Research Briefs
Editor: Jennifer Rockett, PhD

The Texas Juvenile Crime Prevention Center’s research briefs newsletter is written by graduate students at PVAMU in the College of Juvenile Justice and Psychology: Doshie Piper, M.A. (Department of Justice Studies), LaKendra Bass, B.S. (Department of Psychology), Sheridan Owens, B.A. (Department of Psychology), and graduate students in the Clinical Psychology Ph.D. program at Sam Houston State University: Amy Wevodau, M.A., and Natalie Armstrong, M.A.

Goldweber, A., & Cauffman, E. (2012). Relational aggression and the DSM-V: What can clinicians tell us about female juvenile offenders? Journal of Forensic Psychology Practice, 12, 35-47. doi: 10.1177/1073191111400280. Authors tested updated scoring guidelines for a widely used measure of Miranda comprehension in an ethnically diverse sample. Revisions aimed to clarify scoring guidelines and modernize instrument language. The updated measure performed similarly to the original, but consensus among raters was slightly higher. Authors cautioned that results may not hold for younger children (ages 10-12) or the severely mentally ill. Readers are advised to use scores in conjunction with other indicators of comprehension.

Langrehr, K. J. (2011). Racial distinctions in the psychosocial histories of incarcerated youth. Psychological Services, 8, 23-35. doi: 10.1037/a0021795. What can case histories of male juvenile offenders tell us? According to this study, White youth were 19 times more likely than Black youth to be diagnosed with an internalizing disorder (e.g., anxiety, depression) and an additional co-occurring disorder, while rates of externalizing disorder diagnoses were similar in both groups. In addition, White youth received more counseling than Black youth. This may translate to White youth receiving lighter sentences as a function of their psychiatric diagnoses.

early identification and prevention treatment of impulsive behavior among adolescents.

**General Mental Health**

Berkout, O. V., Young, J. N., & Gross, A. M. (2011). *Mean girls and bad boys: Recent research on gender differences in conduct disorder. Aggression and Violent Behavior, 16*, 503-511. doi: 10.1016/j.avb.2011.06.001. Authors reviewed research evaluating the development and expression of conduct disorder (CD) among boys and girls. Although many risk factors for CD are similar across genders, symptom expression (behavior) is likely to vary. Limitations of the existing literature on CD, particularly among girls, are discussed, as are treatment implications.


**Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 52*, 1099-1108. doi: 10.1111/j.1469-7610.2011.02448.x. A large sample of adolescent girls were assessed yearly between age 8 and 16 to monitor the relationship between the development of conduct disorder (CD) and depression. Results showed that symptoms of CD tended to precede symptoms of depression. Findings highlight the importance of assessing depression in girls with conduct problems, and vice versa. Clinical applications of the results are discussed.

Hobson, C. W., Scott, S., & Rubia, K. (2011). *Investigation of cool and hot executive function in ODD/CD independently from ADHD. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 52*, 1035-1043. doi: 10.1111/j.1469-7610.2011.02454.x. Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and oppositional defiant disorder/conduct disorder (ODD/CD) are likely related to deficits in brain functioning. The authors considered the independent influence of ODD/CD on such deficits in their research. Groups of youths with and without ADHD showed impairment in executive functioning (motor inhibition, sustained attention and response execution). ODD/CD was independently related to increased risky decision making and difficulty inhibiting behavior. Findings have implications for reward-related theories of antisocial behavior.

Factors) positively influenced outcomes. The authors suggested that helping youths enhance goal setting, decision making, and self-reliant coping skills, and improving their self-esteem and social support network could lessen common problem behaviors.

Negriff, S., Susman, E. J., & Trickett, P. K. (2011). The developmental pathway from pubertal timing to delinquency and sexual activity from early to late adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 40*, 1343-1356. doi: 10.1007/s10964-010-9621-7. Who knew puberty onset and sexual activity could influence delinquency in youth? According to the authors, sexual activity mediates the association between puberty onset and delinquency. More specifically, sexual activity preceded delinquency, but came after puberty onset. Moreover, for males, having older male friends increased engagement in delinquent behaviors, and early onset puberty increased youths’ likelihood of sexual activity. These findings underscore the importance of appropriately timed intervention and education programs provided within schools.

Legal Proceedings

Armstrong, G. S., & Kim, B. (2011). *Juvenile penalties for "Lawyering Up": The role of counsel and extralegal case characteristics. Crime & Delinquency, 57*, 827-848. doi: 10.1177/0011128711420101. After many debates about the effects of counsel on juvenile case outcomes, the results of this study suggested that juveniles who secure counsel are at a greater risk of out of home placements, especially minority male youth. Juveniles who waive their rights to counsel received less out of home placements. Legal factors (e.g., prior offense history and detention status) also significantly impacted judge’s decisions to place youth out of home.

Asplin, K. N., Marsh, D.T., & Beighley, A. (2011). *Demographic and offense-related variables in Pennsylvania court-ordered placements for juveniles. Journal of Knowledge and Best Practice in Juvenile Justice and Psychology, 5*(1), 5-12. Authors investigated the patterns of placement decisions made based upon offense type for juvenile offenders. Results indicated that individuals placed in more restrictive facilities had more severe offenses, such as felonies and misdemeanors. Juveniles in less restrictive placement had less severe offenses and more status offenses. Gender differences also affected placement with girls being placed in less restrictive facilities more often than boys.


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Does a younger looking defendant influence jurors to attribute less guilt? In this study, attorneys and college students were surveyed about whether they thought juvenile appearance was likely to increase or decrease a jurors' perception of guilt. Both attorneys and college students attributed less guilt to younger looking defendants. When a separate mock juror group was given court transcripts and photos of defendants, however, no differences were observed between their verdicts and sentence recommendations.

Flexon, J. L., Stolzenberg, L., & D’Alessio, S. J. (2011). Effect of the "Roper V. Simmons" decision on homicides committed by juveniles. Crime & Delinquency, 57, 928-949. doi: 10.1177/001112870933726. Policymakers and advocates of capital punishment (CP) have discussed the deterrent effect of CP as a reason to keep the death penalty as a viable option in sentences. Many of these same individuals feared a rise in juvenile homicide after the Roper V. Simmons decision that abolished the death penalty for juveniles who committed their offense(s) prior to the age of 18. The authors, however, presented a time series analysis showing no rise in juvenile homicides after the Roper V. Simmons decision.

Greathouse, S. M., Sothmann, F. C., Levett, L. M., & Kovera, M. B. (2011). The potentially biasing effects of voir dire in juvenile waiver cases. Law and Human Behavior, 35, 427-448. 10.1007/s10979-010-9247-z. Is it possible that pre-trial juror questioning for juvenile cases influences trial outcomes? Jurors were queried pre-trial about juvenile waivers to adult court, and they were more likely to believe the juvenile was guilty and would be convicted, compared to when such questions were not asked. Even though pre-trial queries created juror prejudice, it was short-lived and likely due to introducing evidence during the trial. In addition, when questioned post-trial, evidence reduced juror perceptions of the juvenile’s guilt.

Mellsop, G. W., Fraser, D., Tapsell, R., & Menkes, D. B. (2011). Courts’ misplaced confidence in psychiatric diagnoses. International Journal of Law and Psychiatry, 34, 331-335. doi: 10.1016/j.ijlp.2011.08.005. Authors suggested that courts have become overly reliant on psychiatric diagnoses in arriving at and justifying criminal sanctions. Concerns regarding the rigid application of psychiatric diagnostic systems and labels in this context are considered, including discussion of several specific diagnostic categories with relevance to the courtroom setting.

Believe it or not, children and parents provide different information when it is forensically relevant. Among youths with higher psychopathic-like traits (e.g., lying/manipulation), self-reports of problematic mental and behavioral health (e.g., depression, aggression, and rule-breaking) were discrepant from their caregivers’ assessment. Moreover, nonviolent youth offenders self-reported fewer problems (depression, aggression, etc.) than their caregivers observed within them, but youth sexual offenders reported more. Altogether, it seems youth self-report internal problems (e.g., depression) better than their caregivers’ assessments of them, but caregivers are more accurate reporters of youth aggression and delinquency problems.

Quas, J. A., & Goodman, G. S. (2012). Consequences of criminal court involvement for child victims. Psychology, Public Policy, and Law, Advance online publication. doi: 10.1037/a0026146. Authors summarized existing research on the impact of participation in the criminal prosecution process on child and adolescent victims, including mental health outcomes and legal attitudes. Results suggested that negative outcomes are often limited to certain circumstances and older children and adolescents may be more likely to experience negative consequences than younger children. Developmental level is important in shaping reactions to the legal system. Recommendations to facilitate participation of child victims are made.

Walker, C. M., & Woody, W. D. (2011). Juror decision making for juveniles tried as adults: The effects of defendant age, crime type, and crime outcome. Psychology, Crime & Law, 17, 659-675. doi: 10.1080/10683160903493471. In this study, adult mock jurors read narratives where the defendant’s age (adult vs. juvenile) and type of crime (property vs. person) were manipulated. Mock jurors were more likely to convict a defendant who committed a crime against a person regardless of their age.
The findings appear to suggest that the type of crime that a defendant commits has a greater impact on determinations of guilt rather than the defendant’s age.

**Policy**

Brank, E., Greene, E., & Hochevar, K. (2011). **Holding parents responsible: Is vicarious responsibility the public’s answer to juvenile crime?** *Psychology, Public Policy, & Law, 17*, 507-529. doi: 10.1037/a0024566. Parental responsibility laws hold parents accountable for the delinquent behavior of their children. Using vignettes, the authors assessed the impact of situation and dispositional factors on opinions regarding parental responsibility. Participants attributed more responsibility for deviant behavior to the child than to the parent. The child’s age, foreseeability of consequences, and offense type influenced attributions of parental responsibility. Findings indicate that support for parental responsibility laws are mixed, which may contribute to limited enforcement of these laws.

**Trauma**

Alwood, M. A., Bell, D. J., & Horan, J. (2011). **Posttrauma numbing of fear, detachment, and arousal predict delinquent behavior in early adolescence.** *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 40*, 659-667. doi: 10.1080/0153739X.2011.597081. Authors tested the assumption that severity of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms would be associated with delinquency. Almost all participants reported a trauma history; 20% of these youth exhibited PTSD symptoms. Severity of PTSD symptoms was positively associated with frequency and severity of delinquency, both in the past year and across the lifetime. Findings support the assertion that multiple traumas may increase risk for delinquency. Findings highlight the importance of effective treatment for this population.


**Posttraumatic stress symptoms as associated with the frequency and severity of delinquency among detained boys.** *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 40*, 765-771. doi: 10.1080/15374416.2011.597091. Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is common among delinquent youth. The present study compared Trauma Affect Regulation: Guide for Education and Therapy (TARGET) and Enhanced Treatment as Usual (ETAU) in the treatment of delinquent girls with PTSD. Girls treated with TARGET evidenced almost twice as much improvement in PTSD symptoms, as well as decreased anxiety, depression, and anger, and increased emotion regulation. Results provide preliminary support for TARGET as a potentially efficacious therapy for PTSD in delinquent girls.


Hetzel-Riggin, M., & Meads, C. (2011). **Childhood violence and adult partner maltreatment: The roles of coping style and psychological distress.** *Journal of*
Authors evaluated the claim that childhood abuse is an antecedent to future criminal behavior. The authors’ review of empirical findings suggested that victims of various forms of childhood abuse are more likely to participate in criminal behavior as adolescents and adults, and that the type of abuse suffered may be related to the nature of offensive behavior. The sequelae of deviant behavior following childhood sexual abuse are considered in detail.

**Treatment Outcomes**


The results of this study support the need for continued prevention and early intervention efforts that are focused on reducing adolescent involvement in gangs.

Roettger, M. E., & Swisher, R. R. (2011). *Associations of fathers' history of incarceration with sons' delinquency and arrest among Black, White, and Hispanic males in the United States.* Criminology, 49, 1109-1147. doi:10.1111/j.1745-9125.2011.00253. The authors investigated the impact of intergenerational incarceration on early childhood and adolescent delinquency. More specifically, paternal incarceration was found to be associated with Black, White, and Hispanic sons’ tendency to engage early childhood problem behaviors and adolescent delinquency. This finding highlights the importance of intervention for families of incarcerated parents and the potential impact of early prevention efforts.
Sawyer, A. M., & Borduin, C. M. (2011). Effects of multisystemic therapy through midlife: A 21.9-year follow-up to a randomized clinical trial with serious and violent juvenile offenders. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 79*, 643-652. doi:10.1037/a0024862. Adults who received multisystemic therapy (MST) as youth, compared to adults who received individual therapy (IT) as youth, were less likely to recidivate violently (via felony) and non-violently (via misdemeanors and family civil suits). MST did not affect other civil suit frequency, suggesting the effects of MST may not generalize to all forms of adult functioning. Even so, those who received MST had, as adults, a rearrest rate reduction of 80%.

Zakriski, A. L., Wright, J. C., & Cardoos, S. L. (2011). *Peer-nominated deviant talk within residential treatment: Individual and group influences on treatment response*. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 39*, 989-1000. doi:10.1007/s10802-011-9519-1. Among youth at a residential program for behavior problems, those rated by peers as expressing more deviant talk (DT) evidenced higher levels of problem behaviors and fewer prosocial behaviors. Levels of individual and group DT predicted treatment response. Peer reactions to DT appear influential in perpetuation. For prevention, it is important to identify early those who might engage in problematic levels of DT.

**Theory Focused**


Kimonis, E. R., Skeem, J. L., Cauffman, E., & Dmitrieva, J. (2011). *Are secondary variants of juvenile psychopathy more reactively violent and less psychosocially mature than primary variants? Law and Human Behavior, 35*, 381-397. Did you know there may be psychopathic variants in juveniles? By using the Psychopathy Checklist: Youth Version (PCL: YV), results showed that youths characterized as having the primary variant of psychopathy had low anxiety and greater emotional stability; secondary variants experienced more child abuse, feelings of depression and hostility, less psychosocial maturity, and presented a greater risk for reactive institutional violence.

Mennis, J., & Harris, P. (2011). *Contagion and repeat offending among urban juvenile delinquents*. *Journal of Adolescence, 34*, 951-
controls, and results from a series of negative experiences. The authors found that school-generated negative experiences significantly influenced school bullying behaviors.


Children exposed to violence are at-risk for developing a variety of mental health and academic problems. Violence exposure appears to alter brain development and may result in impaired school-related and social functioning. The timing of violence exposure and developmental stage interact, resulting in additional differential outcomes based on these factors.

Wiesner, M., Capaldi, D. M., & Kim, H. K. (2012). General versus specific predictors of male arrest trajectories: A test of the Moffitt and Patterson theories. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 41, 217-228. doi: 10.1007/s10964-011-9683-1. Is male juvenile delinquency linked to risk factors unique to the man, or types of men? In this study, childhood and current risk factors were examined in young men to determine if risk factors unique to the man, or common to certain men, affected offending frequency. Childhood risk factors did not separate rare from frequent offenders, but offending increased with increased deviant peer association.

Zimmerman, G. M., & Vásquez, B. (2011). Decomposing the peer effect on adolescent substance use: Mediation, nonlinearity, and differential nonlinearity. Criminology, 49, 1235-1273. doi:10.1111/j.1745-9125.2011.00244.x. This study examined the influence of peer substance use (among other variables) on individual youth behavior. Results indicated that in addition to peers, juvenile substance use can be explained by the youth’s perceived health risk of substance use and the neighborhood context. More specifically, youths are less likely to use substances that they perceive to be more harmful and when they reside within neighborhoods composed of intact families whose incomes are above poverty level.
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