

Childhood Predictors of Revenge Cognitions and Fantasies in Early Adulthood

Andrea Tam

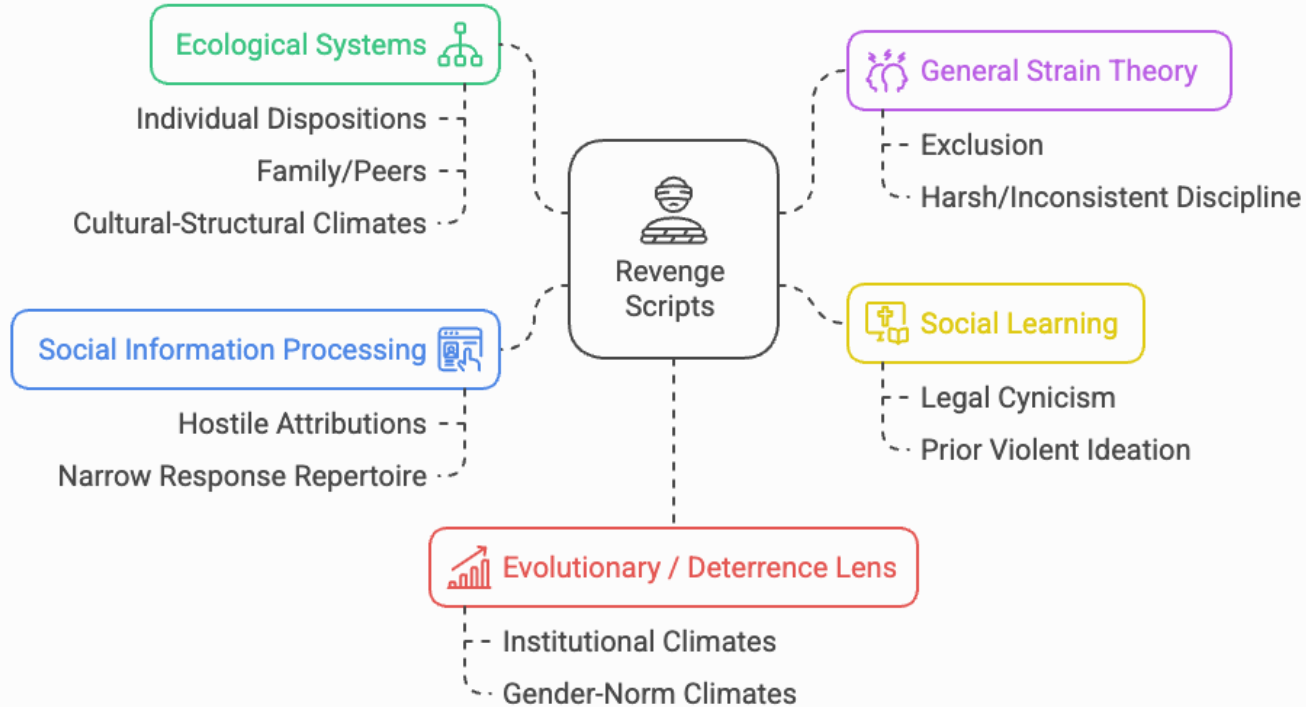
Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge

7th zIREN Research Meeting, 28th August 2025

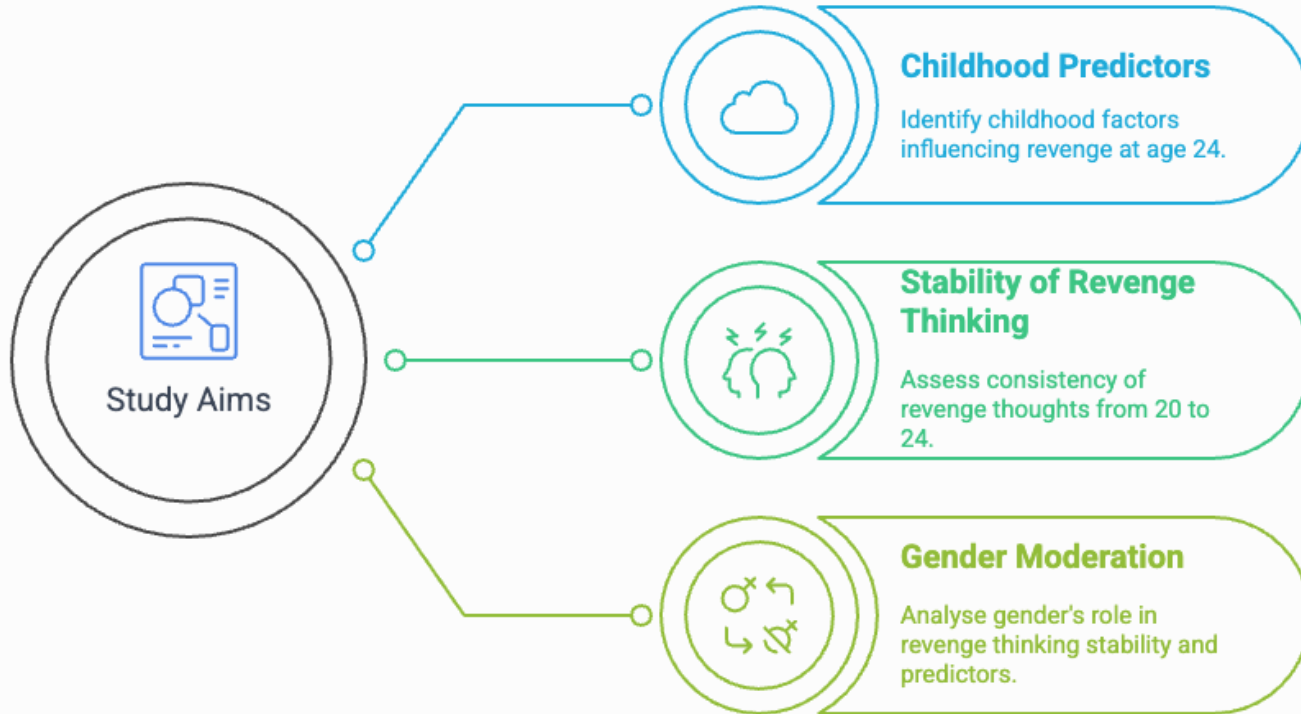
Background

- Revenge-related thinking is linked to victimisation and aggressive responding.
 - Childhood pathways are under-studied, identifying **risk** and **protective** factors can guide **early prevention** in schools and families.
 - Understanding **which early experiences matter** helps target supports before patterns harden in early adulthood.
-

Background



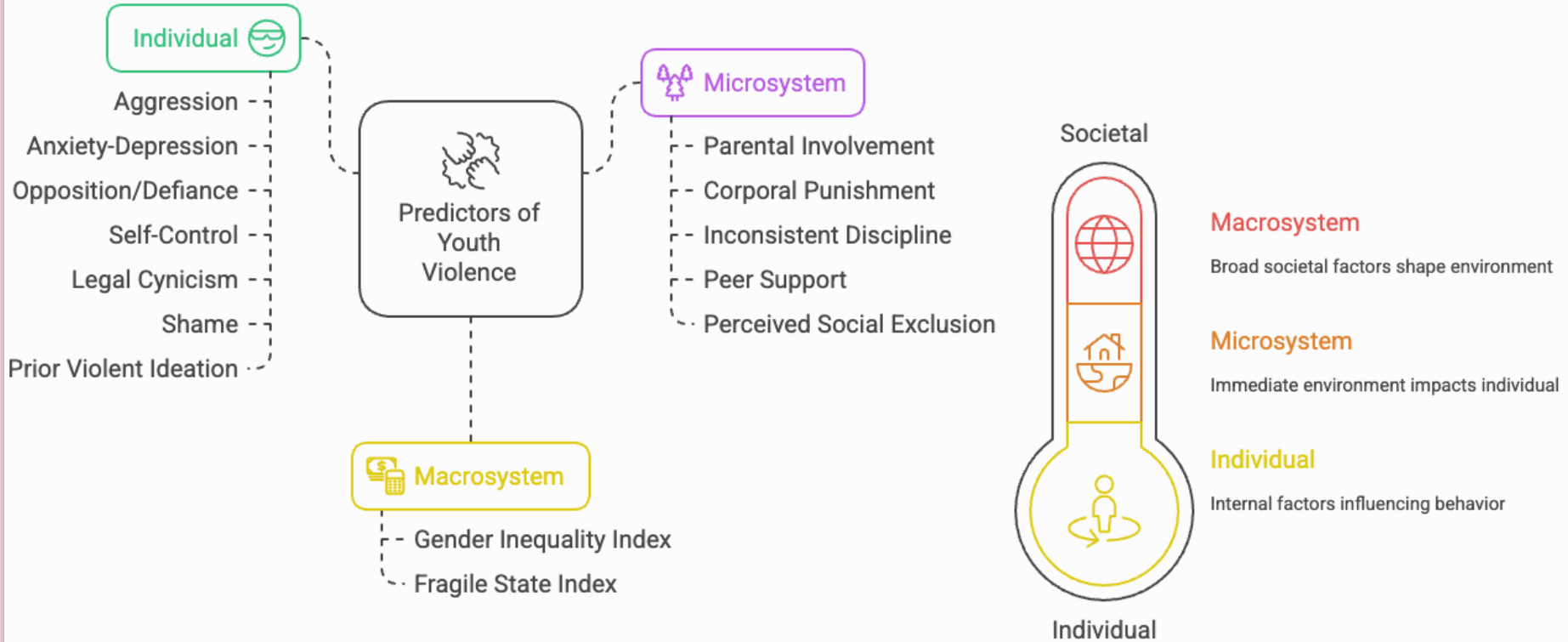
Study Aims



Design

- Waves K4 (11y), K5 (13y), K8 (20y), K9 (24y).
 - K4 n=1,147; K5 n=1,365; K8 n=1,180; K9 n=1,160.
 - **Outcomes:** vengeance cognitions and fantasies at age 24
 - **Controls:** caregiver SES, religion
 - Analyses use linear regression models and SEM; multi-group models for gender.
-

Predictors



Descriptives

- Means (20 to 24):
 - Cognitions 2.03 → 1.87 (Δ -0.16; SD ~0.79 → 0.73)
 - Fantasies 1.18 → 1.14 (Δ -0.04; SD ~0.39)

Bivariate Correlations

- **Risk (↑ vengeance):** legal cynicism (.13–.16), aggression (.12–.16), prior violent ideation (.10–.14), lower self-control (.09–.13), social exclusion (.10–.14), corporal punishment (.08–.10).
- **Protective (↓ vengeance):** parental involvement (–.11 to –.15), shame (–.10 to –.15), peer support (–.09 to –.13).
- **Macrosystem:** small positive links (.08–.14) to vengeance

Stability from 20 to 24

- **Cognitions:** $r=.52$; latent $\beta=.69$ (=48% variance carried forward), $p<.001$.
- **Fantasies:** $r=.42$; latent $\beta=.50$ (=25%), $p<.001$.

Stability Estimates by Gender

- **Cognitions:** Men $\beta=.685$ ($R^2=.47$); Women $\beta=.594$ ($R^2=.35$); Δ ns ($z=1.12$, $p=.26$).
- **Fantasies:** Men $b=.600$ ($\beta=.46$); Women $b=.479$ ($\beta=.59$); $\Delta b=.12$, $p=.10$ (ns).
- Moderate–high stability in both genders

Predictors of Vengeance Cognitions at 24

- Revenge-related thinking is linked to victimisation and aggressive responding.
 - Childhood pathways are under-studied, identifying **risk** and **protective** factors can guide **early prevention** in schools and families.
 - Understanding **which early experiences matter** helps target supports before patterns harden in early adulthood.
-

Predictors of Vengeance Fantasies at 24

- **Unique ↑ predictors:** opposition/defiance at 11 ($\beta=+.29$, $p=.001$); social exclusion at 13 ($\beta=+.10$, $p=.007$).
- **Borderline:** father's GII ($\beta=+.21$, $p=.057$); legal cynicism ($\beta=+.07$, $p=.062$).

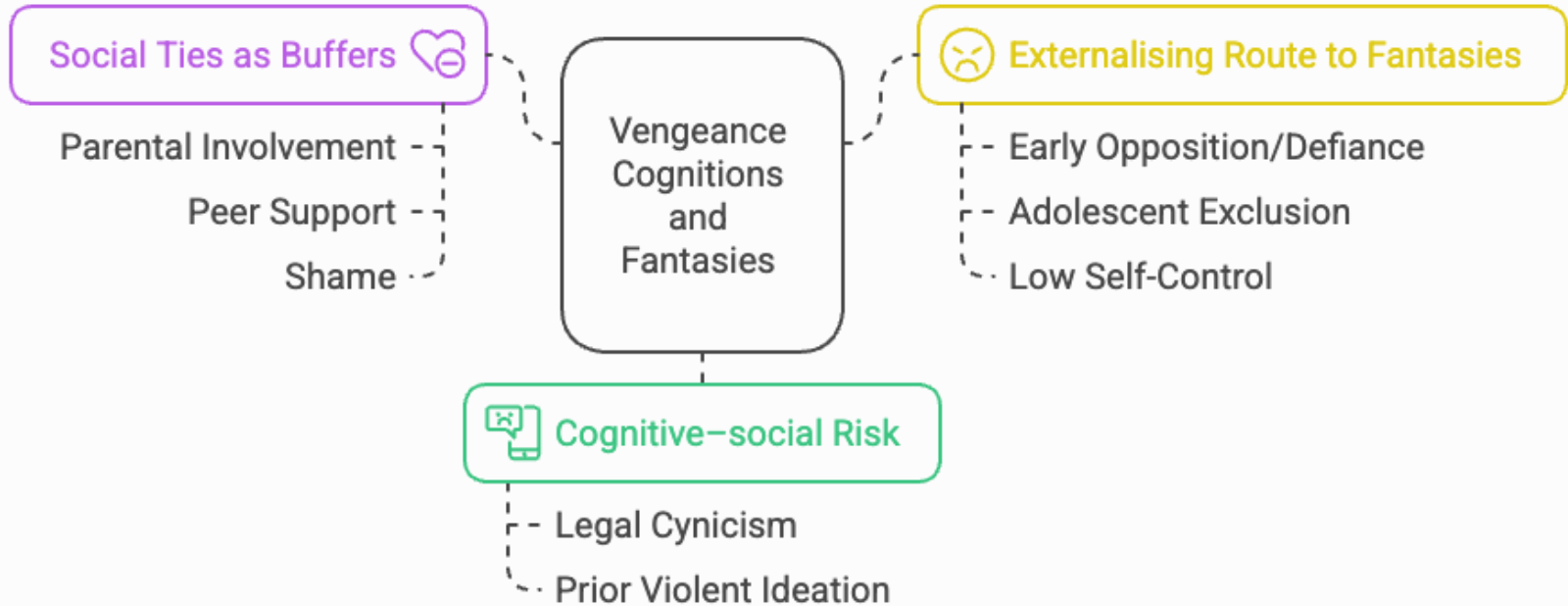
Gendered Patterns

- **Men (fantasies):** opposition/defiance ($\beta=.36$), social exclusion ($\beta=.17$), legal cynicism ($\beta=.11$), low self-control ($\beta=.21$), father's GII ($\beta=.33$) → all $p<.05$.
- **Women (fantasies):** shame protective ($\beta=-.12$, $p=.019$); hints for self-control (-) and SES (+).
- **Cognitions by gender:** Men—higher A/D predicts **less** vengeance ($\beta=-.17$); Women—peer support protective ($\beta=-.14$).

Discussion

- Revenge **cognitions** show high stability from age 20 to 24 ($\beta=.69$): habits of appraisal, grievance scripts, and identity-relevant beliefs likely carry forward.
- **Fantasies** are moderately stable ($\beta=.50$), suggesting more situational sensitivity.

Discussion



Implications



Thank you!

ayt23@cam.ac.uk