

THE RELATIONS OF VIOLENCE EXPOSURE,
TRAUMA SYMPTOMS AND AGGRESSIVE COGNITIONS
TO YOUTH VIOLENT BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

Studies show that adolescents in the United States are disproportionately represented among both the victims and the perpetrators of violent crimes (U.S. Department of Justice, 2002). Studies also show that previous exposure to violence is a strong predictor of aggression and delinquency in youth. This study (n = 124) examined the possible mediational roles of PTSD symptoms and aggressive cognitions in the cycle of violence. Findings indicate that aggressive cognitions, but not PTSD symptoms, were a significant mediator in the relation between home violence exposure and aggressive behaviors in youth. In contrast, PTSD symptoms, but not aggressive cognitions, were a significant mediator in the relation between community violence exposure and aggressive behaviors in youth. Findings also indicate that mediating factors varied by sex, with aggressive cognitions serving as a stronger mediator for boys, and PTSD symptoms as a stronger mediator for girls.