THREAT TO SELF-ESTEEM AS A MEDIATING VARIABLE IN STUDENT AGGRESSION

BY

PATSY LAVONNE ROBERTS

Bachelor of Science in Education
New Mexico State University
Las Cruces, New Mexico
1964

Master of Education
University of Central Oklahoma
Edmond, Oklahoma
1990

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Thesis Advisor

Dean of Graduate College

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CHAPTER ONE

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Introduction

A number of variables have been investigated in an effort to bring understanding to the student-aggression paradigm. Past research has concentrated primarily on environmental factors, rather than individual characteristics, in the study of aggressive student behavior. This study is concerned with the psychological self-esteem construct. It focused on personal vulnerability to (a) threats to self-esteem, (b) threats to property, and (c) threats to physical safety in providing for various levels of physical aggression in student populations.

Student-aggression research and remedial efforts, in the past, have concentrated on such environmental factors as gang association and lack of academic success. Efforts have been concentrated on such societal issues as television violence and drug abuse. This study was primarily concerned with the impact of verbal aggressions that are intentional in nature and provide a threat to the psychological "self" construct.

School Violence

The citizens of this nation are growing increasingly concerned about the high level of violence in public schools. The Houston Post polled parents in September of 1991, and respondents indicated that eighty-five percent considered public schools to be unsafe environments (Toch, Wagner, Johnson, Glastris, Arrante, & Daniel, 1991). Police routinely patrol inner city school halls and parking lots. Gangs and their accompanying

disruption to the academic process and challenge to student safety are no longer unique to large inner city school campuses. School administrators are expressing concern about the level of violence in rural America as well (Bachus, 1994).

Aggressive students dominate learning environments. As early as 1980, 54% of the teachers polled indicated that they felt student behavior substantially interferes with teaching (Phi Delta Kappan, 1980). Teachers continue to express concern about their classroom environments as safety issues remain a primary problem in education today (Quarles, 1989). Incarceration and rehabilitation efforts have been less than successful (National School Safety Center, 1989a & b).

There has been a significant increase in the level of violence on high school campuses during the last thirty years (Garrison 1989; National Institute of Education 1978; National School Safety Center, 1989a/1989b; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1986; Violence in Schools, 1993). The National Center for Education Statistics (1989) published data indicating that disruptive student behavior substantially increased over a five-year-period between 1982 and 1987. More recent data suggest the dynamic is continuing, such as two national studies, the National Crime Survey (Bastian & Taylor, 1991) and the National Adolescent Health Survey (American School Health Association, 1989).

Personal Safety remains a national concern. While no one is exempt from the effects of student-violence, teachers and students are most directly impacted by the difficulty. Both teachers and students routinely express concern for their personal safety (Toch et al.,

1991) and have for some time (Neil, 1978). A national Camp Fire Boys and Girls survey of 546 students between the ages of 13-19 exemplifies the concern of public school students (cited in Violence in Schools, 1993). Major findings included the following:

- 83% have personally witnessed students in fistfights.
- 20% have seen a fellow student pull a knife on someone.
- 16% have watched a fellow student strike a teacher.
- 7% have seen students threatening someone with a firearm.

(Violence in Schools, 1993, p.5).

As early as 1984, 52% of Oklahoma City teachers indicated they had considered leaving the teaching profession, due to students' verbal and physical abuse (Cabinet Council on Human Resource [CCHR] working Group on School Violence\Discipline, 1984). Middle school teachers expressed the highest level of concern, with 66% stating they had considered leaving the profession (CCHR, 1984). Arizona Senator, DeConcini, among others, argues that student violence has reached epidemic proportions (Violence in Schools, 1993). He cautions--

> One out of five high school students now carries either a firearm, a club or a knife to school, and we have 3 million crimes of violence occurring in schools today, and that is one every 8 seconds, somebody has calculated. No longer are our schools a safe haven; they are a dangerous place for our children to attend (p. 4).

The Houston Independent School District, like many other school districts, has found it necessary to maintain its own police force (Rotondo, 1993). During the 1991/92 school year, The Prince George County Public School System in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, recorded two attempted homicides and a 200% increase in campus firearm possession as

well as a ninety-four percent increase in knife possession on campus.

Academic environments have been compromised. Schools are the first social institutions that children come into contact with, and they are assigned a primary responsibility for the socialization of our children (Bynum & Thompson, 1992). "Given the milieu, schools may be the only place in the present culture where the developmental needs of young children can be given the highest priority and the attention and care they require." (Miller, 1990, p. 154)

"Basically the school's responsibilities in regard to socialization are twofold: the transmission of cognitive skills, and the transmission of normative culture" (Bynum & Thompson, 1992, p. 319). There are a number of professionals who maintain our schools are less than successful in meeting the cognitive and cultural normative needs of students (Craig, 1994; Zieman & Benson, 1980). A number of professionals argue that the student/institution mismatch has contributed to the level of violence on public school campuses (Bynum & Thompson, 1992; Craig, 1994). Zieman & Benson (1980) found that students who feel school discomfort, due to confrontations and low academic success, are likely to have truancy difficulties. Low school success is predictive of such behaviors as vandalism. (Truckenmiller, 1982).

Classroom management remains a major concern (Feitler & Tokar, 1982). Teachers avoid confrontations with students out of a fear for their personal safety. Sixteen percent of all students have observed a peer strike a teacher (Violence in Schools, 1993). The student-aggression difficulty is compounded by the impact it has on serious, non-disruptive students' ability to learn. Findings of the Office of

Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (1986) have provided evidence that dedicated, nonviolent students' academic efforts are compromised due to fear and environmental distraction.

Contributing Factors

Feldhusen (1978) determined that delinquency and violent student behavior were influenced by peer group association. More recent data appears to confirm this dynamic (Crains, Crains, Nickerman, Gest, & Gairepy, 1988; Farrington, 1986). The National Institute of Education (1989) in the Chicago Safe School Study report cautioned of the probability of school related contributing factors as early as 1989.

> Teachers and students have little control over the out-of-school factors that contribute to antisocial conduct, but the disproportionate amount of victimization that occurs within schools suggests that there are aspects of the school environment which either encourage or fail to discourage such behavior. (P. 5)

A number of researchers and clinicians have expressed the opinion that the best way to reduce school violence is through a reduction in student gang association while providing for increased academic success (Craig, 1994; Wehlage, Rutter, & Turnbaugh, 1987). The American Federation of Teachers (National School Safety Center, 1989a & b) published findings suggesting that drugs and weapons have contributed substantially to the level of violence on public school campuses.

Poor school performance and delinquency are related (Brownfield, 1990). Schools promote middle class values, and teacher assessment of student conformity and behavioral norms have been determined to be directly linked to grades in a correlational research study executed in a large (average daily enrollment 128,405) central-city urban

southwestern school district (Farkas, Sheehan, Grobe, & Shaun, 1990). Bynum and Thompson (1992) maintained that one of the primary functions of the educational institution is to serve as a "screening device".

A number of students, because they are unsuccessful at meeting society's academic expectations, are unable to experience success. Institutional labeling, through self-fulfilling prophecy, is thought to be a variable in chronic "acting-out" behavior (Kelly, 1982). However, Liska and Reed (1985) have suggested, ". . . for most adolescents in high school, the good opinion of teachers and school administrators may be considerably less important than that of their parents" (p.558).

Student aggression remains a complex, societal-challenge. Frustration has been considered a salient factor in aggressive behavior for some time (Berkowitz, 1983; Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mower, & Sears, 1939). Berkowitz (1962) modified Dollard's initial aggression-frustration paradigm (Dollard et al., 1939) in explanation of aggressive behavior to include anger as an intervening variable. While withdrawal is one means of coping in a nonaggressive manner, as in the case of truancy; aggression, which, ". . . implies hostility directed against a perceived source of frustration--usually another person" (Klausmeier, 1985, p. 414), remains an additional means of dealing with frustration and anger.

Need For Further Research

Researchers are presently considering environmental, familial, genetic, toxic, and additional societal factors in their efforts to identify contributing variables to student physical aggression. Such factors as cognitive development (Maccoby, 1980) and cultural influence

(Santrock & Yussen, 1989) are being considered. Most researchers, however, have concluded that the high level of aggression in public school populations is multifaceted, having many causal factors (Craig, 1994; Feldhusen, 1978; Prothrow-Stith, 1994).

Concerned professionals are presently calling for research in a number of areas. Craig (1994) has suggested that school dysfunction and affiliation should be empirically investigated. The National Institute of Mental Health has requested research in the following four broad areas: (a) Sex Offenders, (b) Family Violence, (c) Victims of Violence, and (d) Youth and Violence (Coughlin, 1992). Prothrow-Stith (1994), expressed the opinion of most professionals when she suggested

> The causes of violence in our culture are complicated and deeply embedded. The complex interaction between poverty, racism, drugs and alcohol, the loss of jobs with decent wages in our inner cities, gangs, inadequate handgun regulation, lack of personal opportunity and responsibility, disinvestment in schools and after school activities, and family violence plays a critical role in our culture of violence. (p. 9)

When one considers the variables investigated thus far, which include peer group influence (Farrington, 1986), environmental frustration (Berkowitz, 1962; Dollard et al., 1939) familial issues (Loeber & Schmaling, 1985), and societal factors (Farrington, 1986), it becomes clear that innate characteristics and individual variability must also be considered in order to obtain a more complete understanding of why children are hurting and, at times, killing one another.

Behavior Observations

In an effort to familiarize the researcher with the issues

associated with student aggression, informal behavioral observation were initiated in order to gain insights concerning student's aggression encounters. Behavioral observations took place and field notes taken over a two-year-period in an ethnically diverse, inner-city school population during the 1993/94 and 1994/95 school years (Roberts, 1995). Observations took place daily in both a Seriously Emotionally Disturbed (SED) population and a larger non-handicapped student population during the 1993\94 school year. Observations continued in a sampling of an Alternative Education Day Treatment population during the 1994\95 school year. Physical encounters rarely ensued with out verbal encounters, which, typically, included a number of threats. The vast majority of the threats were found to fall roughly into three categories: (a) threats of a physical nature, (b) threats involving an individual's property, and (c) threats to self-esteem (verbal insults intended to cause psychological pain).

When the field notes were examined, it was repeatedly noted that the most violent and explosive, peer-encounters were preceded by verbal attacks including name calling: references to physical features; family status, including such factors as sexual orientation and activity; intelligence; affiliation; and peer support (or lack of support). Similar verbal encounters directed at factors that define or describe an individual's physical features were also often observed. Students generally considered to be aggressive and their less aggressive to generally nonaggressive peers were observed to react aggressively when confronted with these verbal attacks.

The verbal insults were most often very negative and either highly exaggerated (eg."You are the fattest girl in school") or entirely

baseless (e.g. "You eat with dogs") references. Other than the *physical restraint option* or moving one student into another part of the building, the only effective crisis intervention was determined to be having the aggressor "Take it back," or otherwise disclaim the validity of the original insults. When adult counsel included references to the hurtful nature of the aggressive insults, students typically responded with, "Yah. Well. . . s/he deserved it", suggesting that the aggressor was well aware of the pain inherent in personal insults, and this behavior suggested intentionality was a factor (Roberts, 1995).

Negative peer-encounters initiated with a threat to physical safety such as, "I'm going to knock the H___ out of you," were observed to be met with far less agitation or arousal. While violence at times did ensue, it was most often of a lesser magnitude, unless verbal insult became a factor. These encounters were most often met with counter threats of a physical nature and expressions of irritation. Remarks such as, "Come on. Do you see me shaking? I'm not scared of you.", typified such negative peer-encounter responses.

When the threat was a *threat to property*, a counter threat and challenge most often followed, again, unless verbal insult directed at self became a factor. A typical response, was, "Yah, you and who else?"; "You see what I do for you, Man?"; "Come on."; "I just hope you try it!" A disempowering shrug, laughter, or some other indication of reduced arousal often followed. Negative peer-encounters involving threats to property and threats to safety were observed to last for longer periods of time but were observed to be less likely to erupt into physical violence.

Limitations of Self-Esteem Research

A number of researchers have argued that research has been negatively impacted due to a lack of consensus concerning such terminology as *self-esteem* and *self-concept* (Beane & Lipka, 1984; Wells & Marwell, 1976). The primary difficulty has been an inability to judge the plausibility of research claims and the inability to make comparisons across studies. Social research scientists have, however, provided the research community and social scientist with increasingly refined definitions (Wells & Marwell, 1976). Kaplan (1964) cautioned, some time ago, that such concepts as *self-esteem* and *self-concept* require a set of explanatory sentences and must be considered in context. These concepts are considered to be too fluid and complex to be adequately defined in a single sentence. Formal definitions, supportive of understanding and comparisons across research projects, have failed to evolve. Books such as Wells and Marwell's (1976) Self-Esteem and Branden's (1994) more recent effort, The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem, have provided multiple and varying perspectives and term-delineation in varying complexity, which has helped in the understanding and usefulness. Unfortunately, researchers continue to struggle with terminology (Branden, 1994). Self-concept, at times, is used to reference both self-knowledge and self-evaluation constructs; however, researchers no longer question the validity or importance of the nonmaterialistic self.

Definitions of self-concept and self-esteem have evolved since James's (1890) early definition to definitions such as Branden's (1994)

in which he referenced a *protection* or *insurance* factor.

Branden has defined self-esteem as being--

1. confidence in our ability to think, confidence in our ability to cope with the basic challenges of life; and
2. confidence in our right to be successful and happy, the feeling of being worthy, deserving, entitled to assert our needs and wants, achieve our values, and enjoy the fruits of our efforts. (Branden, 1994, p.4)

Empowerment is a salient feature of Branden's definition. Learned helplessness theory has evolved to have a similar "insurance" component variable through what is termed "inoculation" (Seligman, 1991). Walz and Bleuer (1992) have cautioned against, . . . "a false, vain, and narcissistic preoccupation with oneself. . ." which inhibits the development of a healthy self-esteem (p. 27). They refer to the unique significance of human beings and emphasize their unique contribution potential. A positive self-esteem is supported by an *appropriate* valuing of one's uniqueness and potential. Accountability and responsibility are vital to a positive self-esteem (Walz & Bleuer, 1992).

Self-esteem may be expressed as a general or global characteristic or as a more specific behavioral attribute. However, current definitions often reference such elements as self-efficacy upon which feelings of self-worth are dependent (Branden, 1992). Self-efficacy supports the confidence variable expressed in his current definition. Definitions that vary considerably have had a negative impact on the interpretation of research findings across research studies.

Focus and Purpose of the Study

It has not been unusual for initial insights concerning specific patterns of human behavior to be gained through introspective thought and observation. Piaget's (1965) contribution to the understanding of cognitive development is one such example. While research has been severely limited in support of the hypothesis that a threat to self-esteem provides for an increased level of violence in public school populations, naturalistic observations and field notes taken by the researcher have lent credence to this possibility (Roberts, 1995). The purpose of this study was to determine whether threats to self-esteem provide for higher levels of aggressive behavior than do threats to property and threats to safety in student populations. Field notes collected over a two year period of time have been the impetus for this study.

This study was concerned with the contribution that personality and environmental interaction make to overall vulnerability to participation in active violence. It was an effort to consider threats to one basic personality trait, or psychological construct, that of self-esteem as a mediating variable in human aggression.

In addition, level of self-esteem (high, low) was investigated as a possible mediating variable. Numerous researchers have argued that self-esteem impacts behavior (Anderson, 1994; Jankowski, 1991; Renzetti, 1992). Toch et al., 1991) envisioned a "compensatory relationship between low self-esteem and violence" (p. 133-134), while others have presented evidence that high self-esteem or "highly favorable self-appraisals are

the ones most likely to lead to violence" (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996, p. 5).

Students do not always do what they feel like doing when stressed. Therefore, an additional focus of this study was a response variable. The response variable had two contingencies, (a) "feel like doing", and (b) "would do".

This study was an investigation of the influence of a (a) threat to self-esteem, (b) threat to property, and (c) threat physical safety on student aggression. Observation data and past research have provided evidence of the possibility that a threat to self-esteem provides for increased levels of overt aggression during juvenile negative-peer encounters. The primary purpose of the study was the investigation of the role that threats to self-esteem play in student aggression.

Student aggression intervention and remedial efforts are dependent upon research that delineates the etiology and contributing factors inherent in student aggression. New knowledge providing evidence of a threat to self-esteem mediating variable in the public school violence difficulty, will provide focus for future research in a number of areas including the self-esteem, self-efficacy, attribution, need for power, affiliation, and learned helplessness constructs. It will also provide focus for student-aggression intervention programs. Diverse ameliorative efforts have largely been unsuccessful. Serious student aggression is continuing to increase (Committee on the Judiciary, 1993). As early as 1993, a juvenile crime was reported every six hours, and a juvenile murder was committed every twelve days (Committee on the Judiciary, 1993). Present remedial efforts reflect past research efforts reflective of environmental concerns. Personality factors that

provide for individual vulnerability have not been thoroughly investigated. This study was initiated in an effort to provide meaningful knowledge supportive of student aggression amelioration efforts. Do students with high self-esteem and students with low self-esteem as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale respond differently in terms of level of aggression as measured by the Aggression Attribution Inventory to three levels of threat, threat to self-esteem, threat to property, and threat to safety. A secondary concern was that of students' perceptions of differences between what they feel like doing and what they would actually do under the three threat conditions.

Research Questions

The primary consideration of the study was whether a threat to self-esteem provides for higher levels of aggressive behavior in student populations, particularly in populations that are known to be unusually aggressive. For each of the research questions investigated in this study, *students* refers to students attending alternative education hospital-based day treatment facilities in a urban midwestern state. This study began with the question: Why are students more aggressive in some situations than they are in others? Research questions follow in table 1, and specific research hypotheses and null hypotheses are evaluated in Chapter IV.

Table 1

Research Questions

Research Question 1: Do students with high and low self-esteem respond differently to threats to self-esteem, property, and safety at the "feel like doing" and "would do" levels of response?

Research Question 2: Do students with high and low self-esteem respond with different levels of aggression at the "feel like doing" and "would do" levels of the response variable?

Research Question 3: Do students with high and low self-esteem respond with significantly different levels of aggression to threats to self-esteem, property, and safety?

Research Question 4: Do students respond with different levels of aggression to the "feel like doing" and "would do" levels of the response independent variable to threats to self-esteem, property, and safety?

Research Question 5: Does level of self-esteem (high, low) significantly affect level of student aggression?

Research Question 6: Do students respond differently to the "feel like doing" and "would do" response contingencies?

Research Question 7: Do students respond with higher levels of aggression to a threat to self-esteem versus a threat to property?

Research Question 8: Do students respond with higher levels of aggression to a threat to self-esteem versus a threat to safety?

Definitions of Terms

The following section provides an operational definition of terms for the purposes of this study:

Hypothetical Self Construct

Self-Concept: ". . . Self-concept is the description an individual attaches to him or herself. The self-concept is based on the roles one plays and the attributes one believes he or she possesses." (Beane, & Lipka, 1984, p. 5) Self-concept is an internal construct that is impacted by environmental influences.

Self-Esteem: "Self-esteem . . . refers to the evaluation one makes of the self-concept description and more specifically to the degree to which one is satisfied or dissatisfied with it, in whole or in part" (Beane & Lipka, 1984, p. 6). A positive self-esteem is thought to support self-efficacy and provide for the confidence variable supportive of empowerment (Branden, 1992). Like self-concept, self-esteem is an internal construct that is never the less impacted by environmental influence.

Social Behaviors

Prosocial Behavior: "Actions that are intended to help or benefit another individual or group" (Kaplan, 1993, p.541) are considered to be prosocial behaviors.

Antisocial Behavior: Antisocial behavior is behavior that harms another individual or group. Antisocial behavior may be verbal, physical, or manipulative in nature. Antisocial behavior may be observed when individuals ". . . throw temper tantrums, fight with their siblings or peers, cheat, lie, be physically cruel to animals or to

other people, refuse to obey their parents, or destroy their own or other's possessions." (Kauffman, 1989, p. 256)

Forms of Aggression

Verbal Aggression: Verbal aggression refers to verbal behaviors that are intentional in nature and psychologically harmful to another individual or group. Such behaviors include name-calling, threats, ridicule, unfair accusations, and the like. These psychological stressers may be thought of as negative feedback from others that threaten an individual's ego or sense of self.

Physical Aggression: Physical aggression is behavior that is intended to physically harm another individual or group. Such behaviors include, but are not limited to pushing, hitting, kicking, and biting, to more serious expressions such as choking, instrumental acts of aggression intended to do serious physical harm, and attempts to kill.

Diverse Threats

This study is primarily concerned with (a) threats to self-esteem, (b) threats to property, and (c) threats to safety. Threats typify student-aggression encounters. It is necessary to define these terms in context of this study.

The American Heritage Dictionary (1982) defines *threat* as follows: "1. An *expression* [italics added] of an intention to inflict pain, injury, evil, or punishment. 2. An *indication* [italics added] of impending danger or harm. 3. One that is regarded as a possible danger or menace" (p. 1265). The terms *indication* and *expression* imply observer understanding, due to demonstration or representation through verbalization or body language.

Threat to Self-Esteem: A threat to self-esteem for the purposes of this study will be understood to be any statement intended to damage a targeted individual's ego or sense-of-self, or otherwise cause a devaluing of self. Behaviors include name-calling, deleterious criticisms, and unfair accusations. Threats to self-esteem are most usually exaggerated and often have no bases in reality. Such expressions as, "It hurts my eyes to look at you," or "You're just a retard!" are typical. Expressions also take the form of attacks toward valued family members and friends. These references are directed toward individuals that contribute to a targeted individual's overall sense of self-worth.

Threat to Property: A threat to property is a threat intended to cause anxiety due to the possible loss of, or damage to, an individual's property or that of a valued family member or friend. These individuals contribute to the targeted individual's global self-worth. They make a contribution to the targeted individual's maintaining a sense of happiness, safety, or worth. Family members and peers are typical targets. Threats may range from minor to serious. Most usually, the threat is of a serious nature, regardless of whether or not the perpetrator has any intentions of carrying out the threat. Threats to property are intended to increase arousal and induce fear.

Threat to Safety: Threats to safety are threats of physical aggression. They are most usually exaggerated in nature and may or may not be acts in the perpetrator's behavioral repertoire. Such acts are intended to increase arousal and fear in the victim. Threats include, but are not limited to, beatings, and black eyes. They range in severity from pushing and shoving behavioral threats to threats to life.

Limitations of The Study

The following limitations were recognized to be inherent in the study:

1. The study included students from one large urban school district in a single midwestern state. Participants attended hospital-based alternative education facilities due to psychological and social difficulties, which made home-school attendance impractical to impossible. Therefore, findings can not be generalized to a regular education population.

2. Differences in attributes between groups can be identified due to the fact that this was a causal comparative study. However, a cause and effect relationship can not be established. Additional research will be necessary in order to substantiate findings.

Organization of The Study

Chapter one presented information concerning the epidemic nature of student violence in school-settings. The research problem has been stated and introductory information concerning school violence, contributing factors, and behavioral observations have been presented. Terms have been defined and the focus of the study, purpose of the study, and significance of the study have been stated. Research questions, and organization of the study have been described.

A review of student aggression and self-esteem literature, as well as how the research has evolved, are presented in Chapter two. Chapter three presents the methodology and instrumentation utilized in this

research. Chapter four reports the results of the investigation and Chapter five presents summary, conclusions, and recommendations for future research information concerning this study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Chapter two examines both classical and current research as it applies to human aggression in an effort to provide support for a threat to self-esteem deficit in student aggression. This chapter investigates student aggression through considering multiple perspectives including developmental, neurological, and social perspectives. It further examines the self-esteem paradigm through an investigation of the hypothetical self-construct, historical perspective, personality theory, developmental needs, and antisocial behavior. An investigation of the roles of self-efficacy, self-verification, and self-enhancement theories provides additional insights. The roles of need for power, personal vulnerability, negative feedback, and learned helplessness are examined in an effort to find an integrating thread in explanation of student aggression.

Aggression

Researchers have primarily been concerned with the variables which are closely associated with aggression and variables that provide explanation for aggressive behaviors across environmental settings. Through examining what is known about aggression, particularly, how aggressive behavior is impacted by environmental factors, and, ultimately, factors unique to the individual, insights which have provided the impetus and focus for this research can be examined in

terms of current research.

Multiple Perspectives

Cole and Cole (1993) have suggested that contributing factors may be thought of as, "explanations for aggressive behavior [which] focus on three factors: the presence of aggression among the evolutionary precursors of our species, the ways societies reward aggressive behaviors, and the tendency of children to imitate the behaviors of older role models" (p.377). This study was concerned with aggression due to societies reinforcing aggressive behaviors and the modeling effect in its broadest sense. Most specifically, this study was concerned with the impact of a threat to self-esteem on the level of violence in public school populations. It would be helpful to consider how aggression may be conceptualized from a number of perspectives. Aggression was defined, for the purposes of this study, as being an antisocial activity. It was briefly examined from developmental, neurological, and social perspectives that contribute to the conceptualization of antisocial human aggression.

Parke and Slaby (1983) have suggested that one of the greatest difficulties with the study of aggression has been defining the term, *aggression.* The simplest definition is . . . "behavior that is aimed at harming or injuring another person" (p. 550). While the purpose of this study focused on antisocial aggression, it is important to make an initial distinction between prosocial and antisocial aggression. Prosocial aggression is differentiated in terms of its purpose.

Klausmeier (1985) has suggested prosocial aggression is . . . "a socially approved way to achieve goals that are acceptable to the moral standards of the group" (p. 415).

Developmental Perspective

Hartup (1974) further delineated *hostile aggression* as being (a) a perception of a threat to an individual's ego or sense of self, and having (b) an inference of intentionality. When an individual is aggressed against, *perception of intent* is the most important factor in terms of responding once a child has attained a developmental status allowing for cognitive processing and interpretation of intent (LeMare, & Rubin, 1987). At the most fundamental level, children must be able to (a) distinguish themselves from others, (b) recognize that they can cause stress, and (c) be aware that others can feel distress (Maccoby, 1980). Young children experience difficulties evaluating intent (Bullock, 1988), and rejected children experience problems recognizing intent clues (Dodge, Murphy, & Bauchebaum, 1984; Dodge & Somberg, 1987). Research has determined that behavioral responses are related to the interpretation of intent (Dodge, et al., 1984).

A number of developmental theorists have contributed to a better understanding of how aggression is expressed across developmental stages. Moshmann, Glover, and Bruning (1987) describe the move from non-directed expressions of anger such as temper tantrums (including manifestations of crying, hitting, and the like) to a more outcome-based behavior as an individual matures. Early reactions to frustration typically peak at around age two and decrease thereafter. As a child develops, expressions of anger become increasingly focused (Goodenough, 1931; Walters, Pearce, & Dahms, 1967).

Revenge and retaliation become primary issues from about age 3-to-5 on, although all behaviors are not considered to be outcome based at that stage of development (Goodenough, 1931). There are times when behaviors are not directed or are self-directed, as in the case of taking flight or hurting oneself. The shift from non-directed behavior to behavior that is focused and retaliatory in nature is considered to be reflective of developmental changes in cognitive ability, (Moshman, et al., 1987; Piaget, 1965).

Aggression can be either instrumental aggression or hostile aggression (Hartup, 1994). Instrumental aggression focuses on goal attainment, as in the case of a toy or other desired goal; whereas hostile aggression is fueled by an intent to hurt or harm another person. Revenge and dominance (Strayer, 1980; 1991) are issues in what Hartup (1974) terms hostile aggression and were a focus of this study. Hostile aggression surfaces after age 3-to-6 (Hartup, 1974).

Weiner and Graham (1984) have maintained that cognitive development provides for causal attribution assignment. Expressions of anger become less frequent and more realistic in nature as an individual matures. Initially, such factors as schedule enforcement or interruption are causal factors; later, frustrated interactions with peers beginning at age 3-to-6 are primary causal factors (Feshback, 1970). Attending to peer-mediated frustration and school-related frustration increases considerably during middle childhood (Jersild, 1968). Efforts to ridicule and humiliate peers in retaliation become an issue as children mature. Adolescents often plan opportune moments in order to provide for optimum affect in ridiculing a peer (Jersild, 1968). This study was primarily concerned with frustrated-peer or other-directed socialized

aggressive behavior.

Adolescence is a period during which anger is most often due to school or social events difficulties (Jersild, 1968). Difficulties are often due to unfair accusations, failure, and the interruption of activities. Adolescents also become frustrated and angry when they are contradicted and when they are offered unwelcome advice (Jersild, 1968). There is a shift from physical aggression to an emphasis on verbal aggression during this period of development, although male reactions remain more physical in nature than do female reactions (Robins, 1986). This dynamic, however, appears to be shifting with more and more crimes being committed by females (Cavan & Ferdinand, 1975; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1990). Maccoby (1980) feels that cognitive development and aggressive behavior are very closely related, in that children must both understand that they can cause distress and manipulate others to get what they want through causing distress.

Neurological Perspective

Aggression can also be examined in light of biological determinants (Darwin, 1859/1958; 1859/1958; Lorenz, 1966). Ongoing research has delineated the role of biological factors in aggressive behavior. Development of patterns of aggression have been closely paralleled across species. Lorenz (1966), Nobel Prize winner and author of On Aggression, considered aggression to be an adaptive, instinctual system which has been necessary to survival. Restak (1984), author of The Brain, has provided insights into how aggression is mediated. He has suggested that there is a *complex portrait* which involves pathways mediated by neurochemicals, neurotransmitters, and neuromodulators which has provided for aggression. Controls and inhibition have been mediated by the cerebral cortex. Social

hierarchies are thought to alter or inhibit expressions of aggression.

White (1960) assigned the original term, *effectance*, to the motive to explore and manipulate the environment. McClelland (1987) later referred to this motive as *impact incentive*. Impact incentive, the motivation to produce affects on the environment, unlike effectance, does not reference what McClelland (1987) refers to as ". . . mastery, competence, and self-determination. . . " (p.148). Rather, it is considered to be a very basic human motive that guides and directs behavior. Anger and excitation surface when the impact incentive is blocked (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). The removal of inhibiting factors such as in the case of war or riot provides for relentless violence beyond goal-attainment and supports violence for violence's sake (Zimbardo, 1970; McClelland, 1987). This type of violence is considered to be primitive in nature and responding is not dependent upon past learning (McClelland, 1987). A challenge to an impact goal might include a number of things including criticism, which in turn would provide for increased intensity in responding and increased anger. McClelland (1987) has argued that such responding is different from responses to goal-attainment frustration in consequence of blocking.

There is some evidence that impact-incentive can be self-rewarding in nature. Animal studies (Panksepp, 1971) have provided evidence of its being self-rewarding. Neurochemicals called *catecholamines* are active in hypothalamous regulated anger-aggression responding (Hamburg, Hamburg, & Barchas, 1975). Electrical stimulation to areas involved in the release and regulation of catecholamines has provided evidence suggesting a reward factor is inherent in catecholamine responding. Rats have been taught to press a lever in order to attain electrical

stimulation in the area responsible for catecholamine regulation.

The catecholamine system has been determined to be more active in males than females when stressed (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974) suggesting a model for higher levels of aggression in males. There is some evidence that hormonal differences predispose males to more aggressive responding as compared to females (Frankenhaeuser, Dunne, & Lundberg, 1976) and males are more often victims as well (Cairns, 1979). Gender differences are considered to be consistent across age, as well as culture (Kaplan, 1993).

Social Perspective

Several researchers, (Bandura, 1965; 1973; Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1963; Eron, Huesman, Brice, Fischer, & Mermelstein, 1983; Stein & Friedrich, 1973) have maintained that, through attending to aggressive acts, a disinhibiting effect takes place. Socialization provides for inhibition of aggression in societies that favor reduced aggression and less aggressive in societies that favor nonaggressive problem-solving. Inhibition is weakened through ongoing observation of aggressive behavior. One explanation for aggressive behavior is society's rewarding of such behaviors (Patterson, 1984; Patterson, DeBaryshe, & Ramsey, 1989). Observational data has provided evidence that aggressive children are rewarded by such positive reinforcers as increased attending, laughter, and similar attending behaviors (Patterson, Littman, & Bricker, 1967).

Self-control is a developmental issue. Children are expected to conform to cultural standards. Their behavior is expected to reflect these standards as they are integrated into society. (Cole & Cole, 1993). Children can be encouraged to develop aggressive responding in

social problem-solving through sustained aggressive parental/caretaker responding (Parke & Slaby, 1983). Children respond to aggression with aggressive behaviors (Bandura, 1986; Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1963). Eron et al., (1983) research supported the hypothesis that children are particularly susceptible to the modeling effect of aggressive behaviors during middle childhood. The ability to feel empathy, participate in cooperative social efforts, and the development of social competence are positively associated with the inhibition of aggression (Eisenberg, 1989). All are considered to be the outcome of healthy socialization. Aggressive children exhibit social skills deficits and tend to be very critical of others (Patterson, Kupersmidt, & Griesler, 1990). It is apparent that a number of individuals fail to have the developmental advantages supported by successful parenting as well as the additional environmental experiences that support the development of empathy, cooperation, social competence, and nonaggressive problem-solving. Aggressive children have been determined to be more aggressive when they are placed with more aggressive peers as versus less aggressive peers (as cited in Dishion, Dishion, Patterson, Stoolmiller, & Skinner, 1991). There are familial and societal situations that fail to inhibit aggression through reduced valuing of appropriate social skills and non-violent problem-solving. Some cultures are known to support increased prosocial behaviors (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989), while others support high levels of aggressive behavior (Fry, 1988). Bandura (1977) has suggested that the way we make sense out of our world and develop behavioral patterns across situations is through observing human interactions and cognitions and memories concerning those interactions. In specific terms, aggressive behaviors are thought to be patterned after

after behaviors observed in parents, peers, and respected others, as well as figures depicted in the media.

Most students spend more time watching violent TV programs than they spend in school. By the time children have completed grade school, they have witnessed 8,000 murders and 100,000 additional violent acts on television (Committee on the Judiciary, 1993). A majority of the social scientists contend that there is a direct relationship between the amount of aggression-laden television viewed and subsequent antisocial behavior, at a time when children are developing values and behavioral standards (Bandura, 1986; Gore, 1987; Joy, Kimbell, & Zabrack, 1986; Pearl, Bouthilet, and Lazar, 1982; Robinstein, 1983). In one study, 1,565 boys age twelve to seventeen, researchers determined that long-term exposure to violence increased the risk of aggressive behaviors, both in terms of overall sustained behavior and level of aggression, with the most aggressive acts being associated with extensive TV violence viewing (Belson, 1978). A second longitudinal study has provided additional evidence that the amount of TV violence viewed by young children (eight-year-olds) is significantly related to the seriousness of adult criminal acts (Huesmann 1986).

Correlational studies do not establish a cause and effect relationship; they merely establish, in this case, a relational or associative status concerning TV violence viewing and subsequent physical aggression. At this point a causal relationship has not been established. Individuals who watch extensive TV violence may be innately more violent, or other factors (e.g. societal factors), may contribute to both their motivation to view violent TV programs and the motivation to be more violent than others in similar situations. While

the controversy continues concerning the causal status of TV violence viewing (Fine, Mortimer, & Roberts, 1990; Freedman, 1984), a number of experts have expressed the opinion that TV violence is one of the contributors to antisocial behavior in children (Condry, 1989; Huston, Wilkins, & Kunkel, 1989; Liebert & Sprafkin, 1988).

Social cognition theory holds similarities to attribution theory (Moshman et al., 1987). However, the theory has been most concerned with the processing of information. Social cognitive theory has stressed the importance of how an individual interprets intent. A more accurate inference of intent is considered to be a function of general maturation. Individuals have drawn on familial experiences as well as experiences relating to society and the culture in which they hold membership. In situations in which an individual has erroneously attributed aggressive intent to behaviors of others, that individual has been more likely to behave aggressively and be perceived by others to be aggressive. This dynamic has supported an escalating cycle of aggressive behavior in this country (Moshman et al., 1987).

Self-Esteem is examined here across varying contexts in order to enhance understanding of the focus of this study. Researchers and clinicians have studied self-esteem in an effort to gain understanding of the contribution the self-esteem variable makes to human vulnerability, empowerment, and behavior. This study was concerned with the level of aggressive behavior during negative peer encounters due to the self-esteem variable. It is necessary to consider both the historical conceptualization and contemporary conceptualization of self-esteem in order to note how the term has evolved. It has moved beyond merely being a *valuing-of-self* hypothetical variable, falling somewhere on a

negative-to-positive continuum. The definition has evolved to include general self-esteem as well as situation-specific self-esteem (e.g. academic self-esteem) and to include an affect component and references to *confidence* in providing protection in terms of meeting future challenges. Researched variables that are known to impact self-esteem were of particular interest to this study.

Hypothetical Self-Construct

Self-esteem is a hypothetical and subjective construct (Wells & Marwell, 1976) that has evolved in an effort to delineate the nonphysical aspects of "self". *Self-concept* and *self-esteem* have come to have separate yet complimentary meanings with self-esteem generally being considered a component of self-concept. Self-esteem may be thought of as the evaluative and affective dimension of self-concept. However, the terms have not always been used consistently. There has been considerable blurring of the distinction between the two terms (Beane, 1991). The difficulty has been compounded by the fact that other terms have been used in their place. For instance, self-esteem has also been referred to as self-worth or self-image (Santrock, 1993), and self-concept has often been used as an inclusive term referencing both the evaluative component and descriptive component of the nonphysical self. Definitions continue to evolve and vary considerably (Branden, 1994; James, 1890; Maslow, 1954). They, typically, require extensive clarification and exemplification in order to afford understanding across varying contexts (Kaplan, 1964).

Self-esteem has moved from a descriptive status (James, 1890) to

referencing judgement and feelings (Maslow, 1954) and on to being considered both a motivator and general personality trait (Branden, 1994).

Historical Perspective

Although self-concept theory and self-esteem theory have actually evolved over the past century, early philosophers such as Rene Descartes (1644) made an initial contribution to theory-development through considering the "nonphysical" aspects of being. Sigmund Freud's ego construct contributed to the evolution of what we now refer to as self-concept and self-esteem; although, both Freudians and neo-Freudians have been reluctant to accept self as being a primary psychological unit (Purkey, 1970).

William James (1890) developed the initial theory through personal introspection and observation of others in a manner similar to Freud and Piaget's efforts. He conceptualized self as being both the object of knowing and the *knower*, reflective of metacognitive efforts. His earliest effort, *Principals of Psychology* (1890), revealed his interest in self. The longest chapter in the text is his "The Consciousness of Self" chapter. James (1890) considered self-esteem to be a valid and conscious construct. He made a substantial contribution to a unified theory with his attitude ratio where Self-esteem = Successes/Pretensions (p.310). His theory provides for multiple self-esteems, similar to more recent theories. Varying attitudes and experiences were thought to provide for the multiple self-esteem construct. "Others" were considered to play a powerful role in the determination of self knowledge, suggestive of the later feedback construct. James (1890) suggested, . . . "a man has as many social selves as there are

individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him in their minds" (p. 294). James, (1890) envisioned the generalized self-esteem construct to be triadic in nature with it's having a (a) material self, (b) spiritual self, and (c) social self. He further maintained that individuals seek *self-preservation* and *self-enhancement* as a function of maturation. A *self-seeking* impetus was thought to direct self-knowledge.

Behaviorists, such as Watson (1929) were less interested in the hypothetical "self" concept. They placed self in the same allusive category as *mind*, *consciousness*, and *awareness* (Purkey, 1970). Early behaviorists contended that the only valuable source of information was that which was both observable and measurable, and that self was neither directly observable nor was it measurable. Psychology and education abandoned the concept of self during the first half of this century, as the behaviorist movement dominated psychological and educational thought.

Contributions to the self-esteem construct during the first half of this century were primarily made by individuals outside the fields of education and psychology. Cooley's (1902) sociological perspective provided for the *looking glass* conceptualization of self-concept. He emphasized a dynamic in which individuals were thought to view themselves the way others do, with self-perception providing the basic building block of self-concept. Others in an individual's environment were thought to provide self with feedback, which through perceptional processing, provided for self-evaluation. Cooley (1902) argued that human beings are innately motivated to self-appreciate. He was convinced that this motivation provided for survival. Cooley (1902)

described self perception in his text, Human Nature and the Social Order, as having, ". . . three principle elements: the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgement of that appearance; and some sort of self-feeling." (p. 151-152).

Goldstein (1939) further contributed the concept of *self-actualization*, and Maslow (1954; 1956) made a substantial contribution to the development of self-actualization theory. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1954) beginning with (1) physiological needs, followed by (2) safety or security needs, (3) love and belonging needs, (4) self-esteem, and, finally, (5) self-actualization, provided for enhanced understanding. Maturation and experience were thought to provide for advancement across levels, when and only when, lower level needs had been met. Self-actualization is considered to be the ultimate human goal. In order for an individual's self-esteem needs to be adequately met, physiological needs, safety needs, as well as love and belonging needs have to have been met.

Self-esteem theory was further enhanced through the efforts of Lecky and Bertocci. They emphasized the human need for self-consistency (Lecky, 1945), differentiating between self as an object and self as a subject (Bertocci, 1945). The self-enhancement variable (Murphy, 1947) and measures of self-concept (Raimy, 1948) were introduced to the educational and psychological communities during the late 1940s.

Hilgard (1949) enhanced the theory through introducing the concept of *defense mechanisms* and maintaining that all defense mechanisms reference self. Allport (1937; 1943; 1955; 1966) emphasized the importance of self and the individual's ability to self-determine through aspirations and self awareness. Motivation was thought to

provide a primary incentive for change and intrinsic control of self enhancement. Roger's (1947, 1951, 1958, 1959, 1965, 1969) conceptualized self as being the central aspect of personality and emphasized the individual's ability to initiate change.

Mead (1934) provided evidence that self-concept develops in a "social context". Sullivan (1953) refined self-concept theory through the introduction of *significant others*, while Rosenberg (1979) assigned the term a more *precise* meaning. Significant others were considered to rank high on a hypothetical importance continuum. Cohen's (1959) definition was similar to James's in that is was discrepancy-based (p.103). Self-concept was thought to be the "degree of correspondence between an individual's ideals and actual concept of himself" (Cohen, 1959, p.11), suggestive of the evaluative component of present self-esteem definitions. Discrepancy-based definitions attend to the difference between ideals and actual attainment.

James (1890) and Cohen (1959) maintained that successes and failures provide for self-esteem. Both were thought to provide for important personal information resources (Lackovi'c-Grgin and Dekovi'c, 1990). Cohen enhanced James's "social me" component of self, assigning it more importance. Feedback was thought to be weighted in terms of its value, or influence, as a function of the importance or value placed on the individual providing the feedback. For instance, feedback from a mother was thought to carry more weight than that of a sibling. Degree of involvement was thought to be a salient factor in the assessment of importance or significance-status (Forgas, 1985). Snygg, Combs, and Combs (1949) and Rogers (1951) also emphasized the importance of perception to the development and maintenance of self-concept.

Self-perceptions were considered to be personal in nature and subject to error.

There has been considerable confusion over the terms self-concept and self-esteem, since James presented his initial discrepancy based formula. For many years, the terms were used interchangeably (Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976). They still are, to some extent. The two terms have, however, evolved to have different meanings (Beane, & Lipka, 1980). While there are, presently, no universally accepted definitions, definitions of self-concept have a component of self knowledge, and self-esteem definitions generally have a component of self-evaluation.

Personality Theory

As early as the late 1960s, the self-esteem construct was considered to be one of the most important variables (McGuire, 1968) providing for general personality. Branden (1994) expressed the opinion of the vast majority when he stated,

> Apart from disturbances whose roots are biological, I cannot think of a single psychological problem--from anxiety and depression, to underachievement at school or at work, to fear of intimacy, happiness or success, to alcohol or drug abuse, to spouse battering or child molestation, to co-dependency and sexual disorders, to passivity and chronic aimlessness, to suicide and crimes of violence--that is not traceable at least in part to the problem of deficient self-esteem. (Branden, 1994 p. XV)

Beane & Lipka (1984) not only considered the concept of self to be central to personality, they felt it acted as . . . "a source of unity and as a guide to behavior" (p. 4). A number of theorists have argued that a positive self-concept [meaning self-esteem] is essential to an

integrated personality (Maslow, 1954; 1967; 1968; Rogers, 1942). Beane and Lipka (1984) has emphasized the human need for stability, consistency, and enhancement in providing for motivation.

Environmental Influence

The relationships an individual has experienced, including the responses and feedback, are assessed and support the perceptions that contribute to the sense of self one acquires (Branden, 1983). Parents play a central role in the development of self-esteem, as does the school environment (Ginott, 1972). Peers contribute to the development of an individual's self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1987).

Children in the United States who are between age 6 and 12 have doubled the amount of time that they spent with peers since their preschool experience (Cole & Cole, 1993). They spend forty percent of their awake time in the company of peers and have drastically reduced the amount of time they spend with parents (Baldwin, 1955; Barker & Wright, 1955; Hill & Stafford, 1980). This shift in allocated time is accompanied by a qualitative change in the child/parent relationship (Maccoby, 1984). Direct parental influence has been reduced. Both social-cognitive skills and later social well-being are influenced by peer interaction (Buhrmester, 1990; Doise, Mugney, and Perret-Clermont, 1975; Paul & White, 1990; Sullivan, 1953).

The self-esteem construct impacts every area of an individual life (Branden, 1994), including school and peer relations (Branden, 1983). Some relationships are asymmetrical in that they provide for unequal power, as in the relationship between teacher and student or parent and child (Galbo, 1984). Peer encounters have also been asymmetrical when one student has maintained more power than another

in a relationship as in the case of the hierarchical leadership found in a juvenile gang, or when a substantial age difference has been an issue. Individuals with increased power or status are thought to exert more influence on self-esteem through the increased value placed on feedback as a function of individual-position on a hypothetical importance continuum (Rosenberg, 1979).

Chronic, or relatively stable, self-esteem is considered to be a personality trait which may fall anywhere on a hypothetical, negative-to-positive continuum. Chronic self-esteem has been shown to be a reliable predictor of reaction to negative feedback. Failure feedback has been determined to have a greater negative impact on low self-esteem than on high self-esteem (Brockner, 1979; Brockner, Derr, & Laing, 1987; Cambell & Fairey, 1985; Shrauger & Rosenberg, 1970; Shrauger & Sorman, 1977). Low self-esteem students, who receive negative feedback, evaluate self lower than do students having high self-esteems, who experience negative feedback (Shrauger & Lund, 1975; Shrauger & Rosenberg, 1970). Rogers and his colleagues (Rogers, Smith, & Coleman, 1978) have maintained that acceptance of others and positive feedback are necessary to the development of a positive self-image. Individuals who meet the criteria that others value are assigned positive labels. Labeling can be either positive or negative and can be *official* or *unofficial* in nature as a function of whether or not it is sanctioned by society. Labeling is a form of feedback when it is other-initiated. Labeling is used to describe, distinguish, or identify an individual (Hardman, Drew, Egan, & Wolf, 1990) and it provides for self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1948). Derogatory slang terms such as stupid, fat, ugly, retard, and crazy are unofficial labels provided most often by

significant others.

Human Behavior

There is a connection between self-attitudes and behavior (Kaplan, 1972; 1975; 1976; 1980; 1982). Behavior is dependent upon available alternatives and the impact on self-enhancement (Kaplan, 1980). Children are dependent on the *reflective appraisal* of others, including parents and peers, in determining a sense of competence (Rosenberg, 1965; 1979; Rosenberg & Kaplan, 1982). Parental neglect and unusually high parental expectations generated self-rejecting attitudes and a devaluing of self (Kaplan, 1982). A number of studies have documented the influence of peer pressure on delinquent behavior (Gold & Mann, 1972; Herschi, 1969; Hindelang, 1973).

Self-concept, " . . . the composite of ideas, feelings and attitudes about ourselves" (Hilgard, Atkinson, & Atkinson, 1979, p. 605), is influenced by perceptions of self, including features such as physical appearance, action, and ability. As personality develops and becomes increasingly organized, so do perceptions of self. Interpersonal relationships and characteristics, as well as academic issues, become salient features of self-concept during the school years (Bryne & Shavelson, 1986; Marsh & Shavelson, 1985; Shavelson, et al., 1976). Reciprocity and effective communication become issues. Researchers have determined that there is a relationship between perspective-taking skills and ability to maintain positive peer relationships (Dodge et al., 1984). Dodge (1983) has argued that individuals use a five step model in

processing social information: (a) decoding social cues, (b) interpretation of cues, (c) response search, (d) response selection, and (e) response. The evaluation of intent is considered to be a very important factor in the selection of optimum response (Dodge et al. 1984). Aggressive individuals are more likely to misinterpret intent (Shantz, 1988). Asarnow and Callan (1985) found that social problem-solving skills were less well developed in maladapted boys.

Self-esteem has had a major impact on interpersonal relationships Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996). Significant others have contributed to the sense of self. Classroom structure and teacher expectations have influenced self-concept (Marshall & Weinstein, 1984). In one study, it was noted that older students (3rd - 8th grades) who had high self-esteem also had high-status with peers (Kurdek & Krile, 1982). Caution should be taken, however, in assuming the direction of causality of this dynamic. The degree to which an individual perceives control over life influences self-esteem. A positive sense of self-worth is dependent upon perceptions of control and the ability to self-evaluate (Barrett, 1968). Control is most often referred to as *internal locus of control.* Walz and Bleuer (1992) have argued that behavior directed at oneself has a substantial effect on self-esteem. Purkey (1994) has referred to this dynamic as being intentionally inviting/disinviting toward self. He puts forth the argument that disinviting behaviors fail to foster positive growth and development (Purkey, 1994).

Prosocial behaviors are behaviors that aid or benefit another person (Mussen & Eisenberg-Berg, 1977), while antisocial behaviors are behaviors that are intentionally harmful (Moshman et al., 1987). Pro-social behaviors, which include ". . . cooperation, sharing, praise,

and so on. . . "(Moshman et al., 1987, p. 149), are considered to be central to the development of a child's social competence. Purkey (1994) has put forth the argument that intentionally inviting behaviors have provided for positive growth in others, and respectful behavior toward self fosters enhanced self-esteem. According to the invitational model of learning (Purkey, 1978; Purkey & Novak, 1984; Purkey & Schmidt, 1987; Purkey & Stanley, 1991), inviting behaviors which include respect, trust, and optimism promote optimal growth and wellness. Disinviting behaviors may be thought of as behaviors that inhibit or interfere with inviting behaviors (Purkey & Schmidt, 1987).

Invitational learning theory maintains behavior directed at self is closely tied to self-esteem (Purkey, 1970; 1990; Purkey and Schmidt, 1987). Perceptions provide for the filtering of experiential information. Behaviors of others are perceived to be either *intentionally* inviting or disinviting based on an individual's belief system and particulars of a specific situation (Schmidt, 1992). A recent study (Wiemer & Purkey, 1994), suggested that individuals are most likely to be other-inviting than self-inviting. Human beings develop self-esteem through interactions with others (Beane, 1991; Purkey, 1970; 1994; Stanley, 1991). There is some evidence that the reporting or valuing of a positive evaluation of self-esteem varies culturally (Beane, 1991).

Low self-esteem is related to academic achievement difficulties, poor mental health, and delinquency (Harter, 1983). One must be able to effectively master one's environment in order to feel competent (White, 1959; 1960). An individual needs to feel culturally valued and worthy in order to maintain high self-esteem (Barrett, 1968). As an individual matures, self-esteem becomes differentiated into multiple domains (Harter

& Pike, 1984). For instance, competence differentiates into cognitive and social components (Harter & Pike, 1984). The sense of self one maintains broadens and becomes multifaceted as an individual matures.

Self-Esteem

Threats to Self-Esteem

Experiences and cognitions that provide for an increased valuing of self and confidence in the ability to sustain self-worth while meeting life's many challenges provide for enhanced self-esteem. Conversely so, experiences and cognitions that provide for a decreased valuing of self and fail to support confidence in the ability to meet life's challenges provide for reduced self-esteem. Valued experiences and cognitions that include positive feedback provide for increased self-esteem, while experiences and cognitions which include negative feedback (verbal aggression) with the intent to cause psychological pain may be thought of as threats to self-esteem. Self-esteem research provides a number of clues and insights concerning the possible role of intentional threats to self-esteem in terms of an individual's self-esteem status and choice of behavioral responses. This study is particularly concerned with students responding to threats to self-esteem.

Developmental Needs

Human beings are highly motivated to attend to their self-esteem needs. Self-esteem needs must be met before movement toward self-actualization can be realized (Erikson, 1963; 1968). Erikson's (1963; 1968) *epigenetic principle* maintains that (a) personality develops through predetermined maturational steps. Society is structurally balanced in such a manner as to actively invite, or encourage,

advancement across stages. During middle childhood, children experience the Industry versus Inferiority stage of development. They are challenged, not only with new tasks, but are challenged with the constant comparison of themselves to others. Studies have determined that individuals are not entirely accurate when they are asked to compare themselves to others. They, typically, evaluate themselves as being above average (College Board, 1976-1977; Cross, 1977), which is no more than an effort to self-enhance. Feelings of inferiority are commensurate with a failure to positively resolve this stage's challenge (Erikson, 1963; 1968). The Identity versus Role Confusion stage of development follows. It not only references an individual's future in terms of vocational concerns, It requires an individual to resolve the "Who am I, and where do I belong" dilemma. The "Who am I" dilemma is central to refining self-concept as an individual grows, and it impacts self-esteem.

Prosocial Behavior

Specific behaviors may be thought of as being prosocial or antisocial in nature. Prosocial behavior is central to the development of social competence and is based on empathy and concern for others (Eisenberg, 1992; Hoffman, 1975). It has societal value (Beane, 1991; Hoffman, 1975) and can also provide for aggression-inhibition (Eisenberg, 1989). Beane has suggested, "Work with self-esteem that promotes integration of self and social efficacy offers the possibility that young people will challenge the status quo, not just accept it" (p. 29). Empathy can be experienced at any age (Hoffman, 1975). "Psychologists are interested in behaviors, which include sharing,

helping others in need, and empathizing with others. A specific type of prosocial behavior, called altruism, involves actions that are internally motivated and for which no reward is expected" (Kaplan, 1993, 211).

Prosocial behaviors have been determined to be higher in countries such as Kenya, Mexico, and the Philippines where extended families are the rule, and where cooperation and responsibility are encouraged (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989). Authoritative parents, who reason with their children and consider their children's point of view in setting limits, have children who exhibit greater prosocial behavior (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Steinberg, Elmen, and Mounts, 1989). Both culture and child rearing practices influence prosocial behavior (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989). Prosocial behavior is thought to be linked to self-concept and social change (Beane, 1991).

Antisocial Behavior

In contrast, antisocial behavior is considered to be detrimental to human development and is not sanctioned by society, at large. Remedial efforts have been found to be relatively unsuccessful; "In general, the data available at this time do not seem to support implementation of any large-scale prevention program to alter antisocial behavior" (Kazdin, 1987, p. 107). It is a societal concern. Not only is it disruptive, it is also known to be relatively stable over time (Olweus, 1977; 1979; 1984).

Aggressive children do not outgrow aggressive behavior; they become aggressive adults (Olweus, 1977, 1979, 1984). Reactions to frustration become increasingly focused as a child matures (Goodenough, 1931; Jersild, 1968; Walters et al., 1967). Behavior becomes retaliatory (Moshman et al., 1987; Piaget, 1965) and revenge and dominance

become factors (Strayer, 1980; 1991). Peer-mediated frustration increases during middle childhood (Jersild, 1968). Acts of violence can be rewarded though increased audience attending.

Social cognitive theory has stressed the role of intent in the determination of responses (Moshman et al., 1987). Aggression, typically, becomes more verbal in nature as an individual matures (Jersild, 1968). However, between three and six times more males are referred to mental health clinics, due to the fact that males remain more physically aggressive (Cullinan & Epstein, 1982). Aggressive children exhibit problems interacting with peers, have social skills deficits, and routinely criticize others (Cullinan & Epstein, 1982). Children develop the ability to take another's point of view during middle childhood (Froming, Allen, & Jensen, 1985), suggesting that they are well aware of the *hurt factor* inherent in inappropriate negative feedback. At the concrete operational stage of development, children are able to evaluate their own attributes in terms of validity (Kaplan, 1993).

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy and self-esteem theories are similar in some respects. Both were developed out of a need to understand *internalized self* and explain human behavior. White (1960) introduced the term *effectance* to the psychological community in an effort to emphasize the importance of participation and environmental manipulation. Self-efficacy is a goal directed motive (McClelland, 1987). McClelland (1987) chose to use the term *impact incentive* to avoid perceptions of ". . . mastery, competence and self-determination. . ." in goal directed behaviors intended to

impact environments that are not mastery oriented (p. 148). Self-efficacy is the basic human need to provide impact on the environment, *effectance* or *impact incentive*, is thought to guide and direct behavior (McClelland, 1987). All human beings have a need to "signature" their environments through *impact motive*. Animal studies have provided evidence that impact-incentive can be self-rewarding (Hamburg, et al. 1975). Anger and excitation can be expected when this motive is blocked (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974).

Experiences are thought to be filtered through an individual belief system and thought to provide for behavior in domain specific areas (Pajares, 1992). For instance, academic self-efficacy is considered to be highly predictive of an individual's future academic performance (Multon, Brown, & Lent, 1991). Past experiences, successes and failures, provide perceptions that in turn provide for self-efficacy (Sherer et al., 1982). Self-efficacy has been linked to many domain specific behaviors: agoraphobia (Bandura, Adams, Hardy, & Howells, 1980), bulimia (Schneider, O Leary, & Bandura, 1985), arithmetic achievement (Schunk & Gunn, 1986), health (O'Leary, 1985), parenting (Cutrona & Troutman, 1986), phobic disorders (Birin and Wilson, 1981), and teaching (Dembo & Gibson, 1985).

While McClelland (1987) cautioned against assuming all aggressive behaviors are frustration based, he has argued, " On the other hand, a challenge to an impact goal, as in threatening or criticizing someone does seem more likely to elicit first excitement and then an increase in the intensity of the response and the emotion of anger" (McClelland, 1987, p. 150). Inappropriate feedback such as name-calling that

is abusive in nature and fails to be based, to any degree, in reality constitutes a blocking of an impact goal and a threat to self-esteem.

The self-esteem construct references judgement and affect, (Maslow, 1956) in guiding behavior, (Beane and Lipka, 1984) and is thought to be essential to personality integration (Branden, 1994; McGuire, 1968). Challenging an individual's basic beliefs about self provides for a threat to self-esteem and a blocking of the impact motive through a manipulation of that individual's basic assumptions concerning the power to influence the environment. Self-efficacy theory provides an explanation for both the verbal insult intended to threaten self-esteem and subjects' aggressive efforts to negate or disrupt such assaults. A positive self-esteem is thought to provide empowerment through *confidence*, or assurance, of an individual's ability to meet life's challenges in social interactions, tasks, and activities (Branden, 1994).

Self-Verification

Perceptions of control and predictability are salient features of both self-efficacy and self-verification theories. Individuals strive to confirm self-views (Swann, Wenzlaff, Krull, & Pelham, 1992; Swann, Wenzlaff, & Tafarodi, 1992). They do this through soliciting self-verifying feedback, which increases perceptions of predictability and control (Heider, 1958; Kelly, 1955; Lecky, 1945; Robins, 1986). Swann and others have extended considerable effort in the investigation of self-verification theory (Swann, Pelham, & Krull, 1989; Swann et al., 1992a; Swann et al., 1992b; Swann & Read, 1981a; Swann & Read, 1981b). Swann et al. published a dual study in 1992 in which "Study 2 provides evidence of the motivational underpinnings of self-verification strivings

by showing that people who encounter threats to their global self-evaluations work to reaffirm such evaluations by seeking self-verifying feedback." (Swann et al., 1992b, p. 314).

Research has determined that dysphoric and depressed individuals are prone to choose interaction partners who provide them with unfavorable evaluations or feedback (Swann et al. 1992b); however, they also determined that, ". . . people with negative self-views were just as saddened by unfavorable feedback as were people with positive views." (p. 316). Swann et al. (1992b) interpreted these findings to mean that individuals with negative self-views retain the desire for praise, while striving for self-verification overrides or takes precedent over self-enhancement, when there is a conflict or when both can not be satisfied in a given situation.

Research has determined that people exert efforts to self-verify, even when to do so is to experience hurtful feedback (Heider, 1958; Kelly, 1955; Lecky, 1945; Rodin, 1986). Inappropriately positive appraisals are considered to be patronizing, and inappropriately positive appraisals are thought to engender fears of being unable to meet expectations (Swann et al., 1992b). People elicit self-confirming feedback (Coyne, 1976; Coyne, Kahn, & Gotlib, 1987; Curtis and Miller, 1986; Pelham, 1991; Swann et al., 1989; Swann & Read, 1981a; 1981b). Swann et al. (1992b) cautioned against assuming those who seek self-confirming feedback enjoy same. He further cautioned that research supports the assumption that at some level, even those with negative self-esteems desire feedback that is self-enhancing (Jones, 1973; Taylor & Brown, 1988). Swann et al. (1989) reminds researchers that subjects

express sadness when they encounter unfavorable feedback. Individuals prefer self-enhancing feedback unless such feedback challenges self-knowledge or self-verification (Swann et al. 1990). Research has determined that individuals having negative self-views seek positive feedback so long as that feedback is self-verifying (strengths) over feedback concerning their deficits (weaknesses) (Swann et al., 1990). Threats to self-esteem are exaggerated in nature. They often have little bases in reality.

Self-Enhancement

Allport (1937), as well as others (Kaffka, 1935; McDougall, 1933), has put forth the argument that self-enhancement is a central goal of the human experience. Both *Simple Self-Enhancement* theory and *Compensatory* or *Defensive Self-Enhancement* theories have emerged in an effort to explain the human motivation, or need, to be appreciated by others (Hull, 1943; Shrauger, 1975; Swann, Pelham, & Krull, 1989). The two differ only in the degree or level of motivation. Compensatory self-enhancement theory suggests that individuals with negative self-esteem work harder to self-enhance than do individuals with positive self-esteem, while simple self-enhancement theory maintains that all individuals retain the same level of motivation to self-enhance. There is a great deal of empirical support for simple self-enhancement theory. Although research has failed to support compensatory self-enhancement theory (Brown, Collins, & Schmidt, 1988; Campbell, 1986; Shrauger, 1975; Swann, et al. 1989; Swann, Hixon, et al., 1990; Taylor & Brown, 1988), it suggests that all individuals strive to protect and increase self-esteem. Perhaps aggressive individuals resort to highly aggressive behaviors in an effort

to self-enhance due to an inability to self-enhance through acceptable channels. Consider incentive for gang membership.

Swann et al. (1989) executed three studies in an attempt to bring new understanding to the self-enhancement versus self-verification controversy. Researchers (Swann et al., 1989) determined that both low and high self-esteemed individuals prefer positive feedback (self-enhancement) concerning perceived positive attributes when the choice is between positive (self-enhancement) and negative feedback (self-verification) concerning attributes. However, there was a slight preference for self-verifying feedback over that of self-enhancing feedback concerning their negative self-views. Level of self-esteem failed to alter this dynamic (Swann et al., 1989). Subjects were found to show a preference for self-enhancing feedback, but also preferred feedback which they perceived to be valid over inappropriate feedback concerning their negative self-views. A number of researchers questioned the studies (Swann et al., 1989) in terms of experimental design and conclusions (Alloy & Lipman, 1992; Hooley & Richters, 1992). Swann et al. (1992a; 1992b) responded to the challenge with additional studies. Findings were consistent with earlier ones.

Need for Power

Need for power motive (N-Power) may be conceptualized as being an *interpersonal* motive (Winter, 1973). Need for power motive may be thought of as a need or desire to compensate for weakness or a need for increased status (McClelland, 1987). It is considered to be a goal-seeking behavior, which can impact an individual's tendencies toward aggressive behavior (Veroff, 1957), as aggressive behavior is considered

to be one outlet of N-Power motive (McClelland, 1987). Expressions of N-Power may be nonaggressive as well as aggressive in nature. The original definition was based on exertion of influence (Veroff, 1957). McClelland (1987) suggested that both men and women high in N-power confess to feeling angry and having aggressive cognitions. However, they were determined to be no more aggressive than others who were low in N-power motive. Winter (1973) found this to be true in college students. McClelland (1975) determined that working class males high in N-power were more likely to impulsively initiate acts of aggression. However, this dynamic did not hold for middle class males, suggesting that the influence of additional mediating variables (e.g. class and values) impacted responding. Expressions of aggression are dependent upon the situation (Veroff, Dorwan, & Kulka, 1982), values (Winter, 1973), and response repertoire.

Individuals high in N-Power, who have chosen antisocial descriptors in describing self, express displeasure concerning these tendencies (Veroff, Depner, Kulka, & Doavan, 1980). Research has supported the theory that individuals high in N-Power seek positions as adults which allow them to exert influence on others (Sonnenfeld, 1975; Mueller, 1975). McClelland (1987) has suggested that professionals, such as physicians, influence through skill, while teachers and similar professionals influence through persuasion. The goal remains that of influence regardless of whether persuasion or skill is the vehicle for achieving same. There is some evidence that individuals high in N-power behave in ways that call attention to themselves (Winter, 1973). Individuals high in N-power will tolerate more physiological risk and

danger (Fersch, 1971).

There is also some evidence that individuals with a high N-power experience reduce aggressive cognitions or N-power arousal following the viewing of power arousing situations such as a fight film or Nazi film, while low N-power subjects experience increased aggressive cognitions following the viewing of the same films (Feshback, 1961; McClelland & Maddocks, 1983).

Vulnerable Self

Anything that threatens an individual's positive regard for *self* constitutes a threat to self-esteem. Purkey (1990) has put forth the argument that, "Self concept continuously guards itself against loss of self-esteem, for it is this loss that produces feelings of anxiety" P. 7). A perception of threat to an individual's ego or sense of self is considered to be a salient factor in hostile aggression (Hartup, 1974). Verbal aggression may be thought of as negative feedback when personal criticism, ridicule, attempts to humiliate, and the like form the bases for the activity. Older children consider opportune times in order to increase the effectiveness of efforts to ridicule peers (Jersild, 1968). This dynamic includes unfair accusations and the giving of unwelcome advice (Jersild, 1968).

Every school experience is thought to impact values, self-concept as well as student's self-esteem (Beane & Lipka, 1980). Perceptions are central to the interpretation of experience and environmental cues. They are unique to the individual and may or may not be valid evaluations of experience. Responding is dependent upon both perceptions (Maccoby, 1980) and the evaluation of intent (Maccoby, 1980; Dodge et al, 1984).

At this point, self-esteem is considered to be a personality component that has either positive or negative status and impacts every area of an individual's life (Branden, 1994, p. XV) providing guidance structure for personality (Purkey, 1970; Purkey & Novak, 1984; Purkey & Schmidt, 1987; Purkey & Schmidt, 1990). Verbal aggression, behaviors that are intentionally harmful to nonphysical self, constitutes a threat to self-esteem and impacts behavior. Feedback is known to impact self-esteem. In one study, Smith and Smoll (1990) found, for instance, that coaches had a substantial effect on children's self-esteem through the feedback dynamic.

Negative Feedback

All feedback, including negative feedback, is weighted with significant others having the greatest influence on self-esteem (Forgas, 1985). Peers have a significant impact on self-esteem. Both the time spent with peers (Baldwin, 1955; Barker & Wright, 1955; Cole & Cole, 1993; Hill & Stafford, 1980) and their influence increases as an individual matures (Brown, Clasen, & Eicher, 1986; Constranzo, 1970). Direct parental influence decreases beginning when a child enters school (Maccoby, 1984), and peers begin to have a significant influence on children.

Purkey (1990) has argued, "the more central a particular belief is to one's self-concept, the more resistant one is to changing that belief" (p.7). There is little doubt that negative feedback has a detrimental affect on self-esteem. Additional evidence may be found in Youngs' (Youngs, Rathge, Mullis, & Mullis, 1990) research efforts which support the hypothesis that as the number of negative life events (stressers)

increases the level of self-esteem decreases. Surely, painful, negative feedback may be considered to be a negative life event. The question remains, do some individuals resort to physical aggression in an attempt to halt the verbal abuse that is known to impact self-esteem.

Learned Helplessness

An individual has two basic choices when confronted with a stimuli, even that of negative feedback: respond or fail to respond. Learned helplessness research provides evidence of the liability of failure to respond to painful stimuli. While the initial stimuli used in the original learned helplessness research was physically aversive rather than psychologically aversive, it was painfully aversive (Maier & Seligman, 1976). Maier and Seligman described what may be expected when an individual fails to respond: ". . . when events are uncontrollable the organism learns that its behavior and outcomes are independent. . . this learning produces the motivational, cognitive, and emotional effects of uncontrollability" (Maier & Seligman, 1976, p.3).

Donald Hiroto, a Japanese-American graduate student designed parallel methodology for research using human subjects after consulting with Seligman (Hiroto, 1974; Hiroto & Seligman, 1975). He, as well as others, researched the applicability of learned helplessness theory to human subjects (Foster & Geer, 1971; Klein, Fencil-Morse, & Seligman, 1976; Miller & Seligman, 1975; Thornton & Jacobs, 1971). Interestingly enough, the original theory defined learned helplessness in terms of three deficits: motivational, cognitive, and emotional deficits (Garber & Seligman, 1980). Later, a self-esteem deficit was added to the syndrome which defined the inability to respond. Some subjects, in all learned

helplessness research studies, were found to be resistant to the development of learned helplessness symptomatology under laboratory conditions in which subjects were unable to control outcome (Seligman, 1991, p. 29). Perhaps higher levels of self-esteem, or resistant self-esteem, provided for the inoculation variable which Seligman references in his book, Learned Optimism (1991). Inoculation provides for resistance in terms of the passivity as well as the motivational, cognitive, emotional, and self-esteem deficits (Seligman, 1991).

Learned helplessness research supports the need to maintain control in aversive situations. More recent research has suggested that ongoing experience in which an individual maintains control over outcome provides inoculation against the deficits associated with the syndromes in situations in which an individual experiences reduced control (Seligman, 1991). All learned helplessness research also has determined that there is initial responding to the aversive stimuli in approximately two-thirds of the subjects (Maier & Seligman, (1976). Failure to respond is a learned consequence of the inability to control outcome (Seligman, 1973; Maier & Seligman, 1976; Seligman, 1991).

Conclusion

The self-esteem construct is considered to be an important variable that contributes to personality (Branden,1994) and guides behavior (Beane & Lipka, 1984; Branden, 1994). Experiences are known to impact self-esteem (Bean & Lipka, 1980). Peer influence increases from the point an individual enters school up through the late teens (Brown, et al., 1986; Constranzo, 1970). Research supports an individual's need to

protect self-esteem (Purkey, 1990).

Seligman (1991) provides evidence that there has been a shift concerning favored explanations for aggressive behavior in consequence of learning (Chomsky, 1959; Piaget, 1965). "The dominant theories in psychology shifted focus during the late 1960s from the (a) power of the environment to (b) individual expectation, preference, choice, decision, control and helplessness" (Seligman, 1991 p. 9) in explanation of behavior. Choice is presently considered to be a primary issue in terms of human behavior.

Cognitive dissonance theory provides evidence of the need for congruency between self-image (self-concept and self-esteem) and behavior (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959), suggesting that things such as inappropriate "name-calling" and "labeling" provide for discomfort in the form of cognitive dissonance (Rokeach, 1973) and perhaps call for behaviors to reduce the incongruency of outcome-based behaviors such as aggression. The role of intent becomes a salient factor in terms of responding, once and individual is able to cognitively evaluate intent (Moshman et al., 1987).

At the concrete operational level of cognitive development, an individual has the ability to evaluate personal attributes (Kaplan, 1982; Piaget, 1965, 1983), enabling that individual to evaluate negative feedback and labeling in terms of validity. Self-efficacy is a goal directed behavior (McClelland, 1987), and self-enhancement is a goal directed behavior crucial to the human experience (Allport, 1937; Kaffka, 1935; McDougall, 1933). There is a great deal of research that has suggested that individuals strive to self-enhance regardless of level of

self-esteem (Brown et al., 1988; Campbell, 1986; Shrauger, 1975; Swann et al., 1989; Swann et al, 1990; Taylor & Brown, 1988). Need for power motive is considered to be an interpersonal motive (Winter, 1973), which is also goal-directed. Need for power motive finds one outlet in human aggressive behavior (Veroff, 1957).

Purkey (1990), among others, has argued that loss of self-esteem creates anxiety. He (Purkey, 1990) further argues that an individual guards against anxiety initiated by the loss of self-esteem contingency. A perceived threat to self or ego has been considered to be a salient factor in hostile aggression for some time (Hartup, 1974). Beane (1991) has further emphasized the human need for stability, consistency, and enhancement.

Peers make a substantial contribution toward an individual's global self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1987). The impact of feedback, including threats to self esteem, is mediated by the importance placed on the individual providing the feedback (Forgas, 1985). Verbal aggression, intended to cause psychological pain, may be thought of as being inappropriate negative feedback directed at self-esteem.

Learned helplessness research (Seligman, 1973, 1991) suggested the deleterious effect of "lack of response" on the empowerment continuum (optimism-to-helplessness). It also provided evidence of a self-esteem deficit when an individual feels powerless to control, or impact, outcome (Seligman, 1973, 1991). Learned helplessness research provides evidence of the negative consequences, including decreased self-esteem, to being powerless to impact outcome (Seligman, 1973; 1991). Research and behavioral observations in applied settings have suggested

the possibility that an individual is motivated to respond with aggression to threats to self-esteem. Social cognitive theory stresses the importance of how an individual interprets intent (Moshman et al., 1987). When the intent is evaluated and determined to be hurtful in nature, aggressive behavior is likely to follow (Moshman et al., 1987).

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

This quantitative study tested theory-based hypotheses concerning student aggression in response to threats, response contingency, and level of self-esteem. The causal relationships were investigated in a public school alternative education hospital-based setting. This chapter describes subjects, ethical considerations, instruments, procedures, research design and data analyses. The results of the data analyses are presented in Chapter four.

Subjects

An alternative education student population between the ages of 12 and 19 was invited to participated in this study. Alternative education is a carefully planned effort that includes prescriptive teaching, similar to that provided by special education services. It provides social and behavioral remediation in a *carefully* monitored setting. Alternative education curriculum concentrates on core courses and survival skills. Successful remediation is defined as the successful reentry into a public school setting and the attainment of specific individualized treatment goals. Students are assigned to day-treatment or hospital-based residential treatment centers by parents, community agencies, or courts. A school district maintains responsibility for the educational component, while health professionals assume responsibility

for the therapeutic component of the dual-based programs. Intervention includes both an education plan and treatment plan. Anger management and aggressive behavior intervention programs are a primary focus of the treatment plan. The male:female ratio was determined to be N = 68:30. While the population socioeconomic status (SES) was diverse, a large number of families was determined to be on public assistance programs (>90%). A few of the families represented were traditional, although, nontraditional, single parent, extended family, and therapeutic foster family placements were all represented. Information concerning the study population demographics is presented in Chapter four.

Students, typically, participate in day-treatment programs for periods ranging from three-to-six months, although a few remain for one year or more. Both categorical special education students and students not placed in special education participated in the study. Psychological trauma and behavioral problems are common in this population. Data was collected over approximately a nine-month period. Sites were visited two-to-three times in order to allow all students who chose to participate an opportunity to take part in the study.

Students enter these hospital-monitored programs highly stressed and frightened. The researcher did not want to contribute to new students concerns. Therefore, clients were invited to participate in the study only after they had been in attendance for two-or-more weeks in order to avoid stressing clients. Five students chose not to participate in this study due to heavy medication that interfered with concentration. The remaining students (95%) who were invited to participate chose to do so. Six of the seven sites invited to participate in the study chose to

participate. One site has maintained a policy allowing no research and, consequently, did not participate in the study due to organization charter bylaw.

Ethical Considerations

The Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board evaluated this study and determined subjects were at no risk of harm (Appendix A). The targeted school district also evaluated this study and determined it to be appropriate and extended permission for the researcher to execute this study. All participants signed an informed consent form (Appendix D), which was read to them. The form explained the study, encouraged questions, and informed subjects that responding was both voluntary and confidential in nature. Students were assured that they could freely withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of privileges.

Instrumentation

The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale was chosen and the Aggression Attribution Inventory (AAI) was developed for the purposes of this study (Appendix E). A dual scoring of the AAI across two response levels, (a) "feel like doing" and (b) "would do", was provided for in order to investigate whether students do what they feel like doing during negative peer-encounters. The self-esteem inventory was added to this study in order to investigate the impact of self-esteem on responding to threats and level of response contingencies.

Aggression Attribution Inventory (AAI)

The AAI was developed by the researcher for the purposes of the study in order to assess levels of aggression in response to threats to self-esteem, property, and safety. A six-item Likert scale was used to assess level of aggression. The AAI was reviewed by two respected educational psychologist who agreed to its content validity. They consider it to be a valid assessment of the threats investigated in this study. Observational data as well as teacher, counselor, and administrator interviews provided the impetus for both the AAI and this study. The instrument was developed around negative peer-encounters that were considered to be representative of the many others recorded during the observational period preceding this study. Students were observed to be challenged by personal insults defined for the purposes of the study, to be threats to self-esteem. Evidence suggests negative feedback is detrimental to an individual's global self-esteem (Brockner, et al., 1987).

The AAI consists of six vignettes. Two vignettes address each threat (self-esteem, property, safety) sampled in this study. Students were told in the testing situation that the vignettes are actual events with the removal of *extensive cursing*. Students, typically, responded with, "We know what they said; don't we?" suggesting that they were able to envision a close approximation of the original scripts. The researcher read information concerning scoring instructions, purpose of the AAI, student confidentiality, and answered various student questions. Scoring instructions were repeated following each vignette. Students were instructed to circle "feel like doing" responses and place an X on "would do" responses. Administration of the instrument required

approximately twenty-five minutes.

Test reliability was investigated through a split-half correlation statistic. Reliability was determined to .76 (SEM=.63) for Threat to Self-Esteem, .79 (SEM=.66) for Threat to Property, and .69 (SEM=.73) for Threat to Safety. The Spearman-Brown Prophecy Formula was used to increase split-half reliability coefficients to establish what the correlations would be for the whole test. Reliability coefficients and standard error of measurement statistics for the three threat components following the Spearman-Brown Prophecy Formula adjustment were determined to be as follows: Threat to Self-Esteem .86 (SEM=.48), Threat to Property .88 (SEM=.63), Threat to Safety .82 (SEM=.56). The reliability coefficient expresses the degree of consistency in measurement of scores. An r of .80 or higher is considered to be an acceptable reliability for an instrument of this type (Sattler, 1988).

Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale

Self-esteem is *phenomenological* in nature. It can not be viewed or directly measured. It must be inferred from behavior and self-reporting. Global self-esteem is considered to be relatively stable over time (Erikson, 1950; Schonfeld, 1969). The term self-concept is considered to be interchangeable with such terms as self-regard and self-esteem in measuring conscious self-perceptions (Piers, 1984). The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale was chosen for the purposes of the study. It is a 80-item instrument. It provides a global self-esteem score as well as six cluster scores. The global score was of primary interest to the study. It was used in the assignment of high and low self-esteem status. Subjects attaining scores above the research population median were assigned a high self-esteem status, while subjects below the median

were assigned low self-esteem status for the purposes of this study.

The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale was designed for individuals between the ages of 8 and 18 and has been standardized for use above third grade (Piers, 1984). It is considered to be a reliable instrument having a test-retest coefficient range from .42 (eight month) to .96 (three-to-four weeks). It correlates highest with the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory ($r = .85$), which is a similar instrument in terms of formatting and age-range assessed. Lower correlations ($r = .42$) have been attained when the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale scores were compared with Pictorial Self-Concept scores.

Procedures

Following Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board approval (Appendix A), the purpose and general procedure of the study was described in the invitation letter (Appendix B). Parents, students, and custodial agencies gave their respective permission for students to participate in the study. Participation was voluntary. Alternative education sites were visited more than once in order to ensure that all students who chose to do so had the opportunity to participate. A number of students were absent during initial sessions due to treatment plan activities.

The researcher read both the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and the Aggression Attribution Inventory (AAI) to students singularly or in small groups of one-to-eight students. This was done in order to facilitate understanding, encourage accurate responding, and, most importantly, in order to avoid stressing or embarrassing disabled

readers. A large number of the population were dysfunctional readers. Scoring instructions were repeated following each vignette in order to ensure accurate, purposeful responding. Students responded independently to all items. Instruments were clipped together, folded once, and placed in a box to assure confidentiality. The data collection activity was followed by a discussion in which students were invited to express their perceptions, concerns, and creative ideas concerning possible student-aggression interventions. This was initiated for two reasons: (1) it gave students the opportunity to discuss feelings before returning to class, and (b) it provided researchers with insights for future research. Appendix C provides information about student's concerns and suggestions for safer educational environments.

Research Design and Data Analyses

Mixed-Model ANOVA Design

The student aggression study utilized a 2 X 2 X 3 mixed-model ANOVA factorial design with one between-subjects factor and two repeated-measure factors. The between subjects variable was two levels of self-esteem (high, low). The two repeated-measures were two levels of Response (feel like doing, would do) and three levels of threat (self-esteem, property, safety). The dependent measure was AAI aggression scores. Tukey post hoc analyses provided additional information concerning sources of variability. Omega-squared statistic was used in the evaluation of practical significance. The specification table, block diagram and source table for the study are represented in Table 2 (p. 66). An alpha of .05 was selected for the evaluation of

Table 2

Specification Table, Block Design, and Source Table Using a Three Factor Mixed-Model Design

Dependent Variable: AAI aggression scores
Independent Variables:
- Within-Subjects Variables
  - Threats (3 levels)
    - Self-Esteem (S-E)
    - Property (P)
    - Safety (S)
  - Response (2 levels)
    - Feel like doing (F-L)
    - Would do (W-D)
- Between-Subjects Variable
  - Self-Esteem (2 levels)
    - High
    - Low

Specification Table:

Self-Esteem (between)	2
Response (within)	2
Threat (within)	3
Subjects/S-ERT	49
Total # Scores	588

Source Table:

Variable	df
Self-Esteem (S-E)	1
S/S-E	96
Threat (T)	2
T X S-E	2
S/TS-E	192
Response (R)	1
S/R S-E	96
R X T	2
R X T X S-E	2
S/RTS-E	192
Total df	587

Schematic Block Design

	High Self-Esteem			Low Self-Esteem		
Response W-L	N=49 s1-49	N=49 s1-49	N=49 s1-49	N=49 s50-98	N=49 s50-98	N=49 s50-98
Response W-D	N=49 s1-49	N=49 s1-49	N=49 s1-49	N=49 s50-98	N=49 s50-98	N=49 s50-98
	S-E	P	S	S-E	P	S
	Threats			Threats		

statistical significance.

A mixed-design ANOVA, rather than a completely randomized experimental design, was chosen for the study because the within-portion of the design controls for subject variability, and the smaller error term increases the probability that a difference be found, if one exists. The repeated-measure portion of the design provides for increased precision through the removal of extraneous variables associated with individual differences between the participants involved in the study. Subject variability was controlled for through the same subjects serving in all within conditions. A reduced error term provides for economy and statistical power (Keppel, 1991). The disadvantages of this portion of the design include practice effect and differential carryover effect. The AAI was counterbalanced in presentation in order to counteract, or compensate, for this difficulty.

This study is dependent upon a statistical or linear model. The general linear model for this study is described in Table 3 (p. 68).

Mixed-Model ANOVA Assumptions

This study is dependent upon a number of assumptions which are essentially a blending of the assumptions for a repeated-measures design and between-subjects design. The following assumptions of independence, normality, homogeneity of variance, and homogeneity of covariance must be met in order for research findings to be considered creditable:

Table 3
Statistical Linear Model

The following statistical linear model for this 2 X 2 X 3 mixed-model ANOVA identifies all sources of variability.

$$Y_{ijkl} = \mathcal{U} + \mathcal{B} + \Pi_{i(k)} + \alpha_j + \alpha B_{jk} + \alpha \Pi_{ji(k)} + \Gamma_l + \mathcal{B} \Gamma_{kl} + \Gamma' \Pi_{li(k)} + \alpha \Gamma_{jl} + \alpha \mathcal{B} \Gamma_{jkl} + \alpha \Gamma_{\Pi jkl(k)} + E_{ijkl}$$

Y_{ijkl} = scores of all subjects

j = response levels
k = self-esteem level
l = threat levels

$\mathcal{U}$ = overall population grand-mean

B_k = the effect of level of self-esteem

$\Pi_{i(k)}$ = the effect of the individual nested in the group

α_j = the effect of level of response

αB_{jk} = the interaction effect of self-esteem and response variables

$\alpha \Pi_{ji(k)}$ = the effect of a particular level of the response variable on the particular individual nested within that group

Γ_l = the fixed effect of repeated-measure, threat

$\mathcal{B} \Gamma_{kl}$ = effect of interaction between repeated measure threat and the self-esteem between subject variable

$\Gamma \Pi_{ji(k)}$ = effect of the particular level of repeated-measures factor, threat, on the particular individual

$\alpha \Gamma_{jl}$ = effect of the interaction between response and threat

$\alpha \mathcal{B} \Gamma_{jkl}$ = effect of the interaction between the three factors, self-esteem, response, threat

$\alpha \Gamma_{\Pi jkl(k)}$ = effect of a particular combination of levels of the response factor and threat factor on the particular individual

$\mathcal{E}_{ijkl}$ = Error term source of variance due to variable level individual subject characteristic differences

1. Independence: Every score is assumed to be unrelated to every other score, which is a design issue. Randomization is not an issue when all subjects in a given population participate in a study. Research design and procedures provided for independent responding in this study. Intact groups participated in the study and both seating and monitoring provided for independent responding. This assumption was not violated in this study.

2. Normality: Characteristics of living things provides for a normal bell shaped curve distribution when this assumption has been met. The normality assumption can be appraised with the construction of frequency polygons. An n=12 is considered to be the smallest number that can be used in the analysis of normality. The research population size of 98 provided for 49 subjects per cell, which is considered to be an acceptable number of subjects (Cohen, 1988).

3. Homogeneity of Variance: Within variances must be approximately equal ($\leq$ 3:1) across treatment/condition. This issue deals with the spread of scores within groups. A small or insignificant difference is considered to be due to sampling error. F-max is an additional evaluation of homogeneity of variance. F-max was calculated, and this assumption was not violated in this study.

4. Homogeneity of Covariance: The pattern of scores must be about the same in order for this assumption to be met. Symmetry is required between treatment group variances and the pooled variances. The variance covariance matrixes provide this information. A three step-strategy is required if data fails to meet the $\leq$ 4:1 high:low variance ratio requirement. This assumption was not violated.

Research Hypotheses

For each of the research questions investigated in this study, students refers to students attending alternative education hospital-based day treatment facilities in a urban area in a midwestern state. Unless otherwise stated, students refers to individuals at all levels of self-esteem. The following hypotheses were tested at a .05 significance level. The null hypotheses (which follow the research hypotheses) were utilized in the evaluation of the following research hypotheses. It was hypothesized--

H1. Students with high and low self-esteem respond significantly different to threats to self-esteem, property, and safety at the like to do and would do levels of response as measured by AAI aggression scores.

$$Ho = All\ \alpha\beta\ \Gamma_{jkl} = 0$$

H2. High and low self-esteemed students respond with significantly different levels of aggression to the feel like doing and would do levels of response as measured by AAI aggression scores.

$$Ho = All\ \alpha\beta_{jk} = 0$$

H3. High self-esteemed students do not respond significantly different than low self-esteemed students to threats (self-esteem, property, and safety) as measured by AAI aggression scores.

$$Ho = All\ \beta\ \Gamma_{kl} = 0$$

H4. Students respond with significantly different levels of aggression under the feel like doing and would do contingencies of

response to threats to self-esteem, property, and safety as measured by AAI aggression scores.

$$Ho = All\ \alpha\beta_{ij} = 0$$

H5. High self-esteemed students are significantly more aggressive than low self-esteemed students as measured by AAI aggression scores.

$$Ho = All\ \beta_k = 0$$

H6. Students respond with significantly higher levels of aggression to the feel like doing versus would do response contingency as measured by AAI aggression scores.

$$Ho = All\ \alpha_j = 0$$

H7. Students are significantly more aggressive in response to threats to self-esteem versus threats to property as measured by AAI aggression scores.

$$Ho = All\ \gamma_i = 0$$

H8. Students are significantly more aggressive in response to threats to self-esteem versus threats to safety as measured by AAI aggression scores.

$$Ho = All\ \gamma_i = 0$$

Summary

Ninety-eight subjects between the ages of 12 and 19 participated in this study of student aggression. Ninety-five percent of the subjects who attended six hospital-based alternative education dual treatment programs participated in this study. Two instruments were administered, the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and the AAI six item vignette aggression instrument. The AAI was scored twice: once under the

"feel like doing" contingency, once under the "would do" contingency. Both instruments were read to students in order to insure understanding.

Descriptive statistics provided information concerning population variability. A 2(self-esteem) X 2(response) X 3(threats) mixed-model ANOVA design was utilized in the evaluation of research hypotheses. Null hypotheses were utilized in the evaluation of statistical significance in the retention or rejection of specific hypotheses. Statistical evaluation of the hypotheses is presented in chapter IV and research findings and their implications are discussed in chapter V.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The results of the statistical analyses are presented in Chapter four. Means and standard deviations as well as ANOVA summary tables are presented in table format. Information presented in Chapter four provides the bases for the summary, discussion, and recommendations that follow in chapter five.

Research hypotheses were investigated utilizing a 2(response) X 2(self-esteem) X 3(threat) causal comparative mixed-model ANOVA in isolating variances associated with the three independent variables. An investigation of two-way variance and main effect variability followed the initial investigation. Level of self-esteem (high, low) was coded through the assignment of high self-esteem status to scores above the median of 56.50 ($\bar{X}$=56.76, SD=13.39) and assignment of low self-esteem status to those below the median on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. A liberal .05 level of significance was chosen for the evaluation of all comparisons, due to the fact that this is a new area of investigation. The self-esteem independent variable provided for between-subjects variability, while the response and threat independent variables provided for repeated-measure variability. AAI aggression scores constituted the dependent variable.

Demographic Descriptive Statistics

Demographic information included age, gender, grade level, number of grades repeated, birth order, and familial configuration. It is interesting to note that approximately 45% of the population repeated one-or-more grades, and less than one-quarter of subjects (20.4%) lived in a home with both parents for a substantial amount of time. Many subjects expressed confusion about the type of home in which they were reared. While the study did not query students concerning number of foster care placements, several students voluntarily included this information. One student referred to 22 foster-care placements. The mean age was 15.52 and the range was seven years (12 - 19). A number of students expressed confusion about their present grade levels. Many were returning after having dropped out of school for a year, or more, and were uncertain of grade placement, while others had made the decision to pursue a GED because of their age and due to high school credit deficits. Descriptive information is presented in Table F1 and Table F2 (Appendix F, p. 150-151).

Hypotheses Evaluation

Hypothesis One: Self-Esteem X Response X Threats

H1. Hypothesis One postulated that students with high self-esteem and students with low self-esteem would respond significantly different to threats to self-esteem, property, and safety at the "feel like doing" and "would do" levels of response, as measured by AAI aggression scores.

Analysis began with an investigation of hypothesis H1. The null hypothesis, H_0 = all $OBI_{jkl} = 0$, was utilized in the evaluation of

statistical significance. The research hypothesis predicted an interaction effect. It was predicted that high and low self-esteemed students would respond differentially to the response variable across three levels of threats. With a calculated F value of .810 (p=.446) and a critical F of 3.00 at the .05 level of significance [$F_{.05}(2,192)=3.00$] the research hypothesis (H1) was rejected and the null hypothesis was retained. The study failed to support a three-way interaction. ANOVA results are presented in Table 4. Table F3 (Appendix F, p. 152) provides information concerning population means and standard deviations.

Table 4

Summary Table of Analysis of Variance of Student Aggression Scores by Self-Esteem, Response, and Threats

Source	SS	DF	MS	F	P
Self-Esteem (B)	15.349	1	15.349	1.970	.164
S/S-E	749.078	96	7.792		
Threats (R)	56.942	2	28.471	19.467	.000*
Response (R)	15.027	1	15.027	7.762	.006*
S-E X T	4.259	2	2.129	1.456	.236
S-E X R	2.456	1	2.456	1.269	.263
T X R	.554	2	.277	.406	.667
T X R X S-E	1.105	2	.553	.810	.446
S/TRS-E	131.007	192	.682		
Total	975.777				*p ≤ .05

(N=98)

Hypothesis Two: Self-Esteem X Response

H2. The second hypothesis postulated that high self-esteemed and low self-esteemed students would respond with significantly different levels of aggression to the "feel like doing" and "would do" levels of response. A two-way analysis of variance was calculated in evaluation of the null hypothesis (table 5). With a calculated F value of 1.363 (p=.246) and a critical $F_{.05}(1, 96)$ of 4.00 the null hypothesis, H_0 - all 0 $B_{jk} = 0$, was retained and the research hypothesis was rejected. Self-esteem failed to differentially affect the dependent variable to a significant degree at the "feel like doing" and "would do levels" of the independent variable, response. Information concerning cell means and standard deviations as well as marginal means and standard deviations is provided in Table F4 (Appendix F, p. 153).

Table 5

Summary Table of Analysis of Variance of Student Aggression Scores by Self-Esteem and Response

Source	SS	DF	MS	F	P
Self-Esteem (B)	5.279	1	5.279	2.026	.158
S/S-E	250.116	96	2.605		
Response (R)	4.850	1	4.850	7.473	.007*
S-E X R	.884	1	.884	1.363	.246
S/S-ER	62.307	96	.649	.246	
Total	323.436				*p. $\leq$ .05

(N=98)

Hypothesis Three: Self-Esteem X Threat

H3. It was postulated that self-esteem in combination with threat would fail to differentially affect student aggression. A null hypothesis, H_0 = all B I_{kl} = 0, was utilized in the evaluation of the research hypothesis. With a calculated F value of 1.406 (p=.248) and a critical $F_{.05}(2,192)$ value of 3.00, the null hypothesis was retained. Level of self-esteem (high, low) failed to differentially influence responding at the three levels of the independent variable, threat. Table 6 provides a descriptive summary of the ANOVA analysis, and Table F5 (Appendix F, p. 154) provides information concerning means and standard deviations as well as marginal means and standard deviations.

Table 6

Summary Table of Analysis of Variance of Student Aggression Scores by Self-Esteem and Threat

Source	SS	DF	MS	F	P
Self-esteem (B)	7.919	1	7.919	2.026	.158
S/S-E	375.174	96	3.908		
Threat (R)	28.258	2	14.129	19.540	.000*
S-E X T	2.034	2	1.017	1.406	.248
S/TS-E	138.833	192	.723		
Total	552.218				

*p ≤ .05

(N=98)

Hypothesis Four: Threat X Response

H4. It was hypothesized that response (feel like doing, would do) would differentially influence aggression at three levels of threat (self-esteem, property, safety). A null hypothesis, H_o = all 0 I_{jk} = 0, was utilized in the evaluation of data. With a calculated F value of .407 (p=.666) and a critical $F_{.05}$ (2, 192) of 3.00, the null hypothesis was retained and the research hypothesis was rejected in this study. Level of response failed to differentially influenced responding (AAI scores) at various levels of the threat variable to a statistically significant degree. ANOVA summary information concerning this component of the study may be found in table 7, while means and standard deviation information as well as marginal means and standard deviations are described in Table F6 (Appendix F, p. 155).

Table 7

Summary Table of Analysis of Variance of Student Aggression Scores by Threat and Response

Source	SS	DF	MS	F	P
Threats (R)	56.942	2	28.471	19.376	.000*
Response (R)	15.027	1	15.027	7.741	.006*
T X R	.554	2	.277	.407	.666
S/RT	132.112	194	.681		
Total	204.635				*p ≤ .05

(N=98)

Hypothesis Five: Self-Esteem Main Effect

H5. It was postulated that level of self-esteem would differentially affect level of aggression. The main effect of the independent variable, self-esteem, with a calculated value of 2.026 (p=.158) and a critical value of $F_{.05}(1, 96) = 4.00$ was determined to be non significant. The null hypothesis, H_0 = all $B_k = 0$, was retained, and the research hypothesis was retained. Level of self-esteem failed to significantly influence AAI aggression scores. Table 8 provides descriptive ANOVA information concerning level of self-esteem (H\L) main effect. Means and Standard Deviations are presented in Table F7 (Appendix F, p. 156).

Table 8

Summary Table of Analysis of Variance of Student Aggression Scores by Level of Self-Esteem

Source	SS	DF	MS	F	P
Self-esteem	2.640	1	2.640	2.026	.158
S/S-E	125.058	96	1.303		
Total	127.698				

(N=98)

Hypothesis Six: Response Main Effect:

H6. Is was postulated that students would respond with significantly higher levels of aggression at the feel like doing level of response versus the would do level of response. The main effect was investigated utilizing the null hypothesis, H_0 = all $0_j = 0$. With a calculated F of 7.446 (p.=.008) and a critical $F_{.05}$ (1, 96) of 4.00, the main effect for response was determined to be significant.

The null hypothesis was rejected and the research hypothesis was retained. Table 9 provides descriptive information concerning the ANOVA analysis. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table F8 (Appendix F, p. 157).

Table 9

Summary Table of Analysis of Variance of Student Aggression Scores by Response

Source	SS	DF	MS	F	P
Response	4.850	1	4.850	7.446	.008*
S/R	63.191	97	.651		
Total	68.041				

*p ≤ .05

(N=98)

The omega-squared statistic provides an estimate of treatment effect. It provides insights concerning the practical significance of research findings. Omega-squared reflects the total variability in the experiment that is attributable to the treatment/condition effect. Omega-squared is most often utilized in the evaluation of the strength of relative magnitude in experimental research (Keppel, 1991). It is considered to be insensitive to sample size and, therefore, a valued statistic (Lane & Dunlap, 1978, p. 109). Omega-squared will be presented in this study only when the F test has been determined to be statistically significant.

Omega-squared was calculate for the response variable. Three percent of the variability in the dependent variable was determined to be attributable to the influence of the response variable. An omega-squared value of 3% is considered to be a small effect size (Cohen, 1977, p. 284-288).

Hypothesis Seven and Eight: Threats Main Effect

H7. It was hypothesized that students would respond with greater aggression to threats to self-esteem versus threats to property.

H8. It was hypothesized that students would respond with greater aggression to threats to self-esteem versus threats to safety.

The null hypothesis, H_o = all I_j = 0, was utilized in the evaluation of this data. With a calculated F value of 19.458 (p=.000) and a critical $F_{.05}(2, 192)$ of 3.00, the null hypothesis was rejected and the research hypothesis was retained. Table 10 provides summative descriptive ANOVA information, and Table F9 presents means and standard deviations (Appendix F, p. 158).

Table 10

Summary Table of Analysis of Variance of Student Aggression Scores by Threat

Source	SS	DF	MS	F	P
Threats	28.258	2	14.129	19.458	.000*
S/T	140.867	194	.726		
Total	169.125				*p ≤ .05

(N=98)

Responding differed significantly across three levels of threat. Further analysis was required in order to isolate variability within the three levels of threat. A Tukey post hoc analysis was performed. Analysis determined that a critical difference of .585 provided for a p=.05 probability statement, .737 provided for a p=.01 probability statement. Analysis further determined that a threat to self-esteem versus a threat to property was significant at a p <.01 level of significance, and a threat to self-esteem versus a threat to safety provided for a p.< .01 level of significance. A threat to property versus a threat to safety was determined to be significant at a <.05 significance level.

Omega-squared analysis determined that 11% of the variability in the dependent variable, AAI scores was due to the threat variable. An Omega-squared value of 11% is considered to be a medium treatment effect (Cohen, 1977; 1988).

Conclusions

Chapter four presented results of the statistical analyses concerning the influence of self-esteem, response contingency, and level of threat on student aggression in a day-treatment alternative education population. Level of self-esteem (high, low) was determined to have a non significant influence on student aggression singularly [$F(1,96)=2.026$, $p=.158$] and in combination with the response variable [$F(1,96)=1.363$, $p=.246$]. The self-esteem variable in combination with the response and threat independent variables was determined to be a statistically insignificant [$F(2,192)=.810$, $p=.446$]. The response variable was determined to represent a statistically significant influence on student aggression, singularly [$F(1,96)=7.446$, $p=.008$], and was found to exert a non significant differential influence on responding at three levels of the threat variable [$F(2,192)=.407$, $p=.666$]. The main effect for threat was significant [$F(2,192)=19.458$, $p=.000$]. However, threat in combination with the self-esteem (high, low) independent variable was determined to be nonsignificant [$F(2,192)=1.406$, $p=.248$]. Additional post hoc analysis determined that a threat to self-esteem was causal of a higher level of aggression than was a threat to property at a $p=\leq.01$ level of significance or a threat to safety at a $p=\leq.01$ level of significance, while a threat to property versus a threat to safety provided for a probability statement of $p.=<.05$.

Marginal means provide additional information concerning variability. The feel like doing level of response with a mean aggression score of 3.95 (SD=1.27) exceeded the would do level of response with a mean score of 3.63 (SD=1.29) by .32 providing for a statistically significant higher level of

aggression at the feel like doing level of the response independent variable. Students in the sampled population were determined to be less aggressive than they felt like being. The threat variable cell means indicated that a threat to self-esteem with a mean of 4.18 (SD=1.28) exceeded the threat to property variable with a mean of 3.43 (SD=1.43) by .75 and exceeded the threat to safety variable mean of 3.76 (SD=1.31) by .42

Results of this investigation should be interpreted with caution, due to the size of the sampled population (98), unique characteristics of the hospital-based population, and the fact that a new assessment instrument was used in the investigation of student aggression. The discussion, recommendations, and discussion elements of this study are presented in Chapter five.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study was designed to investigate whether threats to self-esteem provide for higher levels of aggressive behavior than do threats to property and threats to safety in a student population. In addition, level of self-esteem (high, low) was investigated across two levels of the response ("feel like doing", "would do") contingency.

Two instruments were utilized in the study, the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and the Aggression Attribution Inventory (AAI), which was developed for the purposes of the study. The Piers-Harris instrument was used to group students into high and low self-esteem groups, and the AAI provided the dependent variable student aggression scores used in the study. Self-esteem scores were used to group subjects. Students (N=49) who attained self-esteem scores above the median (56.5) were assigned to the high self-esteem group, while the remaining students (49) were assigned to the low self-esteem group. The AAI consists of six vignettes used to sample three types of threat, threats to self-esteem, property, and safety. A six-item likert scale was used to sample behavioral responses ranging from "I'd do nothing" to "I'd hurt'em a lot" on an aggression continuum. Students were asked to score the AAI once under the "feel like doing" contingency and a second time under the "would do" contingency.

Following Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board approval, parent, student and custodial agencies approval, students were invited to participate in this study. Participation was voluntary. Both the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and the Aggression Attribution Inventory (AAI) were read to the students in order to avoid stressing disabled readers.

Demographics

Demographic information included age, gender, grade level, number of grades repeated, and type of family (eg. single parent) where the student had spent the most amount of time. Forty-five percent of the students reported repeating one-to-two grades in school. Academic difficulties were determined to be concomitant with the behavioral and coping skills deficits addressed in day-treatment. Academic difficulties are not unusual in behavior disordered populations (Coutinho, 1989; Foley & Epstein, 1992). Eighty percent of the population referenced a single parent, grandparent, foster parent, adopted parent, or referenced the other-option in describing the home in which they had spent the greatest amount of time. Sixty-eight males and thirty females participated in the study.

Males were disproportionally represented in the study. However, the disparity fell well below the 8:1 ratio found in school programs for students with behavior disorders (Caseau, Luckassen, & Kroth, 1994). Females have traditionally been under represented in programs for the seriously emotionally disturbed (Coleman, 1986). Recent research suggests that the ratio in SED classes is shifting closer to a 4:1 ratio

(Caseau et al., 1994; Singh, Landrum, Donatelli, Hampton, & Ellis, 1994). This ratio is closer to the ratio observed in this study. The study population included one twelve-year-old, three eighteen-year-olds, and one nineteen-year-old. The remaining students (75%) were between the ages of thirteen and seventeen.

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to investigate the affects of threats in combination with self-esteem and response contingency in an effort to explain the variability in student aggression. Ninety-eight students between the ages of twelve and nineteen participated in the study. A day-treatment population was chosen for the study because emotional and behavioral deficits typically provide for higher levels of aggressive behavior. Sites having older populations were invited to participate in the study because the AAI was developed with junior high and high school populations in mind.

Research Hypotheses

Null hypotheses were used to test the following eight hypotheses:

Hypothesis One. It was hypothesized that high and low self-esteem students would respond significantly different to threat (self-esteem, property, safety) and response (feel like doing, would do) independent variables in combination. Study findings failed to support a statistically significant three-way interaction ($F=.810$, $p=.446$). The research hypothesis was rejected and the null hypothesis was retained in the study.

Perhaps a larger research population would have increased the probability of a three-way interaction effect, due to the fact power and

population size are related (Keppel, 1991). There is also the possibility that the self-esteem scores were not a valid assessment of students' self-esteem, due to treatment activities, which encourage positive self evaluations. Basically, the self-esteem variable and response variable in combination failed to contribute to the variability in student aggression scores across three levels of threat.

Hypothesis Two. It was further hypothesized that the self-esteem and response independent variables in combination would differentially influence the variability in student aggression as measured by AAI aggression scores. The self-esteem and response variables in combination were determined not to be a statistically significant influence on student aggression ($F=1.363$, $p=.246$).

Student day-treatment populations exhibit behavioral deficits, learned helplessness, and depression. Behavioral deficits are concomitant with low self-esteem as evidenced by client treatment plans, yet subjects in the study attained a mean score ($\bar{X}=56.76$, $SD=13.87$) on the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale which is 4.92 points higher than that of the standardization population mean ($\bar{X}=51.84$, $SD=13.87$). This disparity strongly suggests the possibility that self-esteem scores were inflated. They may have been uniformly inflated or differentially confounded due to students varying lengths of time in treatment? It is impossible to discern the true impact of level of self-esteem on student aggression when self-esteem scores are an invalid assessment of student self-esteem.

Research suggests that aggressive responding is dependent on both the level and stability of global self-esteem when individuals are challenged with negative, or ego-threatening feedback (Baumeister, Smart,

& Boden, 1996). Level of self-esteem may be determined to impact level of aggression in response to peer threats in populations which have not been taught preferred responding, in terms of queries concerning self.

Hypothesis Three. It was further hypothesized that self-esteem in combination with threat would differentially influence student aggression scores. The self-esteem and threat independent variables in combination were determined to be a nonsignificant differential influence on the variability of student aggression scores ($F=1.406$, $p=.248$).

It is possible that invalid self-esteem scores failed to differentiate responding to threats at high and low self-esteem. Individuals with high self-esteem have been determined to react strongly to such negative feedback as criticism (Baumeister, Heatherton, & Tice, 1993; Baumeister & Tice, 1985; Baumeister, Tice, & Hutton, 1989). There is some evidence that high self-esteemed individuals exhibit stronger responses to criticism than low self-esteemed individuals (Shrauger & Lund, 1975).

Theory suggests that when individuals are challenged with negative external appraisals that are in conflict with self-perceptions they must decide between self-protection (defending self-appraisal) and a negative adjustment in self-esteem (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996). There is also the possibility that due to the unique characteristics of day-treatment student populations, self-esteem fails to impact level of aggression in response to threats.

Hypothesis Four. It was also hypothesized that the response independent variable would differentially influence aggression at three levels of the threat independent variable. The response and threat independent variables in combination were determined to be a

nonsignificant influence on the variability in student aggression scores as measured by the AAI (F=.407,p=.666).

Students in the study consistently responded with higher levels of aggression to the "feel like doing" contingency versus the "would do" contingency across threats: self-esteem ($\bar{X}$=4.066, SD=1.46), property ($\bar{X}$=3.235, SD=1.63), safety ($\bar{X}$=3.58, SD=1.51). It is interesting to note that in a population assumed to have problems evaluating intent and problems maintaining impulse control, students consistently maintained perceptions of being less aggressive than they would like to have been in responding to threats. This dynamic suggests that students exhibited impulse control or that responding was otherwise inhibited.

Hypothesis Five. It was further hypothesized that level of self-esteem would differentially influence level of aggression as measured by AAI aggression scores. It was postulated that students with high self-esteem would respond with higher levels of aggression than students with low self-esteem. With a calculated F of 2.026 and a critical $F_{.05}(1,96)$ value of 4.00, level of self-esteem failed to differentially influence student aggression (p.158).

Baumeister et al. (1994) have argued, ". . . that ego threats elicit negative affect and that negative affect can lead to violence" (p. 27). Conventional wisdom has maintained that low self-esteemed individuals are prone to be more violent than high self-esteem individuals. However, that theory has recently been challenged (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996). Recent research has suggested that when highly favorable views of self are threatened, individuals direct anger outward. Individual who have high self-esteem maintain higher motivation to enhance self-esteem as compared to individuals with low

self-esteem (Baumeister, Tice, & Hutton, 1989; Tice, 1991, 1993). Level of self-esteem failed to differentiate aggressive responding in this study. One possible explanation for the failure of the self-esteem variable to contribute to the variability in aggression is the treatment impact on self-esteem assessment. There is also the possibility that a larger study population might have provided for a statistically significant probability statement.

Hypothesis Six. It was further hypothesized that students would respond with significantly higher levels of aggression to the (a) "feel like doing" versus (b) "would do" levels of the response independent variable. The response variable with a calculated F of 7.446 and a critical $F_{.05}$ (1,96) value of 4.00 was determined to be a statistically significant influence on student aggression scores, as it provided for a .008 probability statement. Omega-squared statistic provided evidence of the practical significance of the influence of response contingency on AAI student aggression scores. The response variable with an omega-squared value of 3% was determined to have a small-sized effect on student aggression (Cohen, 1977). Students responded with significantly higher levels of aggression to the (a) feel like doing contingency ($\bar{X}$=3.95) versus the (b) would do contingency ($\bar{X}$=3.63) of the response independent variable. Students in the study expressed perceptions of feeling more aggressive than they expected to overtly express during negative peer-encounters due to threats. This dynamic suggests, as expected, that responding has been socialized or inhibited.

This dynamic suggested inhibited responding during negative-peer encounters. Would this dynamic be observed in a day-treatment population in an applied setting. Does the security of the testing situation

encourage cognitive processing and better problem-solving? Students have been observed to respond very quickly during negative peer-encounters, suggesting that there is little consideration given to behavioral options and positive problem-solving in an applied setting.

Hypotheses Seven and Eight. It was hypothesized that students would respond with higher levels of aggression, as measured by the AAI, to threats to self-esteem versus threats to property. It was further hypothesized that students would respond with higher levels of aggression to threats to self-esteem versus threats to safety.

With a calculated F value of 19.458 and a critical $F_{.05}(2,192)$ value of 3.00, the threat independent variable provided a probability statement of .000. Additional Tukey post hoc analysis determined that threats to self-esteem versus threats to property provided for a statistically significant higher level of perceived aggression and provided for a <.01 probability statement. Threats to self-esteem versus threats to safety also provided for a <.01 probability statement. Responding to a threat to property versus a threat to safety provided for a statistically significant difference with a <.05 probability statement. Further Omega-squared analysis determined that 11% of the variability in the dependent variable, AAI student aggression scores, was accountable to the threat independent variable. An omega-squared value of 11% is considered to be a medium effect size (Cohen, 1977). The highest level of student aggression was determined to be in response to a threat to self-esteem ($\bar{X}$=4.18), followed by threat to safety ($\bar{X}$=3.76) and, finally, a threat to property ($\bar{X}$=3.43). Students maintained perceptions of higher levels of aggression in response to a threat to self-esteem as compared to threats to safety and property. A threat to property resulted in the

lowest level of perceived aggression.

It was anticipated that students would respond differentially to three levels of the threat variable. Darwin (1858/1958) has suggested that species go to great lengths, including aggressive behavior, to extend their genetic endowment to future generations. Perhaps human beings are genetically endowed with the need to exert a comparable effort to maintain the psychological core self in an effort to exert influence. Perhaps the need to protect the core self, the unique qualities that define self, have implications for species survival. Both self-enhancement theory (Tice, 1991; 1993) and self-verification theory (Swann, 1987) predict that individuals with high self-regard will react the strongest to unflattering or perceived inappropriate negative feedback.

Further research will be necessary in order to substantiate these findings; however, it was determined that students in the study sustained in their efforts to protect the core psychological construct defined through introspective evaluation, termed "self". The highest level of aggression was expressed when the threat was to self-esteem, and the lowest level of aggression was expressed in response to a threat to property. The differences were determined to be statistically significant at the .05 level of significance.

Limitations of the Research

Generalization Issues

Students who attend day-treatment programs exhibit multiple social, coping, and academic skills deficits, as well as behavioral deficits. Behavioral responses are most often maladaptive in nature. These

difficulties limit the generalization of the research. Research findings can not be generalized beyond the midwestern state day-treatment facilities sampled in the study. Day treatment populations are by their very nature small and vastly different from typical public school populations. The study was further limited by the relatively small size of the research population (98). Additional research will be necessary in order to assess how level of self-esteem affects responding to threats across the two response contingencies in other settings.

Instrumentation Issues

Perhaps level of self-esteem would differentially impact responding in other populations. Student responses on self-esteem inventories (in some settings) may reflect preferred, reinforced, or learned responses, rather than true self-perceptions. It is interesting to note that in a population assumed to have lower than average self-esteem scores there was a disparity between the research population and standardization population mean scores. The research population mean self-esteem score exceeded the standardization population mean score by 4.92. The sampled population mean on the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale was 56.76 (SD=13.39) and the standardized population mean was 51.84 (SD=13.84).

A primary focus in all three primary components of day-treatments (individual counseling, group counseling, and recreational therapy) is enhanced self-esteem. Students may learn to voice preferred responses when queried concerning self. This concern is exacerbated by the possibility that length of time in treatment may differentially affect responding on self-esteem assessment instruments, due to differential learning.

The AAI samples typical negative-peer interactions that are

threat-based; however, preferred, or typical, student expressions could not be included in the instrument for ethical reasons. Students were told that "cursing" had been removed from the vignettes. However, there remains some researcher concern over the validity of responding due to the removal of extensive offensive and inappropriate language, typically, used during negative peer encounters.

Recommendations

Day Treatment Interventions

Based on a review of relevant self-esteem and student aggression literature as well as study findings, the following recommendations are intended to enhance day treatment service delivery:

1. Efforts should be made to evaluate self-esteem when clients enter and withdraw from day treatment facilities. Self-reported evaluation, observational data, and other-reported evaluations of subjects' self-esteem should be compared, in terms of congruency. Caution should be exercised in reinforcing preferred evaluations of self in order to avoid false-positive scoring of self-esteem assessments.

2. Students should be helped, through workshops and treatment programs, to understand the control factor inherent in threats, especially threats to self-esteem. Aggressive responding to insults intended to damage self-esteem represents a transfer of personal control and loss of personal power.

3. Negative peer-interactions which include threats to self-esteem should be more closely monitored, and intervention should be provided earlier during altercations, before physical aggression is observed.

Efforts to resolve altercations need to include presentation of evidence inconsistent with the precipitating negative peer-evaluation. Counseling should address aggressor intent and response options as well as disempowerment issues. Students should be encouraged to take time to process and consider both behavioral options and consequences before responding.

The researcher has noted that in applied settings responding to insults inherent in threats to self-esteem is immediate in nature. Students often reference the initiator-of-threats-to-self-esteem as "making me lose it" or "making me crazy" when queried concerning acts of physical aggression following threats to self-esteem. Interestingly enough, the researcher also noted that physical aggression and "winning" most often failed to dissipate anger. The offended student most often insisted that the insults be "taken back" before the difficulty was resolved.

Future Research

1. High and low self-esteemed students' responding to threats to self-esteem, property, and safety across the "feel like doing" and "would do" contingencies of the response variable should be investigated in other student populations.

2. The AAI requires adjustment in order to compensate for the inability to include extensive abusive language. All six vignettes reflect recording of sampled negative peer-encounters at the junior high level. The threats to self-esteem components of the AAI originally included extensive cursing, which by far outweighed content words. Vignettes should be extended to include subject alertings to the fact that such language has been trimmed through spacing or some similar adjustment.

Video presentations might also be effective. Curse words could be blanked out, while facial expresses, time lapses, etc. . . . would allow students to assume, or imagine, material that had been excluded.

3. It is further recommended that an additional response variable be added to the AAI likert scale. "Tell someone" or "get help" options should be added to the scale. This would enable investigators to assess how often students request help. In addition, it would be helpful if students were queried concerning who they would turn to for help. There are a number of questions that could be answered. Do students who feel disempowered prefer adult assistance, or do students seek gang member assistance or single peer assistance? How do students who seek gang assistance differ from students who request adult assistance, and how do students who request peer mediated (non gang member) assistance differ from the other two groups of students? (It is suspected that (a) tell someone and (b) get help would not be a response chosen when the threat is to self-esteem, because of the immediacy-of-responding issue.)

4. It is further recommended that the three threats be investigated in a classroom teacher population as part of a broader investigation of at-risk student classroom behaviors and teacher responding. Threats would need to be adjusted to reflect student-initiated threats targeting teachers.

5. In addition, it is recommended that gang member responding be contrasted with non gang member responding in an investigation of self-esteem, response, and threat variables in an effort to explain differences in variability in student aggression. Perhaps unresolved threats to self-esteem provide some explanation for ongoing gang violence, particularly between rival gangs. It is interesting to note

that the term, respect, is often referenced when gangs are feuding.

6. It is further recommended that a qualitative research investigation be initiated in the investigation of the roles of treats in an effort to explain the variability in level of physical aggression in younger populations (preschool-to-age-12).

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVALS

APR 25 1995 IRB# ED-95-076

APPLICATION FOR REVIEW OF HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH
(PURSUANT TO 45 CFR 46)
OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Title of project (please type): The Threat to Self-esteem variable in Human Aggression

Please attach copy of project thesis or dissertation proposal.

I agree to provide the proper surveillance of this project to ensure that the rights and welfare of the human subjects are properly protected. Additions to or changes in procedures affecting the subjects after the project has been approved will be submitted to the committee for review.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S): (if student, list advisor's name first)

Typed Name	Signature
Dr. Kay Bull	Kay Bull
Patsy LaVonne Roberts	Patsy L. Roberts

Applied Behavioal Studies in Education — Department
Education — College
309 North Murray — Faculty Member's Campus Address
(405) 744-6036 — Campus Phone Number
P.O. Box 130158, Edmond, OK 73013 — Student's Address
(405) 478-4817 — Phone Number

TYPE OF REVIEW REQUESTED:

[X] EXEMPT [ ] EXPEDITED [ ] FULL BOARD

PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Planning, Research, and Evaluation Department

Tuesday, October 24, 1995

Ms. Patsy L. Roberts
P.O. Box 130158
Edmond, OK 73103

Dear Ms. Roberts:

Your proposal to conduct a research program, "The Self-Esteem Mediating Variable in Student Aggression," with students enrolled in the district's Alternative Education Facilities has been approved by our review committee. Mr. the principal of the Alternative Education Facilities, has been sent a copy of your proposal. Please contact Mr. to discuss the actual implementation of your research.

Sincerely,

Administrator

cc:
Principal, Alternative Education Facilities

APPENDIX B

INVITATION LETTERS

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
ABSED GRADUATE STUDY

Your child is being invited to participate in a doctoral student' research project. Dr. Kay Bull, doctoral Chairperson, is supervising this study, which has Oklahoma State University sanction.

The purpose of this study is the exploration of the "threat to self-esteem" variable in aggression. Teachers, students, parents, and administrators are growing increasingly concerned about the level of aggression in public school populations. Efforts to decrease the level of aggression in our public schools have been less than successful. Successful remediative efforts are dependent upon meaningful research. This research project is one of many current efforts to identify "stressers" that provide for, or increase, aggressive behavior in public school populations.

Participants will be given a six item instrument consisting of vignettes (short stories) sampling such behaviors as "name calling", as well as other similar threats. Students will also complete will complete the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale. Anonymous responding to the question, "What would you do if something like that were to happen to you?" will help researchers, counselors, and educators better understand the student-aggression difficulty and thus provide for safer learning environments. Your child will be asked to provide useful demographic information (age, gender, years in school, etc.); however, his/her name will NOT be recorded. All information will remain strictly confidential. Group statistics will be used to provide information supportive of improved classroom environments.

Your signature will allow researchers to invite your child to participate. Your child, in turn, may decide to participate or decline to participate. Participation is entirely voluntary. A student retains the right to withdraw consent/participation at any point without penalty. Participation should require approximately 15 minutes of your child's time.

The Aggression Attribution Inventory (AAI) and Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale will be available for your inspection at the site listed below for a week before administration should you care to inspect the instrument. Questions will be welcomed by the (1) site coordinator, (2) Patsy L. Roberts (405) 478-4817, or Dr. Kay Bull at (405) 744-6036, or University Research Services (405) 744-5700.

Site Location_____

Local Coordinator_____Phone_____

Date Available____/____/____ Administration date___/___/____

I_____hereby give my permission for Patsy L. Roberts, or associates, to invite my child to participate in the above research project and understand that my permission does not obligate my child in any way to participate. In addition, I understand that I may withdraw my permission at anytime.

I have read this form and fully understand it. Through signing this consent form, I freely and voluntarily give my consent for my child to participate in this research project.

Date:___/___/___ Time: _____ (A.M./P.M.)

Parent_____
signature

Child's Name_____

Please return a signed copy of this form and retain the second copy for your records (by the date listed above) should you give your permission for your child to participate

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
ABSED GRADUATE STUDY
ADMINISTRATOR CONSENT FORM

Your students are being invited to participate in a doctoral student's research project. Dr. Kay Bull, doctoral Chairperson, is supervising this study, which has Oklahoma State University sanction.

The purpose of this study is the exploration of the "threat to self-esteem" variable in aggression. Teachers, students, parents, and administrators are growing increasingly concerned about the level of aggression in public school populations. Efforts to decrease the level of aggression in our public schools have been less than successful. Successful remediative efforts are dependent upon meaningful research. This research project is one of many current efforts to identify "stressers" that provide for, or increase, aggressive behavior in public school populations.

Participants will be given a six item instrument consisting of vignettes (short stories) sampling such behaviors as "name calling", and possible personal property damage. Anonymous responding to the question, "What would you do if something like that were to happen to you?" in combination with an 80-item Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale will help researchers, counselors, and educators better understand the student-aggression difficulty and thus provide for safer learning environments. Your child will be asked to provide useful demographic information (age, gender, years in school, etc.); however, his/her name will NOT be recorded. All information will remain strictly confidential. Group statistics will be used to provide information supportive of improved classroom environments.

Your signature will allow researchers to invite your students to participate. Your child, in turn, may decide to participate or decline to participate. Participation is entirely voluntary. A student retains the right to withdraw consent/participation at any point without penalty. Participation should require approximately 15 minutes of your child's time.

The Aggression Attribution Inventory (AAI) and Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale will be available for your inspection at the site listed below for a week before administration should you care to inspect the instrument. Questions will be welcomed by Patsy L. Roberts (405) 478-4817, or Dr. Kay Bull, Applied Behavioral Studies Professor, at (405) 744-6036 as well as University Research Services, 001 Life Sciences East, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078, telephone: (405) 744-5700.

Site Location_____

Local Coordinator_____Phone_____

Administration date___/___/____

I_____hereby give my permission for Patsy L. Roberts, or associates, to invite my students to participate in the above research project and understand that my permission does not obligate my students to participate. In addition, I understand that I may withdraw my permission at anytime.

APPENDIX C

STUDENT CONCERNS

STUDENT CONCERNS

Students were queried concerning their personal concerns for school safety and how schools can best be improved. Students were challenged with how to provide a more inviting environment in which all participants, administrators, teachers, staff, and students can experience safety, respect, and success. The vast majority of the students took the assignment seriously.

Student responses were recorded by a student volunteer or were recorded by the researcher. Similar responses were most often condensed into inclusive statements. For instance, a number of students suggested that appropriate clothing is a difficulty students face. Some suggested that some students are unable to dress well due to financial or other considerations. It was further suggested that particular styles and colors are associated with gang membership and are considered to be a safety factor. Students elected to add "require uniforms" to their concerns-list even though there were a number of reasons why they thought uniforms would be appropriate.

Students consistently agreed on such issues as opening schools after hours for recreational activities, the need for more teachers who have an emotional investment in the welfare of students, and the need to provide more meaningful, career/job related skills opportunities. Students repeatedly suggested "nobody listens to kids".

Students were both gracious and responsive. After completing this activity, the researcher read responses to the query compiled at other sites (with the exception of the first site). They were both pleased and

surprised to note the similarity between lists. The researcher was surprised that students took the activity very seriously and that many of the responses were reflective of teacher and community concerns. The following responses represent concerns that were repeatedly voiced by students. In order to provide security and improve schools, students suggested that communities--

1. Increase security in schools.
2. Provide larger classrooms.
3. Provide more interesting hands-on work.
4. Provide more one-on-one instruction.
5. Hire more teachers.
6. Build more schools in neighborhoods.
7. Provide more counselors to counsel and discipline students.
    a. Counselors need to be available to help students.
    b. Counselors need more unscheduled time to help students.
8. Find better ways to solve problems.
9. Have rules and policies that students understand.
10. Get gangs out of the schools.
11. Have school uniforms.
12. Find better ways to discipline students.
    a. Turn students over to the judicial system.
    b. Use corporal punishment.
    c. Provide after school study halls and tutoring.
    d. Stop suspension because some students want to get suspended.

e. Understand school is not for everyone.

13. Open schools up in the afternoons for recreational activities to keep kids out of trouble.
14. Concentrate on positive comments on report cards and progress reports. (personal comments)
    a. Make students feel better about themselves.
    b. Help students see what they are doing well.
15. Hire more teachers who care about students.
16. Listen to students.
    a. Provide more student choices.
    b. Take student concerns seriously.
    c. Allow students to express concerns.
17. Teach meaningful skills.
18. Respect all people, especially teachers.
19. Allow students to wear what they want to wear.

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT FORMS

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
ABSED GRADUATE STUDY
Youth Consent Form

I_____have been asked by Patsy Roberts to participate in a research project that is looking at what kinds of things make a person angry. The researcher has explained the study to me and has explained that I may decide to stop at anytime during the study. Taking part in this study will involve the following:

1. I will be asked to answer helpful questions such as how old I am, number of brothers and sisters, etc.. My name will NOT be used in any way.

2. I understand that I will read (or the researcher will read to me) six short stories, and I will be asked how I would feel if I were the person in the story. I will also complete an 80-item Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale Instrument. Participating in this research will help researchers understand what makes people most angry, hitting, name calling, or tearing up things.

3. I accept the risk (fatigue, boredom, etc.). It might not be easy to sit for 15-to-20 minutes; however, I will not forget that I may stop at anytime. I do not have to complete the project. There is no penalty for not participating nor is there a specific reward for participation.

4. I understand that if I typically earn tokens or points for "sticking to business" behavior during school, I will not be denied these points or tokens because I have participated in this project.

5. After I complete the project, I understand that I can talk to the researcher, if I want to, and share my ideas about what makes students angry at school.

6. I understand that the purpose of this study is to help make schools a safer place for students like me.

7. I understand that I may contact Patsy Roberts at (405) 478-4817 or Dr. Kay Bull, in ABSED Department at OSU at (405) 744-6036 if I want further information about this project.

I have read (or had the form read to me) and understand this consent form. I sign it freely and am willing to be a part of this research project.

Date___/___/___ Time_____

Signed_____
(signature)

I certify that I orally explained all elements of this form to the subject before inviting the subject to participate by signing this form.

Signed_____
(signature)

APPENDIX E

AGGRESSION ATTRIBUTION INVENTORY

AGGRESSION ATTRIBUTION INVENTORY

(AAI)

The following instructions will be read to subjects:

This instrument has been developed in order to determine what makes you angry, and what you feel like doing when you are angry. The researchers want to see whether or not the same situations make most people angry. Have you ever thought about the things that make you angry? Some things may make you a little angry and other things may make you very angry. Some things may even make you angry enough that you might feel like hurting someone. The big question is what makes different people angry.

I have some stories and to show you. Think about how you would feel if these things were to happen to you. Mark A, if you would do nothing. Mark B, if you would try to get away. Mark C, if you would say something ugly to the person. Mark D, if you would push or shove the person. Mark E, if you would hurt the person a little. Mark F, if you would hurt the person, seriously. So, your choices are A (do nothing), B (get away), C (Say something ugly), D (push or shove), E (hurt the person a little, F (hurt the person, seriously). Do you have any questions? If not, we will begin now.

Please consider the following situations and think about what you would feel like doing if you had a similar experience. Think about

whether or not you would feel angry. Choose a answer choice that is most like how you think you would feel in a similar situation. We will read each short story and cartoon together, and you will answer the question that follows privately. No one will know how you answered the questions. Your answer sheet will be folded once and put in that box. You will not put your name on the answer sheet.

Draw a circle around the one that best describes how you would feel if had a similar experience.

Draw a circle around the one that best describes how you would feel if had a similar experience.

J_____ was walking alone when a group of boys and girls walked by him. One of the students said, "Hi, retard!" and laughed. Then the same student turned to the others and said, "Bonehead's so ugly; I bet he cries himself to sleep at night. I bet his Mother is so ugly she is afraid to look in the mirror at night!"

What would you do if something like that happened to you?

A. Do nothing

B. Get away

C. Say something ugly

D. Push or shove

E. Hurt'em a little

F. Hurt'em seriously

D_____ had been visiting with her friends when someone bumped her and said, "Hah, Fatty, get out of my way. Why don't you get yourself some decent clothes, and learn to walk straight, or go home?"

What would you do if something like that happened to you?

A. Do nothing

B. Get away

C. Say something ugly

D. Push or shove

E. Hurt'em a little

F. Hurt'em seriously

Draw a circle around the one that best describes how you would feel if had a similar experience.

Everyone has favorite possessions. J_____ had a radio that he was really proud of. This kid walked up to him and said, "That's going to be my radio before the day's over. I really like that radio. When you are not looking I'm taking it."

What would you do if something like that happened to you?

A. Do nothing

B. Get away

C. Say something ugly

D. Push or shove

E. Hurt'em a little

F. Hurt'em seriously

J_____ got a new watch for her birthday. All of her friends complimented her on her watch. It had floating rhinestones that made it sparkle in the light. J_____ saw someone drop a note on her desk. The note said, "That's my watch. Just lay it down and it's mine."

What would you do if something like that happened to you?

A. Do nothing

B. Get away

C. Say something ugly

D. Push or shove

E. Hurt'em a little

F. Hurt'em seriously

Draw a circle around the one that best describes how you would feel if had a similar experience.

T_____ was minding his own business when a classmate came up to him and said, "You are in the wrong place at the wrong time and I'm going to hurt you, Man.

What would you do if something like that happened to you?

A. Do nothing

B. Get away

C. Say something ugly

D. Push or shove

E. Hurt'em a little

F. Hurt'em seriously

S_____ didn't really understand why the girl was angry with her, but she did understand the threat. The girl said, "You just wait until after school. I'm going to catch you away from your friends and beat the day lights out of you."

What would you do if something like that happened to you?

A. Do nothing

B. Get away

C. Say something ugly

D. Push or shove

E. Hurt'em a little

F. Hurt'em seriously

Thank you very much for agreeing to spend a few minutes filling out the following questionnaires. I truly appreciate your efforts. We need some information about you in order to analyze the data (questionnaires). Please clip all of your pages together as a unit after you complete them.

Age_____

School: Grade_____ Number of grades repeated_____

Gender: Male_____ Female_____ Grades repeated_____

Please check one of the following:

I am the _____ in my family.

oldest child_____

middle child_____

youngest child____

only child_____

Please check one of the following:

I have spent most of my childhood in a _____home.

single parent_____

two parent_____

parent/step parent_____

two step parent_____

Grandparent_____

Foster parent_____

Other_____

APPENDIX F

STUDY DEMOGRAPHICS AND MEANS SUMMARY TABLES

Table F1

Gender, Age, and Grade Level in Numbers and Percentages (N=98)

Gender		
Males	Females	Total
68 (69%)	30 (31%)	N=98 (100%)

Age			
12	13	14	15
1 (1%)	9 (9%)	13 (13.3%)	23 (23.5%)
16	17	18	19
29 (29.6%)	19 (19.4%)	3 (3.1%)	1 (1%)

Grade			
6	7	8	9
1 (1%)	4 (4.1%)	17 (17.3%)	31 (30.6%)
10	11	12	Other
30 (30.6%)	8 (8.2%)	5 (5.1%)	2 (2%)

(N=98)

Table F2

Number Of Grades Repeated, Home Setting, and Birth Order In Numbers and Percentages

Number of Grades Repeated			
None	One Grade	Two Grades	Three Grades
54 (55.1%)	33(33.7%)	11 (11.2%)	0 (0)

Home Where Student Spent The Greatest Amount Of Time			
Single Parent	Two Parent	Parent/Step parent	Adopted
42 (42.9%)	20 (20.4%)	19 (19.4%)	4 (4.1%)
Grandparent	Foster Parent	Other	Total
5 (5.1%)	3 (3.1)	5 (5.1%)	98 (100%)

Birth Order			
Oldest	Youngest	Middle	Only Child
18 (18.4%)	26 (26.5%)	40 (40.8%)	8 (8.2%)
Missing Responses			Total
6 (6.1%)			98 (100%)

(N=98)

Table F3

Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges of Student Aggression Scores by Self-Esteem, Threat, and Response

Response Level: Feel Like Doing

	Threat1 Self-esteem			Threat2 Property			Threat3 Safety		
	X	SD	Range	X	SD	Range	X	SD	Range
Low Self-Esteem	4.5	1.43	5	3.62	1.56	5	4.01	1.61	5
High	4.10	1.45	5	3.60	1.60	5	3.85	1.43	5

Response Level: Would Do

	Threat1 Self-esteem			Threat2 Property			Threat3 Safety		
	X	SD	Range	X	SD	Range	X	SD	Range
Low Self-Esteem	4.43	1.35	5	3.46	1.68	5	3.68	1.54	5
High	3.71	1.48	5	3.01	1.50	5	3.49	1.45	5

(N=98)

Table F4

Means and Standard Deviations of Student Aggression Scores by Self-Esteem and Response

Feel Like Doing Level of Response

Low Self-Esteem N=49		High Self-Esteem N=49	
Mean	SD	Mean	SD
4.04	1.31	3.85	1.23

Would Do Level of Response

Low Self-Esteem N=49		High Self-Esteem N=49	
Mean	SD	Mean	SD
3.86	1.30	3.40	1.25

Response	Low	High	
Feel like	$\bar{X}$ 4.04 SD 1.31	$\bar{X}$ 3.85 SD 1.23	$\bar{X}$ 3.95 SD 1.27
Would do	$\bar{X}$ 3.86 SD 1.30	$\bar{X}$ 3.40 SD 1.25	$\bar{X}$ 3.63 SD 1.29
	$\bar{X}$ 3.95 SD 1.12	$\bar{X}$ 3.63 Sd 1.15	

(N=98)

Table F5

Means and Standard Deviations of Student Aggression Scores by Self-Esteem and Threat

Low Self-Esteem

N=49

Self-Esteem		Property		Safety	
Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
4.464	1.21	3.546	1.42	3.852	1.31

High Self-Esteem

N=49

Self-Esteem		Property		Safety	
Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
3.903	1.28	3.306	1.44	3.673	1.30

	Self-E	Property	Safety	
L	$\bar{X}$ 4.46 SD 1.22	$\bar{X}$ 3.55 SD 1.42	$\bar{X}$ 3.85 SD 1.30	$\bar{X}$ 3.96 SD 1.12
H	$\bar{X}$ 3.90 SD 1.28	$\bar{X}$ 3.31 SD 1.44	$\bar{X}$ 3.67 SD 1.31	$\bar{X}$ 3.63 SD 1.15
	$\bar{X}$ 4.18 SD 1.24	$\bar{X}$ 3.43 SD 1.43	$\bar{X}$ 3.76 SD 1.30	

(N=98)

Table F6

Means and Standard Deviations of Student Aggression Scores by Threat and Response

Feel Like Doing Level of Response

N=98

Self-Esteem		Property		Safety	
Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
4.301	1.46	3.612	1.60	3.929	1.53

Would Do Level of Response

N=98

Self-Esteem		Property		Safety	
Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
4.066	1.46	3.235	1.63	3.58	1.51

	Self-E	Property	Safety	
Feel like Response	$\bar{X}$ 4.30 SD 1.46	$\bar{X}$ 3.61 SD 1.60	$\bar{X}$ 3.93 SD 1.53	$\bar{X}$ 3.95 SD 1.27
Would do	$\bar{X}$ 4.07 SD 1.46	$\bar{X}$ 3.23 SD 1.63	$\bar{X}$ 3.58 SD 1.31	$\bar{X}$ 3.63 SD 1.29
	$\bar{X}$ 4.18 SD 1.28	$\bar{X}$ 3.43 SD 1.43	X 3.76 SD 1.31	

(N=98)

Table F7

Means and Standard Deviations of Student Aggression Scores by Self-Esteem

Self-Esteem			
Low Self-Esteem		High Self-Esteem	
N=49		N=49	
Mean	SD	Mean	SD
3.96	1.12	3.63	1.15

(N=98)

Table F8

Means and Standard Deviations of Student Aggression Scores by Response

Response			
Feel Like Doing Level		Would Do Level	
Mean	SD	Mean	SD
3.95	1.27	3.63	1.29

(N=98)

Table F9

Means and Standard Deviations of Student Aggression Scores by Threat

Threat					
Self-esteem		Property		Safety	
Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
4.18	1.28	3.43	1.43	3.76	1.31

(N=98)

VITA

Patsy LaVonne Roberts

Candidate for Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: THREAT TO SELF-ESTEEM AS A MEDIATING VARIABLE IN STUDENT AGGRESSION

Major Field: Applied Behavioral Studies

Biographical:

Education: Graduated from Las Cruces High School, Las Cruces, New Mexico in May 1959; received Bachelor of Science Degree in Education from New Mexico State University, University Park, New Mexico in February, 1964; received a Masters of Education Degree in Special Education from University of Central Oklahoma in 1990. Completed requirements for Doctor of Philosophy at Oklahoma State University in December, 1997.

Professional Experience: Taught first grade and headstart in Las Cruces Public School District, Las Cruces, New Mexico 1964-1966. Tutored at-risk students; volunteer in the community and church. Teaching assistant at Oklahoma State University 1991-1996. Taught Special Education (ED, MH, LD) in Oklahoma City Public School District, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 1993 to present. Presently teaching in an adolescent Residential treatment facility (Alternative Education Facility) for Oklahoma City Public School District.