

Topitzes, James (Dimitri) William (2006). The effects of child maltreatment on adult crime: An examination of a long-term developmental model .

### **Abstract**

This study explored the relation of child maltreatment to adult crime. Aside from examining this main effect, the study also explored school-based and behavioral mediators of the maltreatment/adult crime relation. Risk/resilience theory along with self-trauma model informed both the main effect and mediator models. Three specific research questions guided this investigation. First, does childhood maltreatment have a significant relation to adult crime? Second, does childhood maltreatment have a significant relation to educational performance and juvenile delinquency, and third, if the above relations are found, do educational performance and juvenile delinquency mediate maltreatment's relation to adult crime? Data derived from the Chicago Longitudinal Study which has comprehensive administrative and interview data on a Chicago area cohort born in 1980. All sample members were eligible for an early school intervention program serving low-income, urban dwelling, minority families. The data set includes extensive information on child's maltreatment history, school performance, delinquency and adult crime. The adult records extend though 2004 when study participants were age 24. Probit analyses revealed that official measures of childhood maltreatment were significantly related to general and severe indicators of adult crime, controlling for salient sociodemographic characteristics. Maltreatment was also significantly related, in the expected direction, to grade reading 8 achievement, grades 6-7 acting out behavior, high school graduation, and delinquency. Hierarchical regression indicated that these school-related measures, along with delinquency mediated maltreatment's association with all adult crime indicators in the study, reducing the main effect by magnitudes ranging from 38-63%. Additionally, the school-related mediators consistently had a greater impact on the mediator models than did the delinquency mediator. The main effect results illuminate enduring effects of maltreatment and recommend prevention and early intervention treatment strategies. The mediation findings identify school-related variables as possible catalysts of the maltreatment/crime link, highlighting a potential benefit of school-based interventions for maltreated children.