CORRELATES BETWEEN TRAUMA EXPOSURE AND DELINQUENT BEHAVIORS IN YOUTH

Maureen Allwood, Ph.D.
John Jay College
City University of New York
TRAUMATIZED YOUTH OR TROUBLED YOUTH: A FOCUS ON DIMINISHED EMOTIONS IN THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN YOUTH VIOLENCE EXPOSURE AND VIOLENT BEHAVIORS?

Maureen Allwood, Ph.D.
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Maltreated Youth

As compared to non-maltreated youth:

- More likely to engage in delinquent behaviors
- More likely to exhibit early onset delinquency
- More likely to be arrested as juveniles
- More likely to engage in violent crimes
- More likely to be arrested as adults

Widom, 1989 and many other studies
National Survey of Adolescents (Kilpatrick et al., 2003)

Sexual Assault
- Boys: 47.2% versus 16.6% reported delinquent acts
- Girls: 19.7% versus 4.8% reported delinquent acts

Physical Assault
- Boys: 46.7% versus 9.8% committed an Index offense
- Girls: 29.4% versus 3.2% reported engaging in serious delinquent acts at some point in their lives

Witnessed Violence
- Boys: about 32% versus 6.5% reported ever engaging in delinquent acts
- Girls: about 17% versus 1.4% ever engaging in delinquent acts
Posttrauma Emotional Numbing

- Diminished interest in activities
- Detachment from others (and the world)
- Restricted range of affect
- Amnesia for the event
- Sense of foreshortened future

- A component of the PTSD
- A separate factor from avoidance symptoms
Posttrauma Emotional Numbing

Emotional Numbing in Adolescents linked to:

- **Emotional Dysregulation** (hyperarousal) (Allwood et al., 2011; Weems et al., 2003)
- **Self-Injurious Behaviors** (Weierich & Nock, 2008)
- **Conduct Problems** (Wahlberg et al. 2003)
Callousness & Unemotional (CU) Traits

- Cold and uncaring
- Constricted display of emotion
- Failure to show empathy
- Disregard for the feelings of others
- “More concerned about the effects of his or her actions on him/herself, rather than their effects on others, even when they result in substantial harm to others”

(American Psychological Association, 2013; Frick & Dickens, 2006; Frick, 2009)
Callous & Unemotional Traits

- “callous interpersonal style that includes being deceitful, manipulative, selfish, superficially charming, remorseless, and uncaring”
  
  (Obradovic´ et al., 2007)

- Callousness, described as “hardened”
  “I do not care who I hurt to get what I want”

- Callousness and unemotional traits, seen as early characteristics related to psychopathy
Callousness & Unemotional Traits

- Early onset Delinquency (Frick et al., 2005)

- Aggression, Severe Violence (Essau et al., 2006; Frick & et al., 2003)

- Proactive & Physical Aggression (Kerig & Stellwagen, 2010)
Psychopathy

Personality construct defined by affective, interpersonal, and behavioral characteristics that are callous, manipulative, and impulsive in nature.

(Cleckley, 1945; Frick & Dickens, 2006; Frick, 2009)
Psychopathy

- **Affective**
  - Lacks guilt and remorse
  - Shallow affect
  - Callous use of others
  - Fails to accept responsibility

- **Lifestyle**
  - Impulsive
  - Irresponsible
  - Stimulus seeking
  - Parasitic lifestyle
  - Lacks goals

- **Interpersonal**
  - Pathological lying
  - Manipulative
  - Good at impression management
  - Grandiose

- e.g., Frick & Colleagues; Hare & Colleagues
YOUTH EXPERIENCES
PROJECT
COMMUNITY YOUTH
NEW YORK CITY
Research Questions

■ Is community violence exposure among youth associated most strongly with posttrauma emotional numbing (*trauma*) or mostly strongly with trait-like callousness and unemotionality (*trouble*)?

■ Are both types of diminished emotions related to youth violent and aggressive behaviors? If so, are both types differentially related to different types of aggression, such as reactive and proactive aggression?

■ Does posttrauma emotional numbing (*trauma*) or callousness and unemotional traits (*trouble*) mediate the association between violence exposure and violent/aggressive behaviors?
- **74 Participants**: Community youth from New York City
- 12 to 18 year olds (Mean age = 14.9)
- 62.9% girls

**Race/Ethnicity**

- Black 35.7%
- White 31.4%
- Latino 22.9%
- Asian 5.7%
- Other 4.3%
Measures

- **UCLA PTSD Reaction Index** (Pynoos et al., 1998) a measure of trauma exposure and PTSD symptoms.
  5-item measure of Emotional Numbing symptoms

- **Screen for Adolescent Violence Exposure** (SAVE; Hastings & Kelley, 1997) 32-item measure of youth exposure to violence
  3 subscales: traumatic, abuse, and indirect violence

- **Inventory of Callous-Unemotional Traits** (ICU; Frick, 2003) – 24 items
  3 subscales; Callous, Unemotional & Uncaring

- **Reactive–Proactive Aggression Questionnaire** (RPQ; Raine et al., 2006) – 23-item self-report measure of proactive and reactive aggression
Prevalence of Exposure

Community Violence

- Traumatic: 55.4%
- Abuse: 53.3%
- Indirect: 95.9%
RESULTS
<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Trauma</th>
<th>Abuse</th>
<th>Indirect</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Numbing</td>
<td>.26*</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>.32**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Callous</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.39***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemotional</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncaring</td>
<td>.26*</td>
<td>.33**</td>
<td>.28*</td>
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*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reactive Aggression</th>
<th>Proactive Aggression</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional Numbing</strong></td>
<td>.43***</td>
<td>.24*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Callous</strong></td>
<td>.30*</td>
<td>.48***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.00</td>
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<td><strong>Uncaring</strong></td>
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<td>.46***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Traumatic Violence</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical /Verbal</td>
<td>.48***</td>
<td>.46***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indirect Violence</td>
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<td>-.01</td>
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<td>.34**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uncaring</td>
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STUDY 2
Combined Samples
Callousness & Unemotional Traits

Research examining relationship between CU traits and trauma have used inconsistent terminology to described the findings:

- “Acquired Psychopathy” (Kerig et al., 2012)
- “Secondary Juvenile Psychopathy” (Kimonis et al., 2012)
- “Secondary Callousness” (Kahn, Frick et al., 2013)
- Post-trauma Emotional Numbing (Allwood, 2010)
# Primary & Secondary Psychopathy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heritable/dispositional</td>
<td>Environmentally acquired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficient anxiety, guilt, and fear</td>
<td>Associated with childhood maltreatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited emotional responsiveness</td>
<td>Higher levels of neuroticism, impulsivity, depression, anger, distress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High social dominance, grandiosity, determination, narcissism, extraversion</td>
<td>Higher levels of reactive hostility, and social deviance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High emotional detachment</td>
<td>Withdrawn, low self-confidence, emotionally disturbed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kimonis et al., 2012

- 373 detained juvenile offenders (Southern California)
- 14 to 17 year olds
- 94% Hispanic, Black or multiracial/ethnic

Secondary variant had more:
- Maltreatment
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Anger
- Attention problems

Note: Kahn et al. (2013) found similar results with a clinically referred sample
METHODS
143 Participants (including 71 college students)
- 12 to 19 year olds (Mean= 16.5)
- 70.8% girls

Race/Ethnicity
- Black 29.2%
- White 28.5%
- Latino 31.4%
- Asian 6.6%
- Other 4.4%
Measures

- **UCLA PTSD Reaction Index** (Pynoos et al., 1998) a measure of trauma exposure and PTSD symptoms.
  
  **Pessimism**-- 2 items
  
  “I think that I will not live a long life”
  “I feel pessimistic or negative about my future”

- **Hopelessness Scale for Children** (HSC; Kazdin, Rodgers, & Colbus, 1986) --17 items

- **Children’s Depression Inventory-Short Form** (CDI-S; Kovacs, 1992) -- 10 items

- **Inventory of Callous-Unemotional Traits** (ICU; Frick, 2003) – 24 items
  
  3 subscales; Callous, Unemotional & Uncaring (Essau et al., 2006)

- **Self-Reported Delinquency** (SRD; Elliott et al., 1985)
  frequency of delinquent behaviors in the past year (45 items)
  --Property Offenses
  --Disorderly Conduct
  --Aggression Against People
Callousness and Trauma Exposure

- Callousness & Trauma Exposure ($r = .29$, $p < .001$)

- 59 in the High Callousness Group
  -- Only 12 did not report a Trauma Exposure
  -- Most common exposure for the other 47 were:
    - Violent loss or injury of a loved one
    - Witnessing family member hit, punched, or kicked at home
### Trauma Exposure & Symptoms by Hi-Lo Callousness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low Callousness (n=84)</th>
<th>High Callousness (n=59)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trauma Exposure</strong></td>
<td>1.96 (1.86)</td>
<td>2.90 (2.32)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PTSD symptoms</strong></td>
<td>19.11 (14.25)</td>
<td>27.83 (19.75)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pessimism / Future</strong></td>
<td>0.81 (1.41)</td>
<td>1.97 (2.26)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hopelessness</strong></td>
<td>2.37 (2.29)</td>
<td>2.91 (2.58)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Depressive symptoms</strong></td>
<td>2.26 (2.53)</td>
<td>3.81 (3.86)†</td>
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## Delinquency with Callousness & Trauma Exposure

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<tr>
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<th>Callousness</th>
<th>Trauma Exposure</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Delinquency Total</strong></td>
<td>.42***</td>
<td>.35***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Offense</td>
<td>.37***</td>
<td>.32***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>.47***</td>
<td>.34***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorderly Conduct</td>
<td>.30***</td>
<td>.40***</td>
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***$p < .001$**
## Mean Delinquent Behaviors by Hi-Lo Callousness

<table>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Delinquency Total</strong></td>
<td>9.07 (9.40)</td>
<td>19.20 (18.73)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Property offense</strong></td>
<td>2.23 (3.79)</td>
<td>5.81 (7.00)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aggression</strong></td>
<td>0.76 (1.15)</td>
<td>2.69 (3.87)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disorderly Conduct</strong></td>
<td>2.06 (2.83)</td>
<td>3.78 (4.29)**</td>
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\(***p < .001\), \(**p < .01\), \(p < .001\)
# Delinquent Behaviors

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Step 3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Callousness</strong></td>
<td>.41***</td>
<td>.35***</td>
<td>.39***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trauma Exposure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Callousness * Trauma</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>.20***</td>
<td>.04**</td>
<td>.01</td>
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### Delinquent Behaviors

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<td>.33***</td>
<td>.36***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTSD Symptoms</td>
<td></td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>.26**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Callousness * PTSD Sx</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.10</td>
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</tbody>
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$$R^2 = .20^{***} \quad R^2 = .05^{**} \quad R^2 = .01$$
Discussion

- Preliminary findings indicate that posttrauma emotional numbing (PEN) and callous and unemotional traits (CUTs) represent related yet distinct constructs.

- Both types of diminished emotions were differential related to different types of community violence exposure, with callousness being related to only indirect violence, such as knowing about violent events in the community but not witnessing or being victimized by violence.

- Indirect violence is a marker of “one’s neighborhood” and the association with callousness might represent desensitization. Nevertheless, indirect violence, like other types of violence exposure is related to trauma symptoms, including emotional numbing.
Discussion

- Posttrauma emotional numbing was associated with reactive, impulsive aggression, but not proactive, instrumental aggression.

- Callous traits, as measured by the ICU was associated with proactive instrumental aggression.

- However, we also found that even among this sample of non-referred youth callousness was related to trauma exposure and psychological symptoms.

- These findings indicate that a trauma model of youth violent and aggressive behaviors exists. However, for this group interventions may need to focus most closely on reactive aggression and perhaps reactivity to stimuli more generally.
Implications for “Traits”

- When considering Callousness in relation to Delinquent Behaviors (or specifier for Conduct Disorder), it is important to include information related to trauma exposure, and related symptoms.

- Although there is a great deal of focus on trauma-informed care within the juvenile justice system, we suggest that trauma-informed care would fall short, if we do not include trauma-informed assessments.

- Finally, we should look closely at terms, such as “acquired” or “secondary” psychopathy.
Future Directions

- Examining types of diminished emotions in relation to physiological markers at baseline and under conditions of acute stress.
- Developing ecologically sound stress models that integrate conditions under which adolescents might feel “triggered” (e.g., addressing provocation, threat perception)
THANK YOU!
mallwood@jjay.cuny.edu
References


