Sleep problems come in a variety of forms. Too much sleep, too little sleep, and frequent nightmares can all have a big impact on other aspects of life. In this study, researchers looked at CAP data spanning an 11 year period, from ages 4 to 15. They looked at sleep patterns over time to find out whether or not sleep problems remained stable through childhood and adolescence, and if sleep problems were related to other problems such as depression and anxiety.

For this study researchers used data from questionnaires given to parents when CAP children were 4, 7, and then every year from 9-15. These questionnaires asked parents to rate many aspects of their children's behavior, including questions about sleep problems (‘sleeps less than most children’, ‘experiences nightmares’, etc.), depression (‘cries a lot’, unhappy, sad or depressed’), and attention (‘can’t sit still’, daydreams’, etc.). These data were then analyzed to look for consistency in sleep problems over time as well as overlap between sleep problems and other behavioral/emotional problems.

Researchers found that children with sleep problems at age 4 tended to continue to have sleep problems, although their severity decreased from pre-school to mid-adolescence. They also found that sleep problems at age 4 predicted later emotional and behavioral problems such as depression and anxiety. Possible explanations for this finding included the idea that the same mechanism in the brain may be responsible for both sleep and depression/anxiety, or that disturbances in sleep may disrupt biological rhythms, which in turn could cause disturbances in behavior and emotion. There were no differences found in sleep problems between adopted and non-adopted children.

The results of this study may lead to new ways to predict future emotional and behavioral problems and address them before they begin. Also, if sleep problems can be treated at an early age, future problems such as depression or anxiety may be remedied as well.

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Many people wonder “What happens to my booklet after I take the test?” The answer to this question is a person – Karen Jax. Her responsibility for the project involves transforming the wealth of information in the booklets and from the home visits into a form that can be readily analyzed by a computer.

The first step taken when new booklets arrive in the office is to record the identification number and date of testing. This ID number is a unique 9-digit code, very important in maintaining confidentiality. The various parts of the battery are then “scored”, which usually involves tallying the number of correct items, the incorrect responses, and any number of other measures. With 2 assistants, Karen takes the test battery, personality inventory, and other miscellaneous information such as handedness, musical ability, interests and talents and turns specific information into numbers, which are put on computer sheets.

This entire process is double checked, and then the information is given to the keypuncher who transfers this coded information to 3” by 7” computer cards. The end result is that all the information from one adult booklet is summarized on only 16 computer cards, and from each visit on about 30 cards!!

From the Archives

The more things change the more they stay the same. This story comes from our 1977 newsletter. We continue to conduct many of the processes described below to maintain data integrity over time (data must remain similar in order to perform accurate analysis). Most of our testing books are still hand coded and are identical to the books completed by parents in the 1970’s. Of course we no longer use computer cards to enter the data, and Karen Jax doesn’t work at IBG any more, but other researchers still perform the tasks she was responsible for 25 years ago.

A new CAP book is in the works and slated to be published in early 2003. It is called Nature, Nurture, and the Transition to Early Adolescence. It is the 4th book featuring data collected exclusively from the CAP and covers results from interviews and visits up to 12 years of age. The following is an excerpt from Amazon.com “This latest volume, edited by four eminent researchers in developmental psychology, builds on the large body of research already generated by investigating the role of genes and environments on early adolescent development. Because it is the only volume on the most comprehensive investigation of the effect of genes and environments on early adolescent development, this work will be invaluable to researchers in developmental, cognitive, and social psychology.”

Other CAP books:
• 1985 – Origins of Individual Differences in Infancy
• 1988 – Nature and Nurture During infancy and Early Childhood
• 1994 – Nature and Nurture During Middle Childhood

If you would like to borrow a copy of any of these books from our library please contact us!