

Aggression Replacement Training® Research Summary

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THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Arnold P. Goldstein (1999) describes how several theoretical perspectives influenced both the original design and later refinement of Aggression Replacement Training®. Acknowledging the importance of psychodynamic and client-centered theory approaches to helping people change, Goldstein is clear that social learning theory and skills training are the key influences of the model. Simply, social learning theory seeks to understand the complex interactions among an individual's thoughts, emotions, and actions within a given social context (Bandura, 1977b, 1986). In terms of practice, social learning theory is perhaps most closely allied with cognitive-behavioral methods, including skills training, traditionally much used with antisocial people (Hollin, 1990). Furthermore, Goldstein's view of interpersonal problems is very much in sympathy with a social learning approach. For example, Goldstein (1994) described three levels in the physical ecology of aggression, all incorporating various levels of a person-environment interaction: "Macrolevel" refers to the analysis of aggression at a national or regional level, "mesolevel" to violence at the neighborhood level, and "microlevel" to violence found in settings such as the home and on the street.

The application of social learning theory is axiomatic with an approach to practice that sees the possibilities for change in both the social environment and the individual. At the level of work with the individual young person, practice is concerned with multi-modal change that encompasses the individual's thoughts, emotions, and actions. As is evident from the curriculum, it adopts a multimodal approach to change, with a clear emphasis on skills development. Indeed, the approach to skills development is in keeping with the original social skills model described by Argyle and Kendon (1967). Argyle and Kendon described socially skilled behavior as consisting of three related components – namely, social perception, social cognition, and social performance. Social perception skills are evident in the ability to perceive and if the theoretical and practical underpinnings of the Curriculum are sound, what is the evidence to suggest that some people have specific difficulties in the problem areas that need to be addressed and why? An overview of this evidence in support of the behavioral, emotional, or cognitive change for these three major targets is next provided.

Behavior Focus

Skillstreaming

Skillstreaming is the development of skills, through the use of the techniques of modeling, instruction, practice, and feedback, to allow the young person to replace destructive behaviors with more constructive, prosocial alternative behaviors. Spence (1981a, 1981b) compared the social performance skills of male offenders with those of matched non-delinquent controls. Spence reported differences in levels of nonverbal skills such that the delinquents were rated less favorably in terms of social skill, social anxiety, and employability. Ample evidence shows that skills training – incorporating modeling, role-play, and instructional feedback – can increase young people's social skills (Hollin & Palmer, 2001).

Emotion Focus

Anger Control Training

Anger Control Training involves the application of anger management techniques to previously assessed triggers for the young person's anger. Thus, this course aims to improve the young person's control over anger by developing a self-awareness of internal anger cues, increasing self-instructional skills, facilitating the use of coping strategies and social problem-solving skills, and increasing social skills.

Anger, particularly dysfunctional anger, is the emotional state most frequently associated with aggressive behavior (Davey, Day, & Howells, 2005), although not all violent conduct is associated with anger. Anger is seen to be dysfunctional when it has a negative consequence either for the individual, as seen with poor physical and mental health, or for other people (Swaffer & Hollin, 2000, 2001). The most influential theory of anger was formulated by Novaco (1975, 2007), in which anger is understood to be a subjective emotional state involving both physiological and cognitive activity, but clearly related to environmental circumstances.

Following Novaco's theory, the experience of anger is triggered by some environmental event, typically the individual's perception of the words and actions of another person. Novaco and Welsh (1989) identify various styles of perception and information processing that are typical of individuals who are prone to anger. These styles include the tendency to see hostility and provocation in the words and actions of other people and to make attribution errors in perceiving one's own behavior as situationally determined by the behavior of others, as explained by their negative personality.

The individual's misperception of a situation may prompt distinct patterns of physiological and cognitive arousal. The physiological correlates of anger are typically a rise in body temperature, perspiration and muscular tension and increased cardiovascular activity. The cognitive processes begin with the individual's labeling the emotional state as anger and then continue with the intensification of the information-processing biases as the situation unfolds. Finally, the shift from anger to violent behavior is related to the disinhibition of internal control through, for example, high levels of physiological arousal or the effects of drugs.

Anger control training in various forms is now widely used across a range of populations, including young people and adults with a strong supporting research base (Hollin & Bloxson, 2007).

Cognitive Focus

Moral Reasoning Training

Moral Reasoning Training is intended to resolve maturational delays with respect to moral reasoning and any associated egocentric bias. This aspect of Aggression Replacement Training® includes enhancement of moral reasoning, alongside social perspective-taking skills, using the techniques of self-instruction training, social problem-solving skills training, and guided peer group social decision making.

The importance of moral development in socialization is made clear in several influential theories (Kohlberg, 1978; Piaget, 1932). In particular, Kohlberg's theory is concerned with the development of antisocial behavior. Kohlberg, like Piaget, argues that as the child grows older moral reasoning follows a developmental sequence in line with the child's age. Kohlberg describes three levels of moral development, with two stages at each level. At the lower stages, moral reasoning is concrete in orientation. Reasoning becomes more abstract at the higher stages, involving concepts such as justice and rights.

Kohlberg suggests that antisocial behavior is associated with a delay in the development of moral reasoning that results in weak internal control over behavior. The generally accepted position, reinforced by the major reviews, is that delinquents typically show immature, hedonistic, and self-centered moral functioning when compared with their non-delinquent peers (Nelson, Smith, & Dodd, 1990; Palmer, 2003; Stams et al., 2006).

However, as Gibbs (1993) points out, moral reasoning should be considered alongside other aspects of cognition, particularly social information processing, particularly with regard to cognitive distortions (Gibbs, 1993; Goldstein et al., 1998). Cognitive distortions directly support the attitudes consistent with sociomoral developmental delay and reduce cognitive dissonance. Thus, an example of self-centered moral reasoning would be "If I want it, I take it." Gibbs terms this type of reasoning a primary distortion. Primary distortions are sustained by secondary distortions: Secondary distortions supporting "I want it, I take it" might be blaming victims for the offense or biased interpretations of one's own behavior. The successful use of Moral Reasoning Training with aggressive populations has been reported in the literature (Gibbs, 1996; Gibbs, Potter, & Goldstein, 1995).

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY-PEABODY RESEARCH INSTITUTE META-ANALYSIS DATABASE

The Peabody Research Institute at Vanderbilt University conducts Meta-Analysis evaluation of programs to ascertain program effectiveness. Specifically related to Aggression Replacement Training® they have a significant database to determine the effectiveness of the model related to proximal and distal outcomes. The database codes studies and matches evaluations for sample size, age, ethnicity, etc. In order to make the list there is specific eligibility requirements that studies need to meet. Below is the criteria, in which all eight standards need to be met:

Eligibility Criteria*

Criteria for Inclusion in the Juvenile Delinquency Meta-Analysis Database (JUVMETA):

1. Does this study involve an intervention or treatment?
2. Are subjects juveniles?
3. Is the study set in an English speaking country and reported in English?
4. Is the date of publication 1950 or later?
5. Does this study involve a comparison that contrasts one or more identifiable focal treatments with one or more control conditions?
6. Were subjects assigned randomly, matched, or is pretest available on group differences?
7. Does this study involve delinquent youth/offenders or youth committing acts which constitute chargeable offenses?
8. Is quantitative outcome data or direction of effect available for at least one delinquency outcome measure?

All of the studies in the data base had significant findings related to two specific areas:

1. Proximal outcomes- statistically significant improvement in social skills and thinking errors, and reduced problems with aggression.
2. Distal outcomes – reduced recidivism related to re-offense rates.

The following list contains the studies that were, evaluated, coded and found to meet the criteria:

JUVENILE META-ANALYSIS DATABASE – STUDIES PERTAINING TO AGGRESSION REPLACEMENT TRAINING

Coded Studies (includes lists of relevant publications related to each study):

- Study ID 9284
 - Glick, B. & Goldstein, A. P. (1987). Aggression replacement training. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 65, 356-362.
 - Goldstein, A. P. & Glick, B. (1987). *Aggression Replacement Training: A Comprehensive Intervention for Aggressive Youth* (1st ed.). Champaign, IL: Research Press.

- Goldstein, A. P. & Glick, B. (1994). Aggression replacement training: Curriculum and evaluation. Special issue: Counseling and counselor education. *Simulation & Gaming*, 25(1), 9-26.
- Goldstein, A. P. (1994). *The prosocial gang: Implementing aggression replacement training*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Goldstein, A. P., & Glick, B. (1996). Aggression replacement training: Methods and outcomes. In C. R. Hollin, & K. Howells (Eds.), *Clinical approaches to working with young offenders* (pp. 151-164). Chichester, UK: John Wiley and Sons.
- Goldstein, A. P., Glick, B., Irwin, M. J., Pask-McCartney, C., & Rubana, I. (1989). *Reducing Delinquency: Intervention in the Community* (1st ed.). New York: Pergamon Press.
- Study ID 9342
 - Gibbs, J. C. (1995). EQUIP: A peer-group treatment program for delinquents. In R. R. Ross, D. H. Antonowicz, & G. K. Dhaliwal (Eds.), *Going Straight: Effective delinquency prevention and offender rehabilitation* (pp. 179-194). Ottawa: Air Training and Publications.
 - Gibbs, J. C., Potter, G. B., Goldstein, A. P., & Brendtro, L. K. (1996). Frontiers in psychoeducation: The EQUIP model with antisocial youth. *Reclaiming Children and Youth: Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Problems*, Vol. 4(4), 22-28.
 - Leeman, L. W., Gibbs, J. C., & Fuller, D. (1993). Evaluation of a multi-component group treatment program for juvenile delinquents. *Aggressive Behavior*, 19(4), 281-292.
- Study ID 10158
 - Deschenes, E. P., & Greenwood, P. W. (1998). Alternative placements for juvenile offenders: Results from the evaluation of the Nokomis Challenge Program. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 35(3), 267-294.
 - Deschenes, E. P., Greenwood, P. W., & Marshall, G. (1996). *The Nokomis Challenge Program Evaluation*. Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation. (NCJRS Document Reproduction Service No. 168808)
 - Mil-Kime, V. & Marie, D. (1999). *Delinquents' social attitude change during confinement: A comparison of the Nokomis Challenge Program with traditional residential placements* (Doctoral dissertation, California State University, Long Beach, 1999). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 37(05), 1371. (University Microfilms No. AAT 1395072)
- Study ID 10836:
 - Barnoski, R. (1999). *The Community Justice Accountability Act: Research-proven interventions for the juvenile courts* (Research Rep. No. 99-01-1204). Olympia, WA: The Evergreen State College, Washington State Institute for Public Policy.
 - Barnoski, R. (2004). *Outcome evaluation of Washington state's research-based programs for juvenile offenders* (Washington State Institute for Public Policy). Olympia, WA: The Washington Legislature.

- Barnoski, R. (2005, May). Washington State's experience with research-based juvenile justice programs. Paper presented at the meeting of the Los Angeles County Juvenile Justice Conference, Los Angeles, CA.
 - Barnoski, R. (2007, December). Washington State's experience with evidence-based juvenile justice programs and their effectiveness with minority youth. Paper presented at the meeting of the.
 - Barnoski, R., et al (2002). Washington State's implementation of Functional Family Therapy for juvenile offenders: Preliminary findings (Research Rep. No. 08-08-1201). Olympia, WA: The Evergreen State College, Washington State Institute for Public Policy.
- Study ID 10837:
 - Barnoski, R., & Aos, S. (2002). Washington State's implementation of aggression replacement training for juvenile offenders: Preliminary findings. Olympia, WA: The Evergreen State College, Washington State Institute for Public Policy.
- Study ID 16164:
 - Ryon, S. B., Early, K. W., Hand, G. & Chapman, S. (2013). Juvenile Justice Interventions: System Escalation and Effective Alternatives to Residential Placement *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 52(5), 358.
- Study ID 16184:
 - Torchin, S. (2003). Aggression replacement training: Evaluation of a program for young offenders Unpublished master's thesis, McGill University (Canada), Canada.

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