



SOCIETY FOR THE SCIENTIFIC
STUDY OF PSYCHOPATHY (SSSP)

MAY 7 - 9, 2025

Early Career Event (ECE)



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Welcome Message

On behalf of our organization, we welcome you to our 2025 Society for the Scientific Study of Psychopathy (SSSP) *Early Career Event (ECE)*! We are thrilled to welcome you to join us for three days filled with engaging and insightful presentations on the latest research exploring psychopathic personality across all the lifespan – from early childhood through adolescence and into adulthood.

Overview of the *ECE*

Early career events are experiences, opportunities, or milestones that individuals encounter in the initial stages of their professional journey. These events help shape career development by building skills, networks, and practical knowledge. We hope to foster opportunities for presenters and attendees to interact with leading figures in our field and other early career members – including undergraduate students, post-baccalaureate research assistants, master’s students, doctoral students, and post-doctoral trainees – via a mix of one-on-one and small group discussions dispersed throughout the programming. These events also allow presenters the chance to showcase their work in a 100% digital environment and receive feedback.

Awards

We assembled a team of experts in the scientific field of psychopathy to select recipients of the 2025 *ECE* awards, namely early career trainees in degree-granting postgraduate programs, post-baccalaureate research assistants, doctoral training, post-doctoral training, or fellowship programs. These awards highlight a new wave of early career professionals who have demonstrated excellence in their scholarship. We will announce the award recipients during the event on Day 3.

Whether this is your first professional event with us, or if you attended a previous meeting, we are delighted to welcome you to the 2025 SSSP *ECE*!

Sincerely,

2025 SSSP *ECE* Planning Committee

Martin Sellbom, Ph.D. (co-chair)
Monash University

Nicholas A. Bellamy, M.A. (co-chair)
University of Alabama

Stephen D. Benning, Ph.D.
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Olivia Choy, Ph.D.
Nanyang Technological University

Victoria R. Ward, M.A.
University of Alabama

Acknowledgements

The Society for the Scientific Study of Psychopathy (SSSP) is a non-profit, professional organization aiming to promote the conduct and communication of scientific research in the field of psychopathic personality (psychopathy) and to encourage education and training in those fields of science that contribute to research in psychopathy. The members of SSSP are actively engaged in trying to better understand the characteristics and causes of psychopathy, as well as better ways of detecting it, treating it, and ultimately preventing its destructive manifestations. Our organization is dedicated (see our [By-Laws](#)) to the science of psychopathy. Nevertheless, we welcome not only established investigators, but also students, clinicians, educators, science journalists, attorneys, and others who are interested in learning more about research on this still poorly understood condition.

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2025 *ECE* Award Selection Committee

We are grateful to our team of experts who provided their critical reviews of *ECE* presentations.

Arielle Baskin-Sommers, Ph.D. (chair)
Yale University

Rebecca Waller, Ph.D.
University of Pennsylvania

Inti A. Brazil, Ph.D.
Radboud University

Nicholas J. Wagner, Ph.D.
Boston University

Sneak Peak: Dallas 2026 Meeting

May 7 2026 – May 9 2026

Dallas Marriott Downtown

Dallas Marriott Downtown,
650 North Pearl Street
Dallas, TX, 75201

Pre-Conference Workshops

Tuesday, May 6 2026

Dallas Conference

Dallas, TX, 75201

Downtown
↓



2025 Schedule at a Glance

Wednesday, May 7

1:30-3:30pm Las Vegas / 3:30-5:30pm Alabama / 4:30-6:30pm New York /
9:30-11:30pm London / 10:30pm – 12:30am Amsterdam / 11:30pm-01:30am Nicosia /
4:30 – 6:30am Singapore (Next Day) / 6:30-8:30am Sydney (Next Day) / 8:30-
10:30am Auckland (Next Day)

Welcome Remarks

Randall T. Salekin, Ph.D., SSSP President
(5 min; located in GatherTown Auditorium space)

Break

(5 min)

Blitz Talk Presentations

(45min; located in GatherTown Auditorium space)

Data Blitz presentations occur in the order listed below

*Parent-Reported Warmth Findings with Parents of Young Children with Varying Levels of
Conduct Problems and Callous-Unemotional Traits*

Jessica Henery et al., The University of New South Wales

See accompanying poster at: Poster session 1, Poster #1

*Testing components of an etiological model for secondary callous-unemotional traits in a
clinic-referred sample of young children with conduct problems*

Yisha Gu et al., The University of New South Wales

See accompanying poster at: Poster session 1, Poster #2

*Emotional Reactivity and Recognition Deficits in Individuals with Callous-Unemotional (CU)
Traits: Evidence from Two Multilevel Meta-Analyses*

Emily Kemp et al., University of California, San Diego

See accompanying poster at: Poster session 1, Poster #4

*Advances in Maturity of Judgment Explain a Decline in Psychopathic Traits' from Adolescence
to Adulthood in Justice-Involved Youth*

Scarlet J. Cho et al., University of California

See accompanying poster at: Poster session 2, Poster #5

Associations between psychopathy and suicide: A meta-analytic review

Leigha Rose et al., University of Georgia

See accompanying poster at: Poster session 1, Poster #6

Differentiating Empathy Deficits and Aggression Profiles of Primary and Secondary Callous-Unemotional Trait Subgroups in Conduct Disorder

Jessica J. Todorov et al., University of Birmingham

See accompanying poster at: Poster session 1, Poster #7

Treatment Engagement and Multiple Specifiers among Boys and Girls with Conduct Disorder

Emmely Delamillieure et al., Ghent University

See accompanying poster at: Poster session 1, Poster #8

Measure of Punishment Insensitivity in Young Children Identifies a Unique Subgroup at Risk for Severe Antisocial Behavior

Cambell McDonough et al., University of New South Wales

See accompanying poster at: Poster session 1, Poster #9

Elemental Psychopathy Assessment's Nomological Net: A Meta-Analytic Review

Nathaniel L. Phillips et al., University of Georgia

See accompanying poster at: Poster session 1, Poster #22

Networking/Socializing

(20min)

Day 1 Poster Session

(45min; located in GatherTown Poster Session Room 1)

Poster presentations for day 1 are listed below:

Parent-Reported Warmth Findings with Parents of Young Children with Varying Levels of Conduct Problems and Callous-Unemotional Traits

Jessica Henery et al., The University of New South Wales

Poster #1

Testing components of an etiological model for secondary callous-unemotional traits in a clinic-referred sample of young children with conduct problems

Yisha Gu et al., University of New South Wales

Poster #2

Emotional Reactivity and Recognition Deficits in Individuals with Callous-Unemotional (CU) Traits: Evidence from Two Multilevel Meta-Analyses

Emily Kemp et al., University of California, San Diego

Poster #4

Associations between psychopathy and suicide: A meta-analytic review

Leigha Rose et al., University of Georgia

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Differentiating Empathy Deficits and Aggression Profiles of Primary and Secondary Callous-Unemotional Trait Subgroups in Conduct Disorder

Jessica J. Todorov et al., University of Birmingham

Poster #7

Treatment Engagement and Multiple Specifiers among Boys and Girls with Conduct Disorder

Emmely Delamillieure et al., Ghent University

Poster #8

Measure of Punishment Insensitivity in Young Children Identifies a Unique Subgroup at Risk for Severe Antisocial Behavior

Cambell McDonough et al., University of New South Wales

Poster #9

Motivation to engage with positive affective cues in adolescents with conduct problems and callous-unemotional traits

Anne Gaule et al., University College London

Poster #10

Neuroendocrine and psychophysiological profiles in relation to female callous-unemotional traits and distress facilitation

Victoria Auricht et al., Finders University

Poster #11

The Effect of Attention to Emotional Cues depending on Personality Traits

Katarzyna Kuczaj et al., Victoria University of Wellington

Poster #12

Malicious Meanness Potentiates Demographic Effects on Inherent Value Judgements

A. Michelle Poston et al., University of Nevada

Poster #13

Moral Disengagement as a Mediator Between Psychopathy and Multiple Perpetrator Rape

Anna Le-Nguyen et al., Pacific University

Poster #14

Student Behaviour and Teacher Wellbeing: Exploring Findings from the Building Connections Study

Abbas E. AlAbbas et al., University of Cambridge

Poster #15

Neurocognitive Insights into Facial Emotion Recognition Deficits in Children with Callous-Unemotional Traits: Examining the Impact of Anxiety and Maltreatment

Victoria R. Ward et al., University of Alabama

Poster #16

Primary and Secondary Variants of Callous Unemotional Traits in Longitudinal Perspectives: Exploring Predictors and Outcomes

María Álvarez-Voces et al., University of Santiago de Compostela

Poster #17

Exploring Dynamics between Psychopathy, Political Beliefs, and Political Media Preferences

Madison Martin et al., University of Alabama

Poster #18

Elemental Psychopathy Assessment's Nomological Net: A Meta-Analytic Review

Nathaniel L. Phillips et al., University of Georgia

Poster #22

Thursday, May 8

1:30-3:30pm Las Vegas / 3:30-5:30pm Alabama / 4:30-6:30pm New York /
9:30-11:30pm London / 10:30pm – 12:30am Amsterdam / 11:30pm-01:30am Nicosia /
4:30 – 6:30am Singapore (Next Day) / 6:30-8:30am Sydney (Next Day) / 8:30-
10:30am Auckland (Next Day)

Blitz Talk Presentations

(40min; located in GatherTown Auditorium space)

Data Blitz presentations occur in the order listed below

Latent Profile Analysis of psychopathic traits and conduct problems in a community children cohort: externalizing behavior and prosocial correlates

David Quevedo-Barber et al., Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

See accompanying poster at: Poster session 2, Poster #19

Using parents' own words to develop a comprehensive measure of CU traits in young children

Bryan Neo et al., The University of New South Wales

See accompanying poster at: Poster session 2, Poster #20

Exploring the Intersection of Empathy Deficits in Substance Use Disorders and Psychopathy

Corina Picco et al., Ontario Tech University

See accompanying poster at: Poster session 2, Poster #21

The case of callous cognition: an exploration of moral disengagement and callous-unemotional traits in justice-involved youth

Emma Louise Rodgers et al., University of California

See accompanying poster at: Poster session 2, Poster #23

Self-Construal Moderates the Relationship Between Psychopathic Traits and Prosocial Behaviors

Yiheng Lin et al., Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine

See accompanying poster at: Poster session 2, Poster #24

The intrinsic functional connectivity of psychopathy and its relation to self-control

Jia Hao Kng et al., Nanyang Technological University

See accompanying poster at: Poster session 2, Poster #25

The Affect Misattribution Procedure as implicit measures of diminished distress and fear

Jennifer Pink et al., The Open University

See accompanying poster at: Poster session 2, Poster #35

Networking/Socializing

(35min)

Day 2 Poster Session

(45min; located in GatherTown Poster Session Room 2)

Poster presentations for day 2 are listed below:

Advances in Maturity of Judgment Explain a Decline in Psychopathic Traits' from Adolescence to Adulthood in Justice-Involved Youth

Scarlet J. Cho et al., University of California

Poster #5

Latent Profile Analysis of psychopathic traits and conduct problems in a community children cohort: externalizing behavior and prosocial correlates

David Quevedo-Barber et al., Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Poster #19

Using parents' own words to develop a comprehensive measure of CU traits in young children

Bryan Neo et al., The University of New South Wales

Poster #20

Exploring the Intersection of Empathy Deficits in Substance Use Disorders and Psychopathy

Corina Picco et al., Ontario Tech University

Poster #21

Elemental Psychopathy Assessment's Nomological Net: A Meta-Analytic Review

Nathaniel L. Phillips et al., University of Georgia

Poster #22

The case of callous cognition: an exploration of moral disengagement and callous-unemotional traits in justice-involved youth

Emma Louise Rodgers et al., University of California

Poster #23

Self-Construal Moderates the Relationship Between Psychopathic Traits and Prosocial Behaviors

Yiheng Lin et al., Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine

Poster #24

The intrinsic functional connectivity of psychopathy and its relation to self-control

Jia Hao Kng et al., Nanyang Technological University

Poster #25

Psychopathic/callous-unemotional traits and their role in externalizing behavior: A scoping review of latent variable modeling approaches

Zoé Sandle et al., Radboud University

Poster #26

The Non-Linear Development of Honesty-Humility: Implications for Psychopathy

Jessica M. Biasin et al., Ontario Tech University

Poster #27

An exploration of the impact of Callous-Unemotional traits on teachers' perceptions of student behaviour difficulties and on students' enjoyment of school

Laura Oxley et al., University of York

Poster #28

Adolescent Substance Use Among Boys and Girls with Primary and Secondary Callous-Unemotional Traits

Sydney Larche et al., University of Guelph

Poster #29

The Moderating Effect of Gender on the Relationship Between Psychopathy and Interest in Multiple-Perpetrator Rape

Chloe Foster et al., Pacific University

Poster #30

Can Social Learning Deficits Explain Reduced Prosocial and Increased Antisocial Behavior in Psychopathy?

Marla Dressel et al., Georgetown University

Poster #31

Guilt in the Game: The Impact of Psychopathy and Moral Justification

Jamie Van Doorselaer et al., Ontario Tech University

Poster #32

Investigating Emotion Regulation and Reactivity in Callous-Unemotional (CU) Traits: The Role of Dynamic Physiological Indicators in Primary and Secondary CU Groups

Natalie Stearns et al., University of Guelph

Poster #33

The Affect Misattribution Procedure as implicit measures of diminished distress and fear

Jennifer Pink et al., The Open University

Poster #35

Friday, May 9

1:30-3:30pm Las Vegas / 3:30-5:30pm Alabama / 4:30-6:30pm New York /
9:30-11:30pm London / 10:30pm – 12:30am Amsterdam / 11:30pm-01:30am Nicosia /
4:30 – 6:30am Singapore (Next Day) / 6:30-8:30am Sydney (Next Day) / 8:30-
10:30am Auckland (Next Day)

Blitz Talks

(45min; located in GatherTown Auditorium space)

Data Blitz presentations occur in the order listed below

*In Pursuit of Optimal Intervention Pathways for Callous Unemotional Traits: A Qualitative
Comparative Analysis*

Pamela M. Waaler et al., University of Oslo

See accompanying poster at: Poster session 3, Poster #34

Callous-unemotional traits and caregiver perspectives on causes of misbehavior

Erin P. Vaughan et al., Penn State College of Medicine

See accompanying poster at: Poster session 3, Poster #36

*Empathetic Concern and Psychopathic Traits Among Incarcerated Youth: Insights from a
Novel Measure*

Samuel R. Vincent et al., Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science

See accompanying poster at: Poster session 3, Poster #37

*Influence of Psychopathic Traits on Group Decision-Making and Neural Synchrony During
Real-Time Social Interactions*

Richard Bakiaj et al., University of Trento

See accompanying poster at: Poster session 3, Poster #38

The Search for Primary and Secondary Subtypes of Callous-Unemotional Traits in Detained Boys

Thomas Cassart et al., University of Ghent

See accompanying poster at: Poster session 3, Poster #39

*Affective theory of mind impairments linked with callous-unemotional traits implicate cognitive
control: a pre-registered double-blind randomized controlled trial with dual-task paradigm*

Drew Winters et al., University of Colorado School of Medicine

See accompanying poster at: Poster session 3, Poster #40

We See Meanness in Each Other: Correspondence of Self- And Other-Ratings

Bianca S. Islas et al., University of Nevada

See accompanying poster at: Poster session 3, Poster #41

Networking/Socializing

(15min)

Day 3 Poster Session

(45min; located in GatherTown Poster Session Room 3)

Poster presentations for day 3 are listed below:

In Pursuit of Optimal Intervention Pathways for Callous Unemotional Traits: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis

Pamela M. Waaler et al., University of Oslo

Poster #34

The Affect Misattribution Procedure as implicit measures of diminished distress and fear

Jennifer Pink et al., The Open University

Poster #35

Callous-unemotional traits and caregiver perspectives on causes of misbehavior

Erin P. Vaughan et al., Penn State College of Medicine

Poster #36

Empathetic Concern and Psychopathic Traits Among Incarcerated Youth: Insights from a Novel Measure

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Influence of Psychopathic Traits on Group Decision-Making and Neural Synchrony During Real-Time Social Interactions

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The Search for Primary and Secondary Subtypes of Callous-Unemotional Traits in Detained Boys

Thomas Cassart et al., University of Ghent

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Affective theory of mind impairments linked with callous-unemotional traits implicate cognitive control: a pre-registered double-blind randomized controlled trial with dual-task paradigm

Drew Winters et al., University of Colorado School of Medicine

Poster #40

We See Meanness in Each Other: Correspondence of Self- And Other-Ratings

Bianca S. Islas et al., University of Nevada

Poster #41

Emotion, Motivation, and Attention: The Interplay of Cognitive Mechanisms in Psychopathy

Myra LeBlanc et al., Ontario Tech University

Poster #42

Post-Error Accuracy: Correlated with Fearless Dominance, Moderated by Impulsive Antisociality

Ananda Liz Peixoto Couto et al., University of Nevada

Poster #43

Psychopathic Traits and Emotional Processing in a Community Sample of Children: Facial Recognition and Attentional Pattern

Beatriz Díaz-Vázquez et al., University of Santiago de Compostela

Poster #44

Examining Power Dynamics as a Motivation to Empathize in Individuals with Varying Levels of Psychopathic Traits

Kirsten Stewart et al., Ontario Tech University

Poster #45

Resting-state Network Connectivity Correlates of Psychopathic Traits in a Japanese Community Sample: Sex matters!

S.C. Chester et al., University of Birmingham

Poster #46

The Effects of Callous-Unemotional Traits and Anxiety on Emotional Responding

Frances Clark et al., Victoria University of Wellington

Poster #47

*A Novel Multi-Dimensional Approach to Understanding Psychopathy Traits and
Socioemotional Development in Children*

Hao Xu et al., University of Alabama

Poster #48

Validity, Stability, and Change in Psychopathic Traits in Older Adults: A Registered Report

Leigha Rose et al., University of Georgia

Poster #49

A Computational Approach to Studying Reinforcement Learning Impairments in APSD +/- Psychopathy

Cali Baillie et al., King's College London

Poster #50

2025 ECE Awards Announcements

(15min; located in GatherTown Auditorium space)

Closing Remarks

Martin Sellbom, Ph.D. (co-chair) and Nicholas A. Bellamy, M.A. (co-chair)

(located in GatherTown Auditorium space)

Abstracts for Presentations

On the next few pages, you will find abstracts for the presentations during the *ECE*.

The abstracts are listed in alphabetical order by the first author's last name.



Early Career Event (ECE) on May 7-9, 2025

Hosted by the Society for the Scientific Study of Psychopathy (SSSP) on GatherTown

Student Behaviour and Teacher Wellbeing: Exploring Findings from the Building Connections Study Abbas E. AlAbbas¹, Dr Laura Oxley², Dr Irena Burić³, and Dr Lisa E. Kim⁴

¹ University of Cambridge, Faculty of Education, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, UK.

² University of York, Department of Education, York, Yorkshire, UK.

³ University of Zadar, Department of Psychology, Zadar, Croatia.

⁴ The University of Sydney, School of Psychology, Sydney, Australia.

Abstract

Objective: The Building Connections study explores teachers' experiences of working with students presenting with persistently challenging behaviour, particularly students presenting with Callous-Unemotional (CU) traits such as low empathy, restricted emotions, and a disregard for their academic performance. Students presenting with such behaviours are typically less responsive to teachers' usual behavioural management strategies, and this may in turn impact upon teacher wellbeing.

Methods: The study sample currently consists of at least 27 qualified teachers ($M_{Age}=38.37$ years) from primary and secondary schools across England, recruited through emails, social media, and professional networks. Recruitment is currently still ongoing. Participants will complete online questionnaires at three time points during the academic year including open-ended questions and established measures such as the: Inventory of Callous-Unemotional Traits (ICU; Frick, 2004); Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI; Halbesleben & Demerouti, 2005); Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS; Pianta, 2001); and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997).

Results: The study is currently in the data collection stage. This presentation will discuss the preliminary findings from the questionnaires completed at the first two time points. These will be available by the time of the conference.

Conclusions: Findings from the Building Connections Study will inform intervention efforts for teachers working with students identified as having persistently challenging behaviour, in turn contributing meaningful insights to support teacher wellbeing and teacher-student relationships. Understanding the relationship between teacher perceptions of challenging behaviours and how these may overlap with students presenting with CU traits will inform the work of practitioners in the fields of educational psychology and teaching.

Early Career Event (ECE) on May 7-9, 2025

Hosted by the Society for the Scientific Study of Psychopathy (SSSP) on GatherTown

Primary and Secondary Variants of Callous Unemotional Traits in Longitudinal Perspective: Exploring Predictors and Outcomes

María Álvarez-Voces^{1*}, Beatriz Díaz-Vázquez^{1*}, Laura López-Romero¹ and Estrella Romero¹

¹ University of Santiago de Compostela, Institute of Psychology (IPsiUS), Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

* Both authors contributed equally

Abstract

Objective: This study investigates differences between groups in primary and secondary variants of Callous Unemotional (CU) traits, and how these variants relate to predictors and outcomes.

Methods: The sample was drawn from the longitudinal ELISA Project and included 2,200 children (48.8% girls; $M_{age} T1=4.25$, $SD=0.91$; $M_{age} T6=10.92$, $SD=1.01$). Groups were formed based on scores from the Child Problematic Traits CU subscale and the Spence Generalized Anxiety subscale, resulting in four categories: Normative (78.4%), High CU (10.3%), High Anxiety (9.2%), and High CU-Anxiety (2.1%). Classification was determined by scoring more than 1SD above the mean in at least two of four time points (T2–T5). Predictors at T1, including individual traits (fearlessness, emotional reactivity) and parental variables (punitive parenting, inconsistent parenting, warmth, and parental stress), were analyzed using multinomial logistic regression, controlling for gender. Outcomes at T6—anxiety/depression, depression/withdrawal, somatic complaints, social problems, rule-breaking, aggression, internalizing, and externalizing problems—were examined through MANOVA, controlling for gender.

Results: Comparing the two variants, high fearlessness and low warmth in T1 were linked to a greater likelihood of belonging to the High CU group, while higher parental stress in T1 increased the probability of being in the High CU-Anxiety group. The High CU-Anxiety group exhibited higher scores in anxiety/depression, social problems, and internalizing problems at T6 than the High CU group. Gender played an important role in these results.

Conclusions: These results highlight the need for further research on CU traits and their clinical implications. Gender should also be considered in future studies.

Early Career Event (ECE) on May 7-9, 2025

Hosted by the Society for the Scientific Study of Psychopathy (SSSP) on GatherTown

Neuroendocrine and psychophysiological profiles in relation to female callous-unemotional traits and distress facilitation

Victoria Auricht¹, Natalie Goulter^{1,3}, and Eva R. Kimonis^{2,3}

¹ Flinders University, College of Education, Psychology and Social Work, Bedford Park, Australia

² The University of New South Wales, School of Psychology, Sydney, Australia

³ The University of New South Wales, Salivary Bioscience Research Centre, Sydney, Australia

Abstract

Objective: Emerging evidence supports that primary and secondary callous-unemotional (CU) variants show distinct physiological correlates, though prior research has failed to distinguish CU variants based on physiological indices, instead using psychosocial measures. This study aimed to determine whether identified neuroendocrine (i.e., cortisol, dehydroepiandrosterone [DHEA], and testosterone) and psychophysiological (i.e., heart rate variability [HRV]) profiles mapped onto theoretically relevant psychosocial constructs consistent with CU variants, and whether profiles differed in emotional processing.

Methods: Salivary samples from undergraduate women oversampled for high psychopathic traits ($N=101$) were assayed for cortisol, DHEA, and testosterone, and resting HRV was assessed. Participants completed self-reported measures of CU traits, maltreatment history, anxiety, and negative affect, and an Emotional Dot-Probe task measuring facilitation to emotional distress. Latent profile analyses identified profiles based on neuroendocrine and HRV data. Profiles were compared on psychosocial measures and facilitation to emotional distress.

Results: Analyses revealed a ‘hypoactive’ physiological profile with low cortisol, DHEA, and testosterone, and a ‘hyperactive’ profile with high cortisol, DHEA, and testosterone. Profiles did not differ on HRV nor align with psychosocial measures used to validate theoretical conceptualisations of CU variants. However, the hyperactive profile scored higher on CU traits and showed greater facilitation to emotional distress, relative to the hypoactive profile.

Conclusions: Findings add to a limited literature on female CU traits in relation to physiological functioning and emotional processing. Our findings also provide preliminary evidence of a possible incongruence between physiological and psychosocial measures underlying the identification of CU variants.

Early Career Event (ECE) on May 7-9, 2025

Hosted by the Society for the Scientific Study of Psychopathy (SSSP) on GatherTown

A Computational Approach to Studying Reinforcement Learning Impairments in ASPD +/- Psychopathy

Cali Baillie¹ & Julia Griem¹

¹ Department of Forensic and Neurodevelopmental Sciences, Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology, and Neuroscience, King's College London, United Kingdom

Abstract

Objective: A small proportion of individuals, namely males who meet criteria for antisocial personality disorder with (ASPD+P) or without (ASPD-P) psychopathy, are responsible for a large proportion of violent crime. However, treatment options for both subtypes of ASPD remain scarce, partly due to a limited understanding of their underpinning mechanisms. While they have been shown to differ on neurobiological, behavioural and clinical characteristics, there is inconsistent evidence for differences in cognitive features, in particular reinforcement learning. Some research has indicated only individuals with ASPD+P have impairments, and other research has suggested impairments in both groups. It is important to clarify this to inform whether treatment approaches should address a shared deficit or if a tailored treatment is required for each subtype. Computational methods offer a more fine-grained approach to disentangling cognitive mechanisms such as reinforcement learning. For example, studies have revealed slower punishment learning in individuals with psychopathic traits and youth with conduct disorder +/- callous-unemotional traits (the developmental precursor to ASPD+/-P). However, no research has examined reinforcement learning using computational methods in adult offenders with ASPD+/-P.

Methods: This project aims to address this research gap by using a Rescorla-Wagner model to compare reinforcement learning in violent male offenders with ASPD+P (N=21), ASPD-P (N=19) and male non-offending controls (N=20).

Results: We will summarize trial-by-trial choice data on a response reversal task using learning rate, expected value, and prediction error parameters. These parameters will help to disentangle mechanisms underlying this cognitive ability, offering a more precise understanding of potential impairments than previously used summary measures. We hypothesize that ASPD+/-P individuals will be slower to build negative associations in the response reversal task (i.e., have a lower learning rate in a loss domain) than controls.

Conclusions: Data analysis will be completed in April 2025.

Early Career Event (ECE) on May 7-9, 2025

Hosted by the Society for the Scientific Study of Psychopathy (SSSP) on GatherTown

Influence of Psychopathic Traits on Group Decision-Making and Neural Synchrony During Real-Time Social Interactions

Richard Bakiaj¹, Christopher J. Patrick², Andrea Bizzego¹, Gianluca Esposito¹, & Alessandro Grecucci¹

¹ Department of Psychology and Cognitive Sciences (DiPSCo), University of Trento, Trento, Italy

² Department of Psychology, Florida State University, 1107 W. Call St, Tallahassee, FL, 32306, USA.

Abstract

Objective: This study was undertaken to examine how psychopathic traits, particularly the meanness (callous-unemotionality) subdimension, influence behavioral and neural aspects of group decision-making in real-time interactions, with a focus on sex differences.

Methods: Adults from the community, assessed for meanness using the Triarchic Psychopathy Measure (TriPM), are being recruited to form 100 same-sex pairs (50 male, 50 female) representing high-meanness dyads (HMDs) and low-meanness dyads (LMDs). To date, 36 dyads have been tested, using a group decision-making paradigm (i.e., modified Prisoner's Dilemma task) involving concurrent functional near-infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS) hyperscanning – allowing for quantification of neural synchrony in prefrontal regions using the algorithmic method of wavelet transform coherence. Analyses including chi-square, ANOVA, and multilevel modeling are being used to examine differences in task cooperation and neural synchrony, as a function of meanness, along with moderating effects of sex, when taking incentive manipulations into account.

Results: Major predictions were that HMDs would show reduced cooperation, more frequent defection, and a different pattern of interbrain synchrony compared to LMDs. We also expected these effects to be more pronounced in male dyads. Analyses for our existing 36 dyads indicate that HMDs favor defection whereas LMDs favor cooperation, and that this group effect is influenced by incentive, such that the HMD versus LMD cooperation difference is amplified under higher incentive conditions.

Conclusions: Through use of a socially competitive task with concurrent brain measurement, this study is elucidating how dispositional meanness affects group decision-making when empathy-related mechanisms are involved. Its findings will advance our understanding of how psychopathic individuals process and respond to social situations and inform interventions for mitigating their adverse effects on others.

Early Career Event (ECE) on May 7-9, 2025

Hosted by the Society for the Scientific Study of Psychopathy (SSSP) on GatherTown

**The Non-Linear Development of Honesty-Humility:
Implications for Psychopathy**

Jessica M. Biasin¹, Teena Willoughby (PhD)², and Taylor Heffer (PhD)¹

¹ Ontario Tech University, Department of Forensic Psychology, Oshawa, ON, Canada

² Brock University, Department of Psychology, St. Catharines, ON, Canada

Abstract

Objective: Honesty-Humility (HH) is the tendency to be sincere, fair, and modest, yet in low levels, is associated with psychopathy. Of concern, HH is thought to be particularly low during adolescence. However, prior research has typically categorized age into discrete groups (e.g., adolescents compared to adults) or treated age as a linear variable, thus limiting the ability to assess *non-linear* (e.g., peaks) and continuous trends in HH across development. The current study will use a longitudinal design to assess the non-linear development of HH from childhood to adolescence.

Methods: Using a dataset of children and adolescents ($N = 1,141$; $M_{\text{age}} = 10$ years at baseline), this study has tracked changes in HH over a six-year period. Generalized Additive Models (GAMs) will be employed to capture potential non-linear developmental trajectories. Instead of fitting a single straight line, GAMs use smooth, flexible curves that better capture complex and potentially non-linear patterns in the data.

Expected Results: It is expected that HH will follow a non-linear developmental trajectory, with a decrease in HH during the transition from childhood into adolescence. GAMs will allow us to identify periods of accelerated (or decelerated) slope at specific ages, such as during adolescence.

Conclusions: This study will contribute to personality development research by addressing the gap in understanding how HH changes from childhood to adolescence. Findings could inform psychological theories and early psychological and educational programming to mitigate antisocial behaviour risk, particularly that typical of psychopathy-related traits.

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The Search for Primary and Secondary Subtypes of Callous-Unemotional Traits in Detained Boys

Thomas Cassart¹, Melina Nicole Kyranides², Stijn Vandeveldel¹, Kostas A. Fanti², Olivier F. Colins¹

¹ University of Ghent, Department of Special Needs Education, Ghent, Belgium

² University of Cyprus, Department of Psychology, Nicosia, Cyprus

Abstract

Objective: This study examines the existence and validity of variants of callous-unemotional (CU) traits in detained boys.

Methods: In a sample of 309 detained boys ($M_{age} = 16.96$), groups were identified by employing both model-based clustering (latent profile analysis; LPA) and sample distribution-based cutoff points (DBSC; 0.5 standard deviations above the mean) using anxiety and CU traits as clustering variables. Identified groups were assessed on different variables (e.g., conduct problems, maltreatment, emotional awareness) via self-reports, experimental tasks, and diagnostic interview data.

Results: Using DBSC, four groups were identified: (i) low CU traits and anxiety (CU-/ANX-), (ii) low CU traits, high anxiety (CU-/ANX+), (iii) high CU traits, low anxiety (CU+/ANX-), and (iv) high CU traits and anxiety (CU+/ANX+). The CU+/ANX+ group was not identified using LPA, highlighting the importance of using different clustering techniques. Results show that youth in the CU+/ANX+ (Secondary) group reported higher depressive symptoms compared to the CU+/ANX- (Primary) group, and variants were differentiated by emotional awareness. Both CU variants reported similarly elevated levels of conduct problems and aggression but were distinct from the CU-/ANX- group. Both CU variants showed low treatment engagement. The secondary CU variant scored higher on impulsivity (trait and behavioral), grandiose-manipulative traits, and showed lower affective empathy but reported higher levels of harsh maternal parenting compared to the CU-/ANX+ group.

Conclusions: Findings support the distinction between primary and secondary CU variants, as well as the differentiation between the secondary CU variant and CU-/ANX+ youth. However, future research should further explore similarities, differences, and clinical relevance.

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**Resting-state Network Connectivity Correlates of Psychopathic Traits in a Japanese Community Sample:
Sex Matters!**

Chester, S.C.¹, Dugré, J. R.¹, Rogers, J. C.¹, Ogawa, T.², Terao, M.², Nakai, R.², Abe, N.², and De Brito, S. A.³

¹ Centre for Human Brain Health, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

Institute for Mental Health, School of Psychology, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

² Institute for the Future of Human Society, Kyoto University

³ Centre for Human Brain Health, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

Institute for Mental Health, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

Centre for Developmental Science, School of Psychology, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

Centre for Neurogenetics, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

Abstract

Objective: Previous literature links psychopathy to dysfunctions in several neural networks. As this work has predominantly focused on small clinical and forensic male samples from Western countries, this study examines if these findings extend to non-Western, mixed-sex community samples.

Methods: Using resting-state functional magnetic resonance imaging (rsfMRI), we analysed inter- and intra-network resting state functional connectivity across regions of interest within the Default Mode, Salience, Control, and subcortical networks in 92 well-functioning Japanese adults (43 males, aged 21–39). Psychopathy traits were assessed using the Self-Report Psychopathy Scale (SRP-SF), and connectivity analyses were conducted using the CONN toolbox.

Results: Preliminary results suggest that higher Factor 2, antisocial behavior and erratic lifestyle scores were associated with increased resting-state connectivity within the default mode network (DMN) and between the DMN and subcortical network. Furthermore, Factor 1 and Factor 2 traits interacted to predict connectivity within the salience network, such that, Factor 1 was positively associated with connectivity within the salience network at high (but not low) values of Factor 2 traits. Finally, we found that sex moderated the association between psychopathy trait scores and resting state functional connectivity across multiple networks.

Conclusions: These results suggest the relationship between psychopathic traits and resting state functional connectivity may be more complex than previously outlined and highlight the need for further investigation in diverse populations.

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Advances in Maturity of Judgment Explain a Decline in Psychopathic Traits' from Adolescence to Adulthood in Justice-Involved Youth

Scarlet J. Cho¹, Romain Decrop¹, and Elizabeth Cauffman¹

¹ University of California, Irvine, Department of Psychological Science, Irvine, CA, USA

Abstract

Objective: Measuring psychopathy in juveniles has been debated due to its decline from adolescence to adulthood, which could be attributed to desistance from inherently “juvenile” characteristics (e.g., parasitic lifestyle, impulsivity). Simultaneously, Maturity of Judgment (MoJ) improves over this period, with components (e.g., emotional maturity, consideration of others) conceptually linked to psychopathy-related deficits. Using mediation analyses, this study explored whether advancement in MoJ contributed to an aging-out of juvenile psychopathy phenomenon for an otherwise relatively stable personality characteristic.

Methods: We examined data from Pathways to Desistance, a longitudinal study of 1,170 justice-involved males (aged 14-17) who were followed across 11 waves over 7 years. We tested whether a latent growth curve of MoJ from ages 14 to 26 mediated psychopathic scores, and their constituent dimensions, from the first to the last wave.

Results: While lower initial MoJ predicted higher scores in each psychopathy dimension ($p < .001$), greater MoJ growth was linked to reductions across dimensions ($p < .05$). Results revealed that the intercept and slope growth factors of MoJ mediated the relationship between psychopath at the first and last wave ($p < .05$).

Conclusions: Gains in MoJ contribute to psychopathy's downward trend over this period, calling into question whether “juvenile” or immaturity-related characteristics of psychopathy may be unduly bolstering psychopathy scores in adolescence, and contributing to declines in psychopathy into adulthood. Findings suggest MoJ development's impact on psychopathy should be considered when assessing, conceptualizing, and treating juvenile psychopathy.

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The Effects of Callous-Unemotional Traits and Anxiety on Emotional Responding

Frances Clark¹, Jacob Shapleski¹, Christina Schwenck², Gloria Gehb² & Hedwig Eisenbarth¹

¹ Victoria University of Wellington, School of Psychology, Wellington, New Zealand

² University of Giessen, Department of Psychology, Giessen, Germany

Abstract

Objective: Callous-unemotional (CU) traits are characterised by increased proneness for antisocial behaviour and low empathy; they are also associated with lower emotional responsiveness. However, it is unclear how those differences are reflected in children with primary and secondary variants of CU traits.

Methods: This study is based on a larger project consisting of 210 children aged 7-9 years and their primary caregiver, participants were recruited in Germany. Levels of CU traits, conduct problems and anxiety were measured using the Inventory of Callous-Unemotional Traits and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. Participants viewed three short emotional video clips (positive negative, neutral), meanwhile their pupil dilation and electrodermal activity were recorded. Self-reported arousal was reported via a Self-Assessment Manikin scale.

Results: Latent profile analysis confirmed the presence of primary and secondary variants of CU traits, and a typically developing group. Moment-by-moment emotional intensity ratings by an external sample identified the emotional impact point of each video. Linear mixed model analysis will test whether primary and secondary variants or dimensional CU traits and anxiety scores predict children's physiological and self-reported arousal to emotional videos.

Conclusions: This study seeks to improve understanding of primary and secondary CU traits by investigating children's physiological responses to emotional videos. The current results have supported the use of latent profile analysis for identifying primary and secondary variants of CU traits. Further findings may help us understand differences in emotional responding between variants of CU traits, informing developmental models of CU traits and future research into variant specific treatment options.

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Treatment Engagement and Multiple Specifiers among Boys and Girls with Conduct Disorder

Emmely Delamillieure¹ & Olivier F. Colins¹

¹ Ghent University, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Department of Special Needs Education, Ghent, Belgium

Abstract

Objective: Callous-unemotional (CU), daring-impulsive (DI), and grandiose-manipulative (GM) specifiers are considered informative for the treatment of youth with conduct disorder (CD). However, empirical work testing this expectation is limited. The present study investigates how the multiple specifiers (i.e., CU, DI, and GM traits) are related to treatment engagement (TE) in youth with CD, after controlling for their overlap, the number of CD symptoms, and internalizing problems. It also examines whether the findings hold across sex.

Methods: 16- and 17-year-old boys (n = 286) and girls (n = 50) were interviewed with a semi-structured diagnostic interview to assess CD symptoms, and completed the TE Questionnaire, the Proposed Specifiers for CD, and the Youth Self-Report. Pearson's bivariate correlation coefficients were calculated and a series of multiple linear regressions were performed.

Results: Zero-order correlations indicated that in boys, CU, DI, and GM traits, and in girls, CU traits were negatively correlated with multiple TE scales. However, after controlling for the overlap of the specifiers, the number of CD symptoms, and internalizing problems, CU traits were the only specifier significantly related to various TE scales among boys and girls with CD.

Conclusions: This study demonstrates that CU traits are important for understanding TE among boys and girls with CD. Further investigation is required before applying DI and GM specifiers in clinical practice.

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Psychopathic Traits and Emotional Processing in a Community Sample of Children: Facial Recognition and Attentional Pattern

Díaz-Vázquez, Beatriz^{1*}, Álvarez-Voces, María^{2*}, Sánchez-Vázquez, Carmen³, Romero, Estrella⁴ and López-Romero, Laura⁵

¹: University of Santiago de Compostela, Instituto of Psychology (IPsiUS), Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

*: Both authors contributed equally

Abstract

Objective: Callous-Unemotional (CU) traits have been widely studied in emotion recognition, with inconsistent findings but evidence linking them to deficits in distress emotions (sadness and fear). Other psychopathy dimensions often co-occur with CU traits but remain less explored. This study examines the association between all psychopathy dimensions (grandiose-deceitful, CU, impulsive-need for stimulation) and emotion recognition, including attention to critical facial areas. Additionally, we analyze differences in emotion recognition by considering psychopathic traits separately and as a whole.

Methods: A community sample of 345 children (54.6% male; age $M = 10.31$, $SD = 0.96$) viewed 40 static frontal face images depicting anger, fear, happiness, neutral, and sadness emotions presented using the Tobii Pro Lab eye-tracker software. Each face was presented for 3 seconds. Then, participants selected the correct emotion from a response template. Psychopathic traits measured using the Child Problematic Traits Inventory were related to recognition and attention through a Repeated Measures General Linear Model with Covariates analysis.

Results: The results highlight the importance of considering all psychopathic traits when studying emotional recognition and attentional patterns. Happiness is the emotion that is recognized the most easily and quickly, with a higher number of fixations on the mouth region. CU traits appear to play a more significant role alone and as a moderator, especially in the recognition of distress-related emotions.

Conclusions: Understanding the emotional patterns linked to all psychopathy dimensions could clarify inconsistent findings in the literature in this field and constitute an important step towards developing early tailored interventions.

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Can Social Learning Deficits Explain Reduced Prosocial and Increased Antisocial Behavior in Psychopathy?

Marla Dressel¹, Naomi Nero¹, Ah Yeong Kim¹, Melinda Somers¹, Shawn A. Rhoads^{2,3,4,5}, and Abigail A. Marsh¹

¹ Department of Psychology, Georgetown University, Washington DC, DC, USA

² Department of Psychiatry, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, NY, USA

³ Nash Family Department of Neuroscience, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, NY, USA

⁴ Friedman Brain Institute, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, NY, USA

⁵ Center for Computational Psychiatry, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, NY, USA

Abstract

Objective: Psychopathy is a personality construct marked by reduced empathic concern and a high risk for aggression. While subclinical traits have been associated with social learning impairments, no prior research has specifically examined how high-psychopathy individuals acquire prosocial behavior and antisocial behavior. In this study, we use computational reinforcement learning models to assess how individuals with psychopathy learn about outcomes that benefit or harm others.

Methods: In this study, we will recruit 300 participants, half of whom are high-psychopathy individuals identified through the website of the Society for the Prevention of Disorders of Aggression (SPDA), formerly known as PsychopathyIs. In an online probabilistic social reinforcement learning task, participants make choices that simultaneously affect themselves and another person, either in congruent ways (mutual benefit or mutual cost) or in conflicting ways (altruism or instrumental harm). Afterward, we assess their prosocial and antisocial tendencies via self-report. Computational models of reinforcement learning will be fitted to the data in order to estimate learning rates, reflecting the sensitivity to each specific outcome.

Expected Results: We hypothesize that compared to controls, individuals with psychopathy will show a diminished sensitivity to the effects of their actions on others, particularly when helping or harming others while maintaining the ability to optimize outcomes for themselves. Further, we hypothesize that these learning deficits are linked to prosocial and antisocial tendencies.

Conclusions: This computational profile could offer valuable insights into prosocial and antisocial learning mechanisms and self-serving behaviors in psychopathy, a condition that remains underresearched despite its strong link to persistent and costly instrumental aggression.

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The Moderating Effect of Gender on the Relationship Between Psychopathy and Interest in Multiple-Perpetrator Rape

Chloe Foster¹, Saad Iqbal¹, & Leonardo Bobadilla¹

¹Pacific University, School of Graduate Psychology, Hillsboro, OR, USA

Objective: Multiple-perpetrator rape (MPR) is a particularly violent form of sexual violence. Psychopathy has been associated with rape in the literature, but almost no literature has examined the influence of psychopathy on MPR. The current study replicates and extends one of the only studies examining psychopathy and self-reported arousal, enjoyment, and behavioral propensity towards MPR and the influence of gender in these relationships.

Methods: 147 participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 30.4$; 60.54% female; 54.42% Caucasian/White) completed online versions of the MPR Interest Scale which assesses self-reported arousal, enjoyment, and willingness to engage in MPR using vignettes. Participants then completed the Self-Report Psychopathy-III: Short Form.

Results: Regression analyses revealed that among women, the Antisocial Behavior facet of psychopathy significantly predicted sexual arousal, enjoyment, and behavioral propensity for all MPR vignettes. Similarly, for men, there was a positive -although non-significant- relationship between Antisocial Behavior and MPR. In contrast, among women, Erratic Lifestyle predicted *lower* levels of sexual arousal and enjoyment of MPR and trended negatively in all of the remaining vignettes. But for men, Erratic Lifestyle predicted *higher* levels of sexual arousal and enjoyment of initiation MPR vignettes.

Conclusions: The findings from this study support previous literature that the Antisocial Behavior facet of psychopathy is positively associated with deviant sexual interests for both genders (van Bommel et al., 2018). Alternatively, the differential impact of Erratic Lifestyle on MPR interest suggests that specific facets of psychopathy manifest uniquely among men and women. Notably, the data also provide preliminary evidence for female interest in group sexual violence.

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Motivation to engage with positive affective cues in adolescents with conduct problems and callous-unemotional traits

Anne Gaule¹, Geoffrey Bird², Eamon McCrory¹, Ian Penton-Voak³, Marcus Munafò³, Jean-Baptiste Pingault¹, John Rogers¹, Quentin Bernard, and Essi Viding¹

¹ University College London, Department of Clinical Educational and Health Psychology, London, UK

² University College London, Institute of Education, London, UK

³ University of Bristol, School of Psychological Science, Bristol, UK

Abstract

Objective: Caring about and responding appropriately to other people's positive emotions is considered crucial for forming and maintaining good social relationships. Adolescents with conduct problems (CP) and high levels of callous unemotional traits (CP/HCU) are a vulnerable group that displays atypical social affiliation and is at risk for developing psychopathy in adulthood. Although a wealth of research has indicated that adolescents with CP/HCU differ from those with CP alone (CP/LCU) and typically developing (TD) adolescents in a range of neurocognitive correlates (including negative affect and reinforcement learning), fewer studies have examined how these groups differ in positive affect processing. This is surprising given the role that such processing is thought to play in facilitating typical socialisation over development. We investigate two important indices of motivation to engage with positive affective cues in adolescents with CP/HCU, CP/LCU, and TD peers: readiness to join in with laughter (an important social bonding signal), and willingness to make effort to see positive emotional response.

Methods: CP/HCU, CP/LCU, and TD adolescents aged 11-16 years old completed experimental tasks where they (1) rated how much they felt like joining in with audio clips of real human laughter and (2) used a gripper to watch video clips of people smiling and car races (control condition).

Results: Analyses are currently underway. Groups will be compared on their mean ratings of laughter contagion, as well as the level of force that they are willing to exert to see a person smile (for preregistered analyses, see <https://osf.io/dtfb4>).

Conclusions: Findings and their implications will be discussed.

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Testing components of an aetiological model for secondary callous-unemotional traits in a clinic-referred sample of young children with conduct problems

Yisha Gu¹, Georgette Fleming², Silvana Kaouar¹, Bryan Neo¹, Campbell McDonogh¹, Jessica Henery¹, Lily Chen¹, Yi Rong Shawn Chua¹, and Eva Kimonis¹

¹ University of New South Wales, School of Psychology, Faculty of Science, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

² Macquarie University, school of Psychological Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, Health and Human Sciences, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

Abstract

Objective: Children with callous-unemotional (CU) traits represent a severe subtype of conduct problems and a precursor to adult psychopathy. Two aetiological pathways emerge: a primary variant (emotional processing deficits, low anxiety) and a secondary variant (high anxiety, notable childhood adversity). Despite comparable levels of CU traits, secondary CU variants exhibit more severe conduct problems and poorer treatment outcomes than their primary counterparts. This study tests components of the ESCAPE-ALL model [Emotionally Sensitive Child-Adverse Parenting Experiences-Allostatic (Over)Load] for secondary CU traits to inform unique risk factors and treatment needs.

Methods: Participants included 440 families with 1- to 8-year-old children ($M_{age} = 4.52$, $SD = 1.50$) displaying elevated conduct problems and varying levels of CU traits. Most children were boys (74.1%) and Caucasian/White (42.3%). Parents completed baseline measures assessing CU traits (Inventory of Callous-Unemotional Traits), conduct problems (Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory), parent psychopathology (Behaviour Symptom Inventory, Parenting Stress Index), and child outcomes (Child Behaviour Checklist). Children were categorised into conduct problem-only, primary, and secondary CU groups based on internalising scores and CU traits.

Results: Parents of children with secondary CU traits reported significantly higher parenting stress than children with primary CU traits and conduct problems-only. Mothers of children with secondary CU traits had significantly greater psychological distress. Secondary CU variants had higher irritability scores and more severe conduct problems.

Conclusions: These findings support the 'Adverse Parenting Experiences' (APE-) component of the ESCAPE-ALL model, showing that parents of children with secondary CU traits experience greater psychopathology and stress, increasing the risk of engaging in hostile, irresponsible parenting, contributing to disorganised attachments in these children.

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Parent-Reported Warmth Findings with Parents of Young Children with Varying Levels of Conduct Problems and Callous-Unemotional Traits

Jessica Henery¹, Georgette E. Fleming^{1,2}, Bryan Neo¹, Silvana Kaouar¹, and Eva R. Kimonis¹

¹ The University of New South Wales, School of Psychology, Parent-Child Research Clinic, Sydney, Australia

² Macquarie University, School of Psychological Sciences, Sydney, Australia

Abstract

Objective: Low parental warmth is a key risk factor for callous-unemotional (CU) trait development and a treatment target of interventions adapted for children with CU traits. However, measuring warmth change has been hindered by a lack of comprehensive measurement tools appropriate for use with young children. This study aimed to validate the novel Parental Affection/Warmth Scale (PAWS) in a mixed sample and determine whether PAWS scores predict CU traits beyond conduct problem (CP) severity.

Methods: The current study tested the reliability, validity, and predictive utility of PAWS scores among 69 parents (87% mothers; 73.5% Caucasian/White) of 2- to 8-year-old typically developing and clinic-referred children ($M = 5.59$ years, $SD = 1.67$; 42% girls). Parents completed the PAWS, measures of parent feelings, and measures of child CP, CU traits, and empathy during a baseline assessment. Parents of typically developing children repeated questionnaires at a 2-week follow-up assessment ($n = 24$).

Results: PAWS scores were internally consistent, stable across time ($r = .881, p < .001$), concurrent ($r = .616, p < .001$) and discriminant ($r = -.377, p = .002$) with expected parenting subscales, and convergent with CU trait and empathy scores. ICU scores were moderately associated with PAWS scores beyond CP intensity, whereas CP intensity was not significantly associated with parental warmth.

Conclusions: Results support the psychometric properties of the PAWS and provide further evidence of the unique relationship between parental warmth and CU traits. Implications include validating the PAWS for clinical use and supporting the targeting of parental warmth in treatments for children with CU-type CP.

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We See Meanness in Each Other: Correspondence of Self- And Other-Ratings

Bianca S. Islas¹, Ananda Liz Peixoto Couto¹, and Stephen D. Benning¹

¹ University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Psychology, Las Vegas, NV, USA

Abstract

Objective: This study examined the agreement between self- and other-ratings of meanness, a facet of psychopathy, within dyads using the Meanness in Psychopathy-Self Report (MiP-SR).

Methods: Participants (148 dyads, of which 142 had complete data) from university undergraduate introductory psychology courses and their acquaintances rated themselves and each other on the MiP-SR's three factors: Malice, Coldness, and Imperviousness. Single-rater absolute agreement intraclass correlation coefficients (ICCs) and their [95% confidence intervals] were calculated to assess agreement between ratings.

Results: Overall, dyad members showed good agreement in rating the same target's meanness factors: Malice ICC=.57 [.49,.64], Coldness ICC=.52 [.42,.60]), and Imperviousness (ICC=.37 [.27,.47]). Dyad members' ratings of their own Malice (ICC=.07 [-.09,.23]), Coldness (ICC=.13 [-.03,.29]), and Imperviousness (ICC=.13 [-.03,.29]) indicated poor agreement. In contrast, their ratings of the other dyad member were discernibly different from zero: Malice ICC=.25 [.09,.39], Coldness ICC=.18 [.02,.33], and Imperviousness ICC=.23 [.07,.37].

Conclusions: Though dyad members had reasonable correspondence of their ratings of the same person in the dyad, they did not demonstrate homophily for levels of meanness. Nevertheless, they demonstrated mild homophily in their perceptions of the other person's level of meanness, particularly for Malice. Thus, people selected their friends partly due to their perceptions of the other person's levels of antagonism.

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**Emotional Reactivity and Recognition Deficits in Individuals with Callous-Unemotional (CU) Traits:
Evidence from Two Multilevel Meta-Analyses**

Emily C. Kemp, Ph.D.¹, Taylor Miller, M.A.², Julianne S. Speck, M.A.², and Paul J. Frick, Ph.D.²

¹ University of California, San Diego, Department of Psychiatry, La Jolla, CA, USA

² Louisiana State University, Department of Psychology, Baton Rouge, LA, USA

Abstract

Objective: Though literature supports two theorized mechanisms for the development of CU traits – deficient reactivity to and recognition of others’ emotions – significant inconsistencies remain. Specifically, the association between CU traits and emotional hypo-reactivity is found across development but less consistently in females, and the association between CU traits and deficient emotion recognition appears inconsistent across age. The current study utilized multilevel meta-analyses that controlled for moderators (sex, age) to clarify past inconsistencies.

Methods: A literature search was conducted following PRISMA guidelines, using electronic databases (e.g., PubMed) and terms referring to CU traits, emotional reactivity, and emotion recognition. This led to 106 included studies of emotional reactivity and 95 of emotion recognition; sample sizes ranged from 15 to 2306; mean ages from 4 to 50 years; and percent female from 0 to 100.

Results: A four-level meta-analysis showed CU traits were negatively associated with emotional reactivity (broad: $r = -.25$, $p < .0001$, $k = 106$, $n = 332$; distress: $r = -.24$, $p < .0001$, $k = 82$, $n = 207$), with no moderation. A three-level meta-analysis showed CU traits were negatively associated with emotion recognition (broad: $r = -.10$, $p < .0001$, $k = 95$, $n = 248$; distress: $r = -.10$, $p < .0001$, $k = 59$, $n = 125$), with partial moderation by age showing lower effect sizes in older samples.

Conclusions: Results support pervasive emotional processing deficits related to CU traits, with emotional hypo-reactivity stronger and consistent across age and sex but emotion recognition deficits stronger in younger samples.

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The intrinsic functional connectivity of psychopathy and its relation to self-control

Jia Hao Kng¹, Lizhu Luo¹, Olivia Choy¹, & Junhong Yu¹

¹Psychology, School of Social Sciences, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Abstract

Objective: Previous research has found functional connectivity in various networks to be altered in psychopathy and has theorised a link between these networks and the self-control-related deficits observed in psychopathy. However, this theory has yet to be tested adequately and empirically.

Methods: Data from 179 healthy adults (age range: 20-80) of the open-access MPI Leipzig Mind Brain Body dataset were analysed. Participants completed an affective switching task and questionnaires relating to psychopathy and self-control and underwent resting-state fMRI scans. Functional connectivity matrices were extracted for each subject, and network-based statistics was used to identify intrinsic resting-state functional networks associated with psychopathy scores. The positive and negative network strengths were entered as a mediator of the relationship between psychopathy and self-control related variables.

Results: Significant networks that are positively and negatively associated with psychopathy emerged in the analyses.

The functional connections that correlated positively with psychopathy was mostly characterised by strong connections between the default mode network and salience network, while the functional connections negatively correlated with psychopathy was largely characterised by strong within-dorsal attention network connectivity. Both the psychopathy-associated positive and negative networks were significantly correlated with measures of self-control and impulsivity. Furthermore, the negative network mediated the relationship between psychopathy and affective task-switching.

Conclusions: Findings suggest that alterations in intrinsic functional connectivity are significantly implicated in psychopathy; these alterations possibly account for some self-control related deficits observed in psychopathy.

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The Effect of Attention to Emotional Cues depending on Personality Traits

Katarzyna Kuczaj¹ and Hedwig Eisenbarth¹

¹ Victoria University of Wellington, School of Psychological Sciences, Wellington, New Zealand

Abstract

Objective: Emotional-Induced Blindness (EIB) describes difficulty recalling targets presented after emotionally arousing stimuli. Individuals higher on psychopathic personality traits have been found to show altered emotion processing and reduced EIB effect. This study investigates how psychopathic personality traits moderate performance in an EIB task across repeated assessments. We use Event-related potentials to investigate the neurophysiological correlates of EIB and its moderation.

Methods: Participants ($N = 75$) viewed 324 trials with rapid serial visual presentations of images including a target and distractor. Target images were shown at varying lags (2, 4, 8) after distractor images (negative, neutral, baseline). The task consisted of three timepoints (Session one: T1, T2. Session two: T3 - one week later). Psychopathic traits were assessed using Psychopathic Personality Inventory (PPI-R-40).

Results: Individuals scoring higher on Fearless Dominance more accurately identified target images proceeding negative distractors at lag 2, thus experiencing less Emotion-Induced Blindness. This effect was present at all timepoints. Meanwhile, Self-Centered Impulsivity had no effect on accuracy, nor was there an interaction of the two trait factors. There was a significant interaction between timepoint and Fearless Dominance. Target and distractor related N2 as well as target related P3 are expected to show distractor type differences that explain the behavioural effects.

Conclusions: The results of this research show that fearless dominance (in comparison to self-centered impulsivity) seems to drive an ability to ignore emotional information in the environment that is not goal relevant, which is in line with the fear deficit and attention deficit hypotheses of psychopathy.

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**Adolescent Substance Use Among Boys and Girls with Primary and Secondary Callous-Unemotional
Traits**

Sydney Larche, Natalie Stearns, MSc and Stephanie G. Craig, PhD

¹ University of Guelph, College of Arts, Department of Psychology, Guelph, ON, Canada

Abstract

Objective: Callous-unemotional (CU) traits (i.e., lack of empathy, callousness) are thought to be genetic and are linked to maladaptive behavioural outcomes. Research has found two distinct presentations of CU traits: primary CU traits stemming from a genetic predisposition to hypoarousal and low anxiety, and secondary CU traits, developed as a trauma response to maltreatment resulting in hyperarousal and high anxiety. The literature identifies substance use in CU groups as an ongoing concern among high-risk or justice-involved, and mostly male, adolescent populations. This study aimed to examine substance use in a community mixed-gender sample with primary and secondary CU traits. Gender differences are discussed.

Methods: Participants included 336 Canadian adolescents aged 12-18 ($M = 15.73$). Measures include CU traits, abuse, anxiety, affect dysregulation, affect suppression, and the use of various substances.

Results: Using cluster analysis (CU traits, abuse, anxiety, affect dysregulation, and suppression) 8.9% were classified as primary CU traits (20 boys, 10 girls), 11.6% were classified as secondary CU traits (24 boys, 15 girls) and 79.5% classified as low CU group. A One-way ANOVA found secondary CU adolescents to have significantly higher use of marijuana and other illegal drugs (MDMA, mushrooms, cocaine) compared to the primary CU group and low CU group. However, primary CU individuals reported higher vaping rates. No gender differences in substance use were found across the CU variants.

Conclusions: Findings contribute to the emerging literature on substance use and gender differences among community samples of adolescents with primary and secondary CU traits. Clinical implications are discussed.

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Emotion, Motivation, and Attention: The Interplay of Cognitive Mechanisms in Psychopathy

Myra LeBlanc¹ and Matthew Shane¹

¹ Ontario Tech University, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Oshawa, ON, Canada

Abstract

Objective: This study aims to investigate the interplay between emotional distraction, cognitive control, and motivation in individuals with varying levels of psychopathic traits. Specifically, it will examine how emotionally salient distractors influence cognitive performance under proactive and reactive control conditions, and how financial incentives (fixed vs. performance-based) modulate these effects.

Methods: Participants (N =~ 200; aged 17–26; mixed gender and races; recruited via SONA) completed a cognitive task involving emotionally salient distractor images under one of two control conditions: proactive (preparation-based) and reactive (response-based). The task included financially motivated conditions: fixed rewards and performance-based rewards. Psychopathic traits were assessed using the Psychopathic Personality Inventory-Revised (PPI-R-40). Behavioral performance (accuracy, reaction time) and self-report measures were recorded.

Results: It is anticipated that individuals with higher psychopathic traits will show reduced interference from emotional distractors, particularly under reactive control conditions. Additionally, that performance-based rewards will enhance accuracy across all participants, but this effect may be less pronounced in those with elevated psychopathic traits. Proactive control will improve performance in low-psychopathy individuals but is expected to have minimal impact on high-psychopathy individuals.

Conclusions: This study is an exploratory approach to studying psychopathy that encapsulates multiple cognitive dimensions at once. This multidimensional approach not only advances our understanding of psychopathy but also provides a foundation for future research to explore these dynamics in greater depth, with implications for developing targeted interventions in clinical, forensic, and organizational contexts.

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Moral Disengagement as a Mediator Between Psychopathy and Multiple Perpetrator Rape

¹Anna Le-Nguyen, ¹Rebecca Killion, ¹Saad Iqbal, & ¹Leonardo Bobadilla

¹Pacific University, School of Graduate Psychology, Hillsboro, OR, USA

Objective: Little is known about the individual variables involved in multiple perpetrator rape (MPR), a brutal form of sexual violence. Even less is known about this phenomenon among potential women perpetrators. Data suggests moral disengagement is related to violent tendencies, and psychopathic traits correlate with sexual assault proclivity. The current study examined whether moral disengagement mediates the relationship between facets of psychopathy and self-reported arousal, enjoyment, and behavioral propensity toward MPR among women.

Methods: A non-clinical sample of female participants ($N = 89$; $M_{\text{age}} = 28.4$; 45.83% Caucasian) completed an online survey consisting of the Multiple-Perpetrator Rape Interest Scale, the Self- Report Psychopathy-III: Short Form, and the Propensity to Morally Disengage Scale.

Results: Initial regressions showed the Antisocial Behavior facet of psychopathy was associated with sexual arousal, enjoyment, and behavioral propensity towards scenarios depicting initiation and intimidation MPR. The antisocial facet was also significantly related to the following moral disengagement scales: diffusion of responsibility, distortion of consequences, attribution of blame, and dehumanization. However, contrary to hypothesis, the totality of these moral disengagement scales did not significantly mediate the relationship between Antisocial Behavior and MPR interest.

Conclusions: Consistent with previous data linking antisocial behavior with sexual assault, in this study the antisocial behaviors facet of psychopathy was related to sexual arousal, enjoyment and interest in engaging in MPR among women. Contrary to hypothesis, the findings do not support moral disengagement as a mediating factor between psychopathy and MPR. However, these data merit replication and further exploration of individual traits and processes influencing female proclivity towards group sexual violence.

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Self-Construal Moderates the Relationship Between Psychopathic Traits and Prosocial Behaviors

Yiheng Lin¹, Bin Xie^{1,2}, and Yi Qiao^{1,2}

¹ Shanghai Mental Health Center, Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine, Shanghai, China PRC

² Institution of Forensic Psychiatry, Shanghai Mental Health Center, Shanghai, China PRC

Abstract

Objective: This study explores how self-construal moderates the relationship between psychopathic traits and prosocial behaviors. Specifically, it explores whether interdependent and independent self-construal influence the expression of prosocial tendencies in individuals with varying levels of psychopathy.

Methods: The study is a cross-sectional and self-reported questionnaire-based study. A total of 1,519 participants ($M_{age} = 24.49$, $SD = 7.58$; 58.3% female) from community sample completed Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy Scale (LSRP), Self-Construal Scale (SCS), and Prosocial Tendencies Measure (PTM). Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to examine the moderating effects of self-construal on the relationship between psychopathic traits and prosocial behaviors, controlling for age and gender.

Results: Interdependent self-construal strengthened the positive association between primary psychopathy featuring and public prosocial behaviors while attenuating negative associations with anonymous and altruistic prosocial behaviors. In contrast, independent self-construal showed mixed effects: it weakened the negative relationship between primary psychopathy and certain prosocial tendencies but exacerbated the negative associations for secondary psychopathy. These findings highlight the context-dependent nature of prosocial expressions among individuals with psychopathic traits.

Conclusions: The results support the moderated expression model of psychopathy, suggesting that socio-contextual factors like self-construal influence how psychopathic traits manifest in prosocial contexts. These findings challenge views of psychopathy as uniformly antisocial and underscore the potential for targeted interventions to promote adaptive social outcomes among individuals with elevated psychopathic traits. Future research should explore cross-cultural variations and longitudinal dynamics to further elucidate these relationships.

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Exploring Dynamics between Psychopathy, Political Beliefs, and Political Media Preferences

Madison Martin¹ and Alexandra Harrison¹

¹ University of Alabama, College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Psychology, Tuscaloosa, AL, USA

Abstract

Objective: Prior research has established positive associations between psychopathy and Western political conservatism. Studies show that Republicans tend to exhibit higher levels of psychopathic traits when compared to Democrats (Preston & Anestis, 2018) and individuals with elevated levels of psychopathy appear more susceptible to media narratives that emphasize fear and conflict (De Coninck & Swinnen, 2023). However, the role of political news media in this relationship remains understudied. This study explores interconnections between psychopathy, political beliefs, and political news media preferences among a right-leaning, white American sample.

Methods: About 500 white American residents who identify as centrist to far-right will be recruited from CloudResearch.com and the university's student subject pool. They will complete self-report measures of psychopathy (SRP-SF; Gordts et al., 2017) and political beliefs (NATPROBS; Pew Research Center, 2023) and report preferred political news sources (e.g., Fox News, Newsmax, YouTube, TikTok) on an online questionnaire.

Results: Political belief items and psychopathy scores will serve as indicators in a latent profile analysis (LPA) to identify and describe the optimal number of naturally occurring profiles within the sample. Profile membership from the selected LPA model will then be used to predict differences in political news media preferences in an ANOVA.

Conclusions: Identifying how these constructs naturally cluster within individuals may reveal distinct patterns among white Americans and provide insight into the complex interplay between personality, political beliefs, and political media consumption habits.

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Measure of Punishment Insensitivity in Young Children Identifies a Unique Subgroup at Risk for Severe Antisocial Behavior

Campbell McDonogh¹ and Eva R. Kimonis¹

¹ Parent-Child Research Clinic, Salivary Bioscience Research Centre, School of Psychology, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

Abstract

Objective: Diagnostic classification systems differ in whether they include punishment insensitivity (PI) as a symptom of limited prosocial emotions (LPE). To date, scant research has demonstrated that elevated PI adds value in identifying a clinical subgroup of children with elevated LPE. This study aimed to test whether PI (1) differentiates young children with and without LPE, and (2) adds incremental variance beyond a measure assessing LPE symptoms in identifying young children with severe conduct problems (CP).

Methods: Participants included 99 children (ages 2.5–8 years, 62% boys) recruited from community and clinical settings. Parents rated their children's PI (e.g., "Changes behavior after being punished," "Does not care when punished"; Wakschlag et al., 2014), CP (Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory; Eyberg, 1978), and callous-unemotional traits (Inventory of Callous-Unemotional Traits; Frick, 2004). Children were classified into four groups: low CP control (n = 47), low CP/high CU (n = 16), CP-only (n = 16), and CP+CU (n = 20) for PI comparisons.

Results: ANOVA with pairwise comparisons showed that both high CU groups, regardless of CP level, exhibited significantly higher PI than CP-only and typically developing peers, with no difference between CU groups. PI also demonstrated incremental validity in predicting CP severity beyond ICU scores

Conclusions: In early childhood, PI is unique to the subset of children with CU traits. PI scores also add unique variance beyond ICU scores in identifying children with more severe antisocial behavior. These findings appear to support the inclusion of PI as an indicator of LPE in diagnostic systems.

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Using parents' own words to develop a comprehensive measure of CU traits in young children

Bryan Neo¹, Lucy Koh¹, Natalie Goulter¹, & Eva R. Kimonis¹

¹ Parent-Child Research Clinic, School of Psychology, The University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

Abstract

Objective: The purpose of this study was to determine whether characteristics, including punishment insensitivity and low social affiliation, which are a core components of some theoretical models and diagnostic classification systems, enhance the assessment of limited prosocial emotions (LPE) in young children.

Methods: Transcripts from videorecorded Clinical Assessment of Prosocial Emotions semi-structured interviews (CAPE; Frick, 2013) with mothers and fathers about their 2-8-year-old clinic-referred child with conduct problems (oversampled for CU traits) were used to generate item indicators of LPE. Using MTurk, 899 parents (76% White) of children aged 2–8 years ($M = 4.77$ years, $SD = 1.95$; 46.1% girls) responded to a distilled 131-item set as well as measures of CU traits (ICU, PSCD), empathy, and antisocial behavior about their child. A randomly selected half of the MTurk sample was subjected to EFA and the other half subjected to CFA.

Results: Factor analytic results indicated that a five-factor hierarchical model demonstrated the best fit: lack of guilt/remorse, callous/lack of empathy, unconcerned about performance, shallow affect, and punishment insensitivity. Factor scores were highly correlated (.80-.95), internally consistent (all $\geq .90$), and correlated in expected ways with validating measures. Scores on this new LPE scale added incremental variance beyond ICU and PSCD scores in statistically predicting conduct problem severity.

Conclusions: This new LPE scale offers promise as a comprehensive tool for assessing CU traits in early childhood. Results support the importance of punishment insensitivity to assessing LPE in young children, consistent with the ICD-11 diagnostic classification system.

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Examining Power Dynamics as a Motivation to Empathize in Individuals with Varying Levels of Psychopathic Traits

Kirsten Stewart¹, Matthew Shane¹, and Varvara Ninowsky¹

¹Ontario Tech University, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Oshawa, ON, Canada

Abstract

Objective: Recent evidence suggests that individuals with higher levels of psychopathy do not necessarily lack the capacity for empathy but instead may use it strategically. This study explores how contextual variables—particularly power dynamics—motivate empathic engagement among those with elevated psychopathic traits.

Methods: A sample of ~250 undergraduate students (ages 17–45, mixed genders and races) from Ontario Tech University are completing a Q-sort adaptation of the Empathic Choice Task (ECT). Participants rank 90 social scenarios, some involving power imbalances (e.g., the participant has power over the target) and others with no clear hierarchy. They indicate how strongly each scenario motivates them to empathize for either virtuous (other-focused) or nonvirtuous (self-focused) reasons. Additionally, participants complete the Psychopathic Personality Inventory–Revised-40, Interpersonal Reactivity Index, and Motivation to Empathize Scale to examine psychopathy’s relationship with empathic motivations in power-relevant contexts. They also provide qualitative data explaining their motivation to empathize more in some scenarios than others.

Results: Data collection is ongoing. It is hypothesized that participants with higher psychopathic traits will exhibit motivations to empathize that vary with the power dynamic of the situation. Conversely, participants with lower psychopathy scores are hypothesized to exhibit more consistent motivations to empathize, irrespective of power context.

Conclusions: The anticipated findings will shed light on how psychopathy affects the strategic use of empathy in various power-related scenarios. Understanding this interplay may inform targeted interventions aimed at guiding the potentially adaptive empathic strategies of individuals higher in psychopathic traits.

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An exploration of the impact of Callous-Unemotional traits on teachers' perceptions of student behaviour difficulties and on students' enjoyment of school

Oxley, L.¹, Burić, I.², O'Farrelly, C.³, Viding, E.⁴, Ramchandani, P. G.³, & Kim, L. E.⁵

¹ Department of Education, University of York, United Kingdom.

² Department of Psychology, University of Zadar, Croatia.

³ Play in Education, Development and Learning (PEDAL) Research Centre, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom.

⁴ Division of Psychology and Language Sciences, University College London, United Kingdom.

⁵ School of Psychology, The University of Sydney, Australia.

Abstract

Objective: Children with CU traits often present with significant conduct problems. Yet there is currently limited research about how CU traits may influence teachers' perceptions of the students' behavioural difficulties, or on how CU traits may impact the students' enjoyment of school. This study investigated whether teachers perceived students with higher levels of CU traits to have higher levels of behavioural difficulties, as well as whether the students reported differences in their enjoyment of school.

Methods: The sample consisted of participants from the Healthy Start Happy Start (HSHS) study, with children aged 6-9 years (n=199; mean age=8yrs1month; 48.7% girls), their parents (n=199) and their teachers (n=95). The HSHS study sample comprised of children at higher risk of behavioural difficulties, due to indications of early aggressive and antisocial behaviour. Three measures were included in the analysis: children's self-reported School Enjoyment (SE) survey, parent-reported Callous-Unemotional Traits Scale (CUTS), and teacher-reported Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ).

Results: Statistically significant differences were found between students with higher and lower CU traits on the SDQ scales of conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, and prosocial traits, as well as on the overall SDQ score. No statistically significant difference was found between students' school enjoyment based on their level of CU traits.

Conclusions: The study findings suggest that teachers perceive students with higher levels of CU traits to experience more behavioural difficulties overall, particularly in conduct, hyperactivity/inattention, and prosocial behaviours. However, students do not report any differences in their enjoyment of school based on their level of CU traits.

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Post-Error Accuracy: Correlated with Fearless Dominance, Moderated by Impulsive Antisociality

Ananda Liz Peixoto Couto¹ and Stephen D. Benning¹

¹ University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Psychology, Las Vegas, NV, USA

Abstract

Objective: Psychopathy is marked by failure to learn from experience. Exploration of that deficit from a post-error adjustment framework is mixed (for post-error slowing; PES) or lacking (for post-error accuracy; PEA). This study addressed this gap while examining Fearless Dominance (FD) and Impulsive Antisociality (IA).

Methods: Seventy-one participants completed a speeded forced-choice task responding to the case (upper/lower) or color (blue/yellow) of a letter and committed at least 6 errors. We defined PES as RT following incorrect trials and PEA as accuracy following incorrect trials. Psychopathy scores were estimated from the Multidimensional Personality Questionnaire–Brief Form.

Results: A linear mixed model for RT showed longer RT following incorrect trials ($b = .07, p < .001$) and featured a discernible TrialType x IA interaction ($b = -.02, p = .034$). However, simple slopes analysis revealed no discernible associations between IA and post-error RT after either trial type. The model for accuracy revealed less accuracy following incorrect trials ($b = -.29, p < .001$). A discernible TrialType x FD interaction ($b = .10, p < .001$) suggested more accuracy after incorrect trials for those higher in FD. However, a discernible TrialType x FD x IA interaction ($b = -.06, p < .001$) revealed reduced effect of FD on PEA as IA increased.

Conclusions: We found that PES was not moderated by psychopathy. A surprising interaction revealed that FD had a positive effect on post-error accuracy, which was counteracted by IA. The findings support the call for multidimensional measures of psychopathy in error processing research, as different factors may have opposing effects.

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Elemental Psychopathy Assessment's Nomological Net: A Meta-Analytic Review

Nathaniel L. Phillips¹, Leigha Rose¹, Donald R. Lynam², and Joshua D. Miller¹

¹ University of Georgia, Franklin College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Psychology, Athens, GA, USA

² Purdue University, College of Health and Human Sciences, Department of Psychological Sciences, West Lafayette, IN, USA

Abstract

Objective: Psychopathy is a longstanding construct of clinical interest, marked by traits such as callousness, manipulateness, and impulsivity. The Elemental Psychopathy Assessment (EPA; Lynam et al., 2011) was developed to anchor the measurement of psychopathy within the Five Factor Model of personality. This preregistered study presents a meta-analytic review of the EPA's construct validity, examining its relations at the domain and total levels with other psychopathy measures, personality traits, and psychopathological outcomes

Methods: Drawing from 50 studies across 38 manuscripts, over 3,500 effect sizes were meta-analyzed.

Results: EPA Antagonism showed strong convergent validity with constructs like TriPM Meanness and SRP-III Callous Affect, while EPA Disinhibition was closely linked to impulsivity-related traits such as TriPM Disinhibition and SRP-III Erratic Lifestyle. EPA Narcissism was associated with interpersonal dominance and manipulation, whereas EPA Emotional Stability generally showed positive relations with adaptive traits and outcomes. Antagonism and Disinhibition emerged as the core psychopathy traits, while the role of Emotional Stability remained uncertain due to its varied associations with maladaptive outcomes. Moderator analyses revealed differences across sample types and EPA versions.

Conclusions: These findings offer meta-analytic support for the EPA's validity, highlighting the centrality of Antagonism and Disinhibition, and the complexity of Emotional Stability in the psychopathy construct.

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Exploring the Intersection of Empathy Deficits in Substance Use Disorders and Psychopathy

Corina Picco¹ and Matthew Shane¹

¹ Ontario Tech University, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Oshawa, ON, CAN

Abstract

Objective: Substance use disorders (SUDs) and psychopathy are highly comorbid externalizing disorders that share deficits in impulse control, decision-making, and social cognition, including empathy impairments. Empathy consists of two primary components: cognitive and affective empathy. Psychopathy is consistently associated with deficits in affective empathy, while cognitive empathy often remains intact. In contrast, SUDs have been linked to deficits in both cognitive and affective empathy, with severity of substance use predicting greater impairments. This study aimed to assess the independent and interactive effects of psychopathic traits and substance use severity on empathy within a forensic sample.

Methods: Our study consisted of 142 adult probation/parolees (100 males (70.4%), 42 females (29.6%); total mean age = 33.3 years ($SD = 8.67$)). Participants completed the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R) and the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), and lifetime substance use was assessed via the Addiction Severity Index-Expanded (ASI-X) and Structured Clinical Interview for DSM Disorders (SCID-I/P).

Results: Hierarchical regression analyses revealed that greater substance use severity predicted lower cognitive empathy, while psychopathy did not. Contrary to expectations, neither substance use nor psychopathy significantly predicted affective empathy, and their interaction did not account for additional variance in empathy scores.

Conclusions: These findings suggest that substance use plays a greater role in cognitive empathy deficits, whereas affective empathy impairments may not be as strongly linked to either condition in this sample. This challenges prevailing models of empathy dysfunction in externalizing populations and highlights the need for further research into the mechanisms underlying social cognition in SUDs and psychopathy.

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The Affect Misattribution Procedure as implicit measures of diminished distress and fear

Jennifer Pink^{1,2}, Nicola S. Gray², and Robert J. Snowden³

¹ The Open University, School of Psychology and Counselling, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Milton Keynes, England, UK

² Swansea University, School of Psychology, Faculty of Medicine, Health & Life Sciences, Swansea, Wales, UK

³ Cardiff University, School of Psychology, Cardiff, Wales, UK

Abstract

Objective: The Affect Misattribution Procedure (AMP) is thought to be an implicit measure of affective processing. Participants view a negatively- or positively-valenced image then an ambiguous image. Despite requests to avoid being influenced by the primes, participants typically give the ambiguous images evaluative ratings which correspond with prime valence. Thus, misattributing the affect in response to the prime, to the ambiguous stimuli. As affective deficits, such as a lack of empathy and low fear, are thought to underpin psychopathy, the AMP might be an implicit measure to index affective deficits.

Methods: Two AMPs were created: distress (distressing and neutral primes) and threat (threatening and neutral primes). Each participant completed one AMP and the Triarchic Psychopathy Measure (TriPM). An online community sample ($N = 637$, 58.4% women and 41.0% men, age = 29.95 (12.74), 71.4% white) was recruited.

Results: Both tasks yielded a strong AMP effect, where the ambiguous stimuli were rated significantly more threatening/distressing following the affective prime than the neutral prime. As expected, TriPM Boldness was associated with lower threat AMP scores. Against prediction, TriPM Meanness was not associated with distress AMP scores. However, the AMP data were bimodally distributed which suggests two distinct groups of responders: one group experiencing an effect of the prime, and another experiencing no effect.

Conclusions: The AMPs appeared to index the boldness-threat axis but not the meanness-distress axis. In our opinion the nature of the bimodal distribution is important in any interpretation of the findings and requires further exploration.

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Malicious Meanness Potentiates Demographic Effects on Inherent Value Judgements

A. Michelle Poston¹, Brenna N. Renn¹, Kimberly A. Barchard¹, David Forman², and Stephen D. Benning¹

¹ University of Nevada, Las Vegas; College of Liberal Arts; Department of Psychology; Las Vegas, NV, USA

² University of Nevada, Las Vegas; College of Liberal Arts; Department of Philosophy; Las Vegas, NV, USA

Abstract

Objective: This study examined the associations between demographic similarity, psychopathic traits, and perceived inherent value using a novel measure of perceived inherent value, the Inherent Value Scale (IVS).

Methods: Participants were 270 students who were presented with brief demographic vignettes describing four individuals experimentally manipulated to have varying degrees of demographic similarity (20%, 40%, 60%, and 80%) to the participant based on the participant's demographics. Following each vignette, participants rated the individual described using the IVS. Participants additionally completed the TriPM and Meanness in Psychopathy-Short Form (MiP-SF).

Results: Demographic similarity of the vignette individual to the participant alone predicted higher ratings of perceived inherent value, $F(3, 1072) = 5.02, p = .002, \eta^2 = .01$. This effect was stronger when including psychopathic traits in the analyses. Specifically, in an ANCOVA, there was a discernible effect of TriPM Meanness, $F(1, 255) = 22.84, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .082, r(257) = -.35$, and the main effect of demographic similarity increased, $F(2.74, 698.18) = 33.62, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .116$. A similar effect was found for MiP-SF Malice, $F(1, 260) = 9.29, p = .003, \eta^2_p = .034, r(262) = -.31$, which then increased the main effect of demographic similarity, $F(2.73, 709.08) = 33.46, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .114$.

Conclusions: These results demonstrate that psychopathic traits, in particular those captured by TriPM Meanness and, more specifically, MiP-SF Malice within meanness, improved the prediction of perceived inherent value by demographic similarity through reducing standard errors at each demographic similarity level.

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**Latent Profile Analysis of psychopathic traits and conduct problems in a community children cohort:
externalizing behavior and prosocial correlates**

David Quevedo-Barber^{1,2,3}, Anastasiya Ivanova-Serokhvostova^{2,3}, Albert Bonillo¹,
Eva Penelo¹, Silvia Fuentes^{1,3}, Bernat Soley^{3,2,4}, Sebastián Fernández-Ortiz^{2,3},
Roser Nadal^{3,1,4} & Beatriz Molinuevo^{2,3}

¹ Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Faculty of Psychology, Department of Psychobiology and Methodology of Health Sciences, Spain.

² Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Faculty of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry and Legal Medicine, Spain.

³ Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Institut de Neurociències (INc), Spain.

⁴ Instituto de Salud Carlos III, Biomedical Research Networking Center in Mental Health (CIBERSAM), Spain.

Abstract

Objective: Profiling research in psychopathy has significantly expanded the knowledge of the construct. The limited literature regarding children primarily described four profiles depending on: primary and secondary variants of psychopathy or Callous-Unemotional (CU) traits and Conduct Problems (CP). However, the interaction between other psychopathic domains, CP, and sex in children is still scarce, where the scarce research suggest no significant sex differences.

Methods: The present study aimed to characterize profiles of psychopathic traits alongside CP in a children community sample and study their relations with sex, aggressive behavior, prosociality or peer problems. The sample is composed of 828 children (49.3 % girls) ($M_{age} = 6.83$; $SD = 0.31$) from the ABCD cohort (Sabadell, Spain). The profiles were created using a Latent Profile Analysis based on the parents' responses of the Child Psychopathic Traits Inventory and the Conduct Problem scale from the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire.

Results: A 5-class model provided the best fit, aligning with literature. The identified classes were: general, impulsive, grandiose-disruptive, callous, and psychopathy traits propensity. The analysis also showed that boys had higher odds of belonging to the callous profile rather than the general or grandiose-disruptive profiles (no other sex differences were found). For distal outcomes, reports from parents and teachers indicated that the psychopathy traits propensity profile was most associated with reactive and proactive aggression, while the general profile was most linked to prosociality and least to peer problems.

Conclusions: These findings enhance understanding of heterogeneity in children with externalizing problems and support targeted treatment based on differentiated profiles.

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The case of callous cognition: an exploration of moral disengagement and callous-unemotional traits in justice-involved youth

Emma Louise Rodgers¹ and Elizabeth Cauffman¹

¹ University of California, Irvine, School of Social Ecology, Department of Psychological Science, Irvine, CA, USA

Abstract

Objective: To explore how moral disengagement (MD; cognitive strategies used to bypass guilt in instances of moral transgression) predicts risky behaviors across adolescent and young-adult development while considering the role of callous-unemotional (CU) traits.

Methods: Participants included 1,170 male youth from the Pathways to Desistance study (42.2% African American, 34% Hispanic, 19.2% Non-Hispanic Caucasian, 4.7% other). The dataset was first age-converted (e.g., follow-up interview 1, 2 to age 15, 16), and dynamic panel models were performed to determine how MD and CU traits predicted relevant behavioral outcomes (offending, substance use, and rearrest).

Results: Findings indicate greater MD (i.e., more disengaged cognition) is associated with increased offending ($b=0.06$, $SE=0.01$, $p < .000$), substance use ($b=0.46$, $SE=0.05$, $p < .000$), and re-arrest ($b=0.09$, $SE = 0.04$, $p = 0.03$) at the concurrent age, even after accounting for CU traits (coefficients for CU traits: offending, $b=0.01$, $SE=0.01$, $p < .000$; substance use, $b=0.01$, $SE=0.01$, $p < .000$; re-arrest, $b = -0.01$, $SE = 0.01$, $p = 0.02$).

Conclusions: Traditional definitions of psychopathy and CU traits include a lack of guilt, often conceptualized as being a purely affective deficit. MD offers a cognitive route by which individuals bypass guilt, with or without affective deficit. Findings suggest MD is a relevant predictor of behavioral dysfunction across development, above and beyond known risks of CU traits. Theoretical contributions include the possibility that the callous cognitions captured by MD are relevant to psychopathy—either as an important covariate, or a potential cognitive extension of these traits.

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Associations between psychopathy and suicide: A meta-analytic review

Leigha Rose¹, Nathaniel L. Phillips¹, Donald R. Lynam², Brian W. Bauer¹, and Joshua D. Miller¹

¹ University of Georgia, College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Psychology, Athens, GA, USA

² Purdue University, College of Health and Human Services, Department of Psychological Sciences, West Lafayette, IN, USA

Abstract

Objective: Suicide is a leading cause of death worldwide and is often empirically examined in relation to internalizing psychiatric constructs, such as depression, but less commonly in relation to externalizing disorders. The purpose of this preregistered meta-analysis was to explore the relations between suicide-related variables (i.e., ideation, attempts, self-harm) and psychopathy - a maladaptive personality construct falling under the externalizing umbrella.

Methods: The literature search returned 374 total effects across 55 unique samples indexing the associations between suicide-related variables and psychopathy, including total and factor/subscale scores.

Results: Results showed small-to-moderate associations between total psychopathy scores and suicidal ideation ($r = .19$), behavior ($r = .12$), and self-harm ($r = .20$). Psychopathy subscales and factor scores varied widely in their correlations with suicide-related variables.

Conclusions: Results highlighted the utility of assessing psychopathy using a more nuanced, trait-based approach. Potential mechanisms underlying these relations and clinical implications of the findings are discussed.

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Validity, Stability, and Change in Psychopathic Traits in Older Adults: A Registered Report

Leigha Rose¹, Nathan T. Carter², Donald R. Lynam³, Joshua D. Miller¹, and Thomas F. Oltmanns⁴

¹ University of Georgia, College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Psychology, Athens, GA, USA

² Michigan State University, College of Social Science, Department of Psychology, East Lansing, MI, USA

³ Purdue University, College of Health and Human Services, Department of Psychological Sciences, West Lafayette, IN, USA

⁴ Washington University in St. Louis, College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Psychological & Brain Sciences, St. Louis, MO, USA

Abstract

Objective: Despite the importance of psychopathy – a construct with robust relations with externalizing outcomes – little is known about how psychopathic traits manifest in middle-age to older adulthood.

Methods: The present investigation used a large ($N = 1630$) and diverse (56% female; 68% White, 30% Black) of older adults (M age at baseline = 59.77) to examine psychopathy's nomological network and whether these traits change over four time points spanning approximately 10 years using latent growth modeling.

Results: We found that (a) the nomological network of psychopathy is consistent with what has been observed in samples of younger adults, (b) psychopathic traits remain stable over time as adults make the transition from midlife to later life, and (c) changes that were observed are significantly related to changes in several important outcomes, including physical health, mental health, relationship satisfaction, intimate-partner aggression, and social functioning.

Conclusions: We did not find evidence that psychopathic traits “burn out” with age (Harpur & Hare, 1994), but rather that these traits remain remarkably stable across time into older adulthood.

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Psychopathic/callous-unemotional traits and their role in externalizing behavior: A scoping review of latent variable modeling approaches

Zoé Sandle¹, Dana Vulaj¹, and Inti Brazil^{1,2}

¹ Donders Institute for Brain, Cognition and Behavior, Radboud University, Thomas Van Aquinostraat 4, 6525 Nijmegen, The Netherlands.

² Forensic Psychiatric Centre Pompestichting, Nijmegen, The Netherlands.

Abstract

Objective: Psychopathic traits in adults or callous-unemotional traits in children are strongly associated with externalizing behaviors such as rule-breaking, oppositional behavior, substance abuse, aggression, violence, and manipulation. Previous research indicates links between psychopathic/CU-traits and/or other latent cognitive variables with externalizing behaviors and biopsychological substrates. The exact nature of these connections remains unclear. Different modeling approaches attempt to parse the latent structure of these variables and their variations across individuals, but to date there is no overview of common methods in use and their capabilities.

Methods: The current scoping review provides an overview of modeling approaches used to investigating externalizing behaviors in connection to psychopathy while integrating biopsychological variables. We systematically searched Web of Science, PubMed, Embase and PsycInfo for studies and included N = 59 studies which met our inclusion criteria.

Results: Planned analyses include inspecting publication trends of examined variables, assessment tools and statistical methods and synthesizing results wherever possible given heterogeneity of studies. Preliminary results suggest most commonly used methods are factor analysis, latent profile analysis and structural equation modeling, with a growing trend toward machine learning methods.

Conclusions: We evaluate our findings and discuss future possibilities with a focus on currently underutilized methods which present avenues for future research.

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Investigating Emotion Regulation and Reactivity in Callous-Unemotional (CU) Traits: The Role of Dynamic Physiological Indicators in Primary and Secondary CU Groups

Natalie Stearns¹, Stephanie Craig¹, Kristel Thomassin¹, and Patricia Kerig²

¹University of Guelph, College of Social and Applied Human Sciences, Department of Psychology, Guelph, ON, Canada

²University of Utah, College of Social and Behavioural Science, Department of Psychology, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

Abstract

Objective: Core features of callous-unemotional (CU) traits (e.g., low empathy, lack of guilt, callousness) are underpinned by emotional dysfunction across several domains, including deficits in emotion reactivity (ERc) and emotion regulation (ER). ERc and ER are considered potential mechanisms in the development of two distinct developmental variants of CU traits (i.e., primary, secondary). The current study seeks to identify whether CU trait variants differ in ERc and ER as indexed by objective physiological markers.

Methods: Participants. The proposed study will examine existing data collected for the study titled “The Roles of Trauma Exposure, Rejection Sensitivity, and CU Traits in the Aggressive Behavior of Justice-Involved Youth”. Participants consist of youth (ages 13-18, N = 1087) recruited from juvenile detention centers in Utah who completed questionnaires and an emotionally evocative film task. Measures. The ICU and PTSD-RI will measure CU traits and posttraumatic symptoms respectively. Respiratory sinus arrhythmia (RSA) instability and RSA inertia will index ERc and ER, respectively. Analysis. An LPA will be conducted to identify primary and secondary CU variants using theoretically informed variables as indicators (i.e., posttraumatic stress symptoms, CU traits). RSA inertia and instability will then be regressed on identified latent profiles.

Results: Preliminary results are forthcoming and will be discussed at the conference.

Conclusions: Results will provide a more comprehensive understanding of CU trait heterogeneity with respect to emotion processing differences. It will also highlight the potential importance of ERc and ER as developmental mechanisms/trajectories, allowing us to more effectively target these mechanisms in the treatment context.

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Differentiating Empathy Deficits and Aggression Profiles of Primary and Secondary Callous-Unemotional Trait Subgroups in Conduct Disorder

Jessica J. Todorov¹, Gregor Kohls², Ruth Pauli¹, Jack Rogers³, Anka Bernhard⁴, Katharina Ackermann⁴, Nora Raschle⁵, Jules R. Dugre¹, Aranzazu Fernandez-Rivas⁶, Miguel Angel Gonzalez-Torres⁶, Amaia Hervas⁷, Areti Smaragdi⁸, Karen Gonzalez⁹, Ágnes Vetró¹⁰, Dimitris Dikeos¹¹, Arne Popma¹², Christina Stadler¹³, Kerstin Konrad^{14,15}, Christine M. Freitag⁴, Graeme Fairchild¹⁶, Rory T. Devine^{17*}, and Stephane A. De Brito^{1, 3, 17, 18*} *Shared senior authorship

¹Centre for Human Brain Health, School of Psychology, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

²Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, Faculty of Medicine, Technische Universität Dresden, Dresden, Germany

³Institute for Mental Health, School of Psychology, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

⁴Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Psychosomatics and Psychotherapy, University Hospital Frankfurt, Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

⁵Jacobs Center for Productive Youth Development, University of Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland

⁶Psychiatric Service, Basurto University Hospital, Bilbao, Spain

⁷Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, University Hospital Mutua Terrassa, Barcelona, Spain

⁸Child Development Institute, Toronto, Canada

⁹Department of Psychology, Middlesex University, London, England

¹⁰Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Department, Pediatrics and Child Health Center, University of Szeged, Szeged, Hungary

¹¹Child and Adolescent Unit of the 1st Department of Psychiatry, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens, Greece

¹²Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, VU University Medical Center, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

¹³Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Psychiatric University Hospital, University of Basel, Basel, Switzerland

¹⁴Child Neuropsychology Section, Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Psychosomatics and Psychotherapy, RWTH Aachen University, Aachen, Germany

¹⁵JARA-Brain Institute II, Molecular Neuroscience and Neuroimaging, RWTH, Aachen & Research Centre Juelich, Juelich, Germany

¹⁶Department of Psychology, University of Bath, Bath, UK

¹⁷Centre for Developmental Science, School of Psychology, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

¹⁸Centre for Neurogenetics, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

Abstract

Objective: Youth with conduct disorder (CD) and callous-unemotional (CU) traits exhibit severe aggression and emotional deficits. CU traits can be subdivided into primary (low anxiety) and secondary (high anxiety) subgroups. This study builds on our previous work (Todorov et al., 2024) and investigated differences in empathy and aggression between primary and secondary CU subgroups, and typically developing (TD) youth, while exploring sex differences.

Methods: A total of 1,831 participants (885 CD youth, 946 TD youth) aged 9-18 years from the FemNAT-CD consortium were included. Using latent profile analysis, youth with CD were grouped into primary and secondary CU subgroups. Empathy and aggression were measured through standardized self- and task-based assessments. Group comparisons were analysed using ANCOVAs, controlling for age, IQ, and socioeconomic status.

Results: Both primary and secondary CU subgroups showed significantly lower cognitive and affective ($p < .001$) empathy and higher proactive and reactive aggression compared to TD youth. In boys, primary CU youth exhibited higher proactive aggression and lower affective empathy than the secondary subgroup ($p < .05$), while no significant differences were observed in girls. Both sexes in the CU subgroups showed lower empathy than TD youth, with no significant differences between subgroups.

Conclusions: Youth with primary CU traits, particularly boys, exhibited more severe empathy deficits and proactive aggression, indicating a more maladaptive profile compared to secondary CU youth. These findings highlight the importance of accounting for sex differences in CU subgroups and suggest that interventions targeting empathy and aggression should be tailored to address these specific profiles.

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Guilt in the Game: The Impact of Psychopathy and Moral Justification

Jamie Van Doorselaer¹ & Matthew Shane¹

¹ Ontario Tech University, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Oshawa, ON, Canada

Abstract

Objective: This study examines the interplay between psychopathy, moral justification, and perceived guilt within the context of a violent video game. Specifically, it will focus on how moral justification and psychopathic traits influence guilt perceptions after engaging in virtual violence.

Methods: Participants (N=~150, ages 17-25, mixed genders and races) from the Ontario Tech University student population are asked to play the “No Russian” level from *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* after acknowledging that they are playing either as or against a terrorist group intending to incite World War Three, intended as low or high moral justification, respectively. Following gameplay, participants complete the Guilt Inventory, the State Shame and Guilt Scale, the Short Dark Tetrad scale, and the Psychopathic Personality Inventory-Revised-40. Of particular interest is the relationship between state guilt and moral standards with psychopathy scores.

Results: In line with previous work, we anticipate that a) the state of higher moral justification will significantly reduce feelings of guilt and b) psychopathy traits will correlate negatively with guilt levels, independent of moral justification. Most relevant, we hypothesize a moral justification x psychopathic traits interaction, such that the negative relationship between moral justification and reported guilt will be weaker in participants with the highest levels of psychopathic traits.

Conclusions: The findings will enhance our understanding of the relationship between psychopathic traits and moral justification, in the context of violent actions. From a broader perspective, it will contribute to understanding how personality traits relate to the perception of morally ambiguous scenarios.

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Callous-unemotional traits and caregiver perspectives on causes of misbehavior

Erin P. Vaughan¹, Dara E. Babinski¹, and Daniel A. Waschbusch¹

¹Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health, Penn State College of Medicine, Penn State Hershey Medical Center, Hershey, PA, USA

Abstract

Objective: Despite the importance of understanding antecedents of misbehavior in behavioral treatment, little research has examined how caregivers' perceptions of misbehavior relate to children's callous-unemotional (CU) traits.

Methods: Caregivers ($N = 962$; $M_{\text{age}} = 36.59$ years; 88% biological parent; 43% male; 82% White) of children aged 5-12 ($M_{\text{age}} = 8.42$ years; 50% male; 77% White) were recruited via Qualtrics Panel. They completed the Inventory of Callous Unemotional Traits (using a two-factor structure; "limited prosociality" indicating absence of positive behaviors and "callousness" indicating presence of negative behaviors), the Disruptive Behavior Disorders Rating Scale, and a measure of caregiver explanations for misbehavior.

Results: In structural equation models controlling for ADHD, oppositionality, and conduct disorder symptoms, elevated CU traits were associated with differences in several caregiver explanation factors. Callousness was positively associated with activity demands, internal dysregulation, and person-based explanations ($\beta = .37-.59$, $p < .05$). In contrast, low prosociality was negatively associated with internal dysregulation explanations ($\beta = -.22$, $p < .05$).

Conclusions: Findings suggest that youth with elevated CU traits are viewed differently by their caregivers in terms of explanations of their child's misbehavior, compared both to youth with low disruptive behavior and those high in ADHD and conduct problems. Caregivers of youth high in callousness were more likely to attribute misbehavior to internal dysregulation, while caregivers of youth with low prosociality were less likely to do so. These distinctions support the differentiation of primary and secondary CU traits, which may have implications for tailored intervention approaches.

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Empathic Concern and Psychopathic Traits Among Incarcerated Youth: Insights from a Novel Measure

Samuel R. Vincent¹, Kristopher J. Brazil², Emily E. Graupman¹, and David S. Kosson¹

¹ Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science, College of Health Professions, Department of Psychology, North Chicago, IL, USA

² Carleton University, Department of Psychology, Ottawa, ON, Canada

Abstract

Objective: The precise nature of the relationship between empathic functioning and psychopathic traits is a central topic in psychopathy research. Although most prior studies have contrasted cognitive vs. affective empathy, less research has focused precisely on empathic concern—a unique aspect of empathic functioning. Empathic concern is care about the well-being of others and has been implicated as an inhibitor of antisocial behavior. This study introduced a clinical measure of empathic concern and investigated how ratings on this measure are linked to psychopathic traits and antisocial behavior.

Methods: The sample consisted of 93 incarcerated adolescents assessed using the Psychopathy Checklist: Youth Version (PCL:YV). Empathic concern was assessed using the Empathic Concern Index (ECI), a novel measure on which trained coders rated participants' empathic concern in specific real-life relationships based on answers to clinical interview questions.

Results: A one-factor model demonstrated good fit to the intercorrelations among ECI item ratings. ECI total scores demonstrated good preliminary reliability. Ratings on PCL:YV scores (both total and all facets) were linked to reduced empathic concern. ECI scores also predicted a latent variable of propensity for antisocial behavior over and above the contributions of the interpersonal, affective, and behavioral facets.

Conclusions: These findings provide preliminary evidence for the reliability and validity of the ECI in suggesting empathic concern is linked to psychopathy and contributes uniquely to explaining propensity to antisocial behavior in court-involved youth.

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In Pursuit of Optimal Intervention Pathways for Callous Unemotional Traits: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis

Pamela M. Waaler¹, Patrick A. Mello², Serap Keles³, John Kjøbli^{4,5} and Gunnar Bjørnebekk¹

¹Department of Special Needs Education, University of Oslo, Norway

²Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands

³Knowledge Center for Education, University of Stavanger, Norway

⁴Center for Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Eastern and Southern Norway

⁵Department of Education, University of Oslo, Norway

Abstract

Objective: This study aims to identify pathways to effectiveness in treatment configurations for adolescents with callous-unemotional (CU) traits and use these insights to advance CU trait treatment theory.

Methods: Seventeen CU adolescents (48.6% female; 86.5% Norwegian; M = 14.94 years, SD = 1.43; Mean CU trait pre-score = 33.47, SD = 10.92) participated, with 51 recorded therapy sessions. CU traits were measured using the Inventory of Callous-Unemotional Traits (ICU-24), and therapy sessions were coded based on a CU treatment element codebook. Practice element intensity was assessed using the Intensity Rating Scale for the Child Therapy Process.

We applied Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) to identify treatment elements linked to CU trait improvements. QCA, well-suited for small-N studies, systematically identifies patterns and causal configurations, revealing multiple valid intervention pathways. The four practice elements analyzed were positive reinforcement, motivation, adolescent perspective, and family relations.

Results: Three pathways to improvement were identified (+ indicates *and*):

1. Low intensity positive reinforcement + low intensity motivation + high intensity family relations
2. High intensity motivation + high intensity adolescent perspective + high intensity family relations
3. High intensity positive reinforcement + low intensity motivation + high intensity adolescent perspective + low intensity family relations

Conclusions: CU trait reduction depends on interacting treatment elements, not a single factor. Strengthening adolescent perspective-taking is crucial, but different treatment combinations can be effective, emphasizing the need for tailored, multi-component interventions.

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Neurocognitive Insights into Facial Emotion Recognition Deficits in Children with Callous-Unemotional Traits: Examining the Impact of Anxiety and Maltreatment

Victoria R. Ward^{1,2}, Hao Xu^{1,2}, Yanyu Xiong³, Peter J. Castagna¹, Randall T. Salekin¹, Katie E. Garrison¹, and Bradley A. White^{1,2}

¹ Department of Psychology, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL, USA

² Center for Youth Development and Intervention, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL, USA

³ Alabama Life Research Institute, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL, USA

Abstract

Objective: Callous-unemotional (CU) traits, characterized by lack of guilt, empathy, and shallow affect, place children at elevated risk for disruptive behavior problems and later antisocial outcomes. It is critical to understand the neurocognitive mechanisms underlying facial emotion recognition (FER) deficits in children with CU traits to develop targeted interventions. The proposed study aims to address a critical gap in the literature by examining how CU traits, anxiety, maltreatment history, and their interaction relate to neural processes underpinning FER ability.

Methods: A community sample of 137 children (64% male, 38% White, 62% Black & Other) completed a standardized FER task involving various emotional stimuli while electroencephalography data were collected. Parents completed the UCLA PTSD Index for DSM-5 and children completed the self-report Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale.

Results: It is hypothesized that primary CU traits, characterized by low or no history of maltreatment and anxiety symptoms, will correlate with diminished neural responses (e.g., reduced N170 amplitudes) to fearful and sad faces, reflecting impaired emotional processing. Conversely, secondary CU traits, characterized by history of anxiety and maltreatment, are hypothesized to correlate with heightened neural responses to threat-related (i.e., angry, fearful) emotions due to hyperarousal and hypervigilance.

Conclusions: By elucidating the interactions between CU traits, anxiety, and maltreatment in relation to FER ability, this study aims to contribute valuable insights into the neurodevelopmental pathways leading to antisocial behavior. Findings may inform clinical practices by identifying specific neurocognitive profiles associated with different CU trait variants, ultimately guiding the development of more effective interventions for youth.

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Affective theory of mind impairments linked with callous-unemotional traits implicate cognitive control: a pre-registered double-blind randomized controlled trial with dual-task paradigm

Drew E. Winters^a, Juliet Spitz^a, Kristen Raymond^a, Crystal Natvig^a, Rebecca Waller^b, Susan K. Mikulich-Gilbertson^a, and Joseph T. Sakai^a

^a Department of Psychiatry, University of Colorado School of Medicine, Anschutz Medical Campus, Aurora, CO, USA

^b Department of Psychology, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, USA

Abstract

Objective: Youth antisocial behavior strongly associates with conduct problems (CP) and callous-unemotional (CU) traits. While CP has links to broad cognitive impairments, CU traits have specific links with cognitive control and affective theory of mind (ToM) difficulties. Evidence suggests cognitive control limitations impact affective processing in ToM amongst youth with elevated CU traits. Here we sought to improve on those initial findings by leveraging a randomized dual-task (within-trial) design to replicate and extend prior findings.

Methods: In this double-blind, randomized controlled trial, 85 participants (47% female) were stratified by sex and CU trait severity. The study employed a ToM task with cognitive, affective, and physical conditions, combined with an inhibitory processing task to tax cognitive control. Participants completed single and dual-task trials, counterbalanced to test within-subject effects. Primary hypotheses were tested with both CP and CU traits in the same model using repeated measure mixed effects to examine changes in accuracy and reaction time.

Results: CU traits were uniquely associated with greater impairments in affective ToM under dual-task conditions, reflecting increased difficulty integrating affective information when cognitive demands were increased. CP associated with lower single ToM performance but no change during dual-task trials. Notably, participants resilient to dual-task effects reported fewer antisocial behaviors, even with elevated CU traits.

Conclusions: While appropriately powered for study aims, the sample was underpowered to detect any potential primary and secondary variant interactions on study outcomes. These findings support a CU trait specific cognitive-affective interaction as a mechanism critical for understanding youth antisocial behavior.

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**A Novel Multi-Dimensional Approach to Understanding Psychopathy Traits
and Socioemotional Development in Children.**

Hao Xu M.A.^{1,2}, Victoria Ward M.A.^{1,2}, Olivia Gifford B.A.¹, Chuong Bui Ph.D.³, Yanyu Xiong Ph.D.³, Peter Castagna Ph.D.², Randy Salekin Ph.D.², Despina Stavrinos Ph.D.², and Bradley A. White Ph.D.^{1,2}

¹ Center for Youth Development and Intervention, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL, USA

² Department of Psychology, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL, USA

³ Alabama Life Research Institute, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL, USA

Abstract

Objective: This study examines how psychopathy traits—Grandiose-Deceitful (GD), Callous-Unemotional (CU), and Impulsive-Need for Stimulation (INS)—affect facial emotion recognition (FER) of distress-relevant emotions (sadness, fear) and visual attention in children aged 6 to 11. We aim to assess GD traits and strategic gaze patterns, replicate and extend findings on CU-related FER deficits, investigate INS traits and FER inconsistency, and explore interactions among these traits.

Methods: A community sample of 137 children (64% male, 38% White, 62% Black & Other) completed FER tasks (NimStim; 45 adult facial stimuli displaying sadness and fear) while undergoing eye-tracking assessments (Tobii Pro). Parents completed the Child Problematic Traits Inventory (CPTI). Based on Integrated Emotion Systems model, social dominance theory, and dual-process theory of psychopathy, we hypothesize that GD traits will predict greater accuracy due to strategic attention, CU traits will predict lower accuracy with reduced eye focus, and INS traits will predict more FER errors and scattered gaze. Trait combinations are expected to yield intermediate effects.

Expected Results: We anticipate GD traits to greater accuracy via strategic gaze allocation, CU traits will be linked to lower FER accuracy and reduced eye focus, and INS traits to more errors and erratic gaze patterns. Combined traits may yield nuanced effects: GD+CU may balance accuracy, CU+INS may show the lowest accuracy with scattered gaze, and GD+INS may exhibit mixed gaze patterns.

Conclusions: Findings will enhance understanding of psychopathy traits' impact on FER and visual attention in children, informing targeted interventions to support socioemotional development in at-risk youth.