

## **Using a Risk and Resilience Approach to Understanding Media**

**Violence**, Gentile and Bushman, July, 2012, *American Psychological Association, Popular Media Culture*.

Can media violence impact school bullying? This study looked at identifying whether exposure to media violence was a factor in predicting student aggression. They looked at how multiple risks for future aggression impact student aggression including exposure to media violence. They identified six factors that have research showing they increase students' risk for aggressive behavior.

1. Males are more likely to become aggressive in school.
2. Having already been in a fight at school. Previous experience in aggressive behavior means you are more at risk for future fights.
3. Students who have been victimized, (bullied by another student) are more likely to be aggressive.
4. Students who have a hostile attitude.
5. Parents who are not very involved.

### **6. High media violence exposure.**

The study looked at over 400 students at the beginning of the school year and six months later. Students, peers, teachers, and parents were given several surveys to identify base line on the six risk factors and then repeated after six months including questions that identified aggressive behavior and attitudes. The results of the study showed a cumulative affect that was exponential.

"As you gain risk factors, the risk of aggression goes up disproportionately," said Gentile. "Having one or two risk factors is no big deal. Kids are resilient -- they can handle it. You get to three and there's a big jump. When you get out past four risk factors, risk is increasing at a much higher rate than you would expect."

"If we are concerned about bullying in schools, then this approach has real world implications for helping to target the kids who are at higher risk for bullying behavior so we could use our limited resources more effectively to reduce bullying in schools," he continued. "We could profile kids by measuring their risk factors. In fact, I can get over 80 percent accuracy knowing only three things -- are they a boy, have they gotten in a fight within the past year, and do they consume a lot of media violence? When you get

out to having six risk factors, then we can predict with 94 percent accuracy which kids will get into fights in the coming year. We just can't predict which day."

They also found that students who were low for all five risk factors but had high levels of media violence, especially violent video games, still have a very high potential for aggressive behavior.

"Most of the risk factors for aggression are really hard to change. You can't easily change whether your child has previously been in a fight or bullied. What makes media violence different from the others is that it's the one that is most easy for parents to control." Gentile

The study also showed that media violence exposure has a greater effect on students than the other risk factors except for prior aggressive behavior (being in a fight).

What's important about this study is that it provides a tool to identify students who are most at risk for aggression at school. This allow schools to focus their efforts on students that most need additional support.

Using a Risk and Resilience Approach to Understanding Media Violence, Gentile and Bushman, July, 2012, *American Psychological Association, Popular Media Culture*

*The article is available on Dr. Gentile's website. You can access a pdf of the full article:*

<http://www.drdouglas.org/drdpdfs/GBRisk2012.pdf>