INTRODUCTION

Overt aggressive behavior in early childhood can be a maladaptive behavior and is strongly associated with social problems and problems functioning at home and at school (Dodge et al., 2006). Prior research on the etiology of individual differences in overt aggressive behavior involving temperament has focused primarily on negative affectivity, namely frustration/anger. Frustration/anger is thought of to be an important aspect of a behavioral approach motivational system where frustration/anger (FA) and approach/positive anticipation (AP) can be thought of as negatively and positively valenced affective components. There is some evidence to support this view (see Derryberry & Rothbart, 2001). This investigation aims to extend our knowledge of the associations of FA, AP, and aggressive behavior by examining gender differences, using a more representative sample, and determining whether the links between AP and aggression and FA and aggression overlap or are independent.

METHOD

Participants:
- 195 same-sex twin pairs (61% female) from the Western Reserve Reading Project (WRRP; Petrill et al., 2006).
- 992 non-twin children (52% male) with complete data from the NICHD SECCYD.

Procedure:
- WRRP: Mothers completed the CBCL during two annual home visits and completed the CBQ-SF prior to or shortly after the second home visit.
- SECCYD: Mothers the CBCL and CBQ during lab visits at 54 months and 1st grade.

MEASURES

- **WRRP**: Child Behavior Questionnaire-Short Form (CBQ-SF; Putnam & Rothbart, 2006)
- **SECCYD**: Child Behavior Questionnaire (REF)
  - Frustration/Anger scale
  - Approach/Positive Anticipation scale
- **WRRP and SECCYD**: Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach, 1991).
  - Aggression scale

RESULTS

- As hypothesized frustration/anger (FA), approach/positive anticipation (AP), and overt aggression were all significantly positively correlated (see table 1).
- Results were similar across the WRRP and SECCYD and for boys and girls.
- FA and AP provided both independent and overlapping statistical prediction of overt aggressive behavior.
- FA was a substantial mediator of the prediction of aggression from AP whereas AP was a modest mediator of the prediction of aggression from FA.

CONCLUSION

- Evidence for important associations between frustration/anger (FA), approach/positive anticipation (AP) and overt aggression in early childhood. FA and AP may facilitate each other and the expression of overt aggression as part of a behavioral activation motivational system.
- Evidence for gender similarities instead of gender differences with regard to the associations between frustration/anger, approach/positive anticipation and overt aggression.
- FA and AP provide both independent and overlapping prediction of overt aggression.