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Who Are The Most Violent Ten
And Eleven Year Olds?
An Introduction To Future Delinquency
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by
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Executive Summary

Generally, delinquent behaviour is thought to be the result of complex interactions of individual traits with social (family, peers), situational (school, home) and neighbourhood factors. The more risk factors children experience, and the more realms (individual, social, situational, and neighbourhood) they experience them in, the more at-risk they are.

In this study physical aggression is used as an indicator of early delinquency. The objective was to try to understand some of the differences between those children who appear to be very aggressive and those who do not, and to understand the view that young troublesome people have of themselves and the view of them that is held by others.

Although those children identified as aggressive from their own perspective, or from the perspective of a parent or teacher, are not always the same, the results are quite consistent: those identified as being aggressive are more likely to rate themselves as being unhappy and rejected. For example, they are more likely to report being rejected by their parents and other children, and are not likely to see teachers as being fair. Similar descriptions of the aggressive ten and eleven year olds come from the most knowledgeable adult in the household and the child's teacher.

These data are consistent with other research that suggests that aggressive behaviour on the part of young people is associated with other basic problems in their lives. However, the view of aggressive children from our findings is quite different from the picture often painted of physically violent children. Often they are pictured as if, unless they are caught and punished, they are indifferent to their violent lives. These data suggest that these violent children are part of a group of unhappy children whose lives have gone seriously wrong in many respects. Thus, punitive policies – for example punishment through the justice system – will not lead us to address the most important problems posed by these children.

A reasonable strategy, therefore, would be to intervene in such a way so as to improve the overall lives of these young people, which would reduce the likelihood that they would be violent in the future. It is important to think of these data as a starting point. The NLSCY will allow us to understand the feelings and behaviours of these troubled and troublesome children as they develop into adolescence and will, therefore, help us determine how, and where to intervene.

Sommaire

En général, on considère que les comportements délinquants sont le résultat d'interactions complexes entre des caractéristiques individuelles et des facteurs sociaux (famille, camarades), conjoncturels (école, maison) et liés au voisinage. Plus les facteurs de risque sont nombreux et présents sur de nombreux plans (individuel, social, conjoncturel, et voisinage), plus les enfants sont à risque.

Dans la présente étude, l'agressivité physique est utilisée comme un indicateur de délinquance précoce. L'objectif était d'essayer de comprendre certaines des différences entre les enfants qui semblent être très agressifs et ceux qui ne le sont pas, et de comprendre comment les jeunes fauteurs de troubles se perçoivent eux-mêmes et sont perçus par d'autres personnes.

Même si les enfants qui se considèrent agressifs et ceux qui sont qualifiés d'agressifs par un parent ou un enseignant ne sont pas toujours les mêmes, les résultats sont assez homogènes : les enfants qualifiés d'agressifs sont plus susceptibles de déclarer qu'ils sont malheureux ou rejetés. Par exemple, ils sont plus susceptibles de dire qu'ils sont rejetés par leurs parents ou les autres enfants, et n'ont pas tendance à considérer que leurs professeurs sont justes. L'adulte du ménage qui connaît le mieux l'enfant et l'enseignant de l'enfant donnent des descriptions semblables des enfants de dix et onze ans qui sont agressifs.

Ces données vont dans le même sens que les conclusions d'autres recherches qui semblent indiquer qu'un enfant agressif vit également d'autres problèmes importants. Cependant, nos conclusions tracent un portrait des enfants agressifs très différent de celui que l'on trace souvent des enfants qui commettent des actes de violence physique. On estime bien souvent que, à moins qu'ils ne soient punis, ces enfants sont indifférents à leurs comportements violents. Nos données indiquent que les enfants violents sont des enfants malheureux dont la vie est sérieusement perturbée à bien des égards. Ainsi, les politiques axées sur des mesures punitives – par l'entremise du système juridique notamment – ne nous permettront pas de nous attaquer aux problèmes les plus importants vécus par ces enfants.

Par conséquent, une stratégie raisonnable consisterait à intervenir pour améliorer globalement la vie de ces jeunes, de façon à ce qu'ils soient moins susceptibles d'avoir des comportements violents dans l'avenir. Il est impératif de voir ces données comme un point de départ. L'ELNEJ nous permettra de comprendre les sentiments et les comportements des enfants en difficulté qui ont des agissements répréhensibles, et ce, tout au long de leur adolescence. Nous serons ainsi davantage en mesure de savoir comment et où intervenir.

Acknowledgements

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1.   Introduction

There has been an enormous amount of criminological research examining the development of offending behaviour in youths and young adults. (See, for example, Loeber and Farrington, 1998; Sampson and Laub, 1995; Farrington, 1986 for complete reviews.) Generally, delinquent behaviour is thought to be the result of complex interactions of individual traits with social (family, peers), situational (school, home) and neighbourhood factors. (Loeber and Farrington, 1998; Klein, Forehand, Armistead & Long, 1997; Sampson & Laub, 1993; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990)

Some examples of individual factors that have been found to predict delinquent behaviour are the following: lack of self-control, concentration problems, risk taking, aggressiveness, early initiation of violent behaviour, substance abuse, involvement in other forms of antisocial behaviour and attitudes favourable to deviant behaviour (Loeber and Farrington, 1998). Examples of social interactions within the family that relate to delinquency include: harsh discipline, physical abuse, neglect, and low levels of parental involvement (Loeber and Farrington, 1998).

Academic failure, association with delinquent peers and a low commitment to school are examples of factors within the school that relate to delinquency (LeBlanc, Vallières, and McDuff, 1993). There is actually considerable evidence which suggests that the school is a very important part of a child's life. Some studies have found that a child's strong commitment to school can lessen some of the harmful effects that a poor social environment has on behaviours (Jenkins, 1995).

Finally, some examples of neighbourhood factors that correlate with delinquent behaviour are poverty, community disorganization, a high concentration of neighbourhood adults involved in crime, and the easy availability of drugs (Loeber and Farrington, 1998).

These examples of individual, social, situational and neighbourhood factors that relate to delinquency are all thought to be "risk factors." That is, they increase the risk of involvement in delinquent behaviour. The more risk factors children experience, and the more realms (individual, social, situational and neighbourhood) they experience them in, the more at risk they

are. The questions remain about what factor, or set of factors, in what realm, puts children most at risk, and, more importantly, what factors function in a protective fashion against risk exposure. When later waves of the NLSCY are available, researchers can begin to address these questions.

At this point, however, with only one "wave" of data available, we decided that looking at and understanding pre-adolescent problem behaviour when respondents are age 10 and 11 would be advantageous to understand children who, given a particular set of risk factors, appear to be exhibiting "early offending" behaviour.[1] Examining a child's behaviour in depth is interesting for two reasons. First, by exploring what factors relate to particular patterns of behaviours we may gain insight into possible interventions that could be implemented. That is, if we explore what other difficulties (i.e. social interactions with friends and families) are associated with problem behaviour, we might better understand factors that might be partially responsible for establishing a pattern of behaviour that continues later in adolescence.   The second reason for studying a child's behaviour in depth is so that when the second and third wave of data are collected from the NLSCY, it will be possible to see how well a child's behaviour, at one early point in time, can predict later involvement with the youth justice system. More importantly, we will be able to identify the consistencies and inconsistencies in behaviour over time.

In all of the analyses presented in this paper we are looking only at those children in the NLSCY who were 10 or 11 years old at the time of the first wave of data collection. They were the first children to be asked about their own behaviours, and, therefore, they were the first children whose behaviour can be examined from their own and others' perspectives.

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[1] By "early offending" behaviour we mean behaviour that, if detected when the child is 12 or older, could bring him/her in contact with the youth justice system. For example, physically aggressive or assaultive behaviour would, for people 12 years old or older, put them at risk of criminal prosecution.

2.   Measure of "Delinquency": Physical Aggressiveness

In our everyday lives, we typically think in terms of a young person being either "delinquent" or "not delinquent." Obviously such broad categories are problematic because for "delinquency" to have meaning, one must specify what source of information one might wish to focus on (self-report, official delinquency, views from parents and others, etc.). In addition, the "type" of delinquency has to be specified (violence, property, etc.). Because very few children have committed serious criminal acts (such as break and enters or assaults) by the age of 10 and 11, we decided to use a measure of physical aggressiveness as a sign of "early delinquency."[2]

Thinking of physical aggressiveness as an indicator of early delinquency seemed appropriate for three reasons. First, physical aggressiveness is clearly a type of behaviour that, if exhibited when the child is 12 or older, is likely to bring him/her in contact with the youth justice system. Second, research demonstrates that conduct problems, or aggressiveness, at an early age significantly relates to criminal behaviour later in adolescence (Cullen, Wright, Brown, Moon, Blankenship, Applegate, 1998; Loeber and Farrington, 1998). The third reason why physical aggressiveness seemed to be an appropriate measure is because public concern about crime typically focuses on violence. Thus, it seemed to make sense, at this point, for the purposes of this paper, to focus our efforts on physical aggression.

In this paper, we focus on the "conduct disorder/physical aggression scale" from the NLSCY data. The scale ranged from 0 (no physical aggression) to 12 (high physical aggression). Most children (roughly 45%) were at 0. The scale was a composite of six questions such as: "Would you say that [Name of child] gets into many fights?"; "Would you say that [Name of child] physically attacks people?" and "Would you say that [Name of child] threatens people?"   We had not, originally, contemplated starting with this measure. Rather, we had originally thought of using the responses to the individual items. Although a detailed analysis of the relationship among measures might have been interesting, we felt that in order to take advantage of the unusual character of this set of data – in particular the fact that there were three sources of data (the child, the person most knowledgeable about the child (PMK) and the teacher) – it would be

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[2] By "early delinquency" we mean behaviour that, if detected when children are 12 or older, could bring them in contact with the youth justice system.

more fruitful for us to focus on the measures that Statistics Canada had created and which are broadly available. This also has the advantage that other researchers will be more easily able to understand our analyses.

Thus, we are trying to understand differences between those children who appear to be very aggressive and those who do not. Hence various aspects of their lives—e.g., how happy they are—become, in this analysis, our "dependent variables." As pointed out earlier, we are not attempting to do a study of the causes of delinquency, nor are we trying to make causal statements. Our starting point is to try to understand the view that young troublesome people have of themselves and the view of troublesome children held by those around them.

For the rest of this paper then, we consider those children who are physically aggressive to be at a heightened risk of coming into contact with the youth justice system. We consider physical aggressiveness to be "early offending" behaviour. This assumption – that early aggressiveness predicts later delinquency – is intuitively and empirically (Loeber & Farrington, 1998) plausible.

3.   Who Defines the Child as Being Physically Aggressive?

Even though we are focusing on "physical aggression" in this paper, there is another issue to be addressed: whose perspective should we use in determining whether a young person should be considered to be "aggressive"? The NLSCY provides three perspectives on the children being examined: that of the child, the PMK (typically a parent, most often the mother) and the child's school teacher.

Using behaviour measures from different perspectives (the child's, the PMK's and the teacher's) is fraught with its own difficulties. Examining patterns of behaviours that people exhibit over time and across situations has been the focus of much psychological research.[3] There is considerable evidence that people's behaviour is not consistent across situations (see Funder and Colvin, 1991 for full review). Some analyses (such as Funder and Colvin's or Mischel's classic, 1968, analysis of this issue) argue that we should not necessarily expect behavioural consistency—at least at level of concrete actions—because each situation is psychologically different from others. For example, those who are most talkative in an informal setting might not be the same people who are most talkative at work.

Although the scale that we used was a composite of six questions that were identical for the child, the PMK and the teacher, we still should not expect too much similarity across ratings. For example, Hagell and Newburn (1994), explored how to define "persistent" young offenders. Very similar definitions of who was a "persistent" young offender led to quite different groups of children being identified. What this means, then, is that when examining the frequency of particular behaviours—say a child's behaviour from the perspective of the child, a parent, or a teacher—we should not necessarily expect too much agreement across perspectives because how a child acts in school may be quite different from how the child acts at home and elsewhere.

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[3] For example, as early as 1928 Hartshorne and May examined cheating behaviour in children across a number of situations as a means of assessing "behavioural consistency."

4.   Who is "Highly" Physically Aggressive?

Since many ten and eleven year olds exhibit behaviour that could be considered physically aggressive, we decided to examine those children who are on the "worst" end of the continuum—presumably those with whom society is likely to have the most difficulty. We chose, arbitrarily, to try to understand the views and perceptions of the "worst" 10% (in terms of physical aggression) from the perspective of the child, the PMK, and the teacher.[4] In all, there were 1,492 children for whom there was a rating from all three perspectives.[5] In Figure 1 we have tried to represent the degree of overlap among the three perspectives in these "most aggressive" children.

Each circle represents the children deemed "most aggressive" from one perspective. Thus from the teacher's perspective, there were 75+31+28+39 or a total of 173 of the 1492 children whom we are calling the most aggressive group. Of these, 28 also fell into the "most aggressive" group from *both* the child's and the PMK's perspectives. An additional 31 children were identified by both the teacher and the PMK, but not the child, as being in the most aggressive group. And 39 children were identified by the teacher and the child, but not the PMK as being in the most aggressive group. Finally, 75 children were identified by the teacher as being in the most aggressive group, but not by neither of the others.

Strictly speaking, then, there were only 28 children who were identified by all three people as being in the most aggressive group. This constitutes 1.9% (28/1492) of the total sample. Although there is considerable variability on who the most problematic children are, being identified as problematic by one or more raters was clearly correlated with being identified by another rater.

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[4] In fact, we examined what are "roughly" the "worst 10%" from each perspective. The cutoffs were not exactly at the 10% point for two reasons. First, because the measures that we were using were 12 point scales, it was not always possible to create a cutoff at exactly the 10% point. Second, because of missing data—largely on the teacher questionnaire -- the cutoffs from one analysis did not always correspond to the cutoffs on others. These are, as far as we can tell, technical issues which do not translate into substantive problems.

[5] As mentioned earlier, the largest amount of missing data come from the teachers' questionnaires which were not completed, apparently, on about half of the children.

Figure 1
Overlap Among the Identification of
the Child as One of the Most Physically Aggressive:
Perspectives of the Child, PMK, and Teacher
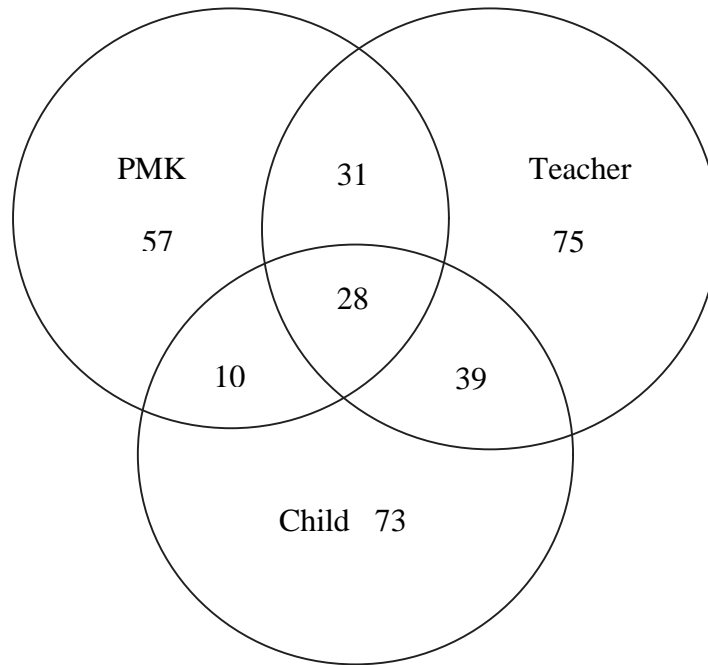
Note: Numbers are *weighted* estimates of the children in the sample for whom complete
data were available (total N = 1492) and are presented in this way in order to represent
the amount of overlap among the perspectives.   There are "1179" (weighted) children
who were not identified by anyone as being highly aggressive.

5. The Relationship Between Being Aggressive and Other Variables

Taking the "worst" 10% of the children (in terms of physical aggression from the perspective of the child, PMK or teacher) and contrasting them to the "other" 90%, some remarkably consistent findings emerge.[6] From all perspectives, regardless of gender, the "most aggressive" children are more likely to describe themselves in terms that simply make them sound unhappy when compared to the other children.

Looking first at the girls (Table 1), as one would expect, given the incomplete overlap among the various perspectives on who is the most aggressive (Figure 1), the exact percentages of girls who are "unhappy" vary across perspectives. For example, from the child's rating of their own behaviour, 66.9% of the aggressive girls, compared to 23.7% of the other girls, report negative relations with family. From the PMK's rating of aggressive behaviour, the proportion of aggressive girls reporting negative relations with family is 47.6% (and 25.6% of the other girls), and by the teacher's perspective its 42.4% (and 26.0% of the other girls). Although the proportions vary, the pattern remains remarkably consistent: the more aggressive girls are experiencing more negative relations with family than do the other girls.[7] More of the aggressive girls also report negative relations with friends, and parental rejection than the other girls. Fewer of the aggressive girls than non-aggressive girls hold the perception that the teacher is "fair" with them. In addition, more of the aggressive girls report that other children say mean things to them and that that they are bullied more than the other girls. All of these relationships also hold true for boys (Table 2).

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[6] We did not limit our analyses to only those children with complete data from all three perspectives (N=1,492). We instead included every child who had an aggressiveness rating from any of the three perspectives.

[7] The statistical significance of each of these findings, in all the tables, was estimated with a continuity corrected (df=1) chi-square applied to each two by two (most aggressive vs. other by whether or not the listed characteristic was present) contingency table.

Table 1: Girls' Social Relationships from Their Own Perspective
As a Function of Whether They Are Seen as Being Aggressive
(as identified by the child, the PMK, or the teacher)***

The individual who identifies the child as being aggressive

Characteristic**	Child		PMK		Teacher	
	Most Aggressive	Other	Most Aggressive	Other	Most Aggressive	Other
negative relations with family[8]	66.9% (81)*	23.7% (1221)	47.6% (101)*	25.6% (1269)	42.4% (46)	26.0% (737)
negative relations with friends	37.8% (83)*	23.2% (1236)	42.6% (104)*	22.9% (1308)	38.9% (46)*	22.8% (751)
perception of parental rejection	65.8% (82)*	29.0% (1213)	47.5% (95)*	30.7% (1244)	41.9% (41)*	28.5% (725)
perception of teacher being "fair"[9]	50.3% (84)*	68.6% (1240)	51.2% (102)*	68.8% (1295)	49.4% (44)*	71.4% (754)
other children say mean things to you[10]	22.0% (83)*	8.2% (1223)	18.9% (101)*	8.7% (1285)	16.1% (46)*	6.2% (749)
other children "bully" you[11]	28.2% (82)*	6.6% (1230)	19.2% (99)*	7.5% (1274)	14.1% (45)	6.8% (744)

*   Significant (based on unweighted frequencies), p<.05.

** These "characteristics" were from the perspective of the child.

*** Percents are based on weighted data. Numbers presented in the table, in parentheses, are the unweighted numbers on which the percents are based.

[8] Negative relations with family, friends and parental rejection were all scales. We took the top third of the distribution reporting the highest negative relations and parental rejection.

[9] This was the proportion of children who reported that their teacher was fair "all the time."

[10] This was the proportion of children who reported that other children say mean things to them "all of the time" or "most of the time."

[11] This was the proportion of children who reported being bullied "always", "most of the time" or "sometimes."

**Table 2: Boys' Social Relationships from Their Own Perspective
As a Function of Whether They are Seen as Being Aggressive
(as identified by the child, the PMK, or the teacher)*****

The individual who identifies the child as being aggressive

Characteristic**	Child		PMK		Teacher	
	Most Aggressive	Other	Most Aggressive	Other	Most Aggressive	Other
negative relations with family[12]	50.5% (213)*	24.2% (1073)	49.1% (211)*	25.6% (1172)	49.1% (144)*	26.9% (652)
negative relations with friends	45.2% (217)*	29.4% (1086)	54.6% (219)*	28.9% (1219)	44.9% (151)*	31.1% (670)
perception of parental rejection	63.7% (213)*	32.9% (1066)	47.2% (185)*	35.5% (1136)	48.0% (141)*	33.7% (622)
perception of teacher being "fair"[13]	44.3% (219)*	65.6% (1091)	56.1% (202)*	63.1% (1199)	53.8% (146)*	65.0% (628)
other children say mean things to you[14]	21.0% (219)*	7.8% (1081)	21.8% (200)*	7.7% (1189)	15.5% (147)*	7.8% (660)
other children "bully" you [15]	28.8% (219)*	10.4% (1080)	24.7% (197)*	12.4% (1189)	22.3% (145)*	11.5% (662)

*   Significant (based on unweighted frequencies), p<.05

**   These "characteristics" were from the perspective of the child.

***   Percents are based on weighted data. Numbers presented in the table, in parentheses, are the unweighted numbers on which the percents are based.

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[12] Negative relations with family, friends and parental rejection were all scales. We took the top third of the distribution reporting the highest negative relations and parental rejection.

[13] This was the proportion of children who reported that their teacher was fair "all the time."

[14] This was the proportion of children who reported that other children say mean things to them "all of the time" or "most of the time."

[15] This was the proportion of children who reported being bullied "always, " "most of the time" or "sometimes."

The more aggressive children also appear not to be as happy as other children on a number of dimensions. Looking at girls first, we see that more of the aggressive girls report not feeling as happy as other children, report feeling miserable, and report feeling left out of school (Table 3).[16] Aggressive and "other" girls, as identified by the teacher, showed the least differences in their own ratings of their feelings. But looking at either the children's rating of their own behaviour, or the PMK's ratings of the child's behaviour, there are fairly large differences in the proportions of aggressive and "other" girls claiming not to feel as happy as other children, to feel more miserable and to feel "left out." For example, 53.6% of the self-identified aggressive girls report feeling "left out" of school compared to 15.3% of the "other" girls. These aggressive girls are also more likely to report having trouble enjoying themselves and more likely to hold a negative self-image. The aggressive girls also appear to be slightly more solitary than the "other" girls and more hyperactive than the "other" girls. This pattern is almost perfectly consistent no matter who identifies the child as being aggressive (child, PMK or teacher) (Table 4). Even for something like holding a "negative self-image", aggressive boys appear to be quite similar to aggressive girls -- 67.6% of the self-identified aggressive girls report having a negative self-image and 57.1% of the self-identified aggressive boys report having a negative self-image (compared to 26.3% of the "other" girls and 26.6% of the "other" boys).

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[16] In Tables 1 -12 there are 204 comparisons between the "most aggressive" children and the "other" children. In 10 of these 204 comparisons there were "reversals" (where the "other" children were worse off then the "aggressive" children). There were no statistically significant reversals.

**Table 3: Girls' Feelings from Their Own Accounts
As a Function of Whether They are Seen as Being Aggressive
(as identified by the child, the PMK, or the teacher)*****

The individual who identifies the child as being aggressive

Characteristic**	Child		PMK		Teacher	
	Most Aggressive	Other	Most Aggressive	Other	Most Aggressive	Other
don't feel as happy as other children[17]	73.0% (83)*	31.2% (1243)	54.4% (100)*	32.8% (1279)	42.7% (45)	33.1% (744)
feeling miserable[18]	72.6% (84)*	34.6% (1239)	48.7% (98)*	36.0% (1275)	63.5% (44)	62.6% (741)
feeling left-out at school[19]	53.6% (84)*	15.3% (1233)	36.4% (102)*	17.0% (1284)	42.4% (45)*	15.1% (750)
have trouble enjoying yourself[20]	70.9% (83)*	27.8% (1241)	49.3% (97)*	29.0% (1272)	61.1% (43)	71.5% (737)
have a "negative" self-image[21]	67.6% (84)*	26.3% (1220)	51.9% (99)*	27.8% (1258)	48.5% (44)*	25.3% (734)
is solitary[22]	24.7% (84)*	15.9% (1237)	30.8% (99)	15.5% (1269)	43.2% (44)*	30.9% (738)
is hyperactive[23]	80.4% (82)*	25.3% (1238)	37.0% (95)*	28.9% (1227)	41.6% (42)*	25.5% (716)

*   Significant (based on unweighted frequencies), p<.05

**   These "characteristics" were from the perspective of the child.

*** Percents are based on weighted data. Numbers presented in the table, in parentheses, are the unweighted numbers on which the percents are based.

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[17] This was the proportion of children who reported feeling "often" or "sometimes" not as happy as other children.

[18] This was the proportion of children who reported feeling miserable "often" or "sometimes."

[19] This was the proportion of children who reported feeling left out at school "always, " "most of the time" or "sometimes."

[20] This was the proportion of children who reported having trouble enjoying themselves "often" or "sometimes."

[21] "Self-image" was a scale -- we took the top third of the distribution to capture those children who, by their own perception, were most negative about themselves.

[22] This was the proportion of children who reported "often" being solitary.

[23] "Hyperactivity" was a scale -- we took the top third of the distribution to capture those children who, by their own perception, were most hyperactive.

Table 4: Boys' Feelings from Their Own Accounts
As a Function of Whether They are Seen as Being Aggressive
(as identified by the child, the PMK, or the teacher)***

The individual who identifies the child as being aggressive

Characteristic**	Child		PMK		Teacher	
	Most Aggressive	Other	Most Aggressive	Other	Most Aggressive	Other
don't feel as happy as other children[24]	64.0% (218)*	27.5% (1097)	35.0% (196)*	32.5% (1181)	51.5% (146)*	31.3% (650)
feeling miserable[25]	53.5% (219)*	32.3% (1095)	46.3% (191)*	34.0% (1176)	42.0% (145)	33.2% (647)
feeling left-out at school[26]	27.5% (219)*	14.5% (1078)	27.4% (198)*	14.8% (1186)	31.0% (146)*	15.8% (659)
have trouble enjoying yourself[27]	42.9% (217)*	23.0% (1097)	34.8% (189)*	25.1% (1190)	33.9% (144)*	26.8% (653)
have a "negative" self- image[28]	57.1% (210)*	26.6% (1065)	48.6% (191)*	28.8% (1142)	50.1% (139)*	28.2% (625)
is solitary[29]	30.0% (218)*	17.3% (1092)	23.6% (192)*	17.8% (1173)	30.9% (144)	15.8% (644)
is hyperactive[30]	78.8% (217)*	30.0% (1085)	58.5% (182)*	34.4% (1225)	61.6% (136)*	32.6% (615)

*   Significant (based on unweighted frequencies), p<.05

**   These "characteristics" were from the perspective of the child.

*** Percents are based on weighted data. Numbers presented in the table, in parentheses, are the unweighted numbers on which the percents are based.

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[24] This was the proportion of children who reported feeling "often" or "sometimes" not as happy as other children.

[25] This was the proportion of children who reported feeling miserable "often" or "sometimes."

[26] This was the proportion of children who reported feeling left out at school "always, " "most of the time" or "sometimes."

[27] This was the proportion of children who reported having trouble enjoying themselves "often" or "sometimes."

[28] "Self-image" was a scale -- we took the top third of the distribution to capture those children who, by their own perception, were most negative about themselves.

[29] This was the proportion of children who reported "often" being solitary.

[30] "Hyperactivity" was a scale -- we took the top third of the distribution to capture those children who, by their own perception, were most hyperactive.

Due to the unique nature of the NLSCY, we can not only view aggressiveness from the perspective of the child, PMK and teacher, but we can see how the PMK and teacher rate the child's feelings. Thus, we can see not only if a child reports being unhappy, but also if those around the aggressive children (the PMK and the teacher) reports them to be unhappy. Looking first at ratings from the PMK, we see that the same trends established in the previous tables hold true (Table 5 for girls and Table 6 for boys). The aggressive children (identified by the child, PMK or teacher) are also more likely to be rated by the PMK as not being as happy as other children, as feeling miserable, as having trouble enjoying themselves, and as being hyperactive.

Looking at the girls (Table 5) whom the PMK's identified as aggressive, we see that 62.7% of the PMKs described the them as not being as happy as other children (compared to 12.7% of the other girls). The comparable figures for the PMK identified aggressive boys (Table 6) are that 45.3% of the PMKs said that her child was often or sometimes unhappy as compared to only 11.4% of the "other" boys.

Clearly these -- and other data in these two tables show quite large differences between the "aggressive" and "other" children whether the identification of "aggressiveness" was done by the child, the PMK, or the teacher. Furthermore, the pattern of results is almost exactly the same as that found in the previous tables.

From the teacher's perspective as well, we see the same overall pattern -- for girls and for boys. Those children who identified themselves as being aggressive, or were identified by the PMK or the teacher as being aggressive, were seen by the teacher as being less happy, more miserable, and more likely to be having trouble enjoying themselves. (See Tables 7 and 8.)

Table 5: Girls' Feelings as Seen by the PMK
As a Function of Whether They are Seen As Being Aggressive
(as identified by the child, the PMK, or the teacher)***

The individual who identifies the child as being aggressive

Characteristic**	Child		PMK		Teacher	
	Most Aggressive	Other	Most Aggressive	Other	Most Aggressive	Other
child doesn't feel as happy as other children[31]	29.8% (84)*	15.9% (1240)	62.7% (111)*	12.7% (1447)	29.7% (50)*	14.9% (779)
child feels miserable[32]	51.3% (84)*	25.8% (1239)	77.4% (111)*	23.3% (1447)	33.1% (50)*	24.4% (778)
child has trouble enjoying herself[33]	34.8% (84)*	22.8% (1239)	54.4% (111)*	19.8% (1447)	24.5% (50)	19.4% (778)
is solitary[34]	34.6% (84)	21.8% (1239)	44.5% (111)*	21.2% (1447)	19.8% (50)	23.8% (778)
is hyperactive[35]	50.6% (84)*	31.1% (1236)	72.4% (111)*	29.4% (1445)	58.3% (50)*	28.9% (778)

*   Significant (based on unweighted frequencies), p<.05

**   These "characteristics" were from the perspective of the child.

***   Percents are based on weighted data. Numbers presented in the table, in parentheses, are the unweighted numbers on which the percents are based.

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[31] This was the proportion of PMK who reported that his/her child feels unhappy compared to other children "often" or "sometimes."

[32] This was the proportion of PMK who reported that his/her child feels miserable "often" or "sometimes."

[33] This was the proportion of PMK who reported that his/her child has trouble enjoying him/herself "often" or "sometimes."

[34] This was the proportion of PMK who reported that his/her child is "often" solitary.

[35] "Hyperactivity" was a scale -- we took the top third of the distribution to capture those children who, by the PMK's perception, were most hyperactive.

**Table 6: Boys' Feelings as Seen by The PMK
As a Function of Whether They are Seen as Being Aggressive
(as identified by the child, the PMK, or the teacher)*****

The individual who identifies the child as being aggressive

Characteristic**	Child		PMK		Teacher	
	Most Aggressive	Other	Most Aggressive	Other	Most Aggressive	Other
child doesn't feel as happy as other children[36]	24.2% (218)*	12.6% (1098)	45.3% (229)*	11.4% (1373)	23.9% (154)*	12.4% (705)
child feels miserable[37]	35.6% (217)*	25.8% (1098)	61.1% (229)*	22.9% (1373)	35.5% (153)*	26.9% (705)
child has trouble enjoying himself[38]	28.3% (217)*	19.9% (1098)	43.9% (229)*	18.2% (1373)	29.6% (153)*	19.4% (705)
is solitary[39]	17.0% (218)	22.1% (1098)	29.4% (229)*	19.3% (1373)	25.8% (154)	21.3% (705)
is hyperactive[40]	57.8% (217)*	43.5% (1093)	86.2% (229)*	39.6% (1371)	70.0% (153)*	38.7% (704)

*   Significant (based on unweighted frequencies), p<.05

**   These "characteristics" were from the perspective of the child.

***   Percents are based on weighted data. Numbers presented in the table, in parentheses, are the unweighted numbers on which the percents are based.

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[36] This was the proportion of PMK who reported that his/her child feels unhappy compared to other children "often" or "sometimes."

[37] This was the proportion of PMK who reported that his/her child feels miserable "often" or "sometimes."

[38] This was the proportion of PMK who reported that his/her child has trouble enjoying him/herself "often" or "sometimes."

[39] This was the proportion of PMK who reported that his/her child is "often" solitary.

[40] "Hyperactivity" was a scale -- we took the top third of the distribution to capture those children who, by the PMK's perception, were most hyperactive.

**Table 7: Girls' Feelings as Seen by the Teacher
As a Function of Whether They are Seen as Being Aggressive
(as identified by the child, the PMK, or the teacher)*****

The individual who identifies the child as being aggressive

Characteristic**	Child		PMK		Teacher	
	Most Aggressive	Other	Most Aggressive	Other	Most Aggressive	Other
child doesn't feel as happy as other children [41]	32.8% (40)	28.9% (724)	70.7% (54)	26.5% (786)	39.6% (50)*	28.9% (777)
child feels miserable[42]	22.1% (40)	23.4% (724)	43.2% (53)*	22.5% (786)	37.5% (50)*	23.3% (780)
child has trouble enjoying herself[43]	33.0% (40)	27.8% (720)	53.6% (51)*	27.2% (784)	42.5% (50)*	28.2% (777)
is solitary[44]	6.9% (38)	13.5% (725)	23.0% (53)	12.3% (786)	14.2% (50)*	12.7% (777)
is hyperactive[45]	61.5% (40)*	27.9% (707)	73.6% (51)*	27.2% (771)	52.9% (49)*	29.8% (765)

*   Significant (based on unweighted frequencies), p<.05

**   These "characteristics" were from the perspective of the child.

***   Percents are based on weighted data. Numbers presented in the table, in parentheses, are the unweighted numbers on which the percents are based.

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[41] This was the proportion of teachers who reported that a child feels unhappy compared to other children "often" or "sometimes."

[42] This was the proportion of teachers who reported that a child feels miserable "often" or "sometimes."

[43] This was the proportion of teachers who reported that a child has trouble enjoying him/herself "often" or "sometimes."

[44] This was the proportion of teachers who reported that a child is "often" solitary.

[45] "Hyperactivity" was a scale -- we took the top third of the distribution to capture those children who, by the teacher's perception, were most hyperactive.

**Table 8: Boys' Feelings as Seen by the Teacher
As a Function of Whether They are Seen as Being Aggressive
(as identified by the child, the PMK, or the teacher)*****

The individual who identifies the child as being aggressive

Characteristic**	Child		PMK		Teacher	
	Most Aggressive	Other	Most Aggressive	Other	Most Aggressive	Other
child doesn't feel as happy as other children [46]	43.0% (131)*	23.5% (637)	54.5% (117)*	21.0% (715)	56.1% (154)*	23.3% (707)
child feels miserable[47]	33.9% (130)*	18.7% (638)	52.7% (116)*	14.3% (753)	42.6% (154)*	18.5% (707)
child has trouble enjoying himself[48]	49.1% (128)*	26.0% (631)	60.8% (115)*	22.3% (745)	45.0% (153)*	27.1% (703)
is solitary[49]	16.2% (132)	14.1% (635)	12.4% (117)	14.5% (750)	19.4% (154)	13.3% (706)
is hyperactive[50]	66.5% (126)*	45.6% (630)	84.8% (114)*	41.8% (741)	65.5% (152)*	47.5% (701)

*   Significant (based on unweighted frequencies), p<.05

**   These "characteristics" were from the perspective of the child.

***   Percents are based on weighted data. Numbers presented in the table, in parentheses, are the unweighted numbers on which the percents are based.

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[46] This was the proportion of teachers who reported that a child feels unhappy compared to other children "often" or "sometimes."

[47] This was the proportion of teachers who reported that a child feels miserable "often" or "sometimes."

[48] This was the proportion of teachers who reported that a child has trouble enjoying him/herself "often" or "sometimes."

[49] This was the proportion of teachers who reported that a child is "often" solitary.

[50] "Hyperactivity" was a scale -- we took the top third of the distribution to capture those children who, by the teacher's perception, were most hyperactive.

Consistent with previous research (e.g. LeBlanc, Vallières, and McDuff, 1993) aggressive children appeared to be doing worse in school than less aggressive children. This held for girls and boys (Table 9 and Table 10, respectively). In addition, fewer aggressive girls and boys than other girls and boys thought that was important to do well at school. Although some of these relationships were not completely consistent across perspectives, there appeared to be a general trend for more of the aggressive children to report not getting extra help from the teacher when they need it. The aggressive children also appeared to be reading less often than non-aggressive children, not getting as much help from parents and not being motivated as often by parents.

The relationship between our measure of whether or not the child was aggressive and income level was not completely consistent across perspectives, but the overall pattern suggested that aggressive children came from lower/lower middle class families (Table 11 for girls and Table 12 for boys). Aggressive children do appear to come disproportionately from single parent families. There appears to be a slight trend for aggressive children to come from low safety neighbourhoods, neighbourhoods with little cohesion and neighbourhoods with many problems.

**Table 9: Girls' School Performance and Related Perceptions as Reported
By the Child as a Function of Whether They are Seen as Being Aggressive
(as identified by the child, the PMK, or the teacher)*****

The individual who identifies the child as being aggressive

Characteristic**	Child		PMK		Teacher	
	Most Aggressive	Other	Most Aggressive	Other	Most Aggressive	Other
doing "average" or "poorly" in school	47.5% (84)*	18.1% (1233)	28.4% (103)*	20.1% (1286)	32.8% (46)*	17.1% (750)
belief that is "very important" to do well in school	39.4% (84)*	71.4% (1232)	67.1% (102)	68.4% (1286)	63.8% (46)	72.1% (749)
"sometimes" or "rarely" get help from teacher	23.7% (84)*	18.7% (1243)	34.1% (103)	18.1% (1295)	40.6% (45)*	17.0% (756)
read less than once a month for fun	21.9% (83)*	7.7% (1232)	11.3% (101)	8.5% (1275)	13.8% (44)*	7.3% (741)
parents "sometimes", "rarely" or "never" help with school work	23.1% (84)*	3.6% (1242)	6.8% (103)*	5.0% (1294)	0.4% (45)	3.2% (755)
parents "sometimes", "rarely" or "never" motivate you to do well	5.7% (83)*	2.1% (1243)	4.4% (102)	2.5% (1294)	9.9% (45)	1.9% (755)

*   Significant (based on unweighted frequencies), p<.05

**   These "characteristics" were from the perspective of the child.

*** Percents are based on weighted data. Numbers presented in the table, in parentheses, are the unweighted numbers on which the percents are based.

**Table 10: Boys' School Performance and Related Perceptions as Reported
By the Child as a Function of Whether They are Seen as Being Aggressive
(as identified by the child, the PMK, or the teacher)*****

The individual who identifies the child as being aggressive

Characteristic**	Child		PMK		Teacher	
	Most Aggressive	Other	Most Aggressive	Other	Most Aggressive	Other
doing "average" or "poorly" in school	43.4% (219)*	19.9% (1083)	35.1% (198)*	22.0% (1192)	34.5% (145)*	20.6% (664)
belief that is "very important" to do well in school	51.1% (218)*	70.2% (1083)	59.2% (197)*	69.4% (1193)	59.8% (146)*	69.2% (663)
"sometimes" or "rarely" get help from teacher	31.0% (219)*	20.0% (1092)	27.1% (203)*	20.4% (1201)	24.6% (148)	20.1% (669)
read less than once a month for fun	25.2% (213)*	11.0% (1082)	19.8% (190)*	12.2% (1174)	13.2% (145)	11.3% (647)
parents "sometimes", "rarely" or "never" help with school work	11.4% (219)*	5.9% (1092)	11.3% (202)*	6.4% (1199)	9.6% (147)	6.8% (669)
parents "sometimes", "rarely" or "never" motivate you to do well	4.3% (218)*	2.1% (1092)	3.4% (203)	2.8% (1197)	1.7% (147)	3.7% (668)

**   Significant (based on unweighted frequencies), $p<.05$

**   These "characteristics" were from the perspective of the child.

*** Percents are based on weighted data. Numbers presented in the table, in parentheses, are the unweighted numbers on which the percents are based.

**Table 11: Girls' Family Income, Family Structure, and Neighbourhood Characteristics
As a Function of Whether the Girl is Seen as Being Aggressive
(as identified by the child, the PMK, or the teacher)*****

The individual who identifies the child as being aggressive

Characteristic	Child		PMK		Teacher	
	Most Aggressive	Other	Most Aggressive	Other	Most Aggressive	Other
lower/lower middle SES	20.1% (84)*	14.9% (1245)	20.7% (111)	14.9% (1447)	32.5% (50)	14.6% (781)
single parent	23.9% (84)*	17.7% (1245)	37.0% (111)*	17.8% (1447)	22.7% (50)	16.3% (781)
low safety neighbourhood**	31.9% (83)	21.6% (1234)	40.4% (109)*	20.5% (1431)	19.7% (49)	21.2% (777)
low cohesiveness of neighbourhood**	32.0% (79)	25.4% (1183)	41.9% (105)*	24.9% (1362)	17.2% (47)	25.4% (745)
many problems in neighbourhood**	61.5% (82)	59.3% (1223)	62.6% (107)	59.9% (1420)	66.2% (49)	57.8% (772)

*   Significant (based on unweighted frequencies), p<.05

**   These "characteristics" were from the perspective of the child.

***   Percents are based on weighted data. Numbers presented in the table, in parentheses, are the unweighted numbers on which the percents are based.

**Table 12: Boys' Family Income, Family Structure, and Neighbourhood Characteristics
As a Function of Whether the Boy is Seen as Being Aggressive
(as identified by the child, the PMK, or the teacher)*****

The individual who identifies the child as being aggressive

Characteristic	Child		PMK		Teacher	
	Most Aggressive	Other	Most Aggressive	Other	Most Aggressive	Other
lower/lower middle SES	21.8% (219)*	12.7% (1101)	32.6% (229)*	12.5% (1373)	23.5% (154)*	11.4% (709)
single parents	22.3% (218)*	11.9% (1101)	25.1% (228)*	13.5% (1373)	28.9% (154)	11.5% (709)
low safety neighbourhood**	18.4% (217)	16.9% (1091)	36.2% (228)*	16.4% (1351)	28.8% (152)*	13.4% (705)
low cohesiveness of neighbourhood**	33.2% (209)*	22.0% (1031)	32.9% (216)*	23.9% (1290)	33.5% (143)	22.4% (674)
many problems in neighbourhood**	68.3% (216)	55.9% (1076)	63.0% (225)*	57.7% (1336)	70.6% (151)*	56.7% (697)

*   Significant (based on unweighted frequencies), $p < .05$

**   These "characteristics" were from the perspective of the child.

*** Percents are based on weighted data. Numbers presented in the table, in parentheses, are the unweighted
        numbers on which the percents are based.

6.   The Top 10% Cut-Off

Some might question our arbitrary decision to take the top 10% of the aggressive children and contrast them with the other 90%. It could be argued that we would not obtain the same pattern of results if we created our groups slightly differently. An alternative commonly used approach would be to divide the children into three (high, medium and low) groups.

Given the distribution of scores along the 12 point physical aggressiveness scale, it is impossible to divide up the scale into equal thirds. For example, in the child's self-report of aggressive behaviours, 46.5% are at 0 (no physical aggressiveness), 21.2% are at 1, 12.9% are at 2, 6.3% are at 3, and the rest of the sample (13.1%) are distributed from 4 through 12. Thus, the closest we can come to dividing this scale up into equal thirds is to have the 0s—no at all aggressive (46.5%), the 1s and 2s—slightly physically aggressive (34.1%) and the 3 through 12—very physically aggressive (19.4%). By using a similar approach with the PMK's report of the child's aggressive behaviour, then we can examine one central finding – whether the child reported feeling miserable, or was reported as feeling miserable by the PMK – as an illustration.

Looking at girls' self-report of their own aggressive behaviour and "feeling miserable" we see the same pattern of results as our previous tables indicated. Of the girls who are not at all aggressive, 23.8% reported feeling miserable, of the slightly aggressive girls, 49.2% reported feeling miserable and 65.0% of the very aggressive girls reported feel miserable (Table 13). Thus, the more aggressive the girl, the more likely she is to feel miserable. This pattern holds for either the child's or PMK's perception—by the child's own rating of behaviour and feelings, or by the PMK's rating of their behaviour and feelings, the more aggressive the girl the more likely she is to feel miserable. The same pattern generally holds true for boys too (Table 14). Thus, no matter how we divide up the scale, the more aggressive the child, generally speaking the more likely it is that the child will report feeling miserable.

**Table 13: Relationship of Ratings of Aggressiveness
To Feelings/Perceptions of Being Miserable (Girls Only)**

	Child's ratings of aggressiveness			PMK's rating of aggressiveness		
	not at all aggressive	slightly aggressive	very aggressive	not at all aggressive	slightly aggressive	very aggressive
child's self report: I feel miserable	23.8% (794)	49.2% (455)	65.0% (160)	32.0% (779)	39.9% (484)	49.4% (180)
PMK's perception: child feels miserable	24.4% (790)	26.1% (456)	48.8% (162)	14.3% (893)	33.5% (561)	66.8% (208)

**Table 14: Relationship of Ratings of Aggressiveness
To Feelings/Perceptions of Being Miserable (Boys Only)**

	Child's ratings of aggressiveness			PMK's rating of aggressiveness		
	not at all aggressive	slightly aggressive	very aggressive	not at all aggressive	slightly aggressive	very aggressive
child's self report: I feel miserable	27.3% (524)	35.3% (513)	49.0% (388)	34.4% (605)	31.7% (562)	47.1% (289)
PMK's perception: child feels miserable	23.3% (527)	26.0% (511)	36.5% (386)	15.8% (741)	28.3% (639)	54.5% (341)

7.   Conclusion

It is depressingly easy to summarize the major findings in this paper. Ten and eleven year old children who are seen as being the most aggressive are much more likely than other children to describe themselves in the following terms:

- having bad relations with their families

- having negative relations with "friends"

- being rejected by their parents

- being subject to unfair teachers

- being subject to having mean things said to them by other children

- being bullied by other children.

With few exceptions, these relationships are true for both boys and girls. And the relationships tend to hold whether we identify the "aggressive" children from their own accounts of their behaviour, or from the adult in their household who knows them best (the PMK), or from their teachers. Furthermore, it is not just the child's own self-report that provides this rather depressing picture. Aggressive children, as described by the PMK and the teacher, do not look much different.

8.   Policy Implications

There are essentially four policy implications from our findings.

1) Our findings illustrate, by the high level of disagreement across perspectives of who is seriously physically violent, that it would be difficult to draft policy to specifically identify "aggressive" children. Depending upon which perspective one examines (the child's, the PMK's or the teacher's) different children tend to be identified.

2) The view of "aggressive" children from our findings is quite different from the picture often painted of physically violent children. Often they are pictured as if, unless they are caught and punished, they are happy in their violent lives. Indeed, many people apparently believe that 10 and 11 year old children who appear to be seriously physically violent should be punished through the justice system. Such a picture is clearly wrong. The picture that one has of them from these data makes it clear that they are, as a group, anything but happy. These data suggest that these violent children are part of a group of unhappy children whose lives have gone wrong in many respects. Thus, punitive policies – for example punishment through the justice system—will not lead us to address the most important problems posed by these children.

3) Although the picture that one gets from the data in this paper may be clear, we have not addressed the issue of causality. It is quite plausible to hypothesize that the causal relationship is in either direction, or that both the aggressive behaviour and the negative feelings and experiences are caused by other variables. Nevertheless, in considering interventions, it is clear that they need to be broadly based, as opposed to focusing exclusively on a small subset of "violent" children. As we have already mentioned, identifying who the "violent" children are is difficult. In addition however, broad interventions that do not focus specifically on criminal behaviour, but instead focus on more central aspects of children's lives show decreases in criminal behaviour (Doob, Marinos & Varma, 1995; Yoshikawa, 1994).

4) It is important to think of these data as a starting point and look to see what level of stability there is in the behaviour and in the feelings and experiences in the next years of the lives of these children. It might possible to identify which risk factors are the most important, and which factors act as protectors from delinquency. The NLSCY will allow us to understand the feelings

and behaviours of these troubled and troublesome ten and eleven year old children as they develop into adolescence and will, therefore, help us determine how, and where to intervene.

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