

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY STUDIES

DISSERTATION DEFENSE FOR

MELISSA LIPPOLD

TITLE: PARENTAL MONITORING AND EARLY ADOLESCENT RISKY BEHAVIOR: A PERSON-ORIENTED APPROACH

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Area of Specialization: Prevention, Adolescent Development and Family Relationships

ABSTRACT

This dissertation uses person-oriented methods to explore the relationships between specific patterns of parental monitoring-related behaviors and youth risky behavior. Most studies, to date, have used variable-oriented methods to isolate the effects of one specific monitoring behavior on youth outcomes. Yet, families are likely engaging in multiple monitoring behaviors simultaneously and parents and youth may have different perceptions of monitoring. Therefore, person-oriented strategies that identify specific combinations of behavior and integrate multiple reporters may more closely resemble the monitoring process as it occurs in natural family settings.

The first cross-sectional study, uses a sample of 796 6th graders in rural communities and small towns to identify latent classes using mother and youth reports of maternal knowledge, active parent monitoring efforts, youth disclosure, supervision, and the amount of parent-youth communication. Five latent classes were identified: High-Monitors, Maternal Over-Estimators, Low-Monitors, Communication-

Focused, and Supervision-Focused when youth were in the sixth grade. Problem behavior and strained parent-youth relationships were associated with increased odds of membership in the Low Monitors, Maternal Over-Estimators, and Supervision-Focused class, relative to the High Monitors. The discussion focuses on the value of using a person-oriented approach with multiple reporters to study patterns of monitoring behaviors in early adolescence.

In Study #2, these analyses are extended longitudinally over the middle school period using Latent Transition Analysis to 1.) identify latent patterns of parental monitoring-related behaviors occurring in mother-youth dyads during middle school and 2.) investigate how changes in monitoring patterns are associated with youth substance use in Grade 6 and substance use initiation from Grade 6 to 8. Using a sample of 536 rural dyads (the longitudinal cases from Study #1), mother and youth reports of parental knowledge, active parent monitoring efforts, youth disclosure, supervision, and parent-youth communication were used to identify six latent patterns of monitoring across grade 6-8: High-Monitors, Low Monitors, Communication-Focused, Supervision-Focused, Maternal Over-Estimators, and Youth Over-Estimators. The initiation of alcohol, smoking, and marijuana was significantly associated with transitions between patterns of monitoring. Initiation of alcohol and smoking was associated with increased odds of transition into the Low Monitors from the Communication-Focused, Supervision-Focused, and Maternal Over-Estimators, relative to remaining in the same status. The discussion focuses on the contributions of a person-oriented approach to study changes in monitoring-related behaviors over the middle school period.