

**BAD BOYS OR BAD ODDS? - RACE, CONTEXT AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE:
AN INVESTIGATION OF YOUTH VIOLENCE IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN
BOYS**

by

Alvin Thomas

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Psychology)
in The University of Michigan
2013

Doctoral Committee:

Associate Professor Cleopatra H. Caldwell, Co-Chair
Professor Sheryl L. Olson, Co-Chair
Associate Professor Robert J. Jagers
Associate Professor Pamela Davis-Kean
Professor Robert M. Sellers

© Alvin Thomas 2013

DEDICATION

This undertaking is dedicated to my parents Fidelis and Thomas Thomas. Your sacrifice and faith have buoyed me through every tempest on my journey. And to the younger generation of my family (*and those who will read this*), I have prepared a dirt path that I hope you will one day transform into a well-travelled highway.

“ . . . Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, come and see (John 1:46).”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Along this journey many people have walk along side me, others have allowed me to lean on their shoulders, and still others sat with me when I could no longer walk. I would like to acknowledge those who play critical roles along this journey. To my mother Fidelis Thomas and my dad Thomas Thomas who encouraged me to dream big and to pursue those big dreams I am forever grateful. I am so proud to be your son, and so proud to have had you carry me through this journey. I saw your sacrifice, I heard you groans, I know your story – and I am the product of it. Thank you so much for believing in me, and making me feel invincible through all of this, even when I felt most fragile. You gave me all I needed to begin this journey, and when you thought you had nothing left to give, your prayers, your unconditional support and your pride on my behalf helped me continue when I doubted my path. To my brother Marcus and my extended family who have reveled in every accomplishments and believed beyond faith, in abilities that I still do not see, thank you for your continued support.

You have become my second family – the Heislars – and I am so thankful for you. I will always be grateful for how you wove me into your family and reduced my homesickness. Your care, concern, and support on so many levels made it possible for me to continue to function while separated from my family by miles of ocean. To the many friends, families, clients, and former students who have in one way or another contributed to the passion behind this project, I thank you for allowing me to share in your lives.

To my committee members who have spent scores of hours reviewing my writing, auditing my analyses and encouraging me to ask my own questions, I am forever grateful. Thank you for calming me when I floundered and grew frustrated with the process and with myself. Thank you for expressing genuine interest in my questions and investing in my progress. Thank you to my committee chairs – I am so grateful for your patience and mentorship. And specifically to my research mentor and co-chair Dr. Cleopatra Caldwell, I will be forever indebted to you. I am awed at how much you do in 24 hours, and still my success and the progress of my dissertation always seemed like your primary concern. I don't know how you did it, but I pray one day I can be as inspirational and supportive a mentor as you have been to me. Thank you for supporting my development while encouraging me to explore my research interests.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
List of Figures.....	vii
List of Tables	viii
Abstract.....	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Three Study Project	1
Literature Review.....	2
Theoretical framework.....	9
Conceptual Model.....	12
References.....	13
Chapter 2: It’s in my hood: Understanding African-American boys’ perception of safety in their neighborhoods	20
Current study and hypotheses	31
Methods.....	33
Data analysis plan	37
Results.....	40
Discussion.....	43
References.....	49
Chapter 3: I come from a tough place: Parent education and violent behavior among African-American boys.....	67
Current study and hypotheses	81
Methods.....	82

Data analysis plan	86
Results.....	88
Discussion.....	91
References.....	99
Chapter 4: Bad boys or bad odds? - Race, context and social influence: An investigation of youth violence in African-American boys.....	122
Study hypotheses	134
Methods.....	135
Data Analysis Plan.....	141
Results.....	142
Discussion.....	147
References.....	155
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	176
References.....	191

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Neighborhood, peer, family, and individual influences on youth violence.....	12
Figure 2.1 Percentage of participants who were exposed to violence and victimization .	65
Figure 2.2 Interaction of collective efficacy and victimization	66
Figure 3.1 Percentage of sample that engaged in each violent behavior	119
Figure 3.2 Interaction of parent education and exposure to peers who endorse violence	120
Figure 3.3 Interaction of parent education and communication about physical fighting	121
Figure 4.1 African-American boys' involvement in violent behaviors	173
Figure 4.2 African-American boys' exposure to violence	174
Figure 4.3 Exposure to Violence Model	175

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 Descriptive statistics for perception of neighborhood safety and predictors.....	63
Table 2.2 Regression coefficients for main effect and interaction models.....	64
Table 3.1 Descriptive statistics for engagement in violent behaviors and predictors.....	117
Table 3.2 Regression coefficients for main effect and interaction models.....	118
Table 4.1 Descriptives and correlations for Exposure to Violence Model.....	172

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examined the influence of risk and protective factors in predicting violent behavior in a sample of 553 African-American adolescent males. Boys' perception of safety in their neighborhoods was also explored. The main risk factors in this project included exposure to violent experiences, affiliation with deviant peers, and perception of classmates' engagement in violence. The protective factors included collective efficacy, parents' communication about fighting and boys' efficacy to avoid violence. In addition, factors such as perception of parents' nonviolent norms, parent education and structural disadvantage were also explored.

The first study examined factors that predicted African-American boys' perception of safety in their neighborhoods. In the second study the protective effect of parental education to reduce violent behavior was investigated. In the third study African-American boys' reliance on an individual strength (i.e. efficacy to avoid violence) was investigated. Additionally, the neighborhood, peer, and parent contributions to understanding youth violent behavior were examined.

Bivariate results indicated that African-American boys were exposed to significantly high levels of violent experiences as victims and witnesses. Multivariate results for the first study showed that collective efficacy was most predictive of youths' perception of their neighborhoods as safe after other protective, as well as risk factors were accounted for. In the second study, parental education moderated the relationship between two factors – deviant peers, and parental communication about fighting – and

youth violent behavior. In the final study, African-American boys' perception of parent nonviolent norms significantly strengthened boys' efficacy to avoid violence. Efficacy to avoid violence was associated with less violent behavior and less affiliation with deviant peers. Experiences with violence remained a strong predictor of violent behavior and deviant peer association for African-American boys in this sample.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the Three Study Project

It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men. (Frederick Douglass)

Youth violence remains a major public health concern in the United States (U.S.) with death from violence being the main issue. Other related issues such as violence related medical care; disabilities resulting from violence and the effect on communities continue to be the focus of much research in this area (Center for Disease Control [CDC], 2010). Factors such as a prior history of violence, substance use, delinquent peer affiliations, poor family functioning, and neighborhood poverty have been found to put youth at increased risk for developing violent behaviors (CDC, 2010). Efforts focused on improving family relations, enhancing community functioning, and encouraging positive problem solving skills in children, as well as providing prosocial mentors have been suggested as protective factors that could avert the development of these violent behaviors (CDC, 2010).

In my dissertation, I explored the trajectory of engagement in violent behaviors among African-American boys and the protective influence of factors like collective efficacy. I argued that collective efficacy was associated with youths' perception of the safety of their neighborhoods. How exposed children were to the influence of deviant peers influenced how secure African-American boys feel about their ability to avoid violence and their level of violent behavior. In addition, I proposed that parents were

pivotal to efforts aimed at addressing the trajectory of violent behavior among African-American boys.

Adolescents' confidence in their ability (efficacy) to avoid violence was treated as a protective factor. It represented an individual strength or asset for African-American boys. This asset was expected to be strengthened by the positive influence of parents, and thus result in less violence. The neighborhood and peers are known to affect youths' efficacy to avoid violence, with negative neighborhood and peer resulting in reduced efficacy to avoid violence. These peer factors influence youth's decision to engage in violent behaviors.

In the literature I discuss briefly what constitutes youth violence and some of its outcomes. In this discussion I also addressed key predictors of youth violence including witnessing violence (including victimization), deviant peer affiliation and neighborhood collective efficacy. Additionally I presented a few key individual, family and neighborhood protective factors related to youth violence.

Multiple theories have been employed for investigating efforts directed at predicting youth engagement in violence, and diverting them from this course. I employed the risk and resilience model (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005) because of its emphasis on strengths rather than solely on deficits. I also address the effect of social factors on youths' behaviors. My aim was to explore existing paths that lead to youth violent behaviors. I also identified individual, family and neighborhood strengths that could attenuate or eliminate African-American boys' engagement in violent behaviors.

Literature Review

Violence within the United States (U.S.) is widespread and affects youth both as

victims and perpetrators (CDC, 2010). Youth violence ranges from physical fights and bullying, to fights resulting in serious injury, and carrying serious weapons. These reports identified violence as the second leading cause of death for youth between the ages of 10 and 24. An average of 4, 878 young people between the ages 10 to 24 were murdered in 2010, reflecting an average of 13 each day. About 85% of these were males. In 2011, for the same age demographic, more than 707, 212 physical injuries resulting from physical assaults were treated in U.S. emergency rooms (CDC, 2010). Moreover, in a 2011 national survey 32.8% of high school age students reported that they had been involved in a physical fight during the previous year (CDC, 2012). In addition 16.6% indicated that they had brought a club, knife or gun to school in the year preceding the survey. While the report does not make a differentiation as to the motives for the violence or for weapon carrying, statistics on violent behavior among youth indicate that this area of research warrants continued attention.

Youth violence

Youth involvement in violence is best understood through the interactions between personal characteristics and the social contexts within which youth exists. The signs of a trajectory of violent behavior may appear before or after the onset of puberty. Early onset (pre-pubertal) trajectory of violent behavior is often indicative of a more chronic course. Early onset of violent behavior has often predicted persistent or life-long involvement in violent behavior (van Lier, Vitaro, Barker, Koot, & Tremblay, 2009). As such, efforts designed to stymie the course of violent behavior patterns would have greatest effect at earlier stages in a child's development (Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], 2001; Tremblay, 2006).

A majority of youth violence can be attributed to youths' reactions to their neighborhoods. Youth behavior is more often reflective of peer, and by extension, neighborhood behaviors or norms. Thus, youth perception of the safety of their neighborhoods is critical to predicting future engagement in violence. There is an intersection of the characteristics of disadvantaged neighborhoods and those events that have caused youth to react with fear, mistrust, and hypervigilance (Brunton-Smith, 2011; Brunton-Smith & Sturgis, 2011). These neighborhood characteristics included, were not limited to poverty, crime, neighborhood social and structural disorder, and drug activity. These factors functioned through negative perceptions of the environment to exacerbate youths' risk for poor mental health outcomes (Cicchetti & Lynch, 1993; Lynch, 2003).

Youth who had been victims of violence in their neighborhoods had lower perceptions of neighborhood safety (Maschi, Perez & Tyson, 2010). Such individuals were also at increased risk for negative mental health trajectory. Little attention has been paid to the lived neighborhood experiences of African-American boys. My dissertation addresses this phenomenological gap in the literature. This would provide a keener understanding of what factors hurt and help youths' perception of safety and comfort in their neighborhood. The deployment of efforts to assuage the plight of African-American boys in poor neighborhoods might become even more effective.

Neighborhoods

Another area that would benefit from increased attention is the predictive effect of various characteristics of risky neighborhoods on violent behavior. More than 80% of youth in urban neighborhoods have been exposed to some form violence (Cooley-Strickland, Quille, Griffin, Stuart, Bradshaw & Furr-Holen, 2009) with African-American

youth making up a significant portion of this percentage. There is need for more research that unravels the development of violent behavior in African-American youth in these neighborhoods. Boys in risky neighborhoods are more likely to be victims of violence and to witness violence in these neighborhoods (Gorman-Smith, Henry & Tolan, 2004). Thus, they merit special attention. These kinds of negative interactions with the neighborhood are a precursor of numerous high-risk behaviors including weapon carrying, physical fighting and problem behaviors at school.

According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) more than 10% of murder victims in 2008 were juveniles, representing an 11% increase from 2003. Of these, 70% were male, and almost half were African American (OJJDP, 2010). These figures demonstrate that African-American males are at particularly high risk with regard to homicide. Overall, homicide was reportedly the 4th leading cause of death for children as young as 1 to 11 years old and the 2nd for those aged 12 to 17 years old (Puzzanchera, 2012; National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2013). Adolescents were also implicated as offenders in 1 of every 4 homicides between 1980 and 2008 (NCIPC, 2013). These data substantiate a call for youth violence to be addressed from both ends of the spectrum – victim and perpetrator.

With particular emphasis on African-American youth, who comprised almost 16% of the juvenile population between 1980 and 2008, the figures on youth violence are troubling. African-American youth accounted for 47% of homicide victims, four times higher than the rate for European American homicide victims (NCIPC, 2013). Although the rate now stands at 47% of African American youth making up the homicide statistics and 49% of Caucasian youth, the situation remains dire regardless of race.

In 2008 homicide among youths age 10 to 24 years, represented a tremendous financial burden on society and the U.S. economy. Annual medical expenses and the associated costs for work loss as a result of youth homicides were estimated at \$16 billion (CDC, 2010). In 2010 more than 784 juveniles were arrested for murder and 35, 001 for aggravated assault (Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), 2011). With these costs added, the fiscal burden from youth violence grows even further.

Peers

Affiliation with peers who have a prior history of violent behaviors is a risk factor that increases the likelihood that other youth will become either a victim or perpetrator of violence (Thornberry, Huizina, & Loeber, 1995; Lipsey & Derzon, 1998). While the early onset of antisocial behaviors has neurodevelopmental origins, adolescent onset is often associated with the challenges of that developmental period (Moffitt, Cicchetti, & Cohen, 2006). With both, however, poor parenting practices, weakened family structure and deficient neighborhoods can exacerbate antisocial behaviors that are the result of neurodevelopmental deficits, or the stress of adolescence (Moffitt et al., 2006). Research has suggested that family, school and neighborhood factors can help protect youth from engagement in violence (Li et al. 2007, LeBlanc, Self-Brown, Shepard, & Kelley, 2011). These elements may also become risk factors if they are present in deficient or maladaptive states.

Neighborhoods that exhibited signs of social and structural disorganization were associated with adolescent problem behaviors including criminal activity, teenage parenthood, delinquency and school dropout (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Crime, drug selling and drug use in the neighborhood were also associated with increased risk

for youth violence (Brewer, Hawkins, & Catalano, Neckerman, 1995). These neighborhood characteristics exacerbated the effect of the weakened family structure and further imperiled boys for negative mental health outcomes. Neighborhoods that encouraged prosocial norms and encourage and provided avenues for monitoring youth protected them from negative developments such as violent behavior. Youth in disadvantaged neighborhoods have fewer opportunities for prosocial interaction. Their access to negative socialization agents is also greater than youth in more affluent neighborhoods. They have limited access to mentors who could have reduced the effect of an already strained single parent structure. These kinds of conditions placed African-American boys at increased risk for involvement in violent behaviors.

Parents

Boys, who grew up in a single-parent family structure, have been found to be more likely to be involved in serious violent acts at later ages (Henry, Capsi, Moffitt, & Silva, 1996). Girls who had also spent some of their childhood years in a single parent family experienced fewer behavioral problems than their male counterparts, but both evidenced some behavioral problems (Carlson & Corcoran, 2004). The single parent family, while not the cause of behavioral problems, is more likely to have additional risk factors associated with it than other family structures. Family structures that are characterized by poor family management practices (e.g. inconsistent discipline, harsh discipline, poor monitoring or involvement) were also associated with increased risk for engagement in violence (LeBlanc, et al, 2011; Herrenkohl, Maguin, Hill, Hawkins, Abbott, & Catalano, 2000). Parenting practices such as communication, monitoring and active involvement in children's lives have been associated with reduced risk for negative

behaviors (LeBlanc, et al, 2011; Kennedy, Bybee, Sullivan, & Greeson, 2009; Gorman-Smith, Henry, & Tolan, 2004; Valois, MacDonald, Bretous, Fischer & Drane, 2002; Cooksey & Fondell, 1996; Harris, Furstenberg, & Manner, 1998;). Parent messages about risky behaviors more specifically have also been shown to reduce negative behavioral outcomes.

African-American parents who are more educated may be an important resource for their children, especially African-American boys. Parent's levels of educational attainment may provide an additional layer of protection for youth in high-risk neighborhoods. Parent education has been linked to other family resources such as higher socioeconomic status and parents' beliefs and behaviors (Davis-Kean, 2005; Goldstein, Davis-Kean, & Eccles, 2005). Children from households with more financial resources are less likely to live in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Parents with more education may have protected their children more directly by reducing adolescents' access to negative agents in the neighborhood. These parents are also more likely to convey problem solving and social skills to their children (Goldstein, Davis-Kean, & Eccles, 2005).

Individual strengths

Internal strengths or assets also reduced youths' risk of engagement in violent behavior. Youth self-efficacy beliefs related to specific behaviors were a significant protective factor for youth in high-risk neighborhoods. Self-efficacy beliefs refer to the individual's evaluation of their ability to marshal the necessary resources towards achieving goals in particular situations (Bandura, 2001). Some research has found that violence avoidance efficacy beliefs were related to lower levels of engagement in violent behaviors (Caprara, Regalia, & Bandura, 2002). Youth in disadvantaged neighborhoods

are faced with clusters of risk factors (e.g. crime, substance abuse, poor housing). Adolescents' confidence in their ability to avoid violence provided an opportunity to successfully surmount aggregated risk. As with many other protective factors, youth who overestimated their ability to avoid violent behaviors could suffer serious consequences. Those who overestimate their ability to be influenced by negative socialization agents in their neighborhood (i.e., peers, gangs), for instance, may find themselves in very dangerous situations. They may well find that they have become targets of these agents – victims of violence and other negative neighborhood interactions.

Theoretical framework

The interplay of risks and protective factors in predicting youth violence has continued to inspire research and has been explored from multiple viewpoints. I chose the risk and resilience model (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005) to frame the investigation of these critical issues (See Figure 1.1). The risk and resilience framework emphasized the protective factors as well as the risks for problem behaviors. I also explore the influence of peers and parents as socialization agents of youth behaviors. The conceptual model for this dissertation is used to explain the origins and development of negative behaviors in childhood and adolescence while accounting for risk and protective factors (Hawkins & Weis, 1985; Cohen, 2008).

Adolescents and children adopt the behaviors and beliefs of the social unit to which they have the strongest bond – i.e., family, peers, and neighborhood. Thus, if the socializing agent is a negative one, problem behaviors ensued (Catalano, Kosterman, Hawkins, Newcomb, & Abbott, 1996). Researchers have also identified multiple pathways to both positive and negative youth behaviors (Catalano et al., 1996). A child

with a strong social bond with the socialization agent would display the behaviors that are supported by the norms and beliefs of the socializing agent. At the very least, the child will be dissuaded from believing of behaving differently from the socializing agent (Catalano et al., 1996; Fleming, Catalano, Oxford, & Harachi, 2002). In this way socialization agents may serve risk and protective roles in the lives of you.

Risk and resilience research focuses on the strengths and protection that are afforded to the individual in the face of risk factors (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). This framework does not ignore risk factors, but rather moves away from the usual deficit model by including resources and assets in the discussion of negative youth behavior. Assets are the individual based positive factors like coping skills, while resources reside outside of the individual e.g., parental support (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). Both can attenuate the effect of risk factors. Thus the socialization effect of important others plays a key role in understanding risk and protective effects on youth violence.

Researchers have identified multiple models of resilience that explain how protective factors interacted with risk factors to determine behavioral outcomes. The protective model is characterized by the ability of the protective factor to reduce the effect of the risk factor. Positive socialization from parents, peers and the neighborhood may reduce youths' exposure to negative neighborhood elements. These socialization agents may also attenuate the effect of exposure when youth encounter neighborhood risk factors. The compensatory model is defined by the counteractive effect of the protective factors on the effect of the risk factors while in the challenge model the protective factor exhibits a curvilinear relationship with the risk factor (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Garmezy, Masten & Tellegen, 1984; Rutter, 1985; Zimmerman & Arunkumar, 1994).

A number of contributions to the extant literature on the development of violent behavior in African-American boys in urban settings were made in this dissertation. I addressed African-American boys' experiences with their neighborhood by investigating predictors of their perception of neighborhood safety. In my dissertation I explored individual, family, and neighborhood elements that influenced how African-American boys' feelings of comfort and support in their neighborhoods. Additionally I examined the risk and protective factors that were related to the trajectory of violent behavior among African-American boys. I focused on parent educational attainment as a resource for African-American boys, as well as other individual, family and neighborhood factors. Keen attention was paid to boys' own individual strength, seen through their efficacy to avoid engagement in violent behavior.

Three empirical chapters addressed the conceptualization of the model in figure 1. Chapter 2 focuses on understanding African-American boys' perception of safety in their neighborhood. The chapter investigates the effects of collective efficacy to predict youths' perception of neighborhood safety. Chapter 3 examines the protective influence of parental education on youths' violent behaviors. The chapter explored the contributions of protective and risk factors and how parental education might influence these factors to reduce youth violence. In the fourth chapter I investigated neighborhood, peer, and parent factors that influence youths' efficacy to avoid violence. The effect of youths' perceptions of parent and peer norms on youths' violent behavior, and efficacy to avoid violence were also investigated.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

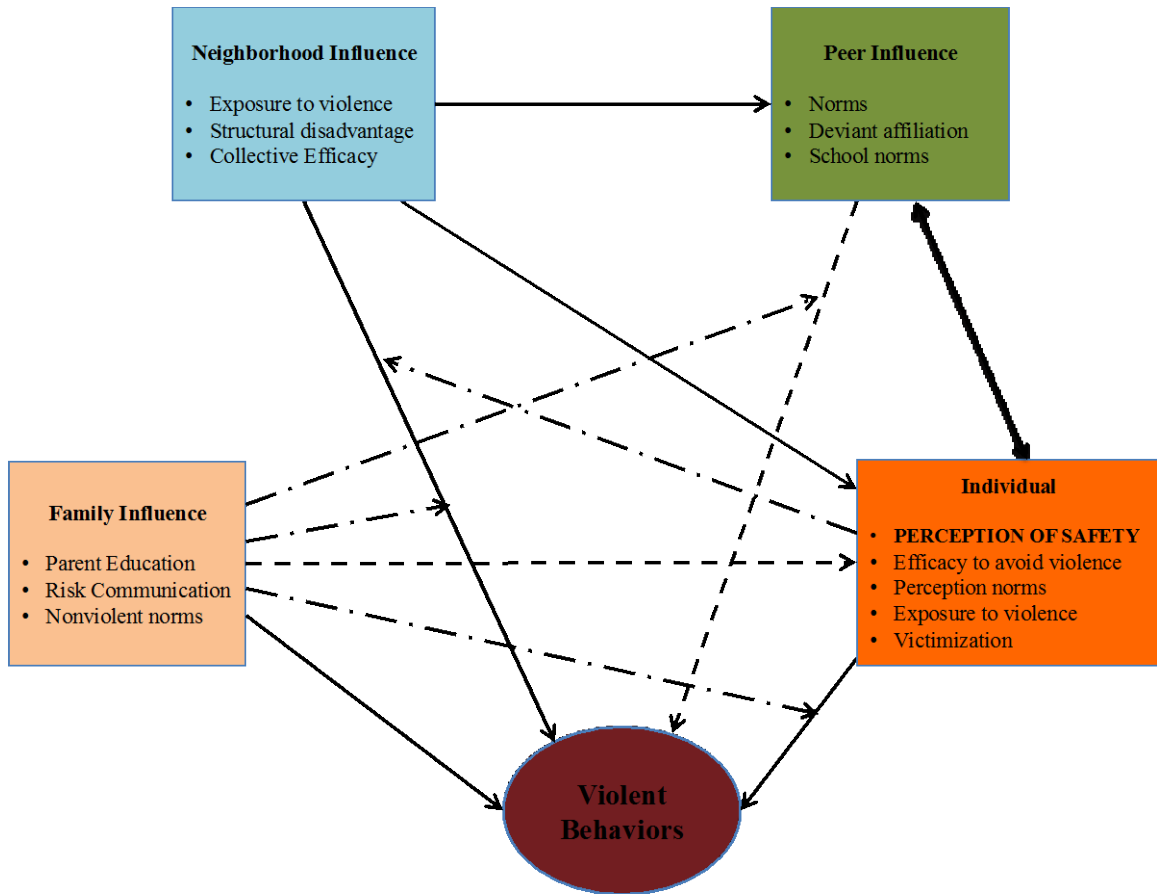


Figure 1.1 Neighborhood, peer, family, and individual influences on youth violence
NB: $- \cdot \rightarrow$ Denotes moderating paths

References

- Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52(1), 1-26.
- Brewer, D. D., J. D. Hawkins, R. F. Catalano, and H. J. Neckerman. 1995. "Preventing Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offending: A Review of Evaluations of Selected Strategies in Childhood, Adolescence, and the Community." In A Sourcebook: Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders, edited by J. C. Howell, B. Krisberg, J. D. Hawkins, and J. J. Wilson. Thousand Oaks, Calif., and London: Sage.
- Brunton-Smith, I. (2011). Untangling the relationship between fear of crime and perceptions of disorder evidence from a longitudinal study of young people in England and Wales. *British Journal of Criminology*, 51(6), 885-899.
- Brunton- Smith, I., & Sturgis, P. (2011). Do neighborhoods generate fear of crime? An empirical test using the British Crime Survey. *Criminology*, 49(2), 331-369.
- Caprara, G. V., Regalia, C., & Bandura, A. (2002). Longitudinal impact of perceived self-regulatory efficacy on violent conduct. *European Psychologist*, 7(1), 63-69.
- Carlson, M. J., & Corcoran, M. E. (2004). Family structure and children's behavioral and cognitive outcomes. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63(3), 779-792.

- Catalano, R. F., Kosterman, R., Hawkins, J. D., Newcomb, M. D., & Abbott, R. D. (1996). Modeling the etiology of adolescent substance use: A test of the social development model. *Journal of Drug Issues, 26*(2), 429.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Youth risk behavior surveillance—United States, 2011. *MMWR, Surveillance Summaries 2012; 61* (no. SS-4). Available from www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/ss/ss6104.pdf.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) [online]. (2010). [cited 2013 Mar 10] Available from www.cdc.gov/injury.
- Chung, H. L., & Steinberg, L. (2006). Relations between neighborhood factors, parenting behaviors, peer deviance, and delinquency among serious juvenile offenders. *Developmental Psychology, 42*(2), 319-331.
- Cicchetti, D., & Lynch, M. (1993). Toward an ecological/transactional model of community violence and child maltreatment: Consequences for children's development. *Psychiatry, 56*(1), 96-118.
- Cohen, D. A., Inagami, S., & Finch, B. (2008). The built environment and collective efficacy. *Health & Place, 14*(2), 198-208.
- Cooksey, E. C., & Fondell, M. M. (1996). Spending time with his kids: Effects of family structure on fathers' and children's lives. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 58*(3), 693-707.

- Cooley-Strickland, M., Quille, T. J., Griffin, R. S., Stuart, E. A., Bradshaw, C. P., & Furr-
Holden, D. (2009). Community violence and youth: Affect, behavior, substance
use, and academics. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review, 12*(2), 127-
156.
- Davis-Kean, P. E., (2005). The influence of parent education and family income on child
achievement: The indirect role of parental expectation and the home environment.
Journal of Family Psychology, 19(2), 294-304.
- DHHS. Department of Health and Human Services Youth violence: a report of the
Surgeon General. Rockville MD: Office of the Surgeon General, 2001.
- Federal Bureau of Investigation. Crime in the United States 2010. Uniform Crime
Reports. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 2011. Available from
[www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2010/crime-in-the-u.s.-
2010/index-page](http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2010/crime-in-the-u.s.-2010/index-page).
- Fergus, S., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2005). Adolescent resilience: A framework for
understanding healthy development in the face of risk. *Annual Review of Public
Health, 26*, 399-419.
- Fleming, C. B., Catalano, R. F., Oxford, M. L., & Harachi, T. W. (2002). A test of
generalizability of the social development model across gender and income
groups with longitudinal data from the elementary school developmental period.
Journal of Quantitative Criminology, 18(4), 423-439.

Garnezy, N., Masten, A. S., & Tellegen, A. (1984). The study of stress and competence in children: A building block for developmental psychopathology. *Child Development, 55*(1), 97-111.

Goldstein, S., Davis-Kean, P. E., & Eccles, S. J., (2005). Parents, peers, and problem behaviors: A longitudinal investigation of the impact of relationship perceptions and characteristics on the development of adolescent problem behavior. *Developmental Psychology, 44*(2), 401-413.

Gorman-Smith, D., Henry, D. B., & Tolan, P. H. (2004). Exposure to community violence and violence perpetration: The protective effects of family functioning. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 33*(3), 439-449.

Harris, K. M., Furstenberg, F. F., & Marmer, J. K. (1998). Paternal involvement with adolescents in intact families: The influence of fathers over the life course. *Demography, 35*(2), 201-216.

Hawkins, J. D., & Weis, J. G. (1985). The social development model: An integrated approach to delinquency prevention. *The Journal of Primary Prevention, 6*(2), 73-97.

Henry, B., Caspi, A., Moffitt, T. E., & Silva, P. A. (1996). Temperamental and familial predictors of violent and nonviolent criminal convictions: Age 3 to age 18. *Developmental Psychology, 32*(4), 614.

- Herrenkohl, T. I., Maguin, E., Hill, K. G., Hawkins, J. D., Abbott, R. D., & Catalano, R. F. (2000). Developmental risk factors for youth violence. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 26*(3), 176-186.
- Kennedy, A.C., Bybee, D., Sullivan, C.M., & Greeson, M. (2009). The effects of community and family violence exposure on anxiety trajectories during middle childhood: The role of family social support as a moderator. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 38*(3), 365–379.
- LeBlanc, M., Self-Brown, S., Shepard, D., & Kelley, M. L. (2011). Buffering the effect of violence: Communication and problem-solving skills as protective factors for adolescents exposed to violence. *Journal of Community Psychology, 39*(3), 353-367.
- Leventhal, T., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2000). The neighborhoods they live in: The effects of neighborhood residence on child and adolescent outcomes. *Psychological Bulletin, 126*(2), 309-337.
- Li, S. T., Nussbaum, K. M., & Richards, M. H. (2007). Risk and protective factors for urban African-American youth. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 39*(1), 21-35.
- Lipsey MW, Derzon JH. Predictors of serious delinquency in adolescence and early adulthood: a synthesis of longitudinal research. In: Loeber R, Farrington DP, eds. Serious and violent juvenile offenders: risk factors and successful interventions. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1998: 86–105.

Lynch, M. (2003). Consequences of children's exposure to community violence. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 6(4), 265-274.

Maschi, T., Perez, R. M., & Tyson, E. (2010). Exploring the relationship between exposure to violence, perceptions of neighborhood safety, and children's adaptive functioning: Clinical and community implications. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 20(6), 744-761.

Moffitt, T. E., Cicchetti, D., & Cohen, D. (2006). Life-course-persistent versus adolescence-limited antisocial behavior. *Developmental Psychopathology*, 3(2), 570-598.

Moffitt, T. E., Caspi, A., Dickson, N., Silva, P., & Stanton, W. (1996). Childhood-onset versus adolescent-onset antisocial conduct problems in males: Natural history from ages 3 to 18 years. *Development and Psychopathology*, 8(02), 399.

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, WISQARS (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System) [accessed February 2013] Available from: URL: www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). (2010). *Statistical Briefing Book*. Retrieved from <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/victims/qa02304.asp?qaDate=2008>.

Puzzanchera, C., Chamberlin, G., and Kang, W. (2012). "Easy Access to the FBI's Supplementary Homicide Reports: 1980-2010." Online. Available: <http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezashr/>

- Query, W. I. S. (2011). Reporting system (WISQARS). *National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Producer)*. Available from: URL: www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars (Accessed Dec.7, 2006),
- Rutter, M. (1985). Resilience in the face of adversity. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, *147*, 598-611.
- Sampson, R. J. (2003). The neighborhood context of well-being. *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, *46*(3), S53-S73.
- Thornberry, T. P., Huizinga, D., & Loeber, R. (1995). The prevention of serious delinquency and violence: Implications from the program of research on the causes and correlates of delinquency. In J. C. Howell, B. Krisberg, J. D. Hawkins, & J. J. Wilson (Eds.), *Sourcebook on serious, violent, and chronic juvenile offenders* (pp. 213–237). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Tremblay, R. E. (2006). Prevention of youth violence: Why not start at the beginning? *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, *34*(4), 480-486.
- van Lier, P. A., Vitaro, F., Barker, E. D., Koot, H. M., & Tremblay, R. E. (2009). Developmental links between trajectories of physical violence, vandalism, theft, and alcohol-drug use from childhood to adolescence. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, *37*(4), 481-492.
- Zimmerman, M. A., & Arunkumar, R. (1994). Resiliency research: Implications for schools and policy. *Social Policy Report*, *8*(4), 1-17.

CHAPTER 2

It's in my hood: Understanding African-American boys' perception of safety in their neighborhoods

High crime rates, drug activity, lower quality housing, and violence among other disadvantages characterize poor, urban neighborhoods. Such characteristics have been associated with higher levels of psychological difficulties and consequences associated with violence for youth living in these neighborhoods (De Coster, Heimer, & Wittrock, 2006; Haynie, Silver, & Teasdale, 2006; Jacob, 2006; Mrug & Windle, 2009; Neumann, Barker, Koot, & Maughan, 2010; Margolin & Gordis, 2000; Overstreet, 2000). African-American adolescent are more likely than their Euro-American counterparts to live in poor urban neighborhoods (Crouch, Hanson, Saunders, Kilpatrick, & Resnick, 2000; Flowers, Lanclos, & Kelley, 2002; McNulty & Bellair, 2003). They are also more likely to suffer the negative outcomes –including violence victimization –associated with these neighborhoods, (De Coster, Heimer, & Wittrock, 2006; Haynie, Silver, & Teasdale, 2006; Jacob, 2006; Mrug & Windle, 2009; Neumann, Barker, Koot, & Maughan, 2010; Crouch et al., 2000; Loeber, Kalb, & Huizinga, 2001; McNulty & Bellair, 2003).

African-American boys living in disadvantaged, urban neighborhoods also are more likely to be involved in violent behaviors (Jacob, 2006; Mrug & Windle, 2009; Neumann, Barker, Koot, & Maughan, 2010; Margolin & Gordis, 2000; Overstreet, 2000). Adolescents who are more exposed to negative experiences in their neighborhood feel more vulnerable and think of their neighborhoods as unsafe. Parents in these

neighborhoods may use structural and social deficits (e.g., high unemployment, gangs, drug activity, crime, poverty, poor housing) to form perceptions of how safe the neighborhood might be. These perceptions inform parents' efforts at keeping their children safe (Lindstrom-Johnson, Finigan, Bradshaw, Haynie, & Cheng, 2011). However, in spite of parents' best efforts youth may continue to feel vulnerable in their neighborhoods. Youth in these contexts may benefit from a strong sense of connection and a feeling of community (collective efficacy) in their neighborhoods. The extant literature has identified multiple risks that exist in poor, urban neighborhoods; however, little attention has been paid to boys' perceptions of safety related to these risks.

Few studies have addressed youth's perception of neighborhood safety in attempting to understand more fully the association between adolescent's behaviors and the influence of their neighborhoods. African-American boys' perception of neighborhood safety offers a way to better understand the critical social context in which these boys develop. Negative behaviors by boys in these contexts may be understood as a function of the perpetual fear and vulnerability that dominates their lives. This remains unexplored, especially for African-American boys.

To address these research gaps I examined how neighborhood characteristics, parental factors, and individual factors may explain the perception of safety for African-American boys who live in urban neighborhood settings. I used the risk and resilience model (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005) to frame this investigation. The risk and resilience framework (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005) explores how the individual continues to function positively in the face of risk factors.

This framework accounts for the influence of protective factors to attenuate an individual's exposure to risks and its association to negative outcomes. Protective factors are categorized as assets or resources. Assets are internal strengths that the individual can employ to reduce the influence of risk on negative behaviors. Resources are external to the individual and may reside in the environment and in important others in the individual's life. The risk and resilience framework does not directly address the influence of socialization on youths' behaviors. Therefore I expanded the theory by also accounting for the social influence of parents and the neighborhood. The influence of parents shapes adolescents' decisions to adopt certain behaviors that are common to their neighborhood environment. The individual's behavior depends largely on the prevailing behaviors that characterize the neighborhood and those to whom the child feels bonded (Hawkins & Weis, 1985; Brown, Catalano, Fleming, Haggerty, Abbott, Cortes & Parks, 2005).

The links between negative youth behaviors and neighborhood characteristics such as violence, poverty and drug activity (Shaw & McKay, 1942) are well established in the literature and have been associated with youth's feelings of safety in their neighborhoods. Inner-city youth, especially African-American boys, have varied with regard to their exposure to violence either as victims or witnesses (Salzinger, Ng-Mak, Feldman, Kam, & Rosario, 2006; Spano, Rivera, Vazsonyi, & Bolland, 2009). Thus, differences in their perceptions of neighborhood safety may prove useful in understanding the potential for involvement in negative behaviors.

There are few, if any, studies that have explored the neighborhood, family or individual factors that may explain feelings of safety or vulnerability for African-

American families living in urban neighborhoods. Even fewer studies have investigated this issue in African-American boys. In this study I considered a characteristic of the neighborhood environment (i.e. collective efficacy) and of the individual (violent experiences) to examine African-American boys' perception of neighborhood safety. In the accompanying literature review I discussed the relation between neighborhood disadvantage and neighborhood safety. I then investigated the link between collective efficacy and positive effects for African-American boys. I also consider the effect of personal strengths (i.e., efficacy to avoid violence), a personal risk factor (i.e., violent experiences), and a family strength (i.e., parent risk communication) in relation to youth feelings of safety in their neighborhood.

Neighborhood disadvantage and neighborhood safety

Disadvantaged neighborhoods are characterized by structural and social process deficiencies. Structural disadvantages include unemployment rates and other sociodemographic and compositional features (Chung & Steinberg, 2006; Vazsonyi, Cleveland, & Wiebe, 2006). The social process deficiencies are weakened forms of formal or informal social controls. Social controls would normally be employed by the collective to direct community members towards a set of shared principles (Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997; Chung & Steinberg, 2006). Constellations of weakened structural and social factors are found in most disadvantaged neighborhoods, and are related to antisocial behavior in youth (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Lipsey & Derzon, 1998). Not surprisingly, youth may feel unsafe in neighborhoods with marked resource deficiencies and with reduced collective efficacy.

Both structural and social disadvantages at the neighborhood level have been

linked to higher rates of criminal behaviors including robbery, burglary, assault, murders and other similar crimes (Jacob, 2006; Mrug & Windle, 2009; Neumann, Barker, Koot, & Maughan, 2010; Osgood & Chambers, 2006; Sampson et al., 1997; Sampson & Groves, 1989; Shaw & McKay, 1942). These factors are in turn related to lowered levels of perceptions of neighborhood safety, especially for youth who may become victims of these actions. Adolescents in these neighborhoods are also at risk for perpetuating similar delinquent and eventually criminal acts (De Coster, Heimer, & Wittrock, 2006; Haynie, Silver, & Teasdale, 2006; Jacob, 2006; Mrug & Windle, 2009; Neumann, Barker, Koot, & Maughan, 2010). However, in neighborhoods where there is an increased sense of collective efficacy, reductions in youth violence, delinquency and related issues have been found (Meier, Slutske, Arndt, & Cadoret 2008; Molnar, Cerda, Roberts, & Buka, 2008; Sampson, 1997; Simons, Gordon Simons, Burt, Brody, & Cutrona, 2005; Van Horn, Hawkins, Arthur, & Catalano, 2007).

Previous research has found that males are more likely than females to aggress; however the literature on socialization suggests a bias for protecting girls through greater regulation of their behaviors compared to boys (Browning, Leventhal, & Brooks-Gunn, 2005). For example, several authors show that boys are allowed more freedom while girls benefit from comparatively increased parental oversight or monitoring (Cernkovich & Giordano, 2006; Pasko, Chesney-Lind, 2012; Fagan, Van Horn, Hawkins, and Arthur, 2007) and thus reduced exposure to neighborhood risks.

In a qualitative study of 390 youth from an urban elementary school, Polvika, Lovell and Smith (1998) examined youth's descriptions of their neighborhoods. The major recurrent themes indicated the neighborhoods as being dirty and noisy. They also

described their daily concern about actual and potential death and injury in their neighborhood. These youth frequently cited their homes as sad and dangerous places. The findings from this study indicated that these youth felt unsafe both in their neighborhoods and their homes.

Perception of safety in one's environment is important as relates to developing a worldview and situating one's self in this view. Though often explored subjectively, the lived experiences of individuals remain an important consideration in neighborhood research (Migliorini & Cardinali, 2011). Youth in urban, disadvantaged neighborhoods are more likely to view the world through lenses of unpredictability and danger. They are likely to respond to their environment with fear and feelings of vulnerability based on these internalized attributions (Brunton-Smith, 2011; Brunton-Smith & Sturgis, 2011; Overstreet, 2000; Price-Spratlen, 2011). Youth who continue to live under these conditions may resort to violence as a way to either stave off possible victimization or as retribution for previous victimization (Fagan & Wilkinson, 1998). Understanding the influence of various factors on youth's perception of neighborhood safety may help in the deployment of resources to youth living in these contexts.

According to Brunton-Smith and Sturgis (2011), the influence of neighborhoods on perceptions of fear and lack of safety may be best understood through four paths. The first is how the neighborhood chooses to respond to the level and incidence of crime across neighborhoods. The second path is the presence of formal and informal controls in the community along with a collective commitment to the neighborhood. The third path – visual cues of neighborhood disorder also factors into individual's feelings of safety. These cues may reaffirm a perception of low collective efficacy and limited social control.

The fourth path suggests that the strength of the influence of neighborhood characteristics on other factors is critical. The authors suggest that factors that cause individuals to feel afraid in their neighborhoods (e.g. crime, drug activity and presence of gangs) may be directly related to neighborhood disadvantage and fear of ones' neighborhood. Youth who live in neighborhoods that actively resist and ameliorate such factors are much better off and do not live in fear of their neighborhoods. Neighborhood cohesion can therefore be a resource for youth who live in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Collective efficacy

The term collective efficacy refers to neighborhood members' perceptions that they are close or connected to their neighbors and that the neighborhood is working towards shared goals (Sampson et al., 1997; Sampson RJ, Morenoff, & Raudenbush, 2005; 2011). In the absence of these factors negative neighborhood characteristics such as distrust and disenchantment take root and low perceptions of safety become the norm (Sampson et al., 1997). Youth who feel reinforced by socialization agents for participation in prosocial activities, even in low resourced neighborhoods, are likely to adopt the rewarded behaviors.

Youth who experience prosocial interactions with parents, peers, and other adults in the neighborhood will have a more positive neighborhood experience and a positive worldview. Violence in the immediate neighborhood shakes one's view of the world as a safe fair place (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1998) and is tied to reduced feelings of safety for adolescents (Sanders et al., 2012). In neighborhoods where low collective efficacy or disorganization is the norm, youth who internalize beliefs of the world as an unpredictable, dangerous place usually reciprocate the neighborhood behaviors (Austin,

Furr, & Spine, 2002; Brunton-Smith, 2011; Brunton-Smith & Sturgis, 2011; Overstreet, 2000; Price-Spratlen, 2011).

In high-risk neighborhoods with low resources, social support and other by-products of collective efficacy serve a protective role for youth. Collective efficacy fosters good academic performance, self-confidence and positive behavioral changes (e.g., Gaylord-Harden et al., 2007; Kerpelman, Eryigit, & Stephens, 2008). Research continues to support the stress-buffering hypothesis of social support and other forms of collective efficacy. The literature suggests that tests of the stress-buffering hypothesis are dependent on the specific outcome being considered, and that other factors may explain these discrepant findings (Rosenfeld, Richman, Bowen, & Wynns, 2006). Just as critical as collective efficacy, is the individual's perception of his own ability to avoid violence in the future.

Efficacy to avoid violence

African-American boys' perceptions of their ability to avoid violence may be related to how safe they feel in their own neighborhoods. While the literature has explored the link between youths' exposure to violence and their efficacy to avoid violence, to the best of my knowledge no study has connected adolescents' efficacy to avoid violence to their perceptions of safety in their neighborhoods. The link between these factors has also not been examined for African-American boys. As such, I make some associations based on related areas of research.

Whereas exposure to violence is related to reduced feelings of efficacy to avoid violence (Kuther, 1999), intervening resources such as supportive parenting and positive neighborhood role models might buffer this relationship and increase self confidence in

avoiding violent behavior and intentions (efficacy) (Kerpelman et al., 2008). Boys who have the ability to avoid or safely negotiate neighborhood risks through protective resources may perceive their communities as safe. Those who perceive their neighborhoods as less safe are more likely to react violently (Marans & Cohen, 1993), often in revenge (Garbarino, Kostelny, & Dubrow (1991). Increasing African-American boys' ability to avoid or safely negotiate unsafe situations in their neighborhood while reducing the likelihood of neighborhood dangers would increase youth efficacy. This may also improve their perception of their neighborhoods as safe.

Violent experiences

Exposure to violence includes hearing, seeing, or otherwise experiencing violence whether at home, school or in the neighborhood. More than 80% of youth in poor urban neighborhoods witness some form of violence, with more than 70% suffering as victims of violence (Cooley-Strickland, Quille, & Griffin, 2009). These exposed adolescents were more likely to think of their neighborhoods as unsafe, and were more likely to develop negative behaviors as a result.

Whereas a large body of research has focused on the effects of exposure to neighborhood violence on youth health outcomes, relatively little research has explored factors that influence their perceptions of neighborhood safety (Jenkins & Bell, 1997; Overstreet & Braun, 2000; Schwab-Stone et al., 1999). African-American boys in varying neighborhood contexts are more likely than their Caucasian counterparts to be victims of different kinds of noisome experiences, including violence, in their neighborhood (Crouch et al., 2000; Gladstein, Rusonis, & Heald, 1992; Loeber, Kalb, & Huizinga, 2001; McNulty & Bellair, 2003; Selner-O'Hagan, Kindlon, Buka, Raudenbush,

& Earls, 1998). The structural and social deficits in these neighborhoods are signs of social disorder and low collective efficacy. Low levels of neighborhood cohesion made individuals easier targets for delinquent and criminal behaviors (Saunders, Rine, Nochajski, & Wieczorek, 2012; Sampson et al., 1997), or to witness acts of violence (Miller, Wasserman, Neugebauer, Gorman-Smith, & Kamboukos, 1999). Other demographic factors are also related to youths' exposure to violent experiences. These factors include parent's education, household income, and the child's age.

Experiences of victimization in one's neighborhood are traumatic. In fact Maschi et al (2010) used a quasi-experimental design to investigate the relationship between violence exposure, perceptions of neighborhood safety, and adolescent's adaptive functioning, among 300 inner-city youth aged 7-12 years. They found that youth's perception of the safety of their neighborhood was related to being a victim or having witnessed violence in the neighborhood. Youth who had been victims of violence reported more feelings of vulnerability in their neighborhood. Those experiences were also inversely related to youth's adaptive functioning. Researchers also found that youth who reported having witnessed higher levels of violence one year before the study fared worse than those who reported more recent though lower levels of violence. Researchers suggest that this difference may be related to individual feelings of safety where worldview remained intact when violence happened to others, but not when it happened to them (Maschi et al., 2010; Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Herman, 1992).

Violent experiences, especially as a victim, are an assault on the individual's perception of the world as a safe place (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1998; Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Continued exposure to violent experiences could lead adolescents to perceive their

neighborhoods as a dangerous place rather than as the haven of safety (Bloom, 1997; Herman, 1992) that is necessary for proper social, intellectual and physical development. The literature is clear on the association between exposure to violence and future risks of negative outcomes. Parental behaviors including communication about risks may help protect African-American youth from the negative effects of their neighborhoods.

The literature asserts that the parents' messages about violence and their nonviolent norms are associated with less violence among youth. These nonviolent expectations that parents have for their adolescents predict lower engagement in violence if parents had communicated these expectations to their children, or if youth had perceived those expectations (Ohene, Ireland, McNeely, & Borowsky, 2006; Sieving, McNeely, & Blum, 2000). Parents message to their children, especially about risks, mirror their own experiences with their neighborhood (Lindstrom-Johnson, 2011; Robinson, Paxton, & Jonen, 2011). Thus parents who perceive their neighborhoods as unsafe might convey more messages about avoiding violence. Parents may be less available with messages about avoiding violence and other risks if they do not think that those risks exists in their neighborhood at sufficiently alarming levels.

Parental communication about fighting

Youth who receive messages from their parents eschewing violence are less likely to engage in violent behaviors. These conversations allow for the transmission of parental values and alternative strategies for dealing with stressful or vexing situations. Parents' own attitudes towards violence have direct predictive effects on youth violence even after youth's attitudes are accounted for (Kliewer, Parrish, Taylor et al., 2006; Copeland-Linder, Jones, Haynie, et al., 2007; Orpinas, Home & Staniszewski, 2003). Parents are

likely to convey their attitudes towards violence during conversations with their children, thus shaping youth's perceptions of neighborhood safety. For example, parents' communications with their children about violence have been shown to moderate the relationship between psychological distress and violence exposure whether at the school or neighborhood level (LeBlanc, Self-Brown, & Kelley, 2011).

Apart from being an obvious show of support for adolescents in difficult neighborhoods, parental communication related to violence provides an avenue for conveying critical coping resources. This kind of supportive parenting validates youth's experiences with the neighborhood. Through these conversations parents also provide strategies for handling difficult situations. Thus parental risk communication may combine with neighborhood collective efficacy to provide a protective effect on perceptions of neighborhood safety for youth. The level of protection that parents provide for their children is associated with demographic factors such as the age of the child, the household income and the parents' level of education.

Current study and hypotheses

There is a need to better understand how neighborhood factors work. Special attention needs to be afforded to African-American boys' perception of their neighborhood and how this may increasingly differ from that of their parents. In this study I explored the relationship between individual (*i.e. violent experiences and violence avoidance efficacy*), family (*i.e. communication about fighting*), and neighborhood (*i.e. perceived collective efficacy*) factors as predictors of African-American boys' perception of neighborhood safety.

A number of main effect hypotheses are proposed. *Hypothesis 1*, perception of

collective efficacy and violence avoidance efficacy will be related to African-American boys' perception of neighborhood as safe. Both constructs have been associated with increased adaptive functioning (Kawachi, Subramanian, & Kim, 2008; Kerpelman et al., 2008). *Hypothesis 2*, parental communication about fighting will be related to boys' perceptions of the neighborhood as a safe place. Parent's communication about risks has been identified as a protective factor for youth in risk contexts (LeBlanc, Self-Brown, & Kelley, 2011). Neighborhood disadvantage has been associated with negative outcomes for youth. Additionally, violent experiences have also been linked to behavioral difficulties in youth (Margolin & Gordis, 2000; Overstreet, 2000; McNulty & Bellair, 2003, Maschi et al., 2010). *Hypothesis 3*, African-American boys will also perceive the neighborhood as less safe when neighborhood structural disadvantage is high. *Hypothesis 4*, youth who have had more violent experiences (i.e. exposure to violence and victimization) will perceive the neighborhood as more unsafe.

I hypothesized three moderation effects in this study. First (1) adolescents who have had fewer violence experiences and perceive high levels of collective efficacy in their neighborhoods will feel safer in their neighborhoods (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1998; Janoff-Bulman, 1992). It is also expected that (2) efficacy to avoid violence will moderate the relationship between violent experiences and boys perception of neighborhood safety with more efficacy being associated with boys feeling safer in their neighborhoods. Lastly (3) interaction of parents' education and youths' efficacy to avoid violence will predict greater perception of neighborhood safety for youth. In neighborhoods with high collective efficacy African-American boys who believe they are able to avoid violent behaviors will perceive their neighborhoods as safer. The

hypotheses in this study are largely exploratory because of the relative novelty of this line of research.

Methods

Procedure

The AAYP (Aban Aya Youth Project) is a longitudinal efficacy trial investigating the effects of three intervention conditions Social Development Curriculum (SDC), School/ family/ neighborhood intervention (SC), Health Enhancement Control (HEC)) on the development of violence, unsafe sex and substance use behaviors among low-income African-American youth. Participants were high-risk students recruited from 12 poor, mainly African-American inner city schools from a large Midwestern city. All schools met the following inclusion criteria: enrollment greater than 500 students with 80% African-American and less than 10% Latino or Hispanic; grades kindergarten through 8; not on probation or slated for reorganization; and not a special designated school (e.g., magnet, academic center; and moderate mobility). Schools signed agreements for 4 years of participation in the study and agreed not to participate in other prevention initiatives during that time. Participants completed measures at 6 different time points after the baseline measurement. Participating schools received the intervention free of charge along with a \$250 incentive per participating classroom –up to a maximum of \$1,000 each year of the study.

Sample. Participants were randomly assigned to the Social Development Curriculum (197 participants), School/ family/ neighborhood intervention (182 participants) and the Health Enhancement Control (174 participants). This study used the baseline data gathered before participants were exposed to the intervention. Participants

in the three groups did not differ based on age, parent education level, length of time boys had lived in the neighborhood or household income. Additionally there were no differences for these boys based on the variables of interest in this study. Previous analyses of difference for baseline data for the original cohort revealed no differences on violence measures after controlling for pre-intervention age and modeling school-level nesting (Jagers, Morgan-Lopez, & Flay, 2009).

Less than 2% of parents requested that their children be excluded from the study (Jagers et al., 2009). Of the total sample of 1,153 participants, 553 were African-American males. Male participants were 10.2 years old on average and were in the 5th grade. They reported having lived an average of 3.6 years in their current neighborhood. The average household income at baseline was \$10,000–\$13,000, and 47% lived in two-parent households. Complete data were gathered from 890 of the parents. On average parents reported having been exposed to vocational education or some college level classes. This sample was collected from 12 schools in below poverty metropolitan Chicago neighborhoods between 1994 and 1998. Students in the first wave of data collection were in the 5th grade (1994-1995 school year) or transferred into one of the 12 schools during that year. Those who transferred out were not followed. Self-report data was collected from both adolescents and parents at each time point. Both parent and child data were used in this study. Measures are based on multiple questionnaires (e.g., Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBSS), National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)). These Measures were adapted based on feedback from focus groups and pilot testing with youth and parents living in high-risk communities.

Measures

Child perception of neighborhood Safety. The dependent or outcome variable for this study is neighborhood safety. To assess their perception of how safe they felt in their neighborhoods youth were asked 5 questions about safety in different contexts in the last month. For instance adolescents were asked how often they felt safe “on their way to school” and “in the neighborhood”. Responses were indicated on a Likert scale from 0 = Never to 3 = Always. Scores ranged from 0 to 15 with higher scores indicating feeling safer. The scale had an alpha of .69 in this sample.

Neighborhood disorganization. Parents reported on the structural deficiencies in their neighborhood by answering 11 questions that required them to indicate on a Likert scale (0 = Never to 4 = Always) whether they had ever noticed certain situations in their neighborhood. Examples of items are “You notice abandoned houses or stores” and “You notice drug sellers or users” in your neighborhood. The scale had an alpha of .87 in this sample indicating good reliability for this measure. Scores ranged from 0 to 44 with higher scores indicating parents’ reports of high levels of neighborhood deficiencies.

Collective efficacy. To measure perceptions of neighborhood support boys were asked 4 questions about how true certain statements were about whether neighborhood residents were cooperative and supportive of each other. Sample questions included “people in my neighborhood care about my well being” and “I know many people in my neighborhood”. Responses were on a Likert scale from 0 = Not true, 1 = Somewhat true and 2 = Very true. Scores ranged from 0 to 8 with higher scores reflecting more collective efficacy in the neighborhood. The scale had an alpha of .69 in this sample indicating good reliability for this measure.

Efficacy to avoid violence. Boys’ perception of their ability to avoid violence

was measured using 4 questions, each asking *How sure are you that you can (1) keep yourself from getting into physical fights (2) keep yourself from carrying a knife (3) stay away from situations in which you could get into fights (4) can seek help instead of fighting*. Responses were reported on a 0-4 scale where 0 = Definitely Not to 4 = Definitely Can. Scores ranged from 0 to 16 with higher scores indicating higher levels of boys' perception of their ability to avoid violence. The measure had a Cronbach's alpha of .83 for this sample indicating good reliability for this measure.

Violent experiences. This measure is a combination of youths' experiences with victimization and their exposure to violence. To assess *victimization* boys' responded 0 = No and 1 = Yes, to two questions asking them to whether they had ever been shot at; or ever been cut or stabbed. The items were correlated at $p < .001$, with a Pearson's correlation coefficient of .283. As a measure of *exposure to violence* participants responded using a dichotomous scale where 0 = No and 1 = Yes, to indicate whether they had ever witnessed certain violent acts. The extent of having witnessed violence was measured using 5 items with a total score ranging from 1 to 5 with higher scores indicating more instances of having witnessed violence. Representative questions included "Have you even see someone get shot at" and "Have you even seen a friend or family member get cut". The scale had a Cronbach alpha of .69 in this sample. In calculating the violent experiences measure victimization was recoded so that 1 = No victimization experiences and 2 = One or more victimization experiences. The combination of victimization and exposure to violence into a measure of violent experiences resulted in scores ranging from 1 to 7 with higher scores indicating more experiences with violence.

Parental communication about fighting. This was a one-item measure asking parents to indicate on a Likert scale with 0 = Never; 1 = Once; 2 = 2 or 3 times; and 3 = more than 3 times, how often in the last month they had spoken to their sons about physical fights.

Demographics. The demographic variables: child's age, how long boys had lived in the neighborhood; average household income, and parent education were included in the analyses as covariates. Length of time lived in the neighborhood was reported as a continuous measure of between 1 to 5 discrete years.

Data analysis plan

Descriptive analyses including correlations and cross tabulations were conducted to explore the sample. A square root transformation was used to address skewed in the victimization variable before it could be used to compute the violent experiences measure. Chi square analyses were used to explore the exposure to violence for boys who had suffered victimization and those who had not. Diagnostic measures indicated that there was no violation of the assumptions of linear regressions. A three-step plan of analysis using hierarchical regressions was implemented. This process allowed specific variables of interest to be entered in a second model to make it easy to observe the change in the variance explained (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003).

In the first model I examined the relationship between collective efficacy and perception of neighborhood safety. Family demographic information was also entered in the first model as control variables. In the second model I entered the remaining predictors. I centered the continuous predictor variables by calculating the mean for each variable and subtracting it from the relevant measure. Interaction terms were created for

collective efficacy with victimization, risk communication, and violence avoidance efficacy. For ease of presentation, the centered variables and resulting interaction terms were entered in the third and final model in accordance with Aiken & West, (1991). The results of these analyses are presented in Table 2.2.

Missing data

At the first wave of data collection participants were asked to complete a baseline questionnaire multiple risk behaviors (e.g. sexual, violence, health) along with measures of mediators of these behaviors. From the second post-test collection onward in an effort to shorten the length of the surveys participants were required to complete three of four survey units. They completed the core unit that comprised all the behavioral outcome measures as well as two randomly assigned modules containing randomly selected meditational measures. Also, participants who transferred into the class were allowed to be part of the project and measured at that time point. This study design generates some expected missingness and therefore requires plans for addressing this issue. The study uses only baseline data.

Missing data was handled at the item level with items ranging from 24 to 58% missingness on variables of interest to this study. It has been argued that the pattern of missingness, more than the extent of missingness has a greater impact on the generalizability of the results of any analyses from the data (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007; Kline, 2011; Fox-Wasylyshyn & El-Masri, 2005). Once the pattern of missingness has been determined to be missing completely at random (MCAR) more advanced data imputation strategies such as Estimation Maximization (EM) and Multiple Imputation (MI) may be employed. These two techniques have the primary advantage of preserving

sample size. Roth (1994) advises that when missingness is at 20%, regardless of the pattern, missingness could be handled with multiple imputation techniques like Maximum Likelihood (ML) and Estimation Maximization (EM). However there is little literature on the use of ML as the procedure, until recently, was unavailable in more convention software packages (Fox-Wasylyshyn & El-Masri, 2005).

Data imputation procedures such as Estimation Maximization (EM) remain appropriate and are considered excellent techniques because of the unbiased estimates that are produced when data are MCAR (Acock, 2005). Several tests exist to assess the pattern of missingness (Cohen et al., 2003; Orme & Reis, 1991). Little's MCAR test presents one global test statistic on missingness (Little, 1988; Rubin & Little, 2002). The Little's MCAR indicated no statistically reliable deviation from randomness $\chi^2 = 177902.852$, $df = 190959$, $p = 1.000$ (Within SPSS 19). Bivariate methods were then used to assess the relationship between missingness and other study measures. None of the markers of missingness were significantly correlated with the study's dependent variable or independent variables (Schlomer, Bauman, & Card, 2010).

The Missing Values analysis function in IBM's PASW package version 19 was used to impute missing data. EM estimates the missing values by using the actual and missing values to estimate missing data. The EM algorithm runs for multiple iterations until there is convergence in parameter estimates, which means that further iterations would not result in parameter estimates that are significantly different from the current estimates (University of Texas Statistical Services, 2013). The imputation was completed at a convergence of 0.001, after 100 imputations.

Results

Descriptive results

Eighty-six percent of participating parents were female. Almost half of the boys (43.9%) lived in two-parent households with 89.1% living with their mothers or a mother figure and 47.1% living with their fathers or a father figure. Single-parent families accounted for 52.2% of the participants. More than half of the parents reported some vocational or college level classes, with 67.7% having completed high school and gaining vocational education, college and post-college education or a professional degree. The family's household income was largely in the lower range with 45.1% of families earning an income that was less than \$15,000 annually, while 47.5% had an income ranging from \$15,000 to approximately \$40,000. The average income was between \$10,000 and less than \$15,000. See Table 1 for additional descriptions of the sample.

Less than a quarter of the boys (18.6%) had ever been victims of violence, though 92.2% had witnessed one or more acts of violence. In this sample, 75.4% of African-American boys had witnessed 2 or more acts of violence in their lifetime, and almost half (46%) had more chronic exposure to violence. African-American boys who were victims of violence, and those who had not been victims, differed in their exposure to violence ($Chi\ sq. = 86.37, df = 5, p = .000$). Non-victims were almost as likely to be exposed to violence as their victimized counterparts. A significant number of victims (90.8%) had been exposed to at least one act of violence, and 71% had been exposed to two or more acts (See Fig. 2.1). Fewer non-victims (16.6%) had been exposed to more chronic levels of violence.

In comparison, African-American boys who had been victims of violence had significantly higher exposure to violence. Almost the entire sample of victimized boys (98%) had also been exposed to one or more acts of violence. Compared to the non-victims, 94% of victimized boys had been exposed to two or more acts of violence. More than half of them had more chronic violence exposure. Overall, African-American boys in this sample had very high levels of violent experiences whether as victims, witnesses or both. It is not surprising therefore that boys reported feeling less safe in their neighborhoods than their parents did. Boys' average score on perception of neighborhood safety was 8.2 (SD = 3.389) while parents' average score on a similar measure was 10.24 (SD = 3.173).

Correlations were calculated to determine relationships between the dependent variable (adolescent's perception of neighborhood safety) and key predictors. A correlation matrix using Pearson's Product moment correlation coefficients was calculated to provide a parametric measure of the relationship among the variables (see Table 2.1). Boys' perception of neighborhood safety was positively correlated with collective efficacy, efficacy to avoid violence, and parents' education. This meant that boys' felt safer in their neighborhood if they perceive collective efficacy, or had high efficacy to avoid violence. More years of education by the parent was also related to boys feeling safer. Adolescents' perception of safety in their neighborhood was not significantly related to their parents' reports about disadvantages in the neighborhood or to boys' violent experiences. The dependent variable was negatively correlated with risk communication suggesting that boys who felt safer also received less communication about risks. The Durbin-Watson statistic was computed to evaluate independence of

errors and was 1.625, which is considered acceptable. This suggests that the assumption of independent errors has been met.

Multivariate results

Table 2.2 presents the results of the three of the hierarchical multiple regression used to determine the main effects of the predictors on adolescents' perception of neighborhood safety while controlling for demographic variables. In model 1 Collective Efficacy was positively related to youths' perception of neighborhood safety. This model explained 8.9% of the variance in the perception of neighborhood safety. In the second model perception of collective efficacy was positively related to neighborhood safety perceptions while parents' communication about fighting was negatively associated with perception of neighborhood safety. Adolescents' violence avoidance efficacy, and neighborhood disadvantage were not significantly associated with perception of neighborhood safety. Violent experiences were also not significantly related to neighborhood safety. However, the inclusion of the new predictors in the second model explained an additional 2% of the variance in the outcome variable, for a total of 10% variance explained.

Interactions were entered in the third model and explain an additional 1% variance in the overall model. The interaction between violent experiences and collective efficacy was the only significant interaction. Figure 1 shows the results of this finding. Under conditions where African-American adolescent boys had been exposed to more violent experiences higher collective efficacy predicted greater perceptions of neighborhood safety. Boys who believed there was lower collective efficacy in their

neighborhood felt less safe compared to those who perceived more collective efficacy regardless of their level of exposure to violent experiences (See Fig. 2.2).

Discussion

African-American boys living in disadvantaged neighborhoods are more likely than others to experience and/or witness violence (Margolis & Gordis, 2000; Overstreet, 2000), thus affecting negatively their perception of inherent danger in their neighborhoods. Adolescents have increased exposure to the neighborhood. This developmental period is marked by the increased influence of peers and extra-familial agents (Sim, 2000). Together, these developments influence youths' perception of their neighborhood. As far as we know, this is one of very few studies to explore the predictors of African-American boys' perception of the safety of their neighborhoods.

I investigated whether African-American boys' perception of collective efficacy in their neighborhoods was associated with their perception of the safety of their neighborhoods. First I examined the influence of neighborhood and individual level factors on adolescents' perception of neighborhood safety. Findings indicated that African-American boys' who believed that their neighborhood was a place where people were supported and encouraged to adopt prosocial behaviors (collective efficacy) reported greater feelings of safety. This finding supports a social dimension to the risk and resilience framework by showing that positive interactions and reinforcement from socialization agents are beneficial for youth in high-risk neighborhoods (Hawkins & Weis, 1985; Brown et al., 2005).

Efficacy to avoid violence and violent experiences did not predict youths' feelings of safety in their neighborhoods as had been hypothesized. Efficacy to avoid violence

was associated with higher perception of neighborhood safety at the bivariate level. The strong predictive effect of collective efficacy and its related interaction in this model may have reduced the contribution of individual efficacy beliefs (efficacy to avoid violence). The separate influence of collective efficacy and efficacy to avoid violence is an area that should be explored. Boys' exposure to violent experiences was not associated with perception of neighborhood safety at either the bivariate or multivariate level. This may represent a measurement issue rather than a conceptual concern. A significant body of research has already established a link between youths' exposure to violent experiences and negative behaviors; however, few if any studies have established a similar link to perception of neighborhood safety for African-American boys. Exploring more specific and comprehensive measures of victimization and exposure to violence might reveal different results.

Parents' communication about fighting was negatively related both at the bivariate and multivariate levels with perception of neighborhood safety. These results suggests that boys who perceived their neighborhoods as safer had received fewer messages about fighting, from their parents. The research shows that parents who communicate with their children about risks provide protection against those specific risks. There are a few reasons why this particular finding may not have been confirmed in this study. It may be that boys who perceived the neighborhood as safe had fewer experiences with violence. This lowered risk exposure may have elicited less communication about fighting from parents. Additionally the parenting communication variable does not identify the kind of messages that were communicated. For instance repeated communication of high-risk messages could itself be a form of risk exposure

depending on the quality of the messages. The use of other parenting practices such as monitoring and involvement in their sons' lives might help to contextualize possibly jarring risk messages.

The influence of collective efficacy on African-American boys' perceptions of their neighborhood was moderated by the extent to which they may have witnessed violence or been victims of violence. Under conditions where African-American boys had been exposed to more violent experiences high neighborhood collective efficacy predicted a perception that the neighborhood was safer. High collective efficacy was related to higher perception of safety compared to lower perception of safety, regardless of the level violent experiences. Collective efficacy, especially in high-risk neighborhoods represents a source of protection. African-American boys who have been victims or have been exposed to high levels of violence may benefit most for the positive effect of collective efficacy. Collective efficacy in one's neighborhood may represent a source of hope for youth living in neighborhoods characterized by significant risk. Even for boys who had comparatively fewer violent experiences, a perception of high collective efficacy was related to youth feeling safer. Boys who had more violent experiences also seemed to feel safer in their neighborhoods than those who had fewer experiences. It may well be that boys who had more violent experiences may have emerged better able to navigate neighborhood dangers, and more aware of available sources of support and protection.

These findings suggest that well-meaning parents could inadvertently engender feelings of vulnerability in adolescents while trying to protect them. However the positive qualities of the neighborhood serve as a protective factor, especially for African-

American boys who have experienced higher levels of violence. In disadvantaged neighborhoods which provide no supportive or protective buffers to their deleterious experiences African-American boys continue to feel unsafe, even with lower levels of victimization experiences.

Boys who live in less efficacious neighborhoods, and who have been exposed to more violent experiences feel more vulnerable and may continue to live in fear of their neighborhoods (Maschi et al., 2010). For economic or other reasons many of these boys may not be able to move away from these neighborhoods, and thus are forced to live in perpetual fear of their surroundings. It may well be that some boys adopt the negative behaviors of these disadvantaged neighborhoods for day-to-day survival or to stave off future victimization experiences. Increasing neighborhood efficacy whether through neighborhood programming or neighborhood education may help improve boys' perceptions of neighborhood safety. Encouraging positive parenting behaviors including monitoring, involvement and communication would help shield African-American boys from interactions with negative factors in their neighborhoods. Communication about specific risks would better equip youth deal with these experiences when they encounter them. Therefore, working with parents to improve the quality and frequency of their communication with their sons about risks would prove beneficial. It would also indirectly reduce the likelihood of victimization in the neighborhood, and thus contribute to overall feelings of safety. Service providers who work with parents of African-American boys from low-income neighborhoods should help identify and connect parents to community resources that build on neighborhood efficacy strategies.

Limitations

The current study sheds light on how neighborhoods are perceived through the eyes of the youth who live in those neighborhoods. There are however, several methodological limitations. The primary limitation in this study is that it is cross sectional and thus does not address issues of causality. The current study tested the influence of neighborhood, parent and individual factors on boys' perception of neighborhood safety. Understanding how these perceptions of safety may influence predictors such as parent communication about fighting and efficacy to avoid violence may prove instructive for future studies.

The negative influence of parent communication about fighting on youths' perception of safety is an interesting, though counterintuitive finding. However, this one item measure does not provide sufficient information to fully understand how this factor operates in this sample. Questions about the quality and content of parents' communication about fighting remain unanswered. This kind of information might have added to the explanation of the counterintuitive finding. While parents' report of neighborhood disadvantage was used in this study, perhaps adolescents' report of neighborhood disadvantage may have been more useful in this study.

This was a sample of school-age boys, and though they may live in very disadvantaged neighborhoods they had limited experiences with the serious victimization measured in this study. This would allow for exploring the effects of victimization and exposure to violence separately. The study was limited to the variables collected as part of the intervention. A more comprehensive measure of victimization that accounted for less serious victimization experiences that may better match the developmental stage of

this sample of boys may have improved the findings. Even with these limitations however, this study contributes to our understanding of how African-American boys in these neighborhoods start to make sense of their difficult contexts. The study highlights areas of interest that prove useful in prevention efforts for African-American boys.

Future Directions

Having acknowledged the contribution of the collective efficacy of the neighborhood, parent's communication, self-efficacy as well as risk factors like neighborhood disadvantage and victimization experiences, there is need to examine these issues across the adolescent developmental trajectory. This would no doubt provide a glimpse into understanding when youth are most at risk, most receptive to intervention, and which factors are most meaningful at set points in the developmental trajectory. Additionally, understanding how this difference in perception of neighborhood safety relates to engagement in violent behaviors may also provide critical information for parents and mental health and social service providers with regard to how and when to intervene to stave off this deleterious outcome. The findings of this study suggest that youth in this study were aware or at least beginning to recognize the available support systems, and were also cognizant of poorly functioning systems that put them at risk. They adjusted their perceptions of their neighborhood based on these analyses. Future studies should investigate the role of self-efficacy for these boys who are faced with significant risk factors such as increased exposure to peers who endorse violence, witnessing violence in the neighborhood, and ease of access to weapons. Each of these represents a significant risk that contributes not just to making youth feel unsafe. They also increase the likelihood of youth's engagement in violent behavior.

References

- Acock, A. C. (2005). Working with missing values. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67(4), 1012-1028.
- Aiken, L. S., & West, S. G. (1991). *Multiple regression: Testing and interpreting interactions*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Austin, D. M., Furr, L. A., & Spine, M. (2002). The effects of neighborhood conditions on perceptions of safety. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 30(5), 417-427.
- Bacchini, D., Miranda, M. C., & Affuso, G. (2011). Effects of parental monitoring and exposure to community violence on antisocial behavior and anxiety/depression among adolescents. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 26(2), 269-292.
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191.
- Bloom, S. L. (1997). *Creating sanctuary: Toward the evolution of sane societies*. Routledge New York.
- Bowen, G. L., & Chapman, M. V. (1996). Poverty, neighborhood danger, social support, and the individual adaptation among at-risk youth in urban areas. *Journal of Family Issues*, 17(5), 641-666.
- Brown, E. C., Catalano, R. F., Fleming, C. B., Haggerty, K. P., Abbott, R. D., Cortes, R. R., & Park, J. (2005). Mediator effects in the social development model: An

examination of constituent theories. *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*, 15(4), 221-235.

Browning, C. R., Leventhal, T., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2005). Sexual initiation in early adolescence: The nexus of parental and community control. *American Sociological Review*, 70(5), 758-778.

Brunton-Smith, I. (2011). Untangling the relationship between fear of crime and perceptions of disorder evidence from a longitudinal study of young people in England and Wales. *British Journal of Criminology*, 51(6), 885-899.

Brunton-Smith, I., & Sturgis, P. (2011). Do neighborhoods generate fear of crime? an empirical test using the British Crime Survey. *Criminology*, 49(2), 331-369.

Cernkovich, S. A., & Giordano, P. C. (2006). Family relationships and delinquency. *Criminology*, 25(2), 295-319.

Chung, H. L., & Steinberg, L. (2006). Relations between neighborhood factors, parenting behaviors, peer deviance, and delinquency among serious juvenile offenders. *Developmental Psychology*, 42(2), 319-331.

Cohen, J., Cohen, P., West, S. G., & Aiken, L. S. (2003). *Applied multiple regression/correlation analysis for the behavioral sciences (3rd ed.)*. Mahwah, NJ US: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Copeland-Linder, N., Jones, V. C., Haynie, D. L., Simons-Morton, B. G., Wright, J. L., & Cheng, T. L. (2007). Factors associated with retaliatory attitudes among African

American adolescents who have been assaulted. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 32(7), 760-770.

Crouch, J. L., Hanson, R. F., Saunders, B. E., Kilpatrick, D. G., & Resnick, H. S. (2000). Income, race/ethnicity, and exposure to violence in youth: Results from the national survey of adolescents. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 28(6), 625-641.

De Coster, S., Heimer, K., & Wittrock, S. M. (2006). Neighborhood disadvantage, social capital, street context, and youth violence. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 47(4), 723-753.

Fagan, A. A., Van Horn, M. L., Hawkins, J. D., & Arthur, M. W. (2007). Gender similarities and differences in the association between risk and protective factors and self-reported serious delinquency. *Prevention Science*, 8(2), 115-124.

Flay, B. R., & Petraitis, J. (1994). The theory of triadic influence: A new theory of health behavior with implications for preventive interventions. *Advances in Medical Sociology*, 4(19), 19-44.

Flowers, A., Lanclos, N. F., & Kelley, M. L. (2002). Validation of a screening instrument for exposure to violence in African American children. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 27(4), 351-361.

Fox - Wasylyshyn, S. M., & El- Masri, M. M. (2005). Handling missing data in self-report measures. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 28(6), 488-495.

- Garbarino, J., Kostelny, K., & Dubrow, N. (1991). What children can tell us about living in danger. *American Psychologist*, *46*(4), 376-383.
- Gaylord-Harden, N. K., Ragsdale, B. L., Mandara, J., Richards, M. H., & Petersen, A. C. (2007). Perceived support and internalizing symptoms in African American adolescents: Self-esteem and ethnic identity as mediators. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *36*(1), 77-88.
- Gladstein, J., Rusonis, E. J. S., & Heald, F. P. (1992). A comparison of inner-city and upper-middle class youths' exposure to violence. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *13*(4), 275-280.
- Hartering-Saunders, R. M., Rine, C. M., Nochajski, T., & Wieczorek, W. Neighborhood crime and perception of safety as predictors of victimization and offending among youth: A call for macro-level prevention and intervention models. *Children and Youth Services Review* (2012), doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2012.05.020
- Hawkins, J. D., & Weis, J. G. (1985). The social development model: An integrated approach to delinquency prevention. *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, *6*(2), 73-97.
- Hayes, L., Hudson, A., & Matthews, J. (2003). Parental monitoring: A process model of the parent-adolescent interaction. *Behavior Change*, *20*, 13-24.

- Haynie, D. L., Silver, E., & Teasdale, B. (2006). Neighborhood characteristics, peer networks, and adolescent violence. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 22(2), 147-169.
- Herman, J. (1992). *Trauma and recovery*. New York: Basic Books.
- Cohen, J., Cohen, P., West, S. G., Aiken, L. S. (2003). *Applied Multiple Regression/Correlation Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences* (3rd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Jacob, J. C. (2006). Male and female youth crime in Canadian communities: Assessing the applicability of social disorganization theory. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 48, 31-60.
- Jagers, R. J., Morgan-Lopez, A. A., & Flay, B. R. (2009). The impact of age and type of intervention on youth violent behaviors. *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, 30(6), 642-658.
- Jenkins, E. J., & Bell, C. C. (1997). Exposure and response to community violence among children and adolescents. In J. D. Osofsky (Ed.), *Children in a violent society*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Kawachi, I., Subramanian, S. V., & Kim, D. (2008). *Social capital and health*. New York: Springer.
- Kennedy, B. P., Kawachi, I., Prothrow-Stith, D., Lochner, K., & Gupta, V. (1998). Social capital, income inequality, and firearm violent crime. *Social Science & Medicine*, 47(1), 7-17.

- Kerpelman, J. L., Eryigit, S., & Stephens, C. J. (2008). African American adolescents' future education orientation: Associations with self-efficacy, ethnic identity, and perceived parental support. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 37(8), 997-1008.
- Kliewer, W., Parrish, K. A., Taylor, K. W., Jackson, K., Walker, J. M., & Shivy, V. A. (2006). Socialization of coping with community violence: Influences of caregiver coaching, modeling, and family context. *Child Development*, 77(3), 605-623.
- Kline, R. B. (2011). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling (3rd ed.)*. New York, NY US: Guilford Press.
- Kuther, T. L. (1999). A developmental-contextual perspective on youth covictimization by community violence. *Adolescence*, 34(136), 699-714.
- Laird, R. D., Criss, M. M., Pettit, G. S., Bates, J. E., & Dodge, K. A. (2009). Developmental trajectories and antecedents of distal parental supervision. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 29(2), 258-284.
- Laird, R. D., Marrero, M. D., & Sherwood, J. K. (2010). Developmental and interactional antecedents of monitoring in early adolescence. In V. Guilamo-Ramos, J. Jaccard & P. Dittus (Eds.), *Parental monitoring of adolescents: Current perspectives for researchers and practitioners* (pp.1 39-66). New York: Columbia University Press.
- LeBlanc, M., Self- Brown, S., Shepard, D., & Kelley, M. L. (2011). Buffering the effects of violence: Communication and problem- solving skills as protective factors for

adolescents exposed to violence. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 39(3), 353-367.

Leventhal, T., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2000). The neighborhoods they live in: The effects of neighborhood residence on child and adolescent outcomes. *Psychological Bulletin*, 126(2), 309-337.

Lindstrom Johnson, S. R., Finigan, N. M., Bradshaw, C. P., Haynie, D. L., & Cheng, T. L. (2011). Examining the link between neighborhood context and parental messages to their adolescent children about violence. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 49(1), 58-63.

Lipsey MW, Derzon JH. Predictors of serious delinquency in adolescence and early adulthood: a synthesis of longitudinal research. In: Loeber R, Farrington DP, eds. *Serious and violent juvenile offenders: risk factors and successful interventions*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1998: 86–105.

Little, R. J. A. (1988). A test of missing completely at random for multivariate data with missing values. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 83(404), 1198-1202.

Loeber, R., Kalb, L., & Huizinga, D. (2001). *Juvenile Delinquency and Serious Injury Victimization*. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Bulletin (Retrieved from, <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/188676.pdf>)

- Lynch, M., & Cicchetti, D. (1998). Trauma, mental representation, and the organization of memory for mother-referent material. *Development and Psychopathology*, *10*(4), 739-759.
- Marans, S., & Cohen, D. J. (1993). Children and inner-city violence: Strategies for intervention. In L. A. Leavitt N. A. Fox (Ed.), (pp. 281-301). Hillsdale, NJ, England: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Margolin, G., & Gordis, E. B. (2000). The effects of family and community violence on children. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *51*(1), 445-479.
- Maschi, T., Perez, R. M., & Tyson, E. (2010). Exploring the relationship between exposure to violence, perceptions of neighborhood safety, and children's adaptive functioning: Clinical and community implications. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, *20*(6), 744-761.
- McNulty, T. L., & Bellair, P. E. (2003). Explaining racial and ethnic differences in adolescent violence: Structural disadvantage, family well-being, and social capital. *Justice Quarterly*, *20*(1), 1-31.
- Meier, M. H., Slutske, W. S., Arndt, S., & Cadoret, R. J. (2008). Impulsive and callous traits are more strongly associated with delinquent behavior in higher risk neighborhoods among boys and girls. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, *117*(2), 377.

- Molnar, B. E., Cerda, M., Roberts, A. L., & Buka, S. L. (2008). Effects of neighborhood resources on aggressive and delinquent behaviors among urban youths. *Journal of Information, 98*(6).
- Mrug, S., & Windle, M. (2009). Mediators of neighborhood influences on externalizing behavior in preadolescent children. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 37*(2), 265-280.
- Neumann, A., Barker, E. D., Koot, H. M., & Maughan, B. (2010). The role of contextual risk, impulsivity, and parental knowledge in the development of adolescent antisocial behavior. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 119*(3), 534-545.
- Ohene, S. A., Ireland, M., McNeely, C., & Borowsky, I. W. (2006). Parental expectations, physical punishment, and violence among adolescents who score positive on a psychosocial screening test in primary care. *Pediatrics, 117*(2), 441-447.
- Orme, J. G., & Reis, J. (1991). Multiple regression with missing data. *Journal of Social Service Research, 15*(1-2), 61-91.
- Orpinas, P., Horne, A. M., & Staniszewski, D. (2003). School bullying: Changing the problem by changing the school. *School Psychology Review, 32*(3), 431-444.
- Osgood, D. W., & Chambers, J. M. (2006). Social disorganization outside the metropolis: An analysis of rural youth violence. *Criminology, 38*(1), 81-116.

- Overstreet, S., & Braun, S. (2000). Exposure to community violence and Post- Traumatic stress symptoms: Mediating factors. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 70(2), 263-271.
- Pasko, L., & Chesney-Lind, M. (2012). *The female offender: Girls, women, and crime* Sage Publications, Incorporated.
- Polivka, B. J., Lovell, M., & Smith, B. A. (1998). A qualitative assessment of inner city elementary school children's perceptions of their neighborhood. *Public Health Nursing*, 15(3), 171-179.
- Polivka, B. J., Lovell, M., & Smith, B. A. (1998). A qualitative assessment of inner city elementary school children's perceptions of their neighborhood. *Public Health Nursing*, 15(3), 171-179.
- Price-Spratlen, T., & Santoro, W. A. (2011). Neighborhood disorder and individual community capacity: How incivilities inform three domains of psychosocial assessment. *Sociological Spectrum*, 31(5), 579-605.
- Robinson, W. L. V., Paxton, K. C., & Jonen, L. P. (2011). Pathways to aggression and violence among African American adolescent males: The influence of normative beliefs, neighborhood, and depressive symptomatology. *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community*, 39(2), 132-148.
- Rosenfeld, L. B., Richman, J. M., Bowen, G. L., & Wynns, S. L. (2006). In the face of a dangerous community: The effects of social support and neighborhood danger on

high school students' school outcomes. *Southern Communication Journal*, 71(3), 273-289.

Roth, P. L. (1994). Missing data: A conceptual review for applied psychologists. *Personnel Psychology*, 47(3), 537-560.

Rubin, D. B., & Little, R. J. (2002). Statistical analysis with missing data. *Hoboken, NJ: J Wiley & Sons*,

Salzinger, S., Ng-Mak, D. S., Feldman, R. S., Kam, C. M., & Rosario, M. (2006). Exposure to community violence processes that increase the risk for inner-city middle school children. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 26(2), 232-266.

Sampson, R. J. (1997). Collective regulation of adolescent misbehavior validation results from eighty Chicago neighborhoods. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 12(2), 227-244.

Sampson, R. J., & Groves, W. B. (1989). Community structure and crime: Testing social-disorganization theory. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, 774-802.

Sampson, R. J., Morenoff, J. D., Raudenbush, S., Stephen, W. (2005). Social anatomy of racial and ethnic disparities in violence. *American Journal of Public Health*, 95, 224-232.

Sampson, Robert J. 2011. Neighborhood Effects, Causal Mechanisms, and the Social Structure of the City. In *Analytical Sociology and Social Mechanisms*, Pierre Demeulenaere, 227-250. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Sampson, R. J., Raudenbush, S. W., & Earls, F. (1997). Neighborhoods and violent crime: A multilevel study of collective efficacy. *Science*, 277, 918-924.
- Schlomer, G. L., Bauman, S., & Card, N. A. (2010). Best practices for missing data management in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 57(1), 1-10.
- Schwab-Stone, M., Chen, C., Greenberger, E., Silver, D., Lichtman, J., & Voyce, C. (1999). No safe haven II: The effects of violence exposure on urban youth. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 38(4), 359-367.
- Selner- O'Hagan, M. B., Kindlon, D. J., Buka, S. L., Raudenbush, S. W., & Earls, F. J. (1998). Assessing exposure to violence in urban youth. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 39(2), 215-224.
- Shaw, C., & McKay, H. (1942). *Juvenile delinquency and urban areas*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sieving, R. E., McNeely, C. S., & Blum, R. W. (2000). Maternal expectations, mother-child connectedness, and adolescent sexual debut. *Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine*, 154(8), 809-816.
- Sim, H. (2000). Relationship of daily hassles and social support to depression and antisocial behavior among early adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 29(6), 647-659.

- Simons, R. L., Simons, L. G., Burt, C. H., Brody, G. H., & Cutrona, C. (2005). Collective efficacy, authoritative parenting and delinquency: A longitudinal test of a model integrating community and family level processes. *Criminology*, 43(4), 989-1029.
- Spano, R., Vazsonyi, A. T., & Bolland, J. (2009). Does parenting mediate the effects of exposure to violence on violent behavior? an ecological–transactional model of community violence. *Journal of Adolescence*, 32(5), 1321-1341.
- Spano, R., Vazsonyi, A. T., & Bolland, J. (2009). Does parenting mediate the effects of exposure to violence on violent behavior? an ecological–transactional model of community violence. *Journal of Adolescence*, 32(5), 1321-1341.
- Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2007). *Using multivariate statistics (5th ed.)*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon/Pearson Education.
- University of Texas Statistical Services. (2013). Handling missing or incomplete data. Retrieved February, 17, 2013, from http://ssc.utexas.edu/software/faqs/general#General_22
- Valois, R. F., MacDonald, J. M., Bretous, L., Fischer, M. A., & Drane, J. W. (2002). Risk factors and behaviors associated with adolescent violence and aggression. *American Journal of Health Behavior*, 26(6), 454-464.
- Van Horn, M. L., Hawkins, J. D., Arthur, M. W., & Catalano, R. F. (2007). Assessing community effects on adolescent substance use and delinquency. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 35(8), 925-946.

Vazsonyi, A. T., Cleveland, H. H., & Wiebe, R. P. (2006). Does the effect of impulsivity on delinquency vary by level of neighborhood disadvantage? *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 33(4), 511-541.

Table 2.1 Descriptive statistics for perception of neighborhood safety and its predictors among study sample (N = 544)

Variables	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Child perception of neighborhood safety	8.20 (3.39)	1								
2. Age	10.91 (.62)	-.075								
3. Income	3.61(1.79)	.07	-.068							
4. Lived in neighborhood	3.60 (1.41)	-.011	.076	.150**						
5. Neighborhood Disadvantage	7.65 (3.85)	-.015	.078	-.230**	.021					
6. Collective Efficacy	6.64 (2.35)	.292**	-.069	.053	.065	-0.02				
7. Efficacy to avoid violence	12.17 (3.76)	.111**	-.127**	.004	-.107*	.045	-.040			
8. Parent Education	5.32 (2.18)	.090*	-.127**	.337**	-.006	-.142**	-.020	.045		
9. Violent Experiences	3.65(1.57)	-.068	.082	.019	.022	.045	.046	-.284**	-.022	
10. Parent communication about fighting	2.41 (.77)	-.091*	-.007	.019	-.052	.058	.046	.055	-.039	.170**

NB: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001 † Average income=\$10,000; and > \$15,000 ; Average Education level=Vocational education or some college education

Table 2.2 Regression coefficients for main effect and interaction models

Variable	<i>Model 1</i>		<i>Model 2</i>		<i>Model 3</i>	
	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.
Constant	7.374**	2.59	6.681*	2.589	6.646*	2.576
Age	- 0.223	0.225	- 0.166	0.226	- 0.170	0.225
Income	0.060	0.085	0.084	0.086	0.091	0.086
Lived In Community (Yrs)	- 0.083	0.101	- 0.084	0.101	- 0.087	0.100
Community Disadvantage	--	--	0.029	0.037	0.031	0.037
Collective Efficacy	0.422***	0.059	0.427***	0.059	0.435***	0.059
Efficacy to Avoid violence	--	--	0.071†	0.039	0.062	0.039
Parent Education	0.105	0.070	0.094	0.069	0.089	0.069
Violent Experiences	--	--	- 0.086	0.094	- 0.108	0.093
Communication about fighting	--	--	- 0.463*	0.182	- 0.484**	0.181
Collective Efficacy X Violent Experiences	--	--	--	--	0.080*	0.034
Efficacy to avoid violence X Violent Experiences	--	--	--	--	- 0.014	- 0.014
Parent Education X Efficacy to avoid violence	--	--	--	--	- 0.027	0.027
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	0.089		0.104		0.113	
<i>Δ in R²</i>	--		0.021*		0.014*	
F statistic	11.591***		7.991***		6.775***	

† p<.06; *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

D.V: Child Perception of neighborhood safety

Figure 2.1 Percentage of participants violence exposure based on victimization

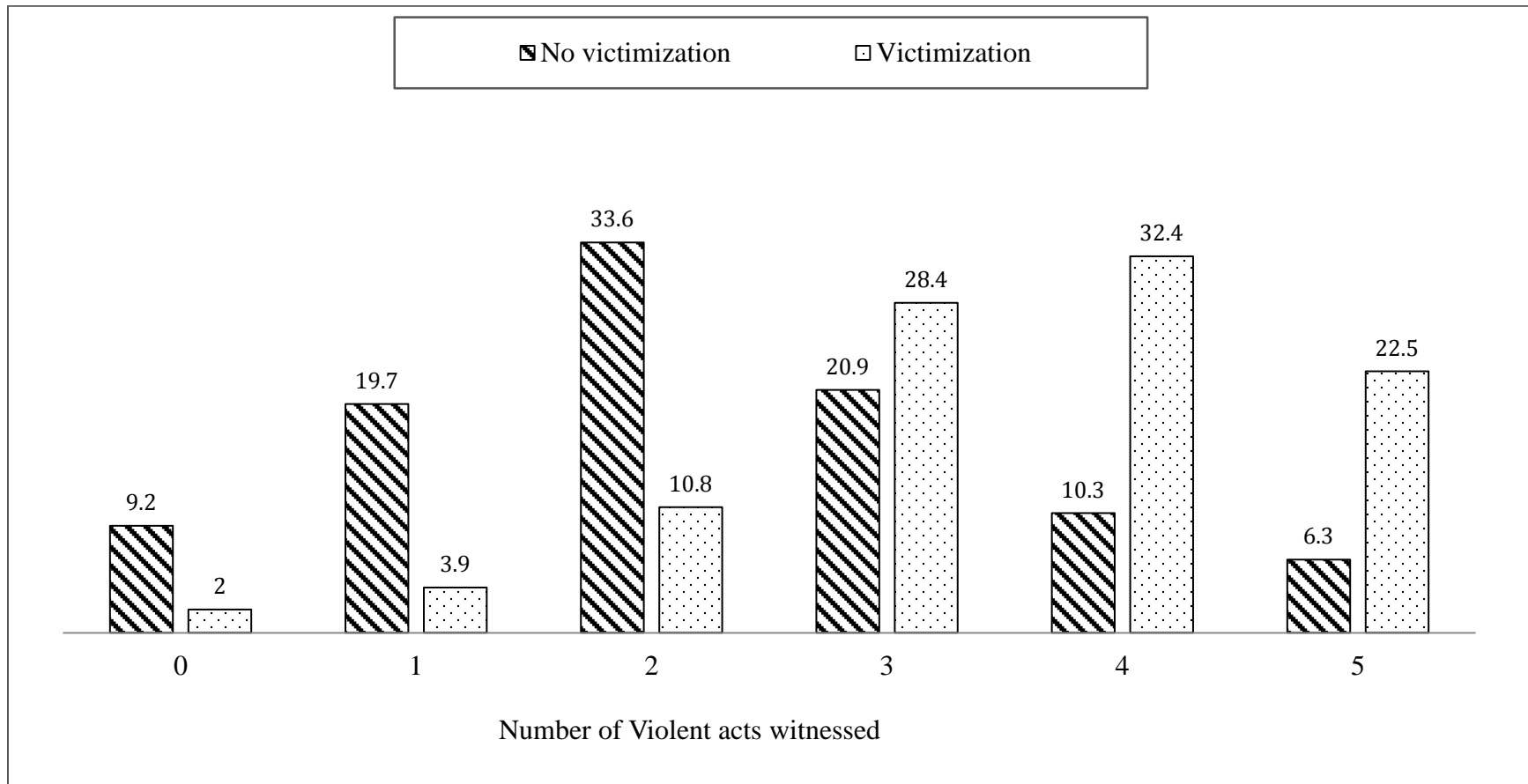
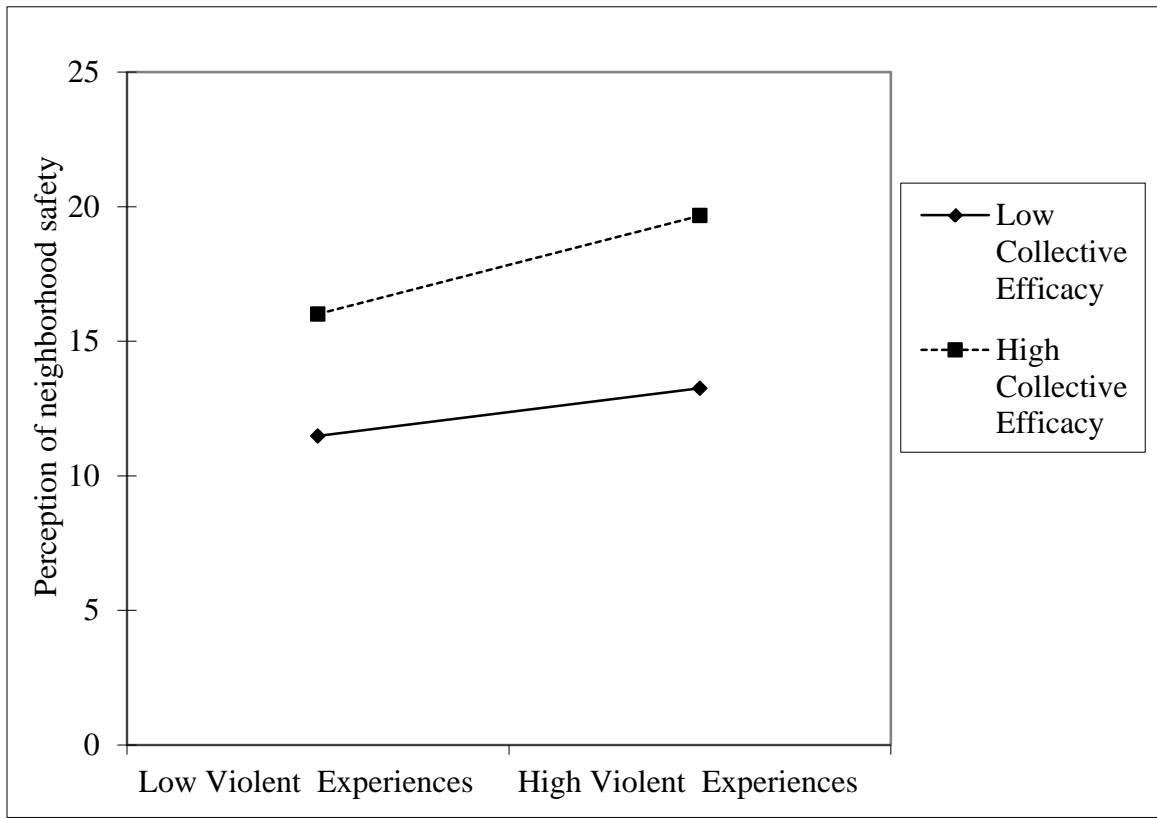


Figure 2.2 Interaction of collective efficacy and violent experiences



CHAPTER 3

I come from a tough place: Parent education and violent behavior among African-American boys

A number of individual, family and neighborhood level factors have been known to attenuate and in some cases eliminate negative outcomes for youth in contexts of high risk. Protective factors such as parent communication about risks, and access to prosocial peers have been shown to moderate the relationship between risk factors and violent behavior (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2003). Adolescents who live in neighborhoods that are characterized by crime, poverty and other forms of disadvantage are at increased risk of being exposed, either as victims or witnesses, to some form of violence in their neighborhood. African-American youth are more likely to live in these disadvantaged neighborhoods, and they experience greater exposure to the negative elements in these neighborhoods than other poor youth (Flowers, Lanclos, & Kelley, 2002; McNulty & Bellair, 2003). These experiences have been linked to the sequelae of numerous negative behaviors among youth who call these neighborhoods home (Jacob, 2006; Mrug & Windle, 2009; Neumann, Barker, Koot, & Maughan, 2010). Adolescents in these kinds of neighborhoods benefit from the presence of individual, family and neighborhood resources.

A large body of research has established a link between risk factors such as witnessing violence and youth engagement in violent behavior (Lindstrom-Johnson, Finigan, Bradshaw, Haynie, & Cheng, 2011; Neumann, Barker, Koot, & Maughan, 2010;

Mrug & Windle, 2009). However, the literature has focused more on identifying risk factors, with fewer studies exploring the influence of these risks in the presence of protective factors and assets (i.e. resilience) (Herrenkohl, Hill, Chung, Gu, Abbott, & Hawkins, 2003; Haynie, Silver, & Teasdale, 2006; Lösel & Farrington, 2012. To address this gap, I investigated the influence of neighborhood and interpersonal factors on violent behavior for African-American youth. Using Zimmerman's Risk and Resilience Model (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005) I investigated the protective influence of parental education in reducing violent behaviors among African American boys growing up in poverty. In this chapter I discussed the prevalence of youth violence. I then explored the influence of a number of risk (i.e. peer and parent influence, and exposure to violence) and protective factors (i.e. parent educational attainment, and parent communication about fighting) on youth violent outcomes.

Youth violence

In the United States a significant number of violent crimes have been perpetrated by youth between the ages of 10 and 24 (Center for Disease Control (CDC), 2010). This age group also is represented in a large portion of the victimization statistics (CDC, 2010; Snyder & Sickmund, 2006; Fox & Zawitz, 2001). The effects of violence are exhibited most significantly in disadvantaged neighborhoods defined by structural disadvantages and instability (Markowitz, 2003). Youth violence includes serious behaviors such as homicide, aggravated assault, intimidation, burglary, theft and robbery, and less serious acts like bullying (Dahlburg, 1998; Herrenkohl, Maguin, Hill, Hawkins, Abbott & Catalano, 2000). Related and possibly more age-feasible violent behaviors have been recorded among school age youth. For instance, half of the middle school boys who

participated in a multi-site study of risk behaviors among minority youth indicated that they had threatened someone with physical violence and half of them eventually carried out their threat (Clubb et al., 2001). The study also revealed that 67% of the African-Americans in the sample had engaged in some type of violent behavior three months before the study.

In a 2011 nationally representative sample of 9-12 year olds 16.6% of those surveyed indicated carrying a weapon on one or more days in the 30-day period before the survey. The prevalence of weapon carrying was higher for males (CDC, 2011). Some research has suggested that compared to other ethnic groups African-American youth evidence higher rates of nonfatal assaultive behaviors such as physical fighting, stabbing or shooting at a person (Kann et al., 2009). These youth also reported greater involvement in more serious violations like weapon carrying (CDC, 2011). Such acts increase the likelihood of victimization and perpetration of violence among African-American youth. In fact African-Americans males are more than 3 times likely as Hispanic males and more than 17 times as likely as non-Hispanic White males to be victims of homicide (CDC, 2010).

Acts of interpersonal violence, regardless of the level of seriousness, affect adolescent's health and well-being. Youth's engagement in violence also has been linked to other risky behaviors like promiscuity and unsafe sexual practices, drunk driving, and suicide attempts (Huizinga & Jakob-Chien, 1998; Sosin, Koepsell, Rivara, & Mercy, 1995). Risk factors such as negative peer influences and witnessing violence in the neighborhood consistently have been identified as predictors of youth violence (Dishion, Andrews, & Crosby, 1995; Henry et al., 2001 (Mrug & Windle, 2009; Jacob, 2006;

Neumann, Barker, Koot, & Maughan, 2010; Pardini, Loeber, Farrington, and Stouthamer-Loeber, 2012). A better understanding of how these risk factors operate in the presence of protective factors such as parent communication about violence, parent education and efficacy to avoid violence will inform parenting efforts as well as those of mental health service providers. Exploring the strengths and resources of African-American boys and their families in the face of neighborhood disadvantage would provide information useful for intervention development, and prevention research. Therefore, I employed a risk and resilience conceptual framework.

Exposure to violence

Multiple experiences such as hearing, seeing or otherwise experiencing violence at home, in the school or in the neighborhood are all encapsulated under the heading – exposure to neighborhood violence. A recent study announced that at least 80% of urban dwelling youth had witnessed some form of violence. More than 70% of these youth had been direct victims of violence (Cooley-Strickland, Quille, & Griffin, 2009). Frequent experiences with neighborhood violence have been shown to predict adolescent's engagement in violent behavior (Lindstrom-Johnson, Finigan, Bradshaw, Haynie, & Cheng, 2011; Gorman-Smith, Henry, & Tolan, 2004). As witnesses and victims of neighborhood violence youth learned that violent behavior was an effective – albeit short-term – solution to social problems. However, parents who communicated with their children about the negative experiences in their neighborhood are able to intervene in the development of negative effects. This communication also allowed parents to offer alternative strategies for dealing with social conflicts (Lindstrom-Johnson, 2011; Caron, Weiss, Harris, & Catron, 2006).

Even when youth are exposed to violence through more indirect means such as repeatedly hearing about violent acts, there is significant risk for negative outcomes (Scarpa & Haden, 2006). While the effect of being a victim of neighborhood violence has obvious negative consequences for youth, merely witnessing violence has been shown to be strongly associated with the development of violent behaviors (Schwartz and Proctor, 2000). Researchers, however, warn against an overly parsimonious reliance on any one risk factor to completely explain youth violence. In studying the relation between neighborhood factors, parenting practices, peer affiliation, and delinquency among 14-18 year old boys (n = 488) Chung and Steinberg (2006) found that social and structural characteristics of the neighborhood provided a framework within which parents and peers differentially influenced youth violence during adolescence. The sample for this study was older juvenile offenders.

Chung and Steinberg (2006) demonstrated that the influence of neighborhood structural and social characteristics on youth behavior functions through parenting behavior and peer deviance. They also reported that community social ties conferred both prosocial and antisocial influences related to developmental risk for youth living in these neighborhoods. Chung and Steinberg's (2006) focus on older offenders took a more reactive response to investigating youth violence. Their findings might prove more informative for secondary intervention efforts. The current study explores a younger more normative sample. Therefore, potential findings would fit more readily into a prevention or primary intervention framework.

Peer and parent influence

For African-American boys living in neighborhoods characterized by violence,

drugs and other forms of risk, the choice of peers may be very limited. Violent behavior may therefore also be a function of the peers who form part of adolescent's social network. Tolan, Gorman-Smith, and Henry (2003), in exploring the link between neighborhood structural and social characteristics noted that weaknesses in either area were directly related to affiliation with gangs. Affiliation with deviant peers has been established as the strongest indicator for violent behaviors among youth (Dishion, Andrews, & Crosby, 1995; Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller, 1992; Henry, Tolan, & Gorman-Smith, 2001; Patterson, Dishion, & Yoerger, 2000). For boys who have limited availability of prosocial peers, researchers posit that their association with deviant peers was particularly predictive of violent behavior two years later. The findings were similar for boys who had low emotional support from their parents (Henry et al., 2001). These findings were based on a study of family and peer influences on antisocial behavior in 246 boys in inner city Chicago neighborhoods.

In a recent study by Henry, Tolan, Gorman-Smith and Schoeny (2012) the influence of affiliation with deviant peers on youth's violent behaviors was shown to predict high levels of youth violence. In this multisite study of 4,432 middle school adolescents, the researchers found that for adolescents who identified as White/other youth peer delinquency was significantly associated with youth's engagement in violent behavior, while only marginally so for African-American youth. This study supports the need for research that determines how risk and protective factors may function differently for different ethnic groups. These findings provided an excellent foundation for exploring how the relationship between affiliation with deviant peers and youth violence may work differently for African-American boys or girls. Thus, in the current study I explored the

effects of specific protective factors like parent education in the face of risk such as peer influence.

Positive parenting behaviors play a crucial role as mediators of neighborhood risks. Parents who were positively involved in their children's lives and who engaged in consistent monitoring of their child's activities reduced the risk of violent behaviors regardless of race and socioeconomic status (Furstenberg et al., 1999; Dishion & McMahon, 1998; Gorman-Smith, Tolan, & Henry, 2000). Parental warmth and the consistency of positive parental involvement may mediate the relationship between delinquent outcomes and neighborhood disadvantages such as exposure to deviant peers (Conger, Ge, Elder, Lorenz, & Simons, 1994; McLoyd, 1990; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2004). More specifically, parental influence plays a crucial role in attenuating the effects of negative peer influences in neighborhoods fraught with risk and disadvantage (Valois, MacDonald, Bretous, Fischer, & Drane, 2002).

While the links between exposure to violence and emergence of aggressive and violent behaviors are modest (Brady, Gorman-Smith, Henry, & Tolman, 2008), the necessity for exploring possible precipitates and buffers for this relationship remains. This study of 285 African-American and Latino boys also revealed that coping styles in childhood and adolescence moderate associations between exposure to violence and aggressive behavior (Brady et al., 2008). While encouraging, Brady and colleagues (2008) did not specifically address the influence of race and sex for these findings. They also did not address these issues in relation to African-Americans although their study employed a sample of African-American and Latino youth in urban settings. My study addresses these concerns as I dealt specifically with an African-American sample, which

should lead to a clearer understanding of these issues and how they affect African-American boys' efficacy to avoid violence. The current study also explored an under examined protective factor – efficacy to avoid violence. Youth who hold strong beliefs in their efficacy to avoid violent behavior are more than likely to have been taught and had those beliefs supported by positive interactions with parents, peers and neighborhood resources. Development of this individual strength may galvanize positive parental and peer support and in turn reduce youth violence.

Violence avoidance efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to the individual's beliefs about their ability to make positive choices in specific situations (Bennett & Fraser, 2000). Self-efficacy beliefs may function as a filter for adolescents' experiences with their neighborhood (Bennett & Fraser, 2000; Bradley & Corwyn, 2001; Jagers, Morgan-Lopez, Howard, Browne, & Flay, 2007; and negative outcomes like violence. Caprara, Regalia, and Bandura (2002) reaffirmed the intervening effect of youth self-efficacy beliefs on violent behavior. The study was based on a study of 350 adolescents in a residential community near Rome and found concurrent and longitudinal effects of adolescents' beliefs of their ability to avoid engagement in violence on actual violent behaviors. Studies in this area have focused largely on European and other youth samples, and have found that violence avoidance self-efficacy beliefs influence their pro-social and antisocial behaviors (Caprara et al. 1998, 2002). Fewer studies have explored this link for African-American populations. Even fewer have explored this link in African-American boys.

One of the few studies of the link between violence avoidance self-efficacy and future violent behaviors showed that self-efficacy beliefs were a negative predictor of

violent behavior among African-American youths (Jagers, Morgan-Lopez, Howard, Browne, & Flay, 2007). The study investigated behavioral changes (i.e. communal values orientation, beliefs about avoiding violence, empathy) among 668 adolescents who participated in a culturally specific intervention. While it was determined that the intervention did not increase youths' efficacy to avoid violence, youth who held such self-efficacy beliefs exhibited fewer violent behaviors. This finding remained true even after controlling for the impact of classmate's fighting (Jagers et al., 2007).

Another study of youth violence employed a multiethnic group of 11-14 year olds (Riner & Saywell, 2002). These authors found that especially for African-Americans, higher levels of nonviolence efficacy were predictive of more violence avoidance behaviors. These beliefs involved personal feelings of confidence that one could resolve conflicts without the use of physical violence. Finally, McMahon, Felix, Halpert, & Petropoulos, (2009) found that continued exposure to violence was related to reduced self-efficacy in relation to avoiding violence. Efforts at reducing youth violence should therefore also focus on building and supporting coping skills for adolescents in disadvantaged communities.

Parent communication about fighting

Adolescents who have limited coping resources in the face of experiencing violence exhibit more violent behavior over time (Brady et al., 2008). For these youth supportive parenting is a key buffer in the relationship between exposure to violence and subsequent violent behavior. Supportive parenting is defined by supportive and caring behaviors such as parent-child communication, parent concern, monitoring, and parent connectedness (Barber, Stolz, & Olsen, 2005; Brookmeyer, Henrich, and Schwab-Stone,

2005; Blum, Ireland, & Blum, 2003; Ceballo, Ramirez, Heran, & Maltese, 2003; O'Donnell, Schwab-Stone, & Muyeed, 2002). These positive parenting practices may strongly reduce the negative influence of high-risk neighborhoods on youth outcomes (Simons et al. 2002, 2004). High levels of parent communication with adolescents about their activities have been associated with reductions in antisocial behavior in adolescence (Barnes & Farrell, 1992; Chilcoat & Anthony, 1996).

The literature suggests that these kinds of parenting behaviors, including communication, may function through their ability to nurture youth's self-esteem and self-efficacy (Caron, Weiss, Harris, & Catron, 2006). These parenting behaviors also increase youths' likelihood to endorse social norms that are supported by their parents, while reducing the likelihood of affiliation with negative peers (Laible & Carlo, 2004). Though researchers have established a direct path between exposure to violence and subsequent violent behavior in adolescents, not all youth in these neighborhoods participate in violent acts (Brookmeyer et al., 2005). For those who are most at risk for adopting violent behaviors, supportive parenting has been associated with reductions in externalizing and criminal behaviors (Barnes, Hoffman, Welte, Farrell, & Dintcheff, 2006; Laird, Pettit, Bates, & Dodge, 2003; Rai, Stanton, Wu, Li, Galbraith, Cottrell, Pack, Harris, D'Alesandri, & Burns, 2003), as well as internalizing behaviors (Blum, Ireland, & Blum, 2003; O'Donnell, Schwab-Stone, & Muyeed, 2002).

The results of a longitudinal study by Brookmeyer, Henrich, and Schwab-Stone (2005) investigated the effect of witnessing violence on subsequent violent behavior among 15-17 year old urban middle school students ($n = 1,599$). The study found that for adolescent boys, even average levels of supportive parenting could intervene in the

sequelae of youth violence. They also found that adolescent boys benefitted from average and high levels of support from their parents, and therefore engaged in fewer acts of violence. Like previous related studies this study by Brookmeyer and colleagues (2005) used data from a multi-ethnic sample and in this case the sample consisted of only 61% African-Americans. The researchers reported no findings specific to race. The current study is one of few that explored these issues among an exclusively self-identified African-American sample of male adolescents and as such makes a much needed contribution to the literature on peer and parent influence on violent behavior for this specific population.

Parent's attitudes and communications about violence are reliable predictors of youth violence even when youth's own attitudes toward violence are taken into consideration (Kliewer, Parrish, Taylor, Jackson, Walker, & Shivy, 2006; Copeland-Linder, Jones, Haynie et al., 2006; Orpinas, Home, Staniszewski, 2003). Adolescents who receive messages from their parents that discouraged aggressive responses to violence were less likely to be violent. However, parental monitoring of their child's activities and related parent-child communication, while associated with reduced levels of violent behavior, is not a panacea. Some studies suggest that the protective influence of these resources may weaken for adolescents who are frequent victims of violence (Bacchini, Miranda, & Affuso, 2011; Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 1998; Miller et al., 1999). On the other hand parents have numerous avenues through which they can protect their children against negative outcomes such as youth violence. One under-researched protective factor is parents' educational attainment.

Parent educational attainment

The literature shows that parents with more economic resources and higher levels of education are less likely to live in disadvantaged neighborhoods. This reduces the likelihood of significant risk exposure for their children. In fact children of less educated mothers were more likely to be exposed to violence (Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 1998; O'Dougherty, Masten, 2005). However, African-American and other non-white parents along with biological parents also spend more time with their children (Cooksey & Fondell, 1996; Harris, Furstenberg, & Manner, 1998; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). While representing only one element of a family's socioeconomic status, parent's education is a specific asset that may reduce the risk of violent behaviors for African-American boys in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Conversely, lower levels of maternal education may function as a risk factor for youth violence. For example, lower maternal education has been linked to inconsistent positive parenting practices and negative outcomes (Davis-Kean, 2005; Goldstein, Davis-Kean, & Eccles, 2005; McLloyd, 1998) including youth violence and increased exposure to violence (Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 1998; Richters & Martinez, 1993) during childhood and adolescence.

Gorman-Smith and Tolan (1998) suggested that higher parental education provides organization to the family system, the most proximal and influential contextual system in development (Cicchetti & Lynch, 1993; Tolan & Gorman-Smith, 1997; Tolan & Guerra, & Kendall, 1995). Families that serve as a safe haven from negative interactions with the neighborhood may reduce the toxic effects of these environments. Parents in these kinds of families monitor adolescents more closely, are involved in the lives of their children, and in other ways limit their child's exposure to deleterious elements in the neighborhood.

Parental education usually determines the kind of resources that parents can provide for their children (see review by Erikson, Cater, Andershed, & Andershed, 2010). Richters and Martinez (1993) found no predictive effect for either adaptive success or failure for youth who had been exposed to violence. They suggested “it was not the mere accumulation of environmental adversities that gave rise to adaptational failure in these adolescents. Rather, it was only when such adversities contaminated or eroded the stability and/or safety levels of the adolescents’ homes that the odds of their adaptation failure increased (p. 609).” Parents with lower educational attainment may remain a credible resource to their African-American sons through positive parenting practices like monitoring and communication. With the influence of peers increasing across the developmental course, parent based resources can attenuate the risk of violent behavior by buffering the erosive nature of accumulated risk. Parents may play a crucial role in providing African-American boys with the skills and strengths for negotiating neighborhood risks.

Risk and resilience

The risk and resiliency framework (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005) was applied to this investigation of the contributions of risk (*exposure to violence, affiliation with deviant peers*) and protective factors (*efficacy to avoid violence, parent communication about physical fighting, and parent education*) for violent behavior. This framework views youth development from a less pathological view by exploring how individuals surmount the negative effects of risk exposure while avoiding the adverse developments associated with such exposure (Garmezy, Masten, Tellegen, 1984; Luthar, Cicchetti &

Becker, 2000; Masten & Powell, 2003; Rutter, 1985; Luthar, 2003; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005).

Generally, research that explores risk exposure among African-Americans adolescent males has employed a deficit model. The risk and resiliency framework accounts for negative outcomes, but also allows the researcher to accentuate the individual's strengths: how individuals manage to develop normally in the face of risk exposure. Within the realm of risk and resiliency protective factors are either internal to the individual (*assets*) or exist outside of the individual (*resources*). Assets are such individual qualities and skills like violence avoidance efficacy and coping skills; resources include factors such as parental education and parental communication about risks. Risk and protective factors can interact in multiple ways. Researchers have identified three overarching models for these interactions: (1) compensatory, (2) challenge, and (3) protective (Garmezy, Masten, Tellegen, 1984; Rutter, 1985; Zimmerman & Arunkumar, 1994; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005).

In the first model a protective factor (e.g. efficacy to avoid violence) works in the opposite direction of a risk factor (e.g. exposure to violence). In this way African-American boys who had a stronger belief in their efficacy to avoid engagement in violent behaviors would commit fewer violent acts. In the second model, a curvilinear relationship exists between the risk and protective factors (Luthar & Zelazo, 2003) such that adolescent boys who are exposed to high and low levels of violence engaged in more acts of violence. Boys who were moderately exposed to violence engaged in fewer violent acts. The suggested rationale is that boys who were exposed to moderate levels of

violence would have encountered just enough risk to challenge their coping responses. As a result those boys learn and hone their coping skills.

The presence and operation of assets and resources moderates the effect of a risk factor on a negative outcome in the protective model. Other researchers have suggested a third sub-model under the protective umbrella; protective-protective (Brook, Gordon, Whiteman, & Cohen, 1986; Brook, Whiteman, Gordon, & Cohen, 1989). The protective-protective model is based on the idea of accumulated protection. One protective factor (e.g. communication about fighting) increases the effect of another protective factor (e.g. efficacy to avoid violence) to produce a positive outcome. For instance, maternal support, which is linked to such factors as maternal education, has been shown to play both compensatory and protective roles in relation to risk factors for violent behavior (Zimmerman, Steinman, & Rowe, 1998). Even so, few studies have investigated the possible cumulative protective effect of parental or maternal education alongside other protective factors like parent communication about risks and youths' efficacy to avoid violence. The effect of this kind of cumulative protection would be beneficial for youth who have higher levels of exposure violence.

Current study and hypotheses

The current study investigates the influence of risk and protective factors on violent behavior among urban African-American boys. I hypothesized that the risk factors (i.e. exposure to violence; affiliation with deviant peers) will be positively related to violent behavior after controlling for demographic factors. This would mean that African-American boys who witnessed more violence or had greater exposure to peers who endorse violence would engage in more violent behaviors. I also expect that the

addition of family and individual protective factors will explain additional variance in violent behavior over and above risk factors such that greater levels of parents' education, communication about physical fighting, and efficacy to avoid violence will be related to fewer violent behaviors. Finally I test moderating hypotheses where parents' education is expected to reduce risk factors (i.e. exposure to violence and deviant peers) and enhance protective factors (i.e. efficacy to avoid violence and communication about fighting) for violent behaviors.

Methods

Sample

The data are from 553 African-American male participants in the Aban Aya Youth Project (AAYP). The AAYP is a longitudinal efficacy trial investigating the effects of three intervention conditions (Social Development Curriculum (SDC), School/family/ neighborhood intervention (SC), Health Enhancement Control (HEC)) on the development of violence, unsafe sex and substance use behaviors among low-income African-American youth. Participants were randomly assigned to the SDC (N=197), SC (N=182) and the HEC or control group (N=174).

The current study is based on the 4th wave of data. Participants in the three intervention conditions did not differ based on age, parent education level, length of time boys had lived in the neighborhood or household income. Additionally there were no differences for these boys based on the variables of interest in this study. Jagers, Morgan-Lopez, and Flay (2009) reported no differences on violence measures after controlling for pre-intervention age and modeling school-level nesting. This comparison was made between baseline data for the original and subsequent cohorts.

Participants for the AAYP came from 12 schools in poor metropolitan Chicago neighborhoods between 1994 and 1998. Students in the first wave of data collection were in the 5th grade (1994-1995 school year) or transferred into one of the 12 schools during that year. Those who transferred out were not followed. Less than 2% of parents requested that their child be excluded from the study (Jagers et al., 2009). Of the total sample of 1,153 participants, 553 were African-American males. The data for this study are from male participants who were 12.5 (SD = .62) years old on average and in the 6th grade. They reported having lived an average of 3.7 years (SD = 1.41) in their current neighborhood. The average household income at baseline was \$10,000–\$13,000. Almost half of the participants (47%) lived in two-parent households. Complete data was gathered from 890 of the parents. On average parents reported having been completed vocational education or some college level classes. Self-report data were collected from both adolescents and parents at each time point. This study uses both parent and child data from the third time point (6th grade). Measures were based on multiple questionnaires (e.g., Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBSS), National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)). These Measures were adapted based on feedback from focus groups and pilot testing with youth and parents living in high-risk communities.

Measures

Violent behaviors (VB).

Youth's report of engagement in violent behavior was assessed using seven questions adapted from the 1992 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBSS: Grunbaum, Kann, Kichen, et al., 1994). Originally, the YRBSS was developed for use with high school students. To facilitate use with younger samples questions were

modified to reflect the earlier stages of violence that fifth through eighth grade students might engage in. Participants indicated whether they had ever: (a) threatened to beat up someone; (b) threatened to cut, stab or shoot someone; (c) been in a physical fight; (d) carried a gun; (e) shot at someone; (f) carried knife or razor; and (g) cut or stabbed someone. Response choices were a simple dichotomy (0 = no; 1 = yes) for the lifetime involvement questions (Have you ever . . .). A sum score was created for this measure. Scores ranged from 0 to 7 with high scores indicating more violent behaviors.

Exposure to violence (EV).

Participants responded with 0 = No and 1 = Yes to indicate whether they had ever witnessed certain violent acts. The extent of having witnessed violence was measured using 5 items with a total score ranging from 0 to 5 with higher scores indicating more instances of having witnessed violence. Representative questions included “Have you even see someone get shot at” and “Have you even seen a friend or family member get cut”. The scale had a Cronbach alpha of .69 in this sample which indicated acceptable reliability.

Affiliation with deviant peers (ADP).

Participants’ affiliation with violent peers was indicated on a 4-item measure on a categorical scale of 0-4 where 0 = Definitely no, 2 = Not sure, 3 = Probably yes, and 4 = Definitely yes. African American boys answered questions such as “ Do your friends want you to avoid getting into physical fights?” and “Do your friends want you to avoid carrying a knife”. Two items were reverse coded so that higher scores on this variable would indicate that friends were promoting violent behavior and encouraging respondents to follow suit. The total possible score on this measure ranged from 0 to 16. Cronbach’s

alpha of was .77, indicating acceptable reliability.

Efficacy to avoid violence (EAV). Boys' perception of their ability to avoid violence was measured using 4 questions, each asking *How sure are you that you can (1) keep yourself from getting into physical fights (2) keep yourself from carrying a knife (3) stay away from situations in which you could get into fights (4) can seek help instead of fighting*. Responses were reported on a 0-4 scale where 0 = Definitely Cannot, 1 = Maybe Cannot, 2 = Not Sure, 3 = Maybe can , and 4 = Definitely Can. Scores ranged from 0 to 16 with higher scores indicating higher levels of boys' perception of their ability to avoid violence. The measure had a Cronbach's alpha of .84 for this sample.

Parent communication about fighting. This was a one item measure asking parents to indicate on a Likert scale with 0 = Never; 1 = once; 2 = 2 or 3 times; and 3 = more than 3 times, how often in the last month they had spoken to their sons about physical fights.

Parent education. Parents reported the highest level of education that they had achieved. Parent indicated the highest-level education completed by selecting the appropriate category from 1 to 11, with 1 representing "less than an 8th grade education", and 11 indicating "Post-college or professional degree".

Demographics. The demographic variables: child's age, length of time lived in the neighborhood, and average household income was included in the analyses as covariates. Length of time lived in the neighborhood was reported as a continuous measure of between 1 to 5 discrete years.

Data analysis plan

Bivariate analyses were conducted to examine the composition of the sample and to determine the relations among the variables. Subsequent multivariate analyses were executed in a three-step plan that employed hierarchical regressions. This mode of analysis was chosen because of its unique ability to explain the relative importance of ‘blocks of variables’. The first model tested the predictive relation between risk factors (i.e. exposure to violence, deviant peer association) and violent behaviors while controlling for demographic factors. The second model included protective factors – African-American boys’ ability to avoid violent behaviors; and parent communication about fighting to observe their influence on the dependent variable. The change in the variance explained by each added block is reported. Subtracting the mean from individual scores centered each continuous variable. This allowed for addressing possible multicollinearity issues. Interaction terms were created with each of the centered predictor variables. The third model included the interaction terms to facilitate easy observation of the change in the variance explained by the model (Aiken & West, 1991; Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). I present the results of these analyses in Table 3.2.

Missing data

At the first wave of data collection participants completed a baseline questionnaire. In an effort to shorten the length of the surveys, from the second posttest collection onward participants were asked to complete three of four survey units: the core unit which comprised all the behavioral outcome measures as well as two randomly assigned modules containing randomly selected meditational measures. Also, participants who transferred into the class were allowed to be part of the project and were assessed at

that time point. This study design generates some expected missingness and therefore requires plans for addressing this issue. This study uses data from the third time point.

The first step in treating missing data is to determine whether the data are missing completely at random (MCAR), missing at random (MAR) or not missing at random (NMAR) to determine how the missing data should be handled (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007; Kline, 2011). Listwise deletion reduces sample size. This missing data solution along with mean and case mean substitutions are limited by their reliance on smaller percentages of missingness, often 20% or less (Acock, 1997; Kline, 2011; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007; Roth, Switzer, & Switzer, 1999). Roth (1994) advises that when missingness is at 20%, regardless of the pattern, missingness could be handled with multiple imputation techniques like Maximum Likelihood (ML) and Estimation Maximization (EM). The literature on the use of the ML procedure is sparse since the procedure has only recently become available in more conventional software packages (Fox-Wasylyshyn & El-Masri, 2005).

Data imputation procedures such as Estimation Maximization (EM) remain appropriate and are considered superior techniques because of the unbiased estimates that result from data that are MCAR (Acock, 1997). While there are multiple tests for discerning missingness patterns, Little's MCAR test is the only available global test statistic on missingness (Little, 1985). The Little's MCAR indicated no statistically reliable deviation from randomness $Chi Sq = 177902.852$, $df = 190959$ $p = 1.000$ (Within SPSS 19). Pearson's product-moment test of correlation ($p \leq 0.05$) reveal no bivariate indicators of missingness related to the variables involved in this study (Schlomer, Bauman, & Card, 2010).

Missing Values analysis in IBM's PASW package version 19 was used to impute missing data. Estimation maximization functions by using the actual and missing values to estimate missing data. The systems algorithm computes multiple iterations until parameter estimates convergence. This results in data values that are comparable to Multiple iteration and which would not be improved significantly with more iterations (University of Texas Statistical Services, 2013). The data was imputed at a convergence of 0.001, after 100 imputations.

Results

Bivariate results

The sample of African-American boys was randomly assigned to one of two intervention conditions or the control group. The School/ family/ neighborhood intervention (SC) condition comprised 32.9% of the sample while the Social Development Curriculum (SDC) and Health Enhancement Control (HEC) comprised 35.6% and 31.5% respectively. For this study I followed the recommendations of previous studies based on these data. Flay, Graumlich, Segawa, Burns, and Holliday (2004) found that the two intervention conditions (SC and SDC) had similar prevention effects compared to the HEC/Control. For this reason, and to increase statistical power for analyses the two intervention conditions were combined (Ngwe, Li, Flay, & Segawa, 2004). As a result the intervention group for this study was a combination of the SC and SDC participants (67.1% of the sample) whereas the control group remained unchanged (32.9%). The sample distribution on the variables in this study indicated no significant difference between the intervention and control groups (See Table 3.1).

The African-American boys who comprised this sample averaged 12.5 years ($SD = .62$) in age and almost half of them (47.2%) lived in two-parent households. They reported having lived in their neighborhood for 3.67 years ($SD = 1.41$). Eighty-nine percent reported living with their mothers or a mother figure and 47% with a father figure or their biological fathers. Most of the parents who participated in this study were mothers (86%). These families had an average household income of \$10,000 but less than \$15,000; however 56.2% of them averaged incomes of between \$10,000 and \$30,000. Only 7.2% had incomes above \$30,000. Parents reported, on average, having completed high school and some vocational education. A large majority of parents, 64.1%, had completed high school or some college education. A noticeable chunk (13.7%) had earned two and four-year college degrees or had earned some post college level degree. See Table 1 for additional descriptions of the sample.

The most frequently reported forms of aggression were episodic, noncriminal and in some cases normative. The most representative violent behaviors were threatening to beat someone up (77%) and engaging in a physical fight (94.8%). Few African-American boys reported threatening to cut/stab someone (23.1%), carrying a gun (12.3%) or had been badly hurt in a physical fight (14.3%). Less than 10% of African-American boys had ever engaged in more serious acts - cutting/stabbing someone or shooting at them (*see Figure 3.1*). Of the boys who had indicated being involved in a physical fight in the past year 15% reported serious injury arising from a fight.

Correlations were also calculated to determine relationships between the dependent variable (violent behaviors) and key predictors. A correlation matrix using Pearson's Product moment correlation coefficients was calculated to provide a parametric

measure of the relationship among the variables (see Table 3.1). Violent behavior was positively correlated with exposure to violence and affiliation with deviant peers.

African-American boys' who had been exposure to violence, or who affiliated more with deviant peers were more likely to engage in violent behaviors. Youths whose parents were more educated were likely to engage in fewer violent behaviors. These variables were negatively inter-correlated.

Multivariate results

Results of the hierarchical multiple regression models are presented in Table 3.2. The first model of the hierarchical regression established a positive relation between African-American boys' engagement in violent behaviors and two risk factors - exposure to violence, and affiliation with deviant peers, demographic variables were entered as controls in this and subsequent models. This first model explained 20.3% of the variance in violent behaviors. Both risk factors entered in this model contributed significantly to predicting violent behaviors. African-American boys who had witnessed more violence or had stronger affiliation with deviant peers committed more violent acts.

Three protective factors (i.e. efficacy to avoid violence, parent communication about fighting, and parent education) were entered in the second model. A total of 23.2% of the variance in violent behaviors was explained and with model representing an increase of 3% of explained variance in violent behaviors. Both exposure to violence and affiliation with deviant peers remained significantly predictive of violent behaviors. The coefficients for both risk factors were reduced by the presence of protective factors in the model (see Table 3.2). The three protective factors were negatively related to engagement in violent behaviors. Higher levels of each variable predicted less violent behaviors in the

presence of significant risks. African-American boys who reported stronger beliefs in their ability to avoid violent behaviors engaged in fewer acts of violence. Adolescent boys whose parents had conveyed messages to them about fighting were also less likely to be involved in acts of violence. Parent's level of education was also negatively related to violent behavior such that higher levels of parent education were associated with fewer acts of violence by boys.

In the final model, interaction terms were introduced. The inclusion of the interaction effects of parent education and key predictors accounted for an additional 1% of the variance explained, and a total of 24% variance explained by the complete model. Only two of the interactions contributed significantly to predicting violent behavior for African-American boys. The interaction between parents' education and peer affiliation was significant. Under conditions of less affiliation with deviant peers, having more educated parents was related to fewer violent acts (see Figure 3.2). African-American boys whose parents spoke to them about physical fighting engaged in fewer violent behaviors. This relationship between the variables was most noticeable for parents with lower levels of education (see Figure 3.3).

Discussion

Poverty, high crime rates, poor housing, and low perceptions of collective efficacy among residents characterize disadvantaged neighborhoods (Chung & Steinberg, 2006; Vazsonyi, Cleveland, & Wiebe, 2006). These neighborhoods leave youth unprotected from the deleterious effects of neighborhood risk factors. In the face of such powerful and chronic stressors, it is important to identify protective resources available to high-risk youths. Parental education as a family resource has remained relatively

unexamined in the discourse on youth violence among African-American boys. A parent's educational level is associated with access to other resources such as financial resources, family stability, living in better neighborhoods, and positive parenting practices (O'Dougherty, Masten, 2005; Farrington, 1998; Thornberry, Huizenga, & Loeber, 1995; Loeber & Farrington, 1998; Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 1998).

I explored the moderating influence of parental education on the relationship between risk and protective factors and violent behaviors. The factors I employed here were exposure to violence, affiliation with deviant peers (risk); and parent education, efficacy to avoid violence, and parent communication about physical fighting (protective) respectively. First I examined the extent to which violent behavior existed in this sample. The boys in this sample were more involved in comparatively less dangerous behaviors such as physical fights, and threatening to beat someone. These behaviors are not rare among adolescents or boys in general. For more intermediate violent behaviors such as threatening to harm someone with a weapon, less than half of the boys had ever made such threats. Less than a quarter of the sample had ever carried a gun, shot at or stabbed someone. This suggested that African-American boys were more normative in their behaviors than the literature has sometimes suggested. African-American boys are not a population doomed to crime and violence. They are instead like any other youth – subjected to the risk and protective factors in their environment.

My findings supported the literature that affirms that boys who are more exposed to violence are more likely to evidence high levels of violent behavior (Lindstrom Johnson, Finigan, Bradshaw, Haynie, & Cheng, 2011; Scarpa & Haden, 2006; Schwatz and Proctor, 2000). Exposure to violence was the strongest predictor of violent behavior

in this sample. African-American boys who had witnessed more violence may have eventually resorted to violence as a conflict resolution strategy (Lindstrom Johnson, Finigan, Bradshaw, Haynie, & Cheng, 2011). Boys with greater deviant peer affiliation were also more likely to be engaged in violent behaviors (Henry et al., 2001; Patterson et al., 2000). On the other hand, African-American boys who felt that they had the ability to avoid engaging in violent behaviors committed fewer violent acts. Parent-based resources such as educational attainment and communication with their child about physical fighting predicted fewer violent acts. These findings are supported by the resilience literature that has indicated that such protective factors reduce the incidence of problem behaviors (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005).

Families with an amalgamation of resource deficits may find it challenging to protect their children from negative neighborhood effects. Disadvantaged urban neighborhoods are home to more non-Whites, single-parent households, adults with lower educational attainment, families with limited financial resources, and more social problems (Loeber et al., 1998; Farrington, 1998; Thornberry, Huizenga, & Loeber, 1995; Flowers, Lanclos, & Kelley, 2002; McNulty & Bellair, 2003). I explored the effect of parental education on some of these neighborhood risk factors. I also investigated the possibility of compounded protection by testing the moderating influence of parental education on the relationship between protective factors (i.e. violence avoidance efficacy and communication about fighting) and violent behavior. Parental education had a moderating effect on peer affiliation and parental communication about fighting.

Parents' education did not differentially affect violent behavior for African-American boys who affiliated with deviant peers. For boys who had less exposure to

deviant peers, high parental education was related to fewer violent behaviors. Boys who were exposed to more deviant peers and whose parents had less education differed only slightly in violent behavior, from those with similar peer exposure but more educated parents. These results suggest that regardless of education level, parents were able to protect their adolescent sons by reducing their sons' affiliation with deviant peers. Higher levels of education served as an additional resource to adolescents. Another explanation is that the developmental age of this sample of African-American boys ($m = 12.49$) reduced the likelihood that they would have access to very deviant peers. Adolescents at this age were more likely to be affiliated with, and influenced by same aged peers. Additionally, current peers may be endorsing those less serious violent behaviors (i.e. physical fighting, threatening to beat up someone) that were reported by this sample. It would be interesting to observe whether these findings continue into adolescence when youth are more likely to affiliate with much older peers and individuals in the neighborhood.

African-American boys whose parents had communicated more messages about physical fighting were engaged in fewer violent acts regardless of parent's educational attainment. Parents with less education, who communicated about physical fighting with their African-American sons less, had sons who engaged in more violence. This suggests that parents remained a source of protection for their African-American sons regardless of their own educational attainment. It also indicated that communication about specific risk was especially beneficial for more disadvantaged boys. Therefore, families with fewer resources may not need extraordinary strategies when it comes to protecting African-American boys. More common positive parenting practices such communication

about risks remains a potent resource that is available to parents. Most of the parents in this sample are mothers. It is encouraging therefore that, regardless of education, mothers can talk to their African-American sons about fighting. This parenting practice remained protective against engagement in violent behavior.

Parents with less education have fewer financial resources and live with multiple risk factors. However, these parents remained a protective element for their African-American sons if parents were engaged in positive parenting practices such as communication about fighting. Thus talking to youth about risky behaviors matters. Even as peers become more important and influential in the lives of adolescents and even in situations of low risk for negative peer exposure, parents can still protect their African-American sons from engaging in violent behaviors. This remained true regardless of parents' educational attainment. Parents need to remain involved, especially as youth move into adolescence and interact increasingly with socialization agents outside of the family. Parents who talk to their African-American sons about risky behaviors like engagement in violence, are providing an important protection. This is especially so for those families who are located in neighborhoods that represent significant risk to adolescent boys.

Implications and Limitations

These findings have meaningful implications for parents, and service providers who work with African-American boys. Parents do not need extraordinary intervention to help protect their African-American sons negotiate the negative neighborhood influences. Interventions that encourage positive parenting practices including parent-child communication about specific risks like fighting, would be beneficial to these families.

Mental health providers, educators and others who work with these families can help by providing guidance to parents about how to speak with their sons. There are current programs aimed at helping parents better communicate with their sons about other risky behaviors like drug use. Similar programs related to communication about avoiding violence for youth, families, and communities may yield benefits. Parents should be encouraged to engage their African-American sons in communication about violence to provide alternative problem solving strategies. These conversations may also give youth the opportunity to talk about their experiences in the neighborhood, while filtering messages from peers and other socialization events outside of the family. These findings suggest the efficacy of parenting practices in averting negative youth behaviors.

Encouraging enhanced communication as part of a cadre of positive parenting behaviors would therefore benefit African-American boys living in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Communication about parental expectations related to engagement in violence may help protect youth in high-risk contexts. This study may therefore have policy implications for the families and neighborhoods represented here. Neighborhood and school programs that increase the chance of parents' communication and involvement with their children may prove beneficial. Additionally school-based programs that encourage parents' communication about non-supportive beliefs about violence may reduce youth violence. These kinds of programs may also increase collective efficacy and thus improve perceptions of neighborhood quality.

There are a few limitations to this study. The main limitation of this study is its cross-sectional nature. This research design does not answer causal questions. Additional research should investigate how neighborhood, parent and youth factors influence youth

violent behaviors, and how youths' violent behaviors also influence these factors. Communication was assessed with a single item measure. This limitation did not allow for examining the quality of parents' communication about fighting. While parents did indicate that they had spoken to their sons about this issue there is no indication of what messages were conveyed. Additionally, the violent behaviors measured in this study seemed out of range for the developmental age of the sample. African-American boys reported behaviors that could well be developmentally appropriate for most boys. The boys reported more physical fighting and threatening to beat up others. It may well be that these boys reported sibling conflicts which would be normative at this age. The current measure did not allow for determining whether these behaviors were occurring primarily at home, at school, or among peers in the neighborhood. Fighting among siblings would be a far less concerning behavior than fights and threats occurring at school, and directed to persons outside of the family. Therefore, a more comprehensive behavior measure that allowed for developmentally representative violent behaviors might have been even more revealing. Another possibility would have been to look at these issues in a sample of violent youth or youth who had committed a crime. Even with these limitations the findings of this study remain salient to the lives of African-American boys.

Future directions

Future studies of youth violence among African-American boys in urban settings should continue to examine parents' education as a source of protection. Future research should investigate gender differences in the protective effect of parents' education attainment on engagement in violent behavior. Much of the research on parenting, and

child and adolescent outcomes continues to have a maternal bias. Exploring how paternal versus maternal level of education influences the behaviors of African-American boys would be a valuable contribution to the literature. The current study is restricted to early and preadolescent youth. Future research should examine these issues at a later age when peer influences are much stronger. This study adds to the largely cross sectional research addressing these issues. There should be a push towards a longitudinal exploration of these issues especially in African-American male samples. Older African-American boys are at greater risk for exposure to more dangerous elements in the neighborhood. Individual efficacy may be stronger later in the developmental trajectory. Investigating the influence of this individual strength alongside other assets and resources may provide a more complete picture of the possible trajectory of youth violence in this population.

References

- Acock, A. C. (2005). Working with missing values. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67(4), 1012-1028.
- Bacchini, D., Miranda, M. C., & Affuso, G. (2011). Effects of parental monitoring and exposure to community violence on antisocial behavior and anxiety/depression among adolescents. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 26(2), 269-292.
- Barber, B. K., Stolz, H. E., & Olsen, J. A. (2005). Parental support, psychological control, and behavioral control: Assessing the relevance across time, culture, and method. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 70, 1–137.
- Barnes, G. M., & Farrell, M. P. (1992). Parental support and control as predictors of adolescent drinking, delinquency, and related problem behaviors. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 54, 763-776.
- Barnes, G. M., Hoffman, J. H., Welte, J. W., Farrell, M. P., & Dintcheff, B. A. (2006). Effects of parental monitoring and peer deviance on substance use and delinquency. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68(4), 1084-1104.
- Bennett, Jr M.D., & Fraser, M.W. (2000). Urban violence among African American males: Integrating family, neighborhood, and peer perspectives. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 27(3), 93–117.

- Blum, J., Ireland, M., & Blum, R. W. (2003). Gender differences in juvenile violence: A report from Add Health. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 32*, 234-240.
- Bradley, R. H., & Corwyn, R. F. (2001). Home environment and behavioral development during early adolescence: The mediating and moderating roles of self-efficacy beliefs. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 47*(2), 165-187.
- Brady, S. S., Gorman-Smith, D., Henry, D. B., & Tolan, P. H. (2008). Adaptive coping reduces the impact of community violence exposure on violent behavior among African American and Latino male adolescents. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 36*(1), 105-115.
- Brook, J. S., Whiteman, M., Gordon, A. S., & Cohen, P. (1986). Dynamics of childhood and adolescent personality traits and adolescent drug use. *Developmental Psychology, 22*, 403-414.
- Brookmeyer, K. A., Henrich, C. C., & Schwab- Stone, M. (2005). Adolescents who witness community violence: Can parent support and prosocial cognitions protect them from committing violence? *Child Development, 76*(4), 917-929.
- Brown, E. C., Catalano, R. F., Fleming, C. B., Haggerty, K. P., Abbott, R. D., Cortes, R. R., & Park, J. (2005). Mediator effects in the social development model: An examination of constituent theories. *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health, 15*(4), 221-235.

- Caprara, G. V., Regalia, C., & Bandura, A. (2002). Longitudinal impact of perceived self-regulatory efficacy on violent conduct. *European Psychologist, 7*(1), 63-69.
- Caprara, G. V., Scabini, E., Barbaranelli, C., Pastorelli, C., Regalia, C., & Bandura, A. (1998). Impact of adolescents' perceived self-regulatory efficacy on familial communication and antisocial conduct. *European Psychologist, 3*(2), 125-132.
- Caron, A., Weiss, B., Harris, V., & Catron, T. (2006). Parenting behavior dimensions and child psychopathology: Specificity, task dependency, and interactive relations. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 35*(1), 34-45.
- Ceballo, R., Ramirez, C., Hearn, K. D., & Maltese, K. L. (2003). Community violence and children's psychological well-being: Does parental monitoring matter? *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 32*(4), 586-592.
- Centers for Disease Control, Prevention. (2004). *Violence-related behaviors among high school students – United States, 1991–2003*. MMWR, 53, 651–655.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) [online]. (2010). [cited 2013 March 10] Available from www.cdc.gov/injury.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Youth risk behavior surveillance—United States, 2011. MMWR, Surveillance Summaries 2012;61(no. SS-4). Available from www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/ss/ss6104.pdf.

- Chilcoat, H. D., & Anthony, J. C. (1996). Impact of parent monitoring on initiation of drug use through late childhood. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 35*(1), 91-100.
- Chung, H. L., & Steinberg, L. (2006). Relations between neighborhood factors, parenting behaviors, peer deviance, and delinquency among serious juvenile offenders. *Developmental Psychology, 42*(2), 319-331.
- Cicchetti, D., & Lynch, M. (1993). Toward an ecological/transactional model of community violence and child maltreatment: Consequences for children's development. *Psychiatry, 56*(1), 96-118.
- Clubb, P. A., Browne, D. C., Humphrey, A. D., Schoenbach, V., Meyer, B., & Jackson, M. (2001). Violent behaviors in early adolescent minority youth: Results from a "Middle school youth risk behavior survey". *Maternal and Child Health Journal, 5*(4), 225-235.
- Cohen, J., Cohen, P., West, S. G., & Aiken, L. S. (2003). *Applied multiple regression/correlation analysis for the behavioral sciences (3rd ed.)*. Mahwah, NJ US: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Compas, B. E., Connor-Smith, J. K., Saltzman, H., Thomsen, A. H., & Wadsworth, M. E. (2001). Coping with stress during childhood and adolescence: Problems, progress, and potential in theory and research. *Psychological Bulletin, 127*(1), 87.

- Conger, R. D., Ge, X., Elder Jr, G. H., Lorenz, F. O., & Simons, R. L. (1994). Economic stress, coercive family process, and developmental problems of adolescents. *Child Development, 65*(2), 541-561.
- Cooksey, E. C., & Fondell, M. M. (1996). Spending time with his kids: Effects of family structure on fathers' and children's lives. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, ,* 693-707.
- Cooley-Strickland, M., Quille, T. J., Griffin, R. S., Stuart, E. A., Bradshaw, C. P., & Furr- Holden, D. (2009). Community violence and youth: Affect, behavior, substance use, and academics. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review, 12*(2), 127-156.
- Copeland-Linder, N., Jones, V. C., Haynie, D. L., Simons-Morton, B. G., Wright, J. L., & Cheng, T. L. (2007). Factors associated with retaliatory attitudes among African American adolescents who have been assaulted. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology, 32*(7), 760-770.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2010). Youth risk behavior surveillance-united states, 2009.
- Dahlberg PhD, L. L. (1998). Youth violence in the united states: Major trends, risk factors, and prevention approaches. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 14*(4), 259-272.

- Davis-Kean, P. E., (2005). The influence of parent education and family income on child achievement: The indirect role of parental expectation and the home environment. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 19(2), 294-304.
- Dishion, T. J., Andrews, D. W., & Crosby, L. (1995). Antisocial boys and their friends in early adolescence: Relationship characteristics, quality, and interactional process. *Child Development*, 66(1), 139-151.
- Dishion, T. J., & McMahon, R. J. (1998). Parental monitoring and the prevention of child and adolescent problem behavior: A conceptual and empirical formulation. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 1(1), 61-75.
- Erikson, I., Cater, A., Andershed, A., & Andershed, H. (2010). What we need to know about factors that protect youth from problems: A review of previous reviews. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 4, 477-482.
- Farrell, A. D., & Bruce, S. E. (1997). Impact of exposure to community violence on violent behavior and emotional distress among urban adolescents. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 26(1), 2-14.
- Farrington, D. P. (1998). Predictors, causes, and correlates of male youth violence. *Crime and Justice*, 24, 421-475.

- Fergus, S., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2005). Adolescent resilience: A framework for understanding healthy development in the face of risk. *Annual Review of Public Health, 26*, 399-419.
- Fitzpatrick, K. M., & Boldizar, J. P. (1993). The prevalence and consequences of exposure to violence among African-American youth. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 32*(2), 424-430.
- Flay, B. R., & Petraitis, J. (1994). The theory of triadic influence: A new theory of health behavior with implications for preventive interventions. *Advances in Medical Sociology, 4*(19), 19-44.
- Flay, B. R., Graumlich, S., Segawa, E., Burns, J. L., & Holliday, M. Y. (2004). Effects of 2 prevention programs on high-risk behaviors among african american youth: A randomized trial. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, 158*(4), 377.
- Flowers, A., Lanclos, N. F., & Kelley, M. L. (2002). Validation of a screening instrument for exposure to violence in African American children. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology, 27*(4), 351-361.
- Fox, J. A., & Zawitz, M. W. (2001). Homicide trends in the United States. *Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics,*
- Fox- Wasylyshyn, S. M., & El- Masri, M. M. (2005). Handling missing data in self-report measures. *Research in Nursing & Health, 28*(6), 488-495.

- Furstenberg, F. F., Cook, T. D., Eccles, J., & Elder, G. H. (1999). *Managing to make it: Urban families and adolescent success* University of Chicago Press.
- Garmezy, N., Masten, A. S., & Tellegen, A. (1984). The study of stress and competence in children: A building block for developmental psychopathology. *Child Development, 55*(1), 97-111.
- Goldstein, S., Davis-Kean, P. E., & Eccles, S. J., (2005). Parents, peers, and problem behaviors: A longitudinal investigation of the impact of relationship perceptions and characteristics on the development of adolescent problem behavior. *Developmental Psychology, 44*(2), 401-413.
- Gorman-Smith, D., Henry, D. B., & Tolan, P. H. (2004). Exposure to community violence and violence perpetration: The protective effects of family functioning. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 33*(3), 439-449.
- Gorman-Smith, D., & Tolan, P. (1998). The role of exposure to community violence and developmental problems among inner-city youth. *Development and Psychopathology, 10*(1), 101-116.
- Gorman-Smith, D., Tolan, P. H., & B. Henry, D. B. (2000). A developmental-ecological model of the relation of family functioning to patterns of delinquency. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology, 16*(2), 169-198.
- Grunbaum, J. A., Kann, L., Kinchen, S., Ross, J., Hawkins, J., Lowry, R., . . . Collins, J. (2004). Youth risk behavior surveillance--united states, 2003. *MMWR*.

Surveillance Summaries: Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. Surveillance summaries/CDC, 53(2), 1.

Harris, K. M., Furstenberg, F. F., & Marmer, J. K. (1998). Paternal involvement with adolescents in intact families: The influence of fathers over the life course. *Demography, 35(2), 201-216.*

Hawkins, J. D., Catalano, R. F., & Miller, J. Y. (1992). Risk and protective factors for alcohol and other drug problems in adolescence and early adulthood: Implications for substance abuse prevention. *Psychological Bulletin, 112(1), 64.*

Henry, D. B., Tolan, P. H., & Gorman-Smith, D. (2001). Longitudinal family and peer group effects on violence and nonviolent delinquency. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 30(2), 172-186.*

Henry, D. B., Tolan, P. H., Gorman-Smith, D., & Schoeny, M. E. (2012). Risk and direct protective factors for youth violence: Results from the centers for disease control and prevention's multisite violence prevention project. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 43(2), S67-S75.*

Herrenkohl, T. I., Hill, K. G., Chung, I. J., Guo, J., Abbott, R. D., & Hawkins, J. D. (2003). Protective factors against serious violent behavior in adolescence: A prospective study of aggressive children. *Social Work Research, 27(3), 179-191.*

- Herrenkohl, T. I., Maguin, E., Hill, K. G., Hawkins, J. D., Abbott, R. D., & Catalano, R. F. (2000). Developmental risk factors for youth violence. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 26*(3), 176-186.
- Huizinga, D., & Jakob-Chien, C. (1998). The contemporaneous co-occurrence of serious and violent juvenile offending and other problem behaviors.
- Jacob, J. C. (2006). Male and female youth crime in Canadian communities: Assessing the applicability of social disorganization theory. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice, 48*, 31-60.
- Jagers, R. J., Morgan-Lopez, A. A., & Flay, B. R. (2009). The impact of age and type of intervention on youth violent behaviors. *The Journal of Primary Prevention, 30*(6), 642-658.
- Jagers, R. J., Morgan-Lopez, A. A., Howard, T. L., Browne, D. C., & Flay, B. R. (2007). Mediators of the development and prevention of violent behavior. *Prevention Science, 8*(3), 171-179.
- Janoff-Bulman, R. (1992). *Shattered assumptions: Towards a new psychology of trauma*. Free Pr.
- Judith, S. B., Whiteman, M., Gordon, A. S., & Cohen, P. (1989). Changes in drug involvement: A longitudinal study of childhood and adolescent determinants. *Psychological Reports, 65*(3), 707-726.

- Kann, L., Kinchen, S. A., Williams, B. I., Ross, J. G., Lowry, R., Grunbaum, J. A., & Kolbe, L. J. (2009). Youth risk behavior surveillance—United states, 1999. *Journal of School Health, 70*(7), 271-285.
- Kliewer, W., Parrish, K. A., Taylor, K. W., Jackson, K., Walker, J. M., & Shivy, V. A. (2006). Socialization of coping with community violence: Influences of caregiver coaching, modeling, and family context. *Child Development, 77*(3), 605-623.
- Kline, R. B. (2011). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling (3rd ed.)*. New York, NY US: Guilford Press.
- Laible, D. J., & Carlo, G. (2004). The differential relations of maternal and paternal support and control to adolescent social competence, self-worth, and sympathy. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 19*(6), 759-782.
- Laird, R. D., Pettit, G. S., Bates, J. E., & Dodge, K. A. (2003). Parents' Monitoring-Relevant knowledge and adolescents' delinquent behavior: Evidence of correlated developmental changes and reciprocal influences. *Child Development, 74*(3), 752-768.
- Leventhal, T., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2004). Diversity in developmental trajectories across adolescence: Neighborhood influences. In R. M., Lerner, L., & Steinberg (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent psychology* (pp. 451–486, 2nd ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley
- Lindstrom Johnson, S. R., Finigan, N. M., Bradshaw, C. P., Haynie, D. L., & Cheng, T. L. (2011). Examining the link between neighborhood context and parental

messages to their adolescent children about violence. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 49*(1), 58-63.

Loeber R, Farrington DP, eds. *Serious & violent juvenile offenders: risk factors and successful interventions*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage, 1998.

Luthar, S. S. (2003). *Resilience and vulnerability: Adaptation in the context of childhood adversities* Cambridge University Press.

Luthar, S. S., & Cicchetti, D. (2000). The construct of resilience: Implications for interventions and social policies. *Development and Psychopathology, 12*(4), 857-885.

Luthar, S. S., Cicchetti, D., & Becker, B. (2003). The construct of resilience: A critical evaluation and guidelines for future work. *Child Development, 71*(3), 543-562.

Luthar, S. S. (2003). *Resilience and vulnerability: Adaptation in the context of childhood adversities* Cambridge University Press.

Margolin, G., & Gordis, E. B. (2000). The effects of family and community violence on children. *Annual Review of Psychology, 51*(1), 445-479.

Markowitz, F. E. (2003). Socioeconomic disadvantage and violence: Recent research on culture and neighborhood control as explanatory mechanisms. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 8*(2), 145-154.

Richters, J. E., & Martinez, P. (1993). Violent communities, family choices, and

children's chances: An algorithm for improving the odds. *Development and Psychopathology*, 5, 609–627.

Masten, A.S. & J.L. Powell. 2003. A resilience framework for research, policy, and practice. In *Resilience and Vulnerability: Adaptation in the Context of Childhood Adversities*. S.S. Luthar, Ed.: 1–25. Cambridge University Press. New York.

McLanahan, S., & Sandefur, G. D. (1994). *Growing up with a single parent: What hurts, what helps*. Harvard University Press.

McLoyd, V. C. (1990). The impact of economic hardship on black families and children: Psychological distress, parenting, and socioemotional development. *Child Development*, 61(2), 311-346.

McLoyd, V. C. (1998). Socioeconomic disadvantage and child development. *American Psychologist*, 53(2), 185-.

McMahon, S. D., Felix, E. D., Halpert, J. A., & Petropoulos, L. A. N. (2009). Community violence exposure and aggression among urban adolescents: Testing a cognitive mediator model. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 37(7), 895-910.

McNulty, T. L., & Bellair, P. E. (2003). Explaining racial and ethnic differences in adolescent violence: Structural disadvantage, family well-being, and social capital. *Justice Quarterly*, 20(1), 1-31.

- Miller, L. S., Wasserman, G. A., Neugebauer, R., Gorman-Smith, D., & Kamboukos, D. (1999). Witnessed community violence and antisocial behavior in high-risk, urban boys. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 28*(1), 2-11.
- Mrug, S., & Windle, M. (2009). Mediators of neighborhood influences on externalizing behavior in preadolescent children. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 37*(2), 265-280.
- Neumann, A., Barker, E. D., Koot, H. M., & Maughan, B. (2010). The role of contextual risk, impulsivity, and parental knowledge in the development of adolescent antisocial behavior. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 119*(3), 534-545.
- Ngwe, J. E., Liu, L. C., Flay, B. R., & Segawa, E. (2004). Violence prevention among African American adolescent males. *American Journal of Health Behavior, 28*(Suppl 1), S24.
- O'Dougherty, W. M., & Masten, S. A. (2005). Resilience processes in development. Fostering positive adaption in the context of adversity. In Goldstein, S., & Brooks B. R. (Eds.), *Handbook of resilience in children* (pp. 17-33). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- O'Donnell, D. A., Schwab–Stone, M. E., & Muyeed, A. Z. (2003). Multidimensional resilience in urban children exposed to community violence. *Child Development, 73*(4), 1265-1282.

- Orpinas, P., Horne, A. M., & Staniszewski, D. (2003). School bullying: Changing the problem by changing the school. *School Psychology Review, 32*(3), 431-444.
- Patterson, G. R., Dishion, T. J., & Yoerger, K. (2000). Adolescent growth in new forms of problem behavior: Macro-and micro-peer dynamics. *Prevention Science, 1*(1), 3-13.
- Rai, A. A., Stanton, B., Wu, Y., Li, X., Galbraith, J., Cottrell, L., . . . Burns, J. (2003). Relative influences of perceived parental monitoring and perceived peer involvement on adolescent risk behaviors: An analysis of six cross-sectional data sets. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 33*(2), 108-118.
- Richters, J. E., & Martinez, P. (1993). Violent communities, family choices, and children's chances: An algorithm for improving the odds. *Development and Psychopathology, 5*, 609-627.
- Riner, M. E., & Saywell, R. M. (2002). Development of the social ecology model of adolescent interpersonal violence prevention (SEMAIVP). *Journal of School Health, 72*(2), 65-70.
- Roberto, A. J., Meyer, G., Boster, F. J., & Roberto, H. L. (2003). Adolescents' decisions about verbal and physical aggression. *Human Communication Research, 29*(1), 135-147.
- Roth, P. L. (1994). Missing data: A conceptual review for applied psychologists. *Personnel Psychology, 47*(3), 537-560.

- Roth, P. L., Switzer, F. S., & Switzer, D. M. (1999). Missing data in multiple item scales: A monte carlo analysis of missing data techniques. *Organizational Research Methods, 2*(3), 211-232.
- Rutter, M. (1985). Resilience in the face of adversity. *British Journal of Psychiatry, 147*(598), 611.
- Salzer Burks, V., Laird, R. D., Dodge, K. A., Pettit, G. S., & Bates, J. E. (1999). Knowledge structures, social information processing, and children's aggressive behavior. *Social Development, 8*(2), 220-236.
- Scarpa, A., & Haden, S. C. (2006). Community violence victimization and aggressive behavior: The moderating effects of coping and social support. *Aggressive Behavior, 32*(5), 502-515.
- Schlomer, G. L., Bauman, S., & Card, N. A. (2010). Best practices for missing data management in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 57*(1), 1-10.
- Schwartz, D., & Proctor, L. J. (2000). Community violence exposure and children's social adjustment in the school peer group: The mediating roles of emotion regulation and social cognition. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 68*(4), 670.
- Simons, R. L., Lin, K. H., Gordon, L. C., Brody, G. H., Murry, V., & Conger, R. D. (2004). Community differences in the association between parenting practices and child conduct problems. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 64*(2), 331-345.

- Simons, R. L., Simons, L. G., & Wallace, L. E. (2004). *Families, delinquency, and crime*. Los Angeles: Roxbury.
- Smith, P., Flay, B. R., Bell, C. C., & Weissberg, R. P. (2001). The protective influence of parents and peers in violence avoidance among African-American youth. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, 5(4), 245-252.
- Snyder, H. N., & Sickmund, M. (2006). *Juvenile offenders and victims: 2006 national Report*. Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Justice.
- Sosin, D. M., Koepsell, T. D., Rivara, F. P., & Mercy, J. A. (1995). Fighting as a marker for multiple problem behaviors in adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 16(3), 209-215.
- Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2007). *Using multivariate statistics (5th ed.)*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon/Pearson Education.
- Thornberry, T. P., Huizinga, D., & Loeber, R. (1995). The prevention of serious delinquency and violence: Implications from the program of research on the causes and correlates of delinquency. In J. C. Howell, B. Krisberg, J. D. Hawkins, & J. J. Wilson (Eds.), *Sourcebook on serious, violent, and chronic juvenile offenders* (pp. 213–237). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Tolan, P. H., & Gorman-Smith, D. (1997). Families and development of urban children. In H. J. Walburg, O. Reyes, & R. P. Weissberg (Eds.), *Urban children and youth: Interdisciplinary perspective on policies and programs* (pp. 67–91). Thousand

Oaks, CA: Sage.

Tolan, P. H., Gorman-Smith, D., & Henry, D. B. (2003). The developmental ecology of urban males' youth violence. *Developmental Psychology, 39*(2), 274-291.

Tolan, P. H., Guerra, N. G., & Kendall, P. C. (1995). A developmental ecological perspective on antisocial behavior in children and adolescents: Toward a unified risk and intervention framework. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 63*(4), 579-584.

Valois, R. F., MacDonald, J. M., Bretous, L., Fischer, M. A., & Drane, J. W. (2002). Risk factors and behaviors associated with adolescent violence and aggression. *American Journal of Health Behavior, 26*(6), 454-464.

Vazsonyi, A. T., Cleveland, H. H., & Wiebe, R. P. (2006). Does the effect of impulsivity on delinquency vary by level of neighborhood disadvantage? *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 33*(4), 511-541.

Zimmerman, M. A., & Arunkumar, R. (1994). Resiliency research: Implications for schools and policy. *Social Policy Report, 8*(4), 1-17.

Zimmerman, M. A., Steinman, K. J., & Rowe, K. J. (1998). Violence among urban African American adolescents: The protective effects of parental support. In X. B. Arriaga & S. Oskamp (Eds.), *Addressing community problems: Psychological research and interventions* (pp. 78–103). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Table 3.1 *Descriptive statistics for engagement in violent behaviors and its predictors among the study sample (N = 553)*

Variables	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Violent Behaviors	2.45 (1.26)								
2. Age	12.50 (.62)	.044							
3. Income	3.95 (2.13)	-.019	-.076						
4. Time lived in neighborhood	3.67 (1.41)	-.030	.063	.097*					
5. Exposure to violence	2.69 (1.40)	.375**	.129**	-.055	.016				
6. Affiliation with deviant peers	5.14 (2.64)	.313**	.051	-.036	.088*	.181**			
7. Efficacy to avoid violence	11.36 (2.96)	-.297**	-.103*	.131**	.014	-.216**	-.399**		
8. Parent Communication about fighting	2.36 (.80)	-.078	.006	.136**	.013	.066	-.088*	.083	
9. Parent education	5.29 (2.16)	-.110**	-.075	.286**	.069	-.034	.004	.091*	-.045

NB: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$

Table 3.2 Regression coefficients for main effect and interaction models

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.
Constant	1.418	.961	1.745	.948	1.936*	.946
Age	-.010	.076	-.037	.075	-.052	.075
Income	.017	.023	.047*	.023	.049*	.023
Lived in Community (Yrs)	-.055	.034	-.044	.034	-.042	.034
Intervention	-.219*	.102	-.184	.100	-.190	.100
<i>Key Predictors</i>						
Exposure to Violence (EV)	.292***	.035	.281***	.035	.287***	.035
Affiliation with Deviant Peers (ADP)	.127***	.018	.099***	.020	.094***	.019
Efficacy to avoid violence (EAV)	--	--	-.058**	.018	-.055**	.018
Parent communication about Fighting (PCF)	--	--	-.128*	.060	-.146*	.060
Parent Education (Pedu)	--	--	-.064**	.023	-.069**	.023
Pedu X EV	--	--	--	--	-.015	.015
Pedu X ADP	--	--	--	--	.017*	.009
Pedu X EAV	--	--	--	--	-.005	.007
Pedu X PCF	--	--	--	--	.044*	.023
Adjusted R^2	.204		.233		.24	
Δ in R^2	--		.033***		0.013*	
F-statistic	24.50***		19.57***		14.39*	

NB: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$

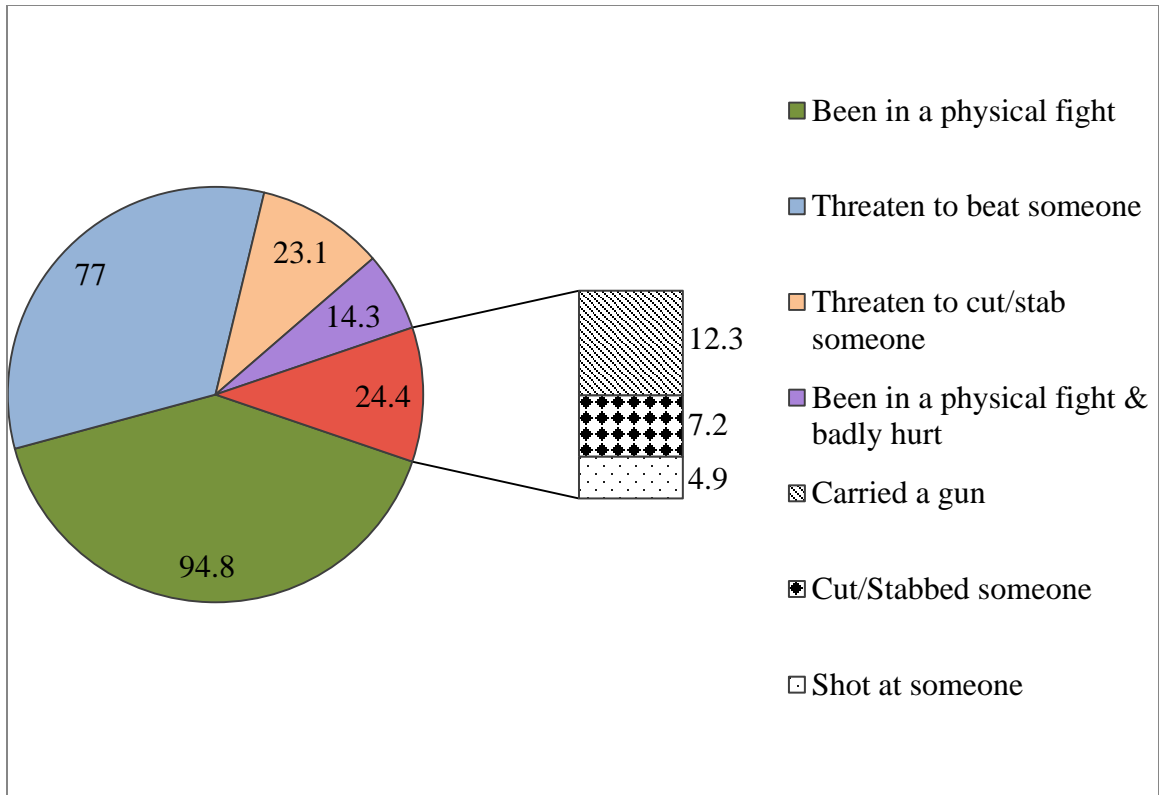


Figure 3.1 *Percentage of sample that engaged in each violent behavior*
 NB. Percentages are not meant to total 100

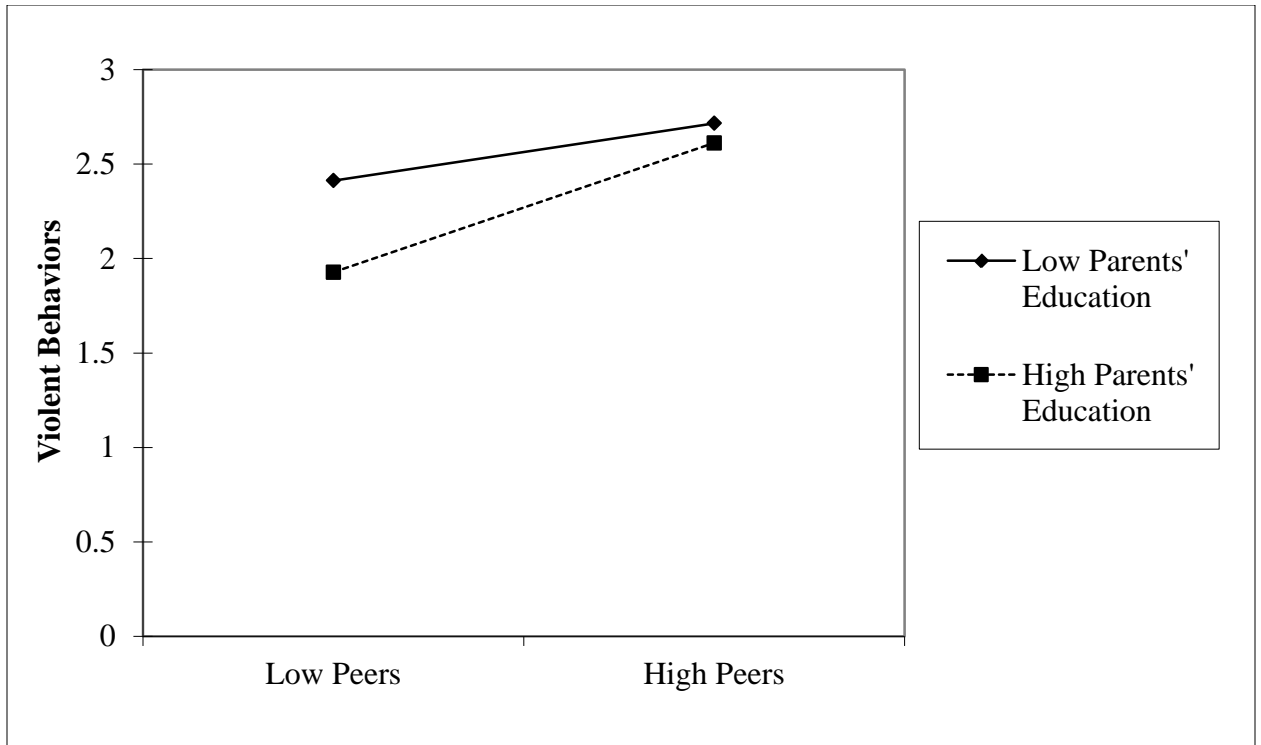


Figure 3.2 *Interaction of parent education and exposure to peers who endorse violence*

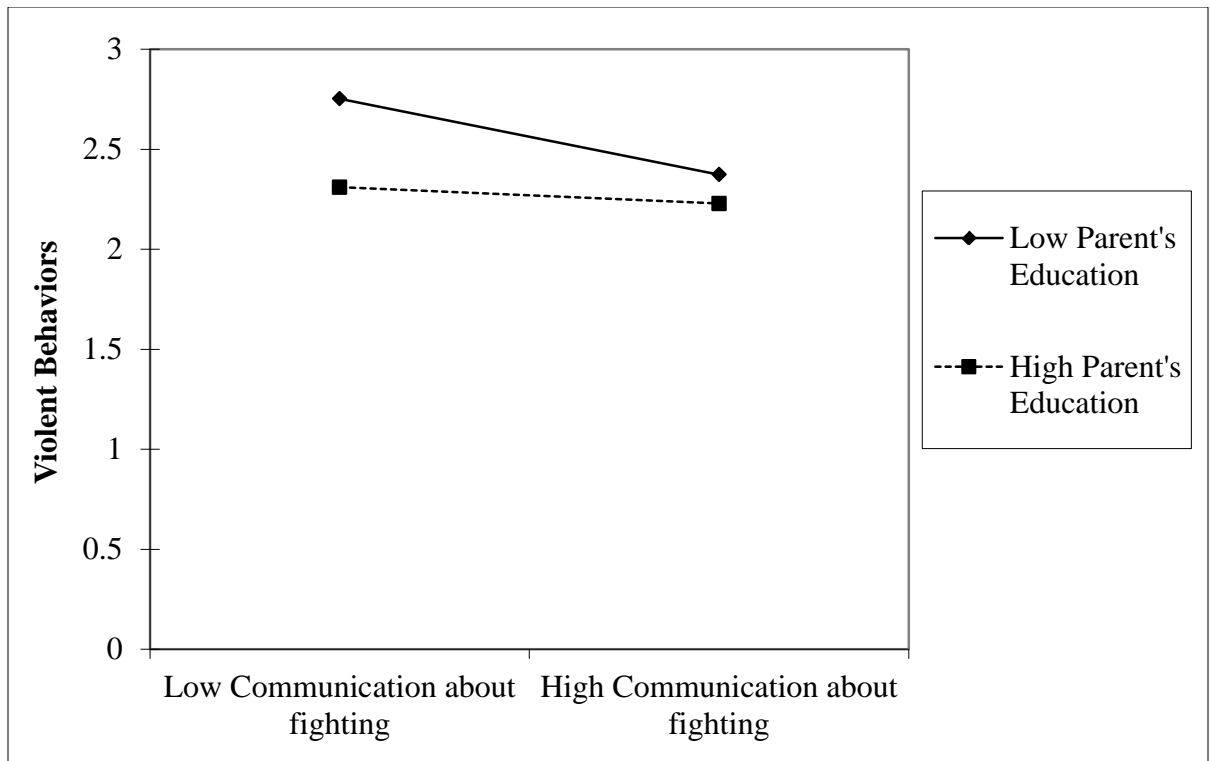


Figure 3.3 *Interaction of parent education and communication about physical fighting*

CHAPTER 4

Bad boys or bad odds? - Race, context and social influence: An investigation of youth violence in African-American boys

The preceding studies have explored the effects of multiple risk and protective factors on violent behavior for African-American boys. The first study demonstrated that collective efficacy was a source of protection for boys in high-risk neighborhoods. This was especially the case for African-American boys who had witnessed more violent acts or had been a victim of violence. Along with collective efficacy, individual and family level factors predicted how safe African-American boys felt in their neighborhoods.

The second study attempted to determine whether parents' education would be a source of protection for youth who live in high-risk neighborhoods. This study raised new questions about how parent communication about fighting, and boys' efficacy to avoid violence work. The study indicated that parents who communicated with their sons about fighting contributed to reducing youths' violent behaviors. It did not reveal however, what might have been most effective about parenting behaviors. I also found that parents were able to protect their adolescent sons from engaging in violence regardless of parent education, when deviant peer affiliation was lower.

The effects of parents, peers and the neighborhood were supported in the previous studies in the expected directions. This final study focused on understanding how African-American boys' efficacy to avoid violence might mediate the effect of negative

neighborhood exposure and peer influences on violent behavior. The current study also investigated the effect of parents on youth violent behavior both directly and through youths' efficacy to avoid violence.

The African-American boys in this study were from disadvantaged, urban neighborhoods, and were at high risk for developing violent behaviors. I applied a risk and resilience framework (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005) to interrogate the influence of peer and parent norms as well as peer behaviors on adolescents' violent behaviors. I also explored the possible paths of these factors through youths' efficacy beliefs in predicting youth violence. The risk and resilience framework is concerned with the individual's ability to follow a positive trajectory while avoiding the deleterious effects of risk factors (Garmezy, Masten, Tellegen, 1984; Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000; Masten & Powell, 2003; Rutter, 1985; Luthar, 2003; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). The risk and resilience model posits that individuals in high-risk contexts benefit from protective factors. Protective factors are either internal to the individual (*assets*) or exist outside of the individual (*resources*). African-American youth living in poor, urban settings benefit from skills like violence avoidance efficacy (Jagers, Morgan-Lopez, Howard, Browne, & Flay, 2007; Riner & Saywell, 2002).

Self-efficacy refers to the individual's beliefs about their ability to make positive choices in specific situations (Bennett & Fraser, 2000). Violence efficacy beliefs represent the individual's confidence in their ability to avoid a specific risk behavior – engagement in violence. Parents who communicate expectations of non-violence to their children also function as a resource. African-American boys' own beliefs in their ability to avoid engagement in violent acts may protect them from the effect of peer and

classmate norms and violent behaviors. This individual strength may also ameliorate the effects of youth's exposure to violence on subsequent engagement in violence.

Youth violence is influenced by multiple social contexts including the neighborhood, family, and peer group (Loeber, Farrington, Stouthamer-Loeber, & White, 2008; Herrenkohl, Tajima, Whitney, Huang, 2005; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011; Farrington & Ttofi, 2011; Murray, Farrington, & Eisner, 2009). However, adolescence as a stage of development is marked by increased peer influence. Research has identified peers as critical to the transfer of both deviant and prosocial behaviors (Smith, Flay, Bell, & Weissberg, 2001, Lösel & Farrington, 2012; Bender & Lösel, 1997; Thornberry, 1998; Loeber, Farrington, Stouthamer-Loeber, & White, 2008; Hawkins, Herrenkohl, Farrington, Brewer, Catalano, & Harachi, 1998). The influence of parents on youths' prosocial decisions remains critical to protecting adolescents from negative outcomes.

Exposure to violence

Exposure to violence is not limited to being a victim of violence. It includes experiences where youth have seen or heard about violence in their homes, schools, or neighborhoods (Kliewer, Cunningham, Diehl, Parrish, Walker, Atiyeh, Neace, Duncan, Taylor, & Mejia, 2004). Adolescents who reside in disadvantaged neighborhoods are exposed to high levels of violence as victims, witnesses and to a lesser extent as perpetrators. Among urban youth who have participated in research studies, 50% - 100% have reportedly witnessed some violence in their community (Buka, Stichick, Birdthistle, & Earls, 2010; Margolin & Gordis, 2000; Stein, Jaycox, Kataoka, Rhodes, & Vestal, 2003). African-American boys are more likely to reside in neighborhoods that predispose them to violent experiences (Neumann, Barker, Koot, & Maughan, 2010; Mrug &

Windle, 2009; Jacob, 2006; McNulty & Bellair, 2003; Flowers, Lanclos, & Kelley, 2002; Margolin & Gordis, 2000). In accordance with the risk and resilience framework (Fergusson & Zimmerman, 2005) these violent experiences are associated with negative outcomes, and may even blunt the effect of protective factors.

Research has established that for adolescents, experiences with violence whether as victims or witnesses are strongly associated with subsequent violent behavior (Lindstrom-Johnson, Finigan, Bradshaw, Haynie, & Cheng, 2011). Lindstrom-Johnson and colleagues (2011) in a study of 143 African-American adolescents indicated that youths' exposure to violence was not predictive of violent behaviors. This finding was inconsistent with the extensive body of literature that links youths' exposure to violence to subsequent violent behaviors. However, the study was important because it demonstrated that parent and youth perceptions of neighborhood efficacy determined the kinds of messages that parents conveyed to youth regarding violence (Lindstrom et al., 2011).

These messages have been linked to lower levels of youth violence and heightened levels of efficacy in avoiding violence. The study had interesting implications for understanding what factors may influence parents' messages and how youth may apply these messages in avoiding violence. Lindstrom and colleagues (2011) examined youths' perceptions of violence in their study; however they did not specifically address African-American males. The current study further extended the literature by addressing this gap. I investigated how the communication of parental norms regarding violence influenced the behavior of African-American adolescent boys.

Studies have found that adolescent normative beliefs about violence and exposure to violence in their neighborhood predicted their use of violence in resolving social conflicts (Robinson, Paxton, & Jonen, 2011; Losel & Farrington, 2012; Lindstrom-Johnson, Finigan, Bradshaw, Haynie, & Cheng, 2011; Scarpa et al., 2006; Gorman-Smith, Henry, & Tolan, 2004). Robinson and colleagues (2011) used a multilevel approach to investigate the predictive effect of specific risk factors on adolescents' use of an aggressive response style to conflict. These risk factors were, normative beliefs about aggression, exposure to neighborhood violence, and depressive symptoms. The study was conducted with 80 African-American adolescent males. The results suggested that cognitions functioned as a pathway through which violent experiences may affect youth's coping skills, and eventual behaviors. The presence of such protective factors may attenuate or eliminate the effects of youths' exposure to risks (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). My study probed the predictive influence of parent and peer norms as well as peer behaviors on violent behaviors for African-American adolescent boys. Additionally I investigated the effect of these factors on attenuating and strengthening the efficacy to avoid violence for African-American adolescent males.

Classmates' violent behaviors

Youth who resided in low-income, urban neighborhoods were more likely to attend the schools in their neighborhoods. These neighborhood schools have been known to have higher concentrations of youth with behavior problems including violence. For many adolescents these school environments have represented continued risk exposure. This social environment has encouraged violence as an acceptable strategy for warding off possible victimization, and for establishing one's status among peers and classmates

(Fagan & Wilkinson, 1998). Adolescents in these disadvantaged settings may have a smaller pool of prosocial peers from which to construct their peer networks. As a result of this deficiency, youth who were more likely to be exposed to violence in their schools are also more likely to affiliate with those who engage in this violence. This kind of risk exposure has been associated with subsequent violent acts (Haynie, Silver, & Teasdale, 2006), gang involvement, and to their own victimization (Werner & Smith, 2001; Hawkins, Herrenkhol, Farrington, Brewer, Catalano, & Harachi, 1998; Thornberry, 1998).

Research has shown that adolescent's overestimate the extent of peers' negative behaviors. Their own behaviors have often reflected their skewed perception of the behaviors and norms of their peers (Prinstein & Wang, 2005; Dishion & Owen, 2002; Dishion, Spracklen, Andrews, & Patterson, 1996). Adolescents who affiliated with classmates and friends who engaged in violent behaviors exhibited poor academic performance (Ratner, Chiodo, Covington, Sokol, Ager, & Delaney-Black, 2006); and demonstrated greater involvement in high-risk behaviors such as violence (Foney & Cunningham, 2002; Salzinger et al., 2006). For these youth, positive parenting practices such as monitoring become an even more critical resource. Parents who monitor their child's behavior and spend time talking with them about high-risk behaviors protect them from negative developments.

Youth who spent more unstructured and unmonitored time with deviant peers and classmates have an increased risk of become victims of violence or of witnessing violence (Richards, Larson, Miller, Luo, Sims, Parella, & McCauley, 2004). These adolescents are also more likely to engage in violence and be exposed to more serious

community violence (Lambert, Lalongo, Boyd, & Cooley, 2005) as deviant friends and classmates reinforce high-risk behaviors (Vitaro, Brendgen, & Tremblay, 2000). Even after controlling for youth's own violent tendencies, associating with violent classmates and peers remained a significant predictor of multiple negative outcomes, including exposure to neighborhood violence (Salzinger et al., 2006) and engagement in violent behaviors. This link has been found to be even more significant for adolescent males (Lambert et al., 2005).

While affiliation with violent and otherwise deviant classmates and friends is related to negative outcomes for youth, adolescents who associate with non-deviant peers benefit from this protective factor (Bender & Lösel, 1997; Jessor, Donovan, & Costa, 1991; Moffit, 1993). Those whose friends disapproved of violence showed less delinquency and youth violence (Loeber, Farrington, Stouthammer-Loeber, & White, 2008; Farrington, 1994; Moffit, Caspi, Dickson, Silva, & Stanton, 1996; Herrenkohl, Tajima, Whitney, & Huang, 2005). This relationship continued to protect youth even in the face of multiple risks (Werner & Smith, 1992; Herrenkohl, Tajima, Whitney, & Huang, 2005), and resulted in desistance of violent behaviors for youth who had already shown signs of being on this negative trajectory (Farrington, 1994; Moffit, Caspi, Dickson, Silva, & Stanton, 1996; Hoge, Andrews, & Leschied, 1996).

Affiliation with deviant peers

Youth who resided in poor, urban neighborhoods with weakened social controls had more opportunities for affiliating with deviant youth. Research showed that continued exposure to deviant peers was likely to result in adolescents adopting the pro-violent norms of their peers. These kinds of peer networks allowed youth to experience

violence as rewarding (Anderson, 1999, Osgood & Anderson, 2004). The norms that these peers convey to other adolescents supported the use of violence as a means of resolving social conflicts and asserting power. Continued exposure to a youth culture of violence was a risk factor associated with more youth violence, and both factors are elements of disadvantaged neighborhoods (Akers 1998; Hoffman, 2003).

Peer influences increased in salience throughout adolescence, and negative peer influences maintained through continued contact with deviant peers predicted youth violence (Rappaport & Thomas, 2004). Adolescents who were less influenced by the moral code of parents and other authority figures became more concerned with behavior codes characterized by ideas such as mutual respect, reciprocity and justice (Piaget, 1932; Turiel, 1997). These principles are more approving of violence, especially in retaliation for a perceived slight (Pitner, Astor, Benbenishty, Haj-Yahia, & Zeria, 2003). Youths' perceptions of peers' behaviors predicted their own behaviors (Smith, Flay, Bell, & Weissberg, 2001). However, parents may continue to protect their children through adolescence by helping to shape youths' perceptions of the behaviors of their friends.

The extant literature has established a relationship between deviant peer norms and negative behaviors, including juvenile delinquency, substance abuse and violence, during adolescence (e.g., Ary, Duncan, Biglan, Metzler, Noell, & Smolkowski, 1999; Dishion, Eddy, Hass, & Spracklen, 1997; Fergusson & Horwood, 1998; Laird, Jordan, Dodge, Petit, & Bates, 2001; Vitaro, Brendgen, & Tremblay, 2002). In particular, association with deviant and violent peers was linked to violent behaviors for adolescent boys (Coper-Linder et al., 2007; Lambert et al., 2005). For example, in a study of 503 adolescent boys Pardini, Loeber, Farrington, and Stouthamer-Loeber (2012) investigated

whether risk and protective factors predicted violent behavior. They found that high peer deviance was associated with youth violence at age 13-14 years, while low peer deviance was a protective factor at 15-18 years old. They reasoned that certain constructs like peer deviant norms may function as a risk for more proximal violence and a protection in future violence. Adolescent attitudes and beliefs about peers' norms about violence predicted violent behaviors such that youth who held negative attitudes about violence engaged in fewer violent behaviors at ages 13-14. Those who believed there was a low likelihood of being caught engaged in more violence. This study did not address these issues specifically for African-American boys. The current study addressed this gap, and probed the possible paths through which peer norms predicted youth violence.

Peers norms and efficacy to avoid violence

Research identified adolescent's efficacy to avoid violence as a protective factor associated with less youth violence (Jagers, Morgan-Lopez, Howard, Browne, & Flay, 2007; Riner & Saywell, 2002). A separate body of literature has also determined that deviant peers represent a significant risk during adolescence, and are linked to more violence (Foney & Cunningham, 2002; Salzinger et al., 2006). However, few studies have examined the association between peers' violence norms and adolescents' efficacy to avoid violence. Therefore I framed the discussion on how peers norms may influence youth's efficacy to avoid violent behaviors by citing the literature on adolescents' efficacy beliefs and peer norms.

Farrell, Mays, Bettencourt, Erwin, Vulin-Reynolds, and Allison (2010) conducted a qualitative study of 106 mostly African-American adolescents (97%) to explore the environmental factors that influenced adolescents' problem solving responses to conflict.

They found that peers exerted a strong influence over adolescents' decisions to be engaged in or to avoid violence. Farrell and colleagues (2010) also found that concern about status and reputation among their peers made youth more susceptible to the influence of peers' norms. Parents can protect their adolescent children by adjusting adolescents' perception of their peers behaviors and norms. Youth who believe that violence was an acceptable and successful means of gaining status among their peers are less likely to choose to avoid violence.

The study also highlighted key peer related contributions: (1) support, (2) pressure and (3) concern about image; that were related to youth behaviors, including violence (Farrell et al., 2010). Those whose friends supported non-violent behavior indicated that peer support for violence was related to their decision to abstain from violence.

According to the adolescents this peer support often took the form of encouragement from peers that they would be supported if they were engaged in the fight. Peer pressure was experienced as taunting and verbalizations that directly encouraged youth to engage in violence (Farrell et al., 2010). Youth cited this as a main barrier to nonviolence.

African-American adolescent males also indicated that being concerned about ones' image among peers and classmates was important. One participant articulated the curious conundrum of adolescent males in high-risk neighborhoods this way: "If you don't fight, people gonna say stuff about you. If you do fight, they still will, but you know that you won . . . you don't want everybody to think you a punk of nothing" (p.27). Youth whose friends encouraged or directly supported violence, and those who perceive violence as a means of saving face or establishing status were more likely to engage in violent behaviors.

While youth violence is associated with peer rejection, some youth are rewarded with popularity for acting out peer endorsed violence norms (Prinstein & Cillessen, 2003; Farrell et al., 2010). As they transition through the school grades adolescents are exposed to informal social norms that encourage violence either in retaliation or as a way of establishing one's status. Adolescents' perception of peers' norms about violence, directly affected adolescents' own beliefs about violence and their eventual violent behaviors (Henry, Guerra, Huesmann, Tolan, VanAcker , & Eron, 2000). These perceptions can both increase and reduce youths' efficacy to avoid violence.

Parent non-violent norms

Parents' norms about violence is yet another resource for African-American adolescent, residing in high-risk contexts. These parental expectations or adolescent's perceptions of these expectations may reduce youth's engagement in violent behaviors. This protective role may also be understood to function directly, or through youths' own feelings of efficacy to avoid negative outcomes.

Parents' own experiences with neighborhood violence influenced their attitudes about violence and the advice that they offered to their children about how to deal with social conflict (Lindstrom-Johnson, 2011). Lindstrom et al., (2011) found that the attitudes held by both parents and their children predicted violent behaviors. Parents' attitudes, however, remained predictive after accounting for adolescents' attitudes. The study also found that the messages conveyed by parents and the adolescents' perceptions of their parent messages, reflected parents' experiences with their neighborhood.

Adolescents who believed that their parents supported fighting were more likely to engage in violence than those who affiliated with violent peers (Copeland-Linder et al.,

2007). Parents can protect their children by encouraging and communicating non-violence norms and expectations. According to the literature adolescents' perception of parent norms about violence were more predictive of youth violence than family structure, the parent-child relationship, or parental monitoring (Orpinas, Murray, & Kelder, 1999). Several studies have found that youth perceptions of their parents' expectations and attitudes toward violence proved more predictive of youth violence than explicitly stated parent norms (Ohene, Ireland, McNeely, & Borowsky, 2006; Sieving, McNeely, & Blum, 2000).

In their study of 134 adolescents (aged 10-15 years) Ohene and colleagues (2006) found that parent norms that eschewed violence predicted less interpersonal violence for adolescents. The researchers connected parent discipline practices (i.e. corporal punishment) to adolescent violent behavior. They demonstrated that even when not explicitly stated, parents' perceived support for violence as a problem solving technique was related to youths' violent behaviors. While the study presented very interesting findings with regard to parent and adolescent interactions, these findings did not generalize to minority samples, especially African-American boys. While the Ohene et al. (2006) study used a predominantly Caucasian sample; the current study addressed more directly the protective role of African-American parents in the lives of their African-American sons.

According to the literature, adolescents who believed their parents disapproved of violence as a problem solving strategy held more non-supportive attitudes towards violent engagement (Ohene et al., 2006). Parents' explicit expectations about avoiding violence predicted neither youth's violence-related attitudes, intentions nor behaviors.

Perceived parental expectations on the other hand protected adolescents against violent behaviors. Parents have continued to protect their children both through direct parenting behaviors and the values that they conveyed to youth (Ohene et al., 2006; Resnick, Farrell et al., 2008; Sieving et al., 2000; Jaccard, Dittus, & Gordon, 1998). When asked to identify the factors that influenced their violence-avoidance decisions, adolescents indicated that their perception of their parents' violence-avoidance norms ("parents' voice in their head") was a major deterrent (Farrell et al., 2008). These findings confirmed the critical role of parents' own beliefs and subsequent messages in protecting youth who were at high risk for engagement in negative behaviors.

In a subsequent study of 5,581 adolescents Farrell et al., (2011) found that parents' support for nonviolence not only reduced violence behaviors but it also reduced youths' affiliation with deviant peers, specifically for African-American boys. The protective effect of parents' expectations however, dissipated by the end of 6th grade. Parents' norms about violence, whether directly stated or perceived, shaped adolescents' own views about violence. These parental expectations also strengthened youth's efficacy for avoiding violence. Parents who conveyed these expectations to their children before middle school, had a better chance of encouraging enduring non-violent beliefs in their African-American sons.

Study hypotheses

Based on the literature presented I tested several hypotheses. I expected (*Hyp.1*) a direct effect of African-American boys' exposure to violence on their engagement in acts of violence. African-American boys' efficacy to avoid violence is thought to be predictive of less violence and less affiliation with deviant friends. Thus (*Hyp.2*) boys

who felt more confident about avoiding violence were hypothesized to be involved in fewer acts of violence and would associate less with deviant peers. (*Hyp.3*) The effect of violence exposure on violent behaviors was mediated by boys' perception of their classmates' violent behaviors through deviant peer relationships.

Exposure to violence can undermine an adolescent's sense of safety and efficacy, thus I hypothesized that (*Hyp.4*) African-American boys' efficacy beliefs mediated the path between exposure to violence and violent behaviors. I expected that while exposure to violence would reduce boys' efficacy to avoid violence, boys with higher efficacy evidenced fewer violent behaviors. Parents, however, played a protective role by providing youth with resources and skills needed to negotiate risky social situations. (*Hyp.5*) Thus, boys who perceived more strongly that their parents endorsed nonviolent norms would have more efficacy to avoid violence. In this final hypothesis, parents' norms about violence were mediated by the adolescent's efficacy beliefs to predict fewer violent behaviors.

Methods

Sample

Participants were randomly assigned to the Social Development Curriculum (SDC = 204 participants), School/ family/ neighborhood intervention (SC = 185 participants) and the Health Enhancement Control (HEC = 182 participants). For this study I followed the recommendations of previous research that examined this data. The researchers found that the two intervention conditions (SC and SDC) had similar prevention effects compared to the HEC/Control (Flay, Graumlich, Segawa, Burns, & Holliday, 2004). For this reason, and to increase statistical power for analyses the researchers have

recommended that the two intervention conditions be combined as one overall intervention (Ngwe, Li, Flay, & Segawa, 2004). In this case the intervention group consisted of 67.1% of the sample and the control group 32.9%. The sample distribution on the variables in this study indicated no noticeable difference between the intervention and control group among the variables. The effect of the intervention was controlled for in this study.

The current study was based on data from the 4th measurement period (6th grade) after participants had been exposed to the intervention. There were 1,153 participants of whom 553 were African-American males. They were 13.5 (SD = .62) years old on average and were in the 5th grade. The participants in the three groups did not differ based on age, parent education level, length of time boys had lived in the neighborhood or household income. Previous analyses of difference for baseline data for the original cohort revealed no differences on violence measures after controlling for pre-intervention age and modeling school-level nesting (Jagers, Morgan-Lopez, & Flay, 2009).

Less than 2% of parents requested that their children be excluded from the study (Jagers et al., 2009). They reported having lived an average of 3.6 years in their current neighborhood. The average household income at baseline was \$10,000–\$13,000, and 47% lived in two-parent households. See Table 4.1 for more a more detailed presentation of the demographics for this sample. Complete data were gathered from 890 of the parents. On average parents reported having completed vocational education or some college level classes. This sample was recruited from 12 schools from poor metropolitan Chicago neighborhoods between 1994 and 1998. Students in the first wave of data collection were in the 5th grade (1994-1995 school year) or transferred into one of the 12

schools during that year. Those who transferred out were not followed. Self-report data was collected from both children and parents at each time point. Both parent and child data were used in this study. Measures are based on multiple questionnaires (e.g., Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBSS), National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)). These Measures were adapted based on feedback from focus groups and pilot testing with youth and parents living in high-risk communities.

Procedure

The AAYP (Aban Aya Youth Project) constituted three intervention conditions Social Development Curriculum (SDC), School/ family/ neighborhood intervention (SC), Health Enhancement Control (HEC)). The project was a longitudinal efficacy trial that investigated the effects of the intervention on the development of violence, unsafe sex and substance use behaviors among low-income African-American youth.

Participating schools were from a large Midwestern city. Schools had enrollments greater than 500 students with 80% African-American and less than 10% Latino or Hispanic; grades kindergarten through 8; not on probation or slated for reorganization; and not a special designated school (e.g., magnet, academic center; and moderate mobility). All participants qualified as high-risk and attended one of the 12 impoverished, mainly African-American inner city schools from a. Schools signed agreements for 4 years of participation in the study and agreed not to participate in other prevention initiatives during that time. Each school received the intervention free of charge along with a \$250 incentive per participating classroom –up to a maximum of \$1,000 each year of the study. Participants completed measures at 6 different time points after the baseline measurement. Questions sought information about violent behaviors and experiences,

substance use, sexual activity, social relationships, and family connections among other concerns. Surveys were administered in a group setting during the “homeroom” classroom. The teacher was present as mandated by law, but a three-person team administered the measures. One member of that team read the questions aloud to the participants while another member monitored the exit and entry of students in the classroom (e.g. late entry, bathroom). The third member of the data collection team responded to individual student concerns during the administration. The survey was administered over a two-hour period with a 5-minute break scheduled.

Measures

Violent Behavior. Youth’s report of engagement in violent behavior was assessed using seven questions adapted from the 1992 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey ([YRBSS] Grunbaum, Kann, Kichen, et al., 1994). The YRBSS was originally developed for high school students. In order to use these measures with this sample questions were modified to reflect the earlier stages of violence in which fifth through eighth grade students might engage.

Participants indicated whether they had ever: (*a*) threatened to beat up someone; (*b*) threatened to cut, stab or shoot someone; (*c*) been in a physical fight; (*d*) carried a gun; (*e*) shot at someone; (*f*) carried knife or razor; and (*g*) cut or stabbed someone. Response choices were a simple dichotomy (0 = no; 1 = yes) for the lifetime involvement questions (Have you ever . . .). A sum score was calculated for this measure. Scores ranged from 0 to 7 with high scores indicating more violent behaviors. This measure was not skewed.

Exposure to violence. Youth's exposure to violence was determined using a 5-item measured. Items were assessed using a dichotomous scale where 0 = No and 1 = Yes, to indicate whether youth had ever witnessed certain violent acts. The total score ranged from 0 to 5 with higher scores indicating more instances of having witnessed violence. Representative questions included "Have you even see someone get shot at" and "Have you even seen a friend or family member get cut". The scale had a Cronbach alpha of .68 in this sample that indicated acceptable reliability for this measure.

Perception of classmates' violent behaviors. Participants indicated how many of their classmates they thought were involved in violent behaviors. The scale consisted of two items "How many of the students in your grade get into a physical fight?" and "How many of the students in your grade carry a knife, a razor or a gun?" Both items were measured on a Likert scale with 0 = None of them; 1 = Some of them; 2 = About half of them; 3 = Most of them; and 4 = All of them. The scale was originally attempted with 5 items, however, only these two items loaded successfully to create a latent factor.

Together these two items account for serious and more normative form of adolescent violence. Scores ranged from 0-8 where higher scores indicated that participants believed that more of their peers were involved in violent behaviors. The items were correlated at $r = .409, p < .001$.

Affiliation with deviant peers. Participants indicated how much their friends supported violent behaviors. The scale consisted of two items "Do your best friends want you to get into a physical fight?" and "Do your best friends want you to carry a knife, a razor or a gun?" Both items were measured on a Likert scale with 0 = None of them; 1 = Some of them; 2 = About half of them; 3 = Most of them; and 4 = All of them. Scores

ranged from 0-8 where higher scores indicated that participants believed that more of their peers were involved in violent behaviors. Of 5 possible items only two loaded successfully to create a latent factor. Together these two items accounted for serious and more normative forms of peer deviance. The items were correlated at $r = .436, p < .001$.

Efficacy to avoid violence. Four questions were used to determine boys' efficacy to avoid violence. The questions were: *How sure are you that you can (1) keep yourself from getting into physical fights (2) keep yourself from carrying a knife (3) stay away from situations in which you could get into fights (4) can seek help instead of fighting.* Responses were reported on a 0-4 scale where 0 = Definitely Cannot, 1 = Maybe Cannot, 2 = Not Sure, 3 = Maybe can, and 4 = Definitely Can. Scores ranged from 0 to 16 and higher scores indicated higher levels of boys' perception of their ability to avoid violence. The measure had a Cronbach's alpha of .68 for this sample indicating acceptable reliability of this measure.

Perception of parent norms about violence. Participant's perception of their parent's norms about violence was assessed using 4 items measured on a Likert scale where 0 = Definitely No; 1 = Probably No, 2 = Not Sure; 3 = Probably Yes; and 4 = Definitely Yes. The total score ranged from 0-16 with high scores indicating stronger perception of parents' nonviolent norms. Representative items included "Your parents want you to avoid carrying a knife or razor or gun?" and "Do your parents want you to stay away from situations where you could get into a fight?" One item was recoded to keep all items in the same direction with higher scores indicating greater perception that parents held norms that eschewed violent behavior. The scale had an alpha of .78 indicating acceptable reliability in this sample.

Covariates. The demographic variables: child's age, how long boys had lived in the neighborhood; average household income, and parent education were included in the analyses as covariates. Length of time lived in the neighborhood was reported as a continuous measure of between 1 to 5 discrete years. The effect of the intervention was also controlled.

Data Analysis Plan

Missing data

Missing data was first handled using the Estimation Maximization algorithm (PASW 19), which estimates the missing values by using the actual and missing values. The algorithm calculated multiple iterations until there was convergence in parameter estimates. Convergence indicated that any additional iteration using the algorithm would have not resulted in parameter estimates that are significantly different from the current estimates (University of Texas Statistical Services, 2013). The imputation for this study was completed at a convergence of 0.001, after 100 imputations.

This procedure has been identified as an appropriate method for handling missing data that are determined to be Missing Completely at Random or MCAR. The quality of the technique is prized because of the unbiased estimates that it produces (Acock, 2005). Little's MCAR test was used to assess the pattern of missingness in these data. This test results in one global statistic (Little, 1988; Little, & Rubin, 2002). In this case the test indicated no statistically reliable deviation from randomness.

Bivariate associations among variables were tested using Pearson's correlations. Structural equation models (SEM) were used for multivariable data analysis. Structural equation modeling allowed for the simultaneous estimation of multiple meditational

paths. This mode of analysis was also chosen because it allowed for using multiple indicators to represent constructs, and thus reduced measurement error. Additionally it facilitated the modeling of mediating relationships, error terms, and test coefficients. A two-step structural equation modeling procedure was used for data analysis (Kline, 2011). The measurement model was tested first without any paths to measure the factor loadings. I tested the full model with all paths of interest in the second model. For structural equation modeling, I used AMOS 19.0 (Allison, 2002; Arbuckle, 2009). Missing data in the SEM procedure was addressed using full information maximum likelihood (FIML). I reported the following fit statistics: chi square, the comparative fit index (CFI) [$> .90$], the root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA) [$< .06$], and χ^2 to degrees of freedom ratio (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Lei & Lomax, 2005; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). I controlled for the effect of the intervention, and report here the standardized regression weights. To confirm mediation I calculated the Sobel test using coefficients for the relevant paths, in accordance with the recommendations of Baron and Kenny (1986).

Results

Descriptive results

Boys in this study ranged in age from 12 to 17 years old, with an average age of 13.5 years ($SD = .62$). Almost half of the sample of boys (47.2%) lived in two-parent families. Participants reported having lived in their neighborhood for 3.8 years ($SD = 1.36$), with a maximum of 7 years of neighborhood residence. Eighty-nine percent reported having lived with their mothers or a mother figure and 47% with a father figure or their biological fathers. Most of the parents who participated in this study were

mothers (86%). The average household income for this sample was more than \$15,000 but less than \$20,000, however 66.2% of families operated on less than \$30,000 annually, with nearly half of these families earning less than \$15,000 annually. Only 14.2% operated on an income of more than \$40,000. The median household income for the state was \$35,081 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996). Eighty percent of parents had completed high school or a two-year college degree. More than 20% of parents had engaged in some college-level course work, earned a four-year college degree or had earned some post college level degree.

This sample reported less chronic behaviors. The violent behaviors reported in this sample were typically more normative adolescent behaviors. About 80% of the sample reported having threatened to beat up someone. This was the second most representative violent act. Physical fighting was the most common behavior with 95.5% of adolescent boys reporting engagement in this behavior. These data provided the best available context for better understanding the reported behaviors. It was not possible for instance, to determine whether the majority of these violent behaviors were routine, developmentally normative sibling and friend disagreements or even roughhousing. However, noticeably fewer African-American boys had been involved in more serious behaviors like physical fights that lead to injury (14.5%). A moderate size of the sample had threatened to cut or stab another person. Between 10% and 20% of boys in this sample had engaged in very serious acts like carrying a gun (19.8%), cutting/stabbing someone or shooting at them (see Figure 4.1). An area of concern here was the increase in weapon carrying among these boys, from previous studies in this dissertation. The data

has suggested that as African-American boys mature, their behaviors increasingly mirror their neighborhoods.

The majority of the African-American boys (83.5%) reported having witnessed a physical fight where someone was badly injured. Almost half of the boys had witnessed first-hand very serious violent acts including seeing some get cut, stabbed or shot at. For almost 70% of these boys, their experiences were potentially more impactful since family members and friends were the victims of these violent acts (see Figure 4.2). It was clear that African-American boys in this study had been exposed to significant amounts of very serious violence. There is need to determine what factors made it possible for these boys to continue to function in relatively normative fashion in the presence of powerful risks.

In bivariate analysis youths' exposure to violence was positively correlated with their perception of classmates' violent behaviors ($r = .144, p < .01$), their affiliation with deviant peers ($r = .140, p < .01$), and violent behavior $r = .384, p < .01$). African-American adolescent males' exposure to violence was negatively correlated with their efficacy to avoid violence ($r = -.165, p < .01$), and their perception of their parents' norms about violence ($r = -.106, p < .05$). African-American boys' efficacy to avoid violence was negatively related to violent behaviors ($r = -.329, p < .01$). Their efficacy to avoid violence was also negatively related to their affiliation with deviant peers ($r = -.249, p < .01$). African-American boys' perception of parents' norms about violence was positively related to their efficacy beliefs ($r = .282, p < .01$), and negatively related to affiliation with violent peers ($r = -.203, p < .01$) and violent behaviors ($r = -.150, p < .01$) respectively (see Table 4.1).

Model Summary

Fit statistics for the measurement model were good [$\chi^2 = 89.706$, $df = 57$, $p = .004$, $\chi^2 / df = 1.574$, $CFI = .949$, $RMSEA = .032$, (90% CI = .019, .045)]. Standardized factor loadings for the classmate's violent behavior and affiliation with violent peers ranged from .358 to .793 and .528 to .833, respectively. The standardized loadings for parents' norms about violence ranged from .516 to .678 (See Figure 4.3).

The full structural equation of the Model also showed a good fit to the data [$\chi^2 = 133.359$, $df = 87$, $p < .001$, $\chi^2 / df = 1.533$, $CFI = .928$, $RMSEA = .031$, (90% CI = .020, .041)]. The path from African-American boys' exposure to violence to violent behavior was positive ($\beta = .302$, $P < .001$), suggesting that those with greater exposure to violence engaged in more violent acts. This confirmed the first hypothesis.

Tests of the second hypothesis found that exposure to violence also had an indirect effect on adolescent boys' engagement in violence. This functioned through youths' perception of violence among their classmates ($\beta = .291$, $P < .01$). Perceptions of classmate violence influenced adolescents' affiliation with deviant peers ($\beta = .407$, $P < .01$) and resulted in increased violent behaviors. Two Sobel tests were conducted to evaluate the indirect effect of exposure to violence through two mediating variables. The first Sobel test indicated that perception of classmate violence partially mediated the effect of exposure to violence on affiliation with deviant peers ($z = 1.988$, $p = .04$). The second test revealed that deviant peer affiliations partially mediated the relationship between perception of classmate violence and youths' violent behavior ($z = 2.408$, $p = .02$). These tests revealed a positive path from boys' exposure to violence to their perception of classmates' engagement in violent acts. This indicated that boys who had been exposed to more violence perceived more violent acts among their classmates. Boys

who believed that their classmates' were more engagement in violence were also more affiliated with violent peers. African-American adolescent boys with higher exposure to violence had lower efficacy to avoid violence ($\beta = -.124, P < .001$), indicating that their perceived capacity to avoid violence was reduced by exposure to violence.

The third hypothesis was not confirmed in these analyses. African-American boys' efficacy to avoid violence did not mediate the relationship between exposure to violence and engagement in violent behaviors. While exposure to violent behavior had a negative effect on boys' efficacy at the bivariate level, the indirect effect of exposure to violence through boys' efficacy did not emerge in this model.

For the fourth hypothesis I found no direct effect of African-American boys' perception of their parents' support of nonviolent behavior on youths' engagement in violent behavior. There was however, an indirect effect of perception of parents' support of nonviolence on youth violence, through African-American boys' confidence in their ability to avoid violent behaviors. Stronger perception that their parents did not support violent behavior predicted, for youth, greater efficacy to avoid violence ($\beta = .389, P < .001$). Boys who were more confident in their ability to avoid violence were less involved in violent behaviors ($\beta = -.177, P < .001$). The indirect effect of the relationship between perceptions of parent's support for nonviolence and youth violent behaviors was evaluated using the Sobel test. African-American boys' confidence in their ability to avoid violence completely mediated the effect of parents' norms ($z = -3.263, p = .001$) to predict fewer violent behaviors. African-American boys' efficacy to avoid violence was also associated with less affiliation with deviant peers ($\beta = -.219, P < .001$).

Discussion

This study contributed to the literature that explored the factors that protect youth who are most vulnerable and exposed to the effects of risk factors in their environment. More specifically the study highlighted the influence of peers, parents and youths' individual strengths in light of a major risk factor for the development of youth violence – exposure to violence. The findings support previous studies that identified the deleterious role of adolescents' exposure to violence (Lindstrom-Johnson et al., 2011) and the deviance of peers (Pardini et al., 2012). The findings underscored the significant protective role that parents continue to play in the lives of their African-American boys. Highlighted here is the individual strength of African-American adolescent boys in avoiding negative outcomes even as they continue to live in high-risk urban contexts.

I found high levels of exposure to violence among the adolescents in this sample. More than 80% of African-American boys had witnessed a fight where someone had been badly hurt. Almost 50% had seen someone stabbed, cut or shot at. Almost 70% of these adolescent boys had seen serious violence experienced by a family member or friend. Participation in violent behavior among the boys in this study ranged from 10% to 95.5% depending on the seriousness of the violent behavior.

Though most of the youth in this study identified less serious acts such as physical fighting and threatening to beat up someone, at least 70% reported engaging in two or more behaviors. Encouragingly far fewer African-American adolescent boys had engaged in more serious acts like weapon carrying and violence that included weapon use – about 10% to 20% in each case. Overwhelmingly, African-American boys had engaged in more normative conflict based behaviors such as physical fights (95.5%), and threatening to

beat someone (81.6%). The findings were aligned with the literature that has demonstrated that youth who are exposed to higher levels of violence engage in more violent behaviors (Lindstrom-Johnson, 2011; Robinson, Paxton, & Jonen, 2011). In the current study exposure to violence evidenced direct effects on youths' behavior but also influenced youths' behavior through their perception of classmates violent behaviors and youths' affiliation with deviant peers.

Adolescents are known to overestimate the negative behaviors of their peers while underestimating their own negative behaviors (Prinstein & Wang, 2005). However, affiliation with deviant peers, and a perception that same-aged youth or classmates are involved in a particular behavior, may falsely normalize violent behaviors. Such a development might leave youth feeling either powerless against this false perception (Salzinger et al., 2006; Prinstein & Wang, 2005), or perceiving violence as an acceptable pattern of behavior (Haynie et al., 2006). The current study found that youth who had experienced more violence perceived that their classmates were committing more acts of violence. Their perception of more violence from classmates resulted in a stronger affiliation with deviant peers for these adolescents and, subsequently, more violent behaviors. The effect of youths' exposure to violence therefore can skewer their perception of what is acceptable and popular behavior among other adolescents. These perceptions can influence African-American boys' choice of peers. For instance boys who may feel vulnerable because of exposure to some violent experience may seek protection among youth who have already started down a trajectory of violence.

African-American boys who feel a sense of vulnerability derived from exposure to violence are less likely to feel confident in negotiating their high-risk neighborhoods.

Another finding from this study is that African-American boys who had more incidents of exposure to violence felt less confident in their ability to avoid being engaged in violence. Boys who are continually exposed to violence, and who think that their peers engage in violence, are more likely to adopt the prevailing youth behaviors. Research warns that the behaviors of adolescents in these situations more often than not will mirror that of the deviant peers who inform this negative youth culture (Salzinger et al., 2006; Prinstein & Wang, 2005).

An important finding in this study was that adolescents' perception of their parents' nonviolent norms was not directly related to less engagement in violent behaviors for youth. This study made an important contribution to the literature by identifying one path through which parents' nonviolent norms influenced youth behaviors. African-American boys' perception of their parent's nonviolent expectations or norms was related to their increased confidence in avoiding violence. This finding further elucidated the body of literature that showed that parents' non-supportive norms about violence predicted less violent acts for African-American adolescent males. Research has shown that this relationship applied whether parents' nonviolent norms were explicitly stated or perceived by youth (Ohene et al., 2006; Sieving et al., 2000; Farrell et al., 2011).

The current study made an important contribution to the literature by identifying efficacy to avoid violence as a critical path through which parents' nonviolent norms influenced youth behaviors. As adolescents become more self-governing encouraging youths' internal strengths becomes more important for helping protect them from the

influence of risk factors. Parents continue to play a critical role in protecting youth through the nonviolent norms that they convey to their children.

A very encouraging finding was related to African-American boys' confidence in avoiding violence. African-American boys who had a stronger efficacy to avoid violence were less likely to be engaged in violent behaviors. These youth were also more likely to make a deliberate choice to avoid deviant peers. Efficacy to avoid violence, though an individual asset, relied upon the norms that parents communicated to their children. In high-risk neighborhoods youth who can draw upon these kinds of assets are less likely to begin a path of negative trajectory. The findings of this study are encouraging to those who work with African-American boys, their parents, and for the literature on this population. These findings have implications for parenting, intervention, mental health, and research efforts.

Limitations

There are a few limitations to this study. The measure of classmate's violent behaviors was limited. While it accounted for one less and one more serious violent act, the measure did not represent a variety of violent behaviors in which youth may commonly be engaged. There is a similar concern for the measure of peer deviance. While for both measures there were 5 available items the two chosen items were the best fit for each scale, with the other items loading poorly. The current scales however, made significant and interesting contributions to the overall model and addressed the key issues of violence in this sample. Future research should determine whether this model works for different levels of violence by including a wider range of violent behaviors.

This, study while it included the adolescent voice into the research, did not account for parent reports. The non-inclusion of parent variables in this study allowed me to explore more fully the adolescent's perspective, especially with regard to the development and influence of cognitive risks and resources such as perception of peer behaviors and efficacy to avoid violence. Future studies should explore this model with a mix of parent and adolescent reported measures. It may also be informative to account for parent perspectives in this as well e.g. parent reported norms. An investigation of parent-based factors (e.g. monitoring, parenting styles, parent mental and physical health, and racial identity) that might influence youth behavior may also prove illuminating to the literature.

Research that has investigated risks and protective factors for youth violence has been largely cross sectional. This study has contributed by exploring structural models to determine paths of influence among the risks and protective factors. Additional research should examine the influence of risk and protective factors across time. Investigating these issues from a longitudinal perspective would determine how the protective value of key factors might fluctuate across time. Additionally, while this study focused on African-American boys, the influence of gender was not examined. An investigation of gender differences may reveal how these risk and protective factors might function differently for adolescent boys and girls in the same high-risk contexts.

African-American boys are more likely to develop the negative outcomes associated with living in high-risk neighborhoods. This study demonstrated that critical protections against the deleterious effects of high-risk neighborhoods exist. African-American boys can be very resilient under these risk contexts, and the two main sources

of strength were boys' own efficacy beliefs and the support of parents. Exposure to violence remained a significant threat to positive development for African-American boys, but parents' nonviolent norms, whether perceived or overtly communicated, strengthened boys' resolve to avoid violence. Exposure to violence also worked through boys' interactions with negative peers and classmates to increase the possibility of violent behaviors. However, boys' efficacy to avoid violence reduced affiliation with deviant peers and directly reduced violent behaviors. These findings are insightful because they focused positive attention on African-American boys, and identified possible resources for working with families. The study further accentuated the positive influence of parents in protecting African-American boys from becoming engaged in violence. This is an especially critical concern for youth and families living in poor, urban neighborhoods.

Implications

Interventions aimed at protecting African-American boys from the risks in poor urban neighborhoods might benefit from a focus on promoting those factors that empower youth to avoid negative influences. Much of the intervention work with African-American boys has focused on reducing risks. Family based interventions have worked towards improving family functioning and parenting practices. It was hoped that families would remain the main resource to adolescents in disadvantaged neighborhoods. This study argued for the inclusion of youths' cognitive skills in future efforts aimed at attenuating and managing the effects of exposure to risks. Perception of classmate violence and deviant peer affiliation were key mediators of violent exposure. Additionally, perceptions of parents' nonviolent norms proved critical as they can boost African-American boys' efficacy to avoid violence. This then reduces violence and

deviant peer associations. Thus, skill building through parent reinforcement may prove effective in developing family based interventions aimed at improving youth outcomes.

Adolescence has been described as a developmental period characterized by a reliance on the influence of peers at the expense of parent and adult authority. This study found that the influence of parents should not be underestimated even during the peer-driven adolescence period. Social and mental health professionals should continue to encourage positive parent practices, especially those that facilitate parents' transmission of critical messages and modeling of behaviors for their sons (i.e. communication, monitoring). Parents will benefit from strategies that allow them to more efficiently communicate nonviolent expectations to their sons, while also providing alternative coping skills.

Clinicians, schools, social service and mental health providers along with parents would do well to focus on building specific skill capacity and coping strategies for African-American boys in poor, urban neighborhoods. Schools and parents may do well to assume the primary role for encouraging norms and beliefs that help youth avoid violence. A school climate that encourages nonviolence may help normalize youth's perceptions about violence among other adolescents and dispel the often-misguided notion that "Everyone is doing it." These kinds of beliefs are tied to the choice of friends that adolescents affiliate with. School programs that promote nonviolence and encourage similar norms may help recalibrate adolescents' perception of peer and classmate behaviors and norms. Such programs may also reduce the influence of peer pressure and the perception of violence as a means for establishing social status or solving social

conflict. Parental expectations about violent behavior, and individual resolve to avoid violence work well to counter negative norms and influences.

References

- Aber, J. L., Gephart, M. A., Brooks-Gunn, J., & Connell, J. P. (1997). Development in context: Implications for studying neighborhood effects. *Neighborhood Poverty, 1*, 44-61.
- Acock, A. C. (2005). Working with missing values. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 67*(4), 1012-1028.
- Akers, R. L. (1998). *Social learning and social structure: A general theory of crime and deviance* Northeastern University Press, Boston
- Allison, P. D. (2002). Structural equation modeling with Amos: Basic concepts, applications, and programming (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Taylor and Francis Group.
- Anderson, E. *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence and the Moral Life of the Inner City*. New York, NY: WW Norton & Company; 1999.
- Arbuckle, J. L. (2009). Amos 18 user's guide. Chicago, IL: Amos Development Corporation.
- Ary, D. V., Duncan, T. E., Biglan, A., Metzler, C. W., Noell, J. W., & Smolkowski, K. (1999). Development of adolescent problem behavior. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 27*(2), 141-150.
- Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction in

social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations.

Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51, 1173-1182.

Bennett Jr, M. D., & Fraser, M. W. (2000). Urban violence among African American males: Integrating family, neighborhood, and peer perspectives. *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, (3)27, 93-117.

Bellair, P. E. (2000). Informal surveillance and street crime: A complex relationship. *Criminology*, 38(1), 137-170.

Bellair, P. E. (2006). Social interaction and community crime: Examining the importance of neighbor networks. *Criminology*, 35(4), 677-704.

Bender, D., & Lösel, F. (1997). Protective and risk effects of peer relations and social support on antisocial behaviour in adolescents from multi-problem milieus. *Journal of Adolescence*, 20(6), 661-678.

Brookmeyer, K. A., Henrich, C. C., & Schwab- Stone, M. (2005). Adolescents who witness community violence: Can parent support and prosocial cognitions protect them from committing violence? *Child Development*, 76(4), 917-929.

Buka, S. L., Stichick, T. L., Birdthistle, I., & Earls, F. J. (2010). Youth exposure to violence: Prevalence, risks, and consequences. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 71(3), 298-310.

Bursik, R. J. (2006). Social disorganization and theories of crime and delinquency: Problems and prospects. *Criminology*, 26(4), 519-552.

- Caldwell, C. H., Kohn-Wood, L. P., Schmeelk-Cone, K. H., Chavous, T. M., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2004). Racial discrimination and racial identity as risk or protective factors for violent behaviors in African American young adults. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 33*(1), 91-105.
- Chung, H. L., & Steinberg, L. (2006). Relations between neighborhood factors, parenting behaviors, peer deviance, and delinquency among serious juvenile offenders. *Developmental Psychology, 42*(2), 319-331.
- Cohen, J., Cohen, P., West, S. G., & Aiken, L. S. (2003). Applied multiple regression/correlation analysis for the behavioral sciences (3rd ed.). Mahwah, NJ US: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Copeland-Linder, N., Jones, V. C., Haynie, D. L., Simons-Morton, B. G., Wright, J. L., & Cheng, T. L. (2007). Factors associated with retaliatory attitudes among African American adolescents who have been assaulted. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology, 32*(7), 760-770.
- Dahlberg, L. L., & Potter, L. B. (2001). Youth violence: Developmental pathways and prevention challenges. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 20*(1), 3-14.
- DHHS. Youth violence: a report of the Surgeon General. Rockville MD: Office of the Surgeon General, 2001.
- Dishion, T. J., Eddy, J. M., Haas, E., Li, F., & Spracklen, K. (1997). Friendships and violent behavior during adolescence. *Social Development, 6*(2), 207-223.

- Dishion, T. J., & Owen, L. D. (2002). A longitudinal analysis of friendships and substance use: Bidirectional influence from adolescence to adulthood. *Developmental Psychology; Developmental Psychology*, 38(4), 480-491.
- Dishion, T. J., Spracklen, K. M., Andrews, D. W., & Patterson, G. R. (1996). Deviancy training in male adolescent friendships. *Behavior Therapy*, 27(3), 373-390.
- Anderson, E. (1999). Code of the Street: Decency. *Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*, New York, NY.
- Fagan, J., & Wilkinson, D. (1998). Social contexts and functions of adolescent violence. In D. Elliott, B. Hamburg, & K. Williams (Eds.), *Violence in American schools* (pp. 55-93). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Farrell, A. D., Erwin, E. H., Bettencourt, A., Mays, S., Vulin-Reynolds, M., Sullivan, T., . . . Meyer, A. (2008). Individual factors influencing effective nonviolent behavior and fighting in peer situations: A qualitative study with urban African American adolescents. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 37(2), 397-411.
- Farrell, A. D., Mays, S., Bettencourt, A., Erwin, E. H., Vulin-Reynolds, M., & Allison, K. W. (2010). Environmental influences on fighting versus nonviolent behavior in peer situations: A qualitative study with urban African American adolescents. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 46(1), 19-35.
- Farrington, D.P., Ttofi, M.M. (2011). Bullying as a predictor of offending, violence and later life outcomes. *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*, 21(2), 90–8.

- Farrington, D. P., & Welsh, B. C. (2006). *Saving children from a life of crime: Early risk factors and effective interventions* Oxford University Press, USA.
- Farrington, D. (1994). Protective factors in the development of juvenile delinquency and adult crime. *Sixth Scientific Meeting of the Society for Research in Child and Adolescent*,
- Fergus, S., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2005). Adolescent resilience: A framework for understanding healthy development in the face of risk. *Annual Review of Public Health, 26*, 399-419.
- Fergusson, D. M., & Horwood, L. J. (1998). Early conduct problems and later life opportunities. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 39*(8), 1097-1108.
- Flay, B. R., Graumlich, S., Segawa, E., Burns, J. L., & Holliday, M. Y. (2004). Effects of 2 prevention programs on high-risk behaviors among African American youth: A randomized trial. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, 158*(4), 377.
- Flowers, A., Lanclos, N. F., & Kelley, M. L. (2002). Validation of a screening instrument for exposure to violence in African American children. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology, 27*(4), 351-361.
- Foney, D. M., & Cunningham, M. (2002). Why do good kids do bad things? Considering multiple contexts in the study of antisocial fighting behaviors in African American urban youth. *Journal of Negro Education, 71*(3) , 143-157.

- Garnezy, N., Masten, A. S., & Tellegen, A. (1984). The study of stress and competence in children: A building block for developmental psychopathology. *Child Development, 55*(1), 97-111.
- Gorman-Smith, D., Henry, D. B., & Tolan, P. H. (2004). Exposure to community violence and violence perpetration: The protective effects of family functioning. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 33*(3), 439-449.
- Grunbaum, J. A., Kann, L., Kinchen, S., Ross, J., Hawkins, J., Lowry, R., . . . Collins, J. (2004). Youth risk behavior surveillance--United States, 2003. *MMWR. Surveillance Summaries: Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. Surveillance summaries/CDC, 53*(2), 1-96.
- Hawkins, J. D., Herrenkohl, T., Farrington, D. P., Brewer, D., Catalano, R. F., & Harachi, T. W. (1998). A review of predictors of youth violence. In R. Loeber & D. P. Farrington (Eds.), *Serious & violent juvenile offenders: Risk factors and successful interventions* (pp. 106-146). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Haynie, D. L., Silver, E., & Teasdale, B. (2006). Neighborhood characteristics, peer networks, and adolescent violence. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology, 22*(2), 147-169.
- Henry, D., Guerra, N., Huesmann, R., Tolan, P., VanAcker, R., & Eron, L. (2000). Normative influences on aggression in urban elementary school classrooms. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 28*(1), 59-81.

- Herrenkohl, T. I., Tajima, E. A., Whitney, S. D., & Huang, B. (2005). Protection against antisocial behavior in children exposed to physically abusive discipline. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 36*(6), 457-465.
- Hill, H. M., Levermore, M., Twaite, J., & Jones, L. P. (1996). Exposure to community violence and social support as predictors of anxiety and social and emotional behavior among African American children. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 5*(4), 399-414.
- Hoffmann, J. P. (2003). A contextual analysis of differential association, social control, and strain theories of delinquency. *Social Forces, 81*(3), 753-785.
- Hoge, R. D., Andrews, D., & Leschied, A. W. (1996). An investigation of risk and protective factors in a sample of youthful offenders. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 37*(4), 419-424.
- Hu, L., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal, 6*(1), 1-55.
- Huesmann, L. R., & Guerra, N. G. (1997). Children's normative beliefs about aggression and aggressive behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 72*(2), 408-419.

- Jaccard, J., Dittus, P. J., & Gordon, V. V. (1998). Parent- Adolescent congruency in reports of adolescent sexual behavior and in communications about sexual behavior. *Child Development, 69*(1), 247-261.
- Jacob, J. C. (2006). Male and female youth crime in Canadian communities: Assessing the applicability of social disorganization theory. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice, 48*, 31-60.
- Jagers, R. J., Morgan-Lopez, A. A., & Flay, B. R. (2009). The impact of age and type of intervention on youth violent behaviors. *The Journal of Primary Prevention, 30*(6), 642-658.
- Jagers, R. J., Morgan-Lopez, A. A., Howard, T. L., Browne, D. C., & Flay, B. R. (2007). Mediators of the development and prevention of violent behavior. *Prevention Science, 8*(3), 171-179.
- Jessor, R., Donovan, J. E., & Costa, F. M. (1994). *Beyond adolescence: Problem behaviour and young adult development* Cambridge University Press.
- Kliewer, W., Cunningham, J. N., Diehl, R., Parrish, K. A., Walker, J. M., Atiyeh, C., . . . Mejjia, R. (2004). Violence exposure and adjustment in inner-city youth: Child and caregiver emotion regulation skill, caregiver-child relationship quality, and neighborhood cohesion as protective factor. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 33*(3), 477-487.

- Kline, R. B. (2011). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling (3rd ed.)*. New York, NY US: Guilford Press.
- Laird, R. D., Jordan, K. Y., Dodge, K. A., Pettit, G. S., & Bates, J. E. (2001). Peer rejection in childhood, involvement with antisocial peers in early adolescence, and the development of externalizing behavior problems. *Development and Psychopathology, 13*(2), 337-354.
- Lambert, S. F., Ialongo, N. S., Boyd, R. C., & Cooley, M. R. (2005). Risk factors for community violence exposure in adolescence. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 36*(1), 29-48.
- Lei, M., & Lomax, R. G. (2005). The effect of varying degrees of nonnormality in structural equation modeling. *Structural Equation Modeling, 12*(1), 1-27.
- Leventhal, T., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2003). Moving to opportunity: An experimental study of neighborhood effects on mental health. *Journal Information, 93*(9), 1576-1582.
- Lindstrom Johnson, S. R., Finigan, N. M., Bradshaw, C. P., Haynie, D. L., & Cheng, T. L. (2011). Examining the link between neighborhood context and parental messages to their adolescent children about violence. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 49*(1), 58-63.
- Little, R. J. A., & Rubin, D. B. (2002). *Statistical Analysis with Missing Data*. New York: Wiley. 2nd ed.

- Little, R. J. A. (1988). A test of missing completely at random for multivariate data with missing values. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 83(404), 1198-1202.
- Loeber R, Farrington DP, eds. Serious & violent juvenile offenders: risk factors and successful interventions. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage, 1998.
- Loeber, R., Farrington, D.P., Stouthamer-Loeber, M., White, H.R. Violence and serious theft: development and prediction from childhood to adulthood. New York NY: Routledge, 2008.
- Lösel F, Bender D (2003) Protective factors and resilience. In Farrington, D. P., Coid, J.W. (eds) *Early Prevention of Adult Antisocial Behaviour*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press pp. 130–204.
- Lösel, F., & Farrington, D. P. (2012). Direct protective and buffering protective factors in the development of youth violence. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 43(2), S8-S23.
- Luthar, S. S., & Cicchetti, D. (2000). The construct of resilience: Implications for interventions and social policies. *Development and Psychopathology*, 12(4), 857-885.
- Luthar, S. S., Cicchetti, D., & Becker, B. (2003). The construct of resilience: A critical evaluation and guidelines for future work. *Child Development*, 71(3), 543-562.

- Margolin, G., & Gordis, E. B. (2000). The effects of family and community violence on children. *Annual Review of Psychology, 51*(1), 445-479.
- Masten, A.S. & J.L. Powell. 2003. A resilience framework for research, policy, and practice. In *Resilience and Vulnerability: Adaptation in the Context of Childhood Adversities*. S.S. Luthar, Ed.: 1–25. Cambridge University Press. New York.
- McNulty, T. L., & Bellair, P. E. (2003). Explaining racial and ethnic differences in adolescent violence: Structural disadvantage, family well-being, and social capital. *Justice Quarterly, 20*(1), 1-31.
- Moffitt, T. E. (1993). Adolescence-limited and life-course-persistent antisocial behavior: A developmental taxonomy. *Psychological Review; Psychological Review, 100*(4), 674-701.
- Moffitt, T. E. (1993). The neuropsychology of conduct disorder. *Development and Psychopathology, 5*, 135-151.
- Moffitt, T. E., Caspi, A., Dickson, N., Silva, P., & Stanton, W. (1996). Childhood-onset versus adolescent-onset antisocial conduct problems in males: Natural history from ages 3 to 18 years. *Development and Psychopathology, 8*(02), 399-424.
- Murray, J., Farrington, D.P., Eisner, M.P. (2009). Drawing conclusions about causes from systematic reviews of risk factors: the Cambridge Quality Checklists. *Journal of Experimental Criminology, 5*(1), 1–23.

Mrug, S., & Windle, M. (2009). Mediators of neighborhood influences on externalizing behavior in preadolescent children. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, *37*(2), 265-280.

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, WISQARS (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System) [accessed February 2013] Available from: URL: www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html

Neumann, A., Barker, E. D., Koot, H. M., & Maughan, B. (2010). The role of contextual risk, impulsivity, and parental knowledge in the development of adolescent antisocial behavior. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, *119*(3), 534-545.

Ngwe, J. E., Liu, L. C., Flay, B. R., & Segawa, E. (2004). Violence prevention among African American adolescent males. *American Journal of Health Behavior*, *28*(Suppl 1), S24.

Ohene, S. A., Ireland, M., McNeely, C., & Borowsky, I. W. (2006). Parental expectations, physical punishment, and violence among adolescents who score positive on a psychosocial screening test in primary care. *Pediatrics*, *117*(2), 441-447.

Orpinas, P., Murray, N., & Kelder, S. (1999). Parental influences on students' aggressive behaviors and weapon carrying. *Health Education & Behavior*, *26*(6), 774-787.

Orpinas, P., Horne, A. M., & Staniszewski, D. (2003). School bullying: Changing the problem by changing the school. *School Psychology Review*, *32*(3), 431-444.

- Osgood, D. W., & Anderson, A. L. (2004). Unstructured socializing and rates of delinquency. *Criminology*, 42(3), 519-550.
- Pardini, D. A., Loeber, R., Farrington, D. P., & Stouthamer-Loeber, M. (2012). Identifying direct protective factors for nonviolence. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 43(2), S28-S40.
- Piaget, J. (1932). *The moral judgment of the child*. London: Kegan Paul, London.
- Pitner, R. O., Astor, R. A., Benbenishty, R., Haj- Yahia, M. M., & Zeira, A. (2003). Adolescents' approval of peer and spousal retribution in their culture vs. other cultures: The role of group stereotypes. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 21(2), 221-242.
- Prinstein, M. J., & Wang, S. S. (2005). False consensus and adolescent peer contagion: Examining discrepancies between perceptions and actual reported levels of friends' deviant and health risk behaviors. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 33(3), 293-306.
- Prinstein, M. J., & Cillessen, A. H. (2003). Forms and functions of adolescent peer aggression associated with high levels of peer status. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 49(3), 310-342.
- Puzzanchera, C. (2009). *Juvenile arrests 2007*. *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention,

- Rappaport, N., & Thomas, C. (2004). Recent research findings on aggressive and violent behavior in youth: Implications for clinical assessment and intervention. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 35*(4), 260-277.
- Ratner, H. H., Chiodo, L., Covington, C., Sokol, R. J., Ager, J., & Delaney-Black, V. (2006). Violence exposure, IQ, academic performance, and children's perception of safety: Evidence of protective effects. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 52*(2), 264-287.
- Resnick, M. D., Bearman, P. S., Blum, R. W., Bauman, K. E., Harris, K. M., Jones, J., . . . Shew, M. (1997). Protecting adolescents from harm. *JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association, 278*(10), 823-832.
- Richards, M. H., Larson, R., Miller, B. V., Luo, Z., Sims, B., Parrella, D. P., & McCauley, C. (2004). Risky and protective contexts and exposure to violence in urban African American young adolescents. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 33*(1), 138-148.
- Riner, M. E., & Saywell, R. M. (2002). Development of the social ecology model of adolescent interpersonal violence prevention (SEMAIVP). *Journal of School Health, 72*(2), 65-70.
- Robinson, W. L. V., Paxton, K. C., & Jonen, L. P. (2011). Pathways to aggression and violence among African American adolescent males: The influence of normative beliefs, neighborhood, and depressive symptomatology. *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community, 39*(2), 132-148.

- Salzinger, S., Ng-Mak, D. S., Feldman, R. S., Kam, C. M., & Rosario, M. (2006). Exposure to community violence processes that increase the risk for inner-city middle school children. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 26(2), 232-266.
- Sampson, R. J. (2003). The neighborhood context of well-being. *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, 46(3), S53-S64.
- Sampson, R. J., & Groves, W. B. (1989). Community structure and crime: Testing social-disorganization theory. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94(4), 774-802.
- Sampson, R. J., Raudenbush, S. W., & Earls, F. (1997). Neighborhoods and violent crime: A multilevel study of collective efficacy. *Science*, 277, 918-924.
- Scarpa, A., & Haden, S. C. (2006). Community violence victimization and aggressive behavior: The moderating effects of coping and social support. *Aggressive Behavior*, 32(5), 502-515.
- Shaw, C., & McKay, H. (1942). *Juvenile delinquency and urban areas*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sieving, R. E., McNeely, C. S., & Blum, R. W. (2000). Maternal expectations, mother-child connectedness, and adolescent sexual debut. *Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine*, 154(8), 809-816.
- Smith, P., Flay, B. R., Bell, C. C., & Weissberg, R. P. (2001). The protective influence of parents and peers in violence avoidance among African-American youth. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, 5(4), 245-252.

- Stein, B. D., Jaycox, L. H., Kataoka, S., Rhodes, H. J., & Vestal, K. D. (2003).
Prevalence of child and adolescent exposure to community violence. *Clinical
Child and Family Psychology Review*, 6(4), 247-264.
- Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2007). *Using multivariate statistics (5th ed.)*. Boston,
MA: Allyn & Bacon/Pearson Education.
- Thornberry TP. Membership in youth gangs and involvement in serious and violent
offending. In: Loeber R, Farrington DP, eds. *Serious & violent juvenile offenders:
risk factors and successful interventions*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage, 1998:147– 66.
- Tonry, M., Ohlin, L. E., & Farrington, D. P. (1991). *Human development and criminal
behavior: New ways of advancing knowledge*. Springer-Verlag Publishing, New
York
- Turiel, E. (1997). Beyond particular and universal ways: Context for morality. *New
Directions for Child Development*, 76, 87-105.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P60-189, *Income, Poverty,
and Valuation of Noncash Benefits: 1994*, U.S. Government Printing Office,
Washington, DC, 1996.
- Vitaro, F., Brendgen, M., & Tremblay, R. E. (2000). Influence of deviant friends on
delinquency: Searching for moderator variables. *Journal of Abnormal Child
Psychology*, 28(4), 313-325.

Vitaro, F., Brendgen, M., & Tremblay, R. E. (2002). Reactively and proactively aggressive children: Antecedent and subsequent characteristics. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 43(4), 495-505.

Werner, E. E., & Smith, R. S. (2001). *Journeys from childhood to midlife: Risk, resilience, and recovery* Cornell University Press.

Table 4.1 Descriptives and correlations for variables in the Exposure to Violence Model (N = 553)

Variables	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Exposure to violence	2.64 (1.40)	—									
2. Violence behavior	2.82 (1.34)	.384**	—								
3. Perception of classmates violence	2.98 (1.06)	.149**	.216**	—							
4. Affiliation with deviant peers	2.81 (1.30)	.141**	.293**	.328**	—						
5. Efficacy to avoid violence	11.17 (3.07)	-.165**	-.329**	-.154**	-.246**	—					
6. Perception of parents' norms about violence	12.05 (2.60)	-.108*	-.147**	-.189**	-.199**	.277**	—				
Covariates											
7. Age	13.5 (.62)	.105*	.069	.018	.069	-.060	.073	—			
8. Intervention †	—	.008	-.023	-.057	.050	-.011	.087*	-.011	—		
9. Income †	4.5 (2.31)	-.031	-.079	-.013	-.078	.145**	.065	-.067	.030	—	
10. Parent education †	5.61(2.27)	-.115**	-.010	.025	-.083	.042	.094*	-.107*	-.027	.352**	—
11. Lived in neighborhood	3.80 (1.36)	-.008	.026	.047	-.007	.030	.028	.002	.066	.038	.015

NB: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$ † Average income=\$10,000; and > \$15,000 ; Average Education level=Vocational education or some college; Intervention coded 0 = Comparison, 1 = Intervention group

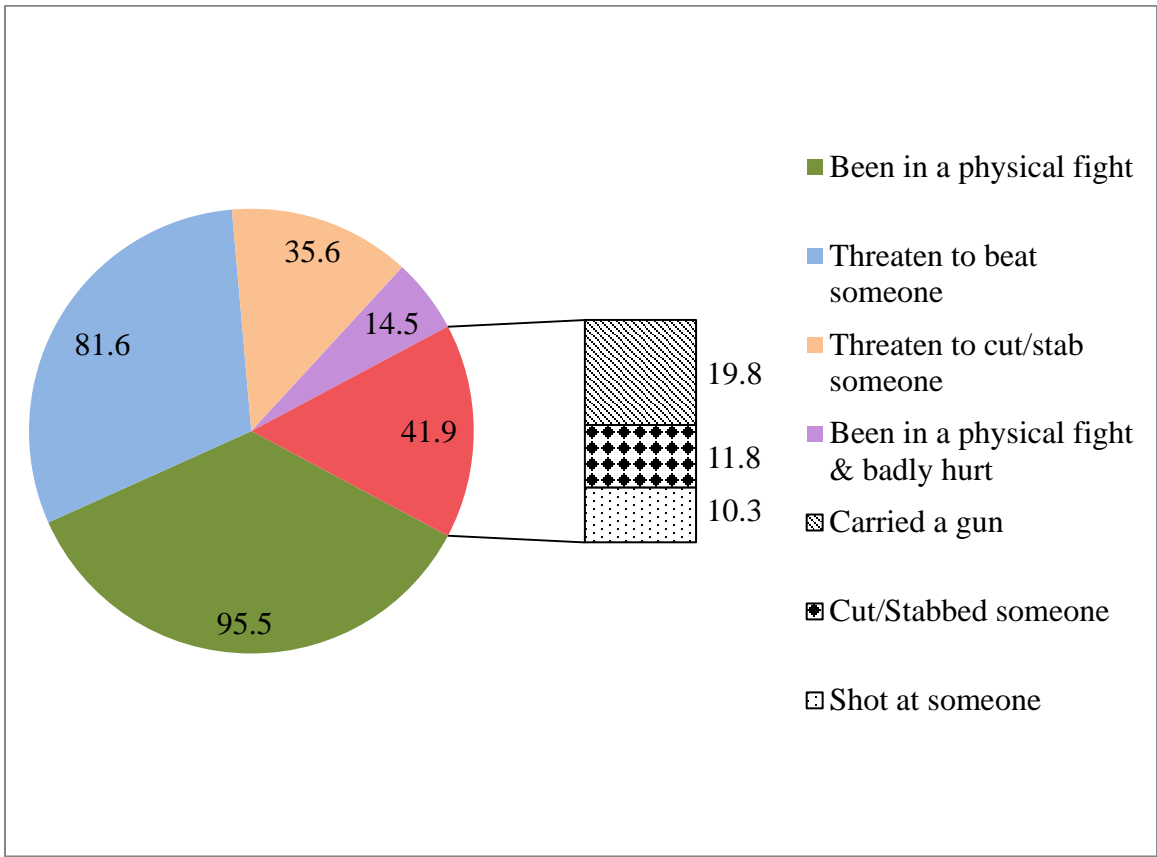


Figure 4.1 African-American boys' involvement in violent behaviors

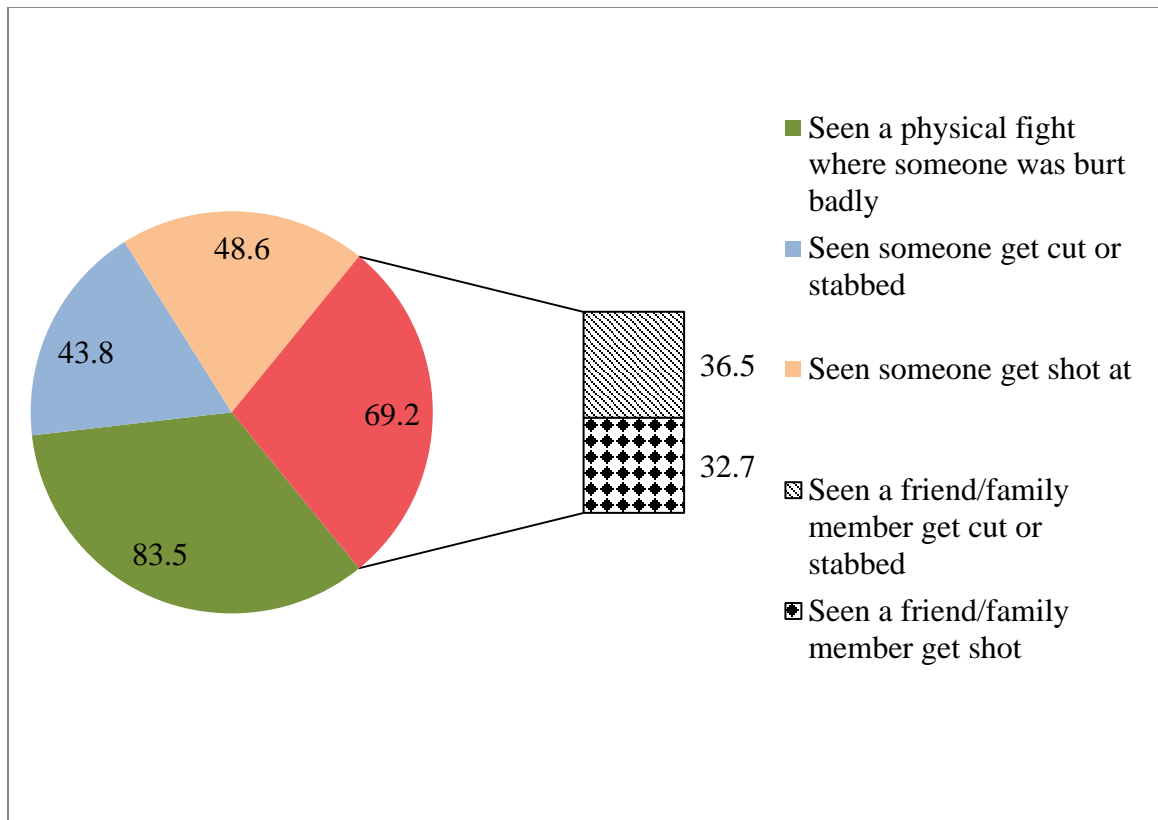


Figure 4.2 African-American boys' exposure to violence
NB: Percentages are not meant to total 100.

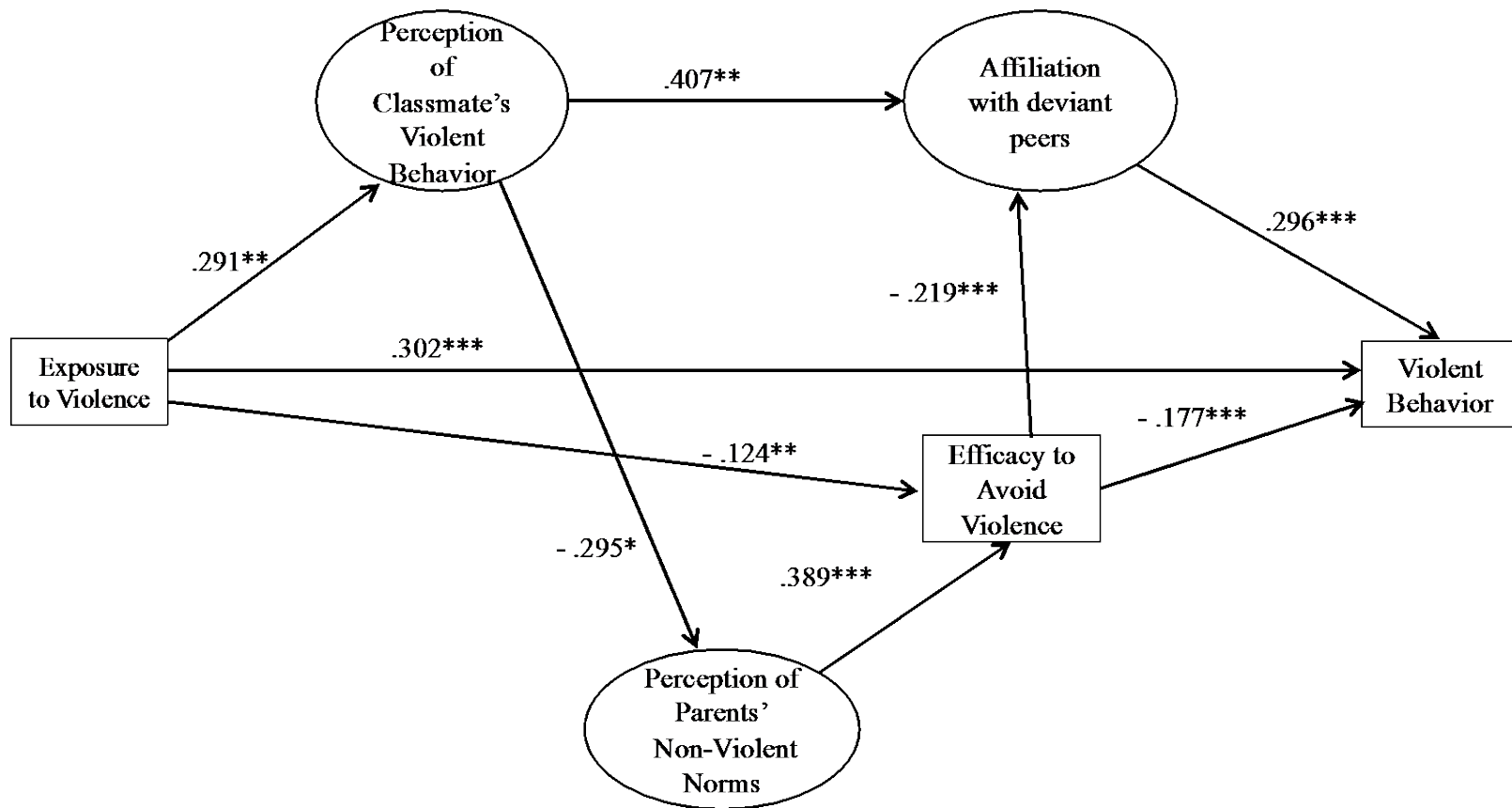


Figure 4.3 Exposure to Violence Model

Note: All values are standardized regression coefficients.
 $\chi^2 = 133.359$, $df = 87$, $p = .001$, $\chi^2 / df = 1.533$, $N = 553$, $CFI = .928$, $RMSEA = .031$, (90% CI = .020, .041)

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

This dissertation was an investigation of a critical public health concern – youth violence. Specific attention was focused on African-American adolescent males, a group at particularly high risk for this negative outcome by virtue of their social context (e.g. neighborhoods). More than 80% of youth in urban, poor neighborhoods have witnessed some form of violence (Cooley-Strickland, Quille, & Griffin, 2009), and African-American boys in these conditions were more exposed than their female counterparts, to the negative social characteristics of their neighborhoods (Jacob, 2006; Mrug & Windle, 2009; Neumann, Barker, Koot, & Maughan, 2010; Margolin & Gordis, 2000; Overstreet, 2000). For this reason it was necessary to understand what assets and resources might be most helpful to adolescent males. Information about the paths through which risks and protective factors operated would prove instrumental to prevention and intervention research. In this dissertation project I examined individual, family and neighborhood factors that placed African-American adolescent males at risk for violent behaviors. This research contributed to the literature by investigating the influence of protective factors for these youth. However, in this investigation I remained aware of the interactions among these risk and protective factors.

I identified risk and protective factors from the literature and used the risk and resilience theory (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005) to guide this inquiry. The literature has implicated adolescents' exposure to violence as a key predictor for violent behaviors.

Adolescents' exposure to deviant peers, victimization experiences, and their perceptions of classmates' violence were all investigated. These were considered some of the primary elements of an adolescent's social context that could predict or increase the chance of adopting violent behaviors. Youths' confidence in their ability to avoid violent behaviors was identified in the research as a major cognitive asset that attenuated the impact of risk factors. I also examined collective efficacy, parent communication, parent education, and perception of parents' non-violent norms as sources of protection for African-American males in low-income, urban, neighborhoods. This project made a number of important contributions to our understanding of how to protect African-American boys. Below I discussed some of the main contributions of each of the studies in turn, before closing with a presentation of important implications that arose from the findings in this dissertation.

Study 1

I focused on perceptions of neighborhood safety in the first study because of the dearth of research on the lived experiences of African-American adolescent males, and how they perceive their living environments. Adolescents' perception of the safety of their neighborhoods has not received much attention in the literature. In fact very few studies have investigated African-American boys' perception of the safety of their neighborhood. The risk and resilience model (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005) was used to account for risk and protective factors related to boys' perceptions of safety in their neighborhood. I also examined the effect of the neighborhood, peers, and parents as the main agents of socialization that may influence youths' perceptions of neighborhood safety.

A number of interesting findings arose from this study; however, the major benefit was the gained insight into how African-American adolescent males actually experienced their neighborhoods. Often researchers are aware of the catalysts for certain behaviors and the eventual outcomes. Fewer studies have endeavored to explain the individual's reactions and lived experiences.

In this study I found that African-American boys had been exposed to a significant amount of violent experiences both as victims and witnesses of this violence. While more than 18% had been victims, 92% had witnessed one or more acts of violence. Boys who had never been victims of violence were just as likely to be exposed to violent experiences as those who had victimized. Of the African-American boys who had suffered violent victimization, 98% had been exposed to one or more violent acts. Therefore, boys who had been victims of violence and who also perceived less neighborhood cohesion rightly determined that their neighborhoods felt unsafe. Compared to their parents, African-American boys thought of their neighborhoods as more unsafe.

Interestingly though, when adolescents perceived strong collective efficacy from their neighborhoods, even when these boys had been victims of violence, their perception of safety in their neighborhoods was stronger. This suggests that these African-American boys may have been able to rely on some source of protection, even if it was not the most proximal (parent). Thus for adolescents in high-risk contexts, the strong influence of the neighborhood cannot be underestimated either as a direct protection or as a supplement to parents' own efforts. Youth without that positive neighborhood influence felt less safe under conditions of either high or low experiences with victimization. Thus, while

multiple violent experiences are deleterious, even one violent experience can have a detrimental effect.

Adolescents who live in high-risk neighborhoods and feel unsafe and unprotected may live in perpetual fear (Maschi, Perez , & Tyson, 2010). These youth may gravitate towards other means of protecting themselves. In disadvantaged neighborhoods where collective efficacy is lower and risks abound, youth may find protection from violent, deviant peers and adults. There is need therefore, to explore and encourage individual strengths for youth in these neighborhoods while exploring other sources of protection.

Study 2

Drawing from the findings of the first study that suggested that African-American boys living in high-risk contexts would benefit from multiple sources of protection, I sought, in the second study, to identify protective factors and to examine their operation in the presence of risk factors. Youth in risk contexts are primed to benefit from whatever protective resources that parents provided. In the past, extant literature had focused less on identifying protections for African-American adolescent males (Herrenkohl, Hill, Chung, Guo, Abbott, & Hawkins, 2003; Smith, Flay, Bell, & Weissberg, 2001), and more on determining outcomes through risks. I hoped to contribute to a growing body of literature that has sought to reverse that trend. I employed the risk and resilience framework (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005) to first establish the link between common risk factors for youth violence, as identified in the literature on youth violence (Brady, Gorman-Smith, Henry, & Tolan, 2008; Herrenkohl et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2001). I then examined how protective factors attenuated the effect of risk factors on the likelihood of adolescent boys to develop violent behaviors. I added to the current literature on

protective factors by exploring the potential of parent education to increase parents' positive effects on adolescent boys in high-risk neighborhoods.

Little research has investigated the influence of parents' education on behavioral outcomes for adolescent boys. Few studies have addressed this concern in relation to African-American boys. African-American adolescent males remain a high-risk population because of the neighborhoods that they are more likely to reside in (Crouch, Hanson, Saunders, Kilpatrick, & Resnick, 2000; Flowers, Lanclos, & Kelley, 2002; McNulty & Bellair, 2003), and their disproportionately higher exposure to negative elements in these neighborhoods (De Coster, Heimer, & Wittrock, 2006; Haynie, Silver, & Teasdale, 2006; Jacob, 2006; Mrug & Windle, 2009; Neumann, Barker, Koot, & Maughan, 2010; Crouch et al., 2000; Loeber, Kalb, & Huizinga, 2001; McNulty & Bellair, 2003). Some research has investigated the influence of other parent demographic variables on adolescent's behaviors. However, few studies have examined the compounded protection that may be available to African-American boys from parents' education alongside positive parenting practices. In this study I examined the amalgamated protection available through parent education and two other protective variables – parents' communication about fighting, and adolescent's confidence in their ability to avoid violence.

Some literature has linked low parental education to low-income, urban residence, and other similar risk factors (O'Dougherty, Masten, 2005). Other studies have identified higher parent education as a protective factor for youth in high-risk contexts (see review by Erikson et al., 2010). However in this study low parental education did not affect African-American boys who had more continued association with deviant friends.

Parents' education did not protect African-American boys from engaging in violent behaviors if adolescents had greater affiliation with deviant peers. For youth with less affiliation with deviant peers, parents were able to provide protection regardless of their education level. Parents with higher levels of education were able to offer more protection from the development of violent behaviors. These findings indicated a strong influence of peers regardless of parents' education, but showed that regardless of education level parents are able to protect their adolescent sons.

Parent's communication with their children has been identified in the literature as a protective factor (Farrell, Mays, Bettencourt, Erwin, Vulin-Reynolds , & Allison, 2010; Laible & Carlo, 2004). This finding was supported in the current study. I also found that parents who spoke to their adolescent sons about specific risk factors (i.e., fighting) were able to reduce their sons' chances of developing violent behaviors. Parents who adopted this practice provided for adolescent boys an avenue for processing boys' interactions with their social environment. Parents who had open communication with their African-American sons also provided them with alternative strategies for dealing with social conflict. More importantly parents' communication about risks established and encouraged non-violent norms and expectations for their sons. Regardless of education level, parents who had spoken to their sons about physical fighting were able to protect them from engaging in violent behaviors. Thus, the effects of positive parenting practices seem to trump parents' education. Parents remained a major source of protection for their African-American sons not through the deployment of extraordinary resources but through common interventions such as communication about risks, and monitoring of adolescents.

While the literature has established that parents with lower educational attainment have many other attending risk factors (e.g., low-income, poor housing, single parent family structure, parental strain) these parents remain a major protective resource for African-American boys. As the influence of peers grows in salience during adolescence parents are even more important. Open communication with adolescent boys strengthened youths' own confidence in avoiding violence. It also reduced youths' affiliation with violent peers, and reduced their likelihood of developing violent behaviors – regardless of parents' education. Since parents remained a source of protection for their sons regardless of their level of education, what was the conduit for this protection that parents offer? How did the influence of parents compare to peer influences during the all too turbulent adolescent period? The third study answered these questions and sought to identify the process through which major risk factors and protective factors influenced youth engagement in violence.

Study 3

In this third study I continued to use the risk and resilience model (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005) to survey the contributions of the neighborhood, peers, parents, and individual strengths in determining adolescents' decision to engage in violent behaviors. I had particular interest in African-American boys' confidence in their ability to avoid violence, as a factor that would reduce their likely involvement in violent behaviors. The previous studies in this dissertation identified parents as a key resource for their African-American sons. The findings also supported the body of literature that posited that exposure to violence and affiliation with deviant peers was major risks for adolescents'

engagement in violence. This third study explored possible paths of influence for the neighborhood (exposure to violence), parents, and peers on youth violence.

Parents' nonviolent expectations for their sons may be conveyed through direct communication about risk, or may be perceived by the child based on the parent's communication and behaviors. These nonviolent norms have been associated with reduced violence among adolescents. This study expanded the literature by suggesting a path through which the influence of adolescents' perception of parents' norms operated to reduce negative outcomes in African-American adolescent boys.

This study advanced the literature by including adolescents' efficacy to avoid violence in the discussion on risks and protections related to youth violence. I explored the contribution of parents' norms, as well as peer and classmate norms and behaviors on youth violence. The power of these environmental influences to predict youth violence was examined. African-American boys' efficacy to avoid violence was treated as a major intervening asset that had the potential to reduce the effect of social influences. The model that was tested identified youth efficacy to avoid violence as a filter for their experiences with the neighborhood, and the influence of parents, peers, and classmates. A number of interesting findings arose from this study.

This study confirmed that exposure to violence and affiliation with deviant peers were both associated with more youth violence, as has been reported in the literature (Lindstrom-Johnson, Finigan, Bradshaw, Haynie, & Cheng, 2011; Pardini, Loeber, Farrington, & Stouthamer, 2012). Exposure to violence also reduced adolescents' confidence in their ability to avoid engagement in violent behavior, while perception of parents' nonviolent norms increased youths' efficacy to avoid violence. These

conclusions drew attention to the contribution of peers and parents in predicting adolescent behavior during the tumultuous adolescence period. The findings demonstrated that during adolescence parents still hold a critical position of influence in the lives of their African-American sons. This was especially the case in averting adolescent risk behaviors.

One of the more exciting contributions of this study was the confirmation of existing research that indicated that youths' belief that their parents held non-supportive views of violence predicted less violent behaviors for adolescents (Ohene, Ireland, McNeely, & Borowsky, 2006; Sieving, McNeely, & Blum, 2000; Farrell et al., 2011). Although this finding did not provide a direct path to violent behaviors, it revealed an interesting understanding of the influence of parents. An interesting path through which these parental expectations predicted youth violent behaviors was identified.

In the current study African-American boys' perceptions of parental nonviolent norms predicted fewer violent behaviors, but only through boys' confidence in their own ability to avoid violent behaviors. These results are encouraging as they are an indication that parents who communicated nonviolent norms to their African-American sons were building the efficacy of these African-American adolescent boys. These parents supported the development of a potent asset and in turn reduced the likelihood that their sons would be engaged in violent behaviors. The values and norms that parents communicate to their African-American sons had the power to protect these adolescents even when parents were not physically present to cushion the impact of deleterious experiences.

The study also elucidated the literature on youths' efficacy to avoid violence. In

this study efficacy to avoid violence emerged as a critical pathway through which both risk and protective factors in the environment functioned. Parents play a crucial role in encouraging the development of this asset. This determination to avoid violence not only reduced African-American boys' involvement in violent behaviors, it affected their choice of friends. African-American adolescent males with higher efficacy to avoid violence were less likely to affiliate with deviant peers, thus reducing their risk for violent engagements.

Youths' exposure to violence is a powerful experience that functions both directly and indirectly through classmates and peers to increase adolescents' odds of violent engagement. For youth who had been exposed to some form of violence there was both a direct and indirect path of influence. Exposure to violence led to youths' perception of more violence among classmates, and this was associated with increased affiliation with deviant peers. Thus youth who had witnessed acts of violence were more likely to think that other adolescents were involved in violence. These might view deviant peer associations as a means of proactive or reactive protection against potential violence. African-American boys with a higher sense of efficacy in avoiding violence made the deliberate choice to avoid deviant peers. For youth in high-risk neighborhoods, this individual strength may be one of the most important protective factors available to African-American boys. Correcting youths' possible overestimation of violence among other adolescents might help reduce fear and association with deviant peers.

The studies in this dissertation represent a survey of risk and protective factors related to youth violence for African-American adolescent males. I have included in this dissertation an examination of neighborhood, peer, parent, and individual factors that

influence the trajectory of youth violence. Chung and Steinberg (2006) have shown that the neighborhood exerts a strong influence on youth behaviors through parenting practices and peer deviance. I examined an additional dimension - the individual component - through which these neighborhood, peer, and parent influences are filtered to determine youth behaviors.

I furthered the discussion on the importance of considering factors related to the individual by demonstrating how perceptions of neighborhood safety might emerge from weakened neighborhood and parenting controls. This shed light on African-American boys' experiences with their neighborhood and their feelings of vulnerability arising from those experiences. Together the dissertation broadens our understanding of the importance of African-American boys' confidence in their ability to avoid violence. More extraordinary interventions such as the Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing Demonstration (MTO) an initiative by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 1994, yielded poor results for adolescents in some samples (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). I have shown here how ordinary resources (i.e., communication, efficacy to avoid violence) can improve outcomes for youth in high-risk contexts, and how this critical asset can be strengthened for at-risk-youth.

These findings can inform the efforts of those who are concerned with youth outcomes whether at the research, intervention, clinical practice, or policy level. Based on these findings, providing support for primary caregivers especially through community based support mechanisms may have special benefit for families and communities. Such community-based efforts would have the dual benefit of fostering and improving parenting skills related to reducing youth violence, while also increasing collective

efficacy. Interventions aimed at reducing youth violence also need to create an environment where parents, and other socialization agents (i.e., including positive peers, community figures, and positive adults) strengthen adolescents' individual efficacy.

Neighborhood violence continues to be one of the most potent predictors of youth violence. Disadvantaged neighborhoods however are not always marked by significant violence. Additional research should tease apart the differential influence of neighborhood structural disadvantage from neighborhood violence on adolescent violent behaviors. The development of policies that improve the quality of neighborhoods whether through increased employment, better housing, police and neighborhood collaborations, may increase collective efficacy in high-risk neighborhoods. This would increase youths' perception of safety in their neighborhoods while also supporting the efforts of parents. Under these conditions youth are less likely to be exposed to violence, and more likely to mirror the nonviolent norms of their parents and their neighborhood.

There are some limitations to these studies. One of the limitations of secondary data analyses is the relative inflexibility of the data since there is little control over what measures are available. In this case there were limits to the violence measures. For instance while the measure for violence exposure was reliable for this sample it was narrow in focus. The measure did not allow for determining less violent violence experiences for example. It also did not allow for reporting violence that adolescents had not actually witnessed. Though a focus only on violence that youth had personally witnessed gives a good estimate of youths' violent experiences, it does not give an accurate account of the prevalence of violence in the neighborhood. Thus I could not closely explore the proximal nature of the violence, or how wide spread it was.

Additionally, youths' report of their own violent behaviors was limited in that I could not determine the quality of these violent behaviors. For instance more than 90% of youth indicated being involved in physical fights. The data held no avenue for determining whether adolescents had included normal sibling and peer disagreements in their report of violent behavior. For the behaviors that were reported, it was not known whether these behaviors had occurred in the neighborhood, the school, or the family. This kind of data would have provided a more accurate representation of the extent and quality of youth violence. In the third study the use of two-item latent factors is another reflection of these measurement difficulties. In this case the latent factors functioned adequately, predicting outcomes in ways that were supported by theory and existing literature. In each case (peer deviance and classmate violence) multiple items were tested for constructing the latent factor, however only two items contributed meaningfully. These were kept as accurate measurements of the aforementioned latent factors.

The studies in this dissertation provide an excellent foundation for exploring youth violence using a longitudinal approach. These kinds of studies would allow for observing how strengths, like efficacy to avoid violence, develop overtime. This information would hone interventions that were meant to develop skills and strengths among youth in high-risk contexts. Future investigations should also examine gender differences in the development of violent behavior in adolescents, and the way parents may protect youth from developing violent behaviors. Additionally the effect of parent gender on their ability to influence the behavior of African-American boys would be an informative line of inquiry into youth violence.

Despite the fact that they were living in high-risk environments African-American boys in the first study felt safe even in the face of violence exposure and victimization if there was greater collective efficacy in their neighborhoods. Parents in the second study living in these neighborhoods, who talked to their children about fighting, had children who engaged in less violent behavior. This was noticed only among parents with less education. However, the boys in the third study who were aware of their parents' norms against violence had more confidence in their ability to avoid violence and violent behavior and were less likely to be negatively influenced by peers.

Collectively these findings contribute new knowledge to the literature by highlighting the significance of collective efficacy for safety in neighborhoods among African-American boys. The protective effect of parents with less education against youth violence in low-income neighborhoods, and the significance of parental norms against violence for African-American boys are not prevalent in scientific literature today. These findings provide empirical foundations for how service providers can screen for strengths within African-American families and low-income neighborhoods in efforts to protect African-American males from youth violence.

More research into the influence of parents on youth violence for African-American boys in high-risk environments is needed. A growing body of research has examined the relationship between fathers and their sons, with a very small amount of attention being spent on nonresident African-American fathers and their sons. However, the literature in this area points to fathers' parenting practices as critical avenues of intervention with African-American boys (Caldwell, Rafferty, Reischl, DeLoney, & Brooks, 2010; Davis, Caldwell, Clark, Davis, 2009; Caldwell, Wright, Zimmerman,

Walsemann, Williams, & Isichei, 2004). I think it would be necessary to determine how that special bond between fathers (i.e., nonresident or resident) and sons could be enhanced in an effort to protect African-American boys from developing violent behaviors.

References

- Brady, S. S., Gorman-Smith, D., Henry, D. B., & Tolan, P. H. (2008). Adaptive coping reduces the impact of community violence exposure on violent behavior among African American and latino male adolescents. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 36*(1), 105-115.
- Caldwell, C. H., Rafferty, J., Reischl, T. M., De Loney, E. H., & Brooks, C. L. (2010). Enhancing parenting skills among nonresident African American fathers as a strategy for preventing youth risky behaviors. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 45*(1), 17-35.
- Caldwell, C. H., Wright, J. C., Zimmerman, M. A., Walsemann, K. M., Williams, D., & Isichei, P. A. (2004). Enhancing adolescent health behaviors through strengthening non-resident father-son relationships: A model for intervention with African-American families. *Health Education Research, 19*(6), 644-656.
- Chung, H. L., & Steinberg, L. (2006). Relations between neighborhood factors, parenting behaviors, peer deviance, and delinquency among serious juvenile offenders. *Developmental Psychology, 42*(2), 319-331.
- Cooley-Strickland, M., Quille, T. J., Griffin, R. S., Stuart, E. A., Bradshaw, C. P., & Furr- Holden, D. (2009). Community violence and youth: Affect, behavior, substance use, and academics. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review, 12*(2), 127-156.

- Crouch, J. L., Hanson, R. F., Saunders, B. E., Kilpatrick, D. G., & Resnick, H. S. (2000). Income, race/ethnicity, and exposure to violence in youth: Results from the national survey of adolescents. *Journal of Community Psychology, 28*(6), 625-641.
- Davis, R. N., Caldwell, C. H., Clark, S. J., & Davis, M. M. (2009). Depressive symptoms in nonresident African American fathers and involvement with their sons. *Pediatrics, 124*(6), 1611-1618.
- De Coster, S., Heimer, K., & Wittrock, S. M. (2006). Neighborhood disadvantage, social capital, street context, and youth violence. *The Sociological Quarterly, 47*(4), 723-753.
- Erikson, I., Cater, A., Andershed, A., & Andershed, H. (2010). What we need to know about factors that protect youth from problems: A review of previous reviews. *Social and Behavioral Sciences, 4*, 477-482.
- Farrell, A. D., Mays, S., Bettencourt, A., Erwin, E. H., Vulin-Reynolds, M., & Allison, K. W. (2010). Environmental influences on fighting versus nonviolent behavior in peer situations: A qualitative study with urban African American adolescents. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 46*(1), 19-35.
- Fergus, S., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2005). Adolescent resilience: A framework for understanding healthy development in the face of risk. *Annu.Rev.Public Health, 26*, 399-419.

- Flowers, A., Lanclos, N. F., & Kelley, M. L. (2002). Validation of a screening instrument for exposure to violence in African American children. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology, 27*(4), 351-361.
- Hawkins, J. D., & Weis, J. G. (1985). The social development model: An integrated approach to delinquency prevention. *The Journal of Primary Prevention, 6*(2), 73-97.
- Haynie, D. L., Silver, E., & Teasdale, B. (2006). Neighborhood characteristics, peer networks, and adolescent violence. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology, 22*(2), 147-169.
- Herrenkohl, T. I., Hill, K. G., Chung, I. J., Guo, J., Abbott, R. D., & Hawkins, J. D. (2003). Protective factors against serious violent behavior in adolescence: A prospective study of aggressive children. *Social Work Research, 27*(3), 179-191.
- Jacob, J. C. (2006). Male and female youth crime in Canadian communities: Assessing the applicability of social disorganization theory. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice, 48*, 31-60.
- Laible, D. J., & Carlo, G. (2004). The differential relations of maternal and paternal support and control to adolescent social competence, self-worth, and sympathy. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 19*(6), 759-782.
- Leventhal, T., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2003). Moving to opportunity: An experimental study of neighborhood effects on mental health. *Journal Information, 93*(9), 1576-1582.

- Lindstrom Johnson, S. R., Finigan, N. M., Bradshaw, C. P., Haynie, D. L., & Cheng, T. L. (2011). Examining the link between neighborhood context and parental messages to their adolescent children about violence. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 49*(1), 58-63.
- Loeber, R., Kalb, L., & Huizinga, D. (2001). Juvenile Delinquency and Serious Injury Victimization. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Bulletin (Retrieved from, <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/188676.pdf>)
- Margolin, G., & Gordis, E. B. (2000). The effects of family and community violence on children. *Annual Review of Psychology, 51*(1), 445-479.
- Maschi, T., Perez, R. M., & Tyson, E. (2010). Exploring the relationship between exposure to violence, perceptions of neighborhood safety, and children's adaptive functioning: Clinical and community implications. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 20*(6), 744-761.
- McNulty, T. L., & Bellair, P. E. (2003). Explaining racial and ethnic differences in adolescent violence: Structural disadvantage, family well-being, and social capital. *Justice Quarterly, 20*(1), 1-31.
- Mrug, S., & Windle, M. (2009). Mediators of neighborhood influences on externalizing behavior in preadolescent children. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 37*(2), 265-280.

- Neumann, A., Barker, E. D., Koot, H. M., & Maughan, B. (2010). The role of contextual risk, impulsivity, and parental knowledge in the development of adolescent antisocial behavior. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 119*(3), 534-545.
- Ohene, S. A., Ireland, M., McNeely, C., & Borowsky, I. W. (2006). Parental expectations, physical punishment, and violence among adolescents who score positive on a psychosocial screening test in primary care. *Pediatrics, 117*(2), 441-447.
- Overstreet, S., & Braun, S. (2000). Exposure to community violence and Post-Traumatic stress symptoms: Mediating factors. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 70*(2), 263-271.
- Pardini, D. A., Loeber, R., Farrington, D. P., & Stouthamer-Loeber, M. (2012). Identifying direct protective factors for nonviolence. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 43*(2), S28-S40.
- Sieving, R. E., McNeely, C. S., & Blum, R. W. (2000). Maternal expectations, mother-child connectedness, and adolescent sexual debut. *Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine, 154*(8), 809-816.
- Smith, P., Flay, B. R., Bell, C. C., & Weissberg, R. P. (2001). The protective influence of parents and peers in violence avoidance among African-American youth. *Maternal and Child Health Journal, 5*(4), 245-252.