

Aggressive Acts, Thinking, Remorse and Private Self-consciousness - An Examination of Real Life Aggressive Episodes

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The link between remorse, reflection and tendency for self-consciousness has not been established in context of actual aggressive episodes. The present study aimed at examining retrospectively reported aggression episodes in everyday life, how individuals feel and think about their own acts afterward and the association between private self-consciousness (PSC) and post aggression feeling and reflection. The sample consisted of 62 high school students (age range 14-18 years) from West Midlands, United Kingdom. Participants provided brief descriptions of aggressive acts (shouting, insulting, and hitting), answered three questions about frequency of acts, feeling and reflection after the acts as well as completed Private Self-consciousness Scale (Scheier & Carver, 1985). The descriptions were content analysed by two raters along pre-decided dimensions; target of aggression and triggering situation. Inter-rater agreement was satisfactory. Analyses showed that young persons shouted at siblings, friends, peers, mothers and other adults in this order of frequency. Hitting occurred between peers, siblings, other adults and friends. Verbal provocation, physical provocation, norm violation and indirect aggression were most frequent triggering situations for aggressive acts. Paired sample *t*-test showed that

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participants reported significantly higher remorse after being aggressive to someone who had not provoked them as compared to when provoked. Correlation analyses revealed remorse, reflection and private self-consciousness relating negatively to aggression frequency whereas PSC, reflection and feeling relating positively. Reflection predicted frequency of aggressive acts and one component of private self-consciousness, internal state awareness, predicted reflection. Findings and implications of the study are discussed with special focus on youth.

Keywords. Aggressive actions, feelings and thinking after aggressive acts, private self-consciousness, Youth

Aggressive interactions between individuals and between groups are an everyday phenomenon. From playground fights of children to exchange of hot words between neighbours, colleagues or family members, we witness and experience a wide range of interactions that are classified under 'aggression'. The term itself is defined as any act that is carried out intentionally to harm someone who is motivated to avoid that harm and therefore includes all acts of direct or indirect harm inflicting, such as verbal abuse, damaging someone's career, or assault (Amjad & Skinner, 2008; Barron & Richardson, 1994). Previous research and theorizing suggests that aggressive acts occur either as reaction to a provocation (retaliation), as a vent for frustration, or in order to obtain a benefit or desired goal (instrumental or pro-active aggression such as robbery, coercion, political intimidation). A vast body of research exists on causes, consequences and prevention of aggression. For peaceful co-existence between individuals, we can learn further from inspection of real life episodes and discern the processes that can help in diverting an aggressive interaction. Minimizing our reaction to provocations, and avoiding moments of hot headed attacks can reduce inter personal harm and diminish the negativity caused by such interactions. Therefore this study aimed to analyse retrospectively reported acts of self aggression, and examine how people felt afterwards and how much they reflected on their actions and whether this was predicted by their tendency for internal awareness and self-reflection conceptualized as private self-consciousness (PSC).

When individuals react or act in a situation some on-line cognitive and affective processes are taking place. Research on information processing suggests that aggressive individuals are prone to biased processing of cues and tend not to take into account all aspects of situation. It has been suggested that thoughtful action (Ajmal, 2004; Anderson & Carnagey, 2004; Habib & Amjad, 1996)

and consideration of socio-moral issues (Fontaine & Dodge, 2006; Iqbal & Amjad, 2012; Munir, 2014) is implicated in inhibition of aggression. Impulsiveness, a tendency to act without consideration of consequences is associated with aggressive behaviour (Alexander, Allen, Brookes, Cole and Campbell, 2004; Caprara et al., 1985). In view of this it is worth examining how frequency of aggressive actions in real life is related to thinking as well as thoughtfulness. Private self-consciousness involves a focus on the covert aspects of oneself- feelings, thoughts and self-memories (Buss & Perry, 1992). It includes both internal state awareness and self-reflection, crucial for thinking about ones actions. The evidence for relation between private self-consciousness and aggression is mixed and needs to be examined further (Buss & Perry, 1992; Nystedt & Ljungberg, 2002). Moreover, link between thinking and feelings after aggression, and private self-consciousness has not been investigated before. This research aimed to analyse afterthought and feeling bad in relation to real life aggression episodes and the relationship of these two with private self-consciousness and frequency of aggressive acts. The research question that led to this investigation was whether individuals think and reflect on their acts, how they feel about it and whether thinking and feeling is related to frequency of such acts. We also raised the question about mechanism or tendency in persons that underlie personal analyses-self-consciousness. It has been found already that self-censure, a tendency to reprimand oneself (Bandura, 1973) is negatively associated with aggressive behaviour frequency (Amjad & Skinner, 2008). In our study we examined reflection and feeling in relation to specific situations so the reporting will be more 'live' and contextualized for participants rather than general.

Anderson and Carnagey (2004) suggested that a single episode of aggression includes input of personal as well as situational variables and work through internal routes of cognition and arousal to lead to an outcome that can be aggressive or non-aggressive depending upon the appraisal and decision processes. Once a person is confronted with a social encounter in which aggressive responding is an option, depending upon his or her personal and situational resources and internal state, he/she may react automatically or choose to carry out reappraisal of the situation. Thoughtful action often can result from reappraisal whereas automatic reaction can be impulsive. These proposed steps and processes in aggressive encounters have been derived from research in many areas (see Anderson & Carnagey, 2004, p. 176 for detailed discussion). Alexander et al. (2004) also found that self-control specifically impulsiveness which can be considered a somewhat opposite trait to thoughtfulness was related to

instrumental representations of aggression and was associated with poor inhibition of aggression. There is also evidence that mindfulness training which inserts thought between impulse to aggress and aggressive action can reduce frequency of aggression (Ajmal, 2004). Anger management counselling using Islamic principle of counting and moving away when anger arousal began also showed a significant reduction in aggressive retaliation (Habib & Amjad, 1996). Apart from these clinical studies, relation between frequency of aggression and thought after aggression has not been empirically tested. Tendency to think about one's actions may be related to one's level of self-awareness. Evidence for self-awareness and aggressive behaviour comes from laboratory experiments (e.g., Carver as cited in Berkowitz, 1993). It has been suggested that heightened self-awareness theoretically produces increased adherence to one's own established values and standards. Private self-consciousness involves a focus on the covert aspects of oneself-feelings, thoughts and self-memories (Dodge, Laird, R. & Lochman, 2002; Scheier & Carver, 1985). The construct of self-consciousness was originally operationalized and measured by Fenigstein, Scheier, and Buss (1975). They distinguished between two components of self-consciousness, private and public self-consciousness. They suggested that private self-consciousness is meaningfully related to self-reflection, a capacity to think analytically about one's own actions and mental states. Subsequent revisions of their scale and studies have confirmed the validity of private self-consciousness construct. Scheier, Buss and Buss (1978) studied the effect of dispositional self-consciousness on the accuracy of self-reports of aggression and found that persons high in private self-consciousness had a significant positive correlation between aggressive behaviour observed in laboratory and self-reports of aggressive behaviour outside laboratory. However they did not assess whether people actually thought about their actions afterwards and how they felt about these acts. Religious and spiritual wisdom also invite reflection on one's actions and thoughts as a means of intrinsic morality. In view of this, the link between PSC and feelings and thoughts about aggression needs to be investigated further.

Most previous studies have used hypothetical situations when investigating reasoning about aggression or attributional style (e.g., Dodge & Frame, 1982; Dodge & Newman, 1981; Dodge & Tomlin, 1987; Fontaine & Dodge, 2006; Schmid, 2005). A few studies have examined aggressive interactions in real life situations (Felson, 1984; Lawrence, 2006; O'Connor, Archer, & Wu, 2001). Felson (1984) found that norm violation was an important feature of most aggressive

interactions. Lawrence (2006) found that those individuals, who found provocations from others more anger arousing than frustrations, were higher on physical aggression, trait hostility and narcissism, as compared to individuals who experienced more negative feelings in response to frustrations. O'Connor, Archer, and Wu (2001) also developed a scenario based Aggression Provocation Questionnaire and found that the aggressive responding to provoking situations correlated with verbal and physical aggression and anger sub-scales of Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Perry, 1992), a measure of trait aggressiveness. Archer and Haigh (1999) measuring expressive and instrumental beliefs about aggression asked the participants whether they had answered the questions based on a real or a hypothetical event. They found that instrumental beliefs (condoning being aggressive to obtain something) were higher whereas expressive beliefs (being aggressive in anger) were similar when people used real events. Boldizar, Perry, and Perry (1989) suggested that the values assigned by children to various outcomes of aggressive acts might hinge on situational factors. These findings underscore the importance of studying individual level variables in conjunction with situations of aggressive episodes.

Such episodes also provide an opportunity to discern the various elements of aggression as a social behaviour. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) specified that all social behaviour includes an action, target, context, and time. Aggressive interactions similarly include actions (e.g., hitting, pushing, shouting, yelling, backbiting). The situational context in previous studies has been defined as the event preceding the action of participant such as a provocation by another person, a frustrating event or a norm violation (Felson, 1984; Guerra, Huesmann & Hanish, 1995; Lawrence, 2006). In present study, descriptions of aggressive episodes including the action of respondent (shouting, insulting, hitting), context of situation and target of action were obtained from participants and analysed. Specifically relationship with the target was also taken into account as it has been pointed out that aggressive interactions and conflicts need to be analysed within the context of social relationships (Cohen, Hsueh, Russell, & Roy, 2006).

Aggression is, to a marked degree, subject to social norms. One norm often guiding aggressive interactions between individuals is retaliation norm of equivalent counter aggression (Zumkley, 1984). Retaliation norm serves to justify an act, which is carried out in defence or as reaction to a prior act of aggression. The acts of retaliation are seen as more justified than acts of unprovoked aggression (Forgas, Brown, Menyhart, 1980; Lagerspetz & Weston,

1980) and unprovoked aggressive acts evoke more negative reactions such as anger and counter-aggression (Lagerspetz & Weston, 1980; Cairns & Cairns, 1984). Someone who commits an unjustified harmful act against another individual transgresses against the norm and therefore the victim of such an act can show spontaneous reactive aggression. Therefore we expected that young persons will feel worse after being aggressive to someone who had not been aggressive to them.

It was expected that thinking about an actual self-reported act, feeling bad after aggression and private self-consciousness are positively associated. It was also expected that thinking and feeling would be negatively associated with frequency of aggressive acts. We also tested the hypothesis that most situations of aggressive interactions arise in response to provocations and people are more likely to feel bad after reacting aggressively to non-provoking situations than provoking situations.

Method

The purpose of data collection in line with aims of study was to obtain descriptions of real life aggressive episodes, content analyse them in terms of targets, and triggers, obtain a measure of reflection, remorse or feeling after these acts, obtain a measure of frequency of these acts and a score on Private Self-consciousness Scale. This was a correlational study using survey method for data collection.

Sample

Sixty-two participants (33 girls, 29 boys) with age range of 14-18 (mean age = 16.10, $SD = 2.70$) took part in study. All participants were students at a local high school in the west midlands, UK in grade 9 and 10. This school facilitated research with adolescents through an agreement with University of Warwick Education department. Children of diverse ethnic origin were enrolled representing mix of population in west midlands. The sample was selected on availability basis. Forty-seven (75%) of the participants were native British, 12 (19%) were British Asian from Indian sub-continent, 3 (4%) were foreign students. The adolescents were contacted through the school. Purpose of study was explained and informed consent was obtained from them. The parental consent was obtained by the school.

Measures

Incident Report Form. The questionnaire was developed based on previous case study research by first author and scenario based questionnaires used in previous studies (e.g., Nystedt & Ljungberg, 2002). The participants were asked to describe episodes in which they had behaved in an aggressive way towards someone. They were asked to recall three situations when: They shouted at someone, said insulting remarks to someone or hit someone. They were asked to give a brief description of the occasion, saying what the circumstances were, who it was, what led up to it and how it ended. For each of these acts they answered three following questions on a 4-point scale:

(a) How much did you think about it afterwards? The response options were: 1 = hardly at all, 2 = a little, 3 = quite a lot, 4 = a lot.

(b) How did you feel about it afterwards? The response options were: 1 = not at all badly, 2 = not very badly, 3 = quite badly, 4 = very badly.

(c) How often might an occasion like this arise? The response options were: 1 = once a year or less, 2 = once a month, 3 = once a week, 4 = once a day or more.

Private Self-consciousness Scale. The original Self-Consciousness Scale was developed by Fenigstein, Scheier and Buss in 1975 and subsequently revised (Scheier & Carver, 1985). It measures two distinct aspects; Private self-consciousness and public self-consciousness through two sub scales. For present study based on theoretical premises, only private self consciousness scale was used. It is a 9-item scale with Cronbach's alpha of .79 reported by authors in original study and .75 in later study. The scale is supposed to assess two aspects of private self-consciousness; self-reflectiveness (e.g., I often think about my own actions) and internal state awareness (e.g., I am aware of how my mind works). In present study overall reliability of private self-consciousness was .76 (.72 for self reflection and .68 for internal state awareness). The items are rated on 5 point likert scale from 1 = not at all like me to 5 = very much like me.

Procedure

The researcher and purpose of research was introduced in a preliminary meeting with students arranged by the school. The study was described to them after a friendly chat to evoke interest. The first author suggested that since we live, play and work together, we sometimes get upset with others. The participants agreed to this. Then

researcher said, "I have something to tell you. I had a row with someone today. I have been thinking about what I did. This study is about how we get along with each other and when we disagree on something how do we react. I will like you to tell me about your own experiences of such interactions". The students were assured that their answers were completely anonymous and no one except the researcher would see them. Further, they were assured that all information will be kept confidential, used only for research purposes and their participation was voluntary. They could talk to school counsellor (present at the time) if they felt upset after or during this answering of questions. Sixty-two out of 70 students from 3 sections of year 9 and 10, were available in class rooms.

Data Analyses

In total from 62 participants, 163 descriptions could be obtained. There were 58 insult descriptions (respondent had insulted someone), 59 shouting descriptions and 46 hitting descriptions. These were entered as single variable in the same way that each individual case is entered in SPSS data sheet. The unit of analysis in this study was episodes. Incidents have been used as unit of analysis before (e.g., Felson, 1984). The purpose is usually to study various characteristics of these interactions rather than individual differences.

The descriptions given by participants were content analysed and coded. The coding was done by the researcher and an independent coder who was a psychology lecture. The categories were explained to the rater with examples. He coded 40% of the descriptions. This rater was blind to the sex and age of the participant and episodes from various participants were mixed. Each incident described by the participants was coded for target, number of words, type of description (general or specific) and the situation. The description was coded as specific if the episode described was a specific incident with detail. The description was coded as general if no particular episode was described and instead the participant gave a general circumstances or conditions in which he/she hit someone or shouted at someone (for example, 'if someone bad mouths my mates I would lash at them'). The targets were coded as they were named, for example, 'I shouted at my mother' or 'I hit a boy during football game'. The overall inter-rater agreement for target and number of words was 100%. For specific and general category, overall agreement was 90%.

Situations were coded by categorizing the preceding action of other person towards whom participants behaved in an aggressive manner or situation, which led to aggressive action by respondent.

Offensive verbal acts like insult or shouting were categorised as verbal aggression, physical acts like being hit, pushed, and punched were categorized as physical aggression and all acts in which someone indirectly tried to harm the participant (for example backbiting) were coded as indirect aggression. All other situations were categorised in light of earlier research and as these categories emerged from the data. Earlier researchers have coded aggression triggering situations under different categories for example; Felson coded taking property or showing inconsiderate behaviour under norm violation whereas, Lawrence (2006) coded these under frustration and supported the coding with principle components analysis. Norm violation is defined by Tedeschi (1994) as violations of the norms of politeness, disregard for others' feelings or property and not fulfilling a prior commitment. For purpose of present study any behaviour, which clearly showed any of the above dimensions, was coded as norm violation. For example: "My sister borrowed my best jeans without asking, so I had to shout at her". Frustration has been defined as unjustified blocking or deprivation of a goal (Lawrence, 2006). In cases where no specific reason was given except bad mood or irritation, the situation was coded as irritation. This has been similarly coded by Barratt et al. (1999). For purpose of testing the specific hypothesis set out for the study, all situations were further coded as either provocations or frustrations based on analyses by Lawrence (2006).

The overall agreement regarding categories of aggression triggering situations was 82%, except for norm violation in which the agreement was 76%, which was resolved by mutual discussion. The agreement for coding as provocation and frustration was 90%. The categories of situations, their descriptions and examples of each code are provided in Table 1. There were a few descriptions, which could be coded under more than one type of action. For example argument was part of many interactions resulting from violation of some norm. In that case the act was coded under the explicitly mentioned original act.

Correlations between thinking, feeling bad, frequency of aggressive act and private self-consciousness were computed separately for each aggressive action, insult, shouting and hitting. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for feeling, thinking and frequency items were .65 .69, and .72 respectively and .76 for private self-consciousness. The overall correlations for these measures are given in results section.

Table 1

Coding Scheme and Examples of Each Category of Aggressive Episodes Reported in Study

Coding categories	Description	Examples
Verbal aggression	Someone called him/her names, used swearing words, shouted	“A kid in football team was saying offensive things”. “My step-dad something bad about my real father, I shouted at him”
Physical attack	Hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, slapping or another physical act	“My brother was repeatedly hitting me with his bat”.
Indirect aggression	Someone said something about him/her behind his/her back	“My friend was nice and friendly to my face and behind my back he had been saying nasty things”.
Norm violation	Someone invaded privacy, took personal property without permission, did not keep a promise	“My mom insisted on getting something from the toilet where I was taking a shower”. “My roommate stole my things”.
Argument	Word argument was mentioned	Had argument about money with my parents
Frustration	A deliberate blocking of a desired goal by someone	“Bus driver drove away, showed him the finger and shouted at him”.
Winding up	No other reason was given except ‘winding up’	“My mate was winding me up so I threw something at him”.

Results

Descriptive Analyses

The number of words used to describe an incident ranged from 5 to 74 and the average number of words used across all participants was 24. The number of words used in one description correlated positively with number of words used in other descriptions by same respondents $r(62) = .69, p < .005$. Eighty percent of participants described specific incidents, whereas 20% gave a general answer such as “I shout when brother teases me”.

Relationship with the target. Overall following targets were identified; peer, sibling, parent, another adult, friend and

girlfriend/boyfriend. The examples of other adults are bus driver, swimming club chairman, a shopkeeper and in two cases a group of robbers. Among the shouting and insulting incidents, 35 % took place in interactions with siblings, whereas among the hitting incidents, 30% took place with peers and 27 % with siblings. 16 (25 %) participants reported shouting at their parents. Out of these 16 incidents, 14 incidents (87 %) took place with mother. Ten percent of shouting incidents took place with peers, 16 % took place with friends. Five percent of shouting, 3 % of insulting and 6 % of hitting incidents took place with another adult. Shouting incidents were also reported (6%) with girlfriend or boyfriend as were hitting incidents (3 %). The percentages for each target according to each act are given in Figures 1, 2, and 3.

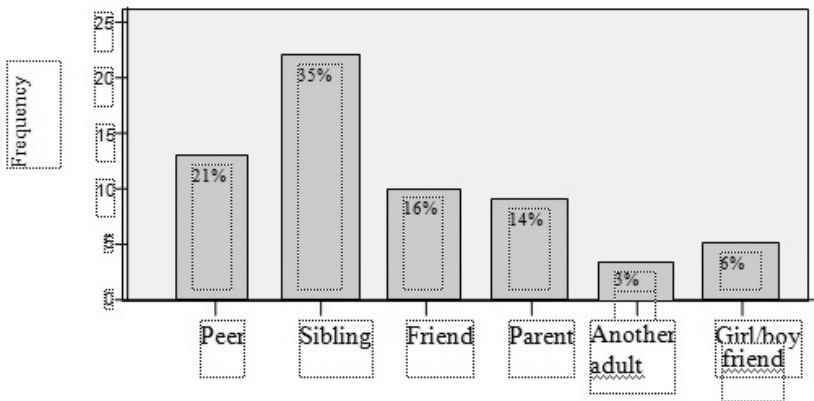


Figure 1. Target persons: insult

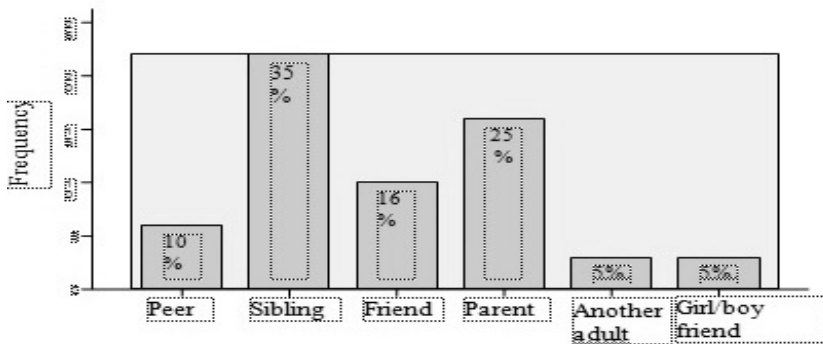


Figure 2. Target persons: shouting

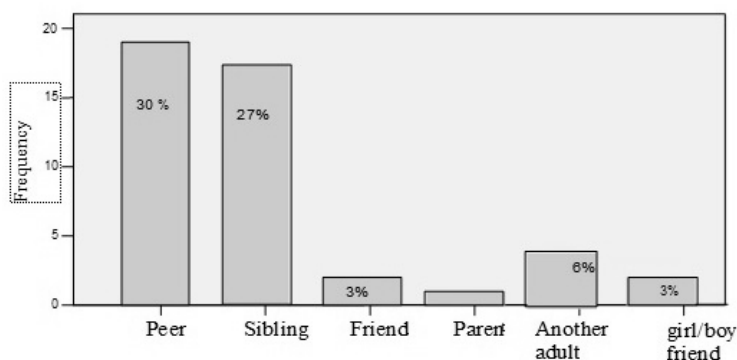


Figure 3. Target persons: hitting

Situations of aggressive episodes. The survey of the aggressive episodes showed that most of the aggressive encounters were reported as response to someone's provocation such as verbal aggression, physical attack or indirect aggression. Total provoking situations were 124 and non-provoking situations were 39. This confirms the observation from previous studies that people more often behave aggressively in response to provocation than other situations (. Only in 10 % of the situations the description did not specify an act, for example no attack on self or person or property, no goal blocking or norm violation was reported. "My little sister is infuriatingly logic less, I scream blue murder at her occasionally" or "I was just irritated that day". Table 2 presents the breakup of situations or contexts in which the participant behaved aggressively.

Table 2

Situations for Aggressive Actions-Frequencies and Percentages

Action	Frequency (%)
Insult	
Context/Situation	
Physical attack	4(6)
Verbal provocation/aggression	31(53)
Indirect aggression	14(24)
Frustration	4(6)
Norm violation	4(6)
Other (drunk)	1(1)
Total insult situations reported =	58
Shouting	
Context/Situation	
Physical attack	2(6)
Verbal provocation/aggression	29(49)
Indirect aggression	6(10)

Continued...

Action	Frequency (%)
<i>Insult</i>	
Frustration	3(5)
Norm violation	16(27)
Other (irritation)	3(5)
Total shouting situations reported =	59
<i>Hitting</i>	
Context/Situation	
Physical attack	20(43)
Verbal provocation/aggression	15(32)
Indirect aggression	3(6)
Frustration	2
Norm violation	4(8)
Other (Drunk)	2
Total hitting situations reported =	46

Inferential Analyses

Paired-samples *t*-test was carried out ($N = 163$) to test the hypothesis that people feel less bad after retaliating to provocations against self than behaving aggressively in response to other type of annoying situations such as frustrations and norm violations. There was a significant difference in feeling bad in two categories of situations ($t_{(56)} = -3.2, p < .05, d = -.60$), people reported fewer negative feelings after reacting to provocations ($M = 1.95, SD = 1.0$) than after behaving aggressively in other situations ($M = 2.55, SD = 0.98$).

A further analysis was carried out to test if people were less likely to feel bad after hitting someone in response to hitting as compared to hitting someone who had verbally provoked them. There were 35 of hitting situations all together which were used in these analysis, (20 situations in which hitting occurred as a response to physical attack and 15 in which hitting occurred as response to verbal provocation). There was no significant difference in feeling bad after hitting in response to verbal provocation and hitting in response to being physically attacked ($t_{(33)} = 0.35, p = .067, d = .03$).

In order to test the hypothesis that thinking after an aggressive action is related to feeling bad after that action and frequency of aggression, correlations between overall thinking after aggression, feeling after aggression, frequency of aggression and private self-consciousness were computed. As a first step these correlations were computed separately for each type of action, shouting, insult and hitting. The correlations between measures were very similar except for hitting where due to smaller number of cases some correlations

were not significant. The overall scores for thinking, feeling, frequency and PSC were computed adjusting for missing values. The correlations between overall scores on all measures are presented in Table 3. Frequency was an estimate of how often a similar type of incident occurred. In other words it can be taken as a measure of how characteristic this type of interaction is for a given individual.

Table 3

Inter-correlations between Frequency of Aggressive Actions, Thinking, Feeling and Private Self-consciousness (PSC)

	Frequency	Feeling bad	Thinking	PSC
Frequency	-			
Feeling bad	-.40*	-		
Thinking	-.50**	.60**	-	
PSC	-.35*	.38*	.50**	-

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

As Table 3 shows the frequency of aggression is negatively and significantly correlated with feeling bad, thinking after aggression and private self-consciousness. Thinking, feeling bad and self-consciousness were positively correlated. In regression analysis frequency of aggressive acts was predicted by thinking and feeling bad but not by self-consciousness (See Table 4; first half). For this analyses total private self-consciousness score was used. In order to discern role of two aspects of private self-consciousness, further regression analysis were run with feeling bad as outcome variable and two aspects, internal state awareness and self-reflection as predictors. As the table shows, feeling bad or remorse was only predicted by internal state awareness (See Table 4; second half).

Table 4

Linear Regression Predicting Frequency of Aggression (First Half) and Feeling Bad (Second Half)

Variables	B	Variable	B
Constant	3.49	Constant	.37
Feeling bad	-.19**	Internal state awareness	.14*
Thinking	-.32**	Self reflection	-.08
Self-consciousness	-.01	Thinking	-.08
F	7.32*	F	12.54*
R ²	.28	R ²	.39

Note. First half shows results for regression analyses with frequency of aggression as outcome variable and thinking, private self consciousness and feeling bad as predictors. Second half of table presents regression analyses results with feeling bad as outcome and thinking and two aspects of private self consciousness (self reflection and internal awareness) as predictors.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Discussion

The present study analysed retrospective accounts of aggressive episodes reported by adolescents. The description of aggressive incidents were content analysed to find whether situation described were specific or general, number of words used, relationship with targets, and situations in which aggressive actions occurred. The study also explored the relationship between private self-consciousness, thinking and feeling bad after aggression and frequency of aggressive actions. Descriptive analysis showed that adolescents shouted at siblings, mothers, friends, peers and other adults in this order of frequency. Targets in insult situations were siblings, peers, friends, parents (mostly mothers), girlfriends/boyfriends and adult strangers in this order of frequency. Hitting occurred between peers, siblings, another adult and friends in this order of frequency. Situations that led to aggressive action were verbal provocation, physical provocation, norm violation and indirect aggression in order of frequency. Quantitative analysis showed that people reported less negative feelings after reacting to provocations than after behaving aggressively in other situations. Analyses also showed that feeling, thinking and private self-consciousness were negatively related to frequency of aggressive actions. Thinking predicted frequency even when other measures were controlled.

Most of the previous studies of aggressive acts by adolescents are carried out in school settings and the situations of retaliation consequently involve peers in school. In this study participants were asked to report only the overt acts and the context in which it occurred. Hence the descriptions given by respondents included situations at home and school as well as situations elsewhere. The results of this study indicate that greatest frequency of verbal aggression occurs within families as compared to outside the home, mostly between siblings and between children and mothers. In other words exchange of unkind words, arguments, and shouting are directed towards family members more often than it is against strangers or peers although arguments between friends are fairly common as well. In view of the fact that family members spend a lot of time together and share a common space, the chances of friction are greater. Moreover there is less to lose when an aggressive episode occurs with a family member as compared to when it occurs with an outsider.

The opportunity for dispute among family members are many considering there can be violations of property norms, violation of

rules and disagreement over share of duties. The social control also operates between parents and children and is reason for many incidents of shouting in our sample. An intriguing explanation for higher incidence of verbal aggression between family members comes from the research on anger (e.g., Averill, 1982). It has been suggested that the desire to avoid negative consequences such as aggressive counter-reaction of others and dislike by others may serve to inhibit verbal aggression (Smits, Jones & Brown as cited in Tedeschi & Felson, 1994). It may be the case that there is less fear of dislike or disturbance in relationships between siblings as a result of verbal exchange of insults, hence there may be less inhibition. The mothers or siblings will not sever their ties due to such skirmishes. This is not in any way denying the fact that friction, rude words and yelling does cause distress in a home and family members would be better off handling conflicts in a calm manner. As Bandura (1973) has noted, social behaviour is extensively regulated by verbal cues. When demands or requests voiced in mild tones are ignored, children and parents learn that only shouts produce results. He makes a pertinent observation, "Because of the differential signal value of parental directives, many households are run at fairly high decibel level" (p. 46).

Respondents also reported feeling less bad after retaliating to provoking situations rather than acting aggressively due to other circumstances (frustration, norm violation, being drunk or simple bad mood). This finding indicates that a moral rationale is at work when people react to others' actions or external events. They feel more justified in reacting to an insult or physical attack than reacting aggressively to a frustrating event or acting aggressively due to bad mood or someone's annoying behaviour which is not provoking. Since retaliation to provocation is believed to be justified according to retaliation norm and beliefs and self-censure negatively correlate, it was expected that there would be less negative feeling after provoking situations than after other situations. One earlier study also suggested that self-censure was experienced more when retaliation was excessive rather than equal (Amjad & Skinner, 2008).

The variables of private self-consciousness, feeling and thinking were all correlated positively with each other and negatively with frequency of aggression which indicates that higher the self-consciousness, higher the reflection and remorse and lower the frequency of aggressive acts. Scheier (as cited in Scheier et al., 1978) suggested that individuals high on private self-consciousness are more aware of their thoughts and moods and therefore may react more intensely to an insult. He tested this by making men angry and then

allowing them to aggress. Those who were high on private self-consciousness aggressed more intensely than those low on private self-consciousness. In the present study, this finding was not supported; private self-consciousness was negatively related to frequency of aggression. In Scheier's study, the aggressive behaviour was measured using aggression machine. In present study the thinking, feeling and frequency of aggression was measured with reference to a specific episode in past. The possible explanation of negative relationship between PSC and frequency of aggression is that high private self-consciousness makes people more reflective about their actions and also more aware of their moods. When giving retrospective accounts this awareness may cause them to report thinking more about a past action than they actually did at the time. Another explanation is that people high in private self-consciousness are more likely to react with careful reflection to provoking situations and therefore may exert better self-control. It has been suggested that self-control is related to inhibition of aggression (Lawrence, 2006). However without investigating emotional reactivity in conjunction with private self-consciousness, this is only a conjecture.

The frequency is predicted by thinking and feeling and suggests that both reflecting on one's aggression and feeling bad are related dimensions of one's expressive social representation of aggression. Archer (2004) found that expressive beliefs about aggression were negatively correlated with verbal aggression and hostility. The path of influence suggested by the results of this study is as follows; the self-consciousness impacts reflecting on one's aggression, which in turn predicts feeling bad after aggression and also predicts the frequency of aggressive acts. However, it is very much possible that the direction of influence is from frequency of acts to thinking and feeling; those who behave aggressively more frequently tend not to think about it afterwards, as posited by information processing theory.

Limitations and Suggestions

One methodological issue in the study was the retrospective method. Although retrospective accounts are first hand source of data on actual behaviour, they can be subject to biased memory processes (see Banaji & Hardin, 1994 for review of retrospective memory). The affect remembered afterwards can also be coloured by the autobiographical memory. The question then arises about the significance of finding about relation between feeling bad and thinking about the aggressive act. Is it possible that persons with

higher private self-consciousness tend to report more feeling bad and thinking about their acts in retrospect due to their tendency to reflect on their actions rather than due to actually feeling bad at the time they acted aggressively? This is a speculation which needs to be tested. Despite this constraint in the study, the fact remains that retrospective account is a replacement of real time observation (even if an inadequate one) and provides a window on to the real world situations and raw politics of everyday life of adolescents. Further studies should recruit larger sample and test mediation model to clearly disentangle role of feeling and thinking from each other.

Conclusions and Implications

The findings of this study present both a mosaic, and a profile of real life aggressive acts, setting it out for us to examine how young persons behave each day. Many of these may seem familiar and hence foster self reflection in us. Findings suggest that most of these episodes occur between close relations such as family, friends and peers. People feel less bad when they retaliate to provocation as opposed to when they lose patience and insult, hit or shout in a frustrating situation. Frequency of acts of aggression is predicted by post-aggression reflection as well as remorse and remorse is predicted by internal state awareness. Findings underscore the link between reflection, remorse and aggression and have implications for planning counselling for conflict resolution, emotion regulation and developing character strength of patience. These findings also suggest that tolerance and reflection can be fostered to minimize aggressive acts towards others in daily interactions. Thinking about our own actions may be an act of self-judgment and may work towards better future monitoring of not only aggressive acts but also as overall intrinsic moral control as religions often stress. Sommers (2006) suggests that the accounts of retaliatory acts and censure felt has a function. The collective moral language and practices are seen as being essentially forward looking, not backward looking. In the situation one couldn't have done otherwise exactly as it arose, but moral evaluations are exactly that which make anticipated future situations different, so one behaves differently.

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