Maltreatment and its Effects on Behavior in Adolescents

Adolescents exposed to maltreatment (abuse and neglect) by caregivers and other adults are more likely to behave aggressively. These aggressive behaviors may be expressed differently, for example, through physical or verbal actions. These behaviors also may have different trajectories due to developmental stage and relevant ongoing experiences in adolescence. Using data from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW), a longitudinal study which surveyed 2,776 subjects between the ages of 11-17 who were in contact with Child Protective Services for possible maltreatment, we developed measure for four types of aggressive behaviors (physical, verbal, sexual toward others and physical toward property) using confirmatory factor analysis. Trajectory models were estimated to determine the pattern of change for each aggressive behavior type between age 11 and 17. Most forms of aggression remain stable in adolescents, but verbal aggression increases in middle adolescence. Some sex differences exist and the different types of aggression trajectories are correlated. This study will go further into looking at children in maladaptive homes to determine which maltreatment types are associates with different forms of aggressive behaviors and changes in those behaviors.