Contributing factors of aggression in elementary school age boys

AnnMarie Mikles

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CONTRIBUTING FACTORS OF AGGRESSION
IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AGE BOYS

A Project
Presented to The
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of The Requirements for The Degree
Master of Social Work

by
AnnMarie Mikles
Jennifer Doswell
June 1995
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Approved by:

Dr. Lucy Cardona, Project Advisor Social Work
Dr. Teresa Morris, Research Chair Social Work
Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, Department Chair Social Work

6/8/95
ABSTRACT

Aggression is a pervasive problem in our society and is now affecting our young people. Research indicates that the home environment is where these aggressive patterns develop. This study employed the positivist paradigm to test contributing factors of aggression in school age boys. Questionnaires were administered to 64 second through sixth grade students with aggressive or non-aggressive behavior at school. It was anticipated that boys who watched violent unsupervised television, witnessed parental aggression to family members and others, and experienced harsh parenting would be more likely to display aggressive behavior than boys who did not. Chi-square findings identify negative role modeling to be a more significant predictor of aggressive behavior than the other contributing factors. While these findings suggest trends correlating with aggression, results of chi-square analysis does not support all of the anticipated hypotheses. Results of frequency percentages that identify relationships between aggressive groups and the contributing factors may assist school officials. Criteria to identify, assess and intervene with at-risk school age boys may then be established to reduce aggression at school sites.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researchers wish to acknowledge the entire faculty at California State University San Bernardino for their individual and collective support through instruction, role modeling, validation, inspiration and encouragement.
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TABLE 1: CHI-SQUARE DISTRIBUTION
Introduction

Little Eyes Upon You – Author unknown

There are little eyes upon you
and they’re watching night and day.
There are little ears that quickly
take in every word you say.
There are little hands all eager
to do anything you do;
And a little boy who’s dreaming
of the day he’ll be like you.

You’re the little fellow’s idol,
you’re the wisest of the wise.
In his little mind about you
no suspicions ever rise.
He believes in you devoutly,
holds all you say and do;
He will say and do, in your way
when he’s grown up just like you.

There’s a wide-eyed little fellow
who believes you’re always right;
and his eyes are always opened,
and he watches day and night.
You are setting an example
every day in all you do;
For the little boy who’s waiting
to grow up to be like you.
Motion pictures that celebrate violence and glamorize its portrayal may actually reflect a cynical view of how we as a society have become callused toward violence. Quoting the most recent FBI crime study report (1995), James Alan Fox, Dean of the College of Criminal Justice at Northeastern University, said, "The rate at which boys are committing crimes, particularly homicide, is skyrocketing." FBI data lists, among other figures, an increase of 165 percent in the number of male youths aged 14 to 17 who have committed homicides between 1985 and 1993 (Gun murders, 1995). Supporting this trend is an awareness of a sharp increase in violence at school sites where school children, directly exposed to the reality of violence up close, trade the learning process for one of survival.

Reported problems in schools is consistent with the FBI findings, and suggests trends toward increased violence in school settings. In 1940, the seven top problems in public schools were identified by teachers as talking out of turn, chewing gum, making noise, running in the halls, cutting in line, dress-code infractions, and littering. In 1980, the seven top problems in public schools were identified as suicide, assault, robbery, rape, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and pregnancy (Zuckerman, 1993).
According to Richters & Martinez (1993), between September of 1988 and January of 1989, 20 Washington, D.C. students were wounded by gunshots or knives on or near their school grounds. In December 1988, two students were wounded by gunshots from a passing car as they left a D.C. high school (Sanchez & Horwitz, 1989).

The pervasiveness of violence is most alarming. Often the school environment produces an element of fear which interferes with a child's learning. In Los Angeles elementary school students were asked to comment on their fear. Some of their responses were, "It's scary, because I think that maybe someday I'll get killed or maybe some of my friends." "I want to get an education but in high school people are getting killed so it's hard to go. I'm afraid." "It's disturbing. It didn't used to be every day that you'd see a kid with a gun or a kid killed. Now it feels like it's every day...I'm worried that it could happen here." "I think about how I want to die. I don't want to get shot, but if I do, I want to get shot in the head so I die instantly, or I want to die in my sleep" (Los Angeles Times, 3/18/93 B1,2). From parents to educators to researchers to law enforcement to political leaders, prevention and intervention are sought, but change so far is not evident.
In the United States almost 2 million students were suspended at least once during the 1985-86 school year (Dupper, 1994). Research tracks the progression of aggressive behavior stating, the same students are suspended over and over again throughout their school careers, and Elementary school students with records of misconduct are 12 times as likely to be suspended in middle school (Dupper, 1994). Researchers of this study hope to provide insight into contributing factors affecting progression patterns of aggressive behavior exhibited by elementary school age boys. Such research will assist educators to develop effective prevention and intervention plans appropriate in a school setting.

**Problem Focus**

Aggression as an act of assault will be the focus of this study. The research orientation is the positivist paradigm. The literature review yields a wealth of research on children and aggression and evidence shows that the home environment is a significant contributor to aggression in children (Radke-Yarrow & Zahn-Waxler, 1986; Eron & Huesmann, 1986; Olweus, et al, 1978). According to McCord (1986), Monahan (1957) supports the above theory when he suggests that the home is the genesis of normal or delinquent
patterns of behavior. This study will examine, specifically, elementary school age boys' aggression and three contributing factors to their aggressive behavior: (1) watching violent unsupervised television programs in the home; (2) being witness to negative role modeling, and (3) experiencing harsh parenting.

Evidence of aggression is displayed at school. The primary problem listed on Student Referral Forms of children referred for counseling is "Aggression to Peers" (Schaefer, 1994). Students are routinely disciplined for fighting, slapping, punching, pushing, kicking, and/or hitting peers or staff. Questions arise regarding the influence of parents who are important socializing agents (Eron, 1982). Following an assumption that violent children grow up to be violent adults (Centerwall, 1993; Erickson, 1962), there is a compulsion to explore contributing factors into probable causes for the surge of violent behavior in children. As the literature review will indicate, there is no single factor identifying an explanation for aggressive behavior.
Literature Review

Television and Aggression

Children watch 5,000 hours of television by the first grade and 19,000 hours by the end of high school, more total time than is spent in the classroom (Zuckerman, 1993). Children between the ages of two and eleven are some of the most ardent viewers and number 33 million nationwide. The A.C. Nielsen Company says the average child in that group watched a record 27 hours and 21 minutes a week in its latest survey of November, 1994, compared with 23 hours and 18 minutes a decade ago (Tooth, 1985).

A preponderance of literature links exposure to violence on television with aggression in children (Heintz, 1992; Huesmann, Eron, & Lagerspetz, 1984; Sneed & Runco, 1992; Lorion & Saltzman, 1993). Used as a baby-sitter, in unsupervised settings (e.g. latch-key kids) the television set will provide a child with numerous hours of absorbing unrealistic portrayals of "life" (Heintz 1992). According to Roberts (1988), repeated television viewing presents kids with athletes, movie stars, and politicians who achieve success through aggression. Television reinforces aggressive behavior in children who watch aggressive television to reinforce their aggressive behavior (Eron, 1992).
By the time a child reaches 18-years old, (s)he will have viewed 200,000 acts of violence, including 40,000 murders (Zuckerman, 1993; Schorr, 1994). The Commission on Violence and Youth of the American Psychological Association (1992) reports that on any given prime-time interval, five to six violent scenes per hour, and 20 to 25 such acts per hour on Saturday morning children's programs are broadcast over network television.

Eron, Huesman, & Lagerspetz (1984) studied the intervening variables in causal relationships of television violence and aggression in the United States and Finland. Their sample included school age children in the United States and France. Results of their study indicated that the strength of the causal relationship between television violence and aggression depended upon both the viewing frequency and the extent of the violence. Their study did not indicate a causal relationship between either a child's predisposition to violence and television violence, or those children with aggressive parent models and television violence. Further, contrary to prominent research which contends that viewing television violence has a causal relationship to aggression, they contend that the relationship of the two variables is correlational. They
believe that it is probably a bi-directional relationship whereby viewing television violence and committing aggressive behavior is reciprocal rather than causal.

Although there may be some uncertainty about why relationships occur, it is clear that children actively process information from television. Cognitive development theories pioneered by Jean Piaget and later revised and expanded by Jerome Bruner (Clark-Stewart, 1988), provide a conceptual framework for understanding intellectual development. As a process for acquiring knowledge and organizing information about the world around them, Piaget contends that children assimilate new information differently from adults. Cognitive psychologists theorize (Corey, 1986) that as new information, perception and experience is understood, it becomes assimilated into a "knowledge bank." If the perception does not fit, the mind either rejects it or changes itself to accommodate this new information or experience, thus defining children as active processors of information or experience, rather than passive receivers of communication (Heinz, 1992).

According to Josephson Huesman (1987), processing is consistent with the cognitive perspective. Huesman has suggested that children create and store into their memories
problem-solving algorithms that are partly based on observing others' behaviors. Repeated scenes of violence on television would lead to the recall of this stored information in later situations if a retrieval cue was presented (Huesman, 1982). Similarly, children are no longer defined as passive receivers of a one-way electronic media process, but as interactive interpreters of media information (Heintz, 1992).

This strategy for processing messages assists children to form concrete concepts and relationships with the physical world, facilitating later development of systematic logical reasoning and an understanding of abstract concepts. If a child is exposed to large doses of unrealistic or faulty "knowledge", misconceptions may become assimilated as fact. Children identify with heroes whose aggressive and violent solutions are rewarded. Young children are unable to distinguish the difference between real and simulated acts of violence they view on the screen, erasing the line between the reality of harm suffered as the result of a violent act and the fantasy of a cartoon character who remains unscathed (Psychology Today, 1992). One ten-year-old child interviewed by Los Angeles Times reporter, Gary Libman (1993), said this about violence on television, "They
should not have that much violence. If you get shot in a cartoon, it doesn’t hurt. Little kids may think if you shoot someone in real life it doesn’t hurt either.”

Parents As Role Models

In a 1982 study, Eron concluded that another contributing factor to aggression includes the modeling of behavior by parents. According to Jouriles, et al. (1989), interspousal aggression correlates with the frequency and severity of child problems (Wolfe, Jaffe, Wilson, & Zak, 1985). Jouriles, et al. (1989), contends that social learning theory and the results from experimental laboratory studies on modeling suggests that children’s direct exposure to interpersonal aggression can result in children’s aggressive behavior.

Jouriles, et al. (1989) completed a study with 87 couples requesting marital therapy who had children between 5 and 12 years of age. Their findings indicated that marital aggression is related to a range of child problems and that 50% of the children from the maritally aggressive homes were evidencing problems at clinical levels. Further comparisons by Strassberg et al. (1994) presents supporting evidence that the most aggressive children come from homes in which both parents model hostile treatment of others.
According to McCord (1986), Monahan (1957) supports the above when he suggests that the place of the home is the genesis of normal or delinquent patterns of behavior. Accordingly, it would be reasonable to define parents as indigenous teachers of their children who imitate their parent(s)' aggressive behavior to resolve conflict.

**Harsh Parenting**

Parents' childrearing practices affect their children's behavior. Parents are more likely to punish older siblings than younger for fighting, and they are more likely to punish boys when they fight with their sisters. This tendency to punish the more powerful sibling results in more frequent acts of aggression (Felson & Russo, 1988).

Harsh treatment may be remembered, but not the reason for it. Endless scoldings, the silent treatment, and shame and ridicule can introduce undesirable emotional problems (USA Today, 1992). Similarly, according to Felson & Russo (1988), punishment may increase the incidents of aggression because the target may imitate the behavior of the punishing agent (e.g. Bandura & Walters, 1963). Similarly, Steele & Pollock (1968) expand on Anna Freud's concept of "identification with the aggressor" by pointing out a child's tendencies to learn aggressive behavior. Children
who are continuously reinforced by parental commands and criticism begin to identify with the aggressive care-giver.

George & Main (1980) compared one to three year-old abused children in a day care setting, with a control group of children whose families experienced stress, and found that the abused children were aggressive to their peers twice as much as children in the control group. A longitudinal study by Strassberg et al. (1994) of preschoolers, both boys and girls, looked at three types of discipline: nonpunative, spanking and violent. They concluded that the more severe a child was disciplined the more aggressive the child was toward peers.

Eron's (1982) study revealed that instigations to aggression implied in parents' rejecting and non-nurturing child rearing practices contribute to aggression. According to Cicchetti & Lynch, (1993) & Sternburg et al., (1993), children who had been physically abused reported higher levels of problematic behavior than did children who had witnessed spousal abuse.

Additionally, a study conducted by Strassberg et al. (1993) in Israel compared eight to twelve year-old children who had experienced harsh punishment, and those who had both experienced harsh punishment and observed their parents
fighting, to find both used aggression as a form of conflict resolution. When comparing Israeli children who had observed abuse, as opposed to those who were actually physically attacked, Sternberg offers, "Perhaps the experience of observing spouse abuse affects children by a less direct route than physical abuse, with cognitive mechanisms playing a greater role in shaping the effects of observing violence than the effects of being its victim."

These conclusions are consistent with Erickson's Theoretical Model (1962) of the life cycle. Erickson's Basic Trust vs. Basic Mistrust phase of ego development included that the infant's system of trust is perpetuated in the overall sense of the continuity and familiarity of experiences in a loving and safe environment. The child's sense of feeling good about him/herself is framed within his/her mother's quality of nurturance and a firm sense of trustworthiness. The lack of homeostasis gives rise to deviance and/or aggression later in life.

Research Design and Method

Purpose of The Study

The purpose of this descriptive study is to identify the salient characteristics of aggressive behavior in elementary school age boys. This study targets elementary
school age boys (first through sixth grades) who have exhibited aggressive behavior at school with a focus on assessing home environment factors.

The home environment includes three stimulus factors that will be described and identified as the independent variables in this study: (1) the viewing of violent unsupervised television programming; (2) parents who negatively role-model aggression including the approval and rewarding of their child's aggressive act; and (3) harsh parenting styles which include verbal parental hostility, physical punishment, and other power-asserting practices. Aggressive behavior is the dependent variable in this study.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

An extensive literature review indicates that exposure to violence on television, parents' negative role modeling, and hostile, punishing parents are each significantly linked to aggression in children.

The research questions are as follows:

(1) Do each of the variables contribute to aggression in elementary school age boys?

(2) Of the three contributing factors, which has a higher predictive factor?
The hypotheses are as follows:

(1) Watching unsupervised violent television is a contributing factor to aggressive behavior in elementary school age boys.

(2) Boys who witness parental aggression toward family members and other individuals are more likely to display aggressive behavior than boys who do not.

(3) Boys who experience harsh parenting are more likely to display aggressive behavior than boys who do not.

(4) Watching violent television is the most significant predictor of aggressive behavior in elementary school age boys.

This study employs the positivist paradigm, is descriptive and uses a one-shot survey design.

Sampling
This study has two (2) non-probability sample groups. The control group consists of 32 (n=32) elementary school age boys exhibiting documented aggressive behavior at school, and a comparative group of 32 case files of elementary school age boys from the same school who have never been identified with aggressive behavior at school.
For purposes of this study, aggressive behavior at school is defined as: fighting, slapping, punching, pushing, kicking, and/or hitting peers or staff.

The subjects are second through sixth grade boys from one elementary school within the Rialto Unified School District in Rialto, California. Boys were targeted because much of the existing research has been done on boys, and also for sampling purposes, it is believed that they would be more accessible than girls. Their ages range from seven to twelve. Reflective of the school’s over-all high minority population, ethnicity of the sample is as follows: thirty-one African-American, twenty-four Hispanic, eight Caucasian and one Filipino.

This study used non-probability samples because of the lack of randomness in the existing school files of aggressive boys. Accordingly, one weakness of the study is that it lacks external validity. Everyone in the population of interest did not have an equal chance of getting into the sample. Generalizability of the research findings is minimized since other school settings would not be duplicated.
Data Collection

Instrument

All subjects were asked to complete a questionnaire specifically designed for comprehension by second through sixth grade school children. Based on the complexity of the study and the ages of the boys, attention was given to the task of preparing questions that best identified home factors influencing their perceptions of aggression. To assist researchers in collecting inclusive and accurate data, a total of 69 questions was contained in a three-part packet; one part for each variable category: Television, Role modeling and Parenting. Appendix A is an example of this instrument. Each question was read to the student to provide for clear understanding and minimum distraction. To control for tedium students were encouraged by the researcher, and rewarded upon completion. Some children experienced confusion with identification of parent figures, i.e.: foster, step, and extended family members, when responding to the Role modeling and Parenting sections.

The strengths of using self-reporting instruments such as this questionnaire packet are in its ability to produce many answers on a given topic in a relatively short period of time. Questionnaires were completed in an average time of forty minutes. Sample sizes remain intact with completed
questionnaires controlled by the presence of the researcher as opposed to mailed questionnaires that may not be returned. Additionally, the researcher’s presence reinforced the importance and legitimization of the task and provided appropriate monitoring for accuracy of the student’s perception of the questions.

The researchers acknowledge the fact that the results of this study is dependent upon the perspectives of elementary school age children and their ability to self-report. It is the opinion of the researchers that the reliability of the responses of children is equally valid with those perspectives of parents, only that parent and student responses may differ.

Procedure

This research study is a one-time survey asking all subjects to voluntarily complete sixty-nine survey questions prepared as previously outlined. Data collection began July 1, 1994 immediately following the opening of the 1994-95 year-round, multi-track curriculum. Researchers received full cooperation of school administration, teachers and staff at the school site. A letter of authorization was obtained from the Principal of the school endorsing the study (Appendix C).
Data providing prospective participants for the aggressive group came from documented confidential discipline files at the school site. The information contained in files resulted from documentation of exhibited acts of aggression towards peers or staff defined as: fighting, slapping, punching, pushing, kicking, and/or hitting. The non-aggressive group was composed of second through sixth grade boys who had not been observed to be aggressive, and therefore did not have discipline files. A random sampling list was prepared to form the non-aggressive group consisting of second through sixth grade students from the school student roster.

On the school site, questionnaires were presented, administered and monitored by the researcher(s). Care was taken to insure uniformity and replication of atmosphere in test-taking circumstances. Effort was made to simulate settings with attention to variables such as time of day, noise & distraction level, comfort control settings, explanation of instruction, and mood and affect of testers.

Protection of Human Subjects
When researchers use minor children for the population sample, he or she must address legal and ethical issues. Therefore, before the questionnaire data gathering began
researchers obtained parental/guardian consent. A cover letter containing debriefing statements and an explanation of the nature, purpose, and implications of the study accompanied a copy of the Consent Form (Appendix B). The consent form offered assurances protecting proposed respondents' anonymity, and indicated the brevity of the questionnaire (forty minutes or less). Care was taken to emphasize that participation was voluntary and informed consent was mandatory for inclusion in the study. Parents/guardians were invited to call with questions.

One of the primary objectives in dealing with the human subjects in this study was to protect participants' confidentiality and anonymity. A pervasive climate of professional confidentiality currently exists within the realm of this study in that one of the researchers is an intervention officer contracted to the school site. Rapport had been established with the students which facilitated trust and strengthened test validity. The office used for data collection was well established with students as a safe place and haven for confidentiality.

Regarding safety, participants were considered to be at minimal risk with even less stress factors anticipated than routine classroom testing presents. Care was taken to
safeguard participant’s (and their parents’) anonymity. However, subjects were informed that should they feel discomfort, they are encouraged to call the professor of research at the Social Work office at: (909)880-5501, or request individual counseling at the school site.

To further assure anonymity of participants, the researchers attached matching numbers to informed consent forms corresponding with the respondent’s completed questionnaires. The consent forms were detached from the questionnaires and placed in an envelope and stored in a locked file cabinet on the school site. The matching numbers were used in place of names once the questionnaires had been identified and coded, and were available to be used as a means to compare data with the Informed Consent forms should there be missing information, etc. The questionnaires themselves were safe guarded in a locked file cabinet on site, further ensuring anonymity should the matching numbers on the questionnaires and the Informed Consent Forms be paired by some unauthorized person. All lists and coding devices were destroyed at the end of data collection procedures.
Data Analysis

During the analysis phase of this research study a quantitative approach was used to determine to what degree each of the (ordinal) variables attribute to aggression in elementary school age boys. The chi-square test of independence was used to compare observed and expected frequencies. The above tests were calculated by the Computerized Business Statistics software program (Table 1). Pertinent questions were extracted from the questionnaire in each of the three variable categories: Television, Role modeling and Parenting. Responses to multiple questions required to establish clarification of answers were combined and used as one response, generating more concise and practical data, e.g. Yell at me, Call me names, Hit me, Embarrass me and Say mean things to me questions all measure a degree of harsh parenting. Data in Role modeling divisions was merged to form categories of physical and non-physical conflict resolution behavior modeled by parents. Results from the chi-square test of independence was inconsistent with the anticipated results. The category, Role Modeling, yielded results rejecting the null hypothesis.
Frequency distribution tables and percentages were generated to illustrate trends between dependent and independent variables.

**Operational Definitions**

The dependent variable, aggression, is defined as fighting, slapping, punching, pushing, kicking, and/or hitting school peers or staff while at school and serve as operational definitions for the dependent variable: aggression in elementary school age boys. The sample of non-aggressive elementary school age boys was selected from a list of boys never documented with aggressive behavior at school and served as the control group.

The independent variable, violent television programming, for this study is defined in three ways: by the amount of time spent viewing television, program titles that identify violent content or the absence of, and degree or lack of adult supervision provided while viewing television.

The independent variable, role modeling, is defined for this study in three ways. First by student witnessing of parents modeling aggressive behavior defined as fighting, and/or hitting family members or others. Secondly, by witnessing non-physically aggressive behavior defined as
shouting and name-calling of family members or others. Thirdly, by parents demonstrating an attitude that approves of and rewards acts of aggression, i.e. teaching to hit back.

The independent variable, harsh parenting, is defined for this study as the use of deliberate hostility and aggression reflected in a power-assertive, authoritarian attitude to parenting. Acts can include but are not limited to physical punishment, name calling, physical attacks, and a general negative, demeaning and rejecting relationship with the boy harbored by one or more parent.

Results

The results of this study indicates limited significant differences between the aggressive and non-aggressive groups when compared to the independent variables of watching television and experiencing harsh parenting. For this reason frequency distribution tables were used to show trends in these categories. However, consistent with the expected hypothesis, significant differences were found when comparing the two groups with role modeling.
Television and Aggression

Results of chi-square tests indicate that there is no significant difference between aggressive and non-aggressive boys. Of the three categories within the variable watching television, hours of television watched per day is the most independent category, the p value of .214 with 2 degrees of freedom and Alpha .05, falls within the range to accept the null hypothesis (Table 1).

Results of frequency distributions reveals two observable trends in television viewing between the aggressive and non-aggressive groups. In the aggressive group, 83% of the boys watched up to six hours of television per day, as compared to 69% of the non-aggressive group. In answer to the question "How often do you watch TV without an adult present," 41% of the time aggressive boys responded 'often' as compared to 31% of the time for non-aggressive boys. These findings indicate that aggressive boys watch more hours of television without an adult present than non-aggressive boys.

Parenting Roles and Aggression

Results of chi-square tests indicate that significant differences exist when comparing aggressive and non-aggressive boys' behavior with the independent variable,
Role Modeling, as indicated in Table 1. Of the four categories within the variable parent role modeling, significant results concerning non-physical and physical modeled conflict resolution was shown. The non-physical category with a p value of .013 with 4 degrees of freedom and Alpha .05, falls outside the acceptable range, rejecting the null hypothesis. The physical category with a p value of .0001 with 4 degrees of freedom and Alpha .05, falls significantly outside the acceptable range, likewise rejecting the null hypothesis (Table 1). These results strongly indicate that: the more boys witness physical and non-physical aggression by their parents, the more likely they will behave aggressively.

Chi-square tests showed no significant level of independence between role modeling parents who teach their sons to hit back and how often boys actually hit back if provoked.

Results of frequency distributions indicates a trend in parental role modeling between aggressive and non-aggressive groups. Aggressive boys responded 25% of the time that often parents directed them to hit back when provoked compared to 44% of the time for non-aggressive boys. However, when provoked aggressive boys reported actually
hitting back 31% of the time compared to 22% of the non-aggressive boys. In regard to other aspects of parental role modeling, there were no other observable trends in this study.

**Harsh Parenting and Aggression**

Results of chi-square tests indicate no significant differences exist when comparing aggressive and non-aggressive boys' behavior with the independent variable harsh parenting. The non-physical punishment category has a p value of .413 with 4 degrees of freedom and Alpha .05. The physical punishment category has a p value of .205 with 4 degrees of freedom and Alpha .05. These results indicate no significant level of independence between the two groups. (See Table 1). These findings fall within the acceptable range to accept the null hypothesis.

Results of frequency distributions indicates no observable trends in harsh parenting between aggressive and non-aggressive groups.
Table 1: Chi-Square Distribution of Aggressive & Non-Aggressive Elementary School Age Boys (N=32)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
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<th>Non-Aggressive (%)</th>
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<th>p value</th>
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Alpha = .05
Discussion

With one exception, the data in this study did not support the hypotheses. There was a significant positive relationship between how often parents role model both physical and non-physical aggression to resolve conflict, and aggressive behavior exhibited by boys. It was hypothesized that aggressive boys watch more unsupervised violent television than non-aggressive boys. As mentioned in the analysis, both groups watch approximately the same amount of violent television. However, non-aggressive boys watched adult supervised television more often. The study indicates that neither watching excessive television nor watching violent unsupervised television contributes to aggression in elementary school age boys.

Although these findings are generally inconsistent with the anticipated results, it is interesting to note that the act of watching violent television itself is not a contributing factor to aggression. This study yields results that are also inconsistent with other studies, revealed within the literature review of this project. The study highlights the importance of supervised television viewing and warrants further study in this area.
Limitations of this study may rest in the weaknesses of self-reporting. Although self-reporting is a viable and commonly used practice for obtaining data, it is not without limitations. It is possible that the respondents were too ashamed or intimidated to admit that their parents were physically abusive role models. Additionally, a "Hawthorne Effect" may have existed whereby the respondents completed the questionnaires according to assumed expectations of the researchers.

The chi-square test of independence supported: boys who witness parental aggression towards family members and others would more likely display aggressive behavior than boys who did not. It is significant to note that witnessing both physical and non-physical aggression by parents increases the likelihood of aggressive behavior.

Frequency distribution indicated an unexpected finding in one aspect of parental role modeling. Parents of aggressive boys instructed their children to hit back less than the parents of the non-aggressive boys. A logical assumption would expect to find a positive relationship between parents telling their boys to hit back when provoked and boys who did hit back when provoked. It is possible that limitations of self-reporting may be attributed to the
unexpected result. Further study in this area is recommended.

According to Strassberg et al. (1994), physical punishment is an inappropriate form of discipline. This study strongly suggests that boys who witness aggression demonstrated by parents as role models, are more likely to exhibit aggression than those boys who do not. The study indicated that role modeled physical and non-physical aggression as conflict resolution are both contributors to aggressive behavior in their sons. This is consistent with Anna Freud’s concept of identification with the aggressor, which demonstrates a child’s tendencies to learn aggressive behavior from his/her parents. The effects of exposure to both physical and non-physical aggression in parents’ aggression to one another has an impact on promoting aggressive behavior in their children who identify and mimic their behavior.

Implications

Results statistically support hypotheses regarding parental role modeling. Consistant with previous research conclusions, one predictor of aggression in boys is permission and encouragement by parents to get needs met by
aggression. The study indicates both physical and non-physical aggression are predictive factors. Implications derived from those trends indicate the home environment to be an important factor in the development or shaping of aggressive behavior. The data suggests more research or improved data analysis is needed to explore implications that good role models, stable, wholesome, and safe environments, and guidance and control of television viewing raise the likelihood that elementary school age boys will not become physically aggressive in their behavior.

Contrary to previous studies, watching excessive, and/or violent television does not contribute to aggression in school age boys. Rather, the implications are that the absence of parental supervision while viewing television is a key factor to promoting aggression. These results place greater responsibility on parents to monitor their children while viewing television. The focus of supervision should be aimed not so much on program selection (violent/non-violent), rather on the common-sense guidance parents provide.

Implications indicate that negative role modeling is particularly detrimental to a child’s conflict resolution skills. Instead of learning to cope in more peaceful ways,
aggression becomes the maladaptive way to interact with his environment. Parents reinforce their son’s aggressive behavior by repeating irresponsible negative role modeling.

Results of this study clearly implicates the family to be the most influential factor of aggression. Further, this data suggests that the responsibility for aggressive behavior lies with the parents. According to this study, a history of negative role modeling would be a good predictor to identify boys who are at-risk to commit aggression at school.

Findings suggest that aggression at school is pervasive enough to warrant the need for skilled professional social workers to intervene. It is recommended that a new state educational mandate be adopted to require and fund placement of at least one on-site social worker on every school campus, pre-school through high school. The mandate would enforce new school policies that would work in conjunction with social workers’ assessment and direct practice with boys and their families through prevention and intervention assistance programs. On-site social workers would assess individual boys’ behavior to determine potential at-risk for aggression families by considering negative role modeling indicators.
Research indicates that children begin to identify with the aggressive parent as early as two years old (George and Main, 1980). Social workers could be instrumental in devising and implementing preventive programs and policies that address appropriate alternatives to conflict, targeting children as young as preschool. Sensitive instruments are needed to identify negative role modeling that supports rather than alienates the identified family. Additionally, policies to address discoveries of covert spousal/child abuse would need to be in place.

Additional tools of assessment would be psychosocial histories required of all students involved in aggression at school. Social workers would specifically note history indicating negative role modeling or abuse. Information would be useful both in working individually with the student and follow-up intervention with the family.

Families identified by social workers to be at-risk would be encouraged, by school policy, to participate in family therapy; appropriate referrals would be supplied. Additionally, parenting classes would be offered on the school site with considerations for single parents and child care. Confidential records and documentation would be kept on-site.
Finally, a state program utilizing local police and social workers is warranted. An annual or bi-annual program is recommended that would highlight both the criminal and developmental consequences of negative role modeling. Classes would be made available to both students and their families with special attention to boys who have demonstrated aggression at school.
APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Television

1. How much do you like to watch television?
   Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

2. How often do your parents/guardians allow you to watch television?
   Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

3. How many hours do you watch TV each day? ______

4. PUT AN X BY ANY OF THE PROGRAMS THAT YOU WATCH.
   (v) Anamaniacs .................................................. ______
   (v) Batman The Animated Series ................................. ______
   (n) Barney & Friends .............................................. ______
   (v) Beavis & Butthead ............................................. ______
   (n) Beverly Hills 90210 ........................................... ______
   (n) Blossom ......................................................... ______
   (v) Bugs Bunny Cartoons ........................................ ______
   (v) Chip & Dale Rescue Rangers ................................. ______
   (v) Cops .......................................................... ______
   (v) Current Affair ................................................ ______
   (v) Dark Wing Duck ................................................. ______
   (n) Family Matters ................................................ ______
   (n) Fresh Prince .................................................... ______
   (n) Full House ..................................................... ______
   (n) In Living Color ................................................ ______
   (v) Inside Edition .................................................. ______
   (v) Mighty Morphin Power Rangers .............................. ______
(v) News .............................................
(n) Nickelodeon .....................................
(v) Rescue 9-1-1 ....................................
(v) Simpsons ........................................
(v) Star Trek: The Next Generation ............
(v) Talk Shows ......................................
   EXAMPLES: Oprah Winfrey, Donahue, Jenny Jones,
   Sally Jesse Rafael, Jeraldo.
(v) Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles ..............
(v) Tom & Jerry’s Fun House .....................
(n) Wheel of Fortune ................................
(v) X-Men ...........................................
(u) Other ............................................

5. How often do you watch TV without an adult present?
   Often ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never ___ Don’t Know ___

6. Who do you watch TV with?

   Grown-ups                      Kids
   Friend ___   Sister ___    Friend ___   Sister ___
   Neighbor ___ Brother ___    Neighbor ___ Brother ___
   Day Care ___ Parents ___    Cousin ___ Uncle ___
   No one ___   Other ___     No one ___   Other ___
   Uncle ___    Aunt ___      Uncle ___    Aunt ___
   Grandma ___   Grandpa ___   Other ___

7. Which would you rather do in your free time?

   Watch TV .....................
   Read a Book .................
   Play Sports .................
   Play with Friends ......
   Play Video Games .........
   Be with your Family .......
   Other ________________________
Questionnaire

Role Modeling

1. Do your parents become angry with each other?
   Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

2. If they do become angry, how often do they ...

   **Shout At Each Other**
   Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

   **Hit or Fight**
   Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

   **Leave**
   Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

   **Call Each Other Names**
   Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

   **Go For A Walk**
   Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

   **Use Bad Words**
   Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

   **Hug Each Other**
   Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

   **Other**

3. How often have you seen your mother angry at someone?
   Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

4. When she is angry do you see her ...

   **Shout**
   Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __
5. How often have you seen your Father angry at someone?
Often ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never ___ Don’t Know ___

6. When he is angry do you see him ...

Shout
Often ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never ___ Don’t Know ___

Hit or Fight
Often ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never ___ Don’t Know ___

Talk About It
Often ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never ___ Don’t Know ___

Leave
Often ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never ___ Don’t Know ___

Call The Other Names
Often ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never ___ Don’t Know ___

Go For A Walk
Often ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never ___ Don’t Know ___

Use Bad Words
Often ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never ___ Don’t Know ___

Other _________________________________

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39
7. How much have you seen your Mother or Father angry at someone lately?
   Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

8. How many times can you remember? ________________

9. If someone pushed, hit, kicked, punched, or slapped you,

   Would you hit back?
   Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

   Would you walk away?
   Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

   Would you cry?
   Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

   Would you get someone else to help?
   Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

   Would you call for help?
   Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

   Would you get an adult?
   Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

   Would you tell someone?
   Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

Other ________________________________
10. Do your parents/guardians tell you to ...

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11. Have the police ever been to your house because one of your parents was fighting with someone?

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Parenting

1. I think my Mother loves me:

   All the time, I know she does ___
   Sometimes I know she does ___
   Seldom do I think she loves me ___
   I Never think she loves me ___

2. I think my Father loves me:

   All the time, I know he does ___
   Sometimes I know he does ___
   Seldom do I think he loves me ___
   I never think he loves me ___

3. How often do your parents/guardians punish you when you make wrong choices?
   Often ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never ___ Don't Know ___

4. How do your parents/guardians punish you when you make a wrong choice?

   Yell at me ...
   Often ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never ___ Don’t Know ___

   Call me names ...
   Often ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never ___ Don’t Know ___
No TV ...  
Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

Time out ...  
Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

Talk to me about what I did ...  
Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

Restriction ...  
Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

Go to my room ...  
Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

Hit me with a belt or something ...  
Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

Embarrass me ...  
Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

Say mean things to me ...  
Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t know __

Call me names ...  
Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t know __

Slap me ...  

Other ... __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

5. My family and I do things together at least 1 time each week ...  
Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

6. My parents/guardians read to me ...  
Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __

7. My parents/guardians play games with me ...  
Often __ Sometimes __ Seldom __ Never __ Don’t Know __
8. If I need help with my homework (?) helps me.

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Dear Parents/Guardians,

The study in which your son is invited to participate is designed to identify characteristics of aggression in elementary school age boys. It will explore the effects of exposure to violent TV and its depth and breadth on boys' behavior at school. The findings of this study could be utilized by parents to heighten awareness and identify contributing factors of aggressive behavior.

This study is being conducted by MSW graduate students AnnMarie Mikles and Jennifer Doswell under the supervision of Lucy Cardona, Ph.D., assistant professor at California State University San Bernardino, and meets the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 45, Part 46, and the American Psychological Association professional ethics principles (1982).

Participation is voluntary and your signature is required on the Consent Form. Participation consists of a one-time questionnaire of thirty (30) questions that can easily be answered in less than thirty (30) minutes, and will necessitate your son being called out of the classroom for that time. He will be rewarded with Morgan Money for his contribution and strict guidelines are enforced to guarantee confidentiality of information and the anonymity of all participants.

Upon completion of this study, all collected data will be destroyed, and you will receive a summary of the results. If questions arise you may call Faculty Advisor Dr. Cardona at California State University San Bernardino, telephone number (909) 880-5532.

Please retain this letter and return the Consent Form. Thank you for your participation.
CONSENT FORM

As parent/guardian of ____________________________,
I give permission for participation in the research study
conducted by California State University San Bernardino
graduate students AnnMarie Mikles and Jennifer Doswell
titled: Contributing Factors of Aggression in Elementary
School age Boys. I understand that minimal risk is involved
and that all responses are confidential with anonymity of
participants safeguarded.

Parent/Guardian Signature ___________________________ Date __________

APPENDIX B

The California
State University
June 6, 1994

To: Institutional Review Board (IRB)
California State University San Bernardino

The following is to establish my statement regarding the proposed research study titled: Contributing Factors of Aggression in Elementary School Age Boys proposed by AnnMarie Mikles and Jennifer Doswell. I understand that student participation is confined to a thirty (30) question one-shot questionnaire with all Human Subjects rights protected pursuant to Federal regulations and the Professional Code of Ethics of the American Psychological Association.

I authorize and endorse this study, confirmed by my signature affixed below.

Robert N. Hayden, Ph.D.
Principal, A. H. Morgan Elementary School
REFERENCES


