of maltreatment intensity over time
- Reveal factors predictive of such a trajectory
- Provide implications for service programs concerning chronic maltreatment

#### Limitations

- No specific maltreatment intensity measures, and a proxy (number of maltreatment reports in a observation session) has to be used
- Lack family social economic information

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#### Thank you!

### **Contact Information**

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