New Research From Clinical Psychological Science

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Read about the latest research published in *Clinical Psychological Science*:

[The Associations Among Callous-Unemotional Traits, Worry, and Aggression in Justice-Involved Adolescent Boys](#)
Emily L. Robertson, Paul J. Frick, James V. Ray, Laura C. Thornton, Tina D. Wall Myers, Laurence Steinberg, and Elizabeth Cauffman

Callous-unemotional (CU) traits, characterized by a lack of empathy, affect, and guilt, have been related to psychopathy and antisocial behavior in youths, especially when associated with high anxiety. Robertson and colleagues explored the association between CU traits, anxiety, self-reported aggression, and official records of violent rearrests among more than 1,000 juvenile male first-time offenders, across 30 months. They collected measures of CU traits, anxiety (measured as trait worry), victimization, aggression, self-reported violent offending, and official arrest records. Results showed that both CU traits and anxiety predicted victimization, self-reported aggression, and violent offending. Moreover, self-reported violent offending was the highest in adolescents with high CU traits and high anxiety. However, arrests were predicted only by CU traits. These findings suggest that the additive effects of CU traits and anxiety in predicting violent behavior might be limited to self-report.

[Mediators and Mechanisms](#)
Warren W. Tryon

In psychotherapy research, mediators are usually thought to be mechanisms. However, mediation is to mechanism what correlation is to causation; that is, evidence of mediation is necessary but not sufficient to explain the mechanism. Thus, mechanisms need to meet criteria of causation and explanation. To fulfill these criteria, Tyron expanded on the proposal of an associative activation psychological mechanism by Otgaar and colleagues (2017). He shows how this mechanism involves parallel distributed processing (PDP) in connectionist neural network (CNN) models of memory, introduced by Rumelhart and McClelland (1986). According to CNN and PDP, information is organized in nodes that

are connected in a network, and once one node is activated, activation automatically spreads to the linked nodes. Tyron provides analyses of the network dynamics and structure as a form of explanation of the mechanism and presents a simulation of personality that supports causation. He suggests the importance of using connectionist models to represent psychological mechanisms in psychotherapy and psychological research more generally.

[Longitudinal Relations Between Depressive Symptoms and Executive Functions From Adolescence to Early Adulthood: A Twin Study](#)
Naomi P. Friedman, Alta du Pont, Robin P. Corley, and John K. Hewitt

Major depressive disorder is usually associated with deficits in executive functions (EF) such as the cognitive control implied in goal-directed thoughts and actions. But what is the cause of these associations? Is it mostly genetic or mostly environmental? The authors tested twin pairs at ages 12, 17, and 23, using a diagnostic interview to assess depressive symptoms and EF tasks (response inhibition, working memory update, and mental set shifting). The results indicated that higher levels of depressive symptoms were associated with deficits in "common" EF, especially at 17 years old, and in "updating-specific" abilities at age 23, but not with "shifting-specific" abilities. The use of twin models allowed Friedman and colleagues to suggest that these associations can be almost entirely explained by shared genetics but not by environmental factors. In sum, the association between depressive symptoms and deficits in EF seems to result from shared genetic risk.

[Identifying Core Deficits in a Dimensional Model of Borderline Personality Disorder Features: A Network Analysis](#)
Matthew W. Southward and Jennifer S. Cheavens

Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is associated with three core deficits: emotion dysregulation, interpersonal problems, and self-identity disturbance. Southward and Cheavens used a network model to explore the associations between these deficits, or symptoms, and how they interact with each other. In network models of psychopathology, symptoms can be represented by nodes that are linked to each other. Depending on the number and strength of the connections between symptoms, they can be more or less central in the network. More than 4,000 participants with a range of BPD features completed measures of emotion regulation, interpersonal problems, and BPD assessment, and Southward and Cheavens conducted a network analysis. They found that loneliness, recklessness, and mood instability were the most central symptoms for participants high in BPD, whereas chronic emptiness, mood intensity, and mood instability were more central for those low in BPD. These results suggest that emotion dysregulation is central for both low- and high-BPD groups, but interpersonal problems are more central for the high-BPD group and self-identity disturbance is more central for the low-BPD group.