

# Trauma & Delinquency: Finding a correlation between early Childhood Maltreatment and later delinquency

## Abstract

- This report is an analysis of a 12 year study by Jennifer Lansford on whether long term early effects of trauma and maltreatment, physical or psychological, hinder overall behavior and academic progress in later adolescence and possibly lead to delinquency.
- Adolescents maltreated early in life had levels of aggression, anxiety/depression, social problems, problems, posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms, and social withdrawal that were on average greater than their non-maltreated counterparts.

## Maltreated vs. Non-Maltreated Results

| Table   |                |              |                    |                     |              |                    |
|---|----------------|--------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Differences Between Maltreated and Nonmaltreated Children in Academic, Psychological, and Behavioral Problems in Adolescence <sup>a</sup> |                |              |                    |                     |              |                    |
| Outcome   | Unadjusted     |              |                    | Covariates Adjusted |              |                    |
|   | Not Maltreated | Maltreated   | F                  | Not Maltreated      | Maltreated   | F                  |
| Grades 9-11 Official School Records (Not Maltreated, n = 387; Maltreated, n = 50)   |                |              |                    |                     |              |                    |
| Mathematics grade (1 = F, 13 = A)   | 8.06 (0.17)    | 6.91 (0.49)  | 3.24               | 7.65 (0.25)         | 7.39 (0.64)  | 0.15               |
| Language arts grade (1 = F, 13 = A)   | 8.64 (0.17)    | 7.04 (0.54)  | 7.63 <sup>†</sup>  | 8.21 (0.23)         | 7.70 (0.59)  | 0.70               |
| Total mathematics percentile  | 67.97 (1.07)   | 64.51 (3.07) | 3.37               | 67.55 (1.59)        | 63.12 (4.42) | 0.96               |
| Total language arts percentile  | 70.49 (1.00)   | 64.73 (3.21) | 5.58 <sup>†</sup>  | 70.10 (1.51)        | 65.72 (3.98) | 1.14               |
| No. of days absent  | 10.27 (0.65)   | 20.47 (3.06) | 21.63 <sup>‡</sup> | 12.40 (0.94)        | 19.33 (2.36) | 8.14 <sup>†</sup>  |
| No. of times suspended  | 0.58 (0.11)    | 1.19 (0.38)  | 5.65 <sup>†</sup>  | 0.73 (0.15)         | 1.23 (0.38)  | 1.64               |
| Grade 11 Mother Reports (Not Maltreated, n = 392; Maltreated, n = 52)   |                |              |                    |                     |              |                    |
| Subscales   |                |              |                    |                     |              |                    |
| Aggression  | 5.72 (0.27)    | 10.02 (1.01) | 23.64 <sup>‡</sup> | 6.06 (0.40)         | 8.15 (0.91)  | 4.80 <sup>†</sup>  |
| Anxiety/Depression  | 3.07 (0.16)    | 5.73 (0.75)  | 34.40 <sup>‡</sup> | 2.67 (0.27)         | 5.32 (0.61)  | 16.89 <sup>‡</sup> |
| Dissociation  | 1.68 (0.11)    | 3.38 (0.43)  | 28.63 <sup>‡</sup> | 1.58 (0.16)         | 2.80 (0.37)  | 10.01 <sup>†</sup> |
| Delinquent Behavior   | 2.02 (0.12)    | 3.40 (0.42)  | 17.80 <sup>‡</sup> | 1.87 (0.19)         | 2.59 (0.44)  | 2.51               |
| Posttraumatic Stress Disorder   | 4.70 (0.21)    | 8.22 (0.77)  | 31.19 <sup>‡</sup> | 4.34 (0.33)         | 7.01 (0.75)  | 11.50 <sup>†</sup> |
| Social Problems   | 1.35 (0.09)    | 3.11 (0.40)  | 33.08 <sup>‡</sup> | 1.35 (0.16)         | 2.65 (0.36)  | 12.25 <sup>†</sup> |
| Thought Problems  | 0.32 (0.04)    | 0.84 (0.19)  | 22.74 <sup>‡</sup> | 0.27 (0.06)         | 0.70 (0.14)  | 9.45 <sup>†</sup>  |
| Social Withdrawal   | 2.32 (0.12)    | 3.98 (0.45)  | 18.06 <sup>‡</sup> | 2.18 (0.19)         | 3.31 (0.43)  | 6.23 <sup>†</sup>  |
| Grade 11 Adolescent Reports (Not Maltreated, n = 405; Maltreated, n = 53)   |                |              |                    |                     |              |                    |
| No. of drugs tried  | 1.18 (0.07)    | 1.00 (0.17)  | 0.02               | 0.95 (0.11)         | 0.69 (0.26)  | 0.89               |
| No. of behavior problems  | 0.28 (0.03)    | 0.45 (0.10)  | 9.04 <sup>†</sup>  | 0.29 (0.04)         | 0.36 (0.10)  | 0.40               |
| Chances will go to college (1 = low, 5 = high)  | 4.36 (0.05)    | 3.56 (0.18)  | 22.16 <sup>‡</sup> | 4.36 (0.07)         | 3.79 (0.17)  | 11.01 <sup>‡</sup> |

Figure 1. Differences Between Maltreated and Nonmaltreated Children in Academic, Psychological, and Behavioral Problems in Adolescence.

## Minority vs. Caucasian

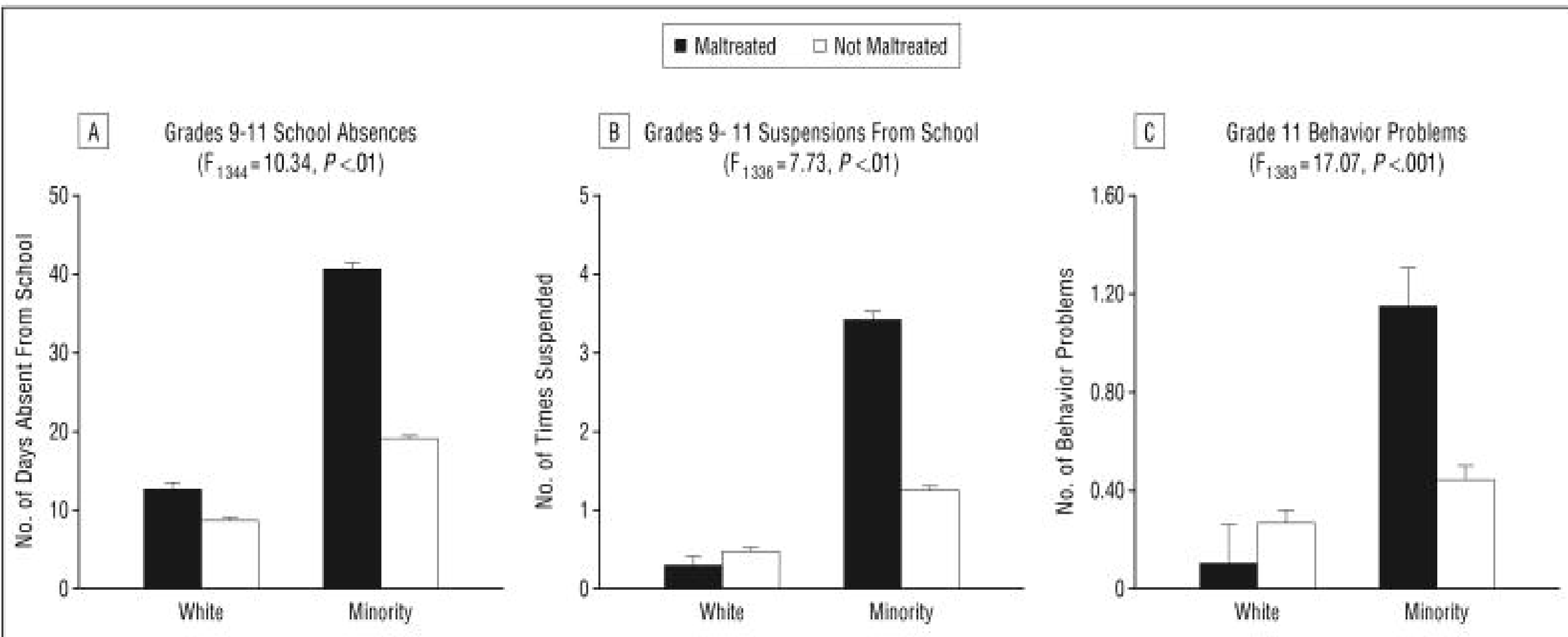


Figure 2. Differences between maltreated white/minority and nonmaltreated white/minority children in official school absences, suspensions, and behavioral problems in adolescence.

## Boys vs. Girls

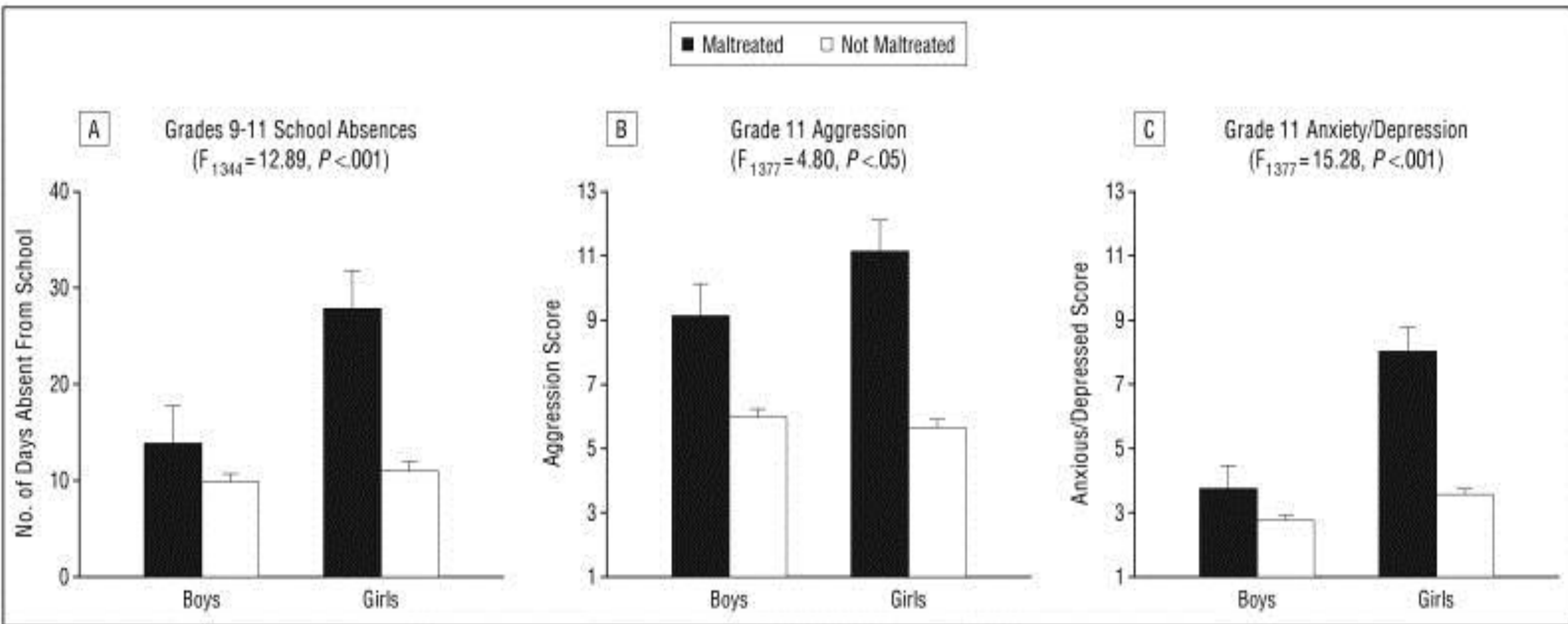


Figure 3. Differences between maltreated boys/girls and nonmaltreated girls/boys white/minority children in official school absences, reported levels of aggression, and reported anxiety/depression in adolescence.

## Results

- These results of school grade student's, grade 9-11, add to the fact that physical maltreatment in early adolescence puts a child at higher risk for behavioral and physiological problems in later adolescence along with lower grades and increased number of days missing from school.
- Females maltreated nearly doubled all the results compared to males & minorities maltreated children tripled all the results when compared to Caucasian maltreated children
- Minority maltreated children and female maltreated children are shown to be affected more than Caucasian maltreated children.

## The Study

- A group of 585 children and their parents were asked to participate the summer before the children entered kindergarten in 3 geographic sites, in the ongoing Child Development Project. Starting about at the age of five.
- Initially, in-home interviews revealed that 69 children (11.8%) had experienced some form of physical maltreatment prior to kindergarten in the summer after the participant's 11th grade year, participants were asked to fill out the Youth Self-Report Form of Child Behavior Checklist to determine the frequency and duration of: delinquent behaviors, scaled between 1-5, 1 being very low, 2 being low, 3 about half, 4 being high, or 5 very high.
- The self-reports also asked various questions such as the use of tobacco products, the use of drugs or alcohol and likelihood of going to college.

## Conclusion

As this study demonstrates, being abused does not automatically condemn a child to become delinquent. There is now more evidence to the point that other abuse, as stated above, including neglect can increase the chances of a child to offend. On the contrary, there is now evidence to indicate that early intervention and new therapy methods may help stop the cycle of abuse.

## References:

- Lansford, Jennifer E., Kenneth A. Dodge, Gregory S. Pettit, John E. Bates, Joseph Crozier, and Julie Kaplow. "A 12-Year Prospective Study of the Long-term Effects of Early Child Physical Maltreatment on Psychological, Behavioral, and Academic Problems in Adolescence." *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*. U.S. National Library of Medicine, 5 Oct. 2009. Web. 27 Oct. 2015.
- Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med. 2002 Aug; 156(8): 824-830.els of aggression, and reported anxiety/depression in adolescence. Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med. 2002 Aug; 156(8): 824-830.
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