

Niamh at 9 months



Niamh at 3 years



Niamh at 5 years



Child neglect neglected: Could we make better use of teachers' reporting about child neglect?

Ela Polek & Diane Wach



“The Guardian”, 1 August 2013



Daniel Pelka, who died aged 4. Photograph: West Midlands police/EPA

Coventry City Council: *"We are sorry we did not do enough to protect Daniel. The report makes clear that the sharing of information and communications between all agencies was not robust enough (...)."*



Main Research Question

Could we make better use of teachers' reporting about child neglect?

-> comparing rates of suspected neglect reported by teachers in the USA and IE with rates of substantiated neglect



Overview

Introduction

1. Classification of child maltreatment
2. Predictors and outcomes of child physical neglect

Method & Results

4. Samples
5. Socioeconomic status of households with child neglect in the USA & Ireland
6. Model: Generational transmission of child maltreatment and low well-being

Conclusions

7. Methodological implications
8. Policy implications



Classification

(based on “Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children”)

Childhood maltreatment:

- abuse
- neglect
- **Neglect (omission, where a child suffers *significant* harm apparent in different ways *over a period of time*):**
 - emotional
 - educational
 - physical -> lack of or inadequate:
 - » supervision
 - » housing
 - » nutrition
 - » clothing
 - » personal hygiene



Child neglect

- **Neglect is the most common type of maltreatment that children experience.**
- **Neglect follows a continuum from mild to severe.**
 - > The more severe the neglect, the more negative the impact on the children.
- **A study of 87 educators in New York found that educators were less likely to report neglect than any other type of child maltreatment (Reyome, & Gaeddert, 1999).**
- **When considering the possibility of neglect, it is important to establish how consistent it is and if it lasts over an extended period of time.**



Predictors of Child Neglect

- **Common predictors of child neglect include:**
 - inadequate parenting skills,
 - high stress levels,
 - limited knowledge of child development
- **Child neglect is associated with:**
 - poverty,
 - low education,
 - substance abuse,
 - domestic violence,
 - parental mental and physical illness and disability.



Correlates & outcomes

- **One form of maltreatment often co-occurs with other forms**
- **Neuro-Affective Relational Models -> Physical Neglect hinders Psychological as well as Physical Development:**
 - Distortions of identity and self-concept such as shame, chronic self-judgement, low self-esteem
 - Low capacity to connect to self and others



Samples

- **USA: National Incidence Study (NIS-4):**
 - Data collected from community professionals (teachers, social workers, police, nurses, child care providers, child protection services) about children who came to their attention during a few months of data collection (2005/2006)
- **There were 10,791 professionals from 122 counties participating in NIS-4, who submitted data on 6,208 children, as suspected cases of child maltreatment (substantiated or not)**
- **Ireland: GUI, 9-year old cohort (N=8, 568)**



Measures NIS-4

- **USA**

- ***Forms of suspected maltreatment:***

- inadequate nutrition
- clothing
- personal hygiene

Severity levels were coded as (1) Fatal, (2) Serious, (3) Moderate, (4) Assumed Harm, (5) Probable Harm, (6) Endangered, (7) Insufficient Information, and (9) No Harm, Child not Endangered.

- **Various demographic measures:**

- Poverty
- Single-parent status
- Number of children
- Urban vs. rural area



Measures GUI

Risk of neglect – 5 questions to teachers:

How often...

- inadequately dressed for the weather conditions
- too tired to participate as he / she should in class
- without a lunch / snack
- hungry
- with a general lack of cleanliness

Answering scale: 1) never, 2) rarely, 3) sometimes, 4) often, 5) always

• **Various demographic measures:**

- Poverty
- Single-parent status
- Number of children
- Urban vs. rural area



Procedure

- **NIS-4: selected sub-sample of children age 7-12 for whom neglect was reported by a teacher (n=370)**
- **Recoding of GUI and NIS-4 measures to make them comparable**
- **Estimating % of affected children in population:**
 - GUI: grossing weight
 - NIS-4 weights and JK2 method with WesVar



Harm vs Endangerment

- The National Incidence Study (NIS-4) records all reported events of suspected maltreatment using two definitional standards: the more stringent 'Harm Standard' and the broader 'Endangerment Standard'
- In the USA rates of neglect are **7.4** for white, and **14.65** for black children per 1,000 (year 2006, NIS-4)
- In Ireland, the rate of reporting is lower, representing **1.6** referrals per 1,000 children (year 2009)



Child physical neglect in the GUI sample (N=8568):

Harm vs Endangerment

(due to missing values % may not add up to 100)

	Inadequate nutrition		Inadequate clothing		Inadequate cleanliness		Inadequate supervision		Physical neglect (overall)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Always or often <i>Likelihood of harm</i>	50	0.6	69	0.8	56	0.7	110	1.3	210	2.5
Sometimes <i>Endangerment: high risk</i>	427	5.0	194	2.3	132	1.5	468	5.5	1071	12.5
Rarely <i>Endangerment: low risk</i>	439	5.1	473	5.5	216	2.5	1058	12.3	1022	11.9
Never <i>Endangerment: No risk</i>	7652	89.3	7522	87.8	7849	91.6	6620	77.3	6265	73.1



Risk of child neglect in the USA and IE based on teachers' observations

- In the USA (NIS-4 data) estimated % in the population of children aged 9-11 years old was **24.16***
- In Ireland (GUI data) estimated % in the population of children age 9 years old was **20.60***

These rates are much higher than rates of substantiated cases:

do we make best use of teachers' observations?

* Comparison based on 3 indicators: nutrition, cleanliness, clothing



SES of neglectful parents: estimations for American and Irish populations¹

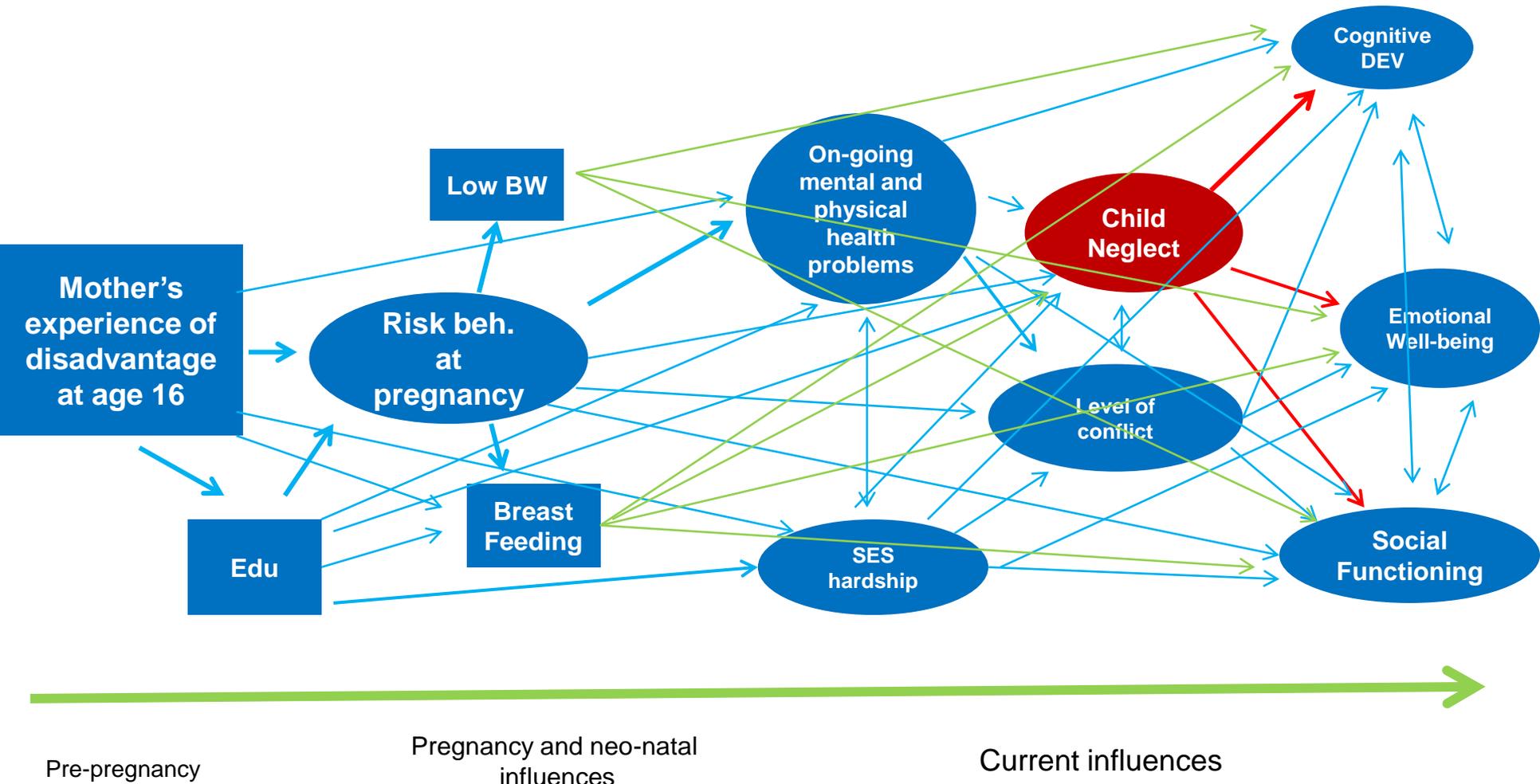
(physical neglect was indicated by lack of adequate clothing, nutrition and cleanliness)

	USA within a given SES category	Ireland within a given SES category
Single parent	11.20%	4.2%
Married biological parents	5.9%	5.9%
More than 3 children	13.21%	1.4%
Poverty in the household	12.58%	1.2%
Non-Irish born mother	N/A	2.2%
Urban area	17.31%	2.5%
Poverty and more than 3 children (combined)	6.94%	1.3%

¹Estimated for Irish population using grossing weight in the GUI and for American population using NIS-4 weights and Jack-knife method with WesVar

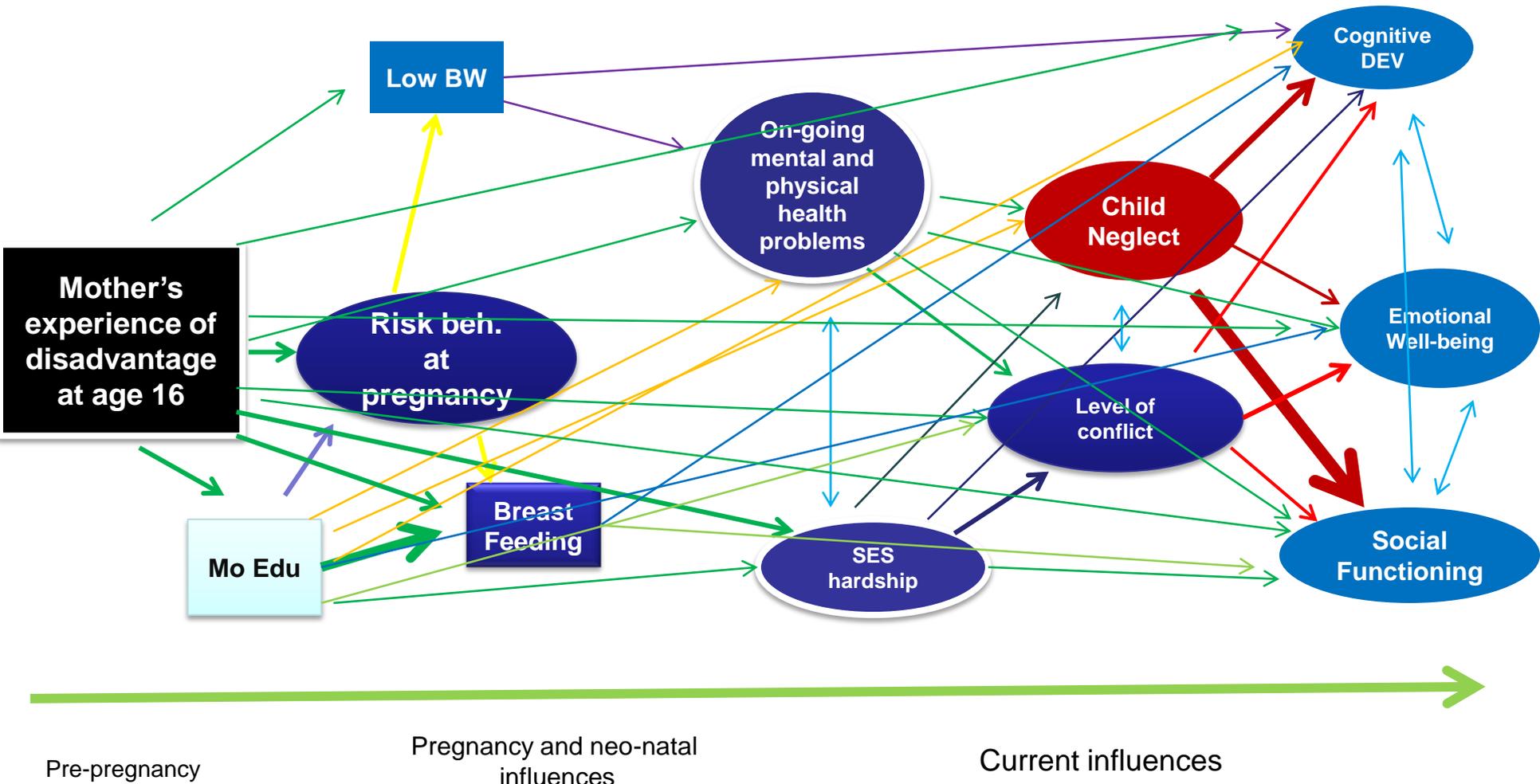


Proximal and distal predictors of child neglect and well-being (GUI)





SEM showing significant pathways (RMSEA=.035, CFI=.953, $X^2 = 270$, $df=23$, $p=.000$)





SEM Results

- **Mother's experience of socioeconomic hardship at age 16 was a *direct* predictor of child cognitive, emotional and social functioning**
- **Mother's experience of socioeconomic hardship at age 16 was a predictor of various family characteristics, which in turn predicted child outcomes**
- **Child neglect was a negative predictor of cognitive, emotional and social development**
- **Child neglect was related to ongoing mental or physical problems in the family, and mother's low education**



Strengths & Limitations: Validity of neglect measure

- **Validity of a child neglect measure in the GUI**
 - Limited number of questions (e.g., lack of questions regarding inadequate child supervision)

Nonetheless:

- ✓ **similar rates of child neglect in GUI and NIS-4 and SES characteristics of neglectful parents constitute a validation of a derived measure of neglect**
- ✓ **An indicator of child neglect was related to measures of child well-being measure and family SES indicators**



Strengths & Limitations: Data comparability

- **Data comparability:**

- Different measures (questions) and answering scales (NIS – severity measurement; GUI – frequency measurement)
- Different data collection methods (GUI was *not* designed to study child neglect)
- Culture influences the way people answer questionnaires (so called “culture-related response bias”)

Nonetheless:

- ✓ **nationally representative and large samples**
- ✓ **collected about the same time**
- ✓ **both include reports about neglect from teachers**
- ✓ **similar indicators of neglect**
- ✓ **similar child age**



Strengths & Limitations: Comparability of societies under study

- **Societal differences between USA and IE:**
 - Different legislation, policy systems -> different notions of child neglect
 - Different society -> different cultural predictors of neglect

Nonetheless: American and Irish cultures are *relatively* similar (e.g. language, historical roots), which increases the validity of comparison



Policy: Prevention as a Strategy

- **Systemic solutions regarding teachers' involvement in population screenings for child maltreatment**
- **Parental education & therapy: parents who neglect their children are likely to be victims of neglect themselves**
 - > combining **corrective actions with education and therapy** could help in breaking the “vicious circle” of generational transmission of child maltreatment



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