



ANATOMY OF VIOLENCE

Biological, Ethological, & Sociological Explanations of Violence

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AGENDA

- Introductions
- Discussion expectations
- Explanations of Violence:
 - Biological
 - Ethological
 - Sociological

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TELL ME ABOUT YOU



- Name - help me with pronunciation
- What country are you from?
- What degree are you working toward? (if any)
- Why are you interested in this class?

WHAT DO YOU
THINK IS THE CAUSE
OF VIOLENCE IN
FAMILIES,
COMMUNITIES,
AND SOCIETY?

Take a
moment
to write
an
answer

- Read the statements in your group.
- What is your reaction to them?
- Are any similar to your own statements? In what ways?
- Are any very different? what argument might one make for that other opinion?

BRIEF DEFINITIONS

Violence

Aggressive and/or
harmful behavior

Aggression

Behavior that is
physically or
psychologically harmful


Individual

TYPES OF VIOLENCE

Collective

Injurious force directed by one person against another person or people

A group, government, directing injurious force against others. Usually to achieve political, economic, or social objectives




TYPES OF VIOLENCE

Expressive: emotionally-motivated violent behavior

Instrumental: A means to an end

Interpersonal: Assault, rape, robbery, murder

Institutional: Violent behaviors perpetrated in an organizational setting



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Structural: Discriminatory social arrangements that can be construed as violent; social inequality

All Violence is Connected

Examples:
Football and intimate
partners

Military (war zones) and
intimate partners





BIOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS FOR VIOLENCE

THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF VIOLENCE

Two characteristics appear across most violence, in all its forms, regardless of country or time period:

Most violence in the world is attributed to young men

Young

Male



CHEMICALS IN OUR BODIES

Serotonin

- Low levels of serotonin associated with violent behavior because their ability to control their aggressive behavior is diminished

Testosterone

- Some evidence that male aggression is linked with levels of testosterone. Most violence is perpetrated by young males

A 3D rendering of a neuron with glowing synaptic terminals and a rainbow-colored bar at the top. The neuron is depicted with a textured, brownish surface and several bulbous synaptic terminals. A bright, glowing trail of light particles follows the path of the neuron. The background is a soft, purple and blue gradient with faint, glowing lines suggesting neural activity. At the top of the image, there is a horizontal bar with a rainbow color gradient from red to green.

WHAT IS SERATONIN?

A chemical in the brain

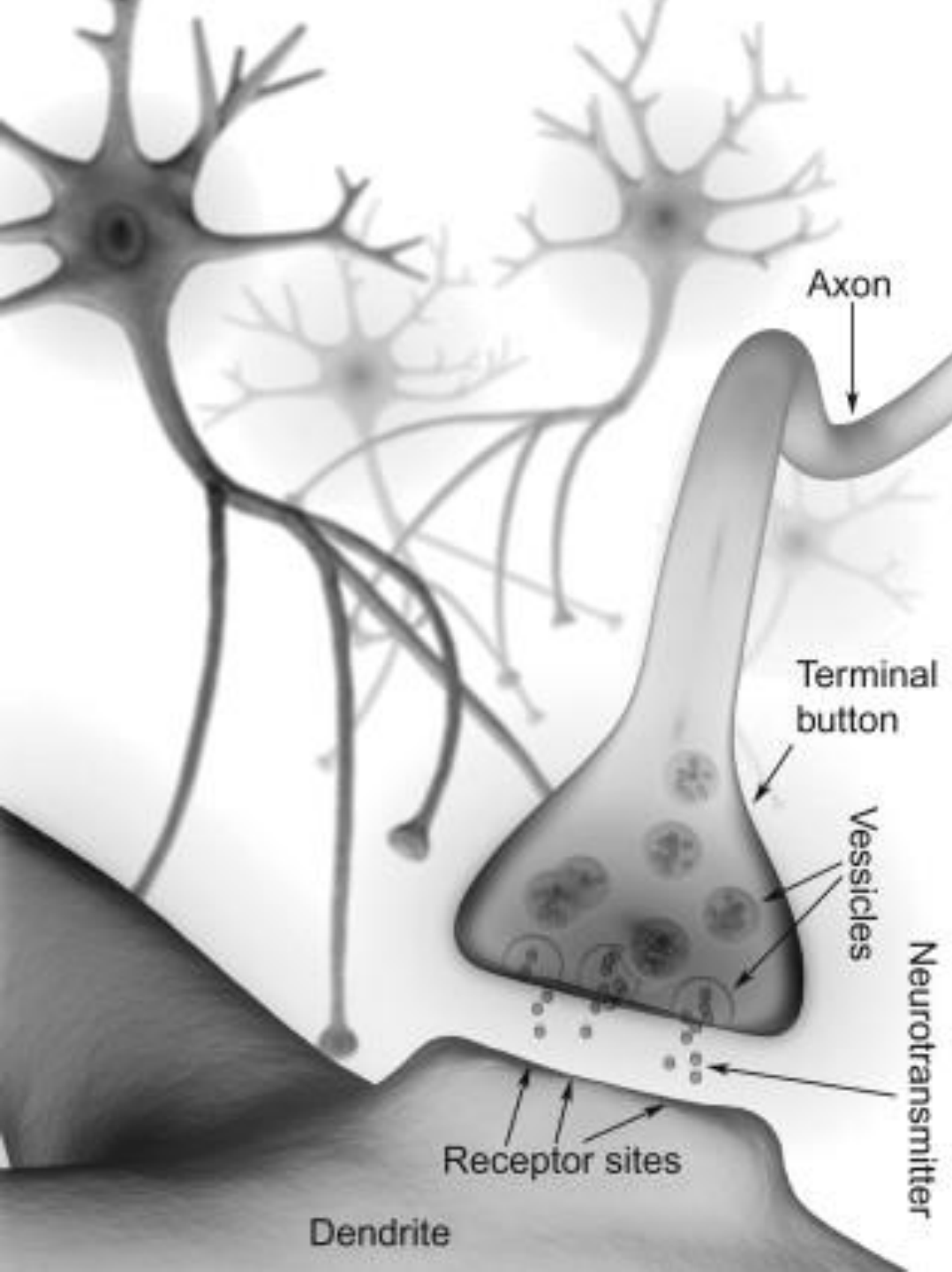
Also known as a
neurotransmitter

NEURONS



Neurons communicate with each other at the ends.

Chemicals such as serotonin help that communication



NEUROTRANSMITTER

- A chemical released at the end of a nerve fiber
- It is released when a nerve impulse arrives
- It jumps into the gap (synapse)
- This triggers an impulse to another nerve fiber

SERATONIN

Regulates moods

- Also regulates:
 - Social Behavior
 - Sleep
 - Appetite
 - Memory
 - Sexual desire

Fluctuations in Serotonin

- Haven't eaten
- Stressed
- Affects part of brain regions that enable people to regulate anger

Low levels of Serotonin cause:

- Depression
- Poor impulse control
- Anxiety
- Aggression



EMOTION REGULATION

- **Emotion regulation** is relevant to both violence and impulse control
- **Aggressive individuals**
 - Difficulty with impulse control
 - Difficulty with emotional regulation
 - Impaired social cognition



Do you exercise? What kind? How do you feel afterward?

How do you feel when you have not eaten in awhile?

How do you feel on sunny days?

INCREASES IN SERATONIN



FOOD



EXERCISE



BRIGHT LIGHT

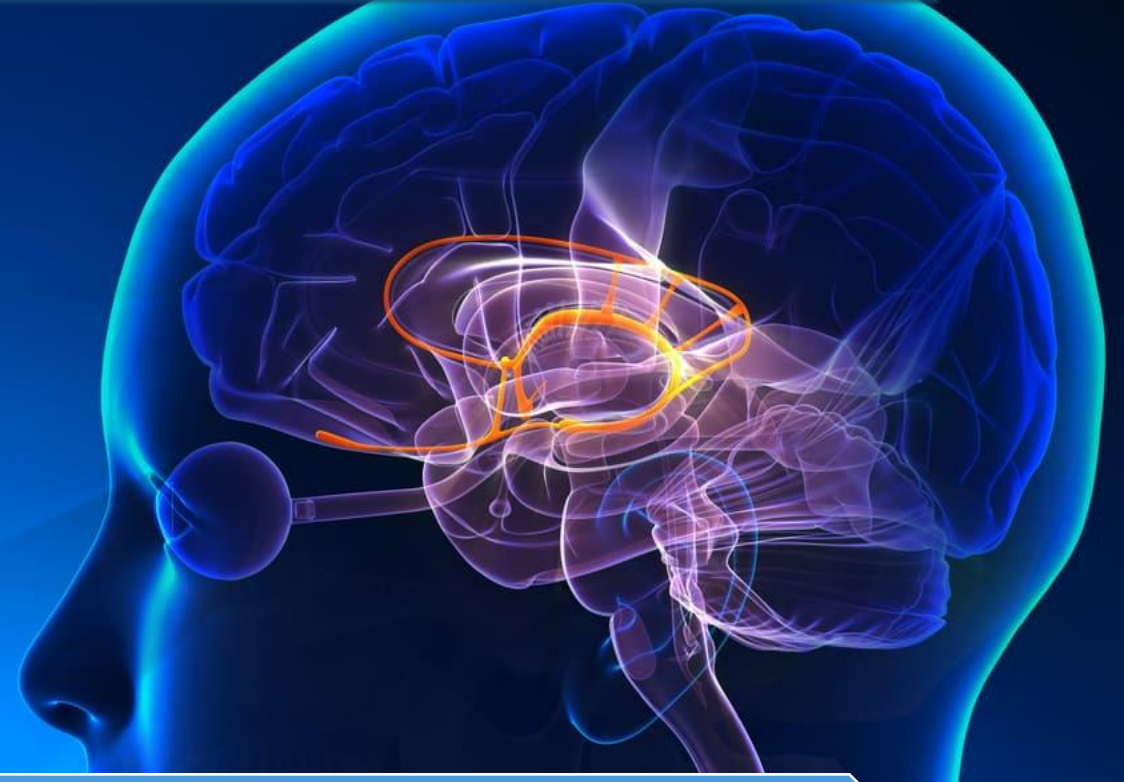


MASSAGE

HOWEVER, RESEARCH ALSO FINDS...



Serotonin dysfunction influences aggression *differently* depending on the individual's baseline impulse control, emotional regulation, and social abilities



Strong emotional states often accompany violent acts that are considered impulsive. Irritability and temper outbursts are often present in violent or impulsive individuals

- Production of testosterone starts to increase significantly during puberty
- Begins to dip after age 30

TESTOSTERONE



Testosterone plays significant role in:

- Stimulates the part of the brain involved in aggression and the muscular system
- Combination of stimulated strength and aggressive instincts can lead to aggressive behaviors

Brain injury

Brain function is affected by injuries, tumors, and other kinds of head trauma

Antisocial personality disorder

Unable to empathize or feel compassion for others. Narcissistic, reckless, and emotionally shallow.

OTHER BIOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS

Aggression is seen in *all species*

Innate behavior of animals is understood by studying them in their *natural environment*

Aggressive behavior is *adaptive* to the specific species



ETHOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS

Animal behavior in natural environments

BREAKOUT 2: AGGRESSION IN NON-HUMAN ANIMALS

1. Have you ever seen a dog behave aggressively?
What was the situation? Why do you think they were
behaving that way?

2. What are reasons that an animal may act
aggressively? Name as many reasons as you can.

3. For each of these situations, what is the adaptive
function? That is, what purpose do they serve?

- Maternal protection of young
- Fear when no escape
- Mating
- Status
- Defense of territory
- Predatory hunting

ETHOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS FOR HUMAN AGGRESSION



Frustration-aggression hypothesis

Violence is one possible response for individuals who feel frustrated and thwarted in achieving something



Stress and violence

Many minority populations live in impoverished and difficult life situations and *these situations* are largely responsible for their higher levels of violent crime

The background features a grayscale image of a hand holding a rainbow flag, with a person's face faintly visible behind it. The text is overlaid on this background.

SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL VIOLENCE

Wars/fighting between ethnic or religious groups

“Righteous Slaughter”

- Perceived humiliation → rage
- Retaliation or defense of principles

Government-sanctioned

Brutalization Hypothesis

- Killings by the state desensitize and devalue human life
- Leads to increased collective tolerance of lethal behavior

JUSTIFICATION AND DESENSITIZATION

Spillover Theory

- Justifications for violence in socially approved settings
- “Spills over” into other settings
- Creates legitimacy

SPILOVER EFFECT EXAMPLES

When Some forms
of Violence are
Legitimized by
Government or
Culture



- Spanked children grow up to be more violent



- Countries recently at war have higher homicide rates in the “peacetime” after a war



- States with the highest death penalty rates also have the highest homicide rates



ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION

- Crime rates are higher in poorer regions...of the world, in the U.S.
- Struggle for survival is intense
- Income *inequality* is strongly associated with violent crime

Most poor people never engage in crime, let alone violent crime

STRAIN THEORY

- Knowing there is a better life available but not to you
- Frustration, anger
- In U.S., comparing with the American Dream
- Pressure to do illegal things to achieve some part of the societal dream or goals.



ANOMIE AND ADAPTATION

- Anomie is the *absence* of the typical social and ethical standards – can apply to an individual or group
- When our society's pathways to success are denied to some groups and they turn to violence to gain a sense of success
- Individuals may choose from a variety of adaptations, some of which may more often result in an increased risk of violence



BREAKOUT 3 (IF TIME)

- Is violence ever justified? Explain.
- Do you think humans are less or more violent than we used to be?
- Why does violence sell? (media, video games, films)
- What interventions for violence are in your community?
 - Are any of these preventive? Explain.
 - What kind of violence is addressed?

SOCIAL LEARNING

- People, especially children, learn through observation, both positive and negative behaviors
- Just because a person learns something does not mean they will change their behavior



MODELS

- All kinds of models, but children only pay attention and mimic *some* of them
- More likely to copy from a person to whom the child can relate or sees a similarity
- Negative behavior can be appealing because it draws attention...or power





COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE



AUTHORITY

- As long as someone else is responsible for the final outcome, ok with violence
- Ongoing experiences that make people willing to obey authority
- Desire to follow authority is more powerful than the stress of cooperating

VIOLENCE ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT

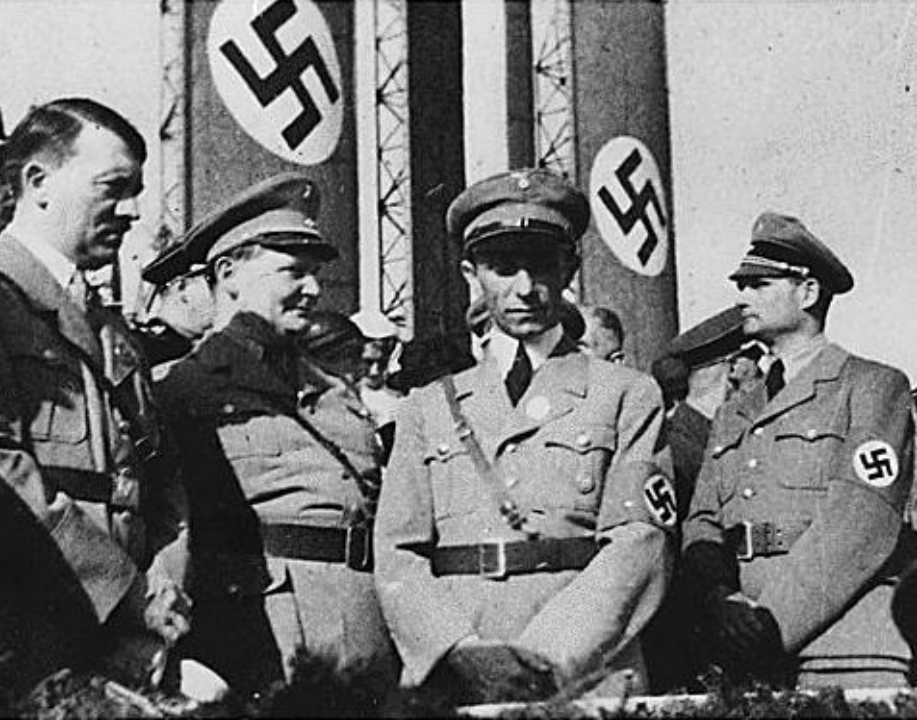
- Worldwide, especially repressive governments
- Used to control political opponents
- As a weapon of war
- To sustain a reign of fear that will prevent the general public from rising up for fighting back.
- To break up communities and family units



DEINDIVIDUATION

- Lost of sense of self and individuality when in a group – normal restraints are not in place
- Where “collective mind takes possession of the individual” – Le Bon
- Behavioral characteristics
 - Lessening of conscious individual personality
 - Convergence of thoughts and emotions in a common direction
 - Emotions and unconscious drive displace reason and rationality
 - Propensity to immediately carry out intentions as they develop

DEINDIVIDUATION



DEHUMANIZATION

- Groups possess legitimacy and authority
 - Perception that victims are less than us or even less than human
 - Increased social distance

RELIGIOUS OR IDEOLOGICAL CONVICTION

- Comfortable with their actions because of conviction
- Most common in authoritarian regimes
- Violence and torture from this type often results in extreme forms
 - because convictions provide strong support that their detainees are inhuman





EMPATHY

- Can be learned!
- Early on can mitigate impact of violence
- The promotion and development of empathy-related skills are useful in the reduction of aggressive or antisocial behaviors.



NEXT CLASS TAUGHT BY DR. NESMITH

7 Dec. Violence in Entertainment