NEIGHBORHOOD DISORDER, COMMUNITY SOCIAL CAPITAL, AND PARENTAL STRESS OF SINGLE MOTHERS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Saijun Zhang PhD candidate
Min Zhan PhD
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Parental stress as a predictor of child maltreatment

- Parental stress increased child abuse potential (Rodriguez & Green, 1997)
- Depressed fathers/mothers were more likely to spank/verbally abuse children (Whipple & Webster-Stratton, 1991)

Thus, important to understand factors and mechanisms causing parental stress

- Neighborhood contextual factors has gained increased research attention
Concepts

- Neighborhood disorder
  - Definition
    - Perceived lack of order and social control in the community (Skogan, 1990)
  - Physical disorder indicators
    - Graffiti, noise, vandalism, broken/abandoned buildings, etc.
  - Social disorder indicators
    - Crime rate, people hanging on street, drug activities and alcohol usage, perception of safety, etc.
Concepts (cont.)

- Community social capital
  - Trust
    - Interpersonal trust and trust on government and institutes
  - Norms
    - Consensus guiding people behavior in a society, such as reciprocal support
  - Networks
    - Networks with relatives, friends, or via voluntary organizations and other groups
- Measurement
  - Aggregate & individual levels
Empirical Evidence

- Neighborhood disorder and parental stress
  - Both mothers and interviewers’ perception of neighborhood safety were linked with maternal depression (Hill & Herman-Stahl, 2002)
  - Perception of neighborhood process (disorder/social capital/social control) was positively associated with parental stress (Gutterman et al., 2009)
  - Neighborhood disorder predicted drug users’ depression 9 month later (Latkin & Aaron, 2003)
Neighborhood disorder and community social capital

- The decline in neighborhood cohesion increased crime and disorder, which in turn reduced cohesion (Markowitz, et al., 2001)

- Disorder increased mistrust, which was partially mediated by criminal victimization (Ross, et al., 2002)

- Violent crimes (homicide, assault, & robbery) and burglary were associated with low trust levels (Kawachi, et al., 1999)
Empirical Evidence (cont.)

Community social capital and parental stress

- Lower perceptions of emotional support was associated with increased chronic parental stress (Quittner et al., 1990)
- Lower social support was associated with mothers’ lower role satisfaction and maternal self-esteem and with higher psychological symptoms (Koeske & Koeske, 1990)
- Neighborhood social capital (group memberships) was negatively associated with distress among less financially advantageous individuals (Scheffler, et al. 2007)
- Adolescent perception of social cohesion was negatively associated with depression (Aneshensel & Sucoff, 1996)
Limitations of Existing Studies

- Limited studies have focused on the effects of neighborhood disorder on single mothers’ maternal stress.
- Few studies have examined the mediating effect of community social capital on between neighborhood disorder and single mothers’ parental stress.
Purpose of This Study

- Whether neighborhood disorder affects maternal stress of single mothers with young children, and if so, whether such effect is mediated by community social capital
Hypothesized Model

Community social capital

- Neighborhood disorder
- Parental stress

+
Data and Methods

- Data & sample (N=1116 single mothers)
  - In-home survey of 3-year-old children

- Methods (4 sets of OLS models)
  - Model 1: disorder – stress
  - Model 2: disorder – social capital
  - Model 3: social capital - stress
  - Model 4: disorder & social capital - stress
Measures – Dependent Variables

- Parental stress (12 items mainly from Early Head Start Study)
  - Sample items on a 5-point scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree):
    - frequent feelings of not handling things very well
    - giving up more life than expected to meet child's needs
    - feeling trapped by parental responsibilities
    - unable to do new and different things
Measures – Independent Variable

- Neighborhood disorder (8 items from Neighborhood Environment for Children Rating Scales, Coulton, 1995)
  - Items on a 4-point scale (never to frequently) regarding neigh. prevalence of:
    - drug dealers or users hanging around
    - drunks hanging around
    - unemployed adults/young adults loitering
    - gang activity
    - misbehaving groups of young children/teens/adults
Measures – Mediator

- Community social capital (5 items from Social Cohesion and Trust Scale, Sampson, 1997)
  - Items on a 5-point scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) asking:
    - neighbor help
    - neighborhood close-knit
    - interpersonal trust
    - people getting along w/ each other
    - people sharing the same value
Control variables

- Mother demographic characteristics: age, race/ethnicity
- Mother SES: education, living arrangement, number of children, family income, employment, FSP and TANF receipt, material hardship
- Mother health and others: maternal alcohol consumption, health status, and stress level
- Child characteristics, gender, and health
Selected Sample Characteristics

**Mom Age**
- <=24: 45%
- 25-34: 44%
- >=35: 11%

**Race/ethnicity**
- White: 17%
- Black: 62%
- Hispanic: 21%

**Number of Kids**
- 1: 30%
- 2: 32%
- 3 & more: 38%

**Public Assistance**
- TANF: 28%
- FSP: 52%
## Multivariate Analysis (n=1116)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Parental Stress</th>
<th>Community Social Capital</th>
<th>Parental Stress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comm. Social capital (Mediator)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.16***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neigh. disorder (IV)</td>
<td>0.09**</td>
<td>-0.32***</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support</td>
<td>-0.67***</td>
<td>0.35***</td>
<td>-0.61***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>-1.31*</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.36**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond high school</td>
<td>-1.50*</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.53*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol use (1/0)</td>
<td>0.95*</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.90*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material hardship (1/0)</td>
<td>1.84**</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.80**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child anxiety</td>
<td>0.43***</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.41***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child withdrawing</td>
<td>0.45***</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.46***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child aggression</td>
<td>0.18***</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.17***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child health excellent</td>
<td>-1.63*</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.68***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adj. $R^2$</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

- Neighborhood disorder is positively associated with maternal stress.
- Neighborhood disorder is negatively associated with community social capital.
- Community social capital is negatively associated with maternal stress.
- Community social capital mediates the effect of neighborhood disorder on maternal stress.
Implications

- Maternal stress intervention programs should take into account neighborhood social contexts
- Efforts for reducing neighborhood disorder
  - effective law enforcement, increased police presence, surveillance camera installation (Curry, et al., 2008)
  - Amending “broken window” (Cohen et al., 2003)
- Efforts for strengthening community social capital
  - Community involvement
  - Social network development
Limitations and Future Research

- **Limitations**
  - Measurement limitation
    - Solely relying on mother report
  - Model limitation
    - Correlation but not causal relationship

- **Future research**
  - Using triangulating measures
  - Applying longitudinal datasets
  - Testing other pathways to maternal stress
Thank You!
Contact Information

Saijun Zhang
Email: szhang11@Illinois.edu