

## SUMMARY

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Little is known about antisocial behavior among children under twelve. Up to now research has been directed at antisocial behavior among children between twelve and eighteen. In this research we examined aggressive and delinquent behavior among children under twelve. Besides these aspects of antisocial behavior attention was also directed at prosocial behavior. The first and second assessment of TRAILS, a large-scale investigation among adolescents in the northern part of the Netherlands, was used to assess these characteristics. The general aim of TRAILS is to describe and explain the development of mental health and social development from preadolescence into adulthood. At the first assessment 2,230 children participated. At the second assessment 2,149 of the 2,230 children participated again.

To gain as complete an insight in the development of antisocial behavior as possible we spoke with several informants and used several forms of data collection. Four research questions were essential during this research:

- What is the prevalence of antisocial behavior for children under twelve?
- To which degree is there continuity or discontinuity of antisocial behavior over a period of two years from the age of 11/12 until the age of 13/14?
- What is the relation between antisocial behavior of children under twelve and individual and parenting characteristics?
- Is a child under twelve called antisocial in one context and prosocial in another?

Moffitt's theory of lifetime persistent and adolescence limited antisocial behavior was used during this research. The differences in occurrence of antisocial behavior between first and second assessment were small. Children and teachers reported a small increase in aggressive and delinquent behavior during the second assessment. Boys showed more delinquent and aggressive behavior than girls. When social economic status was lower aggressive and delinquent behavior were higher. During the transition from primary to secondary education delinquency at home and at school and delinquency with violence decreased while smoking, drinking, and drug abuse increased.

To gain insight into the stability of antisocial behavior we created several groups. The vast majority of (pre)adolescents showed no or almost no antisocial behavior. There was also a group who showed antisocial behavior during the first assessment but had stopped during the second assessment. These children had learning problems in primary school and were possibly considered difficult by their teachers. According to their teachers in secondary school they found a school better fitting their needs. This last group received a lot of extra care. There was also a small group who showed antisocial behavior for the first time during secondary education. These children experienced a lot of negative events after the first assessment like changed family circumstances, problems with friendships, or they were the victims of bullying. They appear to be more angry, restless and sad because of this.

The fifth and last group is a group of children who showed persistent antisocial behavior during their life course. They are far more guilty of antisocial behavior than the other groups. They performed badly on all individual and parenting characteristics investigated. They scored low on intelligence, performed badly at school and often felt frustrated. Their self control was judged to be low by their parents and teachers and they also had a lot of attention problems. Their parents experienced a lot of stress in raising these children.

Parents and teachers mostly agreed about pro- and antisocial behavior of the children. Some children behaved differently in different contexts or informants had different opinions about the children. The differences in opinion were sometimes striking. As long as a child does well at school a teacher will hesitate to call a child antisocial. Hyperactive pupils who do

well are called 'energetic' while a hyperactive child who performs badly is called 'difficult' . The opinion of parents about social behavior had nothing to do with performance at school but everything with the stress they experience in educating their child.

Although there were limitations TRAILS offers unique possibilities to follow onset and course of antisocial behavior over an extended period of time. The outcome of this research tends in the direction of a connection between antisocial behavior and selected individual and parenting characteristics. Some important findings are the insight into why and when children start or stop antisocial behavior. Another finding was that whether a child under twelve is called prosocial or antisocial is dependent on the context. The analyses showed that there is a group of antisocial children under twelve. There is a distinct possibility that a large percentage of this group consists of children who present characteristics of lifetime persistent antisocial behavior.