

Definitions and conceptualization of child neglect

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Disentangling Neglect from Poverty Across Definitions, Outcomes, Interventions, and Policy Recommendations, April 22, 2022

CAPSTONE CENTER ON CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

*Translational Research that Adapts New Science
FOR Maltreatment prevention*

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*Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute
of Child Health and Human Development
Health research throughout the lifespan*

Who are we?

A multi-institution collaboration and partnership with a long established history of working together.



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History and Background

- 1984 Wolock & Horowitz: Neglect of neglect
- 1993 Maltreatment Classification System (Barnett, Manly, & Cicchetti, 1993) published
- 1993 National Research Council & Institute of Medicine report recommended that neglect should be a high priority research area
- 1996-1997 ACYF Demonstration Project grants
- 1997 NIH & USDHHS review of research on child maltreatment: neglect was commonly reported subtype but research was lacking
- 1997 Child Abuse and Neglect Working Group established
- 2000 Federal Child Neglect Research Consortium: Cheryl Boyce and Valerie Maholmes (see Boyce & Maholmes, 2013)
- 2004-2005 *Child Maltreatment* Special Issues (Eds. Dubowitz, DePanfilis, Boyce, & Runyon)
- 2012 Institute of Medicine and National Research Council Child Maltreatment Research Summary
- 2013 *Child Maltreatment* Special Issue (Ed. Widom)
- 2017 *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* NICHD Capstone Centers for Multidisciplinary Research on Child Abuse and Neglect (Valerie Maholmes, GPO)

Maltreatment Classification System

Barnett, Manly, & Cicchetti (1993)

- Developed initially for coding Child Protective Services (CPS) records
- Operational Definitions of maltreatment
- More systematic assessment of children's experiences
- Alternative to using CPS labels
- Considerations:
 - State by state variability
 - Many maltreatment allegations adjudicated as neglect
 - Parental intent vs. behavior
 - Negligence vs. poverty
 - Family context and children's experiences



Maltreatment Classification System

Barnett, Manly, & Cicchetti (1993)

Dimensions of Maltreatment:

1. Subtype
2. Severity
3. Frequency/Chronicity
4. Developmental Period
5. Separations/Placements
6. Perpetrator



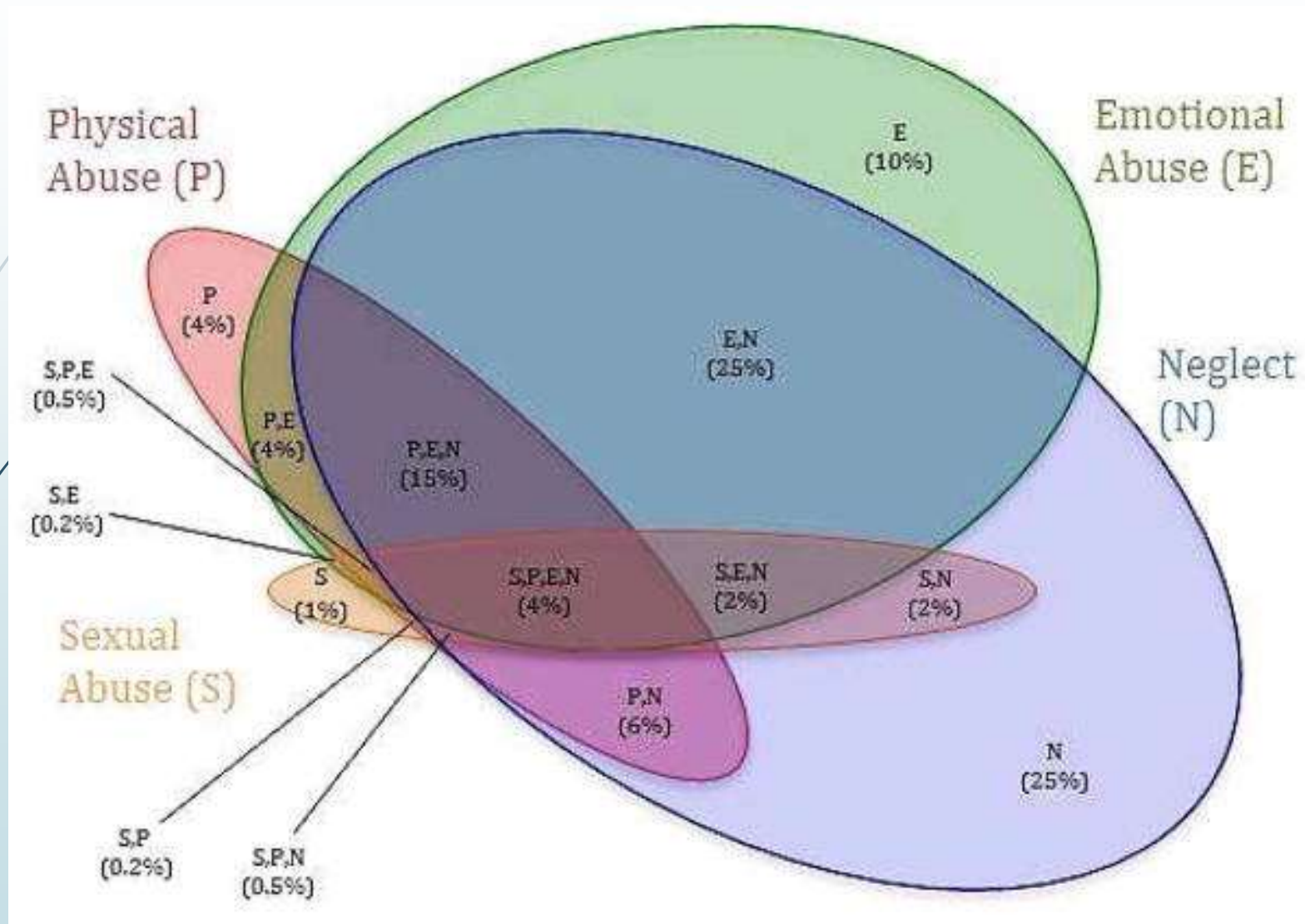
Maltreatment Classification System

Subtype

- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Physical Neglect
- Emotional Maltreatment



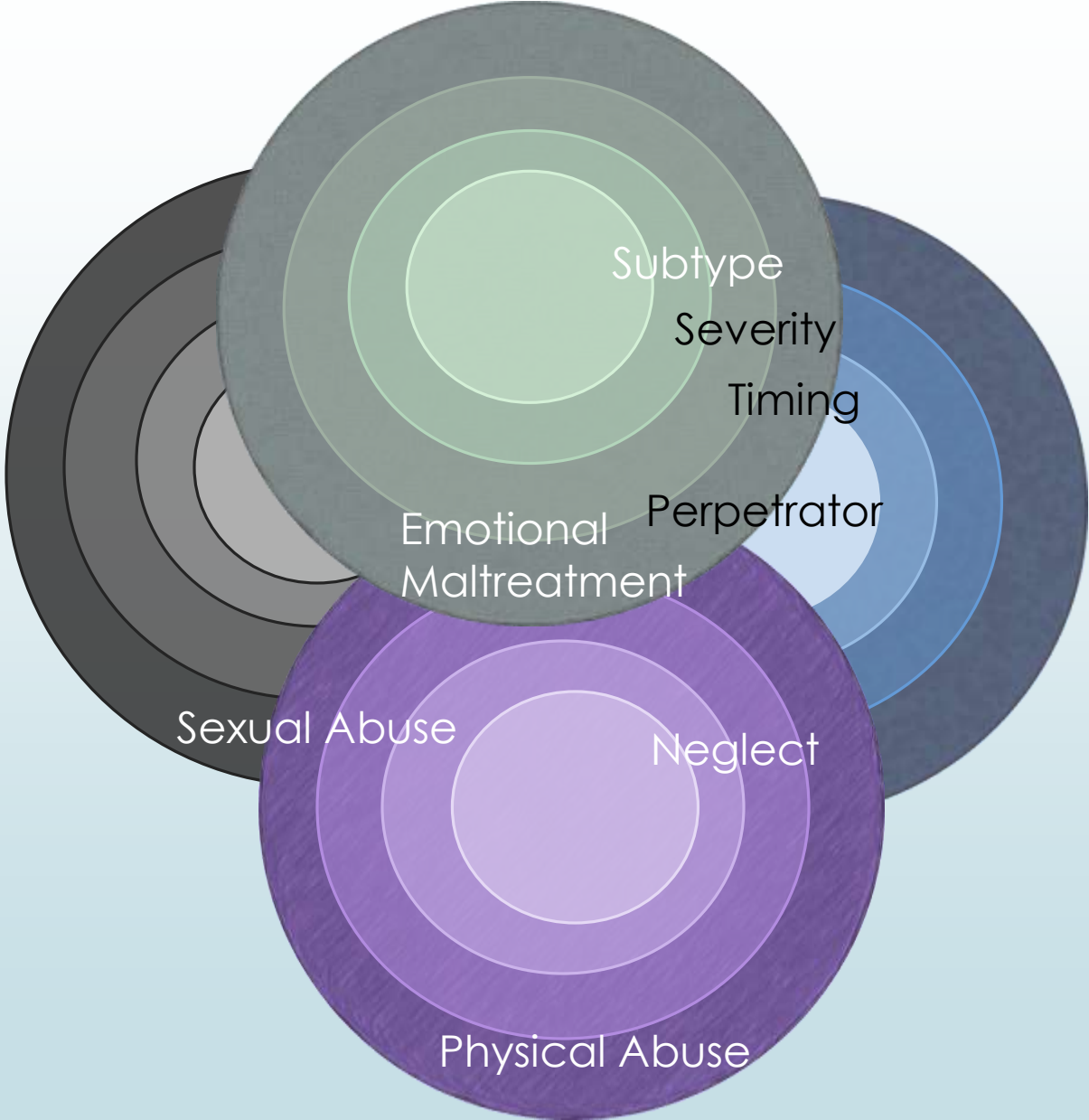
Overlap of subtypes



N=2,292, Ages 5-13

Vachon, Krueger, Rogosch, & Cicchetti, 2015

Nested dimensions within maltreatment



Maltreatment Classification System

1. **Subtype**

- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Physical Neglect
 - Failure to Provide
 - Lack of Supervision
 - Moral-Legal Maltreatment
 - Educational Neglect
- Emotional Maltreatment

Physical Neglect Failure to Provide

Caregiver or responsible adult fails to exercise a minimum degree of care in meeting the child's physical needs.

Note: Distinguish from poverty



Physical Neglect

Lack of Supervision (LOS)

Caregiver or responsible adult does not take adequate precautions to ensure a child's safety in and out of the home, given the child's particular emotional and developmental needs.

- exposure to dangerous situations
- failing to take adequate precautions to evaluate the child's safety

Consider in terms of endangerment

Moral-Legal/Educational Maltreatment

Any behaviors on the part of the caregiver or responsible adult that fail to demonstrate a minimum degree of care in assisting the child to integrate with the expectations of society,

- failing to ensure the child's adequate education
- exposing or involving the child in illegal activity



Take away considerations

- Maltreatment is a heterogeneous phenomenon with multiple dimensions
- Although subtypes have received the most research attention, most maltreated children experience multiple subtypes.
- Therefore, we need to be cautious in considering the confounds among single subtype occurrence and extensiveness of maltreatment via multiple subtypes.
- Researchers have wrestled for decades over definitional issues regarding neglect, especially when neglect derives from omission rather than commission behaviors.
- Although these dimensions are complex and interrelated, increased specificity in definitions and dimensional considerations are likely to result in more precise empirical conclusions.



Thanks for coming/listening!

