



The Roles of Affect Regulation and Deficient Affect in Youth Violence: A Comparison of Different Age Groups

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March 7, 2008





Impaired Affect Regulation: Links to Aggression and Psychopathology

Evidence from normative and at-risk samples

Impaired affect regulation
Negative reactivity & arousal



Internalizing disorders
Externalizing behavior
problems

(Caspi et al., 1995; Castro et al., 2005; Hubbard et al., 2002; Lahey et al., 1999)



The Role of Deficient Affect in Developmental Psychopathology

- Evidence linking the affective dimension of psychopathy to aggression and violence
 - In adults (Salekin et al., 1996)
 - In adolescents & children (Barry et al., 2000; Blair, 1997; Frick et al., 2003; Penney & Moretti, 2007; Vincent et al., 2004)
- Centrality of deficient emotionality in traditional conceptualizations of psychopathy



Affect Regulation, Deficient Affect, and Aggression: Towards an Integrated Model

Some theoretical models

$$A \rightarrow C / B \rightarrow C$$

Impaired affect regulation and deficient affect as two separate, non-overlapping risk factors for aggression

(Dodge & Coie, 1987; Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1998)

$$A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C$$

Impaired affect regulation as a risk factor for later deficiencies in empathy and affect recognition

(Cohen & Strayer, 1996; Eisenberg et al., 1996, 1998)



The Current Study: Research Objectives

1. Do affect regulation and deficient affect each relate to aggression, violence, and delinquency?
2. Do affect regulation and deficient affect represent separate routes to antisocial behaviors, such that there is little shared variance between them?
3. Do the relationships between affect dysregulation, deficient affect, and aggression change across different developmental stages?



Method

Participants

179 adolescents (97 males, 82 females)

Age range = 12 to 18 ($M = 15.3$, $SD = 1.5$)

Sites:

Maximum (28%) and minimum (25%) security custody centers

Provincial assessment and treatment planning center (45%)

Probation offices (2%)

Ethnicity:

Caucasian (66%)

Aboriginal (23%)

Other (11%)



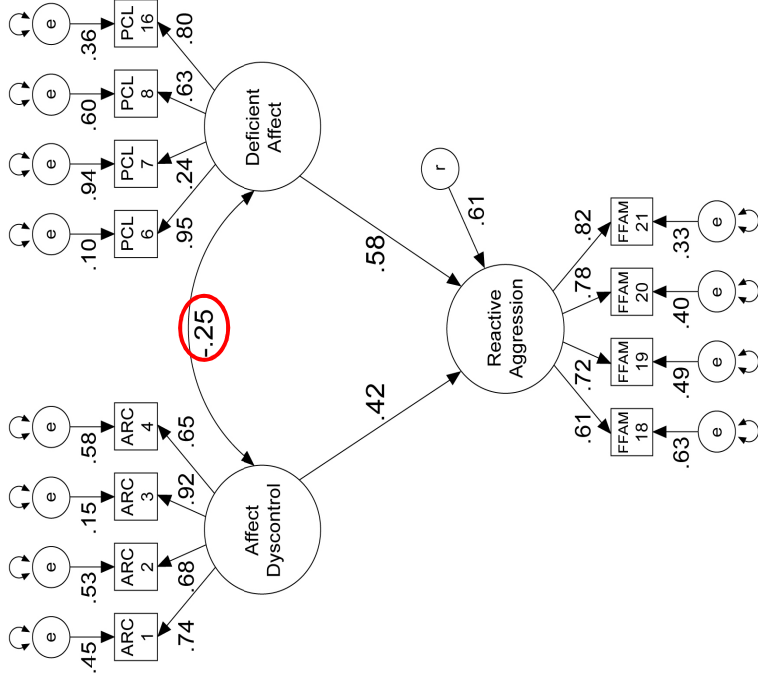
Measures

- Affect Regulation
 - (Affect Regulation Checklist)
- Deficient Affect
 - (Psychopathy Checklist, Youth Version)
- Reactive & Instrumental Aggression
 - (Form-Function Aggression Measure)
- Violent and Non-violent Offending
 - (Self-Report of Offending)



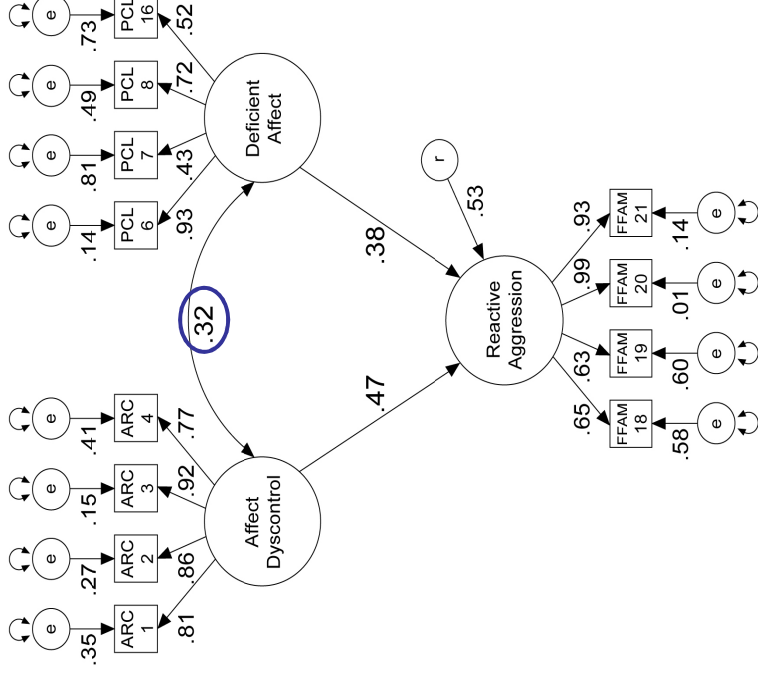
Results: Affect Dyscontrol & Aggression

Age 12-15 ($n = 95$)



CFI = 1.0; TLI = 1.0
RMSEA = .00; WRMR = .56

Age 16-18 ($n = 84$)

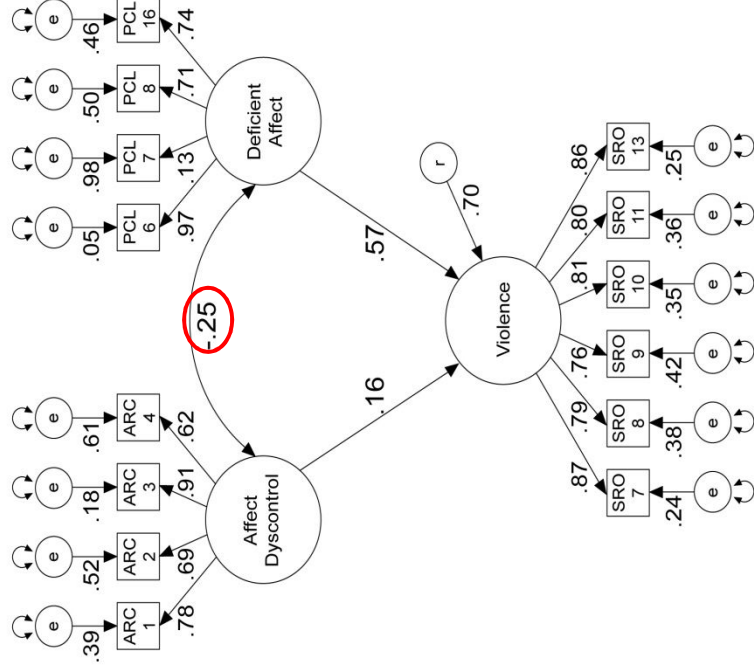


CFI = 1.0; TLI = 1.0
RMSEA = .00; WRMR = .46



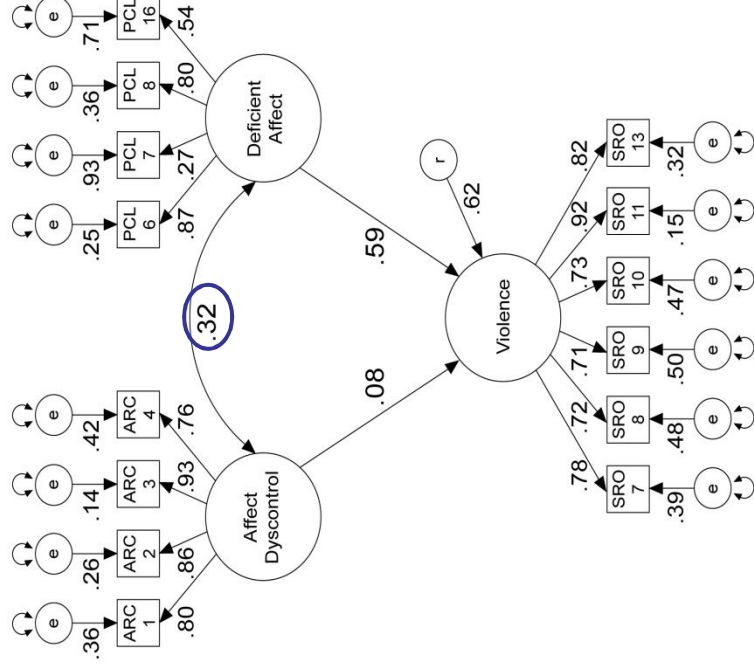
Results: Affect Dyscontrol & Violence

Age 12-15 ($n = 95$)



CFI = 1.0; TLI = 1.0
RMSEA = .00; WRMR = .69

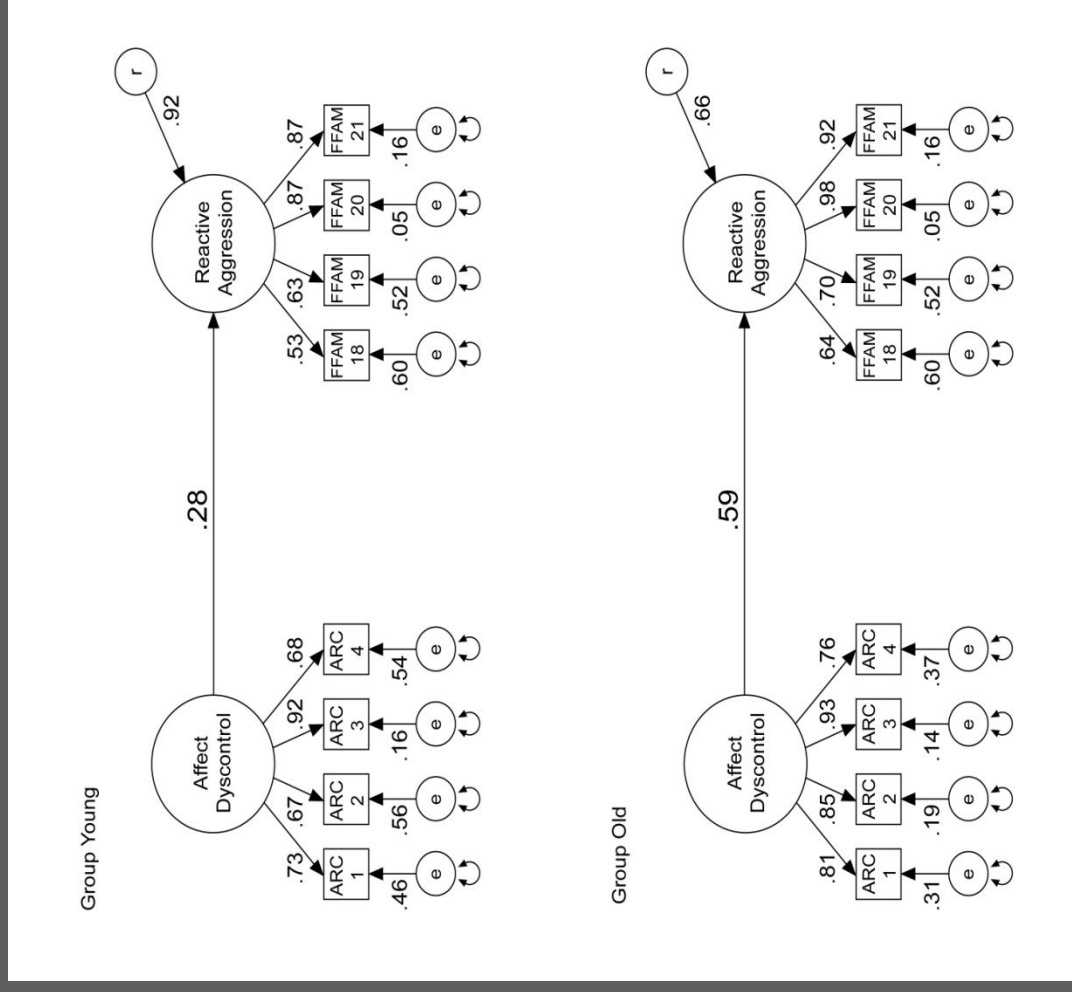
Age 16-18 ($n = 84$)



CFI = .99; TLI = .99
RMSEA = .03; WRMR = .70

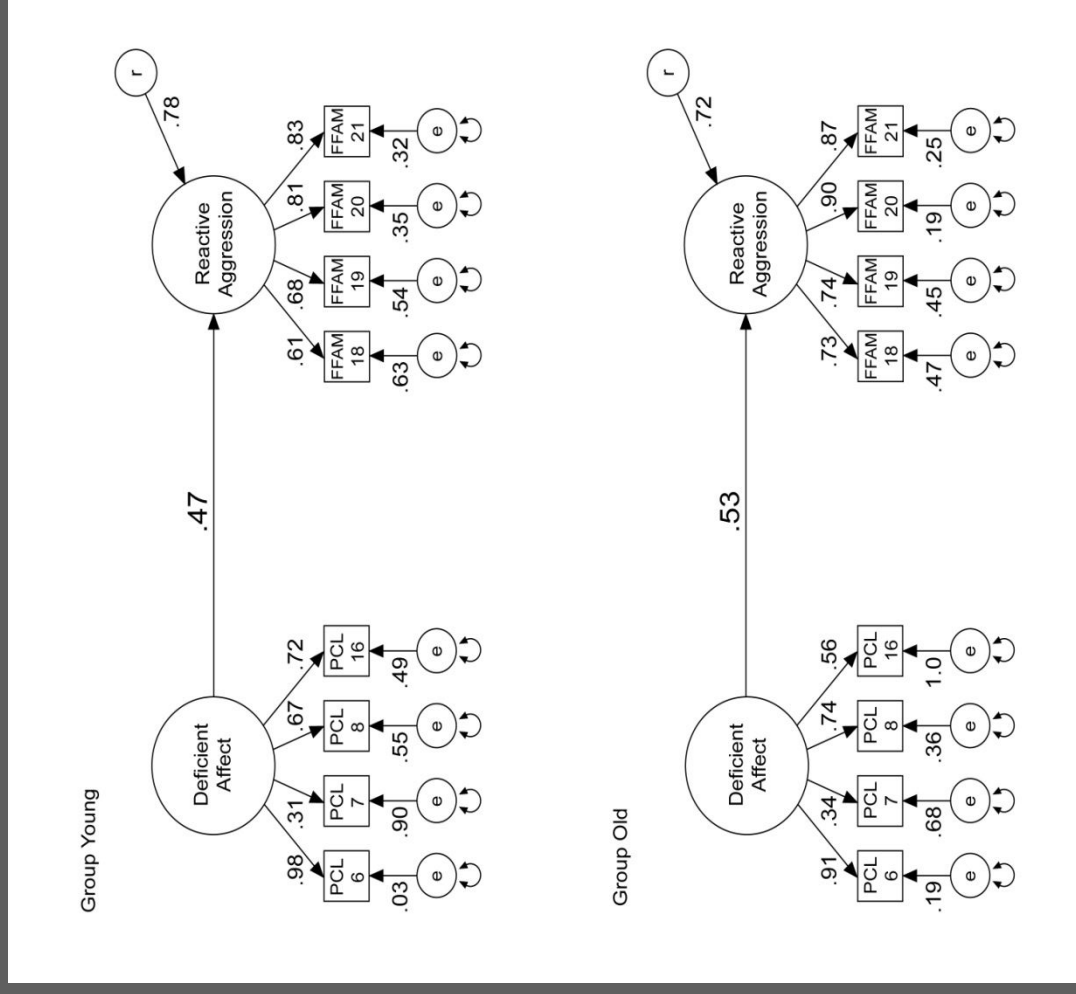


Results: Age Moderation Analyses





Results: Age Moderation Analyses





Conclusions & Directions for Future Research

- Both affect dysregulation and deficient affect were significantly associated with aggression
- Salience of deficient affect as a risk factor for aggression, violence and delinquency
- Age
 - It may be misleading to consider adolescents of varying ages as a homogenous population with respect to risk factors for aggression and violence
 - Call for further research investigating age-related factors in the study of risk factors for youth violence
 - Longitudinal studies to chart the development of pertinent risk factors over time



Acknowledgments

This research is funded by the CIHR Institute of Gender and Health (IGH) in partnership with the CIHR Institute of Human Development, Child and Youth Health (IHDCYH) through a New Emerging Team grant awarded to Dr. Marlene M. Moretti (CIHR #54020).

Many thanks to Russell Ball, Rosalind Catchpole, Kristin Constab, Kimberley DaSilva, Heidi Gordon, Laura Johnston, Jessica Klaver, Carolina Morales, Ingrid Obsuth, Maya Peled, Sherri Philips, and Zina Lee for their assistance with data collection and entry.