

NAME OF PRESENTING AUTHOR: Shelley Gresko

EMAIL ADDRESS OF PRESENTING AUTHOR: shelly.gresko@colorado.edu

An Examination of Early Socioeconomic Status and Neighborhood Disadvantage as Independent Predictors of Antisocial Behavior: A Longitudinal Adoption Study

Shelley A. Gresko^{1,2*}, Laura Hink^{1,2*}, Robin P. Corley², Elizabeth Muñoz³, Chandra A. Reynolds⁴, Soo Hyun Rhee^{1,2}

¹Department of Psychology and Neuroscience, University of Colorado Boulder, USA

²Institute for Behavioral Genetics, University of Colorado Boulder, USA

³Department of Human Development and Family Sciences, University of Texas Austin, USA

⁴Institute for Integrative Genome Biology, University of California Riverside, USA

*Denotes co-first authors

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ABSTRACT: Prior research consistently shows that low socioeconomic status (SES) and neighborhood disadvantage predict antisocial behavior. However, few studies have addressed whether SES and neighborhood disadvantage are independent predictors of antisocial behavior. Additionally, mechanisms underlying this association remain unclear. With the goal of broadening our understanding of this area, the present study has the following aims: 1) determine whether SES and neighborhood disadvantage are independent predictors of antisocial behavior, 2) test whether associations are primarily influenced via environmental mediation or passive gene–environment correlation, 3) examine sex differences in associations. The present study uses data from the Colorado Adoption Project. SES (parental education and occupation) was assessed from birth to age 1. A neighborhood deprivation composite was created for familial address at birth to age 1, using the following census tract indicators: (1) median household income, (2) percent with a high school degree or less, (3) percent owner occupied units, (4) percent in poverty, (5) percent unemployment, (6) median contract rent, and (7) percent of female headed families. Antisocial behavior was assessed by parents (via the externalizing scale of the Child Behavior Checklist) and teachers (via the externalizing scale of the Teacher Report Form) from age 7-16. We will use latent growth curve modeling to examine the initial levels of and change in antisocial behavior. Data from adoptive and non-adoptive families will be examined to distinguish whether the associations between potential predictors and antisocial behavior are due to environmental mediation and/or passive gene–environment correlation.

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