**Describe and evaluate evolutionary explanations for human aggression**

The evolutionary explanation suggests we display aggression in the form of jealousy, with women experiencing more emotional jealousy because of a fear of losing resources and men experiencing more sexual jealousy due to fear of cuckoldry. Men have evolved male retention strategies to deter mates from sexual infidelities. They include direct guarding, in which a male is especially vigilant to their mate in order to restrict their sexual autonomy and negative inducements which are threats and extreme consequences. Shackleford researched in the correlation between male retention strategies and intimate partner violence. In 107 heterosexual married couples, he found that the more men used retention strategies more, the more women reported partner violence. This suggests that males have evolved aggressive behaviours to avoid cuckoldry and infidelity.

Shackleford’s study uses self-report methods and therefore has inherent difficulties with collecting reliable and valid data. If a man is asked to complete a questionnaire asking how violent he is towards his partner, then it is most likely that he will distort the truth due to his desire to appear more socially desirable than he actually is. Similarly, a woman may be less likely to accurately report her partner as abusive if she fears consequences from him. Therefore, questionnaires and surveys may not reveal the true extent and nature of male jealousy.

However a strength of this explanation is that it has real world applications. As Shackleford’s study shows, the mate retention strategies can be used as clear predictor for partner violence. If the identification of these retention strategies is more widely known and taught, then family members and friends would be able to identify them and help stop domestic violence before it happens. This would consequently help the wife who could have been abused. Therefore, this approach and research has value.

The evolutionary approach can explain the different levels and types of aggression found between genders in society. Campbell states that males are more likely to engage in physical aggression whereas females are less likely. This is because the female needs to protect her offspring and ensure her and her child’s survival, therefore avoids the risk. This has been further supported by the biological approach, which states that males and females may have evolved different responses to stress. Females will ‘tend and befriend’ suggesting they are avoiding aggressive encounters. Therefore, females are more likely to engage in verbal aggression and non-aggressive methods to protect offspring.

A weakness of the explanation is that it lacks a scientific approach. The theory is unfalsifiable, as it is based on a hypothesis of human behaviour from thousands of years ago, hence ‘evolutionary’. There is no way to test whether men experience sexual jealousy and so have adapted techniques to reduce cuckoldry, and so it is difficult to use this theory. A theory is not scientific unless it can be disproven. Leading on from this, it is based on correlation, and so it is difficult to assume causation that mate retention strategies come from anti-cuckoldry behaviours. Furthermore, the explanation can’t explain different types of relationships or why people choose to adopt or have donors for their children. It is a very outdated explanation. Therefore, this explanation is weakened and is less useful for the scientific community.