

## chapter 2 aggression

# Aggression

- Aggression is any behavior intended to harm another individual or object by physical or verbal means
- Aggression is a behavior and should be distinguished from feelings of anger
- Aggression may be ***antisocial***, (e.g., self-defense like vandalism, aggression, and rioting), or ***pro-social*** (e.g., law enforcement)

# Physical and non physical aggression

## **Physical aggression**

- aggression that involves harming others physically—for instance hitting, kicking, stabbing, or shooting them.

## **Non-physical aggression**

- aggression that does not involve physical harm. Nonphysical aggression includes verbal aggression (insulting, screaming, swearing, and name calling) and relational or social aggression,

# Instrumental aggression

- Aggression that is intentional and planned and that is aimed at hurting someone to gain something.
- The intentional use of harmful behavior to achieve some other goal.
- Aggressive acts are carried out with the objective of gaining material, psychological, or social benefits  
Carried out to avoid punishment
- The aggression the thief used in his robbery attempt is an example of instrumental aggression.

# Hostile aggression

- Triggered by anger
- The goal of the intentionally harmful behavior is simply to cause injury or death to the victim
- Often impulsive and irrational
- Hostile aggression is not really motivated by the anticipation of rewards or the avoidance of punishments, even though these may indeed be ultimate consequences of the aggressive act.
- Instead, this type of aggression is often impulsive and irrational. There is a goal, but it is
- simply the desire to cause harm to the victim

# Passive and active aggression

- Harming others by withholding a behavior.  
e.g., purposely failing to convey an important message)

Harming others by performing a behavior.  
(e.g., spreading vicious rumors)

# Gender difference in aggression

- There is a widespread belief about men being more aggressive than women.
- Meta-analytic studies indicate that males and females do differ in one important kind of aggression: physical aggression. There is some evidence that males are more likely than females to engage in aggression that produces pain or physical injury (Eagly & Steffen, 1986)

## **Indirect aggression,**

- a form of social manipulation in which the aggressor attempts to harm another person without a face-to-face encounter.
- Gossiping, spreading bad or false stories about someone, telling others not to associate with a person, and revealing someone's secrets are all examples of indirect aggression.

## **Displaced aggression**

- occurs when negative emotions caused by one person trigger aggression toward a different person.



# Biological factors

- Aggression is controlled in large part by the area in the older part of the brain known as the amygdala
- The region in the limbic system that is primarily responsible for regulating our perceptions of, and reactions to, aggression and fear.

- Biological research suggests that individual differences in aggression are partly due to inheritance and hormonal changes.

## **Behavior genetics**

- Identical twins tend to have more similar aggressive tendencies than fraternal twins. The problem with this research, however, is that parents tend to treat identical twins more similarly than fraternal twins, and thus, it is difficult for us to clearly distinguish between biological and environmental determinants of aggression.

## Hormonal activity

- Research indicates that chemical messengers in the bloodstream, known as hormones, influence human aggression (Adelson, 2004).
- Hormones are also important in creating aggression. Most important in this regard is the male sex hormone testosterone, which is associated with increased aggression in both animals and in humans.
- Higher than normal levels of the male hormone testosterone is reported in highly aggressive individuals of both sexes (Carlson, 2004).
- These findings suggest that high testosterone levels may either directly cause aggression or indirectly cause it by encouraging social dominance

# Drinking Alcohol Increases Aggression

- the consumption of alcohol increases aggression. In fact, excessive alcohol consumption is involved in a majority of violent crimes, including rape and murder
- Alcohol increases aggression for a couple of reasons. For one, alcohol disrupts executive functions, which are the cognitive abilities that help us plan, organize, reason, achieve goals, control emotions, and inhibit behavioral tendencies

- Secondly, when people are intoxicated, they become more self-focused and less aware of the social situation, a state that is known as *alcohol myopia*.
- As a result, they are less likely to notice the social constraints that normally prevent them from engaging aggressively

# Negative emotions

- Aggression is caused in large part by the negative emotions that we experience as a result of the aversive events that occur to us and by our negative thoughts that accompany them
- When we are feeling ill, when we get a poor grade on an exam, or when our car doesn't start—in short, when we are angry and frustrated in general—we are likely to have many unpleasant thoughts and feelings, and these are likely to lead to violent behavior.

# Theories of aggression

## 1. **Frustration-Aggression –displacement theory:**

Our motivation for aggression increases when our ongoing behavior is interrupted or we are prevented from reaching a goal.

- This is based on the account that one of our neural systems is responsible for executing the basic responses to threat. It so happens that one of these basic responses from this system is that of aggression.

- The system is made up of and follows from the amygdala to the hypothalamus and finally to the periaqueductal gray matter
- if a man is disrespected and humiliated at his work, but cannot respond to this for fear of losing his job, he may go home and take his anger and frustration out on his family



## 2. **Cognitive Neo-association Theory**

- Berkowitz (1993) has proposed that aversive events such as frustrations, provocations, loud noises, and uncomfortable temperatures produce negative affect.
- Negative affect automatically stimulates various thoughts, memories, expressive motor reactions, and physiological responses associated with both fight and flight tendencies
- negative feelings and experiences are the main cause of anger and angry aggression. Sources of anger include: pain, frustration, loud noise, crowding, sadness, and depression.

- The fight associations give rise to initial feelings of anger, whereas the flight associations give rise to initial feelings of fear
- it also provides a causal mechanism for explaining why aversive events increase aggressive inclinations, i.e., via negative affect

**Social Learning Theory:** Human aggression is largely learned by watching other people behave aggressively, either in person or in films. It is also learned when we are rewarded for aggression.

- According to social learning theories (Bandura 2001), people acquire aggressive responses the same way they acquire other complex forms of social behavior—either by direct experience or by observing others.
- It explains the acquisition of aggressive behaviors, via observational learning processes and provides a useful set of concepts for understanding and describing the beliefs and expectations that guide social behavior.

## **Excitation Transfer Theory**

- This theory suggests that arousal from one situation can be transferred to another situation.
- If two arousing events are separated by a short amount of time, arousal from the first event may be misattributed to the second event. If the second event is related to anger, then the additional arousal should make the person even angrier.

# (assignment topic) How to reduce aggression

## **1. Teaching non aggressive responses to provocation**

- Reducing exposure to violence
- Social skills training
- Apologies as aggression controllers
- Internalizing anti-aggression beliefs:
- Social modeling

## **2. Reducing frustration**

## **3. Punishment**

## **4. Inducing incompatible responses**