

DEVELOPMENTAL BACKGROUND

HOW DO GENDER DIFFERENCES BEGIN?

In one study of preschool boys and girls, each child was asked to make up a story. At the end of the day the author of each story was invited to act out their story and invite members of the class to participate in acting out other roles in the drama.

- Boys are more likely to tell stories that include themes of conflict, danger, heroism, and aggressive violence
- Girls told stories with romantic and family-oriented themes.

When these stories are acted out,

- boys more often called on other boys to act in their stories
- girls mainly acted in girls' stories.

Eventually two distinct sub-cultures begin to form and we experience a multiplier effect:

- a group of girls are more girl-like collectively than they are singly
- the same is truer of boys.

The more time young boys spend playing with boys

- They will increase their activity level, amount of rough-and-tumble play and overt aggression.
- They are also more likely to spend less time close to available adults.

Girls spend more time playing with each other:

- They experience less activity level and aggression and
- Tend to spend more time in proximity to adults.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE IN THE AGENDAS OF THE TWO SEXES?

Both boys and girls have the same agenda when protecting themselves.

Boys:

- However, boys have a tendency to protect their own territory from uninvited intrusion by other boys.
- This leads to more competition, mock fighting and real fighting in boys' groups than in girls' groups.
- Boys also establish coalitions for the purposes of carrying out group enterprises sometimes in opposition to other boys' groups.
- This type of cooperation is more likely among boys than girls.
- Boys typically have casual friends with whom they carry out joint activities despite the fact that they are more competitive among themselves.

Girls:

- Unlike boys, girls prefer to work in dyads and triads where friendships are more intimate.
- Girls will exchange more information about their lives and tend to know considerably more about their friends' families and histories.
- Girls are more responsive to their conversational partners, which leads to a greater understanding of each other's points of view. This interpersonal sensitivity does not translate into groups of four or more girls.

WHO IS MORE AGGRESSIVE?

Males are the more confrontational sex.

- They are more overtly aggressive which includes verbal and physical aggression.
- Boys have more frequent conflicts between themselves than do girls.
- They do more hitting, kicking, pushing, teasing, insulting and attacking property of others.

- Males are more likely to make up after a fight more quickly than do girls and thus less disruptive of ongoing group activity.
- Males will most often go through frequent cycles of conflict and reconciliation among themselves while preserving unity against rivals.

Females are relatively peaceful

- but if they engage in open conflict the chances of reconciliation are low.
- Females avoid confrontation with individuals whom they are close to such as siblings and friends and
- let their aggression run its destructive course in case of a fight with a rival.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF AGGRESSION?

There exists social, verbal and physical aggression.

All aggression, including physical aggression is social.

- The term social aggression is used to describe mean acts intended to inflict damage on a victim's social relationships or social status.

Besides direct physical aggression there is indirect social or relational aggression.

- Girls most often engage in this type of activity that includes hurting others by ignoring them or excluding them from desired social activities, trying to alienate their friends and engaging in negative gossip about them.

Confrontational aggression requires that the perpetrator's identity be known and that the risks of blame, revenge or loss in status are present.

In non-confrontational aggression, the perpetrator may remain anonymous and a connection to social networks must be present.

Girls are more typically concerned about relationships and are more sophisticated about their knowledge of other people's social ties.

- They most often manipulate these ties if it is in their interest.
- However, this makes them more vulnerable to being hurt if they are targeted.

Boys shrug off this type of treatment yet the greater the intimacy of girls' friendships, the more vulnerable they are to betrayal when the friendships break up and social networks shift.

WHO TALKS MORE - GIRLS OR BOYS?

Boys talk about general issues including girls, cars, parties, etc.

Girls on the other hand spend a considerable amount of time talking to their friends and sharing confidences.

- They talk about everything including fashion, social activities, families, boys, relationships, friendships and other girls.
- They go into great detail and talk not only face-to-face but via the telephone.

- Although girls spend more time with one or two friends, they do spend time in larger groups as well.

The breakup of any dyadic friendship most always involves a larger social network.

- Within larger groups, instances of non-confrontational social aggression are often the cause of changing interpersonal relationships within the group.
- The dynamics of girls' groups includes a central girl(s) who controls and manipulates the social alignments within their group.
- Girls use these groups to develop their identities by developing shared ways of doing things, shared ways of talking, and shared beliefs and values.

Girls become experts as it relates to romantic relationships and act as the arrangers while boys are the passive participants.

Girls become heighteners of the social arena breathing excitement into normal everyday people and situations and propelling themselves into the public arena.

- This establishes an arena where personal feelings and associations that were once private become public and subject to non-confrontational social aggression.

WHAT ROLE DOES PARENTING PLAY IN ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR?

Family discord plays a greater role in the development of conduct problems in girls than in boys.

In addition, stressful life events and low family support predicts problem behavior for adolescent girls but not boys.

- When families eat together, for instance, there is a link in less aggression in both boys and girls and to less delinquency in girls.
- Frequent parental checking of homework is linked to less aggression in girls only.
- Girls appear to be more sensitive than boys to positive partnering in ways that reduce their anti-social behavior.
- Anti-social girls appear to be more sensitive to disruptions in the social environment, particularly at home.
- Since attachment to the home environment is particularly strong for girls, any stress factors or disruptions affect girls' behavioral and emotional functioning.
- Antisocial girls perceived more parental rejection and withdrawal which suggests concerns about abandonment and loss of love not so prevalent with boys.

BULLYING – HOW DO GIRLS PARTICIPATE?

Is Bullying Just a Childhood Behavior Problem?

- Boys bully their peers more often than girls at almost every grade level.
- The exception occurs during the school transition from 8th grade to 9th grade when the percentage of girls who report both bullying and being victimized jumps sharply.
- It is at this point in a girl's life that she may be using bullying not only to establish a position of status within a new social context but to establish a sense of belonging and acceptance.
- As girls bid for dominance and belonging in the transition to high school they suffer the most from a substantial relationship cost.
- Bullying may decrease by as much as 50% by the end of high school for both boys and girls but unfortunately does not for troubled youth.
- Bullying may lead to the formation of aggressive relationship style and the escalation of sexual harassment and dating aggression.

Do Children Who Bully Experience Problems in Their Peer Relationships?

- Bullying is a relationship problem that is evident across childhood and adolescence.
- Children who report both bullying others and being victimized by their peers experience the most troubling peer-relationship problems.
- Friendships are often marked with conflict but problems emerge in the context of romantic relationships which occurs more with girls than boys.
- Girls experience higher levels of aggression in conflicts with their relationship partners.
- They have adopted negative leadership styles that create relationship context that are challenging.
- They have failed to develop positive conflict resolution skills that are required for mature and balanced friendships.
- This type of behavior leads to being actively rejected by their classmates.
- In early adolescence, girls who have bullied and have been a victim of bullying reports even higher alienation.
- As they arrive in middle school, they report less positive and more negative qualities in their friendships.
- The pattern of difficulties prevents them from establishing the requisite social skills required to sustain positive relationships with their peers.
- This puts them at a particularly high risk for relationship problems in their later roles as parents, employees and spouses.
- Their approach to peer interactions reflects the inability to establish positive, trusting, low-conflict relationships with friends at a time when peer relationships are the most important.

VICTIMIZATION AND THE GIRLS' PATHWAYS TO DELINQUENCY

Girls who are victimized physically, sexually and emotionally are more likely to see this as their first step to delinquency.

- They normally become victims at a very young age (13-14) and most likely reported that they had been beaten, stabbed, shot or raped.
- There exist a clear correlation between the victimization of girls and specific high-risk behaviors such as serious drug abuse.
- The affects of the drugs helps to dull the psychological devastation brought on by experiences of physical and sexual violations.
- Both the experience of victimization and substance abuse further correlates to multiple risky behaviors including truancy, unsafe sexual activity and gang involvement.