

Aggression, Parents & Hispanic Youth: An Integrated Theoretical Approach

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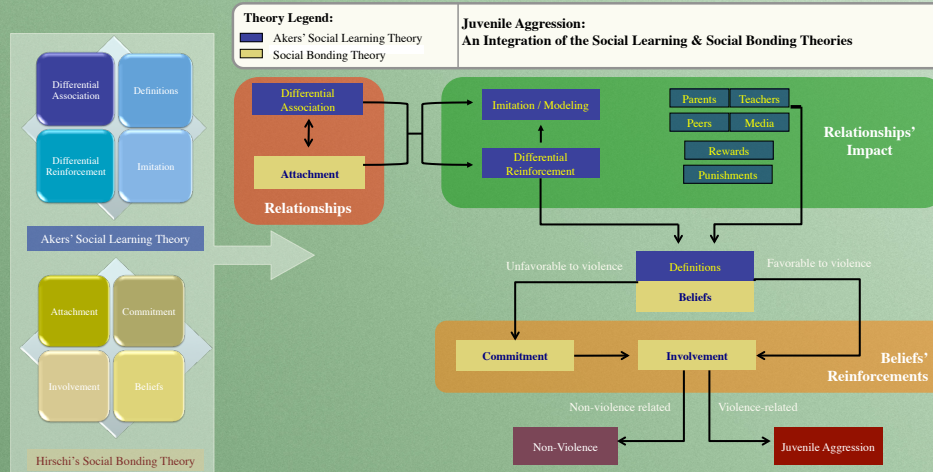
Background

Self-report data analyses show the limited effect of race and ethnicity on overall violence; Hispanics and Blacks do not present higher violence rates than the overall population. Nonetheless, factors associated with race and ethnicity could increase the risk for them to be involved in violence and deviant acts. Some of these factors could be: lower SES and its association with higher levels of neighborhood violence; parents holding multiple jobs and its relation to lower parental supervision; family violence; and the effects of these and other ethnicity-related factors on parental modeling and attachment. Assessments on the effects of different theoretical factors on deviant behaviors have either found variations in the influence of different theoretical factors by race/ethnicity, or recommend its exploration.

Researchers across disciplines recognize the impact parents may have on their children's health and behaviors. Multiple theoretical perspectives have explored the nature and mechanisms of this impact to help explain individual behaviors. From the criminological, social and behavioral sciences' perspective, learning and bonding theories have been widely cited

Purpose

The purpose of this manuscript is to propose a conceptual integration model of Akers' Social Learning Theory and Hirschi's Social Bonding Theory, within the scope of criminology, to help explain US Hispanic parents' influence on juvenile aggression. As part of this theoretical integration, factors will be theoretically reduced, and general assumptions from both theories will be synthesized and incorporated into a potential precursor to a new, temporal oriented model.



Integration Factors	Reduced/Integrated Factors	
	Akers' Social Learning Theory	Social Bonding Theory
Relationships	Describes the existence, normative nature, and affectional aspect of the individual's <i>relationships</i> with significant others (e.g., parents, peers)	Attachment: affectional nature of relationships
Relationships' Impact	The impact of significant others can serve as intervening or mediating variable for the development of the child's own <i>definitions</i> and <i>beliefs</i> about aggression.	None
Definitions/ Beliefs	The child's own favorable or unfavorable <i>definitions/beliefs</i> regarding juvenile aggression will be the product of the <i>relationship</i> they have with significant others, mediated by those <i>relationships'</i> <i>impact</i> in their behaviors.	The absence of beliefs that support or discourage certain behavior will make the individual more likely to engage in the unsupported or undiscouraged act.
Beliefs' Reinforcement	The reduction of SLT's <i>commitment</i> and <i>involvement</i> is consistent with studies in which the researchers have argued there is not a clear distinction nor independence between these two SBT factors and thus should be reduced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitment: conventional goals that discourage deviance. Children with definitions/beliefs unfavorable towards violence will express it. Involvement: "the time dimension of commitment", the child's expression of his/her individual commitment to general norms and non-deviance

Discussion

It is important to understand and assess the impact parents may have on their children's deviance behaviors, by considering the nature of such a relationship – including any ethnicity-related factors that may impact the parent's own behavior and relationship with the child. The proposed SLT & SBT integration explores such an approach, but should only be considered as a precursor to further theoretical expansions.

Causal Order

Although Akers does not specify a strict causality process, his main empirical tests on SLT and adolescent deviance identifies *differential association* as the SLT factor with the greatest magnitude of significant impact on increasing the likelihood for adolescents' substance use and abuse. Similarly, Hirschi did not propose a causal order for the elements of the social bond, in spite of recognizing the need of considering *attachment* prior to the other factors. Thus, the integrated model considers these two factors together as a rational explanation on the role of the *relationship* between parents and children in their subsequent behaviors.

Hispanic children

Several parent-child general and Hispanic-focused operating hypotheses were developed to specifically address Hispanic parents' impact on juvenile aggression utilizing the proposed integrated SLT & SBT model.

Limitations

- Model has not been empirically tested.
- Developed solely from the perspective of its applicability to Hispanic parents and their children (i.e., limited ethnicity-applicability, does not consider non-parental relationships (e.g., school, peers, media).
- Concerns in reducing *differential reinforcements* as a sub-factor, as it would reduce its stand-alone significance within SLT; it is Akers' main distinction between SLT and Sutherland's Differential Association Theory
- Differences in the level of acculturation may greatly affect the impact ethnicity may have on juvenile aggression.

Table 1. Sample Hypotheses to Explore Utilizing the Proposed SBT/SLT Model

Hypotheses	Factors addressed		
	Integration	SLT	SBT
General Hypotheses			
The behavioral impact of a child's relationship with his/her parents depends on the existence and affectionate nature of that relationship.	<i>Relationships</i>	<i>Differential Associations</i>	<i>Attachments</i>
A child is more likely to engage in juvenile aggression if he/she has aggression-supporting parents.	<i>Relationships' Impact</i>	<i>Imitation</i> <i>Differential Reinforcements</i>	<i>n/a</i>
The child will imitate his/her parents' aggression-supporting behaviors if he/she perceives such a behavior will be rewarded.	<i>Relationships' Impact</i>	<i>Differential Reinforcements</i>	<i>n/a</i>
A child's favorable definitions towards aggression are preceded by the impact of his/her relationship with aggression-supporting parents.	<i>Definitions/ Beliefs</i>	<i>Definitions</i>	<i>Beliefs</i>
A child's favorable definitions towards aggression must be reinforced before the behavior is enacted.	<i>Beliefs' Reinforcement</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>Commitment</i> <i>Involvement</i>
A child is less likely to act according to his/her aggression-supporting beliefs if these are discouraged through commitment with prevailing non-violent norms.	<i>Beliefs' Reinforcement</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>Commitment</i>
A child is more likely to act according to his/her aggression-supporting beliefs if he/she has the opportunity to be involved in aggression-supporting environments.	<i>Beliefs' Reinforcement</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>Involvement</i>
Hispanic-specific Hypotheses			
Hispanics strong sense of family (<i>familismo</i>) increases the magnitude of the impact of the child's relationship with his/her parents.	<i>Relationships</i> <i>Relationships' Impact</i>	<i>Differential Associations</i> <i>Imitation</i>	<i>Attachments</i>
Hispanics strong commitment to family values and differential involvement in community-focused activities decreases the child's likelihood of acting according to aggression-supporting beliefs.	<i>Beliefs' Reinforcement</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>Involvement</i>

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