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Peer First Impressions of Childhood Maltreatment Victims

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ABSTRACT
The impact of childhood maltreatment effects can extend beyond the immediate stress of abusive family environments. College students (N = 435) exposed to childhood domestic violence or parental physical abuse were expected to be viewed less favorably by their peers than their nonabused counterparts. They were expected as well to be less accurate in predicting the first impressions left on their peers after 25-minute unstructured interactions. Partial support was found for both hypotheses. Relatively harsher (d = .49) peer first impressions were found among domestic violence witnesses. Domestic violence (d = .58) and parental physical abuse (d = .49) victims overestimated peer ratings. Social anxiety during peer interactions was higher among women exposed to either form of childhood maltreatment. Men from violent families viewed themselves less favorably than their peers (r = .22, p < .05). These results further implicate childhood maltreatment as a contributing factor in peer distancing and rejection.

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KEYWORDS
Domestic violence; peer rejection; person perception; physical abuse

Considerable evidence has now emerged that behavior associated with mood or anxiety disturbance can actually lead to peer rejection (Sacco, Dumont, & Dow, 1993; Segrin & Dillard, 1992). Maladaptive interpersonal behavior such as poor eye contact, excessive self-disclosure, negative conversational content, and nonverbal expressions of sadness might provide partial sources for the distancing observed by others (Segrin & Abramson, 1994). Anger and hostility are also often consequences of mood disturbance (Sacco & Dunn, 1990). Coyne’s (1976) hypothesis that peer rejection is often linked to excessive reassurance seeking in depression has been supported in meta-analytic research (Starr & Davila, 2008). Patients with social phobia have also been described by others as less likeable, friendly, comfortable to be around, and even less attractive (Meleschko & Alden, 1993). Socially, anxiety has been associated with interpersonal skills deficits in both clinical (Voncken & Bögels, 2008) and community samples (Thompson & Rapee, 2002). Frantic efforts to avoid anticipated rejection could paradoxically trigger peer distancing (Clark, 2001).
Childhood maltreatment and peer rejection

Peer rejection could present a risk to child maltreatment victims as well (Rogosch, Cicchetti, & Aber, 1995; Salzinger, Feldman, Hammer, & Rosario, 1993). One longitudinal study (childhood to early adolescence) concluded that peer rejection of maltreated children, when it occurred, became established by early school age (Bolger & Patterson, 2001). The impact of the double jeopardy of maltreatment and peer rejection on developmental trajectories for a range of problems could be considerable. Psychological symptoms of anxious arousal, depression, anger and irritability, intrusive thoughts, dissociation, and impaired self-reference have often been reported among individuals who were physically abused during upbringing (Briere & Elliott, 2003). Adults who were physically abused during upbringing have also been shown to be three to nine times more likely to acknowledge past physical fighting, violence-related trouble, or inflicting violent injury on another (King, 2014). The collective symptoms of distress could subsequently magnify the risks of peer rejection. Exposure to domestic violence during upbringing has been less consistently linked to rejection by peers. Young adults exposed to childhood domestic violence have described their best friendship as relatively less reinforcing, helpful, and sustainable than those without this developmental adversity (Green & King, 2009).

Child abuse cooccurrence

The prevalence of childhood physical abuse and intimate partner violence in the general population has been estimated at 18% (Afifi et al., 2011) and 25% (Desmarais, Reeves, Nicholls, Telford, & Fiebert, 2012), respectively. Recognition must be given in childhood maltreatment research, however, to the likelihood that child and adolescent victims have been exposed simultaneously or sequentially to multiple forms of abuse. For example, childhood physical abuse and domestic violence appear to cooccur as often as 50% of the time (Carlson, 1991; McCloskey & Lichter, 2003; O’Keefe, 1995). These cooccurrence rates limit the extent to which negative outcomes can be attributed conclusively to any specific form of childhood maltreatment.

Person perception accuracy

The ability to accurately perceive and anticipate the thoughts, actions, and motives of others has been associated with higher levels of social skill and general mental health adjustment (Carton, Kessler, & Pape, 1999; Colman & Widom, 2004). Nonverbal cues often provide special decoding challenges among vulnerable individuals. One meta-analysis found that antisocial participants showed deficits in the ability to perceive fearful expression in others.
Recognition of emotion through auditory cues has also been shown to be impaired among socially anxious children (McClure & Nowicki, 2001).

A recent meta-analysis (Blanch-Hartigan, Andrzejewski, & Hill, 2012) found that person perception abilities can be improved substantially through social skills training programs and other forms of focused instruction. Conversely, researchers have not directly examined developmental factors that might impede the normal development of person perception skills during upbringing. A number of studies are available illustrating the favorable or unfavorable effects of prior relationships on emotional reactions and snap judgments elicited by later encounters with others who exhibited similar physical or behavioral features (Andersen & Baum, 1994; Andersen, Przybylinski, & Przybylinski, 2014; Andersen, Reznick, & Manzella, 1996; Gunaydyn, Zayas, Selcuk, & Hazan, 2012). Children exposed to domestic violence during upbringing in one dissertation project (Mallah, 1998) were predisposed in adulthood to infer aggressive motives when viewing a man engaged in a neutral dyadic interaction with a woman. Empirical links between childhood maltreatment and adult person perception have not been otherwise examined in the literature.

**Person perception measurement complexities**

Dyadic and group interaction procedures have provided opportunities to study observer error in perceiving partner attributes that have been identified through psychological testing, expert opinion, consensus impressions, or other means. Cronbach’s (1955) seminal work on the measurement of perceptual accuracy cautioned researchers, however, that statistical discrepancies between the perceptions of an observer and criterion attributes of a target might or might not provide valid measures of interpersonal perceptiveness (Gage & Cronbach, 1955). Raw score rating disparities between an observer and external criterion can occur for many reasons other than perceptual error. Some influences have their impact even before exposure to interaction cues. Standards and anchor points often differ in how people apply rating scales. Subsequently, Cronbach (1955) derived equations that calculated four factors or components that contributed to the overall (ACC) variance (these formulae are provided in the Appendix). Elevation (E) is quantified as the difference in the central tendency of ratings across all targets and attributes. Stereotype accuracy (SA) summed discrepancies between mean observer predictions for individual item dimensions and the average collective (collapsed over targets) criterion scores. SA reflects the accuracy of a “stereotypic” prediction profile for the various attributes under consideration (i.e., average observer rating on each item compared to mean criterion rating collapsed across targets). Differential elevation (DE) quantified disparities...
between mean observer predictions for each target collapsed over item dimensions. DE thus reflected the accuracy of observer predictions for each target of the mean criterion score collapsed over item dimensions (i.e., what the target, in general, is like). Differential accuracy (DA), however, was thought to provide the best index of variance attributable to prediction-criterion rating errors for each item–partner comparison after extraction of rating central tendencies associated with E, SA, and DE (ACC = E + SA + DE + DA). DA and, to a lesser extent, DE provide accuracy estimates that are potentially influenced by information or cues experienced during target contacts. Lower DA and DE scores reflect smaller discrepancies and higher person perception accuracy.

Cronbach’s approach has been extended to more sophisticated iterations (social relations model; Kenny, 1994) of these basic components. Additional factor differentiations have provided methods to better explore situational and process variables involved in interpersonal engagement, perception, and decision making such as target exposure duration (Levesque & Kenny, 1993), ethnic identification (Christensen, Duangdao, Issacs, & Alfonso-Reese, 2012), family negativity (Eichelsheim et al., 2011), social anxiety (Christensen, Stein, & Means-Christensen, 2003), narcissism (Lukowitsky & Pincus, 2013), and others. This study relied on the four basic Cronbach components to provide estimates of whether or not person perception deficits might accompany either childhood physical abuse or exposure to domestic violence.

**Proposed hypotheses**

College students with histories of either parental physical abuse or exposure to domestic violence were examined in this study. It was hypothesized that their peers would convey relatively less favorable first impressions of their personality attributes, as contrasted to those formed from the nonabused participants. The accuracy of maltreated participants in predicting the first impressions left on their peers is expected to be relatively lower than that found for their nonabused counterparts.

**Method**

**Participants**

All of the students enrolled in personality and abnormal psychology courses taught by the author were invited to participate in a study of “interpersonal perceptiveness” for extra credit. They were informed that the study would require them to interact for 25 minutes with up to three other classmates on two separate occasions. They were aware that they would be asked to provide anonymous ratings of their partners at the conclusion of each session and to
complete the Violent Experiences Questionnaire (VEQ) during class at the time of their consent. This study was approved by the university institutional review board.

**Measures**

**Violent experiences questionnaire**
The original (King, Tuhy, & Harris, 1989) and revised (VEQ–R; King, 2012, 2014a, 2014b; Walter & King, 2013) VEQ provides retrospective estimates of the frequency with which respondents were “pushed, shoved, struck, punched, or threatened with physical violence” during upbringing by either parent. The occurrence of aggressive acts can be quantified for four different recording periods spanning the ages of 5 to 19 years. A separate score can be calculated regarding the frequency of the same observed acts perpetrated by the respondent’s father toward his or her mother during the same ages. Total childhood physical abuse (CPA) and childhood domestic abuse exposure (CDA) scores can be generated from the VEQ and interpreted as the number of days per year (maximum set at 104) an index act of either form of maltreatment had occurred during the 15-year respective recording period. The VEQ CPA scale has been found to be internally consistent (α = .91) with elevations linked to rates of laboratory-provoked aggression that exceed (d = 2.5) that observed for control participants (Moe, King, & Bailey, 2004). Best friendship qualities have been associated with VEQ CDA scores (Green & King, 2009). King (in press) found a significant CPA × Birth Order interaction with a six-fold increase in relative risk of a Psychopathic Deviate elevation (T > 70) found for first-born men and women. The VEQ threshold for CPA and CDA in this study will be set at four or more incidents a year over the 15-year respective period (> 60 total incidents).

**First impression interaction procedure**
One method of estimating the extent to which an individual is looked on unfavorably or unfavorably by peers is provided by the First Impression Interaction Procedure (FIIP; King & Pate, 2002). Once formed, first impressions have been shown to be fairly stable over time (Asch, 1946; DiGirolamo & Hintzman, 1997; Dougherty, Turban, & Callender, 1994). The FIIP assesses how a participant is viewed by up to six unfamiliar partners encountered during separate uncontrolled (25-minute) interaction sessions (e.g., two sessions with different interaction partners in each group). Familiarity is assessed for each partner using a 5-point scale that ranged from 0 (*never met or formed any impression*) to 4 (*know person well and have stable impressions*). Participants are excluded if any partner in either group is rated 2 (*have had significant contact, but not formed any firm impressions*) or higher. After these interaction sessions, the FIIP provided participants
with an opportunity to rate each of their partners on 14 different attribute dimensions (good vs poor listener; good vs poor sense of humor; interesting vs boring; intelligent vs unintelligent; attractive vs unattractive; optimistic vs pessimistic; tolerant vs intolerant; affectionate vs unaffectionate; perceptive vs imperceptive; flexible vs rigid; authentic vs inauthentic; relaxed vs tense; assured vs self-conscious; not manipulative vs manipulative) using a Likert (7-point) metric (e.g., 1 = interesting; 7 = boring). Thus, each FIIP attribute dimension has a favorable (1) and unfavorable (7) pole, and negative impressions are reflected in higher ratings.

Every participant rates each of his or her interaction partners, and mean ratings across the 14 dimensions and all partners are used to generate a variety of indexes. Participant ratings subsequently can be quantified into a variety of indexes. The Impression Index score (II) estimates the extent to which a participant was viewed favorably or unfavorably by his or her interaction partners (mean rating across dimensions and partners). Participant predictions of how he or she will be rated by interaction partners are quantified in the Prediction Index (PI). The manner in which each participant views himself or herself is referred to as the Self Index (SI). The harshness of participant ratings of interaction partners is estimated by the Judgment Index (JI) score. The Judgment Ratio (JR) scale is generated from a combination of judgment, self, and prediction ratings to better estimate the extent to which judgments of partners are harsher or more lenient than impressions of self (i.e., JR < 1 indicates the participant views his or her partners less favorably than self).

The FIIP normative sample included 252 college students (King & Pate, 2002). Principle component analyses found that most of the variance in the FIIP indices for both men and women was accounted for by a single favorability factor. All of the scales were found to be internally consistent (alphas exceeding .90) and relatively stable across the two separate interaction sessions. The concurrent validity of the Judgment Index has been established through links with a wide range of MCMI-II (King & Pate, 2003) and Coolidge Axis II Inventory (King & Pate, 2004) personality disorder indicators.

**Procedure**

Participants were scheduled for two separate FIIP interaction sessions in groups of four. Sessions were scheduled at least a week apart, and participants were provided the following instruction on arrival: “

You will be assigned to meet in a particular room at a particular time with three partners. You will be instructed to simply interact freely with these partners for a 25-minute period, which will hopefully provide an opportunity to get to know one another. At the conclusion of each interactive session, you will be provided a
confidential space where you will be asked to provide your impressions, through various formats, of the personality attributes exhibited by each of your three partners. You will also be asked to make predictions about the manner in which each of your interaction partners rated you at the end of the preceding session.

A modified version of the Social Anxiety Thoughts Questionnaire (Hartman, 1984) was completed at the conclusion of each FIIP session with a mean rating used as a social anxiety indicator in the analyses.

**Exclusion criteria**

FIIP session absences and violations of the unfamiliarity requirement do occur, but at a rate that is low enough to manage through participant exclusions after interaction session(s) are completed. Participants were excluded from analysis in this study if they completed the FIIP with fewer than four total partners or indicated familiarity (i.e., rating of 2 or higher on the index described earlier) with any of these classmates.

**Results**

This sample (\(N = 435\)) was comprised of primarily young adult (\(M_{\text{age}} = 23, SD = 6\)) women (74%). Although the sample was largely White (93.5%), partial representation was also provided by American Indian (2.8%), Hispanic (0.5%), Asian (0.7%), biracial (1.6%), and other (.9%) students. About 20% of the total sample reported observing one or more aggressive acts (pushing, shoving, striking, punching, or threats of physical violence) perpetrated against their mother by their father during upbringing. Over 30% directly experienced one or more of these acts at the hands of a parent during upbringing. In 5% and 9% of the sample, respectively, these events occurred, on average, more than four times a year over the 15-year recording period (> 60 cumulative events). All participants completed two FIIP sessions with either 4 (\(n = 53, 12\%\)), 5 (\(n = 171, 39\%\)), or 6 (\(n = 211, 49\%\)) unfamiliar interaction partners (exclusion criteria applied to 44 of the 479 students who attended the first interaction session).

Social anxiety was found to be associated with less favorable SI (\(r = .43, p < .0001\)), PI (\(r = .43, p < .0001\)), and JI (\(r = .25, p < .0001\)) scores. Participants with higher social anxiety (\(r = .13, p < .01\)) were rated less favorably (II) by their interaction partners. CDA (\(r = .14, p < .01\)) was associated with less favorable impressions from interaction partners (see Table 1). Participants exposed to CDA often failed to recognize these valuations and subsequently overestimated the favorability of the impressions left on their partners. These discrepancies were reflected in higher DA scores. Associations between CDA and II ratings were not altered substantially by control (partial correlation analysis) for participant age or social anxiety level. Partial correlations of DA with exposure to domestic violence and parental
physical abuse were not substantially reduced after control for social anxiety. Scores on the CPA index were also associated with less favorable impressions from interaction partners ($r = .10, p < .05$). The CPA victims generated significantly higher SA and DA scores.

**Inferential statistics**

The FIIP PI, SI, JI, and JR scores were all derived from the rating behavior of the participant. A multiple analyses of covariance (MANCOVA; SSP% as the covariate) established that these collective FIIP ratings were not significantly linked to CDA, $\lambda(4, 420) = 1.14$, $p = .342$, or the Gender $\times$ CDA interaction, $\lambda(4, 420) = 1.21$, $p = .31$. A second MANCOVA failed to find effects for CPA, $\lambda(4, 420) = .34$, $p = .85$, or the Gender $\times$ CPA interaction, $\lambda(4, 420) = .31$, $p = .87$.

II scores varied as a function of CDA, $F(1, 430) = 6.67, p = .01$, but not the gender by CDA interaction, $F(1,430) = .46, p = .50$. II scores did not differ by CPA, $F(1, 430) = 2.14, p = .14$, or the gender by CPA interaction, $F(1,430) = .13, p = .72$.

ACC did not vary as a function of CDA, $F(1, 430) = 3.25, p = .07$, or the Gender $\times$ CDA interaction, $F(1, 430) = 3.18, p = .08$. ACC did differ by CPA, $F(1, 430) = 9.47, p = .002$, but not the Gender $\times$ CPA interaction, $F(1,430) = 3.09, p = .08$.

SA did not differ as a function of CDA, $F(1, 430) = .13, p = .72$, or the Gender $\times$ CDA interaction, $F(1,430) = 3.02, p = .08$. SA did not differ by

### Table 1. Violent Experiences Questionnaire (VEQ) Abuse Bivariate Correlates with First Impression Interaction Indexes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpersonal ratings</th>
<th>VEQ variables and accuracy components</th>
<th>Domestic abuse (CDA scale)</th>
<th>Physical abuse (CPA scale)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIIP rating indexes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impression Index (II)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prediction Index (PI)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Index (SI)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgment Index (JI)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgment Ratio (JR)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.22*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cronbach components:

| Accuracy (ACC)                |                                      | .19***| .00 | .12*  | .20***| .08 | .15** |
| Elevation (E)                 |                                      | .20***| -.07| .08   | .22***| -.06| .08   |
| Differential elevation (DE)   |                                      | .11*  | .01 | .08   | .05   | .08 | .07   |
| Stereotype accuracy (SA)      |                                      | -.07  | .10 | -.01  | .04   | .14 | .09*  |
| Differential accuracy (DA)    |                                      | .10   | .08 | .10*  | .10   | .22*| .17***|

Note: CDA = childhood domestic abuse; CPA = childhood physical abuse; FIIP = First Impression Interaction Procedure. Fisher’s $z$ transformations (Ferguson, 1981) found gender correlation strength differences for CDA–JR ($p < .05$), CPA–E ($p < .01$), CDA–E ($p < .05$), and both CDA–Anx ($p < .05$) and CPA–Anx ($p < .05$). $N_{women} = 323$; $N_{men} = 112$.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.
CPA, $F(1, 430) = 2.45, p = .12$, nor the Gender × CPA interaction, $F(1, 430) = .27, p = .60$.

DA differed as a function of CDA, $F(1, 430) = 4.10, p = .04$, but not the Gender × CDA interaction, $F(1, 430) = .03, p = .85$. DA differed by CPA, $F(1, 430) = 8.44, p = .004$, but not the Gender × CPA interaction, $F(1, 430) = .42, p = .52$.

**Group analyses**

The CDA and CPA classification threshold adopted for this study ($VEQ > 4$) distinguished between the top 5% and 9% of the CDA and CPA distributions, respectively. The ratio of women in these resulting CDA (77%) and CPA (71%) groups approximated that found in the total sample (74% women). The cooccurrence of CDA and CPA was about 35% (i.e., 26% of CPA group classified with CDA; 41% of CDA group met CPA criteria). Group differences (see Table 2) were generally consistent with those found in the correlation analyses. Participants with a high (> 4) CDA elicited relatively negative II ($d = .49$) scores that contributed to the observed DA ($d = .58$) group disparity. Domestic violence histories were associated with partners’ judgments (JI) that were more favorable ($d = .42$). DA differed ($d = .49$) by CPA classification.

CPA was associated with higher social anxiety among women examined in isolation ($M_{CPA} = 47.0, SD = 18.6$ vs. $M_{control} = 40.2, SD = 14.5, p = .03, d = .44$). Social anxiety did not differ significantly ($p = .14$) by CDA group among the women.

**Gender considerations**

Men reported more frequent CPA ($d = .25$). Men also elicited less favorable II ($d = .49$) scores. They were harsher in evaluating themselves as reflected in SI ($d = .42$) and PI scores ($d = .56$). Men provided harsher JI ($d = .59$) scores as well. Gender differences were found as well for the ACC ($d = .38$) total score along with disparities in three constituent components of E ($d = .30$), SA ($d = .30$), and DA ($d = .40$). These component scores reflected the relative accuracy of women in predicting the ratings of their interaction partners. Gender differences in social anxiety were not found, but the correlations between social anxiety and CDA and CPA were significantly stronger for the women than the men in this sample. Conversely, the relationship between JR scores and CDA was significant for the men but not the women. None of the Gender × Maltreatment group interactions were significant, suggesting that the gender main effects found in this study were similar among both maltreated and comparison participants.
The uneven gender ratio in the participant pool assured a large difference \((d = 1.3)\) between men and women in the SSP% for their FIIP interaction groups. Partial correlation coefficients that controlled for SSP% yielded, in all cases, very similar correlation strengths to those presented in the results. Collateral analyses using SSP% as a covariate provided further assurance that group compositions did not contribute substantially to the reported findings. Correlation analyses were also conducted on that smaller subset of women \((n = 130)\) who were assigned exclusively to groups comprised of female members (see Table 3). Although DA correlation strengths with CDA and CPA were somewhat reduced, associations between these levels of maltreatment and peer impressions remained unaltered.

### Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for FIIP Indexes and Component Factors by Abuse Group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Interpersonal ratings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Abuse history</strong></td>
<td><strong>No abuse</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(M) (SD)</td>
<td>(M) (SD)</td>
<td>(p)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domestic violence exposure</td>
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<tr>
<td>(n = 22)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FIIP rating indexes</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impression Index (II)</td>
<td>2.50 (.45)</td>
<td>2.26 (.49)</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prediction Index (PI)</td>
<td>2.19 (.67)</td>
<td>2.34 (.70)</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Index (SI)</td>
<td>2.03 (.65)</td>
<td>2.18 (.66)</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgment Index (JI)</td>
<td>1.99 (.55)</td>
<td>2.28 (.69)</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgment Ratio (JR)</td>
<td>1.09 (.31)</td>
<td>1.01 (.21)</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cronbach components</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Accuracy (ACC)</td>
<td>3.42 (1.53)</td>
<td>2.93 (1.51)</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Elevation (E)</td>
<td>.81 (.98)</td>
<td>.65 (.99)</td>
<td>.46</td>
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<tr>
<td>Differential Elevation (DE)</td>
<td>.83 (.56)</td>
<td>.73 (.68)</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Stereotype Accuracy (SA)</td>
<td>.52 (.32)</td>
<td>.56 (.34)</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differential Accuracy (DA)</td>
<td>1.25 (.47)</td>
<td>1.00 (.42)</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Anxiety Inventory</td>
<td>43.6 (19.7)</td>
<td>41.5 (15.1)</td>
<td>.57</td>
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<tr>
<td>(n = 413)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Childhood physical abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>(n = 35)</td>
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<td>2.27 (.49)</td>
<td>.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prediction Index (PI)</td>
<td>2.32 (.67)</td>
<td>2.34 (.71)</td>
<td>.60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self Index (SI)</td>
<td>2.14 (.62)</td>
<td>2.18 (.66)</td>
<td>.55</td>
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<td>Judgment Index (JI)</td>
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<td>2.27 (.69)</td>
<td>.35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judgment Ratio (JR)</td>
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<td>1.02 (.21)</td>
<td>.62</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cronbach components</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy (ACC)</td>
<td>3.26 (1.58)</td>
<td>2.93 (1.51)</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elevation (E)</td>
<td>.69 (.99)</td>
<td>.65 (.99)</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Differential Elevation (DE)</td>
<td>.70 (.58)</td>
<td>.74 (.68)</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotype Accuracy (SA)</td>
<td>.66 (.32)</td>
<td>.55 (.34)</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differential Accuracy (DA)</td>
<td>1.21 (.46)</td>
<td>1.00 (.42)</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Anxiety Inventory</td>
<td>44.8 (17.2)</td>
<td>41.3 (15.1)</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: FIIP = First Impression Interaction Procedure. SSP% was controlled in these analyses of covariance. Violent Experiences Questionnaire thresholds for domestic and physical abuse exposure (> 4) indicate greater than 60 cumulative incidents.

**FIIP partner gender consideration**

The uneven gender ratio in the participant pool assured a large difference \((d = 1.3)\) between men and women in the SSP% for their FIIP interaction groups. Partial correlation coefficients that controlled for SSP% yielded, in all cases, very similar correlation strengths to those presented in the results. Collateral analyses using SSP% as a covariate provided further assurance that group compositions did not contribute substantially to the reported findings. Correlation analyses were also conducted on that smaller subset of women \((n = 130)\) who were assigned exclusively to groups comprised of female members (see Table 3). Although DA correlation strengths with CDA and CPA were somewhat reduced, associations between these levels of maltreatment and peer impressions remained unaltered.
The VEQ indexes of CPA and exposure to domestic violence used in this study varied in their distributions. Prevalence rates of 5% to 10% for CDA and CPA in this college sample were somewhat lower than those reported previously (Afifi et al., 2011; Desmarais et al., 2012) in the general population. The CDA and CPA group cooccurrence rate of 35% approximated previous estimates (Carlson, 1991; McCloskey & Lichter, 2003; O’Keefe, 1995).

Adult first impressions and childhood maltreatment

The relatively negative first impressions left by participants reporting CDA or CPA might or might not constitute a long-term peer rejection risk for victims in the general population. The progressive interpersonal disadvantages of children raised in adversity seemed to be reflected in these findings. The childhood maltreatment victims in this sample cast less favorable first impressions on their peer that were not tempered by the inclinations of many to actually judge their own interaction partners more leniently. Of perhaps equal importance, CDA and CPA victims appeared relatively less accurate in predicting the judgments of peers. The interpersonal behaviors and other contributing sources to these concerns could not be determined using this methodology.

The clinical significance of this first impression effect could be inferred. The CDA group averaged peer impression ratings of 2.2. In fact, none of the CDA cohort elicited impressions that exceeded 3.4. Although these peer ratings still resided toward the favorable pole of the Likert rating scale, consider the prospects of a CDA group member in a job application where ordinal rankings of similar FIIP attributes (e.g., intelligent, self-
assured, relaxed, flexible, etc.) could be highly consequential. Only a small percentage (< 5%) of this cohort would have been represented in the top 20%, and a large percentage (> 40%) would have fallen, often unknowingly, into the bottom 20%. These same deficits could be actualized in any social overture with prospective new friends. Childhood exposure to domestic violence might portend significant interpersonal disadvantages that extend beyond the first impressions cast through brief unstructured interactions.

Interestingly, participants describing CDA histories (> 60 total incidents) were significantly more lenient in their own judgments of their interaction partners ($d = .43$). This was particularly the case for the men, where CDA was predictive of higher judgment ratio scores ($r = .22$, $p < .05$).

**Child maltreatment and adult interpersonal perceptiveness**

Participants in this study with childhood maltreatment histories showed relative disadvantages in predicting the ratings of specific partners on specific attribute dimensions.

Scores from the CPA index were linked to higher DA ($r = .17$, $d = .49$) with trends toward greater vulnerability for male victims. A similar relationship ($r = .10$, $d = .58$) was found for CDA and DA. Social anxiety did not appear to affect these relationships between DA and child maltreatment. This perceptual “blind spot” for CDA victims was found in both the correlation and extreme group analyses, as well as within the exclusively female (Table 3) cohort.

**Limitations and research implications**

This study provides evidence of the first impressions left by childhood maltreatment victims on unfamiliar partners. Exposure to domestic violence and parental physical abuse during upbringing were estimated in this study from retrospective self-reports that were not validated independently. These results might not generalize beyond college samples, and the impact of more severe forms of childhood maltreatment on first impressions, or interpersonal perceptiveness, cannot be confidently estimated from this one undergraduate sample. Although the cooccurrence of CDA and CPA was only 35%, each participant classified in either maltreatment group was likely to have experienced complex constellations of developmental adversity that often extended beyond the unitary variable in question. These results should instead alert researchers and practitioners that childhood maltreatment in various forms is often associated with the negative appraisals of unfamiliar peers. Whether these partner rating tendencies generalize beyond anonymous first impression ratings cannot be determined from these data.
Both exposure to domestic violence and parental physical abuse in this study were associated with relative deficits in detecting the judgments of peers offered through ratings of first impressions. In terms of differential perceptual accuracy, only about 5% of the CDA and CPA cohorts ranked in the top (most perceptive) 20% of the DA distribution. Conversely, 41% and 34% of the CDA and CPA groups, respectively, fell into the bottom 20% of the DA distribution. Although correlation data and maltreatment cooccurrence rates limit most studies of child abuse, systematic efforts remain possible to better identify the developmental sources of peer rejection and relative interpersonal perceptual deficits when they occur. Our current understanding of the risks posed by childhood maltreatment could be advanced by research examining nexuses among developmental predictors, specific behavioral proclivities, and consequent peer impressions and reactions. Applied behavior analyses of the peer group interactions of maltreatment victims collected across time might hold the best promise for achieving these objectives.

References


**Appendix**

\[
ACC_j^2 = \frac{1}{kN} \sum \sum (y_{oij} - x_{o})^2
\]

\[
E = \frac{1}{kN} \sum (y_{..i} - x_{..})^2
\]

\[
DE = \frac{1}{N} \sum \left( \left( y_{o..} - y_{..} \right) - (x_{o..} - x_{..}) \right)^2
\]

\[
SA = \frac{1}{k} \sum \left( \left( y_{ij} - y_{..} \right) - (x_{ij} - x_{..}) \right)^2
\]

\[
DA = \frac{1}{kN} \sum \sum (y_{oij} - x_{m})^2
\]