

# Risk and Protective Factors Research Priorities

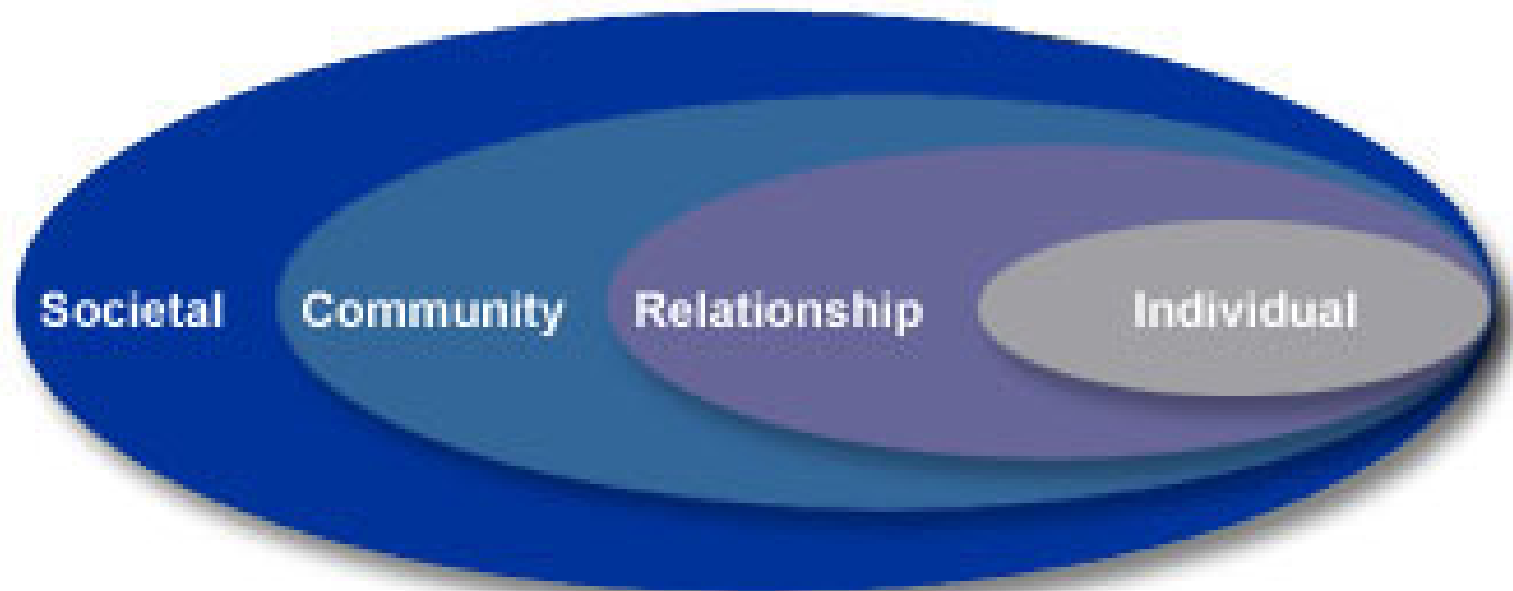
Workshop on Priorities for a Public Health Research Agenda to  
Reduce the Threat of Firearm-related Violence

April 23, 2013

Sharon Lambert  
Department of Psychology  
The George Washington University

# Ecology of Youth Violence

Social-Ecological Model of Risk and Protection for Youth Violence (CDC)



Adapted from: Dahlberg LL, Krug EG. Violence-a global public health problem. In: Krug E, Dahlberg LL, Mercy JA, Zwi AB, Lozano R, eds. World Report on Violence and Health. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization; 2002:1-56

Retrieved from: [http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/Social-Ecological-Model\\_DVP.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/Social-Ecological-Model_DVP.htm)

# Risk Factors for Youth Violence Involvement

## Individual

- Victimization
- Early aggression
- Low control
- Attention problems
- Hyperactivity
- Learning problems
- Antisocial beliefs
- Emotional distress
- Substance use

## Family

- Authoritarian
- Low involvement
- Low attachment
- Low monitoring
- Poor supervision
- Harsh/lax parenting
- Inconsistent
- Substance use
- Criminality
- Conflict/violence

## Peer/Social

- Delinquent peers
- Gang involvement
- Social rejection

## Neighborhood & Community

- Crime
- Few economic opportunities
- Social disorganization
- High transiency
- Low participation
- Availability of drugs, alcohol
- Availability of firearms
- Norms condoning violence

# Protective Factors for Youth Violence Involvement

## Individual

- Problem solving
- Coping strategies
- Self esteem
- Violence avoidance self-efficacy
- Religiosity
- Intellectual abilities
- High GPA
- School engagement

## Family

- Cohesion
- Authoritative
- Supportive
- Monitoring
- Family support
- Shared activities
- High expectations for school performance

## Peer/Social

- Prosocial peers
- Peer support
- Social activities

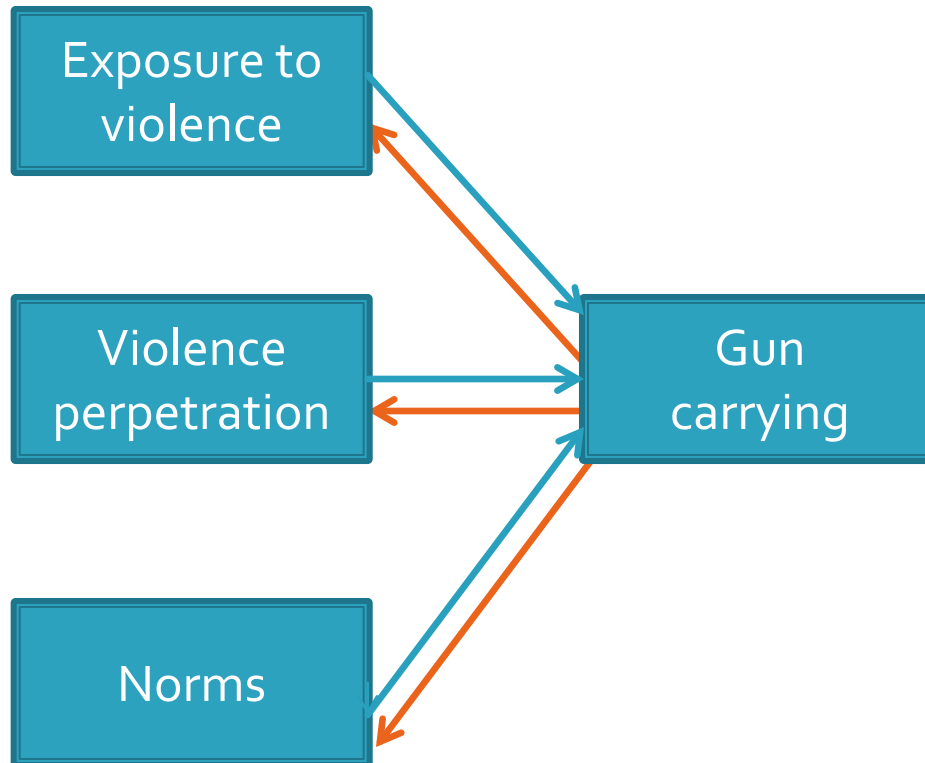
## Neighborhood & Community

- Youth serving community organizations
- Cohesion
- Social support
- Collective efficacy
- Economic opportunities

# Etiology of Gun Carrying

Reason	Motivation	Explanation
<b>Exposure to Violence</b> -direct victimization -witnessing violence	Defense	Self protection Fear of victimization
<b>Violence Perpetration</b> -coercion -harm	Aggression Deter future violence	Progression of antisocial behavior
<b>Social/Community Norms</b> -violence -masculinity -retaliation -problem solving/conflict	Defense Offense Deterrence Appearance	Social learning Contagion, epidemic

# Etiology of Gun Carrying



# Foci for Future Research

Etiologic factor in gun carrying	Areas for future research
Violence Perpetration	Developmental differences in predictors of violence perpetration
Exposure to Violence	Protective factors for youth exposed to violence
Norms about gun violence	Norms associated with injurious and lethal outcomes, and alternative norms.

# Issue 1: Developmental differences in predictors of gun carrying

## ➤ Evidence

- Types of victimization experienced vary for children and adolescents (e.g., Finkelhor et al., 2009).
- Salience of risk and protective factors for violence involvement (e.g., peer and family relationships) change with age (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986).
- Ecological factors that distinguish violence involved youth vary within adolescence (e.g., Matjasko et al., 2010; Steinberg & Monahan, 2007), and for children versus adolescents.



# Issue 1: Developmental differences in predictors of gun carrying

- Questions raised:
  - What childhood characteristics and circumstances best predict adolescent gun carrying, beyond carrying motivated by aggression?
  - Are various patterns of victimization in childhood differentially associated with gun carrying?
  - How is early adversity, including experiences that co-vary with violence exposure and victimization, associated with later gun carrying?

# Issue 1: Developmental differences in predictors of gun carrying

**Priority: Identify patterns of early adversity in childhood and mechanisms linking patterns of adversity with gun carrying.**

➤ Issues to consider

- Measurement:
  - Assess multiple modes of violence exposure and victimization, as well as adversities that co-vary.
  - Weapon carrying and gun carrying are not necessarily the same.
- Study timing and duration: Adversities may be present only in childhood for some; for others, adversities may continue in adolescence.
- Study design: Weight the merits of prospective versus retrospective data.
- Specificity: Are mechanisms linking specific types of victimization with antisocial outcomes similar?

# Issue 1: Developmental differences in predictors of gun carrying

**Priority: Identify patterns of early adversity in childhood and mechanisms linking patterns of adversity with gun carrying.**

➤ Translation

- Identification of mechanisms yields specific targets for interventions for youth with adverse childhood experiences. Even if mechanisms are similar (e.g., skill deficits → skills training), interventions should be tailored to be sensitive to the developmental implications of early trauma or other adversity.

# Issue 2: Protective factors for youth exposed to violence

## ➤ Empirical Evidence

- Large numbers of youth are exposed to violence, including direct victimization, witnessing, and other vicarious exposures. (e.g., CDC, 2011). Among youth directly victimized, polyvictimization is common (Finkelhor et al., 2011).
- Exposure to violence is particularly high in community settings characterized by high crime and violence, poverty, and social processes that may facilitate or help maintain violence (e.g., Stein et al., 2003).
- Understanding of resilience among youth exposed or at risk of exposure, and protective factors is limited and generally focused at the individual and family level (Gardner & Brooks-Gunn, 2009).

# Issue 2: Protective factors for youth exposed to violence

## ➤ Questions Raised

- Among youth exposed or are at high risk of exposure, what differentiates youth who do not carry guns from those who do?
- What community and resources support well-functioning youth and promote individual and family protective factors?
- How does the utility of protective factors vary according to the amount, type, and/or context of violence experienced?
- <sup>4</sup> Are protective factors similar in different sociocultural groups and do protective mechanisms operate the same way in different cultural groups?
- Are protective factors for adolescent risk behavior and aggression applicable to the specific case of gun violence?

# Issue 2: Protective factors for youth exposed to violence

**Priority: Identify community characteristics that promote positive adaptation among youth who have experienced violence.**

➤ Issues to consider

- Sampling: Protective factors may differ for normative versus indicated samples.
- Type of violence: Protective factors vary according to type (s) of victimization or whether victim versus perpetrator.
- Geography: The types and utility of protective factors vary for urban, rural, or suburban settings.
- Specificity: Are protective factors for adolescent risk behavior and aggression applicable to the specific case of gun violence?

# Issue 2: Protective factors for youth exposed to violence

**Priority: Identify community characteristics that promote positive adaptation among youth who have experienced violence.**

➤ Translation

- Knowledge of protective factors can be integrated into community-based prevention programming focused on reducing youth problem behavior to refine these interventions to target gun violence.
- Results and interventions can be presented to community coalitions and organizations mobilized to promote healthy outcomes and reduce risk behaviors in youth, and thereby can empower communities to create changes in gun violence.

# Issue 3: Norms about guns

## ➤ Empirical Evidence

- Social norms are linked with several health risk behaviors, including violence (e.g., Stewart & Simons, 2010) and problem behaviors associated with violence (Song et al., 2012).
- Interventions focused on changing norms about high risk behaviors and altering perceptions about expectations for participation in high risk behaviors can result in reductions in problem behaviors and the associated outcomes (e.g., Knox et al., 2003; Webster et al., 2012).



# Issue 3: Norms about guns

## ➤ Questions Raised

- What are sociocultural differences in norms about gun violence generally, and specific types of violence such as suicide?
  - E.g., Air Force versus Army
- What are sources and reinforcers of norms about gun violence, and specific adverse outcomes (e.g., injury, homicide, suicide)?
- What are the mechanisms through which norms change?

# Issue 3: Norms about guns

**Priority: Identify norms related to gun ownership, carrying, and use that are associated with injury and lethality, and alternative social norms and behaviors.**

➤ Issues to consider

- Variation across contexts: The value and meaning of gun possession may be different in different contexts.
- Sustainability: Norms are linked to structural characteristics and constraints of settings. Assess broader change that may need to occur in parallel to norm change.
- Change in norms: Norms and perceptions change with age, experience, and/or across situations.

# Issue 3: Norms about guns

**Priority: Identify norms related to gun ownership, carrying, and use that are associated with injury and lethality, and alternative social norms and behaviors.**

➤ Translation

- Knowledge about norms can be embedded into prevention programs targeting violence involvement and may provide information about inconsistent results for existing interventions.
- Collaboration with communities to empower residents in identifying and changing social norms around violence will facilitate sustainability.

# Priority Research Topics

- 1. Identify patterns of early adversity in childhood and mechanisms linking patterns of adversity with gun carrying.**
- 2. Identify community characteristics that promote positive adaptation among youth who have experienced violence.**
- 3. Identify norms related to gun ownership, carrying, and use that are associated with injury and lethality, and alternative social norms and behaviors.**

# References

- Centers for Disease Control (2011). Youth violence risk and protective factors. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/riskprotectivefactors.html>
- Finkelhor, D., Ormrod, R. K., & Turner, H. A. (2009). The developmental epidemiology of childhood victimization. *Journal of interpersonal violence, 24*(5), 711-731.
- Knox, K. L., Litts, D. A., Talcott, G. W., Feig, J. C., & Caine, E. D. (2003). Risk of suicide and related adverse outcomes after exposure to a suicide prevention programme in the US Air Force: cohort study. *Bmj, 327*(7428), 1376.
- Matjasko, J. L., Needham, B. L., Grunden, L. N., & Farb, A. F. (2010). Violent victimization and perpetration during adolescence: Developmental stage dependent ecological models. *Journal of youth and adolescence, 39*(9), 1053-1066.
- Reid, A. E., Cialdini, R. B., & Aiken, L. S. (2010). Social norms and health behavior. In *Handbook of Behavioral Medicine* (pp. 263-274). Springer New York.
- Resnick, M. D., Ireland, M., & Borowsky, I. (2004). Youth violence perpetration: what protects? What predicts? Findings from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 35*(5), 424-e1.
- Song, E. Y., Smiler, A. P., Wagoner, K. G., & Wolfson, M. (2012). Everyone says it's OK: Adolescents' perceptions of peer, parent, and community alcohol norms, alcohol consumption, and alcohol-related consequences. *Substance Use & Misuse, 47*(1), 86-98.
- Steinberg, L., & Monahan, K. C. (2007). Age differences in resistance to peer influence. *Developmental psychology, 43*(6), 1531-1543.
- Steinberg, L., & Silverberg, S. B. (1986). The vicissitudes of autonomy in early adolescence. *Child development, 57*, 841-851.
- Stewart, E. A., & Simons, R. L. (2010). Race, code of the street, and violent delinquency: A multilevel investigation of neighborhood street culture and individual norms of violence. *Criminology; an interdisciplinary journal, 48*(2), 569-605.