

A Cross-National Comparison of Aggressors, Victims and Defenders in Preschools in England, Spain and Italy

Claire P. Monks¹, Annalisa Palermi², Rosario Ortega³, and Angela Costabile²

¹University of Greenwich (UK)

²Università della Calabria (Italy)

³Universidad de Córdoba (Spain)

There is a small, but growing, body of research investigating peer-victimisation between preschoolers, an age which has been identified as being important both theoretically and practically for the development of interventions. This study compares aggressive and defending behaviour and victim status of preschoolers in three European countries; England, Spain and Italy. The results provide further confirmation that some children behave aggressively towards their peers during preschool in each of the countries studied. There are similarities between preschool children involved in peer-victimisation in the three countries in terms of the roles taken, sex differences and the types of aggressive behaviours used and experienced by the children. There were differences in the profiles of children identified as taking the roles by teachers and peers. Overall, it was found that those children identified by peers or teachers as being aggressive were more likely to be male, rated as physically strong and more likely to be rejected by classmates. Also, in general, the targets of peer-victimisation differed depending on the reporter. Peer-nominated victims were not identifiable in terms of gender, popularity or physical strength. Teacher-nominated victims were more likely to be socially rejected and physically weak. There are several subtle differences between the countries which deserve further investigation. The findings are discussed in relation to furthering our understanding of the development of peer-victimisation in preschools and the need for interventions which address this phenomenon.

Keywords: victimisation, preschool, aggression, prosocial behaviour.

En la actualidad existe un pequeño, aunque creciente, cuerpo de investigación científica referida a la victimización entre preescolares, edad identificada como de gran importancia tanto teórica como práctica para el desarrollo. Este estudio compara las conductas de agresión y defensa con el estatus social de grupo en muestras de preescolares de tres países europeos: Inglaterra, España e Italia. Los resultados aportan evidencia de comportamiento agresivo de unos escolares hacia otros en cada uno de los países estudiados. Hay similitudes entre los preescolares victimizados por sus iguales en los tres países estudiados en términos de los roles adoptados, el sexo, el tipo de agresión ejecutada y padecida, así como en la identificación que realizan los compañeros sobre los roles jugados. Se encontraron diferencias en identificación y atribución de roles, realizada por los maestros y por los iguales. Y sobre todo, se ha encontrado que los preescolares identificados por sus iguales o por sus maestros como agresores tienden a ser varones, valorados como físicamente más fuertes y con mayor tendencia a ser rechazados por sus compañeros de aula. Pero en general, la elección del preescolar objeto de agresión por sus iguales, parece depender de quién haga la nominación. La nominación como víctimas de sus iguales no parece identificable en términos de género, popularidad y desarrollo físico. Los maestros tienden a nominar como víctimas de sus compañeros a preescolares a los que perciben como socialmente rechazados y físicamente débiles. Hemos encontrado diferencias entre países que requieren investigación confirmatoria. Los resultados se discuten en relación a la necesidad de una mayor comprensión de la victimización entre iguales en los años preescolares para una más idónea intervención del fenómeno.

Palabras clave: victimización, preescolar, agresión, conducta prosocial.

Portions of this research were funded by a grant from the European Union (The Nature and Prevention of Bullying and Social Exclusion ERB-FMRX-CT97-0139) and ESRC Grant No: R0042934653. Preparation of this manuscript was supported by a grant from the Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación de España under the grant Prof-Ex 0106 received by Professor Ortega. We gratefully acknowledge the children and teachers who participated in this study. We also wish to thank Professor Peter K. Smith, Dr. John Swettenham and Elena Torrado Val for their contributions to this research.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Claire P. Monks, Department of Psychology and Counselling, University of Greenwich, Avery Hill Campus, Southwood Site, Avery Hill Road, Eltham, London SE9 2UG. (UK). Phone: +44(0)2083319584. Fax: +44(0)208331916. E-mail: c.p.monks@gre.ac.uk

Preschool relationships can be complex and qualitatively different from each other (Baumgartner, 2000; Coie & Dodge, 1998). Several researchers have shown that preschool children can be either the persecutors or targets of their peers (Crick, Casas, & Ku, 1999; Crick, Casas, & Mosher, 1997; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997; Monks, Ortega, & Torrado, 2002; Ostrov, 2008; Perren & Alsaker, 2006) and that children of this age have already developed some coping skills to deal with stressful situations (Killen & Turiel, 1991).

In this research we explore the nature and extent of aggressive behaviour among preschool pupils. The aim of the study was to examine these behaviours among preschoolers in three European countries; England, Spain and Italy. We use the term “aggression” rather than “bullying”, in order to describe the nature of aggression in preschoolers as it is unclear whether aggression at this age meets the definition of ‘bullying’. Aggression between preschoolers appears to be different from ‘bullying’ as identified in older groups in terms of the consistency of the victim role (e.g. Kochenderfer-Ladd & Wardrop, 2001). There is not necessarily repetition of this behaviour over a long period of time.

Aggression is a behaviour that evolves as the person develops and, over time, it assumes more complex and elaborate characteristics. Björkqvist, Lagerspetz and Kaukiainen (1992) distinguish between direct and indirect forms of aggression. They define direct aggression as a face-to-face clash or fight between participants and indirect aggression as involving a third person or going on behind the victim’s back. Others distinguish physical, verbal and relational or social aggression (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Relational aggression refers to aggressive behaviour which is directed at harming the victim’s relationships with others and is similar to social aggression which is aimed at damaging the recipient’s social status, acceptance or self-esteem. Relational aggression can take direct or indirect forms (e.g. Monks, Smith, & Swettenham, 2003). Direct relational aggression would involve a child telling another that they cannot join in. Whereas, indirect relational aggression includes behaviours such as rumour spreading, which may also damage relationships, but are carried out behind the victims back.

Preschool children tend to exhibit forms of physical and verbal aggression more than indirect relational forms such as the spreading of nasty rumours. Sex differences have been found in the various kinds of aggression; according to Crick et al. (1999), teachers report among 3-5 year olds that girls are more likely than boys to use relational aggression, whereas preschool boys are more likely than girls to use direct physical aggression. However, in their meta-analysis of gender differences in types of aggression, Card, Stucky, Sawalani and Little (2008) found that there were moderate gender differences in direct aggression (with boys more likely to be the perpetrators than girls), but minimal gender

differences in indirect aggression. Monks and Smith (2000) report, in a review of the literature, that while the aggressor role is more frequently taken by males, there are no clear sex differences in the role of the victim. These results have also been confirmed by observational studies (Ostrov & Keating, 2004). Girls are also more frequently nominated as defenders than boys, independent of age (e.g. Monks et al., 2002; Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman, & Kaukiainen, 1996; Sutton & Smith, 1999).

More recently, researchers have assessed the stability of the roles, as a distinctive feature of bullying is repetition over time. Moderate stability has been found in the roles of victim and aggressor in primary school children (Boulton & Smith, 1994; Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Egan & Monson, 1998; Hodges & Perry, 1999). Several studies have been carried out on the stability of roles at the preschool age. Researchers agree that aggressive behaviour towards peers appears to be relatively stable over time during the preschool period over 4 months (Monks et al., 2003; Ostrov, 2008) and a year (Ladd & Burgess, 1999) using peer-, self- and teacher-reports as well as observations. However, there is less agreement regarding the stability of the role of victim during this period. According to child-reports (peer- and self-nominations) and observations the victim role is relatively unstable, with many children experiencing victimisation by their peers, but that, for the majority this appears to be short-lived (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996; Monks et al., 2003; Snyder et al., 2003). In contrast, teacher-reports have recorded a moderate stability in the peer-victimisation of preschool children over periods of one to 4-5 months (Crick et al., 1997; Ostrov, 2008).

The differences in the stability reported for victim status by children and teachers may indicate differences in awareness of behaviours and/or differences in the ability to identify and report victimised behaviours. Previous research has indicated that the different methods employed by researchers contribute unique variance (Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000). Monks and Smith (2006) found that 4-6 year old children’s peer-nominations for the role of aggressor showed some agreement with teacher-reports of aggressive behaviour in their pupils, but that there was low agreement between peer and teacher reports for victim status.

A possible explanation for these findings is that young children may not possess the cognitive skills necessary to identify the repeated victimisation of their peers, particularly as this behaviour, unlike that of the aggressor, may not impact negatively on them and so may not be as salient (Younger, Schwartzman, & Ledingham, 1985). Monks and Smith (2006) found that children were reliable in their peer-nominations for victim, but that they showed low agreement within the class on who was a victim, and many nominated their friends as victims. Ladd and Kochenderfer-Ladd (2002) suggested that this may indicate children’s limited capabilities to nominate peers. Monks and Smith (2006) have argued that this may reflect children

knowing their friends' experiences best. It may also be the case that peer- and self- nominations provide more of an 'inside' perspective than teacher-reports. This could account for the lower stability in this role as reported by children who may become aware more rapidly than teachers of changes in status within the peer-group. If this were the case, it may be that peer-victimisation in preschool/infant classes differs from that reported in older groups and that it is still 'developing'.

Perry, Perry, and Boldizar (1990) have examined why there may be this difference in the stability of the aggressor and victim roles. They suggest that this may reflect the fact that children on entering a new peer group (in this case, starting preschool), may take some time to recognize submissive behaviours in their peers, so that they would at first attack several different peers and only later, when they are able to identify those less able to defend themselves, would they repeatedly focus their aggressive behaviour on a small group of 'victims'. This view is supported by findings of Hanish and Guerra (2000) who note that young children find it difficult to identify socially withdrawn behaviour in their classmates. Additionally, Schäfer, Korn, Brodbeck, Wolke, and Schulz (2005) have implicated the low stability of the dominance hierarchies in younger children's social groups as providing some understanding of why few children are regularly targeted for aggression by their peers. They suggest that the lower stability within the groups means that it is easier for younger targets (compared with their older counterparts) to escape repeated aggression and labelling as a victim.

Characteristics of pupils involved in peer-victimisation

There is a large body of research examining the individual characteristics of those involved in bully/victim problems in middle childhood and adolescence. This approach assumes that pupils are aggressive or victimised due, in part, to individual characteristics (Rigby, 1997). Research indicates that aggressive preschoolers share some characteristics with older aggressors, such as a tendency towards insecure attachments and social rejection (Crick et al., 1997; Monks et al., 2003; Ortega & Monks, 2005; Wood, Cowan, & Baker, 2002).

Research has suggested that during middle childhood and adolescence, the victims of peer-aggression tend to be physically weaker than other children (Hodges & Perry, 1999; Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Berts, & King, 1982; Olweus, 1978), and are more often rejected by the peer group (e.g. Boulton & Smith, 1994; Lagerspetz et al., 1982; Olweus, 1978; Salmivalli et al., 1996).

The hypothesis that victim status is not a stable experience for many young children would predict that victims at this age would not exhibit the same correlates as have been found with older victims as 'risk factors' for victimisation as many children may be experiencing peer-victimisation transiently. Using peer-nominations

for the role taken in peer-victimisation, Monks, Smith, and Swettenham, (2005), reported that victims in infant classes (aged 4-6 years) in England did not exhibit the poor social cognitive abilities or insecure attachments that are characteristic of those who are victimized during middle childhood and adolescence. Furthermore, Monks et al., (2003) found that preschool aggressors were more rejected than either victims or defenders and that overall, victims of peer-aggression tended to be average on measures of peer acceptance and rejection. Monks et al. (2002) and Ortega and Monks (2005) confirm that peer-identified victims of peer-aggression in preschool classes were not rated as being physically weaker than other children.

However, Perren and Alsaker (2006) found that victims aged 5-7 years and assigned to the role based on a combination of peer- and teacher-reports, were found to be less sociable and more likely to have no playmates than other children. In contrast to the studies by Monks and colleagues, these findings indicate that young victims show similar characteristics to older victims which suggests some possible continuity in the victim role over time. These differences may reflect the different methodologies used to identify the victims of peer-aggression as discussed above.

Choice of comparison countries

The preschool experiences of children differ between and within countries. In each of the three countries, preschool is not compulsory, but take up is high. In England and Spain, preschool generally begins at age 4 years. In Italy children attend preschool between the ages of 3 and 6 years.

The comparison of preschoolers' experiences of peer-victimisation in three countries enabled us to examine whether there were common experiences reported by children regardless of their country of residence. Furthermore, the recent UNICEF report (2006) on child well-being in rich countries indicated differences in the levels of well-being between the three countries. Examination of the ratings of child well-being for 21 countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) indicated that Spanish children were ranked in the top third on overall child well-being (ranked 8th), Italian children were within the middle third (ranked 10th) and well-being of children in the United Kingdom (U.K.) was rated as poorest (ranked 18.2). In particular, when examining peer relations and experiences of bullying, a larger percentage of children and adolescents in the U.K. (35.8%) reported experiencing bullying in the last 2 months than in Italy (27.3%) or Spain (26.0%). Also, fewer young people in the UK (43.3%) compared with those in Italy (55.1%) and Spain (59.2%) stated that they that they found their peers 'kind and helpful'. It should be noted that this work was conducted with children and adolescents aged 11, 13, and 15 years. However, it suggests that children's well-being,

perceptions of and experiences with peers differ between the three countries studied among older groups.

Aims

The aim of this study was to compare the nature of peer-victimisation in three European countries; England, Spain and Italy. In addition, we aimed to examine and compare the correlates of the participant roles (limited to Aggressor, Victim, Defender and Bystander) between the three countries. The roles taken by children were obtained using peer-, self-, and teacher-reports. The correlates examined were popularity and perceived physical strength.

It was predicted that aggressive children would share the characteristics of older aggressors/bullies; perceived strength and social rejection. This hypothesis was based on the findings that aggression tends to be a relatively stable behaviour and the findings of previous studies with aggressive preschoolers.

It was predicted that defending children would show similar characteristics to older defenders; being popular with other children.

There were two competing predictions for children identified as the targets of peer-victimisation. The first hypothesis was that young victims would show similar characteristics to older victims; social rejection, low perceived strength. The competing hypothesis based on findings that the role of victim was relatively unstable for most children led to the prediction that these children would not show a particular pattern of characteristics. It was also predicted that this may be affected by the method used to identify a child as a target of peer-victimisation. Based on the research reviewed, it was predicted that child-reported victims would not show particular characteristics similar to older victims, whereas teacher-reported victims would. Furthermore, a finding of few or no differences between the countries on these factors, would lend stronger support to our hypotheses for the development of peer-aggression in preschool.

Differences between countries were more difficult to make direct predictions about. Based on the UNICEF report with older children in each of the countries, it was predicted that children in the English sample may report higher levels of peer-aggression than children in Italy or Spain.

Method

Participants

England; 104 children aged 4-6 years (57% female ($N = 59$), Mean age 65.66 months, $SD = 5.40$) from four classes in schools in London, England and their teachers ($N = 4$) participated in this study.

Spain; 92 children aged 4-6 years (46.7% female

($N = 43$); Mean age 57.95 months, $SD = 7.35$) from four classes in a school in Seville, Southern Spain and their teachers ($N = 4$) were involved in this study.

Italy; 111 children aged 4-6 years (49.5% female ($N = 56$); Mean age 62.57 months, $SD = 6.59$) from four classes in schools in Cosenza in Southern Italy and their teachers ($N = 4$) took part in this research. All of the schools served areas of low to middle income families and were in urban areas close to the partner universities.

There was no significant association between sex and country $\chi^2(2df, N = 307) = 2.02, p > .05$. An ANOVA indicated that there was a significant difference in age by country, $F(2,293) = 34.92, p < .001$. Post hoc Tukey tests indicated that the English children were older than both the Italian ($p < .01$) and Spanish children ($p < .001$) and that the Italian pupils were older than the Spanish pupils ($p < .001$). Therefore, age was controlled in subsequent analyses.

Assessments

Role assignment

An individual interview technique that provided peer for the roles of aggressor, victim, defender and supporter was employed. This interview was the same as that described by Monks et al., (2002). During the interview children were shown four cartoons which depict different types of peer-victimisation; *direct relational aggression* (a child telling another that they cannot play), *direct physical aggression* (a child hitting, kicking or pushing another), *indirect relational aggression* (a child spreading nasty rumours about another) and *direct verbal aggression* (a child shouting at and verbally abusing another). Using these cartoons children provided peer nominations for the roles of *aggressor*, *victim*, and *defender* (see Monks et al., 2002 and Monks et al., 2003 for a more complete description). Children were assigned to the role on which they scored the highest. If they scored within .1 on their two highest roles they were assigned to a dual role. If they did not score above the mean on any of the roles they were assigned to the role of Bystander. This was based on the method used by Salmivalli et al., (1996) and Monks et al. (2002; 2003).

Teacher nominations: The class teacher was given this in a questionnaire format and was asked to nominate children in their class as taking these roles in aggressive situations. Teachers were able to make unlimited nominations for each of the behaviours described. Children were assigned to the role/s for which their teachers nominated them.

Sociometric Status

In order to assess the sociometric status of each participating child, children were asked to nominate the three classmates they liked the most (preference) and the three they liked the least (rejection) (Coie, Dodge, & Coppotelli, 1982).

Physical strength

Table 1
 Role distributions based on peer nominations (*N*'s in parenthesis)

Role	Country		
	Spain (92)	Italy (111)	England (104)
Aggressor	15.2% (14)	20.7% (23)	25.0% (26)
Victim	15.2% (14)	32.4% (36)	22.1% (23)
Defender	34.8% (32)	11.7% (13)	16.3% (17)
Bystander	32.6% (30)	11.7% (13)	29.8% (31)
Multiple Roles	2.2% (2)	23.4% (26)	6.7% (7)

A questionnaire was given to the teachers in order to assess the physical strength of the children in their class. The questionnaire consisted of a 5 point Likert scale; 1 weak, 2 quite weak, 3 average, 4 quite strong, 5 strong. They were asked to rate the physical strength of each child in their class on this scale.

Procedure

Schools were initially approached via the head teacher. The researchers described the aims of the study to the head teacher and permission was requested to conduct the study in the school. The individual interviews with the children were conducted in a quiet area of the school and normally took about 10 minutes to complete. The questionnaires were given to the teachers to complete in their own time. All measures were developed in English and then translated (and back translated) into Spanish and Italian. Informed consent for the study to take place was obtained from each head teacher and class-teacher involved. Passive informed consent was obtained from the children's parents/guardians and children were told that they did not have to take part if they did not wish to, and that no one would be told what they had told the researcher and that no one would get into trouble. If the child said that they were being bullied, they were encouraged to tell a parent and/or teacher about what was happening. This procedure met the ethical requirements of the institutions involved.

Results

Peer-nominated roles

See Table 1 for the role distributions based on peer-nominations. Due to the low levels of nominations for dual or multiple roles, these were not included in analyses. Chi-square tests were used to examine the distributions of the roles in each of the countries. It was found that there was a significant association by country $\chi^2(6df, N = 272) = 31.80, p < .001$. Examination of the standardised residuals indicated that more children were identified as being victims in Italy ($SR = 2.8$, compared with -2.1 for Spain and

-0.6 for England). In Spain, more children were identified as being defenders ($SR = 2.5$, compared with -1.4 for Italy and -1.1 for England). In Spain, fewer children were identified as aggressors ($SR = -1.5$, compared with $.7$ for Italy and $.7$ for England).

Further Chi-square analyses were performed to examine whether there were associations with sex in the distribution of the roles in each of the countries. It was found that there was a significant association with sex in Spain, $\chi^2(3df, N = 90) = 9.79, p < .05$, in Italy, $\chi^2(3df, N = 85) = 18.77, p < .001$ and in England, $\chi^2(3df, N = 97) = 26.91, p < .001$. Examination of the standardised residuals indicated that in each of the countries boys were more likely than girls to be assigned to the role of aggressor. In Spain: *Boys*, 25.5% ($N = 12$), $SR = 1.7$; *Girls*, 4.7% ($N = 2$), $SR = -1.8$, in Italy: *Boys*, 46.5% ($N = 20$), $SR = 2.5$; *Girls*, 7.1% ($N = 3$), $SR = -2.5$, in England: *Boys*, 51.2% ($N = 22$), $SR = 3.1$; *Girls*, 7.4% ($N = 4$), $SR = -2.8$.

The proportions of peer-nominations given in each country for each of the types of aggression and victimisation were examined (See Table 2). It was found that the most commonly nominated form of aggression in Italy and Spain was for verbal aggression. In England the most commonly nominated form of aggression was physical. In England and Spain, the least commonly nominated form of aggression was indirect relational (rumour spreading). However, in Italy, the least commonly reported type of aggression was physical, although this figure of 17.1% was not substantially lower than that received for direct relational aggression (19.5%) or indirect relational aggression (21.0%). When examining the proportions of nominations for victimisation, it was found that the most commonly reported type of victimisation in each of the countries was verbal and the least common was indirect relational.

Teacher-nominations

Table 3 shows the roles to which children were assigned based on teacher-nominations. Teachers gave many nominations for dual or multiple roles. Therefore, the analyses focussed on the differences between those

Table 2

Percentages of peer-nominations for each type of behaviour (as a percentage of total aggression nominations or total victimisation nominations) by country

Types of behaviour		Country		
		Spain (92)	Italy (111)	England (104)
Aggression	Physical	27.9%	17.1%	31.7%
	Verbal	50.6%	42.5%	28.0%
	Indirect relational	4.7%	21.0%	17.9%
	Direct relational	16.7%	19.5%	22.4%
Victimisation	Physical	17.4%	28.6%	21.3%
	Verbal	54.8%	34.2%	34.5%
	Indirect relational	.6%	18.2%	16.6%
	Direct relational	27.2%	19.1%	27.7%

Table 3

Role distributions based on teacher nominations (*N*'s in parenthesis)

Role	Country		
	Spain (92)	Italy (111)	England (104)
Aggressor	8.7% (8)	10.8% (12)	16.3% (17)
Victim	6.7% (6)	9.0% (10)	1.9% (2)
Defender	5.4% (5)	1.8% (2)	11.5% (12)
Bystander	51.1% (47)	73.0% (81)	56.7% (59)
Aggressor/Defender	5.4% (5)	0 (0)	2.9% (3)
Aggressor/Defender/Victim	9.8% (9)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Defender/Victim	1.1% (1)	.9% (1)	0 (0)
Aggressor/Victim	12.0% (11)	4.5% (5)	10.6% (11)

nominated for each role and those who were not nominated by the teachers for this role.

When looking at the nominations given for these roles by teachers it was found that Spanish teachers nominated more pupils as aggressor (35.9%, $N = 33$) compared with Italian (15.3%, $N = 17$) and English teachers (29.8%, $N = 31$) (Standardised residuals were: 1.8, -2.3 and .7 respectively) $\chi^2(2df, N = 307) = 11.89, p < .01$. Spanish teachers also gave more nominations for the role of victim; 29.3% ($N = 27$) of pupils were nominated as being victims compared with 14.4% ($N = 16$) in Italy and 12.5% ($N = 13$) in England (Standardised residuals were: 2.5, -.9 and -1.4 respectively) $\chi^2(2df, N = 307) = 11.00, p < .01$. Teachers in Spain gave more nominations for the role of defender (21.7%, $N = 20$, of pupils received this nomination) compared with 2.7% ($N = 3$) in Italy and 14.4% ($N = 15$) in England (Standardised residuals were: 2.6, -2.9 and .6 respectively) $\chi^2(2df, N = 307) = 17.42, p < .001$. Note that these numbers do not equal 100% because teachers could nominate children for more than one role.

Further chi-square tests were performed to examine whether there were sex differences in the nominations received by boys and girls. It was found that there was no significant difference in the number of boys and girls nominated by teachers for aggressor in Spain, $\chi^2(1df, N = 92) = 3.72, p > .05$ or in England, $\chi^2(1df, N = 104) = .06, p > .05$. However, in Italy, more boys than girls were nominated as aggressor (27.3%, $N = 15$, $SR = 2.3$ and 3.6%, $N = 2$, $SR = -2.2$ respectively) $\chi^2(1df, N = 111) = 12.02, p < .01$.

There was no significant difference in the numbers of boys and girls who were nominated by teachers as victims in Spain, $\chi^2(1df, N = 92) = 1.45, p > .05$, Italy, $\chi^2(1df, N = 111) = 2.76, p > .05$, or England, $\chi^2(1df, N = 104) = .005, p > .05$.

There was no significant difference in the numbers of boys and girls who were nominated by teachers as defenders in Spain, $\chi^2(1df, N = 92) = 2.88, p > .05$. However, more girls than boys were nominated by teachers as defenders in England, $\chi^2(1df, N = 104) = 6.40, p < .05$, with 22.0% ($N = 13$) of girls and 4.4% ($N = 2$) of boys being nominated as defenders (Standardised residuals were 1.5 and -1.8

respectively). This was not calculated for Italy as the *N* was too small.

Popularity

Peer nominations

A MANCOVA was conducted in order to examine whether there were any significant effects of peer-nominated role or country or any significant interactions between role and country on children's preference or rejection scores from other pupils, controlling for age.

There was a significant main effect of role, Wilks' Lambda, $F(6,500) = 21.80, p < .001$. There was no significant effect of country, $F(4,500) = 1.26, p > .05$, and no significant interaction between country and role, $F(12,500) = 1.51, p > .05$. Univariate analyses indicated that there was a significant effect of role on preference scores, $F(3,251) = 9.98, p < .001$, and rejection scores, $F(3,251) = 35.07, p < .001$. Post hoc tests with Bonferroni's correction indicated that bystanders received significantly lower preference scores than aggressors ($p < .01$), victims and defenders (both $p < .001$): Bystander (Mean = $-.53, SD = .75$); Aggressor (Mean = $-.06, SD = .82$); Victim (Mean = $.26, SD = 1.15$); Defender (Mean = $.24, SD = .89$). Post hoc tests also revealed that aggressors received significantly higher scores on rejection than victims, defenders and bystanders (all $p < .001$): Aggressor (Mean = $.95, SD = 1.23$); Victim (Mean = $-.22, SD = .76$); Defender (Mean = $-.21, SD = .68$); Bystander (Mean = $-.44, SD = .67$).

Teacher-nominations

A series of MANCOVAs (controlling for age) was performed to examine whether there were any differences between children nominated by teachers for each of the roles and those not nominated for this role in each country in terms of preference and rejection scores.

Aggressor: There was a significant effect of Role, Wilks' Lambda, $F(2,288) = 16.68, p < .001$. There was no significant effect of country, Wilks' Lambda, $F(4,576) = .84, p > .05$ and no significant interaction between role and country, Wilks' Lambda, $F(4,576) = .79, p > .05$. Follow-up univariate tests indicated that there was a significant difference between aggressors and non-aggressors in rejection scores, $F(1,289) = 29.28, p < .001$, with aggressors receiving significantly higher rejection scores than non-aggressors (Aggressor: Mean = $.48, SD = 1.19$; Non-Aggressor: Mean = $-.17, SD = .85$). There was no significant difference between aggressors and non-aggressors in preference scores, $F(1,289) = 3.52, p > .05$.

Victim: There was a significant effect of Role, Wilks' Lambda, $F(2,288) = 4.50, p < .05$. There was no significant effect of country, Wilks' Lambda, $F(4,576) = .45, p > .05$ and no significant interaction between role and country, Wilks' Lambda, $F(4,576) = .92, p > .05$. Follow-up univariate tests indicated that there was a significant difference between victims and non-victims in rejection scores, $F(1,289) = 8.81, p < .01$, with victims receiving significantly higher

rejection scores than non-victims (Victim: Mean = $.34, SD = 1.09$; Non-Victim: Mean = $-.07, SD = .95$). There was no significant difference between victims and non-victims in preference scores, $F(1,289) = .23, p > .05$.

Defender: Only England and Spain were included in these analyses due to the very low levels of defender nominations given by the Italian teachers. There was a significant effect of Role, Wilks' Lambda, $F(2,189) = 3.47, p < .05$. There was a significant effect of country, $F(2,189) = 6.22, p < .01$. There was a significant interaction between role and country, $F(2,189) = 9.10, p < .001$. Univariate analyses indicated that there was a significant effect of role on preference, $F(1,190) = 10.87, p < .01$. Defenders received significantly higher scores on preference than non-defenders (Defender: Mean = $.45, SD = 1.04$; Non-Defender: Mean = $-.10, SD = .95$). There was no significant effect of role on rejection, $F(1,190) = .77, p > .05$. There was no significant effect of country on preference, $F(1,190) = 1.08, p > .05$. There was a significant effect of country on rejection, $F(1,190) = 5.24, p < .05$, with the Spanish pupils receiving higher rejection scores than the English pupils (Spain: Mean = $.17, SD = .14$; England: Mean = $-.29, SD = .14$). There was a significant interaction between role and country for preference scores, $F(1,190) = 4.38, p < .05$. The difference was that the English non-defenders scored lower on preference than the Spanish non-defenders, but that the English defenders scored higher on preference than Spanish defenders (Non-defender: Spain, Mean = $-.05, SD = 1.00$; England: Mean = $-.15, SD = .91$; Defender: Spain, Mean = $.16, SD = .95$; England, Mean = $.82, SD = 1.07$). There was a significant interaction between role and country for rejection, $F(1,190) = 11.93, p < .01$. The main difference was that Spanish defenders received higher scores on rejection than non-defenders, whereas English defenders received lower scores on rejection than non-defenders (Defender: Spain, Mean = $.31, SD = 1.09$; England, Mean = $-.68, SD = .69$; Non-Defender: Spain, Mean = $-.09, SD = .94$; England, Mean = $.12, SD = .99$).

Strength

Peer-nominations

A two-way ANCOVA was performed to examine whether the peer-nominated roles differed in teacher-rated physical strength and by country, controlling for age. It was found that there was a significant effect of role, $F(3, 237) = 7.60, p < .001$ and country on physical strength, $F(2, 237) = 8.01, p < .001$. There was no significant interaction between role and country, $F(6,237) = .85, p > .05$. Post hoc tests with Bonferroni's correction indicated that aggressors received significantly higher ratings of physical strength than victims ($p < .01$), defenders ($p < .05$) and bystanders ($p < .001$) (Aggressor: Mean = $3.45, SD = .77$; Victim: Mean = $2.98, SD = .65$; Defender: Mean = $3.06, SD = .69$; Bystander: Mean = $2.81, SD = .75$). Post hoc tests indicated that Italian pupils received significantly higher physical

strength ratings than Spanish ($p < .05$) and English pupils ($p < .01$) (Spain: Mean = 3.02, $SD = .78$; Italy: Mean = 3.32, $SD = .58$; England: Mean = 2.91, $SD = .75$).

Teacher-nominations

Three ANCOVAs (controlling for age) were carried out to examine whether there were differences in strength ratings between those who were nominated by teachers and those who were not nominated by teachers for each of the roles and between countries.

Aggressor: There was a significant effect of role on strength ratings, $F(1,266) = 17.35$, $p < .001$, with aggressors being rated as being significantly stronger than non-aggressors (Aggressor: Mean = 3.32, $SD = .85$; Non-Aggressor: Mean = 2.95, $SD = .67$). There was a significant effect of country, $F(2,266) = 4.41$, $p < .05$. There was no significant interaction between country and role, $F(2,266) = 2.95$, $p > .05$. Post hoc tests with Bonferroni's correction indicated that Italian pupils were rated as significantly stronger than English pupils ($p < .05$) (Spain: Mean = 3.00, $SD = .77$; Italy: Mean = 3.32, $SD = .61$; England: Mean = 2.92, $SD = .77$).

Victim: There was no significant difference between victims and non-victims on ratings of physical strength, $F(1,266) = 2.78$, $p > .05$ and no significant effect of country, $F(2,266) = .96$, $p > .05$. There was a significant interaction between role and country, $F(2,266) = 4.71$, $p < .05$. The main difference was that Italian non-victims were rated as stronger than victims, whereas the opposite was true for victims in England and Spain (Non-victim: Spain, Mean = 2.89, $SD = .66$; Italy, Mean = 3.37, $SD = .65$; England, Mean = 2.86, $SD = .74$. Victim: Spain, Mean = 3.27, $SD = .96$; Italy, Mean = 3.08, $SD = .28$; England, Mean = 3.35, $SD = .85$).

Defender: Italian participants were not included in this analysis due to small N. There was no significant difference between defenders and non-defenders in ratings of physical strength, $F(1,190) = .19$, $p > .05$. There was a significant effect of country, with Spanish pupils being rated as significantly stronger than English pupils, $F(1,190) = 5.29$, $p < .05$ (Spain: Mean = 3.00, $SD = .77$; England: Mean = 2.92, $SD = .77$). There was no significant interaction between country and role, $F(1,190) = 2.73$, $p > .05$.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study found that preschool children in England, Spain and Italy could be identified as being aggressors, victims and defenders in situations of peer-victimisation. The results indicate that there were important differences in the profiles of individuals identified as taking the different roles in peer-victimisation depending on whether they were identified by peer- or teacher-reports. Overall, aggressors (both peer- and teacher-nominated) were more likely to be male, rated as physically strong and rejected by peers. Peer-nominated victims were not identifiable by gender,

strength or popularity, whereas teacher-nominated victims were more likely to be rated as physically weak and socially rejected. In general, there were many similarities in the reports given in the three countries. However, there were also some subtle differences which are discussed in more detail below.

Overall, there were some differences in the levels of the roles reported in each country according to peer- and teacher-nominations. From peer-nominations, it was found that children in Italy were more likely than those in England and Spain to be assigned to the role of victim, whereas children in Spain were more likely than those in the other two countries to be assigned to the role of defender and less likely to be identified as aggressors. Furthermore, a higher proportion of children in Italy were assigned to multiple roles by peer-nominations. There were differences by country in the nominations given by teachers, with Spanish teachers nominating more children for each of the roles (aggressor, victim and defender) than teachers in England or Italy.

These findings are difficult to interpret in relation to the hypothesis. Peer-reports are in line with the findings of the UNICEF report; that Spanish children are more likely to report that their peers are prosocial (defenders) and less likely to report that they are aggressive. However, the reports given by Spanish teachers suggest that many children behave aggressively within the preschool class, although this was generally in combination with the other roles (defender and victim), rather than 'pure' aggressors. It is possible that this reflects a higher level of preoccupation with behaviour in the classroom by Spanish teachers. It could also be the case that this high level of nomination given to each of the roles by Spanish teachers may also be related to the organisation of the school-day in Spain. Spanish children have fewer formalised 'break-times' where they play in the playground than children in Italy or England (and where teachers may be less aware of peer-victimisation). Therefore, peer-victimisation that often occurs in the playground in other countries may actually occur in the classroom in Spain and so teachers may be more aware of children's behaviours than teachers in Italy or England. In support of this argument are the findings of Ortega (1993) who found high levels of bullying in Spanish primary schools occurring in the classroom.

When examined by country, it was found that direct forms of aggression were more commonly reported in England and Spain, although there was a slightly higher level of rumour spreading reported in Italy and less reporting of physical forms of aggression. This result is not an artefact of the Italian pupils being older than their Spanish and English counterparts. In fact, the English pupils were slightly older than the children in the other two countries. It may reflect a cross-cultural difference. Tomada and Schneider (1997) have suggested that relational aggression (which includes indirect forms of aggression such as rumour spreading) may be acquired through social learning via the exposure to close-knit communities found in Italy.

In each of the countries, children appeared to be more likely to be the victims of verbal victimisation, and least likely to be the victims of indirect victimisation, which, given their age, is as predicted by Björkqvist et al. (1992). Younger children are thought not to possess the cognitive capabilities necessary to carry out more indirect and 'sophisticated' forms of victimisation. In addition this means that the victim may be less well equipped to recognise these forms of bullying (Crick, et al., 1998).

There were similarities in the characteristics of children involved in peer-victimisation across countries. When examining the characteristics of the children identified as taking different roles in peer-victimisation based on the differing sources (peer- and teacher-reports), a clear pattern emerges with regards aggressor. Based on peer-nominations, aggressors were more likely to be male. Teacher-nominated aggressors were also more likely to be male (although this was only significant in Italy). These findings tend overall to be in accord with those of previous studies (Crick et al., 1999; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996; Perren & Alsaker, 2006).

Peer- and teacher-nominated aggressors also tended to be stronger than non-aggressors and were given more rejection nominations by peers. Lagerspetz et al. (1982) found that older aggressors were likely to be rated as stronger than other children by their teachers. It may be that these aggressive children are stronger than other children, or it may be that behaving aggressively affects others' perceptions of their physical strength. The findings relating to sociometric status show some similarities with previous research with young aggressors (Monks et al., 2005), although others have shown that *some* young aggressors can be fairly popular with some peers (Roseth, Pellegrini, Bohn, Van Ryzin, & Vance, 2007), particularly with other aggressive peers (Perren & Alsaker, 2006).

The characteristics of children identified as the victims of peer-aggression in this study show a slightly different pattern dependant on the informant. Neither sex was more likely than the other to be identified as a victim of peer-aggression based on peer- or teacher-reports, which is in accord with the findings of previous studies (e.g. Ostrov & Keating, 2004).

In contrast to the general consistency in the characteristics of aggressive individuals (according to peer- and teacher-reports), peer- and teacher-nominated victims differed. Peer-nominated victims did not show the pattern of social rejection and physical weakness reported among older victims (e.g. Hodges & Perry, 1999; Salmivalli et al., 1996). Whereas, teacher-nominated victims were found to be more socially rejected and physically weaker than other children (except in Italy), which is more fitting with the pattern seen at later ages. These findings indicate that different children may be being identified by teachers and peers (Monks & Smith, 2006) and fit those reported by Monks et al. (2005) and by Perren and Alsaker (2006), with peer-reported victims *not* showing the same pattern of

characteristics as older victims, but a combination of peer and teacher-nominated victims showing similarities with older victims.

As argued earlier, it is possible that young children may find it difficult to identify peers as victims, perhaps because a classmate being victimized has less impact on them than an aggressive classmate who may victimize them. This may mean that they identify a wide variety of children as victims who may not be so. Or it is possible that peer-victimization is still developing at this age and that few children are consistently victimized by peers, and so children's reports provide an accurate description of the status quo. This hypothesis appears to be supported by the limited number of observational studies conducted with children of this age (e.g. Snyder et al., 2003). It may also be the case that teachers are less aware of peer-victimization than children and that they only report children as being victims who meet the stereotyped 'profile' of a victim (i.e., they are weaker and less socially integrated into the class than other children). It may be the case that these children may be at risk of later victimization (although longitudinal research would need to be carried out to examine this hypothesis). It is also worth noting that teachers rarely reported pupils as being 'pure' victims (i.e. victims only) and that many were aggressor-victims or other combined roles.

There were few sex differences in those identified as defenders. The only difference which reached significance reported that girls were more likely than boys to be identified as defenders based on teacher-nominations (but this was only the case in the English sample). This finding is interesting as it has been found in research using peer-nominations with older children that defenders are more often girls (e.g. Salmivalli et al., 1996), whereas observations of intervening in bullying have found that boys are more likely to do so than girls (e.g. O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999). O'Connell et al., suggest that this disparity may be due to the types of defending asked about using peer-nominations (more caring for the victim and telling an adult) which may be more characteristic of the interventions used by girls.

Peer-nominations for defender correlated significantly and positively with preference scores, indicating higher acceptance with increasing victim or defender nominations. Teacher-nominated defenders received significantly higher preference scores from their peers than those who were not nominated by their teachers as defenders. This was the case in both England and Spain (Italy was not included in this analysis as teachers nominated very few children as defenders). The significant interaction between country and role for social preference showed similar patterns of preference in the two countries; with defenders being more preferred than non-defenders, but that this was more extreme in the English sample. The finding that defenders appear to be popular members of the class is in accord with research conducted with older defenders (e.g. Salmivalli

et al., 1996). These children may gain their social status through the act of helping other children when they are victimised, or they may feel that they are able to defend without fear due to their elevated status within the peer group. Unfortunately, this is beyond the scope of this study, but is worthy of research by a longitudinal design.

There was no significant relationship between defender nominations by peers and physical strength, nor was there a difference between teacher-nominated defenders and non-defenders in teacher-ratings of strength. These findings suggest that it is not necessary for children to be seen as being physically strong in order to intervene in peer-victimisation. Perhaps other factors, such as popularity (as above) or empathy may be more important in determining who defends others. It is also possible that it may be that there is less of a spread of strength at this age, so that teachers may find it more difficult to identify those children who are stronger than others.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that peer-victimisation exists in groups of children from preschool. There are many similarities between preschool children involved in peer-aggression in Italy, Spain and England in terms of the roles taken, sex differences and the types of aggression and victimisation experienced by the children. This study provides further confirmation that some children are behaving aggressively towards their peers at this age. Future research could also examine cross-national differences in general teacher practices and policies relating to various social behaviours (including peer-victimisation). This may help to understand some of the differences found across the three countries.

This study also provides further insight into the effects of using different methodologies reporting on peer-victimisation in early childhood. It was found that there were similarities between peer- and teacher-reports of aggressive behaviour (in terms of those identified fitting similar profiles), whereas there were marked differences in the profiles of those identified as victims based on peer- and teacher-reports. As argued above, it is important that further research examines this apparent discrepancy. Some studies have argued for the use of multiple informants among older groups (e.g. Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000) which may overcome some of these issues. However, observational research is still needed to explore the development and stability of peer-victimisation, as this is an issue that is of particular relevance during the early years at school.

There are a number of limitations to this study. The samples assessed in this research are not necessarily representative of the countries studied as a whole. They are relatively small samples from a limited number of schools/preschools in each country. Therefore, future research should aim to include a larger sample of participants from each country, from a variety of regions, to enable more detailed examination of cross-national similarities and differences.

The findings of this study suggest that, in the three countries studied, interventions should be put in place to deal with peer-victimisation from the point when children first come into daily contact with each other. These interventions may have common themes between countries, such as the focus on changing the behaviours of the aggressive individuals, and developing coping strategies for the entire peer group rather than focusing on those who are currently being victimized (as this experience is short-lived for the majority). In particular, it appears that boys are more at risk of behaving aggressively towards their classmates and that there is a link between aggressive behaviour and peer-rejection. Some have suggested that this rejection may lead to children becoming involved in aggressive/deviant peer groups, which in turn may lead to further deviant behaviour. It is therefore important that interventions focus on children early on in their schooling (if not before) in order to avoid involvement in this potential cycle of aggression/deviancy. In addition, the subtle differences between the countries may suggest slight variations in interventions could be beneficial, although these findings require further investigation.

References

- Baumgartner, E. (2000). Al di là dell'amicizia: tipologie di relazione nella scuola materna [Beyond friendship; typologies of relations in infant school]. *Età evolutiva*, *67*, 33-39.
- Björkqvist, K., Lagerspetz, K. M., & Kaukiainen, A., (1992). Do girls manipulate and boys fight? Developmental trends in regard to direct and indirect aggression. *Aggressive Behaviour*, *18*, 117-127. doi:10.1002/1098-2337(1992)18:2<117::AID-AB2480180205>3.0.CO;2-3
- Boulton, M. J., & Smith P. K., (1994). Bully/victim problems in middle-school children: Stability, self-perceived competence, peer perceptions and peer acceptance. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, *12*, 315-329.
- Boulton, M. J., & Underwood, K. (1992). Bully/victim problems among middle school children. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *62*, 73-87.
- Card, N. A., Stucky, B. D., Sawalani, G. M., & Little, D. D. (2008). Direct and indirect aggression during childhood and adolescence: A meta-analytic review of gender differences, intercorrelations, and relations to maladjustment. *Child Development*, *79*, 1185-1229. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2008.01184.x
- Coie, J. D., & Dodge, K. A., (1998). Aggression and antisocial behaviour. In W. Damon, & N. Eisenberg (Eds.). *Handbook of child psychology: Vol.3, Social, emotional and personality development*. (pp. 779-862.) New York, NY: Wiley.
- Coie, J. D., Dodge, K. A., & Coppotelli, H. (1982). Dimensions and types of social status: A cross-age perspective. *Developmental Psychology*, *18*, 557-57. doi:10.1037/0012-1649.18.4.557

- Crick, N. R., Casas, J. F., & Ku, H. (1999). Relational and physical forms of peer victimisation in pre-school. *Developmental Psychology*, *35*, 376-385. doi:10.1037/0012-1649.35.2.376
- Crick, N. R., Casas, J. F., & Mosher, M. (1997). Relational and overt aggression in pre-school. *Developmental Psychology*, *33*, 579-588. doi:10.1037/0012-1649.33.4.579
- Crick, N. R., & Grotpeter, J. K. (1995). Relational aggression, gender and social-psychological adjustment. *Child Development*, *66*, 710-722. doi:10.1111/1467-8624.ep9506152720
- Crick, N. R., Werner, N. E., Casas, J. F., O'Brien, K. M., Nelson, D. A., Grotpeter, J. K., & Markon, K. (1998). Childhood aggression and gender: a new look at an old problem. In D. Bernstein (Ed.), *The Nebraska symposium on motivation: Vol. 45. Gender and motivation* (pp. 75-141). Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Egan, S. K., & Monson, T. C. (1998). Social-cognitive influences on change in aggression over time. *Developmental Psychology*, *34*, 996-1006.
- Hanish, L. D., & Guerra, N. G. (2000). Predictors of peer victimisation among urban youth. *Social Development*, *9*, 521-543. doi:10.1111/1467-9507.00141
- Hodges, E. V. E., & Perry, D. G. (1999). Personal and interpersonal antecedents and consequences of victimisation by peers. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *76*, 677-685. doi:10.1037//0022-3514.76.4.677
- Killen, M., & Turiel, E. (1991). Conflict resolution in pre-school social interactions. *Early Education and Development*, *2*, 240-255. doi:10.1207/s15566935eed0203_6
- Kochenderfer, B. J., & Ladd, G. W. (1996). Peer victimization: Cause or consequence of school maladjustment? *Child Development*, *67*, 1305-1317. doi:10.1111/1467-8624.ep9704040996
- Kochenderfer, B. J., & Ladd, G. W. (1997). Victimized children's responses to peers' aggression: Behaviours associated with reduced versus continued victimisation. *Development and Psychopathology*, *9*, 59-73. doi:10.1017/S0954579497001065
- Kochenderfer-Ladd, B. J., & Wardrop, J. L. (2001). Chronicity and instability of children's peer victimization experiences as predictors of loneliness and social satisfaction trajectories. *Child Development*, *72*, 134-151. doi:10.1111/1467-8624.00270
- Ladd, G. W., & Burgess, K. B. (1999). Charting the relationship trajectories of aggressive, withdrawn, and aggressive/withdrawn children during early grade school. *Child Development*, *70*, 910-929. doi:10.1111/1467-8624.00066
- Ladd, G. W., & Kochenderfer-Ladd, B. (2002). Identifying victims of peer aggression from early to middle childhood: Analysis of crossinformant data for concordance, estimation of relational adjustment, prevalence of victimization, and characteristics of identified victims. *Psychological Assessment*, *14*, 74-96. doi:10.1037//1040-3590.14.1.74
- Lagerspetz, K. M., Björkqvist, K., Berts, M., & King, E. (1982). Group aggression among school children in three schools. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, *23*, 45-52. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9450.1982.tb00412.x
- Monks, C. P., Ortega, R., & Torrado, E. (2002). Unjustified aggression in a Spanish preschool. *Aggressive Behavior*, *28*, 458-476. doi:10.1002/ab.10032
- Monks, C. P., & Smith, P. K. (2000). The social relationships of children involved in bully/victim problems at school. In R. Mills, & S. Duck (Eds.), *Developmental Psychology of Personal Relationships*. Chichester, UK: Wiley.
- Monks, C. P., & Smith, P. K. (2006). Definitions of 'bullying': Age differences in understanding of the term, and the role of experience. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, *24*, 801-821. doi:10.1348/026151005X82352
- Monks, C. P., Smith, P. K., & Swettenham, J. (2003). Aggressors, victims and defenders in preschool: peer, self and teacher reports. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, *49*, 453-469.
- Monks, C. P., Smith, P. K., & Swettenham, J. (2005). The Psychological Correlates of Peer Victimization in Preschool: Social Cognitive Skills, Executive Function and Attachment Profiles. *Aggressive Behavior*, *31*, 571-588. doi:10.1002/ab.20099
- O'Connell, P., Pepler, D., & Craig, W. (1999). Peer involvement in bullying: insights and challenges for intervention. *Journal of Adolescence*, *22*, 437-452. doi:10.1006/jado.1999.0238
- Olweus, D. (1978). *Aggression in schools: Bullies and whipping boys*. Washington, DC: Hemisphere.
- Ostrov, J. M. (2008). Forms of aggression and peer victimisation during early childhood: A short-term longitudinal study. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, *36*, 311-322. doi:10.1007/s10802-007-9179-3
- Ostrov, J. M., & Keating, C. F. (2004). Gender differences in preschool aggression during free play and structured interactions: An observational study. *Social Development*, *13*, 255-277. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9507.2004.000266.x
- Ortega, R. (1993). Intimidación y violencia en las relaciones interpersonales. La cara más oculta del currículum escolar [Intimidation and violence in interpersonal relations. The hidden face of the school curriculum]. In F. Loscertales, & M. Marín (Eds.), *Dimensiones psicosociales de la educación y la comunicación* [Psychosocial dimensions of education and communication] Madrid: Eudema.
- Ortega, R., & Monks, C. P. (2005). Agresividad injustificada entre preescolares: un estudio preliminar [Unjustified aggression among preschoolers: a preliminary study]. *Psicothema*, *17*, 453-458.
- Pellegrini, A. D., & Bartini, M. (2000). An empirical comparison of methods of sampling aggression and victimization in school settings. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *92*, 360-366. doi:10.1037/0022-0663.92.2.360
- Perren, S., & Alsaker, F. D. (2006). Social behavior and peer relationships of victims, bully-victims, and bullies in kindergarten. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *47*, 45-57. doi:10.1111/j.1469-7610.2005.01445.x
- Perry, D. G., Perry, L. C., & Boldizar, J. P. (1990). Learning of aggression. In M. Lewis, & S. Miller (Eds.), *Handbook of developmental psychopathology*. New York, NY: Plenum.
- Roseth, C. J., Pellegrini, A. D., Bohn, C. M., Van Ryzin, M., & Vance, N. (2007). Preschoolers' aggression, affiliation, and social dominance relationships: An observational,

- longitudinal study. *Journal of School Psychology*, 45, 479-497. doi:10.1016/j.jsp.2007.02.008
- Rigby, K. (1997). *Bullying in school: and what to do about it*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Salmivalli, C., Lagerspetz, K. M. J., Björkqvist, K., Österman, K., & Kaukiainen, A. (1996). Bullying as a group process: Participant roles and their relations to social status within the group. *Aggressive Behavior*, 22, 1-15. doi:10.1002/(SICI)1098-2337(1996)22:1<1::AID-AB1>3.0.CO;2-T
- Schäfer, M., Korn, S., Brodbeck, F., Wolke, D., & Schulz, H. (2005). Bullying roles in changing contexts: The stability of victim and bully roles from primary to secondary school. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 29, 323-335. doi:10.1080/01650250544000107
- Snyder, J., Brooker, M., Patrick, R., Snyder, A., Schrepferman, L., & Stoolmiller, M. (2003). Observed peer victimization during early elementary school: Continuity, growth, and relation to risk for child antisocial and depressive behavior. *Child Development*, 74, 1881-1898. doi:10.1046/j.1467-8624.2003.00644.x
- Sutton, J., & Smith, P. K. (1999). Bullying as a group process: An adaptation of the participant role approach. *Aggressive Behavior*, 25, 87-111. doi:10.1002/(SICI)1098-2337(1999)25:2<97::AID-AB3>3.0.CO;2-7
- Tomada G., & Schneider, B. H. (1997). Relational aggression, gender, and peer acceptance: invariance across culture, stability over time, and concordance among informants. *Developmental Psychology*, 33, 601-609. doi:10.1037//0012-1649.33.4.601
- UNICEF (2006). *Child Poverty in Perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries*. Innocenti Research Centre, Florence: UNICEF. doi:10.2190/EX7G-KCHY-J32Y-XNCP
- Wood, J. J., Cowan, P. A., & Baker, B. L. (2002). Behavior problems and peer rejection in preschool boys and girls. *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 163, 72-88. doi:10.1080/00221320209597969
- Younger, A. J., Schwartzman, A. E., & Ledingham, J. E. (1985). Age-related changes in children's perceptions of aggression and withdrawal in their peers. *Developmental Psychology*, 21, 70-75. doi:10.1037/0012-1649.21.1.70

Received February 12, 2009

Revision received February 22, 2010

Accepted March 24, 2010