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Parenting Styles, Peer Pressure, and the Formation of Antisocial Behavior

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Parenting Styles, Peer Pressure, and the formation of Antisocial Behavior

By

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Abstract

The current study examined the relationship between antisocial behavior, negative parenting, and peer pressure. It was predicted that peer pressure and negative parenting would be positively correlated with antisocial behavior, but that negative parenting would be more statistically significant. There were 177 male and female college students who completed the Subtypes of Antisocial Behavior questionnaire, the Measurement of Parenting Style, the Peer Pressure and Popularity questionnaire, and a short demographics survey. Results indicated that negative parenting and peer pressure were both related to antisocial behavior ($p < .001$). However, the final hypothesis was rejected because the results indicated that peer pressure ($p < .001$) and not negative parenting ($p < .05$), showed to be more statistically significant. It may be suggested that peer pressure may overpower parenting, after a certain age.

Table of Contents

Problem Statement

Antisocial behavior is a prominent issue in many different communities. According to

Burt and Donnellan (2009), antisocial behavior consists of destructive actions that are harmful to

others in society. These behaviors can include illegal activities as well as harming people in

interpersonal manners (Burt & Donnellan, 2009). Antisocial behavior includes theft, threats,

fighting, vandalism, rudeness, using illegal drugs, underage drinking, littering, having anger

issues, manipulating others, verbal abuse, and much more. Many researchers have set out to

detect what factors lead to this type of behavior. Even though there has been a lot of research

done to detect the factors that are possible contributors to antisocial behavior, there have only

been a few studies that have compared the effects of different factors. Both parenting and peer

pressure have been shown to play a role in the presence of antisocial behavior. However, there is

not a lot of research available to determine which factor is a stronger contributor to the presence

of antisocial behavior. Therefore, the present study will focus on which of these factors have a

stronger association with antisocial behavior.

Peer pressure is defined as the social pressure to adopt certain behaviors in order to fit in

with others (Santor, Messervey, & Kusumakar, 2000). The different parenting styles that were

examined in this study included neglectful, authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive.

Neglectful parents exhibit a lack of control and lack of support and protection (Hoeve, Blokland,

Dubas, Loeber, Gerris, & Van Der Laan, 2008). Authoritarian parents are overprotective and

believe in harsh punishment (Hoeve et al., 2008). Authoritative parents show high levels of

support and have effective communication with their children (Hoeve et al., 2008). Permissive

parents give their children high levels of independence, which results in low levels of parental

guidance (Schaffer, Clark, & Jeglic, 2009). The present study focused on the negative behaviors

of parenting. Negative parenting includes behaviors such as abuse, neglect, over control, and harsh punishment (Hoeve et al., 2008).

Even though the literature indicates that peer pressure has a significant relationship with antisocial behavior, it was predicted that negative parenting will have a greater impact than peer pressure as it relates to antisocial behavior in the present study. It was hypothesized that negative parenting such as abuse, neglect, and overprotection will have a stronger relation to the presence of high levels of antisocial behavior than peer pressure will.

Literature Review

What is Antisocial Behavior?

Antisocial behavior is an issue among children, adolescents, and adults. Patterson, Debaryshe, and Ramsey (1993) defined antisocial behavior as aggressive, illegal, or relational offenses that cause distrust in the human race. This is a huge problem in society, because these offenses seem to have a negative effect on all people, no matter what age group the behavior is taking place among (Patterson et al., 1993). Antisocial behavior consists of behavior that violates social norms (Burt & Donnellan, 2009). Antisocial behavior can also be classified into two different categories: covert and overt behaviors (Willoughby, Kupersmidt, & Bryant, 2001; Burt & Donnellan, 2009). Willoughby et al. (2001) stated that overt antisocial behavior is confrontational behavior that is not concealed, while covert antisocial behavior is hidden and non-confrontational.

Burt and Donnellan (2009) used the Subtypes of Antisocial Behavior Questionnaire (STAB) to classify antisocial behavior into three subtypes: physical aggression, social aggression, and rule-breaking. Physical aggression includes fighting, physical bullying, getting angry, having anger management issues, and threatening others (Baldry & Farrington, 2000; Burt

2

& Donnellan, 2009). Social aggression is defined as behavior that is harmful to those who are in social relationships (Burt & Donnellan, 2009). This type of behavior can include gossiping, spreading rumors, purposefully trying to destroy one's reputation, and trying to hurt one's feelings by being negative toward their appearance, actions, and beliefs (Burt & Donnellan, 2009). Rule-breaking can include theft, selling drugs, vandalism, being suspended from school or work, and littering (Burt & Donnellan, 2009). Researchers have not only investigated the types of antisocial behavior, they have also researched the factors that possibly contribute to its formation.

Parenting Styles

Parenting styles are one of the most commonly reported contributors to antisocial behavior (Patterson, Debaryshe, & Ramsey, 1990; Schaffer et al, 2009; Hoeve et al, 2008). There are four conceptual types of parenting styles: authoritarian style, authoritative style, permissive style, and neglectful style (Hoeve, Dubas, Eichelsheim, Van Der Laan, Smeenk, & Gerris, 2009). Authoritarian parents show high levels of control, supervision, harsh punishment, coercion, and moderate levels of love, withdrawal, and support (Hoeve et al., 2008; Hoeve et al., 2009). Authoritative parents show high levels of support, effective communication skills, and supervision without using harsh punishment (Hoeve et al., 2008; Hoeve et al., 2009). Permissive parents are defined as parents who give their children too much freedom, without interfering in the child's daily activities (Schaffer et al., 2009). Neglectful parents are defined as having inadequate punishment skills and displaying very low supervision or control (Hoeve et al., 2008). Parenting styles play a significant role in shaping the personality and behaviors of children, therefore each of these parenting styles have been found to have different effects on children and their behavior (Hoeve et al., 2008).

Steinberg, Eisengart, and Cauffman (2006) found that children who have authoritative parents appear to be socially mature, less likely to be influenced by peer pressure, and more likely to be successful in school. Children who were raised under neglectful parenting styles were found to be less mature and more likely to be influenced by their peers (Steinberg et al., 2006). Those who were raised under either authoritarian or permissive parenting styles were found to be somewhere in between the characteristics of authoritative and neglectful parenting styles (Steinberg et al., 2006).

Neglectful and permissive parenting, which both involve very few disciplinary actions lack of supervision, and lack of support, were found to have the strongest links to antisocial behavior (Schaffer et al., 2009; Hoeve et al., 2009; Hoeve et al., 2008; Mullens, 2004; Wright & Cullen, 2001). Researchers have consistently hypothesized that authoritarian parenting would lead to higher levels of antisocial behavior, but it was found in contrast that styles that were based on non-involvement (i.e. neglectful and permissive) have more of an effect than the styles that include harsh punishment, coercion, and high levels of support and control (Schaffer et al., 2009). Schaffer et al. (2009) stated that although authoritarian parenting styles do have a negative effect on children, neglectful and permissive parenting styles have a longer lasting negative effect on the growth and development of adolescents, which can relate to the formation of antisocial behavior.

Researchers have found that support, empathy, protection, supervision, and affection are needed in order to develop as a psychosocially mature, competent, and responsible individual (Wright & Cullen, 2001; Steinberg et al., 2006). Loeber (1990) concluded that there is a special time in every child's life, which is typically the critical period during an individual's early childhood that a bond is formed with a primary caregiver. Loeber (1990) stated, "This helps

them to learn prosocial skills and unlearn aggressive or acting out behaviors. Without such attachment or bonding, the socialization process by adults will be a much more arduous task (p. 27)". Murray and Farrington (2005) conducted a study about how the absence of parents affects adolescents and it was concluded that neglectful parenting or being separated from parents can cause low levels of support and the lack of an emotional connection between a parent and a child. These factors may contribute to the formation of antisocial behavior and juvenile delinquency (Murray & Farrington, 2005).Wright and Cullen (2001) strengthened the claim that styles of parenting are crucial to the development of a child by stating that negative behaviors can be diminished by strong attachments between parents and children, moderate levels of parental supervision, and the enforcement of household rules. Although parenting styles have been deemed to be a contributor to antisocial behavior, it is not the only interpersonal factor that can lead to antisocial behavior. Adolescents can form relationships with deviant peers and undergo high levels of peer pressure to engage in antisocial behavior.

Peer Pressure

Several empirical studies have established a link between peer pressure and antisocial behavior (Mahoney & Stattin, 2000; Chung & Steinberg, 2006; Zinzow, Ruggiero, Hanson, Smith, Sanders, & Kilpatrick, 2009; Santor et al, 2000). Chung and Steinberg (2006) found that children begin to depend on their peers for acceptance, rather than their parents, during adolescence. Peer pressure eventually becomes harder to resist at this stage such that the opinions of peers often matter more than those of parents (Santor et al., 2000; Zinzow et al., 2009).

In a study that was focused on how violence in the community relates to delinquency and substance use in adolescents, Zinzow et al. (2009) found that when adolescents form

relationships with people who display antisocial behavior, they are likely to take part in the behavior themselves. In another study on peer pressure and antisocial behavior, Mahoney and Stattin (2000) found no relationship between the students' amount of free time outside of school activities and household chores and antisocial behavior. However, they did find that if adolescents spent time with deviant peers, who consumed drugs and alcohol, did not attend school regularly, and were physically aggressive, the adolescents were more likely to engage in antisocial behavior as well (Mahoney & Stattin, 2000).

Value to Discipline

Research has shown a relationship between antisocial behavior, parenting styles, and peer pressure, however there were few comparisons done to detect which may have a greater effect on antisocial behavior. The present study addressed this gap by investigating whether parenting or peer pressure plays a bigger role in the presence of antisocial behavior. It examined the claim that negative parenting has an effect on the growth and development of individuals and may possibly lead to antisocial behavior (Schaffer et al., 2009). This study contributes to the understanding of antisocial behavior by creating a better understanding of which factors should be addressed to lessen the amount of antisocial behavior in society. Research has suggested that without support, empathy, protection, supervision, and affection from a parent, one may be more prone to antisocial behavior, even without the influence of peer pressure. Negative parenting was defined as neglect, over control, physical abuse, verbal abuse, and indifference. Peer pressure was defined as being heavily influenced to partake in antisocial behaviors one would not be a part of if it were not for others.

Method

Participants

Participants included 34 male and 143 female undergraduate college students who ranged from the ages of 18 to 51 (M= 20.67, SD= 4.54), 89.9 % of whom were between the ages of 18 and 23. Of the 177 participants, 57.9 % were Caucasian, 35.4 % were African American, 2.2 % were Hispanic/Latino, 1.1% were Asian, 0.6 % were Native American, 0.6% were Biracial, and 1.7 % were some "Other" race/ethnicity. These participants were all enrolled in psychology courses.

Materials

Demographic Form. The demographic form (See Appendix A) was developed to get basic information from the participants. Questions were pertaining to age, sex, race, primary caregiver, marital status, number of children, and previous treatment information.

Subtypes of Antisocial Behavior Questionnaire (STAB). The STAB assessed the students' levels of antisocial behavior (Burt & Donnellan, 2009). This questionnaire had three different subscales of antisocial behavior: physical aggression, social aggression, and rule-breaking (See Appendix B). The 32 questions were answered on the scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "never" and 5 being "very often". The scores from each subscale were combined to produce the STAB total score, which reflected the overall level of the participants' antisocial behavior level. Higher STAB scores indicated higher levels of antisocial behavior, while lower STAB scores indicated lower levels of antisocial behavior.

Measurement of Parental Style (MOPS). The MOPS was used to assess the parenting style used by the participants' primary caregiver (Parker, Roussos, Hadzi, Mitchell, Wilhelm, & Austin, 1997). It measured three subscales: parental indifference, abuse, and over control (See

Appendix C). There are fifteen questions in total for the students to answer pertaining to their primary caregiver: six questions comprise the indifference subscale, five questions comprise the abuse subscale, and four questions comprise the over control subscale. These questions were answered on the scale of 1-4, with 4 being "extremely true" and 1 being "not true at all." The scores indicated if the student experienced the issues of abuse, over control, and neglect as a child. The three scores from the subscales were combined to produce the total score, which reflected the overall level of negative parenting that the participants experienced. Higher MOPS scores indicated higher levels of negative parenting, while lower MOPS scores indicated lower levels of negative parenting.

   Peer Pressure and Popularity. The Peer Pressure and Popularity items (Santor et al., 2000) was used to assess the level of peer pressure one has experienced, along with how the desire for popularity affects their behavior (See Appendix D). There were two subscales: peer pressure and popularity. The peer pressure subscale contained 10 questions and the popularity subscale contained 12 questions. The total "yes" responses from the peer pressure subscale and the popularity subscale were combined to produce the total score, which reflected the participants' level of peer pressure influence. More "yes" responses indicated higher levels of peer pressure, while only a few "yes" responses indicated lower levels of peer pressure.

   Procedures

   The materials and procedure of this study were reviewed and approved by the University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board prior to data collection. To complete this study, participants were asked to complete the three questionnaires to assess their levels of antisocial behavior, parenting style, and levels of peer pressure, respectively. The three questionnaires, along with a demographics section were administered using the Psychsurveys

website. Participants completed the questionnaires in order to receive extra credit or course credit in their psychology courses. Students signed up for this study using Sona Systems.

Statistical Analysis/ Research Design

This study was done to determine which factor (peer pressure or issues in parenting styles) has a stronger relation to the presence of antisocial behavior. The criterion variable or dependent variable is antisocial behavior and the predictors or independent variables are peer pressure and negative parenting. The first hypothesis was the prediction that negative parenting and antisocial behavior would be positively related, such that a higher MOPS score would result in a higher STAB score. The second hypothesis was that peer pressure and antisocial behavior would also be positively related such that a higher peer pressure and popularity score would result in a higher STAB score. The final hypothesis was that negative parenting would be more statistically significant as a predictor of high levels of antisocial behavior than peer pressure. A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to look at the hypothesized relationships between antisocial behavior and peer pressure and also the relationship between antisocial behavior and negative parenting.

Results

Regression Analysis Examining Predictors of Antisocial Behavior

To test the hypotheses, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine which predictor variable, negative parenting or peer pressure, would have a greater relationship with the criterion variable or dependent variable, antisocial behavior. The variables were entered as follows: antisocial behavior as the dependent variable and negative parenting and peer pressure as the independent variables. The model summary and coefficient tables showed that the overall model was statistically significant (R squared = .166, $p < .001$; see Table 1). The model summary significantly predicted the total scores to be beyond chance. It was also found that the

9

total scores of the MOPS and Peer pressure and popularity questionnaire accounted for 16.6 % of the variance in the total score (See Table 1). Higher levels of negative parenting and higher levels of peer pressure were related to higher levels of antisocial behavior.

According to the unstandardized coefficients, if there is a one unit increase in the participants' MOPS scale, the participants' antisocial behavior scale increases by .19 (See Table 2). With one unit increase in the participants' responses on the peer pressure and popularity questionnaire, the participants' antisocial behavior scale increases by .35 (See Table 2). The multiple regression used for this study also indicated that both negative parenting and peer pressure have a significant effect on a person's level of antisocial behavior, which confirms the first and second hypothesis. Negative parenting was found to be a statistically significant individual predictor ($p = .016$, $b = .170$) as was peer pressure ($p < .001$, $b = .353$; see Table 2). The results were incongruent with the third hypothesis, which predicted that negative parenting would have been more significant than peer pressure.

Discussion

Connection between literature review, hypotheses, and results

The current study examined the relationship between antisocial behavior, negative parenting, and peer pressure. There were three hypotheses about the relationships of these three factors. There was partial support for the hypotheses of the current study. The first hypothesis, which stated that negative parenting and antisocial behavior would be related, was supported by the results of the current study (Schaffer et al., 2009; Hoeve et al., 2009; Hoeve et al., 2008; Mullens, 2004; Wright & Cullen, 2001). The second hypothesis, which stated that peer pressure and antisocial behavior would be related, was also supported by the results of the current study (Mahoney & Stattin, 2000; Chung & Steinberg, 2006; Zinzow, Ruggiero et al., 2009; Santor et

al., 2000). The final hypothesis predicted that although peer pressure and negative parenting would be related to participants' level of antisocial behavior; negative parenting would be more strongly related than peer pressure. This hypothesis was rejected by the results which indicated that peer pressure was more strongly related to antisocial behavior than negative parenting.

Implications of the Current Study

The findings from the current study support the idea that peer pressure may be more impactful than negative parenting in regards to perpetuating antisocial behavior. Therefore, this could possibly underscore the importance of people's peers. According to Mahoney and Stattin (2000), the individuals who a person chooses to associate with have a great deal to do with the person's level of antisocial behavior. The acceptance of the first two hypotheses indicates that both negative parenting and peer pressure play a role in the presence of antisocial behavior. However, based on the rejection of the third hypothesis, it could be inferred that during the transition between adolescence and adulthood, as well as after that transition, peer pressure could be more impactful. The participants of the current study were mostly all college students who are between the ages of 18 and 23. Therefore the results could be attributed to the fact that these college students are on their own without their parents and peer pressure is more crucial to their behavior and development. Literature shows that peer pressure becomes difficult to reject as children grow into young adults, due to the belief that the opinions of peers seem to matter more than the opinions or teachings of their parents (Santor et al., 2000; Zinzow et al., 2009).

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research

The main strength of the current study is that the results supported previous literature by strengthening the claims that negative parenting may contribute to antisocial behavior, as well the notion that peer pressure may contribute to antisocial behavior. Due to the lack of research

that compares peer pressure and negative parenting, the present study was also able to fill the research gap by investigating whether negative parenting or peer pressure played a bigger role in the presence of antisocial behavior among the participants of this study.

One limitation could be the background of the participants. This study only had one sample group, who were all college students. Therefore, if this study were to be conducted with a sample from a different population, such as high schools, juvenile detention centers, or recreational centers, different relationships may have been found. It could be inferred that among different sample groups, higher levels of antisocial behavior would be found. One sample group may have shown significant results, but having more than one sample group may have resulted in even more significant results that would solidify the importance of the role that negative parenting and peer pressure have in relation to the presence of antisocial behavior. Another limitation could be that the participants self-reported their responses, which could have resulted in false answers due to not being able to recall certain information or to protect themselves. Also, there were more females who participated than males in this study. An even amount of both males and females could also make a difference in the results, as well as give future researchers the opportunity to see if the impacts of peer pressure and negative parenting can be associated with gender differences.

Future researchers could strengthen this study by having two samples, such as young children and college students, to investigate the importance of peer pressure and parenting at different stages of life. Also, future researchers could separate analyses for females and males to determine if the results would differ due to gender differences. There could also be separate analyses conducted to determine if the results would differ among different ethnic groups. Also, Steinberg et al. (2006) found that children who are raised under negative parenting are more

likely to be influenced by peer pressure. Future research could include a study that examines the interactions between negative parenting, peer pressure, and high levels of antisocial behavior.

Conclusion

Antisocial behavior is a part of everyday life, and affects millions of people around the world. Therefore, antisocial behavior needs to be carefully examined. It is important to understand not only what antisocial behavior is, but also to have a better understanding of how it is created. Positive parenting and prevention of negative peer pressure may possibly lead to a decrease in antisocial behavior. This could create better environments in schools, homes, and many other places. The more knowledge society has about what contributes to the presence of antisocial behavior, the more work can be done to lessen its presence and impact.

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Table 1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.407	.166	.156	.51832

Predictors: Peer Pressure and Negative Parenting

Table 2: Multiple Regression between Antisocial Behavior, Peer Pressure, and Negative Parenting

	Peer Pressure	Negative Parenting
B (Unstandardized Coefficients)	.354	.188
Standardized Coefficients	b = .353	b = .170
Significance Level	p < .001	p= .016

Dependent Variable: Antisocial Behavior

Appendix A: Demographic Information

1. What is your name? _____

2. What is your gender?
    a. Male
    b. Female

3. How old are you? _____

4. What is your classification?
    a. Freshman
    b. Sophomore
    c. Junior
    d. Senior

5. Who do you consider your primary caregiver?
    a. Mother
    b. Father
    c. Grandparent
    d. Other
6. What is your marital status?
    a. Single
    b. Married
    c. Separated
    d. Divorced
    e. Widowed
7. Do you have any children?
    a. Yes
    b. No
8. What is your race?
    a. Black/African American
    b. American Indian/ Native American
    c. Asian/Asian American
    d. Biracial/Multiracial
    e. Caucasian
    f. Hispanic/Latino
    g. Other
9. Have you ever received psychological treatment or counseling? _____

10. If yes, please explain.

_____

_____

APPENDIX B: The STAB

The following items describe a number of different
behaviors. Please read each item and report how
often you have done this using the following scale.

Never- 1 hardly ever-2 sometimes-3 frequently-4 nearly all the time-5

1._____ Felt like hitting people
2._____ Broke into a store, mall, or warehouse
3._____ Blamed others
4._____ Hit back when hit by others
5._____ Broke the windows of an empty building
6._____ Tried to hurt someone's feelings
7._____ Got angry quickly
8._____ Shoplifted things
9._____ Made fun of someone behind their back
10._____ Threatened others
11._____ Littered public areas by smashing bottles, tipping trash
           cans, etc.
12._____ Excluded someone from group activities when angry
with him/her
13._____ Had trouble controlling temper
14._____ Stole a bicycle
15._____ Gave someone the silent treatment when angry with
him/her
16._____ Hit others when provoked
17._____ Stole property from school or work
18._____ Revealed someone's secrets when angry with him/her
19._____ Got into fights more than the average person
20._____ Left home for an extended period of time without telling
family/friends
21._____ Intentionally damaged someone's reputation
22._____ Swore or yelled at others
23._____ Sold drugs, including marijuana
24._____ Tried to turn others against someone when angry with
him/her
25._____ Got into physical fights
26._____ Was suspended, expelled, or fired from school or work
27._____ Called someone names behind his/her back
28._____ Felt better after hitting
29._____ Failed to pay debts
30._____ Was rude towards others
31._____ Had trouble keeping a job
32._____ Made negative comments about other's appearance

Appendix C: MOPS

During your first 16 years how 'true' are the following statements about your MOTHER's behavior towards you and then answer these same questions about your FATHER's behavior towards you as well.

Rate each statement either as:

0- Not true at all
1- Slightly true
2- Moderately true
3- Extremely true

1. Overprotective of me ☐

2. Verbally abusive of me ☐

3. Over controlling of me ☐

4. Sought to make me feel guilty ☐

5. Ignored me ☐

6. Critical of me ☐

7. Unpredictable towards me ☐

8. Uncaring of me ☐

9. Physically violent or abusive of me ☐

10. Rejecting of me ☐

11. Left me on my own a lot ☐

12. Would forget about me ☐

13. Was uninterested in me ☐

14. Made me feel in danger ☐

15. Made me feel unsafe ☐

Appendix D: Peer Pressure and Popularity

Please read each item and respond to the questions by answering "yes" or "no".

Peer Pressure Items
1. My friends could push me into doing just about anything
2. I give into peer pressure easily.
3. When at school, if a group of people asked me to do something, it would be hard to say no.
4. At times, I've done dangerous or foolish things because others dared me to.
5. I often feel pressured to do things I wouldn't normally do.
6. If my friends are drinking, it would be hard for me to resist having a drink.
7. I've skipped classes, when others have urged me to.
8. I've felt pressured to have sex, because a lot of people my own age have already had sex.
9. I've felt pressured to get drunk at parties.
10. At times I've felt pressured to do drugs, because others have urged me too.

Popularity Items
1. I have done things to make me more popular, even when it meant doing something I would not usually do.
2. I've neglected some friends because of what other people might think.
3. At times, I've ignored some people in order to be more popular with others.
4. I'd do almost anything to avoid being seen as a 'loser'.
5. It's important that people think I'm popular.
6. At times, I've gone out with people, just because they were popular.
7. I've bought things, because they were the "in" things to have.
8. At times, I've changed the way I dress in order to be more popular.
9. I've been friends with some people, just because others liked them.
10. I've gone to parties, just to be part of the crowd.
11. I often do things just to be popular with people at school.
12. At times, I've hung out with some people, so others wouldn't think I was unpopular.