The Impact of Negative Social Contexts on Low-Income Single Mother’s Aggressive Parenting Practice

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Importance of Parenting Practice

- Parenting practice affects children’s social competence, academic achievement, psychological development, and behavioral problems.
- Punitive and physically aggressive parenting predict children’s disruptive, aggressive and oppositional behaviors.
- Such behaviors are often associated with negative mental health outcomes in children’s future life (Stormshak, et al., 2000)
Factors Affecting Parenting

- Three dimensions of factors affecting parenting (Kotchick & Forehand, 2002):

  1. Ethnicity/culture
  2. Community poverty
  3. Other community features

  Family Contexts
  1. Marital relationship
  2. Financial status
  3. Social support

  Parent-Child Characteristics
  Temperament/personality; parental stress, etc.

  Community Contexts
  1. Ethic/culture
  2. Community poverty
  3. Other community features
Existing Research in Parenting Behaviors

• Selected factors affecting parenting have been examined sufficiently:
  – Child-parent characteristics
  – Family contexts

• Very limited studies have been done on factors regarding social contexts, except:
  – Community poverty
  – Ethnicity/culture
Importance of Understanding Violence Exposure on Parenting

• Increased violence exposure on children’s well-being has been a research concern

• Numerous studies have indicated the influence of children’s exposure to violence on their behaviors

• However, very few studies have examined violence exposure on parenting behaviors
  – Focus on school-aged children
  – Use qualitative methods
Knowledge Gap and Research Question

• Few studies have examined the impact of single mother’s violence exposure on their parenting of preschool children

• Research question and hypothesis
  – Does intensity of violence exposure affect low-income single mother’s aggressive parenting styles with their pre-school children?
  – Hypothesis: positive relationship between violence exposure and aggressive parenting
Data and Sample

• Data: Fragile Families and Child Well-Being wave 3 and Three-Year In-Home Longitudinal Study of Pre-School Aged Children

• Sample
  – Low income single mothers (N=352)
    • Low-income: <=200% of Federal Poverty Line
    • Single mothers: without the presence of a partner or a parent
    • Children: preschool
Analysis Methods

• Descriptive analyses

• Multivariate analyses – Ordinal Logistic Regression model
  • Allows a dependent variable with three and more ordered categories
  • Models relationships between these ordered categories
  • Has different intercepts for each model equation, but has same parameter estimates for all model equations
  • Should meet the parallel regression assumption
A Little More Illustration of OLR

- Use a three-category DV for illustration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pooled Categories</th>
<th>Pooled Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equation 1</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Vs. Moderate/High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equation 2</td>
<td>Low &amp; Moderate</td>
<td>Vs. High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Little More Illustration of OLR (cont.)

An illustration of OLR model with a three-category DV
Questions for Dependent Variables

- **Aggressive parenting**
  - Psychological aggression
    - Shouted, yelled, or screamed at
    - Threatened to spank or hit but didn’t actually do it
    - Swore or cursed at
    - Called him/her dumb or lazy or some other name like that
    - Said you would send him/her away or would kick him/her out of the house
  - Physical assault
    - Spanked him/her on the bottom with your bare hand
    - Hit him/her on the bottom with something like a belt, a hairbrush, a stick or some other hard object
    - Slapped him/her on the hand, arm, or leg
    - Pinched him/her
    - Shook him/her
Questions for DVs (cont.)

- For each question, subjects were asked to choose one of eight responses to the question: “How many times have you done this in the past year?”
- Each response is weighted and then summed up to form a scale, which is categorized into three levels: low, moderate, & high

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>*</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3-5</th>
<th>6-10</th>
<th>11-20</th>
<th>&gt;20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weight</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Not last year, but happened before
Questions for Independent Variable

• In the past year, how many times respondents
  – Saw someone get beaten up
  – got beaten up
  – Saw someone attacked with a weapon
  – were attacked with a weapon
  – Saw someone get shot at
  – were shot at
  – Saw someone killed thru violence
## Constructed DVs and IV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DVs/IV</th>
<th>Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychological aggression</td>
<td>Low: 0~2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Std. $\alpha$=.52)</td>
<td>Moderate:3~5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High: 6~22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical assault</td>
<td>Low: 0~5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Std. $\alpha$=.51)</td>
<td>Moderate:6~10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High:11~28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence exposure</td>
<td>No: 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Std. $\alpha$=.70)</td>
<td>Moderate: 1~2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High: 3~13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample Features

Physical Assault Style

- Low: 43%
- Mid: 32%
- High: 25%

Psychological Aggression

- Low: 24%
- Mid: 34%
- High: 42%

Violence Exposure

- No: 50%
- Moderate: 29%
- High: 21%

Race

- White: 17%
- Black: 73%
- Other: 10%
Sample Features (cont.)

**Age**

- <25: 41%
- 25-29: 30%
- 30-34: 16%
- >=35: 13%

**Education**

- Less Highschool: 35%
- Highschool: 37%
- Over Highschool: 28%

**Employment**

- Employed: 61%
- Unemployed: 39%

**TANF Recipient**

- TANF: 38%
- Non-TANF: 62%
## Multivariate Analyses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Aggre/OD</th>
<th>Assault/OD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Violence expo - moderate</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.7*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence expo - high</td>
<td>4.4**</td>
<td>2.4***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress - moderate</td>
<td>3.1*</td>
<td>1.9*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress - high</td>
<td>5.3**</td>
<td>2.8*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>4.8***</td>
<td>2.7*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol - moderate</td>
<td>3.1**</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol - high</td>
<td>6.0**</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R²</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Other factors under control: age, education, number of kids, employment, social support, father support, public assistance recipient, mother health, housing status, etc.
Conclusions

• Negative social contexts, indicated here by intensity of exposure to violence, has significant impact on low-income single mother’s employment of psychological aggression and physical assault in their parenting of preschool children

• Other factors, such as mother’s stress levels, being African American, and alcohol use are also positively associated with the likelihood of adopting one or both such parenting styles
Implications

• Contextual factors such as violent environment should be examined for better understanding of low-income single mother’s parenting practice

• Parenting intervention programs should develop strategies to counteract the impact of such negative social contexts

• The mechanism of parent’s violence exposure on child well-being merits further investigation
Thank you!
• If you have questions or comments, please contact me at: szhang11@illinois.edu