

# ANGER EXPRESSIONS OF FILIPINO CHILDREN AS MEASURED BY THE INTERVIEW AND DOLL PLAY TECHNIQUES

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*This study investigated how 36 boys and 36 girls from different age groups (i.e. 4-6 years old; 7-9 years old; 10-12 years old) would express themselves in anger-arousing situations in both home and school settings. Two response formats were used — interview and doll play. The anger expressions of the children were categorized as direct verbal, indirect verbal, direct motor, indirect motor or unexpressed. Results showed that the children's use of the different modes of anger expression were influenced variably by their age, sex, the setting (home or school) and by the response format used (doll play or interview). Results were discussed in relation to awareness of social rules and expectations, social desirability, verbal proficiency, and the non-threatening, more disguised quality of doll play as a means of eliciting responses.*

Filipino children are generally expected to obey, to respect and to follow orders to the letter unquestioningly (Adea, 1974) such that punishment is meted out to children who are disobedient, disrespectful, and who show such negative behavior as aggressing towards others, especially their elders (Bonifacio, 1978; dela Cruz, Santos & Vida, 1971; Domingo, 1977; Lagmay, 1977; Licuanan, 1979).

Anger seems to be one emotion which is frowned upon by a culture highly concerned with maintaining good interpersonal relationships. The Filipino child has been found to be generally unwilling to verbalize his feelings directly, especially if these are of a negative nature (Carandang, 1979). Instead, he has adopted other ways of expressing himself as through "pag-iyak (crying), pag-dadabog (throwing tantrums), pagmumukmok (sulking) o pag-alis ng bahay (Leaving the house)" (Aceveda, 1975).

Western studies have identified some factors that apparently affect the mode of anger expression used by an individual. Sex as an influential variable was shown in studies done by Goodenough (1945); Sears, P. (1951); Bradzinsky, Messer and Terv (1979) among others. In their researches, they have consistently found that boys are more direct and active in their expression while the girls chose the interpersonal, indirect and verbal forms of aggressive expression. Even with the use of projective-type instruments, boys

were found to produce more physical aggression in fantasy than girls did (Bradzinsky, Messer and Terv, 1979).

The socialization process was also found to influence the type of anger expression that a person adopts. Cosen (1972) reports that according to ". . . social learning theory, the acquisition of aggressive responses may likely be a function of the environment's copious provision of imitative models". Bandura, Ross and Ross (1961) have also observed that subjects exposed to aggressive models reproduced a good deal of aggression resembling that of the models.

In the earlier study, Goodenough (1945) wrote the following about age differences in children's angry behavior:

*"With advancing age, the forms of behavior displayed during anger become more definitely directed toward a given end, while the primitive bodily responses of the infant and young child are gradually replaced by substitute reactions commonly of a somewhat less violent and more symbolic character."*

In investigating human feelings, varied means or instruments have been developed and used, with differential degrees of success. Projective techniques have frequently been utilized. In their work, Mussen and Naylor (1954) cited some studies that positively correlate fantasy needs with overt behavior. In the same article, they also referred to other studies which found a negative correlation. In explaining the latter findings, it was

suggested that certain anti-social needs such as aggression may appear covertly in projective stories because cultural prohibition or internal conflict may prevent the overt manifestation of such aggressive tendencies. The value of findings from studies using projective instruments cannot be over-stated (Sears, 1951). With children especially, the use of projective tools such as play has been most revealing and helpful. Play, offers the child an unthreatening venue for his self expression.

These studies have led to this present study which investigates the effect of a number of variables — sex (male or female); age (4-6 years; 7-9 years; 10-12 years); setting (home or school); and response format (doll play or interview) on the choice of the mode of anger expression used in varied anger-provoking situations.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Operational Definitions*

For this study, the anger expressions of each subject were elicited in two ways: fantasy doll play and interview. Thus, response measures for each subject were of two major types as follows:

1. *Fantasized Anger Expressions* — are the children's indirect responses as reflected in the behavior of the heroes or heroines in the children's doll play within their own made-up stories of anger-arousing situations in a home and in a school setting.
2. *Reported Anger Expressions* — are the children's direct responses to presented anger-arousing home and school situations as narrated in the interviews.

The fantasized and reported expressions were further classified according to the categories listed below. These categories were derived from pretest data and previous research.

### *Categories of Anger Expressions*

1. *Verbal Expression* — when the child as interviewed or the hero/heroine in the child's play makes his/her anger known through the use of words alone. This may include name-calling, accusations and verbal threats.

- 1.a *direct verbal expression* — when the verbalized angry responses of the interviewed child or the hero/heroine in the child's play is directed towards the perceived oppressor.

*Ex: Joey went up to the boy who was teasing him and said "Shut up."*

- 1.b *indirect verbal expression* — when the verbalized angry response of the interviewed child or the hero/heroine in the child's play is directed towards person(s) other than the oppressor. Also includes verbal expressions with self as object or with no target object at all. (e.g. mumbling, cursing one's self, shouting).

*Ex: He felt so angry at his parents that he shouted at the baby. (displaced verbal aggression)*

*He told teacher that the other were teasing him. ("sumberg")*

2. *Motor Expression* — when the interviewed child or the hero/heroine in the child's play makes his/her anger known by acting it out.

- 2.a *direct motor expression* — when the interviewed child or the doll play hero/heroine inflicts bodily harm on on the perceived oppressor.

*Ex: He boxed the enemy.*

- 2.b *indirect motor expression* — when the interviewed child or the doll play hero/heroine displays physical aggression not directed towards the perceived oppressor but to others or to objects around him/her. Also includes other motor expressions with no target object (e.g. crying, head banging)

*Ex: He stormed around his room and kicked the wall.*

*Ex: He tore up his classmate's notebook and scattered the papers about. Then he shoved away the others around him.*

3. *Mixed Verbal and Motor Expression* — when the interviewed child or doll play hero/heroine in the child's play employs both physical aggression and verbal report simultaneously to make his/her anger known.

- 3.a *direct verbal and motor expression* — when the child or the doll play hero/

heroine simultaneously aggresses both verbally and physically towards the perceived oppressor.

*Ex: She shouted and shouted at him as she hit him with her ruler.*

- 3.b indirect verbal and motor expression — when the child or the hero/heroine is simultaneously aggressing physically and verbally towards person(s) or objects other than the perceived oppressor. Also includes expressions with no target object (e.g. shouting and tearing one's hair and shouting and crying) or with self as object.

*Ex: She ran to her room, slammed the door, threw her doll to the floor, punching it and screaming all the time.*

4. *Unexpressed Anger* — when the interviewed child or the hero/heroine in the child's play adopts a passive response to the angering situation. No behavioral expression/manifestation of anger.

*Ex: He felt like boxing her but he knew he should not so he did not.*

### Subjects

Subjects for this study were randomly selected from the pre-school and Grades 1 to 6 pupils of the Jose Abad Santos Memorial School (JASMS). Children who attend JASMS come from middle-class families.

Pre-school children from the Junior and Senior Nursery classes composed the 4 to 6 year old bracket, the primary grade school pupils (Grades I to III) represented the 7 to 9 year old group, while the 10 to 12 year old group were made up of children from the intermediate grades (Grades IV to VI). A total of 72 children were chosen. Each age group was represented by 24 children, 12 boys and 12 girls. Each of the children went through both doll play and interview sessions.

### Instruments

A home/family doll set with a home backdrop and a school/class doll set with a school backdrop were provided the children to facilitate their fantasy play and to elicit their fantasy anger expressions.

A standard set of instructions was used by the researcher to elicit the necessary response.

#### a) For the Home Setting

"Let's pretend that in this home live the family of Mr. and Mrs. Jose de la Cruz. One day, their son/daughter (E advances doll of same sex as subject) named Joey/Annie felt very angry. Can you make up a story telling us why Joey/Annie got angry? What did Joey/Annie do when he/she gets angry?"

#### b) For the School Setting

"Let's bring out this set which looks like a school, and it even has a playground. Let's pretend that these dolls here are classmates and the bigger doll here is their teacher. One day, this doll (E advances hero/heroine doll, same sex as subject) named Joey/Annie got very angry. Can you make up a story telling us why he/she got angry? What did he/she do when he/she get angry?"

Tagalog versions of the text were developed for subjects who were notably more comfortable in using the language.

In the interview format, a set of home and school situations were presented to the children. Vernacular translations were readied for use when necessary.

#### a) For the Home Setting

1. Sibling/cousin/playmate takes your most valued toy/comic book/books, etc.) without asking for your permission. What would you do?
2. Sibling/cousin/playmate teases you e.g. "taba" or "tingting"). What would you do?
3. You are blamed for breaking or destroying some important object even when it is actually not your fault and you are not allowed to explain your side. What would you do?

#### b) For the School Setting

1. Classmate takes your favorite or most important pen/notebook/book, etc. without your permission. What would you do?
2. Classmates gang up on you and tease you about something you are sensitive about. What would you do?
3. During breaktime, children played inside the classroom. Unfortunately,

during play, a class project was accidentally toppled down by one of your classmates. When the teacher asked for the culprit, the other children pointed at you. Teacher punished you. What would you do?

*Procedure*

The presentation to the children of doll play (A) and interview (B) as well as of home (a) and school (b) settings within each format followed this sequence cycle for every 8 subjects;

1. A (ab) - B (ba)
2. B (ab) - A (ba)
3. B (ba) - A (ab)
4. A (ba) - B (ab)
5. A (ab) - B (ab)
6. B (ab) - A (ab)
7. B (ba) - A (ba)
8. A (ba) - B (ba)

In the doll play sessions, anger responses related by the child within a 15-minute time limit for each setting were scored. The interview sessions with each child lasted anywhere from 5 to 15 minutes. In either formats, clarifications regarding the subject's responses were done whenever necessary.

The raters classified the children's responses, as the respondents recounted them, according to the categories that had been previously defined and described. The final scores of each child for each of the categories - direct verbal, indirect verbal, direct motor, indirect motor, and unexpressed - were equivalent to the frequency of use of each category by the child in each of the following situations: Doll-Play-Home; Doll Play-School; Interview-Home; and Interview-School.

*Analysis of Data*

The analysis of variance for split-plot design studies was used to test for significant relationships between the variables of age, sex, environmental setting, response format and the different modes of anger expression. Level of significance for statistical analysis was set at .05.

**RESULTS**

Following is a presentation of the F

ratio values of each independent variable for all 5 modes of anger expression as derived from the analyses of variances conducted for each mode.

*Response Format Variable*

The two methods, doll play and interview, affected the children's use of the different modes in various degrees. This variable was found to have significant effects at  $p < .01$  on the use of the direct verbal and unexpresses modes as shown in Table 1. It also affected the use of the indirect motor mode at .05 significance.

TABLE 1

*F Ratios of Response Format Variable*

<i>Mode</i>	<i>F Ratio</i>
Direct Verbal	145.8039
Indirect Verbal	3.5278
Direct Motor	0.9665
Indirect Motor	6.8206*
Unexpressed	39.5643*

\* $p < .05$   
 \*\* $p < .01$

*Sex Variable*

Table 2 below indicates that the sex of the child does not seem to significantly affect his use of most modes of anger expression -except in the use of the indirect verbal mode. The effect of the variable sex on the use of the indirect verbal mode was found to be significant at  $p < .05$ .

TABLE 2

*F Ratios of Sex Variable*

<i>Mode</i>	<i>F Ratio</i>
Direct Verbal	0.2561
Indirect Verbal	4.0507*
Direct Motor	1.1063
Indirect Motor	1.2037
Unexpressed	0.0256

\* $p < .05$

*Age Variable*

Table 3 would show that age was found

to significantly affect ( $p < .01$ ) the use of the direct verbal mode only. This variable had minimal effect on the use of the rest of the anger expression modes.

TABLE 3

*F Ratios of Age Variable*

<i>Mode</i>	<i>F Ratio</i>	<i>F Ratio</i>
Direct Verbal		18.7016*
Indirect Verbal		1.2737
Direct Motor		0.6097
Indirect Motor		0.8030
Unexpressed		2.4871

\* $p < .01$

### *Setting Variable*

In the following table, it will be noted that the respondents' use of the indirect verbal and the indirect motor modes were significantly affected by the setting variable at  $p < .01$  and  $p < .05$ , respectively. Whether the anger provoking situation was in a home or school setting did not affect the greater or lesser use of the other modes.

TABLE 4

*F Ratios of Setting Variable*

<i>Mode</i>	<i>F Ratio</i>
Direct Verbal	0
Indirect Verbal	9.2327**
Direct Motor	0.5320
Indirect Motor	4.2515*
Unexpressed	0.2699

\* $p < .05$

\*\* $p < .01$

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study consistently indicated that the children's use of the different anger expression modes varied depending on the response format that they were employing. Reports of the frequent usage of the verbal, particular-

ly the direct type, and of the unexpressed modes were given more often during the interview sessions. In the doll play format, the children allowed themselves the use of all the modes including the more physical or motor types of expression. The unexpressed mode surfaced least often in doll play.

Results further indicate that the children's responses came more spontaneously and more freely in doll play than in interview even when the two response formats, as developed for the purposes of this study, were basically projective in nature. Apparently, the interview format lent itself to guarded responses since it seemed more susceptible to the need for social acceptance. The interview responses indicate that the children felt the responsibility of giving answers adhering to known social rules. They reported responses they may not actually make in real situations but which they knew will meet with social approval.

The spontaneity of the children's responses in doll play seemed to have been caused by the more disguised characteristic of the instrument. The comparative freedom from possible judgment according to social rules in the play format allowed it to elicit more responses from each subject. Consequently, doll play seemed to provide a better and more meaningful insight into the children's thoughts, perceptions and emotions than the interview.

Age also had a very distinct effect on the children's use of the various modes of anger expression. The increased use of the verbal mode of expressing anger was notable among the older age groups. This result follows an expected increase in language proficiency or verbal ability as children grow older.

Age also defined the respondent's awareness of social expectations, rules and responsibilities. Older children used less of the motor modes and more of the direct verbal mode. Furthermore, the di-

rection or target of expressed anger became more focused and concrete among older children. The directness or indirectness of the children's expressed anger coincided with their growing awareness of the need to maintain smooth interpersonal relations. The children also responded to anger-arousing events in the home and school setting depending on their awareness of expected behavior in such environs. The phenomenon of "sumbong", an indirect verbal expression, was generally and frequently used as a mode of manifesting anger by the children especially in school where it seems more acceptable. "Pagsumbong" offers a means of responding to the need to aggress without being direct nor physical in the name of good interpersonal relations. It was interesting to note that indirect retaliation through "sumbong" was often resorted to when the provocation was an indirect verbal aggression referred to as "tukso".

Sex roles, which also became increasingly defined with age, allowed for certain acceptable uses of various anger expression modes too. "Sumbong" was more acceptable as a practice among the girls, since they are expected to be more verbal and more indirect in their anger expression. Physical and confrontative aggression is deemed more fitting if exhibited by males.

This study was limited to only a few contexts by which anger can be understood. It is felt that there are numerous other factors that would affect the mode of anger expression of an individual. It is hoped that this study can stimulate further research work in a deeper and more meaningful comprehension of the phenomenon of anger expression. Further distinctions in the types or modes of anger expression could also be developed through continued interest in and study of anger.

The present research has shown that the use of differing expressions of anger follows a developmental pattern and seems cognizant of social realities. It also has emphasized the importance of projective techniques, specifically doll play, in gathering meaningful data on children's thoughts and feelings.

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