

Violent Crime and Youth Resilience

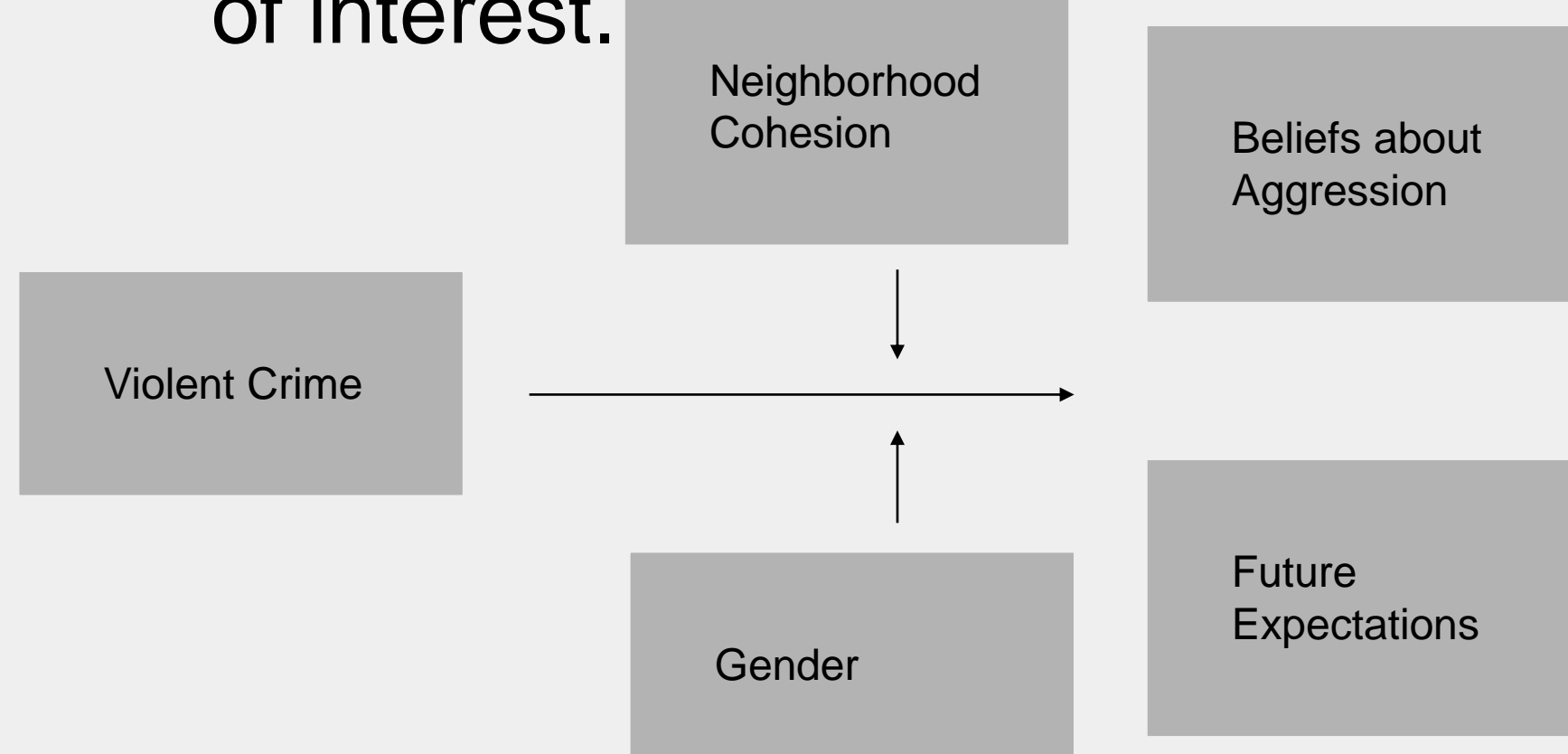
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Introduction

- Neighborhood violent crime (homicide, aggravated assault, and robbery) predicts to lower future expectations, more aggressive beliefs, and worse psychosocial outcomes (Merrin et al., 2014; Thompson et al., 2012; Salzinger et al., 2002).
- **Framework.** Ecological systems theory (Salzinger et al., 2002).
- **Constructs.** Resilience: Developing healthily in spite of adverse environmental conditions (Wu et al., 2013).
- Neighborhood cohesion: How connected one feels to their neighborhood. It is associated with positive affect and fewer neighborhood stressors (Robinette et al., 2013).
- Males are more likely to witness violence, but females have more pronounced post-traumatic and depressive symptoms (Foster et al., 2004).
- This study investigates the impact of violent crime on youth development and the moderating role of neighborhood cohesion and gender from 2015 (wave 1) to 2017 (wave 3).

Hypotheses

- Based on past literature, it is predicted that exposure to violent community crime will be positively associated with more aggressive beliefs (Hypothesis 1).
- Rates of community violence will be negatively associated with optimistic future expectations (Hypothesis 2).
- **Figure 1.** Hypothesized relationship between variables of interest.



Methods

Sample

- Data from 145 African American and Latinx youth mentors residing in low-income, high crime neighborhoods in the west and south sides of Chicago were used in this study
 - The ages of the mentors ranged from 14 to 19 years old
 - All demographic information (age, gender, grade, zip code) was obtained from self-report questionnaires
- Data on neighborhood crime was collected from a federal database on urban crime and demographic variables based on participant zip codes

Measures

- Aggression was assessed using the 12-item Beliefs About Aggression and Alternatives Scale (Farrell, Meyer, & White, 2001).
 - This scale measures an individual's beliefs about the appropriateness of using aggression in hypothetical situations (I.E. "I believe it's okay to hit someone when they've made me angry")
- Neighborhood cohesion was assessed using a 22-item Neighborhood Youth Inventory measuring connectedness to one's neighborhood environment by means of friendship, social support, safety, and activities
- Future expectations were measured using a 7-item questionnaire that assessed youth perceptions of future outcomes

Analytic Plan

- All variables were analyzed through a hierarchical linear regression model. The moderating variables were measured via the PROCESS v2.16 module for SPSS

Results

Wave 3 Correlation Table

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
1. Future expectations	-															
2. Aggressive Beliefs	-.129	-														
3. Nonviolent Beliefs	.131	-.092	-													
4. NYI Support	.180*	-.075	.148	-												
5. NYI Safety	.094	-.083	-.041	.025	-											
6. NYI Activity	.217**	-.142	.125	.662**	.043	-										
7. NYI Friends	.036	-.056	.016	.551**	-.204*	.479**	-									
8. NYI	.208**	-.133	.121	.872**	.362**	.778**	.598**	-								
9. NES	-.182*	.199*	-.100	-.367**	-.541**	-.403**	-.085	-.564**	-							
10. Homicide '18	.055	-.098	-.005	.044	.145	-.027	-.004	.086	-.185*	-						
11. Aggravated Assault '18	.043	.044	-.094	-.060	.072	-.103	-.076	-.048	.012	.810**	-					
12. Robbery '18	.002	-.173*	.046	.075	.142	.017	.089	.138	-.258**	.726**	.251	-				
13. Homicide '17	.056	-.094	-.006	.040	.146	-.032	-.008	.081	-.184*	.997**	.825**	.708**	-			
14. Aggravated Assault '17	.048	.042	-.085	-.052	.076	-.100	-.074	-.039	-.002	.815**	.998**	.367**	.834**	-		
15. Robbery '17	-.005	-.160	.043	.067	.136	.008	.082	.126	-.246**	.735**	.266**	.996**	.723**	.286**	-	

Significant and Trending Moderations

Outcome (Wave 3)	Independent, Moderator Variable	b	t	p	ΔR ²	
Beliefs about Aggression	Murder '15, NYI Friendships (<i>poorer perceptions</i>)	-.01	-2.18	.031**	.03	
	Murder '16, NYI Friendships (<i>poorer perceptions</i>)	-.002	-2.18	.031**	.03	
	Murder '17, NYI Friendships (<i>poorer perceptions</i>)	-.002	-0.72	.472	.637	.03
	Aggravated Assault '15, NYI Friendships (<i>poorer perceptions</i>)	-.01	-2.30	.023**	.05	
	Aggravated Assault '16, NYI Friendships (<i>poorer perceptions</i>)	-.01	-2.29	.024**	.05	
	Aggravated Assault '17, NYI Friendships (<i>poorer perceptions</i>)	-.01	22.29	.024**	.05	

Conclusions and Future Directions

- The findings of this study do not support the hypotheses
- No significant main effects were found
- The results indicate that youth with higher levels of perceived neighborhood cohesion through friendships endorse more aggressive beliefs at lower levels of crime
 - It is possible that the youth in this study already felt desensitized to crime
 - A youth's home environment, length of residency, and number of family members in the household could have also impacted their development
- Limitations of this study include the broadness of the crime measures and a lack of qualitative data
- Strengths of this study include providing context for youth development and measuring the moderating impacts of ecological resiliency
 - This study added to the literature by investigating the moderating influence of perceptions of neighborhood cohesion as a protective factor
 - Future studies should include qualitative data and further environmental contexts (schools)

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