

Biological Theories of Criminal Behaviour

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Introduction

Before delving into the discussion, a brief overview of criminal behavior as researched in the field of criminology will be provided. The field of Criminology has played an active role in apprehending deviant behavior in humans and explaining the reasons behind such actions. Criminologists study the offender's history, analyze their previous records, and evaluate their present behavior in order to make a connection between the stimuli that may have been the cause of such responses (Tierney and O'Neill, 2013).

After analyzing the behavior of the offenders, criminologists work towards treating the problem so that further criminal activities can be prevented from taking place. Therefore, this branch of science is not only related to the sociological phenomenon but it also implements legal methods so that deviancy among the population can be reduced to a minimum (Tierney and O'Neill, 2013).

Furthermore, it should be noted that there are various factors that lead an individual towards deviant behavior, and it is the duty of a criminologist to study all these factors and find a link between them in order to come up with proper recommendations for the prevention of such criminal incidents. In addition to this, the criminal offenders are provided treatment through rehabilitation centers that work towards neutralizing the violent or aggressive nature most commonly found in these individuals (Curran and Renzetti, 2001). Moreover, certain guidelines are provided by the criminological institute, including a penal policy implemented for criminal offenders.

The present paper is based on the views of the different biological theorists who assert that the basic determinants of human behaviour might be inherited. Therefore, in order to carry on the research portion of this paper, different theories will be compared and evaluated in order to apprehend their views and gauge how closely related they are to one another in their perspectives.

Discussion

Numerous theories emerged as a reason for determining the cause of criminal behavior in individuals. Some believe that violent behavior is inherent in humans, and it surfaces under certain circumstances (Gibson, 2002). On the other hand, some theorists believe that external stimuli such as environmental factors as well as social and cultural factors influence an individual and drive him towards deviant behavior, which most often results in criminal offenses. As the aim of this paper is to discuss the biological theories, the main principles of the former will be discussed in detail before comparing the biological theorist with others. It should be noted that humans have been observed to exhibit

antisocial behavior from the onset of their childhood. Theorists assert that antisocial behaviour surfaces during the early years of a person's life but is not stored in the memory, therefore, the individual is unable to remember it.

Moreover, an individual's early years are marked by harmless desires such as the need to be fed and taken care of and the need to feel secure above other things. These needs are reflective of an individual's self-interests. An important aspect to be noted in infants is their behavior, which involves crying and protesting to fulfill their needs. Such behavior highlights that the seeds of aggressiveness are planted at an early age but do not surface until later years when the child has grown up and understands the surroundings better. While infants are allowed to behave in such a manner, as they become toddlers, they realize that achieving things this way is not acceptable. In addition to this, the toddlers realize that they are not the center of attention anymore, and there are other things in the environment that are not based on the toddler's self-interests. For this reason, toddlers have to participate in social interactions as society does not tolerate self-interest-driven behavior, nor is aggressiveness tolerated by others.

Similarly, humans have the capacity to control their actions in such a way that they function according to social norms and, thereby, fulfill society's demands. Despite the human capacity to control one's desires and needs, aggressive behavior still surfaces and is followed by breaking rules and non-compliance with the law. However, most people are aware of the penal policies, and their deviancy is a one-time occurrence that subsides after being punished. As previously mentioned, there is not a single cause of crime that can be pinpointed as the source of deviance. Criminologists assert that crime is a complex spectacle that has been prevalent in the human world for decades and will continue to persist due to a multitude of factors. The variety of criminal theories has been characterized by two main approaches, biological theories, and sociological theories, which will be discussed side by side to get a better understanding of what each approach asserts in terms of violent behavior.

According to biological theorists, crime can be explained to arise due to the inherent factors in an individual. Biological theorists believe that people are born criminals such that their violent nature is inborn and surfaces at an early age. One of the major contributors to this theory is Cesare Lombroso, who was an Italian prison psychiatrist. Around the 19th century, Cesare Lombroso developed ideas after being influenced by Charles Darwin and asserted that criminals were influenced by their ancestors and that the criminal strain was primitive. Lombroso also claimed that criminals had brains that had not been fully developed, which differentiated them from other individuals (Rafter, 2008). Another claim made by Lombroso was that during his time studying the inmates, he observed that the criminal offenders had certain physical attributes such as sloping foreheads and their chins were receding, unlike normal individuals, which set the criminal apart from others (Williams III and McShane, 2010). Such observations led Lombroso to believe that an individual's participation in deviant activities was due to biological factors such that the criminals were born that way. Lombroso termed crime to be an outcome of biology based on these observations, which paved the way for further research on this theory of biological positivism (Williams III and McShane, 2010). Positivism

theory was involved with establishing objective reasons behind an individual's behavior.

In addition to the shape of the forehead and the chin, Lombroso noted that the inmates had defects in their eyes, which were most often accompanied by peculiarities. The ear sizes and the dimensions of the jaws were also recorded to be different from normal individuals' features. Lombroso also asserted that the head shape and size indicated the criminal belonged to a certain race and area from which the criminal trait originated (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). Moreover, Lombroso stressed the necessity of a thorough analysis of an inmate by making use of different measurements and methods that included social, economic, and anthropological data. However, Lombroso's work has been disregarded over the years, and in its place, other biological theories have been formulated.

Another assertion that was made was based on females and how they were not considered to have deviant behavior. The theorist claimed that women could not be criminals, and even if there were any women who had committed a crime, then those were rare cases to be observed (Broidy and Agnew, 1997). However, there are some women who are atavistic criminals to be found in the current society. In spite of this, such women are harder to detect than men, and they tend to be vicious. Another biological approach theory is the anthropological study of inmates. It was highlighted during the research that the criminals were different from normal civilians in every way possible, starting from the facial features and onwards. The physical attributes of the criminals highlighted Lombroso's claim that criminality was heredity. The reason why the prisoners felt inferior was based on heredity and not on their economic and social scenarios. Another theory in the biological approach is the one presented by William Sheldon. He talked about the concept of somatotype, in which ideas related to tissue layers, embryology, and physiology were discussed. Sheldon explained that there are three layers: the endoderm, mesoderm, and ectoderm. Each type was followed by a temperament that was different from one another. In Adoption studies, the theorists suggest that in order to find out the biological impact on an individual, the best example is that of children born to the same parents but who had been raised separately. Children from such parents were thought to exhibit antisocial behavior and were observed to have been more aggressive than the others.

In the later biological theories, the physical attributes were discarded, and instead, the theorists focused on different factors, such as those linked to hormone imbalance, cognitive conditions, genetic inheritance, and intelligence. Contemporary biological theories assert that the attributes of criminal behavior can be pinpointed and that there are substantial differences between criminals and non-criminals. In contrast to biological theories, sociological theories assert that crime is molded by external aspects such that they are present in a person's immediate environment. The biological approach is unable to explain the reason behind people not being violent despite having the violent gene in them, which is why the sociological approach is applicable as it helps in explaining why people deviate and commit crimes. The external factors involved can be based on peers, family, friends, neighborhood, work, and so on. One of the theories involved in the sociological approach is based on the Social Disorganization Theory. It is rooted in research that was conducted by sociologists at the University of Chicago from the 1920s to the 1930s. The main contributors to this theory are Clifford R. Shaw and Henry D. McKay. Both the researchers relied on spatial mapping to observe the

areas that were inhabited by the criminal offenders. By doing so, Shaw and McKay found out that the patterns of criminal behavior were in excess in areas that were inflicted by poverty as well as poor conditions such as bad housing, poor health, and increasing population.

In addition to the mentioned conditions, Shaw and McKay's observation led them to claim that deviancy was attributed to the neighborhood one belonged to, and therefore, the individual or their actions should be blamed without considering their living conditions. Shaw and McKay's claims were made in accordance with evidence that they had gathered, which was linked to the immigration process occurring in Chicago. The new arrivals were believed to have been the instigators of violation of the social norms due to the immigrants having different ethnic backgrounds and cultural values. Shaw and McKay also asserted that due to the increase in the diversity of the population, the conventional institutes that were responsible for social control had been weakened and could not implement laws that would normalize the behavior of the youth.

Another sociological approach that has been researched on the causes of violent behavior is the Strain theory. The concept was formulated by Emile Durkheim, who was one of the lead members of the sociology discourse. The purpose of Durkheim's theory was to elucidate the matter of social norms being violated and how it caused a change in society (Agnew, 1992). Another sociologist, Robert Merton, used Durkheim's concepts to explain the reasons behind criminal offenses that had been occurring in the United States. Merton's Strain theory is based on the notion that crime takes place when there is a space present between the cultural goals of a society and the means to achieve those goals (Aseltine Jr et al., 2000). This implies that people deviate from the right path due to factors such as low income, which becomes a hurdle in the way of achieving wealth and status (Wilson and Herrnstein, 1998). The strain leads people towards frustration and aggressiveness, and they are forced to use unethical means to acquire the things that they desire.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it can be seen that the biological theory believes that there are basic determinants of an individual that are a cause of deviant behavior. One of the most influential socio-biological theorists is Cesare Lombroso, who claimed that criminals could be distinguished from normal individuals by examining their physical features, such as the shape of the offender's head and chin, the eye color, and the dimensions of their jaws. All of these features also contributed to highlighting which race and region the criminal belonged to. He also stated that criminality was atavistic, such that the criminal followed in the footsteps of his ancestors. Deviancy was a primitive strain that surfaced from an early age and made an individual violent. In addition to this theory were William Sheldon's concepts that asserted that there were three kinds of physical features and temperaments. Each type was distinguished according to the individual's behavior, as the mesoderm type was marked by the person's aggressive behavior, while the ectoderm was marked by the individual's antisocial behavior. These theorists and many more who believed in the biological approach were of the view that criminal behavior is inherent and not acquired by the environment.

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