

How Psychoanalytical, Biological and Social Learning Perspectives would explain the causes of human aggression

There are several different approaches considered to be involved in the cause of aggression, few psychologists state that it's the psychoanalytic approach, some say the biological and others say social development. This assignment will discuss these three theories and the potential causes of aggressive behaviour.

The psychoanalytic approach is able to establish a greater understanding of aggressive tendencies in more depth. Freud viewed aggression as a self-destructive instinct, conducted through war towards other individuals and nations. As Freud in particular admires his theory to be observed as an 'instinct theory' he later expressed aggression being distinct by sexuality and as he discovered this, a new era began to develop a deeper understanding of aggressive phantasm of psychological existence. (1900) 'Psychoanalytic Theory of Personality.' Thanatos, which is the death instinct produces innate hostility directed generally against the individual, it was Freud's opinion that every instinct should diminish pressure to a minimal and eventually eradicate it effectively. Several analysts disagreed to his theory of the death instinct as it was entirely hypothetical. Still, others acknowledged its clinical significance. This could be that peaceful state we took great pleasure in during our time in the womb, when our demands were dealt with as soon as they emerged. Self-conducted aggression battles with our basic instinct and self-preservation. Although the strength of a self-destructive mode can potentially be very intense, we cannot allow it to destroy our inner peace and subsequently result in acting out aggressively towards others. Eros, the life instinct, is what makes the human mind desire pleasure. Therefore, sublimating anger and aggression into sport expeditions and displacing it in a positive way will release build ups of energy. Gross, R. (2010). Steiner, J. (2008).

This theory may help explain the cause of aggression by evaluating the conscious and unconscious mind and how ego could affect human actions. The 'instinct theory' assesses how human emotion stems from the 'fight or flight' reaction processes, so how does a person instinctively acknowledge aggressive confrontations? As influenced by Freud's theory, Fromm's 'The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness (1977) talks about the human species being the "most ruthless to ever walk the earth". Also going on to explain how we are naturally aggressive and obtain savage impulses harboring inside ourselves, which causes all of us to have the capability of committing violent crimes in a survival of the fittest motive. Gross, R. (2010).

The biological approach is the explanation of how hormones affect our behaviour. Activities in the brain caused by neurotransmitters are assumed to affect the memory, learning, emotion and language. It's argued that genes are what makes a person violent, although it could be learnt behaviour from an individual's environment or a chemical imbalance in the brain. The amygdala which is a larger part of the brain is liable for adjusting our concept and attitude towards fear and aggression. The Sympathetic nervous system can also relate to fear due to the amygdala's relation with other body systems, others could be processing a sense of smell, facial reactions, stress and aggression, all released by the brain's neurotransmitters. Stangor, C. (2011).

Hormones have a crucial impact on aggression but most importantly testosterone, which suggests that even when associated between humans and animals, there were findings of increased levels of aggression. Throughout research substantial amounts of testosterone and aggression were correlated and despite the stronger link to be among the animals, these findings are still compelling. (Dabbs, Hargrove, & Heusel, 1996). Stangor, C. (2011).

Even though studies indicate that there are higher levels of testosterone in men in comparison to women, aggression is not restricted to men. Positive benefits can be related such as competitiveness in sport or relationships. Regardless of studies observing the relationship between testosterone levels and its connection with aggression, that does not prove that aggressive behaviour is caused by testosterone. To engage in aggressive behaviour may briefly boost testosterone levels and studies suggest that individuals who endure confrontation show more aggression and testosterone as stressful experiences have been associated with an increase in testosterone. As well as this, studies also suggest that within competition, higher levels of testosterone have resulted in more winners and decreased levels result in more losers (Cohen, Hisbett, Bosdile, & Schwarz, 1996). Stangor, C. (2011).

This theory provides us with a clear understanding of why we act out in aggression and the consequences of the effects higher levels of stress have on us as individuals to cause this behaviour. Biological approaches can explain the causes of aggression by showing the links between the mind, levels of stress, frustration and negative emotions. These are likely to associate with fluctuations of aggression inhibited by experience in which the body processes and controls behaviour. For biology, as well as the brain processes and hormones, studies have also suggested the link of genetic influence, in real life conditions twins and siblings were assessed and observed within their own homes. The mothers were required to report both children's specific aggressive traits for several hours each day focusing on inability to comply, reactions to rejection, threats and destructive impulses. Significant inherited similarities were observed by the mothers and results varied demonstrating that some male twins scored higher for aggressive tendencies than female twins. Which indicates a definite relation biology has to aggression and that for future studies a greater depth of detail would lead to more specific answers towards what can occur and to what extent do different types of aggression go. Stangor, C. (2011).

The Social approach is the study that covers how we think, feel and react towards others around us, and how our behaviour is affected by those people. This approach typically understands why we may act out aggressively sometimes and what causes us to do this. The purpose of the social constructionist approach is to understand and explain human behaviour assessed by different interactions. Aggression could stem from social influences such as adolescents being indoctrinated with religious beliefs without understanding it or wanting to take part which develops a social norm by encouraging engagement in certain activities by authoritative figures, parents or peers. This can result in a buildup of anger leading to the person to rebel against authority and lacking respect as the individual grows up and develops more independence. Stangor, C. (2011).

Tuffin, K. (2005) 'Understanding Critical Social Psychology'. Stated that if something was a social construct, that doesn't mean it's real. He also says that because something is 'solid' we assume it's 'reality'. In the Principles of Social Psychology, it's explained whilst analyzing the individuals sense of 'character, personality, dispositions and tendencies.' Most people only like to display their best character traits and attempt to soften their less positive traits.

A lot's to be said about social media and violent video games in attempt to understand the causes of aggression. How is violence perceived on video/computer games television programs? According to Taylor et al. (1994). The effects of media violence are not substantial enough conditions to produce violent behaviour on its own. However, it could be a contributing factor to few aggressive tendencies. Others, nonetheless differ. Researchers feel that the unanimity believe that media violence increases the chances of aggressive behaviour and violence in both instantaneous and progressive context. After Bushman (2002) conducted an analysis of 280 studies, claimed the link is practically as similar to smoking and cancer. Gross, R. (2010)

As a society, the environment around us could greatly impact our judgement on what's morally correct and what's not. The positive reinforcement theories explain that rewarding an individual for bad behaviour is likely to result in a continuation in aggression in the future. However, those who are punished for negative behaviour are unlikely to commit the offence again. Bandura, (1973) argues that 'we don't just imitate the specific behaviour that we see, but that viewing aggression changes our schemas and our attitudes about aggression.' For instance, witnessing a parent or guardian acting out in an aggressive or violent manner may increase the child's views on violence being considered appropriate. There are large links between children who have been brought up in strong violence that are victims of aggression themselves, but end up acting out violently as adults, abusing their own children or future partners. As told by (Heyman & Slep, 2002). Despite being rewarded for violence increases aggression, possibly being punished could decrease it? Whilst criminals are being punished with fines, prison sentences and more so the death penalty; there is an issue with punishment as that itself is aggressive. Stangor, C (2011).

As well as reinforcement being the main cause of behaviour imitation, Bandura et al. (1961-1963) exhibited a child's aggression being increased through indirect reinforcement, for example observing another child being rewarded for negative behaviors. Evidence supplied in the Bobo doll experiment where children recognized adults acting in an aggressive way towards a doll and continued to copy the adult after witnessing the behaviour being rewarded. Gross, R. (2010).

All of these examples give a considerable amount of evidence between the links social situations have on aggressive behaviour. On a see-do basis we can accept that it is learnt behaviour and not something that we would generally do independently unless triggered. Throughout many different real-world scenarios children who are overly exposed to aggression tend to grow up being more aggressive independently possibly down to a lower IQ and poor parenting.

To conclude these findings, the association between the approaches state a clear connection and understanding as to why we act out in aggressive behaviour. Each approach has its own unique theory which are all appreciated from an academic perspective. Aggression is seen throughout most approaches as natural survival instinct for all, and continuous debates today against issues

of whether aggression is an innate reaction or whether we learn the behaviour from our environment, or both.

References

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