

Aggression and violence effect society in a variety of ways. It is the general consensus that our society is becoming increasingly more violent. The Bosnian civil war was the most brutal chapter in the break up of Yugoslavia. On February 29, 1992, the multiethnic republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where Catholic Croats, Orthodox Serb, and Muslim Slavs lived side by side, passed a referendum for independence – but not all Bosnian Serbs agreed. Under the guise of protecting the Serb minority in Bosnia, Serbian leaders like Slobodan Milosevic channelled arms and military support to them. In spring 1992, the federal army, dominated by Serbs, shelled Croats and Muslims in Sarajevo the Bosnian capital. Bosnian Serb guerrillas carried out deadly campaigns of ‘ethnic cleansing’, massacring members of other ethnic groups or expelling them from their homes to create exclusively Serb areas. Millions of Bosnian (and Croatians) had been driven from their homes by July 1992. In early 1994 the fierce three-way fighting became a war between two sides. In February and March the Muslims and Croats in Bosnia called a truce and formed a confederation, which in August agreed to a plan for 51-49 split of Bosnia, with the Serbs getting the lesser percentage. Despite the Muslim-Croat alliance, the peace proposal, and an ongoing arms embargo against all combatants, the fighting did not stop. In 1994 and 1995 the Bosnian Serbs massacred residents in Sarajevo, Srebrenica, and other cities. The Bosnian Serbs wanted to unite all Serb-held land of the former Yugoslavia. By September 1995, however the Muslim-Croat alliance’s conquests had reduced Serb-held territory in Bosnia from over two-thirds to just one-half the percentage allocated in the peace plan for the Serb autonomous region. On December 14, 1995 the leaders of Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia signed the Dayton peace accords, officially ending the wars in Bosnia and Croatia after about 250,000 people had died and more than 3 million others became refugees.

What is the cause of such unleashed aggression towards society? How can we explain such acts of aggression and violence? Warfare is an area of psychology on which much research is focused. Psychologists have tried to discover its underlying mechanisms. Several theories have emerged in the past few decades that attempt to explain different areas of aggression. The old nature-nurture issue is a component in a large portion of the theories presented. Aggression theories can be categorized into three groups: innate theories of aggression drive reduction theories of aggression, and social learning theories of aggression. Innate theories, often called biological theories, explain aggression as a natural, unavoidable behaviour to which some individuals are biologically predisposed. Drive-reduction theorist claim that aggression is a drive that is elicited by external stimuli, and social learning theorists state that aggression is a learned behaviour. These theories offer various explanations towards the understanding of human warfare and why it occurs.

When a referendum for independence was passed on February 29, 1992, not all Bosnian Serbs agreed, and it was here the conflict began, leading on to the Bosnian civil war and so violence took place stemming from frustration and leading to aggression. The frustration-aggression hypothesis formulated by Dollard et al (1939) proposed that frustration is the sole cause of aggression. Although no psychologists believe this now, the other assertion of the hypothesis – that frustration creates instigation to aggressive

behaviour, is more consistent with the evidence. And has led to a large number of investigations right to the present time.

The frustration-aggression hypothesis has been applied by many researchers to the model of social and political unrest. Feierabend & Feierabend (1972) used the frustration-aggression hypothesis as an explanation of socio political violence within a society. They linked social violence to systemic frustration, which is the level of discontent within a society over unsatisfied wants, needs and expectations. Gurr (1970) linked political violence to the level of 'relative deprivation' in a society. He stated that if the realization of things such as desired standards of material welfare, self-determination, decisional freedom and satisfactory social relationships, falls short of expectations, a potential for political violence exists within the society. Gurr suggested that if frustrated people do not blame their problems on the socio-political system, the likelihood of political violence is diminished, and it is possible that a scapegoat may be found, such as a disliked racial or ethnic group. In order to release aggression caused by frustration. This can be applied to the Bosnian civil war where the Serbs unhappy with the referendum for independence, massacred members of other ethnic groups. Gurr suggests dissident elements within a society possess some power to coerce. Evidence has found to show that revolutionary guerrilla armies appear to have some degree of coercive control over people living within territory that they control. This was found in Bosnia with Bosnian Serb guerrillas.

Both Gurr and Feierabend show the use of the frustration-anger hypothesis in the explanation of social and political conflict. However critics believe that such extensions from experimental psychology are overly simplistic. Gurr's 'relative deprivation' theory has been criticised on its theoretical grounds. Walker & Pettigrew (1984) argue that Gurr had described what is called 'egoistic' relative deprivation. However, they propose that cause of collective aggression such as civil wars and riots is 'fraternal' relative deprivation. This is when a person believes that his/her social group is deprived relative to other groups.

There is no understanding of the Bosnian civil war without reference to the three periods of foreign occupation, leaving Bosnia a disintegrated state. Serb forces carried out a deadly campaign of 'ethnic cleansing', massacring members of other ethnic groups or expelling them from lands which they wanted to unite. Serbs mostly controlled areas where their ethnicity has had a significant or almost exclusive presence for hundreds of years. They believed this to be Serb 'territory'. What do psychologists teach us about the concept of 'territoriality' in humans?

Territory is sometimes defined as the area in which a given animal will not tolerate another member of the same species. Applying this to the Bosnian civil war one can see that the Serbs identified themselves as different to the Croats and the Muslims. Robert Ardrey's 'territorial imperative' (1967) suggests that man is dominated by an instinct for defence or gain of territory, inherited from his animal ancestors. This instinct is supposed to be one of the main sources of animal and human aggressiveness'. Ardrey's explanation for the causes of man's unpleasantness, centres upon territorial behaviour.

Defend, protect and resent are all terms which describe human motivational states. To the warrior-oriented mind, the invasion, destruction and/or appropriation of territory belonging to another social group may even be deemed as good, since it expands the territory or territorial influence of one's own group. This innate characteristic of the human species exists as a consequence of evolutionary inheritance. It is a genetically determined form of animal behaviour. Naturalists like Ardrey argue that the basic primordial psychological necessities to life are identity, stimulation and security, all of which the instinctive drive of 'territoriality' provides.

The possibility that man can change through learning is completely dismissed. Rather this 'territorial' instinct must be diverted into conventional substitutes for war. The concept of 'territoriality' is derived from observing animal behaviour. Findings from animal research have then been applied to the human condition. Critics argue that the concept of 'territoriality' is of little help to us understanding animal behaviour and so it may be even less useful in helping us to understand the behaviour of man. Evidence is reviewed and it is concluded that the construct of territoriality is not particularly useful and has little explanatory power. It has been proved that man does have internal impulses to aggression, but there is little evidence that the expressions of these impulses are innately related to 'territoriality'. Critics say the concept is quite erroneous as there are many animal species for whom the concept of 'territoriality' does not apply. The study of apes shows us that they are quite tolerant and flexible with regard to their territory, and does not offer a picture that would permit the analogy to a society. Ardrey uses as evidence, for the concept of 'territoriality', the fact that human beings like animals show assertion and aggression of many kinds in relation to the ownership of objects and property and also in relation to ethnic and national territory. This can be seen clearly by observing attitudes towards in-group, out-group, foreigners, and other races.

The Bosnian civil war illustrated to the world that sexual violence is frequently used as a weapon of war. It creates an environment that terrorizes, humiliates, intimidates and ultimately demoralizes the victim. Sexual violence used in war consists of a broad range of factors, including frustration and political or ethnic hatred, and can be used as a means of expressing hatred for the victim's ethnic group or his/her political loyalties. Some state that sexual violence is a 'by-product' of war, while others argue that it is often an actual means of 'waging war'. The perpetrators of sexual violence conduct war in a way that extends what it is, in essence, a political and military conflict, to the very heart of society by attacking personal rights as a means of assaulting the large group. The aggressor conducts war against the victim's body and against his/her identity and dignity.

The central tenet behind sexual violence is said by psychologists to lie in the concept of 'domination'. The aggressor of sexual violence expresses their domination over the other group by defiling the strongholds of their opponent's culture, heritage and honour. By doing so, they extend the battle ground to the victims' bodies. Studies on animals have found that sexual behaviour patterns are also used for non-sexual, social purposes, ranging from friendly greetings and the inhibition of threats and aggression, to the establishment of dominance-submission relationships.

In traditional societies such as Bosnia rape holds such serious social and religious stigma that if done on a large scale serves to demoralize the victims and isolate them from their communities, terrorizes the civilian population and drives them away from their homes, a method also known as 'cleansing'. Studies undertaken by Groth show that in rape, the desire for sex and the desire for power or revenge are mixed. Many rapists are interested in humiliating their victims and asserting their masculinity by means of violence, than in obtaining sexual satisfaction. Groth studied five hundred rapists, and estimated that forty percent were predominately 'anger' rapists. The precipitating events were typically related to arguments, domestic problems, suspicion of infidelity, social rejection and environmental situations, the latter being present in war situations. Stoor.A (1991).

Sigmund Freud stated in 'the interpretation of dreams';

"All elongated objects, such as sticks, tree-trunks and umbrellas may stand for the male organ – as well as all long, sharp weapons, such as knives, daggers and pikes".
Stoor. A (1991) pp77

Freud treated the genitals as a reality for what other things might be symbols or signs. So Freud suggested most forms of aggression symbolised sexual violence. Freud argument is the opposite to the argument that sexual aggression is itself used as symbol of authority and dominance.

Western media reported the Bosnian civil war as an ethnic conflict between two peoples, the Bosnian Serbs and the Muslim-Croat alliance. Unlike many ethnic rivalries, this was a conflict between people that are almost genetically and linguistically indistinguishable however both groups viewed themselves as having different identities. A certain form of identity – be it individual, social, cultural, professional, religious or political – constitutes the point of departure for any and all relations with others. Identity is what makes us what we are and who we are, and yet the experience of identity invariably evokes codes of exclusion, difference and distinction. Belonging to a collectively always concerns the delimitation of that collectively and the application of logic of conflict and contention. The codes and norms of belonging may have been the raw materials and the basis for the legitimisation of the violent conflicts in Bosnia. What do psychologist teach us about such 'us versus them' thinking?

The group is a social ecological force of great power and consequence. Psychologist studying groups have regularly observed heightened attachment to ones own group and heightened antagonism towards the out-group. A number of social psychologists have examined groups under controlled circumstances in an attempt to re-create and examine inter-group competition. These field experiments have come to be known as 'summer camps', in which 24 white boys 11-12 participated. Researchers who staffed the camp designed three stages of camp programming; group formation, inter-group conflict, and conflict reduction. The boys that where friend where assigned to different groups. Geen, R.G (2001)

During the first week of the experiment the development of a group structure with associated norms and values was observed. High levels of cohesiveness and positive in-group attitudes were well evidenced. In the second stage a tournament was arranged between both groups. Attitude quickly changed from friendly rivalry to overt hostility accompanied by widely evidenced increases in within-group favouritism. When asked to indicate their best friend, over 90 per cent of the boys in both groups chose someone in their own group even though the other group may have consisted of boys that were their friend before they joined the summer camp. In the final stage the experimenters sought to eliminate or at least reduce the group conflict. Both groups were made to pool their money in order to rent a movie neither could afford alone. A reduction of both in-group favouritism and out-group hostility was found as a result. Geen, R.G (2002).

Turner (1975) argues that it is not the division into groups which causes discriminative effects rather the basic motivation we have to find positive regard. We search for positive distinctiveness for the in-group as compared to the out-group in order to build a positive self-esteem for ourselves. This is the reason for in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination biases

Tajfel and his research team conducted 'minimal group' studies, in order to test the proposition that the division of individuals into groups is sufficient to elicit in-group favouritism and out-group bias. In part their research hypothesis and design grew from the field of object perception. They proposed that the principles guiding object perception might apply to person perception. Doise, Deschamps and Meyer (1978) found that perceptual categorization accentuated the perceived similarities of items differently categorized. In minimal group research participants were divided into two groups. Each subject, working alone, was asked to make various decisions regarding the allocation of money to two other subjects. Most subjects allocated monies in the direction of favouring decisions of anonymous members of their own group. It was concluded that the perception or cognition that one belonged to a particular group appeared to be sufficient to elicit discrimination in favour of those perceived as in-group members and against those perceived to belong to the out-group.

Karen Trew spoke at a conference about her research on the development of social identity and sectarianism amongst young people in Northern Ireland. Her findings highlighted the influence of the 'social identity theory'. She concluded that although the absence of stereotyped cues (such as skin colour) delayed social identity development. Children in Northern Ireland had a clear idea of their own religious and socio political identity. This identification was associated with differing social and political attitudes that played a role in sustaining the civil conflict in Northern Ireland. Muldoon, O (2001)

The social learning theory emerges as an up to date, basis for categorization effect phenomena. It presents three processes – social categorization, social identity and social comparison. It states that the individual or group employ these in an effort to create positive group distinctiveness.

The Bosnian civil war was a catastrophe. Political, social and cultural conflicts are ubiquitous and an unavoidable phenomenon in society. Aggressive behaviour has been a huge part of mankind since people first started walking somewhat erect. Due to its relative nature aggression is extremely hard to isolate and study. Many theories have been developed over the years suggesting that there could be many different causes of the aggression that leads to and occurs during warfare. Each theory has its supports and its criticisms but there is no unanimously accepted explanation. I have found that the social learning theory is the most supported by empirical research. It is the most convincing of the theories, perhaps because of its flexibility and changing nature. It is clear that the research done on aggression from the social learning approach have helped us to understand the nature of aggression. This has forced most strict behaviourist to take a more social learning or social cognitive approach to the development of aggression. However in order to obtain a general, well rounded view, one must study the problem from different scientific perspectives. In order to fully understand aggression that leads to, and occurs during, warfare it is necessary to include the ideas of sexual energy, biological factors, frustration and social influences.

I conclude ones aggressiveness is determined by a combination of environment and genes. Genetics determine the threshold level of aggressive behaviour while the environment causes that threshold to be reached. I find that the question of how humans are capable of committing unimaginable atrocities against one another remains universally unanswered. And a question arises from studying the various explanations for the occurrence of warfare, 'does our increased capacity for intelligence bring with it an increased capacity to justifiably harm and manipulate others through warfare?'