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Gaylene Armstrong

University of Nebraska at Omaha, garmstrong@unomaha.edu

Calli Cain

University of Nebraska at Omaha, cmcain@unomaha.edu

Lindsey Wylie

University of Nebraska at Omaha, slwylie@unomaha.edu

Lisa Muftic

Western New England University

Leana A. Bouffard

Iowa State University

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Risk factor profile of youth incarcerated for child to parent violence: A nationally representative sample

Gaylene S. Armstrong^{a,*}, Calli M. Cain^a, Lindsey E. Wylie^a, Lisa R. Muftić^b,
Leana A. Bouffard^c

^a *School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of Nebraska Omaha, 6001 Dodge Street, Omaha, NE 68182, United States*

^b *Western New England University, Department of Criminal Justice, Springfield, MA 01119, United States*

^c *Iowa State University, Department of Sociology, Ames, IA 50010, United States*

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Child to parent violence, Incarcerated youth, Child aggression, Family violence

A B S T R A C T

Purpose: Intra-familial violence occurs in many forms yet few researchers examine child to parent violence (CPV), which occurs in almost 20% of single parent homes. Studies have neither developed a risk factor profile for youth involved in the most severe cases of CPV resulting in incarceration, nor included a comparison of gender-specific correlates.

Methods: Data from the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement (SYRP) 2003, a large-scale, nationally representative sample of justice-involved youth between the ages of 10 and 20 who were surveyed using a multi-stage cluster sampling procedure is utilized.

Results: Youth incarcerated for CPV are typically white and male. Youth, particularly female aggressors, tend to have substantial histories of substance use and/or victimization. Issues of mental health, poor school performance, and other maladaptive behaviors are also common.

Conclusions: Relative concordance between CPV arrest and CPV incarceration risk profiles demonstrates youth who initially come into contact with law enforcement due to a report of CPV will continue and/or escalate the behaviors in a manner that will eventually result in arrest and out of home placement decisions. Interventions that focus on breaking the cycle of interfamilial violence through using collaborative, coordinated law enforcement and social services approaches are needed.

Introduction

Although intra-familial violence occurs in many forms, researchers tend to focus on child abuse and intimate partner violence, with few published studies that examine child to parent violence (CPV). Yet, physical violence perpetrated against a parent occurs in an estimated 7–18% of two-parent homes, and 18–29% of single parent homes within the United States (see Kennair & Mellor, 2007). Existing knowledge on individual and situational dynamics underlying CPV has developed with a reliance on data that is culled from the “front end” of the system, whether that be survey data from affected families (Agnew & Huguley, 1989), interviews with parent victims (Calvete, Orue, Gamez-Guadix, Hoyo-Bilbao, & de Arroyabe, 2015), or official criminal justice system data including CPV incidents documented by law enforcement (Armstrong, Muftić, & Bouffard, forthcoming; Miles & Condry, 2016; Strom, Warner, Tichavsky, & Zahn, 2014; Walsh & Krienert, 2009), court records that include parent narratives (Edenborough, Jackson, Mannix, & Wilkes, 2008), records of judicial proceedings (Ibabe & Jaureguizar, 2010), and probation or diversion records (Kethineni, 2004). Missing are studies that pull data from the “back end” of the system; those CPV incidents for which youth have been incarcerated.

This oversight is unfortunate as CPV incidents present issues distinct from other forms of intra-familial violence that may affect decision-making at various stages of case processing. For instance, since the parent victim usually has legal responsibility for the aggressor, the victim may be reluctant to pursue or participate in formal actions affecting the child, particularly during latter stages of case processing. As such, we anticipate that the risk profile of youth who have entered farther into the system (i.e., youth incarcerated for CPV) may be unique from the risk profile of youth commonly identified by “front end” data including non-system involved youth. This study provides what is believed to be one of the first attempts to create a risk profile of youth incarcerated for CPV utilizing a nationally representative sample.

Risk factors associated with child to parent violence

Researchers have sought to identify demographic characteristics of both youth and parent(s) involved in CPV incidents (Agnew & Huguley, 1989; Calvete et al., 2015;

Calvete, Orue, & Gamez-Guadix, 2013; Condry & Miles, 2014; Contreras & Cano, 2014; Ibabe, Jaureguizar, & Bentler, 2013; Lyons, Bell, Frechette, & Romano, 2015; Routt & Anderson, 2011; Walsh & Krienert, 2009). Studies have demonstrated that, in part, the resulting demographic risk profile of CPV offenders and their parent victims depends upon the sample utilized, as well as the stage in case processing (e.g., initial reporting versus placement decision) at which the incidents were drawn. By and large, the risk profiles generated have come from CPV offender samples that were either non-system involved (e.g., community samples) or, if system involved, from earlier points in criminal justice system processing (e.g., arrest records).

A growing body of research on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) has underscored the damaging effects of childhood abuse, neglect and household dysfunction on youth's subsequent antisocial behavior (Felitti et al., 1998). The ACE framework may be particularly informative regarding CPV as it suggests that the number, severity, and variety of adverse events that children are exposed to affects their later maladaptive behavior (Baglivio, Wolff, Piquero, & Epps, 2015; Dong et al., 2004; Felitti et al., 1998). Indeed several scholars find that exposure to various forms of family violence (e.g., witnessing domestic violence or being the abused/neglected by a parent) is related to adolescent violence toward a parent (Beckmann, Bergmann, Fischer, & Mößle, 2017; Contreras & Cano, 2016; Cornell & Gelles, 1982; Gámez-Guadix & Calvete, 2012; Ibabe et al., 2013; Kennedy, Edmonds, Dann, & Burnett, 2010; Lyons et al., 2015). The ACE framework has gained popularity among criminologists in recent years as a means to explain the link between negative life experiences in childhood and offending patterns in adolescence and adulthood (e.g., Baglivio & Epps, 2015; Levenson & Socia, 2016; Wolff, Baglivio, & Piquero, 2016).

Gender and race

Gender is one of the most frequently studied correlates of CPV with findings indicating that CPV is most commonly perpetrated by sons toward their mothers (Agnew & Huguley, 1989; Armstrong et al., forthcoming; Cornell & Gelles, 1982; Cottrell & Monk, 2004; Evans & Warren-Sohlberg, 1988; Ibabe & Jaureguizar, 2010; Walsh & Krienert, 2007). As a result, CPV is often labeled a “gendered” crime;

however, the existence of this gender dyad differs by at the point in the system from which the sample was drawn. Research that has examined the prevalence of CPV among families not involved in the criminal justice system finds males and females were equally as likely to engage in violence toward their parents (Agnew & Huguley, 1989; Beckmann et al., 2017; Cornell & Gelles, 1982; Pagani et al., 2004, 2009; Ulman & Straus, 2003).

Research that includes CPV incidents reported to law enforcement produces a different offender risk profile. These studies find that males are more often CPV aggressors as opposed to females, particularly physical aggressors (Armstrong et al., forthcoming; Walsh & Krienert, 2007, 2009). Furthermore, males who commit CPV are more likely to be older than females who commit CPV (Kethineni, 2004; Walsh & Krienert, 2007). Age is an important consideration because studies find as male aggressors age, the assault becomes more severe (Walsh & Krienert, 2007).

One explanation for the differences in findings for the youth-parent gender dyads may result from the victim's reluctance to report this type of familial violence to law enforcement (Charles, 1986; Kethineni, 2004; Pelletier & Coutu, 1992). Reporting behavior may be influenced by parental concern about how the incident will reflect on their parenting capabilities (Bobic, 2004) and by the aggressor characteristics that produce a real, or perceived, threat to the parent (Brezina, 1999; Evans & Warren-Sohlberg, 1988). For instance, a parent may perceive an older male youth as more threatening or to hold the capability to produce greater injury to the parent than a younger female youth. As a result, a parent or parents may be more likely to report older male youth to law enforcement. The gender of the victim may also influence parental reporting because mothers may feel less embarrassed about the incident than fathers, especially when sons commit the violence. Walsh and Krienert (2007) note fathers may feel societal pressures to not only maintain an image of strength, but that they are "in control" of family matters.

In terms of race, there appears to be greater CPV prevalence in white families overall than families of other races or ethnicities. This finding is consistent across non-system and system involved samples (Agnew & Huguley, 1989; Armstrong et al., forthcoming; Charles, 1986; Evans & Warren-Sohlberg, 1988; Walsh & Krienert, 2007)

including one study that examined a small sample of incarcerated youth (Kethineni, 2004); however, gender may moderate these findings. Agnew and Huguley (1989) discovered that while white females had significantly higher rates of CPV perpetration than black females, CPV perpetration rates for white males was not significantly higher than black males. Although race is a consistent correlate of CPV in the literature, limitations in the research warrant caution for robust confidence in these findings. Few studies have included a representative sample of the racial and ethnic groups from which they are drawn (Kennedy et al., 2010).

Studies failing to find demographic differences in CPV aggressors have used national random samples that rely on data that have not necessarily been reported (or gone unreported) to law enforcement, whereas studies finding gender and race differences utilized officially reported incidents although these latter studies did not utilize national random samples. Perhaps parents, especially white mothers, are more likely to report incidents of CPV when the violence is committed by their sons because incidents involving female aggressors are either not as serious, or are not *perceived* as being as serious (Agnew & Huguley, 1989; Cornell & Gelles, 1982; Evans & Warren-Sohlberg, 1988). Moreover, white families may be overall more likely to involve law enforcement in familial incidents. In a similar vein, law enforcement may respond more formally to incidents involving males and their mothers because of real or perceived threat, which is supported by findings that indicate a higher likelihood of arrest for incidents with an injury (Armstrong et al., forthcoming). The potential for differences in reporting behavior and categorical differences in CPV incidents, either real or perceived, are anticipated to influence subsequent stages of processing including placement decisions, making gender and race critical considerations moving forward.

Substance use, mental health, and family composition

While adolescent substance use can directly result in family conflict, it can also create indirect conflict stemming from poor school performance and anti-social peer relationships. Furthermore, substance use may also play a role if an adolescent becomes violent toward a parent while intoxicated or high (Cottrell & Monk, 2004). Pagani et al. (2004, 2009) found that adolescent substance use, defined as drinking

“often” or “always” or using drugs at least five times in the past 6 months, predicted verbal aggression toward either parent, but not physical aggression (Pagani et al., 2009). With respect to substance use at the time of the event, Walsh and Krienert (2007) found that only a small proportion of both male and female adolescents reported being under the influence of alcohol or drugs during the assault toward their parents (10% and 3%, respectively).

With respect to mental health, studies find youth CPV offenders had some mental health or emotional concerns (Kethineni, 2004) or had previous contact with mental health counseling or psychiatric hospitalization (Evans & Warren-Sohlberg, 1988; Kennedy et al., 2010). Specifically, studies have reported that youth who have assaulted a parent often have Axis I diagnoses, including schizophrenia or other hallucinations, depression or bipolar disorder, behavioral disorders such as ADD/ADHD, ODD, or conduct disorder, reactive attachment disorder, and learning disorders (Coogan, 2014; Cottrell & Monk, 2004; Kethineni, 2004). Other behavioral issues have included anger and aggression, as well as suicidal and homicidal tendencies (Kethineni, 2004). To examine differences in mental health symptomology, Ibabe, Arnoso, and Elgorriaga (2014) assessed whether adolescents charged with assaulting their parents had a distinct psychological profile from offenders of other crimes and non-offenders. Their findings revealed that CPV offenders experienced a greater number of depressive symptoms and out-of-home behavioral problems (i.e., hyperactivity, school maladjustment, and substance abuse) compared to the other groups. Moreover, youth who were violent toward their parents had lower self-esteem than youth who were not violent toward their parents (Ibabe et al., 2014; Ibabe & Jaureguizar, 2010).

The overall composition of a household (i.e., two parents, one-parent, extended family, or in a correctional center) is also correlated with an increased risk of CPV. CPV disproportionately affects parents in single-parent households (Evans & Warren-Sohlberg, 1988; Ibabe & Jaureguizar, 2010), although single-parent households were no more likely to experience CPV in a large representative sample from Germany (Beckmann et al., 2017). No studies have specifically examined the impact of foster care on CPV; however, Yang, McCuish and Corrado (Yang, McCuish,

& Corrado, 2017) note preliminary results of gender specific effects such that youth in care exhibited a greater likelihood of chronic offending patterns between adolescence and adulthood.

Victimization, school performance, and juvenile justice system involvement

Many scholars suggest that the bi-directionality of family violence explains CPV (e.g., Ulman & Straus, 2003). Consistent with this cycle of violence hypotheses reference in an ACE framework, youth who experience abuse, neglect and household dysfunction are at an increased risk for delinquent behavior (Dong et al., 2004; Felitti et al., 1998). Specifically, exposure to both indirect family violence (i.e., witnessing family violence or intimate partner violence) and direct family violence (i.e., being the victim of violence or parent-to-child violence) is related to adolescent violence toward a parent (Beckmann et al., 2017; Contreras & Cano, 2016; Cornell & Gelles, 1982; Gámez-Guadix & Calvete, 2012; Ibabe et al., 2013; Kennedy et al., 2010; Lyons et al., 2015). In a recent study, Contreas and Cano (2016) compared adjudicated CPV youth offenders, adjudicated non-CPV youth offenders, and non-offenders on exposure to violence in the home, school, and community to examine whether exposure to familial violence is unique from other types of violence in its influence on CPV. Similar to prior studies, both offender groups were exposed to more violence than the non-offender group. Moreover, the CPV offenders were significantly more likely than the comparison groups to have been exposed to, or experienced, violence in the home. Contreas and Cano (2016) concluded that family violence in particular appears to be an influential predictor of child violence toward parents.

Youth who engage in CPV are likely to have problem behaviors that manifest beyond the family sphere (Routt & Anderson, 2011). School performance has been found to be a robust predictor of aggressive behavior among youth (Herrenkohl et al., 2000). As such, it is likely that youth who engage in CPV are likely to have experienced a host of problems at school, including academic failure. Utilizing a sample of justice involved adolescents in Spain, Idabe and Jaureguizar (Ibabe & Jaureguizar, 2010) found that youth who committed CPV were more likely to have presented in court with various school difficulties, including disruptive behavior, than adolescents who were

charged with other (i.e., non-CPV) offenses.

Findings are mixed regarding the extent and severity of offending among CPV offenders. Utilizing juvenile court data, Gebo (2007) found that CPV offenders were significantly less likely to have a prior offense, or to have committed and been charged with a serious crime than non-CPV offenders. Also drawing from juvenile court data, Kennedy et al. (2010) found that CPV offenders did not significantly differ in the number of prior arrests compared to non-CPV offenders. For CPV involved youth, prior offenses tended to involve other forms of violence, whereas non-CPV involved youth are more likely to have a history of property offenses (Kennedy et al., 2010). No differences were found with respect to a history of drug offenses, number of prior arrests, or number of current charges.

The current research

In summary, existing literature suggests there are specific indicators that characterize adolescents who engage in aggressive behaviors toward their parents among samples of reported, system-involved CPV cases. Collectively, studies find that youth who are male, white, present mental health issues, have histories of substance use, and are exposed to other forms of violence in the home are more likely to engage in CPV. Moreover, these youths are more likely to have histories of other violent offenses and manifest problem behaviors in other settings including school.

The current research builds upon the prior literature to assess whether a similar risk profile exists within a nationally representative sample of adolescents incarcerated for CPV. Specifically, does the profile of youth incarcerated for CPV parallel the typical gendered risk profile of youth arrested for CPV (i.e., sons arrested for assaulting their mothers; Agnew & Huguley, 1989; Walsh & Krienert, 2007)? Since male CPV aggressors are more likely to be arrested, we expect a greater proportion of males than females are incarcerated for CPV. Furthermore, will the sample of youth incarcerated for CPV be primarily white or will non-white populations be over-represented for this offense? Certainly, some of the discretionary factors that lead to the development of the risk profile of CPV perpetrators may also influence the population that is pursued for adjudication. In addition to gender and race, we will

examine whether these CPV aggressors experienced victimization and are a product of the intergenerational transmission of violence (Boxer, Gullan, & Mahoney, 2009; Pagani et al., 2009). Furthermore, as the risk factors associated with general delinquency tend to vary by gender, we will assess whether CPV indicators (e.g., prior victimization, substance use, problems in other social spheres) vary by gender in this study.

Method

Data and participants

The present study utilized secondary data from the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement (SYRP) 2003 (Sedlak, 2003), which is a restricted dataset available through Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR). The SYRP is currently the only large-scale, nationally representative sample that collects detailed information directly from justice-involved youth between the ages of 10 and 20 using a multi-stage cluster sampling procedure. It draws a nationally representative sample from all youth in state and local facilities identified by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) in two other large-scale surveys: The Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement and the Juvenile Residential Facility Census (Sedlak & Bruce, 2010). Of the 290 facilities initially identified for study participation, 204 juvenile justice facilities across 36 states participated in the survey (70.3% response rate). Of the total 9495 eligible youth who were sampled between March and June 2003, a total of 7073 youth from these facilities completed the survey (74.5% response rate; see Sedlak et al., 2012 for a detailed methodology report).

The SYRP collects data from youth about their backgrounds, offense histories, the facility, drug/alcohol experiences, and expectations for the future using an audio computer-assisted self-interview (ACASI) system to ask questions and record answers. The SYRP is weighted such that the sample of 7073 youth provides accurate estimates of the size and characteristics of the national youth offender population in custody (estimated as more than 100,000 youth). Survey weights reflect the sampling probabilities of both the facility and youth, and adjusts for

nonresponse at both levels making the findings generalizable to the wider population of justice-involved youth across the nation. The weighted analyses are critical because the SYRP data were obtained through a complex sampling design in which facilities and youth were selected with unequal probabilities. For example, before drawing the SYRP facility samples, several implicit stratifiers were used, such as facility size, proportion of females, proportion of youth who were Hispanic and geographic region (Northeast, South, Midwest, and West), to sort facilities into stratum. Thus, the prevalence of a given type of youth in the unweighted SYRP sample may bear little relationship to that type of youth's prevalence in the overall population of youth in residential placement (see chapters 2 and 7 in Sedlak et al., 2012 for a detailed description of the weighting procedures). Unfortunately, the SYRP data available through ICPSR does not include facility level identifiers, so we could not examine regional differences among youth.

We identified youth who were incarcerated for CPV by examining the most serious offense for which they were convicted and their relationship to the victim(s). We initially identified 400 youth incarcerated for a violent offense, which included murder, rape, robbery, kidnapping, assault with a weapon, or assault without a weapon and who identified a parental figure as their victim (parent, step-parent, foster parent, or grandparent). We excluded youth who were incarcerated solely for kidnapping, rape or robbery of a parental figure ($n = 107$) to be consistent with previous studies, which typically only include physical forms of parental abuse (e.g., assault or murder). Although kidnapping, rape and robbery include an element of physical abuse, robbery is also financial abuse, rape is sexual abuse and kidnapping is a psychological abuse (see Cottrell, 2001; Kennair & Mellor, 2007). We chose to exclude these cases to provide a profile of youth incarcerated for physical forms of CPV. Of the CPV youth offenders excluded, the most serious offenses included kidnapping ($n = 3$), rape ($n = 49$), and robbery ($n = 55$). Thus, the final sample included 293 youth whose most serious offense was either murder, assault with a weapon, or assault without a weapon against a parent, step-parent, foster parent, or grandparent. Once the sample weights are applied to this sub-sample, the resulting sample is comprised of 4196 youth.

Measures

Offender demographic characteristics

Based on prior literature, we focused on demographic correlates of CPV including gender, age, and race in developing the CPV risk profile. We supplemented these demographic characteristics with situational measures of CPV including offense characteristics (i.e., weapon use, victim-offender relationship). Gender was coded as a dichotomous, mutually exclusive variable with categories representing male or female. Race/ethnicity was measured with several binary indicators (white non-Hispanic, black non-Hispanic, Hispanic, Native American/ Asian/Hawaiian, and other or two or more races). Age was measured continuously and reflected age at the time of the survey (i.e., not the age at which they committed the current offense).

The seriousness level of the offense for which the youth was incarcerated was measured with three mutually exclusive categories (murder, assault with weapon, or assault without a weapon). Lastly, relationship to the victim was measured with four non-exclusive dichotomous variables: biological parent, stepparent, foster parent, and grandparent. Having multiple victims was possible in a single criminal incident.

Substance use

The substance use domain measured offender substance use including prevalence, frequency, type and extent to which problems manifested as a result of use including the current CPV offense. We included measures of frequency of substance use in months before custody (every day or several times/week, once a week, once a month, never); whether alcohol and drugs were used simultaneously; whether drug use kept youth from meeting responsibilities at school/work/ home; whether the youth got in trouble while drinking/high; substance use during offense (none, alcohol only at time of offense, drugs only at time of offense, alcohol and drugs during offense), and substance use prior to custody (alcohol, marijuana, other drugs).

Mental health

The mental health domain measured “emotions and mental states over the past

few months and about some lifetime background experiences indicative of or associate with emotional problems” (Sedlak & McPherson, 2010, p. 2). Specifically, presence or absence of the following mental health issues at the time the youth were surveyed at the onset of their incarceration: depression (above average symptoms), anxiety (above average symptoms), anger (above average symptoms), hallucinations (any), and suicide ideations (any). As discussed by Sedleck and McPherson, most items for these scales were derived from the Massachusetts Youth Screening Inventory (MAYSI); however, not all MAYSI items were included in the SRYP so the scoring system does not apply (Grisso & Barnum, 2006).

Living situation

Family composition included measurement of the youth's living situation prior to incarceration (living with two parents, living with one parent, foster care/group home, other relative, friends, homeless/living on own/other), and the youth's living situation growing up (living with two parents, one parent, no parent, prior lifetime foster care/group home).

Victimization

This domain measured five types of prior victimization including direct and indirect victimization. The five dichotomous variables included whether the youth was physically abused as a child, sexually abused as a child, had forced sex growing up, experienced emotional abuse when growing up, and witnessed serious violence. These measures were created based on a series of survey questions that inquired if the youth had ever been physically, sexually, or emotionally abused, raped or witnessed someone seriously injured or killed. All of the questions inquired about victimization experiences prior to their current incarceration. We also included a measure of poly-victimization, which was an additive scale of the number of victimization types youth experienced (physical abuse, sexual abuse, forced sex, emotional abuse, and witnessed serious violence). This scale ranged from zero to five.

Problems in school

For problems manifesting in the school setting, we included measures of academic challenges such as academic performance below modal grade level achievement for the youth's age as well as having a diagnosed learning disability. We also measured behavioral issues that manifested in the school setting including school suspension in the year before custody.

Juvenile justice involvement

For problem behaviors that resulted in juvenile justice system involvement, we measured the number of times the offender was previously in custody, and prior offense history (no prior conviction/involvement, prior involvement but no convictions, prior convictions).

Descriptives of risk domains of youth incarcerated for CPV (Weighted)

$N = 4196$.

Results

We present the results using the suggested data weighting procedures outlined by Sedlak et al. (2012) since facilities and youth within the facilities were randomly sampled, but youth were not sampled with the same probability. First, univariate statistics were used to describe the risk profiles of youth incarcerated for CPV (found in Table 1). Second, t -tests were used to determine mean differences between male and female samples in the risk profiles of youth incarcerated for CPV (see Table 2).

Demographics

The typical youth incarcerated for CPV was a white male, approximately 16 years old, with the specific offense of assaulting a parent without a weapon. Over half of these youth were white (60.1%) and almost one-third of CPV offenders were either black (13.8%) or Hispanic (16.2%). As illustrated in Table 2, statistically significant gender differences for age and race/ethnicity existed. On average, male youth were approximately one year older than female youth ($M = 16.4$ and 15.2 , respectively). A

Table 1
 Descriptives of risk domains of youth incarcerated for CPV (Weighted)
 N = 4196.

	%	(SD)	Range
Male	62.6	(0.48)	0-1
Age at interview (M)	15.94	(1.59)	11-20
Race/Ethnicity			
White, non-Hispanic	60.1	(0.49)	0-1
Black, non-Hispanic	13.8	(0.35)	0-1
Hispanic	16.2	(0.37)	0-1
Native American, Asian, Hawaiian	2.7	(0.16)	0-1
Other, two or more race groups	7.3	(0.26)	0-1
Offense seriousness			
Assault without a weapon	67.2	(0.47)	0-1
Assault with weapon	25.9	(0.45)	0-1
Murder	6.9	(0.25)	0-1
Victim relationship to offender (multiple victims possible)			
Parent	75.7	(0.43)	0-1
Step-parent	25.6	(0.44)	0-1
Foster parent	4.6	(0.21)	0-1
Grandparent	9.8	(0.30)	0-1
Substance use			
Substance use prior to custody			
Alcohol	76.0	(0.43)	0-1
Marijuana	80.0	(0.40)	0-1
Other illegal drugs	76.6	(0.42)	0-1
Freq. of sub. Use in months before custody			
Every day or several times/week	50.2	(0.50)	0-1
Once a week	12.3	(0.33)	0-1
Once a month	15.1	(0.36)	0-1
Never	21.9	(0.36)	0-1
Drug use kept youth from meeting responsibilities at school/work/home	41.6	(0.50)	0-1
Youth got in trouble while high/drinking	41.5	(0.50)	0-1
Youth substance use during CPV offense			
Not under influence at time of offense	53.7	(0.50)	0-1
Alcohol and drugs during offense	27.3	(0.45)	0-1
Alcohol only at time of offense	5.5	(0.23)	0-1
Drugs only at time of offense	13.4	(0.34)	0-1
Mental health			
Depression (above average)	57.0	(0.49)	0-1
Anxiety (above average)	18.1	(0.39)	0-1
Anger (above average)	60.1	(0.48)	0-1
Hallucinations (any)	24.8	(0.43)	0-1
Suicide ideation (any)	44.8	(0.50)	0-1
Prior victimization			
Physically abused as child	50.7	(0.50)	0-1
Sexually abused as child	20.4	(0.41)	0-1
Youth had forced sex growing up	12.1	(0.34)	0-1
Emotionally abused as child	49.6	(0.50)	0-1
Witnessed serious violence	63.8	(0.48)	0-1
Poly-victimization (# of types; M)	1.98	(1.40)	0-5
0	13.7	(0.34)	0-1
1	29.6	(0.46)	0-1
2	22.7	(0.42)	0-1
3	17.9	(0.38)	0-1
4	9.6	(0.29)	0-1
5	5.9	(0.24)	0-1
Living situation			
Living situation before custody			
Living with two parents	36.0	(0.48)	0-1
Living with one parent	47.1	(0.50)	0-1
Foster care/group home	2.1	(0.14)	0-1
Other relatives	3.5	(0.18)	0-1
Friends	6.4	(0.25)	0-1
Homeless/on their own/other	5.0	(0.22)	0-1
Living situation growing up			
Lived with two parents growing up	47.1	(0.50)	0-1
Lived with one parents growing up	44.1	(0.50)	0-1
No parent	8.8	(0.28)	0-1
Prior foster care/group home (ever)	20.4	(0.40)	0-1
Juvenile justice involvement			

Table 1 (continued)

	%	(SD)	Range
Number of times previously in custody			
0	30.6	(0.46)	0-1
1	9.1	(0.29)	0-1
2	15.5	(0.36)	0-1
3	7.7	(0.27)	0-1
4	4.5	(0.21)	0-1
5 or more times	31.9	(0.47)	0-1
Prior offense history			
No prior conviction or involvement	4.2	(0.20)	0-1
Prior involvement, no convictions	8.7	(0.28)	0-1
Prior conviction	86.9	(0.34)	0-1
School-related issues			
School suspension year before custody	60.4	(0.49)	0-1
School expulsion year before custody	26.8	(0.44)	0-1
Learning disability (expert-diagnosed)	37.4	(0.49)	0-1
Youth below modal grade level	43.7	(0.50)	0-1

Table 2
Descriptives and t-tests of risk domains for males and females incarcerated for CPV.

	Males (N = 2627)	Females (N = 1569)	t-Test
	%	%	
Age at interview (M)	16.37	15.22	- .02
Race/Ethnicity			
White, non-Hispanic	62.9	55.3	- .02
Black, non-Hispanic	15.6	10.8	- .09
Hispanic	13.9	20.1	+ .04
Native American, Asian, Hawaiian	2.0	3.8	+ .02
Other, two or more race groups	5.6	10.0	+ .09
Offense seriousness			
Assault without a weapon	64.7	71.4	+ .04
Assault with weapon	26.2	25.5	
Murder	9.1	3.1	- .04
Victim relationship to offender (multiple victims possible)			
Parent	77.0	73.4	- .02
Step-parent	26.9	23.3	- .02
Foster parent	4.2	5.2	
Grandparent	10.3	9.0	
Substance use			
Substance use prior to custody			
Alcohol	72.4	82.2	+ .09
Marijuana	79.2	81.4	
Other illegal drugs	74.2	80.7	+ .04
Freq. of sub. use in months before custody			
Every day or several times/week	49.5	51.6	
Once a week	11.3	14.1	+ †
Once a month	15.0	15.4	
Never	23.8	18.8	
Drug use kept youth from meeting responsibilities at school/work/home	40.5	43.5	
Youth got in trouble while high/drinking	36.2	50.3	+ .09
Youth substance use during CPV offense			
Not under influence at time of offense	54.0	53.3	
Alcohol and drugs during offense	24.1	32.7	+ .04
Alcohol only at time of offense	7.9	1.6	- .09
Drugs only at time of offense	14.0	12.4	
Mental health			
Depression (above average)	50.6	67.7	+ .09
Anxiety (above average)	11.0	29.9	+ .04
Anger (above average)	55.5	67.8	+ .09
Hallucinations (any)	25.9	22.9	- †
Suicide ideation (any)	37.8	56.4	+ .04
Prior victimization			
Physically abused as child	46.1	58.4	+ .09
Sexually abused as child	8.1	41.0	+ .04
Youth had forced sex growing up	4.7	24.6	+ .02
Emotionally abused as child	41.5	63.2	+ .09
Witnessed serious violence	63.0	65.1	
Poly-victimization (# of types; M)			
0	1.98	1.65	- .02
1	16.4	9.2	- .09
2	35.3	20.1	- .04
3	22.9	22.4	
4	16.3	20.6	+ .04
5	7.4	13.3	+ .02
5	0.7	14.5	+ .09
Living situation			
Living situation before custody			
Living with two parents	38.3	32.1	- .09
Living with one parent	44.6	51.2	+ .04
Foster care/group home	2.3	1.7	
Other relatives	3.7	3.1	
Friends	4.2	10.1	+ .04
Homeless/on their own/other	6.9	1.8	- .09
Living situation growing up			

Table 2 (continued)

	Males (N = 2627)	Females (N = 1569)	t-Test
	%	%	
Lived with two parents growing up	43.4	53.4	+ .04
Lived with one parents growing up	50.6	33.1	- .02
No parent	6.0	13.4	+ .09
Prior foster care/group home (ever)	18.2	24.2	+ .04
Juvenile justice involvement			
Number of times previously in custody			
0	26.3	37.9	+ .02
1	11.2	5.6	- .09
2	14.8	16.6	
3	8.4	6.5	- †
4	3.9	5.3	+ †
5 or more times	34.4	27.8	- .02
Prior offense history			
No prior conviction or involvement	1.3	9.2	+ .04
Prior involvement, no convictions	8.1	9.9	+ †
Prior conviction	90.7	80.7	- .04
School-related issues			
School suspension year before custody	60.5	60.3	
School expulsion year before custody	25.5	29.0	+ †
Learning disability (expert-diagnosed)	43.6	26.9	- .04
Youth below modal grade level	50.7	32.1	- .09

Notes. † Significant difference between male sample and female sample, $p < .05$.

* Significant difference between male sample and female sample, $p < .01$.

** Significant difference between male sample and female sample, $p < .001$.

larger proportion of male youth were white or black, whereas a larger proportion of female youth identified as Hispanic, Native American/Asian/Hawaiian, or “other”/two or more races.

Offense characteristics

Approximately two-thirds of the sample was incarcerated for an assault that did not include a weapon, one-quarter of the youth used a weapon during the parental assault. A small proportion of youth were incarcerated for murder of their parent. Significant gender differences existed. Female youth were more commonly incarcerated for assault without a weapon than a male youth, and male youth were more commonly incarcerated for murder than female youth. Male and female youth were equally likely to be incarcerated for assault with a weapon. Three-quarters of the youth victimized a parent whereas approximately one-quarter of the offenders victimized a stepparent. A smaller proportion of youth victimized a foster parent or grandparent. Male youth were statistically more likely to victimize a parent or a stepparent than were female youth. Gender differences were not evident between male and female youth in their likelihood to perpetrate CPV towards foster parents or grandparents.

Substance use

It was common for youth incarcerated for CPV to report having a history of substance use. Almost 80% of the sample reported marijuana use, 76% of the sample reported alcohol use, and 76.6% reported “other drug use.” Interestingly, although female and male youth were equally likely to report marijuana use, female youth were significantly more likely to use alcohol and “other illegal drugs” than male youth. Minimal gender differences existed in the reported frequency of substance use in the months preceding custody.

Youth recognized their substance use contributed to problems in their life. Just less than half of the youth indicated they used drugs in a way that negatively affected their responsibilities at work/school/ home. This finding was similar across male and female youth. When examining the role of substance use in their delinquency, female youth were significantly more likely to report they had gotten in trouble while using

drugs or alcohol as compared to male youth.

Substance use was also an important factor in commission of the CPV offense for almost half the youth. Female youth were more likely than male youth to be under the influence of both drugs and alcohol (32.7% and 24.1%, respectively) at the time of the offense. Male and female youth reported a similar likelihood of being under the influence of drugs alone at the time of the CPV offense (14% and 12.4%, respectively). Male youth were significantly more likely to report being under the influence of alcohol alone than female youth (7.9% and 1.6%, respectively). Substance use prior to custody was prevalent in this sample of CPV offenders, with a large proportion using alcohol, marijuana, and other illegal drugs.

Mental health

Similar to previous studies (Coogan, 2014; Cottrell & Monk, 2004; Kethineni, 2004), mental health issues were prevalent among youth incarcerated for CPV with a large proportion of the sample reporting anger-related mental health issues and depression, as well as anxiety and suicidal ideation (Kethineni, 2004). Gender differences were apparent among all categories of mental health symptomology. Female youth were much more likely to have affective symptoms (i.e., depression and anger), anxiety, or suicidal ideation, while male youth had slightly higher rates of hallucinations compared to females (25.9% and 22.9%).

Living situation

At the time of the offense, most youth were living in single parent homes. Female youth were statistically more likely to be living with a single parent as compared to male youth (51.2% and 44.6%). Male youth were more likely to be living with two parents compared to female youth (38.3% and 31.1%). No gender differences existed for the category of living in foster care, group homes or with other relatives at the time of the offense. Interestingly, female youth were more likely to be living with friends than male youth at the time of the offense (10.1% and 4.2%), and male youth were more likely to be homeless/on their own than female youth (6.9% and 1.8%). The opposite pattern emerged when living situation while growing up was examined.

Females were more likely to have lived with two parents when growing up compared to males (53.4% and 43.4%), while males were more likely to have lived with one parent when growing up compared to females (50.6% and 33.1%, respectively). Significantly more females than males either lived with no parent (13.4% versus 6.0%) or had ever lived in a foster home/group home (24.2% versus 18.2%) while growing up.

Victimization

A stark contrast of gender differences existed in rates of prior victimization between the male and female youth incarcerated for CPV. Significantly more females than males incarcerated for CPV experienced physical, sexual or emotional abuse, or had forced sex while growing up. No gender differences existed for indirect victimization of witnessing serious violence. Furthermore, females had higher rates of poly-victimization, compared to males. Specifically, nearly half (48.4%) of females experienced three or more types of victimizations as compared to about a quarter (24.4%) of male youth. Conversely, over half (51.7%) of male youth had one or no reported victimization types compared to only 29.3% of female youth. The overall prevalence of victimization in this sample is congruent with the general delinquency literature, which suggests the number of adverse experiences (Wolff et al., 2015) and poly-victimizations (Ford, Grasso, Hawke, & Chapman, 2013) increases risk for offending in general. These findings are also consistent with the ACEs study that nearly twice as many females experienced three or more ACEs, such as psychological, physical, and sexual abuse compared to males (i.e., 17.2% of females experienced three or more ACEs compared to 8.9% of males; Felitti et al., 1998).

Problem behavior in other domains

Youth incarcerated for CPV reported issues in school, especially prior school suspensions. While no statistically significant gender differences in school suspensions existed in this sample, slightly more female youth reported school expulsion in the year before custody than male youth (29.0% and 25.5%). On the other hand, more male youth reported their academic performance was below the modal grade for their age (50.7%) and they were more likely to have a clinically-diagnosed learning disability

(43.6%) as compared to female youth (32.1% and 26.9%). These findings parallel studies that find delinquent youth, typically experience academic failure or problems at school (Ibabe & Jaureguizar, 2010) or have had prior contact with the juvenile justice system for other offenses (Evans & Warren-Sohlberg, 1988; Kennedy et al., 2010). Many youth in this sample had juvenile justice involvement prior to this offense including incarceration. Almost the entire sample had prior convictions, although male youth were significantly more likely to have a prior conviction than female youth. While 26.3% of males were not previously incarcerated, 37.9% of females had never been incarcerated.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to improve our understanding of the risk profile of youth incarcerated for CPV, with a specific assessment of the gender congruence in these risk factors. While literature that examines CPV is growing, no studies to our knowledge have aimed to gain insight into the risk profile of youth incarcerated for CPV. Knowing the risk factors for CPV among this most serious group of youth offenders will improve the implementation of early intervention efforts, a coordinated and collaborative criminal justice response, and responsive public policy that will reduce harm and improve outcomes for the affected families. Our results illustrate that the risk profile of youth incarcerated for CPV are congruent with some results from studies that focus on earlier points in juvenile justice system processing, but diverge in some important aspects primarily with respect to the robust nature of certain correlates across the sample. Specifically, similar to prior research, male youth are overrepresented in our sample of incarcerated CPV offenders and are slightly older when they become system involved for a CPV offense. Although Walsh and Krienert (2007) suggested the type of assault becomes more serious with the youth's age, we qualify this CPV correlate finding male youth are more likely to use a weapon when they commit CPV and on occasion the violent act results in death (i.e., murder) more often than for female youth. This finding supports Brezina's (1999) suggestion that aggressor characteristics, for example male status, may influence parental reporting (and thereby subsequent involvement in the criminal justice system) due to a

difference in being a “real or perceived” threat as compared to female youth.

There is consistency of race between who is commonly arrested for CPV with who is incarcerated for CPV. As noted above, several studies have found a higher percentage of CPV perpetrators to be white compared to other race/ethnicities (Agnew & Huguley, 1989; Armstrong et al., forthcoming; Charles, 1986; Evans & Warren-Sohlberg, 1988; Kethineni, 2004; Walsh & Krienert, 2007). We found that the majority of youth incarcerated for CPV were white (60.1%) among both the male and female CPV offenders, although non-black minority females were somewhat overrepresented compared to males (i.e., 33.9% of females were Hispanic, Native American/Asian/Hawaiian, or other/two or more race groups).

Prior literature suggests substance use and mental health issues are important correlates in the commission of CPV, more so as a contributor to ongoing family conflict including verbal aggression (Pagani et al., 2009) rather than physical aggression. Among youth incarcerated for CPV, we find that substance use is also an important covariate in that over one-quarter of the youth were using alcohol and drugs at the time of the offense. Additional indicators also directly support prior assertions that substance abuse was likely contributing to ongoing family conflict, as almost 80% of the sample had used drugs or alcohol previously, 50% of the sample reported a very high frequency of substance use, and 40% self-reported substance abuse caused problems in their lives (e.g., failed to meet responsibilities; got in trouble).

Other findings in these data parallel studies that examine front end data. For example, we find a greater prevalence of CPV in single parent homes, manifestation of problem behavior in other domains such as school, and evidence of prior delinquency among these youth serious enough to warrant juvenile justice system involvement. Although slight gender differences exist in these risk factors, the starkest contrast between groups exists within the prior victimization and mental health domains.

Female youth report significant and sometimes extensive direct victimization and poly-victimization, much more so than male youth, especially with respect to forced sex and sexual abuse. These negative experiences during the girls' formative years (i.e., prior to incarceration) suggest a distinct pathway culminating in physical

aggression toward her specific caregiver(s) that results in incarceration for a violent offense. In addition to high levels of victimization, results demonstrate these girls engage in high levels of alcohol and drug use, arguably to self-medicate as a maladaptive response to their victimization histories. While the same maladaptive response may be true for a subset of male youth, female youth appear significantly more likely to engage in these behaviors overall. These results also point to the possibility that aggression against parents may be defensive, as a result of having been victimized. While we do not have information about who perpetrated abuse against the youth in this sample, prior research on intimate partner violence highlights that women commonly are arrested and adjudicated for using defensive violence against their abusive partners (Hamberger & Larsen, 2015; Muftic, Finn, & Marsh, 2015). The lack of research and theoretical development on gender differences in CPV provides little insight, but future research in this area should examine motivations for violence, including offensive versus defensive violence, to better understand the etiology of this behavior.

Among female offender populations, it is common for women who are substance abusers and a history of victimization to also exhibit a wide range of mental health issues (Blum, Ireland, & Blum, 2003). Here, we find girls significantly more likely to report depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideations than the male youth. The specific mechanisms that led girls with this constellation of risk factors to engage in violence against their parental figure(s) is less clear. Although almost half of these girls grew up in a two-parent household, the quality of their family situation is not necessarily positive given the prevalence of victimization. Interestingly, the composition of the youth's family shifts in about 20% of cases from a two-parent to a single parent home. Moreover, the female youth are also experiencing problems at school and involvement in the juvenile justice system. Pathways to offending for female youth often involve histories of victimization, especially at the hands of family members, leading to attempts to escape the abusive situation including through maladaptive coping such as substance use or running away from home (Chesney-Lind, 1997; Tyler, Hoyt, Whitbeck, & Cuace, 2001). In that light, it is interesting that female youth in this sample are more likely to report that they were living away from

parents at the time of the offense. As with the victimization results discussed previously, it may be that these girls are attempting to leave the home and resort to aggression when that method of coping is ineffective.

For female youth incarcerated for CPV, these data illustrate the life of a young girl that often begins with two parents, but continues on downward spiral of violence and victimization including sexual abuse, a broken home, substance use, and mental health issues. All of these risk factors contribute to problem behaviors across the domains of home and school. The end result is continued maladaptation in these environments, juvenile justice system involvement, and physical conflict with her parent(s) that eventually results in incarceration. Parallels are apparent between the profiles of youth incarcerated for CPV, especially females, and evidence from literature addressing intimate partner violence. Although, similar patterns may be at play, the lack of attention to CPV limits our ability to further explicate these results without additional research. Future studies should explore gender dyads among this most serious population of CPV offenders, as well as more detail about abusive histories, especially in terms of who perpetrated that abuse, motivations for engaging in aggression, and disentangling the links between substance use, mental health concerns, and involvement in CPV.

Conclusions

Beyond a reactive response by law enforcement, these findings indicate the need for extending proactive interventions to families exhibiting early signs of discord. Such a response would coordinate a rapid, collaborative response between law enforcement, the juvenile justice system, and mental health and other services. The relative concordance between CPV arrest and CPV incarceration risk profiles demonstrate the likelihood that those youths who initially come into contact with law enforcement due to CPV will continue and/or escalate the behaviors in a manner that will eventually result in arrest and out of home placement decisions.

Uniquely underscored in this study is the severe nature of some correlates of CPV among those youths incarcerated for this type of violence, specifically underlying victimization histories, substance use and resulting mental health symptomology. It has

long been documented that children who are exposed to violence in the home, direct or in-direct, or at an increased risk of externalizing behaviors and aggression (Malvaso, Delfabbro, Day, & Nobes, 2018). As discussed at the outset of this paper, the developing ACE framework notes child abuse, neglect and household dysfunction results in maladaptive behavior (Felitti et al., 1998). Knowing that youths, especially girls of color, who experience victimization including interfamilial violence will themselves reactive as an aggressor demands action and intervention to aid in breaking the cycle of interfamilial violence.

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