



The Association Between Violent and Non-Violent Adolescent Delinquent Behavior with Adult Depression

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Introduction

- Adolescent violence is a common public health issue which can have long-term effects on the mental health of participating delinquent youth (CDC, 2022) and often co-occurs with depression.
- Childhood behaviors of aggression and delinquency have been statistically significant correlates with adult depression (Diamantopoulou et al., 2011)
- There is a significant relationship between an increase in frequency of offending and increasing levels of depression. Both medium-rate and adolescent-limited offenders showed notably greater levels of depression compared to non-offending individuals (Edwards et al., 2019).
- Additionally, as individuals age, the mental-health-related ramifications of engaging in delinquent activities may intensify as they reflect more on their past decisions and the potentially better life paths they missed out on. (Shover, 1996).
- Race is also a factor associated with this co-occurrence, as African-American and Black youth are disproportionately affected by violence, homicide being the foremost cause of death among this youth population (CDC, 2022).

Research Questions

- Is there an association between adolescent delinquent behavior and adult depression?
- Is the association between adolescent delinquent behavior and depression based on type of delinquency — nonviolent vs. violent?

Methods

Sample

- Respondents (n=1746) grades 7-12 were drawn from the 1994-95 U.S. National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health (Add Health), a nationally representative sample of adults in the U.S. (Wave 1)
- The same sample of respondents were surveyed in 2018 (Wave 5) which accounts for the depression results.

Measures

- Questions which measured non-violent and violent types of delinquency were asked to Wave I participants — all respondents in the study reported 3+ time participation in at least one delinquent activity during the past 12 months.
- “Nonviolent” (n=966) refers to respondents who reported only non-violent behavior (like stealing).
- “Violent” (n=368) refers to respondents who reported only violent behavior (like fighting).
- “Both” (n=412) refers to respondents who reported both types of delinquent behavior (violent and non-violent).
- “Depressed” was coded as a binary categorical variable based on whether or not respondents had been told by a doctor, nurse, or healthcare provider that they have or had depression.
- Race was split into three categories—“white” “black” and “other”
 - “Other” refers to Asian, American Indian, and other populations.

Results

Univariate

- 55.3% of adolescent delinquent respondents are non-violent, 21.1% are violent, and 23.6% are both.
- 25.2% of adult respondents indicated that they have been told by a doctor, nurse, or healthcare provider that they have or had depression.

Bivariate

- While examining the association between adult depression (categorical response) and adolescent delinquency type (categorical explanatory), a chi-square test of independence showed **no significant difference** in adult depression between nonviolent delinquents (28.1% depressed), violent delinquents (25.3% depressed), and combined delinquents (28.2% depressed), $\chi^2=.62$, 2 df, $p=.73$.

Multivariate

- After controlling for race, adolescent delinquency type is **still not significantly associated** with adult depression (Figure 1).
- Race is **not a moderator** for the association between adolescent delinquency type and adult depression.

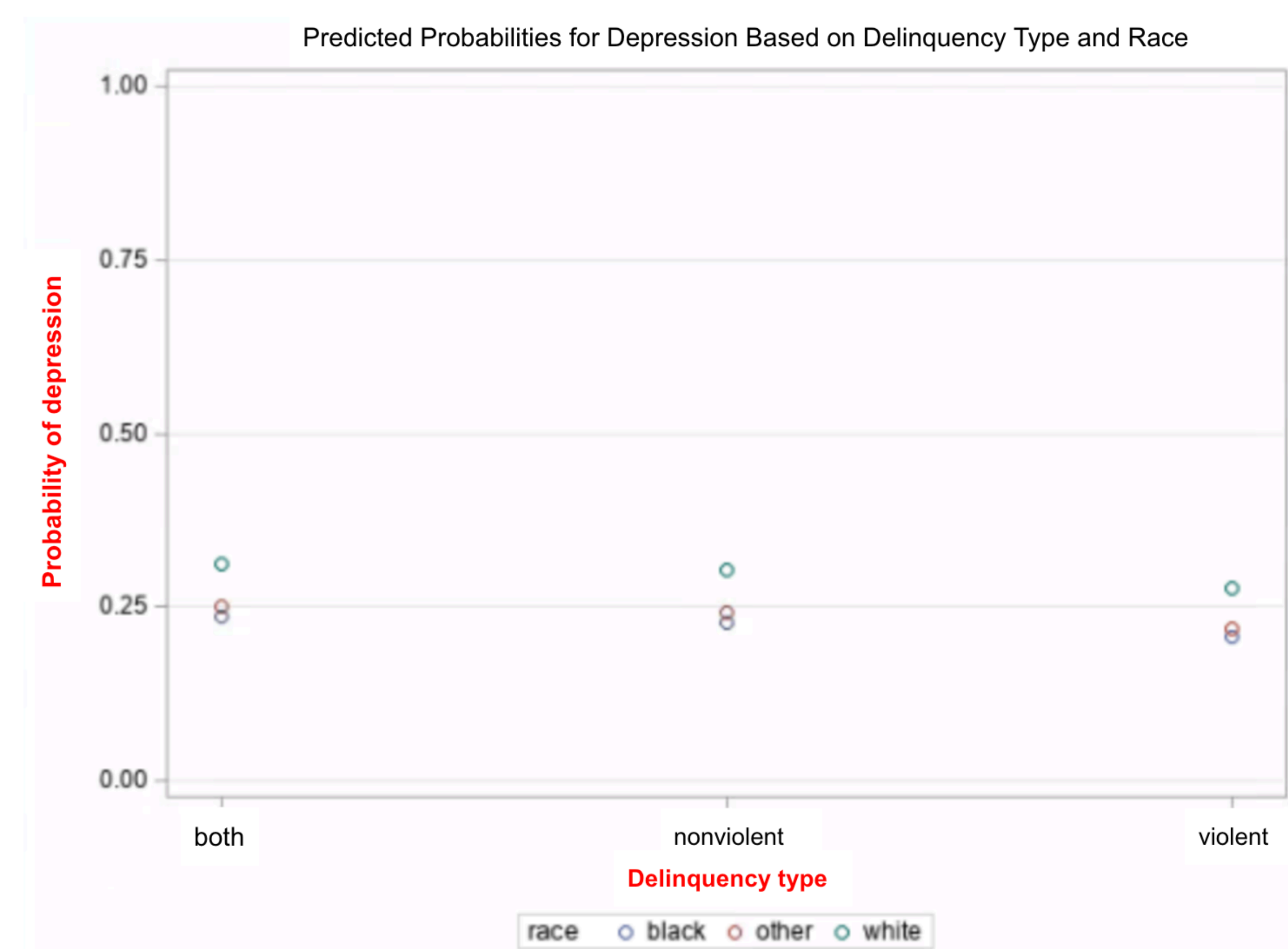


Figure 1

Discussion

- The main limitation of this analysis was the small sample size of adolescent delinquent respondents.
 - Additionally, the large number of respondents lost from Wave 1 to Wave 5 decreased sample size even further.
- Depression level was measured by medical evaluation, which discounts feelings of depression experienced by individuals who have not sought out or do not have access to medical help.
- Further research (with a larger sample size) is needed to determine whether delinquency type is associated with depression.
 - It may also be useful to use sub-categorize delinquency type with a variable for severity/frequency of delinquency.
 - For example, for this analysis, physical fighting and using a weapon to threaten someone were grouped into one delinquency type (“violent”), although the latter is a more severe/harmful action.
 - Taking into account severity/frequency within delinquency types would allow for more specificity in comparison and analysis.

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