# 1

# Interpersonal Violence



Violence is a part of all our everyday lives. We read about violence in our morning newspaper, we hear about it in the daily news on the radio and television. We read murder mysteries for fun and play computer games that involve mayhem and death. Krug, Mercy, Dahlberg, and Zwi (2002) make the observation that "About 4400 people die every day because of intentional acts of self-directed, interpersonal, or collective violence. Many thousands more are injured or suffer other non-fatal health consequences as a result of being the victim or witness to acts of violence" (p. 1083). The accompanying costs are played out in the short-term costs of treating victims and helping families while the longer-term costs may be felt by victims whose lives are irrevocably changed and by the costs incurred in bringing the aggressor to justice.

We also know that violence comes in many shapes and forms. A report published by the World Health Organization (WHO; Krug et al., 2002) refers to three distinct classes of violence: first, *self-directed violence* as with suicide and self-harm; second, *interpersonal violence*, which is taken to be physical or sexual violence against a family member, a partner, or within the broader community; and third, *collective violence* in the sense of violent acts by large groups of people or by states such as so-called ethnic cleansing, terrorism, and war.

It is the second of the WHO classes of violence, *interpersonal violence*, which is of concern here.

What exactly is meant by the term *interpersonal violence*? "Interpersonal" can be understood in its literal sense to mean between people; however, "violence" is a little more problematic. The word "violence" is often used interchangeably with "aggression". However, aggression is not the same as violence and it is used differently according to context. In everyday use we use aggression as an adjective to help

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describe certain forms of behaviour: we may say that a football team has an aggressive style of play, which is very different to saying a team has a violent style of play. In ethology the term "aggression" may be used in the sense of an instinct which, given the right environmental stimuli, leads to fighting between members of the same species (Lorenz, 1966). Tinbergen's (1948) famous study of the three-spined stickleback provides an example of instinctive aggression. Tinbergen showed that when a male stickleback is faced with a strange male intruding into its territory, it is the perception of the intruder's red colouration which is the key stimulus that releases aggression in the territorial male. It seems that at some seaside resorts (I took the picture below near Filey in Yorkshire) the birdlife has become overly aggressive.


Source: Picture © Clive R. Hollin.

It is possible that, like sticklebacks, humans have evolved to possess an aggressive instinct that may help explain human conflict (LeBlanc & Register, 2003). However, unlike sticklebacks, for humans there are the complicating factors of the powerful influence of previous learning together with our cognitions in the form of appraisals of the situation and our personal intentions. Siann (1985) is helpful with the suggestion that with respect to interpersonal transactions the term "aggression" refers to the *intention* to hurt another person but without necessarily causing any physical injury. In a similar vein, Anderson and Bushman (2002) state that "All violence is aggression, but many instances of aggression are not violent. For example, one child pushing another off a tricycle is an act of aggression but is not an act of violence" (p. 29). This latter view suggests a continuum that stretches from aggression at one end to violence at the other: Anderson and Bushman suggest the tipping point from aggression to violence is reliant upon the associated level of harm: "*Violence* is aggression that has extreme harm as its goal (e.g., death)" (p. 29).

Yet further, an important distinction may be drawn between *reactive aggression* and *proactive aggression* (sometimes called *hostile aggression* and *instrumental*

*aggression* respectively). The term "reactive aggression" refers to impulsive acts of violence in which the aggressor's psychological state is dominated by a negative affect such as anger. On the other hand, "proactive aggression" refers to premeditated acts of violence, typically carried out to achieve a personally satisfying goal such as financial gain or revenge (Polman, Orobio de Castro, Koops, van Boxtel, & Merk, 2007). As Babcock, Tharp, Sharp, Heppner, and Stanford (2014) point out, the terms "impulsive violence" and "premeditated violence" are also in use, with some overlap with reactive and proactive. The reactive/proactive distinction will be used here, acknowledging that other terms may carry similar if not identical meanings.

Thus, we can arrive at the understanding, as used in this text, that interpersonal violence is the direct, often face-to-face, actions of an individual, including acts of neglect, which inflict emotional, psychological, and physical harm on other people. These acts of violence may be carried out with premeditation or in the heat of the moment.

The complexity of violence has led to various theories from disciplines ranging from anthropology to zoology (Mider, 2013). However, an overview of contemporary *psychological* accounts of *interpersonal violence* provides the starting point here.

## Psychological Accounts of Interpersonal Violence

There are several theoretical models with a psychological emphasis which have been formulated to provide an account of interpersonal violence. These various models seek to explain acts of interpersonal violence by drawing together in a cogent way a variety of psychological and social factors. In addition, there is a range of biological factors, although these are typically associated with aggression generally rather than interpersonal violence specifically (e.g., Farrington, 1997; Olivier & van Oorschot, 2005; Tiihonen et al., 2010; Umukoro, Aladeokin, & Eduviere, 2013).

In the first psychological model, shown in streamlined form in Figure 1.1, Bandura (1978) describes a tripartite system, based on social learning theory, that relates to the *origins*, *instigators*, and *regulators* of aggressive behaviour.

| **Origins of aggression** → | **Instigators of aggression** → | **Regulators of aggression** |
|---|---|---|
| Observational learning | Modelling | External reinforcement |
| Reinforced behaviour | Aversive treatment | External punishment |
| Innate factors | Perceived consequences | Vicarious reinforcement |
| | Instructional control | Vicarious punishment |
| | | Self-reinforcement |
| | | Self-punishment |

**Figure 1.1** Bandura's Social Learning Model of Aggression. Source: After Bandura, 1978.

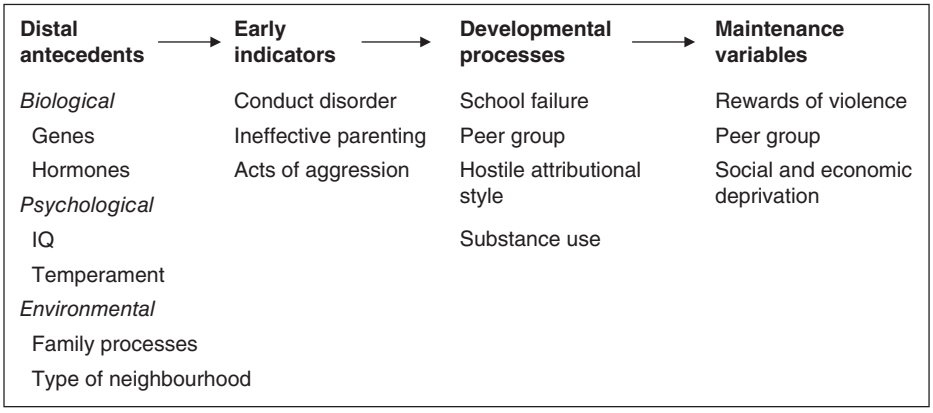


**Figure 1.2** Developmental Model of Violence. Source: After Nietzel et al., 1999.

The model of the aetiology of violent behaviour presented by Nietzel, Hasemann, and Lynam (1999), also drawing on behavioural theory, describes four stages in the development and maintenance of violent behaviour. As illustrated in Figure 1.2, this model progresses through the lifespan identifying the various types of biological, psychological, and social risk factors which may be present at different times.

There is, not surprisingly, a reasonable degree of overlap between these two models: for example, Bandura's *innate factors* are congruous with Nietzel et al.'s *biological antecedents*, while the importance given by Bandura to reinforcement as a *regulator* of behaviour is mirrored in Nietzel et al.'s *maintenance variables*. As noted by Nietzel et al., the evidence base for the importance of the different variables is varied in strength, as is the evidence for the strength of relationships between the variables both within and across stages. Finally, there may be more than one pathway through the model so that individual differences in constitution and experience produce several combinations of variables which may be important in different circumstances.

The General Aggression Model (GAM), as formulated by Anderson and Busman (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; DeWall, Anderson, & Bushman, 2011), places an emphasis on the individual taking part in a social interaction that culminates in a violent act. The GAM views social interactions as a sequence of exchanges, each of which is termed an *episode*, involving verbal and nonverbal behaviour. The main components of the GAM, not unlike other models, consist of *inputs* from the person and the situation, the person's internal affective and cognitive state which is the *route* through which the input information is processed, and finally the *outcomes* of appraisal and the nature of the individual's decision on how to act.

These psychological models all highlight the importance of three, interconnected, areas: first, the formative factors in an individual's development which are associated with the likelihood of violent conduct; second, the environments in which violence occurs; and third the psychological and social processes which occur during the act

of violence. However, before looking at these three areas in more detail, there is one more variable to consider, the gender of the violent person.

## Gender

Inspection of the criminal statistics reveals that there is a gender divide as far as crime, including violent crime, is concerned (Ministry of Justice, 2010a). It is clear from the criminal statistics that men are significantly more involved in crime, including violent crime, than women. However, while a man or a woman may be convicted of the same violent crime, it does not follow that the factors associated with the development and maintenance of that violent act are identical for men and women (Collins, 2010; Putallaz & Bierman, 2004). It is likely that there are some background factors, such as poverty and harsh parenting, which are common to violent men and to violent women, and some gender-specific factors such as prosocial attitudes and emotional problems (Hollin & Palmer, 2006; Manchak, Skeem, Douglas, & Siranosian, 2009).

Crick and Grotpeter (1995) suggest that there is a relationship between gender and *type* of violence. They note that research typically finds that male children use physical aggression to a degree not seen in female children. However, they make the point that just because young girls do not hit, the assumption cannot be made that they are not aggressive; rather, the aggression may take forms other than hitting. Crick and Grotpeter note in support of their hypothesis that girls' aggression is often *relational* rather than *physical*: relational aggression is characterised by attempting to harm other children by damaging their friendships, excluding them from social activities and social groupings, and by spreading false stories so leading to the child's rejection by other children.

Cross and Campbell (2011) make a similar point about older age groups: men are more likely than women to use severe forms of violence such as kicking and punching which inflict physical injury. When the form of violence shifts to less physically aggressive acts, such as hurtful gossip and persistent teasing, so the gender difference is lost. An American study reported by Zheng and Cleveland (2013) compared the developmental trajectories of young men and women, aged between 15 and 22 years, with regard to acts of both violent and non-violent delinquency. They reported that at lower levels of delinquency there were only minimal variations in delinquency between the genders. However, at the higher levels of delinquency, which Zheng and Cleveland called *chronic*, the delinquent acts were violent in nature and perpetrated by males. It is highly likely that the higher number of men in the criminal justice system is a natural consequence of this gender variation although, parenthetically, it seems unlikely that prison has any effect on the recidivism of either men or women (Mears, Cochran, & Bales, 2012).

The role of gender will appear as appropriate in the following chapters. Attention now returns to the three areas—developmental factors, environment, and psychological and social processes related to the act of violence—highlighted by psychological models of interpersonal violence.

## Development of Violent Behaviour

The most powerful way to study behavioural development is by employing a longitudinal research design. The essence of a longitudinal design is that a group of people, usually referred to as a *cohort*, is followed up over a long period of time, typically decades, with periodic measures of a range of variables associated with the behaviour of interest. There is a tradition of using longitudinal research to study the development of violent behaviour (Farrington, 1989).

McAuliffe, Hubbard, Rubin, Morrow, and Dearing (2006) found evidence for the temporal stability of both reactive and proactive aggression. Those individuals whose aggression was evident in childhood and continued into adulthood had poorer outcomes, in terms of both social functioning and criminal offences, than those whose aggression ceased during adolescence. A Canadian longitudinal study reported by Temcheff et al. (2008) covered a 30-year span, from school age into early adulthood, and investigated male and female violence within the family. The males who were aggressive as children showed stable levels of aggression as time passed: they moved from aggression towards peers at school to violence towards partners and children in adulthood. The level of childhood aggression evident for those females in the cohort who became mothers was predictive of their violent behaviour towards their own children. The strongest predictors of violent behaviour included low levels of educational attainment and a punitive parenting style.

Huesmann, Dubow, and Boxer (2009) conducted a longitudinal study investigating the continuity of physical aggression with a cohort of males and females. They monitored acts of aggression through peer report of mildly aggressive acts, such as pushing and shoving, alongside self-report of more serious acts such as punching, kicking, and weapon use. Huesmann et al. reported a moderate degree of continuity of aggression, more distinct for males than for females, from 8 years of age to adulthood. Kokko, Pulkkinen, Huesmann, Dubow, and Boxer (2009) compared data from longitudinal studies carried out in Finland and America: they reported that in both countries and for males and females the level of aggression displayed as a child was a significant predictor of physical aggression as an adult. Finally, the literature review carried out by Piquero, Carriaga, Diamond, Kazemian, and Farrington (2012) came to the conclusion that for some adult offenders aggression is a stable behaviour over the course of the lifespan as traced back to childhood.

The overall conclusion to be drawn from this body of research is clearly expressed by Huesmann et al. (2009): "One of the most consistent findings in aggression and criminology research is that aggression is a relatively 'stable,' self-perpetuating behavior that begins early in life" (p. 136). This point is reinforced still further by the findings of a meta-analytic study reported by Ttofi, Farrington, and Lösel (2012) which showed that involvement in acts of bullying at school was a strong predictor of perpetration of acts of violence in later life.

However, it is not the case that aggressive children are randomly distributed across society: it has long been understood that antisocial and criminal behaviour, including violent behaviour, runs in families. A body of research has looked at the

characteristics of families that engender violent conduct. (The issue of family violence is also considered in Chapter 2 with respect to corporal punishment, throughout Chapter 3, and familial sexual violence is included in Chapter 4.)

## Families

Farrington, Jolliffe, Loeber, Stouthamer-Loeber, and Kalb (2001) considered three generations—fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, uncles, aunts, grandfathers, and grandmothers—in a study of the concentration of offending by boys aged 8, 11, or 14 years, within a sample of 1,395 American families. In keeping with previous research conducted in the UK (Farrington, Barnes, & Lambert, 1996), Farrington et al. reported a high concentration of offending in families: indeed, less than 10% of the families in the study accounted for over 40% of all those who were arrested. While all relatives had some predictive power with respect to boys' offending, it was the father's offending which was the strongest predictor. This pattern of findings has been consistently replicated by studies using samples drawn from a range of populations (e.g., Bijleveld & Wijkman, 2009; Putkonen, Ryynänen, Eronen, & Tiihonen, 2007; Thornberry, Freeman-Gallant, & Lovegrove, 2009). It remains to be established whether the continuity of violence across generations is mainly a function of heredity and associated biological functioning, environment, or, as is more likely, a combination of these factors (Craig & Halton, 2009; Niv, Tuvblad, Raine, & Baker, 2013; Tzoumakis, Lussier, & Corrado, 2014).

*Cycles of violence* Widom (1989a) used the phrase "cycle of violence" to describe the continuity of violence through families and across generations. In particular, Widom's research (Kazemian, Widom, & Farrington, 2011; Maxfield & Widom, 1996; Widom, 1989a, 1989b; World Health Organization, 2007) has focused on the child's experience of neglect and violent abuse within their family and how such childhood experiences may act to increase the risk of their future antisocial and violent behaviour.

The focus on experiences across the lifespan is congruent with the second stage of the model proposed by Bandura (see Figure 1.2) where *aversive treatment* is nominated as one of the factors which instigates aggression. Yet further, also consistent with Bandura's model, it is likely that the abused child will witness violence both between their parents and between their parents and siblings (Holt, Buckley, & Whelan, 2008; Roberts, Gilman, Fitzmaurice, Deckerf, & Koenen, 2010). The child's observations of family violence serve both to model violence, with parents being particularly potent behavioural models, and to reinforce vicariously the potency of violence as an effective short-term means of dealing with interpersonal problems. One of the potential consequences for the child of this type of family background is an increased risk of developing problematic behaviours, including violence, as they grow through adolescence and adulthood (McCord, 1983). This issue is considered further in Chapter 3, as we now move to the environmental side of the equation.

## Violent Places

Wherever people gather there is the potential for interpersonal violence. These potential settings for violence may be as intimate as the family home, as detached and impersonal as a crowd of commuters, or even a setting as seemingly unlikely as clinical medical practice (Hills & Joyce, 2013). There are several physical qualities of the immediate environment which are associated with an increased likelihood of violence.

### Bystanders

The presence of a small number of other people, usually referred to as *bystanders*, at the scene may either inhibit or increase the likelihood of interpersonal violence (Levine, Taylor, & Best, 2011). This "bystander effect" is discussed below in the context of the transactions that lead to violence.

### Crowds and crowding

The role of crowds in relation to violence can be thought of in two ways: first, there are crowds that assemble with the intention of committing acts of collective violence; second, there is the effect on the individual of the experience of being in a crowded space.

*Violent crowds* As described by de la Roche (1996), violent crowds come in a variety of guises each seeking different goals through the use of collective violence. There are, de la Roche suggests, four common types of collective violence—*lynching*, *rioting*, *vigilantism*, and *terrorism*—which all serve the crowd's aim of seeking to right a perceived wrong.

*Physical crowding and violence* It is known that humans have around them an area of *personal* or *defensible* space (Dosey & Meisels, 1969) which is a distance of approximately an arm's length, although the exact distance varies from culture to culture. If anyone intrudes into our personal space we find it stressful and we seek either to move away personally or to push the other person away. When we are in a crowd our personal space is invaded which, depending on the nature of the occasion, may make us anxious and hyper-alert for any signs of hostility which may threaten our wellbeing.

The relationship between crowding and violence is clearly seen in studies of closed environments such as institutions. The advantage of conducting a study in an institutional setting is that many institutions have an established capacity and so it is possible to measure overcrowding with a reasonable degree of precision. Thus, a study by Ng, Kumar, Ranclaud, and Robinson (2001) conducted in a psychiatric

inpatient unit in New Zealand was able to calculate the degree of crowding in the unit according to the percentage of beds occupied. Ng et al. report a higher average occupancy when a violent incident, particularly an act of verbal aggression, took place than when there were no incidents. This crowding effect was independent of the ratio of staff to patients, although violence was significantly more likely to occur between 3 p.m. and 11 p.m.

A similar Finnish study by Virtanen et al. (2011) looked at violent incidents over a five-month period in 90 inpatient wards within 13 acute psychiatric hospitals across Finland. They found that almost one-half of the wards were overcrowded as measured by bed occupancy. In those wards that were overcrowded there was a significantly higher likelihood of a violent assault on hospital staff. Thus, explanations for aggression in institutions for psychiatric patients should not ignore situational and environmental factors (Peluola, Mela, & Adelugba, 2013; Welsh, Bader, & Evans, 2013).

Prisons are another type of institution where crowding may take place and is easily measurable according to the Certified Normal Accommodation (CNA) level. In England and Wales the CNA is the population level which the Prison Service accepts as commensurate with a decent standard of accommodation for prisoners. It follows that if its CNA is exceeded so a prison become officially overcrowded and, in turn, it may be predicted that the risk of violence increases accordingly.

However, establishing a definitive link between prison overcrowding and escalation of violent incidents is not straightforward. As Wooldredge and Steiner (2009) point out, there is a large range of variables—from type of prison, the nature of the prisoner cohort, and the research design—that may influence the degree of correspondence between prison crowding and numbers of violent incidents. In this light it is not surprising that an extensive literature contains a mixture of positive, negative, and null findings. For example, an American study by Gaes and McGuire (1985) looked at assault rates in 19 federal prisons and found that crowding had a marked effect on assault rates. In contrast, another large-scale study of 150 American prisons by Tartaro and Levy (2007) found that it was the racial composition of the prison population together with the level of prison officer supervision that best predicted violence.

## Temperature

As humans we respond to the weather generally as seen, for example, in the impact of weather on daily mood (Denissen, Butalid, Penke, & van Aken, 2008). A relationship between hot weather and violence is implicit in everyday speech: we anticipate the likelihood of violence when we describe people as "hot under the collar" or "hot headed" or having a "fiery temper" and we are familiar with the notion of "hot spots" for crime. Indeed, such is the power of speech that even using words that we associate with violence can act to increase our aggressive thoughts and hostile perceptions of other people (DeWall & Bushman, 2009).

At one level the relationship between heat and aggression is very basic in nature: as it becomes hotter so the potential for violence increases accordingly. This principle extends across the animal kingdom: for example, a study of spiders by Pruitt, Demes, and Dittrich-Reed (2011) found that "At warmer temperatures *A. studiosus* exhibit diminished tolerance of conspecifics, increased activity levels, shorter latencies of attack, and increased tendencies to attack multiple prey items" (p. 318).

There is ample evidence of a similar relationship between heat and violent behaviour in humans as well as arachnids, although it is sometimes couched in terms of seasonality and crime rather than temperature and crime (e.g., Harries, Stadler, & Zdorkowski, 1984). In a typical study, carried out in Philadelphia, Song and Taylor (2011) found a significant association between temperature and number of robberies. However, as with the complexities that are evident for the link between crowds and violence, this association was attenuated by several variables, as Song and Taylor explain:

> Locations that were near major or moderate sized commercial venues, with moderate or upper income communities located there or nearby, and in some instances well served by subway lines (Center City, University City, South Street, Chestnut Hill, Roxborough), seemed to experience the strongest temperature-linked oscillation in robbery counts. Some of these communities contain or are near venues that are year-round tourist attractions more heavily visited in warmer months, or that are sites of special seasonal events such as runs, concerts, or festivals. (p. 468)

The relationship between physical violence and temperature is not restricted to street crime. A study by Larrick, Timmerman, Carton, and Abrevaya (2011) showed an interaction between temperature and sporting aggression. Larrick et al. analysed data from 57,293 Major League baseball games to look at the relationship between provocation and temperature in precipitating aggressive acts. They found that "Higher temperatures interacted with a greater number of teammates being hit by a pitch to increase the chances of a pitcher subsequently hitting an opposing batter" (p. 425). Thus, when temperatures are high the probability of a pitcher hitting an opponent rises, but this relationship is significantly dependent upon whether or not one of the pitcher's teammates has been hit previously by an opposition pitcher. Larrick et al. suggest that it is likely that set within the hot environment, the pitcher's retaliatory decision to hit an opponent is influenced by both their own anger and the promptings of their teammates.

Thus, the effects of temperature on behaviour are in part associated with social factors such as transient crowding, as when people gather for festivals and sporting events, or with the times when people leave work and begin to travel home and so congregate at stations for railway and underground services. Indeed, thinking more broadly, temperature itself is not independent of other influences: the weather is clearly reliant upon the season of the year while, as those of us who live in England know only too well, the summer temperature in one country may be very different from that in another country. There is corresponding evidence, from several

countries, to suggest that factors such as weather and season are related to local crime rates generally and to violence specifically (Breetzke & Cohn, 2012; Ceccato, 2005; Hipp, Bauer, Curran, & Bollen, 2004). In this vein of thought, some commentators have extrapolated from our current understanding to speculate on the impact of climate change on crime (Gleditsch, 2012; Scheffran, Brzoska, Kominek, Link, & Schilling, 2012).

*How does temperature influence violent behaviour?* There are several explanations for the relationship between heat and violence (Anderson, 1989), but the one which has attracted a great deal of attention is based on the GAM. This explanation holds that that rising levels of heat bring about physiological changes that increase the likelihood of violent behaviour in a linear fashion (Bushman, Wang, & Anderson, 2005). In other words, there is a one-to-one direct, linear relationship so that as heat rises so too does violence.

Does the potential for violence keep on increasing as the temperature rises further and further? It appears that the linear relationship between crime and temperature may hold only to a certain point. The *negative affect escape model* suggests that when it becomes very hot the individual's concern is with escaping from the unpleasantness and the discomfort brought about by the rising heat resulting in the net effect of *less* crime (Bell & Baron, 1976). Thus, the linear relationship between temperature and violence becomes curvilinear beyond a certain point.

## Combinations of environmental variables

The effects of environmental variables on human behaviour generally and violence specifically are not straightforward. While there may on occasions be a relationship between both crowds and violence and crowding and violence it is evident that this relationship is attenuated by a wide range of factors. Thus, it cannot be assumed that crowds automatically equal violence, nor can the possibility of violence be discounted when crowds gather. Similarly, as shown by the study of baseball pitchers, previous events and teammates' comments act to fuel heat-driven acts of aggressive retaliation. The interactions between the various environmental influences that may prompt violence add to the complexities of understanding violence and predicting exactly where and when it is likely to occur.

## Weapons

There is an inescapable association between weapons and interpersonal violence. Indeed, the mere presence of a weapon during a violent interaction is sufficient to prime aggressive thoughts among those involved, in turn heightening the chances of the weapon being used (Bartholow, Anderson, Carnagey, & Benjamin, 2005). As will be discussed in Chapter 4, it is axiomatic that the use of a weapon in a violent

exchange, with some weapons decidedly more potent than others, increases the chances of a homicide. There is ample evidence that weapons are frequently used in violent exchanges: Brennan and Moore (2009) note that in the USA and in the UK weapons are used in about one-quarter of all violent altercations.

Why are weapons used in some violent incidents? An individual may carry a weapon for a variety of reasons. The weapon may serve an instrumental purpose, say to use for self-protection if attacked, or to threaten and intimidate in a robbery, or with the premeditated intention of harming another person. This instrumental use of weapons may extend to school bullying: an American study by Dukes, Stein, and Zane (2010) found that, for both male and female pupils, certain types of bullying perpetration and victimisation were associated with weapon-carrying. These findings are in accord with those of American studies which report that carrying weapons to school is associated, more so for males than females, with involvement in physical fights and other forms of delinquency as well links with a peer group where guns are carried and illegal drugs are used (Bailey, Flewelling, & Rosenbaum, 1997; Cao, Zhang, & He, 2008; Kulig, Valentine, Griffith, & Ruthazer, 1998).

It is also the case that weapons are perceived by some groups as a symbol of some desirable personal attribute, such as social status or membership of a certain peer group or sexual attractiveness (Barlas & Egan, 2006; McClusky, McClusky, & Bynum, 2006). Analysis of the beliefs about weapons given by a sample of 212 male and female school pupils in South Wales, aged between 16 and 18 years, led Penny, Walker, and Gudjonsson (2011) to suggest that the overarching belief, particularly for male pupils, is that weapons bring a sense of *potency*. Thus, the pupils believed that carrying and using weapons would bring heightened wellbeing and confidence. Further, weapons give feelings of increased personal power with regard to self-defence, making others comply with one's wishes, fitting in socially and feeling masculine and cool.

The complexity of the issues involved in weapon-carrying among some young people is also seen in a study by Bannister et al. (2010) of carrying knives and other weapons by youth groups and gangs in Scotland. Through interviews with a large sample of young people in several different locations in Scotland, Bannister et al. compiled a rich picture of young people's views about weapons.

The young people who carried knives said that this was for a variety of reasons including self-protection without any intention to use the weapon, to enhance their reputation, which may mean using the knife, and with the intention to use it if they thought it was necessary. The majority of the young people were aware of the risks, including imprisonment, associated with carrying and using knives, and many had been victims of a knife attack. A distinction was drawn between carrying and using a knife: simply carrying a knife was not respected, unlike being prepared to use or having used a knife, which gained respect and enhanced a reputation of being someone to be feared. The twin themes of self-protection and a sense of masculinity emerged in a study of knife-carrying by British males by Palasinski and Riggs (2012).

Some young people attempted to manage the risks of using a knife by targeting their victim's stomach or buttocks so as to reduce the chances of a serious or fatal injury.

However, this strategy is not a guaranteed success and some of the young people were serving prison sentences for seriously wounding or killing their victim. A variety of other types of weapon were used to avoid being caught carrying a knife and the potential prison sentence that would follow. These weapons included a screwdriver, a Stanley blade (a small but very sharp blade used in a tool called a Stanley knife), a hammer and a packet of nails, and a broken bottle.

Brennan, Moore, and Shepherd (2010) compared two groups of adult male prisoners convicted for a violent offence: one group had used weapons, the other had not. The weapon-using violent offenders had a more extensive delinquent history, scored higher on a measure of trait aggression, and were more risk-seeking than other offender types.

In summary, weapon-carrying and use may be associated with a history of involvement in delinquent acts and with delinquent peers, alongside the personal traits of a propensity to aggression and high levels of risk-taking.

## The Violent Act: The Psychology of the Aggressor

If we move from the environmental variables that may influence violence behaviour to personal characteristics, there are three aspects of the individual's functioning to consider: social cognition, the role of emotion, and different forms of violent behaviour.

### Social cognition

What is social cognition? The distinction may be drawn between *impersonal* cognition and *social* cognition. The former describes those facets of our cognitive functioning, such as mathematical ability and abstract thought, which are not directly related to social behaviour. The latter describes those aspects of cognition, such as empathy, perception and understanding of nonverbal behaviour, social values and morals, and social problem-solving, which have a direct influence on how we understand and behave towards other people. Several commentators have suggested that social cognition is an important element in understanding violent behaviour (e.g., Bowes & McMurran, 2013; Carlo, Mestre, Samper, Tur, & Armenta, 2010; Gannon, 2009; Gannon, Ward, Beech, & Fisher, 2007; Seidel et al., 2013). Indeed, it has been suggested that the lower rate of violence typically found with women is a function of their superior social cognitive skills when compared to men (Bennett, Farrington, & Huesmann, 2005).

In order to function effectively in social interactions we must process the continual flow of social information, both verbal and nonverbal, that originates from those around us, make sense of what we perceive, and finally decide how to act based on our understanding of the situation. An influential model of social information-processing was proposed by Dodge (1986), later revised by Crick and

Dodge (1994), and which continues to engage theorists (Orobio de Castro, 2004). While originally devised as a model of social information-processing to inform understanding of social competence in children, the model's principles apply to people of all ages. Crick and Dodge's revised model incorporates six discrete sequential stages.

- *Stage 1: Encoding of cues.* At this stage the individual must attend to their social environment in order to detect relevant social and situational cues. The ability to detect cues may be influenced by prior learning as well as by physical constraints such as hearing difficulties, poor eyesight, alcohol use, and so on.
- *Stage 2: Interpretation of cues.* Following cue selection, the individual next seeks to make sense of what they have perceived. The process of arriving at an understanding may involve forming a view as to what caused the current events, or making inferences and attributions of intent about the actions of the others in the situation.

  As with encoding, the interpretation of social cues may be influenced or guided by previous experience.

  Alongside interpretation of social cues, the individual may be aware of *internal* cues, such as their own emotional state, which occur in response to the situation. The importance of internal cues is discussed further below in considering the role of emotion.
- *Stage 3: Clarification of goals.* When the individual has arrived at their understanding of the situation they formulate a goal or desired outcome for the interaction: this goal may be to engage with the situation to gain an advantage, or to change the perceived course of events, or to disengage and seek to escape from what is unfolding. As social interactions may shift and change quickly, so the individual's goals may correspondingly shift as the situation develops.
- *Stage 4: Response access or construction.* In order to respond to the situation as they perceive it and so move towards their desired outcome, the individual may rely on previous experience in similar situations or, if faced with a situation they have not previously encountered, they may construct new behaviours.
- *Stage 5: Response decision.* At this stage the individual evaluates their potential responses, old or new, and selects a course of action. Their choice of response may be positively influenced by their expectations of the outcome of a specific course of action. These expectations are based on judgements of the appropriateness of their actions, the anticipated outcomes, and their self-belief in their ability to carry out the specific response they judge to be suitable for the situation.
- *Stage 6: Behavioural response.* Finally, having arrived at a decision the individual makes their response utilizing the appropriate repertoires of verbal and nonverbal skills.

There are two important points to note about Crick and Dodge's revised model. First, the individual's experience plays an important role in proceedings. The process of perceiving and processing social information is heavily influenced by

previous social interactions. Thus, the individual's social information-processing is interwoven with the pre-existing information held, in Crick and Dodge's terminology, in their personal *data base*. This pre-existing information takes the form of stored memories alongside acquired rules, social schemas, and social knowledge gathered from previous social situations. Crick and Dodge suggest that as the child develops so over time its cognitive patterns become increasingly rigid. This rigidity in processing, which persists into adolescence and adulthood, influences future behaviour: thus, as Crick and Dodge state, "The result is that processing patterns and tendencies, as they are formed, come to act like personality characteristics that guide behavior. These increasingly stable characteristics account for consistency in behavior across time, self-fulfilling prophecy effects, and the failure of interventions in later life (relative to interventions in early life)" (1994, p. 81). This position is entirely consistent with the longitudinal studies which suggest that aggression is a stable characteristic across the lifespan.

The second point to note is that Crick and Dodge propose a dynamic, cyclical nature in social information-processing. An individual will perceive the effect of their behaviour on others, which then leads to a fresh round of cue perception, evaluation, and monitoring of progress towards goal attainment. This continued round of perception, interpretation, and generation and evaluation of potential responses is evident in social problem-solving approaches to understanding criminal behaviour, including violent crimes (e.g., McMurran & McGuire, 2005).

The social information-processing approach has led to research concerned with specific elements of the overall model. There are two elements of the model that have attracted particular attention: the first is the role of attributions, the second is the influence of emotion.

## Attributions

At the second stage of the model, one of the cognitive processes involved in interpreting social cues lies in making attributions about the other person or people involved in the exchange. Of course, there is a long history to the study of attributions within social psychology in the context of many everyday types of social exchange (Kelley, 1967; Kelley & Michela, 1980). In the study of interpersonal aggression and violence particular attention has been given to the role of *hostile* attributions. A hostile attribution, as the name suggests, occurs when the individual explains another person's behaviour in antagonistic terms. If, for example, I am in the pub and someone pushes into me causing me to spill my drink what do I think? "Whoops, steady on that was a silly accident!" or "That was a deliberate push and it's made me look a right fool"? The former is a *benign* attribution, seeing the cause of the spillage as accidental, "I'm okay, no harm done"; the latter is *hostile* in that the act is seen as deliberate and a threat to my esteem and reputation. "Watch what you're doing mate or next time there'll be trouble." Moeller, Crocker, and Bushman (2009) showed that people with a high self-regard hold a sense of entitlement with regard to expecting

admiration and respect from other people. When the expected respect from others is not forthcoming then the consequence may be interpersonal conflict.

Hostile attributions play a fundamental role in understanding both impulsive and premeditated interpersonal violence (Helfritz-Sinville & Stanford, 2014). Dodge (2006) goes so far as to state that "Individual differences in aggressive behavior occur as a function of characteristic styles of attributing hostile intent (or not) to others' provocative behavior" (p. 791). Dodge suggests that the stable trait of making hostile attributions about the actions of others has its roots in patterns of socialisation and childhood development. The important influences on this maturational process, as with so many other aspects of child development, lie in the nature of the child's attachment to a caregiver, the behaviours they see modelled in their everyday life, and their personal experiences of aggression and violence.

Orobio de Castro, Veerman, Koops, and Monshouwer (2002) reported a meta-analysis of 41 studies involving in total over 6,000 participants, the large majority of whom were males, concerned with the relationship between aggressive behaviour in children aged from 4 to 12 years and hostile attributions regarding the actions of peers. They found that, as anticipated, the levels of aggressive behaviours exhibited by children were strongly related to hostile attributions, which in turn were related to rejection by peers. However, this pattern was less marked with more intelligent children: indeed, higher IQ may have a protective quality in terms of commission of acts of violence (González, Kallis, Ullrich, Zhang, & Coid, 2014). Alongside the large literature on children, there are individual studies that illustrate the importance of hostile attributions in pathways to violence perpetrated by older age groups such as young adults (e.g., Guyll & Madon, 2004) and by violent criminals (e.g., Lim, Day, & Casey, 2011).

A study reported by Crowther, Goodson, McGuire, and Dickson (2013) looked at the accounts a group of boys aged 12 to 16 years, who were involved in aggressive incidents at a school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The boys described how their aggressive behaviour was an essential part of the image of being tough which, in turn, functioned in an environment they perceived as hostile to prevent victimisation and establish friendships among peers. As they describe it, they had no other option than "having to fight".

The second of the fundamental points raised by Crick and Dodge (1994) concerns the role of emotion in the genesis of aggression and violence.

## Emotion

How does emotion influence behaviour? Crick and Dodge (1994) suggest that the relationship between what we feel and what we do takes various forms. First, the qualities of a range of different situations can be emotionally arousing for different people: we may be emotionally aroused by, for example, a piece of art, another person's distress, or by the way that people act towards us. Such emotionally arousing situational cues would impact at stage 1 of the model in and additionally may lead to

internal cues, such as feelings of anxiety, so that at stage 2 both external and internal emotionally arousing cues must be processed. At stage 3 high levels of emotional arousal may act to encourage, discourage, or modify the individual's motivation towards certain goals. Again, this is a dynamic system so that awareness of their emotions may bring the individual to change their goals. Thus, the person may decide to disengage from a social interaction in order to reduce uncomfortable levels of emotional arousal; alternatively, they may decide to hit out in response to the perceived provocation.

This sequence, in due turn, may influence what happens at stage 4 and stage 5 in terms of the individual deciding what response to use and then putting it into action. The net effects of the emotionally driven behaviour may be rewarding in that they help to achieve the goal, or less than rewarding in that they prompt retaliatory aggressive behaviour from others. The type of outcome will inform the individual's evaluation of the effects of their actions and so increase or decrease the likelihood of their repetition in similar situations. The degree to which a person is aware of and understands their emotions, their level of *emotional intelligence*, is associated with levels of aggression. García-Sancho, Salguero, and Fernández-Berrocal (2014) reviewed the evidence and found a negative relationship between the two: those with higher levels of emotional intelligence were less aggressive and vice versa.

There are two emotional states closely associated with violent behaviour: the first is excitement or thrill-seeking, the second is anger.

*Thrill-seeking* Ching, Daffern, and Thomas (2012) highlight *thrill-seeking* or *appetitive violence* as a type of violence, mainly prevalent among young people, carried out simply for the enjoyment of being violent and inflicting suffering. This type of violence, typically carried out in groups, often accompanied by the drug and alcohol use alongside the use of weapons, is targeted against vulnerable groups such as the homeless. It comes in the guise of "bum hunting" in America or "happy slapping" when directed at unsuspecting victims.

If the fear of an increasing use of violence as a means of recreation, across several Western countries, can be substantiated this presents is a worrying trend. There are obvious knee-jerk reactions as to the best way to deal with this type of violence. However, as Ching et al. note, the development of effective preventative measures will rely on a more complete understanding of the psychological and social aspects of this type of violence.

*Anger* The importance of anger in our understanding of interpersonal violence owes much to the work of the social psychologist Raymond Novaco. In a sustained and substantial body of work Novaco has developed an understanding of the role of anger in the commission of acts of violence (e.g., Novaco, 1975, 1994, 2007; Novaco & Welsh, 1989). For Novaco anger is conceived of as a subjectively experienced, adaptive, and complex emotion with both functional and dysfunctional effects for the individual. The state of anger is understood to entail interacting physiological

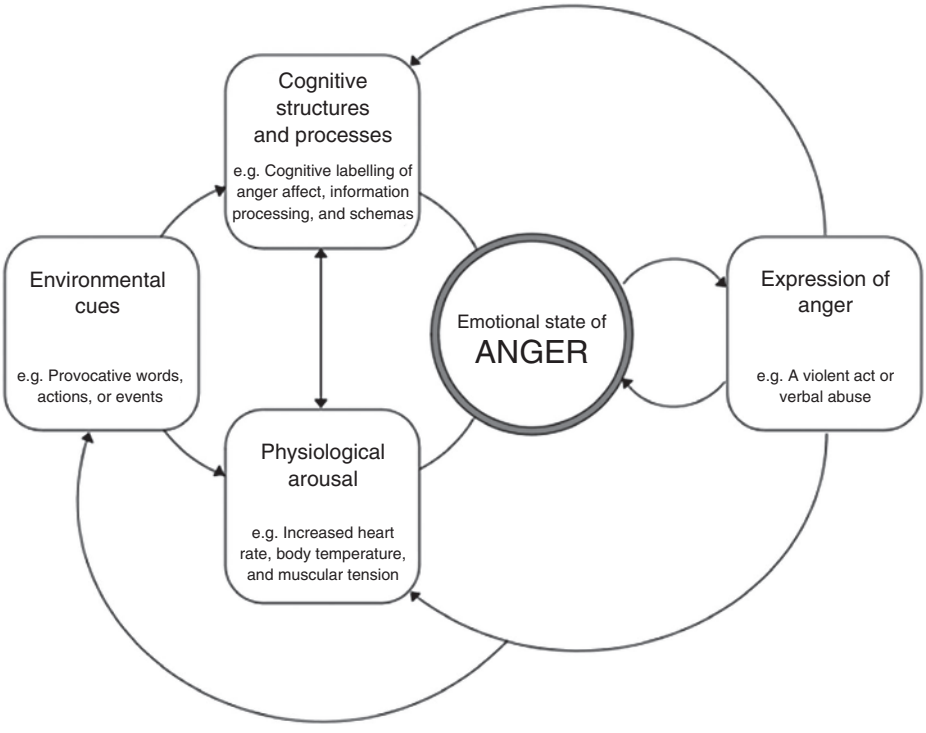


**Figure 1.3** Schematic Representation of Novaco's Model of Anger. Source: After Novaco, 1994.

and cognitive elements, typically related to environmental cues. Thus, an individual becomes angry on those occasions when environmental cues provoke physiological and cognitive arousal and the person labels their subjective emotional experience as "anger". This emotional experience is then associated with a behavioural expression of anger, which may take the form of a violent act directed against another person. The expression of anger therefore depends upon a range of individual factors, including the perception of provocation, cognitive processing, and the ability to cope with the perceived provocation. Figure 1.3 illustrates Novaco's model schematically, showing the dynamic, interactive nature of the environmental, physiological, cognitive, affective, and behavioural elements.

There are several indices of the *physiological* arousal associated with anger: the angry person may, for example, experience increases in cardiovascular activity, muscular tension, and body temperature. Similarly, there are several features associated with increasing cognitive arousal which include cognitive *labelling* of anger and the activation of *schemas*. An individual's cognitive labelling of their emotional state as *angry* follows a subjective appraisal which settles on this term as a suitable descriptor for their internal state. The individual's appraisal of the situation may be affected by schemas which lead to their minimising or disregarding contextual factors and so impacts on their judgement of how best to proceed.

*Schemas* are described by Robins and Novaco (1999) as the psychological representations an individual holds of the relationship between a specific environment and associated behaviour. The content and functioning of schemas are typically based on one's own previous experience. The advantage of schemas is that rather than treating every recurrence of a situation as a novel encounter they enable fast and efficient processing of information and efficient responding. Schemas encompass procedural rules that allow us habitually to deal with a range of different types of interactions and situations. This is not to say, however, that schemas necessarily lead to accurate perception or to competent and appropriate responding to a situation.

In the context of Novaco's model, *anger schemas* predispose an individual, given the appropriate environmental cues, to perceive certain social cues in a negative manner so activating an angry schema and resulting in a behavioural expression of anger (Novaco, 2007; Novaco & Welsh, 1989). In some instances, the behavioural expression that follows activation of an anger schema is aggressive or violent in nature.

The emotion of anger may have beneficial as well as harmful consequences: the experience of anger may be positive in the sense that, for example, it may prompt the individual to act positively to protect themselves and others from an external threat (Novaco, 1994). Nonetheless, anger can have a negative effect both for the individual and others they encounter, in which case the emotion has become *dysfunctional*.

*Dysfunctional anger* The emotion of anger can become dysfunctional when it is not appropriately *regulated*. The notion of anger regulation relates to an individual's ability to remain in a calm state when they perceive that they are being provoked. The level of control of anger of which an individual is capable may be dependent upon on several of the factors seen in Novaco's model. Thus, the appraisal of one's internal state, from mild irritation through to rage, may influence the degree of control; the same is true with regard to the individual's cognitive processing of social cues and information.

Novaco and Welsh (1989) described five types of information-processing which are characteristic of those who frequently show dysfunctional anger followed by violent behaviour. There are two *cognitive operations* (the term "cognitive operations" refers to the way information is encoded, stored, and retrieved from memory) associated with dysfunctional anger: these are attentional cueing and perceptual matching.

*Attentional cueing* refers to a preoccupation with some past provoking cue, such as another person's actions, which leads to rumination about the incident. The act of rumination may produce feelings of irritation about what happened so maintaining angry arousal for some time after the event has occurred. *Perceptual matching* is the process whereby emotions from a previous provoking incident are transferred to the current situation. The more provoking situations an individual has been exposed to in the past the more likely it becomes that they will perceive some degree of correspondence or matching between previous and current situations. This perception may lead to fast activation of a *violence schema* leading quickly to angry arousal in response to the perceived provocation.

In addition to the two cognitive operations described above, Novaco and Walsh also describe three *cognitive propositions* (the term "cognitive propositions" refers to the content of cognitive structures) associated with dysfunctional anger: these are fundamental attribution errors, false consensus, and anchoring effects.

A *fundamental attribution error* occurs when an individual consistently underestimates the importance of external situational pressures and overestimates the importance of internal factors such as motivation and personality when judging other people's behaviour. There is a clear link between attribution errors, dysfunctional anger, and aggressive and violent behaviour (Allred, 2000).

The phenomenon of a *false consensus* takes place when the individual overestimates the extent to which other people hold the same beliefs and opinions that they do. A false consensus may be associated with a lack of perspective-taking (seeing the other person's point of view) and it may lead to feelings of heightened tension, an increased sensitivity to provocation, and subsequent anger and aggression and violence (Russell & Arms, 1995).

Finally, *anchoring effects* refer to the propensity to adhere to one's first impressions of another person or a situation, despite later information which shows the initial impression was either only partially correct or absolutely wrong.

*Consequences of dysfunctional anger* The interplay between patterns of anger and hostile behaviour towards others is evident from an early age (Lemerise & Dodge, 2008). When anger and its associated psychological states become an established part of an individual's functioning there are various consequences alongside an increased likelihood of interpersonal violence. Thus, the undesirable consequences of anger may be experienced directly by either the angry person alone or both the angry person and those on the receiving end of the "angry behaviour". Chronic levels of anger can result in serious psychological and health problems (Miller, Smith, Turner, Guijarro, & Hallet, 1996). Dysfunctional anger is associated with poor physical health as seen with hypertension, coronary heart disease, and carotid and coronary atherosclerosis (Kubzansky, Cole, Kawachi, Vokonas, & Sparrow, 2006), and with behavioural and mental disturbance. With regard to the latter, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR; American Psychiatric Association, 2000) presents dysfunctional anger as a clinical symptom of several disorders including oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder, borderline personality disorder, major depressive disorder, antisocial personality disorder, and some types of schizophrenia. The closest association between dysfunctional anger and behavioural disturbance is evident in intermittent explosive disorder where anger is an integral component of acts of aggression and violence (Swaffer & Hollin, 2000).

As shown in Figure 1.3, and as is also seen in the Crick and Dodge model, Novaco suggests that environmental factors, in this case both the social and the physical characteristics of the setting, impact on the individual both psychologically and physiologically to bring about a state of anger. When the individual's expression of their anger takes the form of a violent act so, in common with other models, Novaco

suggests that the social consequences of the behaviour function as feedback acting to intensify or relieve the individual's anger.

As well as social factors and the physical qualities of the environment there are two other factors related to violence through their effects on the individual's processing of social information. The first of these factors is the effect of substance use, particularly alcohol, the second lies in the quality of the individual's mental health.

## Alcohol and violent crime

As with substance use generally (Boles & Miotto, 2003), the specific association between alcohol and violent crime has long been known across many cultures and societies (World Health Organization, 2008). This common knowledge is in evidence, for example, at some major events where large crowds gather where there are restrictions on access to alcohol. Thus, at football (soccer) matches where there is a fierce rivalry between opposing fans there may be an early noon kick-off (rather than the traditional mid-afternoon), public houses near to the ground remain closed, and alcohol is not sold inside the stadium. Parenthetically, there is an interesting contrast to be drawn here between crowd behaviour at different types of sporting event: while alcohol is controlled at football grounds it is sold (typically at exorbitant prices) before and during and after the game at cricket and rugby matches. Whether this variation in retail practice is due to the nature of the sport being watched or the composition of the crowd is a point to debate.

The no-alcohol policy at some sporting events raises the issue of the relationship between the availability of alcohol generally and the likelihood of violence. As noted by Heaton (2011), changes in the licensing laws governing the times at which alcohol may be sold have the potential to impact on rates of violence.

Box 1.1 shows the nature and extent of the alcohol–crime relationship, as taken from both official statistics and crime surveys, summarised from a factsheet published by the Institute of Alcohol Studies (2010).

Population studies show alcohol is associated with a significant number of acts of violence (Grann & Fazel, 2004) and so it is hardly surprising that violent incidents cluster around the immediate vicinity of bars and clubs (Ratcliffe, 2012). The alcohol–crime relationship is evident for male and female adolescents and young adults (Popovici, Homer, Fang, & French, 2012) and is apparent in many different types of crime including homicide (Miles, 2012; Rossow, 1996), intimate partner violence (Clements & Schumacher, 2010; Foran & O'Leary, 2008), sexual violence (Abbey, 2011), and property crime (Cordilia, 1985). It follows that that alcohol and other drug problems are endemic among convicted offenders (Fazel, Bains, & Doll, 2006; Greenfield & Henneberg, 2001; MacAskill et al., 2011) as well as among victims of crime (Branas et al., 2009).

It is known that many offenders who use alcohol to excess will use other drugs such as cannabis and amphetamines. Those offenders whose drug use does not include alcohol appear mostly to commit crimes of acquisition, presumably to fund buying

**Box 1.1** Alcohol Crime Statistics

- A high proportion of both offenders and victims of violent crime were under the influence of alcohol when the assault took place.
- About over one-third of offenders have a drink problem which may be related to their violent behaviour; a similar proportion have a binge-drinking problem.
- Alcohol was particularly prevalent in domestic violence, with alcohol dependence evident in close to one-half of convicted domestic violence offenders.
- About 1 in 5 of people arrested by the police will test positive for alcohol.
- Alcohol is frequently found in many different types of violent crimes including homicide, wounding, affray and domestic violence.

Source: After Institute of Alcohol Studies, 2010.

drugs, while a pattern of polydrug drug use that includes alcohol is characterised by crimes of violence (Miller & Welte, 1986). Varano, McCluskey, Patchin, and Bynum (2004) focus specifically on the relationship between drugs and homicide. They suggest that there are two principal types of drug homicide: (1) *peripheral drug homicides* where drugs are present or being used by those involved but are not a causal factor; (2) *drug-motivated homicides* where the sale or use of drugs is central to the crime.

There is a variety of explanations for the association between alcohol and violent behaviour (Martin, 2001). The notion of *alcohol outcome expectancies* relates to the formation of "if-then" expectations based on previous experience (Goldman, Del Boca, & Darkes, 1999) as, for example, "If I drink, then I'll have a good time". McMurran (2007) conducted a study looking at alcohol expectancies among a sample of male prisoners, with a mean age of around 30 years, some serving sentences for violent offences. McMurran found that the violent offenders expected alcohol to act to increase their social confidence. As McMurran notes, increased social confidence may lead some men to be drawn to particular settings: "The increased likelihood of violence may be explained by intoxicated, confident (perhaps overconfident), young men meeting others who are drinking for the same reasons in noisy, crowded drinking venues, which may well lead to clashes where aggression and violence result" (p. 282).

Another explanation for the effect of alcohol on violent behaviour is the Alcohol Myopia Model (Steele & Josephs, 1990). There is some support for the proposition that alcohol acts to focus attention on interpersonal cues which are salient to aggression in threatening situations (Giancola, Duke, & Ritz, 2011). Once primed by their myopic processing of the social information, the intoxicated person then acts in an aggressive manner towards the other person. This aggressive behaviour towards others, given the right setting, may produce McMurran's "clashes where aggression and violence result".

McMurran, Hoyte, and Jinks (2011) have elaborated on the nature of the triggers for violence in young male offenders. McMurran et al. interviewed a sample of young offenders serving custodial sentences for violent crimes. They identified six themes relating to triggers for violence: (1) being offended or insulted by another person; (2) seeing the opportunity for a material gain; (3) seeing a friend, male or female, in need of help; (4) the perception of the threat of a personal attack; (5) distress brought about by arguing with others or by seeing an ex-girlfriend with someone else; (6) wanting to be involved in a fight.

A Canadian study reported by Graham et al. (2011) analysed Friday and Saturday night incidents in large bars and clubs. They discerned four types of motive for aggressive or coercive acts among those out for the night—(1) to gain compliance; (2) to express a grievance or to put right a perceived wrong; (3) to make a particular impression, such as being important or "tough"; (4) for fun and excitement—which are not a million miles away from types of offenders as described by McMurran, Hoyte, and Jinks (2012).

In a further large-scale study Graham et al. (2013) reported a gender difference in motivation to aggression in the context of a bar room. For women, who accounted for about one-quarter of the aggressive bar-room patrons, the prime instigation to aggression was an unwanted sexual advance. For men, the main motivator to aggression, towards both males and females, was a perceived risk to their identity in the sense of a personal affront or a threat to their social status within a group.

Not all acts of alcohol-related violence are committed with the same end in sight. McMurran, Jinks, Howells, and Howard (2011) describe three distinct goals evident in a sample of young offenders whose violent offence was alcohol-related. Analysis of the young offenders' description of their offence allowed three "ultimate goals" to emerge: (1) the violence was used for material gain; (2) the violence was intended to establish social dominance over others; (3) the violence was a defence against the perceived threat of violence from others. Those young offenders who fell into the first two classifications were, perhaps not surprisingly, higher in trait aggression and trait anger than those in the third group.

## Mental health

The relationship between mental health and violence has been approached by researchers in several ways: some studies concentrate on a single type of mental disorder, such as the association between schizophrenia and violence, while other studies are concerned with the more generic *psychosis* or *mental illness*; studies may use different criteria, typically DSM or ICD (International Classification of Diseases), in reaching a specific diagnosis; there is a contrast between violence in the community and inpatient violence; and research may employ one of several research designs. A weight of evidence has accrued which allows some broad conclusions to be reached, particularly concerning the association between schizophrenia and violence and between personality disorder and violence.

*Schizophrenia and violence* Opinion on the relationship between schizophrenia and violence has fluctuated over time between the position that there is no relationship at all to the view that in given circumstances a relationship may exist (Monahan, 1992). As Hodgins (2008) states, "There is now robust evidence demonstrating that both men and women with schizophrenia are at elevated risk when compared to the general population to be convicted of non-violent criminal offences, at higher risk to be convicted of violent criminal offences, and at even higher risk to be convicted of homicide" (p. 2505). The research evidence supporting the view expressed by Hodgins is to be found in several large-scale cohort studies, in systematic reviews, and in meta-analyses.

In a cohort study a sample formally diagnosed with a mental disorder is compared with a matched sample (e.g., Alden, Brennan, Hodgins, & Mednick, 2007; Soyka, Graz, Bottlender, Dirschedl, & Schoech, 2007). In a typical example, Wallace, Mullen, and Burgess (2004) compared with a matched sample the criminal records over a 25-year period of a cohort of 2,861 male and female schizophrenic patients. For both males and females, a criminal conviction for any offence was more prevalent in the schizophrenic group (21.6%) than in the comparison group (7.8%): when focusing specifically on violent crimes the same pattern was found (8.2% versus 1.8%), as was also the case for sexual crimes (1.8% and 0.7%). Wallace et al. note that the majority of violent and sexual offences were committed by men, while rates of offending were higher for patients with a comorbid diagnosis of substance use disorder.

A Swedish cohort study was reported by Fazel, Grann, Carlström, Lichtenstein, and Långström (2009): the cohort of 8,891 men and 4,951 women was composed of people with two or more periods of hospitalisation for schizophrenia. With an average 12-year follow-up following hospital discharge, Fazel et al. found that just over 17% of the men and 5.6% of the women had been convicted of a violent offence. The most common types of crime were physical assault and threats and harassment, with very few sexual offences: however, there were 125 homicides, 109 committed by men and 16 by women.

Several substantial contributions to the literature have come from systematic reviews and meta-analyses (e.g., Bonta, Blais, & Wilson, 2014; Douglas, Guy, & Hart, 2009; Fazel, Långström, Hjern, Grann, & Lichtenstein, 2009; Large, Smith, & Nielssen, 2009). In a typical study, Bonta, Law, and Hanson (1998) carried out a meta-analysis of 58 studies investigating predictors of recidivism for offenders in the criminal justice system and for mentally disordered offenders. Bonta et al. reported that that for both general offending and violent offending the strongest predictors of recidivism were the same for mentally disordered offenders as for mainstream offenders. These strong predictors were of three distinct types: (1) *criminal history* such as a juvenile delinquency and a history of serious offences, both violent and non-violent; (2) a *deviant lifestyle* as seen with high unemployment, family problems, and living in poor accommodation; (3) *personal characteristics* including age, being male, antisocial personality, and a history of substance misuse.

Bo, Abu-Akel, Kongerslev, Haahr, and Simonsen (2011) concluded their review of the literature with the conclusion that there are two pathways or trajectories that

may explain the overlap between schizophrenia and violence. In the first trajectory the individual has no history of violence and their positive symptoms, such as persecutory delusions, appear to account for the violent behaviour. In the second it is personality factors, including psychopathy, which predict violence irrespective of any other symptomatology related to schizophrenia.

*Schizophrenia and homicide* Given the association between schizophrenia and violence, is there any particular relationship between schizophrenia and homicide?

Meehan et al. (2006) reviewed 1,594 homicide cases in England and Wales from between 1996 and 1999: they reported that 85 (5%) of these 1,594 murderers had a formal diagnosis of schizophrenia. Meehan et al. also noted the contribution to the homicide made by the high frequency of delusions and the intensity of the person's emotional response to their delusions immediately before the offence. A Swedish study by Fazel, Buxrud, Ruchkin, and Grann (2010) compared patients with a diagnosis of schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and other psychoses who committed homicide within six months of discharge from a psychiatric hospital with a similar group of patients who did not commit another violent offence after discharge. Fazel et al. found that poor levels of self-care, a failure to take prescribed medication, and high levels of substance misuse were closely associated with homicide.

*Schizophrenia and alcohol abuse* It is known that a substantial number, perhaps one-half (Volkow, 2009), of people with schizophrenia have a comorbid substance use disorder. Given what is known about the relationship between alcohol and violence, the combination of schizophrenia and alcohol abuse may represent a heightened risk of violence. A Swedish longitudinal study reported by Fazel, Grann, Carlström, Lichtenstein, and Långström (2009) investigated the relationship between schizophrenia, substance abuse, and violent crime. Fazel et al. compared the level of convictions for a violent crime of over 8,000 people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia with a non-schizophrenic control group drawn from the general population. There was a higher prevalence of violent crime among those with schizophrenia (13.2%) than among the controls (5.3%). However, Fazel et al. noted that in those cases where the schizophrenia was comorbid with substance abuse the rate of violent offending increased threefold.

Another longitudinal study was conducted in America by Elbogen and Johnson (2009). This study gathered a wide range of clinical, criminological and personal data at first contact then again at a two-year follow-up with a cohort of 34,653 patients. The data analysis was directed at identifying predictors of any violence which had occurred in the interval between the two points at which data were collected. Elbogen and Johnson reported that on its own severe mental illness alone is *not* a strong predictor of violence. However, when severe mental illness is comorbid with substance abuse and dependence so the risk of violence increases. Thus, it appears that alcohol and other substance use disorders are the most powerful risk factors, with schizophrenia and other psychoses adding relatively little to the risk of

violence associated with substance abuse alone (Fazel, Gulati, Linsell, Geddes, & Grann, 2009; Steadman et al., 1998). Elbogen and Johnson reach the view that it is not correct to accept the position that violence among those with a mental illness is directly caused by the mental illness. A more reasonable view is that mental illness may contribute to the risk of violence, but that a full understanding of the causes of violence among those with a mental illness must include complex interactions between a range of individual and situational factors. There may be, for example, factors such as social deprivation which are common to violence and schizophrenia and so play a similar aetiological role.

However, a finer-grained view of schizophrenia, rather than a blunt dichotomous categorisation of schizophrenic/non-schizophrenic, may show that there are certain symptoms of schizophrenia, not experienced by all those with schizophrenia, that have the potential to be considered as specific predictors of violence. The phenomenon of "control/threat override" symptoms, often manifest as delusions that others are trying to cause you harm or control your thinking and actions, may be a causal factors in violence (Braham, Trower, & Birchwood, 2004; Bucci et al., 2013). Similarly, an overtly hostile attribution bias may also play a role in violence by those with schizophrenia (Harris, Oakley, & Picchioni, 2014).

Another type of delusion is seen in *Capgras' syndrome*, which is a type of *delusional misidentification syndrome* (DMS; see Christodoulou, 1991) marked by the false belief that imposters have taken the place of familiar people. In Capgras' syndrome the individual believes that familiar people have been replaced by a double who is physically identical to the original person but quite different psychologically. While people with DMS are rare, those individuals who experience this delusion are at heightened risk for both verbal and physical violence (De Pauw & Szulecka, 1998) including murder (Carabellese, Rocca, Candelli, & Catanesi, 2014). Finally, as with other populations, aspects of emotional functioning such as anger (Reagu, Jones, Kumari, & Taylor, 2013) and emotional empathy (Bragado-Jimenez & Taylor, 2012) may play a role in explaining violence by people with schizophrenia.

*Personality Disorder and violence* Another aspect of mental health which has attracted attention is the association between Personality Disorder (PD) and violence. Of the various types of PD, Antisocial Personality Disorder (APD) is particularly evident in offender populations, including mentally disordered offenders. The DSM-IV-TR diagnostic criteria for APD (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) highlight the defining features of APD for those over the age of 18 years as an indifference to the rights of other people, impulsive verbal and physical aggression, involvement in fights, no remorse for victims, and an inability to maintain employment.

APD is associated with a range of crimes, including violent crimes, and is a strong predictor of recidivism, especially when comorbid with substance use disorders (Roberts & Coid, 2010; Walter, Wiesbeck, Dittmann, & Graf, 2010). A variation on the theme of PD is to be found with psychopathic disorder.

*Psychopathic disorder* The modern conception of psychopathy stems from work of the American psychiatrist Hervey Milton Cleckley. Cleckley (1941) describes the psychopath as a superficially sociable and charming individual who uses these attributes as a "mask" for their total disregard for other people's feelings. Hare (1980) reported a factor analysis of data derived from the Cleckley criteria. This analysis yielded the five factors at the heart of the construct of psychopathy: (1) an inability to develop warm, empathic relationships; (2) an unstable lifestyle; (3) an inability to accept responsibility for antisocial behaviour; (4) an absence of intellectual and psychiatric problems; (5) weak behavioural control.

Hare (1980) used this analysis to formulate a scale for the assessment of psychopathy. This scale, the items on which are summarised in Box 1.2, eventually became the 20-item Psychopathy Checklist (PCL; Hare, 1991), later revised (PCL-R; Hare, 2003).

**Box 1.2** Characteristics of the Psychopath

1 Glibness/superficial charm
2 Previous diagnosis as a psychopath (or similar)
3 Egocentricity/grandiose sense of self-worth
4 Proneness to boredom/low frustration tolerance
5 Pathological lying and deception
6 Conning/lack of sincerity
7 Lack of remorse or guilt
8 Lack of affect and emotional depth
9 Callous/lack of empathy
10 Parasitic lifestyle
11 Short-tempered/poor behavioural controls
12 Promiscuous sexual behaviour
13 Early behaviour problems
14 Lack of realistic long-term plans
15 Impulsivity
16 Irresponsible behaviour as a parent
17 Frequent marital relationships
18 Juvenile delinquency
19 Poor probation or parole risk
20 Failure to accept responsibility for own actions
21 Many types of offence
22 Drug or alcohol abuse is not a direct cause of antisocial behaviour

Source: From Hare, 1980. Reproduced with permission of Elsevier.

The PCL-R is widely used in clinical forensic assessment, particularly to assess the likelihood of future violence (Lestico, Salekin, DeCoster, & Rogers, 2008). The PCL-R is used with women as well as men (Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2010), with children and adolescents (Stockdale, Olver, & Wong, 2010), and with mentally disordered offenders (Vitacco, Rogers, Neumann, Harrison, & Vincent, 2005).

In summary, there is clearly a great deal for theory and research to address in seeking to refine our understanding of the association between mental health and violence (Steinert & Whittington, 2013).

## Interpersonal Violence

It is evident that the topic of violence is both complex and diverse. However, in seeking to understand the actions of the violent individual it is important not to lose sight of the fact that interpersonal violence has a social dimension. Acts of interpersonal violence involve one or more aggressors and victims, sometimes accompanied by bystanders, in a social exchange. One way to emphasise the social nature of the interpersonal violence is through the application of the notion of a *situated transaction*. Luckenbill (1977), using the example of homicide, explains that: "By definition, criminal homicide is a collective transaction. An offender, victim, and possibly an audience engage in an interchange which leaves the victim dead. Furthermore, these transactions are typically situated, for participants interact in a common physical territory" (p. 176).

### Luckenbill's approach

To investigate the nature of transactions leading to homicide Luckenbill (1977) analysed the official documents in 70 cases of murder committed in a county of the state of California. Luckenbill explains that:

> All official documents pertaining to these cases were secured. The character of the larger occasion as well as the organization and development of the fateful transaction were reconstructed from the content analysis of police, probation, psychiatric, and witness reports, offender interviews, victim statements, and grand jury and court testimony. These materials included information on the major and minor participants; who said and did what to whom; the chronology of dialogue and action; and the physical comportment of the participants. (p. 177)

The use of multiple sources of information, via the various types of documentation, allowed any inconsistencies in the evidence to be controlled in the analysis. Luckenbill reports that most of the murders occurred during leisure time (i.e., between the hours of 6 p.m. and 2 a.m.), and at weekends. It follows that the murders most often took place in the settings where people spend their leisure time, that is at home, in a bar, or on the street with friends or cruising in a car. In over 60% of cases, the offender

and victim were in some way related—married, family, partner, or friend; in the other cases the offender and victim were variously enemies, acquaintances, or strangers.

In an illustration of the *bystander effect*, Luckenbill notes that when the offender and victim were not closely acquainted, either one or both were accompanied by a family member, friends, or partners.

Against these background details of who, where, and when, Luckenbill was concerned with the transactions, the dynamic interplay, between the offender, the victim, and (when present) the bystanders. As outlined in Box 1.3, Luckenbill described six stages which culminated in murder.

**Box 1.3** Stages in Transaction Leading to Murder

*Stage 1*. The eventual victim makes the first move, a word, an action or a refusal to comply with a request. This move may take place in front of other people, both acquaintances and strangers.

*Stage 2*. The eventual offender perceives the victim's words or actions as a personal insult.

*Stage 3*. The offender stands their ground, seeks affirmation of the perceived affront and, in most cases, retaliates with an insult and issues a verbal or physical challenge to the victim. In a small number of cases the offender has killed the victim at this point.

*Stage 4*. The surviving victims are now in a similarly problematic position to that previously experienced by the offender: they can either respond to the challenge, apologise, or leave the situation. The last choice comes at the cost of "losing face" and displaying weakness in front of those present. When the victim elects to stand firm the situation escalates so that victim and offender enter a manner of "working agreement" that violence is appropriate.

*Stage 5*. With the agreement made, the offender, and in some cases the victim, are committed to combat. In many cases weapons are available with which to reinforce verbal threats and defeat the victim. In just over one-third of cases the offenders have brought hand guns or knives with them which they put to use to inflict the fatal blow. In other instances the offender has either temporarily left the situation to return with a firearm or knife, or they have used an available object, such as a pillow, telephone cord, beer glass, or baseball bat, as a weapon. In just over one-half of cases the offender has killed the victim quickly, with a single shot or stab; in the remainder the fight has been two-sided, with one or both armed, and after an exchange of blows the victim has fallen.

*Stage 6*. With the victim dead, the offender ends the transaction in one of three ways: (1) in over one-half of the cases they flee the scene; (2) in about one-third of cases they voluntarily remain waiting for the police; (3) in the remaining cases they are restrained by bystanders pending the arrival of the police.

Source: After Luckenbill, 1977.

It is not difficult to flesh out the details of a typical scene exemplifying the six stages (expletives deleted): an insult is uttered in a crowded bar: the offender-to-be hears some remark and pointedly asks the victim-to-be "What did you just ******* say?"; the victim disparagingly replies "What the **** is it to you?"; the offender steps up to the mark, "You ****, you think you can make something of it?"; "Any time you ******* like", replies the victim; a punch is thrown, a knife brandished, a shot fired; the victim lies dead.

The stages described by Luckenbill are not, of course, relevant to all murders. Savitz, Kumar, and Zahn (1991) estimated that about 60% of homicides in Philadelphia were a Luckenbill-type "character contest" or "contest of wills". In a similar study, Deibert and Miethe (2003) reported an analysis of 185 dispute-related assaults, finding that character contests were significantly more likely to be found in disputes involving men rather than women, although they are to be found among female offenders and also among older as well as younger people. Deibert and Miethe also found that such character-laden disputes are to be found more often in public rather than private settings. While such disputes are a fruitful source of aggressive behaviour, of course not all disputes end in homicide. As exemplified by a typical public dispute, when customers are aggressive towards service providers the aggression is mainly verbal, sometimes accompanied by physical aggression or sexual harassment (Yagil, 2008).

Luckenbill's analysis is a potentially rich ground for social psychology but there are several additional points to be made. The first lies the notion that the victim is complicit, indeed may actually have precipitated, their own injuries and death. It is not difficult to see how this view could be taken as "blaming the victim", particularly when the victim is much weaker than their assailant. Luckenbill is sensitive to this issue, as is seen in his analysis of cases where the victim refused to comply with the offender's demands. "The offender subsequently interpreted the victim's action as a denial of his ability or right to command obedience. This was illustrated in transactions where parents murdered their children. When the parent's request that the child eat dinner, stop screaming, or take a bath went unheeded, the parent subsequently interpreted the child's activity as a challenge to rightful authority" (1977, p. 180). Although the child plays a role in such transactions, the responsibility for what happens clearly rests with the offender.

However, a study reported by Muftić and Hunt (2013) of 895 homicides in Dallas, Texas, found a substantial number of the victims in victim-precipitated homicides were also known offenders with similar characteristics to their assailant. Muftić and Hunt suggest that: "It is more likely that within victim precipitated acts it is victim-offenders, and not nonoffending victims, who are inciting offenders, as found in this study. Within this context there may be a lessened perception of victim blaming" (p. 250).

It is evident that, for both offender and victim, the perception of the other person's actions and intent plays an important role in the transactions. As Luckenbill points out, these perceptions are not necessarily accurate and, given the context, it is not difficult to see how misperceptions may arise. If we refer to models of social

information-processing (cf. Crick & Dodge, 1994; Dodge, 1986), there are several situational factors present that may sway perceptions in interactions of the type described by Luckenbill. First, there may well be the omnipresent bystanders who offer their version of what is happening and how one or both of the protagonists should respond. Second, as the transaction progresses through the stages so emotions are likely to be aroused: one or both of those involved may become angry, excited, or anxious as violence draws nearer, so narrowing the focus of their attention and impeding their cognitive functioning with regard to thinking of ways to resolve the situation (cf. Novaco & Welsh, 1989). Third, given the location of many of the incidents, it is highly likely that all of those involved, offender, victim, and bystanders, will have been drinking. One of the effects of alcohol is the attenuation of aspects of cognitive functioning such as person perception and social problem-solving (Giancola, Duke, & Ritz, 2011). This particular effect of alcohol acts to increase the likelihood of misperceptions of the words and actions of others, particularly in terms of imputing hostile intent, and restricting thinking with regard to resolving the conflict without resorting to violence.

## After Luckenbill

Luckenbill and Doyle (1989) moved on to develop *grievance escalation theory*, proposing that there are three stages in the process whereby grievances are escalated. Stage 1 is termed "naming" and is seen when the victim of a harmful act blames the aggressor and holds them personally responsible for what's happened. At stage 2, called "claiming", the victim demands reparation from the aggressor, and if that is not forthcoming then there is escalation to the final stage in the use of force. Luckenbill and Doyle suggest that some grievances escalate into violence because of the contribution of the psychological characteristics of *disputatiousness*, a willingness to seek revenge and maintain the grievance, and *aggressiveness* in the sense of believing that violence is a means of solving problems and being willing to use violence.

An Australian study of violent prisoners reported by Kelty, Hall, and O'Brien-Malone (2012) found that the grievances which led to violence were frequently a consequence of psychological harm caused, for example, by broken promises and insults. Further, in another instance of the bystander effect, the men had been encouraged to use violence and even provided with weapons by friends and girlfriends. However, as suggested by Vandello, Ransom, Hettinger, and Askew (2009), men may be unreliable in their estimates of both the aggressiveness of their peers and in the attractiveness of violence to women.

The stance taken by Luckenbill in focusing on the situational aspects of the interaction sits comfortably within the established situational analysis approach to theory and research within criminology generally (Birkbeck & LaFree, 1993) and violence specifically (Felson & Steadman, 1983). Luckenbill's approach has been taken a stage

further by Collins with the notion of *micro-sociological dynamics* in violent encounters (Collins, 2008, 2013). Collins suggests that at the tipping point between violence and non-violence those involved experience a state of confrontational tension or fear. In most instances this shared emotional tension acts as a barrier and the protagonists step back from violence. However, this tension may be bypassed so that an act of violence takes place. Collins (2013) suggests that there are four principal ways by which this bypass can take place: "(1) finding a weak victim, especially a victim who is emotionally dominated; (2) orienting to an audience that encourages a small number of performers of violence; (3) remaining at a distance to launch weapons without having to confront the enemy face-to-face; (4) a clandestine approach which pretends there is no conflict until the very last instant" (p. 136). The first two of the above are most closely associated with interpersonal violence; the latter two with "violence at a distance" as found in warfare or terrorism (see also Dutton, 2012).

## Conclusion

From both a psychological and a social perspective it is clear that interpersonal violence is a complex social phenomenon. There are multi-faceted theories encompassing behaviour, cognition, and emotion, alongside the covarying influences of drugs, particularly alcohol, the state of the individual's mental health, and the role of bystanders. Interpersonal violence may occur in several different settings and it can take many forms, ranging from what we might think of as "everyday violence" to highly serious acts which inflict significant harm, even death. The next chapter moves on to examine what we may think of as the lower end of the seriousness scale considering the forms of violence we have learned to tolerate, even accept, as simply being part of our everyday lives.