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An Analysis on the Effects of Social Context in the Display of Anger in Children

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in the Display of Anger in Children

ABSTRACT

Angie VanMeter, B.S.

An Abstract Presented to the faculty of the Graduate School of
Lindenwood University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Art
September 17, 1999

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The purpose of this research is to determine if social context influences a child's decision to regulate their anger. The subjects used in this study were 20 first, third and sixth grade students totaling sixty children. The categories of social context are as follows: parent, peer and alone. The subjects completed a demographic survey, as well as an aggression questionnaire, designed by the researcher. The results confirmed previous research with regard to the influence social acceptance has over children's actions. This research indicates peers, as being the most influential category in determining a child's response to anger.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Anger has always been a heavily debated topic in society. Many perceive anger as a complicated feeling often leading to an explosive outburst. Anger is an emotion that not only influences actions but also feelings. When viewing children as innocent, one can not fathom the magnitude of intensity that anger can produce on these miniature bodies. Anger has no bias, affecting all human beings, yet producing various outcomes. The reality is that children are affected by anger and do need to learn how to regulate their emotions to remain in control. Past research provides documentation that children are able to regulate their feelings but at what level? The purpose of this research was to determine if social context is a determinant factor in a child's decision to control their anger.

Anger is an immediate response to a violation of how one perceives the world should work (Paul, 1995). In other words, anger prepares the mind and body to stand up for oneself and one's morals. However, when children desperately crave social acceptance there is some question concerning whether or not they will defend their morals. Peer pressure is something children face daily and when they crave acceptance, most children give in to the pressure for this acceptance. Society does not respect or accept disruption, which is what anger is considered. Therefore,

when angry, one must decide if rejection by peers, or expressing feelings is more important.

Statement of purpose

The purpose of this study was to better understand the influence, if any, that social context has on children's decision to regulate their anger. Thus, the research question asks, does social context influence the display of anger in children?

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Anger

Although most people view anger as explosive and disruptive, it does serve a purpose. Anger is designed to challenge perspectives and defend morals, as well as move thoughts to actions, relieving discomfort. If anger is allowed to express itself the energy can focus on the goal, exist briefly and move peacefully (Paul, 1995). However, if the anger is ignored, eventually it will explode and result in behavior that is both attacking and disruptive.

When anger is held back, it takes on many forms. If one feels expressing anger is socially inappropriate resulting in a lose-lose situation, feelings of guilt emerge. A child who fears expressing anger because of trouble he will receive from parents is likely to become depressed. Children who suppress their anger may begin redefining the situation to blame themselves in an effort to avoid the appearance of anger (Harter & Whitesell, 1989).

According to Paul (1995), anger that is internalized affects one's mind in five main ways. First, the ego is designed to give objective information regarding the outside world to help rationalize the thought processes. Yet, when anger energy is held in, it shares space with the now

“puffed up” ego causing it to misinterpret messages in a negative manner, due to the buildup of anger. Anger energy also negatively impacts our perception by consuming the part of the brain, which focuses on daily thoughts and activities. Thus, one cannot focus energy on success due to the negativity one feels (Paul, 1995).

Holding back anger also affects one’s health. By refusing to express anger one is not being honest with one’s feelings and losing self-integrity. Blocking anger results in neglecting one’s body from the nourishment energy brings. This lack of energy causes illness in both body and mind (Paul, 1995).

The influence and development of anger

Children are born self-centered, only recognizing and developing ideas that signify their needs. A child’s ability to recognize his needs marks the first step towards anger. Babies are constantly confronted with new stimuli, which causes distress and confusion. Behavior begins to be instilled in a child as early as the first month of his life. A difficult temperament in infancy can increase the likelihood of aggression in childhood if the parent does not emotionally connect with the child’s needs. When frustrated and discomforted, the baby cries, displaying anger in the initial stage. Infants spend a great deal of time being angry. This is because they are unable to differentiate feelings between the mind and body. Yet anger is a way of involving all these characteristics to express discomfort.

According to Zeman and Garber (1996), children vary in their responses to anger depending on age. Young children express anger through facial expressions, whereas older children learn to rely on verbal cues. Children learn that negative affect is responded to less favorably, therefore, children show signs of adaptation by using a non-verbal approach (Malatesta & Haviland, 1982).

Another characteristic at this age is time. Infants are unable to distinguish time and therefore may worry that his discomfort will be lengthy or never ending, causing another expression of anger. The response the child receives from the crying will determine if the child trusts the caregiver or needs to manipulate with negative emotions to get his needs met (Izard, 1995).

Although there is no evidence of gender differences with aggression in infancy, there is some evidence that emotional expressiveness and self-control may predict future gender related problems (Weinberg & Tronick, 1997). According to Weinberg & Tronick (1997), a child in his earliest forms of life show signs of gender typical behavior when placed with his mother. For instance, boys tend to express more emotion, both positive and negative depending on the input they receive from their mother. Girls tend to regulate their emotions, hiding anger more often than boys (Weinberg & Tronick, 1997).

By six to nine months a child understands the basic meaning of "NO!" How a parent reacts to the child's newfound independence

contributes to the child's learning about independence vs. defiance. The child experiments with testing limits to establish trust and independence with his parents. Due to cognitive changes, children begin experiencing cause and effect with anger occurring randomly.

By one year most children can comply with simple requests, the reward for obeying can predict his desire to behave. During this stage, actions leading to conflict either provoke protest or retaliation due to their lack of reasoning (Caplan, Vespo, Pedersen & Hay, 1991). By fifteen to sixteen months, a child gets his first feel for aggression. Children are struggling with new tasks, such as walking and talking. Unable to distinguish between desire and ability a toddler fails repeatedly at tasks. When recognizing they are unable to accomplish this task they immediately become frustrated leading to crying, throwing or other negative behaviors. If the parent is able to redirect the child to a task that can be accomplished, this child will again become satisfied, putting the parent back in control.

During the 18 month to three years stage, the child is consumed by pushing limits. The child now has the ability to understand the basics of right from wrong (Paul, 1995). Yet, at this stage, independence is his quest allowing selfishness to prevail. At this stage children believe in imaginary friends and magic, using this to their defense. Parents must recognize when this is inappropriate and point out reality to the child to

avoid later behavior patterns from developing. For example, children will blame someone or something else for their actions to avoid punishment.

Blaming is one of the first steps in internalizing. By blaming, the child is acknowledging that he does know the difference between positive and negative behavior and does not want to take responsibility for his actions. This not only states that the child identifies wrongdoing but also recognizes his role in this action. According to past research, age 3 marks the onset for minor aggressive acts, making it a must to confront their responsibility at this stage to avoid further problems from occurring (Moffitt, 1993).

By four to five years old, children are proving their self-confidence through sociability and aggression (Caplan, Vespo, Pedersen & Hay, 1991). The moral reasoning still appears to be self-centered, attempting to conform reality to their way. Children now have developed the cognitive ability to understand that lying is a way of escaping punishment. Children are capable of recognizing visible actions, such as stealing and hitting as negative behaviors, yet are still incapable of recognizing lying as equivalent to other negative behaviors (Caplan et al, 1991). If children are not confronted on their negative actions, they will begin to confuse their morals and lose the value of trust

Being five years old can be a difficult time for children because they are beginning to form an identity, as well as conform to please others. Children are observing their parents and trying to learn their values and

imitate their interests (Singer, 1996). Imitation plays a key part, in shaping personality traits to form an identity. During this phase, it is important for parents to be positive role models, teaching children how to handle difficult situations and respect other's opinions.

At six, children become a bit more competitive in seeking their independence. Competitiveness at this age is healthy, as kids attempt to improve mastery skills, increasing their self-esteem. Failure is difficult to face and if the child is not getting recognition for his effort at home, competitiveness may increase to constant attempts in seeking other's approval (Izard, 1995).

Peer acceptance becomes important, with feelings of rejection triggering anger. When feeling inferior, children become angry and self-conscience. Children now place expectations on themselves and when unable to achieve these goals, they turn their anger inward, blaming themselves and feeling like a failure (Paul, 1995).

At this stage, children are struggling with moral dilemmas to do what they wish vs. what their parents expect. They have yet to internalize morals, making it less difficult to disobey in order to achieve personal satisfaction. Although children are unable to internalize morals, they are capable of recognizing actions to be intended or accidental. They are able to forgive for accidents yet, lack any remorse for their own actions to seek satisfaction. For instance, a child who is cruel to other children or animals, knows this is morally unacceptable but unless parents confront

and punish the child the behavior is not only seen as excusable to him but also encourages further problems (Ascione, 1993).

During the adolescent years, several major changes occur. Due to the increase in physical strength and the accessibility of guns, the level of aggression has increased to the extent of causing injury or death (Berkowitz, 1994; Reiss & Roth, 1993). Unfortunately, weapons have become prevalent among adolescents and have become their solution to problem solving. According to the National Household Education Survey of 1993, between sixth grade and ninth grade, the number of students carrying weapons in the U.S. schools increases drastically (Snyder, Sickmund & Poe-Yamagata, 1996). This survey also states that adolescents are becoming more intrigued by guns, increasing their level of curiosity towards negative actions (Snyder et al, 1996).

The second change in adolescence is the pressure by peers to engage in violent acts against their will (Cairns, 1994). In an effort to be accepted by peers, children are likely to behave in ways that contradict their beliefs, just to conform to the group (Moffit, 1993). Many of these youth attend alternative schools where their peers have similar antisocial tendencies increasing the likelihood of aggression among classmates (Cairns, 1994).

Peer pressure and self-esteem are so important during adolescence that many children join gangs to be a part of something and to feel important. Research (1996), states that during adolescence children

drastically reduce communication and time spent with family members. At this stage, children are experimenting with their self-image and desperately seeking peer acceptance. With this new found image children are changing their philosophies to mold and excite their peers. Given the notoriety of gangs as described in movies and rap music, children tend to view gangs as a way of escaping problems and being cool. These juveniles are so desperate for approval from peers they will justify their actions as acceptable in their immediate environment (Snyder, Sickmund & Poe-Yumagata, 1996).

One of the key components of aggression is control. Once children follow the path of juvenile delinquency, they are consumed by the power of control and become less attached to family values and more interested in pleasing peers. According to the U.S. national survey, parents report more conflict with adolescence than any other age group (Snyder, Sickmund, Poe-Yumagata, 1996). Many of these juveniles become increasingly aggressive, using their physical force to intimidate others. Callahan (1992), reports once an aggressive child learns his physical force gives him control, he may attempt to manipulate his parents and teachers in an effort to gain control. Children who are confronted are more likely to recognize authority figures as having control.

Cross-gender aggression seems to be typical with adolescents. In early childhood, conflicts appeared to be primarily with the same gender since girls mainly played with girls and vice versa. However, during

middle childhood, boys and girls become interested in one another and interest then leads to disappointment. Most children act on their frustration impulsively and boys primarily tend to use physical aggression as their defense. As dating begins, violence between the sexes becomes more common (Vicary, 1995). Coercion is often used to control a situation sometimes resulting in date rape (Vicary, 1995).

The onset of sexual maturity keeps decreasing in age, bringing about new responsibilities to face. Adolescents, children themselves, are now having children without the maturity or resources to handle this stress. These parents now have a responsibility that they do not know how to handle which usually leads to child abuse. Abuse of a partner is also very common among adolescent parents (Moffitt, 1993). "Some researchers suggest that highly aggressive individuals who appear to desist from crime in young adulthood have actually turned their aggressive impulses toward family members" (Moffitt, 1993, p.893).

Anger's defense mechanisms

Many parents have difficulty handling their child's anger due to their perception of anger as "bad." Although it is purposeful, anger can be perceived as negative, due to its' lack of predictability. Emotions are not only feelings but also interpret how one responds towards others. Thus, when the child expresses anger, the parent may view these feelings as a threat. Interpretation determines one's behavior, alerting the parent's defense mechanisms to respond avoiding the anxiety which automatically

comes with a threat. According to Paul (1995) during this process of directing the defense mechanism, the inner defense mechanism prevails and converts itself to an offense mechanism. Paul (1995) states:

Parents use these offense mechanisms to block their own awareness of their child's anger, and in some cases they try to extinguish any trace of anger altogether. Parents may try a direct assault on the offending anger-meting out punishment when a child gets mad for example- or indirect maneuvers, such as bribing the child. The goal, however, is the same: to do away with the child's angry feelings (p. 36).

There are several types of offense mechanisms which parents may use to abolish children's anger. First is denying anger exists in one's child. By ignoring a child's anger, the parent is stopping the communication of human relations and causing the child to internalize added tension and aggression (Paul, 1995). For some parents withdrawing from the situation creates relief (Harter & Whitesell, 1989).

Anger neglect is the second offense mechanism. It is very similar to anger denial in it's attempt to eliminate the feeling. However, with this concept the parent acknowledges the child's anger yet does not confront the issue in hopes that it will disappear. In an effort to decrease anger, parents may chose to minimize the situation (Whitesell & Harter, 1989).

Anger eradication is the third characteristic and can be the most frustrating for children. These parents have usually had poor anger

education themselves and have little tolerance for what they presume anger represents. Paradoxically, these parents are easily irritated and lack impulse control, and are likely to escape the repressed feelings of these same measures used in their childhood.

Parents who abuse their children mishandled their own anger as children, often being victims themselves (Paul, 1995). These parents have little tolerance for anger and when feeling helpless, will take control with physical force. Verbal and emotional abuse are also common weapons used to prevent expressions of anger. Humiliation and intimidation are as frightening and damaging to a child as physical abuse and only teaches the child escape and manipulation as primary tools for problem solving.

There are also indirect offense mechanisms, which aim to eliminate anger. Over soothing anger is an attempt to decrease anger with immediate smothering sympathy (Paul, 1995). This prevents the child from feeling and expressing for one's self. Unfortunately, if continued this child will perceive anger as catastrophic. Due to the lack of inner strength to cope with this pressure, one will face anger with great anxiety, often leading to depression (Paul, 1995).

Compliance can be destructive if the parent loses control of the child and a role reversal takes place. In this stage, anger becomes a manipulator with the parent's preoccupation in pleasing the child to avoid the parent's suppressed feelings of anger from reoccurring (Whitesell &

Harter, 1996). Bribing is an example of suppressing anger without dealing with the issue at hand.

Refusal to set limits takes on many forms, yet with each; the child appears to be in control. A lack of boundaries set by a parent allows a child's anger to reach a destructive level for the child and others. Parents who allow this behavior commonly carry suppressed anger themselves, and are unable to confront their own issues (Paul, 1995). By overlooking the child's problems and defending the negative behavior, the parent is teaching the child to excuse his behavior. According to Paul (1995):

These parents may suggestively push a child toward anger by automatically defending their angry child against others whom they see as victimizers. Often feeling like losers themselves, such parents are quite competitive and, through their children, they have a chance to win. They may resent limits themselves and harbor all sorts of rebellious tendencies. The child, of course- stimulated to pursue destructive ends- gets sacrificed in the process (p.52).

Mishandled anger is not a conscious attempt to harm. However, children are being forced to consciously control their own feelings to benefit others.

Aggression

Aggression can be defined as a behavior, which has the intent to cause harm to another individual for the sake of personal satisfaction

(Crick, 1995). Aggression can be verbal or physical; both of which are forms of emotional manipulation. The goal of aggression is simple, to gain control over a person or situation through intimidation. Aggression can also be viewed as an explosive, short-lived act, which can have lasting effects on the victim.

Aggression covers a wide range of acts depending on the cognitive and emotional level of the individual. A child is going to have less knowledge and experience with emotions to understand how to control these feelings. Yet, a child learns quickly how to respond to bullying and physical fights depending on the guidance he is given in his environment. Children who are either not taught or rebel increase their level of violence with age, starting with bullying and robbery and ending with rape and homicide (Coie & Dodge, 1997). Aggression is a selfish act with only one intention and that is to seek personal satisfaction, with little to no consideration of consequences.

Overt aggression involves acts of manipulation, involving both physical fighting and verbal threats. This type of aggression is often found in boys and is perceived by many as a form of conflict resolution. Due to the high volume of aggression carried out by boys, it seems as if society begins to accept these actions as typical boy behavior.

Relational aggression deals with internal feelings versus physical force. Relational aggression consists of withholding friendships, promoting social exclusion in an effort to gain control. This type of

behavior is often characteristic of girls (Crick, 1995). Studies indicate girls perceive relational aggression, as an effective way of meeting one's needs. One of the primary reasons girls perceived this as effective is due to the fact girls fear social rejection (Crick, 1995).

According to Crick (1995), both boys and girls term relational aggression as a common form of aggression among peers. Studies have shown that both boys and girls view relational aggression as less harmful and believe they should receive less punishment from parents and teachers than that of imposing physical harm (Huesman, 1992). However, there is evidence that children who were frequent victims of relational aggression had a greater likelihood of social-psychological maladjustment than other children (Crick, 1995).

Past research indicates there are differing opinions as to the concept of aggression among children. Boys had difficulty recognizing social exclusion as intent to harm and overall did not perceive relational aggression as a form of aggression. Boys understood physical aggression as an intent to harm and perceived overt aggression as both a negative action and aggressive. Interestingly, boys admitted to using physical force as a way of reaching a goal (Crick, 1995).

It is difficult to fathom the intensity of aggression in children and the problem society is facing with violence among this population. To better grasp this concept, statistics show that the U.S. level of juvenile violence is greater than that of other industrialized countries (Rosenberg,

1991). Deaths among juveniles have increased drastically in the past decade, with juvenile violence being the second main cause of death among children. According to past research, since the mid-1980's, the homicide victimization rate for juveniles has doubled with a heavy concentration in the African American population (Snyder, Sickmund & Poe-Yumagata, 1995).

The manifestations of aggression dramatically change throughout the child's development affecting each gender differently. The concept of development involves both continuity and change by combining varying degrees of behavior with preexisting tendencies. One must attribute some aggressive behavior as age and gender appropriate, and recognize the distinction between normative versus excessive. In order to differentiate normative development of aggression from excessive, one must have knowledge of the child's behavior history including age of onset, continuity and degree of intensity (Tonry & Morris, 1986)

Aggression as a predictor

Interpretation is a key determinant in the prediction of a child's behavior. According to Dodge and Crick (1990), aggressive children are more likely to interpret and respond towards social stimuli in a negative manner. These children increase their likelihood of engaging in aggressive acts by defending themselves in a hostile manner. Crick and Ladd (1990) state aggressive children assess their outcomes to determine

the likelihood of achieving their desired goal. Once their goal is achieved they view aggression as a positive solution to solving problems.

There are studies that indicate proactive aggression (deliberate acts of manipulation used to achieve a goal) can stabilize after six months for both genders (Hay, 1984). Several studies show that females tend to have higher stability for aggression than males (Verhulst & Vander, 1991). Anger which stabilizes over time indicates how anger manifests itself (Farrington, 1994). Continuity of aggression can predict future behavior problems, meaning fighting can turn into assault which can lead to a felony charge.

Research (1994) indicates early aggression can lead one down a destructive path involving convictions of violent offenses, such as domestic abuse. This study also indicates that seven out of ten men charged with a violent crime have been rated by their parents as highly aggressive by age 12, confirming the continuity of the cycle of violence in families (Farrington, 1994).

Cognitive and emotional processes

One of the key determinants in the action of anger is motivation. Motivation involves the cognitive process providing both the means and end to a solution. Cognition generates emotion which in turn is motivated to respond to the emotion depending on the manner of threat of the environment in which the individual is placed (Stein, 1990). The level of motivation one obtains signifies the drive to achieve a goal. The

environment and conditions of importance to achieve the goal determines the potential for harm.

Emotions can be distinguished from moods due to their acute phase. These emotions are also reacting towards a specific encounter unlike moods, which are sporadic and sometimes unexplainable.

According to Nancy Stein (1990):

A certain kind of cognition is indispensable to emotion, namely, the appraisal of the significance of what is happening for well being. Information that one has been threatened or insulted does not per se produce an emotion, say, fear or anger. To feel fear or anger one must also appraise the information as signifying harm (p.10).

According to Piaget, the level of intellectual ability one holds permits emotions. Communication, comprehension and cognition must all be present in order to acquire emotions. For instance, a two-year-old cannot be expected to react to death in the same manner as a 7-year-old, due to their lack of cognitive development. Yet, Piaget believes imitation plays a key factor in child development. This meaning, a child may respond appropriately to death but only because of his observations and mimicking of others in his environment (Singer, 1996).

Piaget concluded that reasoning is the key to intelligence and that children learn to reason not just by observation and imitation but also by interpretation (Singer, 1996). Interpretation at an early stage may be

relevant to future behaviors. According to Dodge and Crick (1990), children respond accordingly to what they have observed in their environment.

Early stages of cognition involve egocentrism, making it impossible for a child to understand other's perceptions. Thus, reprimanding a child is ineffective due to their lack of comprehension. Physical aggression is easy to understand at this level since they only understand what they have experienced

Emotion regulation

According to Campos, Campos and Barrett (1989), emotions are perceived as "bi-directional processes of establishing, maintaining and/or disrupting significant relationships between an organism and the (external or internal) environment" (p.558). Emotions are a way of communicating to others how one is feeling at that moment. This expression is powerful and can influence the maintenance of relationships if not managed in an acceptable manner. Social context can influence a child's emotional development by regulating what is considered appropriate.

Society is comprised of many groups in which each has culturally prescribed rules as to how one is expected to act. Children must learn to follow the rules in order to gain social acceptance. These rules, known as display rules, describe the expression one should display externally to hide the internal feelings. Children are taught display rules, to regulate behavior during emotionally challenging situations. This teaches children

to control their emotions in the presence of others. According to past research display rules serve important functions for the child's internal and social development (Barrett & Campos, 1987). By exposing children to environments that are non-accepting of negative responses, children learn expectations before they have even adapted to this development. In accordance, by adapting to this philosophy of display rules as "normal" development of emotional competence, emotional dysregulation may lead to greater understanding of depression, anger and somatization, according to the developmental psychopathology perspective (Blumberg & Izard, 1985).

The family environment plays a role in a child's development. This environment is the child's first experience with socialization and provides a net for learning expectancies of others. Although it is important that parents are consistent with their behaviors, they must allow children a safe place to express their feelings openly to avoid future behavior problems. According to Cauce (1990), a child's social adjustment is contingent upon the child's perception of support received from parents and peers.

The social context plays a large part in carrying out display rules. Children are taught the importance of friends, yet children are not taught the consequences of rejection. Children learn through trial and error, as well as observation, how to interact appropriately with peers. When this interaction becomes inappropriate the child receives ridicule and rejection.

Due to this rejection, a child learns the role of the display rules in an effort to gain respect. If children refuse to control their emotions they in turn, have adjustment problems throughout life leading to isolation and depression (Kupersmidt & Coie, 1990).

According to Harter (1990), children seek approval from classmates more so than friends. Children perceive acquaintances as a predictor of social acceptance and self worth. Thus, they must learn to consider consequences before responding to emotions as this decision may influence whether support or rejection is received.

Why would children express negative emotion at all? According to research, negative expressions do equate helplessness leaving others to feel a sense of pity and support, wanting to help the child. Everyone needs emotional support which can be more fulfilling than rejecting this emotion. Studies suggest that the audience influences a child's regulation of negative emotion by learning who can be manipulated for his personal gain (Coie & Dodge, 1997).

How well do children understand the regulation of negative emotions? Children are taught this affect is responded to less favorably than positive affect. Although perceptions differ among the genders, both sexes feel most intimidated among peers. Girls are more likely to express negative emotion due to their need for emotional support. Yet boys are taught expressing negative emotions is not masculine and the consequence for this action will result in rejection.

Surprisingly, it has been reported that children understand and use display rules before learning how to manipulate their facial expressions to hide their internal feelings (Gnepp & Hess, 1986). Researchers do not have answers as to what the age is precisely, yet forms of emotion regulation have been observed in preschoolers. Children begin to rely on display rules by age nine (Gnepp et al, 1986). By this age, a child's physiological, cognitive and social domains have all begun to form (Gnepp et al, 1986).

Gender differences appear to play a factor in regulating emotions. Differences in gender may depend on the affect to be controlled, as well as the audience. Girls may mask anger more frequently than boys due to social expectations that anger is not "lady like" (Gnepp & Hess, 1986). During this research, it was noted that girls tended to self-disclose and show their expressions more so than boys. This willingness to self-disclose could be due to the social support girls receive for sharing their feelings deeming it to be appropriate.

Social interactions are a central part of a child's development. Children must establish relationships by combining interests with personality. These relationships provide a sense of security and support for the child. Thus, making it understandable those children rated peers as the most difficult to self-disclose due to fear of rejection and ridicule. Taken together, this assures the child that regulating negative emotions self-protects one from potential threat of negative reactions.

Display rules are used to intentionally control the negative emotions a child is currently experiencing. For the sake of this research, negative emotions were characterized as anger and aggression, both of which are recognized and existent within all human beings. Children were asked to briefly explain each definition to ensure the researcher of the child's comprehension of the topic at hand.

Summary

Although anger can be perceived as negative, it is a natural and healthy function, affecting all human beings. One's interpretation of anger may predict future behavior, thus recognizing the significance of social context in the display of anger. Anger may be unpredictable; yet given the familiarity and comfort level with another person the response to anger may be predictable.

This research sought to examine the influence, if any, that others have on a child's decision to display anger. As discussed previously, there are many factors that may determine a child's willingness to regulate feelings. However, this researcher hypothesized that another individual's presence may be a key determinant in displaying anger. If this hypothesis is true, this indicates that children do understand their ability to control emotions, desiring acceptance from others.

CHAPTER 3

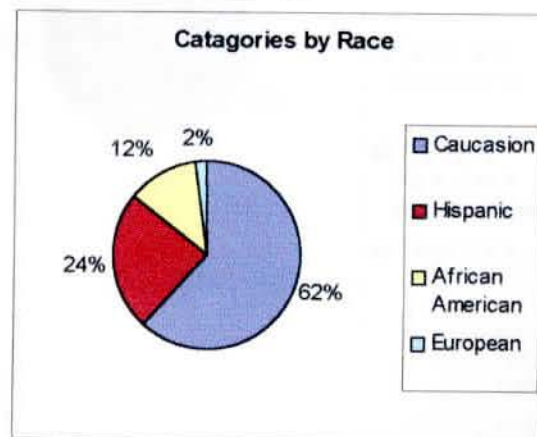
Method

Subjects

A total of 20 first grade (mean age = 6.3 years), 20 third grade (mean age = 8.8 years) and 20 sixth grade (mean age = 11.7 years) students participated in this study. Ten boys and ten girls were selected from each grade. All children attended the same public elementary school, primarily serving a middle class population. Children were selected from two different classes within each grade.

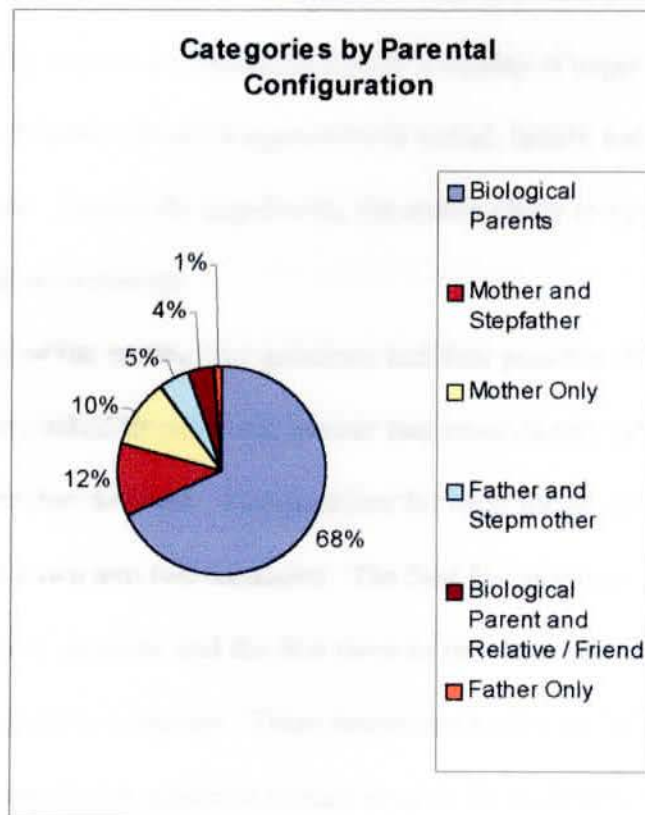
The demographic data pertaining to this study revealed that the majority (61.4%) of the children sampled were Caucasian, 24.2% Hispanic, 12.2% African American and 2.2% were of European decent. See Exhibit I.

Exhibit I



Due to the significance of parental influence in this study, information was gathered regarding parental configuration. (See Exhibit II). Sixty eight percent of the sample was raised by both biological parents, as compared to 11.5% by mother and stepfather, 10.4% by mother only, 5.2% by the father and stepmother, 4.2% by a biological parent and relative/friend, and 1% by the father only.

Exhibit II



Instrument

The instrument selected for this study was a 22-question survey with 4 options, asking how one would respond to certain given situations when angry. This survey had three parts, one section for each audience group (parent, peer and alone). Two sections had eight questions, while the alone category focused on only six. Forced choices were offered to simplify options for the student and eliminate coding discrepancies for the author. This survey, the Aggression Questionnaire was designed by the author and was used to assess the influence that an audience may unconsciously possess in regulating a child's display of anger. This study focuses on children's level of aggression in social, family and personal environments. Due to the population, the author chose to address school as the social environment.

Each of the twenty-two questions had four possible choices. Subjects were asked to select one answer that most closely related to their actions when they are mad. The questions for each social context were then broken down into two subscales. The first five questions for both parent and peer sections, and the first three in the alone section focused on levels of aggressive behavior. These responses are shown in Tables 1, 2 and 3. The remaining questions in each section focused more on insight into the behavior, with these responses shown in Table 4. The choices were broken down in degrees of severity, such as A and B were collapsed

to represent passive, withdrawal responses, while C and D were collapsed to represent more dominant and aggressive responses. See Appendix B.

Procedure

To ensure that participation was voluntary, children received a brief presentation from the researcher one-week prior to the study, explaining the purpose and anonymity of this study. At this time, children were given consent forms (See Appendix A), confirming the purpose and assuring confidentiality to give to their parents. Children were asked to discuss the presentation with their parents and if interested, return the consent form to their teacher. Children were able to share any questions with the researcher to eliminate any concerns. The response rate was above 80%.

Data was collected from the subjects in January of 1999. The children were selected systematically by choosing every third child seated to give a total of twenty subjects. To decrease bias, the subjects were alternated to include an even distribution of boys and girls. Upon leaving the classroom, children were requested to bring a pencil with them to complete their test. The subjects were taken to an empty classroom where the author reminded children of the importance of honesty for this test, as well as their anonymity. Children were then given the aggression inventory and instructed to complete all of the items by choosing the answer that most closely represents their usual response.

Subjects were given the survey as a whole to decrease the level of discussion and distraction among the students. The author handed each subject 3 blank pieces of paper with numbers 1-8 listed and a line in the top right hand corner for age. Subjects were asked 22 questions in all.

The author explained the directions to the children, stating each question will be read twice, reiterating the need to pay attention. The author read each question along with all four choices twice, allowing time lapses between each question. Children were told to chose the answer that most reflected how they would respond to the situation. To assure the author of the subjects' understanding of the peer definition, a peer was described as a classmate to the subjects.

The author administered the test for each grade independently. The testing process took 2 days to complete with 3 grades being tested each day. Since the author chose to select children from 2 separate classrooms per grade, the author tested one class from each grade level, on each day. The test, itself took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Design

This study was a 3 (grade) by 3 (context) design. The grades consisted of first, third and sixth. The context conditions were parent, peer and alone.

CHAPTER 4

Results

This research sought to examine the influence, if any, that others have on a child's decision to display anger. As discussed previously, there are many factors that may determine a child's willingness to regulate feelings. However, this researcher hypothesized that another individual's presence may be a key determinant in displaying anger.

The tables presented below represent the response rates for each set of questions categorized by their social context. Tables 1, 2 & 3 represent the aggressive response rates for each of the three grades to the items pertaining to the three social context respectively: (i) in the presence of parents (ii) in the presence of peers (iii) in the absence of any other person (alone).

Table 4 varies from the previous three tables in that it looks more at the insight for behavior than the actual behavior itself. This table combines all three grades with specific questions asking the reasons behind the subject's actions. Following the same pattern, each set of questions is broken up into groups of social context and is then compared between the three grades.

Table I: Aggressive responses of 1st, 3rd and 6th graders in the presence of their parents.

	1 st Grade	3 rd Grade	6 th Grade
Qn 1.	A. 15%	A. 5%	A. 5%
	B. 25%	B. 45%	B. 30%
	C. 55%	C. 35%	C. 40%
	D. 5%	D. 15%	D. 25%
Qn 2.	A. 10%	A. 25%	A. 10%
	B. 40%	B. 15%	B. 30%
	C. 30%	C. 35%	C. 35%
	D. 20%	D. 25%	D. 25%
Qn 3.	A. 15%	A. 5%	A. 10%
	B. 60%	B. 50%	B. 40%
	C. 10%	C. 20%	C. 25%
	D. 15%	D. 25%	D. 25%
Qn 4.	A. 25%	A. 25%	A. 25%
	B. 30%	B. 40%	B. 25%
	C. 20%	C. 20%	C. 30%
	D. 25%	D. 15%	D. 20%
Qn 5.	A. 30%	A. 35%	A. 40%
	B. 35%	B. 30%	B. 15%
	C. 15%	C. 15%	C. 20%
	D. 20%	D. 20%	D. 25%

In table one, subjects began by answering a hypothetical situation in which each subject was asked how he or she would handle punishment from their mother. First (60%) and sixth graders (65%) appeared to adopt a more aggressive response in terms of violent outburst in physical

aggression relative to 40% of third grade. Third graders showed relatively less desire to cause tension with half adopting aggressive responses and the other half a tendency for withdrawal and submission.

Question two asks each subject how he or she would respond to a disagreement with their mother. In all three grades, subjects primarily responded with aggression, either refusing to listen and yell or by breaking things and hitting. The data shows that aggression increased with age, with 50% of first graders and 60% of third and sixth graders reporting confrontation to be their chosen behavior. While the remaining 50% of first graders and 40% of third and sixth graders reporting crying or isolating to be their response.

In question three, subjects were asked how they would respond to being disappointed by their father. First graders were noticeably affected, with 60% reporting crying as their expression, with 25% confronting their father aggressively and the remaining 15% tending to isolate themselves. In contrast, about 50% of third and sixth graders would react with physical violence (breaking things) or verbal anger, compared to only 25% of first graders who would do the same.

Question four asks how each subject would respond to their parent when mad. Results reveal that third graders tend to withdraw (65%) rather than choosing to react aggressively (35%). First and sixth grades reported choosing equally between both aggressive and passive responses.

In question five each subject was asked how they respond to their parent being angry with them. Results show that first and third graders shared similar opinions with 65% reporting withdrawal while 35% chose to react aggressively. Sixth graders were more likely to adopt aggressive responses (45%).

Table 2: Aggressive Responses of 1st, 3rd and 6th graders in the presence of their peers.

	<u>1st Grade</u>	<u>3rd Grade</u>	<u>6th Grade</u>
Qn 1.	A. 10%	A. 35%	A. 30%
	B. 25%	B. 30%	B. 25%
	C. 35%	C. 25%	C. 30%
	D. 30%	D. 10%	D. 15%
Qn 2.	A. 5%	A. 5%	A. 5%
	B. 35%	B. 35%	B. 40%
	C. 20%	C. 15%	C. 20%
	D. 40%	D. 45%	D. 35%
Qn 3.	A. 5%	A. 5%	A. 20%
	B. 60%	B. 60%	B. 55%
	C. 20%	C. 10%	C. 15%
	D. 15%	D. 25%	D. 10%
Qn 4.	A. 15%	A. 20%	A. 40%
	B. 35%	B. 40%	B. 35%
	C. 30%	C. 25%	C. 15%
	D. 20%	D. 15%	D. 10%
Qn 5.	A. 5%	A. 30%	A. 30%
	B. 45%	B. 35%	B. 35%
	C. 25%	C. 20%	C. 15%
	D. 25%	D. 15%	D. 20%

In table two, each subject was asked how they would react to rejection from a peer, in the presence of the peer. First graders indicated aggression as their primary response with 65% reporting they would react

with verbal anger or violence. Third graders were less likely to be aggressive with only 35% choosing to react violently while 65% chose to cry or ignore. Sixth graders were equally divided between aggressive and withdrawal responses.

Question two asks each subject how they would respond to a peer intentionally breaking their science project. Proportionately more first and third graders (60%) would respond with aggression, while the remaining 40% reported telling the teacher as their alternative. Sixth graders were evenly divided between aggressive and passive responses.

Question three gives a hypothetical situation regarding confrontation with a peer's wrong accusation. All three grades reported they would respond in a somewhat passive manner. Both first and third grades responded they would cry and tell the truth (60%) with 5% ignoring the situation, leaving 35% to respond by either yelling or hitting their peer. Sixth graders however were more likely to ignore the problem relative to first and third graders (20%). They were also less likely (25%) to respond aggressively relative to first and third graders (35%).

In question four, when subjects were asked how they would respond to peer pressure and the desire for social acceptance. First graders reported no difference between passive and aggressive responses, yet sixth graders showed an overwhelming 75% withdrawal with only 25% showing any signs of aggression. Third graders were also less likely to be

aggressive with 40% stating some type of aggression and (60%) reporting a more passive approach.

The fifth question asks how each subject would respond when they were mad at a peer. Both third and sixth grade (65%) stated that withdrawal would be their chosen behavior, leaving only 35% choosing to aggressively confront the peer. First graders however, were more likely than third and sixth graders to be confrontive (50%).

Table 3: Aggressive Responses of 1st, 3rd and 6th graders in the absence of others (alone)

	<u>1st Grade</u>	<u>3rd Grade</u>	<u>6th Grade</u>
Qn 1.	A. 25%	A. 20%	A. 15%
	B. 35%	B. 35%	B. 20%
	C. 15%	C. 20%	C. 40%
	D. 25%	D. 25%	D. 25%
Qn 2.	A. 5%	A. 15%	A. 5%
	B. 10%	B. 20%	B. 35%
	C. 50%	C. 35%	C. 30%
	D. 35%	D. 30%	D. 30%
Qn 3.	A. 10%	A. 50%	A. 20%
	B. 15%	B. 10%	B. 15%
	C. 45%	C. 20%	C. 35%
	D. 30%	D. 20%	D. 30%
Qn 4.	A. 25%	A. 30%	A. 25%
	B. 20%	B. 15%	B. 25%
	C. 40%	C. 40%	C. 30%
	D. 15%	D. 15%	D. 20%

In table three, each subject was asked how they would respond in the absence of others. When asked what each subject would do if their parent told them to stay in their room and their parent left, both first (40%) and third (45%) graders were less likely to engage in defiant or aggressive behavior. However, sixth graders primarily chose to defy their parent

(65%), while only 35% complied with their parents. This behavior seems to suggest a decrease in concern for consequences over grade levels.

In question two, each subject was asked what they would do if a peer in an isolated setting was antagonizing them. All three grades chose to greet the aggression with aggression. First graders responded overwhelmingly with 85% choosing aggression over passivity. Sixty five percent of third graders reported they would be aggressive with 35% choosing to remain passive, while sixth graders followed closely with 60% reporting aggressive versus 40% reporting passive behaviors. With each grade there was a gradual decline in aggression possibly indicating an increase in impulse control. However, across the board there were proportionately more choosing to adopt an aggressive stance than adopt a passive approach when confronted with peer antagonization.

Question 3 asks each subject how they would respond to disappointment when alone. Proportionately more first (75%) and sixth grade (65%) chose to externalize their feelings while only 10% of first graders and 20% of sixth graders tended to internalize their disappointment and cry. Third graders, however, displayed a different pattern of behavior than both first and sixth grade with 50% chose to internalize disappointment and cry and only 40% reacting to their disappointment with aggression.

In question four, each subject was asked how they would respond to anger when alone. First and sixth graders showed comparable

responses for both passive and aggressive categories. However, 55% of third graders appeared to chose to express their aggression while 45% selected to withdraw from their feelings. Although each grade reported closely related responses for passive and aggressive categories, there were differences in severity of the behavior. Forty percent of both first and third graders and 30% of sixth graders tended to use physical violence as their form of aggression. Even more alarming was the trend that indicated 20% of sixth graders, and 15% of both first and sixth graders would set fires as their form of anger expression.

Table 4 focuses on the insight into the behavior, asking children how and why they respond to their anger.

Table 4: Aggressive tendencies of 1st, 3rd and 6th graders in the presence of their parent.

	1 st Grade	3 rd Grade	6 th Grade
<u>Parent Context</u>			
Qn 6.	A. 20%	A. 20%	A. 30%
	B. 30%	B. 45%	B. 30%
	C. 35%	C. 25%	C. 35%
	D. 15%	D. 10%	D. 5%
Qn 7.	A. 25%	A. 5%	A. 30%
	B. 35%	B. 55%	B. 35%
	C. 30%	C. 35%	C. 25%
	D. 10%	D. 5%	D. 10%
Qn 8.	A. 20%	A. 30%	A. 35%
	B. 35%	B. 35%	B. 20%
	C. 40%	C. 30%	C. 40%
	D. 5%	D. 5%	D. 5%
<u>Peer Context</u>			
Qn 6.	A. 15%	A. 25%	A. 25%
	B. 30%	B. 30%	B. 35%
	C. 35%	C. 35%	C. 30%
	D. 20%	D. 10%	D. 10%
Qn 7.	A. 5%	A. 15%	A. 20%
	B. 10%	B. 20%	B. 30%
	C. 50%	C. 25%	C. 35%
	D. 35%	D. 40%	D. 15%

	<u>1st Grade</u>	<u>3rd Grade</u>	<u>6th Grade</u>
Qn 8.	A. 10%	A. 15%	A. 10%
	B. 55%	B. 45%	B. 50%
	C. 30%	C. 35%	C. 35%
	D. 5%	D. 5%	D. 5%

Alone Context

Qn 5.	A. 5%	A. 10%	A. 20%
	B. 25%	B. 35%	B. 45%
	C. 50%	C. 40%	C. 25%
	D. 20%	D. 15%	D. 10%
Qn 6.	A. 10%	A. 5%	A. 20%
	B. 35%	B. 35%	B. 20%
	C. 40%	C. 45%	C. 50%
	D. 15%	D. 15%	D. 10%

In the parent context, each subject was asked if they communicated their anger to their parent. Half of first graders shared regularly followed by 40% of sixth graders and 30% of third graders. However, twenty percent of first and third graders reported “never” sharing their anger with their parent while 30% of the sixth graders indicated they would suppress their anger.

In question seven, all subjects were asked the reason for expressing their anger to their parent. The majority of subjects in each grade chose manipulation (using anger for personal gain) as their deciding factor in the

display of anger with 55% of third graders and 35% of first and sixth graders. Subjects also perceived communicating their anger as a way of achieving monetary gain with 35% of third graders, 30% of first and 25% of sixth graders.

In question eight, each subject was asked if they were ever afraid to share their anger with their parent, nearly half of first and sixth grade report usually being scared while another 40% reported being sometimes scared. However, more third graders (65%) reported to feeling scared while 30% agreed to only sometimes feeling scared. Surprisingly, only 5% from each grade reported “never” feeling scared to express their anger with their parent.

In the peer context, each subject was asked how often he or she chose to share their anger. First and third grades had similar responses with half choosing to express their anger to their peer and the other half choosing only sometimes or never to express it. However, sixth graders appeared to be a little more restrained, with the majority (60%) choosing to only “sometimes” or “never” express their anger.

In question seven, students were asked if fear was a determining factor when deciding to express their anger with a peer. Only 15% of sixth graders reported “never” afraid to tell the peer, whereas 40% of third graders and 35% of first graders. About 50% of sixth graders reported being fearful of telling their classmates compared to 15% of first graders and 35% of third graders. Hence, first and third graders reported little

intimidation, opting to express their anger when needed. However, sixth graders were likely to be more cautious.

In question eight, children were asked to choose the response that most closely relates to why they do not share their anger with their peers. In all three grades, the majority (65%) confirmed that their biggest fear was social exclusion and being made fun of by their peers.

In the alone context, each grade was asked if they would hit a peer that made them angry if they were alone. Seventy percent of first graders reported they would usually hit while 55% of third graders reported doing the same. However, sixth graders tended to be more restrained, responding more regularly towards aggression.

The remaining question asks each grade if subjects were willing to respond to aggression with aggression, if alone. All three grade levels seem to report a tendency to physically retaliate with about 60% reporting they would definitely hurt their aggressor. However, 20% of sixth graders reported "never" doing that, compared to 10% of first graders and 5% of third graders.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

As a consequence of this study, findings show that children do consider their context before acting on their emotions. Past research has suggested that the level of support one has received from the observer as a determinant in displaying negative emotions (Saarni, 1998). The contexts discussed in this study fit three distinct categories: (I) in the presence of a parent (ii) in the presence of a peer and (iii) in the absence of anyone else (alone).

The present study focussed on the effect, if any, that social context has on the regulation of anger. Confirming past research, this study found children to feel most comfortable expressing negative affect in front of their parent suggesting that due to the familiarity and affiliation with their mother, the majority of subjects stated feeling free to express their anger.

When comparing the grades in the parent context, it appears that sixth graders were more likely to engage in aggressive responses. In fact, almost 50% or more reported resorting to aggressive behavior (e.g. yelling or physically retaliating, including breaking objects) in response to the various situations presented. Yet, when dealing with anger towards fathers, first graders were more likely to withdraw (85% report crying or isolating), compared to third graders and sixth graders who tend to be more aggressive in their responses.

It appears subjects responded differently to the sex of the parent. Questions regarding mothers had more aggressive responses, whereas father's responses were overwhelmingly passive for all three grades. It could be that different parenting styles used by the parents, possibly a more dominating approach used by the father, creates intimidation for the child. The most drastic difference was within first graders; 50% reported being aggressive with mother and only 35% when angered by the father. Overall, the generally high percentage (approximately 50%) of aggressive responses in each category seem to support that at least half of these children do not seem to be restrained or fearful in displaying their anger to their parents.

In contrast, in the peer context, it appears withdrawal was the more likely response, especially for the sixth grade who tended to adopt a passive approach of withdrawing through ignoring or crying (almost 2/3rds of them in some situations). This indicates the influence peers have on children's display of anger. In an overall comparison, it seems all three grades responded similar to what provoked anger in the subjects. All three grades responded aggressively to a question involving deliberate destruction to one's homework. However, third and sixth graders reported their reluctance to respond to their peers in an aggressive manner in any other hypothetical situation concerning peer pressure and anger towards peers. As indicated in the above example, aggression decreased slightly

with each grade. This seems to suggest the need for social acceptance increasing with the progression of age.

What was striking was the increased level of aggression displayed when dealing with anger in the absence of others. First graders appeared more likely to adopt aggression throughout most situations, reflecting increased aggression in the absence of others. With each grade there was a gradual decline in aggression, possibly indicating an increase in impulse control. However, across the board there were proportionately more choosing to adopt an aggressive stance than adopt a passive approach when confronted with peer antagonization.

Another interesting finding involves the peer versus alone category. All three grades indicated peers as being influential in determining their display of anger as evidenced by the less likelihood of responding aggressively to peers relative to their parents. However, when placed in an isolated situation with a peer, all three grades reported a willingness to become aggressive and even violent with a peer that antagonized them: 85% (1st graders), 65% (3rd graders) and 60% (6th graders). From this report, it becomes evident that the surrounding environment is a key determinant in regulating the display of anger in children.

In order for children to function in a healthy manner, they must learn how to communicate and control their emotions. By adapting to the social morals, children are learning the importance as well as the

consequences of their actions. Results of this study indicated that children tended to show a high level of aggressive responses, and should be a matter of concern.

Status may also be a factor in displaying one's emotions. Status can be characterized on different levels. Although a parent could be considered by most to have more status than a peer, when familiarity is added, confronting a peer is more threatening due to a lack of history with the person and the fear of social exclusion. A child may feel more threatened by social rejection than facing familiar consequences from a parent, leading to higher anger regulation when placed amongst peers.

Implications

When counseling children with aggressive behavior, one must address the child's self-perspective. According to this study, children were most likely to respond aggressively when isolated, questioning the reason for his anger. Was this suppressed anger that was released? Is this child overwhelmed and unsure how to handle his feelings?

This study states children to be least likely to display anger in the presence of peers. Again, addressing the child's perspective may give answers. Does the child feel intimidated by peer pressure? Does the child have self-esteem issues?

This study also states children overall, to be more aggressive with their parents than their peers. To understand the root of a child's anger, a counselor needs to discover a client's interest and values', determining

what is important to the child. By integrating expression into the daily communication patterns, the child is not only learning a healthy alternative to aggression but also how to communicate effectively with others.

The findings in this study are beneficial in helping others understand the importance of social acceptance. The results of this study suggest there is a time and place for everything and a degree to which anger should be regulated. Children must learn that anger has limits and if it is not able to be expressed in a healthy way, it will escape in an explosive disruptive manner, without thought of its ramifications.

Limitations and recommendations

It would have been beneficial to have a larger sample to strengthen the findings. The researcher studied only 20 subjects at each grade level, thus limiting the reliability of the data. Children were asked to report their perceptions of how they respond to anger. Unfortunately, children are not always accurate in understanding or explaining their actions. Past studies have found that children are not consistent with their responses when placed in hypothetical situations (Saarni, 1998). It would be beneficial for future research to be done on both validity and reliability of children's self-reports. The primary weakness of this study was the researcher developed the instrument. Therefore, reliability and validity remain inconclusive, leaving this study to be descriptive in nature.

A gender comparison would have been beneficial in determining the display of emotion in children. Gender differences could reflect

reasons for varied responses of aggression. Explaining the reason boys chose to be aggressive rather than communicate could be due the pressures he feels from his surrounding environment to suppress negative emotions. Future research could focus on the importance of communicating one's emotions to lessen the likelihood of future aggression.

After reviewing this study it became evident the influential role the parental figure plays in determining the expression of emotions displayed by children. Further research into understanding if gender and parenting style affect the child's expression of anger is needed. It appears children perceived father's to be less accepting of their display of anger with the progression of age. When asked how a subject would respond to anger to their father, each grade showed a slight decrease in aggressive tendencies. Further research could help parents understand how to communicate effectively with their child to decrease the likelihood of children mishandling their anger.

Conclusion

This study found children to regulate their display of anger as a function of the presence of significant others. Overall, children reported a decrease in aggression with age, possibly indicating greater awareness of anger management techniques and anger's affect on others. Future research may wish to examine the socialization processes contributing to the development of children's expectations of expressing one's anger and it's consequences.

In conclusion, the results of this study are beneficial in helping others understand how social acceptance regulates children's willingness to communicate their feelings openly. Findings of this study suggest children are so consumed by social acceptance they forget to respect their true feelings, often leading to poor anger management. There is a time and place for everything and degree to which anger can be regulated. Children must learn that anger has its limits and if it is not able to be expressed in a healthy manner, then it will escape in an explosive disruptive manner without concern for its ramifications or consequences.

Appendix B

Consent Form

My name is Angie Kropp and I am a graduate student at Lindenwood University, in St. Charles, Missouri. I am working on my Master's Degree in Professional Counseling and as partial requirement for my degree I must write a thesis. I have decided to write my thesis on the development of anger in children and determine if environmental factors contribute to the level of anger displayed in children.

My background has included the advocacy and counseling of children from various backgrounds. I have a strong interest in educating children and families in anger management to reduce the likelihood of family violence from continuing. This study will help me understand how children perceive others and at what level their anger is the most vulnerable. This study will take place in your child's classroom on January 21, 1999 and will take approximately 20 minutes.

I would appreciate your child's participation and assure you that all information obtained is for graduate purposes only and information will remain anonymous. If you consent to this study please sign and return to your child's teacher by January 15, 1999.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Angie VanMeter

X _____

Date _____

Appendix C

Parental Influence

1. You got your favorite C.D. for your birthday. You're listening to it when your parent comes in and says, "you didn't clean the house" like she had asked. She took your C.D. away and told you she'd return it in a week because you're grounded. You...
 - A. Do nothing
 - B. Refuse to talk to her; ignore her
 - C. Tell her you don't care; yell
 - D. Break things; hit

2. Your friends are all going to see this cool new scary movie. Your mom tells you, "you can't go, you're too young!" All your friends are going and you have to call and tell them you're not allowed. You..
 - A. Go to your room
 - B. Cry
 - C. Refuse to listen; yell
 - D. Break things, hit

3. Your dad promises you if you're good he'll take you fishing Saturday. You were good all week and on Saturday he says, "maybe next week, I'm going to Uncle Tom's to watch the football game." Now you don't have anything to do and it's Saturday. You..
- A. Watch football by yourself
 - B. Cry; ignore him
 - C. Yell at your dad that this is not fair
 - D. Break things; hit
4. When your parent makes you mad, do you tell them?
- A. Never
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Usually
 - D. Always
5. Why do you let them know you're mad?
- A. I need to talk
 - B. I might not get punished if I do
 - C. They might buy me something
 - D. I want to make them mad

6. Are you ever afraid to tell your parent you're mad at them?
- A. Always
 - B. Usually
 - C. Sometimes
 - D. Never
7. When you get mad at your parent usually you..
- A. Ignore them
 - B. Cry
 - C. Yell; call them names
 - D. Break things; hit
8. When your parent is mad at you, you usually..
- A. Ignore them; go to your room
 - B. Cry
 - C. Yell; call them names
 - D. Break things; hit

Peer Influences

1. You're walking home from school and hear that your peer is spreading bad rumors about you. You see your peer and he tells you he now has new classmates to hang out with. You...
 - A. Ignore him
 - B. Cry
 - C. Call him names
 - D. Break things; fight

2. You worked hard on your science project. You're waiting to be judged but you know you'll win. You go to get a drink and ask your classmate to watch your project. When you return, you notice your project is broken and now it tilts. You...
 - A. Ignore him
 - B. Cry; tell the teacher
 - C. Call the classmate names; yell
 - D. Destroy his project; hit

3. Your test is handed back and the teacher reports someone cheated. You know it was your classmate because he bragged about it. You find out he said you cheated and now you're in big trouble. You...
- A. Ignore it
 - B. Cry; tell the truth
 - C. all the classmate names; yell
 - D. Break things; fight
4. If your classmates are making fun of another classmate and ask you to also, you...
- A. Ignore them
 - B. Tell the teacher
 - C. Make fun of the classmate
 - D. Fight; break things
5. When you're mad at a classmate you usually...
- A. Ignore them
 - B. Tell them to leave you alone
 - C. Call them names; yell
 - D. Fight; break things

6. How often do you tell your classmates when you're mad at them?
- A. Never
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Usually
 - D. Always
7. Is there ever a time where you are scared of your classmate?
- A. Always
 - B. Usually
 - C. Sometimes
 - D. Never
8. The main reason why you don't tell your classmate when you're mad at him is...
- A. They will want to fight
 - B. They will stop being my friend
 - C. They will make fun of me
 - D. They will know I'm scared of them

Alone

1. You had a bad day at school; your teacher sends a note home for your parent to sign. You get home and your parent starts yelling at you. Your parent leaves the house and tells you to stay in your room and no TV or phone. You...
 - A. Stay in your room
 - B. Cry; call them names
 - C. Go to a friend's house
 - D. Hit; break things

2. You're walking home and the classmate you don't like is following you and calling you names. No one else is around but you and the classmate. You...
 - A. Run away
 - B. Ignore them
 - C. Call them names
 - D. Fight

3. Your classmate calls you at home, excited. He just made the basketball team, he tells you, and you didn't make it. You get off the phone and no one is home for you to talk to, you...
 - A. Cry
 - B. Call your classmate and yell at him/her
 - C. Hit; break things
 - D. Run away

4. When no one else is around and you're mad, you...
 - A. Cry
 - B. Yell
 - C. Break things; hit
 - D. Set fires

5. I get mad when I am...
 - A. Alone
 - B. With a parent
 - C. With a classmate
 - D. At school

6. I get scared when I am...
 - A. Alone
 - B. With a parent
 - C. With a classmate
 - D. At school

7. If you know you're not going to get caught, will you hit someone if they make you mad?
 - A. Never
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Usually
 - D. Always

8. If someone hurts you, are you going to hurt him or her back if no one is around?
- A. Never
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Usually
 - D. Always

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