



# Abuse and neglect – a recipe for disaster or a chance to thrive?

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We all know that abuse and  
neglect is associated with  
psychiatric problems



For example...

Schizophrenia Research 228 (2021) 159–179



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Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Schizophrenia Research

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/schres](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/schres)



Types, prevalence and gender differences of childhood trauma in first-episode psychosis. What is the evidence that childhood trauma is related to symptoms and functional outcomes in first episode psychosis?  
A systematic review



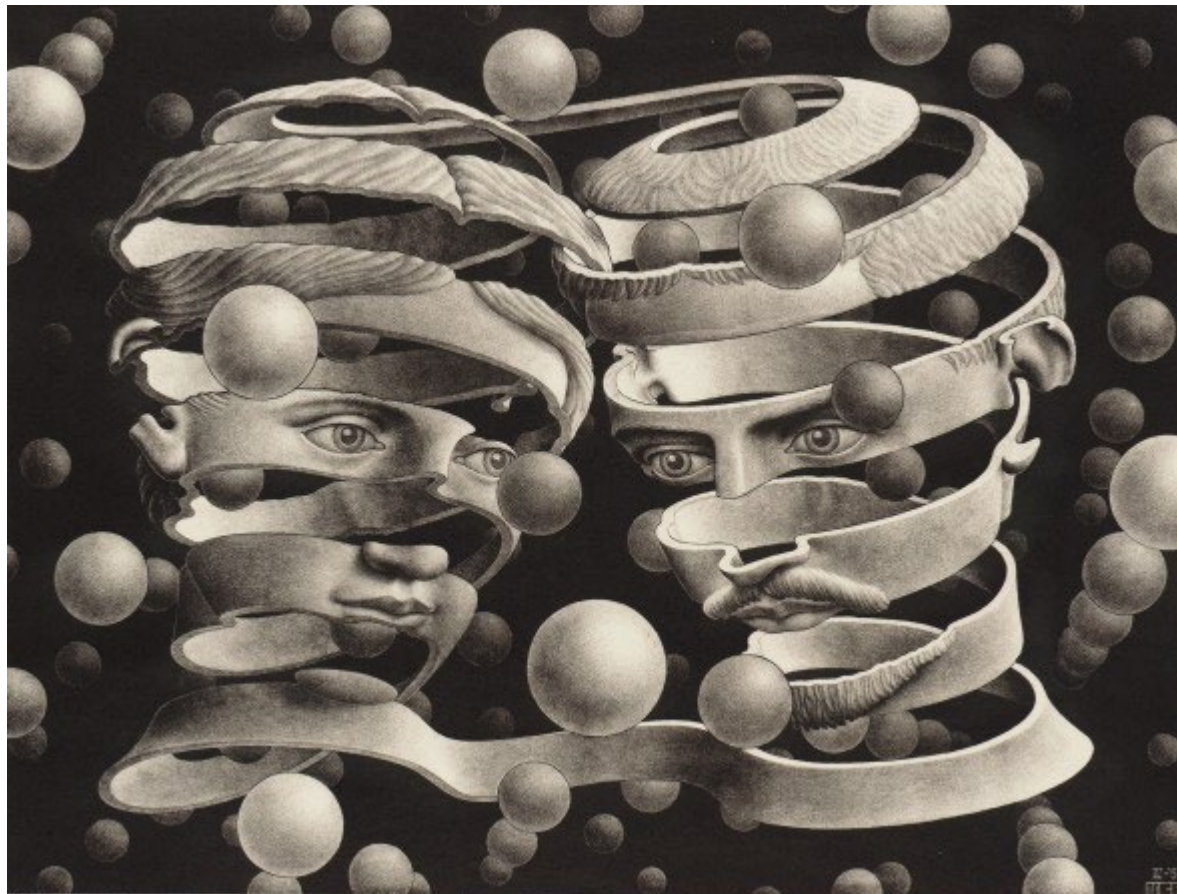
Regina Vila-Badia <sup>a,b,\*</sup>, Anna Butjosa <sup>c</sup>, Núria Del Cacho <sup>a,b</sup>, Clara Serra-Arumí <sup>a,b</sup>, Marina Esteban-Sanjusto <sup>a</sup>, Susana Ochoa <sup>a</sup>, Judith Usall <sup>a</sup>

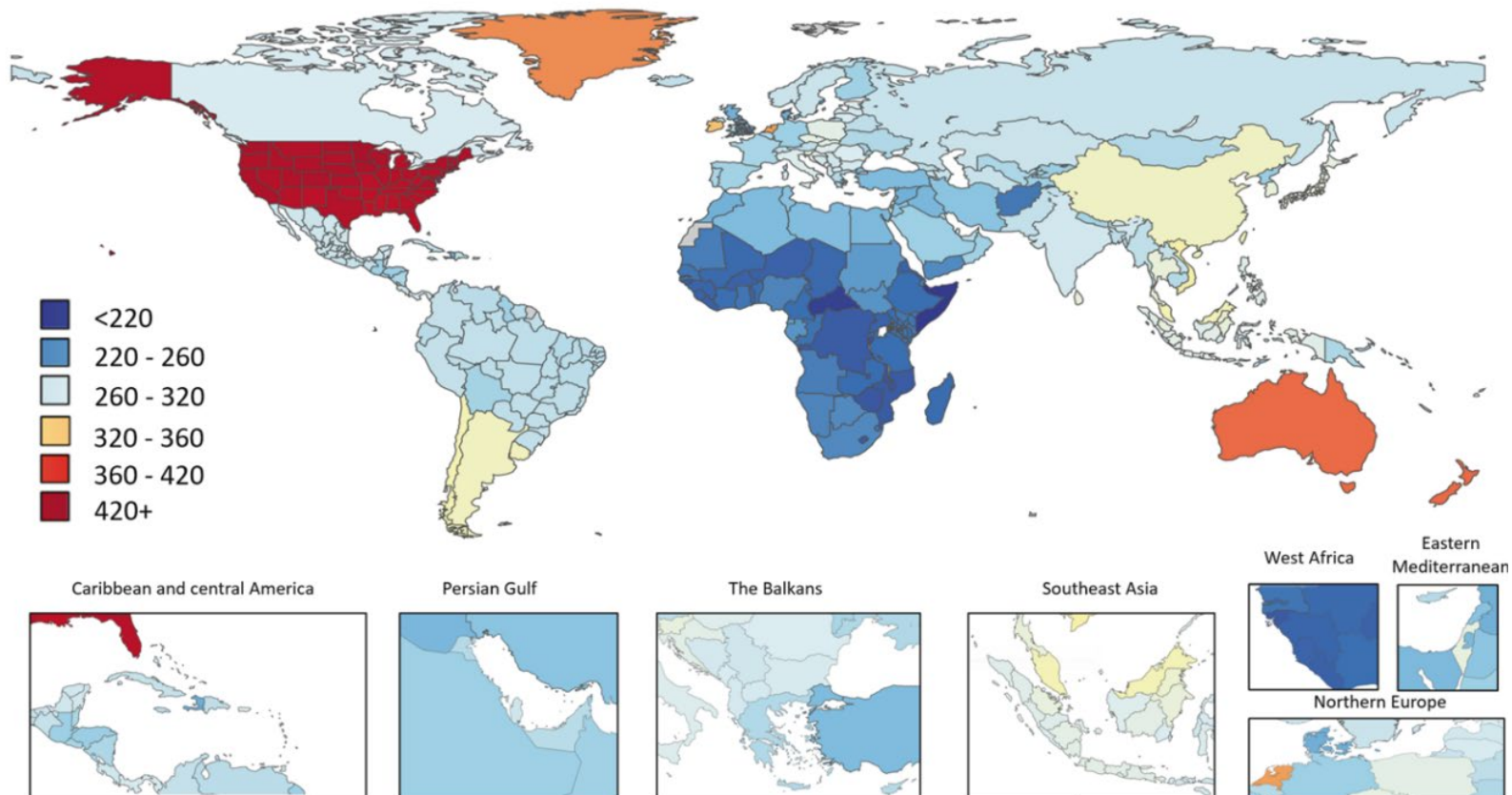
“a high prevalence of childhood trauma in first-episode psychosis.”





But then things get a little strange...

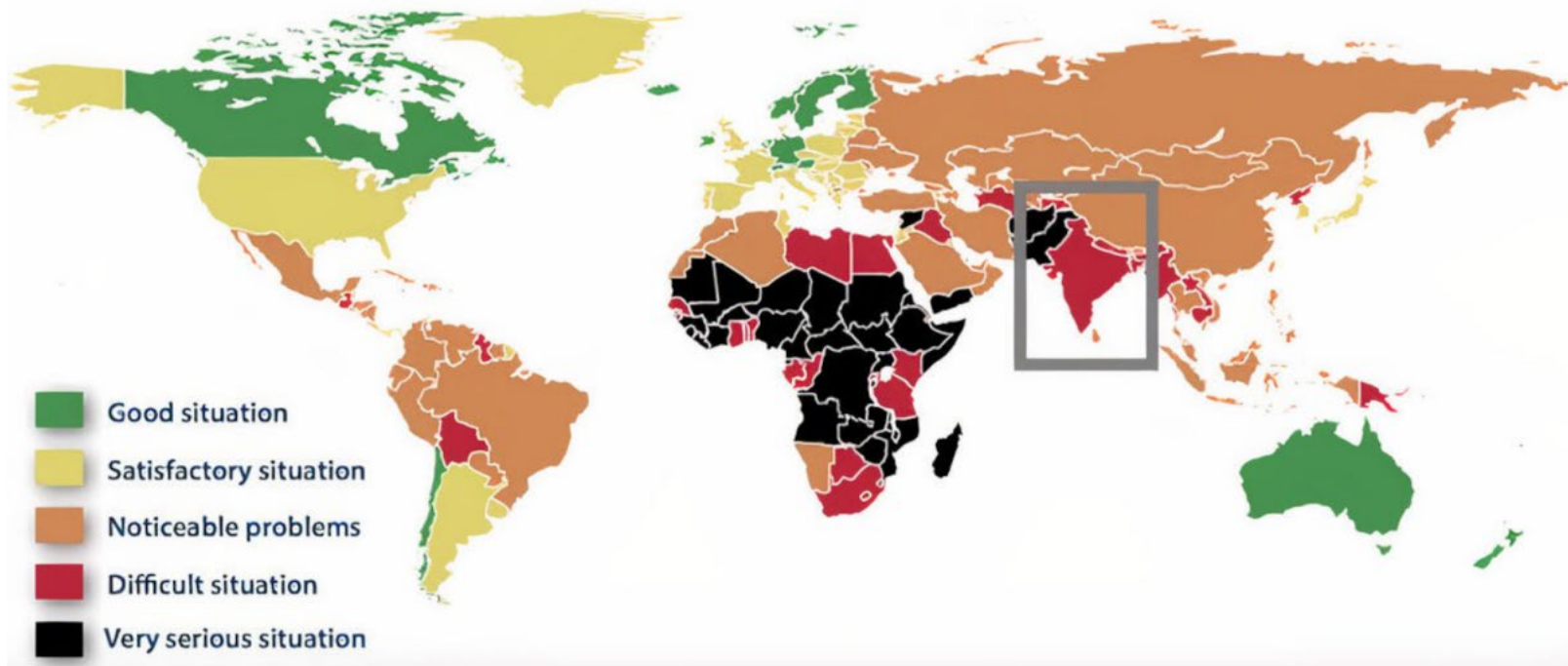




Solmi et al, 2021 <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41380-023-02138-4>

## Prevalence of Schizophrenia across the world

## CHILDREN'S RIGHTS WORLDWIDE 2015

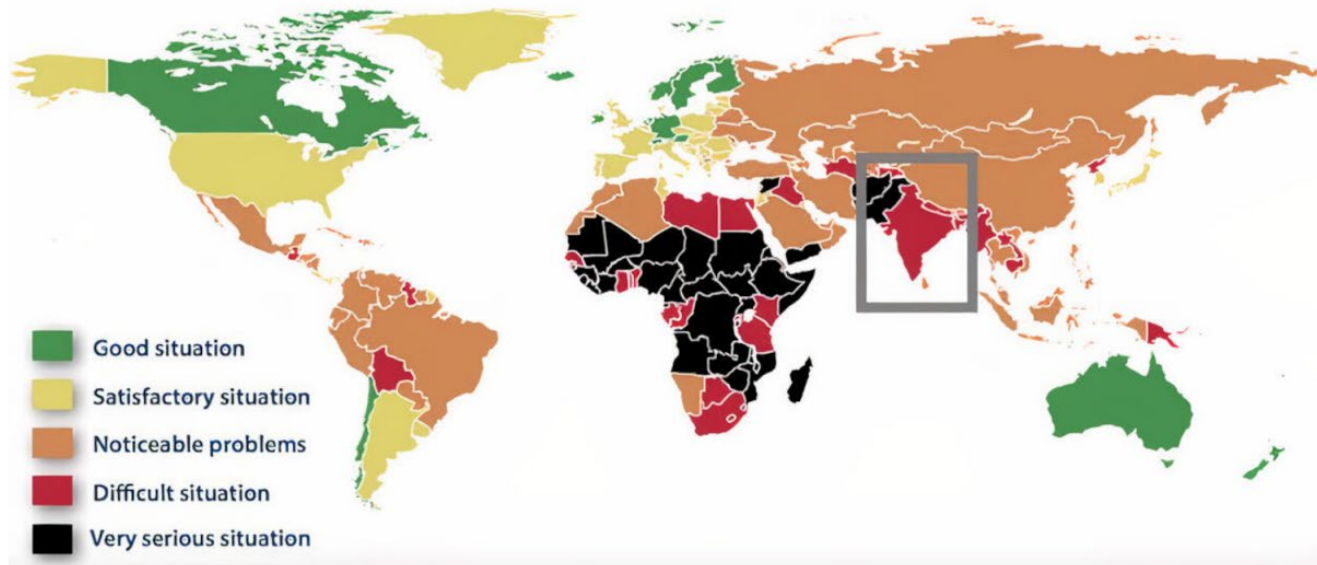
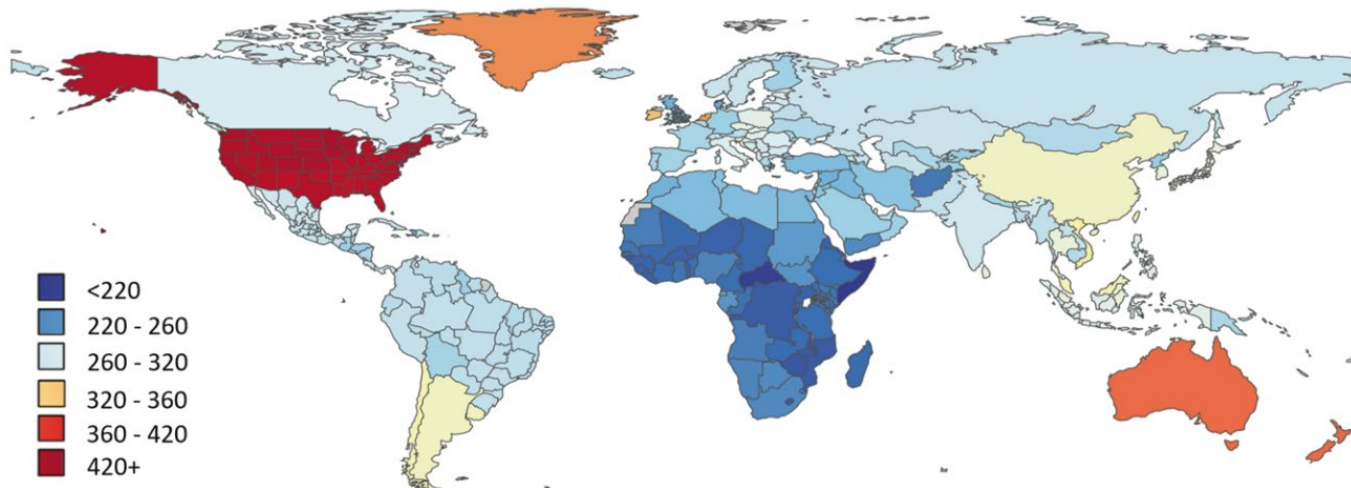


**Figure 1** World map showing the rights of a child as measured by UNICEF and World Bank data.<sup>15</sup>

Fernandes et al, 2021 [e044983.full.pdf](#)

**More abuse and neglect where children's rights are in a “serious situation”**









**What's  
GOING ON?**

There is clearly no direct link, globally, between rates of abuse and neglect and rates of psychiatric disorder



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/neubiorev](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/neubiorev)

Review

### The Adaptive Calibration Model of stress responsivity

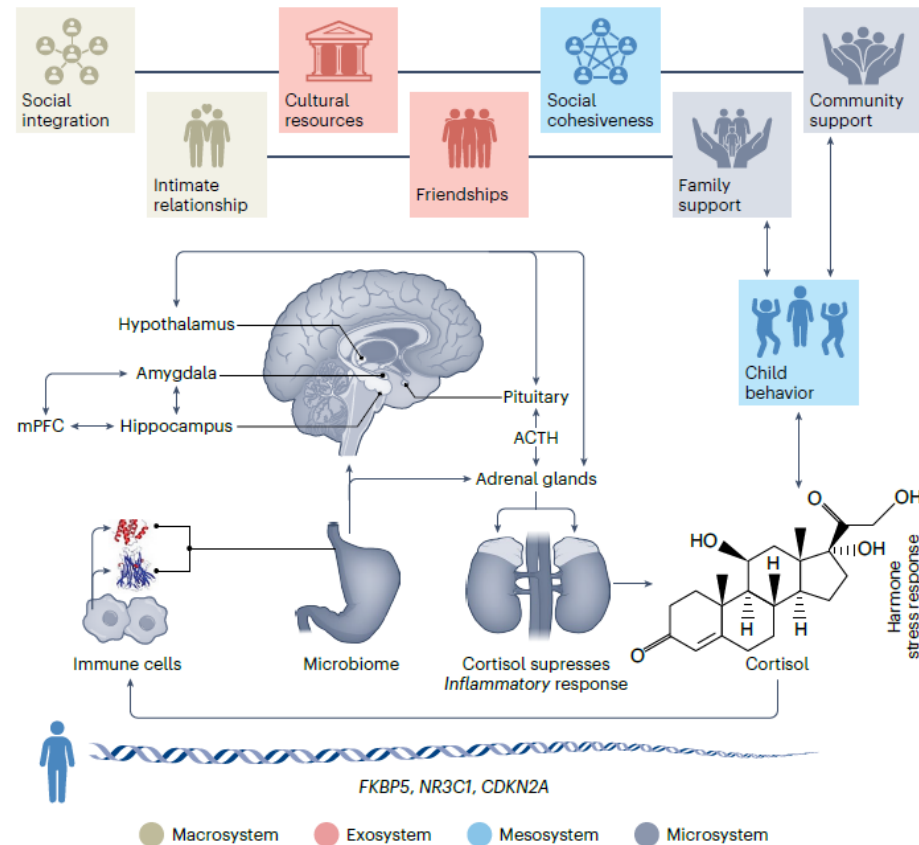
Marco Del Giudice<sup>a,\*</sup>, Bruce J. Ellis<sup>b</sup>, Elizabeth A. Shirtcliff<sup>c</sup>

**“children have evolved ... to respond in biologically adaptive ways to harsh and unsupportive family environments, not just to loving and supportive ones”**



Perspective

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s44220-023-00180-3>

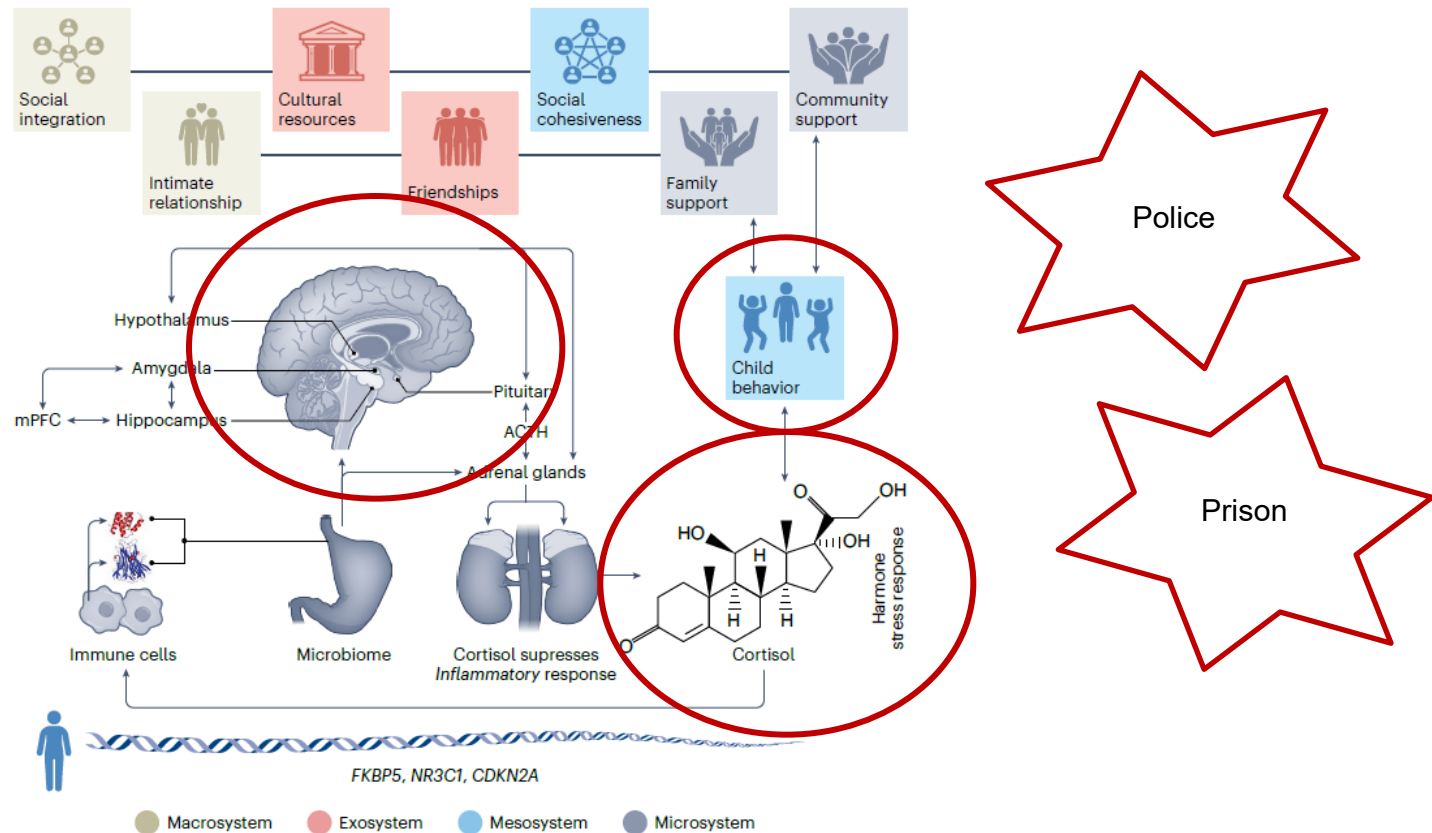


**Fig. 2 | The bio-exposome.** Intracellular processes, stress physiology and the exposome act as a single dynamic system. ACTH, adrenocorticotrophic hormone; mPFC, medial prefrontal cortex.

Our human “shock absorption system”

Perspective

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s44220-023-00180-3>

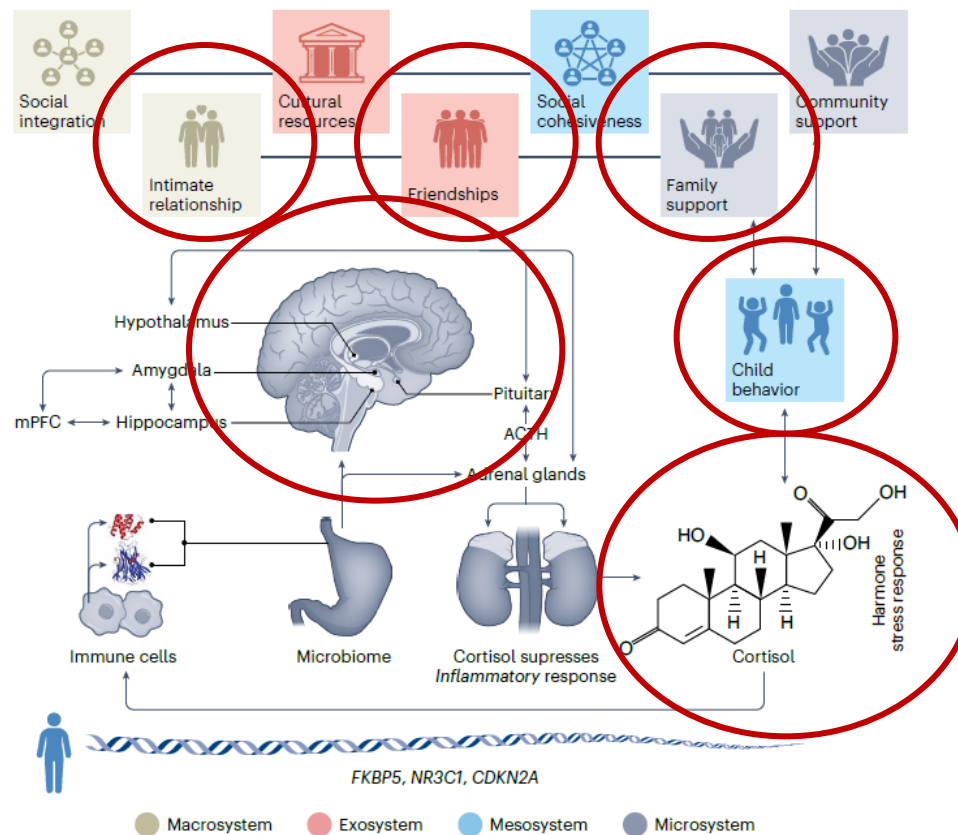


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Perspective

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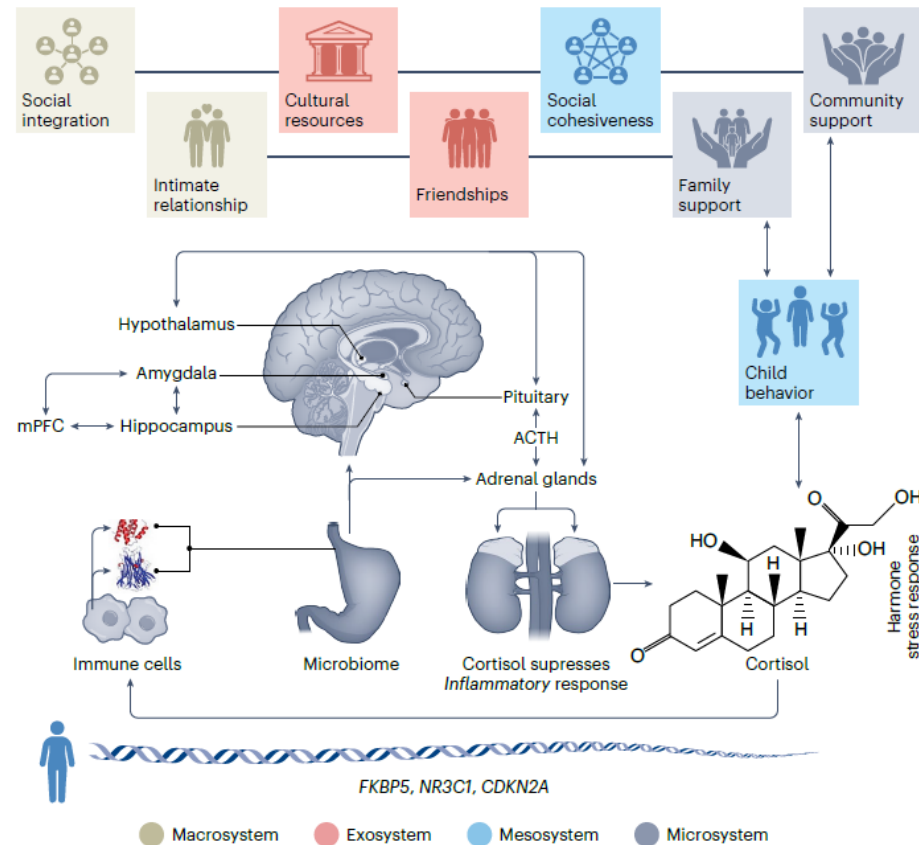


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Perspective

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**Fig. 2 | The bio-exposome.** Intracellular processes, stress physiology and the exposome act as a single dynamic system. ACTH, adrenocorticotrophic hormone; mPFC, medial prefrontal cortex.

Are some of us more prone to negative effects of abuse and neglect than others?



# Maltreatment-associated psychiatric problems

*Minnis, 2013*



We noticed that people who had been maltreated, and had psychiatric problems, tended to have particularly **complex** problems and impairment, often including neurodevelopmental conditions like ADHD and Autism

...but others had no psychiatric disorder or impairment at all



# Maltreatment-associated neurodevelopmental disorders: a co-twin control analysis

**Lisa Dinkler,<sup>1</sup> Sebastian Lundström,<sup>1,2</sup> Ruchika Gajwani,<sup>3</sup> Paul Lichtenstein,<sup>4</sup>  
Christopher Gillberg,<sup>1,3</sup> and Helen Minnis<sup>1,3</sup>**

The Child and Adolescent Twin Study in Sweden (CATSS)

N = 13,052 (49.6% females) aged 9





## We asked about symptoms of:

ADHD

Autism

Tic  
disorders

Learning  
Disability



Are abused and neglected children more likely to have multiple neurodevelopmental conditions?

**Yes**



*Maltreated children are nearly **>six times** as likely to have 3 or more neurodevelopmental conditions, compared to non-maltreated*



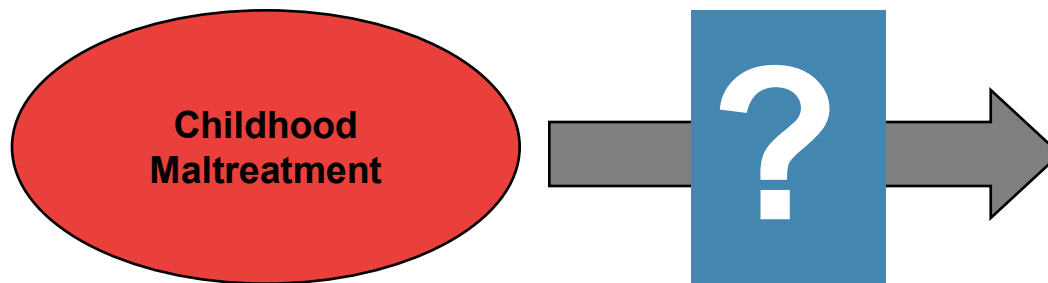
Are abused and neglected children more likely to have multiple neurodevelopmental conditions?

**Yes**



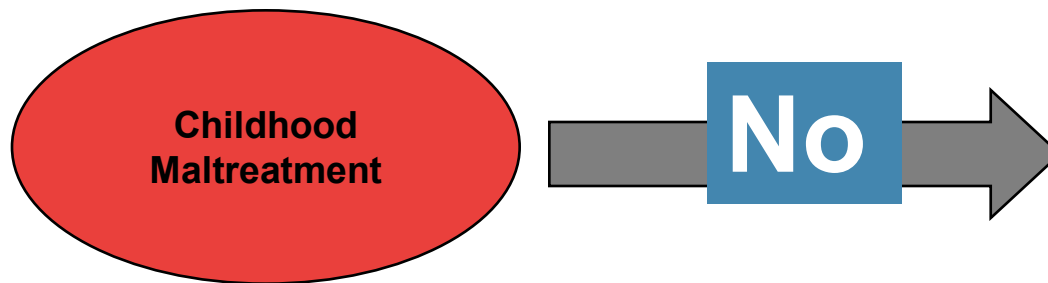
*...and we know that children with neurodevelopmental conditions are at higher risk of developing psychiatric disorders*

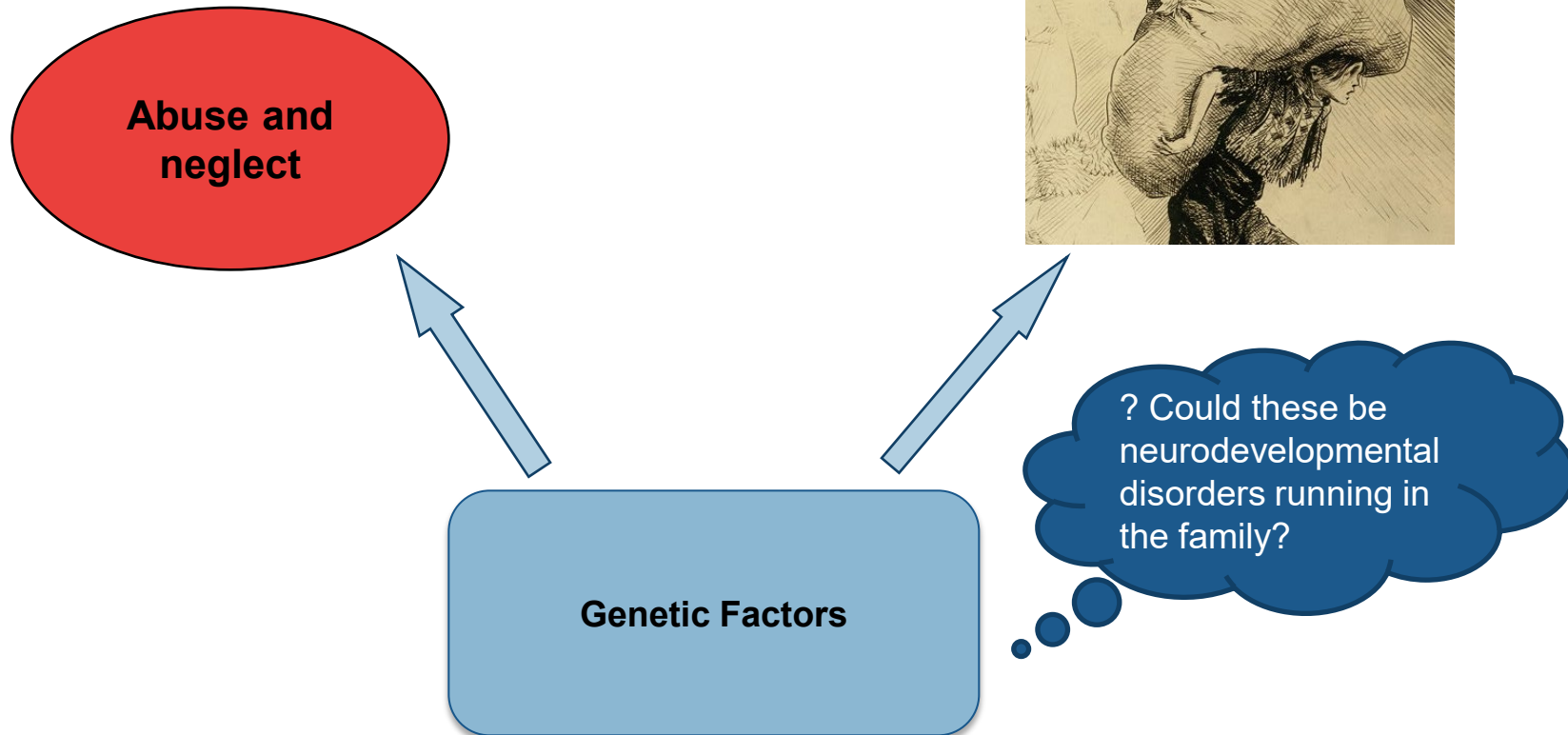
## ***Does abuse and neglect cause this increased neurodevelopmental disorder load?***

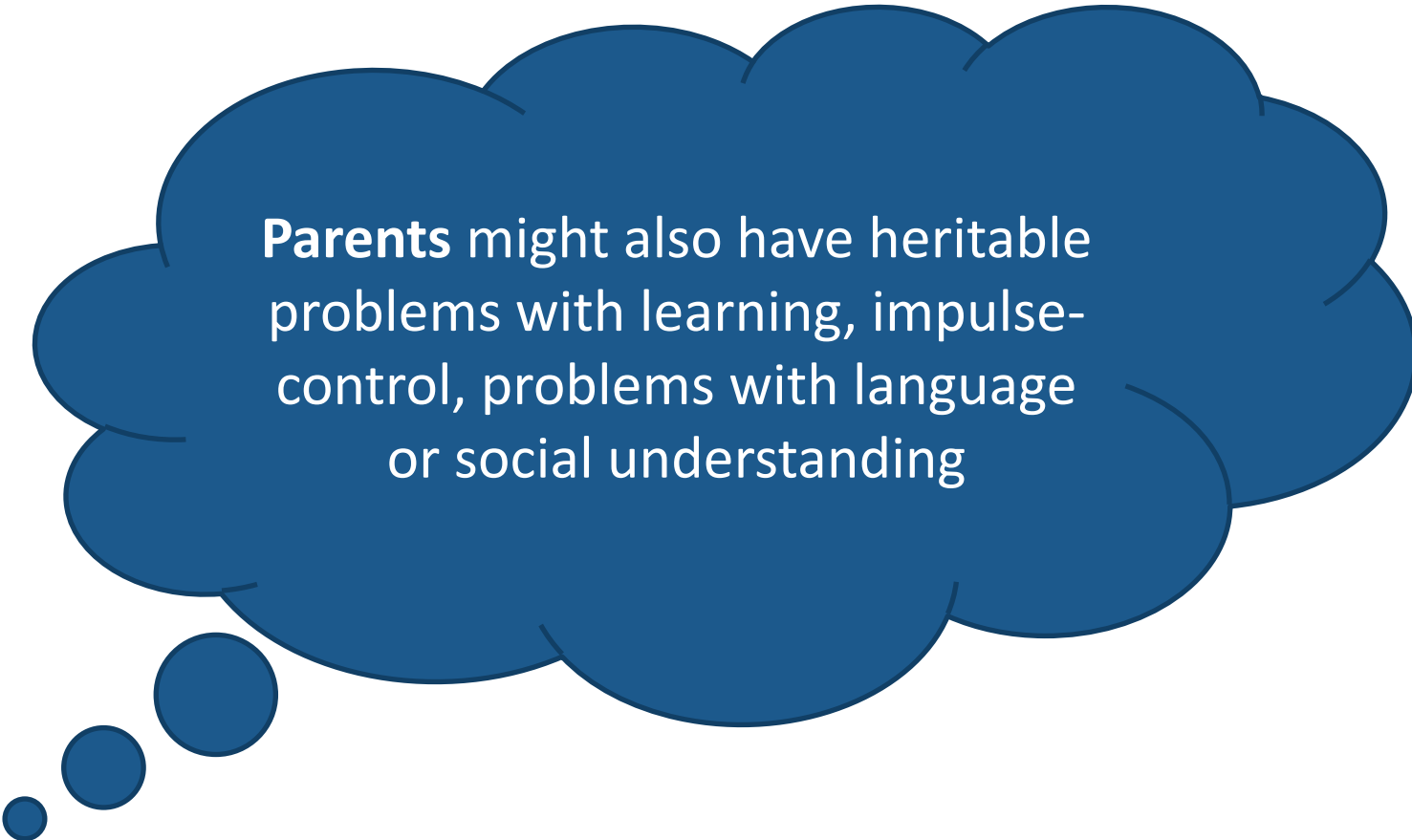




## ***Does abuse and neglect cause this increased neurodevelopmental disorder load?***







**Parents** might also have heritable problems with learning, impulse-control, problems with language or social understanding



Do we need to embrace trauma as a normal part of life?

Do we need to be more comfortable with talking about trauma without drama? Without expectations that it will lead to terrible outcomes?



So how do we assess a child who has been abused and neglected?



Be respectful of their journey and do the ordinary well!










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PSYCHIATRY  
WWW.AACAP.ORG

CLINICAL PERSPECTIVES



## **Accommodating Complexity: The Need for Evidence-Informed Mental Health Assessments for Children in Out-of-Home Care**

Rachel M. Hiller, PhD , Stine Lehmann, PsyD, PhD , Stephanie J. Lewis, MBBS, PhD ,  
Helen Minnis, MBChB, PhD , Katherine H. Shelton, PhD , Michael Tarren-Sweeney, PhD ,  
Heather N. Taussig, PhD 

“Even though children [who have been abused and neglected] often have complex symptoms and needs, the underlying symptoms requiring treatment may provide a usefully focused path forward”

We must...provide this group of children with excellent assessments, to ensure that we are providing the best possible care now”.

