

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 407 623

CG 027 683

AUTHOR Oskin, Deborah L.
TITLE Impact of Community Violence Exposure on Children's Hope.
PUB DATE Aug 96
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association (104th, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, August 9-13, 1996).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Children; *Coping; Defense Mechanisms; Early Adolescents; Elementary Education; *Emotional Response; Psychological Patterns; Responses; Sex Differences; *Student Attitudes; *Victims Of Crime; *Violence
IDENTIFIERS African Americans; *Hope

ABSTRACT

Hope has been theorized to be a stable cognitive mindset that develops over time, as children experience success at meeting challenges and in conquering obstacles to their goals (Snyder et al, 1994). To determine the effects of children's violence exposure, both as victims and as witnesses, to children's hope, 99 children living in violent areas of a large southeastern city were interviewed individually in their homes. The children were from 8 to 12 years old and represented grades 1 through 8. Ninety-five percent were African American and poor: median income ranged from \$5,000 to \$10,000. Results showed a negative relationship between victimization and hope agency for younger children. As levels of victimization increased, hope decreased. Girls may experience victimization differently than boys because they are victimized by different types of violent events. Girls may also use differing emotional responses to victimization, and they may also use different cognitive processes to understand their victimization experiences. Girls tend to generalize their experiences which can lead to diminished coping strategies. Boys tend to see situations as independent of each other. A positive relationship between victimization and hope agency beliefs was found in older children. Research has yet to determine whether females use emotion-focused coping more because they are more likely to be in uncontrollable situations, and whether males use problem-focused coping more because they are more likely to be in controllable situations. (RJM)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

Impact of Community Violence Exposure on Children's Hope

Deborah L. Oskin
Virginia Commonwealth University

poster presented at the annual meeting of the
American Psychological Association
August, 1996
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Author's Note

Many thanks to Wendy Kliewer, Ph.D., Virginia Commonwealth University, for her valuable assistance in the preparation of this poster, and for allowing this study to be conducted as part of her larger cross-sectional study on violence exposure and coping in children.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Abstract

The present study investigated the effects of community violence exposure (victimization and witnessing) on children's hope. Home interviews were conducted with 99 8 to 12 year old children (99% African-American) living in high violence areas of a large southeastern city. Regression analyses demonstrated that, along with interactions with gender and age, victimization accounted for more of the variance in hope agency beliefs ($R^2 = .20$) than did witnessing ($R^2 = .11$). A significant three-way interaction involving victimization, gender, and age was plotted. Specifically, younger children experienced a decline in hope agency as victimization increased; while for older children, increased victimization led to an increase in hope agency. These effects were stronger for girls than for boys, at both age levels.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

D. OSKIN

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Introduction

Hope has been theorized to be a stable cognitive mindset that develops over time, as children experience success at meeting challenges and in conquering obstacles to their goals (Snyder et al, 1994). It is composed of two factors: pathways and agency. Pathways refer to the child's belief in his/her own ability to generate the paths or strategies necessary to succeed in meeting his/her goals, while agency refers to the child's belief that s/he has the energy and determination to meet his/her goals. A high-hope mindset is produced by past successes, and is characterized by the expectation of future positive experiences.

Many children today, however, are growing up under conditions of chronic community violence. Research has found that children who grow up in violent communities have shorter life expectancies and are likely to experience additional stressful life events that impact their well being (Osofsky, 1995). These stressful violent environments may potentially affect children's ability to produce past successes, and their expectations for future success.

Does hope develop in children growing up under such adverse conditions? Theoretically, Snyder's model suggests that hope would be impaired under conditions where successes were minimized. Research has also suggested that children in violent communities develop a less positive view of the future (Osofsky, 1995); thus, hope would be expected to diminish as violence exposure increased.

The present study examined the effects of children's violence exposure, both as victims and as witnesses, to hope. Gender and age were also examined as possible contributors to and moderators of the violence exposure → hope relationship.

Methods

Ninety-nine children (40 boys, 59 girls) living in moderate to high violent areas of a large southeastern city (as determined by police statistics) were interviewed individually in their homes by trained interviewers, who read all questions and response options to each child from a prepared script. The children were from 8 to 12 years old ($M = 10.7$, $SD = 1.3$), and ranged from first to eighth grades (74.2% were in the fourth to sixth grades). Ninety-five percent were African-American, and poor: median income ranged from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

Children's violence exposure was assessed across 17 different types of violent events, using Richters and Saltzman's (1990) Survey of Exposure to Community Violence (Self-Report Version), which assesses victimization and witnessing events separately. Total violence exposure as indexed by this measure has been correlated with child-rated distress, the Child Depression Inventory, and child-rated fear at school. One-week test-retest reliability has been calculated at .81 (Martinez & Richters, 1993). Higher scores indicated a higher lifetime frequency of community violence exposure.

Snyder et al's (1994) Children's Hope Scale (a 12-item measure) was used to measure children's hope. One-month test-retest reliability has been calculated at $r(359) = .71$, $p < .001$. In a different sample, one-week test-retest reliability was found to be $r(89) = .73$, $p < .001$. Higher scores indicated higher levels of hope.

Results

Preliminary analyses of the pathways subscale of the Children's Hope Scale revealed an internal consistency reliability which was unacceptably low (Cronbach's alpha = .38). Because the internal consistency of the total Hope Scale (Cronbach's alpha = .68) equalled that of the agency subscale (Cronbach's alpha = .68), the pathways subscale was eliminated

from the analyses. All regressions reported here were thus performed predicting the Hope agency subscale only.

Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted separately for victimization and witnessing exposures (see Table 1). Overall, the model for victimization achieved significance ($F(7,81) = 2.91, p < .01$), while the model for witnessing did not ($F(7,91) = 1.53, p > .15$). These overall results suggest that victimization by violence plays a larger role in explaining hope agency beliefs ($R^2 = .20$) than does witnessing community violence ($R^2 = .11$).

A significant three-way interaction between victimization, gender, and age (see Figure 1) demonstrated a negative relationship between victimization and hope agency beliefs for younger children; however, a positive relationship was found for older children. For both younger and older children, the relationship between victimization and hope agency was stronger for girls than for boys.

Discussion

The negative relationship between victimization and hope agency for younger children was as predicted: as levels of victimization increased, hope decreased. There are several possible reasons for the interesting finding that girls were more strongly affected than boys by victimization.

Girls may experience victimization differently than boys because they are victimized by different types of violent events. Singer, Anglin, Song, and Lunghofer (1995) studied 3,735 students in nine inner-city and suburban high schools and found that girls were exposed to significantly more violence within the home than were boys. Being victimized by sexual abuse or assault was also significantly higher for girls than boys, supporting the idea that girls and boys are victimized by differential types of violence.

Girls may experience victimization differently than boys because they experience differing emotional responses to victimization. Singer et al. (1995) found that being female was the single strongest demographic predictor of trauma symptoms and psychological distress (e.g., depression, anger, anxiety, dissociation, and PTSD).

Girls may experience victimization differently than boys because they use different cognitive processes to understand their victimization experiences. Dweck, Goetz, and Strauss (1980) have shown that learned helplessness and failure affects girls differently than boys: girls tend to generalize their failure across situations and to internal causes, while boys tend to see situations as independent of each other and attribute their failures to external causes (Miller & Kirsch, 1987; Dweck et al., 1980). After failure feedback, those with external attributions (mostly boys) worked hard and improved their task performance, while those with internal attributions (mostly girls) tended to give up and were more likely to continue to decline in school performance. It's possible that girls who generalize their failures and attribute them internally may have lowered expectations, which can lead to poorer coping strategies involving less persistence and poorer problem-solving strategies (Dweck et al., 1980; Miller & Kirsch, 1987). Both these deficits may be associated with lower levels of hope on the agency and pathways dimensions, respectively. Perhaps these same processes are at work in integrating victimization experiences in this age group.

Finally, girls may experience victimization differently than boys because of a combination of some or all of these factors. Singer et al. (1995) found that specific psychological symptoms (anxiety, dissociation, stress, depression, and total symptom score) were highly associated with certain types of violence exposure: having been a recent victim or witness of home violence and having been sexually abused or assaulted, both more prevalent among girls.

However, the positive relationship between victimization and hope agency beliefs, found in older children, was completely unexpected. Again, this effect is stronger in girls than in boys. Sex differences in coping strategies may partially explain this non-intuitive finding. Many studies have found sex differences in coping styles in both adults and children, such that males are more likely to use instrumental or problem-focused coping, and females are more likely to use emotion-focused coping (Miller & Kirsch, 1987). Some research has suggested that problem-focused coping strategies are more adaptive in controllable situations, while emotion-focused coping strategies may be more adaptive in uncontrollable situations (Miller & Kirsch, 1987; Kliewer & Sandler, 1992), such as victimization.

Research has yet to determine whether females use emotion-focused coping more *because* they are more likely to be in uncontrollable situations, and whether males use problem-focused coping more *because* they are more likely to be in controllable situations. However, differential exposures to victimization between boys and girls lend support to this hypothesis. The findings reported in the present study, of a positive relationship in older children between victimization and hope agency, may be the result of such coping processes. However, there is no doubt that further research is needed to uncover the mechanism(s) for this rise in hope agency beliefs.

References

Dweck, C.S., Goetz, T.E., & Strauss, N.L. (1980). Sex differences in learned helplessness: IV. An experimental and naturalistic study of failure generalization and its mediators. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 38, 441-452.

Kliewer, W. & Sandler, I. (1992). Locus of control and self-esteem as moderators of stressor-symptom relations in children and adolescents. Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 20, 393-413.

Miller, S.M. & Kirsch, N. (1987). Sex differences in cognitive coping with stress. In R.C. Barnett, L. Biener, & G.K. Baruch (Eds.), Gender and stress (pp. 278-307). New York: MacMillan, Inc.

Osofsky, J. (1995). The effects of exposure to violence on young children. American Psychologist, 50, 782-788.

Richters, J.E., & Saltzman, W. (1990). Survey of Children's Exposure to Community Violence: Self-Report Version. National Institute of Mental Health.

Singer, M.I., Anglin, T.M., Song, L.Y., & Lunghofer, L. (1995). Adolescents' exposure to violence and associated symptoms of psychological trauma. JAMA, 273, 477-482.

Snyder, C.R., Rapoff, M., Ware, L., Hoza, B., Pelham, W.E., Danovsky, M., Highberger, L., Rubinstein, H., & Stahl, K.J. (1994, October). The development and validation of the Children's Hope Scale. Paper presented at the Kansas Conference in Clinical Child Psychology, Lawrence, KS.

Table 1

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Hope Agency Beliefs From Victimization and Witnessing

Victimization By Community Violence				Witnessing Community Violence					
Variables Entered	β In	β Final	F cha	R ²	Variables Entered	β In	β Final	F cha	R ²
Step 1			2.97 *	.09	Step 1			2.42 *	.07
Gender	-.11	-.11			Gender	-.01	-.02		
Age	.27	.25			Age	.19 ⁺	.11		
Victimization	-.12	-.16			Witnessing	.15	.26 *		
Step 2			1.64	.15	Step 2			1.08	.10
Victimization x Gender	.09	.09			Witnessing x Gender	-.01	-.17		
Victimization x Age	.20 ⁺	.59 **			Witnessing x Age	-.11	-.15		
Gender x Age	.04	.05			Gender x Age	.25	.15		
Step 3			5.54 *	.20	Step 3			.29	.11
Victimization x Gender x Age	-.47 *				Witnessing x Gender x Age		.08		
Final Model: $F(7,81) = 2.91, p < .01$					Final Model: $F(7,91) = 1.53, p > .15$				

⁺ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

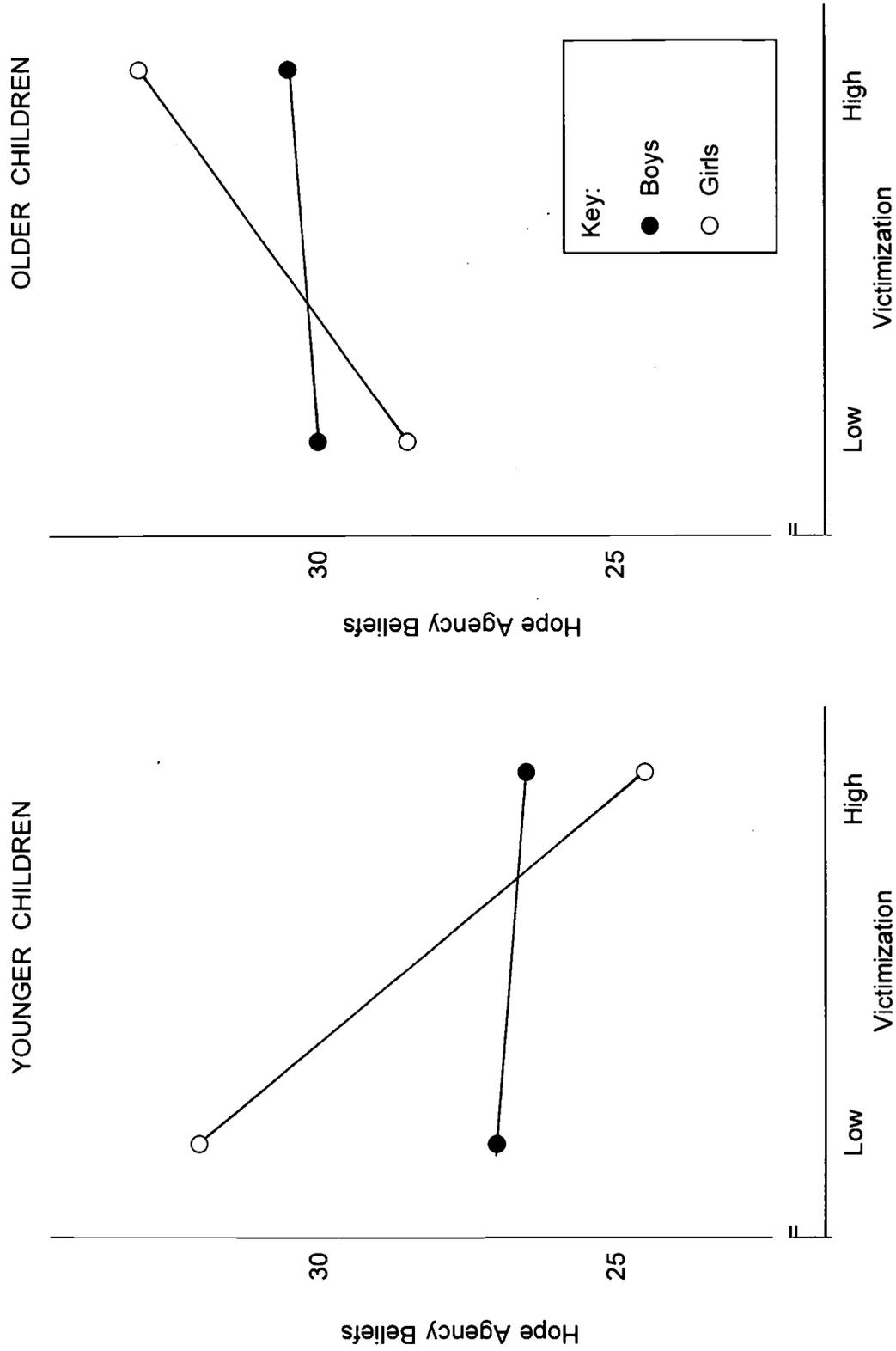


Figure 1.

Graphs of the interaction between victimization by community violence, age, and gender predicting hope agency beliefs. Higher values reflect higher levels of hope.



U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)



REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: Impact of Community Violence Exposure on Children's Hope	
Author(s): Deborah L. Oskin	
Corporate Source: Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association, Toronto, Ontario, Canada	Publication Date: August, 1996

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic/optical media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS) or other ERIC vendors. Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following two options and sign at the bottom of the page.



Check here

For Level 1 Release:

Permitting reproduction in microfiche (4" x 6" film) or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic or optical) and paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

_____ *Sample* _____

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Level 1

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

_____ *Sample* _____

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Level 2



Check here

For Level 2 Release:

Permitting reproduction in microfiche (4" x 6" film) or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic or optical), but *not* in paper copy.

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits. If permission to reproduce is granted, but neither box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

"I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic/optical media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries."

Sign here → please

Signature: <i>Deborah L. Oskin</i>	Printed Name/Position/Title: Deborah L. Oskin	
Organization/Address: 9122 CLOISTERS WEST RICHMOND, VA 23229-4530	Telephone: 804-273-6065	FAX:
	E-Mail Address: PSY4DLO@ATLAS.VCU.EDU	Date:





ERIC/CASS

**COUNSELING
and
STUDENT SERVICES
CLEARINGHOUSE**

**School of Education
101 Park Building
University
of
North Carolina
at Greensboro
Greensboro, NC
27412-5001**

*Toll-free: (800)414-9769
Phone: (910) 334-4114
Fax: (910) 334-4116*

*INTERNET:
ERICCASS@IRIS.UNCG.EDU*

*Garry R. Walz, Ph.D., NCC
Director
Jeanne Bleuer, Ph.D., NCC
Associate Director*

*Improving
Decision Making
Through
Increased Access
to Information*



November 11, 1996

Dear 1996 APA Presenter:

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Counseling and Student Services invites you to contribute to the ERIC database by providing us with a written copy of the presentation you made at the American Psychological Association's 104th Annual Convention in Toronto August 9-13, 1996. Papers presented at professional conferences represent a significant source of educational material for the ERIC system. We don't charge a fee for adding a document to the ERIC database, and authors keep the copyrights.

As you may know, ERIC is the largest and most searched education database in the world. Documents accepted by ERIC appear in the abstract journal Resources in Education (RIE) and are announced to several thousand organizations. The inclusion of your work makes it readily available to other researchers, counselors, and educators; provides a permanent archive; and enhances the quality of RIE. Your contribution will be accessible through the printed and electronic versions of RIE, through microfiche collections that are housed at libraries around the country and the world, and through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). By contributing your document to the ERIC system, you participate in building an international resource for educational information. In addition, your paper may be listed for publication credit on your academic vita.

To submit your document to ERIC/CASS for review and possible inclusion in the ERIC database, please send the following to the address on letterhead:

- (1) Two (2) laser print copies of the paper,
- (2) A signed reproduction release form (see back of letter), and
- (3) A 200-word abstract (optional)

Documents are reviewed for contribution to education, timeliness, relevance, methodology, effectiveness of presentation, and reproduction quality. Previously published materials in copyrighted journals or books are not usually accepted because of Copyright Law, but authors may later publish documents which have been acquired by ERIC. Finally, please feel free to copy the reproduction release for future or additional submissions.

Sincerely,


 Jillian Barr Joncas
 Acquisitions and Outreach Coordinator