

Human Aggression (Part 2)

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2.0 Theories of Aggression

Aggression is a behavior characterized by verbal or physical attack, yet it may be appropriate and self-protective or destructive and violent (Perry, 2007). The complex set of behaviors recognized as aggression has been studied in man and animals for many years. While the definition of aggression varies somewhat from author to author, it is helpful to look at theories of aggression as there are many theories come up in discussing the aggression for further understanding.

Dugan (2004) has divide aggression into three schools: those that consider aggression as an instinct, those that see it as a predictable reaction to defined stimuli, and those that consider it learned behavior. The three schools form a continuum along which, at one end, aggression is seen as a consequence of purely innate factors and, at the other end, of external factors (Dugan, 2004). In fact, much of the debate on aggression might be framed as a more general "nature vs. nurture" debate (Dugan, 2004).

Bushman and Anderson's earlier study on human aggression has discussed on six main theories of aggression that guide most current researches. It includes Cognitive Neoassociation; Social Learning; Script; Excitation Transfer; Social Interaction; and Instinct Theory.

2.1 Cognitive Neoassociation Theory

It is also known as Negative Affect Theory which was proposed by Leonard Berkowitz. It states that negative feelings and experiences are the main cause of anger and angry aggression. Berkowitz, in his article of *Pain and Aggression: Some Findings and Implications* has proposed that aversive events such as frustrations and depression, pain, crowding, provocations, loud noises, uncomfortable temperatures, and unpleasant odors produce negative affect. Negative affect produced by unpleasant experiences automatically stimulates various thoughts, memories, expressive motor reactions, and physiological responses associated with both fight and flight tendencies (Bushman & Anderson, 2002). The difference between the fight

and flight is that the fight associations give rise to rudimentary feelings of anger, whereas the flight associations give rise to rudimentary feelings of fear.

Furthermore, Cognitive Neoassociation Theory assumes that cues present during an aversive event become associated with the event and with the cognitive and emotional responses triggered by the event (Bushman & Anderson, 2002).

(Collins & Loftus, 1975) on the other hand, proposed that aggressive thoughts, emotions, and behavioral tendencies are linked together in memory. When a concept is primed or activated, this activation spreads to related concepts and increases their activation as well.

Cognitive Neoassociation Theory also includes higher-order cognitive processes, such as appraisals and attributions. If people are motivated to do so, they might think about how they feel, make causal attributions for what led them to feel this way, and consider the consequences of acting on their feelings. Such deliberate thought produces more clearly differentiated feelings of anger, fear, or both. It can also suppress or enhance the action tendencies associated with these feelings (Bushman & Anderson, 2002). The likelihood that an angry person will act aggressively depends on his or her interpretation of the motives of the people involved.

According to Bushman and Anderson (2002), Cognitive Neoassociation Theory subsumes the earlier frustration-aggression hypothesis and provides a causal mechanism for explaining why aversive events increase aggressive inclinations. This model is particularly suited to explain hostile aggression, but the same priming and spreading activation processes are also relevant to other types of aggression.

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