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**“What the mates think is really important.”
Why teenage boys are aggressive to girls.**

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Because children and young teenagers usually associate in same-sex groups, study of aggression in schools has often focused on within-sex interactions. However, during adolescence, boys and girls increasingly interact with each other. This increased contact between the sexes provides the opportunity for constructive and pro-social relationships as well as for damaging conflict and aggression. This paper examines the explanations of boys' aggression to girls provided in focus group discussions and individual interviews at four middle class Adelaide metropolitan schools by Grade 9 boys, girls and their teachers. Thematic analyses revealed some common and some differing explanations across boys, girls and teachers. All agreed that boys were verbally aggressive to girls in order to impress other boys and for their own entertainment or fun (i.e., to get a laugh). Boys and teachers reported that boys' offensive behavior to girls was sometimes an attempt to impress girls. For some boys, the motive for hurting girls was revenge. Some teachers suggested that boys' hurtful behaviour may be explained by sexist attitudes learned at home. This presentation highlights the vital role of the peer group in motivating boys' aggressive behaviour toward girls. It also emphasizes the importance of understanding behaviour from the different perspectives of boys, girls and teachers.

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