

Introduction

- Parenting practices have been linked consistently to delinquency in youth. For example, parental monitoring and discipline relate negatively to violent and delinquent behavior (e.g., Fulkerson, Pasch, Kerry, & Komro, 2008; Laird, Pettit, Bates, & Dodge, 2003).
- Relatively little research has examined potential variation of the link between parenting practices and aggression for different ethnic groups, socioeconomic levels, or family structures.
- There is evidence of such variation. Deater-Deckard & Dodge (1997) report that harsh parental discipline is positively related to delinquency for White children, but not for African American children.
- More research is needed to determine the link between parenting practices and delinquency among subgroups of youth to more accurately target family prevention and intervention services.
- The purpose of this study is to examine moderation effects of family characteristics (ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and presence of an adult male in the household) on the relation between parental monitoring and physical aggression in a diverse sample of high-risk adolescents.

Participants

- N=1235; 65% Male, Sixth grade students.
- 83% African American, 15% Hispanic, 13% White, 0.65% Native American.
- High-risk sample, selected based on teacher nominations on the basis of two criteria: a history of aggressive and disruptive behavior in the classroom, and the students' relative level of influence on other students.
- Selected from four sites: Richmond, VA; Durham, NC; Chicago, Illinois; and Atlanta, Georgia.

Measures

Dependent Variable

- The *Problem Behavior Frequency Scale* (PBFS; Farrell, Kung, White, Valois, 2000) was used to measure self-reported physical aggression in the past 30 days. The physical aggression subscale is composed of 7 items (e.g., "Been in a fight in which someone was hit"). Responses were recorded on a 6-point scale ranging from "Never" to "20 or more times." This scale has demonstrated good reliability with our sample ($\alpha = .80$).

Independent Variable

Parenting Practices Scale:

- Parental monitoring was measured using a latent construct collapsing three scales (for details see Gorman-Smith, Tolan, Zelli, & Huesmann, 1996).
- Example item: How often does a parent talk with you about what you had actually done during the day?
- Responses are composite scores combining both parent and child report ($\alpha = .80$).

Moderating Variables

- Student-reported ethnicity was dummy coded with African American as the reference group. Hispanic students were grouped into one category, and Caucasian and other ethnicities were grouped into another category.
- For each student, a poverty threshold was calculated using the national census data. For this analysis, we used a binary variable indicating that the student was above or below the poverty threshold.
- Each student was asked to report on the presence/absence of an adult male in the household.

Results

- After controlling for residence, school, and intervention condition, results indicate a significant main effect for parental monitoring in negatively predicting increases in physical aggression. In addition, residence site also related to change over the study period. With these variables considered, there were no significant interaction effects.

Table 1. Hierarchical Linear Regression with Parental Monitoring and Family Demographics Predicting Change in Physical Aggression.

| | | B | t | ΔR^2 | ΔF |
|--------|------------------------------|-------|---------|--------------|------------|
| Step 1 | Control & Aggression entered | | | 0.28 | 65.16* |
| | Study Site | 0.06 | 2.11* | | |
| | School ID | -0.01 | -0.42 | | |
| | Universal | 0.03 | 1.08 | | |
| | Targeted | -0.04 | -1.24 | | |
| | Combined | 0.01 | 0.01 | | |
| | Physical Aggression Time 1 | 0.52 | 19.27** | | |

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Notes: Targeted, Universal, and Combined are controls for intervention status; Mon = Monitoring; SES = socioeconomic status; Hisp = Hispanic; Adult Male = Adult Male present in household; Gen = Gender; Dem = Demographics.

Table 1 Continued

| | | B | t | ΔR^2 | ΔF |
|--------|---------------------------------|-------|---------|--------------|------------|
| Step 2 | Main Effect Dem Added | | | 0.01 | 1.37 |
| | Study Site | 0.07 | 2.40* | | |
| | School ID | -0.02 | -0.76 | | |
| | Universal | 0.03 | 1.01 | | |
| | Targeted | -0.05 | -1.37 | | |
| | Combined | 0.01 | 0.03 | | |
| | Physical Aggression | 0.51 | 18.58** | | |
| | Mon | -0.06 | -2.06* | | |
| | SES | 0.01 | 0.12 | | |
| | Hisp | 0.02 | 0.73 | | |
| | White | 0.01 | 0.09 | | |
| | Adult Male | 0.04 | 1.41 | | |
| Step 3 | Dem Interactions with Mon | | | 0.01 | 0.89 |
| | Study Site | 0.07 | 2.39* | | |
| | School ID | -0.03 | -0.77 | | |
| | Universal | 0.03 | 1.02 | | |
| | Targeted | -0.04 | -1.33 | | |
| | Combined | 0.01 | 0.04 | | |
| | Physical Aggression | 0.51 | 18.53** | | |
| | Mon | -0.06 | -1.11 | | |
| | SES | 0.20 | 1.05 | | |
| | Hisp | 0.24 | 1.22 | | |
| | White | 0.03 | 0.16 | | |
| | Adult Male | -0.23 | -1.18 | | |
| | Mon X SES | -0.21 | -1.04 | | |
| | Mon X Hisp | -0.22 | -1.12 | | |
| | Mon X White | -0.03 | -0.14 | | |
| | Mon X Adult Male | 0.28 | 1.39 | | |
| Step 4 | Interactions of Gen, Dem, & Mon | | | 0.01 | 1.28 |
| | Study Site | 0.08 | 2.42* | | |
| | School ID | -0.03 | -0.84 | | |
| | Universal | 0.03 | 1.05 | | |
| | Targeted | -0.05 | -1.37 | | |
| | Combined | 0.01 | 0.02 | | |
| | Physical Aggression | 0.51 | 18.56** | | |
| | Monitoring | -0.05 | -0.98 | | |
| | SES | 0.23 | 1.16 | | |
| | Hisp | 0.28 | 1.43 | | |
| | White | 0.01 | 0.07 | | |
| | Adult Male | -0.22 | -1.14 | | |
| | Mon X SES | -0.23 | -1.12 | | |
| | Mon X Hisp | -0.20 | -1.00 | | |
| | Mon X White | -0.05 | -0.23 | | |
| | Mon X Adult Male | 0.28 | 1.38 | | |
| | Mon X SES X Gen | -0.01 | -0.14 | | |
| | Mon X Hisp X Gen | -0.08 | -1.63 | | |
| | Mon X White X Gen | 0.05 | 0.95 | | |
| | Mon X Adult Male X Gen | -0.02 | -0.38 | | |

Discussion and Implications

- Findings indicate that parental monitoring is negatively related to physical aggression in adolescence.
- The study results do not support the finding that monitoring effects on change in aggression vary by gender, ethnicity, household makeup, or poverty level.
- Monitoring is an important factor to target in prevention and intervention services aimed at reducing aggression for all groups (Dishion & McMahon, 1998).

References

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