

Family SES and Parental Perceptions of Children's Aggressive Behaviors

Amelia DuBose, Madeline Drives, Anthony Pruner, & Tsu-Ming Chiang, Ph.D.

Georgia College & State University

Abstract

Past literature has shown the strength of the relationship between low socioeconomic status (SES) and behavioral issues during childhood. However, it is unclear how family's low SES may be related to children's behavioral issues. A possible reason could be due to the stress brought on by financial difficulties, contributing to more frustrations between parent and child. Researchers believe that parents typically expect their children to have gained some control over their aggression emotions by early childhood. There is also evidence to support that parents tend to exhibit more anger towards their child's behavior if it is aggressive (Mills & Rubin, 1990). Tough punishment could foster aggression during childhood (Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1994). Previous literature on parental beliefs of aggression suggests that parents are more likely to use force when mediating aggressive behavior than other types of disciplinary tactics. Furthermore, parents are also more likely to react more intensely to their child's misbehavior if it is something they can control. Parents with aggressive children also tend to be more critical and take on a very harsh disciplinarian role (Hastings & Rubin, 1999).

The present study, part of a larger study, is aimed to assess the differences in aggressive levels of children based on family's SES and parental evaluations. Parental disciplinary strategies and report of children's prosocial versus aggressive behaviors were collected through a parental survey distributed at a neighborhood Head Start program and Montessori academy. Parents from low SES are expected to report more physical punishment and aggressive behaviors in their children than parents with a higher SES. Detailed results and implications will be shared and discussed at the conference.