In the time it takes you to read this chapter, dozens of Americans will be assaulted, raped, or murdered, and numerous children will be abused or neglected (see Table 13.1). As alarming as these statistics are, they represent only a fraction of the aggressive and violent acts that occur throughout the world every day. Terrorism, political oppression, and wars plague international relations, and hate crimes, gang violence, and school-related shootings attest to the immediacy of violence at home. Although violent crimes in America are currently declining (www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/homicide/hmrt.htm), aggression continues to be an all-too-common feature of human interaction.

This chapter examines social psychological approaches to aggression. Social psychologists define aggression as behavior intended to physically or psychologically harm another person. Table 13.2 shows that aggression can be physical or verbal, and can be directed at a person’s body, property, or reputation. Though they differ in kind and severity, all of these types of aggression have in common an intention to harm another person.

The first part of this chapter is devoted to understanding the origins of aggression. Here, we examine whether people are innately aggressive or whether aggression is entirely learned. The second section of this chapter deals with the dynamics of an aggressive episode. Here we look at personality variables and situational factors that influence whether people become angry when they are provoked and whether they aggress when they are angry. Section three considers the link between media-violence

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**TABLE 13.1 Crimes in America**

- One murder every 32 minutes.
- One violent crime every 6 seconds.
- One robbery every 55 seconds.
- One assault every 7 seconds.
- One rape/sexual assault every 2 minutes.
- 56 women are victimized by an intimate every hour.
- A teenager is victimized every 19 seconds.
- A child is abused and/or neglected in America every 35 seconds.
- Every 19 seconds a violent crime is committed against a person at work or on duty.
- 3 people become victims of stalking every minute.


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**TABLE 13.2 Types of Aggression**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Aggression</th>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>FORM OF AGGRESSION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Indirect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Assault, bullying</td>
<td>Vandalism, destruction of property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>Insult, teasing</td>
<td>Harming a person’s reputation by spreading malicious rumors or gossiping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>