Predicting Maternal/Paternal Abuse Risk: A Longitudinal Theoretical Design

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Presentation Overview

- What is Parent-Child Aggression?
- Social Information Processing Theory
- Triple-F Study Research Design Results
- Take Away Messages
Violence against children in the US

- **DHHS reports:**
  - Over 700,000 victims child maltreatment *confirmed* in the US in 2014 *(DHHS, 2016)*
  - Physical abuse: most common after neglect *(17%)* *(DHHS, 2016)*

- **BUT**, such reporting underestimates extent of physical abuse

- National Incidence Study-4: estimates >1.25 million *(Sedlak et al. 2010)*
The Abuse-Discipline Connection

- Physical discipline virtually universal in the US (94% 3-4 year olds) (Strauss & Stewart, 1999)

- ~ 2/3 parents recent spanking 3-yr-old (Taylor et al., 2010)

- Spank 3x likely → abusive discipline (Zolotor et al., 2008)

Physical Discipline

* Qualitative v. quantitative difference
* Context for when physical abuse arises
* Relevance to prevention

Physical Abuse

Child abuse potential: estimate of risk to progress on continuum, become physically abusive
Social Information Processing (SIP) Model

- Pre-existing Beliefs: Child-related and discipline-related beliefs & affective schema
- Pre-existing affect: derived from prior interactions

Four stage model
- Stage 1: Perceptions—factors that interfere with accurate attending/perceiving child
- Stage 2: Expectations, interpretations, evaluations—factors that bias or distort parent’s assessment of situation
- Stage 3: Information integration, response selection—difficulty in adjusting/ incorporating options
- Stage 4: Implementation, monitoring—factors that interfere with parents’ tracking own behavior once implemented

Following First Families (Triple-F) Study

- Prospective, longitudinal study
  - Prenatal, 6mo, 18mo

- Recruited first-time moms in last trimester of pregnancy and their partners

- ½ targeted to be at-risk
  - <150% poverty line, federal assistance, <HS, unemployed, single
Triple-F Study

- Multi-method
  - self-report, analog, direct observation
- Testing SIP model *beyond* “taxes” and “resources”
  - Controlling for demographics
Theoretical Model

Hypothesized Path Model

Stage 1
Reactivity

Pre-existing Empathy

Stage 2
Attributions

Pre-existing PCA Attitudes

Stage 3
Knowledge Discipline

Stage 2
Compliance Expectations

Time 2
PCA Risk

Discipline path & empathy path
Triple-F Study: Participants

**TIME 1**
- 203 primiparous women
  - 151 male partners (86% available dads)
- Mom’s Race/Ethnicity
  - 51.2% Caucasian
  - 46.8% African-American
  - 1% Asian
  - (3% also Hispanic, 5.9% Bi-racial)
- 43% moms receiving gov’t assistance
  - 46.3% within 150% poverty line
- 30.5% HS diploma or less;
  - 21.2% some college

**TIME 2**
- 186 moms
  - 146 male partners
  - 2 families removed from study, 5 families different dads
- Data: 196 moms, 145 dads at Time 1, 141 dads at Time 2
Triple-F Study: Measures

**Taxes:**
- Brief Symptom Inventory
- Substance Abuse & Mental Illness Scale
- Revised Conflict Tactics Scale

**Resources**
- Social Support Resources Index
- Couple Satisfaction Index
- Coping Self-Efficacy Scale

**SIP PRE-EXISTING SCHEMA**

**PCA Attitudes:**
- AAPI-Value Corporal Punishment
- Physical Abuse Vignettes
- Parent-Child Aggression Movie Task *

**Empathy:**
- Interpersonal Reactivity Index
- Empathic Concern
- Perspective Taking
Triple-F Study: Measures

**SIP Stage 1: Reactivity**
- Negative Mood Regulation Scale
- Frustration Discomfort Scale
- Paced Auditory Serial Addition Task *

**SIP Stage 2: Negative attributions**
- Plotkin Child Vignettes
- Infant Crying Questionnaire
- Video Ratings *
- Noncompliance Implicit Association Test *

**SIP Stage 2: Expectations**
- Compliance Expectations Vignettes

**SIP Stage 3: Knowledge**
- Generated Discipline Options

**PCA Risk Dependent Variable**
- Child Abuse Potential Inventory
- Adult Adolescent Parenting Inventory-2
- Expected Parental Authority Questionnaire
- Response Analog to Child Compliance Task *
Triple-F Study: Analysis

- Data reduction: Composites created w/ standardized scores
- Path models w/ and w/o demographics; all control for taxes and resources
- Actor-partner independence models for dyadic model
Mother Model

SIP Path Model for Mothers with Standardized Coefficients

- Reactivity
- Pre-existing Empathy
- Pre-existing PCA Attitudes
- Stage 2 Attributions
- Stage 2 Compliance Expectations
- Stage 3 Knowledge Discipline
- Time 2 PCA Risk

Coefficients:
- $\beta = 0.47^{***}$
- $\beta = 0.33^{***}$
- $\beta = 0.17^{**}$
- $\beta = 0.25^{***}$
- $\beta = 0.17^*$
- $\beta = 0.21^{**}$
- $\beta = 0.05$
- $\beta = 0.19^{***}$
- $\beta = 0.10$
- $\beta = -0.28^{***}$

Significance levels:
* $p \leq 0.05$
** $p \leq 0.01$
*** $p \leq 0.001$

Dashed lines indicate non-significant paths.
Father Model

SIP Path Model for Fathers with standardized coefficients

- Stage 1 Reactivity
  - Pre-existing Empathy
    - Pre-existing PCA Attitudes
    - Stage 2 Attributions
      - Stage 2 Compliance Expectations
      - Stage 3 Knowledge Discipline
  - Stage 3 Knowledge Discipline
    - Time 2 PCA Risk

Coefficients:
- 
  * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$
- Poor empathy predicts greater reactivity (but weaker for dads) & negative attributions for moms & dads and reactivity predicts negative attributions
- PCA attitudes predict less knowledge of discipline options and negative attributions, but for dads only also higher compliance expectations
- PCA risk predicted by negative attributions (esp. moms), less knowledge of options, and for moms, higher compliance expectations (marginal for dads), greater reactivity, and PCA approval (marginal for moms)
Discussion: Take away messages

- Mom/Dad models have some commonalities but distinctions
  - Model fit was very good for dads (RMSEA = .009, CFI = .99) but weaker for moms
  - Suggesting we need more model refinement for moms

- Parents with low empathy appear more likely to overreact and more likely to hold negative attributions

- Perhaps greater empathy fosters more patience and regulation of emotions, limits negative biases
- But empathy may be more important for moms than dads
Take away messages

- **Negative child attributions important predictor of risk**
  - Help parents with their beliefs about child behavior intentions
  - But seems stronger for moms than dads
  - Attributions have been rarely studied in dads, we need more direct comparisons

- **Greater approval of PCA appears to impact risk through negative attributions and less knowledge of options**
  - Changing attitudes about PCA may decrease negative attributions, encourage thinking of alternatives
  - PCA attitudes related to fathers’ higher compliance expectations, not moms
  - Dads who approve of PCA also expect more compliance
Take away messages

- Current “taxes” were not a significant covariate when considered with demographic characteristics and resources
  - But resources associated with lower risk for both moms and dads
    - Additional resources?
  - So the value of comprehensive theoretical models is...?
    - How factors are interconnected (where working on one area might influence another)
    - Or only one area might be identified as problematic, so tailor intervention

- Coming.... Time 3 results!
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Thank you...

Questions??

(save a tree!)

Email me for copies
(or for the new in press article in *Psychology of Violence*)

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