

Callous-Unemotional (CU) Traits, Quality of the Teacher-Child Relationship and Child Academic Performance

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Background

Conduct Problems (CP) and Academic Outcomes

- Youth CP associated with poor academic achievement and school problems (Hinshaw, 1992).



CP and the Teacher-Child Relationship (TCR)

- Quality of early TCRs impact students' later successes and behaviour problems (Pianta, 2001).
- CP children tend to experience TCRs that are high in conflict (Baker et al., 2008).
- High closeness and low conflict TCR is a protective factor for students at risk of or displaying CP (Baker et al., 2008).
- Close TCR influences the progress of school attainment positively for student at risk of poor educational outcomes (Baker, 2006).
- The majority of TCR research has been conducted in primary schools, but children develop cognitive representations of themselves as a learner, academic competencies, and motivation during secondary school (Baker, 2006).

CU Traits

- Affective, interpersonal dimension of psychopathy.

Low CU	High CU
Emotional / Anxious	'Blunted' emotionality
Hostile attribution bias	Under-reactive to threat/distress
Reactive aggression	Proactive aggression
Reward seeking	Punishment insensitive

CU Traits, TCR and Academic Outcomes

- CU traits have a detrimental effect on the development of positive interpersonal relationships (Frick, 2004).
- Children with CP+CU and CP experience more negative interactions with teachers, and are less likely to receive positive attention (Wehby et al., 2003).
- Positive TCR is a protective factor for CP children, behaviourally and academically.



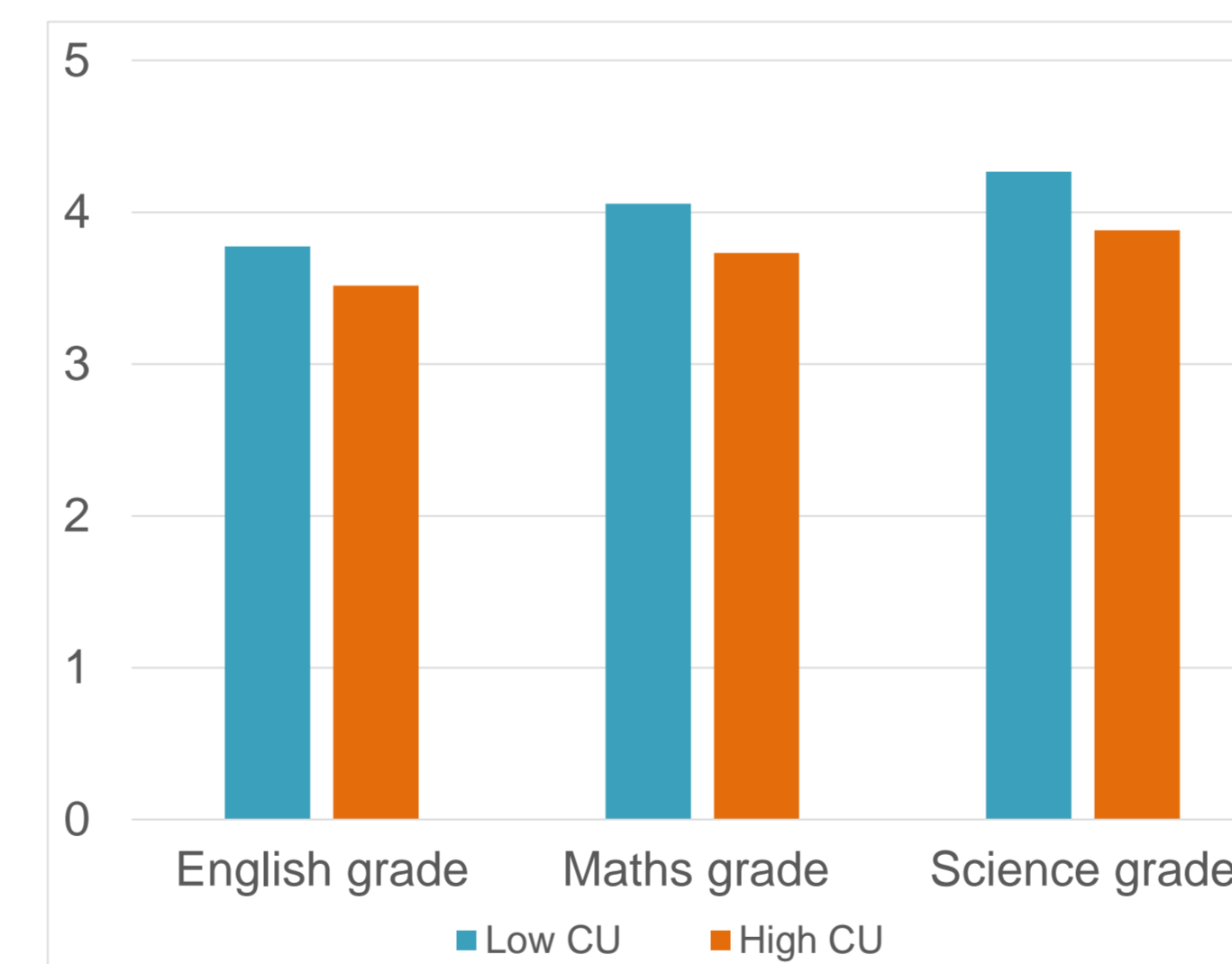
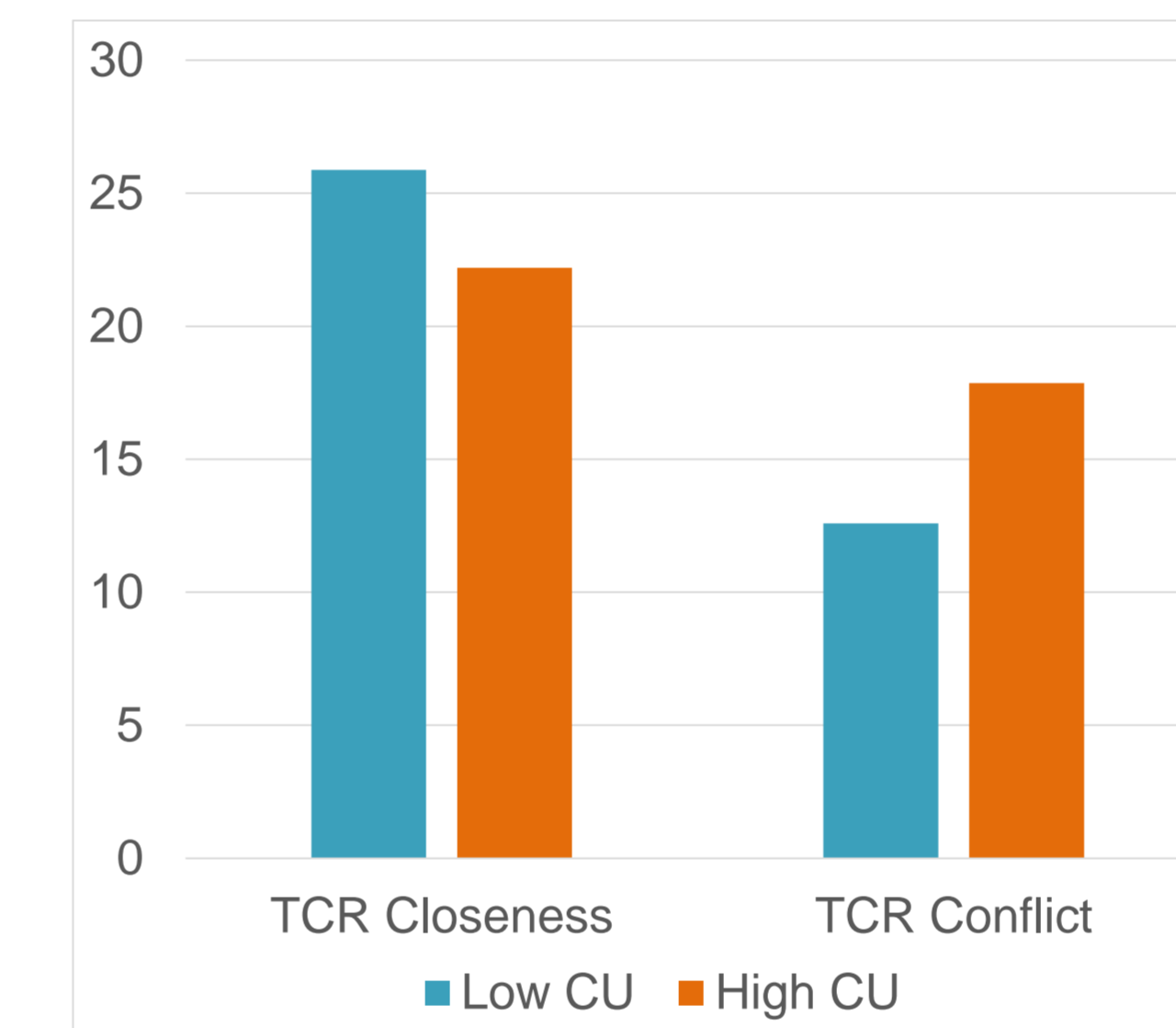
Quantitative Findings

	TCR Closeness	TCR Conflict	English Grade	Maths Grade	Science Grade
ICU callousness	-.13	.43**	-.13**	-.26**	-.31*
ICU uncaring	-.25	.27	-.13**	-.12*	-.14*
ICU unemotional	-.28	.15	-.03	-.06	.42
ICU total	-.25	.37*	-.15**	-.18**	-.22**

* $p < 0.05$
** $p < 0.01$

H1. Higher levels of CU traits are related to more conflict in the teacher-child relationship, poorer grades in English, Maths and Science.

H2. There is a significant difference between high and low CU children in TCR conflict but not closeness (controlling for teacher-reported CP). Teachers report more conflict in their relationship with high CU compared to low CU children.



H3. There is a significant difference between high and low CU children in Maths and Science grades, but not English ($p=0.06$). High CU students achieve poorer Maths ($p<0.01$) and Science ($p<0.01$) grades than low CU children.

Quantitative: Summary & Conclusions

- High CU students have **overall poorer academic outcomes**.
- CU behaviours appear to be disruptive to children's learning.
- CU traits were related to **greater teacher-child conflict** but not closeness.

Concluding Thought

"Let us remember... it is those who have a disagreeable temperament, who are rough, stubborn, sullen... that most need our love, compassion, and help. Those who most try our patience most need our love."

Ellen G. White (1927-1915)
Counsels to Parents and Teachers

Teacher Interviews

CU Traits and Disruptive Behaviour in School

"I would say definitely limited empathy, especially the girl sitting next to her, she riles her up, she knows what she is doing, gets that it's funny, but doesn't care how emotionally hurtful it is, and the girl will be in floods of tears because of her."

"It's got a big effect (on academic performance) because he's missed a chance of work where he had to have time out to reflect and calm himself down."

CU Traits and Academic Motivation

"He'll sit back and do nothing if you're not careful, but with real guidance he will actually do some fantastic work."

"You have to be pushing him and be behind him to keep going, he will not do work at home, he will put in minimal effort to pass."

"I think he is bright, but he is not performing as he should."

CU Traits and Teacher-Child Relationship Quality

"I'd say it's not good, he doesn't like the fact that I will keep on at him to settle down and get on with his work."

"My relationship with X is very good, and we know each other. He knows what I expect from him. I know what he's up to before he does it, I can predict him."

"I think now very positive. I think he trusts me, I think he works really well, but I know that is not the case with other staff in the school."

Interviews: Summary & Conclusions

- In contrast to low CU students, high CU students display **frequent and severe disruptive behaviour** in the classroom.
- High CU students **lack self-motivation**, are **unresponsive to encouragement to complete schoolwork**, and need more **"pushing"** from teachers.
- A **good relationship** may still be present and may be a **protective factor** for high CU students.

Aims

- To investigate the relationships between **CU traits**, **teacher-child relationship quality** (conflict and closeness), and **academic outcomes**.
- Enhance understanding about relationships between these factors and their impact in mainstream classrooms.

Hypotheses

- High levels of CU traits will be related to less closeness and more conflict in the teacher-child relationship, and poorer academic outcomes.
- High CU children will have a significantly poorer quality relationship with their teachers (more conflict, less closeness), compared to low CU children.
- High CU children will show significantly poorer achieving academic achievement than low CU children.

Methods: Students

Sample

- $N=437$ (50% male)
- 11-14 years ($M=12.5$)
- Secondary state school, East of England
- Predominantly white, middle class sample

Assessment

- CU traits (ICU; Frick, 2004)
- Impulsivity / fun-seeking (SPSRQ-C; Colder et al., 2011)
- English, Maths and Science grades

Methods: Teachers

Sample

- $N=12$ (33.3% male)
- 23-51 years ($M=35$)
- 75% White British
- 7.5 years teaching experience (range 1-15 years)

Assessment

- Random selection of 41 children above/below median split ICU
- Each teacher reported on 4-5 students (questionnaires); 2-9 students (interview)
- CU traits (ICU; Frick, 2004)
- Child adjustment (SDQ; Goodman, 1997)
- Student-teacher relationship quality (STRS; Pianta, 2001)
- Semi-structured interviews