

Children's Exposure to Violence: *Keeping Children Safe*

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*Children report witnessing violence or
being victimized in large numbers*

Osofsky et al. (1993)

- **91 % of the children (5th graders) witnessed violence and over half had been victimized**
- **Children reported witnessing shootings (26%), seeing dead bodies (19%) and seeing weapons being used (72%)**

Children witnessing violence or being victimized

Richters & Martinez (1993)

- **5th/6th graders**
 - **72% witnessed violence**
 - **32% were victimized**
- **1st/2nd graders**
 - **61% witnessed violence**
 - **19% were victimized**

Outcomes Associated with ECV in Prior Research



- **Internalizing**
 - PTSD
 - Other Anxieties
 - Somatic Complaints
 - Depression
- **Externalizing**
 - Delinquency
 - Aggression
 - Substance Abuse
 - Weapon carrying

PROJECT GOALS: Study I

- 1. Identify the effects of community violence on children**
- 2. Identify risk and protective factors that predict children's stress symptoms and academic problems**
- 3. Develop a program for *Keeping Children Safe* (similar to *La Greca, Vernberg, Silverman, Prinstein & Vogel, 1994*).**

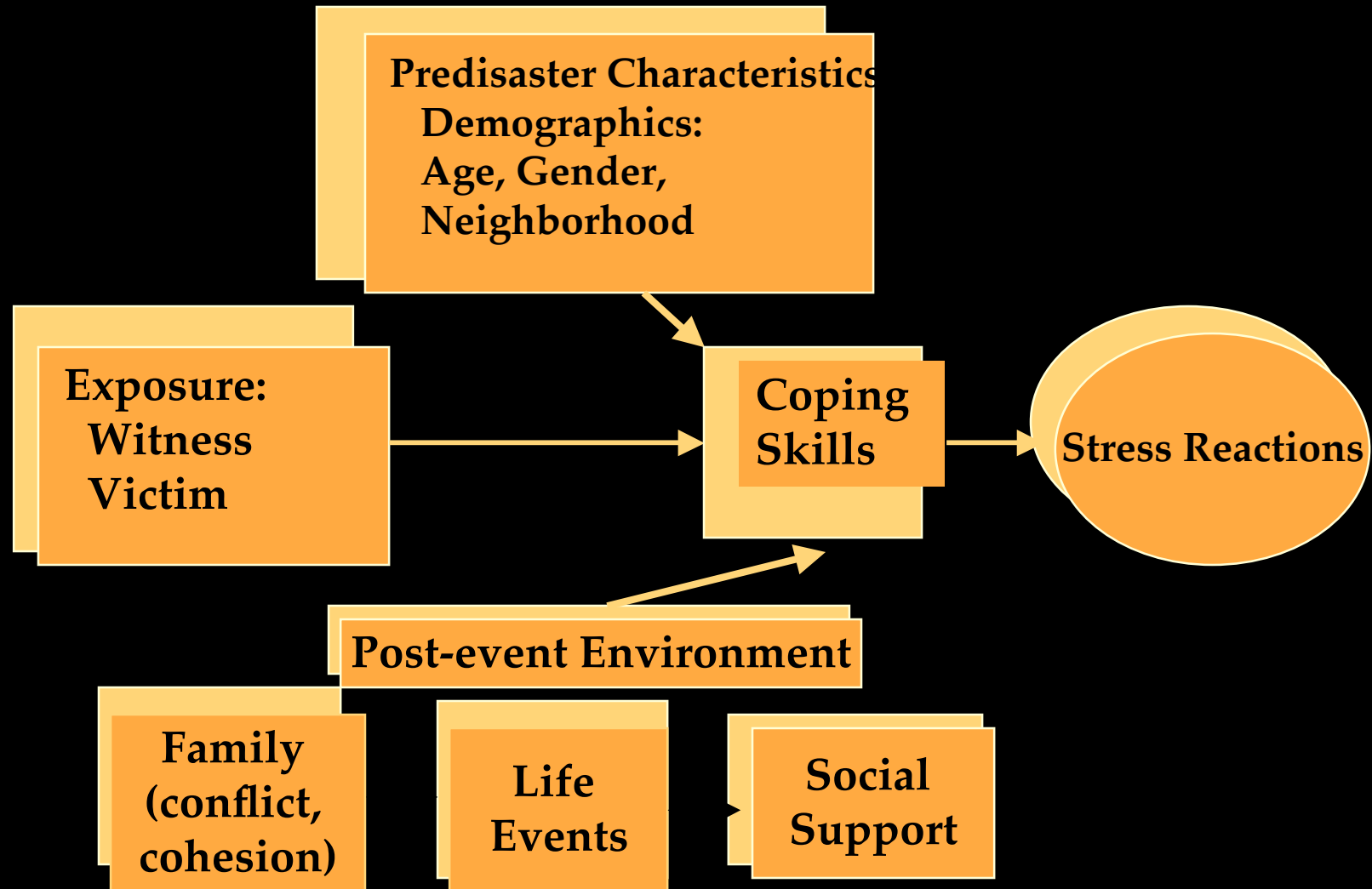
PROJECT GOALS: Study II

- 1. Evaluate the effectiveness of the *Keeping Children Safe* program**

Expect that the program will lead to

- Fewer PTS symptoms**
- Better Coping Skills**
- More Social Support**

Conceptual Model Revised



Study I: Participants

- **260 Students in Grades 3, 4, 5**
- **48% boys, 52% girls**
- **3 Schools selected based on moderate to high crime ratings for the neighborhood**
- **Primarily Hispanic and Black**
 - **69.3% Hispanic; 21.1% Black; 5.4% Non-Hispanic White**

Children's Report of Neighborhood Dislikes:



- “Kids fight a lot”
- “They sell drugs”
- “Too much garbage”
- “The loud noise”
- “Gang members live close to us”
- “Cars go too fast”
- “Shooting at others”

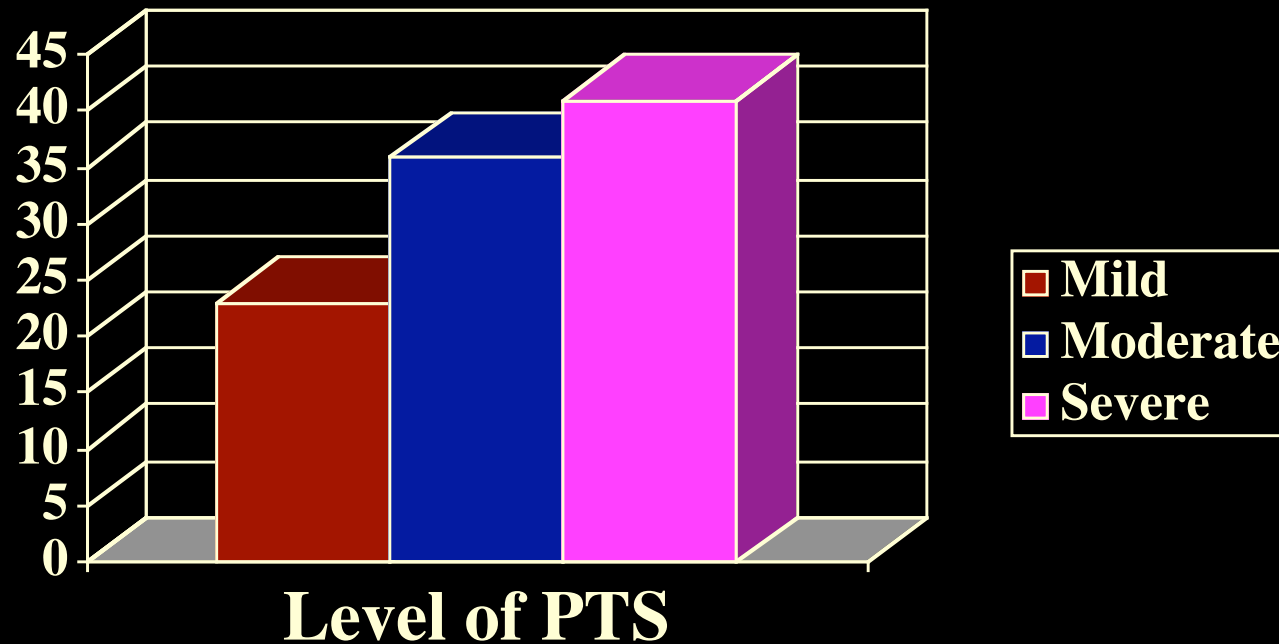
What Types Of Violent Events Do Children Report?

- 19% report **being** chased
- 40% report seeing someone get chased
- 2% report **being** arrested
- 57% report seeing someone get arrested
- 43% report **being** slapped, punched or hit
- 57% report seeing someone get slapped, punched, hit
- 14% report **being** beaten up or mugged
- 41% report seeing someone beaten up

How Do Children React?

PTS Symptoms

% with PTS symptoms



Does Exposure to Community Violence Relate to PTS Symptoms?

	PTS symptoms	Interference
Witness CV	.37***	.20***
Victim of CV	.39***	.14 *
Total ECV	.45***	.24***

*p < .05, ***p < .001

Risk and Protective Factors₁

Life Events:

	PTS Symptoms	Interference
Life Events in the past 6 Months	.22***	.19**

****p<.01, ***p < .001**

Risk and Protective Factors₂

Social Support:

	PTS Symptoms	Interference
From Parents	-.14*	-.12 ns
From Classmates	-.24***	-.15*
From Friends	-.05 ns	-.08 ns
From Teachers	-.09 ns	.01 ns

***p < .05, ***p < .001**

Risk and Protective Factors₃

Family Functioning:

	PTS Symptoms	Interference
Family Conflict	.19***	.05 ns
Family Cohesion	-.32***	-.18**
Parental Monitoring	-.03 ns	.02 ns
Communication	-.04 ns	.06 ns
Knowledge	.05 ns	.00 ns

****p<.01, ***p < .001**

Risk and Protective Factors₄

Coping Skills:

	PTS Symptoms	Interference
Positive Coping Skills	.22***	.14*
Negative Coping Skills	.47***	.32***

***p<.05, ***p < .001**

Summary: Factors that Protect Children Against Distress

- **Less exposure to crime (witness, victim)**
- **More support from family and classmates**
- **Less life stress**
- **Fewer negative coping strategies**

Keeping Children Safe:

Study II

Keeping Children Safe -- designed to:

- Teach strategies for keeping safe
- Building social support
- Teach children to avoid negative coping and use positive coping skills
- Provide parents with information on how to monitor and support their children

Adapted from *Helping Children Cope with Natural Disasters* (La Greca, Vernberg, et al., 1994)

Keeping Children Safe Program:



- Talking about feelings
- Working with others
- Safety Skills
- Coping Skills
- Relaxation
- Conflict Reduction
- Teasing & Bullying
- Reducing Exposure
- Parental Monitoring

www.keepingchildrensafe.com

Study II: Participants

- **3 schools (moderate/high crime)**
- **119 children; 3rd - 5th graders (9 - 12 yrs)**
- **45% girls; 55% boys**
- **71% Hispanic; 19% Black; 10% Other**
- **Classrooms assigned to Inter. or usual activities**
- **Universal intervention; did not target specific youth**
- **Implemented by teachers, counselors or project staff**

Intervention Constraints

Preliminary Test of the Intervention

- Time Constraints (due to FCATs):
 - Condensed program: Core activities plus extras
 - No opportunity for follow-up assessment
 - Sessions were condensed in some classrooms
 - Post-intervention assessment occurred almost immediately after the program ended

Measures Administered: Pre and Post

- Exposure to Community Violence (ECV)
- PTSD Reaction Index
- Kidcope (positive and negative coping)
- Social Support Scale for Children (support from parents and classmates)
- Parental Monitoring

Time 1 Descriptive Data: Children Reports

Moderate exposure to violence = 8.4 events

Witness = 5.92 events

Victim = 1.97 events

Moderate levels of PTS S_x = 32.5 (12.6)

Coping: Positive = 5.80; Negative = 1.40

Support: Parents = 3.60, Classmates = 3.08

Parental Monitoring = 5.25

No Significant Differences Between Int and Controls

MANOVA: Significant Changes over Time

Exposure to Violence declined

T1 = 8.4 versus T2 = 7.7 events ($p < .05$)

PTS Symptoms declined

T1 = 32.5 versus T2 = 28.1 ($p < .001$)

Parental Monitoring declined

T1 = 5.25 versus T2 = 4.97 ($p < .018$)

Parental Support tended to increase

T1 = 3.60 versus T2 = 3.69 ($p < .08$)

MANOVA: Intervention Effects

- Only Intervention children declined in negative coping skills ($p < .05$)
- Only Intervention children increased in social support ($p < .07$)

Conclusions



- *Modest* intervention effects; evident for reducing negative coping strategies and increasing social support
- Large # of “time effects” suggest that assessments may have been too close together

Next Steps



- Results bear further study and replication
- Re-examine program with a larger sample and with greater opportunity for follow-up (prevention)
- Include conflict resolution and teasing (i.e., full program)
- Disseminate program; solicit feedback

Keeping Children Safe Program: Dissemination



- Already distributed over 4,000 copies across the US and abroad
- Encourage schools to try out the activities; be flexible in adapting them
- Welcome and encourage feedback on the program

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Keeping Children Safe Program:



Pages 1 - 11 and 58-60:
Information for counselors
and teachers (stress reactions,
resources, etc.)

Pages 13 - 16:
Introduction to the activities
and “how to use” the manual
Group rules
Behavioral Incentives
Group Discussions
Individualize for your use

Program: Focus on Coping Skills



- Talking about feelings
- Working with others
- Safety Skills I and II
- Coping Skills
- Relaxation
- Conflict Reduction I and II
- Teasing & Bullying
- Reducing Exposure
- Parental Monitoring

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Keeping Children Safe: Introduction

Pages 1 - 11 : Overview of the Program

Project Goals

How to Use the Manual

Children's Reactions to Community Violence

Assessment of Children's Stress Symptoms

How to Identify Children at Risk

Keeping Children Safe: Introduction



**Pages 13 - 16: Introduction to the activities
and “how to use” the manual**

Group rules

Behavioral Incentives

Group Discussions

Individualize for your use

Pages 58 - 60: When to Refer; Resources

Keeping Children Safe: Specific Activities

- Children's Feelings (17 - 20)
- Working with Others (21-22)
- Safety Skills - Part I (23-28), Part II (29-30)
- Coping Skills (31 - 34)
- Relaxation (35-38)

Keeping Children Safe: Activities

- Conflict Reduction - Part I (39-42)
- Conflict Reduction - Part II (43-46)
- Teasing and Bullying (49-51)
- Reducing Violence Exposure (53-54)
- Parental Monitoring (55-57)