

Anger and its links to Violent Offending

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April 2004

Overview

- Operational Definitions
 - Anger
 - Aggression
 - Violence
- Prevalence
 - Violent Crime
- Risk Assessment
- Theory
 - Cognitive-Affective
- Treatment of Angry Offenders



What is Anger?

- (Negative) Human emotion
 - But is it uncontrollable and inevitable?
- A messenger?
 - Clue that something is not right
 - Response to something “wrong”
- Personal experience
- Associated with
 - Personality (e.g. Borderline PD, Histrionic PD, ASPD)
 - Mental disorder (e.g. PTSD)
 - Life history

Operational Definitions

● Anger

“strong feeling of distress or displeasure in response to a specific provocation” (Thomas, 1993)

● Hostility

“implies a more pervasive and enduring antagonistic mental attitude” (Thomas, 1993)

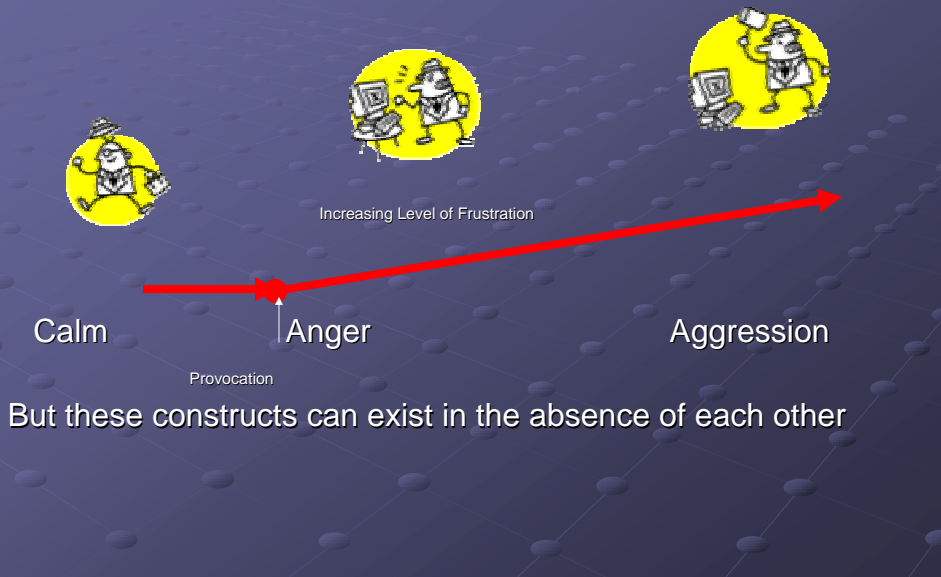
● Aggression

- “any behaviour toward another person (or a person’s property) with the intent to do harm” (White & Kowalski, 1994)

● Violence

- “Forceful infliction of injury” (Howells & Day, 2002)

Conceptualisation



Anger Related Social Problems

- Violent offending (homicide)
- Partner violence
- Child abuse
- Sex offending (affective dyscontrol)
- Violence in psychiatric institutions
- PTSD



Prevalence Of Violent Offending

RATE PER 100,000 POPULATION

	1995	2000
Homicide	5.4	5.2
Murder	1.8	1.6
Attempted Murder	1.7	2.0
Manslaughter	0.2	0.2
Assault	562.9	736.8
Sexual Assault	72.5	81.6

(Adapted from ABS, 2002)

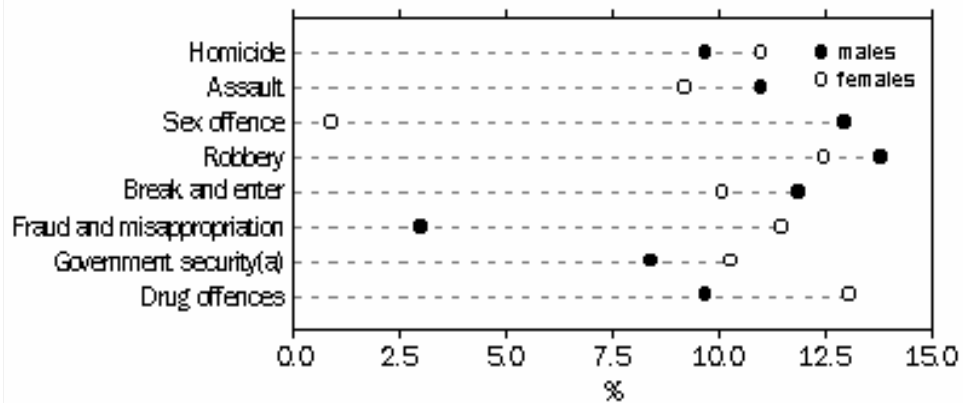
Violent Crime: Prevalence

● Violent Crime

- Increasing concern
- Violent offenders high in numbers in prison
 - Nearly 8500 people in Australian prisons (ABS, 2000)
 - Nearly half of sentenced prisoners



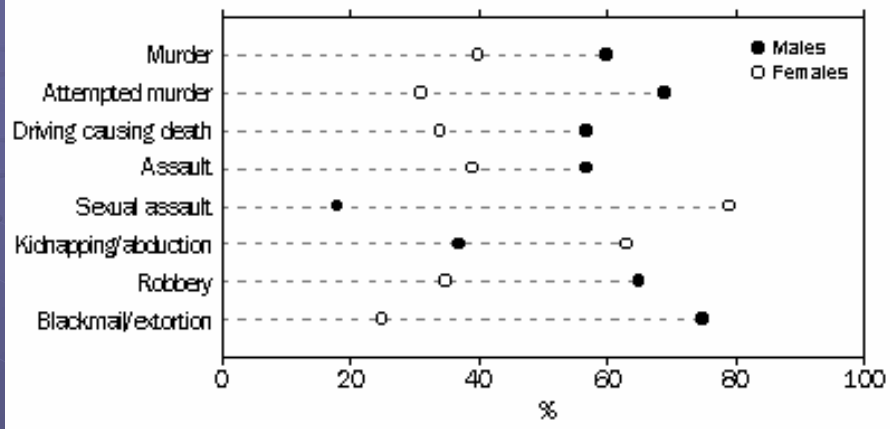
11.25 SENTENCED PRISONERS, By Sex and Selected Most Serious Offence—2000



(a) Government security offences include offences such as treason; they also include offences against justice procedures, such as perjury and resisting police.

Source: *Prisoners in Australia, 2000, Companion Data (4517.0)*.

11.7 VICTIMS, By Sex—2000



Source: *Recorded Crime, Australia, 2000* (#510.0).

Victim-Offender Relationship

(AIC, 2003)

● Homicide Victims

- 93% of female victims knew the offender
- 76% of male victims knew the offender
- Female victims were 7 times more likely to be killed by an intimate
- Male victims more likely to be killed by friends and acquaintances

Risk Assessment

- Specific tools have been developed to predict risk of violence and sexual violence
- Require training to use
 - HCR-20
 - SVR-20
 - PCL-R
- Tools also develop to predict likelihood of violence in Forensic Psychiatric populations
 - VRAG

Beyond Risk Assessment ...

- Risk Assessment has many implications
 - Security Ratings
 - Management
 - Intervention
- It is possible to reduce the likelihood of recidivism (re-offending)
 - Targeted
 - Appropriate intervention

Violence

“Forceful infliction of injury” (Howells & Day, 2002)

Sexual, Physical, Emotional, Verbal

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graph TD; Violence[Violence] --> Angry[Angry]; Violence --> Instrumental[Instrumental];
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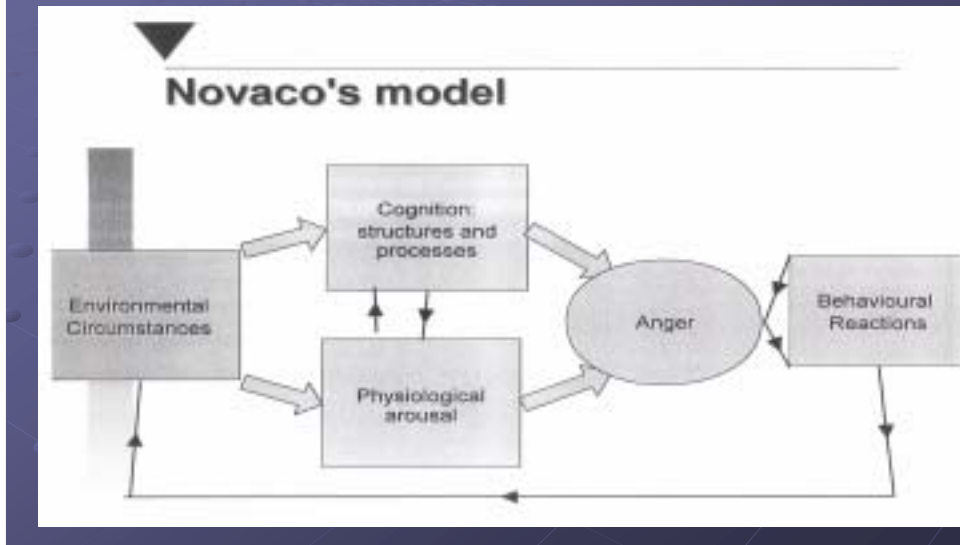
Angry

Instrumental

Although violence is not necessarily related to anger, it has been argued that poor anger control is often implicated in violent offending –

We know that poor anger control plays a role in many violent offences, and the violent offenders commonly experience greater difficulties in managing anger effectively than non-violent offenders

Novaco's Model



Novaco described a reciprocal relationship between environmental events, physical and social cognitive process. EG situational events trigger angry thoughts and in turn emotional arousal is heightened, this leads to increasingly angry thoughts and increase the likelihood of aggression. Importance of attentional cueing of aggression (i.e. seeing hostility and provocation in the actions of others)

What sorts of events trigger anger? These differ between individuals

What appraisals induce anger? Attribution – malevolent intent, external blame, Rule violations

Role of physiological arousal - ANS changes to provoking stimuli, Individual variation, Intensity, duration, control

Behavioural strategies in response to anger -What are normal strategies? Avoiding escalation

How to change – feedback, self-observation, enlarge repertoire, rehearsal, modelling, reinforcement

Assessment

- Paramount
- Individualised understanding
 - Triggering events
 - Interpersonal/environmental
 - Cognitions
 - Appraisals/attributions/rule violations
 - Psychophysiological
 - Intensity/duration/control
 - Behavioural
 - How respond?
 - Avoid escalation
 - Anger expression – internal/external, physical/verbal
 - Consequences
 - Short term
 - Long term

Psychological Intervention

- Awareness of feelings and emotions
- Recognition of emotional states in others
- Identify personal signs of anger
 - Role of build up, temper, recovery
- Relaxation Training
- Introduce CBT model
 - Interconnectiveness of thoughts, feelings and behaviours
- Identify external/cognitive triggers
 - Modify logical thinking errors
- Identify Consequences
- Assertive vs Aggressive talk
- Negotiation Skills
- Problem Solving Skills
- Coping Mechanisms
- Relapse Prevention



Does Anger Management Work?

- General conclusion “yes”
 - Moderate effect sizes
- Theoretical orientation
- Multicomponent
 - Eg Stress inoculation (Novaco) – CBT, relaxation and assertiveness training
- Individualised
- But less conclusive with offending populations
 - Heterogeneous outcomes
 - Need to target treatment

Anger Management with Violent Offenders

- Some limited support but studies on a small scale
- Eg Stermac, McDougall et al., Goldstein and Glick, Graham Towl's work in UK
- Dowden et al. (1999) in Canada -50 hour program reduced recidivism in high risk offenders (very high recidivism in treatment drop-outs)
- Australia
 - Watt and Howells (1999) little impact on clinical outcomes apart from anger knowledge (20 hour program)
 - Howells et al. (2000)
 - Heseltine et al. (2003)

Future Treatment Directions

- Anger Management Treatment important
- Target Offenders
- Pre-treatment screening
- Intensity of programs need to increase
- Programs need to be therapeutic
- Monitor program integrity
- Evaluation – built in rather than post hoc

Blanket delivery to all referred should be discontinued

Offer treatment on basis of likelihood of improvement

Pre-treatment screening assessment eg anger levels and readiness

Programs should be more intensive – 50-100 hours? More for high risk.

A therapeutic rather than educational focus

Continue to monitor program integrity

Evaluation – built in rather than post hoc

Conclusions

- Anger is an important antecedent for some violent offences
- A reasonable theoretical base exists for understanding anger problems
- Well structured treatment programs are available
- There is evidence that these programs are generally effective (absolute)
- Correctional programs may need to be modified – better criteria, assessment, more psychotherapeutic, more intensive

Future Directions ...

- Attention to readiness – a client and systems focus
- Incorporating other conceptual frameworks
- Cultural and preventative interventions

