

Head Start Families and the Challenges They Encounter



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Paper Topics

- Maternal Depression**
- Exposure to Violence**
- Involvement with Criminal Justice System**
- Cumulative Risk Factors**



Maternal Depression

CES-D Depression Scale

- ❑ A 12-item scale measuring levels of depression
- ❑ Score range 0-36

Mean = 7.6

SD = 6.7

alpha = .86



Over One Fourth Were Classified as Moderately or Severely Depressed

Not Depressed **41%**

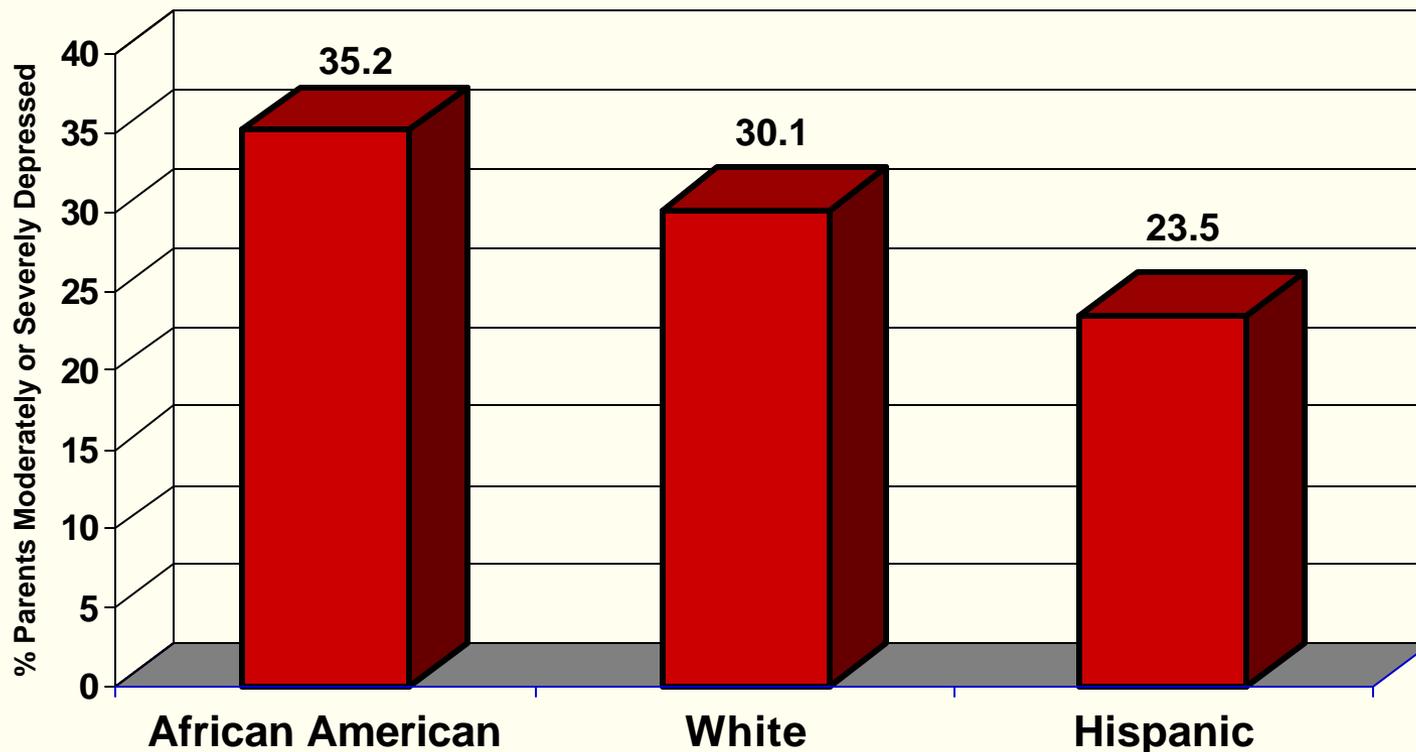
Mildly Depressed **28%**

Moderately Depressed **16%**

Severely Depressed **13%**



Levels of Depression Varied by Ethnicity





Mothers Were Less Depressed When Fathers Lived in the Home

**% Classified as Moderately or
or Severely Depressed**

Without Father in Home

33%

With Father in Home

23%



Maternal Depression Had Significant Effects on Parents

Parents who were more depressed ...

- Were more likely to have lost employment from fall to spring,
- Had a lower household income,
- Had a need for and used more social services,
- Had a more external locus of control,
- Had less social support,
- Were more likely to live with smokers or problem drinkers,
- Engaged in fewer safety practices with their children.



Maternal Depression Had Significant Effects On Children's Outcomes

When parents were more depressed, they ...

- Participated in fewer activities with their children,
- Reported more problem behavior for their children,
- Reported less positive social behavior for their children,
- Reported lower emergent literacy skills for their children,
- Were almost twice as likely to spank their children.



Maternal Depression Had an Effect On Children's Cognitive Outcomes

Children of parents who were severely depressed did significantly worse on ...

One-to-One Counting
(early math, labeling)

Book Knowledge
(book familiarity)

Color Naming
(expressive vocabulary)

Creativity
(Self-expression)

Design Copying
(perceptual-motor skills)

Social Awareness
(oral communication about self)

WJ Dictation Tasks
(early writing, letters)

WJ Letter-Word ID
(letter recognition, word decoding)



Exposure to Violence

5-Item Measure of Neighborhood/Personal Violence

- Saw non-violent crime in neighborhood
- Saw violent crime in neighborhood
- Know victim of violent crime in neighborhood
- Victim of violent crime in neighborhood
- Victim of violent crime in home

Score range 0-15

Mean = 6.1

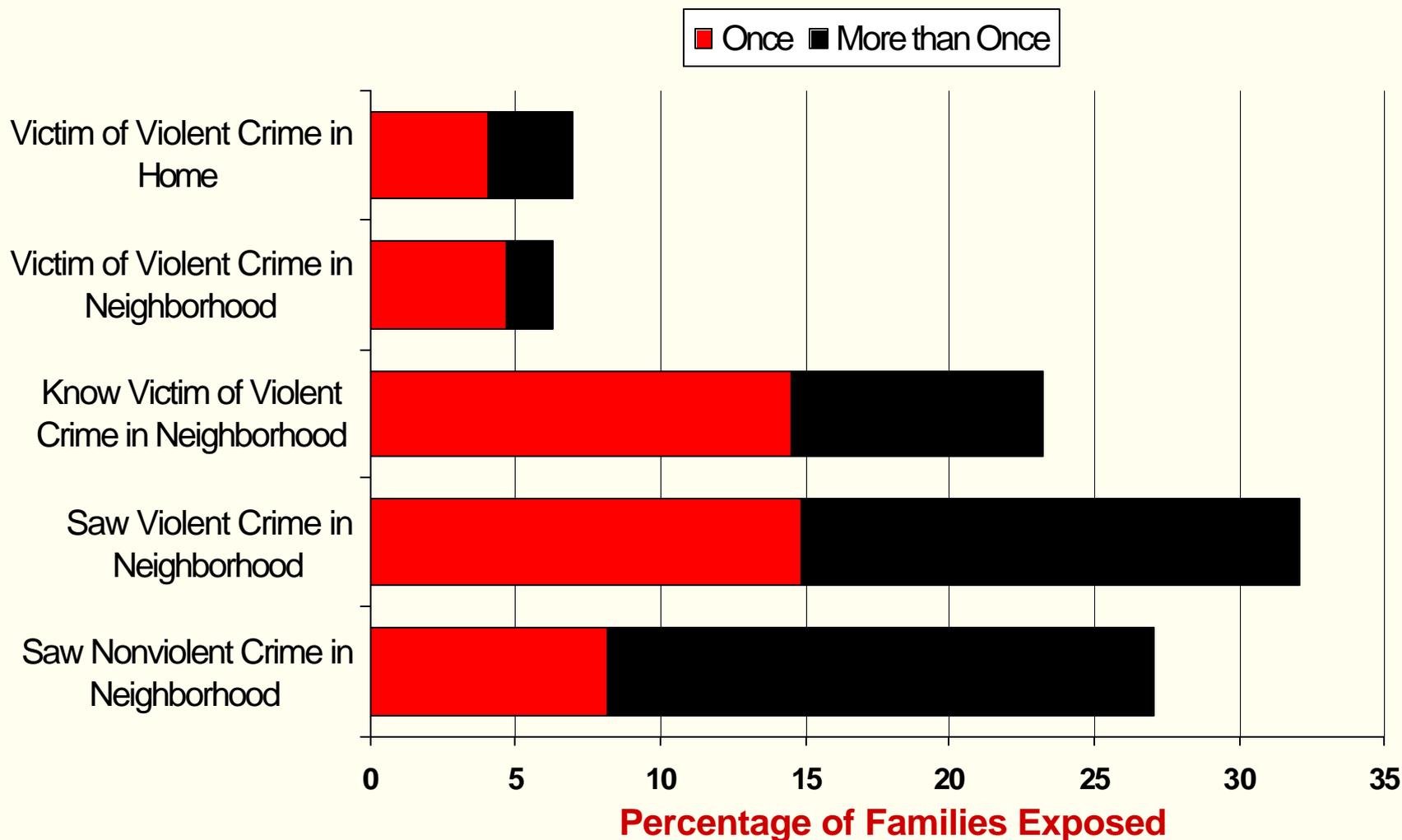
SD = 1.6

Response Categories

Never, Once, More than once

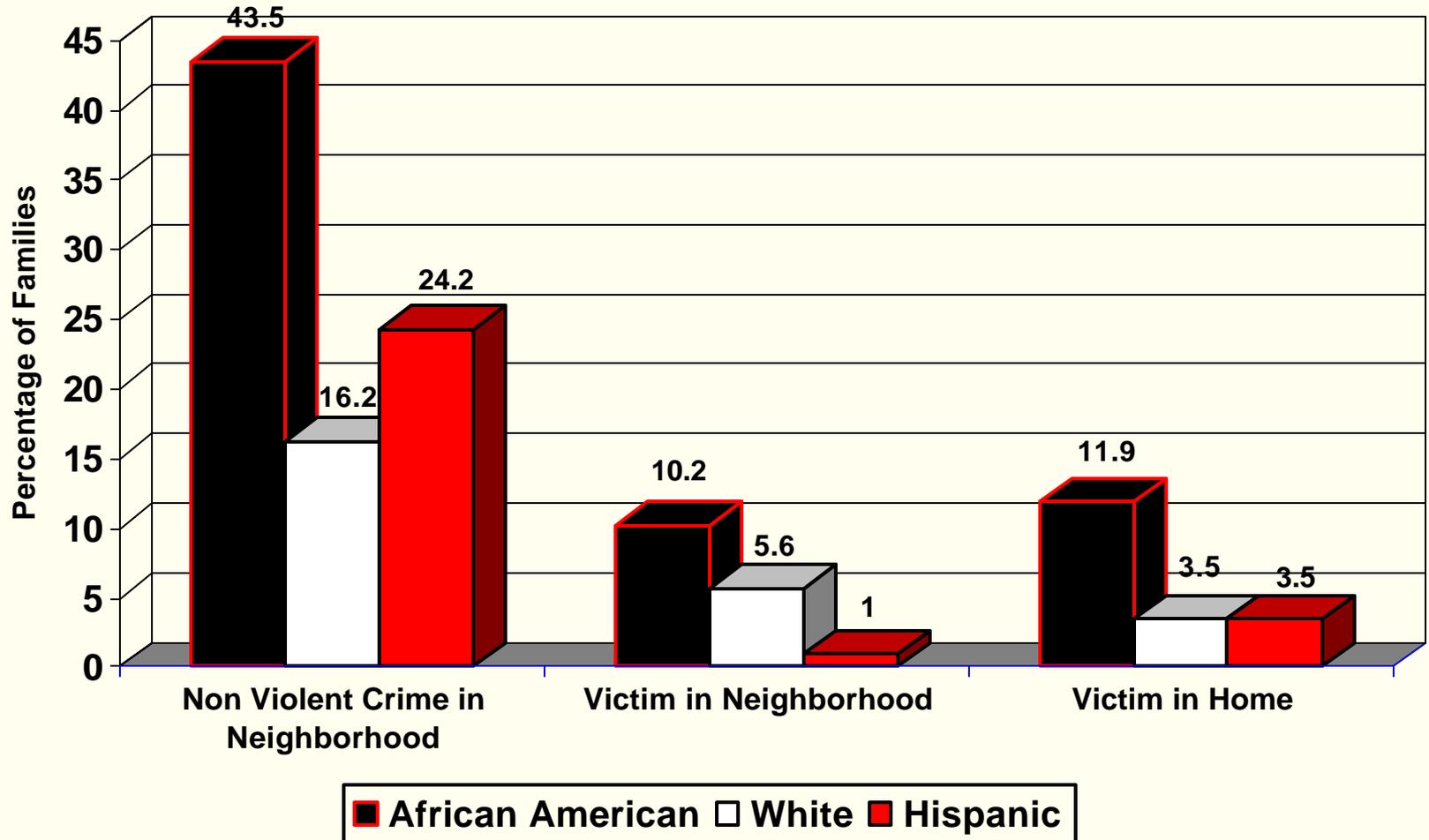


The Reality of Violence was Very Close to Many Head Start Families





Exposure to Violence Varied Across Ethnic Groups





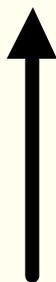
Exposure to Violence Has Direct and Indirect Effects on Child Outcomes

Parents who lived in more violent neighborhoods reported ...

More Aggressive
Child Behavior



More Hyperactive
Child Behavior



More Withdrawn
Child Behavior



Less Positive
Social Behavior



More Maternal
Depression

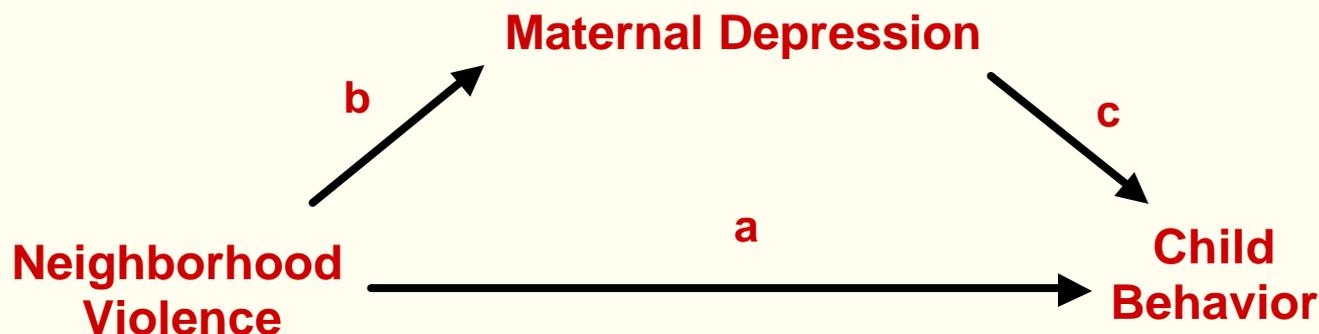




Maternal Depression Mediated the Relationship Between Neighborhood Violence and Child Behavior

Correlation between

- a. Neighborhood Violence and Child Behavior** $r = .09, p < .0001$
- b. Neighborhood Violence and Maternal Depression** $r = .26, p < .0001$
- c. Maternal Depression and Child Behavior** $r = .28, p < .0001$





Involvement with the Criminal Justice System

Parents reported . . .

...whether they, another household member (or a non-household biological parent) had been arrested or charged with a crime by the police.

If yes, parents indicated:

- Relationship of this person to the child, and**
- Whether or not this person spent time in jail.**



More than One Fifth of Head Start Families Had Involvement with the Criminal Justice System

23% of families had someone arrested or charged with crime.

18% reported someone had spent time in jail.

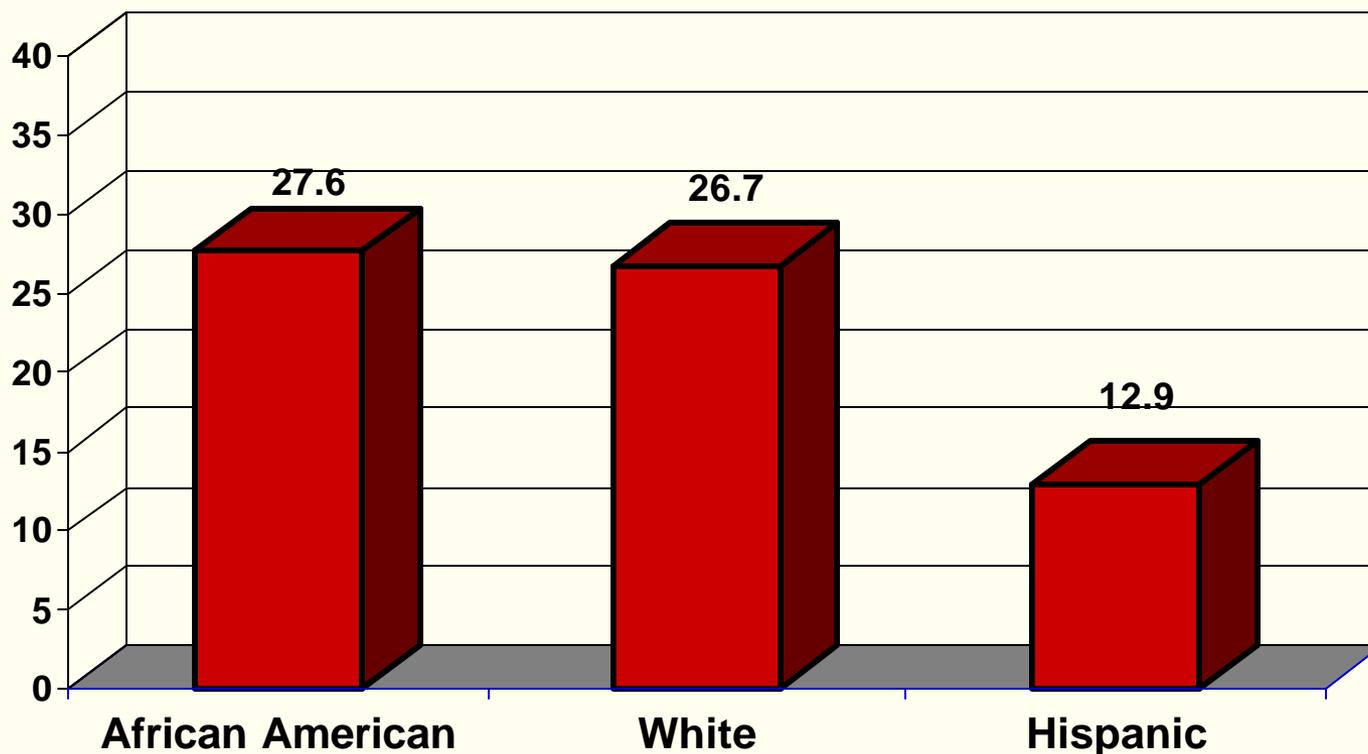
94% of those who were arrested were mothers or fathers.

17% of all fathers, and

5% of all mothers were arrested or charged with a crime.



Involvement with the Criminal Justice System Varied by Ethnicity



Families Who Reported Someone Who Was Arrested or Charged with a Crime



Involvement with the Criminal Justice System Impacted Families

Families with members who had been arrested or charged with a crime were . . .

Almost twice as likely to have parents who were depressed.

2.5 times more likely to be families headed by single mothers.

Over 4-times more likely to have parents who have been victims of violent crime in their homes.

Children from Families Who Had Someone Arrested



Were at Risk for Exposure to Violence

- Almost 5-times more likely to have been a witness to violent crime or domestic violence, and
- 4-times more likely to have been a victim of violent crime or domestic violence.

Were Reported by Teachers to

- Have more problem behavior, and
- Be more aggressive and hyperactive.

Had Lower Scores on

- McCarthy Draw-A-Design Task, and
- Woodcock-Johnson Letter-Word Identification Task.



Cumulative Family Risk

6-item Risk Index

- Child not living with two parents
- Head of household a high school dropout
- Family income below the poverty line
- Child living with parent(s) who did not have steady, full-time employment
- Family receiving welfare benefits
- Child did not have health insurance

Score range 0-6

Mean = 2.21

SD = 1.39



Cumulative Risk

21% of the families had 4 or more risk factors

Parents from families with four or more risk factors

- Were** more depressed
- Reported** less social support
- Had a** more external locus of control



Children from Families with 4+ Risk Factors Were Negatively Affected

- ❑ Reported by teachers to have more problem behavior
- ❑ Had significantly lower scores on:

One-to-One Counting
(early math and labeling)

Book Knowledge
(familiarity with books)

Color Naming
(expressive vocabulary)

Design Copying
(perceptual-motor skills)

Print Concepts
(print conventions)

PPVT
(receptive vocabulary, general knowledge)

WJ Dictation
(early writing, letters)

WJ Applied Problems
(early math, problem solving)

WJ Letter-Word ID
(letter recognition, word decoding)