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Girls' and Women's Violence: The Question of General Versus Uniquely Gendered Causes

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Abstract

In this review, we consider theory and research focused on girls' and women's violence, with an emphasis on studies that inform long-running debates about whether uniquely gendered explanations are required to understand such behaviors. The review emphasizes potentially malleable social processes and influences, and studies that have explored neighborhood, family, and peer-based sources of risk. We also examine contemporary research on precursors of a specific type of aggression—intimate partner violence—where self-reports of perpetration have been found to be similar across gender, but research has consistently shown that the consequences are generally more serious for female victims. Our review draws on findings from analyses of large scale survey data as well as qualitative approaches that explore meanings and motivations. The results point to significant areas of overlap as well as some distinctive patterns by gender, support learning and intersectionality theories, and identify potentially fruitful areas for additional research.

Keywords

Gender; violence; intimate partner violence; community; family; peers; social learning

INTRODUCTION

Girls and women evidence lower rates of involvement in aggression and violence, whether we focus on self-report studies or arrest and adjudication data (e.g., Lauritsen, Heimer, & Lynch 2009; Rennison 2009; Schwartz & Steffensmeier 2012). Nevertheless, some young girls and women do resort to the use of violence, and a recurring issue within the criminological literature and related fields (e.g., research on intimate partner violence) is whether distinct explanations are required to understand such aggressive actions. Irwin and Chesney-Lind (2008) critiqued the continued emphasis on similarities and differences (particularly the similarities perspective), arguing for a strong focus on the sex/gender system as a broader, overarching dynamic affecting women as well as men. Considered from this perspective, theorizing and research often centers on the importance of women's victimization experiences as a critical and fundamentally gendered piece of the causal puzzle. The authors argue further that continuing to focus on similarities across gender has

potential consequences, as this may: a) increase the odds of adapting more punitive policies toward women (i.e., affecting the nature, extent and consequences of system involvement, and b) limit the perceived need and resources provided for gender-specific programming. Other researchers in this developing area have drawn from traditional criminological theorizing but highlighted uniquely gendered aspects of causal pathways (Heimer & De Coster 1999) or contexts (Miller & White 2003) associated with violence; still others document gender similarities and differences without explicitly endorsing a particular theoretical stance on the issue of unique or gendered causes.

Based on a mix of motivations that include: a) the clear gap in research on women, b) increased interest in feminist perspectives, c) recognition of the neglect of justice-involved girls/women, and d) funding agencies' 'inclusion' requirements, researchers have in recent years conducted studies that provide new insights about questions of similarities and differences across gender in the precipitants of interpersonal violence. This review explores findings and their implications based on contemporary studies ranging from Add Health analyses to ethnographies of disadvantaged adolescent girls' lives and studies of intimate partner violence. While consideration of gender differences in rates of violence (the so-called sex ratio question) is important and connects logically to theorizing in this area, the current review centers primarily on scholarship that has sought to document precursors, or that further contextualize girls' and women's violent behavior. In addition, recognizing the impact of basic biological differences, our focus in this review is upon potentially malleable social influence processes. Finally, in line with the goal of assessing similarities and differences, samples that include both women and men are clearly an asset; yet some important single-gender studies bear on the issue by indicating how results connect to the larger body of prior research on men's use of violence.

Our review encompasses the theoretical ideas developed by researchers working in this area, and stresses how findings support or challenge provisional hypotheses. Yet in the process we consider the potential of social learning as a useful framework for understanding patterns of variation in girls' and women's violence. Social learning is a staple of criminological theorizing, but has also been invoked to understand women's relatively low rates of violence (i.e., the notion that girls are socialized to be passive, caring, remain closer to the family). Yet such treatments have focused primarily on gender socialization, and often do not reflect on the variability and multilayered nature of women's experiences. More recent theorizing has critiqued binary or essentialist views of gender and recognized the inevitable intersection of gender and other critical social addresses and locations (i.e. class, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation) (Burgess-Proctor 2006). Thus, women—along with their male counterparts—grow up in different types of neighborhoods, within particular family contexts, and eventually begin to invest more heavily in peer and romantic relationships. In the review below, we identify research that explores these traditional arenas of social influence—neighborhood, family, and peer factors—and how these varied experiences connect to women and men's use of violence. Even though risk factors involving these domains have long been associated with male delinquency/aggression, our view is that there is nothing intrinsically male about poverty, family discord, or peer influence. However, recent research does more than 'add women and stir,' (e.g., Giordano 2010; Haynie, Doogan & Soller 2014; Heimer & Kruttschnitt 2006; Ness 2010; Zahn 2009), as investigators have explored the

potential for distinctive dynamics that connect to these core domains. Further, research on meanings and motivations (contextualizing violence) adds significantly to the developing body of research that has addressed issues of gender similarity and difference in the causes and patterning of interpersonal violence.

NEIGHBORHOOD FACTORS

Structural Conditions and Community Violence

Social scientists have long recognized the striking variation in rates of violence across neighborhood contexts. Indeed, there is burgeoning body of literature on the effects of communities on a broad range of behavioral outcomes. A consistent finding across macro-level studies of crime is the link between neighborhood structural characteristics—including poverty, residential instability, and neighborhood compositional factors—and violence (e.g., Sampson, Raudenbush & Earls 1997; Wilson 1987). Yet the bulk of this research has focused on males' use of violence (Ingoldsby & Shaw 2002). Although women and girls exhibit much lower rates of violence than their male counterparts, the omission of gender in macrosocial research is only partially attributable to differential rates of male and female violence. An additional explanation is the tendency of early research to trace women's participation in violence to biological differences, individual pathologies and the role of earlier victimization experiences (ChesneyLind 1997; Daly 1994; Widom 1989).

Research on male violence has a longer tradition of attention to structural factors. For example, traditional strain perspectives pointed to structural factors affecting the distribution of legitimate opportunities to understand class-based differences in criminal behavior (Merton 1938). Because men's status pressures are considered to revolve around economic/occupational domains (as contrasted with the traditional notion of women's emphasis on relational concerns), the feelings of status frustration that are common in structurally disadvantaged settings are widely understood as a masculine adaptation (Cohen 1955; Steffensmeier & Haynie 2000). This would lead to the conclusion that neighborhood structural characteristics are more salient predictors of male violence. However, scholars have documented that variability in male rates of violence are generally predictive of female rates (Steffensmeier & Allan 1996). These basic findings provide an indication that women as well as men are likely to be influenced by experiences tied to broader macro-level forces. Thus, researchers have explored important empirical and theoretical questions about whether men and women are similarly influenced by socioeconomic disadvantage as measured by aggregate indicators and other features of social disorganization at the neighborhood/community level.

Steffensmeier and Haynie (2000a) explored this question using US Census and UCR data. The authors were particularly interested in whether city-level variation in female offending was associated with structural factors, and moreover, whether indicators of structural disadvantage were equally predictive of male and female offending. Focusing on the UCR index offenses (homicide, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, and larceny) the authors found that index offending rates were higher in cities with higher levels of structural disadvantage (i.e., poverty, income inequality, unemployment, female-headed households, percent black) for men and women, and that the effects of structural disadvantage on

offending were greater for violent offenses. Although there were slight differences in terms of the magnitude of effects, such that structural disadvantage was a stronger predictor of male rates of offending, the overall findings suggest considerable overlap in the macro-level causes of male and female crime, including violent offenses. In a related study, Steffensmeier and Haynie (2000b) examined the effects of structural disadvantage on sex-specific arrest rates of homicide. Consistent with their prior work, they found that structural characteristics of cities are associated with male and female homicide offending rates. Despite similarities in the structural correlates, however, the effects on male homicide offending were greater. Furthermore, as compared to the other age-sex groups considered in their investigation (adult females, adult males, juvenile males), the effect of structural disadvantage on the homicide offending rate of juvenile females was less pronounced. Taken together, the findings of these two studies (Steffensmeier & Haynie 2000a; 2000b) suggest that male and female violence are shaped by adverse economic circumstances and other conditions of social disorganization. Yet similar to other gender-related research the authors note the “half-empty, half-full” nature of their results, which signal substantial overlap in the structural sources of offending, but also some areas of gender divergence.

Research on gender and violence has also considered the role of structural disadvantage in more relative terms. Drawing on the economic marginalization thesis (i.e., as women’s wellbeing declines, women account for a greater share of offending), Heimer and colleagues (2006) examined variation in gender rate ratios of crime across major US cities over a 30 year period. They found that in cities and decades where women’s relative economic wellbeing was lowest, women accounted for a greater portion of arrests. Relatedly, Zimmerman and Messner (2010) found that neighborhood disadvantage moderated the effect of gender on crime, such that the gender gap in violence narrowed as neighborhood levels of disadvantage increased. This suggests that although neighborhood structural characteristics “matter” for men’s and women’s violence, the extent of gender differences in men’s and women’s involvement in offending varies depending on the broader socioeconomic context.

Other related lines of research shed further light on the extent to which structural factors predict women’s (and girls’) use of violence. For example, a number of studies have examined the consequences of community violence for violence and other antisocial behaviors (e.g., see also Fowler et al. 2009 for a review). This literature documents that in general girls are exposed to less community violence (Foster, Kuperminc, & Price 2004). Nevertheless, scholars consistently find that girls who reside in more disadvantaged and violent communities are more likely to engage in violence as compared to their peers in safer neighborhood contexts (Brooks-Gunn et al. 1993). In a recent study, Browning et al. (2014) examined the association between exposure to violence and adolescents’ internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors. The authors also assessed whether neighborhood levels of collective efficacy moderated the effect of violence exposure on internalizing and externalizing problems. Using data from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN), the authors identified a link between exposure to life-threatening violence and girls’ internalizing (anxiety/depression, somatic problems, and withdrawn behavior) and externalizing behaviors (i.e., aggression and delinquency); however, this effect was restricted to neighborhoods with low levels of collective efficacy. Controlling for other factors, the effect of life-threatening violence on

internalizing and externalizing problems was not significant for boys. Reflecting on the gendered nature of the findings, the authors theorized that “girls’ heightened fears of victimization, concerns about the capacity for self-defense, and concerns about the potential for sexual victimization may result in particularly acute reactions when confronting extreme forms of community violence” (p. 1886). Thus, while accounts of male violence in contexts of disadvantage often emphasize a ‘normative’ or social learning component (Anderson 1999), the authors theorized that girls’ aggression and delinquency connects more readily to fears of or the experience of victimization.

Neighborhood Normative Beliefs and Violence

Structural factors influence neighborhood social processes such as levels of social control and cohesion, but also the local cultural norms that shape individuals’ attitudes and behaviors with respect to violence. In particular, this line of scholarship emphasizes the development of a redefined version of manhood, one that rewards men’s use of physical aggression and violence in settings where the resources for success along more conventional lines are scarce (e.g., Anderson 1999; Messerschmidt 1993). This research thus draws on structural disadvantage as an important backdrop, but considers how identities, social relations, and conduct across a range of interpersonal situations are shaped by these harsh structural conditions. Yet while women and girls have been exposed to these same circumstances, limited scholarship has examined how normative climates in disadvantaged neighborhoods affect women’s and girls’ participation in violence.

In an important exception, Ness (2010) draws on findings from a year of ethnographic fieldwork with low-income female adolescents in West and Northeast Philadelphia to describe girls’ use of violence, as well as the meanings that they ascribe to their behavior. The findings complicate existing depictions of female violence. In particular, whereas violent girls are often characterized as maladjusted (Gilbert 2002) or primarily responding with violence based on victimization fears (Ferraro 1996; Pearson 1997), the author suggests that fighting between girls is an accepted, normative dimension of life in the neighborhoods she studied (and according to the author, significantly underestimated). In addition, interviews with adolescent girls uncovered motivations for violence that appeared similar in several respects to the motivations often described by adolescent boys. For example, in addition to themes of security, girls also mentioned status and self-esteem considerations (see also Miller & Mullins 2006). In addition, the girls Ness interviewed reported that they sometimes fought for fun or enjoyment—a view that is at odds with the idea that girls’ use of physical aggression is motivated primarily by self-defense considerations.

Given the emphasis on masculinity in research on violence in disadvantaged contexts, some scholars have suggested that fighting among girls may indicate that they have adopted their own version of manhood (Anderson 1994). Yet based on the girls’ own narrative accounts, Ness develops the view of violence as a part of growing up that does not conflict with girls’ gender identities, or the extent to which boys view them as feminine. The ability to navigate these “uniquely situated femininities” (Jones 2008) is likely linked to distinct gender socialization practices in urban environments, including messages conveying the conditions under which violence is an acceptable/expected response as well as the importance of being

able to stand up for oneself. Although these social expectations regarding the use of violence are channeled to youth through a myriad of actors and settings, some researchers have highlighted the important role of the family, and especially mothers (Giordano 2010; Irwin & Adler 2012). This includes mother's support/encouragement of girls' violence under some conditions, and at times their direct involvement in violent altercations alongside their daughters—a dynamic that Ness refers to as “double-generation” violence.

FAMILY

Family influences have been central to theorizing about crime and violence, and research on gender and crime has similarly emphasized family dynamics (see Kruttschnitt & Giordano 2009). Girls' relational orientation and greater connection to the family are believed to discourage female involvement in violence in a number of ways: by shaping the learning of violent definitions, exposure to greater parental controls/supervision, and limiting their interaction with antisocial peers. Even though family dynamics do operate as inhibiting factors, a number of family influences have been identified as important predictors of girls' as well as boys' participation in violence and other forms of delinquency. These include family structure effects, family processes (including gendered dynamics within the family context), parental criminality, as well as exposure to family violence. The latter, particularly sexual victimization, has been singled out as a uniquely gendered risk factor.

Family Structure

Early studies of “broken homes” (Shaw & McKay 1932) and more recent research consistently reveal that youths who live with both biological parents are less delinquent than those from other family structure arrangements (Mack, Peck & Leiber 2015). Although much of the research on family structure effects focused on delinquency more generally, some evidence suggests that the effect of family structure varies across specific forms of delinquency. In a meta-analysis of fifty studies, Wells and Rankin (1991) found that the effects of family structure were larger for more minor forms of delinquency (e.g., status offenses) as compared to more serious offenses, including violence. Results of Demuth and Brown's (2004) more recent investigation, however, indicated that youth in single-parent families were especially likely to participate in more serious forms of delinquency (e.g., violence) relative to youth residing with two biological, married parents. The latter of these two studies is notable, as it was one of the first investigations of family effects and delinquency to recognize the growing diversity of children's family living arrangements (see also Apel & Kaukinen 2008). Consistent with an increasing number of studies, Demuth and Brown (2004) found that family processes explained much of the family structure – delinquency link, however, underscoring the need for greater attention to the content of family life among boys and girls who engage in varying levels of violent behavior (Kruttschnitt & Giordano 2009).

Family Processes

Scholars generally agree that the effect of family structure on delinquency is often indirect, and operates via more tangible indicators of family processes and dynamics, which may be related to these different family forms (e.g., two biological married parents, single parent,

step-parent). Accordingly, researchers have attempted to capture the various dimensions of family/parenting processes that may influence serious adolescent delinquency, and have focused in particular on attachment/control perspectives and gendered socialization practices. Control perspectives have been invoked most often to explain the gender gap in offending. Within this tradition, scholars argue that the lower levels of delinquent behavior observed among adolescent girls are due to greater levels of parental supervision and monitoring, and the stronger bonds between adolescent females and their parents (Hagan, Gillis & Simpson 1985). However, much of the early work in this area relied on pooled samples of male and female adolescents and was restricted to nonviolent forms of delinquency. Analyses based on a multidimensional model of family processes, and separate models for males and females, found that parental supervision was associated with lower levels of delinquency (including violent delinquency) for boys and girls (Cernkovich & Giordano 1987). Findings of more recent research have similarly documented links between negative family processes and the delinquent behavior of male and female adolescents (e.g., Chamberlain 2003; Hoeve et al. 2009).

Nevertheless, researchers have pointed out that despite a similar set of family predictors, the nature of the effects of family processes on delinquency may differ for boys and girls. For example, some scholars have suggested that girls may be more influenced by attachment (Gilligan 1982), while boys are more influenced by physical controls (Heimer 1996). Hagan's (1990) power-control theory attempts to more fully develop the ways in which gendered family dynamics may differentially impact male and female children within the household. According to the theory, girls are generally subject to greater controls, while boys are freer to engage in risky and/or delinquent behaviors, and these differences explain boys' greater delinquent involvement. However, boys and girls living in households characterized by a more egalitarian power balance are subject to similar levels of familial controls, and under these conditions rates of male and female delinquency tend to be similar. Gender and delinquency scholars have noted the important contribution of Hagan's work in elucidating gendered practices within the family, however, tests of the theory have yielded mixed support (Hagan, Gillis, & Simpson 1990; Jensen & Thompson 1990; Morash & Chesney-Lind 1991). In addition, scholars have suggested that an exclusive focus on control mechanisms is incomplete as an explanation of delinquent behavior (Heimer 1996).

Another line of research that emphasizes the gendered nature of control mechanisms derives from Heimer and colleagues' work on gender and delinquency (Heimer 1996; Heimer & De Coster 1999). Consistent with the notion that familial controls may be uniquely gendered, Heimer and De Coster (1999) developed the idea that control encompasses two distinct dimensions, including direct (supervision and coercive discipline) and indirect (emotional bonding or attachment to families) dynamics. In addition, the authors argued that a comprehensive view of delinquency requires looking beyond control to the learning of definitions that relate to violence as well as gender, consistent with a gendered social learning perspective. Using data from the first three waves of the National Youth Survey, the authors test a model of gender and violent delinquency, and conclude that girls are typically non-violent for the following reasons: 1) they are influenced more heavily by familial bonds, 2) they learn fewer violent definitions, and 3) they are taught that violence is inconsistent with female gender roles. The results of this investigation also suggest that more overt

controls (supervision, discipline) are important predictors of male violence, but figure less centrally in depictions of female violence.

When the focus shifts to the subset of girls who do become violent, the conditions under which and mechanisms through which definitions are learned remain less well understood. Heimer and DeCoster suggested that emotional bonds to family typically reduce the learning of violent definitions among girls; this suggests that learning is more likely when these bonds to parents and family are weak. Here, a lack of attachment would appear to be required to initiate the process. Yet as we have noted in prior work, many parents describe strong emotional bonds to their children—even within the context of highly dysfunctional and problematic families (Giordano 2010; Kruttschnitt & Giordano 2009). Thus, in addition to dynamics that reflect a certain level of support (attachment, love) and supervision (control), social learning or “direct transmission” may occur via family-related violence and the parent’s own patterns of criminal behavior.

Family Violence

A focus on early exposure to violence within the family is consistent with feminist approaches to female offending, particularly the role of childhood trauma and victimization as pathways associated with girls’ and women’s antisocial behavior and violence (Daly 1994). Studies in the feminist tradition that have assessed the relationship between childhood traumas and offending align generally with either the cycle of violence theory or pathways approaches, but emphasize girls’ and women’s greater vulnerability and marginalized positions as they contribute to victimization risk. Other researchers have drawn more explicitly on social learning perspectives to explain the link between childhood victimization and/or exposure to parental violence and subsequent offending. In general, study findings indicate that the different forms of family violence (i.e., physical/sexual abuse and neglect, exposure to interparental IPV) are associated with greater externalizing behaviors among children; however, the magnitude of these effects and the extent to which these factors explain the violent offending of both males and females is unclear.

Much of the research on child abuse and neglect in the criminological literature has built on Cathy Widom’s (1989) foundational analysis, in a comparison of the official criminal records of individuals who had substantiated abuse and neglect as children and a control group of nonabused children. The initial findings indicated that both males and females with a history of child abuse/neglect were more likely to acquire a criminal record (juvenile and adult). However, analysis of the arrest type revealed few differences between the abused or neglected and controls. Notably, the effects of abuse/neglect on violent offending only appeared for males, and only in the case of adult arrests (Rivera & Widom 1990). However, later follow-up interviews and additional arrest data provided a somewhat different portrait, as for both males and females, abuse/neglect increased the odds of (juvenile/adult) arrest for violent crime. Differences were noted based on whether the outcome reflected prevalence or frequency of offending, but analyses that included sex by abused/neglect interactions did not reveal evidence of a gendered pattern (Widom & White 1997). Reflecting on her prior work, along with a range of other longitudinal prospective studies, Widom (2014) concluded that

the heightened risk of delinquency, adult crime, and violence among abused and neglected children appears to be consequential for the later behavior of girls as well as boys.

In addition to child abuse and neglect, a number of studies have examined the association between exposure to domestic violence and externalizing behaviors. In general, findings suggest that children who have witnessed parents' violence toward one another are more likely to exhibit symptoms of externalizing behaviors (Sternberg et al. 2006). Some studies find evidence of multiple adjustment problems (Cummings & Davies 1994), while others only find effects for externalizing problems (Wolfe et al. 1985) or no effects at all (Grych et al. 2000). In a metaanalysis of 60 studies, Evans, Davies, and DiLillo (2008) found that the link between exposure to domestic violence and externalizing behaviors was stronger for boys. This conclusion conflicts with early research findings suggesting that witnessing violence is related to violence in girls but not boys (Song, Singer & Anglin 1998--see also the discussion of IPV perpetration below).

Parental Criminality as a 'Package' of Risks

As the above review indicates, research on family factors has tended to focus either on things that are missing from family life (two-parent family, adequate support/attachment, consistent supervision), or the presence of violence within the home. Consistent with the latter emphasis, studies of adjudicated girls and women offenders often stress that early victimization, and in particular sexual abuse experience, are key risk factors for understanding girls' and women's crime and violence, particularly based on interviews with system-involved girls and women (Gaarder & Belknap 2004; Daly 1994; Proctor 2004). While this work has been useful in the development of gender-sensitive programming, and of trauma-informed perspectives, potential limitations are that studies are generally based on retrospective reports, lack comparison groups, and do not typically include interviews with male offenders. In addition, recent general surveys of women and girls have documented relatively high rates of unwanted sexual experience, suggesting the need to explore how abuse experiences combine with other aspects of family history and risk exposure to increase the odds of girls' violence (Giordano, Deines & Cernkovich 2006; Gaarder & Belknap 2004).

Research on parenting in disadvantaged neighborhoods suggests that parents do not typically endorse violence, but may communicate to the child their right to protect themselves physically and the importance of standing up to those who have disrespected them (Brown 1998; Ness 2010; Morash and Chesney-Lind 2009; Tapper & Boulton 2000). Findings of these studies thus suggest a role for a direct transmission dynamic within these disadvantaged family contexts. However, early on, Anderson (1999) pointed to variability in family adaptations even within disadvantaged neighborhoods. In this regard, a parent's drug use, criminal behavior and criminal justice system involvement may result in exposure to a potent combination of family-related risks (low supervision and victimization risk and communications that directly transmit acceptability of "violence-under-some-conditions"). And drawing on structured and qualitative data from a longitudinal follow-up the parenting experiences and child well-being of a sample of highly delinquent girls, Giordano (2010) found that while both parents contribute to the child's risk portfolio, exposure to the criminal

behavior/violence of female relatives—especially mothers—appeared to be particularly important source of risk for girls. Yet while these apparent connections are consistent with basic principles of identification, these aspects of family life remain an understudied cause of girls' violence and offending (Kruttschnitt & Giordano 2009).

In addition, most studies in the differential association tradition focus explicitly on definitions favorable to the violation of law; however, this follow-up highlighted the need to broaden the lens to include a range of different definitions parents impart, recognizing that attitudes and behaviors related to non-criminal areas of life may also amplify the level of risk (Giordano 2010). For example, relying on analyses of the TARS data, parents' attitudes reflecting gender mistrust were related to later male and female IPV perpetration, net of parental coercion and other traditional covariates (Giordano, Johnson et al. 2016). Attention to the full array of parents and other family members' behavioral repertoires and attitudes also has implications for contemporary research on incarceration effects. This research has highlighted negative consequences of a parent's incarceration for a host of child outcomes, including aggression (for a recent review see Haskins, Amorim, & Mingo 2017). However, studies in this developing literature have not uniformly include detailed measures of parental criminality and other attitudes/behaviors of parents, which may contribute to the observed intergenerational patterns along with effects tied directly to the parent's incarceration. Rather than pit one type of risk factor against the others, analyses are needed that examine ways in which the parent's involvement with the justice system along with other lifestyle factors may coalesce, presenting a formidable package of family related risks. And recognizing that women offenders' criminal careers more often involve low-level system contacts (arrests, short jail stays), research on these experiences and the behaviors that contribute to them (e.g., drug problems) should be a focus of additional research on girls' problem behavior outcomes, including aggression.

PEERS

The family's foundational role is widely accepted, yet across development, extra-familial relationships become increasingly important as sources of companionship, reference, and influence (Sullivan 1953; Brauer & De Coster 2015). Thus, particularly during adolescence, attitudes/behaviors of friends (peer characteristics), their routine activities (e.g., unstructured socializing), and group dynamics (e.g., level of attachment, influence processes) have been investigated as they heighten risk for violence or serve as protective factors. The importance of this line of research is underscored by studies indicating that acts of violence often occur in the company of friends, and friends/other young people are frequent targets of adolescents' aggression (Franke, Huynh-Hohnbaum & Chung 2002). Status/prestige processes represent another important dimension, one that unfolds within friendship circles but transcends these affiliations to encompass standing with other peers, classmates and the broader community (i.e., while not completely unrelated, popularity is not friendship) (Bukowski, Newcomb & Hartup 1998).

As a general backdrop to our discussion, we note that while studies of peer influence on girls' violence are a relatively recent development, historically scholars have incorporated peers into discussion of girls' low rates of aggressive behavior (i.e., in general they are less

likely to affiliate with violent friends, often engage in socializing ‘closer-to-home,’ are viewed as doing friendship differently (smaller groups, less competitive dynamics. more focused on intimate talk than activities), and are more likely to be negatively evaluated rather than accorded prestige/status if they commit violent acts (Leonard 1982; Warr 2002; Youniss & Smollar 1985; see also Giordano 2009). But what about the subset of girls who do engage in fighting and other acts of aggression?

The Basic Contours of Friendship: Peer Characteristics and Gender Composition

Peer characteristics (friends’ delinquency and violent behavior) are considered robust correlates of youths’ own related actions, but many of the early studies were cross-sectional, focused primarily on males, and relied on respondents’ reports about their friends’ attitudes and behaviors. These studies indicate that males who report violence are in general more likely to affiliate with delinquent/violent friends, and where samples include both males and females, some meta-analyses show a similar pattern of effects across gender (Hubbard & Pratt 2002; Wong, Slotboom & Biljleveld 2010). Specific studies have shown a stronger impact for girls Zimmerman & Messner 2010) that contrast with previous research documenting that boys are likely to be more responsive to this aspect of the peer normative climate (Mears, Ploeger & Warr 1998; Piquero et al. 2005).

Analyses relying on contemporary data sets such as the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health) have advanced the study of peer effects, as they draw on a large national probability sample of male and female adolescents, a longitudinal perspective, and researchers can link directly to friends’ reports about their own behaviors. Haynie, Steffensmeier, and Bell (2007) provided longitudinal evidence that peers’ reports of violence influenced observed variability in male and female respondents’ reports about their own serious violence, net of prior violence and other traditional covariates. Results showed that this effect was similar across gender. Although this departed from their initial hypothesis that males would likely be more strongly influenced by peers, their analyses offered a nuanced portrait by examining the gender composition of the friendship group. This investigation extends the work of McCarthy, Felmlee and Hagan (2004), who drew on a sample that included homeless and school youth, and found that in general female friendships within social networks decreased delinquency involvement of both boys and girls (but not in the case of homeless boys). Results of the Haynie et al. analyses showed that exposure to opposite sex friends increased girls’ violence, but was associated with a reduction for male respondents. The authors also explored interrelationships between violence reports and sex composition, finding that for girls, involvement in mixed sex groups heightened the peer violence effect (opposite sex involvement was in fact only found to be criminogenic if those friends were violent). Among males, effects of the two dimensions of friendship appeared to operate in an additive fashion (in general female friends reduced but violent friends increased odds of involvement in violent behavior).

Early on we relied on a basic social learning argument to explore the impact of involvement in mixed sex groups, suggesting that this form of socializing may be associated with girls’ antisocial behavior because boys will on average have a more well-developed tradition of involvement in various forms of risky behavior. At the same time, perceived acceptance and

approval from other girls is likely integral to the influence process, reflecting basic principles of identification (people like me are willing to do things like that), and the important role of friendships in girls' lives (Giordano 1978). Thus, involvement with males may--but not inevitably, as Haynie et al.'s (2007) research demonstrates--be related to adapting attitudes that support violence, as well as increasing exposure to contexts in which fighting and violence are more likely to occur.

Research on gang involvement has also taken up the issue of sex composition, in investigations of the impact of the sex ratio within gangs and its relationship to risk of violence and other behaviors such as drug use (for a more general review of the literature on girls and women in gangs, see Belknap & Bowers 2016). Studies of girls' gang affiliations are particularly important, as ample research has demonstrated that in general being in a gang increases risks for violence exposure, both as a perpetrator and as a victim (Katz et al. 2011; Miller 2001; Papachristos et al. 2015). For example, Deschenes and Esbensen (1999) found that gang affiliation was associated with greater violence, even after multiple risk factors derived from traditional criminological theorizing had been taken into account. Some gang researchers have drawn on an organizational/institutional framework to develop a different theoretical lens for understanding how sex composition within the gang may influence both women and men's actions. Peterson and Carson (2012) argued that issues related to dominance/competitiveness dynamics and the felt need to perform in stereotypically gendered ways are likely to vary across these different social contexts (i.e., in majority male, sex-balanced gangs, majority female gangs). The authors suggest that a higher number of girls/women within the gang may increase pressure to assert dominance and power, which would not be the case where girls have only a token representation within a gang. Results of a recent analysis by Peterson, Carson, and Fowler (2018), based on the Gang Resistance Education and Training study data (G.R.E.A.T) found that girls in majority-male gangs reported higher levels of violent offending than in same-sex gangs. According to their theorizing, this reflects that their actions would not be viewed as threatening, and they would be more likely to behave in an 'unfettered' way, and thus participate fully in the gang's activities, including violent behavior. Consistent with their organizational/institutional hypothesis, however, males in sex-balanced gangs reported more violent offenses than males in same-sex and majority male gangs.

Selection vs. Socialization

Whether focusing on informal friendship groups or gangs characterized by a particular sex ratio, a continuing issue is whether initial characteristics or group dynamics explain observed concordance in friendship networks or the level of violence within particular gang contexts. In an interesting use of the linked Add Health friendship data, Haynie et al. (2014) drew on actor based stochastic models and Add Health's longitudinal framework to address the selection vs socialization issue in greater depth than prior work, including the potentially gendered aspects of these dynamic processes. In addition, their analyses addressed the specific issue of whether the adolescent male and female respondents tended to reduce violence when confronted with prosocial models. The researchers found that boys and girls were influenced by their friends' violence, but it appeared that both selection and socialization effects were stronger for girls (i.e., friends' violence was a more decisive factor

for initiating friendship ties and influence processes also appeared stronger for girls). Further, results indicated that boys were less likely than their female counterparts to reduce violence upon exposure to the nonviolent behavior of friends. These findings connect well to the broader developmental literature that has emphasized the intimacy of girls' friendships and the central role of communication (suggesting perhaps a heightened awareness of friends' characteristics at the outset, as well as a greater tendency to develop similar repertoires, consistent with Youniss and Smollar's (1985) idea of adolescent reality as "cooperatively co-constructed"). In addition, however, the finding that girls are somewhat more likely to move in the direction of non-violent friends may reflect the generally greater normative acceptance of boys/men's use of violence. In short, girls' movement in the direction of non-violence would entail adapting what is a more typical normative stance.

Unstructured Socializing and Other Leisure Pursuits

It has long been recognized that even youths who are affiliated with gangs spend much of their time engaging in activities other than delinquency or acts of violence (Thrasher 2013; Decker & Van Winkle 1996). Thus, understanding the basic contours of groups or gangs (size, the sex-composition) does not provide a complete portrait of teens' social worlds and their impact. Prior studies have highlighted that in general involvement in unstructured socializing is associated with heightened risk for antisocial behavior (Hoeben & Weerman 2016; Osgood & Anderson 2004). Kang, Tanner and Wortley (2017) using a sample of Canadian youth, recently developed further this line of inquiry, developing additional categories of peer leisure pursuits. They drew on survey items that tapped home-based socializing, peer-centered actions (e.g., driving around), hedonistic pursuits (those involving sexual behavior, nightclubs, parties), and self-improving activities (library, cultural event, symphony). The researchers found that variability in patterns of involvement in these social contexts did little to reduce the gender gap in specific forms of criminal behavior, including violence. Nevertheless, home-based socializing was associated with less violent behavior for girls, but not for boys in the sample. In contrast, involvement in peer centered and hedonistic socializing heightened risk of property and violent offending for boys, but participation in the peer centered activities in itself was not related to girls' violence. Hedonistic involvement (arguably the set of routines most likely to foster risk) was related to girls' violence, but the association was not as strong as that related to boys' behavior. Finally, there appeared to be a positive effect of involvement in the "self-improving activities" only for boys. Although the findings are cross-sectional, this study is useful in focusing attention on variability in the 'content' of teens' peer worlds, and the potential role of these varied social activities in understanding violent behavior and other forms of risk. This set of findings and the authors' treatment moves beyond standard incarnations of "routine activities" theories, however, as it considers the possibility of gendered meanings and differential impact even where teens participate in similar social activities.

Status Processes

Adolescents spend a great deal of time with friends, and the above research studies highlight that what they do together, as well as their attitudes and behavior profiles, are important for understanding violence risk. A related but potentially broader set of concerns revolves around the general desire to be respected and well-liked (Sutor, Minyard, & Carter 2001).

Thus, prestige and popularity with peers are important considerations during this period that may be related in complex ways to girls' involvement in violence or avoidance of it. Kreager (2007), again relying on the Add Health peer social network data, used number of friend nominations received as a measure of peer acceptance or popularity, and found that in general violence did not appear to be status-enhancing for either male or female respondents. However, Kreager's results indicate that underachieving males in particular appeared to derive a status benefit from fighting (i.e., received more friendship nominations), consistent with early criminological theories that emphasized links between problem behavior and inability to achieve success along traditional lines (Cohen 1955). Although girls who reported fighting did not receive such a status benefit even if they were academic underachievers, Kreager found school-level effects, namely that female fighting appeared to have "fewer consequences for peer status in schools characterized by higher levels of violence." (2007: 916). These findings highlight that girls' and boys' behavioral choices and their peer status implications are likely to be influenced by a range of personal characteristics, social addresses, and environmental contexts. The results thus resonate with theory and research emphasizing intersectionalities (i.e., perspectives that focus on how gender connects in unique ways with experiences associated with race, SES, and/or sexual orientation).

This nexus has been most effectively highlighted in qualitative research such as studies by Miller (2001) and Ness (2010), who, as described briefly above, have explored the meanings and status implications of girls' fighting/violence in disadvantaged contexts. Ness, for example, interviewed girls who indicated that fights were a way to be a "someone," especially in the eyes of one's peers (p. 48). As one young woman put it, "even if you don't want to fight, to be popular you have to, so you just get it over with (2010: 66)." Other peer-based concerns reference the need to avoid what might be considered the girls' 'feared selves' (Marcus & Nurius 1986) as well, themes that have been discussed in prior work on males involvement in violent altercations: "I hate to be made fun of... what kind of a person would I be if I just let someone talk shit on me." I ain't no punk, and now she know that. Not just her. Now everybody knows that (Ness 2010: 49). This quote is particularly useful, as it shows the way in which issues of identity, along with specific dyadic and broader reputational concerns ("now everybody knows") connect in ways that increase the likelihood of relying on an aggressive response. Yet even though these concerns resonate generally with themes identified in research on male adolescents in disadvantaged contexts (Anderson 1999; Wilkerson & Fagan 1996), Ness points out that some of the specific points of contention remain distinctly gendered (e.g., negative attributions about appearance, "relational snubs"(p. 77), and concerns about romantic partners or reputational issues—see also Kruttschnitt 2016).

GENDER AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Other recent research suggests that the specific form of violence matters for understanding the impact of gender as an influence on the use of aggression in connection with interpersonal conflicts. Contemporary research on intimate partner violence has documented that within this context the use of "physical conflict tactics" (Straus & Gelles 1990) by women is also a relatively common phenomenon. Findings based on self-reports and

community samples often indicate similar rates of female and male perpetration (Woodward, Fergusson & Horwood 2002), and some studies have reported higher rates on the part of women (Herrera, Wiersma & Cleveland 2008). These findings have been observed whether the focus is on dating and cohabiting relationships (Giordano et al. 2010; Herrera et al. 2008; Niolon et al. 2015) or samples of married couples (Brush 1990; Sorenson, Upchurch, & Shen 1996). At the same time, the meaning and consequences of these rates is the subject of much debate, given that it is generally recognized that IPV has distinctly gendered consequences for women. Studies based on shelters for victims, those focusing on injuries reported, and samples of arrested individuals all provide a strongly gendered picture about this form of violence (Dobash et al. 1992; Graham-Kevan & Archer 2003; Johnson 1995). In addition, research has documented that on average female victims experience greater fear and emotional distress related to their victimization (Demaris & Swinford 1996; Hutchinson 1999; see also Schafer, Huebner & Bynum 2006). While the consequences research has appropriately conceptualized these relationship dynamics as distinctly gendered, it is potentially limiting to dismiss women's own aggressive actions within intimate contexts as reflecting primarily self-defensive reactions or instances of playful/non-serious aggression. Research has shown, for example, that an element of mutuality in intimate conflict is associated with greater odds of injury for women (Capaldi, Kim & Shortt 2007; Whitaker et al. 2007). Further, while some early research revealed that a common male response to a partner's aggressive act is to 'laugh,' (Dobash & Dobash 2004; Saunders 1986), recent longitudinal studies have shown that IPV is related to within-individual variability in men's as well as women's levels of depression (Johnson et al. 2014). Our review of causal factors associated with women and men's perpetration of IPV also suggests a complex portrait, as below we consider research on traditional predictors, as well as recent studies that have explored unique relational precipitants of this form of violence.

Traditional Predictors

Many investigations of the etiology of IPV have focused on the role of early exposure to violence within the family. Thus, as noted briefly above, a traditional learning or cycle of violence approach focuses attention on witnessing parents' violence and child abuse as predictors of women and men's use of violence specifically against romantic partners (Ehrensaft et al. 2003). Many studies have been based on retrospective reports (e.g., Gomez 2011, Renner & Slack 2006; Roberts et al. 2010), but Linder and Collins (2005) in a prospective examination found that both factors were associated with male as well as female use of violence in their intimate romantic relationships. Most work in this area does not distinguish maternal and paternal use of violence, however Moretti et al. (2006) found that girls who observed mothers' use of aggression toward partners were more likely to use aggression toward friends. This was similar to their finding that paternal IPV was related to boys' use of aggression toward friends. Such results would appear to follow from basic principles of identification, but the researchers also found that both girls and boys who observed maternal use of aggression were more aggressive toward their own romantic partners.

Other researchers have investigated the links between these forms of early family exposure, the onset of delinquency/antisocial behavior, and subsequent risk for IPV (Swinford et al.

2000). Dardis, Dixon, Edwards, and Turchik (2015) recently reviewed a host of specific studies of family influences that had included attention to gender similarities and differences. While some individual studies documented stronger effects for women and others for men, the authors concluded that on balance “for both young men and young women, witnessing interparental violence, child abuse, and juvenile delinquency are most often positively associated with DV perpetration.” The results of their review accord well with Capaldi et al.’s (2012) conclusions based on their own comprehensive assessment of findings derived from 228 articles. The authors concluded that witnessing parents’ violence and child abuse “show a low to moderate effect on IPV risk,” and suggested further that “there is no indication of major gender differences in these associations” (2012: 247).

Research on dating violence and the experiences of adolescents and young adults has also documented peer effects. Centering on an adolescent sample, Foshee et al. (2011) found that affiliation with teens using violence toward peers was associated with male and female IPV perpetration (see also Miller et al. 2009; Williams et al. 2008). Relying on a somewhat more general index of peer behavior, Schnurr and Lohman (2008) found an effect of antisocial peers on both women and men’s IPV reports. Minter et al. (2015) recently analyzed interview data from the TARS study, and results revealed that peer IPV and attitudes of peers reflecting tolerance of IPV under specific conditions were both related to IPV reports. This analysis controlled for witnessing parents’ IPV, scales tapping respondent and partner delinquency and other family and sociodemographic characteristics, as well as reports of earlier IPV. Interactions with gender and the focal peer variables were not significant, indicating a significant association between peer attitudes and behavior and IPV for young adult women and men who participated in the TARS study.

Relationship-Specific Factors

Family and peers are critically important social influences on women and men’s patterns of IPV. Yet as noted in several critical reviews, these factors, while significant, are not wholly determinative. As long observed with regard to more general research on intergenerational transmission (Thornberry 2009), young people exposed to violence within the home do not inevitably go on to evidence violence in their own intimate relationships; conversely some experience/perpetrate IPV even in the absence of these forms of risk exposure. Recent research on age-graded trends in IPV also highlights some limitations of focusing only on family background or even the traditional risk portfolio that includes peers, family, community and individual factors. For example, Johnson described an age-IPV curve indicating within-individual variability that is not well explained by focusing on early background factors or an individual differences approach. Of particular interest given our focus here on gender, Johnson found that while the age-IPV curve mimicked the standard curvilinear age-crime curve in some respects, women self-reported higher levels of IPV perpetration across the full study period (data spanned ages 12–29), and the decline in the late twenties was less steep for young adult women relative to their male counterparts. Similarly, while some themes in the area emphasize continuity (“once an abuser...”), research has shown that desistance within a given relationship does occur, and discontinuity across relationships is an even more common pattern (Capaldi, Shortt & Crosby 2003; Giordano et al. 2015; Whitaker, Le & Niolan 2010).

These developmental shifts and particularly elements of discontinuity across relationships suggest a role for dyadic or couple level dynamics (Capaldi & Langhinrichsen-Rohling 2012). Some researchers interested in couple-level processes have focused on partner characteristics, particularly delinquency/antisocial behavior. For example, Herrera et al. (2008), drawing on the Add Health data, found that the delinquency of respondent as well as the behavior of the partner contributed to the odds of perpetrating IPV. This line of research is useful as it focuses on what both members of a couple 'bring to the table' in terms of their own characteristics. However, a fully relational lens points to specific dynamics within the relationship, some of which appear to be relatively unique to the romantic context.

Feminist perspectives have shed light on relationship dynamics and the gendered nature of this form of violence, and initially theorizing and research centered on the ways in which broader gender inequalities tend to be replayed at the couple level (Komter 1989). A central theme is that IPV is a means to maintain control over female partners, and that traditional gender socialization leads men to expect a position of dominance within these relationships (Boonzaier 2008). This perspective has provided a strong basis for exploring unique aspects of this form of violence, and for catalyzing social change in this area. Yet empirical studies on variability in a given sample suggest complications. For example, adherence to traditional gender beliefs is somewhat inconsistent as a correlate of men's violence (see Nabors & Jasinski 2009), and the perspective is not straightforward as a framework for understanding precipitants of women's IPV perpetration.

Recent research provides a portrait of relationship dynamics, gender, and IPV that incorporates insights from feminist theorizing, but complicates them. For example, ample research documents that controlling behaviors are risk factors for IPV (Stets & Pirog-Good 1990). However, more general studies of control within relationships indicate that women as well as men often engage in control attempts. For example, in the TARS study male respondents report higher levels of partner control attempts across all waves of the study (Giordano et al. 2012). Further, results indicate that both male and female partner control attempts are associated with higher odds of IPV, and relationships reflecting high levels of control on the part of both partners had especially strong odds of reporting IPV within a focal relationship (Giordano et al. 2016). Similarly, in a study of 360 couples, Moffitt et al. (2001) found that negative emotionality of both partners was associated with higher odds of IPV. Finally, results of the TARS analysis showed that anger specifically related to the partner, net of a more general measure of anger identity, was related young adult women's perpetration as well as that of their male counterparts (Giordano et al. 2016).

Although these findings indicate that feelings of anger and attempts to control the partner are related to aggressive actions, they do not tell us much about why individuals are angry, or what it is they are attempting to control. Thus recent research has explored specific domains of contestation in adolescent and adult relationships that are linked to the use of aggression within the context of an intimate relationship. Results, again relying on the TARS data, show that concerns about and 'actual' (as perceived by the respondent) partner infidelity are significantly related to male and female perpetration (Giordano et al. 2015; see also Nemeth et al. 2012). These findings fit well with a broader literature that has documented that on average male partners report higher levels of infidelity or 'concordance' (Ford, Sohn &

Lepkowski 2002; Miller & White 2003), and they move beyond the earlier focus primarily on male jealousy. Nevertheless, our analysis concluded that traditional male socialization may nevertheless come into play, as male partners may find partner control attempts, or a less than favorable power position, as highly aversive and something to be avoided (dissatisfaction with relationship power article).

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH ON GENDER AND VIOLENCE

The research studies reviewed above provide ample evidence of areas of similarity across gender in the precursors of violence; many results nevertheless lend support to Kruttschnitt's (2016) recent conclusion that "the salience of gender varies in different contexts and is intermixed with other forms of stratification" (2016: 8). Early on, researchers centered on girls' and women's experiences of victimization as a key pathway leading to violent behavior and other criminal activity. Subsequent prospective studies focusing on the consequences of child maltreatment are consistent with this emphasis, but show that this is a significant risk factor for men's pathways to crime and violence as well (Widom 2014). Further, research on neighborhood disadvantage, family influences, and peer dynamics highlight the importance of social processes that connect directly to these key domains, as critical to the development of a comprehensive portrait of risk factors associated with girls' and women's violence.

Thus, for example, Steffensmeier and Allen's research revealed that men's rates of violence in a community are significant predictors of women's rates; yet subsequent research has shown that in these disadvantaged contexts peer violence may actually play a larger role for girls (Zimmerman & Messner 2010). These constellations of findings thus resist simple conclusions about gender-violence connections, and in the process complicate conventional beliefs about social dynamics linked to patterns of violence (i.e., the notion that girls remain closer to the family, while boys' violence traces to peer pressure and gang involvement—see e.g., Leonard 1982). Similarly, even though research documents that the consequences of intimate partner violence remain highly gendered, women's reports about their motivations do not always revolve around issues of protection/self-defense, and often include anger about specific 'domains of contestation' that have parallels with concerns expressed by male respondents.

Women act in aggressive ways less frequently than do their male counterparts. Yet basic principles of social learning theory are nevertheless potentially useful as a framework for organizing knowledge regarding the behavior of girls and women who do use violence, and for continuing to explore risk factors associated with these behaviors. Thus, conditions of disadvantage are linked to normative climates in which girls' use of violence may become accepted and even status-enhancing, families characterized by violence and other forms of criminal behavior may impart everyday lessons that increase risk, and support from like-others (peers) provide definitions and a social framework for fighting and other forms of aggression. The gap question we bracketed off at the outset is always in play, however, in that most of the time girls learn to be non-violent, but not inevitably and not in all contexts

(i.e., the relatively high rates of violence observed in self-report research on the perpetration of intimate partner violence).

Additional research is needed on ways in which girls and boys use their agency and resources in risky neighborhoods to successfully avoid violence. For example, Ness (2010) described variability in the resort to violence, even in neighborhoods where she had observed that fights among girls were very common. Qualitative and quantitative research that includes male and female respondents would serve to illuminate the gendered and more universal aspects of these non-violent adaptations. Similarly, parental criminality is an understudied family factor that often confers substantial risk, but girls may develop distinct identities-in-contrast or other strategies to successfully navigate these risky family environments (Giordano 2010). Further, recognizing that girls are more often not aggressive or otherwise delinquent, statistical analyses that explores configurations or packages of risk may ultimately prove more helpful than traditional variable-centered approaches.

A life-course/developmental lens is also likely to advance knowledge in this area. For example, some older girls Ness (2010) interviewed developed the view of girls' fighting as immature, and research on trends in intimate partner violence indicate that cessation of IPV is quite common. Nevertheless, few studies have examined the generic or gendered aspects of this form of desistance (Giordano et al. 2015; see also Rodermond et al. 2016). A recent study of violence that had been avoided in specific conflictual situations suggests another interesting way of thinking about desistance in more immediate terms (Kruttschnitt et al. 2017). Although the latter study focused on a sample of women, comparison to men's avoidance strategies could be informative for the development of gender-sensitive programming efforts.

Additional in-depth studies are needed of each of the social arenas explored above. While qualitative investigations are often positioned as the appropriate methodological strategy for researching a phenomenon in-depth, concepts such as "neighborhood normative climate" or "parental attitudes that foster violence" could be examined in more specific detail relying on survey methods as well. Currently, measures of norms that support violence are often global and verging on the tautological, and fail to tap the "conditions under which" that may be generally informative and also reveal subtly gendered understandings.

Finally, recognizing the central position of peers in the life of adolescents and young adults (periods when violence risk is especially high), additional research is needed that grapples with the reality that youths' social connections may not always revolve around the school. For example, relying on the same Add Health data set as many of the school-based network analyses, Harding (2008) found that neighborhood violence predicted friendships with individuals who were no longer in school and for both males and females with individuals who attended other schools. Consistent with this portrait, and relying on the NELS data set, Harding (2009) showed that youths in more disadvantaged neighborhoods were significantly more likely to interact regularly with older peers. Although the latter study focused only on male respondents, these outside-the-school connections (including romantic partnerships) warrant additional empirical scrutiny as sources of influence on gendered and generic dimensions of violence.

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