
Paper Session WP-1
Wednesday, July 26, 2006

Children's risk and recovery following exposure to domestic violence

***Abigail Gewirtz, & Amanuel Medhanie,
Institute of Child Development, University of Minnesota***



There is a dearth of research literature charting children's recovery in the close aftermath of exposure to violent trauma. This paper reports results from a pilot short-term longitudinal study investigating children's adjustment in the weeks and months following exposure to an incident of interparental violence. Data on child functioning, risk, and exposure to violence were gathered from parent and self report measures for 35 mothers and their 6-12 year old child. Children and their mothers were separately asked about children's lifetime exposure to violent events, and distress symptoms. Both chronic, or cumulative risk, and degree of recent violence exposure were significantly associated with children's distress symptoms. Of particular interest was the relationship between parent and child reports of children's distress: while parent-child agreement on individual items was low, longitudinal analyses of mean change over time in parent and child perceptions of distress were significantly related. That is, both mother and child showed similar patterns of responding over the three months following the violent incident.

Results are discussed in terms of their implications for further understanding the context of violent trauma exposure in children, and the need to gather multi-informant data regarding both violence exposure and traumatic stress symptoms in children.

Communicating author:
Abigail Gewirtz, 612-624-1475
agewirtz@umn.edu