CAPSAC President’s Message

The national landscape has changed (yet again) in a matter of weeks. But unlike the COVID 19 pandemic, there is nothing novel about the reasons behind the public calls for reform. Black people and other people of color have faced centuries of systemic racism, oppression, and violence. This public call for reform extends beyond the justice system and urgently calls for action now across ALL systems.

All of CAPSAC’s members are committed to addressing issues of child maltreatment. It is time we recognize systemic racism and implicit bias as yet another form of violence against children. Chronic exposure to injustice and the viral images of Black and brown bodies being brutalized and murdered can have long-lasting effects on a child’s mental health, and research is beginning to show that there is a clear link between experiences of discrimination and long-term health outcomes. The CAPSAC Board of Directors, along with APSAC, is committed to eliminating systemic racism and implicit bias in the child maltreatment field.

-Lauren Maltby, CAPSAC President

APSAC’s Statement On Implicit Bias in the Child Maltreatment Field

APSAC joins with people around the world in expressing our deepest sympathy and condolences to the families who have lost loved ones to senseless violence rooted in racism and implicit bias. We stand in solidarity with all who have pledged to end this scourge. This killing, injury, and abuse must stop.

APSAC believes it is essential to the future of our society that we eliminate racism and implicit bias. Teresa Huziar (https://mailchi.mp/nca-online/what-justice-really-means?e=8e07cc2163), Executive Director of the National Children’s Alliance, reminds us that slavery, and the racism that goes with it, is America’s original sin. We are struggling with the wounds and

(continued to page 2)
ongoing harms of 400 years of systemic racism, its insidious companion implicit bias, and the violence it has spawned.

Racism kills. The deaths noted above and health research shows that racism kills directly and indirectly. When directed at youth, racism is child abuse. It is a form of psychological maltreatment and toxic like physical and sexual abuse.

Our efforts to address racism and implicit bias, including cultural sensitivity and diversity training are a start but they are not enough. There are many layers and much complexity to this deeply ingrained injustice. It will take decades of sustained effort on many fronts to eradicate. Despite the huge task before us, there is a guiding principle. Do the right thing. Regardless of the consequences to one’s career, comfort, or material well-being, do the right thing.

At this pivotal moment in our nation’s history, APSAC commits to an enduring effort to develop, monitor and regularly update an “APSAC Action Plan to Eliminate Systemic Racism and Implicit Bias in the Child Maltreatment Field.” This action plan is central to APSAC’s mission. It requires all of our participation, listening closely to others, learning, changing ourselves, and changing our practices. It requires resources. The Princeton Theological Seminary (https://slavery.ptsem.edu/response/) plan to address the injustice of slavery along with racism and implicit bias provides one example. The objective of the PTS plan is also APSAC’s objective to “commit to tangible action to shape [our] community’s future in meaningful, lasting ways.”

Join APSAC for a Zoom Chat on ending racism and implicit bias in child maltreatment

Tuesday, June 16 at 2:00 pm Eastern Time

Register here

Additional resources for Parents and Children can found at

https://www.apsac.org/fighting-racism-and-bias
An increasing body of literature highlighting the connection between trauma and incarceration is beginning to shed light on one of the darkest parts of the juvenile justice system: girls in need of protection and support not only fail to receive the care they deserve, but have been criminalized as a direct result of their trauma, a phenomenon known as the sexual abuse to prison pipeline.

Successful juvenile justice reform efforts over the past decade have reduced the number of incarcerated youth by half. One key aspect of successful reform has been a focus on the ways that trauma serves as an underlying driver of arrest and incarceration, and a corresponding investment in trauma-responsive diversion strategies. These reforms, however, have largely failed to address the unique forms of gender-based violence and trauma that bring girls and LGBQ/TGNC youth into the justice system. Girls now make up a greater proportion of the juvenile justice system than ever before, and the most recent data continues to show the deep disparities for LGBQ/TGNC youth in the system (Irvine and Canfield, 2018).

Girls in the justice system experience high rates of complex childhood trauma (Baglivio et al., 2014). Sexual violence, in particular, is a gendered and often unaddressed form of trauma that commonly leads girls into the justice system. Best estimates indicate that up to 81% of girls in the justice system have experienced sexual violence (Acoca, 1998; DeHart, 2009; Smith, Leve, & Chamberlain, 2006). Additionally, girls in the justice system experience sexual violence at an earlier age and for a longer period of time as compared to other forms of abuse (Chamberlain & Moore, 2002). Girls of color are disparately impacted—Black women are more likely to be survivors of sexual violence and sex trafficking than their White peers (“Characteristics of suspected human trafficking incidents”, 2011; DuMonthier, Childers, & Milli, 2017).

Childhood trauma and sexual violence are not only a key part of girls’ experiences before and during their justice involvement, they are also a direct pathway leading girls and LGBQ/TGNC youth into the justice system (Dierkhising et al., 2013; Ford, Grasso, Hawke, & Chapman, 2013; Saada Saar, Epstein, Rosenthal, & Vafa, 2015).

This can happen in two primary ways. Girls may be criminalized when experiences of abuse or trauma are not adequately responded to by child-serving preventive systems. In these cases,
the justice system becomes the default answer to trauma responses, like running away or fighting. Girls may also be criminalized when systems confine them in an effort to protect them, a common story for girls who are being trafficked. Once girls are in the justice system, they are often pathologized, diagnosed with mental health disorders, and mandated to services aimed primarily at behavioral modification rather than addressing the underlying trauma that led to their incarceration.

In these cases, girls are punished twice—first when they do not receive acknowledgment or support for the abuse and trauma they experienced, and then again when they are arrested for behaviors directly related to that abuse. Implicit racial biases result in girls of color, and Black girls in particular, being viewed as less in need of empathy (Epstein, Blake, & Gonzalez, 2017), which makes it more likely their trauma responses will be incorrectly and inappropriately recategorized as delinquent behaviors. The justice system, however, is ill-equipped to provide the type of individualized, trauma-informed responses that are best practice for supporting trauma survivors.

In 2018, the Vera Institute of Justice launched the National Initiative to End Girls’ Incarceration, working in five sites across the country: Hawaii, Maine, New York City, North Dakota, and Santa Clara County (CA) to ensure that girls and LGBQ/TGNC are no longer left behind by government systems that have a responsibility to prevent and respond to childhood trauma. Our work brings together a cohort of jurisdictions working across agencies to disrupt the pipeline into the justice system and invest in a continuum of community-based resources that can support the safety and well-being of girls and LGBQ/TGNC youth and address the root causes of their incarceration.

Across our “Getting to Zero” sites, we have seen vivid examples of the patterns documented in the research, highlighting the ways in which childhood trauma and abuse intersect with gender and race to lead girls and LGBQ/TGNC youth into the justice system. For example, girls are consistently arrested for drug use, running away from home, or fighting with family members following a sexual assault that has not been reported or responded to. Schools call police after fights prompted by repeated harassment due to a young person’s gender expression. And, even in jurisdictions where minors cannot be arrested for prostitution, trafficked youth are arrested for survival behaviors, like shoplifting, burglary, or drug running coerced by traffickers. Girls who run away from placement or schools, often in an effort to avoid further
harm or to cope with the aftermath of harm, are confined in a misguided attempt to keep them safe.

Prevention and early intervention are critical, because understanding and attending to the link between childhood trauma and justice involvement can disrupt the pipeline to the justice system. One promising model, called an “advocacy-approach,” builds on work developed in the context of victim services for survivors of domestic and sexual violence. When applied to delinquency prevention, advocacy-based interventions pair girls with advocates who support them in achieving self-determined goals. These models are fundamentally about restoring the agency and power that are taken away from girls when they experience trauma and building their capacity to directly change their environmental contexts, including safety concerns (Javdani, 2013). Preliminary findings demonstrate success at increasing resilience and self-efficacy, while reducing delinquent behaviors, internalizing symptoms, substance use, and sexual risk-taking (Javdani & Allen, 2016).

Providers working within the context of child welfare and childhood trauma need to be aware of the ways that responses from prevention systems can result in justice involvement. So-called “delinquent behaviors” should never make a child unworthy of empathy and support, but instead must be understood within the full context of a young person’s experience—at an individual, interpersonal, and institutional level—acknowledging the role that racism and sexism have played in their lives. Practitioners working with childhood abuse survivors must have access to support, training, and resources to provide trauma-informed, gender-responsive, and culturally-responsive interventions that can adequately identify and attend to trauma, disrupting the pipeline into the justice system.

References


Recognizing and Responding to the Spiritual Impact of Child Abuse*

by Victor Vieth

This article is adapted from the law review article *Wounded Souls: the Need for Child Protection Professionals and Faith Leaders to Recognize and Respond to the Spiritual Impact of Child Abuse*, which will be published as open access article in volume 45 of the Mitchell Hamline Law Review. The article is authored by Victor Vieth and Pete Singer.

Introduction: defining spirituality

Abuse or neglect not only impacts a child physically and emotionally (Felitti & Anda, 2010), it can also impact a child spiritually (Russell, 2018). Spirituality has been defined as a “search or quest for the Sacred” or as a “private, personal, affective experience with ‘the Divine’” (Walker, Reid, O’Neill, & Brown, 2009). Religiousness is more commonly thought of as “an institutional set of beliefs and practices” (Walker, et al, 2009). Although academics differentiate between religiosity and spirituality, most laypersons consider them to be interchangeable terms (Walker, et al, 2009).

Research on the spiritual impact of child abuse

However the term is defined, child abuse often impacts a child’s sense of spirituality. For example, in a study of 527 male victims of child maltreatment, researchers found significant spiritual injuries including feelings of guilt, anger, grief, despair, fear of death, and a belief that God is unfair (Lawson, Drebing, Berg, Vincellente, & Penk, 1998).

When the perpetrator is a member of the clergy or otherwise closely connected to the child’s faith tradition, the spiritual impact may be particularly pronounced (Pargament, Murray-Swank, & Mahoney, 2008; McLaughlin, 1994). Researchers have found that “religion-related abuse has significantly more negative implications for its victims’ long-term psychological well-being” than similar abuse not inflicted in the name of God (Bottoms, Nielsen, Murray & Filipas, 2004).

There also appears to be an age difference with young children being more spiritually impacted than older children—perhaps because their spirituality is still in development (Gall, 2007). There may also be differences among survivors of different faith traditions or denominations (Collines, O’Neill-Arana, Fontes, & Ossege, 2014).

Spirituality as a source of resilience

Although these studies highlight the spiritual harm inflicted as a result of child abuse, there is (continued to page 8)
also a significant body of research that spirituality can be a source of resiliency and may aid an abused child or other victims of violence in coping physically and emotionally (Bryant-Davis, et al, 2012; Walker, et al, 2009). Even without meaningful intervention, child abuse victims maintaining a connection to their faith communities have fewer mental health conditions throughout their life (Reinert, Campbell, Roche, Lee, & Szanton, 2016). Two scholars provide this summary:

The research around religious and spiritual coping shows strong and convincing relationships between psychological adjustment and physical health following trauma. Spirituality provides a belief system and sense of divine connectedness that helps give meaning to the traumatic experience and has been shown over and over to aid in the recovery process (Gwinn & Hellman, 2019).

Responding to the spiritual impact of abuse

In response to this significant and growing body of research, mental health providers should work on three fronts. First, mental health providers need to grow their knowledge of this issue and, where appropriate, permit or even cultivate an exploration of spirituality in therapy. The American Psychological Association has published two treatises that may be of assistance (Walker & Hathaway, 2013; Walker, Courtois, & Aten, 2015).

Second, mental health providers need to take a leadership role in educating the faith community about mental health. The American Psychiatric Association (APA) recognizes that “people experiencing mental health concerns often turn first to a faith leader.” (American Psychiatric Association, 2016). Accordingly, the APA has developed a guide to assist faith leaders in recognizing signs of mental illness and making an appropriate referral (American Psychiatric Association, 2016). The APA guide as well as other resources for coordinating mental health and spiritual care (Singer, 2018) should be shared widely with community faith leaders.

Third, mental health professionals working as part of a Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC) or as a member of a multidisciplinary response to child abuse need to develop effective

(continued to page 9)
working collaborations with faith leaders (Tishelman & Fontes, 2017). As one promising practice, the Julie Valentine Center, a CAC in Greenville, South Carolina, employs a full-time chaplain who is available to assist when children or adults raise spiritual questions and who can make referrals to other faith leaders who are trauma-informed and willing to coordinate their work with medical and mental health providers.

Conclusion

Martin Luther King said, “We must accept finite disappointment but never lose infinite hope.” Although some mental health professionals may feel uncomfortable with the subject of religion, we cannot ignore its importance to many abused children and the critical role it can play in resiliency. When spirituality is important to a client, mental health providers have a moral obligation to respond in a culturally sensitive manner to what, for many survivors, is a source of infinite hope.

*This article previously appeared in the APA Division 37 Section on Child Maltreatment newsletter Insider, Winter 2019, Vol. 24, Number 3, and is printed here with permission from the author and APA.

References


---

**CALL FOR APPLICANTS**

**Paul Crissey Grant for Outstanding Graduate Student Research**

**to be awarded**

**January 24, 2021**

**See next page for more details!**
Paul Crissey Grant for Outstanding Graduate Student Research

The California Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (CAPSAC) annually awards a grant of $750 for outstanding research by a graduate student (up to one-year post MA/Ph.D. degree) in the field of child maltreatment, child welfare, foster care, or a related topic. The recipient will also receive a one-year membership to CAPSAC and the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC).

The American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (apsac.org), founded in 1987, is a nonprofit national organization focused on meeting the needs of professionals engaged in all aspects of services for maltreated children and their families. Especially important to APSAC is the dissemination of state-of-the-art practice in all professional disciplines related to child abuse and neglect.

CAPSAC aims to provide additional support to California professionals working in the field of child abuse through training, consultation, advocacy and networking.

Applicant Requirements

- Be a graduate student within one year completion (before or after) of a Master's or Doctorate degree from an accredited California educational program;

- Submit a one thousand word summary of the research in progress or completed study in the field of child maltreatment. The study title should be on the first page of the summary. Identifying information (name, address, telephone number, email address, title of study and academic institution) should be sent in a separate file that will not be sent to the reviewers;

- Submit one or two letters of recommendation from faculty members or academic readers who are familiar with your research;

- Be available to receive the award and present a poster of the study at the CAPSAC Reception January 24, 2021 at the San Diego International Conference on Child and Family Maltreatment. Travel expenses will be paid not to exceed $300.00. Alternatively, be available to receive the award and present an overview of the study at a CAPSAC meeting or a CAPSAC training event in 2021.

- Agree to the publication of the submitted summary in the CAPSAC newsletter, The Consultant.

Deadline: All materials must be received by November 1, 2020.

Send submissions or questions to: CAPSAC Research Award Committee at apsaccalifornia@gmail.com. Place "Paul Crissey Grant" in the subject line.
Neal Snyder Outstanding Service Award

The California Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (CAPSAC) established the Neal Snyder Outstanding Service Award in 2019 to recognize professionals who demonstrate extraordinary dedication and efforts on behalf of children.

Neal Snyder graduated Phi Beta Kappa from UC Berkeley with a BA and MA in sociology, and obtained his JD from Hastings College. As an attorney, he specialized in protecting children from abuse - an area he helped make a legal specialty - and became a role model for many others in the field. Neal worked for the California State Department of Social Services in day care licensing litigation. He was a co-founder of CAPSAC, drafted its initial bylaws and assisted with its incorporation. He continued to serve as a board member, supporter, and consultant to CAPSAC for the rest of his life. Neal was an intelligent, even-tempered, positive, athletic, and kind man who loved jazz, his wife, Yvonne Garcia, their annual visits to Thailand, his children and grandchildren.

Any professional in California may submit nominations. Nominees cannot be CAPSAC Board Members or CAPSAC Executive Committee Members.

Nominees should demonstrate the mission and goals of CAPSAC. The mission of CAPSAC is to improve the effort and response of professionals working with children who have experienced abuse and neglect. The goals of CAPSAC are to promote collaboration among all disciplines working in the area of child protection, to promote education on child maltreatment of professionals and community members who work with children, to promote research on child abuse and neglect in the areas of prevention, identification, intervention, and treatment, and to promote appropriate and effective services to the children and families who have experienced child maltreatment.

Nominees should exhibit outstanding service in the area of child maltreatment. Nominees should model outstanding professionalism and have made contributions in the area of child maltreatment.

The Neal Snyder Outstanding Service Award recipient will be selected from among the nominees by the CAPSAC Board of Directors and presented with the Neal Snyder Outstanding Service Award certificate as well as a one-year membership to APSAC/CAPSAC on January 24, 2021 at the CAPSAC Board Meeting and Reception at the San Diego Child Maltreatment Conference. Travel will be reimbursed not to exceed $300. An article about the recipient will be published in the CAPSAC newsletter the Consultant. The person who nominated the award recipient will receive a 10% discount on their APSAC/CAPSAC membership fee.

If you have questions or to request a nomination form, email apsaccalifornia@gmail.com Place “Neal Snyder Outstanding Service Award 2021“ in the subject line.
CAPSAC Board of Directors

President
Lauren Maltby, Ph.D., ABPP

Secretary
Julie Robbins, LCSW

Treasurer
Bea Yorker, JD, RN, MS, FAAN

Immediate Past President
Susan Moan Hardie, RN, Ph.D.

Directors
Monica Borunda, LMFT
Elisa Carias, JD
Colleen Friend, Ph.D., LCSW
Rachel Gilgoff, M.D.
Shelley Hamilton, LCSW
Calvin James, JD
Toni Cavanagh Johnson, Ph.D.
Brad McCartt, DDA
Mary Pat Panighetti, MA

Follow CAPSAC on Facebook!
https://www.facebook.com/CaliforniaAPSAC