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**Maltreatment and Youth Delinquency: The Relationship between Physical Neglect and
Delinquent Behaviour in Young Males**

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Masters by Thesis only in
Psychology

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Abstract

Current maltreatment research speculates neglect is more prevalent than abuse, is associated with other forms of maltreatment in 95% of cases, and can go unnoticed until other forms of maltreatment are brought to the attention of authorities (Arthur, 2007). Even though any form of maltreatment is detrimental to the development of a young person; neglect has been significantly associated with youth delinquency and insecure attachment (Robertson, 2009; Zielinski, 2009). Neglect however, is the most understudied and least understood form of maltreatment (McSherry, 2007). This study aimed to explore neglect and its relationship with insecure attachment and youth delinquency. Eighty one young males, aged 16 – 20 years were recruited from community organisations and a school located in the lower North Island of New Zealand. The young people were assigned into two groups - delinquent group and non-delinquent group. Three questionnaires were administered: Childhood Trauma Questionnaire, Adolescent Attachment Questionnaire, and Self-Report Delinquency Scale. Results indicated that overall maltreatment, overall abuse, overall neglect, physical abuse, and physical neglect were all significantly associated with youth delinquency. The more severe the experience of physical abuse or physical neglect the more likely the young person was to display delinquent behaviour. There was no association found between attachment and delinquent behaviour, possible reasons for this are discussed. Physical neglect was the only type of maltreatment to remain significant after the school group was removed.

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