

Temper, temper: Lifetime of aggressiveness leads to negative outcomes

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People who were aggressive as children and young adults are likely to continue that behavior later in adult life and wind up with marital problems, traffic violations and even arrests, a new study shows.

"These individuals also had the lowest levels of [occupational prestige](#) and [educational attainment](#)," said L. Rowell Huesmann, the University of Michigan Amos N. Tversky Collegiate Professor of Communication Studies & Psychology.

Individuals who were regularly aggressive at ages 8, 19 and 30 experienced a difficult later adult life all the way through age 48, according to the study published in the journal *Aggressive Behavior*.

The results also supported other findings that many children grow out of adolescent problem behaviors. Outbreaks of aggressive behavior that were limited to adolescence were shown to have few long-term negative consequences, he said. These results paralleled findings from Britain, Finland and Sweden published in the same journal issue.

Huesmann and his colleagues at the U-M Institute for Social Research used data from the Columbia County Longitudinal Study, a 40-year project of the development of aggression and competence across generations. The study sampled third graders in Columbia County, N.Y. in 1960, then age 8, until 2000 when they were age 48.

The researchers measured long-term consequences of aggressive and

antisocial behavior among 523 participants in childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. Males were typically more aggressive than females, said Huesmann, who is also a researcher at the Institute for Social Research. The outcomes included arrests, [traffic violations](#), [marital problems](#), educational failures, economic failures and health concerns

Individuals who remain high in aggression from age 8 through 30 fared poorly in comparison with others on a variety of criminal and psychosocial outcomes, the research indicated.

The researchers also found greater continuity of aggression for males compared with females. In addition, males who were highly aggressive in childhood were more likely to remain highly aggressive in adulthood than were females who were also highly aggressive in childhood.

Females rated at low levels of aggressiveness during childhood were more likely to remain low in aggressiveness in adulthood than males who were rated low in aggressiveness during childhood.

The researchers also noted that a small number of people who suddenly became more aggressive at age 30 experienced significant negative consequences later in adulthood. This late-onset aggression resulted in depression, problem drinking and poor health at age 48. The majority of this group was female, Huesmann said.

The findings appear in a special section on "Life Span Longitudinal Studies of Aggressive and Criminal Behavior" in the March issue of the journal *Aggressive Behavior*. Huesmann co-wrote the article with Eric Dubow, ISR and Bowling Green State University, and Paul Boxer, ISR and Rutgers University.

Provided by University of Michigan ([news](#) : [web](#))

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