

## **EVIL AND GOOD, AGGRESSION AND VOLUNTEERING: Two Sides of a Coin?**

**Eli Jaffa, Ph.D.**

Division Director of Magen David Adom in Tel Aviv, Israel  
eliy@mda.org.il

**Uzi Sasson, Ph.D.**

Lecturer and Researcher at Beit-Berl Academic College, Israel  
Coordinator of the College's Social Involvement Project | uzi.sasson@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

The current study deals with youth aggression and volunteering as the two sides of the same coin – youth need for autonomy. While youth aggression is the negative side to adolescents' need for autonomy, volunteering is the positive side to it. To date, no consistent examinations of the relationship between aggressive behavior and motivation to volunteer has been carried out. The present study focused this relationship. This article quests the correlations between aggressive behaviors and the youth motivations to volunteer. The results of the present study compliment and extend the existing literature investigating adolescence violence and individual's motivations to volunteer. It suggests that adolescents seek their independence in either positive ways by volunteering or negative ways by behaving aggressively.

*Key words: Adolescents Volunteering, Adolescents Aggression, Need for Autonomy, Motivations to Volunteer*

### ***Gut und Böse, Aggression und freiwilliges Engagement: Zwei Seiten einer Medaille?***

*Diese Studie beschäftigt sich mit Aggression und freiwilliges Engagement als die zwei Seiten einer Medaille – das jugendliche Bedürfnis nach Autonomie. Während Aggression die negative Seite des jugendlichen Bedürfnisses nach Autonomie darstellt, ist freiwilliges Engagement die positive Seite. Bisher wurden noch keine Untersuchungen zu der Beziehung zwischen aggressivem Verhalten und der Motivation, Freiwilligenarbeit zu leisten, durchgeführt. Die vorliegende Studie untersucht diese Beziehung. Sie untersucht die Zusammenhänge zwischen aggressiven Verhaltensweisen und der unterschiedlichen Motivationen von Jugendlichen, sich freiwillig zu engagieren. Die Ergebnisse ergänzen und erweitern die vorhandene Literatur zu jugendlicher Aggression und den individuellen Beweggründen, sich freiwillig zu engagieren. Der Beitrag liegt den Schluss nahe, dass Jugendliche ihre Unabhängigkeit entweder auf positivem Wege durch Freiwilligenarbeit anstreben oder auf negativem Wege durch aggressives Verhalten. Schlagwörter: Jugendliche Freiwilligenarbeit, Jugendliche Aggression, Autonomie-Bestrebung, Motivationen zu freiwilligen Engagement.*

*Schlagwörter: Jugendliche, Freiwilligenarbeit, Aggression, Autonomie-Bestrebung, Motivationen zu freiwilligen Engagement*

## 1. Introduction

Adolescence aggression is a popular topic of investigation for both academic studies and news headline (Zimring 1998; Furlong/Kingery/Bates 2001; Elliott/Hamburg/Williams 1998). Episodes of extreme youth violence often raise the question: How could we have prevented such tragedies in advance? Some of the ways to cope with adolescence violence refer to education (Savage/Holcomb 1999; Shilts 1991) and law enforcement in all levels (Grisso 1998; Sheldrick 1999; Borum 2000). A very small portion of the articles, which tend to answer the above question, combined aggressive behavior of adolescents with the remedy of after-school curriculum (Eccles/Barber, 1999; Stevens/Peltier, 1994; Savage/Holcomb, 1999; Shilts, 1991; Resnick et al., 1997). But to date, no study, as far as we know, discussed the possibility that volunteer activities correlate with the reduction of adolescence aggressive behavior. This study proposes the foundation for a theory that marries the characteristics of volunteering with aggressive behavior of adolescents. More specifically, this study correlates the motivations to volunteer (Clary et al. 1998) with adolescents' aggressive behavior (Kingery 1998).

Previous studies have associated youth violence with the need for adolescence autonomy (Moffitt 1993; Agnew, 1984; Tittle 1995). Agnew (1984) and Brezino (2008) claim that one of adolescents' strongest desire is their autonomy and independence. Adolescents' demand for autonomy is defined, in previous studies, as life without authority, as once ability to take control over desired actions without the permission of others, and even against others will and demands (Agnew 1984; Brezino 2008). Therefore, their demand for autonomy has to do with adolescents' interest to maintain positive social relationships with their community members (Brezino 2008; Eccles et al. 1991). On the other hand, it could lead to adoption of aggressive behavior (Agnew 1994; Brezino 2008). Those who have higher desire for independence are more probable to channel this desire into aggressive behavior (Agnew 1984). Furthermore, Brezino (2008) suggests that aggressive behavior may also generate antisocial attitudes, such as lack of concern for other's well-being.

Volunteering is one of the positive behaviors adolescents could assume upon themselves. Clary et al. (1998) established the basis for understanding volunteers' motivations and the satisfactions that they can elicit from it. The six basic motivations that explain volunteers' engagement with their work are: (1) values, (2) understanding, (3) social, (4) career, (5) protective functions, (6) enhancement (Clary/others 1998). Volunteering out of values is defined by Clary et al. as "the opportunities to express altruistic and humanitarian concerns or others" (1998: 1517). The value motivation characterizes mostly those who choose to develop a positive relationship with society. Thus, adolescents who feel compassion for others, and concern for other group will be motivated to volunteer.

A second motivation to volunteer is volunteering with the aim of understanding (Clary et al. 1998). Adolescents who are eager to learn and understand may find the opportunity to learn by volunteering. Volunteering allow the chance to experiment and exercise abilities that otherwise go unpracticed (Clary et al. 1998).

The social motivation is the third motivation that Clary et al. (1998) recognized with those who are concerned with one's friends. The adolescents who expect their acquaintances to reward them for their behavior found to be motivated socially to volunteer.

Career is the fourth motivation to volunteer (Clary et al. 1998). This motivation is the concern with one's career-related benefits. Adolescents who logically calculate their future may volunteer. Volunteering can be the first step for personal economical freedom and will express involvement and leadership on volunteer's curriculum vitae.

The fifth motivation, developed by Clary et al. (1998), is to offer protective functions in association with ego and narcissism. Such motivation, argue Clary et al. (1998), concerns with the protection of the volunteer from negative psychological problems. For example, protect the ego of oneself, and serves as a remedy to negative feelings, (Clary et al. 1998).

The sixth motivation to volunteer is enhancement of one's confidence (Clary et al. 1998). Adolescents who are seeking positive feelings, self-importance, self-esteem, and admiration by others may achieve the feelings from volunteering (Clary et al. 1998).

In light of this review, the aim of the current study was to examine the following research questions: Is there a relationship between adolescence aggressive behavior and the motivation to volunteer? Does youth aggressive behavior correlate with specific motivations to volunteer? More specifically, which motivations to volunteer characterize individuals with frequent episodes of aggressive behavior? Answering the above questions will redefine the importance of volunteering as a strategy to reduce violent behavior.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Participants

The participants were 231 adolescents who volunteer for an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) organization in Israel. These adolescents were trained to provide medical care. The Israeli government directed the organization to perform its role in times of wars, and to prepare itself during peaceful times.

Adolescents' age ranged from 15 to 19 years, who participated in advanced training courses for emergency situations during the year of 2007. We included only

adolescents who agreed to participate and returned the form indicating that they answers were Completely Honest, or Pretty Honest. We excluded only seven surveys who indicated that their answers were either Not Very Honest or Not Honest at All. Only five students who participated in the training declined participation in the study. A description of the subjects who participated in the study and indicated providing honest answers, is provided in Table 1 and Table 2.

It is worthwhile to notice that as the motivation to volunteer is the main variable; the sample should consist of volunteers. To be more specific, non-volunteers would not be able to indicate a motivation to volunteer. Hence, the participants, as indicated above, are all volunteers.

**Table 1: Mean, and Standard Deviations for demographic values.**

	MEAN	SD
age (Y)	16.71	0.69
School Grade	10.32	0.6
Head of household's education level	14	2.8
Head of household's socioeconomic status	4 (1-5 higher)	0.84

**Table 2: Frequency Distributions of Demographic Variables**

	SUBJECTS	
	No. Valid, (Missing)	Valid %
<b>GENDER</b>		
Male	89	43
Female	118, (7)	57
<b>RELIGIOUS</b>		
Jewish	208, (6)	100
<b>LEVEL OF RELIGIOSITY</b>		
High	47	23
Low	158, (9)	77
<b>IMMIGRANT</b>		
Israelis	179	83
First Generation	35	17

## 2.2 Questionnaire

We used Clary et al.' (1998) thirty-item questionnaire to assess participants' volunteering motivations. We used the same categories as in Clary et al.' (1998) survey to explore the motivations of these adolescents to volunteer: Values, Understanding, Social, Career, Protective Functions, and Enhancement.

In addition, we used the forty one-item violence scale (Kingery 1998) to assess participant's level of violence and aggressive behavior. This scale has six subscales; each includes four to twelve questions. Kingery (1998) divided violent behavior into the following subscales: Common Violence, Inventive Violence, Passive Aggression, Severe Menacing, Menacing Language, and Impulsive Violence. The adolescents participating in the survey had to indicate the number of times (one to 40 or more times), during their lifetime, they have done any of the things the questions describe, while being at school, at home, or somewhere else (Kingery 1998). The survey also included a question that assessed honesty, for the purpose of increasing the reliability of the results (Kingery 1998). The question was: "Overall, how honest would you say you were in answering these questions?" with the responses format of: Completely Honest, Pretty Honest, Not Very Honest, and Not Honest at All.

## 2.3 Procedures

Although we recognize Kingery's (1998) rationale for process of classifying the different propositions to six, we believe that each of the forty one-items in the questionnaire had its own uniqueness and can be used as a stand-alone variable. In order to test the hypothesis that Kingery's violence propositions are associated with Clary et al.' (1998) motivations to volunteer, we performed multiple Pearson correlations between each proposition, the six aggregate subscale, and each motivation. Only items from Kingery's (1998) survey, which significantly correlated ( $P > .05$ , one-tailed) with Clary et al.' (1998) motivations, were used as independent variables.

## 3. Results

We used Pearson's correlation to answer the question informing this study. We used one-sided test to reveal the kind of aggressive behaviors that positively or negatively correlate with the motivations to volunteer. A significant positive correlation indicated a positive influence on the motivations to volunteer. Conversely, a significant negative correlation showed a decrease in the motivation to volunteer.

Table 3 shows the bivariate Pearson's correlation between the aggregative level of violence and the six motivations to volunteer. The table shows that Inventive

violence is negatively correlated with Understanding and Career. We found no correlation between any of the other aggregate expressions of violence to Values, Social, Protective Function, or Enhancement.

Table 3: Pearson's Correlations between Motivation to Volunteer and Aggregative Level of Violence and Aggressive behavior

VARIABLE	VALUES	UNDER- STANDING	SOCIAL	CAREER	PROTECTIVE FUNCTION	ENHANCE- MENT
Common violence	-.099	-.108	-.066	-.049	.023	-.057
Inventive Violence	-.127	-.161*	-.125	-.14*	.007	-.069
Passive Aggression	-.089	-.098	-.041	-.012	.027	-.013
Severe Menacing	.035	.005	-.079	-.43	.032	.065
Menacing Language	-.101	-.088	-.058	-.012	.013	-.028
Impulsive Violence	-.060	-.119	-.005	-.105	.008	.03

\*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (one-tailed)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the .01 level (one-tailed)

Table 4 (p. 68/69) shows the bivariate Pearson's correlation between the specific indicators of aggressive behavior and the six motivations to volunteer. The table shows only items that are significantly correlated with at least one of the six motivations for volunteering. While Values, Understanding, and Career are negatively correlated with different types of aggressive behavior, Understanding was most frequently correlated with aggressive behavior. Enhancement was found to positively correlate with 2 measures of aggressive behavior. We found a mixture in the direction of correlation for Social and Protective. Understanding and Career had the most frequent correlations with the different types of aggressive behavior (see figure 1, p. 70).

Values was weakly and negatively correlated with minor to moderate aggressive behavior. Specifically, values, as a motivation to volunteer, decreases for adolescents who reported that they tripped someone (-.15), locked someone in a room (-.205), dropped something on to someone else (-.167), cut in front of someone in line (-.116), and used body language to threaten someone (-.116).

Table 4. Pearson's Correlations between Motivation to Volunteer and Specific Violence and Aggressive behavior

VARIABLE	VALUES	UNDER- STANDING	SOCIAL	CAREER	PROTECTIVE FUNCTION	ENHANCE- MENT
Hit someone with an object that you were holding or that you threw	-.051	-.06	-.107	-.138*	.037	-.083
Shoved or tripped someone	-.15*	-.079	.011	-.002	.036	.004
Stepped on someone's foot or some other part of their body	-.083	-.167**	-.155*	-.162*	-.136*	-.112
Forced one person to hurt another person	-.063	-.133*	-.027	-.094	.034	-.035
Forced someone's head under water so he/she couldn't breathe	-.102	-.134*	-.082	-.102	.007	-.097
Tied someone up or locked someone in a closet or room	-.205**	-.096	-.168**	-.064	.003	-.023
Bit someone with your teeth	-.036	-.123**	-.103	-.125*	.041	-.015
Dropped something on to someone else	-.167**	-.182**	-.069	-.057	-.081	-.104
Stirred up someone else to start a fight between two or more people	-.083	-.166**	-.009	-.104	-.018	.019
Tried to get someone into trouble when they didn't do anything wrong	-.11	-.127*	-.056	-.062	-.047	-.087

\*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (one-tailed)

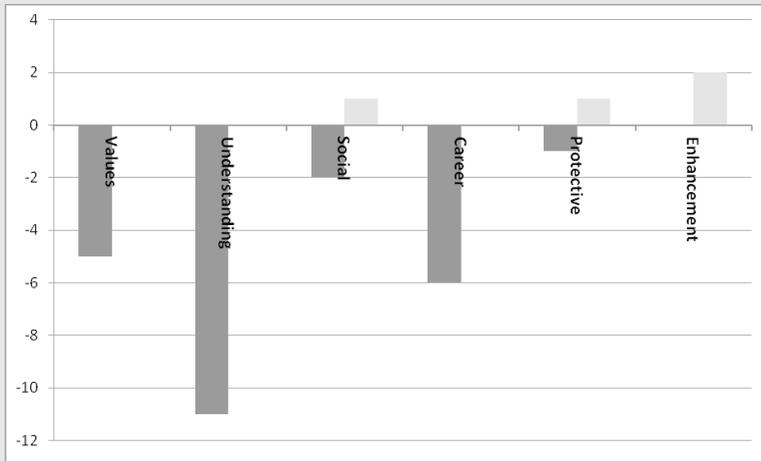
\*\*Correlation is significant at the .01 level (one-tailed)

VARIABLE	VALUES	UNDER- STANDING	SOCIAL	CAREER	PROTECTIVE FUNCTION	ENHANCE- MENT
Cut in front of someone in line to make them mad	-.116*	-.06	-.013	-.05	-.049	-.067
Asked someone else to do something that would hurt or anger someone	-.051	-.117*	-.055	-.003	.018	-.062
Told someone you would reveal a secret that would cause him/her trouble	.016	-.007	-.065	.034	.117*	.072
Tried to force someone to do something sexual when he/she didn't want to	.103	.1	.105	.014	.089	.14*
Threatened to hurt someone with a weapon	.076	-.004	.122*	.064	.078	.059
Used body language to threaten someone (looked mean, clenched you fists, etc.)	-.116*	-.12*	-.087	-.112	-.013	-.111
When I'm angry and feel the sudden urge to hit someone, I usually do hit him/her	-.016	-.093	-.059	-.115*	-.03	-.043
If someone disrespectful to me, I can't help it if I respond violently	-.096	-.118*	.012	-.118*	.008	.029
If people don't want me to be violent, they should treat me with more respect	.034	.037	.058	.012	.104	.126*
When I feel a violent impulse, I don't often stop to think about consequences before I act	-.064	-.137*	-.039	-.158*	-.099	-.048

\*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (one-tailed)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the .01 level (one-tailed)

Figure 1: Correlation frequency of aggressive behavior and volunteering motivations



Understanding, as a motivation to volunteer, was most frequently correlated with aggressive behavior. It was negatively correlated and decreased with the following eleven aggressive actions: stepped on someone's foot (-.167), forced one person to hurt another person (-.133), forced someone's head under water (-.134), bite someone (-.182), stirred up someone else to start a fight (-.166), tried to get someone into trouble when they didn't do anything wrong (-.127), asked someone else to anger someone (-.117), used a threatening body language (-.12), impulsively respond violently (-.118), and don't think about the consequences before acting violently (-.137).

Career, as a motivation to volunteer, was frequently correlated with aggressive behavior. It was negatively correlated with the following six aggressive behaviors: Hit someone with an object (-.138), stepped on someone's foot or some other part of their body (-.162), bit someone (-.125), when feeling angry usually hit someone (-.115), impulsively respond violently (-.118), and don't think about the consequences before acting violently (-.158)

Social motivation, on the one hand, was modestly and negatively correlated with the both aggressive actions: stepped on someone's foot (-.155), and bit someone (-.125). On the other hand, social motivation was modestly and positively correlated with: threatened to hurt someone with a weapon (.122).

Protective function as a motivation was also modestly correlated with two aggressive items. While negatively correlated with stepped on someone's foot (-.136), this motivation was positively correlated with the threat to cause trouble by revealing someone's secret (.117).

Enhancement as a motivation to volunteer was modestly and positively correlated with two the items: tried to force someone to do something sexual when he/she didn't want to (.14), and with asking for respect in a violent way (.126). Specifically, as the level of the two stated aggressive items increases, the level of enhancement increases as well.

#### 4. Discussion

Adolescence violence and volunteering motivations (Clary et al. 1998) are widely examined topics in the social behavior literature. Despite the availability of the manifestations of aggressive behavior (Kingery 1998), the causes underlying youth violence (Moffitt 1993; Agnew 1984; Tittle 1995), and individual's motivations to take part in volunteering endeavors, to date, no consistent examinations of the relationship between aggressive behavior and motivation to volunteer has been carried out. The present study focused this relationship. Its primary goal was to examine whether adolescents with frequent manifestations of aggressive behavior have different motivations compared to adolescents with less frequent incidents of aggressive behavior. To achieve this goal we used multiple Pearson correlations between Kingery's (1998) propositions and Clary et al.' (1998) six motivations to volunteer.

The findings of the present study demonstrate that aggressive behavior is weakly associated with motivation to volunteer, and worth further exploration of the relationships with more research. In addition, it may indicate that adolescents with more incidents of aggressive behavior do not volunteer as a result of a desire to learn and gain more knowledge nor do they volunteer as a result to promote a future career goal. This suggests that aggressive behavior as measured by Kingery's (1998) proposition scale may be related to the participant's motivation to volunteer. It may indicate that the motivations to volunteer can fulfill the needs which might lead to aggressive behavior of youth, such as their demand for autonomy. Hence, we may propose that volunteering would replace the need for aggressive behavior, but not for all of the episodes.

One of the episodes that volunteering might replace aggressive behavior is 'Passive Aggression'. For instance, revealing someone's secret that would cause him/her trouble, position the aggressor in power in order to psychologically protect the aggressor's ego. At the same time, adolescent volunteers who are motivated by the protective functions will gain the same power and protection for the ego, as well as the aggressor would do. Therefore, both the aggressive behavior above and the motivation described above feed the ego. Further, an adolescent who threatened to hurt someone with a weapon more times, has higher levels of social motivation to volunteer. Adolescents, who acted this way, were found to volunteer with higher levels of social motivation. Adolescents who tried to force someone to do something sexual when he/she didn't want to had the Enhancement motivation to

volunteer. Volunteering in order to seek high self importance and high self-esteem might substitute for this kind of sexual harassment. The motivation to volunteer for enhancement causes, grants respect to the adolescent volunteer. The same respect is granted with violent behavior.

The results of the present study compliment and extend the existing literature investigating adolescence violence and individual's motivations to volunteer. It suggests that adolescents seek their independence in either positive ways by volunteering or negative ways by behaving aggressively. Hence, screening for both previous aggressive behavior and motivation to volunteer is important. Through the examination of both aggressive behavior and volunteers' motivation to volunteer leaders of volunteer associations could help community in additional ways. They can support the ones who have the tendency to use certain aggressive behaviors, and encourage desired motivations over undesired ones.

On a more general level, the concept of aggression, violence and volunteering is important because it calls attention to the need to understand that adolescents' behavior can be influenced by volunteering. It means that we should strive to find more ways and approaches to influence adolescents' behavior. Clearly, we want to call attention to this approach and urge researchers to expand future studies on the merits of volunteering and its potential effects on aggressive behavior.

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