



Major Research Project

Parenting, head injury and aggression:

Predictive pathways of offending in male young offenders

Word Count: 7988 (not including tables, figures, headings or references)

Literature Review:

Exploring the link between parenting, head injury, aggression and crime in
young offenders.

Word count: 3984 (not including headings or references)

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May 2012

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Abstract

Adolescence is a risk period for offending and head injury (HI), with rates of HI in young offender populations frequently exceeding those in the community. Poor parenting practices have been associated with increased risk of offending and development of reactive and proactive aggression. Preliminary research suggests HI may discriminate offender profiles within young offenders, but the influence of HI on offending alongside parenting and aggression is less well known. This study explored the relationships between parenting practices, reactive and proactive aggression, HI and offending in a sample of male young offenders from a Young Offender Institute (n=98) using self report data. A history of at least one HI was reported by 73.5%, with 61.1% reporting a knock out from their worst HI. Poor supervision emerged as a key predictor: predicting knock out history, indicators of offending and reactive and proactive aggression. Repeated HI was predictive of reactive aggression and a knock out history predicted earlier age of first offence. The impact of HI on outcomes via neuropsychological sequelae or as a “marker” for contextual risk factors such as poor supervision and reactive aggression are examined. Clinical implications for young offenders are discussed.

Key Words: Young offender, head injury, parental supervision, prisoner health