

Aggression

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The statistics (2004, UCR)

■ Murder	16,137
■ Forcible rape	94,635
■ Robbery	401,326
■ Aggravated assault	854,911

“Now the bad news...”

- FBI Uniform Crime Reports
 - Built from reports from individual jurisdictions (some 40,000 of them)
 - Includes lots of local “definitions”
 - Includes only those *reported*
- National Criminal Victimization Surveys
 - National sample of over 65,000 people
 - Shows, by comparison to UCR, that as few as 1 in 10 rapes may be reported!

A definition

- Behavior intended to harm another
- Intention counts, not results
- So, accidents happen
- Forms of aggression
 - Instrumental – to achieve some purpose
 - Emotional – impulsive, in heat of moment

Variations in occurrence

- Age: lock away everyone from 14-24
- Sex: actually, lock away only boys
- Location: perhaps only in the South
- Race
 - African-Americans more likely victims
 - Most violence is intra-racial
 - Consequently, more African-American perpetrators, as percentage of their race

Potential explanations

- Evolutionary: intraspecific competition
 - Behavior genetics: inherited tendency
 - Testosterone: more is worse
 - Serotonin: not enough
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- At this point, no really convincing evidence for one over another

Social factors

- Modeling and social learning
- Socialization differences: aggression encouraged, or at least tolerated, among boys more than girls
- “Culture of honor:” personal affronts give rise to violent responses

Cohen & Nisbett 1996

- Three related experiments with common procedures
- Confederate bumps into subject, calls him "asshole," then handshake, testosterone, and judgments measured
- "Southerner:" at least 6 years in census 5, 6, or 7 (Delaware to Florida)
- Problem: median family income of 90K in 1994

Frustration-aggression

- Thorough description of the concept
- Original formulation too broad
- Evidence for displaced aggression in response to provocation
- But catharsis doesn't work
- Berkowitz's reformulation into negative affect (from a variety of sources)

Sources of arousal

- It's the *heat* !
 - During hot *years*, or hotter *days*
 - But lots of explanations for more violence in the summer
- Excitation transfer (two factor theory)
- Negative affect from any source
- Prior provocations

Emotional aggression

- Input variables
 - Aversive experiences (frustration, heat)
 - Situational cues (weapons, models)
 - Individual differences (hostility, empathy)
- Affect – arousal – cognitions
- Higher-order thinking (interpretations of situation, other's motives)
- Aggression

Media violence

- Copycat violence: would perpetrators have found some *other* way?
- Televised violence: the simple answer is *YES!* Effects are twice as strong as those for condom use and HIV
- Also true for gangsta rap and violent video games; short-term and long-term

Pornography and violence

- Unlike that for depicted violence, this relationship is *complex*
- Nonviolent pornography: No
- Violent pornography: Yes.
Particularly of males toward females.

Intimate violence

- Half of murder victims killed by someone they knew
- 25% of college females report attempted or completed rape
- Half of these were “date rapes”
- In marriages, more severe violence by women, more final damage by men

Reducing aggression

- Improve quality of life to reduce frustration
- Reduce all forms of aggression in society
- Provide models of peaceful behavior
- Reduce media glorification of violence
- Provide fans, limit weapons
- Encourage communication, limit excessive drinking