Childhood Victimization Pathways and Violent Extremism

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Today’s Agenda

1. Scope of the problem
2. Theoretical framework
3. Methodology
4. Results
5. Key take-aways
Scope of the Problem

- In 2014, approximately 702,000 children were the victims of maltreatment\(^1\).

- Childhood maltreatment is associated with a variety of both internal and external consequences\(^2\).
  - Anxiety, aggression, depression, risky sexual behaviors, substance abuse, truancy.

\(^1\): U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016  
\(^2\): Wright, 2016
Scope of the Problem
Theoretical Framework

Sequential Model of VE Participation

Dimension 1

- Early Childhood Trauma (e.g., family dysfunction, victimization, etc.)
- Adolescent Conduct Problems (e.g., aggressive behavior, truancy, etc.)
- Negative Emotions (e.g., anger, depression, etc.)
- Extremist Participation

1: Simi, Sporer, & Bubolz, 2016
Sample and Methodology

1. Former violent right-wing extremists ($n = 44$)

2. Life history interviews

3. Modified grounded theory approach
## Childhood Victimization Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victimization Types</th>
<th>$f$</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Abuse</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Violence</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witnessed Family Violence</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witnessed Community Violence</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abandonment</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Incarceration</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Substance Abuse</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>59.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any One Type</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>84.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poly-Victims</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>68.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low (2-3)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>43.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High (4-6)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pathways to Poly-Victimization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dysfunctional Family</th>
<th>Dangerous Family</th>
<th>Dangerous Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Emotional and physical neglect</td>
<td>1. Physical abuse</td>
<td>1. Community violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Parental incarceration</td>
<td>3. Witnessed family violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pathways to (Poly)-Victimization

Dysfunctional Family

Dangerous Family

Dangerous Community

0
8
0
4
9
6
3

*n = 30
“...she [mom] was not like a compassionate or loving person at all...

**There was like no affection**...they never taught me anything like right from wrong or told me not to do anything. There was none of that ... **good behavior was never encouraged, and bad behavior was never discouraged**...I had extremely low self-esteem and felt worthless from never having heard anything positive about myself from my parents...

(Jacqueline, 4/5/14).”
“... I mean there was a bunch of times when I got my ass whipped and, took it... **Nobody beat me as bad as my step dad beat me**...a thirty-six-...thirty-seven-year-old man who used to **beat the shit out of me at twelve** and that's called a fair fight...I was...fighting for survival (Freddie, 5/31/15).”
“We lived right on the corner from the projects, I think that had a lot to do with what happened to me. A gang would always come into our neighborhood and **steal our stuff, start fights, beat people up**, stuff like that. I think even from a very early age I had a **negative feeling towards black people** from that. When I met people later on, I was ready to go. I was already prepped (Sebastian, 5/26/14).”
Key Take-Aways

- Importance of non-ideological factors and violent extremism
- Similarities between pathways into crime and violent extremism
- Intervention opportunities in early childhood
Thank you for your time.