Trauma Profiles and Correlates Among Maltreated Adolescents in Child Welfare

Jennifer Lyons, B.A.¹
Kelly Weegar, B.A.¹
Elena Gallitto, M.A.¹
Elisa Romano, Ph.D.¹
The MAP Research Team²,³

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¹University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada
²University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada
³McMaster University, Hamilton, Canada
Background

- Significant number of youth in child welfare report past and/or current maltreatment (Trocmé et al., 2010)
- Maltreatment, combined with removal from the family home, can have significant negative consequences on psychological functioning (Scott et al., 2010)
Background

• Studies on the effects of maltreatment have typically relied on variable-centered analyses.

• Person-centered analyses have the potential to capture the heterogeneity of outcomes for youth in care.
Background

• Emerging research has identified meaningful profiles within the larger population of youth in care (Hagaman et al., 2009; Keller et al., 2007; Yates & Grey, 2012)

• These studies have identified correlates, including:
  – Gender
  – Ethnicity
  – Physical abuse
  – Multiple victimization
  – Current placement
  – Number of placements
Study Objectives

• To identify trauma-related profiles in maltreated adolescents involved with the Canadian child welfare system

• To identify socio-demographic-, maltreatment-, and welfare-level correlates of profile membership
Maltreatment and Adolescent Pathways Project (Wekerle et al., 2009)

• Longitudinal study of randomly selected adolescents involved with child welfare in Ontario, Canada
  – Data were collected at 8 time points over 3 years

• Questionnaires ask about: socioeconomic status, drug and alcohol use, dating/sexual practices, friendships, psychological well-being, and maltreatment history

• Data for the current study were drawn from the initial time point
  – 479 adolescents aged 13-17 years for whom complete data was available on the variables of interest (54.1% female, mean age = 15.8 years)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>M (SD)</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South/South East Asian</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asian</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Asian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of ± 2</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Living situation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster parents</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>44.4</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group home</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With ± 1 bio. parent</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kin/adoptive parents</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On own/with friends</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total years in child welfare</strong></td>
<td>369</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5.75 (4.26)</td>
<td>0-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of placements in past 5 years</strong></td>
<td>449</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.10 (1.41)</td>
<td>0-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of workers</strong></td>
<td>376</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.06 (1.82)</td>
<td>0-20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Bio. = biological
Child Trauma Questionnaire-Short Form (CTQ; Bernstein et al., 2003)

- 28-item self-report instrument
- Participants indicate the frequency of early childhood experiences on a 5-point Likert scale
- Measures the frequency of five types of maltreatment:
  - Physical abuse (e.g., *People in my family hit me so hard that it left me with bruises or marks*)
  - Sexual abuse (e.g., *Someone tried to touch me in a sexual way, or tried to make me touch them*)
  - Emotional abuse (e.g., *I felt that someone in my family hated me*)
  - Physical Neglect (e.g., *I had to wear dirty clothes*)
  - Emotional neglect (e.g., *My family was a source of strength and support*)

- We also calculated the number of maltreatment types that were endorsed to create a multiple victimization variable, ranging from 0 to 5

*Reverse coded*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>M (SD)</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple victimization</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>87.9</td>
<td>3.32 (1.42)</td>
<td>0-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.15 (4.68)</td>
<td>5-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11.33 (5.76)</td>
<td>5-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9.89 (5.55)</td>
<td>5-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional neglect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13.35 (5.81)</td>
<td>5-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical neglect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>76.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9.33 (4.02)</td>
<td>5-25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children (TSCC; Briere, 1996)

• 54-item self-report instrument
• Participants are asked to rate how frequently they experience symptoms on a 4-point Likert scale
• Assesses six areas of functioning:
  - Anxiety (e.g., Feeling nervous or jumpy inside)
  - Depression (e.g., Feeling lonely)
  - Posttraumatic Stress (e.g., Scary ideas or pictures just pop into my head)
  - Dissociation (e.g., Pretending I am someone else)
  - Anger (e.g., Wanting to yell and break things)
  - Sexual Concerns (e.g., Can’t stop thinking about sex)
Data Analysis

• Profiles were generated using Latent Profile Analysis (Mplus 7.3)
• A multinomial logistic regression (SPSS 22.0) was conducted in order to examine the relationship between the profiles and a number of correlates:

  Socio-demographic:
  – Age
  – Sex
  – Ethnicity

  Maltreatment:
  – Type of maltreatment
  – Multiple victimization

  Welfare:
  – Number of placements in past 5 years
  – Current placement type
Results: Trauma Profiles

Class membership: Minimal symptoms (N = 281; 58.7%); moderate symptoms (N = 144; 30%); high symptoms (N = 54; 11.3%). **TSCC Clinical Scales:** ANX: Anxiety; DEP: Depression; ANG: Anger; PTS: Posttraumatic stress; DIS: Dissociation; SC: Sexual Concerns.
Results: Significant Correlates

• **Age:**
  – With each one year increase, the likelihood of being in the high trauma-related symptom profile versus the minimal trauma-related symptom profile decreases (OR = .62, CI = .41-.91, \( p \leq .05 \))

• **Sexual abuse frequency**
  – With each one unit increase on the sexual abuse subscale, the likelihood of being in the high trauma-related symptom profile versus the minimal trauma-related symptom profile increases (OR = 1.17, CI = 1.08-1.26, \( p \leq .01 \))
Results: Significant Correlates

• Emotional abuse frequency
  – With each one unit increase on the emotional abuse subscale, the likelihood of being in the moderate trauma-related trauma symptom profile versus the minimal trauma-related symptom profile increases (OR = 1.10, CI = 1.04-1.18, \( p \leq .01 \)).
  – With each one unit increase on the emotional abuse subscale, the likelihood of being in the high trauma-related symptom profile versus the minimal trauma-related symptom profile increases (OR = 1.12, CI = .02-1.24, \( p \leq .05 \)).
Results: Significant Correlates

- **Multiple victimization:**
  - With each additional type of maltreatment, the likelihood of being in the moderate trauma-related symptom profile versus the minimal trauma-related symptom profile increases (OR = 1.30, CI = 1.01-1.68, $p \leq .05$)
## Results: Significant Correlates

### Table 3. Mean Differences in Significant Correlates Across Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlate</th>
<th>Minimal trauma-related symptoms (58.7%)</th>
<th>Moderate trauma-related symptoms (30%)</th>
<th>High trauma-related symptoms (11.3%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>15.76 (.93)</td>
<td>15.81 (.96)</td>
<td>15.67 (1.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse frequency (range 5-25)</td>
<td>6.23 (3.43)</td>
<td>7.35 (4.67)</td>
<td>11.37 (7.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional abuse frequency (range 5-25)</td>
<td>9.68 (5.11)</td>
<td>12.75 (5.45)</td>
<td>16.09 (6.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple victimization (range 0-5)</td>
<td>2.97 (1.47)</td>
<td>3.69 (1.16)</td>
<td>4.17 (1.18)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Non-significant correlates: Sex, ethnicity, physical abuse frequency, physical neglect frequency, emotional neglect frequency, number of placements, and current placement.
Discussion

• The majority of adolescents are functioning within the average range

• Younger adolescents were more likely to be in the high distress profile
  – It is possible that they possess less developed capacities for self-regulation, decision-making, executive functioning
  – Maltreatment may have occurred earlier

• Profile characterized by high distress was associated with greater sexual maltreatment

• Profiles characterized by moderate to high distress were associated with greater emotional maltreatment
Discussion

- Profile characterized by moderate distress was associated with more multiple victimization
- There were no significant differences in child welfare variables across profiles
  - Quality of placement and/or other supports may be more important
Clinical Implications

- The current study identifies three clearly distinct service populations for maltreated adolescents in care
  - Majority seem to show resilience
- Profile membership could be matched to interventions or treatment
Thank you!

Contact information:
Jennifer Lyons, B.A.
Email: jlyon019@uottawa.ca
Children’s Well-Being Laboratory, University of Ottawa
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
E-mail: lbee-cwbl@uOttawa.ca
Website: http://socialsciences.uottawa.ca/lbee-cwbl/eng/
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I, Jennifer Lyons, have no commercial relationships to disclose.