

## Introduction

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# Aggression in Adolescence – the Contribution of Longitudinal Studies

Research on the development of aggression throughout adolescence has a long tradition in developmental research. While the focus was first on physical aggression in adolescent boys, in the past few decades a lot of work has been devoted to differentiate the definitions of aggression to include non physical forms of aggression such as social, indirect, relational and verbal aggression. Even more recently forms of aggression that are communicated or transported through new media (e.g., internet, mobile phones) have received an increasing amount of attention. The goal is to learn about a wider variety of aggressive behaviors in young males and females from the perspectives of multiple disciplines. Thus a multitude of research in psychology, education, sociology, and criminology but also behavioral genetics, neurology, and psychobiology has focused on age and gender differences, context, social, and individual factors that effect the development of aggression in childhood and adolescence.

Despite the growing quantity of studies and the resulting body of knowledge on a wide variety of issues concerning aggression, the interest in furthering our understanding on the development of these behaviors has not dwindled. In response to the increasing attention towards public shootings or shooting rampages in schools, the interest on prevention and intervention strategies and (school based) anti-aggression programs has amplified.

Question such as why some people are more aggressive than others, why some children demonstrate an increase in their aggressive behaviors but others demonstrate a decrease in aggression throughout development, how different forms of aggression are related and what kind of prevention and intervention programs are most effective are – among many others – still very prevailing in current developmental research on aggression.

This special issue tackles these questions from multiple theoretical perspectives with very recent and

large data sets collected from adolescence residing in four different countries, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland, and USA. The authors (re-)examine the social-cognitive components of development and aggression on a Swiss sample (Averdijk, Malti, Ribeaud, & Eisner, 2011), examine individual factors on aggression and problem behaviors within a German sample (Roth, 2011), look developmental trajectories of aggression and the consequences on friendships in a US sample (McDonald, Wang, Menzer, Rubin, & Booth-LaForce, 2011), and examine the effectiveness of a program to foster bystander intervention in a Luxembourg sample (Pfetsch, Steffgen, Gollwitzer, & Ittel, 2011).

We are certain that the reader finds not only new and exciting results but also many stimulating and constructive ideas for further research to answer our continuing quest to understand and prevent the development of aggression in adolescence.

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