CHAPTER 11

Aggression

OUTLINE

I. What is Aggression?
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   A. Cultural and Aggression
   B. Gender and Aggression
   C. Individual Differences
III. Origins of Aggression
   A. Is Aggression Innate?
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   A. Violence in TV, Movies, Music Lyrics, and Video Games
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   A. Sexual Aggression among College Students
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   C. Child Abuse
VII. Reducing Violence
   A. Multiple Causes, Multiple Cures
   B. Conclusions
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LEARNING OBJECTIVES: GUIDELINES FOR STUDY

You should be able to do each of the following by the conclusion of Chapter 11.

1. Define aggression as well as related concepts, such as anger, hostility, and violence. Distinguish between instrumental aggression and emotional aggression. (pp. 391-392)

2. Discuss the role of culture in aggression and attitudes towards aggression. Consider various explanations for differences in aggression across cultures and across groups within cultures. (pp. 392-395)

3. Identify individual differences that have been found to predict aggression, paying particular attention to gender. In doing so, explain the different types of aggression (overt and relational) for which gender differences have been observed. (pp. 395-397)
4. Consider whether aggression is innate by reviewing instinct theories, the evolutionary perspective, and the role of biological factors. Discuss how these different explanations account for gender differences in aggression. (pp. 397-401)

5. Consider whether aggression is learned by reviewing the concepts of reinforcement, punishment, and the social learning theory of aggression. Discuss how socialization accounts for gender and cultural variations in aggression. (pp. 401-406)

6. Explain the original version of the frustration-aggression hypothesis, including discussion of the concepts of displacement and catharsis. Identify problems with this hypothesis and summarize its subsequent reformulation. (pp. 406-408)

7. Discuss the role of affect, arousal, and cognition when it comes to aggression as captured by the negative affect escape model, the process of excitation transfer, the arousal-affect model, and the cognitive-neoassociation analysis. Consider situational factors that influence these processes. (pp. 408-414)

8. Summarize the immediate as well as long-term effects on aggression of exposure to violent forms of media. Explain the concepts of habituation and cultivation. (pp. 414-420)

9. Discuss the influence of nonviolent and violent forms of pornography on nonsexual and sexual aggression, and consider the factors and psychological processes responsible for these effects. Consider types of interventions or education that might reduce these effects. (pp. 420-423)

10. Discuss the antecedents, prevalence, and consequences of different forms of violence among intimates. Discuss the role played by alcohol and rape myth attitudes in sexual aggression among college students and other populations. Discuss effective ways of reducing these forms of violence. (pp. 423-429)

MAJOR CONCEPTS: THE BIG PICTURE

Below are six basic issues or principles that organize Chapter 11. You should know these issues and principles well.

1. Pinning down what is meant exactly by “aggression” can be rather difficult. This chapter emphasizes the role of one’s intention to harm another person in its definition of aggression. Other concepts defined and discussed include violence, anger, and hostility. Two types of aggression are distinguished – aggression that is a means to some other end, and aggression that is impulsive and not intended to achieve some other end.

2. There are a number of ways in which patterns of aggression are similar and different across cultures and gender. Rates of violent crimes vary widely across countries, and across different regions within a particular culture – as in subcultures within a society that emphasize the use of violence to protect or establish one’s honor. There are also significant variations in rates of aggression as a function of age, economic class, and race. In virtually every culture ever studied, men are much more likely than women to commit, and to be victims of, violent crime. Males tend to be more physically aggressive than females, but this difference is weakened under a variety of conditions. For more indirect, relational forms of aggression, females are often more aggressive than males.

3. Various theories and research findings concerning the origins of aggression differ in their perspectives. These perspectives vary in terms of the degree to which they emphasize the “nature” or “nurture” origins of aggression. Perspectives emphasizing the former include those that regard aggression as an innate instinct, as a characteristic favored by natural selection and other processes of evolution, as produced by genetic heritability, and as influenced by biological factors such as hormones and neurotransmitters. Perspectives emphasizing the latter include social
learning theory, which focuses on the influence of models of aggression. These perspectives are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and they can be seen together as illustrating the interaction between nature and nurture, or biological and social factors.

4. There are numerous situational influences on aggression. Among these influences are frustration, negative and positive affect, and arousal. Thought – both automatic and deliberate – can also play an important role in influencing aggression.

5. The media have many important effects on aggression. Depictions of nonsexual violence can increase aggressive behavior among adults and children, and it can lead to changes in people’s sensitivity to and attitudes about violence. Exposure to pornographic materials can also influence aggressive behavior and attitudes. The nature of the relationship between exposure to such materials and aggressive behavior depends in part on the arousal elicited by the materials, whether the pornography is nonviolent or violent, and whether the people depicted in the pornography are portrayed as enjoying or suffering through their experience.

6. Violence is not limited to strangers or competing groups. A great deal of violence occurs within familiar contexts and intimate relationships, as is evident in research concerning sexual aggression among college students, physical aggression between spouses or partners, and child abuse.

**KEY TERM EXERCISE: THE CONCEPTS YOU SHOULD KNOW**

Below are all of the key terms that appear in boldface in Chapter 11. To help you better understand these concepts, rather than just memorize them, write a definition for each term in your own words. After doing so, look at the next section where you’ll find a list of definitions from the textbook for each of the key terms presented in random order. For each of your definitions, find the corresponding textbook definition. Note how your definitions compare with those from the textbook.

**Key Terms**

1. displacement
2. instrumental aggression
3. pornography
4. cognitive neoassociation analysis
5. mitigating information
6. emotional aggression
7. cultivation
8. cycle of violence
9. aggression
10. catharsis
11. arousal-affect model
12. social learning theory
13. weapons effect
14. desensitization
15. frustration-aggression hypothesis
16. hostile attribution bias

Textbook Definitions

a. Behavior intended to injure another person who does not want to be injured.
b. Inflicting harm in order to obtain something of value.
c. Inflicting harm for its own sake.
d. The proposition that behavior is learned through the observation of others as well as through the direct experience of rewards and punishments.
e. The idea that (1) frustration always elicits the motive to aggress and (2) all aggression is caused by frustration.
f. Aggressing against a substitute target because aggressive acts against the source of the frustration are inhibited by fear or lack of access.
g. A reduction of the motive to aggress that is said to result from any imagined, observed, or actual act of aggression.
h. The proposal that aggression is influenced by both the intensity of arousal and the type of emotion produced by a stimulus.
i. The view that unpleasant experiences create negative affect, which in turn stimulates associations connected with anger and fear. Emotional and behavioral outcomes then depend, at least in part, on higher-order cognitive processing.
j. The tendency of weapons to increase the likelihood of aggression by their mere presence.
k. Information about a person’s situation indicating that he or she should not be held personally responsible for aggressive actions.
l. Reduction in emotion-related physiological reactivity in response to a stimulus
m. The process by which the mass media (particularly television) construct a version of social reality for the public.
n. Explicit sexual material.
o. The transmission of aggressive behavior across generations.
p. Individuals who tend to perceive hostile intent in others.
ANSWERS FOR KEY TERM EXERCISE

Answers for the key terms exercise are listed below.

1. f
2. b
3. n
4. i
5. k
6. c
7. m
8. o
9. a
10. g
11. h
12. d
13. j
14. l
15. e
16. p
PRACTICE QUIZ: TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE CHAPTER

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. The region of the United States that typically has the highest rates of violence is the
   b. South.
   c. Midwest.
   d. West.

2. The idea that arousal produced by one stimulus can increase a person’s emotional reaction to another stimulus is called
   a. excitation transfer.
   b. incompatible responses.
   c. emotional aggression.
   d. displacement.

3. Research consistent with the cognitive neoassociation analysis has shown that even among people in a neutral mood, aggression can be provoked by
   a. mitigating information.
   b. music that reduces their arousal.
   c. catharsis.
   d. the presence of weapons.

4. Research on the effects of pornography on aggression has found that
   a. the effects of violent pornography tend to be strong only among men who fit the rapist’s profile.
   b. catharsis is much stronger in response to violent pornography than in response to nonviolent pornography.
   c. nonviolent pornography tends to increase aggression primarily when arousal is low.
   d. violent pornography tends to have greater immediate effects on male-to-female aggression than on male-to-male aggression.

5. In some samples of preschool children studied, children living with a stepparent or foster parent were much more likely to be fatally abused than were children living with both biological parents. This finding is most consistent with
   a. negative affect theory.
   b. a cycle of violence.
   c. the concept of catharsis.
   d. evolutionary psychology.

6. Brad is more likely than his peers to interpret other people’s motives as hostile and to think aggressive thoughts whenever he finds himself in a conflict. He also is more likely to lash out with emotional aggression in such situations. Brad’s aggressive behavior is most clearly explained by
   a. Konrad Lorenz’s theory of aggression.
   b. social learning theory.
   c. the cognitive neoassociation analysis.
   d. cultivation.
7. According to social learning theory, an effective way to strengthen existing restraints against aggression is to
   a. discourage displaced aggression.
   b. encourage catharsis through socially acceptable means of displacing aggression.
   c. punish acts of aggression quickly, consistently, and with obvious hostility.
   d. demonstrate nonaggressive responses to a provoking situation.

8. The idea that repeated exposure to violent crimes on the local and national television news leads individuals to become overly fearful, distrustful, and more likely to feel threatened is most consistent with the concept of
   a. cultivation.
   b. habituation.
   c. social learning.
   d. displacement.

9. John read a magazine containing several pictures of very attractive nude models. John found this to be a very pleasant but not particularly arousing experience. Immediately afterward, John was put in a situation in which he had the opportunity to aggress against another man who had acted toward John in a way that might be considered insulting. Compared to someone who had not just seen the pictures, the degree of John’s retaliatory aggression against this individual would likely have been
   a. increased.
   b. reduced.
   c. increased, unless the material that John read elicited feelings of empathy.
   d. reduced if John had already had a great deal of experience with pornography, but increased if he had not.

10. When Carl thinks of any of the *Lethal Weapon* movies, he imagines violence and mayhem. His thoughts are so strong that he’s ready to start a fight at the drop of a hat. For Carl, these movies are most clearly
   a. a source of frustration.
   b. an aggression-enhancing situational cue.
   c. a trigger for death instincts.
   d. an outlet for catharsis.

11. Jerry angered Tom, and now Tom has an opportunity to retaliate by aggressing against Jerry. Assume that Jerry could do each of the following just before Tom has the chance to aggress against him. Of these actions, which, according to the research, should be most successful in reducing the degree of aggression that Tom would use against Jerry in retaliation?
   a. Jerry tricks Tom into drinking a great deal of alcohol, and then tells Tom that he hadn’t meant to anger Tom.
   b. Jerry shows Tom a series of violent cartoons in which both characters depicted in the cartoon are killed.
   c. Jerry shows Tom a picture of a kitten who has lost its mother, causing Tom to feel sympathy and empathy for the kitten.
   d. Jerry gives Tom a punching bag and has Tom punch it a few minutes.

12. When a witness went to the police and told them that she saw Jim leaving the scene of the crime, Jim did not get very upset but instead hired someone to kill her before she could testify in court. Jim’s actions illustrate
   a. emotional aggression.
   b. instrumental aggression.
   c. a cycle of violence.
   d. excitation transfer.
13. According to research by Malamuth, men who fit the rapist’s profile report more sexually coercive behavior in the past and more sexually aggressive intentions for the future than do men who do not fit this profile. Men who fit the rapist’s profile are also more likely than other men to
   a. express attitudes toward women that are very positive, whereas their behaviors are more negative.
   b. be habituated to violent pornography, such that they are no longer aroused by exposure to it.
   c. be vulnerable to the weapons effect.
   d. have high levels of arousal in response to violent pornography.

14. Whenever people stop Lynda from getting what she wants, she verbally attacks them. But she attacks people only when they have stood in her way. Lynda’s behavior is an example of the
   a. frustration-aggression hypothesis.
   b. arousal-affect model.
   c. cycle of violence.
   d. negative affect theory.

15. On the hottest day of the summer, Spike, who is usually not very aggressive, is walking down the street. There is a lot of noise on the street, and the pollution is bad. When Tony sees Spike and comes over to ask him a question, Spike is verbally aggressive to Tony. Spike’s aggression is most likely a reaction to
   a. death instincts.
   b. habituation.
   c. noxious stimuli.
   d. mitigating information.

16. After the home team loses the championship game, many fans of the home team run into the streets and vandalize the neighborhood while yelling, drinking, and fighting. This behavior is least likely to reflect
   a. emotional aggression.
   b. excitation transfer.
   c. instrumental aggression.
   d. the relationship between frustration and aggression.

17. Freud believed that aggression was the result of
   a. the life instinct deflecting the death instinct outward rather than inward.
   b. people’s instinctual enjoyment of inflicting pain on others.
   c. the processes of sexual selection.
   d. imitating the behaviors of one’s opposite-sex parent.

18. In a bar, Mick aggressed successfully against a man named Walt. A few minutes later, Mick encountered some other men in the bar whom he found to be annoying. According to social learning theory, Mick’s motivation to aggress against these other men may have been relatively high because his previous act of aggressing against Walt was likely to
   a. reduce Mick’s levels of arousal and negative affect.
   b. reinforce aggressive actions for Mick.
   c. strengthen Mick’s positive affect.
   d. produce catharsis for Mick.
19. When Kentaro asked Florence if he could borrow her class notes for a day, Florence told Kentaro not to bother her and called him annoying. Kentaro was about to make an insulting retort, but did not when he remembered that Florence recently had heard bad news about a loved one back home. Kentaro’s decision not to retaliate against Florence’s insults best illustrates the
a. negative affect theory.
b. impact of appropriate rewards and punishments in social learning.
c. effects of mitigating information.
d. role of gender norms.

20. Which of the following would the social psychological research on aggression suggest is most likely to reduce aggression in society?
   a. Reducing the prevalence of displays of weapons
   b. Exposing people to movies in which the use of violence by “the bad guys” is met with even stronger, successful violence by “the good guys”
   c. Encouraging parents to respond to their children’s aggression by punishing them quickly with spanking and other kinds of non-abusive but very strong physical punishments
   d. Teaching people to be true to themselves by responding directly to their emotional states

21. Based on data from INTERPOL reports, the rates of violent crimes are higher in __________ than many other region in the world.
   a. the Americas
   b. Europe
   c. Africa
   d. England

22. There is considerable variation in how acceptable students found different actions, such as a husband slapping a wife or vice versa. Students from which country found this most unacceptable?
   a. United States
   b. India
   c. Australia
   d. New Zealand

23. Aggression in __________ best predicts aggression in adulthood.
   a. childhood
   b. early teens
   c. late teens
   d. pre-puberty

Essay Questions

24. How are men and women similar or different in terms of aggression?

25. Explain what is meant by the weapons effect. Describe an experiment, discussed in the main text, that illustrates the weapons effect.

26. A group on campus has asked you to provide a list of the factors that make brief exposure to nonviolent pornography more or less likely to lead to aggressive behavior. How would you summarize the research findings relevant to this question?

27. Discuss the latest findings on bullying around the world.
ANSWERS TO THE PRACTICE QUIZ

Multiple-Choice Questions: Correct Answers and Explanations

1. b. South. Over the years, the highest rates of recorded violence in the United States have been reported in the South, followed by the West. This is consistent with the idea that there exists a strong “culture of violence” among White men in the South, as well as in the West.

2. a. excitation transfer. Excitation transfer occurs when arousal experienced in one setting carries over to another setting. This residual arousal can enhance aggressive responding. Incompatible responses are mutually exclusive (experiencing one precludes the other). The different responses described in this question are related, not incompatible. As emotional aggression and displacement concern behaviors, they are not relevant here.

3. d. the presence of weapons. Seeing weapons can lead to automatic associations with aggression and violence, thus making aggressive responses more likely. Mitigating information, factors that reduce arousal, and catharsis all should reduce aggression, not provoke it.

4. d. violent pornography tends to have greater immediate effects on male-to-female aggression than on male-to-male aggression. Male-to-male aggression is no greater after exposure to violent pornography than after exposure to highly arousing but nonviolent pornography; male-to-female aggression, however, is markedly increased. The effects of violent pornography are not limited to those men who fit the rapist’s profile. There is no evidence that catharsis is stronger in response to violent pornography than in response to nonviolent pornography. Nonviolent pornography does not tend to increase aggression primarily when arousal is low; indeed, it tends to decrease aggression when arousal is low and the emotional response to the pornography is positive.

5. d. evolutionary psychology. According to evolutionary psychology, behaviors can be interpreted as attempts to increase the odds of one’s genes being passed on to future generations. Research on child abuse shows that parents are more likely to fatally abuse children if they do not share their genes. Although it is possible that stepparents or foster parents experience more negative affect or have more violence in their family background, there is no clear evidence that either would be the case; thus, there is no compelling reason to suspect a strong role of negative affect or of a cycle of violence. Catharsis is the reduction of the motive to aggress that is said to result from any imagined, observed, or actual act of aggression, but there is no reason to infer any role of catharsis in this research finding.

6. c. the cognitive neoassociation analysis. The cognitive neoassociation analysis proposes that unpleasant experiences create negative affect, which in turn stimulates associations connected with anger and fear. Emotional and behavioral outcomes then depend, at least in part, on higher-order cognitive processing. Brad’s associations of aggressive thoughts in a number of situations and his tendency to see others as hostile are both likely to promote emotional aggression, according to this perspective. In contrast, Lorenz’s theory is instinct-based and has little, if any, direct relevance here. Social learning theory proposes that behavior is learned through the observation of others as well as through the direct experience of rewards and punishments, but there is nothing in this question about such observations or experiences of rewards and punishments. Cultivation is the process by which the mass media construct a version of social reality for the viewing public, but there is no reference to this in the question.
7. demonstrate nonaggressive responses to a provoking situation. This method teaches a peaceful alternative. But there is nothing in social learning theory that suggests that discouraging displacement would be effective, and encouraging catharsis or modeling punishment should, according to this theory, both increase aggression.

8. cultivation. Cultivation is the process by which the mass media (particularly television) construct a version of social reality for the viewing public. The version constructed by television news shows is very violent and threatening. Habituation would be evident to the extent that the individuals adapt to such exposure on the news and no longer become aroused by it. Social learning is not implicated because there is no evidence that the individuals learned acts of aggression. And displacement refers to aggressive acts directed at someone other than the source of provocation, so it is not relevant here.

9. reduced. Experiences that produce pleasant affect and low levels of arousal tend to reduce aggression.

10. an aggression-enhancing situational cue. Any object or external characteristic that is associated with successful aggression or with the negative affect of pain or unpleasantness can serve as an aggression-enhancing situational cue. For Carl, these movies have some of these associations and make him more likely to be aggressive.

11. Jerry shows Tom a picture of a kitten who has lost its mother, causing Tom to feel sympathy and empathy for the kitten. By causing Tom to feel sympathy and empathy, Jerry has created a response in Tom that is incompatible with aggression; by this means, the aggression should be reduced. In contrast, exposure to alcohol or to violent cartoons tends to increase aggression, and giving Tom a punching bag could have any of a number of different effects.

12. instrumental aggression. Instrumental aggression is inflicting harm in order to obtain something of value. Jim’s action is intended to eliminate the witness in order to obtain his freedom. Because the aggression is a means to some end, rather than aggression for its own sake, Jim’s actions do not reflect emotional aggression. No information is given about Jim’s family background or levels of arousal, so there is no evidence suggesting a cycle of violence or excitation transfer.

13. have high levels of arousal in response to violent pornography. In addition to having relatively high levels of arousal in response to violent pornography, men who fit this profile express attitudes and opinions indicating acceptance of violence toward women. Finally, men who fit this profile are as vulnerable to the weapons effect – in which the mere presence of weapons increases the likelihood of aggression – as anyone else.

14. frustration-aggression hypothesis. The frustration-aggression hypothesis proposes that frustration causes the drive to aggress, and that aggression is the result of frustration. Consistent with this hypothesis, whenever Lynda is frustrated she aggresses, and she aggresses only when frustrated.

15. noxious stimuli. A noxious stimulus is an unpleasant event (such as heat, pollution, or noise). Exposure to noxious stimuli tends to increase people’s likelihood of aggressing. The concept of the death instinct concerns the proposal that people have the unconscious desire to return to an original inanimate state; but it cannot explain why Spike would be more aggressive than usual in the situation described in this example. Habituation is the adaptation to something familiar so that psychological and physiological responses are reduced; Spike’s reactions indicate that he had not habituated to the noxious stimuli around him. And mitigating information indicates that a person in a particular situation should not be held responsible for hostile actions; this is not relevant in this question.
16. **c. instrumental aggression.** Instrumental aggression is inflicting harm in order to obtain something of value. The fans’ behavior in this example is not intended to get them anything of value. Rather, their behavior can be seen as aggressive behavior for its own sake, which is consistent with emotional aggression. It is likely that the fans were aroused by the game, and that this arousal may have enhanced their negative feelings after their team lost, leading to an excitation transfer. In short, the fans were probably frustrated by the loss, and their frustration may have caused their desire to aggress.

17. **a. the life instinct deflecting the death instinct outward rather than inward.** Freud proposed the concept of the death instinct – a profound, unconscious desire to escape the tensions of living by becoming still, inanimate, dead. Freud believed that people’s life instinct inhibits them from succumbing to their death instinct, and that aggression is the result of the life instinct’s deflection of the death instinct so that, rather than harm oneself, an individual harms others. Freud did not propose that people have an instinct that causes them to enjoy inflicting pain on others. And neither the processes of sexual selection nor imitating opposite-sex parents would be relevant to Freud’s perspective on aggression.

18. **b. reinforce aggressive actions for Mick.** Because Mick’s aggression was successful, aggression was positively reinforced for him. Social learning theory does not propose that aggression reduces arousal, strengthens positive affect, or produces catharsis.

19. **c. effects of mitigating information.** Mitigating information indicates that a person in a particular situation should not be held personally responsible for his or her hostile actions. Kentaro learned information suggesting that Florence should not be held responsible for her actions while she was worried about the loved one back home. There is no evidence that affect, rewards and punishments, or gender norms played a role in Kentaro’s actions.

20. **a. Reducing the prevalence of displays of weapons.** By this means, people’s exposure to aggression-enhancing cues would be lessened, thereby reducing the likelihood that they would aggress. Exposing people to violent movies, even those in which the violence is met with stronger violence, is likely to increase, rather than decrease, real-world violence; the successful, justifiable violence used by “the good guys” is likely to reinforce the use of violence as a way to solve problems and succeed. Research suggests that parents who punish their children may serve as models of aggression, and that the children are likely to imitate such models eventually. Finally, responding directly to one’s emotional states is likely to cause more, rather than less, aggression; for example, people so responding would be less likely to take into account mitigating information or to be sensitive to norms against aggression.

21. **a. the Americas.** Based on data from INTERPOL, the world’s largest police organization, Nigel Barber (2006) reports that rates of violent crimes are higher in the Americas than many other regions in the world. According to these data, the rates of murder, rape, and assault among 11 countries in the Americas (including Argentina, Bahamas, Chile, Costa Rica, and the U.S.) were about double the world averages. Barber proposes that a key factor that may explain this difference is the relatively high rate of single parenthood in the Americas, which correlates with violent crime.

22. **a. United States.** Cultures also differ in their attitudes about aggression. In a study involving students at 36 universities in 19 different countries around the world, there was considerable variation in how acceptable the students found different actions, such as a husband slapping a wife or vice versa (Douglas & Straus, 2006). For example, almost 80% of the respondents from a university in India did not strongly disapprove of a husband slapping a wife, compared to only about 24% at a university in the United States. In general, samples from Europe were more approving of a husband slapping a wife than were samples from Australia and New Zealand, which in turn tended to be somewhat more approving than samples from North America.
23. **childhood.** Although it is clear that aggression can vary across cultures and gender, a different question is whether there is consistency in aggression within specific individuals. In other words, do some people simply tend to be more aggressive than others, across age and situations? The evidence on this point is fairly clear: Although situational variables certainly do have significant influence on whether and how someone will aggress, there are some stable individual differences in aggressiveness. Aggression in childhood does predict aggression in adolescence and adulthood, along with adult criminality, alcohol abuse, and other antisocial behaviors (Harachi et al., 2006; Vierikko et al., 2006).

**Answers to Essay Questions: Sample Essays**

24. In virtually all cultures studied in virtually any time period, men are more violent than women. Men, for example, are much more likely to commit, and be the victims of, murder. Males in general (both young boys and adult men) are more likely to engage in overt, physical acts of aggression than females (both young girls and adult women). Even in the toddler years, gender differences can be seen – two-year-old boys are more likely to be interested in violent, scary books than are two-year-old girls. But the gender differences in aggression become less clear when considering measures of non-physical aggression. Although they are less physically aggressive than boys, girls are often more indirectly, or relationally, aggressive than boys, especially from around age eleven until they become young adults. An example of indirect or relational aggression is spreading mean-spirited, false stories about someone in order to get others to dislike this person. In addition, even concerning overt aggression, the gender difference may be more complicated than had been realized previously. When the aggression can be hidden – from others or from themselves – the tendency for males to be more overtly aggressive than females may be reduced or even eliminated. For example, in one study, male participants behaved more aggressively than female participants under ordinary conditions. However, when experimental conditions made participants feel anonymous and deindividuated, female participants were just as aggressive as the males.

25. The weapons effect refers to the tendency for the presence of guns and other weapons associated with aggression to increase aggression. The presence of a gun can serve as an aggression-enhancing situational cue for an angered individual, making the individual more likely to resort to aggression or to engage in greater degrees of aggression. As Berkowitz said, “The finger pulls the trigger, but the trigger may also be pulling the finger.” An experiment that illustrates the weapons effect was conducted by Berkowitz and LePage (1967). In this study, male participants were provoked by a confederate, and subsequently were given the opportunity to deliver shocks to the confederate. The participants delivered more shocks to the confederate if a revolver and rifle were present in the room with them than if badminton racquets and shuttlecocks were present. The weapons – the revolver and the rifle – apparently served as aggression-enhancing cues.

26. To the extent that the nonviolent pornography elicits a pleasant emotional response and low levels of arousal, aggression should not increase and retaliatory aggression may even be reduced. To the extent that it elicits a negative emotional response and/or high levels of arousal, however, aggression may increase. Male-to-female aggression is particularly likely to increase after exposure to arousing nonviolent pornography if restraints against male-to-female aggression are reduced, as when men are given repeated opportunities to retaliate against a woman who has angered them. Research has found that men who viewed many pornographic images over an extended period of time (e.g., thirty-six pornographic films over six weeks) were more likely than other men to express negative attitudes toward women.
27. One form of aggression involving children that seems to be fairly consistent across cultures is bullying. Although some differences in frequency and forms of bullying exist, a number of studies of bullying across many countries, especially in Europe, Asia, and North America, have shown fairly consistent patterns of bullying behaviors (Eslea et al., 2003; Kanetsuna et al., 2006; Nesdale & Naito, 2005). Some recent research suggests that 5–15% of students around the world are physically, sexually, or emotionally bullied by other students; other estimates are even higher than that (Dao et al., 2006; Juvonen et al., 2003; Olweus, 2003, 2004).