

Human Aggression (Part 4)

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2.3 Script Theory

Abelson and Schank proposed that when children observe violence in the mass media, they learn aggressive scripts (Huesmann, 1998). Scripts define situations and guide behavior where the person first selects a script to represent the situation and then assumes a role in the script (Bushman & Anderson, 2002). Once a script has been learned, it may be retrieved at some later time and used as a guide for behavior. This approach can be seen as a more specific and detailed account of social learning processes. Scripts are sets of particularly well-rehearsed, highly associated concepts in memory, often involving causal links, goals, and action plans (Huesmann, 1998). When items are so strongly linked that they form a script, they become a unitary concept in semantic memory.

Furthermore, researchers believed that even a few script rehearsals can change a person's expectations and intentions involving important social behavior. A frequently rehearsed script gains accessibility strength in two ways. Multiple rehearsals create additional links to other concepts in memory, thus increasing the number of paths by which it can be activated. Multiple rehearsals also increase the strength of the links themselves. Thus, a child who has witnessed several thousand instances of using a gun to settle a dispute on television is likely to have a very accessible script that has generalized across many situations. In other words, the script becomes chronically accessible. This theory is particularly useful in accounting for the generalization of social learning processes and the automatization as well as the simplification of complex perception-judgment-decision-behavioral processes (Bushman & Anderson, 2002).

2.4 Excitation Transfer Theory

Excitation Transfer Theory proposed by Zillmann in 1983 notes that physiological arousal dissipates slowly. If two arousing events are separated by a short amount of time, arousal from the first event may be misattributed to the second event. If the second event is related to anger, then the additional arousal should make the person even angrier. The notion of excitation transfer also suggests that anger may be extended over long periods of time if a

person has consciously attributed his or her heightened arousal to anger. Thus, even after the arousal has dissipated the person remains ready to aggress for as long as the self-generated label of anger persists (Bushman & Anderson, 2002).

2.5 Social Interaction Theory

Social Interaction Theory on the other hand interprets aggressive behavior (or coercive actions) as social influence behavior, i.e., an actor uses coercive actions to produce some change in the target's behavior (Bushman & Anderson, 2002). Coercive actions can be used by an actor to obtain something of value (e.g., information, money, goods, sex, services, safety), to exact retributive justice for perceived wrongs, or to bring about desired social and self identities (e.g., toughness, competence) (Bushman & Anderson, 2002).

According to this theory, the actor is a decision-maker whose choices are directed by the expected rewards, costs, and probabilities of obtaining different outcomes. Social interaction theory provides an explanation of aggressive acts motivated by higher level or ultimate goals. Even hostile aggression might have some rational goal behind it, such as punishing the provocateur in order to reduce the likelihood of future provocations (Bushman & Anderson, 2002). This theory provides an excellent way to understand recent findings that aggression is often the result of threats to high self-esteem, especially to unwarranted high self-esteem.

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