Family Climate Contextual Effects on Adolescent Threat Appraisals: A Longitudinal Investigation

Gregory M. Fosco
Mark E. Feinberg
The Pennsylvania State University
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Interparental Conflict (IPC): Robust Risk for Maladjustment

• Prevalence: experienced by nearly all children
  – Coparenting, 2-caregiver homes (Cummings & Davies, 1994)

• Consistently linked with children’s psychological maladjustment (Buehler et al., 1997; Cummings & Davies, 1994; Grych & Fincham, 2001)

• Multifinality in types/severity of outcomes
A Second Generation: Cognitive-Contextual Framework

A Second Generation: Mechanisms

Emotional Security Theory

Emotional Security Theory-R
Frequent, Intense, Unresolved, IPC

Cognitive Appraisals

Child Psychopathology

Fosco, DeBoard-Lucas, & Grych (2007)
Evaluates Environmental Risk: Personal Relevance of IPC

Specific Concerns: Escalation, Turn to Child, Result in Harm/Injury, Divorce

General worries about implications of IPC

General Fears that IPC → Something Bad

Atkinson et al., 2009; Davies & Cummings, 1994; Davies & Woitach, 2008; Grych et al., 1992; Fosco et al., 2007; Grych & Cardoza-Fernandez, 2001; Martin et al., 2014
Threat is **Adaptive**

- Evaluations of immediate threats to safety
- Guiding self-protective processes
- Vigilance for subsequent risk

Threat is **Maladaptive**

- Stable Beliefs Persist Beyond Objective Danger
- Persistence may overwhelm coping resources

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Atkinson et al., 2009; Davies & Cummings, 1994; Davies & Woitach, 2008; Grych et al., 1992;

Fosco et al., 2007; Grych & Cardoza-Fernandez, 2001; Martin et al., 2014
Threat: Risk In Adolescence

Cross-Sectional and Meta-analytic Evidence, Internalizing, Externalizing

Longitudinal Change in Internalizing Problems

Predicts Escalations in Cigarette Use

Poster: Predicts Increases in Social Anxiety and Lower-Quality Peer Relationships

Fosco & Feinberg, (2015); Fosco & Feinberg (Under Review)
Buehler et al., 2007; Gerard et al., 2005; Grych, Harold, & Miles, (2003); Fosco & Grych (2008);
What are the lifespan developmental implications of IPC and threat?

• Most longitudinal research: 2-4 year duration

• How do experiences in one developmental period carry forward into later periods of life?

• Early childhood -> adolescence
  – Cummings et al., 2012
Interparental Conflict (Early Adol) → Threat Appraisals (Mid Adol) → Young Adult Psychopathology (19.5 years)
Family Climate: Shapes Appraisals

• Adolescents are more attuned to broader family dynamics than younger children (Davies & Forman, 2002)

• Consistent with this:
  – Mother-adolescent closeness predicted threat, above and beyond the prediction of IPC (Grych et al 2004)
  – These findings generally not upheld earlier in development (DeBoard et al, 2010; Fosco & Grych, 2007)
Family Change During Adolescence

• Repetti (2002): Important to consider dynamic processes in developmental models

• Adolescence = Family Change
  – Family conflict increases (Fosco et al., 2014)
  – Family cohesion decreases (Van Ryzin et al., 2013)
  – Monitoring/Involvement decreases (Dishion et al. 2003)
Family Context for Threat Appraisals During Adolescence

- **Family Climate** (changes from early-mid adolescence)
  - Interparental Conflict
    - Early Adolescence
  - Threat Appraisals
    - Middle Adolescence
  - Psychopathology Risk
    - Young Adulthood
Research Questions

1. Do threat appraisals in adolescence confer risk for young adult emotional distress?

2. Are changes in the family climate over early-mid an important contextual factor for threat appraisals? - Or... for young adult emotional distress?
Method

- Drawn from a community implementation of the PROSPER intervention delivery system in rural Iowa and Pennsylvania.
- Current sample = 225 two-caregiver families
  - Early adolescents: 53% female, 92% Caucasian
- Family assessments: Fall 6th, Spring 6th, 7th, 8th
- Adolescent data: Fall 6th, Spring 8th, Age 19-20
The Current Sample

Original PROSPER Sample N = 11,690

PROSPER In-Home Family Sub-Sample
n = 979

Youth Only In-School
N ≈ 2500

Overlap = 271 YA,
225 from 2-caregiver homes

Fall 6th  Spr. 6th  Spr. 7th  Spr. 8th  Age 19-20
# Measurement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Reporter</th>
<th>Measure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interparental Conflict</td>
<td>Parent, Youth</td>
<td>Self/Partner Hostility (Spoth et al. 1998)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency of Conflict (Single Item)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Threat</td>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>4 items from CPIC (Grych et al. 1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Climate</td>
<td>Parent/Youth</td>
<td>7 Items from FES (Moos &amp; Moos, 1974) Cohesion, Conflict, Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional Distress</td>
<td>Youth, Young Adult</td>
<td>YSR (Middle Adolescence)</td>
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<td>CES-D (parceled into two indicators)</td>
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<td>ASR (parceled into two indicators)</td>
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Unconditional Growth Model: Family Climate

Mean $i = 3.80^*$
$s = -.10^*$

VAR: $i = .15^*$
$s = .002^*$

Model Fit: $\chi^2(5) = 14.22, p = .01; CFI = .99; TLI = .99; \ RMSEA = .09$
Emotional Distress 4  CESD P1
Emotional Distress 5  CESD P2
A/D P1
A/D P2

Model Fit
χ²(159) = 292.36, p = .00; CFI = .95; TLI = .94; RMSEA = .06

Girls: -.30*
Boys: .06, ns

Auxiliary Vars:
Parent Edu.
Family Income
State (PA vs. IA)
2-Bio Parents

Age 11
IPC W1
Threat T1

Age 14
Threat T4

Age 19.5
Emotional Distress T5

- .26*
- .18*
- .27*
- .31*
- .61*
- .28*
- .06,
Summary

• IPC and Threat in adolescence have longitudinal implications for young adulthood
  – Controlling for prior levels of threat, emotional distress

• Family Climate:
  – Change over early-mid adolescence impactful
  – Additive effects comparable to IPC wrt: Threat
    • Within literature: adolescence may be a key developmental period for family contextual factors related to threat
  – Long-term implications for young adult women
Implications

• Advances a more integrated, family systems perspective on cognitive appraisals of interparental conflict

• Cognitive evaluations of the family may be a key pathway for understanding risk into later developmental periods.
Limitations/Future Directions

• Inclusion of self-blame: implications for externalizing outcomes
• Replication with diverse samples
Thank you!

Contact: GMF19@psu.edu
Web: Gregfosco.weebly.com