Peer Aggression in Middle Childhood and Child and Maternal Well-Being in Adolescence

Kei Nomaguchi (nomaguk@bsu.edu), Marshall Neal Fettro, and Lindsey Aldrich

Department of Sociology
Bowling Green State University

Background

- Peer aggression is a public health issue
- Negative consequences for child’s developmental outcomes (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1999)
- Development in research in the past two decades
- Use of longitudinal data (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Wardrop, 2001)

• Life Course Perspective (Elder, 1994)
• What are longitudinal patterns of peer aggression involvement from third to sixth grades?
• How do duration and timing matter in the association between peer aggression and child outcomes?
• Linked Lives: Is children’s peer aggression involvement related to maternal well-being?

Data and Measures

- The NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development (SECCYD) (1991 – 2008)
- Cohort of children born in 10 cities in 1991
- Grades 3, 5, & 6, and Age 15 interviews (N = 901)
- Peer Aggression: Self report in Grades 3, 5, & 6
- Victims: “Sometimes” or greater in any of the following 4 items: Does anyone (a) pick on you, (b) say mean things to you, (c) say bad things about you, (d) hit you at school?
- Bullies: “Sometimes” or greater in any of the following 4 items: Do you (a) pick on people, (b) say mean things, (c) say bad things about them, (d) hit other kids in your class at school?
- No involvement: other victims or bullies
- Child and Maternal Well-Being at Age 15 (15th Grade)
- Externalizing and Internalizing problems (YSR)
- Math test percentile (WJ-IV)
- Mother-child relationship conflict (ACRS)
- Maternal depression (CES-D)

This Study

Descriptive Results

Figure 1. % Peer Aggression Involvement: Third, Fifth, and Sixth Grades (N = 901)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Third Grade</th>
<th>Fifth Grade</th>
<th>Sixth Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No involvement</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullies</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullies-Victims</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulls</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Descriptive Statistics

- Externalizing problems
- Interpersonal problems
- Math test percentile
- Maternal behavioral type
- Peer aggression during grades 3, 5, & 6
- Maternal depression
- Mother’s marital status
- Mother’s age at birth
- Mother’s education at birth
- Family income
- Family size
- Mother’s work hours
- Children’s math test percentile
- Gender

Multivariate Results

- # of waves bully
- # of waves victims
- # of waves non-involvement

Figure 2. % Peer Aggression Involvement Across Third, Fifth, and Sixth Grades (N = 901)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Third Grade</th>
<th>Fifth Grade</th>
<th>Sixth Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No involvement</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullies</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullies-Victims</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulls</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of Findings

Overall patterns

- 3/4% of children were involved in peer aggression during the third, fifth, & sixth grades (Fig. 2)
- Most children did not switch their roles: either stayed in the same role or not involved (9.1% changed roles, Fig. 2)

Victims

- Most common in third grade (43.6%, Fig. 1); rarely persisted (10.1%, Fig. 2)
- The # of waves and later occurrence were related to:
  - More externalizing and internalizing problems
  - More mother-child relationship conflict
- The # of waves and earlier occurrence were related to lower math scores
- Sixth grade occurrence only was related to more maternal depression

Bullies

- Small % and rarely persisted
- The # of waves and later occurrence were related to more externalizing and internalizing problems

Conclusions

- Children’s peer aggression experiences have implications for mother-child relationship and maternal well-being as well as child well-being
- It is important to examine duration and timing to better understand consequences of children’s peer aggression