



Development of Aggression in Boys: Implications for Interventions

Jim Larson, Ph.D.

School Psychology Program

Department of Psychology

University of Wisconsin – Whitewater

Whitewater, WI 53190

larsonj@uww.edu

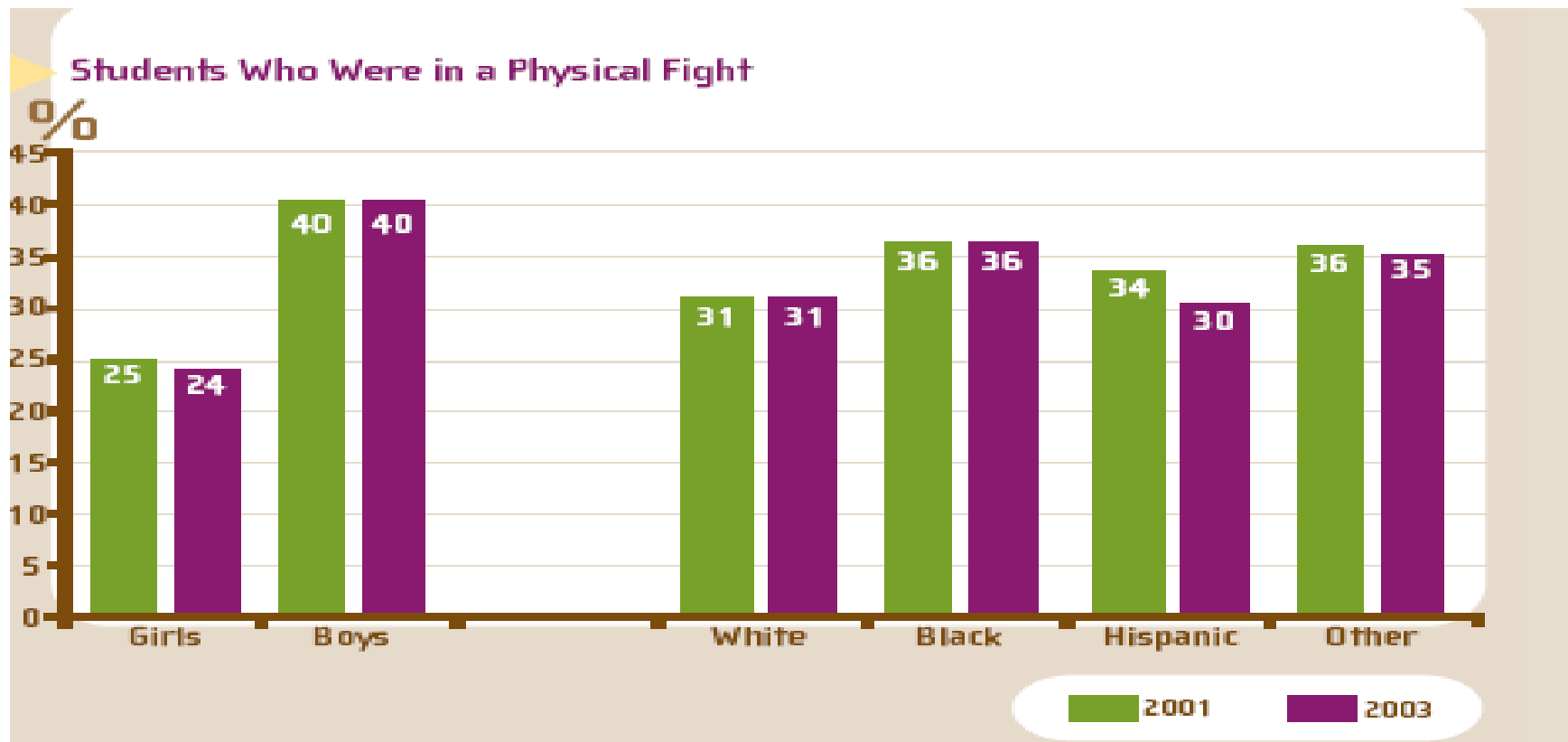
and

The Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention and
Treatment

6250 Sunset Drive, Suite 204, Miami, FL 33143

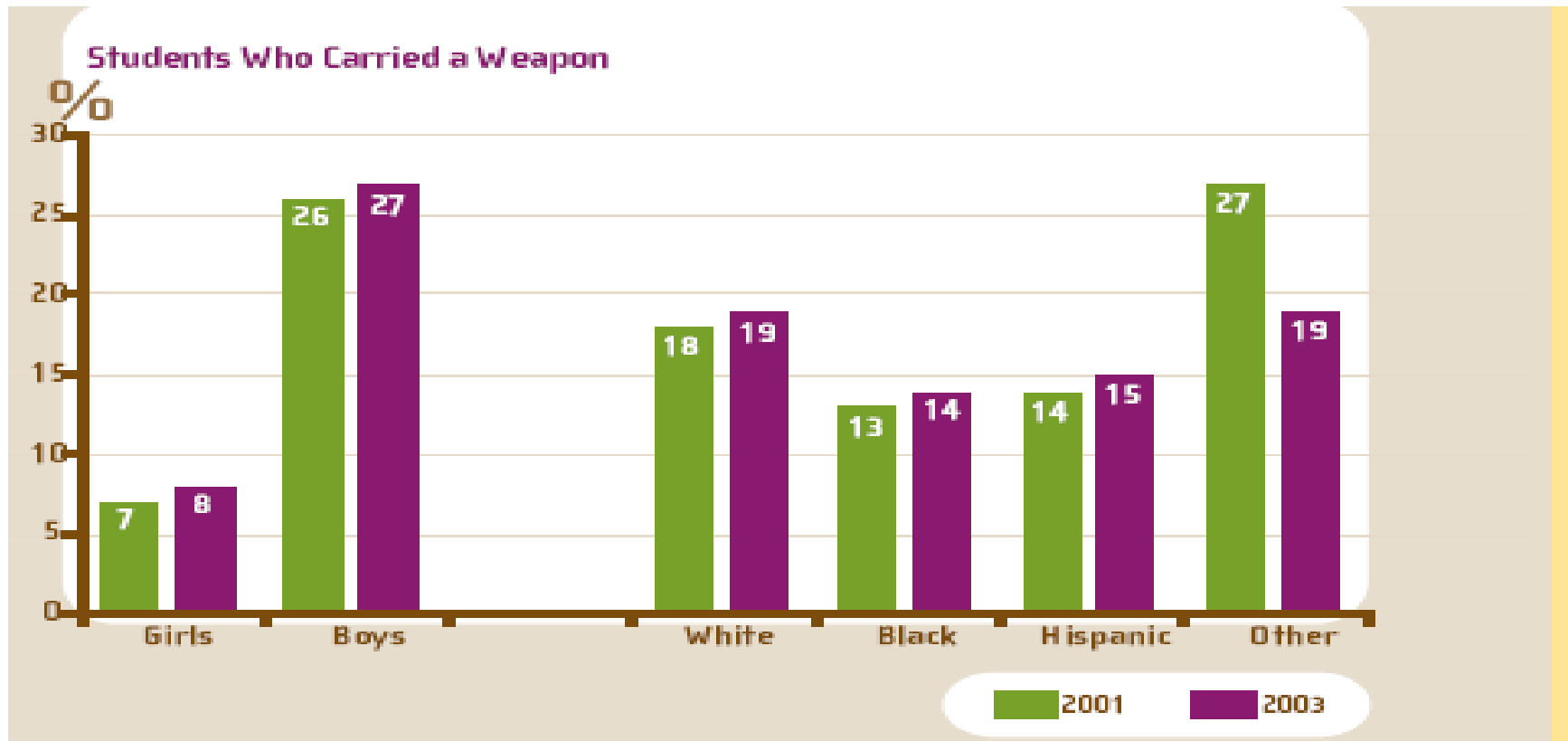
Physical Fight – Florida

Youth Risk Surveillance Survey



Carried a Weapon – Florida

Youth Risk Surveillance Survey





Closing the Gap

- In 1983 and 1993, the ratios of male to female youths committing violent acts were 7.4 to 1 and 7.0 to 1, respectively. This means that for every violent act committed by female youths in these years, at least seven violent acts were committed by male youths. By 1998, this ratio had closed to 3.5 to 1



How Do Boys Become Aggressive?

- Solid research indicates very little gender differences in toddler period
- Both girls and boys engage in more object-related than person-related aggression
- Differences begin to emerge at age 4-5
- Why?



Is it Testosterone?

- The primary *androgen*, a class of steroid hormones that develop and maintain masculine features
- Research is somewhat mixed
- Aggressive effects are predominantly in animal studies
- Better explanations in social – environmental influences



How Do Boys Become Aggressive?

Differential Parenting

Keenen & Shaw study of low income families (1994) hypothesis:

- Parent criminality predicts boys' aggression, but not until age 4-5
- Not biology alone, but also socialization
- Differential parent responses to boys' aggression
- Influence of aggressive modeling



How Do Boys Become Aggressive?

Social Learning Model Bandura et al.

- Observation of a Model
 - Observe sib, parent, and peer behavior
 - Observe models in media
 - What behaviors pay-off?
- Direct Experience
 - Can I do it?
 - How did it turn out?



How Do Boys Become Aggressive?

Coercive Family Process – Patterson et al.

- Pre-schoolers acquire aggressive behaviors through social learning
- Sib and parent compliance demands are obtained through threats or physical aggression; *attack -counterattack - positive outcome*
- Prosocial behaviors ignored or go unrecognized



How Do Boys Become Aggressive?

Coercive Family Process - Patterson et al.

- Punishment paradigms are narrow, inconsistent, and harsh
- Children become increasingly coercive and aggressive
- Process becomes *bi-directional* as child aggressiveness & non-compliance increases, and parent effectiveness decreases



How Do Boys Become Aggressive?

If the **family setting** is the early training grounds for aggressive behavior,
the **school** is where the behaviors are practiced, reinforced, and solidified



How Do Boys Become Aggressive?

Off to School They Go....

- Ill-prepared for a rule-governed environment more suited for typically socialized girls
- Hold beliefs that value aggression
- Lack essential pre-academic skills
- Encounter system more concerned with test scores than socio-emotional learning
- Have few if any positive adult male role models



How Do Boys Become Aggressive?

Off to School They Go....

- Encounter peer rejection
- Subjected to unsupported “interventions”
- Referred to special education
- Fail to bond in a meaningful way
- Bi-directional aversion develops
- Drop-out and push-out behaviors escalate



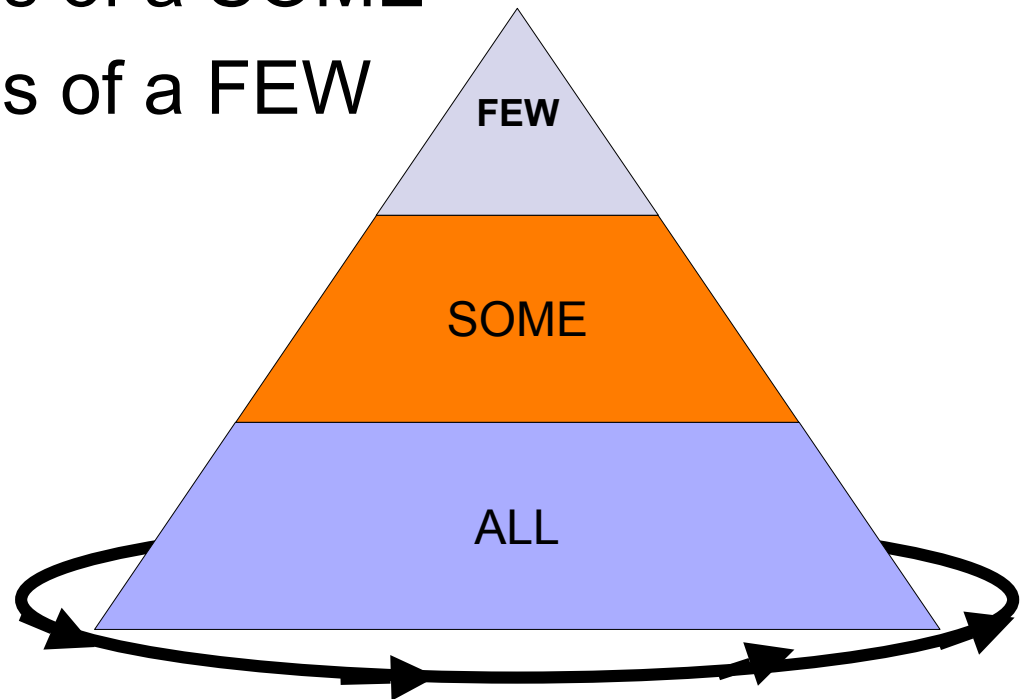
and what happens in MDCPS?

Graduation Rate = regular diplomas from 2004 / 8th grade enrollment from 2000

- The longitudinal 4-year **2000-2004 graduation rate** for White, Non-Hispanic students was **73.1 percent**;
- for Hispanic students the rate was **61.1 percent**;
- and for Black, Non-Hispanic students the rate was **49.5 percent**.

Three-Level Prevention Approach

1. Address the needs of ALL
2. Address the needs of a SOME
3. Address the needs of a FEW





What Can Be Done for Boys?

In a culturally-sensitive context...

- Promote community-based parent training
 - *Incredible Years*
- Support quality mentoring programs
 - *Big Brothers/Big Sisters*
- Teach socio-emotional competencies
 - *Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies*
 - *Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum*



What Can Be Done for Boys?

In a culturally-sensitive context...

- Promote bonding to school
 - Learning-based - not exclusionary - discipline
- Promote parent involvement
- Assess and monitor academic progress
 - Early literacy screenings, e.g., *DIBELS* or *AIMSweb*
 - RTI approaches for academics and behavior



What Can Be Done for Boys?

In a culturally-sensitive context...

- Early screening for high risk boys
- Behavioral skills training with evidence-supported interventions
 - ICPS (I Can Problem-Solve)
 - Anger Coping Program
 - Positive Alternative Choices Training (PACT)
 - Think First Anger and Aggression Management

A Final Story





Resources

- Webster-Stratton, C., Mihalic, S., Fagan, A., Arnold, D., Taylor, T., & Tingley, C. (2001). Blueprints for Violence Prevention, Book Eleven: The Incredible Years: Parent, Teacher And Child Training Series. Boulder, CO: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.
<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/model/programs/IYS.html>
- McGill, D.E., Mihalic, S.F., & Grotmeter, J. K. (1998). Blueprints for Violence Prevention, Book Two: Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. Boulder, CO: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.
<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/model/programs/BBBS.html>
- Greenberg, M.T., Kusché, C. & Mihalic, S.F. (1998). Blueprints for Violence Prevention, Book Ten: Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS). Boulder, CO: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.
<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/model/programs/PATHS.html>



Resources

- AIMSweb <http://www.aimsweb.com/index.php>
- Dynamic Indicators of Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)
<http://dibels.uoregon.edu/>
- ICPS – I Can Problem Solve available through Research Press
- PACT – Positive Adolescent Choices Training available through Research Press
- Anger Coping Program – Larson, J., & Lochman, J. E. (2002). *Helping schoolchildren cope with anger: A cognitive-behavioral intervention*. New York: Guilford Press
- Think First – Larson, J. (2005). *Think First: Addressing aggressive behavior in the secondary schools*. New York: Guilford Press