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Hopelessness and Youth Violent Behavior: A Longitudinal Study

Janie Demetropoulos

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science

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ABSTRACT

Hopelessness and Youth Violent Behavior: A Longitudinal Study

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This study examines how hopelessness impacts youth engagement in violent behavior over time. The data are from waves I and II of The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health). Poisson regression was used to analyze contributors to violence in just wave I, and then again across time in wave II using explanatory and control variables from wave I. Results indicate that hopelessness is positively associated with violent behavior. Furthermore, while hopelessness and most of the other explanatory variables predicted violent behavior in wave I, almost all the variables became non-significant or negative except hopelessness and a measure of community when predicting violence in wave II. This shows that hopelessness is a concept that needs to be explored more closely when studying violence among youth.

Keywords: hopelessness, violence, violent behavior, youth, adolescents, longitudinal

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HOPELESSNESS AND YOUTH VIOLENT BEHAVIOR: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY

Over the last couple of decades, hope has become an increasingly common topic of discussion due to the expansion of positive psychology. Hope has been found to be a protective factor against suicide and other self-injuries, making it a vital part of our society (Luo et al. 2016). Despite its importance, defining the true nature of hope can be very elusive; only a few researchers even have attempted to do so. In his 1987 book, *A Philosophy of Human Hope*, Joseph Godfrey endeavored to outline the concept of hope. He said that hope can be taken multiple ways for example, as a verb; “I hope to finish this project,” a noun; “There’s no hope for her,” or an adjective; “Despite how disappointed I am right now, I am still hopeful” (Godfrey 1987). It is this last type of hope, the attitude of hope, which will be the focus in this paper.

While the protective nature of hope has typically been connected to suicide and other inwardly aggressive behaviors, it may be protective of more outwardly aggressive behaviors as well. If hope is defined as the positive expectation of one’s future, then it should be protective of delinquent and violent behavior as well, as any destructive behavior would jeopardize that expectation. Although hope has been found to be protective of suicide and other self-harming behaviors (Luo et al. 2016), only a few studies have focused on the other end of this spectrum, hopelessness and its outwardly harmful effects.

The purpose of the present study is twofold: (1) to assess the extent to which hopelessness influences engagement in violent behavior, and (2) to explore this relationship over time. I attend to these goals by using a nationally representative data from a large study of youth to longitudinally study the impact hopelessness and other traditionally connected concepts have on violent behavior. Taken together, this study helps to extend the literature on violent behavior

and delinquency generally and contribute specifically to how such behaviors are linked to psychological states of being such as hopelessness (e.g., Allwood et al. 2012; Bolland 2003; Duke et al. 2011; Stoddard, Zimmerman, and Bauermeister 2011).

HOPE

So, what exactly are we hoping *for*? According to Godfrey (1987:11), “what is hoped for is... a state of affairs or an event.” Thus, hope isn’t something that is based on things that are occurring at the present moment. Rather, hope is directed towards the unknown future. Even such expressions as, “I hope you had a good day” are still future-oriented because it is not known at the present whether or not such a thing happened, so it is still very much a part of the future. Furthermore, expressions of hope are for definite things. Very rarely does someone simply end a sentence with “I hope.” There is always a definite object of that hope. If it weren’t something specific, then how could we know whether to be disappointed when our hopes are unfulfilled, or satisfied when our hopes are realized (Godfrey 1987)?

Bury, Wenzel, and Woodyatt (2016) attempt to better clarify the concept of hope as well as tackle the moments when hope is created or arises. They contend that, “hope must involve more than expectation, for if one expects to obtain a desired goal, what need is there to hope?” (Bury et al. 2016:588). Moreover, “hope is grounded in uncertainty; it is exactly the uncertainty of obtainment that causes one to hope” (Bury et al. 2016:589). Again, these researchers argue that hope is for something defined; their contention is that hope comes forth when odds are low but individuals are highly invested in the outcome. A person does not hope for something about which they are apathetic or certain. Hope has its place only in the improbable things. This does not mean that individuals with hope ignore their low chances of success, but rather that “hope arises in recognition of the uncertainty of reaching their goal” (Bury et al. 2016:589). Therefore,

our final definition of hope is an attitude, a belief in a definite something *more* for the future, in spite of – or very well because of – how the present may appear.

HOPELESSNESS

It may be easy to think that hope and hopelessness are conceptualized on the same spectrum, but Huen et al. (2015) argue that hope and hopelessness cannot be seen in that way; they are two distinct but correlated constructs. They claim that hopelessness is a negative future expectation and hope is “... not simply a positive future expectation... but also contains a mixture of outcome expectancies... and one’s expectancies about whether or not one is able to influence the outcome” (Huen et al. 2015:5). Hopelessness is a belief in the inevitability of failure, while hope is a continued belief in the possibility of success, no matter how remote. Thus, both hope and hopelessness are based on future expectation, but hope expects that a person can influence the outcome, something hopelessness doesn’t do. This means that a person can have both hope and hopelessness at the same time, showing that “hope and hopelessness have their own bipolar spectra” and should not be treated as the absence of one or the other (Huen et al. 2015:5). In other words, “a person can have a raised sense of agency and problem-solving abilities (i.e., hope) on one spectrum, together with the presence of negative future-oriented thoughts (i.e., hopelessness) on the other” (Huen et al. 2015:5).

One example of this, as given by Huen et al. (2015:5), is a person with seasonal affective disorder who is experiencing its symptoms during the cold months. While the person feels pessimistic and negative towards his future and oversleeps and overeats, he is also hopeful that (based on past experience) the change of seasons will improve his future and therefore attempts to change his bad habits and negative thoughts. It is the difference in temporal focus that makes it possible for a person to be hopeless and hopeful at the same time because, “whereas

hopelessness focuses on the anticipation of future experiences or consequences, hope focuses on past and present experiences of successful goal pursuit” (Huen et al. 2015:5).

Hopelessness is defined here as the negative perception of one’s future. Future orientation provides the basis for making plans and setting goals for the future, which is an integral part of an adolescent’s life as young people determine who they want to be as an adult. It is vital that they feel confidence in their ability to succeed. Research has shown that if an individual has hope for the future, they have a much better chance of becoming a successful adult later in life (Arnett 2000; Nurmi 1989; Nurmi, Poole, and Seginer 1995). It stands to reason then that those with a more negative perception of their own futures would have less of a chance of being successful. Why would an individual try to be successful if he or she has already determined that it is impossible? Further confirming this, hopelessness has been shown to be one of the best predictors of suicide, both suicidal ideation and the act (Huen et al. 2015).

VIOLENT BEHAVIOR

Violent behavior, which refers to behavior that causes physical harm or threat to another, could be classified as either a reckless act of passion or the result of calculation. Whether it is an act of passion or calculation depends on the motivation of the individual or group, and both passion and calculation could be the impetus of some violent acts. Violent behavior is varied and several variables have been used to predict it. These have included lack of education (Chaudhuri, Chowdhury, and Reilly 2013; Deming 2011; Lochner and Moretti 2001; Maguin and Loeber 1996; Stacey 1998), negative peer influences, the young adult dropout culture (Akers 1998; Cloward and Ohlin 1960; Hartnagel and Krahn 1989; Matsueda and Anderson 1998; Osgood et al. 1996; Thornberry et al.1994; Warr 2002), early exposure to violence (Olweus 1995), a lack of self-control, and the drug trade (Barber 2008; Draine et al. 2002; Fajnzylber, Lederman, and

Loayza 2002; Gibson and Wright 2001; Gottfredson and Herschi 1990; Harrison and Gfroerer 1992; Marien 2011; Pratt and Cullen 2000). It has also been argued by Katz (1990) and others that there are some individuals who choose a life of violent behavior; there are certain people who enjoy a criminal type lifestyle and despise the steady, working life of an average member of society (Conley and Wang 2006). Whatever the reason behind the violent behavior, there is no doubt that it has a negative effect on the lives of those who participate.

Research shows that violence rates typically peak during adolescence (Stoddard, Zimmerman, and Bauermeister 2011), and those labeled as delinquent at one point in time could become more violent in later points of time (e.g., Lemert 1951). Previous research on youth violence has examined risk and promotive influences, particularly those factors related to good and poor academic achievement and how they relate to violent behavior (Borowsky, Windome, and Resnick 2008; Brookmeyer, Henrich, and Schwab-Stone 2005; DuRant et al. 1994; Farrington 2007; Gorman-Smith, Henry, and Tolan 2004; Herrenkohl et al. 2000; Resnick, Bearman, and Blum 1997; Resnick, Ireland, and Borowsky 2004; Sampson and Raudenbush 1997; Valois et al. 2002).

The influence of peer relationships has also been shown to influence whether or not adolescents engage in violent behavior (Busch et al. 2015). Those who have more peer-problems can become more prone to bullying, which can then lead to disengagement from school and others leading to even more discontent and violence. Other research indicates that attitudes have a significant impact on violence (Blee 2007; Epps and Haworth 1993; White et al. 2013; Wiklund et al. 2014). These studies focus on a particular kind of attitude—one that either favors or opposes violence—and how it affects future violence. Predictably, those who have a positive attitude toward violence are much more likely to commit violent acts (White et al. 2013;

Wiklund et al. 2014). Yet, few studies have investigated the concept of the attitude of hopelessness as it relates to youth violence, and even fewer have explored it longitudinally.

HOPELESSNESS AND VIOLENT BEHAVIOR

Hopelessness and violent behavior have been discussed exhaustively in other areas, but they have rarely been discussed in conjunction with one another. Hopelessness can be a very strong emotion and, therefore, can have a significant impact on how people react to various situations. While much of the literature connects hopelessness to personal grievances (suicide, self-harm, addictions, etc.), it stands to reason that hopelessness could also be connected to social injustices as well, such as violent behavior. This kind of violence can be directed against communities, particular groups, or even specific persons depending on where the individual places blame for their feelings of hopelessness. Because violent behavior typically peaks during adolescence, this age group is an ideal population with which to examine this relationship.

Hopeless Adolescents and Violent Behavior

Feelings of hopelessness can be brought about by environmental factors such as a culture or community of violence and poverty since “neighborhoods play an important role in influencing a young person’s values” (Stoddard et al. 2011:280). When the behaviors that are modeled for a child are negative behaviors that lead to hopelessness, it is much more likely that the adolescent will mimic those behaviors and emotions. An attachment to one’s community can involve a sense of community, feelings of belonging, and a measure of community embeddedness (Boulianne and Brailey 2014) and can arise from various social relations, opportunities, and resources. If youth have negative experiences with members of their community, or limited opportunities or resources needed for a hopeful future then a lack of attachment to the adolescents’ community can arise. A disruption or detachment from an adolescents’ community,

such as a recent move, could also create a feeling of a lack of attachment to the youths' community.

Furthermore, this lack of attachment to an adolescent's community can also hamper the development of values like trust and hope, restricting an adolescent's ability to think about the future (Lorion and Saltzman 1993; McGee 1984). Thus, "if youth do not have positive expectations for the future and do not see current behaviors as linked to future goals they may not be concerned about consequences of risk taking behaviors such as criminal involvement and violent behaviors" (Stoddard, Zimmerman, and Bauermeister 2011:239). Adolescents live much more in the moment than adults, giving little thought to the path they are making for themselves; furthermore, if they do not see a way out of their dismal situations, then they feel hopeless about the inevitability of their failure.

These risk-taking behaviors can be further influenced by youths' tendency to be impulsive, which some argue is one of the reasons why violent behavior peaks in adolescence (Agnew 2003). Additionally, hopelessness can "... often result in diminished concern regarding social norms and one's future within society..." which may lead to involvement in violence (Allwood et al. 2012:116). This lack of concern for social norms, one's future in society, and the feeling that current behaviors are not linked to future goals can lead an individual acting out in violence. If individuals feel uncertain about the future, they may just want to abandon long-term goals for short ones. Risky and dangerous behavior can be associated with more immediate forms of gratification and thus becomes more attractive. Impulsivity, then, can be a kind of reaction against hopelessness; even if the things violent adolescents are accomplishing are negative, they are still accomplishing *something*. These behaviors can usually end up becoming violent (Bolland et al. 2001:238).

Another perspective on the relationship of hopelessness and violence comes from an examination of the literature on hopelessness. Much of this literature connects hopelessness to individuals at risk for suicide, and it is often assumed that the majority of those classified in the suicidal group are low activity, depressed individuals. However, Dudeck et al. (2016:352) have shown that this is not the case; their research shows that “violent criminals are overrepresented in the suicide statistics, with rates of suicides in criminals four to five times greater than those found in the general population.” Studies have consistently shown that hopelessness is a key predictor of suicide (Luo et al. 2006), and yet Dudeck’s study has shown that there are more violent criminals than there should be in the suicide statistics. Therefore, it stands to reason that there is a stronger connection between feelings of hopelessness and violent behavior than previously thought. Dudeck hypothesizes, “if externally directed aggression is non-executable, the focus might switch to one’s own person and self-directed aggression becomes more likely. Thus, aggressive behavior towards others and self-injurious or suicidal behavior may be the result of the same increased or disinhibited aggressive potential” (Dudeck et al. 2016:352). Hopelessness, therefore, can be seen to manifest itself in some sort of injurious behavior, whether it be harming others or harming oneself.

As Dudeck (2016) asserts, suicide and violent behavior are essentially the result of the same type of aggressive behavior; one is directed outward and the other is directed inward. Either way, a person is choosing to hurt a human being. Why and how this emotion is expressed in such different ways could be due to each person’s perceptions of who to blame for the feelings of hopelessness. This perception is likely to be on some sort of spectrum, where many individuals don’t blame just one person. Instead, they may have mixed feelings regarding who is at fault, whether it be themselves, others, or some combination of both. This may be why those

who are violent are also suicidal: because they can't determine precisely who they want to lash out against. Those who blame others could be more inclined to violent behavior, and those who blame themselves could be more suicidal.

I have argued that hopelessness can come from environmental factors, such as a lack of attachment to community, which can foster negative values. Moreover, if adolescents don't have positive expectations for the future and don't see their current behaviors as linked with future ones, they may abandon long-term goals for short ones, which can include violence.

Furthermore, an additional view on this connection is that hopelessness produces aggressive behavior which can result in either violent acts or suicide, depending on who the individual blames. Since hopelessness has already been well documented as a key risk factor for suicide, it stands to reason that hopelessness would be an important aspect of violent crime as well, since they can be argued to be the same general type of behavior.

Limitations in Previous Studies

Some studies have examined the relationship between hopelessness and violence (Allwood et al. 2012; Bolland 2003; Bolland et al. 2007; Bolland et al. 2001; Duke et al. 2011; Stoddard et al. 2011; Stoddard, Zimmerman, and Bauermeister 2011). However, the results are inconsistent, with some indicating that hopelessness is an important factor for predicting violence, and others finding that it is not. They also tend to be limited to specific groups, such as African Americans and high poverty inner city youths (Bolland 2003; Bolland et al. 2007; Bolland et al. 2001; Stoddard et al. 2011; Stoddard, Zimmerman, and Bauermeister 2011). Instead of focusing on subgroups of people, a broader analysis should be conducted in order to better understand how hopelessness affects a wide range of people.

Finally, studies tend to rely on cross-sectional data, with only a few studies using a longitudinal design to examine whether there is an association over time. Longitudinal studies have examined only specific groups like African Americans and those in high poverty neighborhoods, as previously mentioned (Bolland et al. 2007; Stoddard et al. 2011; Stoddard, Zimmerman, and Bauermeister 2011). If a longitudinal study included other racial groups, levels of income, and neighborhoods, it could more effectively examine the impact of feeling hopeless on future violence.

SUMMARY AND EXPECTATIONS

I have argued that for various reasons hopelessness is not the passive emotion that researchers portray it as. The very fact that hopelessness is typically connected to suicide—a very violent act against the one thing all cultures hold valuable—highlights this. Hopelessness is more than just a predictor of suicide; it is also an indication of current and future violent behavior. While triggers of violence have been researched exhaustively, hopelessness is one that has rarely seen the spotlight. Consequently, it is important to examine the effect of hopelessness on violence and to determine if the more hopeless individuals feel, the more likely they will be to participate in violent behavior. Therefore, I propose to answer the following research questions: (1) does the feeling of hopelessness influence violent behavior, and (2) does hopelessness at one point in time affect future youth violent behavior?

DATA AND METHODS

Data

The research questions are examined using Wave I (collected 1994-1995) and Wave II data (collected in 1996) from the public use data of The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health). The data consist of an in-home interview, an in-school survey, and a school

administrator survey. Through random, stratified sampling of schools in the US, students were surveyed in 132 schools that were chosen to ensure representation with respect to school size and type, ethnicity, urbanicity, and region of country (Harris et al. 2009). An in-school questionnaire was administered to more than 90,000 of these students during a 45 to 60-minute class period and included topics such as risk behaviors, self-esteem, expectations for the future, education and occupation of parents, household structure, and social and demographic characteristics of the participants.

All students who completed the In-School Questionnaire as well as those who were absent that day but were enrolled in the school qualified for the in-home sample. A random sample of 20,745 students (6,504 observations available in the public use sample, which was used in this study) was then selected for an in-home interview; this constitutes the Wave I sample. This cohort of adolescents was then followed over time. Wave II was created about a year after Wave I with almost 15,000 (4,834 in the public use sample) of the original group and includes in-home interviews with the adolescents and follow-up school administrator interviews (Harris et al. 2009). Almost all the variables used here are from Wave 1, except for the variable measuring those who moved since Wave 1 and the second measurement of violent behavior in Wave 2. The final sample size using listwise deletion was $n = 3,191$.

Outcome Variable: Violent Behavior

Eight questions from the Add Health dataset regarding violent behavior were used to create the outcome variable, violent behavior. Respondents were asked:

1. In the past 12 months, how often did you use or threaten to use a weapon to get something from someone?

2. In the past 12 months, how often did you take part in a physical fight where a group of your friends was against another group?
3. In the past 12 months, how often did you get into a serious physical fight?
4. In the past 12 months, how often did you hurt someone badly enough to need bandages or care from a doctor or nurse?

The four response categories for these questions (0 = never, 1 = one or more times, 2 = three or four times, 3 = five or more times) were dichotomized such that the individuals either did or did not commit one or more of these acts in the past 12 months. This was patterned after a similar measurement of violence (Haynie et al. 2006). Additionally, respondents were asked to indicate if in the past 12 months they had:

5. Pulled a knife or gun on someone? (yes = 1).
6. Ever carried a weapon at school? (yes =1).
7. Used a weapon in a fight? (yes =1).
8. Shot or stabbed someone? (yes = 1).

When combined, these eight responses provide a count of the total number of incidents of violent behavior by each respondent, resulting in a measure that ranged from 0-8. The same process was applied to the measurement of violent behavior at wave II.

Explanatory Variables

My first key explanatory variable is hopelessness. I use four items to capture a multidimensional view of hopelessness. Specifically, respondents were asked:

1. How often was this true during the past week? You felt hopeful about the future? (0 = most/all of the time, 1 = a lot of the time, 2 = sometimes, 3 = never/rarely).

2. How often was this true during the past week? You felt life was not worth living? (0 = never/rarely, 1 = sometimes, 2 = a lot of the time, 3 = most/all of the time).
3. What do you think are the chances that you will live to age 35? (1 = almost no chance, 2 = some chance, but probably not, 3 = a 50-50 chance, 4 = a good chance, 5 = almost certain).
4. What do you think are the chances that you will be killed by age 21? (1 = almost no chance, 2 = some chance, but probably not, 3 = a 50-50 chance, 4 = a good chance, 5 = almost certain).

I created a four-indicator factor variable of hopelessness using a principal factor method with rotated factor loadings. From the original four variables, a unidimensional factor structure emerged that accounts for 39.70% of total variance among these items.

The second key explanatory variable is minor delinquency. Accordingly, ten indicators of minor delinquency were combined: tagging, stole something worth more than \$50, stole something worth less than \$50, stole something from a house, sold drugs, deliberately damaged property, shoplifted, ran away from home, drove a car that wasn't theirs, or were loud/unruly in a public place. Each item ranged from 0-3 where 0 = never, 1 = one or more times, 2 = three or more times, and 3 = five or more times. I created an index by summing the scores across all ten indicators, resulting in a measure that ranges from 0 to 30. The Cronbach's alpha for this measure is 0.78.

An additional key explanatory variable is exposure to violence. I measure exposure to violence with a five-item index. The list of types of violence respondents were exposed to includes: they saw someone shoot/stab someone else, someone pulled a knife/gun on them, someone shot them, someone cut/stabbed them, they were jumped. Each item ranged from 0 to 3

where 0 = never, 1 = once, and 2 = more than once. Drawing on these five items I created a summative index that ranged from 0 to 10. The Cronbach's alpha for this measure is 0.66.

The fourth key explanatory variable is sense of community. This was measured with a six-item index. The six indicators of community asked if participants knew most people in their neighborhood (1 = true), have recently stopped to talk to someone who lives there (1 = true), feel that people in the neighborhood look out for each other (1 = true), feel safe in their neighborhood (1 = yes), are happy living in their neighborhood (1 = not at all, 2 = very little, 3 = somewhat, 4 = quite a bit, 5 = very much), would be happy or unhappy if they had to move (1 = very happy, 2 = a little happy, 3 = wouldn't make any differences, 4 = a little unhappy, 5 = very unhappy). I created an index by summing the scores across the six indicators, resulting in a measure that ranges from 0 to 14. The Cronbach's alpha for this measure is 0.60. A second measure of community was used to indicate whether the individuals had moved since wave I, asking if participants had lived there since the month of their last interview (no = 1). This variable is intended to measure a sense of community disruption, or detachment from community or residence.

Finally, impulsivity is the fifth key explanatory variable and was measured with the question, "When making decisions, you usually go with your 'gut feeling' without thinking too much about the consequences of each alternative?" This item is measured on a 5-point ordinal scale where higher numbers indicate stronger agreement. That is to say, higher numbers indicate an individual who relies more on their gut feeling than thinking before they act.

Control Variables

Six control variables were used in this study, four of which are age (range 10-20 in wave one), male (yes=1), Black (yes=1), and family income (ranging from \$0 to \$999 thousand in one year).

Family structure was also measured by using the legitimate skip from some of the variables. This included those that asked if the resident mother and father were born in the United States. Using legitimate skips, a family structure variable was then created indicating that participants either lived in a single parent home (yes=1) or lived with both a resident mom and dad (yes=0). Mom's education was measured as "Less than HS", "HS or equivalent", "Post HS education or some college", and "Graduated college or beyond." See Table 1 for descriptive statistics of all variables included in the analysis.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

Analytic Strategy

I analyze the data with a two-step process. First, I look at just wave I and examine whether the variables predict violent behavior cross-sectionally. Then I look at whether violent behavior in wave II is predicted by the wave I variables to determine the effects of time on the level of violence expressed. Due to the nature of the outcome variable, Poisson regression is used for this analysis. Violent behavior from wave I (measured the same way as violent behavior from wave II, as stated above) was also used as a control in the second model. The coefficients are exponentiated, thus yielding incidence rate ratios. These assess the violent crime rate of one group relative to the rate of another group. Values greater than one indicate a positive association and those between zero and one indicate a negative association.

RESULTS

Table 2 presents the results from the model predicting violent behavior in wave I. The results show that hopelessness is positively related with violent behavior: each one unit increase in hopelessness is associated with a 5.9% increase in the rate of violent behaviors. The relationship between hopelessness and violent behavior is statistically significant ($p < .05$). Minor

delinquency, exposure to violence, and impulsivity are all positively associated with violent behavior at the $p < .001$ level. Each one unit increase in minor delinquency is associated with an 8% increase in the rate of violent behaviors, and each one unit increase in exposure to violence is associated with a 24% increase in the rate of violent behaviors. A one unit increase in impulsivity is associated with a 16.2% increase in the rate of violent behaviors.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

Being male, Black, and growing up in a single parent household are all positively associated with the rate of violent behaviors at the $p < .001$ level. Males are expected to commit 54.8% more violent behaviors than females, and Blacks are expected to commit 34.2% more violent behaviors than members of other racial groups. Individuals who grew up in a single parent household are expected to commit 15.7% more violent behaviors than those who grew up in a two-parent household. Furthermore, each one unit decrease in the mother's education of the individual is associated with a 15.3% increase in the rate of violent behaviors. Community, age, and income were not significant predictors of violent behavior in this model.

Table 3 presents the results from the model predicting violent behavior in wave II. Once again, hopelessness is positively associated with violent behavior at the $p < .05$ level. Each one unit increase in hopelessness at wave one is associated with a 5.9% increase in the rate of violent behaviors at wave II, adjusting for the previous rate of violent behavior. Those who moved since wave I tended to be involved in more violent behaviors (34.7% higher). Minor delinquency is negatively associated with the rate of violent behaviors: each one unit decrease in minor delinquency in wave I being associated with a 3.2% increase in violent behaviors in wave II ($p < .001$). In this model, exposure to violence, community, impulsivity, age, male, Black, income, single parent household, mom's education, and violent behavior at wave I were not

statistically significant predictors of violent behavior at wave II.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

DISCUSSION

The first statistical model shows that hopelessness, minor delinquency, exposure to violence and impulsivity were all positively associated with violent behaviors. This supports research discussed previously (e.g., Agnew 2003; Akers 1998; Cloward and Ohlin 1960; Hartnagel and Krahn 1989; Matsueda and Anderson 1998; Olweus 1995; Osgood et al. 1996; Thornberry et al. 1994; Warr 2002). While community was not found to be a significant predictor of violence in the first model, it does show up in the second model when those who moved between wave I and wave II were found to be more likely to commit violent behaviors. The other main key explanatory variables (hopelessness, minor delinquency, exposure to violence, and impulsivity) all seem to have the expected connection with violent behavior when measured in wave I.

The majority of the control variables (male, Black, single parent household, and mom's education) also contribute to the propensity to violence, as expected. Studies indicate that those who are male and African American tend to be at higher risk for violent behavior (e.g., Stoddard, Zimmerman, and Bauermeister 2011). This is possibly due to the propensity for males to express their emotions more outwardly than females and for those among the racial minority to become more frustrated than the privileged white. Those who come from single parent homes are also at more risk for violence (e.g., Haynie, Silver, and Teasdale 2006), perhaps because these adolescents have less parental attention given at home and are thus unable to control their emotions as well as those with two parents. Furthermore, mother's education (along with income) is a measure of socioeconomic status which has been shown to have lasting effects on child development, including the propensity for violence (e.g., Anderson, Cesus, and Tekin

2015). This is possibly due to lack of opportunity, resulting in frustration and anger which can then lead to violent behavior.

The findings in this study become noteworthy when model two is examined. Almost all the previously noted predictors of violent behavior either become non-significant or turn negative except for the variables hopelessness and moved since wave I, as discussed previously. Even more interesting is the fact that violent behavior measured at time one is not predictive of violent behavior at time two, as would be expected since involvement in criminal behavior tends to be consistent for many youth over time. The results suggest that over time the typically published causes of violent behavior are not supported, except for feelings of hopelessness and a measure of community disruption. While the statistical significance of hopelessness is only at the $p < .05$ level and is associated with violent behavior at a modest level (5.9%), it is interesting that it is one of the very few factors that remains statistically significant over time. This could be because the other predictors of violence have already had attention drawn to them in research and, therefore, are being controlled over time. In other words, since so much research has already shed light on the connection between these variables and violent behavior, perhaps policies or other social strategies focused on potentially violent youth (according to current research) are working and violent behavior over time is being curbed. If this is true, however, then more focus needs to be placed on feelings of hopelessness and community disruption as other predictors of violence.

The role of hopelessness in predicting violent behavior, while not large, is still statistically significant and remains consistent over time while the other variables do not. Moreover, hopelessness has rarely been studied in association with outwardly expressed violence, focusing instead on inward aggression and harm such as suicide. This study shows that

hopelessness has an important role in predicting violent behavior and should therefore be addressed in future studies of aggression and violence.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the limited amount of research done on the relationship between hopelessness and violence. I have argued that hopelessness has an impact on violent behavior over time. Using Poisson regression, analyses indicate that those who feel more hopeless commit more violent acts over time, with almost everything else included in the analysis losing its connection to violent behavior throughout the models. This confirms the conceptual approach and hypotheses I proposed, and leads us to believe that society needs to become better at promoting hope and individuals' expectations that they have the ability to change their future. However, the data for this study was limited to the US and thus cannot be generalized to other societies. Moreover, hopelessness only accounts for 40% of the total variance among the items measured. Thus, while it may not be the best measure of this concept, this study suggests it is useful for understanding an important negative outcome. Hopelessness may not be highly predictive of violence and is likely not a leading factor in the etiology of violent behavior. Having said that, it was still one of the very few factors that remained in the model when looking at violence over time and, therefore, should still be considered when addressing this important topic.

This study shows that the typically applied concepts and variables used in the prediction of adolescent delinquency and violent behavior do not hold as well over time as hopelessness. While delinquency, exposure to violence, impulsivity, gender, race, single parent household, and parent's education are good predictors of violence in the moment, they become non-significant over time. Hopelessness, however, persists over time. This shows that more research needs to be

done on the concepts of hope and hopelessness and the effects that individual attitudes have on aggressive behavior over time.

Future research should also try to find a better measure of hopelessness since it is an attitude that deals with expectations over time, which is one of the main findings of this study. Additionally, more in depth investigations of hopelessness regarding peers, community, and family could also be conducted to determine the extent to which hopelessness arises and is formed in the individual and their surroundings. Furthermore, since adolescence is arguably different in other cultures, future research could also examine what hopelessness looks like in other areas of the world and how it also might affect youth violent behavior there.

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TABLES

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	Mean^a	SD
<i>Outcome variables</i>		
Violent behavior (wave 1)	0.92	1.43
Violent behavior (wave 2)	0.65	1.28
<i>Explanatory variables</i>		
Hopelessness		
Factor variable	0.00	0.99
Feel hopeless	1.12	0.98
Chances live to age 35	1.60	0.83
Chances killed age 21	1.64	0.79
Life not worth living	0.15	0.47
Minor delinquency	2.20	3.28
Exposure to violence	0.45	1.08
Community	10.65	2.50
Moved since wave 1	10.69	
Impulsivity	2.98	1.14
<i>Controls</i>		
Age	15.01	1.62
Income	49.11	59.06
Mom's education	2.72	1.04
Male	47.88	
Black	22.88	
Single parent household	29.11	

Note: ^a Proportions are presented for categorical variables. N = 3,191

Table 2. Determinants of Violent Behavior (wave 1)

<i>Explanatory Variables</i>	Coefficient
Hopelessness	1.059**
Minor delinquency	1.080***
Exposure to violence	1.240***
Community	0.996
Impulsivity	1.162***
<i>Controls</i>	
Age	1.000
Male	1.548***
Black	1.342***
Income	1.000
Single parent household	1.157***
Mom's education	0.847***
<i>Constant</i>	0.410***
<i>LR chi2(11)</i>	2123.54
<i>Prob > chi2</i>	0.000
<i>Pseudo R2</i>	0.223
<i>Valid N</i>	3191

*** Significance at the p<.0001 level

** Significance at the p<.01 level

* Significance at the p<.05 level

Table 3. Determinants of Violent Behavior (wave 2)

<i>Explanatory Variables</i>	Coefficient
Hopelessness	1.059*
Minor delinquency	0.968***
Exposure to violence	1.01
Community	1.007
Moved since wave 1	1.347***
Impulsivity	0.99
<i>Controls</i>	
Age	0.991
Male	0.941
Black	0.963
Income	1.000
Single parent household	1.034
Mom's education	1.031
Violent behavior (wave 1)	0.998
<i>Constant</i>	0.691
<i>LR chi2(13)</i>	48.94
<i>Prob > chi2</i>	0.000
<i>Pseudo R2</i>	0.006
<i>Valid N</i>	3191

*** Significance at the p<.0001 level

** Significance at the p<.01 level

* Significance at the p<.05 level