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1

Aggression and Violence: Definitions and Distinctions

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Aggression is a phenomenon that can take many forms, ranging from relatively minor acts (such as name calling or pushing) to more serious acts (such as hitting, kicking, or punching) to severe acts (such as stabbing, shooting, or killing). The fact that aggression appears in so many forms can sometimes make it difficult to determine whether or not aggression has occurred. To further complicate matters, as is the case for many psychological constructs, there is often a divide between the general public's notions of aggression and violence and the definitions used by scientists. Frequently, the word "aggression" is used in ways that do not meet the scientific social–psychological definition. For example, people may describe an energetic and persistent salesman as "aggressive," exhort their soccer players to "be more aggressive," or characterize rapid changes in mood as "violent." Medical afflictions and treatments are also sometimes described as aggressive (e.g., an aggressive tumor, aggressive chemotherapy). None of these examples, however, meet social–psychological definitions of aggression or violence. This chapter focuses on answering the question "What are aggression and violence?" by describing in detail what constitutes aggression and violence according to social–psychological research. It also outlines the many forms that aggression can take in order to help readers distinguish between subtypes of aggression. Finally, similar but distinct concepts that are sometimes confused with aggression and violence are described so that readers can better distinguish between these concepts.

Definitions of Aggression and Violence

Aggression

Although the scientific definition of aggression has changed slightly over the years, the definitions utilized by aggression researchers have (mostly) converged to support a single definition. In social psychology, aggression is most commonly defined as a *behavior* that is *intended to harm* another person who is *motivated to avoid that harm* (Bushman & Huesmann, 2010; DeWall, Anderson, & Bushman, 2012). This harm can take many forms (as will be discussed

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throughout this chapter), such as physical injury, hurt feelings, or damaged social relationships (to name just a few). Although definitions vary slightly, highly similar definitions have been utilized by many prominent aggression researchers (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Baron & Richardson, 1994; Berkowitz, 1993; Geen, 2001; Krahé, 2013). For example, in order to better distinguish between certain subtypes of aggression, Anderson and Bushman (2002) more specifically defined human aggression as "any behavior directed toward another individual that is carried out with the *proximate* (immediate) intent to cause harm. In addition, the perpetrator must believe that the behavior will harm the target, and that the target is motivated to avoid the behavior" (p. 28).

Both of the definitions provided above include several key characteristics that help to distinguish aggression from other phenomena. First, aggression is an observable behavior—not a thought or feeling. Although aggressive cognitions (e.g., hostile attitudes, beliefs, thoughts, or wishes) and aggressive affect (e.g., feelings of anger, rage, or desire for revenge) can and frequently do serve as important precursors to aggressive behavior, neither aggressive cognition nor aggressive affect is considered aggression. Second, the act must be intentional and be carried out with the goal of harming another. This means that accidental harm (e.g., unintentionally elbowing someone in a crowded room) does not count as aggression. The focus on intent also outweighs the outcomes of the behavior in question (i.e., whether or not harm has actually occurred). This means that scenarios in which one person harms another for their benefit (e.g., a doctor amputating a patient's leg to save their life but thereby causing pain) *are not* considered aggression. Conversely, scenarios in which individuals attempt to harm another but fail to do so (e.g., a person shoots to kill someone but misses) *are* considered aggression. Third, aggression involves people, meaning that damaging inanimate objects (e.g., kicking a wall, smashing plates, or pounding one's fists on a table) is not considered aggression *unless* it is carried out with the intention of harming another person (e.g., slashing the tires on your enemy's car). Finally, the recipient of the harm must be motivated to avoid that harm. This condition excludes phenomena such as masochism (i.e., deriving pleasure, often sexual, from pain), suicide, and assisted suicide from the realm of aggression. This does not mean that some of these latter forms of behavior are totally unrelated to aggression. Indeed, some of the same psychological processes are likely at work. Nonetheless, research over many decades has shown that the more specific definition of "aggression" used by social psychologists has proven to be extremely useful in developing and testing high-quality theories of aggression, and shown that the various types of behavior that do meet this specific definition are very similar in etiology and underlying processes.

Violence

Although violence is sometimes treated as separate from aggression—especially by criminologists, political scientists, public policy makers, and the general public—most social psychologists consider violence to be a subset of aggression. Specifically, the most common scientific definition of *violence* is as an extreme form of aggression that has severe physical harm (e.g., serious injury or death) as its goal (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Bushman & Huesmann, 2010; Huesmann & Taylor, 2006). Like aggression, a behavior does not have to cause actual harm to be classified as violent. Attempting to fatally wound someone with a knife, but missing, is still considered a violent act, for example.

Aggressive and violent behaviors are best conceptualized as being on a continuum of severity with relatively minor acts of aggression (e.g., pushing) at the low end of the spectrum and

violence (e.g., homicide) at the high end of the spectrum. Thus, all acts of violence are considered instances of aggression, but not all acts of aggression are considered instances of violence. For example, a child pushing another child away from a favored toy would be considered aggressive but not violent. An extreme act, such as attempted murder, however, would be considered both aggressive and violent (with violent being the more descriptive term).

In recent years, some nonphysical forms of aggression have earned the label "violence" when the consequences are severe. For example, certain types or patterns of verbal aggression are sometimes labeled "emotional violence," usually when directed at children or intimate partners with the goal of severely harming the target's emotional or social well-being. Nonetheless, "violence" is most often researched in the context of extreme physical aggression. Since violence is considered a subset of aggression, the remainder of this chapter will focus primarily on aggression with the understanding that most of the classifications of aggression are also applicable to violence.

In the United States, the Federal Bureau of Investigation classifies murder, forcible rape, aggravated assault, and robbery as violent crimes, with the definition of each crime closely resembling social–psychological definitions of violence. But, even here, there is some ambiguity. Although the relevant research is sometimes considered politically controversial, some studies of rape have found that the primary intent of some rapists is not to harm the victim but rather sexual gratification. This does not mean that the harm to the victim should be downplayed, of course, or that the crime should be considered less offensive. But the focus on intent is important if one wants to thoroughly understand such heinous behavior in order to devise interventions that reduce its occurrence. Similarly, many robberies have as their primary goal the attainment of money or other valuable resources, and to the robber the harm that is visited upon the victim is incidental. Again, the scientific goal of understanding the criminal act of robbery requires a full understanding of the various motivations that underlie it, and theories of aggression and violence are designed to do just that.

Types of Aggression

As previously noted, aggression can come in a wide variety of forms, and many different types of aggression have been identified in the literature (Krahé, 2013; Parrott & Giancola, 2007). Several categorization schemes have been proposed to organize the many types of aggression, but there is still controversy regarding which taxonomy is best (Parrott & Giancola, 2007).

Two of the most recently proposed taxonomies of aggression are provided in Table 1.1 and Table 1.2 as examples. These provide an overview of the many different types of aggression while avoiding redundancy. Given the huge number of subtypes that have emerged in the literature and the considerable overlap between many of those subtypes, the discussion is necessarily incomplete, but the most common classifications are discussed. Furthermore, this chapter asks the reader to consider that there may not be a single "best" taxonomy of aggression. That is, which distinctions are most useful may well depend on the research question being considered.

Response Modes

One of the most common distinctions made in classifying aggressive behavior is response mode. Aggression is most often classified as physical, verbal, or relational in nature (Bushman & Huesmann, 2010). Physical aggression involves physically harming another person (e.g., punching,

Table 1.1 Aggression taxonomy proposed by Krahé (2013).

Aspect	*Subtypes*	*Examples*
Response modality	Verbal	Shouting or swearing at someone
	Physical	Hitting or shooting someone
	Postural	Making threatening gestures
	Relational	Giving someone the "silent treatment"
Immediacy	Direct	Punching someone in the face
	Indirect	Spreading rumors about someone behind their back
Response quality	Action	Making another person engage in unwanted sexual acts
	Failure to act	Withholding important information from a colleague at work
Visibility	Overt	Humiliating someone in front of others
	Covert	Sending threatening text messages to a classmate
Instigation	Proactive/unprovoked	Grabbing a toy from another child
	Reactive/retaliative	Yelling at someone after having been physically attacked
Goal direction	Hostile	Hitting someone out of anger or frustration
	Instrumental	Taking a hostage to secure a ransom
Type of harm	Physical	Broken bones
	Psychological	Fears and nightmares
Duration of effects	Transient	Minor bruises
	Lasting	Long-term inability to form relationships
Social units involved	Individuals	Intimate partner violence
	Groups	Riots and wars

Table 1.2 Aggression taxonomy proposed by Parrott and Giancola (2007).

	Direct Expression	*Indirect Expression*
Active Expression	*Subtypes*	*Subtypes*
	Physical	Physical
	Verbal	Verbal
	Postural	Postural
	Damage to property	Damage to property
	Theft	Theft
Passive Expression	*Subtypes*	*Subtypes*
	Physical	Physical
	Verbal	Verbal
	Damage to property	Damage to property
	Theft	Theft

kicking, stabbing, or shooting). Verbal aggression involves using words to harm another person (e.g., name calling, swearing, or screaming). Relational aggression (sometimes called social aggression) involves harming another person by damaging their social relationships or making them feel unaccepted or excluded (e.g., spreading rumors, neglecting to invite someone to a social event, or telling others not to hang out with someone). It has also been proposed that aggression can be postural in nature (e.g., making threatening gestures or invading personal space; Krahé, 2013;

Parrott & Giancola, 2007), but this classification is less common than the other response modes. Similarly, some researchers (e.g., Parrott & Giancola, 2007) suggest treating damage to property and theft as distinct forms of aggression (as long as they are carried out with the intent to harm another).

Traditional Dichotomous Distinctions

Throughout the study of human aggression, many dichotomous distinctions have been proposed. This section describes the most common distinctions made in classifying aggressive behavior, some of the issues associated with these traditional distinctions, and some suggested methods of dealing with those classification issues. Generally speaking, each of the response modes described earlier can vary along the characteristics discussed in this section. For example, physical aggression can be considered hostile or instrumental, direct or indirect, and active or passive. The same is true for verbal and relational aggression.

Hostile Versus Instrumental Aggression

The distinction between instrumental and hostile aggression is one of the oldest and most prevalent classification schemes (Bushman & Anderson, 2001; see Buss, 1961; Feshbach, 1964; Hartup, 1974 for early discussions). Hostile aggression is motivated by a desire to hurt a person and is characterized as affectively "hot" behavior that is angry and impulsive. This type of aggression is also known as "angry," "affective," "retaliatory," "impulsive," and "reactive" aggression. Hitting someone who has made you angry (perhaps by insulting you) would be an example of hostile aggression. In contrast, instrumental aggression (also known as "premeditated" and "proactive" aggression) is motivated by a desire to attain some other goal (e.g., money, social status, or sex) and typically is characterized as affectively "cold" behavior that is calm and calculated. The harm caused to the victim by instrumental aggression is simply a means of attaining the other desired goal. Shooting at the police in order to safely escape from a bank robbery would be an example of instrumental aggression.

The dichotomies of hostile versus instrumental aggression, impulsive versus premeditated aggression, and reactive versus proactive aggression overlap considerably and are often used interchangeably, but each of these dichotomies emphasizes slightly different aspects of aggressive behavior (Anderson & Huesmann, 2003). The hostile versus instrumental distinction emphasizes the goal of the aggressive behavior (i.e., hurting someone versus obtaining some other goal). The impulsive versus premeditated distinction emphasizes how thoughtless (impulsive) versus thoughtful (premeditated) the behavior is. Finally, the reactive versus proactive distinction emphasizes whether the behavior occurred in response to provocation (reactive) or without provocation (proactive).

Despite their popularity, some researchers (Anderson & Carnagey, 2004; Anderson & Huesmann, 2003; Bushman & Anderson, 2001) have pointed out that traditional dichotomous approaches fall short in classifying aggression, especially when treated as nonoverlapping dichotomous categories, because they fail to include mixed motive aggression and are confounded with other common dichotomies. The key to understanding this problem lies in the term "dichotomy"—this means that each instance must be classified into only one of two possible categories. But aggression is more complex, and the most popular aggression and violence

dichotomies overlap. For example, the hostile versus instrumental dichotomy overlaps with the dichotomy of automatic versus controlled information processing, but it isn't exactly the same. The traditional hostile versus instrumental distinction requires aggressive behavior to be motivated by either a desire to hurt or a desire to attain some other goal, leaving no room for aggression motivated by multiple goals. Say, for example, an unpopular high school student is bullied on a daily basis and often fantasizes about taking revenge on the bully to finally end the bullying and earn the respect of their peers (a premeditated plan with safety and social respect as instrumental rewards). One day, the bully pushes the victim over the edge, and the bullied student lashes out in a fit of rage (a hostile retaliation), earning the desired rewards. This example has elements of both hostile and instrumental aggression, and cannot be easily classified using the traditional dichotomy.

Similarly, traditional classification requires that hostile aggression be relatively automatic (i.e., impulsive) whereas instrumental aggression is regarded as relatively controlled (i.e., calculated), but sometimes hostile aggression has controlled aspects and instrumental aggression has automatic aspects. Say, for example, that two men get into an argument at a bar. One man angrily prepares to punch the other man until he notices a gun in that man's pocket. The would-be aggressor then quickly backs down and decides to scream a verbal insult instead. The fact that the intended aggression was driven by anger and that the verbal insult would also be considered hostile would classify it as a hostile act, but the fact that potential negative consequences were considered (i.e., getting shot) would classify the same act as instrumental. Again, the traditional hostile versus instrumental dichotomous classification scheme falls short in describing this behavior.

One way to deal with these classification issues is to (1) distinguish between the proximate and ultimate goals of aggressive behaviors and (2) adopt a dimensional approach to classification (Anderson & Carnagey, 2004; Anderson & Huesmann, 2003). Using this scheme, the proximate (or immediate) goal of aggressive behavior must be to harm another, but the ultimate goal can be hostile in nature (e.g., wishing only to bring harm to another person), instrumental in nature (e.g., aggressing only in order to steal money), or a mixture of both (e.g., aggressing against another because you dislike that person *and* want to steal his or her money). Similarly, any act of aggression can be located at various points on at least four different continuous (i.e., not dichotomous) dimensions: (1) how much hostile or agitated affect is present, (2) how automatic the behavior was, (3) the extent to which the ultimate goal is to benefit the perpetrator versus harm the victim, and (4) the extent to which consequences of the aggressive action were considered. This dimensional approach allows for a more nuanced classification of aggressive behavior that accommodates mixed motives and relatively automatic but consequence-sensitive forms of aggression.

Direct Versus Indirect Aggression

Aggression can also be classified as direct or indirect (Buss, 1961; Krahé, 2013). Direct aggression occurs when the victim is physically present whereas indirect aggression occurs when the victim is physically absent (DeWall et al., 2012). For example, punching someone in the face would be considered direct physical aggression whereas hiring a hit man to assassinate the same person would be indirect physical aggression (although the hit man's action would be direct). Similarly, insulting someone to their face would be direct verbal aggression whereas anonymously sending mean emails to the same person would be indirect verbal aggression.

Unfortunately, like the hostile versus instrumental dichotomy, there are classification issues associated with the direct versus indirect aggression dichotomy because the latter classification confounds (1) the visibility of the act and actor to the victim with (2) proximity to the harm-producing act (Anderson & Carnagey, 2004). For example, if a jury sentences a criminal to death, the presence of the criminal during the trial would classify this action as direct aggression. However, the fact that the actual execution will take place at a later time with no jury members present suggests that this action is better classified as indirect aggression. Choosing instead to classify this behavior as highly visible (i.e., overt rather than covert) but low in proximity resolves this issue. In some scenarios, however, it may be necessary to refine the dimensions of visibility and proximity even further. For example, if a sniper assassinates someone from a great distance, the act of aggression is low in visibility (i.e., the victim could not possibly see who was responsible), high in temporal proximity (i.e., the victim will suffer the consequences immediately), and low in spatial proximity given the large distance between the aggressor and victim. Similarly, if an assassin were to put slow-acting poison in a person's drink and then inform the victim, this act of aggression would be high in visibility and low in temporal proximity (i.e., immediacy) but high in spatial proximity.

Displaced and Triggered Displaced Aggression

Aggression is also sometimes classified as displaced (vs. not displaced) or triggered displaced aggression (a subset of displaced aggression). Displaced aggression occurs when an innocent substitute target becomes the victim of aggression (Bushman & Huesmann, 2010). For example, say a waiter is insulted by a customer at work. Although the waiter is very angry, he refrains from retaliating. If he then goes home and yells at his girlfriend for no apparent reason, displaced aggression has occurred. Instead of retaliating against the customer, the waiter's innocent girlfriend becomes the target of his aggressive outburst. Triggered displaced aggression occurs when the substitute target is guilty of some relatively minor offense (Miller, Pedersen, Earleywine, & Pollock, 2003). For example, if the same waiter had come home to find that his girlfriend still had not taken out the trash (as she had promised to do), this minor offense may have triggered him to aggress against her verbally. Here, there is an apparent reason for the waiter's aggressive outburst (i.e., the unfinished household chore), but his aggressive response is disproportionate to the severity of his girlfriend's offense. Research has shown that the likelihood and/or severity of triggered displaced aggression increases if the potential aggressor ruminates about the initial provocation, and that such rumination can sustain a readiness to aggress over long periods of time (Bushman, Bonacci, Pedersen, Vasquez, & Miller, 2005). Triggered displaced aggression is also more likely if the aggressor dislikes the substitute target, if the target is dissimilar to the aggressor, or if the target is a member of an outgroup (Pedersen, Bushman, Vasquez, & Miller, 2008).

Both types of displaced aggression occur for two primary reasons (Bushman & Huesmann, 2010). First, sometimes it is unfeasible to retaliate against the provocateur. This can happen because the provocateur is either absent (e.g., one receives poor job performance evaluations by email) or an intangible entity (e.g., heat, foul odors). Second, the aggressor may fear retaliation from the provocateur (as in the case of an employee refraining from retaliating against a frustrating boss for fear of getting fired). This fear of consequences inhibits aggression against the dangerous provocateur and facilitates aggression against less dangerous substitute targets.

Active Versus Passive Aggression

Aggression can also be classified as active or passive (Bushman & Huesmann, 2010; Buss, 1961; Krahé, 2013). Active aggression involves engaging in harmful behavior whereas passive aggression involves failing to engage in helpful behavior. For example, kicking or insulting someone would be considered active aggression whereas intentionally "forgetting" to invite someone to a party and intentionally withholding help from someone who is drowning would both be considered passive aggression (in fact, the latter could be considered passive violence, given its severity).

Overt Versus Covert Aggression

Aggression is also sometimes classified as overt or covert (Krahé, 2013). Overt aggression is highly visible behavior, such as making fun of someone or beating them up in front of their friends. In contrast, covert aggression is relatively low in visibility, such as leaving mean notes for a person or spreading rumors about people behind their back.

Legitimate Versus Illegitimate Aggression

It has also been proposed that aggression can be classified as legitimate versus illegitimate (Krahé, 2013). For example, capital punishment (which meets the social–psychological definition of aggression) is legal in many countries and thus could be considered legitimate aggression. In contrast, homicide would be considered illegitimate aggression. Unfortunately, the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate aggression outside the legal realm is highly subjective. For example, if a group of slaves were to rise up and aggress against their masters in order to gain their freedom, this would be likely to be considered legitimate aggression by the slaves and anyone else who is against slavery. The same behavior, however, would be likely to be considered illegitimate aggression by the slave masters and anyone else supportive of slavery. This same problem appears when one considers who gets labeled as rebels versus freedom fighters. Indeed, at least one of Israel's past prime ministers (Menachem Begin) was considered by many to be a terrorist in his youth but a freedom fighter later in his career.

Another excellent example of the subjectivity of the legitimate–illegitimate aggression distinction is found in the controversy surrounding corporal punishment (e.g., spanking children). Although corporal punishment is considered a criminal act in many countries, it is completely legal for parents in the United States and is considered by many to be a legitimate form of behavioral control and child rearing. However, despite the legal status of and support for corporal punishment in the United States, there are still plenty of parents (and nonparents) who consider it an illegitimate form of aggression. Similarly, although capital punishment is legal in some parts of the United States, there is still a great deal of controversy concerning its legitimacy. Thus, even when a given act of aggression is clearly legal or illegal, there is still a large amount of subjectivity in classifying that behavior as legitimate or illegitimate aggression.

Personological and Situational Aggression

The general aggression model (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Anderson & Carnagey, 2004; DeWall & Anderson, 2011; DeWall et al., 2012)—a widely used, integrative, and comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding human aggression—emphasizes that aggressive

behavior is heavily (and interactively) influenced by both personological and situational variables. As such, any given instance of aggressive behavior can be dimensionally classified based upon the extent to which it is influenced by person factors, situation factors, or both. Examples of person factors that increase the likelihood of aggression include traits (e.g., narcissism or susceptibility to hostile attribution, perception, and expectation biases), sex (males tend to be more physically aggressive and more likely to engage in violent behaviors), beliefs (e.g., aggression-related self-efficacy[1] and outcome-efficacy[2] beliefs), attitudes (e.g., positive attitudes toward violence in general or violence against certain groups), values (e.g., valuing personal honor and answering violations of honor with violence), long-term goals (e.g., desiring to be feared or desiring wealth by any means necessary), and scripts (e.g., believing that the only viable response to being punched is to punch back). Examples of situation factors that increase the likelihood of aggression include aggressive cues (e.g., the presence of weapons or recent exposure to media violence), provocation (e.g., being insulted or shoved), frustration (e.g., being blocked from obtaining a goal), pain and discomfort (e.g., being kicked or exposure to loud noises or hot temperatures), drugs (e.g., alcohol and caffeine), and incentives (e.g., money, social status, and goods). In behaviorist terms, situation factors can be thought of as antecedents that increase (e.g., establishing operations) or decrease (e.g., discriminative stimuli) the likelihood of aggressive behavior, depending upon their associations with different consequences (i.e., rewards and punishments). For example, if a person often retaliates when provoked and is always satisfied after retaliating, the satisfaction reinforces the aggressive behavior and provocation becomes an establishing operation (i.e., it increases the likelihood of aggression in the presence of provocation). In contrast, if a child is always punished for pushing other children in front of his parents, then parental presence becomes a discriminative stimulus and decreases the likelihood of aggressive behavior.

Thus, if a pacifistic individual is provoked to the point of engaging in uncharacteristic aggression, this would be classified as situation-based over person-based behavior. In contrast, if a highly aggressive individual attacks someone in the relative absence of situational risk factors for aggression, that behavior would be classified as person based over situation based. Of course, in many (if not most) scenarios, aggressive behavior is both personologically and situationally determined, as in the case of a narcissistic individual retaliating against someone who has insulted them or a sexist man becoming especially aggressive toward women after drinking alcohol. Therefore, most instances of aggressive behavior are not clearly person versus situation based, but it can nonetheless be helpful to consider the extent to which a behavior is instigated by personological and situational variables.

Similar Concepts

This section defines and discusses concepts that are similar to but distinct from aggression and violence to help readers differentiate between them.

Antisocial Behavior

Antisocial behavior is any behavior that violates the social norms of appropriate behavior (DeWall & Anderson, 2011; Krahé, 2013). Whether or not a particular behavior is considered antisocial depends on the social context. Many acts of aggression and violence are considered antisocial behavior, but not all. For example, engaging in a physical fight at a funeral would be

considered antisocial behavior, but fighting someone in a boxing ring would not be antisocial behavior, even though both examples count as aggression. Similarly, social norms in most societies dictate that killing others is wrong, but these constraints are loosened in times of war, when killing the enemy becomes socially normative behavior. Thus, killing would not necessarily be classified as antisocial behavior in a war zone.

Antisocial behavior is broader in scope than aggression because it also includes nonaggressive behaviors. For example, littering, vandalism, and lying are all considered antisocial behaviors in most societies, but they do not necessarily constitute aggression. Note, however, that each of these examples could also be classified as aggressive behavior if the action were carried out to harm another person who was motivated to avoid that harm (e.g., littering in your neighbor's backyard to annoy them).

Juvenile Delinquency

Definitions of juvenile delinquency are much more closely tied to legal factors than are social–psychological definitions of aggression and violence. For example, Siegel and Welsh (2014) define juvenile delinquency as "participation in illegal behavior by a minor who falls under a statutory age limit" (p. 13). The concept of juvenile delinquency encompasses a wide range of behaviors from relatively minor acts such as loitering to extreme acts such as murder. For example, the self-report measure of delinquency included in National Youth Surveys (for more information see Anderson & Dill, 2000; Elliott, Huizinga, & Ageton, 1985) includes items that assess vandalism, theft, illegal drug use, prostitution, disorderly conduct, obscene prank phone calls, drug trafficking, breaking and entering, rape and attempted rape, and assault and attempted homicide. Like antisocial behavior, some types of juvenile delinquency are aggressive in nature, but not all delinquent acts are aggressive. Like aggression, delinquency is sometimes classified as overt or covert, with overt delinquency (e.g., assault, murder, rape) being aggressive and covert delinquency (e.g., shoplifting, or selling or using illegal drugs) being nonaggressive (Hoeve et al., 2009). Although juvenile delinquency bears a striking resemblance to antisocial behavior, it places greater emphasis on laws being broken as opposed to social norms being violated and is also limited to a younger population.

Coercion

Coercion can be defined as "any action taken with the intention of imposing harm on another person or forcing compliance" (Tedeschi & Felson, 1994, p. 168). Coercive actions take three primary forms: threats, punishments, and bodily force (Krahé, 2013; Tedeschi & Felson, 1994). Threats communicate an intention to harm another person (e.g., a police officer threatening to shoot a criminal if they make a move); punishments carry out harm on another person (e.g., a parent putting a child in time-out for misbehaving); and bodily force uses physical contact to elicit compliance (e.g., one person physically restraining another to stop that person from escaping). Coercion is viewed as a form of social influence that focuses as much on obtaining compliance as it does on harming others. Although harm and compliance are the proximate goals of coercion, coercive actions are carried out in order to attain some other ultimate goal (e.g., money, cooperation, social status, or sex), meaning that coercion most closely resembles traditionally defined instrumental aggression. Since coercion focuses on obtaining compliance as well as inflicting harm, it is a broader construct than aggression.

Assertiveness

Assertiveness can be defined as behavior that allows one to stand up for personal rights and express one's thoughts and feelings in a respectful manner to others (Parham, Lewis, Fretwell, Irwin, & Schrimsher, 2015; Warland, McKellar, & Diaz, 2014). Definitions of assertiveness are sometimes contrasted with inaction (i.e., lack of assertiveness) or with aggressive styles of standing up for oneself. For example, if someone were to cut in front of you in line at the grocery store, there would be at least three responses to choose from. You could (1) sacrifice your personal rights by doing nothing and letting the person cut ahead of you (the inactive, unassertive response), (2) stand up for your personal rights by speaking with the person about how it is unfair for them to cut in front of you and asking them to please go to the back of the line (the assertive response), or (3) aggressively push the person to the back of the line to make sure you keep your spot (the aggressive response). Thus, although laypeople sometimes incorrectly describe assertive people as aggressive, assertiveness stands apart from aggression given its focus on respecting the rights of others (and, in doing so, not harming them).

Aggressive Cognition

Aggressive cognition includes factors such as aggressive beliefs and attitudes (e.g., believing that getting into fights is common and acceptable), aggressive perceptual schemata (e.g., a tendency to perceive ambiguous situations in a hostile manner), aggressive expectation schemata (e.g., a tendency to expect others to behave aggressively), and aggressive behavioral scripts (e.g., believing that the appropriate response to an insult is attacking the insulter; Anderson & Bushman, 2002). The sum of these different cognitive components can be thought of as knowledge structures, and the sum of a person's knowledge structures can be seen as what determines their personality (Mischel, 1973; Mischel & Shoda, 1995). People who characteristically have aggressive cognitions easily accessible—that is, those who frequently see the world as an aggressive place and who can easily think of aggressive solutions to interpersonal conflict—tend to behave aggressively. Similarly, situations that increase aggressive thinking (e.g., provocation, media violence) tend to increase aggression. However, the activation (or thinking) of aggressive cognitions does not always lead to aggressive behavior, nor are aggressive cognitions required for aggressive behavior to occur. Thus, aggressive cognitions, though related, are distinct from aggressive behavior.

Aggressive Affect

Aggressive affect includes feelings of anger, hostility, and irritability (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Prot & Anderson, 2013). The presence of aggressive affect increases the likelihood of aggressive behavior occurring, but, like aggressive cognition, aggressive affect is not a necessary condition for the elicitation of aggressive behavior. It is quite possible for aggression to occur in the absence of aggressive affect (as in traditionally classified instrumental aggression). Similarly, the presence of aggressive affect does not guarantee that aggression will occur. Thankfully, being angry at others does not mean that one will necessarily aggress against them. Aggressive affect and aggressive cognitions work interactively to influence aggressive behavior (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). For example, in ruminatively based triggered displaced aggression, an initial provocation elicits aggressive affect, which is sustained over time by rumination

(i.e., aggressive cognition), leading to later aggressive behavior (Miller et al., 2003). But, again, it is important to maintain the distinction between aggressive affect and aggressive behavior (e.g., aggression).

Many measures of aggressive personality include aggressive cognition, aggressive affect, and aggressive behavior, mainly because they so frequently co-occur. This sometimes leads to confusion in the research literature by clouding the distinctions between these three very different concepts.

Conclusion

Although the fact that there are so many different forms that aggression and violence may make comprehensive classification of these phenomena a difficult task, many years of research have provided us with empirically supported taxonomies. Aggression is most often defined as behavior carried out with the intent to harm another person who is motivated to avoid that harm. Violence is an extreme form of aggression that has severe harm (usually physical injury or death) as its goal. The most common response modes for aggression are physical, verbal, and relational in nature. Aggression can be classified in many ways. It can be hostile or instrumental, reactive or proactive, impulsive or premeditated, direct or indirect, active or passive, overt or covert, and legitimate or illegitimate. It can also be characterized as displaced or triggered displaced versus not displaced, and person based, situation based, or both person and situation based. Although aggression shares similarities with antisocial behavior, juvenile delinquency, coercion, assertiveness, aggressive cognition, and aggressive affect, it stands apart from each of these concepts. In sum, the question "What are aggression and violence?" has a great many answers given the many types of aggression that have been identified. We hope that this chapter has provided the reader with a much clearer understanding of what aggression and violence are and what they are not.

Notes

1 Aggression-related self-efficacy beliefs refer to beliefs about how successful one is likely to be in carrying out an aggressive behavior (e.g., "Am I strong enough to win a fight against that person?").
2 Aggression-related outcome-efficacy beliefs refer to beliefs about whether or not an aggressive action will produce the desired outcome (e.g., "If I hit this person, will they stop insulting me?").

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