Childhood Maltreatment and Parenting Style: Implications for Anxiety Sensitivity

URECA Recipient: Aubrey L. Edson, B.A.[1]

Faculty Mentor: Timothy R. Stickle, Ph.D. [1]

[1] University of Vermont

Abstract

Developmental psychopathology research has confirmed that maltreatment during childhood puts children at risk for later development of behavioral and emotional deficits. Research examining parenting styles has also become increasingly scrutinized in terms of risk for later development of psychopathology. The results are particularly useful in yielding a better understanding of which parenting styles are harmful or beneficial to a child's normal development. Anxiety Sensitivity (AS) is a third variable that has acquired literary attention, defined by a fear of anxiety provoking stimuli and an extreme sensitivity to the physiological sensations that accompany anxiety. Maltreatment during childhood and a harsh, cold parenting style have both been independently identified as strong predictors of AS but there has been little research examining the mechanisms responsible for the relationships. This study aims to explore the associations between these three variables and their implications for current developmental psychopathological theory and treatment of AS.

Data will be collected from students ages 10 – 15 and their primary caregivers in Edgewater Park, New Jersey via an anonymous online questionnaire. Parents' basic demographic information, self-reported levels of AS and self-reported parenting style will be measured by the Anxiety Sensitivity Index (ASI-3) and the Alabama Parenting Questionnaire Parent-Report (APQ). Students' basic demographic information and self-reported levels of AS, the student's perception of his or her parent's parenting style, and self-reported exposure to trauma during childhood will be measured by the Child Anxiety Sensitivity Index (CASI), the Alabama Parenting Questionnaire Child-Report (APQ), and the Childhood Experiences of Violence Questionnaire (CEVQ) in a separate online questionnaire. Multiple regression analyses will serve as the primary method of analysis, and results will inform clinical interventions for children who

may be at risk for development of AS due to experience with childhood maltreatment and history

of parents with harsh, cold parenting styles.