

Adolescent Weapon Carrying and Conflict Management Skills

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Introduction

American adolescents are more likely to die from gunshot wounds than all natural causes combined. Learning more about how adolescents resolve anger and conflict might help explain weapon carrying behaviors. Explaining the relationship between conflict management skills and weapon carrying behaviors among adolescents may help guide prevention efforts to reduce high rates of violence.

Specific Aim: To determine the relationship between Maladaptive Conflict Management skills and Weapon Brandishment.

Method

The Mobile Youth Survey (MYS) is a community research project designed to determine decision making and subsequent health risk among impoverished adolescents. In 1990, 42% of African Americans in the Mobile area lived in high-poverty census tracts, placing Mobile third in the nation in this measure of concentrated poverty.

The responses of 2,335 adolescents that participated in the 2006 wave of the MYS were analyzed.

Statistical Analysis

Logistic regression was utilized to determine if maladaptive conflict management skills are associated with recent weapon brandishment. Age and gender were used as covariates.

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Statistical Analysis

Maladaptive conflict management skills were measured by asking participants to respond to the following items (true/false):

1. Do you have a quick temper?
2. When I get angry, I get into fights.
3. When I get angry, I yell a lot.
4. When I get angry, I get crazy or loco.
5. When I get mad, I usually don't care who gets hurt.
6. If someone else starts a fight with me, I am going to finish it.
7. Hitting someone really knocks sense into them.
8. When you are in an argument, you should stand your ground to get what you want.

Weapon brandishment was measured by asking participants the following questions (yes/no):

1. In the past 3 months (90 days), did you carry a knife or razor?
2. In the past 3 months (90 days), did you carry a gun?

Results

One-fifth of adolescents (N=488, 20.9%) reported carrying a knife or razor, and 388 (16.6%) reported carrying a gun in the past three months. Adjusted for age and gender, adolescents who reported fighting, or getting crazy when angry were between 1.89 and 3.54 times more likely to report weapon brandishment. See Table 1 and Table 2 for all results.

Table 1. The relationship between Maladaptive Conflict Management skills and carrying a knife or razor in the past three months

Independent Variables	B	S.E.	OR (95% CI)
Do you have a quick temper?	.69	.11	1.99 (1.60,2.46)*
When I get angry, I get into fights.	.79	.11	2.19 (1.76,2.74)*
When I get angry, I yell a lot.	.72	.13	2.06 (1.61,2.63)*
When I get angry, I get crazy or loco.	.64	.11	1.89 (1.54,2.32)*
When I get mad, I usually don't care who gets hurt.	.70	.10	2.01 (1.64,2.64)*
If someone else starts a fight with me, I am going to finish it.	.52	.12	1.68 (1.31,2.14)*
Hitting someone really knocks sense into them.	.55	.11	1.73 (1.41,2.13)*
When you are in an argument, you should stand your ground to get what you want.	.77	.12	2.15 (1.71,2.7)*

*p <.05

Table 2. The relationship between Maladaptive Conflict Management skills and carrying a gun in the past three months

Independent Variables	B	S.E.	OR (95%CI)
Do you have a quick temper?	.79	.12	2.20 (1.74,2.80)*
When I get angry, I get into fights.	1.26	.14	3.54 (2.69,4.64)*
When I get angry, I yell a lot.	.226	.13	1.25 (.98,1.6)
When I get angry, I get crazy or loco.	.86	.12	2.37 (1.88,2.99)*
When I get mad, I usually don't care who gets hurt.	.82	.11	2.27 (1.81,2.83)*
If someone else starts a fight with me, I am going to finish it.	.64	.14	1.90 (1.44,2.5)*
Hitting someone really knocks sense into them.	.72	.12	2.05 (1.63,2.59)*
When you are in an argument, you should stand your ground to get what you want.	1.02	.14	2.77 (2.12,3.62)*

*p <.05

Conclusion

Adolescents that indicated maladaptive approaches to conflict were more likely to carry a knife, razor or gun in the past three months. Intervention programs should consider teaching high risk adolescents adaptive methods for managing confrontation and anger.