

# Psychopathic Personality Works Better than CU Traits for Predicting Fearlessness and ADHD Symptoms among Children with Conduct Problems.

Frogner L, Andershed AK, Andershed H.

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## Abstract

Children with early-onset conduct problems (CP) are at great risk for future behavior problems, and this risk seems to increase when CP co-occur with psychopathic traits. Even though studies are indicating that the entire psychopathic personality construct may be more useful in designating a meaningful subgroup of children with CP, research on psychopathic traits and CP in childhood have mainly focused on the role of callous unemotional (CU) traits. Prospective longitudinal data of 1867 3- to 5-year-olds (47% girls) followed annually for two years was used to compare groups of children with different combinations of CP and psychopathic traits on fearlessness and Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) symptoms. Children with CP and psychopathic personality had higher baseline and stable levels of ADHD symptoms than children with CP only or children with CP and concurrent CU traits, while baseline levels of fearlessness did not differ. They were also more likely to display stable levels of the risky combination of CP and ADHD symptoms. Results were similar for boys and girls. Findings indicate that there are reasons to consider other traits and behaviors as specifiers for subgroups of children with CP over and above CU traits, in order to optimize both diagnostic practice and treatment outcomes.