Parent-adolescent discrepancies of parental monitoring and adolescent delinquency

LISA KAN, JENNA TOMEI, CARLA G. MUNOZ, HYEMIN JEON, CRAIG HENDERSON, GAYLE DAKOF, & HOWARD LIDDLE

Sam Houston State University | shsu.edu | MEMBER THE TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
Researchers and practitioners utilize multiple informants when assessing childhood psychopathology.

However, discrepancies exist among these different informants (Achenbach, McConaughy, & Howell, 1987)

- Effects = difficulties in making diagnoses, negotiating treatment goals, and targeting appropriate problem areas during treatment (e.g., Hawley & Weisz, 2003; Yeh & Weisz, 2001)
Informant Discrepancies

- Informant discrepancies are often interpreted as bias or measurement error (Beck et al. 2006; Guion et al. 2009)

- Yet, discrepancies might be meaningful in predicting behavior over time (e.g., De Los Reyes et al., 2013)
Lack of parental control is associated with higher levels of delinquency and criminal behavior (e.g., Harris-McKoy & Cui, 2012; Hoeve et al., 2009)

Poor monitoring, parental rejection, and family conflict influence the development of mental health illness, substance abuse, and behavioral problems in adolescents (Rowe, 2010)
De Los Reyes et al. (2009): mothers who reported higher levels of parental monitoring, in comparison to their child’s ratings, had children who reported greater levels of juvenile delinquency two years later.
Current Study

- Current study extended these findings:
  - Data from a MDFT randomized clinical trial (Henderson, Dakof, Greenbaum, & Liddle, 2010) involving detained, substance-abusing juvenile offenders
  - Measured delinquent behaviors by both self-report and juvenile justice data

- Hypothesis: informant discrepancies with parents reporting higher levels of monitoring than adolescents will be associated with higher levels of self-reported and official counts of delinquent behaviors
Methods

Population:
• 154 youths and their families
  o 83% male
  o 61% African American
  o Average age of 15.4 years
  o 65% reported a single-parent home environment.

• Multidimensional Family Therapy (Rowe, 2010; Henderson et al., 2010)
  o Reduction in: involvement with antisocial peers, delinquency, substance use
  o Improvement in: academic performance & internalizing symptoms
Methods

Measures:
- Parenting Monitoring Scale (Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992) completed by parents and adolescents at 8 time points (from baseline to 42 months post-intake).
- Adolescents’ delinquent activities: National Youth Survey Self Report Delinquency Scale (SRD; Elliot, Huizinga, & Ageton, 1985), and the juvenile justice records up to nine months post-intake.

Procedures:
1. Parental Monitoring Scale total scores converted into z-scores
2. Adolescents’ Z scores – Parents’ Z scores
3. Natural log transformation of the SRD total scores.
Preliminary Results

- **Group 1**: no differences in adolescents reporting higher levels of parental monitoring
- **Group 2**: parents reporting higher levels of parental monitoring
## Effect Sizes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Intake</th>
<th>3M</th>
<th>6M</th>
<th>9M</th>
<th>18M</th>
<th>24M</th>
<th>36M</th>
<th>42M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group 1</strong></td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>1.31 (1.32)</td>
<td>0.56 (0.98)</td>
<td>0.78 (1.14)</td>
<td>0.80 (1.19)</td>
<td>0.79 (1.19)</td>
<td>0.88 (1.09)</td>
<td>0.60 (1.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group 2</strong></td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>1.95 (1.57)</td>
<td>0.98 (1.14)</td>
<td>0.86 (1.12)</td>
<td>1.05 (1.19)</td>
<td>1.25 (1.43)</td>
<td>1.00 (1.26)</td>
<td>0.86 (1.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>d</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preliminary Results

- 1-1. Adolescents in Group 2 generally reported more delinquent behavior, except for 42-months post intake when the trend was reversed.

- 1-2. Results involving official arrest and charge data were not significant, which might be in part due to substantial number of adolescents who did not have any post-intake contact with the juvenile justice system.
Discussion

• **Summary**
  - Results suggest informant discrepancy can be informative
  - Consistent with hypothesis, parents reporting higher levels of parental monitoring have adolescents reporting higher levels of delinquency

• **Implications**
  - Suggesting that informant discrepancy of parental monitoring can be a helpful indicator of treatment progress in family therapies, as improved communication is often a targeted area.

• **Further research**
  - Exploring how treatment affects informant discrepancy and if decreases in informant discrepancies predict better outcomes
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