

Aggression

Week 10

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Definitions

CONFLICT

Perceived incompatibility of goals

AGGRESSION

Behaviour intended to hurt someone (physically, verbally, psychologically, economically,...)

HOSTILE/EMOTIONAL AGGRESSION

Aggression driven by anger and performed as an end in itself. Hostile aggression is often spontaneous and followed by guilt or regrets.

INSTRUMENTAL AGGRESSION

Aggression that is a mean to some other end. Instrumental aggression is often planned.

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Instrumental aggression

WHY?

When someone sees an opportunity for gain.



Assessment of material costs and rewards (impact of the ability to sense appropriate opportunities).

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Instrumental aggression

FACTORS OF INFLUENCE

Personal abilities (physical/verbal abilities, feeling of competence, history of successes,...)

Gender (gains and perceived costs/danger for physical and verbal aggressions)

Social benefits (what do you have to lose?)

- Loss of status
- Poverty as the most important factor in violence (Hill, Soriano, Chen, & Laframboise, 1994)

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Hostile aggression



WHY?

Desire to maintain or increase social contact and perceived respect

Protection from a perceived threat to self-esteem or status (when facing social rejection, disrespect, insults,...)

Low impact of perceived costs (e.g. likelihood of punishment)

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Hostile aggression

FACTORS OF INFLUENCE

Presence of an audience

High but fragile self-esteem

Interpretation of ambiguous acts as provocation

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Aggression and negative emotions

THE FRUSTRATION-AGGRESSION THEORY

Frustration: blocking of an important goal
From "frustration" to "negative emotion"



Examples

- Heatwaves and violent crimes (murders, rapes,...)
- Stressful noises, crowding, noxious odours, air pollution
- Frustration and hierarchy in rats

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The role of norms

THE PRO-AGGRESSION NORMS

The norm of family privacy and the special status of "crimes of passion" and "crimes of honour"

- it exempts family life from public standards of behaviours (anonymity)
- accessibility of family members
- presence of weaker members
- social acceptance of violence towards one's childrens

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The role of norms

THE PRO-AGGRESSION NORMS

The right to bear firearms and to use them

The culture of honour

- A special readiness to respond with violence to perceived insults or threats of material loss
- Higher homicide rates in Southern states (USA)

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The role of norms

THE CULTURAL CUES TO VIOLENCE

Notion of accessibility of norms

The weapon effect: the effect of seeing weapons or cues associated to violence

Examples

- The sponge throwing booth (Turner et al., 1977)
- Drivers stopped by police officers
- Black uniforms and penalties in hockey and football

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The role of norms

MODELS OF AGGRESSION

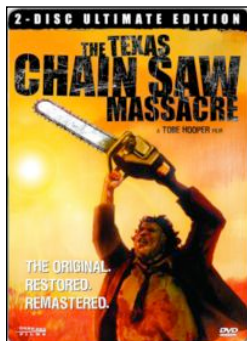
- Accessibility, social acceptance and assessment of costs & rewards
- Interpretations of hostility and accessibility of thoughts
- Long-term and short-term effects
- Impact of the diversity of models

Examples

- Children's exposure to television and behaviour at school
- TV violence at 8 and conviction for violent crimes at 30
- Family models
- ...



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The role of norms



Example of desensitization

- Frequent viewers of "slasher" movies are relatively unconcerned about violence toward women (Donnerstein et al, 1987)!

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What about video games?

DIFFERENCE WITH TV

In a video game, players:

- identify with, and play the role of the main character
- are actively involved in the virtual world
- learn ways to solve virtual problems
- repeat the character's behaviours over and over
- are rewarded for their play

THEORETICAL CONSEQUENCES

Self-perception theory

Attributions

Foot-in-the-door

Social learning

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What about video games?

EMPIRICAL RESULTS UP TO NOW (more than 30 studies)

Playing violent games:

- 1) increases arousal
- 2) increases aggressive thinking (accessibility/bias)
- 3) increases aggressive feelings and expressed hostility
- 4) increases aggressive behaviours
- 5) decreases prosocial behaviours
(e.g. they become slower to offer help to peers)

And the more violent the games played, the bigger the effect!!

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Depth of processing

AT-RISK SITUATIONS AND DEPTH OF PROCESSING

In an anger-inducing situation, the triggering event is generally the most striking.

Thus:

A superficial processing easily produces aggression

A systematic processing produces:

- either an increased accessibility of non-violent alternatives (if possible)
- or the elaboration of justifications for the aggression

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Depth of processing

FACTORS INFLUENCING DEPTH OF PROCESSING

The ability to elaborate alternatives to violence
(importance of models and individual differences)

Emotional activation and cognitive abilities

Alcohol

- Impact on cognitive abilities
- Social disinhibition (impact of norms and of expression of pain)

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Reducing aggression

CATHARSIS

TARGETTING THE CONSEQUENCES (Social learning)

Reinforcing non-aggressive behaviours and ignoring aggressive ones

The problem of punishment

PREVENTING AGGRESSIONS (Social learning)

Reducing exposure to (and accessibility of) aggressive stimuli (TV, video games, models, cues,...)

Promoting the elaboration of alternatives to violence

Promoting empathy

Facilitate systematic processing (but be careful!)

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