



The role of childhood maltreatment in the altered trait and global expression of personality in cocaine addiction



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ABSTRACT

Background and aims: Drug addictions are debilitating disorders that are highly associated with personality abnormalities. Early life stress (ELS) is a common risk factor for addiction and personality disturbances, but the relationships between ELS, addiction, and personality are poorly understood.

Methods: Ninety-five research participants were assessed for and grouped by ELS history and cocaine dependence. NEO-FFI personality measures were compared between the groups to define ELS– and addiction-related differences in personality traits. ELS and cocaine dependence were then examined as predictors of personality trait scores. Finally, k-means clustering was used to uncover clusters of personality trait configurations within the sample. Odds of cluster membership across subject groups was then determined.

Results: Trait expression differed significantly across subject groups. Cocaine-dependent subjects with a history of ELS (cocaine+/ELS+) displayed the greatest deviations in normative personality. Cocaine dependence significantly predicted four traits, while ELS predicted neuroticism and agreeableness; there was no interaction effect between ELS and cocaine dependence. The cluster analysis identified four distinct personality profiles: Open, Gregarious, Dysphoric, and Closed. Distribution of these profiles across subject groups differed significantly. Inclusion in cocaine+/ELS+, cocaine-/ELS+, and cocaine-/ELS– groups significantly increased the odds of expressing the Dysphoric, Open and Gregarious profiles, respectively.

Conclusions: Cocaine dependence and early life stress were significantly and differentially associated with altered expression of individual personality traits and their aggregation as personality profiles, suggesting that individuals who are at-risk for developing addictions due to ELS exposure may benefit from personality centered approaches as an early intervention and prevention.

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1. Introduction

Drug addiction remains a major socioeconomic problem associated with marked morbidity and mortality. Genetic and environmental factors are thought to represent the major determinants of drug addiction (Agrawal and Lynskey, 2008; Enoch, 2012), though their impacts are often indirect and intertwined with intermediate factors such as personality variables (Davis and Loxton, 2013; Gorwood et al., 2012). Personality is defined as an individual's set of enduring, largely predictable traits, behaviors, and thought

processes and is represented by both individual traits, such as neuroticism and impulsiveness, as well as clusters or profiles that represent global trait organization. Although most personality studies of drug use disorders (DUDs) focus on categorical DSM-defined Axis-II personality disorders (PDs), individuals who have or are at high risk for having a DUD also deviate significantly from general population scores for dimensional, non-pathological personality traits (Allen and Lauterbach, 2007; Drerup Stokes et al., 2013; Franken et al., 2006; Kotov et al., 2010; Sher et al., 2000).

Every stage of the addiction process, from drug use initiation to relapse, is closely associated with altered normative personality trait expression (Elkins et al., 2006; Grekin et al., 2006; Prisciandaro et al., 2011). Certain personality traits predict DUDs (Lukasiewicz et al., 2008; Turiano et al., 2012) and are associated with an early onset of drug use (Anderson et al., 2007; Malmberg et al., 2012; Nees et al., 2012), the transition from impulsive to compulsive

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