

EFFECTS OF CHILD NEGLECT ON CHILDREN

JULIE L. CROUCH

JOEL S. MILNER

Northern Illinois University

This article reviews empirical studies investigating the effects of child neglect on children's development. A number of methodological problems inherent in the study of child neglect are described and discussed in terms of their impact on our ability to interpret existing findings. Empirical findings are organized according to domains of development, including physical, intellectual, social, behavioral, and affective functioning. Throughout the review, a developmental perspective is suggested as a means of conceptualizing neglect and understanding its impact on the developing child.

Although there has been a burgeoning of research interest concerning the effects of physical abuse (for reviews see Augoustinos, 1987; Friedrich & Einbender, 1983; Lamphear, 1985) and sexual abuse on children (for reviews see Beitchman, Zucker, Hood, daCosta, & Akman, 1991; Beitchman et al., 1992; Browne & Finkelhor, 1986; Wolfe, Wolfe, & Best, 1988), interest in the effects of child neglect has developed more slowly. A search of the literature revealed no summaries of research related specifically to victim effects associated with child neglect, albeit some reviews have covered both physical child abuse and child neglect. The absence of a published review on the effects of child neglect may be due in part to the paucity of empirical work in the area. Subsequently, this attempt to review the child neglect victim effects literature begins with a discussion of

AUTHORS' NOTE: *Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Joel S. Milner, Family Violence Research Program, Department of Psychology, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115-2892.*

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conceptual and methodological problems that have impeded research progress. Then, existing findings and gaps in the research exploring the effects of child neglect are described.

CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Examination of the literature reveals that many studies exploring child neglect victim effects focus on child "maltreatment" groups for which inclusion criteria tend to be broad. In many studies, subject groups are composed of both child neglect cases as well as child physical abuse cases leaving the relationship between child neglect and developmental outcomes unclear. Further, within some individual cases of child maltreatment children experience neglect concurrent with abuse (e.g., Allen & Oliver, 1982; Daro & McCurdy, 1991; Kaufman & Cicchetti, 1989), suggesting that these individuals may constitute yet another group worthy of study.

Difficulties in establishing neglect definitions for research purposes also stem from a lack of recognition that subtypes may exist within neglect. Zuravin and Taylor (1987) have described eight categories of neglect, which include lack of physical health care, lack of medical health care, inadequate supervision, child abandonment, shelter hazards, lack of household sanitation, lack of hygiene, and lack of nutrition. Other common forms of child neglect include educational and emotional neglect. Also, within these specific types, subdivisions have been proposed. For example, within the domain of emotional maltreatment, Baily and Baily (1986) have proposed 16 definitions of different forms of emotional maltreatment that bridge neglect and physical abuse. Finally, within subtypes there has been little attention given to degrees of severity or chronicity of neglect.

In addition to definitional difficulties, there has been a historic lack of attention to the development of theory in the area of child neglect. Although attention to developing etiological models of child neglect may be increasing (e.g., Crittenden, 1993 [this issue]; Dubowitz, Black, Starr, & Zuravin, 1993 [this issue]), it is notable that few studies on the effects of child neglect have been guided by comprehensive theory.

Beyond these definitional and theoretical issues, subject recruitment practices also have important implications for the study of child neglect. As a matter of convenience, researchers often rely solely on social service agencies for recruiting subjects, resulting in the formation of subject groups whose validity is dependent on the confirmation process employed by the supplying agency. This issue may be particularly problematic given anecdotal evidence that suggests that protective services workers sometimes confirm child neglect when physical child abuse is suspected but cannot be confirmed. To the extent that such confirmation problems exist, studies designed to discern the independent effects of neglect may be confounded by unconfirmed experiences of other forms of maltreatment.

Another difficulty related to the use of social service referrals as a primary source of neglect subjects is the homogeneity of cases studied. More specifically, studies that solicit subjects through social service systems typically describe their neglect groups as being composed of single parent, lower socioeconomic status (SES) families, with mothers who report 12 or fewer years of education (e.g., Allen & Oliver, 1982; Crittenden & DiLalla, 1988; Hoffman-Plotkin & Twentyman, 1984). This consistency in subject group composition across studies of child neglect limits the generalizability of findings, as well as raises the possibility that demographic factors may confound results in studies that lack adequately matched comparison subjects.

Beyond these issues, other problems in design, sampling, and measurement may be noted in the literature exploring the effects of child neglect. First, although more stringent criteria for group membership are desirable, when such are employed sample sizes are often greatly reduced (e.g., Allen & Oliver, 1982, neglect $n = 7$; Dietrich, Starr, & Weisfeld, 1983, neglect $n = 6$) limiting statistical power, reliability, and generalizability of study findings. Second, although the inclusion of matched comparison groups is desirable, such is often not accomplished in existing studies of the effects of neglect. Third, the common reliance on retrospective self-reports or official records as a means of identifying maltreatment status has limited the meaningfulness of many studies in this area. Finally, dependent measures employed in the study of child neglect are often not standardized, making replication and interpretation of outcomes difficult.

This review attempts to highlight studies that distinguished neglect from other forms of maltreatment (i.e., physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse) in order to address the question of whether the experience of childhood neglect has unique developmental correlates. In addition, emphasis is placed on the use of comparison groups (matched on age, gender, and race of child, as well as SES of family) in an effort to enhance the clinical meaningfulness of effects reported. Also included are studies in which subject matching was not achieved but statistical control for systematic differences between groups was attempted. In cases where neither adequate matching nor statistical control were evident, appropriate qualifications are mentioned. Given the many methodological concerns inherent in the neglect literature, caution is warranted when interpreting and generalizing from findings summarized in this review.

DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE

The effects of certain “neglectful” parental behaviors on the child may depend on the child’s needs at the time of the omission. Similarly, understanding neglect from the perspective of its endangering effects on the child presupposes an understanding of what is adequate development as well as what are the necessary and sufficient conditions for fostering such growth. Given the importance of developmental considerations in efforts to define and understand the effects of neglect, a developmental perspective is suggested as an organizational framework for the study of child neglect.

The developmental perspective used in this review emphasizes that the developing individual is embedded in, and dynamically interactive with, a social context (Lerner, 1988). In addition, the process of development is viewed as remaining relatively plastic throughout life, and changes in either the person or the context may serve to alter the course of development for the individual. Hence, from a developmental perspective, understanding the effect of neglect on children requires not only understanding the nature of the “neglectful” omission, but also understanding the child’s developmental needs, and the dynamic interaction between these two factors. While the following review is organized by domains of functioning, where possible at-

tempts have been made within domains to present the empirical findings sequentially with regard to developmental stages (e.g., infancy, preschool, school age, and adolescent).

PHYSICAL EFFECTS OF NEGLECT

Studies of the impact of neglect on the physical well-being of the child have most often focused on the earliest stages of life. A child's need for a safe and nourishing environment begins even prior to conception and continues throughout pregnancy, raising the potential for neglect to occur prior to birth. Thus preconception health-related behaviors in the mother (e.g., use of drugs that remain stored in the body for long periods of time) can effect the quality of the in utero environment for a newly created life. Failure to meet preconception and prenatal needs may result in varying degrees of damage to the developing fetus. Consistent with a developmental perspective, the nature and extent of damage will depend on the interaction of the type and severity of neglect and the stage of development of the fetus at the time of the neglect.

At birth the infant's need for continued provision of a safe and nourishing environment remains paramount. Experiences of nutritional and/or psychosocial deprivation during infancy often result in a recognizable clinical disorder that is referred to as failure-to-thrive (FTT) syndrome. As early as 1949, Bakwin, through his observations of emotionally deprived hospitalized infants, described the FTT syndrome as being manifested by a significant growth delay with certain postural (poor muscle tone, unhappy facial expressions, persistence of infantile postures) and behavioral signs (minimal smiling, decreased vocalizations, general unresponsiveness).

Subcategories of the FTT syndrome have been proposed. For example, organic failure-to-thrive (OFTT) describes FTT that is caused by organic factors, whereas nonorganic failure-to-thrive (NOFTT) refers to occurrences of this clinical syndrome for which no organic cause may be found. In the case of NOFTT, psychosocial neglect (e.g., isolation, lack of stimulation) is thought to be the underlying cause. Evidence of differences between NOFTT and normally developing infants in psychosocial experiences has been demonstrated. For ex-

ample, Drotar, Eckerle, Satola, Pallotta, and Wyatt (1990) compared interactional patterns of mother-infant dyads involving infants with histories of NOFTT to those involving infants demonstrating normal development. These authors reported that mothers of NOFTT infants had less adaptive social interactional behavior, less positive affective behavior, and more arbitrary termination of feedings. These and similar findings have led some researchers to conceptualize NOFTT as a manifestation of a form of neglect whose key feature is a breakdown in caretaker-child interaction. Nevertheless, others have emphasized the importance of recognizing the potential diversity of factors (both organic and nonorganic) that may interact in the etiology of any given child's failure to thrive (Ayoub & Milner, 1985; Goldbloom, 1982).

INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Neglected children, when compared with matched comparison children, have been reported to demonstrate deficits on measures of language ability and intelligence. Dietrich et al. (1983) reported that infants who experienced failure-to-thrive in conjunction with physical abuse, as compared to matched nonmaltreated comparison infants, exhibited significant delays on measures of mental and motor ability. In contrast, infants who experienced neglect alone or physical abuse alone did not differ from the matched comparison subjects. Although study limitations should be noted (i.e., small neglect sample, $n = 6$; significance of differences between groups in racial composition unknown), Dietrich et al. (1983) interpreted their results as suggesting that serious delays in mental and psychomotor functioning may not inevitably occur in neglected infants, but rather may only be manifest in cases of severe maltreatment (i.e., combined abuse and neglect).

Qualitative differences in social cognitions between neglected, physically abused, and nonmaltreated youth have also been reported. For example, Smetana, Kelly, and Twentyman (1984) found that neglected preschool children were more likely than their physically abused and nonmaltreated counterparts to judge the unfair distribution of resources to be unconditionally wrong for themselves. Also, neglected children differed from physically abused and nonmaltreated

children in that they did not alter their judgments concerning the amount of punishment deserved when the recipients were to be themselves versus others. As the authors noted, these findings underscore the importance of acknowledging the existence of various types of maltreatment in research on victim effects as a means of better understanding the unique sequela of particular maltreatment experiences.

With regard to language ability, Allen and Oliver (1982) compared the ability of maltreatment status (abused, neglected, abused and neglected, and nonmaltreated preschool children) to predict measures of language ability in preschool children and reported that only neglect emerged as a significant predictor for measures of auditory comprehension and verbal ability. The authors interpreted these findings as suggesting that neglect may be a critical, although frequently unrecognized, feature in the often reported relationship between maltreatment and language delays.

Fox, Long, and Langlois (1988) also reported significant differences in language comprehension skills between groups of preschool and school-age children who were either physically abused, generally neglected (i.e., no physical injury to child occurred as a result of neglect), or severely neglected (i.e., child's person or health was endangered or damaged as a result of neglect). According to Fox et al., the severely neglected group scored significantly lower than nonmaltreated comparisons on tests of language comprehension. More specifically, nonmaltreated children demonstrated the highest language comprehension ability, followed by the generally neglected and physically abused groups respectively, with the severely neglected children earning the lowest scores. These findings support the need to consider severity when exploring the relationship between neglect and developmental impacts. Caution in interpreting these results, however, is warranted because only minimal attempts were made to match groups on demographic variables and the authors do not report whether significant differences between groups existed on demographic factors.

Gender differences in the effects of neglect on the intellectual development of children have been noted. Rogeness, Amrung, Macedo, Harris, and Fisher (1986) compared IQ scores of school-age children admitted to psychiatric hospitals who had been either neglected, physically abused, or had received no maltreatment. For boys, the

neglected group, compared to the physically abused and no maltreatment groups, earned significantly lower full-scale IQ scores, with the lowest subtest scores occurring for the information and vocabulary subtests. For girls, the neglected group did not significantly differ from the physically abused group, with both maltreatment groups scoring lower than the no maltreatment group. Although gender differences have not received much attention in the literature on neglect, these findings suggest the usefulness of considering gender issues when exploring potential effects of various types of maltreatment. However, these interpretations are tenuous given the possibility that differences between groups with regard to SES, race, and levels of parental pathology may have confounded study results.

With regard to academic performance, it has been suggested that neglected children, similar to other groups of maltreated children, demonstrate difficulties in school performance and adjustment. Wodarski, Kurtz, Gaudin, and Howing (1990) reported that neglected school-age and adolescent children, in comparison to nonmaltreated counterparts, displayed severe academic delays. More specifically, the neglected youth obtained lower scores on composite measures of overall school performance, as well as on tests of language, reading, and math skills. It must be noted that subject groups were not matched on a number of demographic variables (e.g., race, family size, and maternal age), limiting the interpretability of these results. Although the study limitations make conclusions based on this study speculative, the Wodarski et al. findings suggest a relationship between childhood neglect and risk for academic difficulties. The possibility for potential long-range effects of neglect is consistent with the developmental perspective that suggests that early changes in a child's intellectual and linguistic abilities as a result of neglect may effect the dynamic interaction between the child and environment in such a manner that later academic, social, and behavioral difficulties become more likely.

In summary, frequently cited sequelae of neglect include delays in intellectual and linguistic abilities, which have been noted as early as infancy and appear to continue into adolescence. It has been suggested that a lack of stimulation inherent in certain forms of neglect may be responsible for the occurrence of such delays in neglected children (e.g., Allen & Oliver, 1982). Existing research not only suggests that

relationships exist between neglect and certain cognitive abilities, but also illustrates the importance of considering issues of gender and severity of neglect when exploring these relationships. However, the fact that many of the studies in this domain failed to control for important demographic variables (e.g., SES, race) makes it difficult to discern any independent effects attributable to child neglect.

SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL DEVELOPMENT

Numerous researchers have reported a relationship between childhood neglect and an increased frequency of insecure patterns of infant-caretaker attachment (Crittenden, 1992; Egeland & Sroufe, 1981; Lamb, Gaensbauer, Malkin, & Schultz, 1985; Schneider-Rosen & Cicchetti, 1984). Specifically, neglected children, compared to non-maltreated children, have been reported to display higher frequencies of avoidant and resistant attachments to their primary caretaker. Lamb et al. (1985) also observed that neglected toddlers were similar to physically abused counterparts in their frequency of avoidant and resistant attachments. Other researchers have found neglected preschool and school-age children, compared to nonmaltreated counterparts, to be more passive (Crittenden, 1992), to display fewer overtures of affection, and to produce less frequent initiations of play behavior in interactions with their mothers (Bousha & Twentyman, 1984).

In addition to differences in attachment behaviors, neglected children have been reported to adopt notably different styles of social interaction with peers. For example, Crittenden (1992) reported that neglected preschool and school-age children tended to remain isolated during opportunities for free play with other children. Similarly, Hoffman-Plotkin and Twentyman (1984) found that neglected preschool children, compared to either nonmaltreated or physically abused counterparts, displayed significantly fewer interactions during classroom observations. Also, Hoffman-Plotkin and Twentyman found neglected preschoolers to be similar to physically abused children in that both groups exhibited significantly fewer prosocial behaviors than did nonmaltreated comparisons. Egeland, Sroufe, and Erickson (1983) reported that direct observations of social interactions revealed that

neglected preschool children differed from nonmaltreated comparisons, in that the neglected children were more apathetic, withdrawn, and dependent in their social interactions.

Although attempts were made to match subject groups on some demographic variables in each of the reviewed studies exploring the social development of the neglected child, remaining study limitations make interpretation of these results difficult (e.g., incomplete matching with regard to education and IQ of mother, Crittenden, 1992; lack of information regarding matching on variables such as gender of child, Bousha & Twentyman, 1984, Egeland et al., 1983; and contamination of the neglect group with concurrent forms of maltreatment, Schneider-Rosen & Cicchetti, 1984). Although qualified by these study limitations, the reviewed studies describe neglected infants and preschool children as being withdrawn, isolated, and passive in interactions with others. In comparing this social style with coping styles of other groups of maltreated children, Crittenden (1992) suggested that changes in neglected children, such that they "turn away from people altogether," detrimentally effects the dynamic interaction between child and environment to such a degree that neglected children are placed at the highest risk for maladaptive development. As Crittenden noted, "their behavior neither improves their present situation nor promotes the possibility of improved coping in the future" (p. 341).

Several authors have suggested that neglected children, although initially passive in social interactions, become increasingly difficult behaviorally as they develop under the care of neglectful but not physically abusive parents (Crittenden & DiLalla, 1988; Egeland et al., 1983). Supporting this view, neglectful mothers compared to nonmaltreating mothers appeared to rate their children as having more behavior problems (Rohrbeck & Twentyman, 1986; Williamson, Borduin, & Howe, 1991). Similarly, in a cross-cultural study, school-age neglected children in Spain, compared to nonmaltreated children, were rated by their teachers as having more externalizing behavior problems (DePaul, 1992).

While collateral reports suggest that neglected children demonstrate behavioral difficulties, empirical evidence validating these reports and clarifying the nature of the behavior problems is needed. For example, in direct observation, Rohrbeck and Twentyman (1986)

failed to find differences between neglected preschool children and matched comparison children on measures of impulsivity. A similar finding was reported by Egeland et al. (1983), who noted that preschool children who were both neglected and physically abused were significantly more hyperactive and distractible than nonmaltreated children. However, children who experienced only neglect did not differ from nonmaltreated controls on measures of impulsiveness. These findings suggest that although neglectful parents may perceive their children's behavior as more demanding, the experience of neglect alone may not be related to child impulsivity.

With regard to levels of aggressiveness, Bousha and Twentyman (1984) directly observed interactions of mother-child dyads and reported that both neglected and physically abused preschool and school-age children displayed greater amounts of physical and verbal aggression in interactions with their mothers than with their nonmaltreated counterparts. Similarly, Reidy (1977) reported that teacher ratings of aggression revealed that neglected school-age children were viewed as similar to physically abused counterparts in that both were judged to be more aggressive in school interactions than nonmaltreated children. In the same study, however, Reidy noted that neglected children did not differ from nonmaltreated peers in aggressiveness in free play observations and measures of fantasy aggression, although physically abused youngsters obtained significantly elevated scores on both these measures. Similarly, Kaufman and Cicchetti (1989) noted that although each of their maltreated groups of school-age children (neglected, emotionally and physically abused) scored lower than comparison children on measures of prosocial behavior, only physically abused children scored significantly higher than controls on measures of aggression.

In summary, mixed findings regarding the relationship between neglect and behavioral difficulties and aggression in preschool and school-age children have been reported. Interestingly, few studies exploring the relationship between childhood behavioral difficulties and experiences of neglect have considered the potential for gender differences in this area, although exceptions may be noted. For example, in exploring the relative effects of gender and neglect on measures of social behaviors, Kaufman and Cicchetti (1989) failed to find significant interactions between gender and maltreatment status (the

detection of which may have been prohibited by small sample sizes) but reported main effects for gender, such that boys received higher ratings of aggressiveness and girls higher ratings of prosocial behaviors. Such findings suggest that consideration of gender may be important in studies exploring the relationship between neglect and aggressive behavior.

Several researchers have been interested in the relationship between a childhood experience of neglect and later delinquent behavior. In a correlational study, Brown (1984) examined adolescent subjects' self-reports of delinquent behavior and their parents' retrospective responses to a questionnaire designed to measure qualities of child rearing (including dimensions of neglect, and emotional and physical abuse) and reported that childhood experiences of neglect were positively related to all forms of self-reported delinquency. In contrast, Henggeler, McKee, and Borduin (1989) reported that adolescent delinquents with a history of neglect did not differ from delinquents without a history of neglect on familial characteristics and behavioral variables, leading these authors to suggest that the psychosocial functioning of the delinquent may not be differentially associated with childhood experiences of neglect.

In an attempt to provide prospective data regarding the relationship between neglect and subsequent antisocial behavior, Widom (1989) and Rivera and Widom (1992) examined official records of childhood abuse and neglect and subsequent records of adult criminal activities. These authors reported that neglected, as well as physically abused children, compared to matched nonmaltreated counterparts, have a higher likelihood of arrests for delinquency, adult criminality, and violent criminal behavior. Examination of gender differences revealed that only males who experienced childhood abuse and neglect were at higher risk for later violent criminal activity (Rivera & Widom, 1992).

In addition, Rivera and Widom (1992) reported that increased risk of later violent criminal activity was found to vary across races. Blacks who had experienced childhood neglect and/or abuse, compared to Blacks who had not experienced childhood maltreatment, were at higher risk of subsequent violent offending. In contrast, Whites maltreated in childhood did not differ from nonmaltreated Whites in their risk for violent criminal activity in adulthood. Interestingly, Rivera

and Widom noted that recent official reports indicated that Black families, compared to White families, are characterized by a higher incidence of neglect and slightly lower incidence of other forms of abuse.

Despite their increased risk, Widom (1989) noted that the majority of neglected and physically abused individuals do not later engage in criminal activity. According to Widom, these findings suggest that the link between childhood abuse and neglect and later antisocial behavior is far from inevitable. Hence, better understanding of the factors that buffer neglected children from long-term negative effects appears to be warranted.

AFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT

Egeland and Sroufe (1981), in a longitudinal study of families at risk for maltreatment, reported a number of differences in socioemotional status between 2-year-old children who experienced neglect, both neglect and physical abuse, and comparison children who received no maltreatment. Both neglect-only and neglect-with-physical-abuse groups displayed more negative and less positive affect compared to nonmaltreated children. Children in the neglect-only group, compared to comparison and neglect-with-physical-abuse groups, displayed more anger, and children in the neglect-with-physical-abuse group, compared to children in the other two groups, displayed more frustration. Egeland and Sroufe suggested that although the physically abused child may adopt a more compliant and pleasing presence as a means of avoiding physical retaliation, neglected children who are not routinely physically threatened may more directly express anger toward their caretaker's unresponsiveness. In a follow-up of these children at 42 months, Egeland et al. (1983) reported that in addition to more negative affective states, the neglected children, compared to children who had experienced other forms of maltreatment, were less flexible and less creative in their approaches to problem-solving tasks. In addition, the neglect-only children were reported to display less effective coping behavior.

In summarizing observations from their longitudinal research, Egeland et al. (1983) described their neglected subjects as the most unhappy of the maltreated children and as experiencing a number of difficulties in effectively coping with their environments. Although the longitudinal work of Egeland and his colleagues suggests distinct developmental difficulties as a result of the experience of neglect, interpretation of their findings is limited by the lack of operational definitions of a number of the dependent measures and insufficient information on demographic variables on which subject groups were matched.

Given the suggested differences in general affective states and coping skills, researchers have questioned whether neglected children experience differential rates of psychopathology as compared to nonmaltreated children. To explore this possibility, Rogeness et al. (1986) examined the frequencies of diagnoses assigned to neglected, physically abused, and nonmaltreated school-age children and adolescents admitted to psychiatric hospitals. Both neglected and physically abused boys, compared to nonmaltreated counterparts, had a higher frequency of conduct disorder diagnoses, with the neglected boys having significantly more undersocialized-type classifications. In addition, neglected boys were more frequently rated as displaying impaired relatedness as compared to physically abused and nonmaltreated subjects. For girls, no differences in frequency of conduct disorder diagnoses were reported between neglected and nonmaltreated subjects, and a higher rate of conduct disorder diagnoses was found for physically abused girls. Rogeness et al. reported that differences in frequencies of child psychopathology remained after adjustments controlling for differences on SES and race were made. However, differences between groups with regard to levels of parental pathology were not controlled (e.g., parents of neglected children had higher rates of mental illness), limiting the interpretability of the reported relationships between neglect and later development of psychopathology.

In a study employing matched subject groups, Williamson et al. (1991) found that neglected adolescents, compared to nonmaltreated youths, obtained higher global scores on a checklist of psychiatric symptoms. With respect to depressive disorders, Kaufman (1991) reported significant relationships between experiences of physical and

emotional abuse and levels of depression in school-age children but failed to find an association between neglect and depression scores.

In summary, current findings suggest that neglected children experience more negative affective states and increased coping difficulties. Although some have noted a relationship between neglect and increased frequency of specific types of psychopathology (e.g., conduct disorder), it is unclear whether such relationships would remain significant when other factors (e.g., SES) are controlled.

SUMMARY

The developmental impacts of experiences of neglect remain poorly understood, despite data that suggest that neglect is the most frequently reported category of maltreatment in the United States (comprising approximately 46% of all reported cases of maltreatment in 1990; Daro & McCurdy, 1991). As noted throughout this review, numerous conceptual and definitional difficulties have impeded research exploring the sequelae of child neglect. These conceptual concerns highlight the need for continued scholarly efforts aimed at developing and promoting the use of classification systems that organize subtypes of neglect in a developmentally sensitive fashion. Adoption of such a classification system might facilitate systematic exploration of the differential impacts of the subtypes of neglect on the developing child.

In addition to these broad conceptual issues, existing empirical studies of the effects of child neglect serve to highlight a number of directions for further research. At the most basic level, the limited number of studies in this area indicate the need for additional studies that attempt to assess the effects of neglect independent of other forms of maltreatment. Previous research also suggests that severity of neglect, as well as the possibility of racial and gender differences, are important considerations when attempting to discern the impacts associated with neglect. Finally, recruitment of neglect subject groups from ecological systems other than those tapped through social service referrals may help broaden our understanding of the developmental impact of neglect.

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