



# Callous-Unemotional traits and parenting: The role of children's impairments and conduct problems

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## Background Information

Callous-Unemotional (CU) traits describe children with behavioral pattern characterized by:

- lack of empathy and guilt
- shallow and deficient affect
- callous use of others for one's own personal gain
- a lack of concern about performance in important activities (Frick et al., 2014).

Extant research indicated that children high on CU traits show reduced emotional reactivity and insensitivity to punishment (Blair et al., 2001) and increase risk for subsequent Antisocial Behavior and Conduct Problems (CP), that appear relatively stable (Frick & White, 2008).

Thus, it is important for research to advance knowledge on malleability of CU traits, on the causes of conduct problems and to determine etiological processes.



### Research Area

**parenting practices:** negatively influence a child's socialization (Waller, Gardner, & Hyde, 2013) and the interventions targeting parenting tend to be the most effective in reducing conduct problems in young children (Frick, 2012).

**children's impairments:** young children are particularly at-risk for engaging in conduct problems due to limitations in their verbal communication skills (Emerson, Robertson, & Wood, 2005).

## A growing body of research....

Parents play a key role in socializing child behavior, but children also shape their own environment.

### Negative parenting

(harsh, inconsistent discipline) these parenting practices are more strongly related to conduct problems in those low on CU traits (Pasalich, Dadds, Hawes, & Brennan, 2011).



### Positive parenting

(warm affect, positive cooperation/communication) negative associations with conduct problems, especially strong for youth with elevated CU traits (Pasalich et al., 2011; Waller et al., 2013).



### Children's impairments

may evoke more emotionally intense negative reactions from parents attempting to enforce rules and this can lead to CU traits behavior (Waller et al., 2015).

The prevalence of CU traits would be greater among young children with developmental delay given the earlier onset to CP among children with CU traits (Kimonis et al., 2014)

**Research purposes...** It is unclear whether associations between **parental affect**, **conduct problems**, and **CU behavior** would operate in the same way in samples comprised by children with different levels of behavior problems, or in specific developmental period. Beyond intellectual disabilities, we are not aware of prior studies that examine CU traits among children who show deficits in adaptive skills.



- ✓ studying the association between **parenting** and **conduct problems**
- ✓ considering the **level of CU traits** displayed by the child
- ✓ considering the **developmental difficulties** of the child

## References

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