

Childhood Trauma and Delinquency---A connection that should influence our thinking about children and adolescents in the juvenile justice system

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Presented at Rutgers University Center for Children and Childhood Studies and School of Law Children's Justice Clinic
 "Rethinking Childhood: Juveniles and the Justice System"
 March 1, 2007



Childhood Trauma is Clearly a Problem for America's Youth

- ▲ The National Survey of Adolescents, a general population survey of over 4,000 adolescents ages 12 to 17
 - ▲ 13 % of females and 3.4 % of males reported being sexually assaulted at some point in their lives
 - ▲ 21.3 % of boys and 13.4 % of girls reported experiencing physical assault
 - ▲ 43.6 % of boys and 35% of girls reported having witnessed violence

(Kilpatrick et al., 2003b).



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National Survey of Adolescents:
U.S. Adolescent Population Estimates of Violence Exposure

Violence Type	n	Prevalence	Population Estimate*
Sexual Assault	326	8.1%	1.8 million
Physical Assault	701	17.4%	3.9 million
Physically Abusive Punishment by Parent	376	9.4%	2.1 million
Any Direct Assault	1,050	26.1%	5.8 million
Witnessed Violence	1,586	39.4%	8.8 million
Any Violence Exposure	1,911	47.5%	10.6 million

*Based on US Census Bureau Estimate that there were 22.3 million adolescents in the U.S. in 1995. Rounded to nearest 100,000.

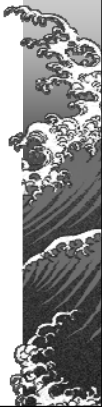
Research shows that childhood exposure to child maltreatment, assault, and witnessing domestic and community violence can have the following consequences:

- ▲ aggressive behavior
- ▲ depression
- ▲ anxiety
- ▲ lower levels of social competence and self-esteem
- ▲ poor academic performance
- ▲ posttraumatic stress symptoms such as emotional numbing and increased arousal



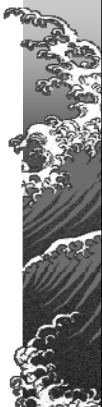
Life in the war zone

- ▲ Chronic environmentally pervasive violence, such as living in violent neighborhoods, affects children in ways similar to living in war zones. They develop symptoms such as anxiety, helplessness, numbness, and difficulties concentrating.
- ▲ Furthermore, children in such environments may become desensitized to threat and engage in high levels of risk taking and participate in dangerous activities (Schwab-Stone et al., 1995).



Why would there be a link between child maltreatment and delinquency?

- ▲ Developmental theory suggests that children adapt to the world through early experiences with caregivers which tend to facilitate later adaptations to novel situations.
- ▲ Early positive experiences may facilitate later successful adaptations, whereas early negative experiences may potentiate the emergence of psychopathological outcomes.
- ▲ Child maltreatment is described as "the greatest failure of the environment to provide opportunities for normal development" (Cicchetti, 1996).



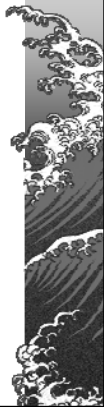
Why would there be a link between child maltreatment and delinquency?

- ▲ Families where children are maltreated characteristically provide fewer supports and opportunities for children to learn to effectively function outside the family. Such families may be unable to provide an environment that fosters normal development.
- ▲ Children who are maltreated develop strategies that may be adaptive in their home but maladaptive in other contexts.



Why an abuse-delinquency connection?

- ▲ Some research suggests that victimization can result in a breakdown in a child's capacities to regulate emotions and process social information and this can result in "delinquent" acts. (see Ford, 2002). Some suggest biological basis with an interaction of genetics, brain chemistry and victimization → violence. (Moffitt)
- ▲ Others have suggested that PTSD plays a role in perpetuating violence by interfering with daily living, causing inappropriate reactions, fostering intrusive reliving of trauma, and avoidance (Steiner et al., 1997).
- ▲ And others suggest a pathway where violence exposure and pervasive feelings of not being safe develop into a state of chronic threat which in turn requires a youth to adjust his or her behavior, feelings and self-concept and makes the youth more willing to use physical aggression (Schwab-Stone et al., 1995).



Gender--Girls' abuse and delinquency

- ▲ Although girls are often described as responding to victimization through internalization of symptoms, such as depression and withdrawal...

Chesney-Lind and Shelden (1998) theorize that girls growing up in abusive households develop unique tactics of self-preservation, such as running away, that ultimately subject them to criminal exploitation that may propel them into delinquency.



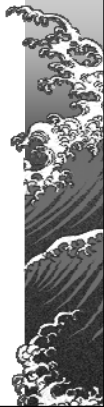
Widom's Research

- ▲ Cathy Widom has found that those with experiences of abuse or neglect in childhood are more likely than those who were not maltreated to be arrested as a juvenile (or an adult.)
- ▲ Being abused or neglected as a child increased the likelihood of
 - ▲ arrest as a juvenile by 59%
 - ▲ juvenile arrest for violent crime by 30%
- ▲ The abused and neglected children were younger at first arrest, committed nearly twice as many offenses, and were arrested more frequently (Widom, 1995; Widom and Maxfield, 2001).



Smith and Thornberry

- ▲ Data from the Rochester Youth Development Study show that a history of maltreatment significantly increases the risk of being arrested for violent, serious, and moderate forms of delinquency and increases the frequency of arrests, even when controlling for race, sex, social class, family structure, and mobility (Smith and Thornberry, 1995).



Relationship between childhood victimization and delinquency

- ▲ While there is a growing body of high quality research on this topic....
- ▲ Some recent work argues that the link between maltreatment and delinquency is not as strong as was once suspected and that perhaps some of the linkages are related to the family environment that fosters both delinquency and child maltreatment



Connections between Childhood Trauma and Delinquency may be more Complex

- ▲ A review of the research suggests that the connections are complicated--- we need to examine the pathways for different types of abuse as well as the impact on different types of delinquent outcomes-- including physical violence, sexual violence, running away, substance abuse, truancy and school drop out, prostitution.
- ▲ In addition, some research suggests that one form of delinquency may lead to another form (running away ---> prostitution) and also may be co-morbid with other MH and behavioral problems.. It is a complicated picture.
- ▲ On the other hand, we need to understand that delinquency is a label applied by a system and may be more or less readily applied to those abused in childhood.



For a more complex analysis--- Findings from a longitudinal study of sexually abused boys and girls (Siegel & Williams, 2003)

- ▲ Our research involved a sample of 790 men and women from major northeastern city, including 353 child victims of sexual abuse (CSA) reported in 1973-75, and interviewed as adults in 1990s
- ▲ For both males and females, there was a statistically significant association between CSA and violent offenses as well as "dependency" findings in juvenile/ family court
- ▲ Sexually abused girls were also more likely to have been arrested for running away
- ▲ Dependency itself was significantly associated with all offense categories except drug offenses for both males and females



Findings from a longitudinal study of sexually abused boys and girls (Siegel & Williams, 2003)

- ▲ Multivariate logistic regression equations showed that, for females, CSA was a risk factor for arrests in general and for arrests for property offenses in combination with dependency. For violent offenses, however, CSA victims were at significantly greater risk of arrest than matches regardless of dependency status.
- ▲ For males, both CSA and dependency significantly increased the odds of being arrested as juvenile, but only dependency increased the odds of arrest for violent or property offenses



What does the research tell us about child maltreatment and delinquency in girls?

- ▲ In a several prospective studies comparing abused and non-abused children's juvenile and adult records, both boys and girls who were abused and neglected in childhood were significantly more likely than their non-maltreated counterparts to have both a formal juvenile delinquency record and a formal adult criminal record.
- ▲ When analyzed by gender the difference in criminality was more dramatic for women, indicating a higher sensitivity to the effects of abuse for women than for men.
- ▲ Abused and neglected females, but not males, were at significantly higher risk than were non-abused comparisons for substance abuse/dependence diagnosis and for arrests for violent crime. This gender difference was also apparent in analysis of arrests for alcohol and drug offenses (Ireland & Widom, 1994).



Also note: Re-victimization part of the complexity of the connections between abuse and delinquency

- ▲ For girls, victimization in childhood elevates the risk for repeat victimization (see Siegel & Williams, 2003)
- ▲ These experiences may launch a life course where maladaptive beliefs that have formed to aid survival in a harsh childhood environment are solidified and confirmed by ongoing experiences.

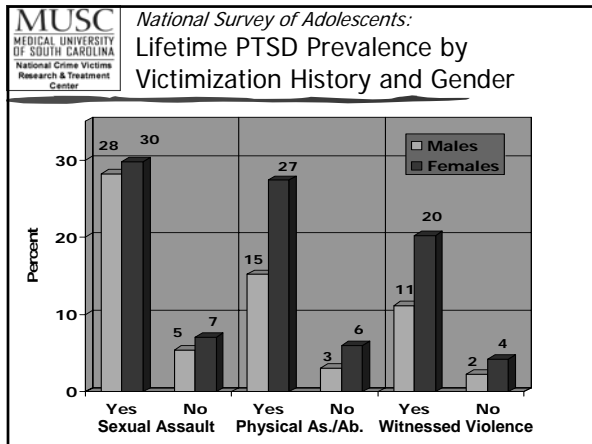


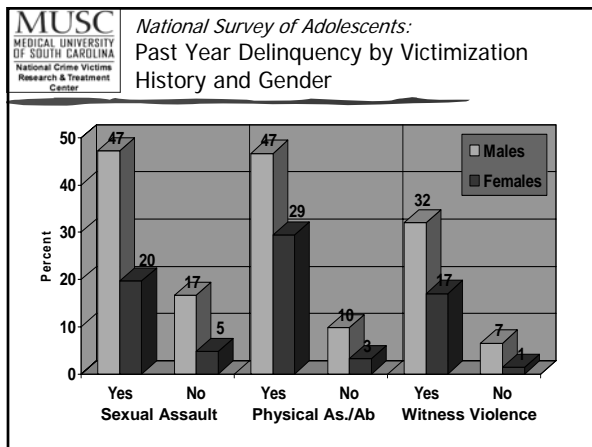
We have pressed for research that reflects a more complex understanding of child maltreatment

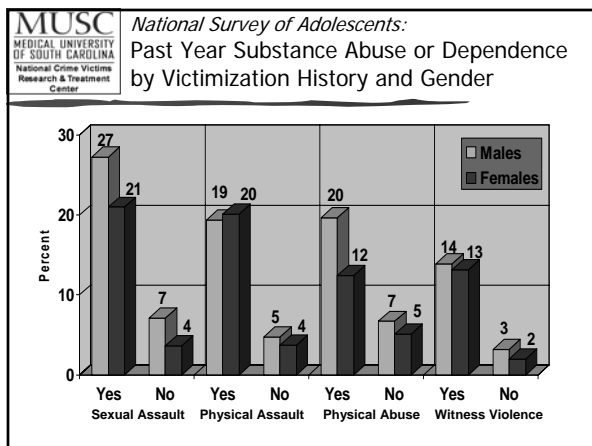
Research that

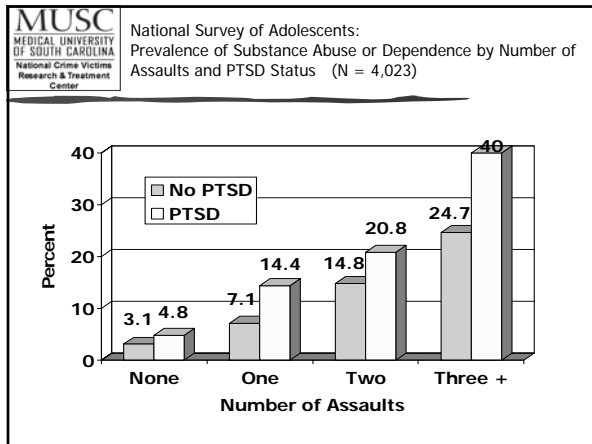
- ▲ teases out the effects of different types of maltreatment
- ▲ examines the compounding effects of multiple victimizations
- ▲ Studies the social factors that may influence how maltreatment impacts the developing child (for example, gender, ethnicity, culture, and familial or community resources)
- ▲ AND research that utilizes prospective data and innovative methods, analytic strategies, or designs.











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Navy Family Study (Saunders & Williams)
Child-reported Exposure to Violence at T1 (N = 195)

Violence Type	All	Females	Males
Sexual assault victim	29.2%	45.9%	1.4%***
Physical assault victim	34.4%	36.1%	31.5%
Physical abuse victim	48.2%	52.5%	41.1%
Personal assault	67.2%	77.0%	50.7%***
Witnessed community violence	70.3%	71.3%	68.5%
Witnessed domestic violence	43.6%	49.2%	34.2%*
Witnessed violence	79.5%	81.1%	76.7%
Victim or witness of violence	88.7%	91.0%	84.9% ^T

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

n=122 n=73

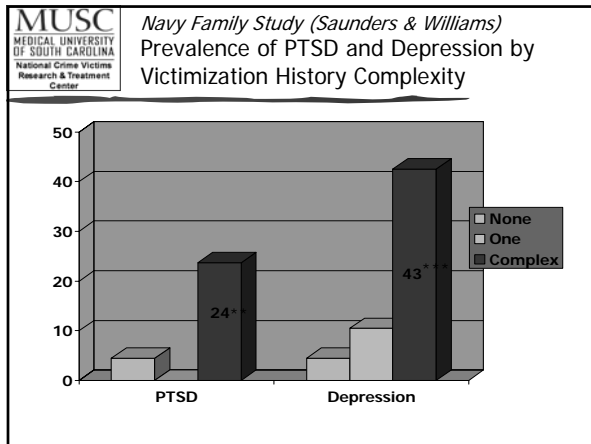
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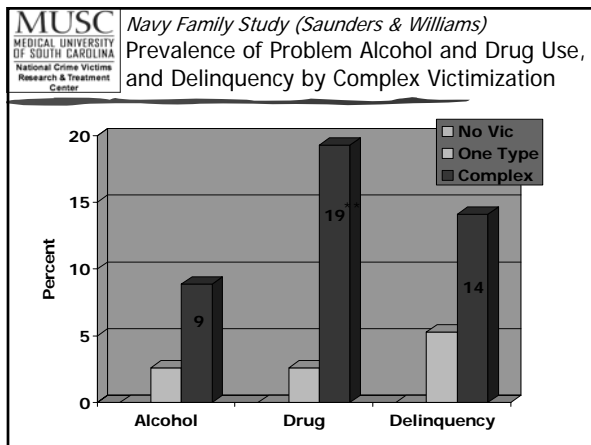
Navy Family Study (Saunders & Williams)
Number of Victimization Types Reported by Children at T1

Number	All	Females	Males
0	11.3%	9.0%	15.1%
1	19.5%	14.8%	27.4%
2	29.2%	29.5%	28.8%
3	21.5%	20.5%	23.3%
4	9.2%	11.5%	5.5%
5	9.2%	14.8%	0.0%
Mean(SD)	2.26(1.42)	2.55(1.49)	1.77(1.14)

69.1% had experienced two or more types of violence


$\chi^2(5) = 17.9^{***}$; $F(1, 193) = 14.9^{***}$





What can be done to break the link between child trauma and delinquency?

- ▲ Improve prevention of victimization
- ▲ Improve reporting of victimization
- ▲ Target interventions to victimized children
- ▲ Intervene early with juvenile victims
- ▲ Understand just how extensively these systems (Child Welfare and Juv Just.) overlap and Carefully screen youth in substance abuse and delinquency programs for violence and trauma exposure
- ▲ Increase awareness that victimization of juveniles is criminal (e.g., with prostituted children and teens)



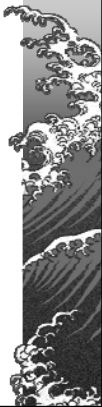
Traumatized girls in juvenile settings---

- ▲ Girls in juvenile justice settings who have trauma histories need to feel physically and psychologically safe.
- ▲ The detention environment (seclusion, staff insensitivity, loss of privacy) can exacerbate negative feelings and feelings of loss of control among girls, resulting in suicide attempts and self-mutilation. Children who feel they are unsafe cannot be expected to change until they are safe
- ▲ The traditional methods of preserving order and asserting authority in these centers (especially "tough" physically confrontational approaches and the use of isolation and restraints) may backfire with female detainees who suffer from PTSD (Griffin, 2002).
- ▲ For females with PTSD the detention experience may result in re-traumatization and/or re-victimization.



Trauma-focused therapy

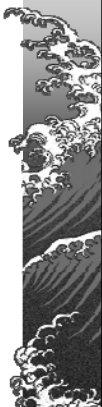
- ▲ The only trauma-focused therapy that received a high rating for evidence-based adolescent trauma treatment was Cohen, Mannarino, and Deblinger's (2003) Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) for PTSD (Saunders et al, 2003).
- ▲ This therapy is designed to reduce negative emotional and behavioral responses and correct maladaptive beliefs and attributions related to traumatic experiences.
- ▲ To date there are no known research studies on the use of CBT for trauma with youth involved in the juvenile justice system. The therapy can be used in individual, family, and group therapy and in office- or school-based settings.



Trauma-Focused Interventions for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System – from NCTSN (Mahoney, Ford, Ko, & Siegfried)

- ▲ Evidence suggests it is important to involve family members trauma-focused therapy
- ▲ Barriers may exist when involving the families of youth in the juvenile justice system (Ko et al., 2004).
 - ▲ Some juvenile facilities are located far from the home communities of children they detain, making family participation impossible
 - ▲ Many families need transportation or other assistance in order to participate in treatment.
 - ▲ Families may feel angry, ashamed, or burdened by their child's delinquent behavior and the additional hardship it has brought to the family.

[//www.nctsn.org/nctsn/nav.do?pid=ctr_rschn_prod#q5](http://www.nctsn.org/nctsn/nav.do?pid=ctr_rschn_prod#q5)



What about justice for juveniles?

- ▲ Adolescents understand issues of justice and accountability. Childhood trauma that goes unaddressed may foster a radical shift in the way an adolescent thinks about the world and his or her belief in safety, protection, and the social contract. (Siegfried, Ko, & Kelley 2004)
- ▲ When we address only the violence they inflict on others, is it not logical that this only serves to reinforce the notion they have that they will not be protected?



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