Handbook of School Violence and School Safety
International Research and Practice
Shane R. Jimerson, Amanda B. Nickerson, Matthew J. Mayer, Michael J. Furlong

Conceptual Foundations for Understanding Youth Engaged in Antisocial and Aggressive Behaviors

Publication details
https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203841372.ch1
Shane R. Jimerson, Shelley R. Hart, Tyler L. Renshaw
Published online on: 05 Dec 2011

Accessed on: 27 Oct 2023
https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203841372.ch1

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Section I

Foundations of School Violence and Safety
1 Conceptual Foundations for Understanding Youth Engaged in Antisocial and Aggressive Behaviors

Shane R. Jimerson and Shelley R. Hart
THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA

Tyler L. Renshaw
ALPINE SCHOOL DISTRICT, AMERICAN FORK, UT

Abstract

In efforts to address violence that occurs at school, it is important to consider the conceptual foundations informing our understanding of youth who engage in antisocial and aggressive behaviors. Careful consideration of the developmental trajectories, characteristics, and contexts associated with antisocial behaviors reveals that there is no single profile associated with aggressive behavior. This chapter emphasizes developmental, contextual, and mental health factors that inform our understanding of youth who engage in antisocial and aggressive behaviors, with an emphasis on research-derived models describing how antisocial and aggressive behaviors emerge from the developmental process. A central tenet of this chapter is that youth engaged in antisocial and aggressive behaviors have many needs that community and school-based professionals may address. A summary table highlights practical implications derived from the conceptual and theoretical literature.

Although news media often popularize high-profile incidences of school violence, evidence indicates that schools are among the safest places for youth. Over the past two decades, the safety of schools has been corroborated by two major, national studies—the Indicators of School Crime and Safety (e.g., Dinkes, Kemp, & Baum, 2009) and the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS; e.g., Eaton et al., 2009)—which reveal favorable trends regarding crime, safety, and harm indicators related to youth in the United States. These studies indicate that severe forms of youth victimization (e.g., assault with a deadly weapon) have declined at school, while use of school-based safety and security measures have increased. Nevertheless, concurrent with these favorable trends, two unfavorable trends have surfaced. First, the prevalence of
youth possessing weapons at school persists at a high and stable rate, as 27% of males and 7% of females in grades 9–12 reported carrying a weapon on campus within the last 30 days (Eaton et al., 2009). Second, mild forms of youth victimization (e.g., bullying) are becoming increasingly prevalent at school. For example, during the 2007–2008 school year alone, 1.5 million nonfatal, school-based crimes of violence or theft were reported among 12- to 18-year-old students, while 32% of secondary students and 43% of sixth-grade students reported experiencing bullying at school (Dinkes et al., 2009). Taken together, these emerging trends suggest that, despite much positive headway, there is still ample reason to be concerned about school violence.

The sporadic occurrence of high-profile incidences of school violence, paired with the increasing prevalence of milder forms of violence on campus, has resulted in magnified attention from educators on the origins of antisocial and aggressive behaviors among youth. Educators are primarily concerned about the nature of such behaviors given that any form of violence—and even the potential for it—is antithetical to the nurturing and educational mission of schools and, by extension, the positive development of students. Moreover, educators desire to understand the origins of such behaviors so they can utilize empirical knowledge to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of intervention efforts—aiming to reduce the prevalence and curb the severity of current cases, while preempting the genesis of new cases. These aims, reduction and prevention, are especially important in light of developmental scholarship suggesting that the majority of severe violent behaviors exhibited in adulthood are the fruits of antisocial and aggressive behaviors engendered throughout childhood or adolescence (van Domburgh, Loeber, Bezemer, Stallings, & Stouthamer-Loeber, 2009). Such violence can have far-reaching effects, harming both perpetrators and innocent victims, as well as exacting costs on society as a whole. For example, the monetary costs to society for youth criminal behaviors are especially great, as longitudinal findings estimate that some youth can cost up to $177,000 to $542,000 in public funds over a decade (Welsh et al., 2008). These and other ominous costs have rocketed professional interest in school violence to new heights during the past two decades, making it a global concern (e.g., Jimerson, Swearer, & Espelage, 2010).

The first step toward addressing school violence and ameliorating its menacing effects is to carefully consider the characteristics and contexts of youth who engage in antisocial and aggressive behavior. This chapter addresses these vital considerations, with an emphasis on developmental, contextual, and mental health factors. Specifically, the first section provides an overview of aggressive conduct patterns as delineated in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association [APA], DSM-IV-TR, 2000); the subsequent sections explore research-derived models regarding the emergence of antisocial and aggressive behaviors from human developmental processes; and the final section explores the interface of such behaviors within school contexts.

**Diagnosis of Antisocial and Aggressive Behaviors**

Aggressive behaviors are one of the most common reasons for referral of children and adolescents to mental health professionals (Sugden, Kile, & Hendren, 2006). Such behaviors may have different origins (e.g., impulsivity, affective instability, predatory) and be linked with several different mental health diagnoses (e.g., bipolar disorder, anxiety, autism; Sugden et al., 2006). The disorder of particular interest to the development of antisocial and aggressive behaviors, and thus to school violence, is conduct disorder (CD). Oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) is often a precursor to CD; however, ODD also predicts mood and anxiety disorders. The following section reviews the nature of CD, its subtypes, and related aggressive and antisocial behaviors.
**Conduct Disorder: Diagnosis, Prevalence, and Comorbidity**

Conduct disorder encompasses a pervasive and persistent pattern of aggressive, deceptive, and destructive behaviors (APA, 2000). Youth who meet diagnostic criteria for this disorder (see Table 1.1) usually present challenges in school environments, and are likely to have poor academic performance and exhibit other negative life outcomes (e.g., school dropout, early pregnancy, substance abuse). Recent scholarship estimates the lifetime prevalence of CD at 9.5%, with a significantly higher rate in males than females (12% and 7%, respectively) and a median age-of-onset of between 11- and 12-years-old. Furthermore, recent scholarship suggests that having a diagnosis of CD is a significant risk factor for a plethora of other psychiatric diagnoses—suggesting high comorbidity with mood, anxiety, impulse control, and substance abuse disorders (Nock, Kazdin, Hiripi, & Kessler, 2006)—as well as speech and language disorders and learning disabilities (Benner, Mattison, & Nelson, 2009). Overall, such findings indicate that there can be many shared characteristics among youth with CD diagnoses (Achenbach, 1998).

**Subtypes of Conduct Disorder and Related Aggressive and Antisocial Behaviors**

Whereas there appear to be similarities among individuals diagnosed with CD, current diagnostic criteria (see Table 1.1) promote identification of a variety of aggressive and antisocial youth. As only three of fifteen criterions are required within the last year, with one symptom endorsed in the last six months—the result is a plethora of possible symptom constellations. Furthermore, given different developmental trajectories have been shown to lead to aggressive and antisocial behavior, much attention has been focused on identifying subtypes of CD and their associated developmental pathways (e.g., Loeber, Pardini, Stouthamer-Loeber, & Raine, 2007). Specifically, one way of identifying subtypes via the current diagnostic system is by using the age criterion (i.e., 10 years old) as the specifier for distinguishing between childhood- and adolescent-onset types (APA, 2000). Although this age-based distinction may seem arbitrary, it has been supported by growth mixture models from longitudinal studies and has demonstrated clinical utility, as childhood-onset cases have developed substantially poorer outcomes than adolescent-onset cases (Moffitt et al., 2008).

Several additional subtypes of CD have been proposed, yet the distinctions between **overt** (e.g., public fighting) versus **covert** (e.g., vandalism) and **reactive** (e.g., defensive responses) versus **proactive**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1.1 DSM-IV-TR Criteria for Conduct Disorder</th>
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<tr>
<td>A repetitive and persistent pattern in which the rights or societal norms or rules are violated as manifested by the presence of at least three of the following criteria in the past 12 months (with at least one criterion present in the past 6 months).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Aggression to people and animals</strong>, for example, bullying, threatening, or intimidating others, initiating physical fights, using a weapon that can cause serious physical harm to others (e.g., a bat, brick, broken bottle, knife, gun), being physically cruel to people or animals, or has stolen while confronting a victim (e.g., mugging, purse snatching, extortion, armed robbery), or has forced someone into sexual activity.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Destruction of property</strong>, such as having deliberately engaged in fire setting with the intention of causing serious damage, or has deliberately destroyed others’ property (other than by fire setting).</td>
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<td><strong>Deceitfulness or theft</strong>, for instance, has broken into someone else’s house, building or car, having often lied to obtain goods or favors or to avoid obligations (i.e., “cons” others) or has stolen items of nontrivial value without confronting a victim (e.g., shoplifting, but without breaking and entering; forgery).</td>
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<td><strong>Serious violation of rules such as</strong>, staying out at night despite parental prohibitions (beginning before age 13 years), running away from home overnight (at least twice while living in parental or parental surrogate home or once without returning for a lengthy period), or is often truant from school (beginning before age 13 years).</td>
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(e.g., goal-directed acts) subtypes appear to have the strongest internal and external validation (Connor, 2002). However, Nock and colleagues (2006) recently used latent class analysis to identify five subtypes of CD present in their nationally representative sample (i.e., Rule Violation, Deceit/Theft, Aggressive, Severe Covert, and Pervasive), providing more differentiation than preexisting dichotomous subtypes—allowing for distinctions between both type and severity of symptoms. Despite these and similar scholarly advances regarding subtypes, relatively few changes have been proposed for the new CD diagnostic criteria in the fifth edition of the DSM (see http://www.dsm5.org). One consideration is the addition of a callous and unemotional specifier, suggesting the presence or lack of psychopathy underlying the CD (Lynam et al., 2009). Ultimately, such variance among existing, tentative, and proposed subtypes suggests that youth diagnosed with CD can exhibit a variety of problematic aggressive and antisocial behaviors, have varying levels of genetic and biological risk, and possess differing neurocognitive profiles (Moffitt et al., 2008).

Pathways to Antisocial and Aggressive Behaviors

A review of the relevant research literature and theories indicates there is no singular developmental trajectory leading to long-term antisocial and aggressive behavior, but that such behavior evolves through periods of quiescence and dynamic growth (Patterson & Yoerger, 2002). Developmental and ecological models of antisocial and aggressive behavior focus on family, peer, and school contexts as the primary settings in which these behaviors evolve. The following section briefly overviews the major perspectives accounting for the development of harmful behaviors among youth.

Social Learning Theory Models

Social learning theory posits that (a) learning is a social as well as internal process, (b) behavior is goal directed and eventually becomes self-regulated, and (c) reinforcement and punishment have direct (i.e., behavioral) and indirect (i.e., cognitive) effects (Bandura, 1986). The social learning model emphasizes the importance of antecedents and consequences of behaviors occurring in daily social exchanges between children and others in their social milieus (e.g., parents, siblings, and school staff; Patterson & Yoerger, 2002). For example, if children’s home environments are characterized by parenting styles that include inconsistent discipline and coercion (i.e., positive and negative reinforcement, paired with physical or verbal aggression), such patterns of interaction are likely to become cyclical and reinforced, resulting in parents modeling inappropriate problem-solving methods and inadvertently teaching aggressive behaviors. The social development model integrates social learning theory, control theory, and differential association theory, focusing on how both prosocial and antisocial developmental pathways—fluenced by biological and environmental risk and protective factors—underlie all social behavior (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996). This model emphasizes transitional periods (i.e., preschool, elementary, middle, and high school), acknowledging that certain factors have stronger or weaker influence on social development during sensitive periods (e.g., the family is primary during preschool), and that outcomes from these periods are influential in shaping subsequent developmental manifestations.

Social Information-Processing Model

Rather than placing primary influence on external modeling and reinforcement, the social information-processing model focuses on the role of social cognitions in shaping various antisocial behaviors (Crick & Dodge, 1994). This model hypothesizes that flaws in processing social information (i.e., encoding, interpretation, generation of possible responses, selection of a response,
and enactment of behavior) lead to antisocial and aggressive behaviors. Such information processing flaws have been identified in habitually aggressive children, who tend to concentrate more on hostile or aversive social cues, have memory difficulties that interfere with their processing of social information, and interpret cues from their preexisting aggressive schema (Zelli et al., 1999). As a result, these youth often seek only self-interested goals, retaliate against persons presenting obstacles to obtaining such goals, generate few prosocial solutions for accomplishing their goals, and tend to appraise their aggressive solutions as more effective than prosocial solutions (Calkins & Keane, 2009; Carlson & Cornell, 2008).

**Persistence/Desistence Models of Aggression**

Another way of conceptualizing the origins of youth’s antisocial and aggressive behaviors is by distinguishing between life-course persistent (i.e., aggressive behaviors exhibited from childhood through adulthood) and adolescent-limited trajectories (i.e., aggressive behaviors exhibited between ages 14 and 17; Moffitt, 1993). Youth within these categories have been shown to have distinct differences in etiology, developmental course, prognosis, and severity of harmful behaviors. Specifically, life-course persistent aggression is believed to begin with neurological impairment—caused by genetics, maternal drug exposure, or traumatic brain injury, among other things (Moffitt, 1993)—that has detrimental effects on language-based verbal skills and executive functioning (Moffitt, 1990). Deficiencies in these areas often lead to a host of deleterious outcomes, including poor academic performance, impaired social-information processing, and impulsive behavior, which, in turn, place the child at risk for more negative outcomes, such as substance abuse, school dropout, and gang membership. On the other hand, adolescent-limited aggression involves those youth who engage in antisocial behaviors between early adolescence and young adulthood, primarily as the result of social influences grounded in reinforcement and punishment contingencies. This perspective also hypothesizes that such harmful behaviors exhibited by youth may be part of a natural quest for obtaining maturity and autonomy—seeking a pathway into adulthood (Moffitt, 1993). Overall, contemporary longitudinal research continues to support the distinction between life-course persistent and adolescent-limited aggression, showing that childhood-onset leads to significant impairment in educational, social, behavioral, and vocational domains (Bradshaw, Schaeffer, Petras, & Ialongo, 2010; Odgers et al., 2008); however, even adolescent-limited aggression patterns tend to indicate poorer outcomes (e.g., lower graduation rates, higher unemployment, more incarcerations; Loeber et al., 2007).

**Transactional-Ecological Developmental Model**

Similar to the previously described models, the transactional-ecological developmental model is a framework for understanding the dynamic processes by which children and contexts shape each other (Sameroff, 2009). Specifically, this model posits that all human development is an adaption that is shaped at three primary levels: the (a) genotype (i.e., genetic and biochemical makeup), (b) phenotype (i.e., phenomenological experience and current developmental expressions), and (c) environtype (i.e., multilevel nested environments; Sameroff, 2000). These three levels interface via transactions—or multilevel interactions throughout time—continuously taking place among them. To take a simplified example, a child’s biological makeup (genotype) may predispose him to poor decision-making skills, while the family environment (environtype) may be characterized by chaotic or volatile interactions, and thus the child may behave (phenotype) in a manner that further elicits negative responses from within the given context. As a result, over time, this dynamic interplay may serve as a pathway for developing antisocial or aggressive behaviors. However, this perspective allows for different developmental pathways—or combinations of risk and protective factors—to lead to similar developmental expressions (i.e., equifinality), while
allowing that initially similar developmental pathways may lead to divergent developmental expressions (i.e., multifinality; Gutman, Sameroff, & Cole, 2003). In this way, no particular constellation of personal or environmental variables determines antisocial or aggressive behaviors among youth; rather, children and contexts both influence each other, forming interactive feedback loops throughout time that fuel human development and ultimately manifest in such harmful behaviors (Sameroff, 2009).

**Antisocial and Aggressive Behaviors and the School Context**

The boundaries between antisocial or aggressive behaviors and typical behaviors are often first met within educational contexts when youth’s behavior exceeds acceptable norms. As a result, schools are also the most likely setting for providing intervention to remediate such behaviors. To facilitate the best interventions possible, it is imperative for school personnel to be equipped with an accurate understanding of how harmful behaviors develop, as described above, and how such behaviors interface with various elements in school systems. The following section focuses on the latter, describing how schools react to antisocial and aggressive behaviors and how these reactions influence such behaviors—and vice versa.

**Common Educational Practices Associated with Antisocial and Aggressive Behaviors**

Common educational practices utilized by schools may have unfavorable influences on the development of students’ antisocial or aggressive behaviors. Specifically, methods employed by schools to identify students with disabilities impact how school personnel address the needs of youth manifesting antisocial and aggressive behaviors. For example, given that students classified with emotional disturbance (ED) are reported by teachers to have higher rates of substantive threats and fighting at school (e.g., Bradley, Doolittle, & Bartolotta, 2008; Kaplan & Cornell, 2005), students exhibiting antisocial or aggressive behaviors may be hastily classified with ED, without full consideration of their constellation of presenting problems. Students exhibiting such behaviors may also, sometimes, be excluded from disability consideration altogether, because they are deemed to be “socially maladjusted,” despite no diagnostic or legal definition for this term (Olympia, Farley, Christiansen, Pettersson, & Clark, 2004). Moreover, students identified with both learning disabilities (LD) and antisocial or aggressive behaviors are disproportionately more likely to be served under the LD category only, unless the behaviors become a primary focus for intervention, in which case they are also at risk for exclusion from services (Morrison & D’Incau, 2000). These discouraging trends suggest that many students manifesting antisocial or aggressive behaviors may be inappropriately classified for special education services, resulting in missed opportunities for appropriate intervention. To remedy this situation, school professionals must diligently attend to the nuances of the identification process, making sure to link all assessment information—despite the resulting classification status—to appropriate prevention and intervention services.

Once a youth engages in antisocial or aggressive behaviors, the disciplinary reactions of school officials, teachers, parents, and others may facilitate more or less favorable outcomes (Casp, Elder, & Bem, 1988). Because school disciplinary systems address only rule-violating behaviors, and because zero-tolerance policies are common, school personnel may often ignore extenuating circumstances surrounding youth exhibiting harmful behaviors (Krezmien, Leone, & Achilles, 2006), resulting in high rates of school exclusion (i.e., suspension and expulsion) for such students. School exclusion, although a popular and modern practice, has been shown to have negative effects on many students exhibiting antisocial and aggressive behaviors, resulting in increased perpetration of offending behaviors (Hemphill, Toumbourou, Herrenkohl,
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McMorris, & Catalano, 2006). While protected by additional safeguards, students in special education who exhibit antisocial and aggressive behaviors may be disproportionately subject to exclusionary practices, given suspension and expulsion rates of students classified with ED (i.e., 64%) are three times higher than those of students in other disability categories (Bradley et al., 2008). Thus, the discipline trends of particular schools, as well as the disciplinary zeitgeist of school systems in general, may unintentionally serve as a contextual risk factor contributing to continued misbehavior. However, given the transactional nature of human development, common educational practices are not the only forces shaping students’ behavior; individual protective and risk factors also play a key role in shaping how students interface with school contexts (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990).

Individual Characteristics Associated with Antisocial and Aggressive Behaviors

Students exhibiting antisocial and other harmful behaviors at school often show early signs of aggression, defiance, victimization, academic failure, and peer rejection (White & Loeber, 2008). Such youth may also show deficits in (a) social behaviors, (b) cognitive and affective empathy, (c) self-regulation, (d) generation of prosocial solutions, (e) conflict resolution, and (e) work habits (Calkins & Keane, 2009; Campbell et al., 2010; Dodge, Coie, & Lynam, 2006; Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2004). Moreover, such children typically do not often engage in teacher-pleasing behaviors (e.g., working neatly and quietly; Bradley et al., 2008), and they tend to disproportionately endorse aggressive behaviors as a means to positive social outcomes (Carlson & Cornell, 2008). Recognition of these and other risk factors is imperative, given the recent developmental scholarship indicating the predictive power of certain personal characteristics with particular future-life outcomes. For example, personal risk factors such as hyperactivity, fearlessness, and low prosocial behaviors in Kindergarten have been shown to predict deviant peer group affiliation twelve years later (Lacourse et al., 2006).

In contrast, protective—or resilience—factors may counterbalance some of the aforementioned risk factors, facilitating more prosocial outcomes for such students. For instance, personal characteristics such as sociability, problem-solving ability, planning ability, and internal locus of control are likely to help children establish better relationships with parents, teachers, and other critical adults. In turn, such relationships are likely to result in students making increased positive life-course decisions and having more positive perceptions of their self-control, cooperation, self-efficacy, cognitive abilities, and social problem-solving ability (Clarke & Clarke, 1994; Elias & Branden, 1988; Jessor, Van Den Bos, Vanderryn, Costa, & Turbin, 1995; Rutter, 1979). Thus, when working with children exhibiting antisocial and aggressive behaviors, the challenge for school systems and professionals is to minimize the effect of personal risk factors by maximizing and emphasizing the development of personal protective factors. But beyond personal factors, schools may also shape students’ behavior through both group and schoolwide influences.

Group Influences Associated with Antisocial and Aggressive Behaviors

The influence of social or peer affiliations in students’ development of antisocial and aggressive behaviors is pivotal (Dodge et al., 2006). Specifically, peer social clusters are highly influential given that they create and maintain group behavioral norms that may be transmitted into adulthood, even following group affiliation changes. Thus, research has found that peer social networks, and even brief experiences that facilitate a similar in-group sentiment, can profoundly influence negative behaviors such as aggression, bullying, and ostracism (Nipedal, Nesdale, & Killen, 2010). However, the opposite is also true, as group influences have been demonstrated to shape positive student behaviors in both academic and social realms (Farmer et al., 2010). Within the school context, classrooms serve as quintessential group settings, where students and teachers
create and negotiate a climate that influences academic, behavioral, and social adjustment of all students within the group. For this reason, teachers’ skills and personal characteristics can serve as settings events—or risk and protective factors—for students’ development of antisocial and aggressive behaviors (Farmer et al., 2010).

Some common risk factors for students struggling with such behaviors include teachers lacking strategies for addressing students’ developmental delays (La Paro, Pianta, & Cox, 2000), as well as an increase of negative teacher–attention that hampers the development of positive student–teacher relationships (Blankemeyer, Flannery, & Vazsonyi, 2002; Reinke & Herman, 2002). In contrast, some common protective factors for such students include teachers employing effective instructional techniques (e.g., classwide and peer tutoring), reinforcement of student strengths and behaviors, early intervention for learning problems, and positive regard for students and student–teacher relationships (Farmer et al., 2010; Scott, Nelson, & Liaupsin, 2001). Thus, such findings indicate that teachers can play a significant role as classroom architects who shape an environment that can, in turn, exacerbate or curb students’ development of antisocial and aggressive behaviors.

**Schoolwide Influences Associated with Antisocial and Aggressive Behaviors**

Schoolwide influences can also help to exacerbate or curb students’ development of antisocial and aggressive behaviors. A disorderly school environment—characterized by vague rules and expectations, low academic achievement, and high antisocial behaviors—is likely to be an especially potent risk factor for students who need clear expectations and structure (Gottfredson, 1989; McEvoy & Welker, 2000), resulting in high suspension and expulsion rates for such students (Civil Rights Project, 2000). Furthermore, school environments characterized by ambiguous sanctions, punitive teacher attitudes, poor teacher–administrator cooperation, and use of physical safety restrictions (e.g., metal detectors, high fencing, etc.) are associated with problem behaviors and alienation among students (Mayer & Leone, 1999). Also, schools with higher rates of suspension, as discussed above, often have higher student–teacher ratios, more negative teacher attitudes and lower expectations of students, and poorer academic performance (Ostroff, 1992; Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1982). In such schools, school personnel spend more time on discipline–related matters and therefore pay significantly less attention to issues of school climate (Bickel & Qualls, 1980), which affect all students’ development. A reciprocal cycle is thus established, in which schools with poorer climates and environments serve as contextual risk factors for developing antisocial and aggressive behaviors, while students exhibiting such behaviors shape even poorer school climates and environments, and so on. Considering this situation, recent scholarship suggests that schools combine elements of social emotional learning with schoolwide positive behavioral support programming, to better support students with interrelated needs in both social–emotional, behavioral, and academic domains (Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010).

**Concluding Comments Regarding Youth Exhibiting Antisocial and Aggressive Behaviors**

Youths engaged in antisocial and aggressive behaviors represent a heterogeneous group of students. Given that both the presence and potential for school violence hampers the educational environment, it is imperative that educators and scholars are equipped with current empirical information that will help them better understand, intervene with, and prevent antisocial and aggressive behaviors among youth (implications for practice are delineated in Table 1.2). This chapter provided a brief overview of such timely information, focusing on (a) the relation of...
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Table 1.2 Implications for Practice: Towards an Understanding of Youth Engaging in Antisocial and Aggressive Behaviors

1. Youth engaged in antisocial and aggressive behaviors represent a diverse group; there is no single profile, thus, education professionals should aim to identify risk factors and facilitate healthy adjustment among all students.

2. Many youth engaged in antisocial and aggressive behaviors face numerous challenges in multiple settings (e.g., at home, with peers, at school), and thus, have many needs to be addressed.

3. Each of the theories recognizes the importance of early identification and intervention to address the needs of youth engaged in antisocial and aggressive behaviors; thus, early antisocial and aggressive behaviors warrant serious attention to provide appropriate early interventions to address both behavioral and underlying emotional problems.

4. There is no single theory to explain the patterns of antisocial and aggressive behaviors among youth; thus, education professionals are encouraged to consider the transactional-ecological developmental perspective, which better models the complex interplay among factors influencing antisocial and aggressive trajectories.

5. Applied research focusing on the interface of antisocial developmental patterns and the schooling process has the potential support screening, prevention, and intervention efforts.

6. School policies, practices, and relationships have important influences on the well-being of youth engaged in antisocial and aggressive behaviors; thus, it is essential to carefully consider school factors in efforts to address problem behaviors.

7. Intervention plans emphasizing skills students need in order to behave in a more appropriate manner, or plans providing motivation to conform to required standards, are generally most effective.

8. The school is a premier social setting which affords the opportunity to systematically screen for youth with antisocial behavioral patterns.

9. Schools are generally among the safest places for youth and provide an important context to promote their well-being and address their needs (e.g., academic, cognitive, social, emotional, and mental health).

antisocial and aggressive behaviors to the psychiatric diagnosis of conduct disorders and its subtypes, (b) the various and interrelated pathways for conceptualizing the origins of students’ antisocial and aggressive behaviors, and (c) the multiple factors influencing the development of such behaviors as they interface with school contexts. With such information, it is imperative to recognize that youth exhibiting antisocial and aggressive behaviors have significant needs, and that the most efficient and effective approach toward helping such students is early identification and intervention services. Moreover, universal-level prevention programs aimed at enhancing the social and cognitive competence of all youth are especially warranted—to promote schoolwide well-being and academic success, while simultaneously reducing the potential for school violence. Ultimately, such efforts will facilitate the development of healthier children, families, schools, and communities.

Note

Portions of this chapter were adapted from Jimerson, S. R., Morrison, G. M., Fletcher, S. W., & Furlong, M. J. (2006). Youth engaged in antisocial and aggressive behaviors: Who are they? In S. R. Jimerson & M. J. Furlong (Eds.), Handbook of school violence and school safety: From research to practice (pp. 3–19). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

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