

You Can Spot a Future Bully at Age 1, Research Shows

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Huffington Post:

Infants don't really have what it takes to be bullies. They simply lack the physicality — the strength and coordination and mobility — to be aggressive. But are some of these babies already little bullies inside, just waiting to show their dukes?

That may sound like a cynical view of human nature, but it's basically what some new research is suggesting. While only a minority of toddlers are habitual bullies, this aggressive tendency appears to emerge right along with the motor skills that make it possible — by age one. What's more, such playroom roughness appears linked to the mothers' own problems with mood and conduct.

Psychological scientist Dale Hay of Cardiff University in Wales has been leading a large team of investigators looking for the roots of early childhood aggression. In a recent study, they interviewed more than 300 pregnant women whom they had found through a midwifery clinic serving at-risk mothers. They focused on these mothers because earlier research had pointed to a number of maternal risk factors for childhood and adolescent aggression, ranging from social class and education to smoking, depression and conduct disorders. The scientists interviewed and evaluated the mothers during their final trimester of pregnancy, and then observed both mothers and babies at 6, 12, 21 and 33 months. A number of mothers dropped out of the study for various reasons, leaving a total of 271 babies, both boys and girls.

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