A lot of research to support that comes from both natural and lab studies. Lab studies = low ecological validity, but high control – more reliable. Natural studies = high ecological validity, but low control.

Natural study to refute – Charlton et al (2000): found that the level of aggression in children on the island of St Helena before and after the introduction of TV in 1995, were low before and after; suggesting that exposure to aggression through the media doesn’t necessarily lead to a rise in imitative behaviour.

SLT makes cognitive sense and therefore has numerous practical applications for reducing aggressive behaviour. In the classroom, aggressive behaviour should be punished (e.g. detention) since then children won’t imitate it through vicarious learning. In TV and film, don’t include violence/aggression in children’s TV since they’re likely to imitate it when they observe it (age ratings and water sheds). Aggressive behaviour should be punished, and good behaviour should be rewarded.

SLT can explain why people’s levels of aggression are different in different situations. If aggression was determined purely by biological factors then we would expect aggression levels to be consistent across all situations. People may be more aggressive in different situations due to different role models and upbringing – not all parents are the same and different children have experienced different things. Incorporates individual differences, dependant on how aggressive you are.

SLT successfully explains individual and cultural difference in aggression as resulting from different learning experience. It is therefore a universal theory of aggression which is a strength because we can generalise results to the whole population (representative). Plausible theory since everyone can understand it.

Reductionist since although it seems obvious that a child’s experience will influence learning experiences, it ignores other factors, e.g. biological (genes – biological: MAOA gene + research), emotions involved, or maybe just the situation the individual is in that may cause them to be aggressive.

Observational learning = more influential than biological factors? If aggression was determined by our genes, then all humans should show aggression, however, there are societies that are non aggressive, like the Amish communities in the USA.

Ethnocentric – research done in individualistic cultures so can’t be generalised to collectivist.

Biological approach since behaviour is learnt. Nurture – suggests free will since people have a choice of who to observe and imitate, but actually fairly deterministic as it suggests that if we see aggressive behaviour, we will copy it, no matter what.

Unethical – aggression is practiced and not punished – may cause distress/harm.
Institutional Aggression

- When aggression and violence occur within an institutionalised setting, it often attracts the attention of the media.
- This is due to the fact that rules and expectations have been transgressed.
- Unfortunately, aggression in institutions is common, and in order to try and reduce it, risk factors need to be identified.

Aggression in educational settings = student on student (bullying, verbal and physical), e.g. Columbine shootings.

Aggression in the police and prisons = inmate on inmate, inmate on guard, guard on inmate.

Aggression in the healthcare setting = patient on nurse, nurse on patient.

Prison Aggression

Many explanations of prison aggression tend to focus on 2 broad explanations:

The importation model – aggression occurs as a result of individual characteristic that the prisoner brings in to prison (dispositional factors).

The situational model – aggression occurs as a result of internal factors within the prison setting (situational factors).

The Importation Model

- This model suggests that prisoners bring their own social histories and traits with them to the prison environment, which influence their behaviour in prison.
- Prisoners being a ready made way of behaving to the institution, many pre-existing personal and psychological factors of incarcerated individuals have been shown to affect levels of aggression. This include alcoholism, unemployment and low level of education, e.g. no qualifications, or go to a poor school with less opportunities.
- A study to support this was done by Mills et al (1998) which showed that higher levels of ‘serious institutional misconduct’ were associated with severe levels of alcohol dependence – surveyed 202 new inmates in Canadian prison (demand characteristics, nonethnographic sample, ethnocentric)
- Two important demographic factors which influence aggression in prison are race and age. According to Kane et al (2004) non whites and younger inmates are far more likely to be aggressive in prison. This is since they’re more likely to be ‘disfranchised’ and separated from mainstream norms and values that promote prosocial behaviour (self fulfilling prophecy)

Evaluation

Detailed explanation by referring to criminal subcultures – doesn’t stereotype all criminals, not all aggressive. Kom (1954) tended to suggest that inmates imported the ‘holistic’ criminal subcultures into the institution. Irwin (1962) different subcultures within the prison, ‘convict subculture’, career criminals are more likely to be aggressive.

Support from studies on gangs. DeLisi (2004) studies prison records from 831 inmates from the USA to explore prison violence of inmates involved in street/prison gangs. There was a small but significant relationship between gangs and aggression, suggesting subculture values had been imported into prisons.

Juvenile Delinquent Support. Poole (1983) assessed the relative impact of several derivational and importational variables on inmate violence in 4 juvenile correctional institutions. While
institutions, and yet violence can erupt suddenly, for seemingly little reason. Only happens occasionally, can't be situational. However, this does support the popcorn model.

Research to support. Richards (2007) examined inmate-staff and inmate-inmate assaults in 900 US state prisons (1984-1995). Some inmate programmes increased rates of assaults in prisons, whilst others decreased levels of violence. Suggesting that it is the particular characteristics of the institution that causes aggression.

Research to refute. Jiang (2002) did 431 reports and found that situational is best for explaining overall inmate misconduct, but deprivation model best at explaining violent incidents.

Unexplained motives for some aggressive outbursts. Light (1991) developed categories to describe different assault settings. One category was the unexplained – 25% of assaults had no motive for the aggressive behaviour. How can we blame the situation if it's not very often and out of the blue? Goffman (1961) found that prisoners will often hide motives behind aggression, makes research difficult.

What about female aggression? Scholars have reported that female offenders develop stronger bonds with other members of their social groups rather than identify with the prisoner subcultures (strong bonds with guards and prisoners), and thus explanations for female aggression in prisons maybe qualitatively different from those for male inmates. Not every good for explaining lack of female aggression, female and male prisons cant be that different?

**Education Aggression**

- Most of the violence is student-student
- Fraternities and societies were established as a support network for US college undergraduates.
- ‘Hazing’ – ritualistic, humiliating, or torment abuse of an individual or group involving burning, branding, kidnapping, and sexual abuse to prove their ‘worth’.
- Law (1990): hazing has contributed to death and serious physical injuries including paralysis, and is now illegal in most states.
- Crowding can also increase levels of aggression in colleges. However, Mathews (1979) found that crowding would increase aggression, but only up to a certain point. When the density becomes such that it is difficult to move, people were less likely to display aggression.
- Supports Situational model, goes against deindividuation as the attacker would be known and identifiable to their victims.

**Health Care Aggression**

- Violence in health care settings are most commonly associated with psychiatric units.
- Biological factors may underpin the likelihood of aggression but these factors also interact with social and environmental factors.
- Factors such as loss of identity, powerlessness and loss of rights (using toilet alone), and frustration, through having simple requests ignored.
- Rosenham (1973) found that when nurses moved away from patients with their heads turned away as if they had not heard them speak, 88% reported frustration.

OVERALL CONC: The interaction model – combines these 2 models and has been widely accepted as providing a more convincing understanding of inmate violence.
Court Brown did a study on 314 patients on XYY chromosomes, and suggested that they would be better hospitalised due to increased risk of aggressive behaviour. This research was influential since it is socially sensitive (affects a group of people in society for the worse).

Evolution and Human Aggression

Evolutionary Explanations of Human Aggression

- Such theorists believe that aggression has been naturally selected because it promotes survival.
- This is a gradual process where species that are aggressive have survived to reproduce, so carry forth aggression into the next generation as an adaptive behaviour.
- If it was non-adaptive (doesn’t have an evolutionary purpose), then it should have disappeared.
- In essence, competition arises when resources are limited, so animals and other species must compete in order to increase their fitness.
- Aggression is advantageous – ‘survival of the fittest’.

There are 3 main strands (multi-faceted):

Aggression is programmed:

- Humans are programmed for violence by their nature, and have an inbuilt tendency for violence.
- It serves an adaptive purpose, in that has evolved as a natural element in the behavioural repertoire of some species since it aids survival and adaptation to the environment – an inherited fighting instinct (Lorenz).
- Inbuilt tendency only towards males.

Hunter gatherer explanation:

- This is due to our ancestors fighting for food, mates, safety and companionship – we don’t have to do this anymore.
- In our past, some male hunters were more successful than others.
- Men who had stamina and strength began to outperform and bring back more resources than others.
- This male dominance in hunting led to battles for dominance in territory and the selection of females, who are essential elements of gene transference.

Intrasexual competition:

- Females tend to be choosier, therefore, they select men who’re able to provide for potential offspring through resources on offer.
- Men are therefore more competitive with each other for access to females, resulting in males being aggressive and sensitive to hierarchy.

Research