

Children's' Behaviors Leading to Ostracism in Natural Transient Play Groups

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IUPUC Sponsored by: The Office of Student Research

Introduction

- Over the past 20 years, research on ostracism has focused on the effects it has on adults and adolescents, with most work involving experimental laboratory paradigms.
- “Ostracism is usually defined as ignoring and excluding” especially in peer groups (Williams, 2001, p. 472).
- Research shows that self-esteem and arousal both decrease with ostracism, but they do not look at what leads to the ostracism, especially in children. (Gerber and Wheeler, 2009)
- Boivin, in 1995, observed boys in a laboratory setting to help understand the dynamics between ostracism in play, but this does not address transient play groups nor both genders.
- Researchers will observe natural play behaviors from children in transient play groups and see if certain behaviors lead to ostracism.

Research Questions

- What non-normative behaviors correlate with ostracism from peers?
- Does gender have an effect on how children are treated in transient play groups?
- Does race relate to how aggressively children behave towards one another?
- Does a child get ostracized more when displaying aggression?
- When a child has more adult interaction, does it predict children’s behavior?

References

- Boivin, M., Dodge, K. A., & Coie, J. D. (1995). Individual-group behavioral similarity and peer status in experimental play groups of boys: The social misfit revisited. *Journal Of Personality And Social Psychology*, 69(2), 269-279. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.69.2.269
- Gerber, J. & Wheeler, L. (2009). On being rejected a meta-analysis of experimental research on rejection. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 4, 468-488.
- Williams, K.D. (2001). *Ostracism: The power of silence*. New York: Guilford.

Method

Participants

Participants were selected at random. 256 subjects between the ages of 2-41 years were observed. 74 of these were target children estimated to be between the ages of 5-11 years, and 182 individuals were the source, who interacted with the target children (no age restriction). There were 96 females and 155 males that participated in this study. The average age of the source was 9.37 (SD= 8.40). The average age of the target children was 7.08 (SD= 1.71). The target participants were 75.7% white with 84.6% of source participants being white.

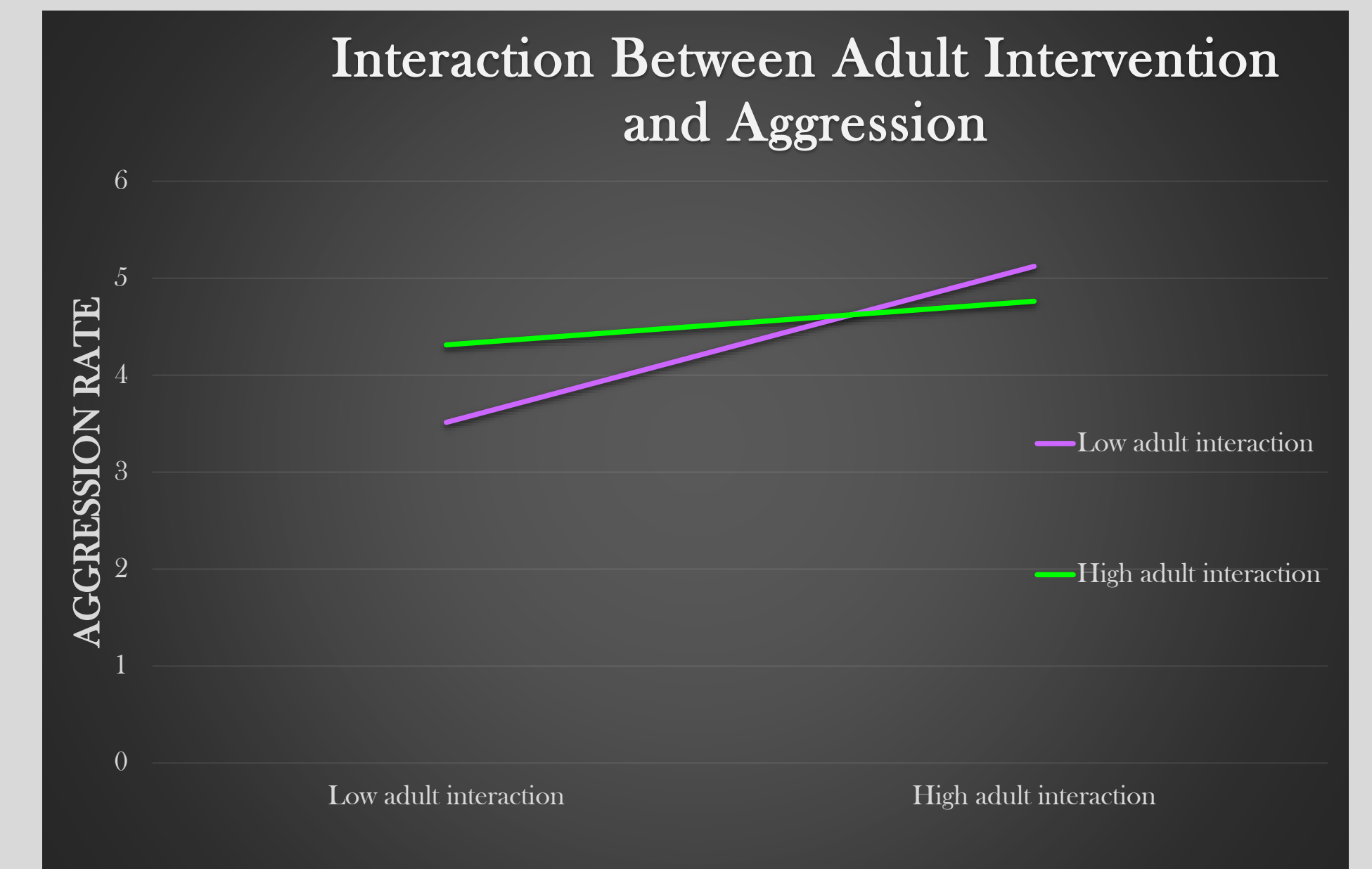
Procedure

Participants were observed for natural play behaviors in transient play groups at the Commons Playground in Columbus, IN. We documented behaviors exhibited by all participants in narrative form. After collecting data, we coded the narratives using a 0-5 scale, where 0 means none of the behavior was shown and 5 means it was shown 5 or more times during the 10 minute observational session.

Results

- The independent samples T-test revealed that there is not enough evidence to state that there are gender differences in terms of amount of ostracism during play $t(74)=-.05, p = .96, d=-.013$.
- ANOVA showed that there is no significant difference between ethnicity of the targets and aggression towards them $F(4, 69)=.237, p=.92, \eta^2 0.01$.
- Correlation test showed there is a connection between aggression from the source peers and the amount they ostracize the target $r(182) = .27, p = .00$
- There were no main effects of adult interaction with the target child predicting ostracism.

- Moderated regression showed that when an adult is involved (e.g., parent reprimands child), aggression declines between the children playing, $\beta = -0.29, t=2.09, p = .04$.



Discussion

- There were no consistent predictors of ostracism. However, there was some evidence suggesting that the same kids who are aggressive did more ostracizing.
- We do not have enough evidence to say there are certain behaviors that can be correlated ostracism.
- If the target child’s adult intervened, the other kids became less aggressive.
- What does it imply:
- If an adult intervenes, aggression is reduced – parents, teachers, caregivers should step in if they see misbehavior – it does matter.
- Ostracism is a group dynamic, maybe in transient play groups, the groups aren’t well enough developed for ostracism to be an option. This could also show that ostracism is more dependent on what the group determines, not just the actions of the target child.
- There is a follow up study planned at Foundation for Youth Summer Camp. This study will help eliminate third variables, such as parent involvement and the presence of siblings or babies. We can also look at groups longitudinally.