

## **Boys will be boys and girls will be girls: Trauma and aggressive behaviors**

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Past research has evaluated how trauma can manifest in children as aggressive behaviors (Scheeringa, 1995). Trauma symptoms appear to affect the severity of aggressive behaviors, but studies have also magnified the role of gender in aggressive behavior especially in peer relationships (Cullerton-Sen et al., 2008). Some research suggests that there is a difference in the type of aggression each gender uses: Boys have been shown to be more likely to use physical tactics in their aggressive behaviors such as pushing, and hitting, and girls are more likely to use relational tactics, such as lying about others or verbal bullying (Cullerton-Sen et. al., 2008).

There has been little examination into gender differences in the young traumatized children's aggressive styles, and whether gender differences in the use of physical and relational forms of aggression can be extended to their style of interacting with their parents. While there has been little research examining if these forms of aggression manifest in interactions with their parents, some researchers suggest that aggression lies within a larger group of controlling behaviors that children implement within their social interactions to control their environment (Munoz, Braza, Carerras, 2004). The purpose of this study is to examine the differences between traumatized boys' and girls' use of aggression in their relationships with their parents.

To evaluate boys and girls relational and physical aggression with their parents, 15 minute observations were coded using the Brief-Emotional Availability Tri-analog Screener (BEAS-T; Timmer, Nelson, West, Culver & Thompson, 2009) examining the child's role-reversal controlling behaviors. In a traumatized sample of 123 parent-child dyads, 77 of which were male children and 26 which were female, results showed that boys demonstrated more punitive role-reversal behaviors than girls and girls demonstrated more role-reversal caregiving behaviors. These findings suggest that traumatized boys' and girls' use of aggression does translate into interactions with their parents in the context of controlling and role-reversal behaviors.

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