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Adolescents at Risk of Delinquency. The Role of Parental Control, Trust, and Disclosure

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Adolescents at Risk of Delinquency. The Role of Parental Control, Trust, and Disclosure

Giannino Melotti, Silvia Potì, Giovanna Giancesini & Antonella Brighi

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of parental control, trust, and disclosure as protective factors on individual and peer-group delinquency in a sample of 1420 Italian high school students aged from 14 to 18 ($M_{age} = 15.59$, $SD_{age} = 1.17$), representative of the adolescent student population in Rimini (57.3% males and 42.7% females). A cluster analysis identified different patterns of parental monitoring, associated with different levels of involvement in individual and group delinquency during adolescence. The results showed parental trust, control, and adolescent disclosure to be inversely associated with violent behaviors. Our results challenge the assumption.

Introduction

Youth violence and delinquency are problems that continue to challenge many communities in Italy. Worrying figures from the Italian Institute of Statistics and the Department of Juvenile Justice (Juvenile Justice Department et al. 2015) show that the number of entries in the justice centers has increased by 58% in the last 10 years. European data from 15 western countries showed a considerable degree of variability on the prevalence rates of the major categories of delinquency in European countries, with Italy showing the highest rate within its cluster of countries (Enzmann et al. 2010). The same trend has been reported for bullying and cyber bullying (Genta et al. 2012). These cross-cultural variations in the rates of adolescent violence depend not only on the different definitions of what constitutes an offence and the minimum age of criminal responsibility, but also on policy-related criteria, welfare policies, family education, family structures, and dynamics (Smith 2013; Giancesini 2013a). In Italy, the level of material family well-being, the level of support provided to families by the government, the gender-specific division of labor within the family, a widespread ideology of familialism, and the relationship with peers and parents differ greatly from other cultures in Europe (Felson et al. 2011; Giancesini 2013b). Consequently, measures of youth crime and offending need to be understood with reference to the specific and peculiar context of each country; in particular this study focuses on the Italian context.

Parental monitoring and control

The literature shows that adolescent delinquency is linked to low or ineffective parenting practices (Stavrinos 2011) and common sense seems to suggest that a strong behavioral control over children could “curb” an innate inclination to violence, considered somehow as a trait typical of youth. Parental monitoring is conceptualized in the literature (Stattin and Kerr 2000) as “a set of correlated parenting behaviors involving attention to and tracking of the child’s whereabouts, activities and adaptations” (Dishion and McMahon 1998:61). As Stattin and Kerr (2000) pointed out, this definition of “monitoring” overlaps with that of “control” exerted by parents over their

children in order to know what they do during their daily activities. Parents who systematically control their children have adolescents who are less likely to engage in delinquency (Jacobson and Crockett 2000), have low levels of substance use (Biglan et al. 1995; Dishion et al. 1995), avoid premature sexual activity (Longmore, Manning, and Giordano 2001), and are less involved in delinquent peer groups (Biglan et al. 1995). Conversely, some studies have shown that adolescents with too little parental control are more inclined to enact anti-social, deviant or criminal behaviors (Cernkovich and Giordano 1987; McCord 1986; Patterson and Stouthamer-Loeber 1984; Sampson and Laub 1994; Weintraub and Gold 1991), use illegal drugs or tobacco (Biglan et al. 1995; Flannery et al. 1994), adopt risky sexual behaviors (Metzler et al. 1994; Romer et al. 1994), have worse academic performance (Crouter et al. 1990; White and Kaufman 1997), or mix with deviant peers (Chassin et al. 1993; Dishion et al. 1995). Parental control, i.e., the surveillance that parents exercise over their children's life, is also a critical source of parental knowledge of children's whereabouts, and reflects the parents' direct efforts to supervise them (Georgiou and Stavrinos 2013). Such knowledge may not directly decrease risk-taking behaviors on the part of the adolescent, but represents a buffer against inappropriate behaviors that could escalate to antisocial levels (Sullivan, Kung, and Farrell 2004).

Beyond control: adolescent self-disclosure and trust

Stattin and Kerr (2000) have expanded the concept of parental monitoring, suggesting that it cannot simply be control of parents over their children; it should rather be integrated in the processes that lead parents to acquire information on their children. Self-disclosure is described by Stattin and Kerr (2000) as the degree of adolescents' spontaneous openness to their parents accompanied by trust, corresponding to the adolescents' perception of how much their parents trust them. The authors have shown that the relationship between parental monitoring and children's rule-breaking should be re-interpreted as two-way rather than one-way (i.e., only parent-child), demonstrating a dynamic view of family systems in which parents and children mutually influence each other: "a good parent-child relationship, which should operate preventively, should be a two-way process, including both the parents' solicitation or knowledge and control of their children's behavior and the children's willingness to make their parents part of their lives" (Stattin and Kerr 2000:1083). The focus is then placed on the process of acquiring information, in which parental knowledge is "complementary" to the availability of the adolescent's spontaneous disclosure, a predisposition that could promote both knowledge and parental control. Stattin and Kerr (2000) showed that adolescents' willingness to be open (i.e., self-disclosure) is linked to consistently low involvement in deviant behavior, much more than parental control, limits, and rules themselves. This statement has been confirmed by a longitudinal study by Kerr, Stattin and Burk (2010), showing that measures of parents' monitoring efforts (control and solicitation) did not predict changes in delinquency over time, while youth disclosure did. A convergent conclusion comes from the longitudinal study by Keijsers et al. (2010): not only was adolescents' disclosure a negative predictor of delinquency, but adolescents' delinquency also predicted less disclosure. A similar indication comes from a study by Brighi et al. (2013) on the relationship between self-disclosure, parental solicitation, and being involved in cyber bullying during adolescence. By considering the full range of monitoring dimensions indicated by Kerr and Stattin (2000) (parental control, parental solicitation, parental knowledge, child self-disclosure), the authors showed that only low adolescent self-disclosure linked with high parental solicitation significantly increased the probability of being involved in active cyber bullying among males. Adolescents' willingness versus unwillingness to disclose reflects the climate of the parent-adolescent relationship (Kerr and Stattin 2000) and represents a means of building intimacy versus establishing boundaries and privacy (Marshall,

Tilton-Weaver, and Bosdet 2005). According to Frijns et al. (2010), secrecy seems to be the driving force behind the disclosure-adjustment link. There is also evidence that avoiding discussion of certain topics, such as negative life events, dating experiences and dangerous behaviors, naturally increases from childhood to adolescence (Guerrero and Afifi 1995), in an attempt to redefine the parent-adolescent relationship and renegotiate the areas over which adolescents believe parents have no authority (Keijsers et al. 2009; Smetana et al. 2006). During adolescence, parental attunement and appropriate responsiveness is critical in accompanying children to the next level of functioning (Chak 2001), as they strive toward autonomy and parents struggle to find new ways of supporting their children in multiple contexts. Warm, close, and supportive parenting determines a positive adolescent-parent relationship, and the amount and depth of information that adolescents disclose to their parents, which in turn is linked to increased parental knowledge about teens' friends and activities, and reduced levels of antisocial adolescent behaviors (Keijsers et al. 2009). As Kerr, Stattin, and Trost (1999) showed children's views of their relationships with their parents appear to be strongly related to the extent to which they feel trusted. Trusting children means greater levels of freedom, handing over greater decision-making responsibility, which is a gradual process that requires knowledge, maturity and experience: parents who trust their children believe that they will act honestly and reliably and will be responsible for their own actions in every situation, especially when they are not present (Borawski et al. 2003). Steinberg and Silverberg (1986) argued in favor of the autonomy-granting perspective, stating that reductions in monitoring are followed by reductions in delinquent behavior, as parents tend to grant more autonomy to well-adjusted adolescents. On the other hand, low levels of trust may be the effect of adolescents' inappropriate past behaviors: delinquent adolescents have proven to be untrustworthy, and their parents then tend to disinvest in them emotionally (Kerr, Stattin, and Trost 1999). As stated by the "premature autonomy" model proposed by Dishion, Nelson, and Bullock (2004), parents tend to disengage from and abandon their children when they lean toward deviant behaviors. As a result, this parental abdication (i.e., parents giving up their parental responsibilities) increases opportunities for even more delinquent behavior in adolescents, which in turn affects the parenting practices even more negatively (Patterson, Reid, and Dishion 1992) and predicts a decline over time in the parent-adolescent relationship. However, the pathway toward parental control, trust, and effective children's disclosure, may not be so straightforward: in some cases, parents may grant trust to their children relying on a misleading or unrealistic image of their level of maturity. Indeed, a study by Cattellino, Calandri, and Bonino (2001) found that high levels of control were related to lower involvement in risky behavior, especially in the 14-15 age group, while at an older age (18-19 years) high control was correlated to a high level of problematic behavior. The authors explain this result with the idea that in the 18-19 age group adolescents have probably already internalized parental rules and values, and have developed the ability to self-adjust their behavior: too much control would hinder their autonomy. Moreover, parents' attempts to solicit information from reluctant adolescents might obtain the opposite effect on their behavior, which may be interpreted as an intrusion into their privacy (Stattin and Kerr 2000) and be perceived as a lack of trust. Moreover, parents need to exert their monitoring over adolescents' experiences with peers: most researchers agree that the process of parental monitoring operates in a complementary manner to predict children's affiliation in positive or negative experiences with peers (Tilton-Weaver et al. 2013; Bank, Burraston, and Snyder 2004; Keijsers et al. 2010). Peers are in fact important sources of support throughout adolescence, and adolescents often believe that parents should not interfere with their friendships. Likewise, adolescents who view leisure activities as issues of personal choice may resist parental attempts to regulate them. On the other hand, parents may try to exert more control when they fear that their children may aggregate with deviant peers. Effective monitoring may thus be influenced by the type of behavior, the time of its use and whether adolescents feel

over-controlled by their parents (Tilton-Weaver et al. 2013). The above considerations point to a subtle modulation among levels of control, trust and adolescent self-disclosure in predicting maladjusted behaviors in adolescence. This relationship may be not so linear, and points out the need to investigate how a flexible and sensitive constellation of parental behaviors may function in supporting adolescents during the attainment of their developmental tasks.

The current study

The general purpose of this study was to investigate how perceived parental control, trust in the parent– adolescent relationship, and adolescents' self-disclosure to parents may influence the onset of violent and deviant behaviors, including bullying and cyber bullying, in a representative sample of adolescents in the coastal area of Rimini (a town in central-northern Italy). In recent years, repeated episodes of adolescent violence have been reported in this area, ranging from vandalism to interpersonal aggression and homicide (Melotti and Ghigi 2011; Melotti and Brighi 2012). The current study is part of a larger research project on violent behaviors among adolescents in the province of Rimini (ibid.), aiming to investigate the prevalence of violent and deviant behaviors among adolescents and their social representations of violence. The topic of this paper is an investigation on the dimensions of parental control, adolescents' disclosure and perceived trust from their parents in relation to violent and deviant behavior, enacted individually and during leisure time with peers. In particular, some literature suggests that parental control can to a minimal extent predict deviant behaviors and, when excessive and not accompanied by disclosure and trust, may lead to counter-regulatory behavioral strategies facilitating deviance (Cattelino, Calandri, and Bonino 2001). In agreement with this view, we specifically hypothesize that: (1) Low control, accompanied by a low level of trust and low adolescent self-disclosure, could be a risky combination for adolescent delinquency; (2) On the other hand, high control accompanied by low trust and low self-disclosure could also be linked to adolescent deviant behaviors. In this case, the excessive level of control exerted by parents could limit the correct acquisition of proper age-specific autonomy, and thus trigger transgressive behaviors, as a means to asserting independence from the normative adult world; (3) Moreover, we hypothesize that low control combined with high levels of trust, when accompanied by low adolescent self-disclosure, could represent another risky combination for adolescent delinquency, because it may hinder parents' unrealistic or misleading view of their children's level of maturity; (4) Conversely, we expect that a low level of control, when linked to high trust and high levels of adolescents' self-disclosure, should not be associated to adolescent violence and delinquency.

Method

Sample

The sample used in this research included 1420 adolescents (57.3% males and 42.7% females) aged 14 to 18 ($M = 15.59$, $SD = 1.17$, corresponding to 9th to 11th grade) obtained through a stratified cross-sectional sampling procedure based on type of school and grade to guarantee a representative sample of the adolescent population in Rimini, and covering all public and private schools in the province, with one exception. Data were obtained from High Schools (classic, language, scientific, educational psychology, art) ($n = 598$, 42.1% of the total sample), Technical Institutes ($n = 469$, 33.0%), Vocational Training Schools ($n = 217$, 15.3%) and Professional Training Centres (PTC) ($n = 136$, 9.6%). The majority of participants (87.5%) were born in Italy, while 6.3% were born in other European countries, including the Republic of San Marino, and only 1.1% in Asia, Africa and South America. Adolescents born in the province of Rimini represented 64.1% of the total sample. Concerning the family composition, the majority of adolescents lived with both parents (81.8%),

while 14.1% lived only with the mother and 2.3% only with the father. Among the 27 adolescents not living with their parents, 10 lived with other relatives, 6 with other adults, and 11 did not respond. 55.5% of the subjects had just one sibling, 24.2% were only children, while the rest had more than one sibling. The level of education of the adolescents' parents was middle-low: 34.8% of fathers had a high school diploma, 33% had a middle school diploma, 15% a university degree, and 4.3% a primary school leaving certificate. Among the mothers, 42.5% had a high school diploma, 28.3% a middle school diploma, 16.1% a university degree, and 2.8% a primary school leaving certificate.

Instruments

From a broader questionnaire developed for the research project on "Violent Behaviors among adolescents in the Province of Rimini" (Melotti and Ghigi 2011; Melotti and Brighi 2012), in addition to the socio-demographic items, for this study we selected the following sections: relationship with parents (Control, Disclosure, and Trust), adolescents' violent and deviant behaviors, concerning both individual behaviors and peer-group activities.

Relationship with parents: disclosure, control, and trust

Adolescents' perceptions of disclosure, parental control and trust were measured using Child Disclosure (5 items), Parental Control (4 items), and Parental Trust (6 items), using the scales proposed by Kerr, Stattin, and Trost (1999), i.e., the 0–5 point Likert scale (from "never" to "almost always"). The Child Disclosure subscale measures the openness in adolescents' voluntary communication with their parents on what happens at school, during leisure time, evening and weekends (i.e., Do you usually tell how school was when you get home (how you did on different exams, your relationships with teachers, etc.)?); the Parental Control subscale measures the adolescents' perception of control exercised by parents in relation to leisure activities, evenings out and use of money (i.e., Do you need to ask your parents before you can decide with your friends what you will do on a Saturday evening?); the Parental trust subscale measures the adolescents' perception of how much the parents trust them (i.e., Do your parents trust you to not hang out with bad people?). The alpha reliability scores are quite similar to those reported by the original authors (ibidem): in this study .77, .70, and .80 and in Kerr, Stattin, and Trost (1999) study .78, .78, and .82 for Control, Disclosure and Trust, respectively.

Adolescents' violent and deviant behaviors

We used a shorter version of the International Self-Report Delinquency Study-2 (ISRD-2) scale (ISRD-2 Working Group 2005; Junger-Tas et al. 2010; Haymoz and Gatti 2010), an international survey aimed at investigating unlawful conduct in adolescence in 30 different countries. As previously done in a study by Melotti and Brighi (2012), we selected the following six items from the original questionnaire referring to offences with violence: property offences (Did you ever damage something on purpose, such as a phone booth, a window, a car or a seat in the bus or train?), illegal behavior (Did you ever carry a weapon, such as a knife -not a pocket-knife-, bar, chain, or brass knuckles?), violent offences (Did you ever snatch a purse or steal a wallet or something else from a person? Did you ever threaten somebody with a weapon or beat them up, just to get money or something else from them? Did you ever intentionally beat someone up, or hurt them with a bar or knife, so badly that they had to see a doctor?) and group fights (Did you ever participate in a group fight?).

Bullying

To further investigate the dynamics of peer violence we introduced 19 items (on a 0–4 point Likert scale, from “never” to “often”) (Melotti and Brighi 2012), assessing the motivations for physical, psychological and cyber bullying. Specifically, we asked adolescents whether they had ever physically hurt (physical bullying, 7 items, $\alpha = .86$) or made fun (psychological bullying, 7 items, $\alpha = .76$) of someone because of religious affiliation, language spoken, skin color, sexual orientation, clothing, physical appearance or political orientation. Moreover we assessed cyber bullying enacted by technologies (phone, text messages, email and publication of images or videos on social networks, unrequested sexting) to threaten, tease, make fun or denigrate someone (5 items, $\alpha = .74$).

Peer-group activities

To investigate peer-group activities we selected eight items (on a 0–4 point Likert scale, from “never” to “always”) related to leisure activities with friends from the ISRD-2 scale, adding two additional items that better suited Italian adolescents (We attend a volunteer group and We compete in illegal motorcycle races) and split two items of the ISRD-2 scale (We drink a lot of beer/alcohol or take drugs; We play computer games or chat on the computer) each into two different sets of behaviors (We drink a lot of beer/alcohol and We take drugs; We chat on the computer and We play computer games).

Procedures

After obtaining the authorization to collect school data from the principals of the participating schools, informed consent was obtained from the children’s parents and the students filled in our anonymous questionnaire individually and voluntarily during school time (either during class or at recess) in the presence of the researchers.

Analysis

All statistical analyses (Descriptive statistical analysis, Cluster analysis, Chi square, ANOVA) were performed using SPSS (version 19). In order to identify distinctive groups of adolescents who experimented different relational styles with their parents, a cluster analysis was performed on the following variables, entered as independent variables: a) Adolescent Disclosure, b) Parental Control and c) Parental Trust. As suggested in the literature (Aldenderfer and Blashfield 1984; Clatworthy et al. 2005) the Euclidean distance with iterative partitioning method (K-means) was used as a similarity measure. In order to determine the number of clusters, the F statistic was used. In order to examine the stability of the clusters, the total sample was randomly divided into two halves and the cluster analysis was repeated on each half, reporting a similar classification of the subjects (see Table 1). The groups obtained from the cluster analysis were compared along the socio-demographic variables and subsequently along the dependent variables (violent and deviant behaviors, Bullying and Activities with Peers) running a chi Square test and an ANOVA analysis.

Results

Cluster analysis for adolescent disclosure, parental control, and parental trust

The cluster analysis produced six groups with different mean scores on the following variables: a) Relationship with parents (Adolescent Disclosure), b) perception of control exercised by parents (Parental Control), and c) perceived trust by parents (Parental Trust) (see Table 1), on 1341 participants, corresponding to 94.3% of the sample. The groups obtained are described and

discussed below, reporting their distribution by gender, age and household composition as well as their hypothesized level of risk of delinquent behavior. Group 1 (n = 110, 7.7%) included subjects who reported the lowest scores on all three scales. The teenagers in this group showed low Disclosure with parents and felt their parents neither Trust nor Control them. According to our hypothesis, this condition may constitute a potential risk factor for delinquent and violent behaviors. Group 2 (n = 176, 12.4%) was composed of teenagers with low Disclosure with their parents, low Control by parents but perceived Trust. This includes older adolescents (16 on average), a condition allowing them to be perceived as more independent and autonomous by parents and thus in need of less control. However, in addition to this, because there is no communication between parents and children (low self-disclosure) this was still considered a group with a potential risk of delinquency/violence. Group 3 (n = 118, 8.3%) was characterized by adolescents with perceived high parental Control, low Trust, and low Disclosure in their relationship with parents. In line with our hypothesis, we considered the perception of excessive control, the lack of trust from parents, and the lack of disclosure in communication as potential risk factors for delinquency and/or violence. Group 4 (n = 271, 19%) was represented by adolescents who felt high Control, who tend to have average Disclosure, but perceived Trust by their parents (high Disclosure). Due to these traits, depicting a very common, almost stereotypical image of adolescence, we considered this group to not be particularly at risk. Group 5 (n = 286, 20.1%) was characterized by low Control, a high degree of Disclosure with parents and high openness (high Trust). This group appeared to be represented by adolescents who, by virtue of their relationship with their parents, have earned their trust and thus appear projected toward autonomy. This group was not considered at risk of offensive and/or violent behaviors. Finally, Group 6 (n = 380, 26.8%) was represented by adolescents who were closely controlled (high Control) by their parents but with high scores of Disclosure and perceived Trust. This group was not considered at risk either.

Table 1 - Composition of the 6 clusters based on the average values of Disclosure, Control and Trust

	Group n. 1	Group n.2	Group n. 3	Group n. 4	Group n. 5	Group n. 6
	at risk	at risk	at risk	no risk	no risk	no risk
Disclosure	2.45	2.46	2.62	2.99	3.97	4.24
Control	2.23	2.26	3.90	3.94	2.73	4.40
Trust	2.44	3.99	2.79	4.04	4.31	4.50
	% of reclassification in the same cluster randomly dividing the sample into 2 halves					
Subsample 1	90.0%	71.7%	90.6%	78.3%	94.0%	100%
Subsample 2	72.0%	96.4%	87.7%	97.0%	97.8%	99.0%

Gender

A χ^2 analysis highlighted a gender difference in three of the six clusters. Boys were mostly present in Group 1 and Group 2, while girls were more represented in Group 6. In the three remaining groups (3, 4, and 5), no gender differences were found (see Table 2).

Age

With regard to the mean age, significant differences were found among the groups. Subjects with lower control, lower disclosure and with parents who trusted them (Group 2) appeared to be older

(M = 16.10, SD = 1.08), while those who were highly controlled, very self-disclosing and with parents who trusted them highly (Group 6) were the youngest (M = 15.21, SD = .96) (see Table 3).

Household composition

Through the χ^2 test it was possible to show how the various clusters of adolescents also differ in relation to the composition of their families. Specifically, the majority of adolescents in Group 2 lived only with their father (26.7%). The majority of adolescents in Group 6 lived with both parents (30.3% vs. 21.1% who lived alone with their mother and 10% who lived alone with their father). No significant differences were found in Groups 1, 3, 4, and 5 (see Table 2).

Table 2 - Description of the 6 clusters based on Gender and Household composition

	Gender df = 5, $\chi^2 = 44.59$, p ≤ .0001		Household composition df = 10, $\chi^2 = 19.75$, p ≤ .03		
	% M (n)	% F(n)	% with both parents (n)	% with only the mother (n)	% with only the father (n)
	adj. std. res.	adj. std. res.	adj. std. res.	adj. std. res.	adj. std. res.
Group n. 1	10.2 % (78) 3.1	5.5% (32) -3.1	7.6% (83) -1.7	11.1% (21) 1.6	10.0% (3) .4
Group n. 2	16.4% (125) 4.1	8.8% (51) -4.1	12.1% (133) -1.5	14.2% (27) .6	26.7% (8) 2.3
Group n. 3	9.1% (69) .4	8.4% (49) -.4	8.9% (97) .1	8.9% (17) .1	6.7% (2) -.4
Group n. 4	20.8% (158) .6	19.5% (113) -.6	20.3% () .0	21.6% (41) .4	13.3% (4) -1.0
Group n. 5	20.9% (159) -.4	21.9% (127) .4	20.8% (223) -1.2	23.2% (44) .6	33.3% (10) 1.6
Group n. 6	22.6% (172) -5.3	35.9% (208) 5.3	30.3% (332) 3.2	21.1% (40) -2.5	10.0% (3) -2.3
Trust	100 (761)	100 (580)	100 (1096)	100 (190)	100 (30)

Table 3 - Age: ANOVA, comparison of age among the six clusters

df = 5-1340, F = 22.15, p ≤ .0001						
	Group n. 1	Group n.2	Group n. 3	Group n. 4	Group n. 5	Group n. 6
Age	15.97 ^{abc}	16.10 ^{defg}	15.48 ^{ad}	15.52 ^{beh}	15.72 ^{bi}	15.21 ^{cghi}

Note. The letters in superscript indicate the average differences in Bonferroni post hoc test (identical letters correspond to significant differences between the two groups with p < .05).

Clusters x violent, and deviant behaviors

Groups 1 (low Control, low Disclosure and low Trust), 2 (low Control, low Disclosure and high Trust), and 3 (high Control, low Disclosure and low Trust) recorded the highest occurrence of violent behaviors, with the exception of group 2 on Threat and group 3 on Hitting or hurting someone (see Table 4) . Regarding the other three clusters, Group 6, with adolescents having the higher scores on all three scales (high Control, high Disclosure, and high Trust) recorded the lowest frequency of all violent behaviors. The lowest frequency of all violent behaviors, with the exception of Vandalism, Group fights, and Hitting or hurting someone, was also recorded in Group 5 (low

Control, high Disclosure and high Trust). Moreover, group 4 (high Control, medium Disclosure and high Trust) did not differ statistically from the other five groups, except for Threat where, together with Groups 5 and 6, it showed a significant difference from Groups 1 and 3. Finally, concerning Vandalism, Stealing, Threat, and Group fights, it is interesting to note that Group 3 (high Control, low Disclosure and low Trust) showed a higher occurrence of violent behaviors than Group 2 (low Control, low Disclosure, and high Trust).

Table 4 - Violent behaviours: percentage, frequency and adjusted standardized residuals of the six clusters

		Group n. 1 % (n) adj. std. res.	Group n.2 % (n) adj. std. res.	Group n. 3 % (n) adj. std. res.	Group n. 4 % (n) adj. std. res.	Group n. 5 % (n) adj. std. res.	Group n. 6 % (n) adj. std. res.
Vandalism							
Did you ever damage on purpose something, such as a phone booth, a window, a car or a seat in the bus or train?	No	48.6% (53) -5.8	63.2% (110) -3.0	58.5% (69) -3.6	74.4% (201) .08	74.9% (212) 1.0	85.0% (322) 6.4
	Yes	51.4% (56) 5.8	36.8% (64) 3.0	41.5% (49) 3.6	25.6% (69) -8	25.1% (71) -1.0	15.0% (57) -6.4
df = 5, $\chi^2 = 81.26$, $p \leq .0001$	Total	100% (109)	100% (174)	100% (118)	100% (270)	100% (283)	100% (379)
Stealing							
Did you ever snatch a purse or steal a wallet or something else from a person?	No	88.0% (95) -2.2	89.7% (157) -2.0	83.1% (98) -4.6	93.0% (252) -.1	96.8% (276) 2.8	96.8% (367) 3.3
	Yes	12.0% (13) 2.2	10.3% (18) 2.0	16.9% (20) 4.6	7.0% (19) .1	3.2% (9) -2.8	3.2% (12) -3.3
df = 5, $\chi^2 = 41.02$, $p \leq .0001$	Total	100% (108)	100% (175)	100% (118)	100% (271)	100% (285)	100% (379)
Carrying a weapon							
Did you ever carry a weapon, such as a knife (not a pocket-knife), bar, chain, or brass knuckles?	No	61.1% (66) -7.5	74.3% (130) -4.5	79.7% (94) -1.9	87.1% (236) .8	89.8% (256) 2.3	95.2% (360) 6.3
	Yes	38.9% (42) 7.5	25.7% (45) 4.5	20.3% (24) 1.9	12.9% (35) -8	10.2% (29) -2.3	4.8% (18) -6.3
df = 5, $\chi^2 = 106.84$, $p \leq .0001$	Total	100% (108)	100% (175)	100% (118)	100% (271)	100% (285)	100% (378)
Threat							
Did you ever threaten somebody with a weapon or to beat them up, just to get money or other things from them?	No	88.0% (95) -6.8	97.1% (170) -.4	92.4% (109) -3.9	99.6% (269) 2.4	99.6% (282) 2.5	99.2% (377) 2.4
	Yes	12.0% (13) 6.8	2.9% (5) .4	7.6% (9) 3.9	0.4% (1) -2.4	0.4% (1) -2.5	0.8% (3) -2.4
df = 5, $\chi^2 = 70.79$, $p \leq .0001$	Total	100% (108)	100% (175)	100% (118)	100% (270)	100% (283)	100% (380)
Group fights							
Did you ever participate in a group fights?	No	47.2% (51) -6.5	64.6% (113) -2.9	55.9% (66) -4.5	73.7% (199) .1	76.2% (215) 1.2	88.4% (336) 7.8
	Yes	52.8% (57) 6.5	35.4% (62) 2.	44.1% (52) 4.5	26.3% (71) -.1	23.8% (67) -1.2	11.6% (44) -7.8
df = 5, $\chi^2 = 108.73$, $p \leq .0001$	Total	100% (108)	100% (175)	100% (118)	100% (270)	100% (282)	100% (380)
Hitting or hurting someone							
Did you ever intentionally beat up someone, or hurt him with a bar or knife, so badly that he had to see a doctor?	No	88.9% (96) -5.0	93.7% (164) -2.6	96.6% (113) -.2	98.5% (266) 1.7	97.7% (278) 1.1	98.9% (376) 2.7
	Yes	11.1% (12) 5.0	6.3% (11) 2.6	3.4% (4) .2	1.5% (4) -1.7	2.1% (6) -1.1	1.1% (4) -2.7
df = 5, $\chi^2 = 37.92$, $p \leq .0001$	Total	100% (108)	100% (175)	100% (117)	100% (270)	100% (284)	100% (380)

Clusters x bullying (physical, psychological, and cyber)

We investigated the frequency of physical, psychological, and cyber bullying behaviors in the 6 Groups obtained (see Table 5). Concerning physical bullying, we observed that the average value decreased progressively from Group 1 to Group 6. The Bonferroni post hoc test showed that Group 1 differs statistically from all other groups. Group 2 differed only from Groups 1 and 6. All other groups differed only from Group 1. Regarding psychological bullying, we observed the same general trend underlined by the previous analysis: a gradual decrease in the mean scores from Group 1 to Group 6. The Bonferroni post hoc test showed that Group 1 differs significantly from Groups 4, 5, and 6, Groups 2 and 3 differ from Groups 5 and 6, and Group 4 differs from Group 6.

We also observed the same overall trend for cyber bullying: a decrease in the average values from Groups 1 to 6. In this case, the Bonferroni post hoc test showed a significant difference only for subjects in Group 1 from all other groups.

Table 5 - Physical, Psychological and cyber bullying: ANOVA, comparison of the six clusters

	Group n. 1	Group n.2	Group n. 3	Group n. 4	Group n. 5	Group n. 6
Physical bullying df = 5-1330, F = 24.35, p ≤ .0001	1.43 ^{abcde}	1,14 ^{af}	1,13 ^b	1,09 ^c	1,08 ^d	1,05 ^{ef}
Psychological bullying df = 5-1319, F = 15.48, p ≤ .0001	2.09 ^{abc}	1,95 ^{de}	1,93 ^{fg}	1,86 ^{ah}	1,71 ^{bdf}	1,69 ^{cegh}
Cyber bullying df = 5-1329, F = 15.22, p ≤ .0001	1.60 ^{abcde}	1,37 ^a	1,36 ^b	1,33 ^c	1,29 ^d	1,28 ^e

Note. The letters in superscript indicate the average differences in Bonferroni post hoc test (identical letters correspond to significant differences between the two groups with p <.05).

Clusters x group-activities with peers

With regard to group activities (Table 6), when analyzing all six risk activities (drinking lots of beer or alcohol, taking drugs, smashing, or vandalizing things for fun, shoplifting, frightening or annoying people for fun, doing illegal motorcycle/car races), we found largely the same pattern: the frequency of these behaviors gradually decreased from Group 1 to Group 6, except for Group 3, which sometimes showed a slightly higher average than Group 2 (taking drugs, smashing or vandalizing things for fun, shoplifting and frightening). Analyzing the results of the Bonferroni post hoc tests performed on the 6 risk activities, Group 1 differed from all other groups, with the exception of the items “we take drugs”, “we smash or vandalise things for fun”, “we shoplift just for fun”, and “we frighten or annoy people around us just for fun”, where the difference with Group 3 was not significant. Group 2 differed significantly from Group 6 with the exception of the items “we drink a lot of beer/alcohol” and “we take drugs”, where the difference also emerged with Group 5. Similarly, Group 3 differed from Groups 4, 5, and 6 except for the item “we compete in illegal motorcycle/car races” and the item “we frighten or annoy people around us just for fun”, where it did not differ from Group 4. Group 4 differed almost exclusively from Group 6 only for the items “we drink a lot of beer /alcohol”, “we take drugs”, and “we frighten or annoy people around us just for fun”. Finally, Group 5 differed significantly from Group 6 only for the item “we drink a lot of beer/alcohol”. By analyzing other behaviors (non-risk activities), we noted that going to discos or pop concerts was a less frequent activity among Group 6, which had significantly lower

average values than all other groups. Considering the very low average values shown by all six groups in the activity “we play in a band”, although Group 2 showed significantly higher values than Group 6, we can conclude that being part of a musical band does not seem to be frequent among the adolescents in our sample. Playing computer games was a prevalent activity among subjects in Group 1, differently from Groups 4 and 6. No significant differences emerged in the frequency of chatting, sports activities and group volunteering among the six groups.

Table 6 - ANOVA: Comparison between the clusters in the activities of the Group of Peers

What do you do when you go out with your friends? Usually:	Group n. 1	Group n.2	Group n. 3	Group n. 4	Group n. 5	Group n. 6
At risk activities						
We drink a lot of beer/alcohol df = 5-1323, F = 50.86, p ≤ .0001	2,54 ^{abcde}	2,21 ^{afgh}	2,19 ^{bijk}	1,88 ^{cfil}	1,72 ^{dghjm}	1,41 ^{ehklm}
We take drugs df = 5-1319, F = 22.65, p ≤ .0001	1,60 ^{abcd}	1,33 ^{aef}	1,43 ^{ghi}	1,20 ^{bgj}	1,16 ^{ceh}	1,05 ^{dfij}
We smash or vandalize things for fun df = 5-1320, F = 17.87, p ≤ .0001	1,70 ^{abcd}	1,42 ^{ae}	1,51 ^{fgh}	1,28 ^{bf}	1,29 ^{cg}	1,17 ^{deh}
We shoplift just for fun df = 5-1321, F = 13.19, p ≤ .0001	1,32 ^{abcd}	1,11 ^{ae}	1,30 ^{efgh}	1,08 ^{bf}	1,09 ^{cg}	1,07 ^{dh}
We frighten or annoy the people around us just for fun df = 5-1321, F = 14.37, p ≤ .0001	1,78 ^{abcd}	1,51 ^{ae}	1,59 ^{fg}	1,43 ^{bh}	1,36 ^{cf}	1,23 ^{degj}
We compete in illegal motorcycle/car races df = 5-1317, F = 18.57, p ≤ .0001	1,82 ^{abcde}	1,45 ^{af}	1,31 ^b	1,29 ^c	1,30 ^d	1,15 ^{ef}
Not at risk activities						
We go to discos or pop concerts df = 5-1321, F = 14.05, p ≤ .0001	2,35 ^a	2,35 ^{bc}	2,11 ^d	2,10 ^{be}	2,16 ^f	1,84 ^{acdef}
We play in a band df = 5-1320, F = 2.78, p ≤ .02	1,17	1,27 ^a	1,26	1,15	1,14	1,11 ^a
We play sport df = 5-1322, F = .67, p = n.s.	2,41	2,52	2,46	2,55	2,57	2,56
We chat on the computer df = 5-1321, F = .83, p = n.s.	2,82	2,71	2,78	2,75	2,77	2,65
We play computer games df = 5-1320, F = 2.88, p ≤ .02	2,51 ^{ab}	2,20	2,30	2,17 ^a	2,29	2,18 ^b
We attend a volunteer group df = 5-1315, F = 2.38, p ≤ .04	1,07	1,09	1,10	1,20	1,15	1,18

Note. The letters in superscript indicate differences in Bonferroni post hoc test (identical letters correspond to significant differences between the two groups with p <.05).

Discussion

Our study aimed to investigate how parental control, trust and adolescents’ disclosure were related to violent and deviant behaviors enacted alone or with peers in a sample of Italian adolescents. The results of our study highlighted that the concurrence of parental control, trust and adolescents’ disclosure better explains the family dynamics that are functional to preventing adolescents’ violent

behaviors more than each construct separately. Generally speaking, in line with our hypotheses, the group with the lowest score on Disclosure, Trust, and Control (Group 1) was at the highest risk of enacting violent behavior. This result confirmed the evidence in the literature in our sample of Italian adolescents (Kerr and Stattin 2000). For Group 2 (low Control, low Disclosure, and high Trust) our results add something new to the literature (Kerr, Stattin, and Trost 1999; Borawski et al. 2003): trust was not sufficient to protect adolescents from acting violently. In this case, the parent–adolescent relationship seemed unidirectional (from parent to son/daughter) without a corresponding openness on the adolescent’s part. High trust may also correspond to a permissive parental style (Baumrind 1996) which, by granting trust to children without an appropriate control, may be indicative of parents who abstain from the difficult task of setting limits and negotiating boundaries with their assertive adolescent counterparts. Finally, the results for Group 3 (high parental Control, low Trust, and low Disclosure) showed how parental control can be harmful, when not accompanied by trust and disclosure as indicators of a positive relationship. When parents use control in a relation lacking in trust and fluent communication, they tend to become coercive. In this way they focus the adolescent’s attention on the powerful status of the parent rather than on helping the child to reason on the dangerous consequences of acts that the parent wishes to prevent (Baumrind 1996). This may trigger coercive hostile cycles (Patterson, Reid, and Dishion 1992) which can provoke defiance and undermine the internalization process of prosocial attitudes and norms. In this case control may be an obstacle to the adolescent’s development of autonomy, and works against the parents’ attempts and expectations to reduce deviant behaviors. Moreover, although our study did not collect information about the characteristics of the peer group, from our results it emerged that parental control (too much or too little control) may also be related to peer socialization processes, but this relation might not be as straightforward as previously thought, since dimensions other than control should be taken into account (Tilton-Weaver et al. 2013): despite the opposite level of control, the similarities in violent and illegal behaviors enacted by Groups 1 and 3 were consistent, indeed for activities performed with the peer group during leisure time. Groups 1 and 3 were more similar than Group 2 for the kind of risk of violent or illegal behaviors enacted, such as taking drugs, vandalizing properties, frightening other people, shoplifting. Moreover, in line with the differences in violent behaviors reported in Groups 1, 2, and 3 compared to Groups 4, 5, and 6, the results obtained by comparing the Clusters of Bullying showed that the average values of bullying decreased progressively from Groups 1 to 6. In particular, young people reporting low Control, low Trust, and low Disclosure (Group 1) were involved more often in physical, psychological and cyber bullying compared to groups with no risk (Groups 4, 5, and 6); this confirms the evidence reported in the literature that pointed out a positive association between low parental Control (Bonds and Stoker 2000), low Trust and low child Disclosure with involvement in bullying and cyberbullying (Brighi et al. 2013; Law, Shapka, and Olson 2010). Other studies have emphasized the role of lack of emotional connection with parents (e.g., adolescents’ perceived loneliness in family relations) (Guarini, Passini, Melotti and Brighi 2012; Li and Wu 2007) and poor and inconsistent parenting (Farrington and Baldry 2010) in predicting the involvement in bullying and cyberbullying, confirming our hypothesis: excessive parental Control, when not accompanied by Trust and Disclosure, rather than limiting deviant behavior, tends to facilitate it through counter-regulatory behavioral strategies and supporting attitudes. On the other hand, the group of adolescents that emerged positively was group 6 (high Control, high Disclosure, and high Trust) as it has by far the lowest frequency of violent and deviant behavior and (Physical, Psychological and Cyber) bullying. Second only to Group 6, we found Group 5, consisting of adolescents with little parental Control but open communication with them (high Disclosure), accompanied by a high level of Trust; it is significant to note that this group included adolescents who were older than those in Groups 4 and 6: this result may be indicative of adjusted parenting

strategies according to developmental task dealing with the autonomy that older adolescents have to face (Cattelino, Calandri, and Bonino 2001). These patterns of evidence were consistent for both individual and peer group activities. Group 6 consistently performed better in terms of low involvement in risk behaviors with peers. This result was consistent with evidence from the literature that states that parental warmth and trust may be a condition under which adolescents perceive peer management as more acceptable, and where they feel free to disclose to parents their social experiences with peers (Bank, Burraston, and Snyder 2004; Keyjsers et al. 2010; Tilton-Weaver et al. 2013). These results, therefore, seem to challenge the stereotypical view of parental control as the strategy that, alone, can act as a deterrent for violent behavior in adolescence, demonstrating the need for an effective affective communication in a climate of mutual and reciprocal trust and respect. The family is confirmed in its key socialization role, as it embeds processes whereby important dimensions such as trust and communication may be experienced together with a sense of belonging that integrates and balances the needs for autonomy and the emotional investment outside the family. Our results can also be explained by the Hirschi's Social Control Theory of Delinquency (1969) that identifies the cause of deviant behavior in the disruption or lack of social bonding between adolescents and their families and their social community; this social bonding is based on the adherence to values and conventional goals of their community, the active involvement in socially accepted activities and trust in moral and social norms. In this framework, adolescents who care about their parents' wishes and opinions (and disclose their experiences to their parents) are more connected to norms and are therefore less involved in deviant behaviors (Dornbusch et al. 2001). Acting violently could therefore be prevented by building trust and facilitating communication between parents and children, especially in adolescence where testing reciprocal strategies of negotiation and respect becomes possible. In several ways, therefore, this study offers an expanded view of monitoring and adolescent violent and illegal behaviors, both at individual and peer group levels.

Conclusions

With this study we aimed to analyze deviant and violent behaviors in adolescents with reference to some dimensions of parental monitoring. Here, parental monitoring was conceived as a multidimensional construct, not limited to parental control, but also including adolescent disclosure and parental trust, which is embedded and develops in a two-way relational process between parents and children. By adopting this multidimensional concept of monitoring, we showed how the occurrence and frequency of deviant and violent behavior in adolescents is influenced by a complex relationship between control and trust, thus overcoming the old assumption that controlling children is sufficient for preventing deviance. This seems to be an interesting result, together with the finding that parental control, where not accompanied by adolescent disclosure and/or parental trust, may even "encourage" such deviant actions. Our results could support professionals working with families in developing educational and training programs where the emphasis is placed not only on control, as the only effective tool to prevent adolescents from risk and violent behaviors, but rather on promoting mutual trust and open communication between parents and adolescents. Future research should investigate the mechanisms and processes within the parent-adolescent relationship that specifically foster the development and maintenance of adolescent disclosure and parental trust. This study has some limitations worth considering. We used a self-report questionnaire administered only to teenagers, thus Parental Control, Trust, and Disclosure were limited to the subjective perception of adolescents. The literature suggests that evaluating parental monitoring through effective parents' reports may be worthwhile (Kerr, Stattin, and Trost 1999; Kerr and Stattin 2000; Stattin and Kerr 2000). Moreover, the cross-sectional nature of the research did not

allow us to monitor the development of adolescents at risk over time (Groups 1, 2, and 3), and test whether the risk remains consistent over time. Moreover, although the sample was representative of the teenage population of the province of Rimini, it represented only a geographically limited area of Italy. It would be interesting to see whether our results could be generalized to other Italian areas, and international contexts. Finally, the impact of some family factors (parental control, parental trust and adolescent disclosure) and their interaction with the important role played by peers in the socialization of violent behaviors (Emler and Reicher 1995) has not been fully investigated. Future research could shed light on the mediators and/or moderating effects of peer influence.

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