The Effects of Parenting on Late Adolescent Aggression, Bullying Behaviors and Peer Victimization

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Dedication

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Abstract

Stories of bullying, aggression and peer victimization have flooded the news, media and schools in recent years. This increase in attention has led researchers to ask more questions about how children and adolescents become involved in aggressive and bullying behaviors and how certain factors can influence these behaviors. Research has found that negative parenting styles are linked to aggression and bullying behaviors, as well as internalizing behaviors of victimization (Arim, Dahinten, Marshal, & Shapka, 2011; Georgiou, 2008b; Smith & Myron-Wilson, 1998). The present study examines how adolescents’ perceptions of parenting styles are correlated with aggression, roles in bullying, and outcomes of bullying. It is hypothesized that individuals in late adolescence who perceive their parents to have negative parenting styles will be correlated with higher rates of aggression and more internalizing behaviors of victimization. Results found that negative parenting styles were significantly correlated with verbal and hostile aggressive behaviors, as well as internalizing behaviors of victimization. Gender differences were also found; male aggression was correlated with negative perceptions of their fathers, and female aggression and victimization outcomes were correlated with negative perceptions of their mothers.
The Effects of Parenting on Late Adolescent Aggression, Bullying Behaviors and Peer Victimization

In recent years, bullying, peer victimization and aggression in children and adolescents has gained much attention: there has been an increase in articles being written, research studies being conducted, media exposing tragic stories, and a heightened awareness and fear among parents of school-aged children. Research illustrates that peer relational aggression, physical aggression and bullying are all increasing within the school system. This increase in aggressive peer relations has brought much concern to teachers, parents and students. Research has also found that aggression, bullying behaviors and victimization can be linked to how children were raised by their parents. Are parents encouraging aggressive and bullying behaviors through their methods of discipline and parenting? The current study focuses on adolescent perceptions of their parents’ parenting styles and how these perceptions are related to the development of aggression, bullying behaviors and problematic outcomes from victimization in late adolescents.

Bullying in Children and Adolescents

Stelios Georgiou (2008b) defines bullying as “a physical, verbal or psychological attack of intimidation that is intended to cause fear, distress or harm to the victim” (213). This “systematic abuse of power imbalance” is victimization with an intention of hurting another individual (Georgiou, 2008b, p. 213). Bullying uses different types of aggression and is often used to establish dominance and status. It can also be understood as a relationship problem, as peer relations are incredibly important and bullying is a way for some children to establish themselves within a peer group or a peer norm (Pepler, Craig, Jiang & Connolly, 2008).

Thousands of cases of victimization and bullying take place at schools every year, and the results of this bullying can be long-lasting and painful. Anxiety and depression, substance
abuse, aggression, behavioral and learning problems, self-esteem and confidence problems, and suicide are just a few of the possible outcomes of bullying. Children and adolescents with aggressive behavioral problems can lead to bullying behaviors, as well as more severe conduct problems, including property damage, shoplifting, or physical fighting. Bullies and aggressive children tend to have similar risk factors—parents with poor child-rearing practices, parental neglect or abuse, low socioeconomic status, school factors, or neighborhood and societal factors. Although not all highly aggressive children are bullies, the differences between the two groups remain unclear (Wicks-Nelson & Israel, 2009).

National statistics from 2010 indicate that roughly 32 percent of students ages 12 to 18 reported bullying at their school, and 25 percent of students reported that this bullying happened on a daily or weekly basis. Gender differences were found within this research as well. For example, research has found that boys are more likely to be involved in bullying, both as the bully and as the victim, and bullying occurs more frequently during 6th and 8th grade. Girls tend to be more involved in relational and verbal aggression, such as spreading rumors, manipulating friendships and relationships and isolating others. On the other hand, boys tend to be involved in more physical and openly displayed bullying (Wicks-Nelson & Israel, 2009).

Bullying behaviors can be categorized by different types of aggression: reactive or proactive. Reactive aggression is anger and retaliation in response to provocation; proactive aggression is deliberate, unprovoked behavior that is used to accomplish a social goal (Morrow, Hubbard, McAuliffe, Rubin & Dearing, 2006). Bullies tend to use proactive aggression, or deliberate acts of aggression to hurt others socially. Bullies using proactive aggression may view aggression positively and have hostile feelings towards others (Unnever, 2005). Victims may respond with reactive aggression or anger that is in response to the bullying. Most research
examining the link between aggression and bullying has primarily used these reactive and proactive definitions to measure aggression (Roland & Idsoe, 2001).

The roles that children and adolescents take in bullying situations vary. To begin, bullies are described to be highly aggressive; they tend to have a positive attitude toward violence, are impulsive and dominating, have little empathy toward victims and may be physically stronger than average (Wicks-Nelson & Israel, 2009). In adolescence, peer groups and norms play a key role in maintaining bullying behaviors; however, children are more heavily influenced by their families. On the other hand, victims of bullying tend to be more anxious and insecure; they tend to be cautious, sensitive, quiet, and nonaggressive and may suffer from feelings of low self-esteem. If the victims are boys, they may be physically weaker than average. Victims are usually submissive and nonassertive (Wicks-Nelson & Israel, 2009). Children can become victims for just about anything—from something simple like not wearing “cool” clothing, to something more serious like having a disability or a disorder.

While most victims tend to fit the description described earlier as submissive and nonaggressive, a number of victims will respond with reactive aggression. These “bullying victims respond with aggression towards peers, despite being bullied themselves” (Champion, Vernberg, & Shipman, 2003, p. 536). Research by Champion, Vernberg and Shipman (2003) found that these aggressive victims may lack necessary coping skills in areas of emotional arousal. These victims lack coping skills in order to select appropriate solutions to bullying and instead rely on aggression to cope. Also, while pure victims could still have supportive friendships, aggressive victims were less likely to maintain close friendships—they were “unable to negotiate conflicts without aggressive intentions and responses” (p. 548). However, research has also demonstrated that while these children have problems with aggression, they are more
organized and goal-oriented with their aggression than bullies (Schwartz, Dodge, Pettit & Bates, 1997). Although definitions for bullying have been outlined, the question remains as to why some adolescents become bullies, why some adolescents engage in aggression, and why others suffer from outcomes of victimization.

### The Role of Parenting on Bullying

The role of parenting has been commonly examined in relation to bullying as researchers theorize that “bullying starts at home” (Georgiou, 2008a, p. 109). Literature on bullying contains an abundance of evidence linking bullying behaviors with parenting (Georgiou, 2008a). Modeling and differences in parenting styles are two of the most commonly researched areas linking parenting with bullying behaviors and with the roles that children and adolescents take in these situations.

To begin, research has found that modeling is predictive of bullying behaviors: children model their parents’ behaviors, which may then lead to aggressive or bullying behaviors (Albrecht, Galambox, & Jansson, 2007). Therefore, children may learn to be aggressive by watching the daily interactions of their family members and this can potentially lead to aggression and bullying by the children. Modeling has been found to be influential in children and adolescents; parents need to provide their children with information on bullying, and how to seek change and prevention in non-violent ways. Also, what a child sees at home influences how they behave and conduct themselves at school. Parents with a “lack of warmth, are punitive and inconsistent with discipline, and lack monitoring of their child’s activities” are linked to having children with more aggression towards peers (Smith & Myron-Wilson, 1998, p. 408).

Differences in parenting styles are also commonly correlated with bullying outcomes. There are four commonly known categories of parenting styles. Maladaptive parenting styles
include authoritarian, neglectful and permissive, while authoritative parenting is seen as positive. Authoritarian parents impose many rules, expect obedience and offer few explanations for their harsh/strict discipline. Neglectful parents are uninvolved in their child’s life and provide their children with little time, attention or emotional commitments. Lastly, permissive parents are more concerned with becoming their child’s friend than with disciplining them (Wicks-Nelson & Israel, 2009). In contrast, authoritative parents have a more positive parenting style as they are warm and affectionate towards their children, while still providing them with guidance and a sense of control. These parents explain why they have certain rules, encourage their children, and the communication between parent and child is clear and understanding (Patterson, 2008). These parents are available and securely attached to their children, and this is commonly linked with positive outcomes for the child.

Research has identified relationships between these parenting styles and different bullying outcomes. First, children who become the bully tend to have parents with an authoritarian or neglectful parenting style. The families of bullies tend to be distant or “disengaged in structure” and this can be seen through the bully’s negative relationships with family members and peers (Smith & Myron-Wilson, 1998, p. 414). Victims of bullies are likely to have mothers who are permissive or overprotective and the families tend to be more closely knit. However, victims (especially male victims) are apt to have fathers who are distant or absent. Lastly, parents with children who are bullies or aggressive victims may experience more violence, physical abuse, or marital conflict. Families of conflict and discord are more likely to have problems and these problems are often reflected in a child’s aggressive behaviors.

In contrast, the more parents pay attention to their children, supervise them closely and expect them to succeed without the use of aggression, the more likely their children are to not
become bullies or victims. Such parents exhibit an authoritative parenting style, which can promote more positive behaviors and interactions. Their children may be more likely to adapt at school, achieve in areas of academics, and may make more successful social adjustments (Georgiou, 2008b). In short, how a parent acts is believed to be reflected in how the child acts—less aggressive parents are correlated with less aggressive children.

Clearly, modeling and parenting styles are two important factors of parenting that are correlated with and predictors of bullying behaviors. In general, research has found that poor parenting, insecure attachments and negative relationships between parents and children are correlated with having children involved in bullying (either as the bully or the victim). Conversely, positive parental modeling and authoritative parenting styles are related to more positive outcomes and less bullying/victimization behaviors.

**Gender Differences with Parenting and Bullying**

A few gender differences emerge in research linking parenting and bullying roles. Boys were more likely to become victims if they were cautious, sensitive, and had a close and overprotected relationship with their mothers. A boy may also have an increased risk of being bullied if his father is distant and does not provide an adequate role model or attachment figure. For girls, victimization tends to be mostly associated with maternal hostility. This hostility or unwelcoming relationship was correlated with the development of anxiety or depression, and in some cases victimization. However, an important question remains: does maternal overprotection turn a child into a potential victim of bullying or does the child’s fragility and preoccupation with victimization make a mother more overprotective? Research has found that having a highly responsive mother may be linked with placing a child at risk for victimization because they are seen as overprotective. In spite of this, a responsive mother may protect his/her child from being
aggressive towards others. These responsive mothers may be overprotective, but they do not tend
to have children who are bullies. By not supporting violence and aggression and being overly
involved, these mothers may be cultivating non-aggressive victims (Georgiou, 2008a).

**Aggression in Children and Adolescents**

In addition to looking at how parenting is related to bullying behaviors, many research
studies have also indicated that parenting can be correlated with aggressive behaviors.
Aggression is a very general term for a variety of actions and responses: frustration, hostility,
producing fear in others, violence, instinctual, anger, fear-induced, and so on (Myers, 2005).
Bullying would thus be seen as a form of aggression that is used to cause distress or harm to a
victim. Although aggression is defined differently from culture to culture, a person’s biological
system responds similarly when feelings of aggression are triggered. There could be genetic
influences with aggression: some people could be more prone to respond to stimuli in more
aggressive ways. The brain does not specifically have one trigger spot for aggression; however,
the brain does have neural systems that facilitate aggression. Influences include hormones,
alcohol, and other harmful substances. For example, high testosterone correlates with irritability,
frustration, assertiveness and impulsiveness, making high testosterone levels a reason for
potentially more aggressive behaviors. This could explain why males are more likely to be seen
as aggressive. Research also indicates that higher testosterone levels correlate with delinquency,
drug use and bullying (Myers, 2005). In addition to hormonal contributions of gender differences
in aggression, there are also differences between genders with varying types of aggression.
For example, males tend to be more physically aggressive, while females tend to be more
verbally aggressive and hostile (Buss & Perry, 1992).
As stated previously, most researchers agree that aggression is a characteristic of bullying (Roland & Idsoe, 2001). Aggression can be influenced by social events or emotions involved with the aggressor. However, it still needs to be clarified what kinds of aggression may be directly associated with defining bullying. Several researchers deemed bullying aggression as proactive—the bully is achieving an outcome through aggression. Although research suggests this link, there is no direct evidence that bullying is primarily reactive or proactive aggression. Therefore, because aggression and bullying are often examined together, parenting has been shown to impact both behaviors in children and adolescents.

**The Role of Parenting on Aggression**

Similar to how parenting can impact bullying behaviors, modeling and parenting styles can also be seen to impact aggressive behaviors. Parents are seen as models by their children, so when they act in aggressive or violent ways, they are “modeling” behaviors that the children can develop, and this aggression can include both verbal and physical forms. Parents may encourage their children to fight back and promote hostile and angry behaviors. However, other parents who have very strong beliefs against aggression may encourage their children to find strategies to combat conflict other than with violence/aggression (Farrell, Mays, Henry, & Schoeny, 2011).

A study by Arim, Dahinten, Marshall and Shapka (2011) examined how an adolescent’s perception of his/her parents can influence aggression. This study was one of the first to examine the link between parenting and aggression in adolescence; most studies have focused on this relationship during childhood. Bowlby (1988) describes attachment theory: when an adolescent feels secure attachment with his/her parents, and then the adolescent is provided with a sense of security and comfort. However, a threat to this security and attachment can lead to anxiety, anger or disturbances in behavior. Thus, when an adolescent feels unsafe, fearful or angry, this may
predict an increase in problematic behaviors, such as aggression. Arim et al. (2011) found that when adolescents felt that their parents were psychologically controlling them, or using unfair parenting, there were more occurrences of relational and physical aggression. When adolescents had a perception of good parenting and nurturance, they were less likely to develop aggressive behaviors. In other words, a secure attachment indicated fewer problematic behaviors.

In relation to parenting styles, authoritarian and neglectful styles are repeatedly correlated with adolescent aggression, while authoritative parenting is correlated with less aggressive children (Arim, Dahinten, Marshall, & Shapka, 2011). While parenting is seen as a strong indicator of aggressive behaviors, peer influences also become increasingly important during middle childhood and early adolescence. These peer influences are seen to predict forms of aggression, which is then maintained through social norms. This aggression may be a way for a child or adolescent to gain social status or to conform to peer pressure. Often, this aggression can result in victimizing others through bullying; bullying can be seen as “a subtype of aggression” (Pepler, Jiang, Craig, & Connolly, 2008).

The Role of Parenting on Victimization Outcomes

All of this research linking parenting with bullying and aggression indicates that behaviors by parents can produce negative or problematic outcomes for children and adolescents. While aggressive children tend to display high levels of anger, research suggests that these children are often sad as well. Aggression and depression in children and adolescence is often co-occurring. Furthermore, peer rejection can be seen as a mediator between aggression and depressive symptoms (Morrow et al., 2006). Perceived parental rejection has been correlated with aggression and depression (Hale, VanderValk, Akse, & Meeus, 2008).
Children who are victims of bullying tend “to have low self-esteem, may have more health problems (sleep problems, headaches, bed wetting and stomach aches), and trouble concentrating on school work” (Smith & Myron-Wilson, 1998). Two of the most researched aspects of victimization are the internalizing distress and externalizing distress of being bullied. Internalizing behaviors of victimization may include anxiety or depression; externalizing behaviors of victimization may include anger and hostility. Davidson and Demaray (2007) found that perceived social support from parents, teachers and classmates helped buffer victims from internalizing distress. Teacher and classmate support helped buffer this distress for males; parent support moderated the distress for females. However, social support was not found to buffer victims from externalizing behaviors (Davidson & Demaray, 2007).

What can the link between parenting and victimization tell us? As mentioned earlier, directionality must be considered—does victimization cause these outcomes, or do children with these problems experience more victimization? Most of the research has shown correlations or regressions, which do not indicate causality. However, most research points in the direction that children who are bullied experience a loss of self-esteem and may develop depression. On the other hand, bullies may continue on an “enhanced pathway of developing antisocial behaviors” (Smith & Myron-Wilson, 1998, p. 405).

Research has shown that authoritarian parenting styles are correlated with children who develop internalizing behaviors and problems, such as perfectionism, depression, depersonalization and anxiety. Permissive parenting styles are correlated with children who display impulsive aggression (aggressive victims). Additionally, bullies often describe their families as “less cohesive, more conflictual, and less organized” than normal (Georgiou, 2008b, p. 215). These correlations between parenting styles and childhood outcomes are important to
consider. Most research describes how parenting influences bullying behaviors or victimization, but how does parenting influence how the victimized respond to bullying?

While past literature provides evidence for the relationship of parenting styles with bullying behaviors and aggression, there has been little research from the adolescent’s perspective. Albrecht, Galambos & Jansson (2007) found a relationship between adolescent perceptions of parental psychological control with aggression. Adolescents who saw their mothers and fathers as psychologically controlling were predicted to have higher levels of relational aggression. Also, Rigby (1994) found that child perceptions of negative family function were related to fewer prosocial behaviors within peer interactions. However, the question remains: how are adolescent perceptions of parenting styles related to bullying behaviors, aggression and victimization outcomes?

**Current Study**

The current study is unique in several different ways. First, although there has been much research on the relationship between parenting and aggression, this is one of the first studies to look at the relationships between parenting, aggression and bullying outcomes. This unique combination of factors has been identified to find converging evidence with previous studies, as well as to look for new patterns among these variables. Next, this study examined four subtraits of aggression in order to see if specific types of aggression are correlated with parenting styles. Also, this study examined parenting in forms of negative versus positive parenting styles, as well as labeling parents into different styles (authoritative, authoritarian, etc.). Another unique dimension of this project is that parents were examined separately, so each participant reflected on his/her mother and father separately. Lastly, this study asked late adolescents to reflect their past experiences with bullying and victimization. Most studies focus on child samples; the
present sought an older sample with hopes that these adolescents would accurately and realistically reflect upon their role and behaviors in bullying at a younger age.

Research indicates that certain parenting styles are correlated with different roles in bullying, as well as aggressive behaviors. Previous research has found that negative parenting styles are repeatedly correlated with adolescent aggression (Arim, Dahinten, Marshal, & Shapka, 2011). Also, negative parenting styles have been found to be linked to aggression in adolescents towards their peers and other family members with bullying behaviors (Smith & Myron-Wilson, 1998). Some adolescents respond to being bullied with externalizing behaviors of victimization, such as aggression. These individuals were also found to have parents with negative parenting styles (Unnever, 2005). Adolescents who became involved in aggressive acts and bullying tended to create negative outcomes for their peers, which include internalizing behaviors such as depression, low self-esteem, anxiety and suicide (Smith & Myron-Wilson, 1998).

To date, there has been an abundance of research on how parents, teachers and young children rate aggression, parenting styles and victimization outcomes. However, there has been little research done specifically with adolescents’ reflections on these topics. Therefore, in this particular study, outcomes such as aggression, roles in bullying, and victimization will be examined from the adolescent’s perspective. These factors will be examined to see how they may be correlated with adolescents’ perceptions of their parents. Will adolescent perceptions and reflections on these topics still show the same correlations as previous research, or will new trends emerge? In this study, participants were given questionnaires with self-assessments for aggression and externalizing and internalizing outcomes of bullying, as well as for parenting styles and behaviors. Participants were also asked to reflect upon the role they took in bullying. It
is hypothesized that parents perceived to have an authoritarian (negative) parenting style will be correlated with higher rates of aggression and more internalizing behaviors in victimization.

Method

Participants

The group of late adolescents participating in this study was composed of 100 college students (43 males and 57 females) in a 100-level introductory psychology class and a 200-level adolescent psychology class at a small, liberal arts college in the Midwest. Ages ranged from 17 to 26 years ($M = 19.76, SD = 1.65$). All students gave written consent for participation, and they earned a research credit for their psychology classes. Students were administered the questionnaires in groups, and asked to sit apart from one another to maintain their privacy in answering the questionnaires.

Materials

Aggression. The Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Perry, 1992) was used to assess four types of aggression. These types include anger, hostile, verbal and physical aggression. Participants were asked to examine 29 statements (e.g., “I have become so mad that I have broken things” or “I have trouble controlling my temper”) and then rate the statements from 1 (extremely uncharacteristic of me) to 5 (extremely characteristic of me), with a total score range of 29 to 145. Validity and reliability have been found in almost every study, making Buss & Perry’s questionnaire widely and commonly used to measure aggression (Gerevich, Bacskai, & Czobor, 2007). Cronbach’s alpha for the current study was 0.77.

Bully Victimization. The Bully Victimization Scales (Reynolds, 2003) include a section to specifically measure externalizing and internalizing outcomes of bullying. This measure is intended to measure the outcomes of bullying, specifically whether an individual responds
externally or internally. Participants were given 33 statements (e.g., “I was hurting inside because students were picking on me” or “When students picked on me, I felt so mad that I picked on other students”), and then asked to rate the statements from 0 (never/almost never) to 3 (almost all of the time) in terms of how often these feelings arose. There was a total score range of 0 to 99. Cronbach’s alpha for the current study was 0.94.

**Parental Authority.** Participants were given two Parental Authority (Buri, 1991) questionnaires, one for their mother and one for their father. This questionnaire is intended to measure an adolescent’s perception of his/her parent’s parenting styles. There were 22 statements to be rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and included statements such as “My mother finds time to talk to me” or “my father is often disapproving and unaccepting of me.” There was a total score range of 21 to 105 for each questionnaire, as participants answered these statements separately for their mother and their father. This measure examines an authoritarian parenting style and an authoritative/permissive parenting style.

**Parenting Styles.** The Parenting Styles Questionnaire (Paulson & Caldwell, 1994) was used to assess adolescents’ perceptions of their parents parenting styles as either positive or negative. This questionnaire delved into parental involvement and their relationship with the adolescent. Statements included “My father keeps pushing me to do my best in whatever I do” or “When my mother wants me to do something, she explains why.” Participants answered “usually true” or “usually false” for these questions.

**Reflection Question.** Participants were also asked a reflection question, which was to examine how these adolescents would categorize themselves in past bullying situations. The participants were given a definition of each role in bullying (bully, victim and bystander), and were asked to circle which role best described them. They were also given the opportunity to
answer “not-applicable” in case they had not experienced bullying. This question was added to the questionnaire packet because it is believed that adolescents would be able to accurately and realistically reflect on these bullying situations and truthfully answer this question.

**Procedure**

Questionnaires were given during scheduled data collection times in classrooms on the college campus. After giving consent, participants were asked to fill out a 12-page questionnaire packet. All answers remained anonymous and the data was only seen by the researchers. Once the participants were finished, they received a written debriefing which illustrated the overall idea of this study. It was also asked of the students to not talk about the nature of this study with other students, as others in their classes might be taking this study at another time.

**Results**

Pearson correlations were computed for general findings, gender differences, and themes that emerged from participants’ reflections of bullying.

**General Themes**

Pearson correlations were run to see if there was a link between parenting styles and aggression, externalizing behaviors of victimization, and internalizing behaviors of victimization. Perceptions of mothers being authoritarian was correlated with hostile aggressive behaviors $r(100) = 0.29, p < 0.01$, and with internalizing behaviors of victimization $r(100) = 0.30, p < 0.01$. Perceptions of fathers being authoritarian was correlated with hostile aggressive behaviors $r(100) = 0.23, p < 0.05$.

Perceptions of overall positive parenting was negatively correlated with verbal aggressive behaviors $r(100) = -0.21, p < 0.05$. Perceptions of mothers being authoritative/flexible was negatively correlated with verbal aggressive behaviors and hostile aggressive behaviors ($r(100) =$
-0.24, \( p < 0.05; r(100) = -0.28, p < 0.01 \); respectively). Also, if adolescents perceived their mothers as authoritative/flexible, this was negatively correlated to internalizing behaviors of victimization \( r(100) = -0.25, p < 0.05 \).

These results support the hypothesis which predicted that negative parenting, specifically an authoritarian parenting style, would be significantly correlated with aggressive behaviors and internalizing behaviors of victimization. However, only certain types of aggression, hostile and verbal, were found to have significant correlations with perceptions of parenting styles. Correlations are shown in Table 1.

**Gender Differences**

Males had significantly higher scores on the aggression questionnaire (\( M = 75.56, SD = 12.64 \)) than females (\( M = 65.35, SD = 14.81 \), \( t(99) = 3.64, p < 0.01 \). Also, males had significantly higher scores with externalizing victimization behaviors (\( M = 19.21, SD = 4.44 \)) than females (\( M = 16.95, SD = 3.54 \), \( t(99) = 2.75, p < 0.01 \). Females had significantly higher scores with internalizing victimization behaviors (\( M = 29.60, SD = 9.95 \)) than males (\( M = 25.37, SD = 8.36 \), \( t(99) = -2.25, p < 0.05 \).

Pearson correlations were then conducted split by gender. Males were found to be significantly correlated by their perceptions of their fathers. Male adolescents who saw their fathers as authoritarian were significantly correlated with hostile aggressive behaviors \( r(43) = 0.34, p < 0.05 \). Similarly, male adolescents who saw their fathers to have negative parenting styles were significantly correlated with physical aggressive behaviors, \( r(43) = 0.32, p < 0.05 \). Correlations are shown in Table 2.

Similarly, females who saw their mothers as authoritarian were significantly correlated with hostile aggressive behaviors, \( r(57) = 0.29, p < 0.05 \). However, females who saw their
mothers as authoritarian were significantly correlated with both internalizing victimization behaviors and externalizing victimization behaviors ($r(57) = 0.39, p < 0.05$; $r(57) = 0.33, p < 0.05$; respectively). Lastly, females who saw their mothers to have a negative parenting style were significantly correlated with internalizing victimization behaviors and externalizing victimization behaviors ($r(57) = 0.37, p < 0.01$; $r(57) = 0.29, p < 0.05$; respectively).

Females who saw their mothers as authoritative/flexible were significantly correlated with verbal aggressive behaviors, $r(57) = -0.31, p < 0.05$, and hostile aggressive behaviors, $r(57) = -0.27, p < 0.05$. Females who saw their mothers as authoritative/flexible were significantly correlated with internalizing victimization behaviors, $r(57) = -0.27, p<0.05$, and externalizing victimization behaviors, $r(57) = -0.38, p < 0.01$. Correlations are shown in Table 3.

**Reflections on Bullying**

Participants were asked to reflect upon their years in school and examine the role that they played in bullying situations. Only three participants answered that they had been the bully, 18 answered that they had been the victim, 55 said they had been bystanders, and 24 answered “not-applicable” to playing a role bullying situations. Results of these reflections are shown in Figure 1.

**Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to examine the link between late adolescent perceptions of parenting styles with aggressive, bullying and victimization behaviors. Previous research has shown a relationship between negative parenting styles and higher levels of aggression and bullying behaviors (Arim, Dahinten, Marshall, & Shapka, 2011). There has also been research linking negative parenting styles with more occurrences of internalizing behaviors of victimization (Georgiou, 2008b). As most research has focused on correlations between
parenting styles and aggression/bullying in childhood, this study was one of few that examined older adolescents. This study was unique in that it focused on how adolescents perceived their parents’ parenting styles, as well as how they rated their own experiences of bullying and aggressive behaviors.

Results indicate that adolescents who perceived their parents as negative, specifically with an authoritarian style, were correlated with demonstrating more hostile aggressive behaviors, verbal aggressive behaviors, and with internalizing victimization behaviors. Gender differences were also found in this study; males who perceived their father’s parenting style as negative were correlated with specific aggressive behaviors, and females who perceived their mother’s parenting style as negative were correlated with specific victimization and aggressive behaviors.

**General Themes**

When the participants rated their mothers and fathers as authoritarian, there was a significant correlation with hostile aggressive behaviors. These results are similar to those found by Smith & Myron-Wilson (1998) who predicted that authoritarian parents have children with aggressive and bullying behaviors towards their peers. Furthermore, when participants rated their mothers as authoritative, there was a negative significant correlation with hostile and verbal aggressive behaviors. Also, when participants rated their parents’ parenting style as positive, there was also a negative significant correlation with verbal aggressive behaviors.

Research also has indicated that there is a link between authoritarian parents and adolescents with more internalizing distress from bullying (Georgiou, 2008b; Davidson & Demaray, 2007). Also exemplified through research is that social support from parents can buffer the effects of internalizing distress from bullying (Davidson & Demaray, 2007). Results
found in the current study also are shown to be similar. Adolescents who perceived their mothers as authoritarian were significantly correlated with internalizing behaviors of victimization and negatively correlated with externalizing behaviors of victimization.

**Gender Differences**

Gender differences emerged in data analysis, indicating that the link between perceptions of parenting styles and aggression are quite different for males and females. Males who showed aggression were correlated with negative perceptions of their fathers, whereas females with aggression were correlated with negative perceptions of their mothers. For example, males who saw their fathers as authoritarian were significantly correlated with hostile aggressive behaviors. Also, males who saw their fathers’ parenting style as negative were significantly correlated with physical aggressive behaviors.

Females who saw their mothers as authoritarian were significantly correlated with hostile aggressive behaviors, as well as internalizing and externalizing victimization behaviors. Yet, females who saw their mothers as authoritative were negatively correlated with verbal and hostile aggressive behaviors, as well as both internalizing and externalizing victimization behaviors. This is one of the first research studies to find a significant correlation between negative parenting styles and externalizing victimization behaviors. Previous research has only suggested a link between negative parenting styles and internalizing victimization behaviors (Georgiou, 2008b). The results in this study indicate that females who perceive their mothers as authoritarian are correlated with experiencing both internalizing and externalizing distress from bullying. This finding could be due to the measures; however, previous studies had not separated parenting into two distinct mother and father groups.
Reflections on Bullying

This study adds to previous research as it examines these topics from the perspective of older adolescents. Participants were asked to reflect upon their bullying experiences in their past, and to honestly determine their role in these bullying situations. The answers were interesting, as the distribution of answers was very wide. Only three responded that they had been the bully, 18 responded that they had been the victim, 55 saw themselves as the bystander and 24 responded that they had not been a part of bullying situations. Future research may want to focus more on reflection questions to gain a more in-depth perspective from older adolescents.

Implications

When comparing the results of this study to previous literature, many of the results are similar, suggesting that the correlations between negative parenting and aggression and victimization behaviors are similar from childhood through late adolescence. Also, adolescent perceptions on these topics displayed similar results to those using teacher, parent and peer reports, indicating that self-report can be just as useful and reliable.

How adolescents perceive their parents’ parenting styles can have great implications for aggressive behaviors, as well as how they respond to victimization. The greatest trend found in this study was that negative parenting is strongly correlated with hostile aggressive behaviors, or behaviors that are the cognitive component of behavior. How adolescents perceive their parents can influence how they cognitively think through decisions using aggression. This hostility consists of “feelings of ill will and injustice” (Buss & Perry, 1992). Verbal and physical aggression were also found to be significantly correlated with negative perceptions of parenting, which are the instrumental or motor components of behavior. Although anger aggressive behavior was not found in this study to be correlated with perceptions of negative parenting, it
was still correlated with the other three factors of aggression, suggesting that there could still be a link between anger aggression and negative parenting.

This study also found a link between negative parenting and internalizing distress from victimization, which has been shown in previous literature. In addition, this study found that females who perceive their mothers to have authoritarian or negative parenting styles were correlated with externalizing behaviors of victimization. This link has not been previously shown in research, and further research is needed to strengthen the evidence for this correlation. Nonetheless, these results indicate that there could be a relationship between females perceiving their mothers as having negative parenting styles and externalizing distress from victimization.

**Limitations and Future Directions**

One of the most important limitations was that the results were obtained from a small sample size in just one school. In order to generalize these results to a larger population, a larger and more encompassing sample would be needed. Also, results were obtained solely from self-report measures, which do not allow multiple sources of information. Future research obtaining data from parents and peers would be beneficial in strengthening the correlations that were found. Lastly, a longitudinal design would be important to see these correlations over time.

It may be suggested that future research uses more measures from the perspectives of not only the adolescents, but also from their parents and peers, as well as obtaining such data over a course of time to gain a better spread of data. From this study, participants may not have honestly answered the reflection question about bullying, but it is impossible to determine whether the participants were honest or not. Clearly, a more reliable mean for measuring the adolescents’ role in bullying is needed.
Conclusions

This study demonstrates how adolescent perceptions of parenting styles are related to adolescent outcomes, such as bullying and aggression. This study has made a vital contribution to research on aggression by investigating the perspective of older adolescents, and it is one of few to examine how parenting, aggression and bullying situations are linked in adolescence instead of childhood. This study also found a significant correlation between authoritarian parenting and externalizing victimization behaviors, which warrants further study and support. Past research with children and adolescents demonstrates the link between parenting and childhood outcomes such as aggression, bullying behaviors and victimization distress. The current research found supporting evidence for these links in adolescence, drawn from the perspective of the adolescents themselves.
References


Appendix

Table 1

*Correlations of parenting styles with aggression and behaviors of victimization.*

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*p<.05. **p<.01.
Table 2

Correlations of parenting styles with aggression and behaviors of victimization. Data for males is shown.

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*p<.05, **p<.01.
Table 3

Correlations of parenting styles with aggression and behaviors of victimization. Data for females is shown.

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*p<.05. **p<.01.
Figure 1

Pie chart showing how the participants reflected on their roles in bullying.

Reflecting on Role in Bullying

- 24: The Bully
- 18: The Victim
- 55: The Bystander
- 3: Not-applicable