

## Conclusions and Future Directions

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At the start of this book we recognised the global scale and virtually endless history of violence in human society. Could there be something species-specific? From a psycho-evolutionary standpoint, Buss (2004), for instance, has noted that humans and chimpanzees are the only two species of animals documented to engage in “intense male-initiated territorial aggression, including coordinated coalitions that raid neighbouring territories and result in lethal attacks on members of their own species” (p 281). The reason is thought to be largely for the sake of acquiring “reproductively-relevant resources” (p 282). Already, anthropological evidence is putting this idea to the test.

Socio-cultural history adds a further layer of explanation. Australia, with its history of colonisation and settlement remains sensitive to grievances around dispossession and the continuing marginalisation of the Indigenous population. The resulting deep-seated distrust and resentment are driving forces in the continuing conflict and violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations and between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples (Day, Davey, Wanganeen, Howells, DeSantolo & Nakata, 2006). Lessons from this inter-group conflict have not lost their relevance in the study of encounters between the old and new arrivals on Australian shores, whether they be immigrants or refugees (see Mason, 2007; 2012).

A further step from the socio-historic level brings one face-to-face with the individual in all his/her own complexity. Physical aggressiveness is not a property based on mere membership of a particular group. The psychology of individual differences urges us to explore personality traits (eg, dominance-submissiveness) and the now well-established Big Five personality factors (John, Naumann & Soto, 2008). The psychology of emotions leads us to identify appraisals underlying particular emotions that motivate violent behaviour (Fernandez, 2008).

The “person x situation” interaction considers not only the individual but the whole context in which behaviour occurs. By definition, interpersonal aggression or violence occurs in a relational context. Sometimes, it is a dyadic relationship, in other cases, an inter-group conflict and in yet other instances, an encounter between individual and community. What transpires is reciprocally determined. This does not suggest a diffusion of blame but the need for the researcher qua observer to note the multiple factors that are at work in conflictual and volatile situations. Like so many other behaviours, aggression and violence are not domain-specific but (even in the same individual) are a function of the complexities of context in which they occur. The chapters in this book

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