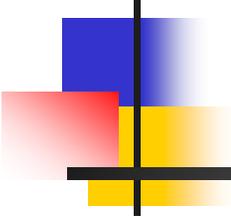


The Effects of Housing on Childcare Adequacy: An Exploratory Analysis

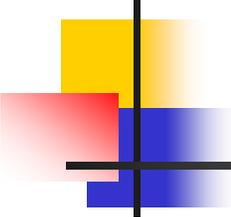


Joy Swanson Ernst, Ph.D., M.S.W.

Megan Meyer, Ph.D., M.S.W.

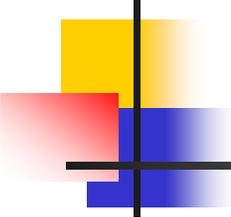
Diane DePanfilis, Ph.D., M.S.W.

7th Annual Society for Social Work Research Conference
Washington, DC
January 19, 2003



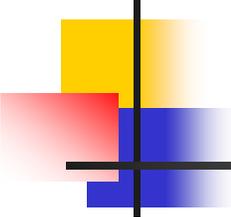
Acknowledgments

- Family Connections is a program of the University of Maryland School of Social Work in collaboration with the School of Medicine.
- Services are provided by MSW interns in faculty field based units in the community.
- Initial funding for Family Connections was provided by the USDHHS, Children's Bureau, Grant No. 90CA1580 -- Diane DePanfilis, Principal Investigator



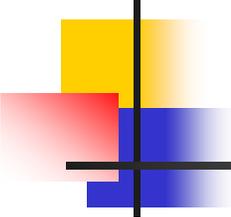
Research Question

- What is the relationship between housing conditions and physical childcare adequacy in a sample of families at risk for child neglect?



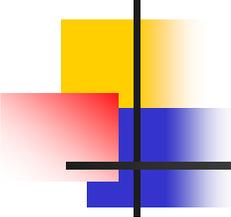
The Housing-Childcare Adequacy Connection

- Few researchers have examined the influence of structural conditions of housing on childcare adequacy.
- Literature reviews published in 1975 and 1985 presented evidence suggesting a relationship between housing and child neglect (Parke & Collmer, 1975; Zuravin, 1985).



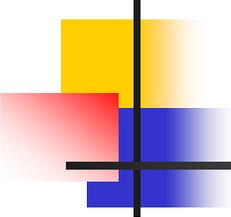
The Housing-Childcare Adequacy Connection

- Examination of living conditions of 182 families involved with metropolitan child welfare agency (Nelson et al., 1993)
 - 20% experienced problems with appliances, overcrowding, or unsafe living conditions
 - 11.5% had problems with rats
 - Families poorer on average than other neighborhood residents



The Housing-Childcare Adequacy Connection

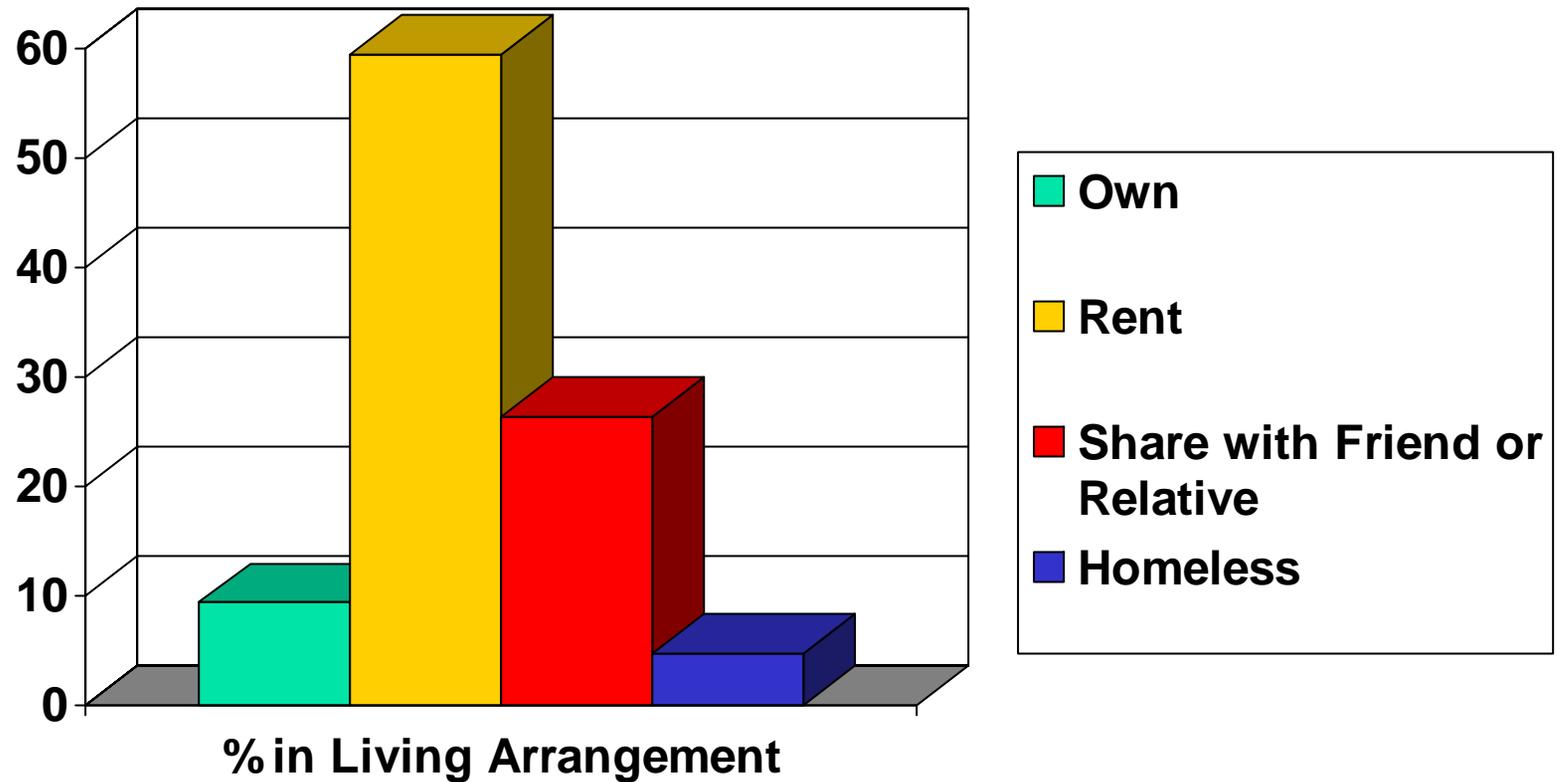
- For 18.4% of 128 Toronto families, housing conditions were one of the factors that resulted in temporary placement of child (Cohen-Schlanger & Fitzpatrick, 1995).
- Child's return home was delayed by housing-related problems in 8.6% of cases.

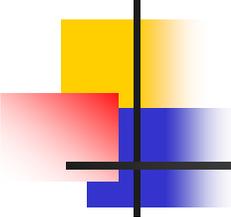


Setting and Sample

- Low income urban neighborhood in East Coast city
- 106 caregivers
 - 105 female caregivers, one male caregiver
 - 86.8% African American
 - Mean age = 36.25
 - Average of 3.1 children in home

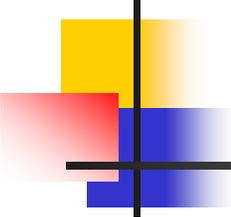
Living Arrangements





Data and Variables: Housing Conditions

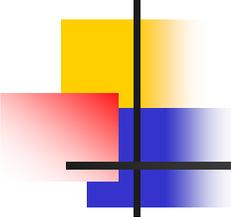
- How often do you experience the following problems in your home?
 - Not enough heat or hot water
 - Stove, refrigerator, or kitchen sink not working
 - Bathroom sink, toilet, or bathtub not working
 - Presence of rats or mice
 - Presence of roaches or other vermin (“bugs”)
 - Loss of at least one essential utility for several days
 - Unsafe or dangerous physical conditions in the home.



Data and Variables: Physical Child Care Adequacy

- Child Well Being Scales*
 - Observational scales
 - Measure of adequacy of child care & quality of parenting role performance
 - Linked to program outcomes - family maintenance and safety, problem solving, social support, & care of children

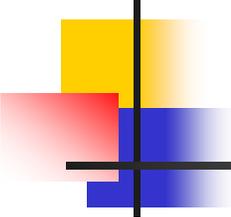
*Magura & Moses, 1986



Data and Variables:

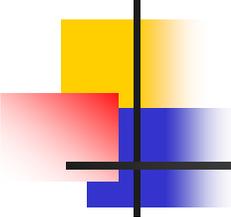
Physical Child Care Adequacy

- Three scales represent caregiver's ability to meet basic needs related to physical care:
 - Nutrition
 - Clothing
 - Personal hygiene
- "Physical care adequacy" variable calculated by summing and taking the average of the respondent's seriousness scores for these scales



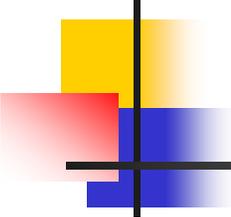
Data Analysis

- Principal components analysis of housing variables
- Hierarchical multiple regression analysis
 - Step 1: Covariates (age, caregiver education, income, total number in household)
 - Step 2: Housing conditions variables



Principal Components Analysis – Housing Variables

- Two factors were retained which accounted for 60.2% of variance
- Factor 1: “Home Essentials”
 - Problems with plumbing, heat and hot water, and working appliances
- Factor 2: “Unsafe Conditions”
 - Unsafe conditions, loss of utilities, presence of household pests
- Factor scores created



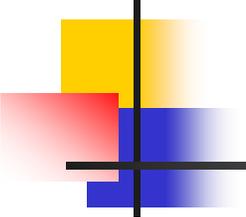
Regression Variables

- Independent

- Covariates
 - Age
 - Caregiver Education
 - Income
 - Total # in Household
- Housing Variables
 - Home Essentials
 - Unsafe Conditions

- Dependent

- Physical child care adequacy
 - Nutrition
 - Clothing
 - Personal Hygiene

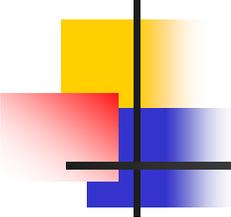


Results: Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Relationship
between Housing Variables and Physical Child Care Adequacy (N=106)

Variable	B	SE	Beta
<i>Step 1</i>			
Caregiver Age	.030	.083	.039
Caregiver Education	-.462	.457	-.103
Total # in Household	-.396	.413	-.094
Total Income	.000	.000	.183
<i>Step 2</i>			
Caregiver Age	.011	.081	.015
Caregiver Education	-.458	.445	-.102
Total # in Household	-.176	.409	-.042
Total Income	.000	.000	.151
Home Essentials Factor	.431	1.42	.032
Unsafe Conditions Factor	-3.805	1.45	-.284*

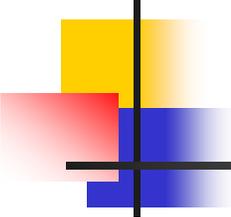
Note: $R^2 = .053$ for Step 1; R^2 change = .069 for Step 2 ($p = .024$).

* $p < .05$



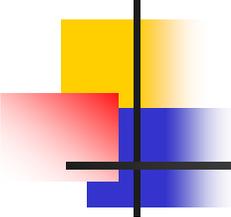
Results

- Caregivers who experienced more unsafe housing conditions were less likely to meet the nutritional, clothing, and personal hygiene needs of their children.



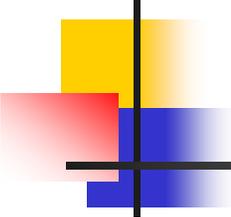
Discussion

- Lack of decent, affordable housing is endemic to highly stressed urban areas
- Families have to make do with inadequate housing that may be in poor repair
- As housing conditions worsen, the ability of “at risk” families to adequately care for their children may decrease



Implications for social work practice and education

- Child Neglect Prevention Programs should address housing inadequacies along with personal deficiencies of parents
- Child welfare workforce should be educated about housing problems and trained in housing-related advocacy



Further Information

Copies of these slides and other information about Family Connections are available at:

<http://www.family.umaryland.edu>

