

Relationship Between Reactive Physical Aggression and Criminal Attitudes and Associates

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Introduction

Individuals who perform acts of physical aggression are committing crimes and are at risk to acquire criminal charges.

Prior research suggests that adults who lack prosocial ways to communicate their emotions use physical aggression as a way to solve problems or express anger (Barratt et al., 1997; Mathias & Stanford, 1999).

Additionally, poor interpersonal skills were found to be consistent with physical and reactive aggression (Hart & Ostrov, 2013).

Physical reactive aggression largely accounts for future violence risk (Matlasz et al., 2020).

There is little research about reactive physical aggression (RPA) and criminal attitudes.

We filled this gap by examining the relationship between RPA and criminal attitudes, including violence acceptance, entitlement, antisocial intent, and antisocial associates.

Our hypotheses were that (1) participants who endorse more acts of RPA would have higher rates of pro-criminal attitudes, and (2) participants who endorse more severe acts of RPA would have higher rates of criminal attitudes.

Method

Participants

- Participants (N = 397) were adults (M = 33.37 years, SD = 12.22).
- More participants identified as male (51.7% male; 47% female; 0.5% Transgender; 0.8% Other).
- Participants identified primarily as Caucasian/White (66.8%) with 9.8 % Asian or Asian American, 7.4% Hispanic/Latinx, 7.1% African American, 6.9% Multiracial, 0.5% Arab American, 1.5% Other, 0.3% Native American or Indigenous American, 0.3% Middle Eastern, 0.3% North African, and 0.3% Pacific Islander.

Procedure

Participants completed an online survey.

The survey included demographic data, the Reactive Physical Aggression (RPA) questionnaire (Olson, 2021), and the second part of the Measure of Criminal Attitudes and Associates (MCAA, Mills et al., 2002).

There are four scales on the second part of the MCAA measuring acceptance of violence, entitlement, antisocial intent, and antisocial associates.

Results

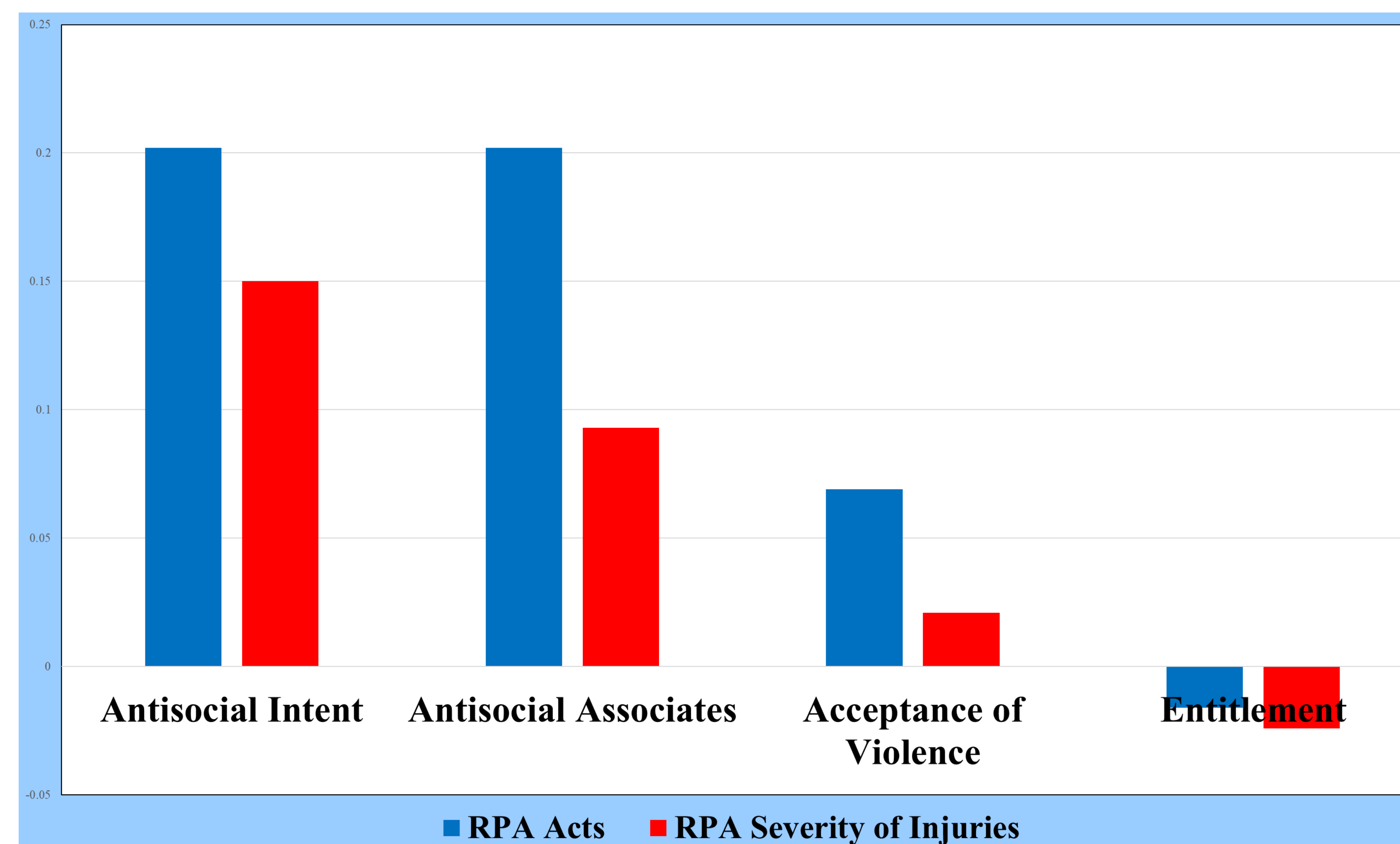
Regression analysis was conducted with the four scales of the MCAA as the predictors and the number of RPA acts committed as the DV. The full model was significant, $F(4, 373) = 11.36, p < .001, \text{adj. } R^2 = .10$. The best predictors were antisocial intent ($p < .001$) and antisocial associates ($p < .001$).

Another regression analysis was conducted with the same predictors and the severity of RPA acts committed as the DV. The third model was significant, $F(2, 203) = 3.70, p = .026, \text{adj. } R^2 = .03$. The best predictors were antisocial associates ($p = .036$) and antisocial intent ($p = .267$).

Regression analyses were run for women and men separately for both number and severity of RPA acts committed. The full model with all predictors did not significantly predict number of RPA acts for men $F(4, 172) = 1.75, p = .141$; however, it was significant for women, $F(4, 191) = 13.13, p < .001$. The best predictors for both men and women were antisocial intent and antisocial associates.

The full model with all predictors did not significantly predict the severity of RPA acts committed for men, $F(4, 98) = .75, p = .560$; however, three predictors approached significance for women, $F(4, 94) = 2.17, p = .079$. The significant predictors for women are antisocial associates, acceptance of violence, and entitlement.

Predictors of Reactive Physical Aggression (Beta Weights)



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Discussion

The hypotheses were partially supported.

Specifically, more antisocial intent and antisocial associates predict more RPA acts.

Additionally, more antisocial associates and intent predict more severe RPA injuries.

Women reported more acts of RPA, while men caused more severe injuries.

For men and women, more antisocial intent and antisocial associates predict more RPA acts.

For men, criminal attitudes and associates do not predict more RPA severity of injuries; however, for women, antisocial associates, acceptance of violence, and entitlement predict more RPA severity of injuries.

Additional research is needed to better understand the connection between RPA acts and severity of injuries and antisocial associates, antisocial intent, acceptance of violence, and entitlement.

It would be beneficial for attorneys and forensic psychologists to understand the relationship between RPA acts and severity of injuries with criminal attitudes and associates.

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