

# Section on Child Maltreatment Newsletter

## Division 37, American Psychological Association

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### President's Column

## News from the President

### “Happy Birthday to Us: Celebrating 15 Years of Advocacy”

Mary E. Haskett, PhD  
NC State University, Raleigh NC

It is an honor to begin my 2-year term as President of the Section on Child Maltreatment. I've been a member of the Section for many years and have been amazed at the incredible energy and productivity of the members. As we enter 2011, the Section will begin a celebration of 15 years of supporting research, practice, and advocacy in the field of child maltreatment. Our Section was established in 1995 under the extraordinary leadership of **Jeffrey Haugaard** and **Gail Goodman** as our first and second presidents, respectively. Jeff and Gail were recently interviewed by **Steven Behling** about the early years of the Section and current challenges in our field – you can read portions of the interviews in this issue of the newsletter. Throughout 2011 we will celebrate our past accomplishments, followed by a long-range planning process to insure our next 15 years are even more successful than our first. I welcome all members to join this celebration and participate in the strategic planning.

Although our Section is relatively small in number of members, we are national leaders in the field of child maltreatment and our combined expertise and leadership has contributed to significant advocacy efforts over the past 15 years. Some of our successes will be summarized in the second issue of the 2011 newsletter, so renew your membership now to insure that you receive the next issue! The Section has not rested on its past accomplishments, however. As you read this newsletter, the Section is shaping the 18<sup>th</sup> National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect that will be held in Washington, DC (April 16-10, 2012) by recommending speakers on a range of topics; a portion of your membership fees is being used to support dissertation research and to acknowledge the work of early career professionals; and training guidelines prepared by Section members (led by **Cindy Miller-Perrin**) and posted on our website are being used by universities to educate students

on child maltreatment issues. Additionally, a Section task force, led by **Lisa Jones**, is producing policy recommendations to improve epidemiological data on child abuse and neglect; and **Staci Perlman** and I recently initiated a task force to address the intersection of child maltreatment and family homelessness. This is just a sample of the Section's current activity.

Our outgoing Board members deserve thanks for their years of dedicated service to the Section, including **Tony Mannarino**, Past President; **Amy Shadoin**, Secretary; **Rochelle Hansen**, Member at Large; **David Kolko**, Membership Chair; and **Jenelle Shanley**, Program Chair. We are fortunate that **Cindy Miller-Perrin**, who spearheaded many accomplishments in her term as Section President, will continue to be involved in the Section as Past President; she also begins a term as Member at Large for the Society for Child and Family Policy and Practice (Division 37).

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I extend a warm welcome to our newly elected and appointed board members, including **Rex Culp**, President Elect; **Jenelle Shanley**, Secretary; **Sara Maltzman**, Member at Large; **Maggie Stevenson**, Membership Chair; **Lana Beasley**, Program Co-chair; and **Kate Cuno**, Student Representative-Elect. You can meet our new Board members in this issue of the newsletter. These are stellar researchers, trainers, practitioners, and policy makers and we are fortunate to have them as leaders in the Section. They look forward to working with you – their contact information is provided on the last page of the newsletter.

Finally, we hope everyone received this issue of the Section Newsletter electronically. The financial savings associated with electronic distribution will be significant. In addition, electronic distribution will free us from concerns about page limits, allow us to distribute the newsletter more quickly and efficiently, and will help us be more “green”. However, there will likely be some kinks to work out, so let us know how we can improve the newsletter in its electronic format. And please be patient with us in this transition!

All the best to you, and the children and families you touch, in 2011.

Mary Haskett

Mary E. Haskett, PhD, is a Professor of Psychology at North Carolina State University. She and her students explore characteristics of physically abusive parents and their children, mechanisms that link together the family and school contexts in which children develop, and factors that support positive adjustment of young abused children. Her research has been supported by NIMH and NICHD. As a school and clinical child psychologist, Mary teaches graduate courses in family interventions and supervises practicum students in delivery of home-based parenting support.

## EARLY CAREER AWARD COMPETITION!

### EARLY CAREER AWARD

The Section on Child Maltreatment (Section 1 of Division 37, APA) announces its 2010 Early Career Award for Outstanding Contributions to Practice in the field of child maltreatment. Nominees should be professionals within eight years of receiving their terminal degree. They need not be a member of the Section. Self-nominations are welcome. Nominations should include an electronic copy of the following:

- 1) A cover letter outlining the nominee’s accomplishments to date and anticipated future contributions. This letter should describe the nominee’s major accomplishments related to the field of child maltreatment and how the nominee’s work has had an impact on the field;
- 2) The nominee’s current curriculum vitae;
- 3) A letter of support; and
- 4) Other relevant supporting material, as appropriate.

Please submit applications by **April 1, 2011** to:

Cindy Miller-Perrin, Ph.D.

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## Best Practices

# SafeCare: Helping parents enhance their children's health, safety, and happiness

**Jenelle R. Shanley, Ph.D.**

*Director of Training, National SafeCare Training and  
Research Center  
Assistant Professor, Georgia State University*

Over 770,000 substantiated reports of child abuse and neglect were reported in 2008 (USDHHS, 2010). Neglect is the most common form of maltreatment, accounting for 71% of all maltreatment cases (USDHHS, 2010), but the co-occurrence of multiple types of maltreatment is common. The impact of maltreatment on children can range from benign to severe physical and mental health difficulties (Erickson & Egeland, 2002; Kolko, 2002). Thus, empirically supported treatment and prevention programs are needed to mitigate the impact of child maltreatment. Evidence-based programs (EBPs) are the best course of prevention and intervention for children and their families at-risk or exposed to maltreatment.

SafeCare is an evidence-based parent training program for families at-risk for or who have substantiated reports of child maltreatment (Lutzker & Bigelow, 2002; Whitaker et al., 2008). SafeCare is designed for parents of children ages birth to 5 to address three areas commonly associated with child abuse and neglect: health, home safety, and parent-child interactions. In the Health Module parents learn how to care for their children when sick or injured. The Safety Module trains parents to identify hazards in their homes and to effectively reduce

such hazards. Finally, the Parent-Child and Parent-Infant Interaction Modules focus on enhancing parents' abilities to affectionately and appropriately interact with their infants and children and to plan appropriate activities for their children.

The SafeCare program, usually completed in 18 to 20 weeks, is assessment-driven and skills-oriented. Each module is typically completed in 5 to 7 sessions, beginning with a baseline assessment, then several training sessions. Training involves a sequence of behaviorally-based teaching techniques, starting with an explanation of the skills to the parent, followed by the home visitor physically modeling the behaviors, the parent practicing the skills, and the home visitor providing positive and corrective feedback until a designated skill level is achieved.

There is a growing body of literature supporting the SafeCare program. SafeCare originated from Project 12 Ways, a program created by Lutzker (Edwards & Lutzker, 2008; Lutzker & Bigelow, 2002) to address 12 challenges associated with families' involvement in Child Protective Services. SafeCare is a more focused version of Project 12-Ways that addresses key behaviors associated with maltreatment. Both programs have been shown to be effective in clinical trials (Gershater-Molko et al., 2002; Lutzker & Rice, 1984). Research

has found that families who receive SafeCare are at a significantly lower risk of child maltreatment than families who receive typical family preservation services three years after services (15% versus 44%; Gershater-Molko et al., 2002). Furthermore, numerous single-subject design studies document the efficacy of SafeCare in changing targeted behaviors (see Hetch et al., 2008 for a review).

In 2007, the National SafeCare Training and Research Center (NSTRC; SafeCareCenter.org) was founded through the support of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. The primary objective of NSTRC is nationwide implementation of SafeCare, through various research and training efforts. The Center conducts several research programs designed to enhance the dissemination and implementation of the SafeCare program. Furthermore, NSTRC collaborates with local, state and national individuals and agencies to improve support and resources for promoting the accessibility and utility of EBPs to prevent child maltreatment.

Several SafeCare research projects are currently underway across the nation. A project in Oklahoma is assessing the impact of a modified version of SafeCare (SafeCare+) as a prevention program for high-risk families faced with caregiver depression, substance use or domestic violence (PI: Dr. Jane Silovsky, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center). SafeCare+ incorporates Motivational Interviewing (MI) techniques to engage caregivers in services to address depression, substance use, or domestic violence. MI techniques are also used to engage families in structured problem solving and safety planning. Another Oklahoma study in progress is evaluating a culturally adapted SafeCare with a Latino community (PI: Dr. Jane Silovsky, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center).

Several other projects in progress are examining factors related to effective dissemination of SafeCare. First, in California, two state-wide projects are underway regarding effective sustainability of SafeCare. One study is implementing a new approach

to SafeCare implementation by maximizing local SafeCare expertise through organizational structures, contracting, and policy (PIs: Gregory Aarons, University of California, San Diego; Mark Chaffin, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center; John Lutzker, NSTRC, Georgia State University). The other project is utilizing a “Dynamic Adaption Process” to facilitate providers, agencies, and systems in making effective adaption decisions for implementing SafeCare while maintaining fidelity to the model (PI: Gregory Aarons, University of California, San Diego). This study is also examining the use of computerized technology to evaluate parent-reported home visitor fidelity and parent satisfaction data.

Second, an on-going study in Georgia, in coordination with a statewide implementation of SafeCare, is comparing the impact of two approaches to training SafeCare trainers on provider fidelity and competency and the effect on family participation and attrition (PI: Daniel Whitaker, NSTRC, Georgia State University). This involves NSTRC training Georgia Department of Human Resource (DHR) staff as trainers and coaches, who in turn train providers to conduct SafeCare.

Finally, a cross-state study conducted through NSTRC is in progress to assess the most effective and efficient process of conducting SafeCare “coaching” and the impact on family engagement and acquisition of skills (PI: Daniel Whitaker, NSTRC, Georgia State University). The purpose of this project is to compare NSTRC purveyor coaching to local coaching.

In summary, SafeCare is currently being implemented state-wide in California, Georgia, Oklahoma and Washington, as well as at several individual agencies across numerous states. The NSTRC is committed to advancing the use and accessibility of EBPs to address child abuse and neglect, and continues to examine ways to more efficiently and effectively prevent child maltreatment to enhance the lives of children and families nationally and internationally.

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## Celebrating 15 years of Advocacy in Child Maltreatment

In the early to mid-1990's, amidst a climate of nationwide distress over escalating rates of child abuse, increasing levels of poverty, and declining federal support for social programs, Diane J. Willis directed the APA's Coordinating Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect to pioneer three working groups focused on child abuse issues: prevention and treatment, the legal system, and education and training. Their findings underscored the need to create an entity to champion child abuse issues in an exclusive and ongoing way. Willis approached a receptive Division 37 executive committee and President (Jan Culbertson) about this idea, and in 1994, the Section on Child Maltreatment was established with the mission to "advance scientific inquiry, training, and professional practice in child maltreatment, to provide up-to-date information about maltreatment, and to encourage networking and collaboration across Divisions/Sections in the area of child maltreatment." As Chair of the new Section, Willis wrote its original bylaws and led a Coordinating Committee of devoted child advocates with expertise in child maltreatment (including Barbara Boat, Barbara Bonner, Jan Culbertson, Dennis Drotar, Jeff Haugaard, Karen Saywitz, Cynthia Schellenbach) into its first official meeting at which the first Executive Committee was elected. Over the next three years, the first dedicated President, Jeffrey Haugaard, further developed the bylaws and appointed an Advisory Board of 20 widely known

researchers, clinicians, and advocates in child maltreatment. Subsequent Section Presidents were Gail S. Goodman, Bette L. Bottoms, Thomas Lyon, Sharon Portwood, Anthony Mannarino, and Cindy Miller-Perrin.

This brief description of the establishment of our Section is taken from:

Achilles, G. A., Barrueco, S., & Bottoms, B. L. (forthcoming). The evolving legacy of the American Psychological Association's Division 37: Bridging research, practice, and policy to benefit children and families. In A. Culp (Ed.), *Advocacy for Children and Families*.

We open our celebration of 15 years with interviews conducted by Steven Behling with our first two Presidents, Jeffrey Haugaard and Gail Goodman. The full text of the interviews will soon be available on the Section website at [http://www.apa.org/divisions/div37/child\\_maltreatment/homepage.html](http://www.apa.org/divisions/div37/child_maltreatment/homepage.html)

In the summer issue of the newsletter we will publish interviews with the next two Section Presidents – Tom Lyon and Bette Bottoms. If you are interested in conducting an interview with one of these national leaders in child maltreatment, please contact Mary Haskett at [mary\\_haskett@ncsu.edu](mailto:mary_haskett@ncsu.edu).

## Special Feature

## The Section Turns 15: Looking Back, Looking Forward

by Steven Behling, PhD

This year marks the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of APA Division 37's Section on Child Maltreatment. At the time it was created, the mission of the Section was as follows:

“The purpose of the Section shall be to promote the general objectives of the American Psychological Association and the Division of Child, Youth, and Family Services to support and encourage the development of the scientific study of child maltreatment and of sound professional practice relevant to child maltreatment, to provide up-to-date information about maltreatment, to encourage networking across divisions and sections in the area of child maltreatment, and to advance scientific inquiry, training, and professional practice in the area of child maltreatment as a means of promoting the well being, health, and mental health of children, youth, and families.”

In celebration of the Section's 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary, past-presidents Jeffrey Haugaard, PhD, and Gail S. Goodman, PhD, share their memories of the early years of the Section, explore whether the Section's founding purpose is relevant today, discuss changes in the field of child maltreatment and current issues facing the Section, and more.

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### JEFFREY HAUGAARD, PhD

#### Who were the individuals leading the initiative to start the Section on Child Maltreatment?

It was primarily Diane Willis and Barbara Bonner. They were both at the University of Oklahoma and had been actively involved in research, and a lot of training more than anything else, in the child maltreatment area. They were working with Dennis Drotar, the President of Division 37 at the time.

#### Why did they think the Section was needed?

Well, in many ways child maltreatment had become a newly developing field in the 1970s and early 1980s. It seemed as if society had decided that some things they knew were going on with kids in the past were problematic, and maybe they weren't paying as much attention to it as they should have been. There was more research being done, and there were a number of books and training programs to inform therapists about how they should be treating children who had been involved in abusive situations. Yet it was not clear that the work was based on science, so there was a desire to start more of a concentrated effort through the APA to develop a better scientific base for working with children and families and get people organized around trying to promote science in practice. I think we've been more careful about developing those programs and modifying those programs as the scientific base has developed.

Also, at that point there was no Division focused on child, adolescent, or pediatric issues. There was also a question at the time about whether it would be best to try to have an entire Division focused on child maltreatment. The thinking was that if that were to happen, everybody would say “well, the child maltreatment stuff is over there,” but if child maltreatment issues could extend across several different Divisions, it would impact the entire organization.

#### Do you feel that the Section's mission is still relevant 15 years later?

Absolutely. Research has continued to fine-tune what we know about various types of maltreatment and the wide range of responses children and families have to maltreatment...but my guess is that we haven't finished with that yet. Training professionals also remains an important goal because there are new professionals entering the field and they need to have more of a sense about the importance of

child maltreatment issues in people's lives. This training cannot just focus on child clinicians because people who are treating adults need to understand the long term consequences of maltreatment and how that can affect how people parent their own kids. It is also important to promote policies at the various county, state, and federal levels to address these issues and help prevent child maltreatment.

**What were the critical issues in child maltreatment during the time you were president of the Section?**

There were still a number of definitional issues that people were struggling with, and I think we are still struggling a bit with that today. Child maltreatment as it was defined then (and probably still is now) extended across a wide range of behaviors. During my time as president, I was on an NICHD panel that discussed whether or not we should keep the same definitions or whether we should be aiming for different definitions. One of the ideas we were talking about then was that maybe rather than dividing maltreatment as we had been doing into emotional, psychological, physical, and sexual, maybe it should be divided into mild, moderate, and severe and include all of those (sexual, physical, and emotional abuse) into each of those three categories. It was an interesting discussion because how you define things affects how you do your research and then how you conceptualize individual cases. Although all forms of maltreatment can be harmful, most of the kids experience more mild or moderate forms of abuse and a few experience more serious forms. The worry is that if you think everybody is in the moderate range, you'll miss the kids who are experiencing much more severe forms and probably need more intervention than those who have experienced what we might consider much more mild forms of maltreatment. Also, is it ok to spank young children? I'm not sure that we have ever resolved that. I also think that within the APA organization we were struggling – and my sense is we're still struggling – to have children's issues become a more important part of what the organization focuses on.

**How has your own career developed and changed since you were president of the section?**

During the time I was president, my research was focused more on special needs adoption kids and the

adoption of older kids, many of whom, or most of whom, had been maltreated. I had some small projects going with that and was a professor at Cornell. Yet it became more difficult to do the kinds of research I wanted to do in the small community of Ithaca, and the whole special needs adoption world changed fairly dramatically. It used to be that you could never adopt kids who had been your foster children, and now the large percentage of special needs adoptions are done where somebody has been a foster child in the family and the parents later decide to adopt that child. I then started doing some research on stalking and other forms of dating violence, which was easier for me to do because I was surrounded by students. I did that for a number of years and then became more steadily interested in the undergraduate education piece. I found out that there were "honors colleges" at various institutions, although none of the institutions I had attended or worked at had such a thing; suddenly I found out that they existed and became interested in them. Eventually, I got a job as the founding director of the honors college at SUNY Albany. I moved up here 5 years ago to start the honors college here and have been working at that ever since. The nice thing about being a professor is that, once you get over that tenure hump, you really do have a fair amount of freedom to say "what's important to me?"

**Is there anything else you think would be important for the Section to know in terms of its early years?**

I do think there was a lot of work done to establish the Section. The folks whose idea it was to do this – and it really was Barbara Bonner and Diane Willis – the field, the Section, APA owes a lot to them. It was their brainchild and they pushed to make it happen. And then there were a number of people who got involved in the Section very early on – some of them, like Cindy [Miller-Perrin], stayed involved forever. And the work that people did then – those little meetings we had back then – were very important to getting the Section started and to keeping it going. There are a number of people who got us off to a good start and I'm glad to see that we're still going.

**GAIL S. GOODMAN, PhD**

**Why did the founders of the Section think it was needed?**

At the time, APA didn't really have any other forum to specifically address child maltreatment issues, yet it was clearly an incredibly important topic. I think child maltreatment has unfortunately always been with us, but in those years there was some momentum for trying to bring attention to child maltreatment and solve the problem. There was also the realization of just how prevalent some forms of child maltreatment are in society and the devastating consequences it can have, so that was another motivation for creating the Section. Since that time, I've been on APA Council and have actually been surprised at how few child and developmental issues they address. In retrospect, I've thought even more about why the Section was needed—so there would be a focus and a forum for child maltreatment issues.

**Do you feel that the Section's mission is still relevant 15 years later?**

Yes, definitely. Child maltreatment can be an exceptionally controversial issue, and it is really important to have a group of people with expertise in that area, one that APA and others can go to when issues of child maltreatment come up. APA has relied on the Section when they needed such expertise.

**What were the critical issues in child maltreatment during the time you were president of the Section?**

One of the big issues while I was president was the Rind controversy. *Psychological Bulletin*, one of the most prestigious journals published by APA, came out with an article that caused a big uproar. The authors presented a meta-analysis, concluding that said sex with children, especially adolescent boys if they were willing, was not necessarily a bad thing. One of the talk show hosts, Dr. Laura Schlessinger, had gotten her hands on the article and blasted APA for publishing it, and the U.S. Congress was about to sanction APA. That was a very serious threat. APA contacted the Section and we, of course, were already mounting our resources to respond. Several Section members wrote an article that appeared in *Psychological Bulletin* countering what Rind et al. had published (see Ondersma et al., 2001). Other Section members were

asked to write articles for the *American Psychologist* and to help review brochures and pamphlets about child sexual abuse and related topics. In response to the controversy, APA agreed to do a little more monitoring of the journal to ward off sanctioning by Congress. This was followed by another uproar, where scientists were saying APA shouldn't censor journal articles and shouldn't interfere with the peer review process, so there was that to deal with as well. We also put out training material for college courses on child maltreatment, which was later adapted for high school students, and also organized symposia and talks for APA. We also participated in some congressional briefings on child maltreatment that Gary Melton helped organize.

**How has the field of child maltreatment changed since you were president of the Section?**

There used to be the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect that was part of the federal government, but it was dissolved after some of the controversial preschool cases fell apart due to concerns about potentially egregious interviews of preschool children and possible false reports. The federal government then created a significantly underfunded Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, that does not have much money for scientific research. Now the limited funding for child maltreatment research is diversified across different agencies that may or may not care about funding this kind of work. So that was one change that was unfortunate. Although I didn't think it was a good idea back then and I still think it was the wrong decision, I can understand the government needing to do something. Fortunately, now it's a whole different era. It's a good time to rethink that and start again. The country could profit from a new Center on Child Abuse and Neglect that funds high power scientific research to combat child maltreatment. As it is now, it can be hard to obtain research funding on child abuse work because of the necessary methodological and ethical issues one faces. Random assignment to groups can be difficult, and some review panels are not sympathetic to studies of child maltreatment, so I'd love to have a federally funded center again on research in child abuse and neglect. Another change since I was president of the Section concerns my own specific area of study—children's testimony and child witnesses. There's been a huge amount of research conducted, and it has become a worldwide endeavor. We have learned a lot. And now, based on such research, there

are child forensic interview centers all over the world that rely on studies produced by members of the Section on Child Maltreatment.

**What are some of the current challenges related to child maltreatment that you feel the Section should be addressing at this time?**

I see a need for psychology to better inform the whole child protective services system in terms of children's needs. For instance, a lot of child protective services agencies see their mandate as safety and permanence. However, in terms of a child's emotional well-being, they aren't prepared to handle that. For me, that should be the crux of child protective services, and I think the Section could possibly do some work to help with that agenda or effort. Such action needs to come from the top, from the federal government. The federal government has child indicators about which each state is supposed to report every few years or so. These indicators concern how kids in the child welfare system are doing. If the federal government included greater emphasis on a child's emotional well-being in the indicators, it could basically force the welfare system to include children's emotional well being, mental health, and attachment relationships much more in what they do.

From the bottom up, I think education in child welfare needs to focus much more on attachment theory and ensure a deeper understanding of child development and the psychological needs of children. And, we need to better train and select foster parents. We could do a lot more to support having better foster parents. And, of course, prevention is key. The child protection system needs to open up more to research generally.

**How has your own career developed and changed since you were president of the section?**

Well my career has been a fascinating, surprising, and highly rewarding experience for me, especially given that I was trained in theoretical issues concerning cognitive development, not on child abuse research or application. In my postdoctoral and assistant professor years, I developed expertise in applying some of that education to child abuse, and that really opened up a whole new world to me. Since that time, I've continued publishing, getting grants, and doing research on child maltreatment. Several years ago, the state of

California approached me to help establish a center at the University of California, Davis where we work with the Department of Social Services, particularly on child maltreatment and child protection issues for the state. So, in addition to my laboratory, where I work with my doctoral students and postdocs on child witness research, we also now conduct a lot of work with the California state government to try to help with child protection issues. For instance, right now we're conducting a huge survey of all newly turned 17-year-olds in foster care as part of a federally required initiative called the National Youth in Transition Database Project. This involves surveying 6,000 youth from all over California about how they're doing; it's a big job as we have 45 days to survey each youth after they turn 17, so it's time-intensive. The goal is to follow a subset of youth over time as they turn 19 and 21 and re-survey them to see how they're doing.

Overall, since I've been Section president, I've learned a great deal about state government and how that works. If I were to do the Section presidency again, I think I would have a much broader perspective now on the issues of child protection in the United States. I've also served on the faculty at the University of Oslo in Norway and helped establish a center there dealing with childhood trauma, so I've also obtained more of an international perspective. Finally, I want to be sure to end by saying how proud I am of the Section and how grateful I am for its commitment to the protection of children from abuse and neglect. We share a noble goal that can be reached through the combined efforts of scientists and practitioners. It was an honor to have served as the Section's second president, and it's been a delight to see the Section blossom and grow.

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## Case Notes

## “Game Over” for Young Violent Video Gamers? U.S. Supreme Court to Decide

Leroy B. Scott, M.A. and Eve M. Brank, J.D., Ph.D.

*University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

For centuries, people have been involved in violent activities for “fun.” The ancient Roman gladiator games involved players risking their lives in battles against humans and wild animals. Today, gladiators of a different kind battle any number of different virtual foes. Like the Roman gladiators, video gamers are playing to win, which usually means they need to kill the most and be the last one alive. Of course, the deaths in the video games are not real, and a player can simply restart the game upon dying, but some people are concerned that these deaths are more real than virtual. Video gamers might, after amassing fake cyber victims, seek to cause injury or death in real life.

The media is replete with anecdotal evidence of video gamers leaving their couches to implement in the real world their virtual skills of causing injury and destruction. The California state legislature responded to these concerns by enacting a law that prohibited the sale or rental of “deviant violent video games” to individuals under 18 years old (California Civil Code sections 1746-1746.5). Shortly after the law was enacted, the Video Software Dealers Association and the Entertainment Software Association (“video game dealers”) were successful in challenging the law on First Amendment freedom of speech grounds in the United States District Court. The court issued a permanent injunction that prevented California from enforcing the law. California appealed the district court’s decision to the Court of Appeals, but the court upheld the district court’s holding. That decision was appealed to the United States Supreme Court in *Schwarzenegger v. Entertainment Merchants Assn.* Oral arguments for the Supreme Court case were heard in November, 2010. The Supreme Court case focused on (1) whether the First Amendment of the United States Constitution prohibited states from restricting the sale and rental of violent video games to persons under 18 years old, and (2) if

the First Amendment applies, whether the state must prove a direct causal link between violent video games and physical or psychological harm to minors.

California argued that First Amendment protections are limited when communication is directed at children, and therefore the First Amendment does not prevent the state from regulating children’s access to violent video games. In support of its position that traditional First Amendment reasoning should not apply in this case, California cited *Ginsberg v. New York*, 390 U.S. 629 (1968), a case in which the Supreme Court held that a state could constitutionally prohibit the sale of sexually explicit materials to children (although it would have been unconstitutional to prohibit their sale to adults). The video software dealers opposed California’s assertion, and argued instead that if the law infringes on freedom of speech, it should be subjected to traditional strict scrutiny analysis. Under the strict scrutiny analysis, California can only enact such a law if it can prove that the state has a “compelling interest” for doing so and that the method chosen to fulfill the interest is “narrowly tailored.”

Researchers disagree on the issue of whether there is a meaningful causal link between video games and physical or psychological harm to minors. An *amicus* brief submitted in support of California’s position, presented research findings indicating that “data continually and strongly suggest that participating in the playing of violent video games by children increases aggressive thought and behavior; increases antisocial behavior and delinquency; engenders poor school performance; and desensitizes the game player to violence.” Specifically, Anderson’s (2004, 2007, 2010) research was cited as providing evidence that violent video games lead to more violence than nonviolent

games, and long term exposure to violent video games predicts future aggression. In contrast, these findings were rejected in an *amicus* brief submitted by social scientists on behalf of the video game dealers. The brief cited studies by Ferguson (2010) and Ferguson and Kilburn (2010), which suggested that notwithstanding some indication that violent video games correlated with certain negative outcomes, the impact of violent video games on minors have been exaggerated by the media and the literature and therefore current research findings do not support California's reasoning for enacting the law.

During the oral arguments before the Supreme Court, it became clear that the justices were concerned about future First Amendment implications if it allowed California to

enforce this law. In particular, the court asked about whether upholding this law would also allow California to limit minors' access to other forms of media such as television or radio that portrayed other potentially harmful activities such as drinking and smoking. The justices also questioned the appropriateness of using 18 years as the cutoff age for applicability of the law by indicating that content that is harmful to a 7 or 8 year old might not be harmful to a 17 year old.

Expect to see a Supreme Court decision on this case sometime this spring. Of particular interest will be how much emphasis the decision and opinion places on the psychological research.

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## Dissertation Award Competition!

### DISSERTATION AWARD GRANT

The Section on Child Maltreatment (Section 1 of Division 37, APA) announces its tenth annual dissertation award grant. A \$400 prize will be awarded to one successful graduate student applicant to assist with expenses in conducting dissertation research on the topic of child maltreatment. Applicants are requested to submit an electronic copy of the following:

- 1) A letter of interest, indicating how the applicant would use the award funds toward the completion of the dissertation research;
- 2) A 100 word abstract; and
- 3) A five-page proposal summarizing the research to be conducted.

Please submit applications by **April 1, 2011** to:

Cindy Miller-Perrin, Ph.D.  
Professor of Psychology  
Pepperdine University  
Social Science Division  
Malibu, CA 90263

## Student's Corner

# Greetings from the Section's Graduate Student Representative

**Lauren Drerup Stokes**  
*University of Kansas*

Hello from your graduate student representative, **Lauren Drerup Stokes!** As a graduate student at the University of Kansas, I have research and clinical interests in the area of child maltreatment and the Section has been an excellent opportunity to become more involved in the field. I would like to share with you some of the recent endeavors of the Section's student members and invite you to join us in the exciting projects that we are currently working on. Let me first introduce you to our graduate student representative elect, **Kate Cuno**, who has been integral to our student contributions to the Section. Thanks Kate!

One of our primary projects is to increase student membership in the Section, with a recent effort including a "meet and greet" session in conjunction with Division 37 students at the Kansas Conference in Child and Adolescent Psychology in October. We were honored to have **Dr. Barbara Bonner** from the Oklahoma Health Sciences Center and **Dr. Yo Jackson** from the University of Kansas, both experts in the field of child maltreatment. We were able to recruit four new student members and thoroughly enjoyed our discussion with both **Drs. Bonner and Jackson**.

Another one of our projects is to enhance the graduate student web-page by providing information regarding child maltreatment, including facts and statistics, a detailed reference list, and current efforts in research, prevention, intervention, and public policy. Our goal is to provide both undergraduate and graduate students with a comprehensive resource on child maltreatment and to connect them with Section members who are experts in this field.

Finally, our most recent initiative is the formation of a student board. This will be comprised of five members who will each be responsible for one of the five following areas: student web-page development, student recruitment, public policy, cultural diversity, and the Section's newsletter. Each member will be collaborating and consulting with the current and elect graduate student representatives and thus, it is anticipated that the student board members will significantly increase the contributions of students to the Section.

I would like to invite the student members to email me (**ldrerup@ku.edu**) if they are interested in contributing to any of the above projects. I also welcome your ideas for ways to continue to improve the students' contributions to the Section. As the graduate student representative, my primary goal is to increase student involvement. Not only does your service to APA and the Section on Child Maltreatment enhance your training and leadership experiences, but you will be contributing to the very timely and important issue of child maltreatment. I look forward to hearing from you! Thank you very much for your support of the Section.

\*\*\*For all members, including students, affiliates, and full members, please email **Kate Cuno** (**kate.Cuno@gmail.com**) with a short description about your current research projects in child maltreatment (e.g., what you are currently working on, what stage of the project you are in, future plans, etc.). We plan to include Section members' research activities on our web-site and would like to include your work.

Thanks!  
**Lauren Drerup Stokes**

## Public Policy

# CONGRESS COMPLETES CAPTA, MOVES TO BUDGET CONCERNS

Thomas L. Birch, J.D.

*National Child Abuse Coalition*

### OBAMA SIGNS CAPTA BILL

After numerous delays and two years overdue, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) Reauthorization Act of 2010 (S.3817) renewing the federal child abuse statute passed both the House and the Senate in December during the lame duck session. President Obama signed the legislation into law on December 20.

In a press release from the White House, following final passage of the bill drafted by Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-CT), President Obama expressed appreciation to the Democratic sponsors of the legislation, Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Rep. George Miller (D-CA) “for their great work, and ...particularly...Senator Dodd for his leadership. This legislative achievement is a fitting tribute to his many years of effort in the Senate to protect the most vulnerable of our citizens.” Dodd retired at the end of the 2010 legislative session; he was determined to finish the CAPTA work before leaving the Senate. The Senate bill had bipartisan sponsorship with Sens. Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Michael Enzi (R-WY) and Mike Crapo (R-ID) joining their Democratic colleagues on the measure.

Dodd was intent on drafting a bipartisan bill that would continue authorized funding for CAPTA’s discretionary programs as well as the basic state grants and the community-based prevention grants. As a result of the desire to arrive at a bipartisan agreement, the bill introduced by Dodd last September is modest in scope.

The CAPTA Reauthorization Act addresses such themes as promoting differential response in child protective services, addressing the co-occurrence of child maltreatment and domestic violence, and sharpening the prevention focus of the community-based child abuse prevention grants.

For example, the bill seasons provisions throughout CAPTA with references to addressing an alternative approach to protecting children from harm, with a charge to HHS to address best practices in differential response through dissemination of information, research, training of personnel, as an eligible use of basic state grant funds for improving child protective services, and as a state grant eligibility requirement to identify “as applicable” policies and procedures around the use of differential response. The bill also would require state policies and procedures encouraging the involvement of families in decision-making pertaining to cases of abuse and neglect of children.

The bill’s findings include a new provision recognizing the co-occurrence of child maltreatment and domestic violence in “up to 60 percent of the families in which either is present,” and calls for the adoption of procedures aimed at “enhancing the safety both of children and the victims of domestic violence.”

Other provisions follow this theme, with directions to HHS to disseminate information on effective programs and best practices in collaborations between child protective services and domestic violence services; in research, technical assistance and training; and through support for development of collaborative practice. Attention to services for children exposed to domestic violence would be an eligible expenditure of basic state grant funds, and states would be required to have procedures in place to address the co-occurrence of child maltreatment and domestic violence.

The Dodd bill sharpens the prevention focus of CAPTA Title II with a broad mandate to support the range of community-based and prevention-focused activities

which include a variety of services and strategies, recognizing respite care and home visiting as “core services” for support of the Title II grants, with optional services such as supports to parents with disabilities, domestic violence services, and child care, and early childhood education and care. The bill also seeks to enhance the involvement of parents in planning and implementation of prevention services.

Finally, in recognition of the relationship between child maltreatment and substance abuse, the Senate bill in a number of provisions seeks to address through research, technical assistance, program innovation, policies promoting collaborations with substance abuse treatment services, and in preventive services to improve upon the ability of the child welfare system to intervene effectively in child maltreatment cases where substance abuse presents itself as a factor.

### **HOUSE-SENATE HEADING FOR BUDGET SHOWDOWN**

Sometime after the middle of February, President Obama is expected to send to Congress his budget proposal for fiscal year 2012. Although no word is available on funding levels to be requested for any federal agency, the President suggested in his State of the Union address that he would ask Congress to freeze 2012 funding at 2011 levels for the next five years. The suggested freeze applies to the total amount of the federal budget, which still leaves room within the various accounts to increase, or decrease, the proposed funding level.

In the current 2011 fiscal year, the federal government is operating under a continuing resolution. On December 21, 2010, President Obama signed the fourth continuing resolution carrying appropriations for all federal programs through March 4, 2011, essentially at 2010 funding levels. An effort in December to move ahead with an omnibus appropriations measure for the entire year that included enhanced funding for several priorities dear to the outgoing Democratic majority in the House was scuttled in the Senate. The final spending levels for 2011 will be set by the new 112th Congress convened in January.

On January 5, the new Republican majority in the House of Representatives began to set the stage for a

budget showdown with the Democratic majority in the Senate. On a strict party-line vote, the House approved a resolution setting new fiscal rules giving the chair of the House Budget Committee the authority to force reductions in the current fiscal year’s spending. Budget chair Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI) has pledged to cut about \$60 billion from current program spending. The cuts Ryan proposes could mean more than 20 percent reductions since they would come half-way into the fiscal year.

Losing no time, the House Republican Study Committee (RSC), the most fiscally conservative caucus in the House, has laid out a plan for \$2.5 trillion in spending cuts over the next decade, mainly by holding 2011 funds at 2008 levels and then in 2012 through 2021 rolling back all non-defense discretionary spending to 2006 levels, and eliminating spending entirely on more than a hundred federal programs.

The RSC numbers more than 165 Republicans as members, representing a sizable group in the new Republican majority intent on following through on a pledge to reduce spending. Still, enacting the proposal would be next to impossible, given that the Senate Democrats have called for more modest spending restraint, and the White House would oppose many of the cuts as well. Still, the proposal sets the stage for some serious challenges in the House this year as spending bills emerge from the Appropriations Committee.

There is no indication that the chair of the House Appropriations Committee, Rep. Harold Rogers (R-KY) would back the RSC plan, although he has announced his intention to begin scaling back non-security discretionary spending to fiscal 2008 levels this year, replacing the current stopgap measure with another continuing resolution that would cut spending. Rogers is not a member of the RSC.

The RSC chair, Rep. Jim Jordan (R-OH), has drafted the Spending Reduction Act of 2011 embodying the budget cutting plan of the caucus. Many of the programs proposed for elimination have long been on the wish list for budget hawks to cut, like Title X birth control and family planning grants, the Legal Services Corporation, and funds for the U.S. Agency for

International Development. There are also any number of President Obama's initiatives on the list such as the programs of the National and Community Services Act and the Department of Energy's work on fuel efficient cars.

### CHILD MALTREATMENT 2009

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families in December 2010 released its annual report on child abuse and neglect. An estimated 3.3 million referrals of possible cases of child abuse and neglect were made to state child protective services (CPS) agencies in the United States in 2009. According to the report, *Child Maltreatment 2009*, almost two-thirds (61.9%) of the referrals – 2.04 million reports — were accepted by CPS for an investigation or assessment, resulting in an estimated 702,000 children found to be victims of child abuse and neglect.

Of those receiving a response from CPS – usually either an investigation or referral to services — about 23 percent were substantiated victims of maltreatment, and just over 9 percent received an alternative or differential response. According to HHS, the new study of child maltreatment reporting information shows a steady decrease for the third consecutive year in the number of child victims who suffered maltreatment, down now from 772,000 in 2008.

Of referrals made to CPS for an assessment, it is worth noting that almost 10 percent (9.2%) were referred to an alternative response for services rather than a formal investigation and finding of maltreatment. Of the 14 states submitting data on referrals to an alternative response, nine states (KY, MN, MO, NC, OK, TN, VA, WA, and WY) counted fewer substantiated reports – those given a full investigation – than those receiving an alternative response.

While this is the third year that the number of victims has decreased; it continues to be difficult to tell whether the decrease indicates a trend until more data are collected. The decrease can partially be attributed to several factors, including the increase in the number of children who received an

unsubstantiated disposition, the increase in the number of children who received an alternative CPS response, and the decrease in the number of substantiated reports.

This is the first time that the report on state child abuse and neglect reporting data has been issued at this time of the year. It usually is made available in April, Child Abuse Prevention Month. The Children's Bureau intends to maintain the new publication schedule.

### U.S. SIGNS CHILD PROTECTION CONVENTION

On October 22, the United States signed the Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Co-operation in Respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children. The agreement ensures international recognition and enforcement of custody and visitation orders. It contains provisions addressing cooperation on key issues such as runaway children and the cross-border placement of children in foster families or institutional care.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said, "Signing this Convention reaffirms the deep commitment of the United States to protecting the rights and welfare of children around the world." The convention must be approved by the U.S. Senate. Clinton said that the State Department will work closely with Congress, other federal agencies, and state and local officials to address implementation of the convention in the United States. The Senate recently approved the Hague Convention on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance. The convention for the protection of children is meant to complement and reinforce the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.

## Meet the Newsletter Contributors and Executive Committee!



**Steven Behling, Newsletter**

**Contributor**, received his PhD in Clinical Psychology from DePaul University in 2010. His clinical and research interests include child maltreatment, parenting, infant mental health, religion and spirituality, and treatment adherence in pediatric populations. He is currently a postdoctoral fellow in the Irving Harris Program in Child Development and Infant Mental Health at the University of Colorado School of Medicine.

**Kate Cuno, M.A.**, recently earned a masters of arts in clinical psychology and is currently completing her doctorate in psychology from Argosy University in Washington D.C. She began her work in the field of child maltreatment working at Children's National Medical Center on their inpatient child psychiatry unit as a child psychiatric specialist treating children presenting with a diverse range of presenting problems and experiences of child maltreatment. She is currently an extern at the Child and Family Therapy Clinic of the Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore, Maryland, providing family and individual therapy for families with children. She currently serves as the **student representative, elect** for APA Division 37's Section on Child Maltreatment. Her dissertation research is focused on the phenomenon of foster care drift, the tendency for victims of child sexual abuse to enter in and out of the foster care system after multiple failed reunifications.



**Rex E. Culp, PhD, JD, President Elect**, is a Professor in the Department of Child, Family and Community Sciences and Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies in the College of Education at the University of Central Florida. His PhD is in Developmental and Child Psychology. He has conducted research on at-risk parenting, child maltreatment and intervention programming for over 35 years. Prior to his position at UCF, he held teaching and research positions at Colorado State University, the University of Colorado Medical Center, the University of Kansas Medical Center, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Oklahoma State University and the University of Alabama. In addition, he has served as the Director of Research for the Children's Place (Kansas City, MO), a day-treatment program for maltreated children, Associate Center Scientist at the Center for the Advancement of Youth Health at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Charter Senior Investigator at the Institute for Rural Health Research in the College of Community Health Sciences at the University of Alabama, and member of the center of Excellence for Minority Health Disparities, Bioethics and rural Health in Alabama's Black Belt at Tuskegee University and the University of Alabama.



**Sara Maltzman, Ph.D.** received her doctorate in psychology with a minor in neuroscience from the University of Minnesota in 1992. She has served as the Senior Staff Psychologist for the County of San Diego Child Welfare Services since 2005. In this position, Dr. Maltzman provides trainings and case-level consultation for protective services workers, attorneys, and therapists. She also provides consultation to CWS Administration on topics related to mental health best practices and research pertaining to child abuse and neglect.

Dr. Maltzman has published and presented on the biopsychosocial approach to mental health services, processes and outcomes in psychotherapy, pain management, and secondary/vicarious traumatization. In addition to her election as **Member-At-Large** to the Executive Committee of the Section on Child Maltreatment in APA Division 37, Dr. Maltzman serves as a Practice Forum Advisory Board member for *The Counseling Psychologist* and chairs the Special Interest Group on Secondary and Vicarious Trauma in APA Division 56.



**Margaret Stevenson** received her Ph.D. in social psychology in 2008 from The University of Illinois at Chicago. Currently, she is Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of Evansville. She conducts research, rooted in social psychological theory, aimed at improving the justice system for children. More specifically, she studies jurors' perceptions of children who enter the legal system, either as victims of crime or as perpetrators of crime. Most recently, she has been involved in a line of research examining public perceptions of juvenile sex offender registration policy and factors that predict support for juvenile sex offender registration.

## Please Let Us Know What You Think

We invite our members to contribute to the newsletter!

If you have suggestions for the newsletter; comments about the articles and issues discussed; or would like to contribute an article or details of recent publications to be included in future newsletters, please contact the editor at the following address along with your contact information.

### Attention Authors/Editors of New Books and Publications

If you have recently published an article, or have other exciting news (e.g., featured on a radio show, etc.) that you would like to share with other Section members, email the information to: Amie Lemos-Miller at [amielemos@hotmail.com](mailto:amielemos@hotmail.com). The announcement will be included in a future edition in the Section's newsletter.

**Please join the Section's listserv!** Email [amielemos@hotmail.com](mailto:amielemos@hotmail.com) to join and receive pertinent updates and information regarding the Section. **Future newsletter editions may also be sent via the listserv.**

## Newsletter of the Section on Child Maltreatment

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