Aggression and nature innate factors

There is no simple or single entity which we can call aggression" (Stainton Rogers et al. 1995, p. 169). What does this statement mean and what are the implications for Psychological theories which attempt to explain aggression?

Aggression is part of every person'spersonality. For each individual at some point of our lives, we tend to be aggressive towards another person or towards the situation. There is no simple or single entity which we can call aggression" (Stainton Rogers et al. 1995, p. 169). There are several psychological theories which explains aggression these can be a result of nature, environmental factors and social factors.

Nature/Innate Factors:

Sigmund Freud is the father of psychoanalysis. In his early theory, Freud asserts that human behaviors are motivated by sexual and instinctive drives known as the libido, which is energy derived from the Eros, or life instinct .

Thus, the repression of such libidinal urges is displayed as aggression (Alexandra K. Smith, 1999 http://serendip. brynmawr. edu/bb/neuro/neuro99/web3/Smith. html) In the Oedipus complex, a boy is fixated on his mother and competes with his father for maternal attention.

The opposite, the attraction of a girl to her father and rivalry with her mother, is sometimes called the Electra complex. (changingminds. org)

Freud came to the conclusion that humans have not one but two primary instincts. He called the life-favoring instinct Eros, one of the Greek words for " love," and the death instinct Thanatos, the Greek word for " death." (Beyond the Pleasure Principle. New York: Norton, 1960).

Another theory about aggression is Konrad Lorenz's instinctual aggression.

Lorenz examined herring gulls and other territorial birds. They defend their territory(theirfood& breeding source) by aggression using fixed action patterns, elicited by sign stimuli.

The build up of internal forces did not seem to play a role in the theory. Aggression is an instinct, serving territoriality, elicited by biologically relevant signs, is automatic, and difficult to inhibit out with certain biologically based sign inhibitors (www. psy. gla. ac. uk, p. 2).

Environmental Factors:

Identification with the aggressor which is defined as version of introjection that focuses on the adoption, not of general or positive traits, but of negative or feared traits. If you are afraid of someone, you can partially conquer that fear by becoming more like them (Dr. C. George Boeree, 1997 http://webspace. ship. edu/cgboer/freud. html). To cite an example is the Stockholm Syndrome.

A woman named Patty Hearst was capture by a small group of self - proclaimed revolutionaries called the Symbionese Liberation Army. She was kept in closets, mistreated and even raped. Yet she decided to join her captors , making little propaganda videos for them and even waving a machine gun around during a bank robbery.

When she was later tried, psychologists strongly suggested she was a victim, not a criminal. She was nevertheless convicted of bank robbery and sentenced to 7 years in prison. Her sentence was commuted by President

Carter after 2 years ((Dr. C. George Boeree, 1997 http://webspace. ship. edu/cgboer/freud. html).

Citing this example we can relate that aggression is caused by the environmental factor that the aggressor created.

The most well known drive theory of aggression is the frustration-aggression hypothesis proposed by a group of researchers at Yale led by John Dollard. He and his colleagues define frustration as " an interference with the occurrence of an instigated goal-response at its proper time in the behavioral sequence."(Dollard, et. al. 1939, p. 7)

In this theory, frustration and aggression are linked in a cause and effect relationship. Frustration is the cause of aggression and aggression is the result of frustration.(Alexandra K. Smith, 1999). The prison cell setting can be an example of this theory since inmates who are extremely frustrated can be more aggressive or commit more crimes.

Social Factors:

Social learning theory focuses on the learning that occurs within a social context. It considers that people learn from one another, including such concepts as observational learning, imitation, and modeling. Among othersAlbert Bandurais considered the leading proponent of this theory (Ormrod, J. E. (1999).

General principles of social learning theory follows:

1. People can learn by observing the behavior is of others and the outcomes of those behaviors.

2. Learning can occur without a change in behavior. Behaviorists say that learning has to be represented by a permanent change in behavior, in contrast social learning theorists say that because people can learn throughobservationalone, their learning may not necessarily be shown in their performance. Learning may or may not result in a behavior change.

3. Cognition plays a role in learning. Over the last 30 years social learning theory has become increasingly cognitive in its interpretation of human learning. Awareness and expectations of future reinforcements or punishments can have a major effect on the behaviors that people exhibit

4. Social learning theory can be considered a bridge or a transition between behaviorist learning theories and cognitive learning theories.

(Ormrod, J. E. (1999).

The conclusion of this school of thought on aggression has been summed up: " Human aggression is a learned conduct that, like other forms of social behavior, is under stimulus, reinforcement, and cognitive control." Bandura, Albert. The Social Learning Theory of Aggression. In R. A. Falk and S. S. Kim, (Eds.), The War System: An Interdisciplinary Approach. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980, p. 146.

How theenvironmentreinforces and punishes modeling:

People are often reinforced for modeling the behavior of others. Bandura suggested that the environment also reinforces modeling. This is in several possible ways:

1. The observer is reinforced by the model. For example a student who changes dress to fit in with a certain group of students has a strong likelihood of being accepted and thus reinforced by that group.

2. The observer is reinforced by a third person. The observer might be modeling the actions of someone else, for example, an outstanding class leader or student. Theteachernotices this and compliments and praises the observer for modeling such behavior thus reinforcing that behavior.

3. The imitated behavior itself leads to reinforcing consequences. Many behaviors that we learn from others produce satisfying or reinforcing results. For example, a student in my multimedia class could observe how the extra work a classmate does is fun. This student in turn would do the same extra work and also receive enjoyment.

4. Consequences of the model's behavior affect the observers behavior vicariously. This is known as vicarious reinforcement. This is where in the model is reinforced for a response and then the observer shows an increase in that same response.

Bandura illustrated this by having students watch a film of a model hitting a inflated clown doll. One group of children saw the model being praised for such action. Without being reinforced, the group of children began to also hit the doll .

Contemporary social learning perspective of reinforcement and punishment:

1. Contemporary theory proposes that both reinforcement and punishment have indirect effects on learning. They are not the sole or main cause.

2. Reinforcement and punishment influence the extent to which an individual exhibits a behavior that has been learned.

3. The expectation of reinforcement influences cognitive processes that promote learning. Therefore attention pays a critical role in learning. And attention is influenced by the expectation of reinforcement. An example would be, where the teacher tells a group of students that what they will study next is not on the test. Students will not pay attention, because they do not expect to know the information for a test.

Cognitive factors in social learning:

Social learning theory has cognitive factors as well as behaviorist factors (actually operant factors).

1. Learning without performance: Bandura makes a distinction between learning through observation and the actual imitation of what has been learned.

2. Cognitive processing during learning: Social learning theorists contend that attention is a critical factor in learning.

3. Expectations: As a result of being reinforced, people form expectations about the consequences that future behaviors are likely to bring. They expect certain behaviors to bring reinforcements and others to bring punishment. The learner needs to be aware however, of the response reinforcements and response punishment. Reinforcement increases a response only when the learner is aware of that connection.

4. Reciprocal causation: Bandura proposed that behavior can influence both the environment and the person. In fact each of these three variables, the

person, the behavior, and the environment can have an influence on each other.

5. Modeling: There are different types of models. There is the live model, and actual person demonstrating the behavior. There can also be a symbolic model, which can be a person or action portrayed in some other medium, , such as television, videotape, computer programs. Ormrod, J. E. (1999).

Given the three concepts on how aggression can be associated with, I have considered that we cannot conclude that one factor is the strongest among the three. Our lives are interrelated one way or another, our innate drives, environment, and social learning can be associated on how we respond to situations that can unleash aggression.

References:

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