

Aggression can be defined as 'behaviour that is intended to harm or injure, directed towards another living being. This applies primarily to human behaviour and can include psychological as well as physical injury' (Lippa, 1994). Humans have spent years studying the causes behind this behaviour. In psychology, there are many different approaches, two of which include; biological and sociocultural. Each of these approaches gives us a different insight into the cause behind aggression. In this essay, I will explain in depth the most evidential theories in each approach that explain the causes of aggressive behaviour and how each works together.

The biological approach is one of the many approaches that can be used to explain behaviours such as aggression, it investigates how our genetics, hormones and other biological factors affect our behaviour. One of these factors of the biological approach that can be used to explain the causes of aggression is our genes, specifically the MAOA gene. The MAOA gene is responsible for breaking down key neurotransmitters such as serotonin and dopamine, both of which are responsible for regulating emotion and behaviour. Studies have shown that low levels of serotonin are linked to aggressive and violent behaviours. Another theory within the biological approach that can explain what causes aggressive behaviours in a person is hormones. One hormone that is closely linked to aggressive behaviours is testosterone. A study conducted in a men's prison by Kreutz and Rosel in 1972 found that prisoners who had committed violent crimes during their adulthood had much higher testosterone levels than those who had committed non-violent crimes. It was found that there was a strong link between higher levels of testosterone and more violent and aggressive behaviours being committed.

The sociocultural approach is another approach we can use to understand the causes of aggression. The sociocultural approach looks into the social norms and interactions within our own personal cultures and wider society. The sociocultural approach may help us understand another view on what causes aggression as it is the idea that our behaviours are influenced by our environment. This environment is our social and cultural surroundings such as teachers, parents, religion and other social norms that we grow up with. One way the sociocultural approach may explain aggressive behaviours is by understanding the different norms within cultures.

One person may be viewed as more aggressive than someone from a different culture which has grown up with different behavioural norms. A sociocultural factor that may cause aggression is growing up in a violent neighbourhood where it is common and normalized to see people yelling or hitting each other. A child growing up in this environment sees this behaviour as normal and learn to act in the same way leading to them being viewed as aggressive in social situations outside their culture. Albert Bandura gave us the 'social learning theory' in 1961 in which children were shown models who acted aggressively toward play toys. The results showed that the children paid attention to the models and later imitated the same aggressive behaviour. These results may be applied to situations such as the areas we grow up in and the behaviours we see around us as a child. This means that children who grow up in violent neighbourhoods are likely to be more aggressive than those who didn't.

These approaches have many differences in the way they test for aggressive behaviour. The sociocultural approach uses qualitative data to help understand how and why certain factors may cause aggression because they cannot be easily measured or numerically gathered. Qualitative data is gathered using methods such as interviews and/or questionnaires. This allows researchers to gather information about the participant's social and cultural

backgrounds such as the neighbourhood they grew up in and the behaviours of their role models and apply this to, in this case, their tendency to show aggressive behaviours.

Qualitative data allows researchers to get deeper and more specific when it comes to the causes behind behaviours and find common links between people's experiences and the behaviour they show. This type of research also allows for the data to be uniquely interpreted and patterns to be found that may help us to predict whether someone is more likely to act aggressively coming from a certain cultural setting. On the other hand, the biological approach uses quantitative data which is numerical and observable data. This is done through lab tests where they are easily able to gather information about the person's hormone levels, genes and neurotransmitters. In the context of researching the biological causes behind aggression, a person's hormone levels can be measured in a lab which has allowed researchers to discover the link between high testosterone levels and aggressive crime.

The biological and sociocultural approaches also have many differences in the way they evaluate supporting data and use it to explain behaviours such as aggression. Firstly, they both support different sides of the nature-nurture argument. The biological approach is strongly on the nature side as it uses the idea that our genetics, hormones and other internal factors provide explanations for our behaviours whereas the sociocultural approach focuses more on how our social and cultural environment shapes our behaviour.

The biological approach uses a reductionist method to evaluate the data, simplifying it to its fundamental and basic elements. This means that when using the biological approach to understand the causes of aggression, it is broken down into simple and separate parts that we can really understand and then look back at the bigger picture when we put it together to have a really in-depth, detailed understanding behind the causes of aggression. Eg. researching

specifically on how certain genes may be linked to aggression or how hormone levels may mean a person is more likely to be aggressive and then looking at it as a whole. When it comes to the sociocultural approach, it takes more of a holistic view of things. This is the idea that we can get a better understanding of things if we look at them as a whole and take into consideration as many factors as we can.

Although there may be many differences between the biological and sociocultural approaches, in a wider view of things both approaches work together to deepen our understanding of the causes behind certain behaviours such as aggression. Neither of these approaches can fully explain aggression without the other because no matter what, you are always going to be influenced by both what you are born with and the environment around you. Both approaches and theories work together to explain the causes of aggressive behaviour. An example of how both these approaches work together is a twin study that was done by the University of Louisville where they had a set of identical twins. They tested the twins for intelligence and found that one was more intelligent than the other, but after proper stimulation, for both twins, they found that the more intelligent twin stayed the same while the less intelligent twin caught up. This showed us that you may be born with the potential to reach a certain level of intelligence but without the right stimulation, you may not reach it. The theory of this research can be applied to aggressive behaviours as well. Someone may be born with the MAOA gene and be more susceptible to being aggressive but depending on whether that person gets the right environment and stimulation growing up will also determine how large of an effect this gene has on them, and the behaviour they show.

The interactions between the biological and sociocultural approaches can cause

some people to be extremely aggressive towards others, resulting in criminal

behaviour and prison time. An example of this is someone who carries the MAOA gene, because of this gene that they carry they are more susceptible than others to exhibit aggressive behaviour due to it lowering their levels of serotonin, dopamine and other important neurotransmitters that help us to regulate our emotions and behaviour. If this person grows up in an environment where aggressive behaviour is shown to them all the time because they lack the ability to regulate their emotions and actions, they are more likely to display the same behaviour and the chances of them learning to regulate their emotions after growing up with violence being the norm are very low. This can lead to their aggression growing and possibly resulting in them having to do time in prison. By understanding the people who are most at risk of developing these aggressive behaviours due to genetic, hormonal or other biological issues we can focus on getting them in a more suitable environment where they are more likely to be given the right assets to help them regulate their emotions which would lower the crime rate.

In conclusion, these approaches may have their differences in the way they test them and the way they assess the data that is gathered. Although both of these approaches are important and work together to influence our behaviours, there are limitations to how much we can change when it comes down to it. The biological approach can give us a good insight into why a person may act a certain way, allowing us to take precautions but we cannot change our genetics, therefore it has a stronger influence on us. Knowing about the how the sociocultural approach causes aggression can help us know what to do to avoid imprisonment for horrific crimes such as ensuring children grow up in non-violent households.

[The student also included a reference list, which has been removed for brevity]