

# Does Maltreatment and Parent-Child Attachment Predict Teen Dating Violence and Risky Sexual Behaviour?

PRESENTER\* & AUTHORS: Cassia L. McIntyre\*,  
Natalie Goulter, & Marlene M. Moretti  
Department of Psychology

## BACKGROUND

Teens with maltreatment histories are at increased risk for dating violence (DV) and risky sexual behaviour (RSB), but secure parent-child attachment may reduce this risk<sup>1-2</sup>.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

Does parent-child attachment security reduce risk for DV and RSB reported over five year later among teens with maltreatment histories?

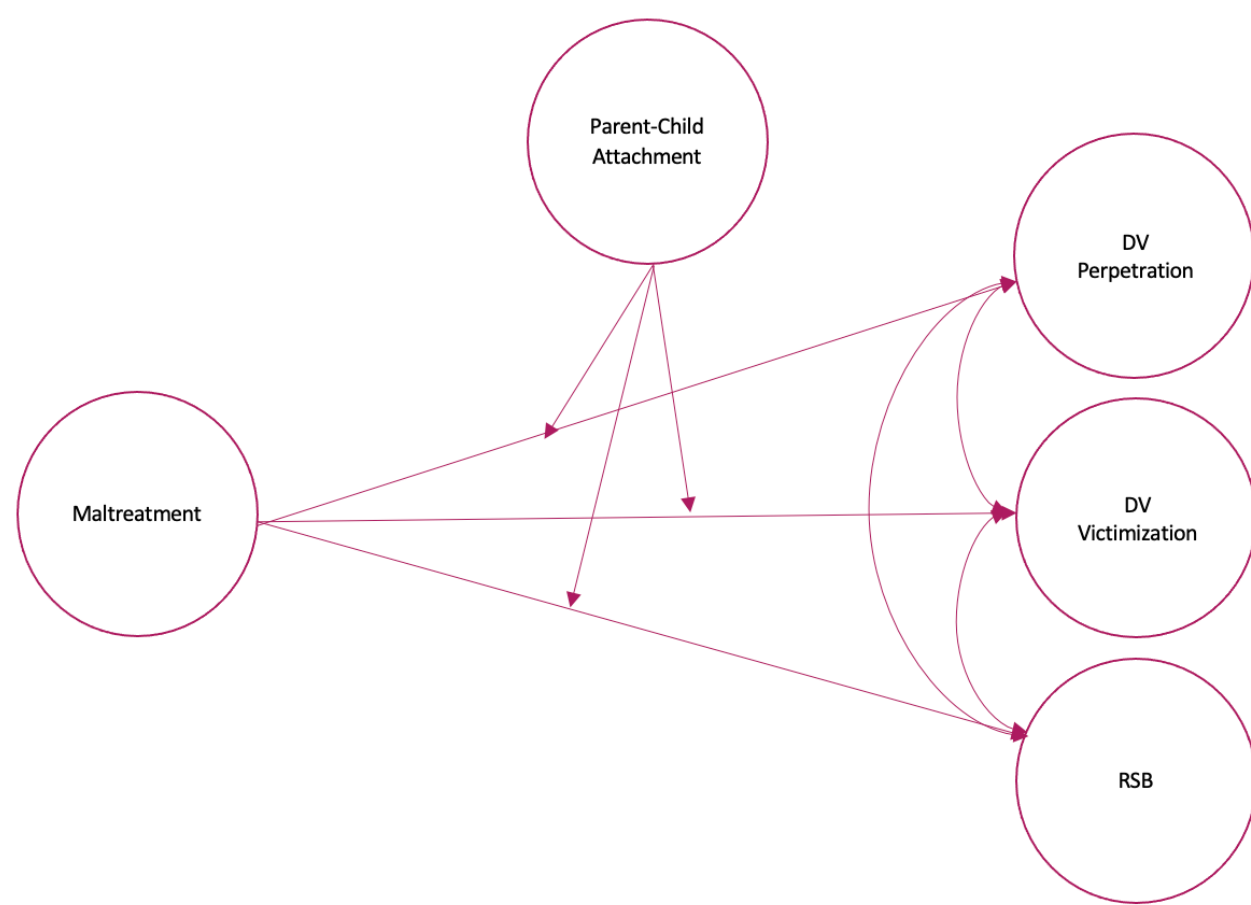


Figure 1. Effect of maltreatment on dating violence perpetration, dating violence victimization, and risky sexual behaviour moderated by parent-child attachment.

## METHOD

179 teens ( $M_{age} = 15.34$ ) at-risk for antisocial behaviour reported their maltreatment histories and attachment; five years later, they reported DV and RSB. Structural equation modelling was conducted.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Parent-child attachment moderated the association between maltreatment and RSB (Table 1). Parent-child attachment moderated the association between maltreatment and DV for boys, but not girls (Table 2).

Parent-child attachment security may influence risk for RSB and DV among teens with maltreatment histories. Gender analyses are exploratory and should be interpreted with caution due to small sample size. Research with larger samples and gender diverse teens is needed.

Parent-child attachment has a significant effect on the association between maltreatment and risky sexual behaviour for high-risk teens.

Parent-child attachment may also have a significant effect on the association between maltreatment and dating violence perpetration & victimization for boys, but not girls.

## TABLES

Table 1. Full Sample Estimates between Covariates, Main Study Variables, RSB, DV Perpetration, DV Victimization, and the Interaction Term

Variable	B(SE)	$\beta$	p
<b>Maltreatment</b>			
Youth Age	.07(.03)	2.79	.010
Youth Gender	.27(.08)	3.44	.001
<b>Attachment</b>			
Youth Age	-.01(.04)	-.14	.888
Youth Gender	.47(.15)	3.67	.001
<b>RSB</b>			
Youth Age	-.09(.07)	-1.33	.193
Youth Gender	.26(.24)	1.08	.278
Maltreatment	.79(.50)	1.61	.112
Attachment	-.05(.13)	-.42	.674
Maltreatment x Attachment	-.28(.14)	-1.97	.049
<b>DV Perpetration</b>			
Youth Age	.02(.05)	.48	.628
Youth Gender	.10(.19)	.54	.594
Maltreatment	.47(.68)	.68	.497
Attachment	-.00(.13)	-.04	.967
Maltreatment x Attachment	.04(.20)	.20	.838
<b>DV Victimization</b>			
Youth Age	.00(.07)	.03	.979
Youth Gender	.10(.26)	.38	.706
Maltreatment	1.09(.91)	1.23	.234
Attachment	.05(.13)	.37	.713
Maltreatment x Attachment	.00(.26)	.01	.993

Note. N = 179.

Abbreviations: RSB = risky sexual behaviour, DV = dating violence.

Table 2. Multigroup Model Estimates between Covariates, Main Study Variables, RSB, DV Perpetration, DV Victimization, and the Interaction Term

Variable	Boys			Girls		
	B(SE)	$\beta$	p	B(SE)	$\beta$	p
<b>Maltreatment</b>						
Youth Age	.09(.03)	3.23	.008	.03(.04)	.69	.497
<b>Attachment</b>						
Youth Age	.07(.05)	1.45	.153	-.11(.07)	-1.43	.150
<b>RSB</b>						
Youth Age	-.01(.09)	-.17	.862	-.17(.11)	-1.21	.145
Maltreatment	-.19(.56)	-.35	.730	.69(.93)	.92	.458
Attachment	-.26(.19)	-1.40	.175	-.10(.18)	-.51	.569
Malt x Attach	.12(.16)	.76	.459	-.30(.22)	-1.92	.181
<b>DV Perpetration</b>						
Youth Age	-.08(.07)	-1.31	.208	.08(.06)	1.32	.185
Maltreatment	-.74(.65)	-1.79	.253	.65(.70)	1.02	.353
Attachment	-.09(.16)	-.58	.597	.01(.15)	.07	.943
Malt x Attach	.39(.20)	4.86	.050	.03(.17)	.15	.882
<b>DV Victimization</b>						
Youth Age	-.20(.09)	-2.18	.018	.15(.09)	1.39	.099
Maltreatment	-1.23(.78)	-2.75	.114	1.26(1.30)	1.16	.330
Attachment	-.02(.22)	-.11	.914	.01(.22)	.06	.953
Malt x Attach	.60(.24)	6.97	.014	.06(.37)	.15	.873

Note. N = 174 (94 boys; 80 girls).

Abbreviations: Malt = maltreatment; Attach = attachment; RSB = risky sexual behaviour;

DV = dating violence.

## REFERENCES

- Thibodeau, M., Lavoie, F., Hébert, M., & Blais, M. (2017a). Pathways linking childhood maltreatment and adolescent sexual risk behaviours: The role of attachment security. *Journal of Sex Research, 54*(8), 994-1005.
- Livingston, J. A., Lessard, J., Casey, M. L., Leonard, K. E., & Eiden, R. D. (2019). Teen dating violence in a high-risk sample: The protective role of maternal acceptance. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 1*-20.



Cassia McIntyre  
cassiam@sfu.ca

