THE EFFECTS OF THE AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE REDUCTION TRAINING PROGRAM ON AFRICAN-AMERICAN ADOLESCENT MALES

by

FAY CARLISE BILLINGS

(Under the direction of Larry Nackerud)

ABSTRACT

The Aggression and Violence Reduction Training Program (AVT) was implemented with African-American adolescent males referred by probation officers and judges in the Fulton County Juvenile Justice System in Atlanta, Georgia. Twenty-one adolescent males comprised the purposive sample of this research study. The treatment group consisted of ten adolescent males and the control group consisted of eleven adolescent males.

The AVT was an eight session program that utilized cognitive-behavioral techniques to reduce low to moderate levels of aggression and violence in adolescent African-American males. The program/intervention addressed social skills training, anger management, and violence education through such methods as group activities, discussions, handouts, video presentations, homework, role playing

activities, facilitator feedback, and group feedback. The study utilized a quasi-experimental non-equivalent control group design to evaluate efficacy of the intervention. Questionnaires were completed by the youth and their parent or caregiver at pre and post-testing. The youth completed the Conners-Wells' Adolescent Self-Report Scale (CASS) and the Aggression Questionnaire (AQ). The parent or caregiver completed the Conners' Parent Rating Scales-Revised (CPR-R) and a Behavioral Questionnaire (BQ).

Data collected were analyzed using the independent-samples t-test and the paired-samples t-test. Based on the results of the independent-samples t-test, the groups were not found to be statistically significantly different on the pretest prior to the intervention. After the intervention, statistical significance was found based on the results of two of the four measures; the CASS completed by the youth and the BQ completed by the parent/guardian. Differences in the control group were not observed. Of four hypotheses, two were fully substantiated and two were partially substantiated.

INDEX WORDS: Aggression, Violence, African-American Adolescent males, Cognitive-behavioral treatment, Quasi-experimental design

THE EFFECTS OF THE AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE REDUCTION TRAINING PROGRAM ON AFRICAN AMERICAN ADOLESCENT MALES

by

FAY CARLISE BILLINGS

B.A., Hampton University, 1993

M.S.W., The University of Georgia, 1998

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment

of the

Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2003

THE EFFECTS OF THE AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE REDUCTION TRAINING PROGRAM ON AFRICAN AMERICAN ADOLESCENT MALES

by

FAY CARLISE BILLINGS

Major Professor: Larry Nackerud

Committee: Bonnie Yegidis
Rufus Larkin

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
August 2003

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. (Joshua 1:9, NIV) As God commanded Joshua he too has commanded me. That which God has asked me to do has come so easily. I never knew following his will for my life could be so rewarding, even in the midst of challenge.

I would like to thank my committee, Drs. Nackerud, Yegidis, and Larkin for their support throughout the past three years, especially this last year. I can only wish that every student were as lucky as I, to have the *Dream Team* of a committee. Words simply can not express how much each of you has influenced me in your own individual way. I thank you…

To Marty, Kat, Jeanell, Teresa, and Emma without your positive attitudes and willingness to help, I don't know where I would be.

To mommy and daddy, I can't thank you enough for your continued support. You must know that your lives have always been an example of strength, perseverance, and love which I am Blessed to have modeled.

To my baby sisters, Stacey, Fritzie, and LeAnn, who quite honestly are the talented ones; thank you for keeping me inspired. Knowing that you guys continued to look-up to me even though I was struggling through this program kept me inspired and motivated to succeed.

Auntie, who ever thought it would be your steps for which I would follow… I only hope that I will be able to accomplish as much as you have.

Grandma Cathcart, Grandma Hunt and Aunt Sarita, your prayers and heartfelt concern, kept me covered… for that I thank you.

To my friends and entire family including the Bridges and McDaniels, my loving extended family; thank you for always checking on me to make sure I was doing okay! Your words of encouragement were greatly appreciated.

And to the most important person; my Ku'Uhoa, Koy… my husband and best friend (and educational coach): You were the one who made sure I was studying, made sure I finished my papers, and made the motivational speeches that helped sustain and encourage me over the past three years. I can not believe how truly fortunate I am to have you as husband. The sacrifices you made to make sure I was able to put school first were tremendous. Your love is so amazing…thank you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....iv

LIST OF TABLES.....vii

LIST OF FIGURES.....viii

CHAPTER

1 INTRODUCTION.....1

2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....12

3 METHODOLOGY.....81

4 RESULTS.....101

5 DISCUSSION.....114

REFERENCES 131

APPENDICES

A THE CONNERS-WELLS' ADOLESCENT SELF-REPORT SCALE.....151

B AGGRESSION QUESTIONNAIRE.....154

C THE CONNERS' PARENT RATING SCALES-REVISED.....157

D BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONNAIRE.....160

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE

1 Understanding the Concept of Aggression 27

2 Understanding the Concept of Violence 28

3 Distribution of Selected Demographic Variables for 21 Participants in the Treatment and Control Group 103

4 Independent-Samples T-Test Analysis of the Conners-Wells' Adolescent Self-Report Scale (CASS), the Aggression Questionnaire (AQ), the Conners' Parent Rating Scales-Revised CPRR), and the Behavioral Questionnaire 106

5 Paired-Samples T-Test Analysis of the Conners-Wells' Adolescent Self-Report Scale (CASS), the Aggression Questionnaire (AQ), the Conners' Parent Rating Scales-Revised(CPRR), and the Behavioral Questionnaire (BQ)(Treatment group). 107

6 Paired-Samples T-Test Analysis of the Conners-Wells' Adolescent Self-Report Scale (CASS), the Aggression Questionnaire (AQ), the Conners' Parent Rating Scales-Revised(CPRR), and the Behavioral Questionnaire (BQ)(Control group). 108

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE

1 Relationship Between the Concepts.....31

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Presently on any given day in the United States, 1.5 million individuals are incarcerated. In any one year, over 10 million Americans will see the inside of a prison or jail (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998). For every 100,000 adults, 202 were incarcerated in state or federal prisons in 1985. By 1995, this figure had doubled and by 1997, for every 100,000 adults, 445 were incarcerated. This figure included prison population only, and when jail populations were added, the rate increased to 652 adults incarcerated for every 100,000 American adults. By the end of 1980, over 1.8 million individuals were in jail or prison (Mackenzie, 2000).

National records of the total correctional population included people on probation or parole as well as those in prison. The total correctional population which consisted of those in prison, probation or parole rose from 1.8 million in 1980 to 5.7 million in 1997. Looking at this 17 year time span, the probation rate increased 191 percent, parole rates increased 213 percent, and the number of prisons built increased at a rate of 271 percent. Over 4.1

million adult men and women were on probation or parole by 1998 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998).

A comparison of the arrest rates between male and female juveniles revealed that arrest rates for serious violent crimes committed by males were 6.6 times higher than that for females. According to the Uniform Crime Reports, between 1980 and 1998, the average arrest rate for males was 8.6 per 1,000 persons, whereas the arrest rate for females was 1.3 per 1,000 persons (Lynch, 2002). During this 20 year time period, it was also noted that arrest rates for serious violent crimes were much higher for African-American juveniles than for White juveniles. On average African-American juveniles accounted for 16.6 arrests per 1,000 persons, whereas White juveniles accounted for 3.0 arrests per 1,000 persons (Lynch, 2002).

The noticeable challenge concurrent with adolescent aggression and violence is the disproportionate number of African-American youth that are presently in contact with the juvenile justice system. In fact, research has shown that African-American juveniles are overrepresented at all stages of the juvenile justice system. African-American youth comprise 15% of the juvenile population in comparison to 79% of White youth and five percent of other races. Yet African-American youth account for 42% of violent crime

arrests compared to 55% for White youth. In regards to such crimes as robbery, African-American youth account for 54% of arrests, yet White youth account for only 43% of arrests. Based on the crime of murder and non-negligent manslaughter, African-American youth represent 49% of arrests whereas White youth represent 47% of arrests. One crime that did not reflect a disparity in arrests was arson. White youth accounted for 80% of arson arrests where as African-American youth accounted for only 18% of arson arrests (Hawkins, Laub, Lauritsen, & Cothern, 2000).

Moreover, African-American youth are charged with more criminal offenses, and are five times more likely than their White counterparts to be detained in jail, prison, placed on parole, or on probation. African-American youth are also at a cumulative disadvantage because they are more frequently tried in adult courts and incarcerated in adult prisons (Bilchik, 1999). In fact, nearly 60% of youthful offenders in adult state prisons are African-American (Coalition for Juvenile Justice, 2002).

According to Mackenzie (2000), African-American and Hispanic males had the greatest overall rate of incarceration. While only six percent of the United States population is African-American and male, almost half of the men in prison are African-American. Imprisonment for

African-American men occurs at a rate of more than six times higher than that of White American males. In fact for every 100,000 White Americans, 306 are in prison; yet for every 100,000 African-Americans, 1,947 are in prison (Mendez, 2000). Further in a national study conducted in 1990, it was discovered that 1 of 4 African-American men between the ages of 18 and 35 were in prison, on probation, on parole, on bail, or being sought by police with a warrant (Lindesmith Center, 2000).

African-American youth are at an even greater risk. African-American youth in the United States between the ages of 10-17 constitute 15% of this age group, yet account for 26% of juvenile arrests. Of the 32% of juvenile delinquency cases referred to juvenile court, African-American youth comprise 41% of those detained, 46% of those placed in correctional institutions, and 52% of those transferred to adult criminal court after juvenile judicial hearing (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998; Building Blocks for Youth, 2000).

African-American youth are four times more likely than White youth to be incarcerated for the same type of property offense. Regarding crimes related to personal offenses, African-American youth are six times more likely to be incarcerated than White youth who commit the same

crime. Adolescent African-American offenders are twice as likely as their White counterparts to be transferred to adult court. Presently, one of every three African-American adolescent males is on probation on parole, in juvenile detention, or in jail awaiting prison (Coalition for Juvenile Justice, 2002). The latter occurs when some youthful offenders remain in juvenile detention or jail until majority age, at which time they are transferred to adult prisons.

The disparity in the criminal justice system which is reflected in arrests, parole, probation, and incarceration records is abhorrent. The residual of the disproportionate numbers of African-American youth incarcerated greatly impacts the community, family, and individual. Adolescent male incarceration effects educational achievement, reduces employability, and the individual's loss of voting rights impacts his influence upon local, state, and national government (Billings & Todd, 2001). The family is impacted by alteration in the family structure and loss of the male responsibility to the family as a son, father, or brother (Mendez, 2000). The criminal record for an adolescent is a constant blemish that follows him into adulthood. Even though under the juvenile justice system, this file is

considered a confidential document, the stigma remains (Billings & Todd, 2001).

Concerns regarding the consequences of aggressive and violent behavior among this population have prompted the development and implementation of interventions through rehabilitation programs (Yung & Hammond, 1995). Additional concerns reflect the lack of statistical evidence that supports program evaluation regarding treatment success or failure (Blueprints for Violence Prevention, 1998). Today there are several community and school-based programs available nationwide that address youth aggression and violence. However, these programs rarely produce empirical evidence that substantiates the efficacy of their intervention. In fact, Elliott (1995) revealed that 95% of community programs do not produce scientific data supporting program efficacy (Hoagwood, 2000). Such school-based and community-based programs are often promoted and implemented, but because they are untested, could be harmful and produce adverse effects for those seeking treatment (Hoagwood, 2000).

In addition, obtaining research data that accurately reflects the social concerns of African-Americans has been identified as a challenge. African-American researchers began to articulate the problem regarding the lack of

research on African-Americans as early as the 1970s (Billingsley, 1970; Nobles, 1978). Early research regarding African-American social issues was found to reflect prejudice, ignorance, and arrogance. Further, research literature of that time period, identified the problems of the Black family in "negativistic, problem-laden, and pathological terms" (Billingsley, 1970; Nobles, 1978, p. 679).

Obtaining research data utilizing at-risk populations, such as African-Americans, continues to present a challenge, even today. There is a lack of trust between African-Americans and researchers; there is a fear that the research will in some way negatively impact the research participant; and there is a concern that the research obtained will not provide a benefit to the population being studied (See, 1998; See, 2001). In addition, human service providers continue to use interventions with this population that are not culturally sensitive and lack evidence of effectiveness (See, 2001). Such fears and concerns greatly reduce the ability to collect data on this population and obtain data through extensive literature reviews. This lack of literature was articulated by See (1998):

> Human service professionals, who have worked extensively with African-American client systems, still lament the fact that when complex race-specific behavioral problems surface in practice, there is an absence of data sources where accumulated writings by African-American professionals about African-Americans can be quickly retrieved (See, 1998, p. 2).

Therefore, providing research data that adds to the field of social work through the use of an empirically validated intervention with African-American aggressive adolescent males is a necessity.

Research supports using a behavioral approach to address aggressive and violent behavior (Bandura, 1973; Bandura, 1989; Feldman & Wodarski, 1975; Wodarski & Wodarski, 1998; Yung & Hammond, 1995). Behavioral approaches are most effective when they focus on three critical elements that are often lacking among aggressive and violent youth: social skills training, anger management, and violence education. Research suggests that interventions utilizing these three components greatly impacts aggressive behaviors in adolescent youth (Cotton et al., 1994; Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 1991; Feindler & Ecton, 1986; Goldstein & Glick, 1987; Hammond & Yung, 199l;

Harris, 1993; Webster, Gainer, & Champion, 1993; Wells & Miller, 1993).

The current researcher drew upon a broader context and examined social, behavioral and family issues that surrounded the imprisonment of African-American youth and concluded with an intervention program designed to alter the high susceptibility of African-American youth to criminal arrest. The proposed intervention program targeted early onset aggressive and violent behaviors in African-American adolescent males. The display of intense anger, uncontrollable temper, spontaneous outbursts, disruptive classroom behavior, and fighting were behaviors that often served as predictors to delinquency and criminal arrest. Hence, this study sought to determine whether teaching African-American male youth preventive measures, curtails negative behaviors. The hope is that the intervention implemented will longitudinally assist in reducing the disproportionate number of African-American male youth being served by the criminal justice system.

The purpose of this study was to answer the research question: Is the Aggression and Violence Reduction Training Program (AVT) effective for reducing levels of aggression in African-American adolescent males, such that the effect is statistically significant? In addition, this

study sought to add to existing research by providing an empirically validated intervention that addressed low to moderate levels of aggression among African-American male youth. This study utilized a quasi-experimental design selected to determine the efficacy of the intervention (Rubbin & Babbie, 2001). The design consisted of a treatment and control group [delayed treatment/wait-list group] where each received pretest and posttest measurements of their level of aggression as reported by African-American youth and their caregiver. The following hypotheses were generated to provide direction for the dissertation and hypothesis testing:

1. Posttest mean scores on the Conners-Wells' Adolescent Self-Report Scale (CASS) and the Aggression Questionnaire (AQ) will be significantly reduced from pretest scores for youth in the experimental group.
2. Pretest and Posttest mean scores on the CASS and AQ will not be significantly different for the youth in the control group.
3. Posttest mean scores on the Conners' Parent Rating Scales-Revised (CPR-R) and the Behavioral questionnaire (completed by parent or guardian) will be significantly reduced from pretest scores for the experimental group.

4. Pretest and Posttest mean scores on the CPR-R and Behavioral Questionnaire (completed by parent or guardian) will not be significantly different for the youth in the control group.

Results from this study are intended to offer social workers, school and community educators, and other human service providers a statistically supported treatment modality that can be used in a community or school setting to address the presence of and the early onset of aggression in African-American males. The study further provides theoretical references for practitioners that will guide their assessments and placement of youth into violence prevention programs. Results from this study seek to add to the body of knowledge that supports the use of an empirically validated treatment modality with youth of a specific population. Finally, results from this study may document evidence for effectiveness in programs designed to curtail violent behavior among African-American youth.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The open display of aggression and violence directly attributed to adolescents has become a priority in American society (U.S. Department of Health and Human Service, 2001). Findings have revealed that those adolescents who participate in violent acts before the age of 13, in general, commit more crimes (Elliott, Hagan, & McCord, 1998). These crimes then lead to more serious crimes extending over a longer period of time. The pattern of violence for these adolescents begins in childhood and progresses with age into adulthood. It is important to note that not all adolescents will be violent offenders when they reach adulthood. However, if they are not rehabilitated prior to the transition into adulthood many will continue to commit crimes as they mature (Elliott, Hagan, & McCord, 1998; U.S. Department of Health and Human Service, 2001).

At present there is limited empirical research available that primarily focuses upon African-American adolescent violence and aggression, especially research that leads to or provides data supporting effective

interventions. The purpose of this study was to answer the research question: Is the Aggression and Violence Reduction Training Program (AVT) effective for reducing levels of aggression in African-American adolescent males, such that the effect is statistically significant? In addition, this study sought to add to existing research by providing an empirically validated intervention that addressed low to moderate levels of aggression among African-American male youth.

This chapter presents the following: (1) aggression and violence among adolescents, (2) perceptions of violence among African-American youth, (3) predictors of youth violence, and (4) conceptual understanding of aggression and violence. In addition, this chapter examines six theories and/or perspectives of violence and crime related to this research study. Those theories include Ecological Systems Theory, Social Learning Theory, Differential Association Theory, General Strain Theory, Social Control Theory, and the understanding of aggression and violence among African-American youth. Lastly, this chapter discusses the intervention used in the current research study.

Aggression and Violence among Adolescents

Violence in the United States is a growing concern, and violence among youth has become especially disturbing. The statistical evidence of aggression and violence for African-American youth is alarming. The violent crime index in America includes four serious offenses: murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. The total number of juvenile arrests under the violent crime index in 1998 was 112,200. African-American youth accounted for 42% of the total arrests. The number of juvenile arrests for murder was 2,100; African-American youth accounted for 49% of these arrests. The total number of juvenile arrests for rape was 5,300; African-American youth accounted for 39% of the arrests. For robbery, the total number of arrests was 32,500; African-American youth accounted for 54% of the arrests. Lastly, 72,300 juvenile arrests were made for aggravated assault; African-American youth accounted for 37% of these arrests (Bilchick, 1999; Building Blocks for Youth, 2000).

The offense profile of African-American adolescent males under the age of 18 is equally alarming. African-American adolescent males comprise 63% of the criminal justice system for violent crimes in 1997. For property crimes, this population accounted for 16% of arrests, a

decline from 32% in 1985. However, criminal offenses related to drugs increased during this time period. In 1985, African-American adolescent males accounted for approximately 2% of arrests. However, by 1997 the number of arrests had increased to 15% (Bilchick, 1999; Building Blocks for Youth, 2000).

Perceptions of Violence among African-American Youth

Establishing consequences to crime for African-American adolescent males has become a source of contention within the criminal justice system. Although disproportionate numbers between African-American youth and White youth do exist, many service providers attribute the disparity in sentencing to the perception of aggression and violence by those in authority. Bridges and Steen (1998) found that the difference in sentencing for African-American youth in comparison to White youth was based on how the youth were perceived by people in positions of power. Bridges and Steen (1998) reviewed racial disparities in the official assessments of juvenile offenders and found that attributional stereotypes were being used to justify sentencing recommendations.

Bridges and Steen (1998) found that aggression and violence in African-American youth were attributed to internal attributions, such as lack of self-control and

self deprivation; whereas aggression and violence in White youth were connected to external attributions, such as environmental factors. For example, the behavior of African-American youth is often viewed as out-of-control and deficient (internal attributions), whereas the behavior of White youth is attributed to an alcoholic parent or a bad environment (external attributions).

Too often these attributions are used to make sentencing recommendations and assess the adolescents' threat for future crime. Bridges and Steen (1998) found that court officials regarded internal attributions more severely than the crime itself or the criminal history of the adolescent when determining the offender's recidivism rate.

Predictors to Youth Violence

Predictors of youth violence were identified by Hawkins, Herrenkohl, Farrington, Brewer, Catalano, Harachi, and Cothern (2000) through a meta-analysis that was completed using 66 research studies that examined the relationship between risk factors and youth violence. Twenty-two researchers conducted the evaluation over a two-year period. The studies selected met rigid criteria: (1) juveniles must live within their community (2) research participants were not chosen based upon prior criminal or

violent offense records, (3) the studies had to measure interpersonal physical violence or acts resulting in physical injury or threat of physical injury to another person, (4) a modifiable indicator of a predictor or risk factor had to be identified, studies with multiple risk factors were excluded along with those dealing with race and gender as precursors to violence, (5) the study design had to be longitudinal with results based upon prospective or retrospective data, and (6) individual research participants served as the unit of analysis for both independent and dependent variables. The study showed that predictors of youth violence were categorized within five domains: individual, family, school, peer-related, and community and neighborhood (Herrenkohl, Maguin, Hill, Hawkins, & Abbott, 2000; in Hawkins et al., 2000).

Individual Predictors

Pregnancy or delivery complications present in a youth's birth history, low resting heart rate, and internalizing disorders, such as anxiety, were analyzed to determine whether a correlational relationship existed between youth violence and aggression. The evidence, however, was inconsistent in identifying these characteristics as predictors of youth violence. Kandel and Mednick (1991) found that when violent offenders were

compared to property offenders and nonoffenders, that 80% of violent offenders scored high on delivery complications in comparison to 30% of property offenders and 47% of nonoffenders. In contrast, Denno (1990) and Farrington (1997) found no association between delivery complications and youth violence. Slightly negative correlations were found when the relationship between internalizing disorders and youth violence were analyzed. Low resting heart rate was identified to be indicative of a fearless temperament, thus predisposing youth to aggression and violence (Raine & Jones, 1987). Farrington (1989) measured this finding and found that a low resting heart rate and internalizing disorders were weak predictors of youth violence.

Hawkins et al. (2000) found that hyperactivity as a factor was indicated by problems with concentration, restlessness, and risk taking and was found to have a significant relationship with predicted violent behavior. Several school-based programs have recently implemented interventions to address attention deficit/hyperactivity (ADD-H) problems among adolescents due to the disruptive nature of those youth in the classroom environment, on the child's inability to learn, and based upon the linkage between hyperactivity and youth violence (Hawkins et al.,

2000; Klinteberg, Andersson, Magnusson, & Stattin, 1993 in Hawkins et al., 2000).

Other predictors such as aggressiveness, early initiation into violent behavior, antisocial behavior, and beliefs and attitudes favoring deviant behavior were all found to have positive correlations to violent behavior in youth. Violence among males especially was noted when aggressive behavior was identified at 6 years of age and continued through 13 years of age (Hawkins et al., 2000). Also early aggression, congruent with antisocial behavior, was found to be a strong predictor of propensity for violent crime (Hawkins et al., 2000; Loeber, 1990, 1996; Loeber and Hay, 1996; Olweus, 1979).

McCord and Ensiminger (1995) conducted a longitudinal study to determine if early aggressive behavior predicted future criminal activity (Hawkins, et al., 2000). A sample of six-year-old African-American boys in the Woodlawn area of Chicago was obtained for the study. Nearly half of the six year-olds rated as aggressive by their teachers, had been arrested for a violent crime by the age of 33. Researchers have demonstrated that the early onset of aggression, violence, and delinquency is associated with chronic violence observed in older youth and adults (Farrington, 1991; Hawkins et al., 2000; Piper, 1985;

Thornberry, Huizinga, and Loeber, 1995; and Tolan and Thomas, 1995).

Family Predictors

Through research on the family, parental criminality as a predictor of youth violence, revealed significant findings. However, Hawkins et al. (2000) recommended that further research was needed in order to investigate the relationship between parental criminality and type of youth violence. Even though studies by Baker and Mednick (1984) and Farrington (1989) found a significant relationship between boys and an incarcerated parent as a predictor of youth violence, a study by Moffitt (1987) showed individuals with a criminal parent were no more likely to be arrested for a violent offense than those with no criminal parents. Moffitt's study surveyed adults between the ages of 29-52 who had a parent with a criminal record. Other family factors such as child maltreatment in the form of physical abuse or neglect by a parent or guardian also was found to be a predictor of youth violence (Hawkins et al., 2000; Smith and Thornberry, 1995; Zingraff, Leiter, Myers, & Johnson, 1993; Widom, 1989).

Family structure, family bonding and conflict management, and level of parental involvement also were found to have a significant impact on predicting youth

violence. Failure to set clear guidelines for a child's behavior, poor monitoring and supervision, and inconsistent disciplinary methods were identifiable predictive characteristics. Strong parental involvement was found to be a deterrent to future violence among youth (Hawkins et al., 2000), whereas low levels of parental involvement were found to be a precursor to violence among youth (Williams, 1994; in Hawkins et al., 2000). Randolph et al. (1996) found a significant association between family stress and conflict as factors in predicting aggression among African-American male adolescents (Randolph et al., 1996).

School Predictors

Commitment to school and educational advancement among youth deters juvenile delinquency and participation in criminal activity (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996; Hawkins et al., 2000; Hirschi, 1969). High school attachment is a stronger deterrent to delinquent behavior among African-American students and boys than in White students and females (Hawkins et al., 2000; Williams, 1994); and poor academic achievement is a greater predictor of youth violence among females than among males. However, poor academic achievement overall is a strong predictor for future youth violence, and the earlier the academic failure, the greater the risk for later violent behavior

(Denno, 1990; Farrington, 1989; Hawkins et al., 2000; Maguin & Loeber, 1996; Maguin, Hawkins, Catalano, Hill, Abbott, & Herrenkohl, 1995; in Hawkins et al., 2000).

Truancy and dropping out of school, frequent school transitions, and alternative-type schools are determinative predictors for future youth violence (Hawkins et al., 2000). Farrington (1989) and Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice, and Tremblay, (1996) reported truancy and school drop out as predictors to future youth violence, but also noted that other factors such as frequent school transitions could contribute to truancy and school drop out rates that are congruent with predictive factors of youth violence (Hawkins, et al., 2000). Farrington (1989) found that youth who attended schools with a high delinquency rate were more inclined to participate in violent acts than youth not involved in alternative-type schools (Hawkins et al., 2000).

Peer-related Predictors

Delinquent siblings and peers have a direct impact on non-delinquent siblings and peers (Hawkins et al., 2000). Early involvement with an offending sibling or friend increases the likelihood of that individual becoming associated with criminal activity (Farrington, 1989). This offending relationship is stronger in girls than in boys

(Williams, 1994). The peer relationship is equally influential. In some studies, peer-rejection was found to be a predictor of future delinquent behavior. Miller-Johnson et al. (1999) conducted a study with African-American boys and girls and found that for boys, childhood peer rejection and aggression was a strong predictor of delinquency. In fact, for boys, the combination of peer-rejection and aggression was associated with felony assaults. Other researchers like Coie, Dodge, & Coppetelli (1982) and Coie et al. (1991) have also found a significant relationship between childhood aggression and peer rejection. Gang affiliation, however, is a stronger contributor of youth violence than an association with delinquent peers and siblings (Battin, Hill, Abbott, Catalano, Hawkins, 1998; Hawkins et al., 2000).

Community and Neighborhood Predictors

Within the community several predictors of aggressive and violent behaviors among youth are identified. Poverty, low attachment to one's neighborhood and community disengagement, the availability of drugs and firearms, exposure to violence and racial prejudice, laws and norms conducive to violence, and frequent media portrayals of violence are contributive factors to violence (Brewer, Hawkins, Catalano, Neckerman, 1995; Elliott, Huizinga, &

Ageton, 1985; Elliott & Wilson, 1996; Gottfredson, McNeil, & Gottfredson, 1991; Simcha-Fagan & Schwartz, 1986). Additional studies show that poverty and low family income are predictors to future involvement of youth violence and crime (Farrington, 1989; Hawkins et al., 2000; Henry, Avshalom, Moffitt, & Silva, 1996; Hogh & Wolf, 1983; Wikstrom, 1985; Sampson & Lauritsen, 1994). Community disengagement is defined as communities in which gangs, poor housing, crime, and drugs are rampant. The presence of these characteristics within communities serves as greater predictors of youth violence than engaged communities (Hawkins et al., 2000).

According to Paschall (1996), exposure to violence and crime, not only within one's home and community, but globally leads to increased risks of susceptibility to crime and violence (Hawkins et al., 2000). Researchers also have found that African-American youth who report experiencing racial discrimination and racial profiling have a tendency to commit more violent acts (Gary, 1981; Majors & Billson, 1992; McCord & Ensminger, 1995; in Hawkins, et al., 2000; Townsey, 1981).

Conceptual Understanding of Aggression and Violence

Theories have been created to bring about understanding of human aggression and how it contributes to

violent behavior. Many researchers and theorists have provided definitions of aggression to help service providers understand the complexity of the word and its relationship to violence. This section provides the reader with an understanding of the two concepts, and how they relate to antisocial behavior among youth.

Aggression as seen in Table 1 has been defined by several theorists and researchers. The definitions are similar, and some are more descriptive than others. The difficulty lies in identifying one central definition that is common to all human service providers.

According to Table 1, aggression is referred to as a behavior. Each researcher defines aggression as a behavior directed towards someone or something (Berkowitz, 1993; Huesmann & Miller, 1994; Renfrew, 1997). The behavior could be either physical or verbal (Delva-Tauili'ili, 1995), and the result of aggression is personal injury or destruction of property (Bandura, 1973). The result of aggressive behavior is also defined as violence (Farrington, 1998). Aggression and violence tend to have an interchangeable effect because the two are so closely related.

Table 1

Understanding the Concept of Aggression

Definition	Source
Aggression is defined as behavior that results in personal injury and in destruction of property. p. 5	Bandura, A. (1973). *Aggression: A social learning analysis*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
Any form of behavior that is intended to injure someone physically or psychologically. p. 3	Berkowitz, L. (1993). *Aggression: Its causes, consequences, and control*. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.
Behaviors by one individual that are intended to injure or irritate another individual. Eron, Walder, & Lefkowitz (1971), p. 155	Huesmann, L. R. & Miller, L. S. (1994). Long-term effects of repeated exposure to media violence in childhood. In L. R. Huesmann (Ed.) *Aggressive Behavior* (pp. 153-186). New York: Plenum Press.
Aggressive behaviors are defined as physical and verbal behaviors that a youth or group of youths exhibit in an attempt to injure others.	Delva-Tauili'ili, J. (1995). Assessment and prevention of aggressive behavior among youths of color: Integrating cultural and social factors. *Social Work in Education*, 17 (2), 83-92.
Aggression is a behavior that is directed by an organism toward a target, resulting in damage.	Renfrew, J. (1997). *Aggression and its causes*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Aggression is further explained to be the increased dependency and the intensified feelings of one's own weakness which lead to greater feelings of inferiority that may contribute to feelings of anger and a drive for aggression in order to compensate for such a loss.	Smithmeyer, C., Hubbard, J., & Simmons, R. (2000). Proactive and reactive aggression in delinquent adolescents: Relations to aggression outcome expectancies. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 29 (1), 86-93.

Table 2 provides several definitions of violence that in some ways appear to be similar to aggression.

Violence like aggression is also defined as a behavior (Blackburn, 1993; Farrington, 1998). However, violence according to the definitions of Moore & Tonry (1998) has a more irrevocable effect on the youth and his victim. Such lasting effects include interaction with the criminal

justice system that can result in probation, parole, and/or a prison sentence. According to Borduin, & Schaeffer

Table 2

Understanding the Concept of Violence

Definition	Source
The use or credible threat of use of physical force intended to physically harm other persons or property. p.21	Elliott, D. & Tolan, P. (1999). Youth prevention, intervention, and social policy: An overview. In Flannery, D. & Huff, C. (Eds.). *Youth violence: Prevention, intervention, and social policy.* Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, Inc.
…the forceful infliction of physical injury (Blackburn, 1993, p. 210)	In McGuire (1997). Psycho-social approaches to the understanding and reduction of violence in young people. In Varma, V. (Ed.). *Violence in children and adolescents*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
…behaviour by people or against people liable to cause physical or psychological harm (Gulbenkian Foundation, p.10)	In McGuire (1997). Psycho-social approaches to the understanding and reduction of violence in young people. In Varma, V. (Ed.). *Violence in children and adolescents*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
The term "violent" is reserved for those adolescents who have been adjudicated for crimes against people (e.g., physical assault, armed robbery, homicide) p. 145.	Borduin, C. & Schaeffer, C. (1998). Violent offending in adolescence: Epidemiology, correlates, outcomes, and treatment. In Gullotta, T., Adams, G., Montemayor, R., (Eds.). *Delinquent violent youth: theory and interventions*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
Physical trauma or injury: something is violent if flesh has been torn or bones have been broken. Violence also suggests….that the trauma has not just occurred accidentally; it has been inflicted. p. 3	Moore, M. & Tonry, M. (Eds.). (1998). *Youth Violence* (Vol. 24). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
Behavior that is intended to cause and actually causes injury…and incidents where there is intentional and threatened injury, but no actual injury…p. 422	Farrington, D. (1998). Predictors, causes, and correlates of male youth violence. In Moore, M. & Tonry, M. (Eds.). (1998). *Youth Violence* (Vol. 24). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

1998) the term violent is usually used to refer to youth who have been adjudicated.

The similarities in the definitions often cause difficulty in distinguishing between the two concepts, but they are distinctively different. Bandura (1973) defines aggression as a behavior that results in personal injury and in destruction of property. Delva-Tauili'ili (1995) defines aggression as physical and verbal behaviors that a youth or group of youths exhibit in an attempt to injure others. Other researchers have defined aggression with emphasis on the behavior of the individual (Berkowitz, 1993; Huesmann, & Miller, 1994; Renfrew, 1997); or as an action (Berkowitz, 1993; Renfrew, 1997). Elliott and Tolan (1999) provide a specific definition for violence: "the use or credible threat of use of physical force intended to physically harm other persons or property" (p.21).

If this is indeed the case, then aggression can be identified as a behavior that leads to or perpetuates an act of violence. For clarity and better understanding, this paper will define aggression as behaviors or actions towards others that may result in physical or emotional harm. Violence will be defined as the outcome of aggressive behaviors. In other words, aggression is the antecedent and violence is the consequence or outcome

(Bandura, 1973; Delva-Tauili'ili, 1995; Elliott & Tolan, 1999; Renfrew, 1997).

Two additional concepts associated with aggression and violence among youth are delinquency and antisocial behavior. Delinquency is defined as criminal behavior, and juvenile delinquency is defined as criminal behavior committed by a minor (Siegel & Senna, 1994). Recall that violence has been defined as the outcome of an aggressive behavior which results in adjudication. Therefore aggressive youth who commit violent acts and are adjudicated are called juvenile delinquents (Farrington, 1998; Siegel & Senna, 1994; Varma, 1997). Delinquency provides the connection to antisocial behavior.

Antisocial behavior is defined as externalizing actions such as aggressive, defiant, and impulsive behavior that violates the rights of others or society. From a legal perspective, a child or adolescent is considered delinquent if his antisocial/aggressive behavior leads to an act of violence for which the consequence involves the criminal justice system (Bourduin & Schaeffer, 1998; Hinshaw & Zupan, 1997).

Figure 1 was created to help us understand how the concepts are connected. Aggressive behavior and antisocial behavior are used in research literature to refer to

adolescent behaviors that are physically harmful to others, the term violent offender or juvenile delinquent, is not used until the adolescent has been adjudicated for acts of violence {e.g. physical assault, robbery, homicide, vandalism} against a person or property (Borduin & Schaeffer, 1998).

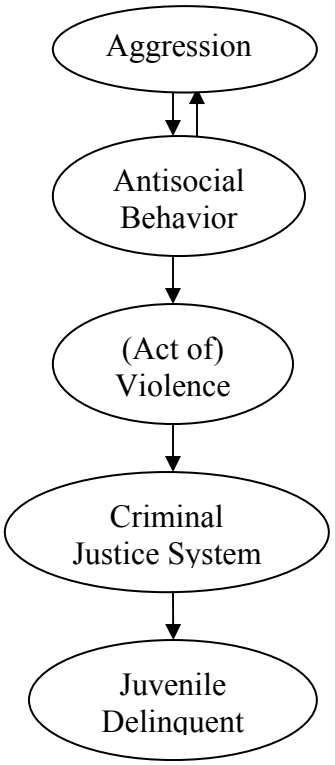

Figure 1. Relationship Between the Concepts[1]

Figure 1 illustrates aggression in adolescents which is found to lead to antisocial behavior and vice versa, antisocial behavior can cause aggression among adolescents.

[1]Explanation derived from the following sources: Borduin & Schaeffer, 1998; Delva-Tauili'ili, 1995; Farrington, 1998; Moore & Tonry, 1998; Siegel & Senna, 1994; Varma, 1997.

The presence of aggression and antisocial behavior leads to an act of violence committed by the youth. Once the act of violence occurs, and the youthful offender is detained, he then comes in contact with the criminal justice system. As a result of his interaction with the justice system, he is then deemed a juvenile delinquent.

Aggressive behaviors also referred to as antisocial behaviors identify actions of individuals that contribute to violence. There are many different types of aggression that could manifest in an individual. Subtypes of aggression and antisocial behaviors include physical aggression, such as bullying or fighting, and verbal aggression, such as name calling. Instrumental or goal-directed aggression (Feshbach, 1970 in Hinshaw & Zupan, 1997) occurs when, for example, a youth pushes another in order to obtain an item blocked by the victim. Additional subtypes include hostile aggression (which occurs when pain is inflicted upon others), proactive aggression, and reactive aggression (Dodge & Coie, 1987; Hinshaw & Zupan, 1997). Direct and indirect aggression, and overt and covert aggression, concludes the present list of aggression subtypes (Hinshaw & Zupan, 1997).

Aggression in adolescents most often identified by researchers is reactive and proactive aggression (Brown &

Parsons, 1998; Dodge & Coie, 1987; Smithmyer, et al., 2000). Reactive aggression is defined as a response to a perceived threat. The reaction is defensive in nature even though the response may exceed the threat. The root of the aggressive behavior is frustration that stems from viewing a threat as an obstruction to goal attainment (Berkowitz, 1990; Brown & Parsons, 1998; Dollard, et al., 1939). For example, an adolescent who is walking in a crowded hallway at school may react violently when another student bumps into him and knocks his books out of his arm. The adolescent views this act as a personal attack against him. Such behavior is difficult to manage by real or perceived consequences due to the impulsivity and non-mediated quality of reactive aggression (Brown & Parsons, 1998).

Proactive aggression is defined as a deliberate goal-directed behavior that occurs without provocation (Brown & Parsons, 1998; Smithmyer, et al., 2000). Brown & Parsons (1998) argue that proactive aggression is a learned behavior that is controlled by contingencies. Further, Dodge & Coie (1987) note that an adolescent displaying such behavior intends to harm, dominate, or coerce another adolescent to achieve a goal. For example, if a third boy, standing with the adolescent who had his books knocked out of his arm in the hallway yelled at the perpetrator, his

reaction would be viewed as proactive. He is either trying to get the attention of his friend, bully the other guy into an apology, or instigate a scene between the perpetrator and the victim. Regardless of reasoning, both reactive and proactive aggression can be addressed with proper intervention. Due to the nature of this study, the intervention used focuses on reactive aggression, also referred to as affective aggression (Wells & Miller, 1993).

Theories and Perspectives of Aggression and Violence

The varying levels of aggression enable researchers and service providers to understand the precise kinds of aggressive and antisocial behavior patterns that are exhibited in youth. This understanding is important because researchers have found that there is a significant correlation between childhood aggression and violence (Farrington, 1998). In order to understand the prevalence of youth violence, researchers and providers utilize theoretical explanations. The Ecological System's Theory provides an environmental explanation to youth violence, while Social Learning Theory purports that violent behavior is learned and much of that learning takes place in the child's natural environment. Three additional theories, Differential Association Theory, General Strain Theory, and Social Control theory seek to explain violence from a

criminology perspective. Lastly, Hawkins (1990) provides an explanation of violence among African-American adolescents as being attributed to several factors, such as discrimination and racism. Each theory or explanation contributes understanding regarding the etiology of violence, and provides the reader with a greater knowledge of how violent behavior evolves in individuals, especially youth.

Ecological Systems Theory

Ecological Systems Theory and Social Learning Theory, in many aspects, work together to explain aggression and violence in adolescents. Although youth violence extends across class, race, gender, and communities, most offenders and victims of violence are disproportionately male, Black, urban, and from low income and single parent families (Elliott, 1994). When examining the high rate of violence in this ethnic group, the neighborhood in which the adolescent lives is sometimes viewed as a catalyst to the violent behavior. The presence of gangs and illegal activity, such as drug trafficking provide a high level of exposure to violence, violent role models, and positive rewards for violent activities (Elliott, 1994).

Using the environment as a key component, Ecological Systems Theory (EST) is in the forefront for explaining

aggression and violence. EST focuses on the surroundings of the adolescent and his inability to adapt to those surroundings that lead to aggressive behavior. Bronfenbrenner (1989) defines ecological theory:

> The ecology of human development is the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation, *throughout the life course*, between an active, growing human being, and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by the relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded (p. 188).

Social workers and other human service providers frequently use this theory to analyze an individual in the context of their environment. The *person in the environment* is one of three models identified by Bronfenbrenner, and it is a combination of both the *social address model* and *personal attributes model*. The social address model identifies demographic characteristics related to an adolescent's development. Some of those characteristics are social class, family size, birth order, and rural versus urban residence. More recent characteristics have been added, which include, but are not limited to, one versus two-parent families, home care

versus day care, number of hours the father spends in child care and household tasks, and mother's employment status. This model, as Bronfenbrenner acknowledges, does not examine the environment in detail. It does not take into consideration what the environment is like, the type of people who live in the environment, what takes place in the environment, and how these activities affect the adolescent (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1983; in Brofenbrenner 1989).

In summary, the social address model delves into the inner-workings of the person. The personal attributes model, however, focuses on an adolescents' development by examining only the characteristics of that individual at an early age (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). It adheres to the internal attributes of youth, in other words, those characteristics within the individual that cause him/her to react appropriately or inappropriately.

The person-in-the-environment model is the model with which social workers are most familiar (Devore & Schlesinger, 1999; Morales & Sheafor, 2002). This model focuses on both environmental and individual characteristics simultaneously. The strength of this model is that it acknowledges *ecological niches,* which are

> …regions in the environment that are especially favorable or unfavorable to the development of

> individuals with particular personal characteristics (Bronfenbrenner, 1989, p.194).

This model yields credibility in its application to African-American males as an explanation of the effects of disadvantaged neighborhoods upon those youth raised in urban environments.

A study by Elliott & Wilson (1996) utilized EST to determine adolescent ability to persevere in disadvantaged neighborhoods. In spite of stereotypes and misnomers often associated with youth of urban neighborhoods, Elliott & Wilson (1996) maintained that a majority of youth achieve adequate levels of self-efficacy, personal competence, and commitment to conventionality that enable them to transition into productive adults.

Elliott & Wilson (1996) provided an explanation of the disadvantaged neighborhood and its effect on neighborhood organization and culture. The disadvantaged neighborhood is often associated with poverty and urban inequality. However, to appropriately define this type of environment, several characteristics should be explored. In addition to poverty, the characteristics of the disadvantaged neighborhood described by Elliott & Wilson (1996) include:

> …high rates of unemployment, cultural heterogeneity, and population turnover (Shaw & McKay, 1942); changes

> in the structure of the job market, for example the elimination or relocation of skilled manufacturing jobs (Wilson, 1987, 1991); family composition, particularly the prevalence of single-parent families with children (Land et al., 1990; Reis & Tonry, 1986; Sampson & Groves, 1989; Sampson & Lauritsen, 1994; Wilson, 1987); and the impact of urban renewal and other housing policies (Bursik, 1989; Logan& Molotch, 1987; Sampson & Wilson, 1995; Skogan, 1986) (p. 391).

Incorporating the aforementioned characteristics as ecological indicators of neighborhoods that are disadvantaged provides a more comprehensive perspective on the social ecology of neighborhoods than does the characteristic of poverty alone. This multi-trait perspective to analyzing neighborhoods that are disadvantaged is also theoretically grounded (Elliott & Wilson, 1996) and, thus, appropriate for examining aggression and violence among youth with demographics similar to the characteristics systemic to disadvantaged neighborhoods. Using this multidimensional focus on disadvantaged neighborhoods no longer isolates poverty as the determining factor, and it encourages social workers and researchers to examine a combination of characteristics, such as chronic unemployment and non-

traditional families as precursors to aggression and violence. For example, single parent homes, common to disadvantaged neighborhoods, may contribute to the adverse development of an adolescent.

Social Learning Theory

An alternative to Ecological Theory's explanation of aggression and violence in the African-American adolescent male is the rationalization for learned behavior. Whether the adolescent is modeling the behavior of peers or responding to the reinforcement of acceptance based on completing some type of activity (Elliott & Wilson 1996), both explain Social Learning Theory.

Albert Bandura (1989) describes observation learning as the model that includes "new behavior patterns, judgmental standards, cognitive competencies, and generative rules for creating new forms of behavior" (p. 17). This model includes four components by which learning is achieved. The *attentional process* is the process by which youth observe many different modeling influences such as family, friends, and community members like gang leaders, and determine what information will be extracted from their observation. The next stage places the observation into memory. The *retention process* involves transforming and restructuring those observations modeled

into rules and ideas to be memorized. The *behavioral production process*, the third process in modeling, requires that idea or conception be translated into appropriate behavior. The final process is *motivational processing*. It is not possible to perform every behavior learned, therefore motivating factors evolve to determine which behaviors will be performed (Bandura, 1989).

The three major types of motivating factors are direct, vicarious, and self-produced motivators. Adolescents are more likely to repeat an observed behavior when the outcome is rewarding. Personal convictions also motivate the reproduction of a behavior. That behavior which satisfies the adolescent's need is repeated, versus that behavior which is personally disapproved and thus rejected (Bandura, 1989).

An adolescent's ability to observe behavior and submit that observation through the four steps or processes depends on their development process (Bandura, 1989). The developmental process for the adolescent rightfully begins at birth, and extends throughout the growth and maturation phase into adulthood.

Differential Association Theory

Differential Association Theory (DAT) is one of the oldest theories explaining aggressive behaviors that lead

to crime. Its evolution began in 1939 by Edwin Sutherland (Title, Burke, & Jackson, 1986) and has since gone through several revisions. Delinquency according to this theory is a learned behavior that occurs in primarily small informal groups. Within these groups, collective experiences and specific, situational, and current events are shared (Goddard, Goff, & Melancon, 2000). In other words according to Sutherland (1973), Differential Association:

> Refers to both criminal and anti-criminal associations and has to do with counteracting forces. When persons become criminals, they do so because of contacts with criminal patterns and also because of isolation from anti-criminal patterns (Opp, 1989, p. 7).

Before the development of the DAT, criminal behavior was explained as a multi-factor approach. Based on this approach, criminal behavior occurred as a result of one or more contributing variables; age, minority status, mental disorders, broken homes, social class, alcoholic parents, and inadequate socialization. DAT was conceptualized in efforts to remove the theory of crime from unorganized factors to scientific understanding (Sutherland, 1973; in Matsueda, 1988). The theory consists of three interrelated concepts: (1) normative (culture) conflict, (2) differential association, and (3) differential social

organization. Differential social organization is categorized by two levels of explanation; the society (group) and the individual (Cressey, 1960; in Matusueda, 1988).

Normative conflict

DAT assumes that theory is rooted in normative conflict, which exists as a result of segmented groups within society maintaining a conflictual relationship over norms, values, and interests. Group conflict occurs as a result of group interpretation of the law: some groups define law as rules to be adhered to in all circumstances; other groups define the law as rules to adhere to in most situations, but some aspects of the law can be violated under special conditions. Lastly, there are groups that define the law as rules to be broken at anytime (Matsueda, 1988). These varying interpretations best reflect the diverse modern society in which we live. Unfortunately, such a diverse environment produces high rates of crime. A society that is relatively homogeneous with the same values, norms, and basic interpretation of law as rules to be strictly adhered to would undoubtedly experience lower rates of crime.

Matsueda (1988) introduces the historical standpoint by which crime originates, noting that the passing of

criminal laws evolved as a political expression of normative conflict. In other words, the behavior of one particular group in society threatened the values, interests, or beliefs of another group that was politically more powerful. The more powerful group then used political influence to make the behavior in question illegal. This is an example of normative conflict. Those within the powerful group define the law and dictate how rules should be followed. Other groups recognizing that the behavior is now defined as an illegal act, will change their behavior and attitude to reflect the new law. However, there will be groups that will not follow the change, and as a result, will continue behaviors newly defined as illegal (Sutherland, 1974; in Matsueda, 1988).

Differential association

Differential association provides understanding of normative conflict on individual acts of crime. This element of DAT purports that criminal behavior is learned through communication with small intimate groups of people. In these discussions, the individual learns two sets of elements described by Matsueda (1988):

> One set is the techniques and skills for committing crimes, which vary from simple techniques known by virtually all members of society, to complicated

> specialized skills known by only a select circle of members. The second, more important set of elements learned are the specific direction of motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes—either toward defining the law as a set of rules to be observed or broken (p. 281).

Youth are constantly surrounded by individuals who will either define law positively or negatively. The criminal behavior occurs when youth consistently receive definitions favorable to law violation over definitions favorable to law adherence (Sutherland, 1974). Because definitions are key elements in how youth begin to interpret situations, it is important to understand that the definitions received by youth are weighted by frequency, duration, priority, and intensity. In other words, those definitions of the law that are presented more frequently, for longer periods of time, earlier in the youth's life, and from a more reputable source, receives more weight for the youth's perception of what is an accurate definition (Sutherland, 1974; in Matsueda, 1988).

Differential social organization

Differential social organization applies normative conflict to societal organization. The extent to which societies or groups organize in favor of crime or against

crime determine the rate of crime for that society or group. It may be concluded that crime rates are a social organizational expression of normative conflict. Differential social organization directly looks at the exposure of groups to criminal behavior patterns. In other words, how does the community in which the youth reside define the law, and are these beliefs reinforced negatively, thus contributing to normative conflict of the individual? Matsueda & Heimer (1987) further explain the relationship of differential social organization through an example related specifically to inner-city African-American youth. The authors examine the high rate of delinquency among inner-city youth as a result of their social organizational context: structural barriers to economic success, residence in low-income neighborhoods, high-delinquency neighborhoods, and high rates of one-parent households, which lead to exposure to an excess of definitions favorable to delinquency. Based on the history of African-Americans in the United States, Joseph (1995) noted, "the present status of young Blacks in the United States is related to economic, social and political factors" (p. 35). In terms of economics, the jobs received by Blacks are lower-paid than those of their White counterparts. Even those African-Americans who have

obtained a college education find themselves receiving an unequal salary. The conservative political climate (Joseph, 1995) and lack of adequate representation in positions of political power (West, 1993) are just a couple of the political factors contributing to the present status of Black youth. Racial discrimination by far, remains a major component in regard to social factors that plague Black youth. This is seen in the areas of employment, education, housing, health services (Joseph, 1995), and even in the legal system in the disparity of arrests and sentencing in comparison to Whites (The Lindesmith Center, 2000). All of these factors contribute to the youth's definition of society, which directly impacts how he will reduce his anger and resolve conflict.

Arguably the judicial system is not seen by all as a truly rehabilitative process for youth. Presently, one of every three African-American adolescent males is on probation, on parole, in juvenile detention, or in jail awaiting prison (Coalition for Juvenile Justice, 2002). Based upon DAT, one could conclude that such settings increase the youth's consistent learning of unfavorable definitions of the law and criminal behavior. However, changes in the definitions can take place. Comparable to Social Learning Theory, when the youth is repeatedly

influenced and becomes receptive to new definitions that are favorable to law adherence; his behavior will change to reflect socially acceptable behavior as opposed to criminal behavior. In fact, Sutherland and Cressey (1978) explain that youth who learn an overabundance of anti-criminal definitions will be receptive to learning additional anti-criminal definitions, and will be resistant to pro-criminal definitions, and vice versa (Matsueda, 1988, p. 283).

The association of criminal behavior with criminal definitions is applicable to understanding youth aggression and violence according to DAT, however, critics argue otherwise. In fact Sutherland (1973), the leading theorist of DAT, offered an oppositional opinion of the theory. His critique related to opportunity. He suggested that if a youth does not have the opportunity to commit a crime, he will not violate the law. DAT, however, addresses the youth's motivation to commit a crime when the opportunity exists. It does not address why a youth would commit a crime when the opportunity does not exist (Matsueda, 1988). Another theory, General Strain Theory, addresses another motivational factor of aggressive behavior among youth in which criminal behavior is a result.

General Strain Theory

Strain Theory has varying definitions to explain aggressive and criminal behavior among individuals. The premise of the theory is that delinquent acts are a result of failure to achieve goals by legitimate means (Agnew, 1985; Paternoster & Mazerolle, 1994). Other theorists included explanations that an individual's inability to obtain middle class status (Cohen, 1955), or the individual's inability to acquire economic security, contributes to strain (Merton, 1938; Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; in Paternoster & Mazerolle, 1994). Merton's explanation of Strain Theory speculates that the youth's inability to achieve a goal leads to his selection of alternative choices, which result in criminal or delinquent behavior. The works of Cohen, Cloward, and Ohlin conflict with Merton's perspective of goal-blockage leading to delinquency. These researchers conclude that if a youth has already formed, or is in contact with delinquent sub-cultures, goal-blockage will not lead to delinquency (Agnew, 1985). Nevertheless, the basis of the Strain theory lies in goal attainment (Paternoster & Mazerolle, 1994). The General Strain theory (GST), Agnew's revised interpretation of previous theorist's interpretation of

strain, maintains that the focus of goal attainment or lack thereof, contributes to violence.

GST provides explanation of negative emotions, such as anger and frustration that are the likely results of strain and stress on an individual. The need for corrective action related to the anger and frustration can lead to criminal acts. Such acts may be methods to reduce strain, alleviate negative emotions, and assert vengeful feelings. GST builds on the work of earlier theorists by introducing new categories of strain that include the loss of positive stimuli such as the death of a friend. It includes explanations of negative stimuli such as physical assaults and verbal insults; and finally, GST provides new categories of goal blockage, such as failure to achieve goals related to justice. GST, unlike other theories of strain, also provides characteristics of strain that most likely lead youth to crime.

Strain, according to Agnew (1992) refers to "relationships in which others are not treating the individual as he or she would like to be treated" (p. 48). Strain has been further divided into three categories, objective, subjective, and emotional reaction to an event or condition. Objective strain refers to an event or condition generally disliked by most members of a given

group. In other words, the individual is experiencing an event or condition with which members of his or her group would most likely disagree. Subjective strain refers to events or conditions that are disliked by the individual directly experiencing the condition; there is no group consideration for feeling or emotion. The emotional response to an event or condition is interconnected with subjective strain, and acknowledges an individual's evaluation of an event or condition. The emotion involved determines how the individual will respond to a behavior, objective, or idea (Agnew, 2001).

According to Agnew (2001) "strain is most likely to lead to crime when individuals lack the skills and resources to cope with their strain in a legitimate manner, are low in conventional social support, are low in social control, blame their strain on others, and are disposed to crime" (p. 323). The types of events and conditions that produce strain include goal blockage, the loss of positive stimuli, the presentation of negative stimuli, and the magnitude and duration of a particular event or condition. Not all types of strain lead to acts of crime, however, some responses to strain either subjective or objective lead to criminal behavior. Youth, such as those in this research study, are taught techniques and strategies that

will help them cope with their emotions so they can resolve situations in a nonviolent manner. Agnew (2001) found that individuals use a variety of methods such as cognitive strategies, behavioral coping strategies, and emotional coping strategies to resolve feelings of anger that result from strain-producing situations. When the coping methods fail, particular types of strain result in crime.

Unjust strain

When strain is perceived by the youth as unjust, it is more likely to evoke emotions, such as anger, that lead to criminal acts. Agnew (2001) presented an extensive list of researchers who have indicated a strong link between unjust treatment and anger. Agnew also has provided research-based support that connects the increase in anger with the likelihood of crime, particularly violent crime (Agnew, 2001). It is suggested that anger advances crime because it disrupts the youth's ability to apply problem solving skills and other positive coping mechanisms that would alleviate criminal behavior. Anger also impedes the youth's ability to gage actual and perceived consequences of his act. In other words, the youth may feel that fighting is a justified solution for an unjust condition. Finally, anger creates a desire for revenge or retribution;

it creates a false sense of control or power, and it entices the need for action (Agnew, 2001).

Strain in high magnitude

A youth's enhanced perception of the magnitude of strain that exists based upon a condition or event can lead to criminal behavior. This heightened strain greatly affects the youth's ability to cope in a nonaggressive manner. The youth is unable to conceptualize the consequences of coping in a noncriminal manner as opposed to coping in a criminal manner. High magnitude of strain will likely enhance the youth's temperament to engage in criminal behavior. Severe strain reduces the youth's ability to cope and generates more anger, and influences the youth's likelihood to engage in criminal behavior (Agnew, 2001).

Strain associated with low social control

The youth's level of social control greatly impacts whether strain will lead him to aggressive behavior resulting in criminal acts. Strain is likely to result in criminal behavior because low social controls reduce the youth's perception of consequences, and may impede their ability to cope in a positive manner. Strain like parental rejection, erratic parental discipline, and homelessness are associated with low social control. The strain of

parental rejection is connected to low attachment. Erratic parental discipline is associated with low direct control, and homelessness is connected with low direct control, attachment, and commitment. Youth with low direct control, attachment, and commitment oftentimes lack the social supports needed to facilitate positive coping mechanisms (Agnew, 2001).

Strain associated with pressure and incentive

Strain is considered to be an element that creates pressure or incentive to engage in criminal behavior. This element of strain draws upon Social Learning Theory and the impact of modeling and reinforcement. Youth are said to be influenced by the appeal of noncriminal and criminal behaviors, which affects the pressure or incentive to engage in or refrain from crime. Youth who are consistently exposed to individuals who model criminal behavior, or reinforce crime, and present beliefs favorable to crime, are impacted by the strain of such a relationship. Youth may perceive that aggression and criminal behavior is appropriate when addressing perceived injustices and the magnitude of strain that coincides with injustice (Brezina, 2000; in Agnew, 2001). In addition, Anderson (1999) addresses the plight of young males in poor inner-city communities, noting that they are under great

pressure to respond to the strain of disrespect and mistreatment with violence (Agnew, 2001).

Even though the GST provides a theoretical explanation of strain and pressure that leads to anger among youth and results in aggressive and violent acts, critics argue that the theory does not sufficiently address criminal behavior. Some researchers find the theory too broad in its explanation of strain, making it difficult to specify types of strain for research purposes. Other researchers find difficulty in distinguishing GST from Social Learning Theory and Social Control Theory when applying the GST to research instruments. This creates another problem that relates to theory distinction. Because a major argument of GST is that most types of strain are rooted in Social Control Theory and Social Learning theory, how does one distinguish between crimes that occur as a result of strain, social control, or social learning (Agnew, 1985)? At the crux of this theory distinction problem is Social Control Theory, which explained below.

Social Control Theory

Social Control Theory (SCT) has existed in varying forms since the early 1900s (Taylor, 2001). Theorist Travis Hirschi was credited with the theoretical frame of SCT that is widely used today. SCT like many theories has

been critiqued, revised, and empirically validated to prove its efficacy in responding to the concern of adolescent aggression and violence.

SCT identifies the delinquent individual as one who is free from the social bond of attachment, commitments or aspirations, and moral beliefs (Agnew, 1993; Taylor, 2001). SCT addresses the connection between the aforementioned variables and their relationship to delinquency. It is believed that a person who is free to commit delinquent acts lacks ties to conventional order or societal norms. The influence of the social bond, particularly attachment, is considered significant in alleviating delinquent behavior. According to Hirshci (1969) if the bond between parent and child is strong, and there is a strong social bond, a child is less likely to participate in criminal behavior.

There are four major forms of social control, or the elements of the social bond that can be attributed to an adolescents' likelihood to engage in criminal behavior. The first is attachment, which refers to the respect and affection an adolescent holds towards significant others such as a parent or close relative. If the youth does not care about the expectations of these significant others, he will consider himself less attached to societal norms, thus

free to deviate from societal explanations. The second element is commitment, which refers to how committed the adolescent is to behavior which society deems acceptable. In other words, is the adolescent committed to conventional activities? The third element is involvement, which reflects the amount of time the youth is involved in conventional activities. The more time he spends involved with structured activities, the less time he will have to indulge in criminal behavior. The final element is belief. Belief refers to the adolescents' commitment to obeying societal rules. In addition, belief reflects the adolescents' adherence to the core values of society (Agnew, 1993; Hirschi, 1969; Taylor, 2001). Agnew (1993) provides empirical support that shows a weak correlation between the social bond of involvement and delinquency. However, studies did suggest that when individuals were low in attachment, commitment to societal values, and moral beliefs, they were more likely to engage in criminal behavior.

The question still remains, why do adolescents resort to criminal activities? The dominant answer or consideration is expelled by SCT. Social Control theorists argue that youth possess unfulfilled needs or desires, and when they have low social control, they feel free to

satisfy their needs or desires without regard to social standards. The result is criminal behavior, because oftentimes these needs are satisfied by delinquency or antisocial needs. Illegal means for youth also enable them to acquire their needs relatively quickly (Agnew, 1993; Burton, Cullen, Evans, Alarid, & Dunaway, 1998).

According to Agnew (1993), early theorists report that all individuals' posses needs and desires that are antisocial; however, these theorists do not contend that individuals are inherently antisocial because of these needs or desires. The conflict lies in the awareness that these needs can either be satisfied through legitimate or illegitimate means. Criminal behavior occurs when individuals low in control turn to criminal acts to quickly meet their needs or desires. Thus, as SCT purports, low control leads to delinquency "because it allows individuals to satisfy certain needs/wants in the most expedient manner" (Agnew, 1993, p. 248).

The control argument has become the major source of criticism for opponents of SCT. Critics argue that the theory provides no other explanation that would attribute to a youth's criminal behavior aside from the lack of control (Taylor, 2001). Although critics view this as a negative aspect of the theory, credence should be given to

a theory that is more direct in its explanation of a social behavior or social concern. Oftentimes, theories that try to broaden the scope of a concept to include more descriptive explanations of a social phenomenon are criticized for being too broad to directly address the occurrence.

Understanding of Aggression and Violence among African-American Youth

Researchers have generated ideas and opinions that have contributed to the understanding of violence and crime among African-Americans, especially adolescents (Elliot & Wilson, 1996). However, theories that specifically explain why African-American youth are violent, either do not exist, or are undergoing the rigor of theory testing. One researcher, Darnell Hawkins (1990) provides an explanation of violence within the African-American community by looking at violence and the homicide rate through a Black-White comparison approach. The Black-White comparison is taken from the field of criminology and presupposes various ways that race influences group differences. Such presuppositions are key elements in the social scientific view of race relations and social life among African-Americans that were noted in the 20th century (Hawkins, 1990).

The Black-White comparison occurs by observing and collecting data on a particular group, and comparing the data to that collected from another group. In short, the data comparison is used to explain why a societal concern exists in one group and not another (Hawkins, 1990). Black-White comparison studies have revealed disproportionately high rates of homicide as early as the 1930s. Brearley, a prominent researcher during the 1930s, produced the first data-supported study that showed the homicidal rate among African-Americans was seven times more than that for Whites (Hawkins, 1990). Such data differentiated by race has been routinely collected and used to explain societal differences.

Central themes have been generated to explain the high rates of violence among African-Americans since the early 1900s. One such theme is the historical and economic factors that have perpetuated the current levels of sociopathology among African-Americans. Another delves into the extent to which the legacy of slavery, present-day poverty, and inequality contribute to the high rate of crime within the African-American community (Alridge & Daniels, 2000; Hawkins, 1990). Additional themes such as sociocultural, social psychological, and biological have been generated to explain the high rates of violence and

homicide (Hawkins, 1990; West, 1993). While several single themes exist, researchers consistently argue that no single cause can be distinguished as the contributing factor of high rates of violence among African-Americans (Hawkins, 1990).

Using a multi-causal approach, two types of causation have been identified to explain the etiology of violence among African-Americans. One approach is internal causation. Internal causes of violence have been identified as self-perpetuation subculture and genetics. The concept of self-perpetuation subculture has been on the forefront of explaining the etiology of violence and crime for the past fifty years (Hawkins, 1990). This concept depicts the African-American community as an isolated, self-perpetuating, pathological subculture (Curtis, 1975; Silberman, 1978; in Hawkins, 1990). The concept of genes and violence proposes that certain groups are more or less genetically predisposed to violence (Hawkins, 1990; Wilson & Herrnstein, 1985; in Hawkins, 1990).

The second approach is external causation. External causes that have been found to contribute to high rates of criminal activity have been identified by researchers as the legacy of slavery and post-slavery discrimination and oppression (Brearley, 1932; Wolfgang, 1958; Wolfgang &

Ferracuti, 1982; in Hawkins, 1990). Alridge and Daniels (2001) argue that from a socio-historical perspective, "violence has been infused into the African-American experience via the Middle Passage, slavery, Jim Crow, and other forms of institutional racism and discrimination" (p. 29).

The long history of racial oppression and discrimination dating back to the early 1800s has created a divide among African-Americans {referred to as Blacks during this time period} and Whites that continues to exist today, with race as the obvious marker of such differences. After the abolishment of slavery came laws and policies that disenfranchised Blacks and prevented them from obtaining positions of power in a predominately White society. In addition to legal obstacles strategically created to disqualify Blacks from voting, Jim Crow laws were followed by mandating separate but supposedly equal accommodations for Blacks and Whites in public places (Joseph, 1995).

When legal measures failed to keep Blacks and Whites separate, racist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan evolved and began using intimidation and violence to force Blacks to adhere to segregation. Organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

(NAACP) in 1954 and 1965 fought vigorously to repeal racist laws and the racial divide; and indeed major gains were spawned by the landmark case of Brown vs. the Board of Education in 1954, which ruled segregated schools to be unconstitutional. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibiting racial discrimination in employment, and followed by the Voting Rights Act of 1965, intended to remove legal obstacles to voting for Blacks. Federal and state funded initiatives were enacted to right the wrongs of the past, and in spite of such gains, African-Americans are still unequal in areas of education, economics, and politics as compared to Whites (Joseph, 1995; West, 1993).

The effects of racism and the African Diaspora are present throughout history, and especially in the United States where African-Americans continue to struggle for equality. As seen in the criminal justice system, the disparity in sentencing perpetuates negative myths, psychologically impairs youth, and stiffens the freedom of African-American males caught in the system. When youth are able to transition from adolescence into adulthood by gaining employment and maintaining stable intimate relationships, they are more likely to resist those aggressive behaviors prompted by inequalities within society (Elliott, Hagan, & McCord, 1998). In fact,

research studies confirm that no difference in the continuity of violent activity exists between African-Americans and Whites when employment is gained and a stable relationship is maintained. According to Elliott et al. (1998), both groups transitioned out of unstable aggressive behavior into more appropriate suitable roles in American society when stable relationships and employment were ongoing. African-American males do not prevail when economic, political, and social mobility are unobtainable to them.

The lack of resources available to assist African-American adolescent males in their transition from unstable, aggressive behaviors to suitable roles in society perpetuates their inability to seek change. The rate of involvement in violent acts increases in African-American males between the ages of 21-24, whereas White males during this same time period show dramatic decrease in their rate of violent acts. The rate of violence in White males begins to decline between the ages of 16-17, yet it escalates for African-American males during this time period. African-Americans are also twice as likely as Whites to continue acts of violence into adult years (Elliott et al., 1998). This, in part, is due to a lack of resources, support, opportunities for change, economics and

insufficient role modeling (Elliott et al., 1998; Joseph, 1995; West, 1993).

In addition to the aforementioned theories, several other theories exist that address aggression and violence among youth. There are biological or physiological theories that explain the concept of aggressive behavior through factors such as toxins, hormones, and neurological injuries (Elliott, 1992; Fishbein, 1990; in Yung & Hammond, 1995). Sociological and criminological theories address the impact of conforming to deviant behaviors and bleak economic conditions as they relate to aggression, violence, and criminal behavior among youth (Lukenbill & Doyle, 1989; in Yung & Hammond, 1995). Psychological theories attribute youth aggression and violence to interpersonal factors, such as impulsive responses and learned behavior (Feindler & Ecton, 1986; Novaco, 1976; in Yung & Hammond, 1995). There are even a few other conceptual frameworks that address aggression and violence among African-American youth. Such theories consider the effects of discrimination and poverty, and speculate about the acceptance of violence as a justifiable response to provocation (Hawkins, 1990; in Yung & Hammond, 1995).

The Aggression and Violence Reduction Training Program

A researcher may adhere to the Ecological System's Theory explanation of aggression, which seeks to explain aggression from an environmental perspective, acknowledging the neighborhood and its contributing factors that can be attributed to youth aggression. One may choose the Social Learning Theory, which provides an explanation of adolescent aggression that deals with learned behavior and modeling behaviors observed in one's natural environment. Others may select the Differential Association Theory, which suggests that youth violence is attributed to how a youth perceives or takes in varying definitions related to rules. The General Strain Theory could be used, as it accredits varying degrees of strain as contributors to pressure among youth that leads to an emotion of anger. Even the Social Control Theory can be selected as it provides an explanation of the lack of control among youth that causes them to seek immediate and oftentimes criminal means to meet their needs. The theory selected only provides understanding it is the intervention that is created based on theoretical understanding that leads to change.

Research has proven that when interventions are implemented at the onset of aggression, adolescents have a

higher rate of success for modifying their aggressive behavior (Acker & Talbot, 1999) and a reduced risk of delinquent behavior (Frey, Hirschstein, & Guzzo, 2000). If the youth displays behaviors of reactive aggression, which are likely to be nonmediated behaviors, such as impulsivity and explosiveness as a defense to perceived provocation, cognitive and behavioral interventions would be most effective (Brown & Parsons, 1998). The cognitive behavioral approach guides social skills training, anger management, and violence education through implementation of techniques that teach the adolescent to: (1) control his anger, (2) identify stressors that can provoke provocation, (3) understand the consequences of aggressive behavior, (4) develop cognitive relaxation skills that will reduce stressors, (5) receive and give assertive statements, (6) deal with the anger of others, (7) develop effective communication skills, and (8) develop alternative behaviors that generally exacerbate violent acts (Thornton et al., 2000; Sterba & Davis, 1999; Wodarski & Wodarski, 1998; Studer, 1996; Yung & Hammond, 1995; Wells & Miller, 1993).

The Aggression and Violence Reduction Training (AVT) program was developed using critical elements that attribute to the success of a cognitive behavioral

intervention for early onset aggression among youth. Greene (1998) provided a succinct list of the skills that should be utilized when addressing the attitudes and beliefs that support aggressive behavior in youth. These skills include:

> negotiation, critical thinking, and decision making identifying, managing, and coping with feelings, including anger anticipating the consequences of one's aggressive verbal and nonverbal behavior finding nonviolent alternatives to conflict and moral reasoning (Thornton et al, 2000, p. 122).

Such programs as Conflict Resolution: A Curriculum for Youth Providers is a school-based intervention program for middle school students that has been proven effective and utilizes the aforementioned skills. Teachers use this curriculum to address conflictual situations that are experienced by students. Current short-term results have proven positive, and continued success over time will determine the true efficacy of this program (DuRant et al., 1996; Thornton et al., 2000).

The Violence Prevention Project is a program that has been implemented on the high school level to combat early onset aggression. However this school-based program produced non-significant rates of success when the

experimental group was compared to the overall student population. Yet, the researchers found that when the intervention program was implored in specialized classes that received services not available to the main student body, and had smaller student to teacher ratio, the suspension rates of youth due to aggressive behavior was reduced by 71 percent (Hausman, Pierce, & Briggs, 1996).

Other programs designed with more intensive treatment to be utilized with youth who exhibit chronic aggressive behavior included BrainPower and Positive Adolescent Choices Training (PACT). These programs were selected for their success rate in the reduction of youth aggression and violence. BrainPower was designed to be implemented with Latino and African-American boys. The focus of the intervention was to reduce peer-directed aggression. An evaluation of BrainPower was conducted with 384 third through sixth grade participants in four southern California elementary schools. Behaviors and attitudes of the boys were measured for 12 months following the intervention. Short-term gains showed improved self-control and fewer judgments of hostile intent. However, these gains diminished over time (Hudley et al., 1998; Thornton, 2000).

The PACT program for which the AVT was modeled was designed to address aggressive and violent behavior among seventh and eighth grade African-American students. The fundamental elements of PACT are social skills training, anger management, and education about violence. Evaluation of the program found that participants in the experimental group expressed less physical aggression at school than did those in the control group during and after the training. Also, when compared to the control group, the PACT participants had less involvement with the juvenile court system, lower rates of offense per person and, fewer violence-related charges (Cirillo, 1998; Yung & Hammond, 1995).

Another program in which the AVT was modeled was created by Wodarski & Wodarski (1998). This empirical paradigm focused on research-based techniques with an emphasis on behavioral group work in the prevention of youth violence. Wodarski & Wodarski (1998) found that youth modeled their daily interactions, and therefore, the behaviors learned, observed, and monitored in the group atmosphere were conducive to positive change. Groups provide individuals the opportunity to test what they learn in a realistic setting. This setting provides immediate

feedback from peers and group facilitators (Wodarski & Wodarski, 1998) to reinforce or to modify behaviors.

While studies exist with proven efficacy in the use of social-cognitive intervention with youth violence, a few unsuccessful programs have been found. Cirillo et al. (1998) implemented a 10-week intervention program with fifty students from ninth through twelfth grade in an east-central Texas school system. Twenty-two students participated in the intervention program and 21 were placed in a control group. The majority of the students were between the ages of 14-17 and the ethnic composition was very diverse: 44% White, 30% Black, 23% Hispanic, and 2% other. The results of a two-way ANOVA revealed no significant differences between the experimental and control groups based on mean scores on violence avoidance beliefs $F(1,123) = 2.49$, $p = 12$. The researchers found that their study did not support the assumption that interventions utilizing social skills training, cognitive restructuring, behavioral consequencing, mentoring, and problem solving would reduce violence avoidance beliefs. Cirillo et al. (1998) cited factors such as referrals based only on at-risk environmental conditions, need for more than 10 sessions, intellectual functioning, and small

participant numbers as causes for non-statistical significance.

Though Cirillo et al. (1998) mention PACT and The Violence Prevention Project of the Health Promotion Program for Urban Youth as effective intervention programs for adolescent violence; it is unclear which program was utilized for their intervention. Further, the researchers made other fundamental errors when designing their program. According Dr. Sandra Graham and Dr. Hudley, researchers of adolescent aggression in the Department of Education at the University of California, Los Angeles, groups implemented to address aggression and violence among youth should have no more than 6-8 participants and should be as homogeneous as possible (personal communication, January 4 2001). The work of Cirillo et al. (1998) did not meet these qualifications. In addition, PACT was designed specifically for African-American youth. The methodology used in the study by Cirillo et al. (1998) described a very diverse sample population in relation to age, ethnicity, and sex.

The AVT program was designed for a specific ethnic, age, and sex group with only 6-8 participants in each group. The AVT program considered the necessity of group intervention as supported by extensive research (Bourke &

Van Hasselt, 2001; Frey et al., 2001; Larkin, 1998; Wodarski & Wodarski, 1998; Wells & Miller, 1993; Yung & Hammond, 1995) and focused on the key elements emphasized in PACT: social skills training, anger management, and violence education.

Social Skills Training

Social skills training, defined as the ability required for effective communication (Bornstein, Bellack, and Hersen, 1977; in Moote, Smith, & Wodarski, 1999), is a proven technique to address youth violence when used appropriately (Ang & Hughes, 2001; Bullis, Walker, & Sprague, 2001; Moote et al., 1999). Social skills training teaches the youth to constructively express feelings of anger, frustration and disappointment. Adolescents also learn to listen and react appropriately to criticism and the anger of others. Finally, they learn to resolve disagreements without violence (Thornton et al., 2000; Yung & Hammond, 1995).

According to Michelson et al. (1983) social skills training has several components that make it effective as an intervention tool to combat youth violence.

> It is acquired primarily through learning, comprises specific and discrete verbal and nonverbal behaviors, entails both effective and appropriate initiations and

> responses, interactive by nature and entails both effective and appropriate responses, maximizes social reinforcement, influenced by characteristics of the participants and environments in which it occurs, and deficits and excesses in social performance can be specified and targeted for intervention (Michelson et al., p. 38).

In a meta analysis conducted by Moote, et al. (1999) findings revealed that while social skills training is often used and has utility among youth, it should be viewed with a 'cautious optimism'. These authors reviewed 25 intervention studies published after 1985 that focused on adolescents between the ages of 10 and 18. All of these studies were school-based or conducted in an educational setting. Moote et al. (1999) found that when social learning theory was used as the theoretical base for the intervention, 14 of the 25 studies reviewed reported beneficial effects for participants while 9 of the studies reported limited or mixed results. Only 2 studies concluded that the social skills training yielded no significant results (Moote et al., 1999).

In addition, a meta-analysis conducted by Ang and Hughes (2001) reviewed 38 studies utilizing social skills training to address anti-social behavior among youth.

Interestingly, this study focused on group composition in regards to treatment. The study revealed an overall effect size of .62 post treatment which supported the use of heterogeneous groups as opposed to homogeneous groups when implementing social skills training (Ang & Hughes, 2001). In contrast, Yung and Hammond (1995) found efficacy in utilizing social skills training to reduce youth violence. However, the latter researchers incorporated anger management and violence education along with social skills training and found the combination produced significant results in the reduction of youth violence (Yung & Hammond, 1993).

Anger Management

Anger management training, defined as a response to cognition and physiological processes, is widely used to help adolescents control their anger and identify moods and situations that trigger angry responses (Geen, 1990). Anger management training further helps youth understand their responses to anger and the consequences of their response. In addition, techniques are modeled through group exercise and facilitator instruction that address appropriate methods of controlling anger (Thornton et al., 2000; Yung & Hammond, 1995).

Research conducted by Frey et al. (2001) reviewed Second Step, a violence prevention program designed to reduce social, emotional, and behavioral problems among youth. The researchers found the program to be a great success in application with aggressive adolescents. Along with other components, they found the anger management training to be comprehensive and well-designed. This component of the program was designed to help students recognize triggers of anger, implement stress-reducing techniques, and respond according to the situation. Anger, as an emotion, accounts for much of the relationship between cognitive and aggressive behavior (Frey et al., 2001; Graham, 1993). The techniques utilized in this program and similarly in the AVT program address the youth's emotions and teach the youth how to modify their aggressive feelings.

Grossman et al. (1997) conducted a comprehensive evaluation of Second Step to review its success with reducing aggressive behaviors. The curriculum was implemented in 49 classrooms and taught twice a week during a five-month period. Pre, post, and follow-up data was collected using teacher ratings, parent ratings, and direct behavioral observations by trained observers blind to the study conditions. Behavioral observation revealed a

decrease in physical aggression at post-test rating period. No reduction in physical aggression was observed in the control group. Interestingly, the greatest levels of reduction were observed in the least structured areas such as the playground and the lunchroom. At six month follow up, the experimental group continued to show significantly lower levels of physical aggression than the control group. Higher levels of positive interaction also continued to exist in the experimental group.

These findings support the necessity to incorporate comprehensive anger management programs in youth violence intervention programs. Such considerations were made for the AVT program as well. The AVT program recognizes that anger management taught through cognitive behavioral techniques engages and challenges youth to identify alternative thoughts and behaviors that are more socially acceptable (Eisenberg et al., 1997; Frey et al, 2001). The final component necessary in reducing youth violence is violence education.

Violence Education

Violence education is defined as knowledge building that addresses the ramifications of violent behavior (Yung & Hammond, 1995). Violence education brings reality to an adolescents' aggressive behavior. It dispels myths

associated with the media portrayal of violent behavior (Studer, 1996). Further, it identifies realistic consequences of violent behavior and raises awareness of the violence model (Thornton et al, 2000; Yung & Hammond, 1995).

Violence education in the AVT program has been introduced through statistical information on the disparity in sentencing for African-American youth and the disproportionate numbers of African-American males incarcerated today. Video presentations are utilized to portray a vivid image of youth who are presently incarcerated and youth who have overcome adversity to fulfill personal goals.

Youth lack the resources to obtain accurate information about the risk of violence. Researchers have found that youth believe that the greatest source of danger is from strangers or from police (Harris, 1993; Price, Desmond, & Smith, 1989; Yung & Hammond, 1995). While little research exists to support the use of violence education as a component in youth violence prevention, several researchers have acknowledged its utility as a strategy for a well-designed and comprehensive youth violence prevention program (Ginsburg, 2002; Guetzloe,

1999; McCord, 1997; Richman & Fraser, 2001; Varma, 1997; Yung & Hammond, 1995).

Social skills training, anger management, and violence education complete a multimodal approach to youth violence prevention within the AVT program. These components utilized individually as an intervention may not withstand the evaluation standards of efficacy (Cirillo, et al., 1998; Feindler & Ecton, 1986; Goldstein et al., 1984; Goldstein & Glick, 1987; Kazdin, 1995; Moote et al., 1999; Yung & Hammond, 1995;); however as a multimodal approach, these skills have been proven effective when implemented in youth violence reduction programs (Goddard et al., 2000; Ginsburg et al., 2002; McWhirter, 1999; Yung & Hammond, 1995). Although Ang & Hughes (2001) provided evidence through meta-analysis denouncing the efficacy of homogeneous groups when dealing with at risk youth, it is important to note that group composition for this meta-analysis was based on an anti-social diagnosis. This type of diagnosis among youth may not be conducive to group therapy and further research is necessary to address this issue. In contrast, the AVT program conducted in the current study was designed for implementation with youth who have low to moderate levels of aggression. The youth referred to the AVT program did not have a behavior

disorder and did not have a medication treatment plan. In addition, the AVT program was designed to model the PACT program which has been proven effective in reducing levels of aggression among African-American youth and an empirical paradigm for teenage violence prevention (Yung & Hammond, 1995; Wodarski & Wodarski, 1998).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to answer the research question: Is the Aggression and Violence Reduction Training Program (AVT) effective for reducing levels of aggression in African-American adolescent males, such that the effect is statistically significant? In addition, this study sought to add to existing research by providing an empirically validated intervention that addressed low – moderate levels of aggression among African-American male youth.

This study utilized a quasi-experimental design, selected to determine the efficacy of the intervention. The referrals obtained through the Fulton County Juvenile Justice system were immediately placed into a treatment group and received the intervention. The control group was obtained during an extended time period when neither the facilitator nor co-facilitator was able to provide the intervention to the group. The delay was acceptable to parents and approved by the court system. The specific design chosen to meet the study requirements and evaluate

intervention effectiveness was a quasi-experimental design identified as the non-equivalent control group design and is diagramed as follows:

	Pre-test	Intervention	Post-test
Treatment group	O (1)	X	O (2)
Control group	O (1)		O (2)

The quasi-experimental design is considered a rigorous design in evaluation research. It is not as rigorous as the true experimental design, primarily because it lacks randomization of research participants to groups. However, in research, the true experimental design is often considered impossible to achieve because of the need for randomization (Babbie, 2001).

Obtaining research data utilizing at-risk populations, such as African-Americans, is a challenge. There is a lack of trust between African-Americans and researchers. There is a fear that the research will in some way negatively impact the research participant. Lastly, there is a concern that the data obtained will not provide a benefit to the population being studied (See, 1998; See, 2001).

This researcher, an African-American woman, was able to dispel some fears by explaining the purpose of the research in detail. Youth were able to participate in the current research study even if they did not want to participate in the data collection process, and the

benefits of the intervention were discussed with the youth and his parent or caregiver. In addition, the co-facilitator was an African-American male with whom the youth were able to identify.

Additionally, the use of the quasi-experimental design enabled the study to proceed without randomization. Parents therefore did not feel that their children had to wait an extended period of time to receive the intervention. Other advantages of the design included the use of a control group (during a period in which the intervention could not be administered), ability to use a purposive sample in which matching techniques were implored, and the ability to discern clinical significance of the intervention without having a large sample (Rubbin & Babbie, 2001). The purposive sample reflected youth with the same characteristics. The participants were referred from probation officers in the Fulton County Juvenile Justice system, the participants were African-American and male, and the participants had been identified for displaying low to moderate levels of aggression (early onset aggressive behaviors).

Each participant and his parent or guardian was asked to complete two questionnaires at two separate time periods: before and after treatment. The control group was

administered questionnaires at the time of explanation of the group and questionnaires were re-administered five-six weeks later. Each adolescent participant completed the Aggression Questionnaire (AQ) and the Conners-Wells' Adolescent Self-Report Scale (CASS). Each parent or guardian completed the Conners' Parent Rating Scales-Revised (CPR-R) and a Behavioral Questionnaire (BQ) which asked parents specific questions about their child's behavior that could be observed.

Data Analysis

Pretest and posttest data for each group are presented in tabular form including descriptive data such as sample size, means, and standard deviations. The following hypotheses were generated to provide direction for the dissertation and hypothesis testing:

1. Posttest mean scores on the Conners-Wells' Adolescent Self-Report Scale (CASS) and the Aggression Questionnaire (AQ) will be significantly reduced from pretest scores for youth in the experimental group.
2. Pretest and Posttest mean scores on the CASS and AQ will not be significantly different for the youth in the control group.
3. Posttest mean scores on the Conners' Parent Rating Scales-Revised (CPR-R) and the Behavioral

questionnaire (completed by parent or guardian) will be significantly reduced from pretest scores for the experimental group.

4. Pretest and Posttest mean scores on the CPR-R and Behavioral Questionnaire (completed by parent or guardian) will not be significantly different for the youth in the control group.

The statistical procedures used to test the hypotheses statements were the t-test for independent group means. The independent t-test was used to analyze differences between group means at pre and post-testing. The use of the t-test procedure is appropriate when testing the difference in means of a small sample (Huck, 2000).

Referral Process

The research participants were obtained through a referral process from the Fulton County Juvenile Court System in Atlanta, Georgia. As referrals were obtained from probation officers, the youth were assigned to groups of six-eight by the researchers. Groups were conducted at the Georgia Hill Community Center in Atlanta, Georgia and the Judge Romain T. Powell Juvenile Justice Center, also in Atlanta, Georgia. The community center and juvenile justice center were in a central location for all respondents and was near the public transportation system.

In addition to the convenience of the treatment location for the youth and their families, researchers also have found that groups provided for youth are most successful when they are conducted within the youth's community (Leonard, Lee, & Kiselica, 1999).

Prior to group participation, youth and their parents or caregiver were asked to sign consent and assent forms. The facilitator reviewed the forms with both the youth and the parent and answered any questions or concerns generated by family members. Confidentiality was assured and explained in detail and parents were made aware that the data collected would be used for scholarly research but that identifying information would at no time be revealed. Parents and caregivers also were told that they could withdraw from the data collection portion of the program prior to research completion and that their child's data would be withdrawn without penalty. If they chose to withdraw from the intervention, referrals would be provided to them by the researcher for other programs in which they might participate.

Client Sample

Participants were either part of a Diversion program also known as the 90-Day Review Program or were on probation, and maintained low to moderate levels of

aggressive behavior. The Diversion Program was created to give adolescents a second chance. Youth were given a time frame to complete tasks such as community service, restitution, counseling, and group treatment. At the next assigned court date, the adolescent would present his progress to the judge who at that time would make a ruling on the original offense, which could include dropping all charges so that no criminal record would be on file or sentencing the youth for the crime in which he was charged. Youth on probation had a mandated time frame in which they were supervised by a probation officer. They too had to complete tasks similar to youth in the Diversion program.

Data were collected from this purposive sample which was obtained through referrals from Fulton County Juvenile Court Probation Officers. Study participants were African-American adolescent males: ranging in age from 11 to 15. The initial criteria required youth to be between the ages of 12-14, however, exceptions were made if the probation officer specifically requested a particular adolescent be a part of the program. Most of the youth who were 11 years of age, would turn 12 within the same school year, however, not by the end of the Aggression and Violence Reduction Training Program (AVT). Those adolescents who were 15, had

recently turned 15 prior to entering the group, or had turned 15 within the school year of the study.

Additional eligibility criteria were established to ensure that appropriate referrals were made to this research program. Youth had to exhibit low to moderate levels of aggression. Low to moderate aggression was conceptually defined as early onset aggression in which a youth is beginning to display behaviors that are intended to injure or irritate another individual (Eron, Walder, & Lefkowitz, 1971; in Huesmann & Miller, 1994). More specifically, low to moderate aggression was operationally defined by a list of characteristics. Youth with one or more of these characteristics could be referred to the Aggression and Violence Reduction Training Program (AVT):

1. Reacts to disappointments, criticisms, or teasing with extreme and intense anger, blame, or revenge
2. Has trouble controlling temper
3. Has a history of tantrums and uncontrollable angry outbursts
4. Does not anticipate or consider consequences
5. Brags about fighting or frequently involved in fights or arguments

6. Talks about weapons (i.e. guns, knives)
7. Often disrupts classroom activities
8. Is not sensitive to the feelings of others
9. Associates with other children known to be unruly or aggressive

Adolescents who exhibited the following characteristics were inappropriate for the AVT program:

1. Extremely disruptive or hyperactive behavior
2. Is affiliated with a gang: gets involved in fighting, stealing, or destruction of property related to gang involvement
3. Extremely violent (i.e. attacked authority figures, parent(s), school staff AND a weapon was involved)
4. Is cruel or violent toward pets or other animals
5. Substance abuse problem

A total of 21 youth participated in the research project. Due to the request of the juvenile court system, randomization could not take place. As referrals were obtained they were immediately placed in a group receiving treatment. Four groups were conducted and ten youth completed the AVT program which consisted of the treatment group. The control group was obtained during a time phase in which the facilitator and co-facilitator could not conduct groups. Referrals were collected and parents were

informed of the break and the later starting date for treatment. The juvenile court system and parents aggreed to the delay.

The treatment group consisted of ten African-American adolescent males: One 11-year-old, five 13-year-olds, two 14-year-olds, and two 15-year-olds. Within the treatment group, one participant was in the fifth grade, two were in the sixth grade, one in the seventh grade, two in the eighth grade, and four in the ninth grade. The control group consisted of 11 participants. Three participants were 11-years-of age, two were 12-years-of-age, three were 13-years-of-age, and three were 14-years-of-age. Of these participants, five were in the fifth grade, one was in the sixth grade, two were in the seventh grade, and three were in the eighth grade. Each referral met the eligibility criteria established for the program and youth were expected to complete eight sessions designed to educate youth to the consequences of aggression and violence, teach anger management skills, and provide social skills training.

Letter of Support

A letter of support from the Fulton County Juvenile Justice system in support of data collection for the dissertation study was obtained. In addition, approval was

obtained from the University of Georgia's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to utilize human subjects for research purposes.

Intervention

The intervention, also known as the independent variable, was administered by the researcher and a co-facilitator. Both facilitators were Licensed Master Social Workers working on their doctoral degrees in the Field of Social Work at the University of Georgia and Clark Atlanta University, respectively.

The intervention focused on two models of approach by Wodarski & Wodarski (1998) and PACT by Yung & Hammond (1995) that addressed adolescent aggression among youth. PACT specifically addressed aggression among African-American adolescent males. The intervention used in this research study was a cognitive-behavioral approach to preventive treatment for the targeted population. It combined the approaches of both Wodarski and Wodarski and the PACT program. Youth received empirically based group treatment that focused on aggression and violence education, anger management training, and social skills training. The curriculum designed for the intervention utilized group activities, discussions, handouts, video

presentations, homework, role playing activities, facilitator feedback, and group feedback.

Each of the eight sessions in the curriculum maintained a general format to address the core principles of the group; social skills training, anger management, and violence education. Some alterations were made on a group-to-group basis that addressed specific needs identified by the group. Each session was designed based on the Social Learning Theory which guides cognitive behavioral therapy. Cognitive behavioral techniques were used to help restructure or reframe negative cognitions that led to negative behaviors. Participants were taught skills that would help them develop positive cognitions that led to positive behaviors (Bandura, 1989; Wodarski & Wodarksi, 1998). The general format for each session was as follows:

Session I

The first session served as an introductory session. The facilitators introduced themselves and explained the purpose of the group. The youth then introduced themselves through a predetermined exercise that encouraged them to interact with each other. The format of the group, schedule of the group, and expectations of the group were discussed. Ground rules were then established by all participants, including the facilitator.

After introductions a video presentation was provided that addressed the consequences of violence and aggression among African-American youth. The facilitators then led a discussion that included the dissemination of current data on violence endemic to African-American males. A discussion of expected and unexpected consequences of aggressive and violent behavior ensued.

Session II

The second session group focused on defining anger and exploring methods of expression. Visual aides were used to reflect the different stages of anger to encourage recognition of physical and emotional reactions to anger. A group activity ensued that helped the youth identify the connection between anger and stress for themselves. An interactive exercise was utilized to help youth identify angry and stressful situations and their personal and external consequences. Role-playing and modeling were used to engage the group and help them identify trigger words or gestures that advanced stressful situations.

Session III

The third session provided a detailed discussion of the ABC method that helps youth manage their anger. The ABC method identifies Antecedents, Behavior, and Consequences of aggressive behavior. Triggers of

aggressive behavior were identified by group members and role playing was used to recreate aggressive incidents, and group members provided feedback for alternative reactions based on the awareness of the ABC method.

Social skills were identified and discussed in the reenactment of appropriate behavioral responses to misguided situations. Cool down techniques such as deep breathing, counting down, biofeedback and visualization were reviewed with youth to provide alternative behavioral responses to aggression.

Session IV

The fourth session further addressed social skills by identifying the youth's ability to give and receive both positive and negative feedback. Through facilitator coaching, group members were asked to reveal scenarios that resulted in aggressive behavior from their pre-assigned homework. Using these scenarios a group discussion followed that helped group members appropriately state feelings and emotions. Youth were coached on appropriate ways to give negative feedback in stressful situations and how to receive negative feedback in stressful situations.

A stop-look-and-listen exercise was taught to address empathetic listening and to build good communication. Negotiation skills relating to compromise also were

discussed through modeling, role-playing and homework assignments.

Session V

The fifth session reviewed social skills through interpersonal skills building exercises. This session taught the youth how to be assertive without offending peers and adults. Youth received instruction on the various types of interpersonal skills. Through role-playing, they were challenged to create situations that utilized the newly taught techniques.

Confrontation was then addressed. Youth were taught the connection between assertion of feelings and ideas and the stages of confrontation. Youth learned to identify the behavioral cues of the person being addressed and how to respond without the situation escalating into an act of violence.

Session VI

The sixth session focused on conflict resolution. After identifying methods of coping in uncomfortable situations, the youth were taught how to handle anger-provoking situations without using violence. The facilitators used video presentations and mock scenarios to assist youth in identifying stressful situations that led to conflict. The facilitators further assisted youth in

recognizing how more positive coping strategies enabled them to handle conflict in a more productive manner.

Once the youth learned to identify anger-provoking situations and to implement more positive coping strategies with these situations, problem-solving techniques were introduced using vignettes demonstrating the steps of problem solving. Youth were asked to identify anger-provoking incidents and through role-play they reconstructed the incidents using the problem solving techniques. Constructive feedback from the facilitators and other group members was utilized.

Session VII

Changing behaviors through cognitions was the central theme of the seventh session. A reflection of self was addressed. Youth were challenged through written assignments to identify their positive attributes, establish realistic goals, and list the steps necessary to obtain their goals. Youth were led through a discussion that addressed the connection between feelings of self and poor decision making.

As a group they identified situations in which their behavior yielded unfavorable outcomes. Together they discussed their natural gifts and strengths, and framed the behavioral response to reflect those gifts and strengths.

Session VIII

The final session included an overview of the previous seven sessions using role-playing and inter-active games between the small groups. The youth completed the post-test and received letters of completion for their probation officer.

Outcome Measures

Two sets of measures were used for this study. The youth completed one set of measures that included the Aggression Questionnaire and the Conners-Wells' Adolescent Self-Report Scale. The parent or caregiver of the youth completed a set of measures that included the Conners' Parent Rating Scales-Revised, a Behavioral Questionnaire, and general demographic information.

The Conners' Rating Scales-Revised (CRS-R) were designed to address a multimodal approach to assessment. The CRS-R evaluates problem behaviors by obtaining reports from the adolescent, the parent or caregiver, and the teacher. The CRS-R has proven useful for program evaluation, research contexts, clinical applications, screening purposes, and for measuring treatment changes. This approach has yielded strong reliability and validity results. Based on a review of coefficient alpha, reliability estimates ranged from .75 to .90. After 6-8

weeks, the test-retest reliability coefficients ranged from .60 to .90. The validity of the CRS-R forms was obtained using factor analysis techniques on derivation and cross-validation samples. The relationship between the CRS-R scores and other related measures supported convergent and divergent validity. Statistical results found discriminant validity existed as the CRS-R was able to differentiate Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) individuals from nonclinical individuals and other clinical groups (Conners, 2001).

Adolescent Measures

The Conners-Wells' Adolescent Self-Report Scale (CASS) was completed by the youths. CASS is a 27-item measure that takes 5-10 minutes to complete. The measure was a four-point response scale ranging from Not True At All (0) to Very Much True (3). The CASS contains four subscales: conduct problems, cognitive problems/ inattention, hyperactivity, and ADHD Index. Reliability coefficients for the CASS range from .75 to .85 (Conners, 2001).

The second measure used with the adolescent was the Aggression Questionnaire (AQ). The AQ is a 34-item measure that also can be modified using the first 15 items as the short version of the scale, which was used for this study. The AQ measures an individual's aggressive responses and his

ability to channel those responses in a responsible and safe manner. The AQ has five subscales: physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, hostility, and indirect aggression (Buss & Warren, 2000).

The measure is written at a third-grade reading level and can be completed in 5-10 minutes. It utilizes a five-point likert scale ranging from Not At All Like Me (1) to Completely Like Me (5). The reliability of the measure based on internal consistency is .94. Test-retest correlations after a 9-week interval between administrations yielded reliability of .80. Test validity in the form of construct validity, concurrent validity, and discriminant validity were found to be present in the AQ. Predictive validity, was found but only in a limited number of studies; more research in this area is recommended by the authors of the measure (Buss & Warren, 2000).

Adult Measures

The Conners' Parent Rating Scales-Revised (CPR-R) is a 27-item measure that is administered to the parent or guardian of the child and takes 5 - 10 minutes to complete. The parent measure addresses the youth's behavior at home and in other environments in which the parent is able to observe the child. The measure has a four-point response scale ranging from Not True At All (0) to Very Much True

(3). Reliability coefficents of this measure range from .86 to .94. Utilizing a three factor-derived subscale (oppositional, cognitive problems/inattention, and hyperactivity) statistical analysis yielded strong factorial validity (Conners, 2001).

The Behavioral Questionnaire was created by the principal researcher as a tool to record parent observation of their child's aggressive behavior. It has 8 items which the parent/caregiver can rate their child based on their observation of behavior in their natural environment such as home and school. Responses to the questionnaire range from Not at All Like My Child (1) to Very Much Like My Child (4).

All of the measures utilized in this study were written at a sixth or third grade reading level, respectively, and subsequently were easy to read and understand. The measures took a minimal amount of time to complete. It is possible that research participants had different reading skill/comprehensive levels. To avoid embarrassment the researcher read the directions and statements on the questionnaires aloud for the entire group. The participants reported no problems with completion of the questionnaires.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to answer the research question: Is the Aggression and Violence Reduction Training Program (AVT) effective for reducing levels of aggression in African-American adolescent males, such that the effect is statistically significant? In addition, this study sought to add to existing research by providing an empirically validated intervention that addressed low – moderate levels of aggression among African-American male youth. A purposive sample was used to obtain study participants. Youth who were referred to the program were automatically assigned to the treatment group. The control group was obtained during a wait period in which the facilitators were unable to provide treatment.

The purposive sampling procedure was used based on the researcher's knowledge of the population being studied, an identified need for an intervention for the targeted population, and the goal of the research study (Rubin & Babbie, 2001). A request was made by Fulton County Juvenile Detention Center to provide an intervention for youth who presented with aggressive behaviors and

attitudes. The youth were African-American males between the ages of 11 – 15.

Based on the demographic data outlined in Table 3, the treatment group, which consisted of 10 participants and the control group, which consisted of 11 participants were fairly homogeneous. In addition, the results of the independent-samples t-test, in Table 4, revealed that there were no differences between groups prior to the intervention. The ethnicity of all participants was African-American.

According to the demographic data presented in Table 3, participants in the treatment group were interspersed throughout grades 5 thru 9, whereas five participants of the control group were in the 5^{th} grade. The average age of treatment group participants was 13.4 and 12.5 for the control group.

A majority of the participants in both groups came from single parent homes. More of the treatment group participants were part of families that consisted of four or more children whereas control group participants largely came from families consisting of two or more children.

Forty percent of parents in the treatment group and 63.6% of parents in the control group had obtained a high school diploma. Seventy percent of parents in the

Table 3

Distribution of Selected Demographic Variables for 21 Participants in the Treatment and Control Group

Variable	Treatment	Control
Participant Grade		
5th	1 (10%)	5 (45.3%)
6th	2 (20%)	1 (9.1%)
7th	1 (10%)	2 (18.2%)
8th	2 (20%)	3 (27.3%)
9th	4 (40%)	0
Participant Age		
11	1 (10%)	3 (27.3%)
12		2 (18.2%)
13	5 (50%)	3 (27.3%)
14	2 (20%)	3 (27.3%)
15	2 (20%)	
Age [Mean (SD)]	13.4 (1.2)	12.5 (1.2)
Family Composition		
Single Parent	9 (90%)	7 (63.6%)
Dual Parents	1 (10%)	4 (36.4%)
Children in the home		
1 child	1 (10%)	
2 children	1 (10%)	5 (45.5%)
3 children	4 (40%)	3 (27.3%)

4 children	2 (20%)	
5 or more	2 (20%)	3 (27.3%)
Parent Education		
HS* Diploma	4 (40%)	7 (63.6%)
Tech Training	2 (20%)	2 (18.2%)
11th grade	2 (20%)	2 (18.2%)
10th grade	1 (10%)	
8th grade*	1 (10%)	
Parent Employment		
Employed	7 (70%)	7 (63.6%)
Unemployed	3 (30%)	4 (36.4%)
Parent Occupation		
Business owner	1 (10%)	1 (9.1%)
Food Services	1 (10%)	
Machine operator	1 (10%)	1 (9.1%)
Unskilled labor	1 (10%)	
Other	4 (40%)	7 (63.6%)
Unemployed	2 (20%)	2 (18.2%)
Family Income		
$12,000 or below	5 (50%)	6 (54.5%)
$12,001 - $25,000	4 (40%)	5 (45.5%)
$45,001 - $55,000	1 (10%)	

Note. Demographic data was obtained using through the use of SPSS Base 10.0 software. HS is the abbreviation for High School. 8th grade* indicates 8th grade education or lower

treatment group were employed and 63.6% of parents in the control group were employed. Jobs ranged from business owner to unskilled laborer. The average income for over half of the families in both groups was $12,000 or below. Remaining income for both groups fell between $12,001 and $25,000. One family in the treatment group reported an income between $45,001 and $55,000.

In order to respond to hypothesis statements generated for this research study, the independent t-test and the paired- samples t-test were implemented. The t-test in general is the statistical procedure used to test differences in the means or averages of two groups being studied. Often times, differences between groups can be seen by observation, however, in order to show confidence in research findings that a change has occurred the statistical t-test is considered to be a strong robust procedure that analyzes data based on the means of two groups at a given time (Montcalm & Royse, 2002).

The independent-samples t-test was used to measure differences in means between two independent samples. Data from the Conners-Wells' Adolescent Self-Report Scale (CASS) and the Aggression Questionnaire (AQ) completed by the youth and the Conners' Parent Rating Scales-Revised (CPR-R) and the Behavioral Questionnaire (BQ), completed by the

parent or guardian were analyzed before and after (pre and post) the intervention. The differences were compared between the treatment and control group and are listed in Table 4.

Table 4

Independent-Samples T-Test Analysis of the Conners-Wells' Adolescent Self-Report Scale (CASS), the Aggression Questionnaire (AQ), the Conners' Parent Rating Scales-Revised (CPRR), and the Behavioral Questionnaire (BQ).

	Treatment Group (N-10)		Control Group (N-11)				
Variable	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p*
CASS (1)	32.3	16.2	25.5	11.2	1.13	19	<.05 (.271)
(2)	24.9	14.8	27.0	11.4	-.37	19	<.05 (.718)
AQ (1)	95.1	25.1	84.8	18.9	1.05	18	<.05 (.310)
(2)	83.2	27.9	86.1	19.3	-.27	18	<.05 (.789)
CPRR (1)	42.8	24.9	32.5	17.7	1.11	19	<.05 (.282)
(2)	34.7	28.0	33.0	18.1	.16	18	<.05 (.874)
BQ (1)	23.2	7.5	17.2	7.1	1.88	19	<.05 (.075)
(2)	17.1	7.8	17.5	5.4	-.12	18	<.05 (.909

Note. Pre-test was indicated by (1) and Post-test was indicated by (2). P values indicative of statistical significance were noted if the value was less than .05. The actual significance value or p-value for each measure is in parenthesis next to the anticipated p-value. Each measure was completed by the youth(CASS and AQ) and his parent or guardian (CPRR and BQ).

The paired-samples t-test, also called the related-samples t-test, or correlated-samples t-test, was used to compare data taken at two different time periods but from each group to determine if within group differences occurred between pre and post-testing. The paired-samples t-test is used when the same group is measured twice or

when the responses of the research participants are thought to be correlated (Montcalm & Royse, 2002). Data from the treatment group was used in this analysis and are listed in Table 5.

Table 5
Paired-Samples T-Test Analysis of the Conners-Wells' Adolescent Self-Report Scale (CASS), the Aggression Questionnaire (AQ), the Conners' Parent Rating Scales-Revised (CPRR), and the Behavioral Questionnaire (BQ)(Treatment group).

	Treatment Group				
Variable	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p*
CASS (1)	32.3	16.2			
(N-10) (2)	24.9	14.8	2.6	9	.028
AQ (1)	95.1	25.1			
(N-9) (2)	83.2	27.9	1.7	8	<.05 (.114)
CPRR (1)	40.8	25.5			
(N-9) (2)	34.7	28.0	1.3	8	<.05 (.214)
BQ (1)	23.1	7.9			
(N-9) (2)	17.1	7.8	3.1	8	.015

Note. Pre and Post data is indicated by (1) pre and (2) post. Each measure was completed by the youth (CASS and AQ) and his parent or guardian (CPRR and BQ). P values indicative of statistical significance were noted if the value was less than .05.

The data presented in Table 4, 5 and 6 were utilized to determine if the hypothesis statements used in the research study were substantiated or rejected.

Hypothesis 1

Posttest mean scores on the Conners-Wells' Adolescent Self-Report Scale (CASS) and the Aggression (AQ) will

be significantly reduced from pretest scores for youth in the experimental/treatment group.

Table 6
Paired-Samples T-Test Analysis of the Conners-Wells' Adolescent Self-Report Scale (CASS) and the Aggression Questionnaire (AQ) and the Conners' Parent Rating Scales-Revised (CPRR) and the Behavioral Questionnaire (BQ)(Control group).

	Control Group (N-11)				
Variable	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p*
CASS (1)	25.5	11.2			
(2)	27.0	11.4	-1.6	10	.137
AQ (1)	84.8	19.0			
(2)	86.1	19.3	-1.1	10	.295
CPRR (1)	32.5	17.7			
(2)	33.0	18.2	-.5	10	.633
BQ (1)	17.2	7.1			
(2)	17.5	5.4	-.3	10	.756

Note. Pre and Post data is indicated by (1) pre and (2) post. Each measure was completed by the youth (CASS and AQ) and his parent or caretaker (CPRR and BQ). P values indicative of statistical significance were noted if the value was less than .05.

The paired-samples t-test did not reveal statistically significant differences between the pre and post data for participants on the AQ. However statistical significance was observed in the CASS $t(9) = 2.6$, $p < .05$ (See Table 5). Based on the results, Hypothesis 1 was partially corroborated.

Although the independent-samples t-test did not reveal statistical significance in the pre and post data for

participants on the AQ, clinical significance was observed based in the reduction of mean scores at pre and post-testing for the treatment group on both the AQ and the CASS (See Table 4). The average pretest score on the CASS was 32.3, the posttest score was 24.9. The average pretest score on the AQ was 95.1, the posttest score was 83.2. Such findings, especially on the AQ, reveal that based solely on means, scores were reduced at post-testing. Oftentimes treatment is conducted with small groups, therefore, it is important to also be aware that mean score changes may not indicate statistical significance, but does provide evidence of clinically significant reduction in mean scores.

Hypothesis 2

Pretest and Posttest mean scores on the CASS and AQ will not be significantly different for the youth in the control group.

Based on the independent-samples t-test and the paired-samples t-test, no significance was found on the CASS and AQ of the control group when compared to the CASS and AQ of the treatment group. The mean and standard deviation of the CASS was 25.5 and 11.2, respectively, at pretest. An increase was observed at posttest based. The mean and standard deviation of the CASS was 27.0 and 11.4,

respectively. For the AQ the mean and standard deviation was 84.8 and 18.9, respectively, on the pretest (See Table 6). Again an increase in mean scores was observed at the posttest. The mean for the AQ was 86.1 and the standard deviation was 19.3 (See Table 6). The lack of statistically significant change between the two groups at pre and posttest fully support Hypothesis 2 which indicated no significant difference would be observed between pre and post-testing on questionnaires of youth in the control group.

The researcher expected no change in the control group. Few programs were available in the community that directly addressed the key components of violence reduction: social skills training, anger management, and violence education. In addition to the lack of availability of programs, the researcher observed that few probation officers encouraged youth to participate in programs available through the court. Parents also contributed to the non-compliance of group participation. Such a lack of support varied from parent to parent as well as for probation officers. However, in general, both parents and probation officers were observed to wait until court hearing dates approached before fulfilling judges'

requirements that would release their youth from probation or from a 90-Day Review.

Hypothesis 3

> Posttest mean scores on the Conners' Parent Rating Scales-Revised (CPR-R) and the Behavioral questionnaire (BQ) completed by parent or guardian) will be significantly reduced from pretest scores for the experimental/treatment group.

Based on data analysis presented in Table 5, using paired-samples t-test, statistical significance was observed on the BQ $t(8) = 3.1$, $p < .05$. The CPR-R did not reveal statistical significance between pre and post-testing. Hypothesis 3 was partially supported.

A reduction in mean scores pre and post was observed on the CPR-R even though analysis did not support statistical significance. The mean scores of the CPR-R at pretest were 40.8 with a standard deviation of 25.5. At posttest the mean scores were reduced to 34.7 with a slightly higher standard deviation of 28.0. Again the findings were not statistically significant, but the reduction in scores might indicate clinical significance.

Hypothesis 4

Pretest and Posttest mean scores on the CPR-R and the Behavioral Questionnaire (BQ) (completed by parent or guardian) will not be significantly different for youth in the control group.

The independent-samples t-test and the paired-samples t-test were used to obtain differences between the means at pre and post-testing for the CPR-R and the BQ (See Table 6). The mean of the CPR-R at pre testing was 32.5 the standard deviation was 17.7 at post testing, the results had increased slightly to 33.0 and 18.2, respectively. The mean and standard deviation of the BQ was 17.2 and 7.1, respectively, at pre testing and 17.5 and 5.4, respectively, at post testing. The lack of statistically significant change between the two groups at pre and post-testing substantiate Hypothesis 4 which indicated no significant difference would be observed between pre and post-testing in the youth control group.

Reports from parents about their children at post-testing included statements such as "he is the same way he was when you first asked these questions," or "he hasn't done a thing since we last talked" and lastly "nothing has changed in his behavior, he does the same old thing." Such

results were anticipated since youth in the control group received no intervention.

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Twenty-one adolescent African-American males and their parents or guardians agreed to participate in the data collection process enabling the researcher to ascertain efficacy of a cognitive-behavioral group treatment. The intervention was designed to reduce levels of aggression among the targeted population. Participants in the treatment and control group were given two questionnaires that measured aspects of aggression. Based on the results of the independent-samples t-test, the groups were not found to be statistically significantly different on the pretest prior to the intervention. After the intervention was administered to the treatment group, it can be seen from Table 4 that means decreased on each of the four measures which indicates clinical significance. Statistical significance resulted in two of the four measures; the CASS completed by the youth and the BQ completed by the parent/guardian (see Table 4). Differences in the control group were not observed as indicated in Table 4. Based on the results, Hypothesis 2 and 4 were fully substantiated while Hypothesis 1 and 3 were partially substantiated.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to answer the research question: Is the Aggression and Violence Reduction Training Program (AVT) effective for reducing levels of aggression in African-American adolescent males, such that the effect is statistically significant? In addition, this study sought to add to existing research by providing an empirically validated intervention that addressed low to moderate levels of aggression among African-American male youth. The AVT program used cognitive behavioral group techniques that focused on violence education, social skills training, and anger management. The AVT program was implemented through the Fulton County Juvenile Justice System from October, 2002 through September, 2003. African-American adolescent males were the participants in this research study. Probation officers and judges made referrals based on eligibility criteria that stipulated age and behavioral characteristics for low to moderate levels of aggression.

Youth were expected to be between the ages of 12-14. However, exceptions were made if the probation officer

specifically requested a particular adolescent be a part of the program. Low to moderate levels of aggression were conceptually defined as early onset aggression in which a youth is beginning to display behaviors that are intended to injure or irritate another individual (Eron, Walder, & Lefkowitz, 1971; in Huesmann & Miller, 1994). Low to moderate levels of aggression was operationally defined by a list of descriptive behaviors, which was included to better assist probation officers and judges in the referral process. Acceptable behaviors for referral were operationally defined and included such behaviors as: reaction to disappointments, criticisms, or teasing with extreme and intense anger, uncontrollable temper, and history of tantrums and uncontrollable angry outbursts. Unacceptable behaviors for referral included: substance abuse problems, violence that included a physical attack with a weapon against an adult, gang affiliation, and extremely disruptive or hyperactive behavior that warrants the use of medication.

Approximately 20 youth were referred and accepted as research participants in the treatment group. Only 10 completed the intervention and data collection process. A total of 11 referrals were made for the control group and all completed the data collection process. The

intervention was found to be generally successful, and was subsequently offered to the control group. However, due to lack of support from the probation officers and careful deliberations with the program coordinator, the intervention was discontinued. Referrals were made for participants in the control group to attend other established programs supporting the Fulton County Juvenile Justice System. If the intervention was found to be unsuccessful, then implementation with any other referral group would not be extended.

The intervention received favorable response from parents whose youth completed the program. One parent reported that she noticed her son "taking his time to make decisions." Another guardian reported that her grandson seemed to be calmer and was getting into less trouble at school. The researcher found that youth who attended all sessions were more serious about each session, and completed the posttest questionnaires with importance. They were observed taking their time reading each question and considering the answers before responding. On the other hand, youth who missed one or more sessions were not fully vested in the program, and were observed to rush through their questionnaires.

Based on data analysis, of the four hypotheses generated, two were confirmed and two were partially confirmed. It is possible that the sample size was too small for significant findings in all hypothesis statements in spite of the use of the t-test statistical procedure. The questionnaires used at pre and post-testing may have been too long for parents and youth to complete with full concentration. Also, the questionnaires may not have reflected the developmental level of the research participants, thus skewing responses to questionnaire statements. Cultural sensitivity was adhered to throughout the implementation of the intervention. However, the lack of trust between African-Americans and researchers, the fear that the research would negatively impact the research participant and the concern that no benefit from the intervention would be obtained (See, 1998; See, 2001) may have further contributed to partial confirmation of hypothesis 1 and 3.

In addition, youth with an active probation officer were observed to be more vocal and participatory in sessions, and had a higher attendance record than those who had not seen their probation officer for an extended period of time. In fact, one youth reported that he had not seen or heard from his probation officer in over four months.

This youth subsequently dropped out of the program. Therefore, youth attendance and participation was highly predicated upon the influence of the probation officer. The youth were well aware that their responses on the questionnaires would remain confidential, and thus, influence on pre and post testing was not likely to be affected. However, the ongoing support of the probation officer did greatly influence attendance and completion of the program.

Limitations

This study was implemented to address a program need for the Fulton County Juvenile Justice System, to more effectively serve African-American youth and to answer a pertinent research question, "Is the AVT program effective for reducing aggression in African-American adolescent males?" A non-randomized quasi-experimental design was selected to determine the efficacy of the intervention. More specifically, a non-equivalent control group design was used with pre and post testing of the treatment and the control group. The sample was a purposive sample in which matching techniques provided group similarity without having random assignment. All youth were referred from a central location and specific criteria were established for referrals that helped to offset selection bias that may

have occurred by probation officers or judges. In addition, the criteria for group participation increased the expectation that groups would be similar.

Further, two facilitators conducted the groups which reduced a threat to the internal validity of the study that might occur due to the interaction between facilitator and youth. Though such controls were implemented, no research that utilizes human subjects, or research in general, is without limitations. It is very difficult to create social research in which all extraneous variables are controlled. As a result, as with this study, there are certain limitations that should be considered.

Limitations of a study are viewed through threats to the internal and external validity of the research. Internal validity refers to the amount of confidence the researcher has that the results of one's study accurately depicts the relationship between the independent and dependent variable diminishing the impact of all other factors. The external validity of a study refers to the ability to replicate a study and yield similar results. External validity also relates to the generalizability of findings beyond the conditions in which the original study is conducted (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2002; Rubin & Babbie, 2001).

Based on the present research, threats to internal validity included experimental mortality and history. Experimental mortality deals with the loss of research participants due to absence or death (Rubin & Babbie, 2002). The participants in this study simply dropped out of the program. Two of youth completed their court hearings prior to the conclusion of the intervention and based on the findings of the court, they did not return to the group. However, the majority of youth simply faced no consequence for group attendance. It was later reported by a probation officer and a program coordinator that some judges and probation officers did not penalize youth for failing to complete programs in which they were referred. In addition, some parents did not impose consequences on their youth for failing to attend the groups. Overall, there was a lack of support and failure to impose consequences if youth did not attend the AVT program. As a result, several youth simply stopped coming to the program.

The threat of history refers to occurrences that take place during the intervention that influences the outcome on final questionnaires (Rubin & Babbie, 2002). This threat was observed based on the results of the posttest scores for two participants. Instead of the anticipated decline in posttest scores, two of parent responses

revealed an increase in results, which would signify no benefit of the intervention to the child. At the completion of the questionnaires, the researcher asked the parent if anything had recently occurred. One parent informed the researcher that her child had been "benched during a basketball game because of his poor attitude." The other parent informed the researcher that she and her child had recently gotten into a bad argument, and she was still upset with him. In spite of the researcher's disclaimer to complete questionnaires based on the youth's overall behavior, these parents completed the questionnaires based on the specific negative behavior that had taken place prior to the posttest. In addition to the threats to internal validity, a few threats to external validity were also noted. Two such threats are the interaction among treatments and the effects of generalizing-across-effect constructs. Interaction among treatments occurs when multiple treatments are administered to research participants and the effects are collective, one can not generalize the results to situations based on one single treatment (Parker, 1990). The AVT program was composed of three treatment modules: violence education, social skills training, and anger management. The culmination of the three modules was found to be clinically

significant and partially statistically significant, therefore to address reduction in aggression and violence based on one module would cause erroneous interpretation of data.

Generalizing-across-effect-constructs, refers to the degree to which an intervention is found to be effective on one outcome and will work to produce other outcomes (Parker, 1990). The results of the data should be a reduction in mean scores on all posttests for youth. Some readers would be inclined to say that because aggression and violence was reduced based on the youth outcomes of the CASS and AQ, and parent outcomes on the CPR-R and the BQ that youth should also feel better about themselves. Such a statement is impossible to make as it relates to self-esteem and was not addressed in the modules conducted by the AVT program. While one would assume that a youth who has changed his behavior in a positive manner would feel better about himself, such a statement can not be implied based on the current study results.

The results or findings in research can only be generalized to similar populations in similar settings. If the program is administered in a different setting with a different population, research should be implemented to ensure the efficacy of the program. Research is not

without flaws. There are limitations to every study. But the limitations should not preclude the significance of research findings in this study.

Significance of Research Findings

The AVT program was created to address three areas identified by previous researchers as key to reducing aggression and violence among youth. Yung & Hammond (1995) found that violence-risk education, anger management, and social skills training were critical components in their research and work with African-American adolescent males. In addition, the significance of the findings was enhanced by also incorporating the work of Wodarski & Wodarski (1998), which provided an empirical paradigm to be used with the targeted population. The use of a cognitive behavioral group approach as influenced by the Social Learning Theory was beneficial to the research study. The cognitive behavioral techniques reinforced positive behavior learned in a group format, enabled youth to practice and model appropriate behaviors with group members, and encouraged youth to rely on peer support within the group.

Statistical significance was found based on results of the CASS for the treatment group (i.e., significantly lower scores on the posttest). The CASS was designed to rate

conduct problems, cognitive problems/inattention, and hyperactivity/ADHD. Although lower scores for the treatment group on the posttest of the AQ were not statistically significant, the reduction in score was indicative of change resulting from the intervention. The AQ was designed to measure physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, hostility, and indirect aggression. Lower scores on the CASS and AQ on the posttest indicated that aggression and violence among participants had been reduced. This is a significant finding that supports the goal of the intervention, which was to reduce aggressive and violent behavior among youth.

In spite of the lack of support from some probation officers and some parents, youth who completed the program demonstrated learning from the three components of the AVT program. For one component, social skills training, youth retained information that taught them how to constructively express anger and disappointment, listen and react appropriately to the criticism of others and compromise to resolve disagreements without violence. In the second component, anger management, youth retained skills that helped them identity triggers of anger, understand responses to anger, identify consequences of their reaction to anger, and use relaxation techniques to control their

anger. Of the third component, violence education, provided a clear picture the legal system, the number of African-American youth incarcerated, and the reality of how uncontrolled aggressive and violent behaviors can abolish future goals and dreams.

The parent responses on the CPR-R and the BQ also provide significant findings. The BQ yielded statistically significant results on the posttest (i.e., lower scores on the final administration) yet both questionnaires generated lower mean scores from pre to post testing based on the independent-sample t-test and the paired-samples t-test. The results are significant because they indicate that overall, parents observed changes in the behavior of the child who participated in the AVT program. Such recognition could encourage positive reinforcement by the parent of new learned behaviors. This reinforcement would encourage youth to continue the positive behavior instead of the negative behavior.

Such findings are significant to the field of social work as well. The nature by which the study was conducted, and its findings support the social worker as an empirical practitioner. The findings were obtained through the use of the scientific method. Hypotheses were generated, instruments were utilized to measure and observe changes in

the behavior of research participants, and data were evaluated, which adds to a core body of knowledge upon which the field of social work is based. The significance of the findings provides empirical support for the use of the AVT in social work practice with small groups of African-American adolescent males who exhibit low to moderate aggressive and violent behaviors.

Social workers must carefully select interventions that offer evidence of effectiveness, and target the specific needs of the youth with whom they are working. Several programs exist today that have no definitive research base, provide suggestive outcome data based on poor research designs, have limited evaluation components over an extended time period, and provide positive results from less than well-designed studies (Fetsch and Silliman, 2002). The AVT program is one program that has demonstrated effectiveness through implementation with a small population of juvenile delinquents in Fulton County, Georgia.

Even though this study yields significance in its findings, and contributes to the social work field, methodological improvements could be made to strengthen the study and its findings. One immediate suggestion would be to add a follow-up component for the treatment group. This

will help to ascertain whether youth in the treatment group maintain the new skills learned in the intervention. In addition to the follow-up, providing treatment to the control group and assessing that group after treatment through a follow-up would further substantiate intervention effectiveness.

A second improvement would be to utilize measures that have fewer items. The youth questionnaires had 27 items and 34 items, respectively. The parent questionnaires had 27 items and eight items, respectively. Statistical significance was noted on those questionnaires that had fewer items. It is possible that the reading level, attention span, and degree of probation and parent support had an impact upon significance levels. This may mean that youth respond more accurately to short-item instruments, but lose patience and attentiveness to longer instruments; or more importantly, that the presence of immediate consequences motivates more positive behaviors.

Lastly, program support from the judges and probation officers is essential to the retention rate of group participants. Without ongoing support and follow-up from probation officers, youth are likely to view programs of this nature as inconsequential to their probation, and thus, choose not to participate. This behavior parallels a

lack of investment in the programs. In the future, social workers should be aware of adult involvement (such as parents and probation officers) and consequences imposed on youth for compliance or non-compliance. A training component should be added that teaches parents and probation officers how to recognize and reinforce positive improvements in behavior. Such factors will contribute greatly to the retention of participants in each group, as well as the likelihood of increased success.

Summary

The effects of uncontrolled aggressive and violent behavior in African-American male youth are seen daily in the juvenile justice system and in adult prisons. Oftentimes counties lack the resources to provide effective interventions, those programs that have been proven effective have long waiting lists, or programs that are available simply are not research based, and therefore, the efficacy of the program is unknown. Social workers must begin to address this population and provide the necessary support that is specific to this population; for without the support, individuals, families, and communities will continue to suffer.

The lack of presence of large numbers of African-American males from society deprives young Black males of

potential role models. The large numbers of African-American fathers incarcerated has created a dramatic change in the structure of the African-American family. The role of incarceration on fatherhood and the male responsibility to family has been overlooked. In fact, oftentimes the relationship between children and parent is viewed as a mother-child relationship in the African-American community. Little emphasis is placed upon the father-child relationship (Mendez, 2000).

Other contributors to the detriment of the African-American community as a result of adolescent male incarceration include; educational demise, reduction in employability and loss of voting rights for a period of time, and sometimes for life. The multitude of factors resulting from incarceration severely dilutes the political power and upward mobility of the African-American community. The economic base is affected by fewer employed individuals, and the enculturation and socialization of African-American youth into larger society is hindered by criminal records (Billings & Todd, 2001).

This study is important to social workers because it: (1) provides a theoretical base that enables the social worker to formulate ideas and concerns about the targeted population and issue; (2) the theories discussed enable

social workers to select appropriate interventions; (3) the intervention provides a framework of effective treatment that can be modeled and researched with other populations, and (4) this study adds to the body of social work research, and supports the use of social workers in a field normally beset by criminologists, psychologists and psychiatrists.

REFERENCES

Acker, R. V. & Talbot, E. (1999). The school context and risk for aggression: Implications for school-based prevention and intervention efforts. *Preventing School Failure*, 44 (1), pp. 12-21.

African-American Youth and the Juvenile Court System. Coalition for Juvenile Justice. Retrieved June 2002, www.juvjustice.org

Agnew, R. (1985). A revised strain theory of delinquency. *Social Forces*, 64 (1), pp. 151-167.

Agnew, R. (1992). Foundation for a General Strain Theory of Crime and Delinquency. *Criminology*, 30, pp. 47-87.

Agnew, R. (1993). Why do they do it? An examination of the intervening mechanisms between "social control" variables and delinquency. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 30 (3), pp. 245-266.

Agnew, R. (2001). Building on the foundation of General Strain Theory: Specifying the types of strain most likely to lead to crime and delinquency. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 38 (4), pp. 319-361.

Alridge, D. & Daniels, M. (2001). Black violence and crime in the 21st century: A socio-historical structural analysis. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 4 (2/3), pp. 27-43.

Ang, R. P. & Hughes, J. N. (2001). Differential benefits of skills training with antisocial youth based on group composition: A meta-analytic investigation. *School Psychology Review*, 31 (2), pp. 164-185.

Babbie, E. (2001). *The practice of social research* (9th ed.). Australia: Wadsworth Thomson Learning.

Baker, R. L. & Mednick, B. R. (1984). *Influences on Human Development: A Longitudinal Perspective*. Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff.

Bandura, A. (1973). *Aggression: A social learning analysis*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Bandura, A. (1989). Social cognitive theory. In R. Vasta (Ed.), *Annals of child development* (pp. 1-60). Greenwich, Connecticut: JAI Press, Inc.

Battin, S. R., Hill, K. G., Abbott, R. D., Catalano, R.F., & Hawkins, J. D. (1998). The contribution of gang membership to delinquency beyond delinquent friends. *Criminology*, 36, pp. 93-115.

Berkowitz, L. (1993). *Aggression: Its causes, consequences, and control*. New York: McGraw-Hill, Incorporated.

Bilchik, S. (1999). *Minorities in the juvenile justice system*. 1999 National report series: Juvenile justice bulletin. U.S. Department of Justice: Office of Justice Programs.

Billings, F. C. & Todd, C. (2002). African-American Violence Prevention. Paper presented at the National Association of African American Studies, Houston, Texas.

Billingsley, A. Black families and White social science. *Journal of Social Issues*, 26, pp. 127-143.

Blueprints for Violence Prevention (1998). Retrieved October 2001, from www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/about/main.htm

Borduin, C. & Schaeffer, C. (1998). Violent offending in adolescence: Epidemiology, correlates, outcomes, and treatment. In Gullotta, T., Adams, G., Montemayor, R., (Eds.). *Delinquent violent youth: theory and interventions*. Thousand Oaks; Sage Publications.

Bourke, M. L. & Van Hasselt, V. B. (2001). Social problem-solving skills training for incarcerated offenders: A treatment manual. *Behavior Modification*, 25 (2), pp. 163-188.

Brewer, D. D., Hawkins, J. D., Catalano, R. F., & Neckerman, H. J. (1995). Preventing serious, violent, and chronic juvenile offending: A review of evaluations of selected strategies in childhood, adolescence, and the community. In J. C. Howell, B. Krisberg, J. D. Hawkins, & J. J. Wilson (Eds.). *Sourcebook on Serious Violent and Chronic Juvenile Offenders* (pp. 61-141). California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Bridges, G. and Steen, S. (1998). Racial disparities in official assessment of juvenile offenders: Attributional stereotypes as mitigating mechanisms. *American Sociological Review*, pp. 554-571.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1989). Ecological systems theory. In R. Vasta (Ed.), *Annals of child development* (pp. 187-249). Greenwich, Connecticut: JAI Press, Inc.

Brown, K. S. & Parson, R. D. (1998). Accurate identification of childhood aggression: A key to successful intervention. *Professional School Counseling*, 2 (2), pp. 135-141.

Brownfield, D. (1986). Social class and violent behavior. *Criminology*, 24, pp. 421-437.

Building Blocks for Youth. (2000). *The problem of overrepresentation of minority youth in the justice system.*

Retrieved October 2001, from http www.buildingblocksforyouth.org

Bullis, M., Walker, H. M., & Sprague, J. R. (2001). A promise unfulfilled: Social skills training with at-risk and antisocial children and youth. *Exceptionality*, 9, pp. 67-90.

Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice. (1998). *Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention 1996 Report*, Washington, D.C.

Buss, A. H. & Warren, W. L. (2000). *Aggression Questionnaire*. Los Angeles, California: Western Psychological Services.

Catalano, R. F. & Hawkins, J. D. (1996). The social development model: A theory of antisocial behavior. In J. D. Hawkins (Ed.). *Delinquency and Crime: Current Theories* (pp. 149-197). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Cirillo, K. J., Pruitt, B. E., Colwell, B., Kingery, P. M., Hurley, R. S., & Ballard, D. (1998). School violence: Prevalence and intervention strategies for at-risk adolescents. *Adolescence*, 33 (130), pp. 317-329.

Conners, C. K. (2001). *Conners' Rating Scales—Revised: Technical manual*. New York: Multi-Health Systems Incorporated.

Cotton, N., Resnick, J., Browne, D., Martin, S., McCarraher, D., & Woods, J. (1994). Aggression and fighting behavior among African American adolescents: Individual and family factors. *American Journal of Public Health*, 84, pp. 618-622.

Delva-Tauili'ili, J. (1995). Assessment and prevention of aggressive behavior among youths of color: Integrating cultural and social factors. *Social Work in Education*, 17 (2), 83-92.

Denno, D. W. (1990). *Biology and violence: From birth to adulthood.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Devore, W. & Schlesinger, E. (1999). *Ethnic-Sensitive Social Work Practice* (5th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Dodge, K., Bates, J., & Pettit, G. (1991). Mechanisms in the cycle of violence. *Science*, 250, pp. 1678-1683.

Dodge, K. A. & Coie, J. D. (1987). Social-information processing factors in reactive and proactive aggression in children's peer groups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 53, pp. 1146-1158.

DuRant, R. H., Treiber, F., Getts, A., McCloud, K., Linder, C. W., & Woods, E. R. (1996). Comparison of two

violence prevention curricula for middle school adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 19 (2), pp. 111-117.

Eisenberg, N., Fabes, R., Shepard, S. A., Burphy, B. C., Guthrie, I. K., Jones, S., Friedman, J., Poulin, R., & Maszk, P. (1997). Contemporaneous and longitudinal prediction of children's social functioning from regulation and emotionality. *Child Development*, 68, pp. 642-664.

Elliott, D. (1994). *Youth Violence: An overview* (F-693 CSPV Paper 008). Boulder, CO: University of Colorado, Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence: Institute of Behavioral Sciences.

Elliott, D., Hagan, J., & McCord, J. (1998). *Youth violence: Children at risk*. Washington, DC: American Sociological Association.

Elliott, D. & Tolan, P. (1999). Youth prevention, intervention, and social policy: An overview. In Flannery, D. & Huff, C. (Eds.). *Youth violence: Prevention, intervention, and social policy*. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, Inc.

Elliott, D. & Wilson, W. (1996). The effects of neighborhood disadvantage on adolescent development. *Journal of Research in Crime & Delinquency*, 33, (4), pp. 389-427.

Farrington, D. P. (1989). Early predictors of adolescent aggression and adult violence. *Violence and Victims*, 4, pp. 79-100.

Farrington, D. P. (1991). Childhood aggression and adult violence: Early precursors and later-life outcomes. In D. J. Pepler & K.H. Rubin (Eds.). *The Development and Treatment of Childhood Aggression* pp. (5-29). Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Feindler, E. & Ecton, R. (1986). *Adolescent anger control*. New York: Pergamon.

Feldman, R. A. & Wodarksi, J. S. (1975). *Contemporary approaches to group treatment*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Fetsch, R. J. & Silliman, B. (2002). *Which youth violence prevention programs work?* The Forum for Family & Consumer Issues, 7 (1). Retrieved September 2002, from www.ces.ncsu.edu

Fingerhut, L. A. & Kleinman, J. C. (1990). International and interstate comparisons of homicide among youth men. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 263, pp. 3292-3295.

Frey, K. S., Hirschstein, M. K., & Guzzo, B. A. (2000). Second step: Preventing aggression by promoting

social competence. *Journal of Emotional & Behavioral Disorders*, 8 (2), pp. 102-113.

Geen, R. G. (1999). *Human Aggression* (2nd ed.). Buckingham: Open University Press.

Ginsburg, K. R., Alexander, P. M., Hunt, J., Sullivan, M., Zhao, H., & Cnaan, A. (2002). Enhancing their likelihood for a positive future: The perspective of inner-city youth. *American Academy of Pediatrics*, 109, pp. 1136-1143.

Goddard. W., Goff, B. G., Melancon, M. V. (2000). Profiles of delinquency: A comparison of delinquent behavioral groups. *Journal of Social Behavior & Personality*, 15 (1).

Goldstein, A., Apter, S., & Harootunian, B. (1984). *School violence*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Goldstein, A. & Glick, B. (1987). *Aggression replacement training: A comprehensive intervention for aggressive youth*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.

Gottfredson, D. C., McNeill III, R. J., & Gottfredson, G. D. (1991). Social area influences on delinquency: A multilevel analysis. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 28, pp. 197-226.

Green, M. B. (1998). Youth violence in the city: The role of educational interventions. *Health Education and Behavior*, 25 (2), pp. 175-193.

Grossman, D. C., Neckerman, H. J., Koepsell, T. D., Liu, P. Y., Asher, K. N., Beland, L., Frey, K., & Rivara, F. P. (1997). Effectiveness of a violence prevention curriculum among children in elementary school: A randomized controlled trial. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 277, 1605-1611.

Guetzloe, E. (1999). Violence in children and adolescents—a threat to public health and safety: A paradigm of prevention. Prevention School Failure, 44 (1), pp. 21-25.

Hammond, W. R. & Yung, B. R. (1991). Preventing violence in at-risk African American youth. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 2, pp. 259-373.

Harris, L. (1993). *A survey of experiences, perceptions, and apprehensions about guns among young people in America*. Boston: Harvard School of Public Health.

Hausman, A., Pierce, G., & Briggs, L. (1996). Evaluation of comprehensive violence prevention education: Effects on student behavior. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 19, pp. 104-110.

Hawkins, D. F. (1990). Explaining the Black homicide rate. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 5 (2), pp.151-163.

Hawkins, D. F., Laub, J. H., Lauritsen, J. L., and Cothern, L. (2000). Race, ethnicity, and serious and violent juvenile offending. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention: U.S. Department of Justice.

Hawkins, J. D., Herrenkohl, T. I., Farrington, D. P., Brewer, D., Catalano, R. F., Harachi, T. W., & Cothern, L. (2000). *Predictors of Youth Violence*. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention: U.S. Department of Justice.

Hinshaw, S. P. & Brian, A. Z. (1997). Assessment of antisocial behavior in children and adolescents. In D. M. Stoff, J. Breiling, & J. D. Maser (Eds.) *Handbook of antisocial behavior* (pp. 36-51). New York: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.

Hirschi, T. (1969). *Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hoagwood, K. (2000). Research on youth violence: Progress by replacement, not addition. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 8 (2), pp. 67-71.

Huck, S. W. (2000). *Reading statistics and research* (3rd ed.). New York: Longman.

Hudley, C. A., Britsch, B., Wakefield, W. D., Smith, T., Demorat, M., & Cho, S. An attribution retraining program to reduce aggression in elementary school students. *Psychology in the Schools*, 35 (3), pp. 271-282.

Huesmann, L. R. & Miller, L. S. (1994). Long-term effects of repeated exposure to media violence in childhood. In L. R. Huesmann (Ed.) *Aggressive Behavior* (pp. 153-186). New York: Plenum Press.

Joseph, J. (1995). *Black youths, delinquency, and juvenile justice*. Westport, Connecticut: Praegaer.

Kandel, E., & Mednick, S. A. (1991). Perinatal complications predict violent offending. *Criminology*, 29, pp. 519-529.

Larkin, R. (1998). *The effect of behavioral group counseling on improving self-esteem, perceived self-control, and classroom behavior of elementary students*. Published doctoral dissertation, University of Georgia, Georgia.

Leashore, B. R. (1985). Social Services and Black men. In L. E. Gary (Ed.). *Black men* (pp. 257-268). California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Leonard, S., Lee, C., & Kiselica, M. S. (1999). Counseling African American male youth. In A. M. Horne & M. S. Kiselica (Eds.). *Handbook of counseling boys and*

adolescent males: A practitioner's guide (pp. 75-86). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Incorporated.

Lindesmith Center-Drug Policy Foundation. (2000). *The sentencing project. Young Black men and the criminal justice system: A growing national problem*. Retrieved October 2001, from www.lindesmith.org

Loeber, R. (1990). Development and risk factors of juvenile antisocial behavior and delinquency. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 10, pp. 1-41.

Loeber, R. (1996). Developmental continuity, change, and pathways in male juvenile problem behaviors and delinquency. In J. D. Hawkins (Ed.). *Delinquency and Crime: Current Theories* (pp. 1-27). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Loeber, R. & Hay, D. F. (1996). Key issues in the development of aggression and violence from childhood to early adulthood. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 48, pp. 371-410.

Lynch, J. P. (2002). Trends in juvenile violent offending: An analysis of victim survey data. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention: U.S. Department of Justice.

MacKenzie, D. L. (2000). *Sentencing and corrections in the 21st century: Setting the stage for the future*.

The National Institute of Justice; Office of Justice Program, U. S. Department of Justice. Retrieved February 2002, from www.bsos.umd.edu/ccjs/corrections

Maguin, E. & Loeber, R. (1996). Academic performance and delinquency. In M. Tonry (Ed.). *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research, Vol. 20*, (pp. 145-264). Chicago: University of Chicago.

Majors, R. & Billson, J. M. (1992). *Cool Pose: The dilemmas of Black manhood in America*. New York: Lexington Books.

Matsueda, R. L. (1988). The current state of differential association theory. *Crime & Delinquency*, 34 (3), pp. 277-306.

Matsueda, R. L. & Heimer, K. (1987). Race, family structure, and delinquency: A test of differential association and social control theories. *American Sociological Review*, 52, pp. 826-840.

McCord, J. (Ed.). (1997). *Violence and childhood in the inner city*. Cambridge: University Press.

McWhirter, B. T. (1999). Effects of anger management and goal setting group interventions on state-trait anger and self-efficacy beliefs among high risk adolescents. *Current Psychology*, 18, (2), pp. 223-238.

Mendez, G. A. (2000). Incarcerated African American men and their children: A case study. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Thousand Oaks; Sage Publications.

Michelson, L., Sugai, D. P., Wood, R. P., & Kazdin, R. E. (1983). *Social skills assessment and training with children*. New York: Plenum.

Moffitt, T. E. (1987). Parental mental disorder and offspring criminal behavior: An adoption study. *Psychiatry*, 50, pp. 346-360.

Morales, A. & Sheafor, B. (2002). *The Many Faces of Social Work Clients*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Montcalm, D. & Royse, D. (2002). *Data Analysis for Social Workers*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Moore, M. & Tonry, M. (Eds.). (1998). *Youth Violence* (Vol. 24). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Moote, G. T., Smyth, N. J., & Wodarski, J. S. (1999). Social skills training with youth in school settings: A review. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 9 (4), pp. 427-466.

Nobles, W. W. (1978). Toward an empirical and theoretical framework for defining Black families. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 40, pp. 679-688.

Olejnik, S. (2001). *Research Design in Education*. Instructor Notes, University of Georgia.

Olweus, D. (1979). Stability of aggressive reaction patterns in males: A review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 86, pp. 852-875.

Opp, K. (1989). The economics of crime and the sociology of deviant behaviour: A theoretical confrontation of basic propositions. *KYKLOS*, 42, pp. 405-430.

Parker, R. M. (1990). Power, control, and validity in research. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 23, 613-620.

Paternoster, R. & Mazerolle, P. (1994). General Strain Theory and delinquency: A replication and extension. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 31 (3), pp. 235-263.

Piper, E. (1985). Violent recidivism and chronicity in the 1958 Philadelphia cohort. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 15, pp. 319-344.

Price, J., Desmond, S., & Smith, D. (1991). A preliminary investigation of inner city adolescents' perceptions of guns. *Journal of School Health*, 61, pp. 255-259.

Raine, A., & Jones, R., (1987). Attention, autonomic arousal, and personality in behaviorally disordered

children. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 15, pp. 583-599.

Randolph, S. M., Koblinsky, S. A., & Roberts, D. D. (1996). Studying the role of family and school in the development of African American preschoolers in violent neighborhoods. *Journal of Negro Education*,65, pp. 282-294.

Renfrew, J. W. (1997). *Aggression and its causes: A biopsychosocial approach*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Richman, J. M. & Fraser, M. W. (2001). Resilience in childhood: The role of risk. In J. M. Richman & M. W. Fraser (Eds.). *The context of youth violence: Resilience, risk, and protection* (pp.1-15). Wesport: Praeger.

Richters, J. E. (1993). Community violence and children's development: Toward a research agenda for the 1990s. *Psychiatry*, 56, pp. 3-6.

Rubin, A. & Babbie, E. (2001). *Research methods for social work* (2nd ed.). Australia: Wadsworth Thomson Learning.

See, L. A. (Ed.). (1998). *Human behavior in a social environment from an African-American perspective*. New York: Haworth Press.

See, L. A. (Ed.). (2001). *Violence as Seen Through a Prism of Color*. New York: Haworth Social Work Practice Press.

Siegel, L. J., & Senna, J. J. (1994). *Juvenile delinquency: Theory, practice, and law* (5th ed.). St. Paul: West Publishing Company.

Simcha-Fagan, O. & Schwartz, J. E. (1986). Neighborhood and delinquency: An assessment of contextual effects. *Criminology*, 24, pp. 667-699.

Smith, C. & Thornberry, T. P. (1995). The relationship between childhood maltreatment and adolescent involvement in delinquency. *Criminology*, 33, pp. 451-481.

Smithmyer, C. M., Hubbard, J. A., & Simons, R. F. (2000). Proactive and reactive aggression in delinquent adolescents: Relations to aggression outcome expectancies. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 29 (1), pp. 86-93.

Stoff, D., Breiling, J., & Maser, J. (Eds.). (1997). *Handbook of Antisocial Behavior*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Studer, J. (1996). Understanding and preventing aggressive responses in youth. *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling*, 30 (3), pp. 194-204.

Taylor, C. (2001). The relationship between social and self-control: Tracing Hirschi's criminological career. *Theoretical Criminology*, 5 (3), pp. 369-388.

Thornberry, T. P., Huizinga, D., & Loeber, R. (1995). The prevention of serious delinquency and violence: Implications from the Program of Research on the Causes and Correlates of Delinquency. In J. C. Howell, B. Krisberg, J. D. Hawkins, & J. J. Wilson (Eds.). *Sourcebook on Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders* (pp. 213-237). Oaks, California: Sage Publication.

Thornton, T.N., Craft, C.A., Dahlberg, L.L., Lynch, B.S., & Baer, K. (2000). *Best practices of youth violence prevention: A sourcebook for community action*. Atlanta: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control.

Tolan, P. H. & Thomas, P. (1995). The implications of age of onset for delinquency risk: II. Longitudinal data. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 23, pp. 157-181.

Townsey, R. D. (1985). The incarceration of Black men. In L. E. Gary (Ed.). *Black men* (pp. 229-256). California: Sage Publications, Inc.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Service. (2001). *Youth Violence: A report of the Surgeon General*.

Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Service.

Wells, D. & Miller, M. J. (1993). Adolescent affective aggression: An intervention model. *Adolescence*, 28 (112), pp. 781-792.

West, C. (1993). *Race Matters*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Widom, C. S. (1989). The cycle of violence. *Science*, 244, pp. 160-166.

Wodarski, J. S. & Wodarski, L. A. (1998). *Preventing teenage violence: An empirical paradigm for schools and families*. New York: Springer Publishing Company.

Yegidis, B. L. & Weinbach, R. W. (2002). *Research methods for social workers* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Yung, B. R. & Hammond, W. R. (1995). *PACT: Positive adolescent choices training*. Illinois: Research Press.

Zingraff, M. T., Leiter, J., Myers, K. A., & Johnson, M. (1993). Child maltreatment and youthful problem behavior. *Criminology*, 31, pp. 173-202.

APPENDIX A

THE CONNERS-WELLS' ADOLESCENT SELF-REPORT SCALE

Conners - Wells' Adolescent Self-Report Scale (S)

by C. Keith Conners, Ph.D. and Karen Wells, Ph.D.

Instructions: For the items below, circle the number that indicates whether the item is Not At All, Just a Little, Pretty Much, or Very True for you. "Not at all" means that the item is seldom or never a problem. "Very Much" means that the item is very often a problem or occurs very frequently. "Just a Little" and "Pretty Much" are in between. Please respond to all the items.

	Not True At All (Never, Seldom)	Just A Little True (Occas-ionally)	Pretty Much True (Often, Quite a Bit)	Very Much True (Very Often, Very Frequent)
1. My parents only notice my bad behavior	0	1	2	3
2. I bend the rules whenever I can	0	1	2	3
3. I tend to learn more slowly than I would like to	0	1	2	3
4. I am touchy or easily annoyed	0	1	2	3
5. I cannot sit still for very long	0	1	2	3
6. I feel like crying	0	1	2	3
7. I get into trouble with the police	0	1	2	3
8. I have trouble organizing my schoolwork	0	1	2	3
9. My parents expect too much from me	0	1	2	3
10. I have too much energy to sit still for long	0	1	2	3
11. Noises tend to put me off track when I am studying	0	1	2	3
12. I break rules	0	1	2	3
13. I forget things that I have learned	0	1	2	3
14. I tend to squirm and fidget	0	1	2	3
15. I do not have good judgment about a lot of things	0	1	2	3
16. I like to hurt some people	0	1	2	3
17. Sticking with things for more than a few minutes is difficult	0	1	2	3
18. I feel restless inside even if I am sitting still	0	1	2	3
19. My handwriting is poor	0	1	2	3

20. I have urges to do really bad things	0	1	2	3
21. I have trouble concentrating on one thing at a time	0	1	2	3
22. I have to get up and move around during homework	0	1	2	3
23. I am behind in my studies	0	1	2	3
24. I destroy property that belongs to others	0	1	2	3
25. I lose my place when I am reading	0	1	2	3
26. I have trouble sitting still through a meal	0	1	2	3
27. My parents do not reward or notice my good behavior	0	1	2	3

APPENDIX B

AGGRESSION QUESTIONNAIRE

Aggression Questionnaire

by Arnold H. Buss, Ph.D.

Directions: The statements on this form ask you to describe how you interact with other people. There are no right or wrong answers, so please just describe yourself as honestly as you can. When you are ready to begin, read each statement carefully and decide how well it describes you, using the following response scale. Then circle the number of the one response that best fits your answer. (1) Not at all like me, (2) A little like me, (3) Somewhat like me, (4) Very much like me, (5) Completely like me. Please circle only one response for each statement. If you want to change an answer, draw an X through your first response. Then circle the number that shows your new choice.

Not at all like me	A little like me	Somewhat like me	Very much like me	Completely like me	
1	2	3	4	5	1. My friends say that I argue a lot.
1	2	3	4	5	2. Other people always seem to get the breaks.
1	2	3	4	5	3. I flare up quickly, but get over it quickly.
1	2	3	4	5	4. I often find myself disagreeing with people.
1	2	3	4	5	5. At times I feel I have gotten a raw deal out of life.
1	2	3	4	5	6. I can't help getting into arguments when people disagree with me.
1	2	3	4	5	7. At ties I get very angry for no good reason.
1	2	3	4	5	8. I may hit someone if he or she provokes me.
1	2	3	4	5	9. I wonder why sometimes I feel so bitter about things.
1	2	3	4	5	10. I have threatened people I know.
1	2	3	4	5	11. Someone has pushed me so far that I hit him or her.
1	2	3	4	5	12. I have trouble controlling my temper.
1	2	3	4	5	13. If I'm angry enough, I may mess up someone's work.
1	2	3	4	5	14. I have been mad enough to slam a door when leaving someone behind in the room.
1	2	3	4	5	15. When people are bossy, I take my time doing what they want, just to show them.
1	2	3	4	5	16. I wonder what people want when they are nice to me.
1	2	3	4	5	17. I have become so mad that I have broken things.
1	2	3	4	5	18. I sometimes spread gossip about people I don't like.
1	2	3	4	5	19. I am a calm person.
1	2	3	4	5	20. When people annoy me, I may tell them what I think of them.
1	2	3	4	5	21. I sometimes feel that people are laughing at me behind my back.

1	2	3	4	5	22. I let my anger show when I do not get what I want.
1	2	3	4	5	23. At times I can't control the urge to hit someone.
1	2	3	4	5	24. I get into fights more than most people.
1	2	3	4	5	25. If somebody hits me, I hit back.
1	2	3	4	5	26. I tell my friends openly when I disagree with them.
1	2	3	4	5	27. If I have to resort to violence to protect my rights, I will.
1	2	3	4	5	28. I do not trust strangers who are too friendly.
1	2	3	4	5	29. At times I feel like a bomb ready to explode.
1	2	3	4	5	30. When someone really irritates me, I might give him or her the silent treatment.
1	2	3	4	5	31. I know that "friends" talk about me behind my back.
1	2	3	4	5	32. Some of my friends think I am a hothead.
1	2	3	4	5	33. At times I am so jealous I can't think of anything else.
1	2	3	4	5	34. I like to play practical jokes.

APPENDIX C

THE CONNERS' PARENT RATING SCALES-REVISED

Conners' Parent Rating Scale (S)

by C. Keith Conners, Ph.D.

Instructions: Below are a number of common problems that children have. Please rate each item according to your child's behavior in the last month. For each item, ask yourself, "How much of a problem has this been in the last month?", and circle the best answer for each one. In none, not at all, seldom, or very infrequently, you would circle 0. If very much true, or it occurs very often or frequently, you would circle 3. You would circle 1 or 2 for ratings in between. Please respond to each item.

	Not True At All (Never, Seldom)	Just A Little True (Occasion-ally)	Pretty Much True (Often, Quite a Bit)	Very Much True (Very Often, Very Frequent)
1. Inattentive, easily distracted	0	1	2	3
2. Angry and resentful	0	1	2	3
3. Difficulty doing or completing homework	0	1	2	3
4. Is always "on the go" or acts as if driven by a motor	0	1	2	3
5. Short attention span	0	1	2	3
6. Argues with adults	0	1	2	3
7. Fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in seat	0	1	2	3
8. Fails to complete assignments	0	1	2	3
9. Hard to control in malls or while grocery shopping	0	1	2	3
10. Messy or disorganized at home or school	0	1	2	3
11. Loses temper	0	1	2	3
12. Needs close supervision to get through assignments	0	1	2	3
13. Only attends if it is something he/she is very interested in	0	1	2	3
14. Runs about or climbs excessively in situations where it is inappropriate	0	1	2	3
15. Distractibility or attention span a problem	0	1	2	3
16. Irritable	0	1	2	3
17. Avoids, expresses reluctance about, or has difficulties engaging in tasks that require sustained mental effort (such as schoolwork or homework)	0	1	2	3
18. Restless in the "squirmy" sense	0	1	2	3
19. Gets distracted when given instructions to do something	0	1	2	3
20. Actively defies or refuses to comply with adults' requests	0	1	2	3
21. Has trouble concentrating in class	0	1	2	3
22. Has difficulty waiting in lines or awaiting turn in games or group situations	0	1	2	3
23. Leaves seat in classroom or in other situations in which remaining seated is expected	0	1	2	3

24. Deliberately does things that annoy other people	0	1	2	3
25. Does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores or duties in the workplace (not due to oppositional behavior or failure to understand instructions)	0	1	2	3
26. Has difficulty playing or engaging in leisure activities quietly	0	1	2	3
27. Easily frustrated in efforts	0	1	2	3

APPENDIX D

BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Aggression and Violence Reduction Training
Behavioral Questionnaire

by Carlise Billings, LMSW

Please complete the following questionnaire related to your child's behavior. This questionnaire should be related to your child's behavior over the past six months while at home or at school. Please circle the correct response to each question.

	Not at all like my child	A little like my child	Somewhat like my child	Very much like my child
1. After disappointments, does your child become extremely angry? (Examples of behavior to observe: your child may become very withdrawn, he may curse or argue with you or others, he talks about how he will harm another person)	1	2	3	4
2. After being criticized, does your child become very angry? (Examples of behavior to observe: your child may curse or argue with others, he blames others for his own behavior)	1	2	3	4
3. After being teased, does your child seek revenge towards the person(s) who have teased him? (Examples of behaviors to observe: your child may become withdrawn, he walks around with clenched fists, or appears agitated, he talks about how he will harm another person)	1	2	3	4
4. Does your child blame others after getting in trouble and you know he is responsible for the act? (Example of behaviors: when caught in the act of doing wrong, your child will blame friends, siblings, etc., he does not accept responsibility for the action)	1	2	3	4
5. Does your child throw tantrums defined as uncontrollable angry outbursts? (Examples of behavior to observe: your child may throw objects, he may shout or scream at someone, he may use obscenities—curse words AND you can't calm him down)	1	2	3	4
6. Does your child disrupt classroom behavior? (Examples of behavior to observe: has the teacher reported that your child talks too much, such that it disrupts classroom activities, has the teacher reported that your child makes jokes, teases, or speaks out of turn in effort to disrupt the classroom setting, has the teacher reported that your child throws objects, i.e. paper, pencils; and distracts other students?)	1	2	3	4
7. Does your child argue a lot? (Examples of behavior to observe: your child frequently challenges	1	2	3	4

other people's responses and suggestions in a matter that creates an argument)				
8. Does your child brag about fighting? (Examples of behavior to observe: your child talks about fighting to solve problems, your child argues with others)	1	2	3	4
9. Is your child frequently involved in fights? (Examples of behavior to observe: your child talks about fighting to solve problems, your child argues with others, your child fights to resolve problems)	1	2	3	4