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# Effects of Abusive Parenting, Caretaker Arrests, and Deviant Behavior on Dating Violence among Homeless Young Adults.

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Effects of Abusive Parenting, Caretaker Arrests, and Deviant Behavior  
on Dating Violence among Homeless Young Adults

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### Abstract

Though dating violence is widespread among young adult homeless populations, its risk factors are poorly understood by scholars. To address this gap, the current study uses a social learning theory to examine the effects of abusive parenting and caretaker arrests on dating violence among 172 homeless young adults. Results from path analyses revealed that child physical abuse and caretaker arrests were positively associated with engaging in a greater number of school fights, which, in turn, was strongly and positively correlated with participating in more deviant subsistence strategies (e.g., stealing) since being on the street. Young people who participated in a greater number of delinquent acts were more likely to report higher levels of dating violence. Study results highlight the extent of social learning within the lives of homeless young adults, which is evident prior to their leaving home and while they are on the street.

**Keywords:** Child physical abuse; delinquent behavior; dating violence; homeless young adults

## **Effects of Abusive Parenting, Caretaker Arrests, and Deviant Behavior on Dating Violence among Homeless Young Adults**

Dating violence, which includes physical or sexual violence, threats of violence, and psychological aggression is widespread in both youth and young adult dating relationships. It is estimated that between 9 and 30% of youth report violent experiences within their dating relationships (Knox, Lomonaco, & Alpert, 2009; Swahn et al., 2008), whereas over one-third of U.S. college students report dating violence (Stappenbeck & Fromme, 2010). A 17-country study of 33 universities revealed that the prevalence of physical assault perpetration among dating couples ranged from 17 to 45% (Straus, 2004). Though these rates are high, dating violence among the homeless is even more prevalent: Tyler, Melander, and Noel (2009) found that 65% of homeless young adults had committed at least one form of dating violence against a current or recent partner and 69% reported being a victim.

Though homeless young people experience various forms of victimization and violence (Baron, 2003b; Thrane, Hoyt, Whitbeck, & Yoder, 2006), risk factors for dating violence are poorly understood among this population given that prior research on this topic tends to be dated and descriptive in nature (North, Smith, & Spitznagel, 1994; North, Thompson, Smith, & Kyburz, 1996) or has focused on samples of older homeless and poor women (Bassuk, Dawson, & Huntington, 2006). Though a few recent studies of homeless young adults exist (Slesnick, Erdem, Collins, Patton, & Buettner, 2010; Tyler et al., 2009), neither study considered caretaker arrests and deviant behavior as risk factors for dating violence. Thus, the current study fills these

gaps in the literature by examining the following research question through a social learning interpretation: What is the effect of child physical abuse and caretaker arrests on dating violence among homeless young adults?

## **Background**

### **Dating Violence**

The prevalence of dating violence among homeless youth/young adults ranges from approximately 33 to 69% (Slesnick et al., 2010; Taylor et al., 2008; Tyler et al., 2009). Certain demographic factors may play a role in the risk of perpetrating dating violence. North and colleagues (1994) found that similar percentages of adult homeless males and females reported hitting or throwing things at a partner (12% and 17%, respectively). Some studies among homeless young adults show similar findings, with young men and women exhibiting similar rates of both partner violence victimization and perpetration (Boris, Heller, Sheperd, & Zeanah, 2002). Tyler and colleagues (2009), however, found that females reported significantly higher rates of partner violence perpetration compared to their male counterparts. These inconsistent findings regarding gender warrant further exploration in understanding risks of violent perpetration. Regarding age, research has shown that older homeless young adults report higher rates of victimizing their partners (Tyler et al., 2009; Tyler & Melander, 2012), though some research shows that age does not play a role in experiences of partner violence among homeless young people (Petering, Rice, Rhoades, & Winetrobe, 2014). Given the paucity of research on dating violence among homeless young adults, we know very little about the risk factors within this population.

**Family History**

A history of child abuse has been identified as an important risk factor for dating violence in both general populations (Foshee, Benefield, Ennett, Bauman, & Suchindran, 2004; Herrenkohl et al., 2004; Rich, Gidycz, Warkentin, Loh, & Weiland, 2005) and among homeless populations (Bassuk et al., 2006; Melander & Tyler, 2010; Slesnick et al., 2010; Tyler et al., 2009). According to a social learning orientation, it is assumed that children from violent households observe and learn the techniques of being violent and then emulate this behavior in future personal relationships because it may be rewarding to them. Research that has examined the effect of child abuse on dating violence has found both a direct (Bassuk et al., 2006; Slesnick et al., 2010) and an indirect link through other constructs (Brownridge, 2006). Research also finds that among homeless youth, a history of physical abuse is associated with both participation in delinquent activities such as robbing, conning, or stealing (McMorris, Tyler, Whitbeck, & Hoyt, 2002) and with having a father with a criminal history (Ryan, Kilmer, Cauce, Watanabe, & Hoyt, 2000). Furthermore, homeless young people with high levels of family conflict and violence tend to develop their own problem behaviors, including aggressive peer relationships and social isolation (Anooshian, 2005).

Additionally, parental deviance (including arrests) more generally has been linked to homeless youths' antisocial behaviors suggesting that the confrontational nature of overt behavior may be due to parental modeling or reinforcement from deviant parents (Tompsett & Toro, 2010). Regardless of the reason for parental arrests, the fact that they are arrested suggests that they have little respect for the law, are irresponsible (e.g., arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol) and do not follow rules. In other words, some of these parents are engaging in antisocial behavior. Through parental modeling or reinforcement from deviant parents, it is

possible that homeless youths' confrontational behavior may lead to school fighting as well as hostile and combative interactions on the street because they have learned that responding with violence can be rewarding and effective in problem-solving. Similarly, they are more likely to gravitate towards peers who are similar to themselves (Caspi, Elder, & Bem, 1987), and thus may be at greater risk for entering into personal relationships with those who are similarly aggressive. Furthermore, someone with prior experiences of abuse may view violence as a normative aspect of relationships (Brownridge, 2006) and thus be at greater risk of becoming involved with an abuser.

### **Deviant Behavior**

Research finds that homeless youth are at increased risk for dropping out of high school: at two-year follow up, Hyman, Aubry, and Klodawsky (2011) found that only 28% of homeless youth from their original sample were still in school. School has also been found to be challenging for these young people: 78% of homeless youth had experienced peer bullying in a school setting before taking to the streets (Coates & McKenzie-Mohr, 2010). Homeless youth also experience conflicts with teachers, principals, and other students and these problems have been found to be associated with trouble at home (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997). The difficulties that youth experience in school may lead to confrontations with students and perhaps teachers and such fighting may subsequently lead to suspension and expulsion (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999). These early experiences with violence and aggression both within the family and school settings likely cultivate a confrontational and oppositional interaction style among some of these youth and a general willingness to use violence to solve problems within all interpersonal relationships.

Many homeless youth engage in stealing or selling drugs, often as a basic survival strategy (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997) and this practice has been referred to as deviant subsistence strategies (Whitbeck & Simons, 1990). Those with deviant values are more likely to engage in various forms of crime (Baron, 2003a; 2009) and these values may stem from their earlier family experiences. For example, delinquency has been found to mediate the relationship between child abuse and dating violence (Swinford et al., 2000).

### **Potential Modes of Intergenerational Transmission of Delinquency and Violence**

Among general population samples, a variety of theoretical perspectives have been utilized to understand how negative childhood and adolescent experiences are linked to young adult relationship violence. Social learning theory provides theoretical rationale for the intergenerational transmission of violence explanation (Stith et al., 2000). According to social learning theory, violence directed at others is learned from one's social environment through the process of observational learning (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1978). Children exposed to violence in their family may later imitate the behavior they have observed, especially if they witness its positive outcomes (e.g., compliance). Further, Gelles (1997) argued that children who grow up in violent homes learn the techniques of being violent and the justifications for this behavior. Early exposure to distinctive types of family violence is also related to the development of unique forms of aggression in later life (Bevan & Higgins, 2002).

Relatedly, the background situational model of dating violence suggests that those who are more accepting of dating aggression are more likely to engage in dating violence (Riggs & O'Leary, 1996). As such, exposure to familial violence may lead children to view aggression as an acceptable part of relationships, and perhaps increase their tolerance for it and likelihood of

using it to establish compliance (Foshee, Bauman, & Linder, 1999). This normalization of violence in interpersonal interactions is linked to an increased likelihood of experiencing violence in future dating relationships (Riggs & O'Leary, 1996; Sev'er, 2002). The intergenerational transmission framework has been met with mixed support, as the majority of child abuse victims do not experience violence within their intimate relationships (Kaufman & Zigler, 1987; Wofford Mihalic & Elliott, 1997). Despite this, experiencing childhood abuse and/or neglect has been directly linked to victimization (Brownridge, 2006), perpetration (Herrenkohl et al., 2004; Swinford, DeMaris, Cernkovich, & Giordano, 2000), or both (Gover, Kaukinen, & Fox, 2008; Whitfield, Anda, Dube, & Felitti, 2003) within intimate relationships.

### **Hypotheses**

Based on the above literature review and social learning theory, we propose the following hypotheses: (1) child physical abuse and caretaker arrests (i.e., modes of parental deviance) will be positively associated with dating violence; (2) child physical abuse and caretaker arrests will be positively associated with school fighting and deviant subsistence strategies because children are likely to model parental behavior, in this case deviance and aggressive behavior, to establish compliance within their own relationships or personal interactions; (3) child physical abuse and caretaker arrests will be indirectly and positively associated with dating violence through school fighting and deviant subsistence strategies; (4) school fighting will be indirectly and positively associated with dating violence through deviant subsistence strategies; and (5) deviant subsistence strategies will be positively linked to dating violence. The proposed model controls for gender and age.

## **Method**

### **Sample**

Data are from the Homeless Young Adult Project, a pilot study designed to examine the effects of neglect and abuse histories on homeless young adults' mental health and high-risk behaviors. From April of 2004 through June of 2005, 199 young adults were interviewed in three Midwestern cities. Of this total, 144 were homeless and 55 were housed at the time of the interview. Participants comprising the housed sample were obtained via peer nominations from the homeless young adults. Despite being housed at the time of the interview, 28 out of the 55 housed young adults had extensive histories of being homeless and had run away from home numerous times. The final sample included 172 young adults who were homeless or had a history of running away and being homeless. The university Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this study.

### **Procedures**

Experienced interviewers who have worked on past projects dealing with at-risk young people, have served for several years in agencies and shelters that support this group, and are very familiar with local street cultures (e.g., knowledgeable about where to locate young adults and where they congregate) conducted interviews. All interviewers had completed the Collaborative IRB Training Initiative course for the protection of human subjects in research. Interviewers approached shelter residents and located eligible respondents in areas where street young adults congregate. Study eligibility required young people to be between the ages of 19 and 26 and homeless. This age range highlights the key developmental period of emerging

adulthood (Arnett, 2000), which was the broader focus of this study. Homeless was defined as those who don't have a regular place to live including residing in a shelter, on the street, or those staying with friends but not paying rent (i.e., couch-surfing) because they had run away, had been pushed out, or had drifted out of their family of origin (Ennett, Bailey, & Federman, 1999). Interviewers obtained informed consent from young adults prior to participation and told the young people about the confidentiality of the study and that their participation was voluntary. The interviews, conducted in shelter interview rooms or quiet corners of fast food restaurants or coffee shops, lasted approximately one hour and all participants received \$25 for participating. Referrals for shelter, counseling services, and food services were offered to the young adults at the time of the interview. Although field reporters did not formally tally screening rates, they reported that very few young adults (i.e., less than 5%) refused to participate.

## Measures

**Dependent variable.** *Dating violence* included eight items from the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996) that asked respondents about physically violent behavior ever directed at a partner (e.g., how many times they choked or slammed their current or previous partner against a wall). We focused on the physical aggressive items because social learning theory argues that this type of antisocial behavior is learned from parental deviance and reinforced through subsequent interpersonal relations. Due to skewness, items were first dichotomized (0 = never; 1 = at least once) and then a count was done to create an index for dating violence. Previous research has found that the internal consistency estimate for these physical assault items is .86 (Straus et al., 1996).

**Independent variables.** *Physical abuse* included 16 individual items from the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, Hamby, Finkelhor, Moore, & Runyan, 1998). Respondents were asked to reflect upon abusive experiences that occurred prior to age 18 and how frequently their caretaker, for example, shook them or kicked them hard (0 = never to 6 = more than 20 times). A mean scale was created where a higher score indicated more physical abuse ( $\alpha = .88$ ). This scale has been shown to have excellent reliability among homeless populations ( $\alpha = .88$ ; Whitbeck & Simons, 1990).

*Caretaker arrests* was measured by asking respondents if their parent/caretaker had ever been arrested (0=no; 1=yes).

*School fights* was an open-ended question that asked respondents how many times they had been in a physical fight at school. Due to skewness, this variable was collapsed into 0 = none to 5 = more than 100 times.

*Deviant subsistence strategies* included 12 items in which respondents were asked how often they had engaged in a series of delinquent behaviors such as stealing and violence (adapted from Whitbeck & Simons, 1990). Response categories ranged from 0 = never to 3 = many times (5+). A mean scale was created with a higher score indicating greater involvement in deviant subsistence strategies ( $\alpha = .89$ ). This scale has been shown to have good reliability among homeless populations ( $\alpha = .75$ ; Whitbeck & Simons, 1990).

*Demographic characteristics.* *Gender* was coded 0 = male and 1 = female. *Age* was a continuous variable that measured how old the respondents were at the time of the interview.

**Results**

**Sample Characteristics**

Forty percent of respondents were female (N = 69) and 60% were male (N = 103). Young adults ranged in age from 19 to 26 years and the majority of the sample was White (80%, N = 137) and identified as heterosexual (80%, N = 137). Ninety five percent of young adults had been physically abused at least once and 37% reported that their parent/caretaker had ever been arrested. Though 30% of respondents reported being in one to three fights at school, almost 38% said they had been in four or more fights while enrolled at school. Seventy six percent of respondents had engaged in at least one kind of deviant subsistence strategy since being on the street. Finally, 62% of young people committed one or more forms of dating violence physical assault against a current or former dating partner. Pearson correlation coefficients for all measures are presented in Table 1 along with the means, standard deviations (*SD*), and ranges.

---Table 1 about here---

Table 1  
Correlation Matrix for all Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Female	--						
2 Age	-.13	--					
3 Caretaker arrests	.00	.06	--				
4 Child physical abuse	-.06	.04	.26**	--			
5 Number school fights	-.27**	.21**	.22**	.31**	--		
6 DSS <sup>a</sup>	-.09	.21**	.07	.26**	.49**	--	
7 Dating violence	.40**	.10	.14	.05	.07	.20**	--
Mean	.40	21.45	.37	1.44	1.34	.61	1.64
SD	.49	2.12	.48	1.07	1.27	.68	1.81
Range	0-1	19-26	0-1	0-4.75	0-5	0-2.67	0-7

\*\**p* < .01, \**p* < .05.

<sup>a</sup>Note: DSS = deviant subsistence strategies.

### **Data Analysis**

A fully recursive path model was estimated (i.e., all possible paths are hypothesized with the exception of reciprocal paths) using the maximum likelihood (ML) procedure in Mplus 6.0 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2007). The statistical assumptions of ML estimation (e.g., multivariate normality of the endogenous variables) were satisfied. This model takes into account both the direct effects as well as the indirect effects through delinquent behavior.

### **Direct Effects**

Standardized coefficients for the significant findings for dating violence are shown in Figure 1. Results revealed that males ( $\beta = -.24$ ), older youth ( $\beta = .16$ ), those who reported having a caretaker who has ever been arrested ( $\beta = .15$ ), and youth who experienced more child physical abuse ( $\beta = .25$ ) engaged in a greater number of school fights. Those who partook in a greater number of school fights were more likely to have participated in more types of deviant subsistence strategies ( $\beta = .46$ ). Young adults with higher participation in deviant subsistence strategies ( $\beta = .18$ ) and females ( $\beta = .45$ ) were more likely to report greater dating violence. These variables in Figure 1 explained 25% of the variance in dating violence.

---Figure 1 about here---

**Indirect Effects**

Table 2 shows the direct, indirect, and total effects for the full model on dating violence. The effect estimate presented for direct, indirect, and total effects are all standardized coefficients and have the same interpretation as the beta coefficients in Figure 1. That is, direct effects refer to the direct relation between two variables, indirect effects refer to the effect of one variable on an outcome through another variable, and the total effect is the combination of both direct and indirect effects.

The results revealed that while two variables had a significant direct effect on dating violence (i.e., gender and deviant subsistence strategies) two variables also had significant indirect effects. That is, age and child physical abuse both had a significant indirect effect on dating violence through school fights and deviant subsistence strategies. Specifically, respondents who are older and those who report more child physical abuse engaged in a greater number of school fights, which leads to greater participation in deviant subsistence strategies and thus greater dating violence. Additionally, school fights had a significant indirect effect on dating violence through deviant subsistence strategies.

---Table 2 about here---

Table 2  
Full Model Results

Variables	Direct effect estimate	<i>SE</i>	Total indirect effect estimate	<i>SE</i>	Total effect estimate	<i>SE</i>
<b>Dating violence</b>						
Female	.452**	.064	-.022	.024	.430**	.063
Age	.104	.069	.044*	.021	.149*	.069
Caretaker arrests	.113	.070	.008	.020	.121	.070
Child physical abuse	-.024	.072	.058*	.026	.034	.071
Mediating constructs						
Number school fights	.055	.083	.085*	.038	.140	.075
DSS <sup>a</sup>	.184*	.077				

\*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

Note: Standardized coefficients shown.

<sup>a</sup>DSS = deviant subsistence strategies.

### **Discussion**

Utilizing a social learning perspective, the current study set out to examine the effect of child physical abuse and caretaker arrests on dating violence among a sample of homeless young adults. Shortcomings in the current literature include a very limited understanding of correlates of dating violence within homeless young adult populations as prior research has either been descriptive in nature or has only examined child abuse as a risk factor. Current study results show that those who experience higher rates of child physical abuse and those who report a caretaker who has ever been arrested are more likely to experience a greater number of school fights. Additionally, we find that child physical abuse is indirectly associated with dating violence through school fighting and deviant subsistence strategies. Next, findings reveal that young adults who report more school fighting engage in a greater number of deviant subsistence strategies, which is positively associated with more dating violence. Combined, these multiple factors create interlocking, transecting experiences of violence that can potentially reinforce one another in complex ways. These webs of violent behavior can serve to normalize aggression in homeless young adults' lives. For example, these different behaviors create situations in which youth are exposed to and take part in many forms of violence such as at home, at school and on the street. Moreover, engagement in deviant subsistence strategies such as stealing may be done for survival purposes when youth are homeless, but these behaviors also may lead to lower resistance to engaging in other crime such as assaulting a partner. Likewise, many of these youth may be dating other youth who have been similarly exposed to multiple forms of violence and when two such youth are in a relationship, this may increase the likelihood of dating violence. The present study highlights the extent of physical violence within the lives of homeless young adults, which is evident prior to their leaving home and while they are on the street.

Our findings also highlight unique demographic risk factors associated with perpetrating partner violence. For example, females reported higher levels of partner violence. The unstable context of homelessness could foster violent behaviors for young women as a means of survival and self-defense. Age, however, was linked to dating violence through indirect pathways with school fights and deviant subsistence strategies. Though we do not know the age at which youth were involved in these violent behaviors, it is possible that some youth had longer exposure to these experiences, and thus this conduct could become normalized in their everyday lives. Furthermore, these risk factors related to gender and age underscore the complex ways that multiple experiences of violence can shape homeless young people's lives (Taylor et al., 2008).

In response to our research question, study results show that though child physical abuse does not have a direct effect on dating violence, it does have an indirect effect through school fighting and deviant subsistence strategies. Findings also show that caretaker arrest is not associated with dating violence, either directly or indirectly, but it is positively associated with school fights. Our findings suggest that children exposed to violence in their family are more likely to engage in various forms of antisocial behaviors including school fighting, deviant subsistence strategies, and dating violence. Because past research has found that deviant acts tend to be correlated (Jessor & Jessor, 1977; Patterson, Dishion, & Yoerger, 2000) and antisocial behavior remains stable across one's lifespan (Caspi & Moffitt, 1995; Sampson & Laub, 1993), it follows that those involved in a physically aggressive relationship will have a history of patterned involvement in other forms of antisocial behavior as well (Simons, Lin, & Gordon, 1998), which is consistent with current study results. That is, youth exposed to poor parenting (i.e., physical aggression) are more likely to be aggressive in general as antisocial inclinations are often learned in the formative years of childhood (Bandura, 1978). Thus, poor parenting

leads to externalizing behaviors (e.g., school fighting, deviant behavior) among youth including aggression toward one's dating partner.

Specifically, it appears that school is where some abused youth cultivate a confrontational and oppositional style, which may be in response to negative interactions with teachers and peers, as well as being labeled as deviant. It is possible that many abused youth are willing to use violence to solve problems in all interpersonal relationships, which follows with a social learning framework (Bandura, 1978). Confrontational and oppositional reactions may be a normalized response to manage conflict or achieve goals based on these young people's exposure to household violence (Anooshian, 2005). According to Patterson and colleagues (1984), this type of interaction style is likely to be used in peer interactions and homeless youth may actively seek out situations or relationships in which others are confrontational and/or antisocial because these are the types of interaction styles to which these youth have become accustomed (Caspi et al., 1987; Patterson, Dishion, & Bank, 1984) through antisocial interactions with parents. Therefore, youth's exposure to deviant values and antisocial behavior at home is then cultivated within the school environment and extended to other circumstances including deviant subsistence strategies on the street as well as dating violence.

Overall, our results are generally consistent with a social learning approach (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1978) whereby children who are exposed to poor parenting (i.e., child physical abuse and caretaker arrests) are at increased risk for engaging in antisocial behaviors such as school fighting and/or deviant subsistence strategies. Our findings emphasize the impact of exposure to early family violence and discord on homeless young people's development of problematic behaviors, such as engaging in deviant subsistent strategies and school fighting. Furthermore, the fact that childhood physical abuse operated through the mechanism of

antisocial behaviors in its relationship to dating violence emphasizes the complexity of social learning processes (Bandura, 1978) as well as the multiple experiences of violent conflict in the lives of homeless young people and their connection to later behavioral issues (Anooshian, 2005). Growing up in a violent home leads some youth to adopt more aggressive behaviors (Simons et al., 1998) and this pattern is generalized to other social contexts including dating and interpersonal relationships.

Some limitations should be kept in mind while interpreting these results. This is a sample collected in the Midwest so as one might expect, the majority were White, which is reflective of the overall population in this region. Additionally, given the difficulties of recruiting hard-to-reach populations, a convenience sample of homeless young people was used. Also, the data are self-reported, so we are unable to confirm actual incidents of abuse and dating violence. Previous research, however, has demonstrated that homeless youth do not appear to over report child abuse compared to parental reports (Whitbeck, Hoyt, & Ackley, 1997). If anything, homeless youth/young adults are likely to under report abuse because they do not always recognize or consider certain acts to be abusive (see Tyler & Melander, 2009). Additionally, because the data are cross-sectional, inferences about causality cannot be made; however, young adults were asked to reflect on experiences that occurred during specific time periods (e.g., before leaving home for child abuse and since leaving home for deviant subsistence strategies) that assist with temporal ordering of variables. However, it is possible that there is an alternative causal order. For example, physical abuse and school fighting could have occurred simultaneously, thereby reinforcing one another. Similarly, it is possible that dating violence occurred prior to involvement in deviant subsistence strategies or school fighting. However, because we are unable to tease out causality with these data, this limitation should be kept in mind when

interpreting these findings. Finally, school fighting is a general recollection of the number of fights youth have had and it is possible some youth could not recall exact incidences or may have misremembered certain events. Additionally, it should be kept in mind that the definition of what constitutes a fight may have been interpreted differently by participants. While it is beyond the scope of this study, future research could fruitfully explore these alternative causal explanations.

### **Conclusion**

Despite its limitations, the current study also has unique strengths including investigating various forms of direct physical violence including child physical abuse, school fighting, violent crime within deviant subsistence strategies, and dating violence as well as indirect exposure to violence including caretaker arrests. In addition, we tested for indirect effects via school fighting and deviant subsistence strategies. Further, there is a paucity of research that has examined dating violence among homeless young adults despite their high rates of child abuse, which has been found to be an important precursor of partner violence among general population studies (Foshee et al., 2004; Gelles, 1997; Herrenkohl et al., 2004; Rich et al., 2005). Future research is needed to more fully explore these important linkages between family background variables, street risk exposure, and dating relationships. Furthermore, subsequent studies would also benefit from exploring multiple types of dating violence beyond physical, including both sexual and emotional violence, to potentially determine differential pathways to deviance. Finally, this study investigated caretaker arrests, which was a significant correlate of school fighting, suggesting that not only experiencing child physical abuse impacts homeless young adults, but indirect exposure to delinquent behavior through caretaker conduct also influences these young people.

Current study results reveal some important correlates of homeless young adults' dating violence experiences as well as potential pathways to abusive relationships through a social learning framework, which may have implications for prevention and intervention. Because many of these young people were raised in a violent home with antisocial parents, they may be more aggressive in general as children tend to learn antisocial tendencies from caregivers early on in life and emulate this behavior in subsequent interpersonal encounters (Bandura, 1977). Therefore, they likely use maladaptive coping styles of dealing with conflict (e.g., aggression), and specific programs that target physically abused young adults are needed to assist them with developing pro-social coping strategies. Intervention programs that teach these individuals alternative coping strategies and that help them develop problem-solving skills may lower their chances of engaging in antisocial behaviors across the life course, including violence in interpersonal relationships. Additional services such as life skills training, educational training, and job training are also needed so that young adults have viable alternatives to engaging in deviant behavior and such skills will ideally be effective in helping young people transition out of street life.

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