Parenting Practices as Mediators of Mothers’ Community Violence Exposure on Young Children’s Aggressive Behavior

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Why This Study?

- Community violence a serious concern
- Current research on community violence exposure primarily targets effects of children’s exposure
  - depression
  - delinquency, antisocial, and violent behavior
  - poor academic performance
Theories

- **Social context theory**
  - Viewing violence exposure as a community/neighborhood characteristic
    - Objective indicators (e.g., Brooks-Gunn et al., 1993)
    - Subjective indicators (e.g., Sampson, 1991, 2003)
      - Perception
      - Observation

- **Family stress theory**
  - Viewing violence exposure as a life stressor (e.g., Kotchick et al., 2005)
Figure of Parenting Contexts

- Kotchick & Forehand (2002)

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

Community Contexts

- 1. Marital relationship
- 2. Financial status
- 3. Social support

Family Contexts

Parent-Child Characteristics

- Temperament/personality; parental stress, etc.
Literature

- Effects of parents’ violence exposure on child aggression
  - Local crime and parent perceptions of community violence and other problems
  - Combined parent and child violence exposure (Linares et al., 2001; Oravecz et al., 2008)
  - Combined parent violence exposure with other environmental factors (Cohen, et al., 1990)
Effects of parents’ violence exposure on parenting

- Social disorganization on less warm and consistent parenting (Pinderhughes et al. 2001)
Literature (cont.)

- Effects of aggressive parenting on child aggressive behavior
  - Child physical and emotional abuse (Kaplan et al., 1999)
  - Aggressive physical and psychological parenting (Gershoff, 2002)
  - Child abuse and harsh parenting a continuum (Knutson et al., 2004)
Limitations of Previous Studies

- Few studies have examined effects of mothers’ violence exposure on child behavior
- Studies usually have used small, convenient samples
- Few studies have examined whether parenting practices mediate the effects of parents’ violence exposure on child wellbeing
Purpose of This Study

- This study examines whether
  - mothers’ violence exposure is related to child aggression
  - mothers’ violence exposure is related to psychological and physical aggressive parenting
  - aggressive parenting is related to child aggression
  - aggressive parenting mediates the relation between mothers’ violence exposure and child aggression
Data and Methods

Data (N=2,247)
- Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCW) wave 4 mother core data (2003-2006)
- In-home survey of 5-year-old children

Methods
- Ordinal logistic regression and OLS regression
Measures – Dependent Variable

- Child aggression
  - Twenty items from the Child Behavior Check List (4-18), such as
    - arguing a lot
    - fighting a lot
    - destroying things
    - demanding a lot of attention

- Responses: yes (1); no (0)
Measures – Independent Variable

- Mothers’ violence exposure
  - In the past year, frequency of witnessing and/or being a victim of
    - beating
    - attack with a weapon
    - shooting
    - killing
  - Responses: never to more than 10 times (5-point scale)
Measures - Mediators

- Physical aggressive parenting
  - In the past year, frequency (0-20 times on a 6 point scale) the mother
    - spanked with hand
    - hit child’s bottom with an object
    - slapped
    - pinched
    - shook
Measures – Mediators (cont.)

- Psychological aggressive parenting
  - In the past year, frequency (0-20 times on a 6 point scale) the mother
    - shouted, yelled, or screamed
    - threatened to spank or hit
    - swore or cursed
    - called child dumb or similar names
    - threatened to kick the child out of home
Control variables

- Demographic characteristics: age, race/ethnicity
- SES: education, marital status, number of children, family income, employment status, FS and TANF receipt
- Health and others: maternal alcohol consumption, health status, and stress level
## Variable Construction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Cont./Category</th>
<th>Value Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child Aggression (α=.86)</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td>0-36 (M=10.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological aggressive parenting (α=.52)</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>0-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>3-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>6-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical aggressive parenting (α=.51)</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>0-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>6-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>11-26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Violence exposure (α=.70)</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-2 times</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 and more times</td>
<td>3-13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Selected Sample Characteristics

**Physical Aggression**
- Low: 51%
- Mid: 31%
- High: 18%

**Psychological Aggression**
- Low: 21%
- Mid: 36%
- High: 43%

**Violence Exposure**
- No: 64%
- 1-2 times: 20%
- 3 & more times: 16%

**Race/ethnicity**
- White: 54%
- Black: 24%
- Hispanic: 20%
- Other: 3%
Sample Characteristics (cont.)

Family Income

- <100%: 41%
- 100 - 199%: 24%
- 200 - 299%: 14%
- >=300: 20%

Education

- <Highschool: 30%
- Highschool: 33%
- >Highschool: 38%

Maternal Stress

- 0-6: 27%
- 4-12: 26%
- 13-17: 24%
- 18+: 23%

Maximum Alcohol Drinks/Day

- 0: 45%
- 1-3 drinks: 42%
- 4+ drinks: 13%
# Multivariate Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Child Aggression</th>
<th>Psych Aggr Parenting</th>
<th>Physic Aggr Parenting</th>
<th>Child Aggression</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coeff. (OLS)</td>
<td>OR (OL)</td>
<td>OR (OL)</td>
<td>Coeff. (OLS)</td>
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<td>Psych Aggr Parenting (Low)</td>
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<td>1.45***</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.54***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physic Aggr Parenting (Low)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.51***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.54***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom Violence Expo (0)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times</td>
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<td>1.40**</td>
<td>1.50***</td>
<td>0.77*</td>
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<td>3 &amp; more times</td>
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<td>1.53***</td>
<td>1.22***</td>
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</table>

Note: Control variables not shown
Findings

- Mothers’ violence exposure increases child aggression
- Mothers’ violence exposure increases both psychological and physical aggressive parenting
- Both types of aggressive parenting increase child aggression
- When aggressive parenting is controlled, coefficients for relations between mothers’ violence exposure and child aggression decline by about 1/3
Implications

- Parenting and child behavior intervention programs need to screen parents’ violence exposure as a risk factor
- Efforts for reducing community violence
- Strategies such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) relief may be worth consideration
Future research

- Longitudinal study to establish more substantial causal relationships of the proposed model
- Studies that can exclude child community violence exposure as a potential confounding factor
Thank you!