



### SPR 18th Annual Meeting

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ID# 161

Location: Imperial Ballroom (Grand Hyatt/2nd Floor)

Time of Presentation: Jun 02 5:45 PM - 7:45 PM

Category/Theme: Epidemiology

#### **Emotional intelligence as a moderator to the relation between community violence exposure and alcohol and other drug use in an urban adolescent sample**

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Substance abuse in adolescents is a risk factor for dependence later in life. The present study examines environmental and individual risk factors, chronic exposure to community violence and low Emotional Intelligence (EI), as well as their synergistic effects on substance use.

Data for the study came from a sample of urban middle school students (n=131) collected prior to their participation in an intervention to reduce the negative social-emotional effects of community violence exposure.

Lifetime use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs (ATOD) was at 53%. Community violence witnessing and victimization was collapsed into one community violence exposure variable. The most common reports of violence exposure included: seeing someone get chased (55%), seeing someone being slapped, hit, or punched (85%), seeing someone get beaten up or mugged (63%), seeing someone seriously wounded after an act of violence (39%), actually being slapped, hit or punched (47%), actually being chased (15%), and actually being beaten up or mugged (17%). EI was measured using the Emotion Awareness Questionnaire (EAQ) which consists of five subscales: differentiating emotions (range: 7-21, mean: 10.83, sd: 2.97), verbal sharing of emotions (range: 3-9, mean: 6.4, sd: 1.43), not hiding emotions (range: 6-14, mean: 10.11, sd: 1.77), bodily awareness (range: 5-15, mean: 9.52, sd: 2.33), attending to others' emotions (range: 7-15, mean: 11.72, sd: 1.99), and analyses of emotions (range: 5-15, mean: 9.89, sd: 2.60). Logistic regression showed a main effect for violence exposure and ATOD use ( $B=.058$ ,  $p=.003$ ). There was also a main effect on the not hiding emotions subscale in that those who hid emotions were 1.4 times more likely to use ATOD ( $p=.002$ ). There were interaction effects on three of the EAQ subscales: differentiating emotions, bodily awareness, and analysis of emotions. In all three cases, lower scores increased the positive relations between community violence exposure and probability of ATOD use.

This research may be of importance to community violence and ATOD use prevention and intervention programs. If it can be determined that emotional intelligence plays a role in dealing with exposure and drug use, it may be important to incorporate an EI component into already well-established programs.

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