

CHAPTER II

THE PROBLEM OF AGGRESSION IN RETROSPECT

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There are almost as many theories of aggression as there are individuals doing research on it. Partly, this is because different scholars have studied the problem from the viewpoint of different disciplines, and research methods vary tremendously. Some investigators feel that rigorous, highly controlled experimental research provides the only key for understanding aggressive behavior, even though such research necessarily confines them to the milder types of aggression that can be investigated in the laboratory, and bars such areas as group or international violence. Others feel that naturalistic observation of naturally occurring aggressive interactions such as gang fights or wars is the method of choice. Still other scholars maintain that any theory of aggression derived solely from research on humans is bound to be inadequate. They prefer to study aggressive behavior across the full phylogenetic spectrum.

Thus in many respects the situation is similar to the three blind men attempting to describe an elephant when each could touch only part of it.

But when it comes to theories of aggression, unfortunately, we cannot even be sure that we are all attempting to describe the same animal. We may have wandered blindly into a zoo and stopped before different cages.

Despite this diversity, there are certain common threads that underlie most of the theoretical approaches to the problem of aggression. Aggression, after all, is simply one form of human behavior, and all human activities do have a common factors that must be considered if the activities are to be explained, so, too, with aggression.

The first factor we shall call instigation. By instigation we mean those forces within the individual that motivate, drive, or impel him towards the performance of aggressive behavior. Without such motivation it is unlikely that the individual will behave in an aggressive fashion. Similarly, a group is not likely to behave aggressively unless it has some members who are instigated towards the performance of aggressive behavior. While most basic form of instigation to aggression is a desire to hurt others, such anger or hostility is not the only motivational source for aggressive behavior. Sometimes individuals or groups behave aggressively as a means to accomplish other ends. The hangman may simply be trying to earn an honest living. Of course, as is the case in all human behavior, aggression is usually multiply determined, satisfying a number of needs.

The second set of factors that we shall consider are inhibitions. Inhibitions are factors in the individual personality that oppose the overt expression of aggression. In the absence of internal inhibitions, the individual will probably act on his aggressive instigation, unless (1) there are other competing responses which are stronger, or (2) there are external inhibitions present in the environment. However, all societies have developed taboos against some forms of aggressive behavior, and most individuals growing up in these culture learn inhibitions against the overt expression of at least some forms of aggressive behavior. The interaction between instigation and inhibition helps determine whether or not an aggressive response takes place, and it influences the direction and the nature of any aggressive behavior that is performed.

Man does not live in a vacuum. His behavior is a function not only of his individual personality characteristics but also of the situations in which he finds himself. It is these situational factors that form the third group of variables we must consider in the analysis of aggressive behavior. These situational factors may act either to facilitate or to inhibit the expression of aggressive behavior. The presence of a crowd cheering one ~~on~~ might have ~~_____~~

a facilitating effect, while being confronted by an officer of the law might have an inhibiting effect.

For an aggressive act to take place, then, the motivational factors instigation and the situational factors that facilitate the expression of aggression must exceed the inhibitory factors - the personality and situational factors that counteract the overt expression of aggression. If the inhibitory factors outweigh the motivation factors, then the aggressive act cannot take place. On the other hand, if the motivating factors exceed the inhibitions, the aggressive act may take place. This does not necessarily mean that it will occur. However, the fact that instigation out-weighs inhibitions only means that aggression is possible. Man is a complex creature, and at any given time a number of different responses and behaviors are probably competing for expression. Engaging in one act often means that the individual cannot take part in another, so a decision between them has to be made. Most of the time these internal bargaining processes take place unconsciously and so rapidly so that we are unaware of the process. Most theorists would not object to the analysis thus far, but here and the limits of common agreement.

Review of the literature and theories of frustration and aggression :

Writers such as Freud (1930), Storr (1968), and Lorenz (1966), trace the mainsprings of aggression

primarily to internal sources, and assume that man has a spontaneously engendered drive impelling him to attack and even destroy other persons; they maintain that this energy must be discharged (whether by direct aggression, the observation of violence, the destruction of inanimate objects, participation in competitive sports, or achieving of positions of dominance and mastery) if uncontrolled explosions of violence and perhaps even suicides are not to occur.

Work of Sigmund Freud : Freud was trained as a physician and did physiological research long before he turned his attention to the psychological complexities of human behavior. With his background, and the Darwinian spirit of his times, it is not surprising that he should have arrived at a theory of human behaviour that was firmly rooted in man's animal nature. The destructiveness of World War I had a profound effect on Freud's thinking. Earlier, Freud had emphasised the life force (libido or eros) as the biological source of human motivation. But the mass destruction of the war convinced the 60 year-old Founder of psychoanalysis that man is impelled not solely by libido, but by another unnamed set of drives he termed the "death instinct" or Thanatos (Jones 1955) the primary function of the death instincts, according to Freud, was the destruction and return of the individual to an inanimate state, and overt aggression was seen as the outward manifestation of these instincts.

Freud maintained that although the aggressive drive had a biological basis, inhibitions develop during childhood as a result of the resolution of the Oedipus Complex and the consequent formation of the superego, or conscience.

Like many of Freud's theories, the postulated death instincts were greeted with same skepticism both within the and outside the psychoanalytic movement. This notion that man carries within him the seeds of his own destruction was abhorrent to many on theological and philosophical as well as scientific grounds.

Freud's theory has important practical implications. As with Lorenz, the notion that aggressive instigation is an innate human attribute suggests there is little to be gained by efforts to prevent aggressive motivation from developing. Moreover, the idea strongly implies that violence, for instance homicide, is the natural form that aggressive behavior would take unless blocked by inhibitory forces. On the other hand, Freud's theory that inhibitions develop in the course of the young child's interactions with his family suggests that child rearing practices aimed at fostering inhibitions against aggression have hope of decreasing violence.

Lorenz and other Ethologists :

One group of the people who popularise the notion that man is instinctively aggressive take their

evidence from the science of animal behavior, called ethology. Some of these writers are among the world's foremost ethologists. In many cases, their studies are careful and detailed and constitute major additions to our knowledge of the way their subjects behave. For the most part there is no quarrel with the quality of that work, or with its importance. There is strong disagreement, however, with the easy analogies these writers have made between genes and the behavior of fish on the one hand, and human beings on the other. Ethologists believe that human violence is a built-in-human quality and that man kills his fellow men because of his inheritance from his killer ancestors. Lorenz seeks to answer that why man has such a singular propensity for "intraspecific" aggression by stating that unlike non-verbal animals, man's rapid technological development has outstripped the slower evolution of innate inhibitions against the expression of his aggressive instigation. Lorenz has suggested that the best solution is to provide men with opportunities to discharge their aggressive instigation through participation in sports and other harmless competitive activities. The most important books and writers who have taken this position to innate aggressiveness during the past decade have been, on aggression (1966) by Konrad Lorenz, *African Genesis* (1961), *The territorial Imperative* (1966) and *The Social Contract* (1970) by Robert Ardrey, *Adventures with the*

Missing Link (1959) by Raymand Dart, The Naked Ape (1967) and the Human Zoo (1969) by Dasmond Morris, Human Aggression (1968) and Human Destructiveness (1972) by Anthony Storr and Finally there is Niko Tinbergen's Oxford Inaugural Address "On War and Peace in Animals and Man" (1968).

Leon Eisenberg and Ashley Montagu :

Eisenberg (1975) and Montagu (1976) debunks these currently fashionable theories of innate aggressiveness. Montagu takes issue with innate aggressionists and shows that "on every one of the fundamental claims they have made concerning man's allegedly instinctive drives, they are demonstrably wrong". In addition, he sets forth the scientific evidence for an alternative view. Montagu refutes point by point such proof of our 'killer instinct' as the existence of cannibalism and territoriality, the idea that tools were originally utilised as implements for killing, and practice of extrapolating to human behavior the evidence of ethology. The facts support his view that virtually no specific human behavior is genetically determined, that humans are capable of all kind of behavior and that behavior is determined by interaction of experience and genetic constitution. The notion that human beings are inescapably killers has had a fierce grip on the western imagination for centuries. Many people find it a comforting thought

for not only 'explains' the worldwide violence to which we have grown accustomed but also "excuses" our own violent behavior. Leon Eisenberg also rejects the currently popular notion that man is instinctively aggressive.

"Human nature is not truly reflected in the currently popular image of a 'naked ape', motivated by "territorial imperatives" and impelled by "aggressive" instincts.

He also challenges Sigmund Freud, whose illusion of civilization were shattered by the barbarities of the first world war, and wrote in *Civilization and Its Discontents*: "The Tendency of aggression is an innate, independent, instinctual disposition in man". Eisenberg argues further that the ways in which men theorize about themselves influence significantly how they behave.

Thus would it not be far more sensible to begin with the assumption that men are by nature neither aggressive nor peaceful, but rather are fashioned into one or another as a result of a complex interaction between a widely, but not infinitely, modifiable set of given biological conditions and the shaping influences of the biological environment, the cultural envelope and individual experiences?

Frustration and Aggression Hypothesis proposed
by Yale Group :

Frequently seen as the major alternative to the Freudian-Lorenzian conception of aggression is the frustration aggression hypothesis proposed by Yale Group

i.e., Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer and Sears (1939). The Yale Group had maintained that a frustration, defined as "an interference with the occurrence of an instigated goal response at its proper time in the behavior sequence", will universally arouse an instigation to aggression. Some American psychologists (e.g. Bandura and Walters, 1963) have questioned this thesis by cited demonstrations of learned modifications of frustration reactions as evidence of the inadequacy of the frustration-aggression hypothesis.

The 1939 monograph "Frustration and Aggression" by Dollard et al has stimulated more empirical research than any other theory of aggression. Largely, this was because the authors, who were reared in the American behaviorist tradition, couched their hypotheses in clear, unambiguous language and provided operational definitions of their principal constructs. During the last three decades many erroneously interpreted the statement "Aggression is always a consequence of frustration" to mean that frustration always leads to overt aggressive behavior. Miller (1941) then clarified the point by postulating that instigation to aggression inevitably follows frustration, but that whether the instigation is actually expressed depends on the relative strength of instigation and inhibitions.

Another point of controversy was whether the theory implies that frustration is the only cause of

aggressive instigation. Buss (1961) suggested that attack, also, can elicit instigation to aggression. A number of studies on animals have shown that painful stimuli such as electrical shock, intense heat, physical blows and tail pinches can result in aggression (Ulrich, Hutchinson, and Azrin, 1965) some authorities argued that such stimuli fall within the Yale Groups' definition of a frustration as an interruption of an ongoing goal sequence. Berkowitz (1962), for example, stated, "..... A person who steps on our toes might also arouse anger if this action interrupted or interfered with internal responses oriented toward the reservation or attainment of security or comfort." Others hold that it is more parsimonious simply to include attack as one of variables which, along with frustration, can elicit aggressive instigation.

Subsequent research on the frustration-aggression theory has focused on the factors that may influence the amount of perceived frustration and the subsequent instigation to aggression. The arbitrariness of frustration (Pastore, 1952), and whether the frustrated individual believes he will have an opportunity to retaliate (Thipaut and Coules, 1952; Worchel, 1957) have been among the variables found to influence these parameters. Yale's group study takes its departure point from the assumption that aggression is always

a consequence of frustration'. More specifically the proposition is that the occurrence of aggressive behavior always presupposes the existence of frustration, and contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression. From the point of view of daily observation, it does not seem unreasonable to assume that aggressive behavior of the usually recognised varieties is always traceable to and produced by some form of frustration. But, in many adults and even children, frustration may be followed so promptly by an apparent acceptance of the situation and readjustment, that one looks in vain for the aggressive behavior to occur. Here, aggressive reactions may be temporarily compressed, delayed, disguised, displaced or otherwise deflected from their immediate and logical goal, but they are not destroyed. Before we proceed further it will be useful to define certain related concepts.

An instigator is some antecedent condition of which the predicted response is the consequence.... The concept of instigator is much broader than that of stimulus; whereas the latter refers only to energy exerted on a sense organ, the former refers to any antecedent condition, either observed or inferred from which the response can be predicted, whether this condition be a stimulus, a verbally reported image, idea, or motive or a state of deprivation.....

Several instigators to a certain response may operate simultaneously, adding to the strength of instigation.

An act which terminates a predicted sequence will be called a goal response. It reduces the strength of instigation to a degree at which it no longer has as much of a tendency to produce the predicted behavior sequence.

An interference with the occurrence of an instigated goal-response at its proper time in the behavior sequence is called a frustration.

A substitute response is any action which reduces to some degree the strength of the instigation, the goal response to which was prevented from occurring. Substitute responses occur with great frequency in the face of frustrations of all kinds. Any sequence of behavior, the goal-response to which is the injury of the person towards whom it is directed, is called aggression. According to the frustration-aggression hypothesis, this is the primary and characteristic reaction to frustration.....

Many of the common forms of aggression can be instantly recognized by almost any observer who belongs to a particular culture in which they occur. Like other forms of behavior, aggressive behavior is also frequently forced into culturally defined pattern.

Acts of physical violence are perhaps the most obvious one. Phantasies of "getting even" with rivals, calculated forays against frustrating persons (whether the weapon is a business deal, a gun, a malicious rumor, or a verbal castigation is of little moment), and generalised destructive or remonstrative outbursts like lynchings, strikes, and certain reformist campaigns are clearly forms of aggression as well. It hardly needs special emphasis that tremendously complex learned skills, such as the use of the boomerang and machine gun, may occur in these aggressive behavior sequence.

Aggression is not always manifested in overt movements but may exist as the content of a phantasy or dream or even a well thought out plan of revenge. It may be directed at the object which is perceived as causing the frustration or it may be displaced to some altogether innocent source or even towards the self, as in masochism, martyrdom and suicide. Thus target of aggression may be inanimate or animate. Such nouns as anger, resentment, hatred, hostility, animus, exasperation, irritation and annoyance carry something of the meaning of the concept. Verbs such as destroy, damage, torment, retaliate, hurt, blow up, humiliate, insult, threaten and intimidate refer to actions of an aggressive nature.

Although the frustration - aggression hypothesis assumes a universal casual relation between frustration and aggression, the two concepts have been defined independently as well as dependently.

The dependent definition of aggression is that response which follows frustration, reduces only the secondary, frustration - produced instigation, and leaves the strength of the original instigation unaffected. Frustration is independently defined as that condition which exists when a goal-response suffers interference. Aggression is independently defined as an act whose goal-response is injury to organism.

The frustration - aggression hypothesis originated in 'Frustration and Aggression', and it is stated clearly on the first page of the book : "This study takes as its point of departure the assumption that 'aggression is always a consequence of frustration'. More specifically the proposition is that the occurrence of aggressive behavior always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise, the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression." (Dollard et al, 1939, p. 1). This immediate reaction to this sweeping generalization was negative, and one of the authors quickly amended the hypothesis to read, "Frustration produces instigations to a number of different types of responses, one of which is an instigation to aggression." (Miller, 1941, p.338). This new version of the hypothesis ^{does} not retain the sweep and generality of the original, and it is

certainly more in line with the facts concerning frustration and aggression.

In denying that frustration always leads to aggression, Miller did not retract the other half of the hypothesis, namely that aggression is always caused by frustration:"

"The assertion that the occurrence of aggression always presupposes frustration, is in our opinion defensible and useful as a first approximation or working hypothesis." (Dollard et al, 1944, p.338). This notion, that the only antecedent of aggression is frustration, has been accepted by most psychologists who have dealt with this issue. There have been two outstanding exceptions. Maslow (1941) denied that simple frustration would lead to aggression, which he believed would be caused only by attack or threat. Rosenzweig (1945) also emphasized that non-threatening stimuli would not lead to aggression but that threatening, frustrative stimuli would lead to aggression. Except for these two writers, most psychologists appear to have accepted the frustration - aggression hypothesis, denying any antecedent to aggression other than frustration. In the two comprehensive reviews by psychologist (Berkowitz, 1958; McNeil, 1959) the frustration - aggression hypothesis is fully accepted. Berkowitz

goes so far as to state that frustration includes attack and insult, arguing that frustration and attack cannot be distinguished operationally.

Reinforcement Patterns and Aggression :

The Social Learning Theory

The social learning theory proposed by Bandura and Walters⁽¹⁹⁶³⁾ represents a shift in emphasis to how aggressive behavior patterns are learned and maintained. Compared with the other theorists, these authors are less concerned with the sources of aggressive instigation or drive than they are with the reinforcement contingencies in the milieu which influence whether an aggressive response, once made, will be rewarded.

While most of the theorists thus far have focussed on what Buss (1961) terms "angry" aggression - aggressive behavior that is rewarded by the injury of the victim - Bandura and Walters also include 'instrumental' aggression within their domain. They investigate aggression learned as a means to some other end such as imitation of a parent's aggressive behavior to obtain his approval. These studies demonstrate that theories of aggressive behavior that are limited to angry aggression will be incomplete.

The response to aggression can also, according to Bandura and Walters, have complex results. Physical punishment for aggressive behavior may induce inhibitions, as the Yale Group suggested; but it may simultaneously, provide the child with an aggressive model to imitate. Similarly, engaging in overt aggression may reduce instigation, making subsequent acting out less likely, but it can also decrease inhibitions, thereby increasing the chances for future aggressive behavior. The practical implications of the social learning view point is that the elimination of frustration through successful poverty programmes and the like might reduce instigation to aggression, but extrinsic rewards for aggressive behavior in a culture also contribute to the development and maintenance of aggressive habits.

Rosenzweig 'Frustration Theory' and his definition of frustration :

In 1934, Saul Rosenzweig, then a Research Assistant in the Harvard Psychological Clinic, published a "heuristic" classification of types of reactions to frustration. A more complete formulation of his theory appeared in 1938. His theory consisted of three major points. First, there was a very global definition of frustration conceived as the "Occurance of an obstacle that prevented the satisfaction of a need." The term

"Need" is used as more or less equivalent with the broad concept of motivation. Second, and perhaps the best known feature of this theory as the classification of types of reactions to frustration. His concepts "extra-punitive", 'intropunitive' and 'impunitive' come under the direction of aggression. 'Obstacle dominance', 'ego-defence' and 'need-persistence' came under the type of aggression. The third is the "frustration-tolerance" which means 'the capacity of the individual to withstand frustration without resorting to inadequate modes of response (Rosenzweig, 1965). He asserted that frustration tolerance tends to increase with age, and also there is some sort of "optimum" amount of frustration that an individual should experience at a particular developmental level in order to attain maximum frustration-tolerance.

As an impediment to growth, frustration is an ingredient of all disease. As a stimulant to growth it enters into most, if not all, creative activity. The importance of stress to the physician hardly can be overestimated, and any instrument that contributes to an appraisal of its effects in the individual patient is necessarily of interest.

Frustration theory assumes the unity-of-the-organism, but attempts to implement the point of

view concretely by adopting frustration as a centrally orienting concept and ordering to it in operational and experimental terms many of the insights derived from psychoanalysis and psychosomatic medicine (Rosenzweig, 1944). The theory includes three levels of psychobiological defence the cellular or immunological, the autonomic or emergency, and the cortical or ego-defence. The normal and abnormal interrelationships of these levels in the unified functioning of the organism provide the key to both adjusted and mal-adjusted behavior. As can be appreciated readily, a general theory of disease and of health is implicit in the afore-indicated continuum : Frustration-growth-creativity.

Frustration is defined as occurring whenever the organism meets a more or less insurmountable obstacle or obstruction in its route to the satisfaction of any vital need. An adventitious increase of tension signals the presence of such a stress. It is hypothesized that when such stress occurs aggression of some type ensues.

Rosenzweig's description of aggression :

Aggression has been discussed in recent times with two fallacies in evidence. One of these

perhaps the more important equates aggression, with hostility or destructiveness. However, conceived as generically or essentially self-assertive, aggression can be viewed as affirmative or negative, constructive or destructive in effect. The other fallacy concerns the limitation of aggression to antecedent frustration. While it is true that frustration is one of the prominent conditions to the instigation of aggression, it is not justifiable, according to present knowledge, to regard aggression as necessarily dependent upon frustration. "Aggression" is broad enough to embrace both constructive and destructive behavior; for reasons of convenience, the part of present investigation is limited to verbal aggressive behavior under frustrating stimulus conditions. "Convenience" refers here to the Picture-Frustration (P-F study, which was devised as a tool to elicit the various modes of verbal aggression induced by frustration).