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.)
- Negative Emotions (e.g., anger, depression, etc.)
- Adolescent Conduct Problems (e.g., aggressive behavior, truancy, 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>
<tr>
<td>4. Parental substance abuse</td>
<td></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).”
Dangerous Community

“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.