IOM Workshop on the Contagion of Violence

“Interrupting Family Violence”

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Interrupting Family Violence

• Attitudes, Beliefs and Stereotypes (Langlois, Krishnan)

• Intimate Partner Aggression and Spillover (Margolin, Marshall)

• Political Violence, (Huesmann, Cummings)
The Origin and Significance of Appearance-Based Stereotypes (Judith Langlois)

Research Goals:

- To examine the origins, and functional significance of appearance-based stereotypes

- To form a better understanding of the consequences of appearance-based stereotypes.
  
  • How do children behave toward others based on appearance?
  • Do non-prototypical faces elicit negative affect from perceivers and, if so, how might this lead to stigmatization?
  • What are the social, physical, and mental health risks associated with appearance-based stereotypes?
Stereotypes...

• Later in development, these early and basic attractiveness-valence associations become elaborated and maintained through *interactions and experience*.

• Because infants and young children *observe* differential behavior by and treatment of attractive and unattractive people (especially in the media), initial, rudimentary attractiveness-valence associations become more firmly established and nuanced.

• Attributing positive characteristics to attractive individuals and negative characteristics to unattractive individuals biases how children process counter-stereotypic information.

• Ramsey and Langlois (2002) showed that children make attribution errors in favor of attractive peers and remember information better when the peers’ actions or traits are congruent with these stereotypes.
Research Implications

• Studies may lead to important interventions designed to ameliorate negative judgment and treatment based on attractiveness.

• Initial studies aimed at identifying information-processing mechanisms underlying the development of appearance-based stereotype. These provide background to learn how to reduce the stress, burden, and cost of appearance-based stigma.

• Demonstrated that differences in information processing and perceptual fluency explain the affect generated from attractive faces compared to unattractive faces and that experience can lead to changes in affect.
Research Implications

• Implications for an appearance-based stereotype intervention by increasing fluency through repeated exposure.

• If affect can be increased and re-associated, it is theoretically possible to change the nature of appearance-based stereotypes.

• May ultimately be able to develop successful interventions to reduce attractiveness-based risk factors for peer rejection, victimization, aggression, and poor parenting.
Empowering Daughters and Mothers-in-Law to Mitigate Gender-Based Violence (PI: Suneeta Krishnan)

• Exploratory study building on prior work in Bangalore, India

• Evaluates the feasibility, safety and potential effectiveness of an innovative woman’s empowerment intervention to reduce GBV and related health outcomes.

• Mothers-in-Law are strategic family entry point for leveraging and redirecting their power to reduce GBV against Daughters-in-Law.
Gender-Based Violence

- Young married women are at high risk of GBV because they have limited power and must acquiesce to the demands of the marital family.
- The effectiveness of efforts to enhance young women’s power and to mitigate GBV must address the broader context of women’s lives shaped by the marital family.
- Guided by Social Cognitive Theory and a social-ecological framework, the intervention aims to empower DIL-MIL dyads with knowledge, skills and social support to the mitigate DILs experiences of GBV and health outcomes.
Gender-Based Violence

• Research Goal:
  – RCT conducted in health centers with 140 pregnant DILs and their MILs. Evaluations will occur at 3 and 6 months post partum.
  – To evaluate of the effectiveness of the Dil Mil (*Hearts Together*) intervention to enhance empowerment of DILs and MILs in terms of knowledge about safety and the links between GBV and health, gender-equitable attitudes, decision making skills, and the ability to resist GBV.
  – Examine preliminary evidence of the effect of Dil Mil on GBV incidence and perceived quality of life, psychosocial status, and maternal and infant health.
Within-Incident Spillover of Family Aggression (PI: Amy Marshall)

• More than 99% of parents with young children engage in inter-parental aggression.

• Virtually all couples who engage in interparental aggression (IPA) also engage in parent-to-child aggression (PCA)
Within-Incident Spillover of Family Aggression (PI: Amy Marshall)

• Project Goals:
  – to provide a better understanding of the context, processes, and mechanisms of spillover of family aggression affording greater insight into the co-occurrence of IPA and PCA
  – to determine the relative frequency and direction of within-incident aggression spillover (i.e. the direct transfer of aggression from one family subsystem to another family subsystem)
Spillover of Family Aggression

- Findings will help understand whether adverse outcomes for children who witness IPA may be due to children being the targets of aggression within the same immediate context of IPA.
- Understanding these processes will help interrupt and ameliorate the perpetration of violence within families.
- We need to know the mechanisms whereby spillover leads to other forms of aggression outside the family context or if these spillover behaviors are contained within the family (sibling-sibling aggression).
Adolescents’ Exposure to Family and Community Violence (PI: Gayla Margolin)

- Study of mechanisms that explain why some adolescents fare worse than others in response to violence exposure.
- Focus on adolescence as a time of particular developmental risk for high risk behaviors including perpetration of violence.
- Tests the direct impact of violence exposure as well as the mediating effects of negative family processes, negative daily experiences, and altered cortisol levels on adolescent outcomes.
- Examines separate and combined effects of three types of violence exposure: interparental aggression, aggressive parent-to-child behaviors and community violence.
Adolescents’ Exposure to Family and Community Violence

Hypotheses:

• Negative family processes, e.g. hostile communications, multi-system family conflict, and chaotic family environments mediate the direct effects between violence exposure and adolescent outcomes.

• Violence exposure leads to dysregulated biological stress of the HPA axis and that violence-exposed youth are primed for HPA activation in response to negative family interactions.
Study Implications

• The focus on proximal, modifiable variables can be used to inform intervention and prevention programs for adolescents exposed to violence.
• Goal:
  – to understand the ecological, psychological and familial processes underlying effects of ethnic conflict in Northern Ireland on children.
  
  – To deepen *process-oriented* understanding of the effects of political violence on children, including the effects of cultural, ethnic violence and conflict on family, community and child well-being, with implications for other regions of the world with sectarian or other forms of ethnic conflict and violence.
Political Violence

• Hypotheses:
  – community violence and emotional security about the community will relate to family dysfunction including conflict, alcohol abuse, and parental mental health.
  – A comprehensive social ecological model will best inform about the pathways and influences through which political violence affects children
  – children’s emotional security and social identity as regulatory processes will be proximal mediators of relations between social contexts of conflict and child adjustment
Political Violence

• Findings:
  – Multiple pathways were identified from sectarian community antisocial behavior to family functioning to children’s emotional security to child outcomes.
  – Family functioning and child emotional security processes played intervening roles in the effects of sectarian community violence on children from multiple family structures through multiple pathways.
  – Family cohesion acted as a positive influence associated with reduced child adjustment problems and elevated prosocial behavior through direct pathways and through children’s security about family relationships.
Political Violence

Further research:

• Threatening community contexts may serve to heighten prosocial behavior, but prosocial behavior in this context may reflect a type of preference for one’s own group over others

• Heightened family cohesion may be a protective mechanism against external threats in the community

• Possible age/developmental stage differences in the impact of political violence on children – sectarian/nonsectarian violence may be perceived differently by children at a younger group vs. older groups.  (Cummings et al, 2010)
Effects of Children’s Exposure to Political Violence (PI: Rowell Huesmann)

- Children’s regular exposure to violence should increase the likelihood they will grow up to be violent individuals
- Emotional desensitization to violence
- Observational learning of scripts for violence
- Observational acquisition of beliefs supporting violence
- Children’s regular exposure to violence should increase the likelihood of their experiencing serious traumatic stress mental health problems as they grow up
- Children’s regular exposure to ethnic/political violence should increase their negative stereotypes about others whom they perceive as belonging to the “in-group” perpetrating the violence