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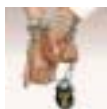
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Misunderstood Social Cues Result in Juvenile Delinquency

by Tanya on September 22, 2009 at 8:54 AM [Child Health News](#)

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Research reveals that juvenile delinquency may be a result of misunderstood social cues. Male juvenile delinquents frequently misinterpret facial expressions of disgust as anger, providing a possible cause for their aggressive behaviour

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A Japanese study has found that young offenders who mess with the law may have difficulty interpreting social cues in others.

Lead author Wataru Sato from Kyoto University found that the delinquent youths were more likely to make mistakes in distinguishing between facial expressions of disgust as anger than their peers.

"This bias towards misrecognising other emotions as anger is particularly significant because anger appears to play an important role in delinquency," The BBC quoted Sato as saying.

"Taken together the data suggest that delinquents might be projecting their own heightened angry emotions onto others when they misperceive others' negative, but not hostile, emotional states as anger," Sato added.

Professor Karen Pine, a UK expert in developmental psychology at the University of Hertfordshire, added the misinterpretation may lead them to feel threatened without due cause and maybe towards antisocial behaviour.

She said: "This is consistent with previous evidence and has been shown to account for some conduct problems in children."

But also warned: "The delinquents also had significantly lower IQs than the control group and this alone may have accounted for their poor performance on the task."

The study has been published in the journal *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*.

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