



Postscript

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Adolescent Beliefs about Antisocial Behavior: Mediators and Moderators of Links with Parental Monitoring and Attachment. *International Journal of Emotional Education*, 4 (2), 4-26.

The current study examined whether parental monitoring and attachment were related to adolescent beliefs about antisocial acts, with temperament, gender, and age considered as potential moderators. A total of 7135 adolescents, ages 14-18 years, completed self-report measures of antisocial beliefs, parental monitoring, attachment security, and temperament. Results indicate that both attachment security and parental monitoring are associated with adolescent beliefs about antisocial behaviour. It also appears that the two aspects of parenting are complementary, in that a secure attachment relationship is associated with greater parental monitoring knowledge, which in turn is linked with a lower tolerance for antisocial behaviour. However, the relations between these aspects of parenting and beliefs about antisocial acts depended on the young people's characteristics, with some results varying by age, gender and temperament. Implications for future research and parent-focused interventions to prevent antisocial beliefs and behaviour are discussed.

Keywords: parental monitoring, attachment, antisocial behavior, temperament, adolescents

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POSTSCRIPT

Andrew V. Dane^{1a}, Anthony A. Volk^b & Prarthana Franklin^b

^a*Department of Psychology, Brock University, Canada;* ^b*Department of Child and Youth Studies, Brock University, Canada*

This study extended previous research published in this journal in which parental monitoring knowledge was negatively associated with tolerance of antisocial behavior in adolescents with temperamental deficits in self-regulation. In the current study, parental control (i.e., adolescent permission seeking) and adolescent self-disclosure were negatively associated with attitudinal tolerance of antisocial behavior. Additionally, Honesty-Humility and Emotionality were negatively related to antisocial attitudes, and parental control was related to tolerance of antisocial behavior only when Honesty-Humility was low. In both studies, parental behavioral control was related more strongly to antisocial attitudes when adolescents had traits that predisposed them to antisocial behavior.

Parenting, Personality, and Moral Cognitions

Moral cognitions, including attitudes toward antisocial behavior (i.e., perceived wrongness of antisocial behavior) and moral disengagement (i.e., cognitive mechanisms to disengage self-sanctions for antisocial behavior), have been associated concurrently and longitudinally with antisocial behavior, such as delinquency and bullying (e.g., Bao, Zhang, Lei, Sun, & Wang, 2015; Marini, Dane, Bosacki, & YLC-CURA, 2006; Vitaro, Brendgen, & Tremblay, 2000). Parental socialization is critical to the development of moral cognitions in children and adolescents (Campaert, Nocentini, & Menesini, 2018), but there is relatively little research on how specific parenting practices are related to moral cognitions in adolescence (Laible, Eye, & Carlo, 2008). However, some studies have shown that parental monitoring and knowledge of children's activities, parent-child attachment relationships, parental warmth, inductive discipline (i.e., moral reasoning), and persistent discipline are associated with adolescents' moral cognitions (Bao, Zhang, Lei, Sun, & Wang, 2015; Campaert et al., 2018; Dane, Kennedy, Spring, Volk, & Marini, 2012; Laible, Eye, & Carlo, 2008; Patrick & Gibbs, 2012; Trentacosta et al., 2011). The current study examined parental knowledge in relation to moral cognitions, along with strategies that enable parents to gain knowledge of adolescent activities (e.g., Stattin & Kerr, 2000). In particular, this study also examined parental control (seeking permission from parents to partake in activities) and adolescents' self-disclosure to parents about their activities, both of which are associated with higher levels of parental knowledge and less antisocial behavior (Stattin & Kerr, 2000).

Parental behavioral control strategies reduce access to antisocial friends, who model and reinforce beliefs legitimizing antisocial behavior (Newcomb, Bukowski, & Bagwell, 1999; Patterson, DeBaryshe & Ramsey, 1989), and may facilitate consistent discipline that signals when behavior is wrong (Grusec, 2002). Furthermore, conversations involving adolescent self-disclosure and parental control provide a context for inductive moral reasoning, a key parental influence on moral cognitions (Laible et al., 2008; Patrick & Gibbs, 2012).

¹ Corresponding author: adane@brocku.ca

Past research has shown that adolescent temperament moderates these relations, with parental monitoring and knowledge having a stronger relation with attitudes about antisocial behavior when adolescents have difficulty with self-regulation (Dane et al., 2012). The current study examined whether several personality traits similarly moderate the link between parental behavioral control and adolescent attitudes about antisocial behavior, because the HEXACO personality model is well suited to predicting antisocial traits (Book, Visser, Volk, 2015), with three of six traits involving predispositions toward antisocial or prosocial behavior (Ashton & Lee, 2007). Honesty-Humility represents cooperative (high pole) versus exploitative (low pole) tendencies, which previously moderated the association between maternal monitoring knowledge and bullying perpetration (Farrell, Provenzano, Dane, Marini, & Volk, 2017). Agreeableness captures forgiveness (high pole) as opposed to vengefulness (low pole), and Emotionality taps predispositions toward anxiety and sentimentality (high pole) rather than fearfulness and a lack of empathy (low pole). Consistent with previous research (Dane et al., 2012), we expected associations between parental behavioral control and adolescent moral cognitions to be stronger when adolescents possessed personality traits that predisposed them toward antisocial behavior.

Methods

Participants

We recruited a total of 350 Canadian adolescents from southern Ontario extracurricular clubs. This group was comprised of 147 boys and 203 girls between the ages of 11–18 ($M = 14.65$, $SD = 1.51$). Participants were primarily middle-class (70.3%) and Caucasian (63.1%). Additional ethnicities included Asian (3.6%), Hispanic (2.2%), African Canadian (2.2%), and Indigenous (1.8%), with remaining participants reporting “Other” (15.8%) or no ethnicity (10.4%).

Measures

Attitudes toward Antisocial Behaviors. We measured adolescents’ attitudinal tolerance of antisocial behavior using an 11-item scale adapted from Jessor et al.’s (1995) Attitudinal Intolerance of Deviance Scale, which assesses the perceived “wrongness” of engaging in antisocial behavior such as physical aggression, theft, and damaging property (e.g., How wrong do you think it is to take little things that don’t belong to you?). Participants rated a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from *not at all wrong* to *very wrong* ($\alpha = .87$). High scores indicated greater acceptance or tolerance of antisocial behavior.

Personality. Personality was assessed using the Honesty-Humility, Emotionality, and Agreeableness scales from the 100-item HEXACO Personality Inventory-Revised. Participants provided self-report ratings provided on a five-point scale, from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* (Lee & Ashton, 2004; $\alpha = 0.73$ to 0.78 for the three factors). A sample item for Honesty-Humility includes, “I wouldn’t pretend to like someone just to get that person to do favors for me.”

Parenting. Participants complete 9 items for parental knowledge, 5 for self-disclosure, and 6 for parental control, all adapted from Stattin and Kerr (2000; $\alpha = 0.78$ to 0.83). An item for parental knowledge includes, “How often do your parents know which friends you spend time with?” An item for self-disclosure

includes, “How often do you keep secrets from your parents about how you spend your free time?” An item for parental control includes, “How often do your parents require you to tell [them] where you are, with whom, and what you are doing in the evening?” All items were rated on a five-point scale (1= almost never, 3 = sometimes, 5= very often).

Procedure

We contacted group leaders of extracurricular activities via email or phone to request approaching their members for participation in our study. We obtained written permission from coaches and followed up by visiting their club inform adolescent members of the study. We then gave out packages containing an online link to the test materials (on Qualtrics) as well as parental consent and adolescent assent forms to be completed and returned at a later date. Adolescents received \$20 for a completed set of online questionnaires (that also included some additional measures). A university ethics board cleared all procedures.

Results

Preliminary Analysis. We analyzed the nature and pattern of missing values, as well as the appropriateness of the univariate and multivariate assumptions for regression analyses. Little’s MCAR test (Little, 1988) indicated non-problematic pattern of missing data ($p < .05$). All univariate and multivariate assumptions were also met.

Correlations. Our zero-order correlations showed that parental disclosure, parental control, and parental knowledge had significant small to medium positive associations with H, E, A, and medium negative association with attitudes toward antisociality (see Table I).

Multiple Regression Analysis. As shown in Table II, we ran a multiple regression analysis predicting attitudes toward antisocial behavior, entering demographic variables in the first step, personality traits (H, E, A) and parental behavioral control (parental knowledge and control; adolescent disclosure) in the second step, and two-way interactions between parenting and personality in the third step. Being older, low parental disclosure, low parental control, low H, and low E, were significant predictors of attitudinal tolerance of antisocial behavior (see Table II). In addition, as shown in Table II and Figure 1, parental control interacted significantly with Honesty-Humility, and was significantly associated with antisocial attitudes when H was low ($\beta = -.27$; $sr^2 = .02$; $p < .001$), but not when it was high ($\beta = -.05$; $sr^2 = .00$; $p = .57$).

Discussion

Overall, the results are broadly congruent with our hypothesis, and with previous research (e.g., Dane et al., 2012) showing associations between parental behavioral control and adolescent moral cognitions, which depend on individual differences in adolescent temperament or personality. The present results extend previous research by showing that aspects of parental behavioral control pertaining to parent-adolescent communication about adolescents’ activities, including seeking parental permission (parental control) and voluntary disclosure of information to parents (adolescent self-disclosure), were independently related to adolescent attitudes toward antisocial behavior, whereas parental knowledge of their activities was not.

Parent-adolescent conversations about adolescent activities likely provide a context for inductive discipline, discussions about moral reasoning that previous theory and research have found to be positively associated with adolescent moral cognitions (Laible et al., 2008; Patrick & Gibbs, 2012).

Table I. Correlations among independent and dependent variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	-	-.05	-.30**	-.29**	-.27**	-.17**	-.05	-.17**	.29**
2. Sex	-	-	.25**	.19**	.21**	.14**	.32**	.08	-.14*
3. Adolescent Disclosure	-	-	-	.49**	.70**	.33**	.17**	.29**	-.43**
4. Parental Control	-	-	-	-	.65**	.31**	.21*	.27**	-.46**
5. Parental Knowledge	-	-	-	-	-	.38**	.14*	.26**	-.46**
6. Honesty-Humility	-	-	-	-	-	-	.15**	.36**	-.48**
7. Emotionality	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.05	-.22**
8. Agreeableness	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.21**
9. Antisocial Attitudes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>M(SD)</i>	14.64 (1.52)	-	3.82 (.84)	4.23 (.82)	4.11 (.77)	3.43 (.56)	3.434 (.57)	3.24 (.53)	1.51 (.50)

Table II. Attitudes toward antisocial behavior in relation to parental behavioral control (adolescent disclosure, parental knowledge, parental control and adolescent personality traits

	β	sr^2
Step 1		
Age	.28***	.08
Sex	-.11*	.01
Step 2		
Adolescent Disclosure	-.15**	.01
Parental Control	-.20***	.02
Parental Knowledge	-.08	.00
Honesty-Humility (H)	-.33***	.08
Emotionality (E)	-.10*	.01
Agreeableness (A)	.02	.00
Step 3		
Adolescent Disclosure*H	.07	.00
Adolescent Disclosure*E	-.05	.00
Adolescent Disclosure*A	-.05	.00
Parental Control*H	.11*	.01
Parental Control*E	.06	.00
Parental Control*A	-.04	.00
Parental Knowledge*H	.05	.00
Parental Knowledge*E	-.04	.00
Parental Knowledge*A	-.06	.00

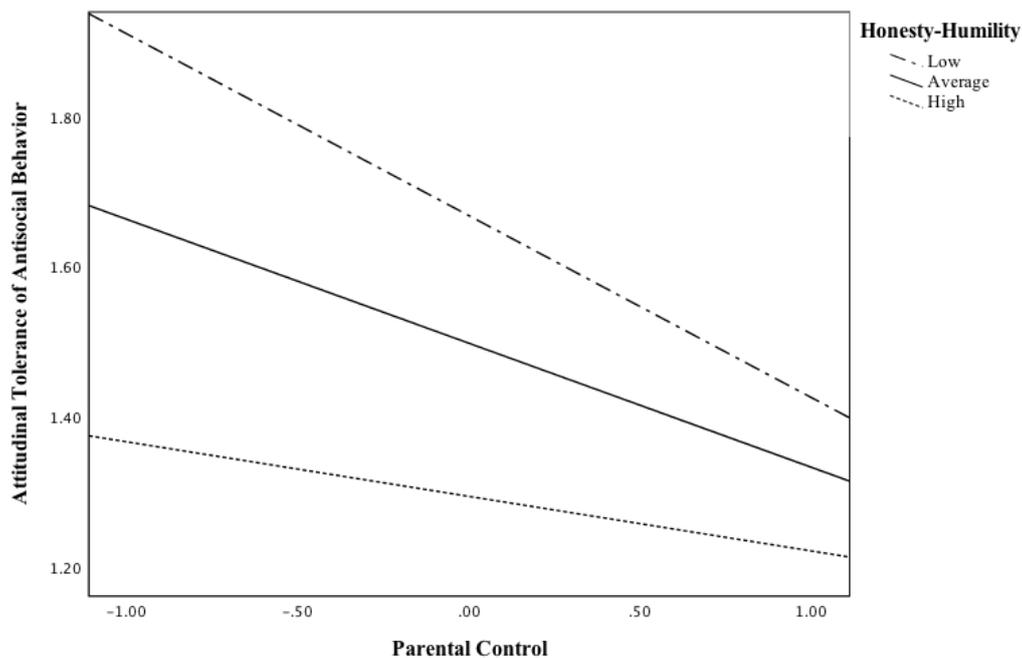


Figure 1. Honesty-Humility Moderates the Effect of Parental Control on Attitudinal Tolerance of Antisocial Behavior

Consistent with similar previous research (Dane et al., 2012), personality traits were associated with adolescent attitudes about antisocial behavior independent of parenting. Specifically, adolescents were less likely to tolerate antisocial behavior when they were high in Honesty-Humility and Emotionality, in line with personality theory and research demonstrating that the high poles of these traits predispose individuals to prosocial rather than antisocial behavior (Ashton & Lee, 2007). Furthermore, similar to our previous study (Dane et al., 2012), the relation of one aspect of parental behavioral control (parental control) to antisocial attitudes was moderated by adolescent personality, with the association being stronger for adolescents with low Honesty-Humility. As in our previous work, parental behavioral control was more strongly associated with adolescent moral cognitions when adolescents had a personality trait that predisposed them to antisocial behavior. Adolescents low in honesty and humility may tolerate antisocial behavior less when they have more conversations with parents that afford opportunities for inductive discipline and moral reasoning.

Overall, our results support the idea that parenting, particularly parental behavioral control, is related to adolescent attitudes about antisocial behavior, but that these relations depend partly on adolescents' temperament or personality. We encourage future longitudinal research on this topic, to better disentangle the causal direction of these associations, to determine whether parents truly influence adolescent moral cognitions, or vice versa

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