

# CMY 3701 EXPLANATION OF CRIME

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## Theme 2: The Predestined Actor Model

### Assumptions of the positivist school:

- ❖ Bartollas, White and Haines highlight the primary assumptions of this school of thought.
- ❖ Personal backgrounds of offenders are used to explain criminal behaviour.
- ❖ Nature and characteristics of the offender are focused on rather than the criminal act.
- ❖ A crucial assumption of positivism is the existence of scientific determinism.
- ❖ Crime is assumed to be determined by prior causes.
- ❖ Individuals' activities and behaviour are primarily shaped by factors and forces outside their immediate control.
- ❖ This school of thought rejects the view that the individual is reasonable, has free will and is capable of making choices.
- ❖ An offender is seen as fundamentally different from a non-offender.
- ❖ Offenders are driven into crime by something in their physical makeup, their psychological impulses or by the harshness of their social environment.
- ❖ The offender can be scientifically studied, therefore can be diagnosed, classified and ultimately treated or dealt with.
- ❖ Treatment must be individualised and appropriate to the specific offender
- ❖ The length of treatment must take into account the diagnosis and classification of the offender.
- ❖ Positivists suggest that individuals are not responsible for their actions.
- ❖ The school of thought implies that there is a total absence of free will and ability to control one's actions.
- ❖ The school of thought fails to take into account human decision making, rationality and choice.
- ❖ It focuses on treatment and avoids the issue of responsibility of the individual.

### Early theories of biological positivism: the Italian School

- ❖ Focuses on physical attributes and appearance of the offender.
- ❖ Criminality was associated with abnormality or defectiveness, or biological inferiority.
- ❖ Joseph Gall popularised phrenology: the science of equating the shape of the skull with the structure of the brain, which was assumed to influence behaviour.
- ❖ Lombroso believed that it was possible to identify offenders by their biology.

- ❖ Lombroso came to 2 main conclusions:
  - ✓ Criminals were genetic throwbacks or atavistic. Primitive people in a modern era.
  - ✓ He studied executed criminals to identify a “criminal type” through physical features such as facial characteristics (large jaws and cheekbones, fleshy lips, receding chin.) He believed that these were inherited trait, therefore the propensity for committing crime was inherent. Non inherited features such as tattoos often accompanied these physical features.
- ❖ Lombroso’s conclusions were of the view that criminals were “born bad”.
- ❖ Later he modified this statement to include external factors that influence crime, such as climate and education.
- ❖ Lombroso made 2 significant contributions to the study of criminal behaviour:
  - ✚ He provided the impetus for criminologists to study the individual offender rather than the crimes committed by the individual.
  - ✚ He used control groups to conduct his studies.
- ❖ Lombroso also extended his approach into Somatotyping (body-building).
- ❖ He believed that the behaviour of a person relates to the shape of their body.
- ❖ People with heavy builds (short arms and legs) tend to be relaxed and extravert and relatively non-criminal.
- ❖ Mesomorphs (athletic builds) tend to be aggressive and are likely to commit crimes that require speed and agility.
- ❖ Ectomorphs (lean, sensitive introverts)
- ❖ Later studies conducted by Wiilams found that there is some association to these assumptions, however criminal behaviour was related to a combination of biological, environmental and psychological factors.

Ferri and Garafalo continued and elaborated on the work of Lombroso.

Ferri asserted there were 3 categories of criminals:

- Those who were born bad
- Those who were insane
- Those whose actions were the consequences of a particular set of circumstances in which they found themselves.

Ferri paid attention to social and environmental factors and argued that criminal behaviour would be explained by studying the interaction ranging from physical factors such as age, gender and psychological variables to geographical factors as well as social factors such as population, religion and culture.

Garafolo followed the scientific methodology. He described a criminal as someone who lacks regard or concern for others, and may be developmentally deficient.

### Biosocial theories:

1. Biosocial theorists focus on a vast spectrum of biological factors, such as genetics, environment, injuries, toxins, poisoning and reproductive factors.
2. They do not claim that biology leads to crime.
3. They assert that biological factors influence crime by shaping the development of particular traits that are more conducive to crime.
4. They recognise the importance of the social environment in relation to individual development.
5. The social environment shapes the development of certain traits that may lead to criminal behaviour.

Core principles of Bio-social theory:

- A. It assumes that genetic makeup contributes to human behaviour.
- B. It contends that not all humans are born with equal potential to learn and achieve.
- C. It argues that no one is the same, other than identical twins.
- D. It postulates that the combination of human genetic traits and the environment produces behavioural patterns.

### Genetic Factors:

Evidence to support the idea that criminality is inherited biologically has been obtained from criminal family studies, twin studies and adopted children studies.

Criminal family studies:

- Dugdale conducted studies on the infamous Juke family who were famous for criminality, prostitution and apparent poverty. He postulated that these factors were related and were fixed and therefore would always run in the family.
- Both social and inherited criminal traits were found in the several family lines that were studied.
- Goring conducted a control group study on a group of prisoners and a group of non criminals as the control group. His findings were that the prisoners were found to be inferior in terms of physical size and mental ability.
- He found that there were links between the criminality of children and their parents and between brothers.
- Contact with a criminal parent did not seem to be a significant factor associated with criminal behaviour.
- There is no certainty about the nature and causal relationship between parental and child offending. The evidence indicates that at least part of the association is genetic make- up and criminal behaviour.

### **Twin Studies:**

- Identical twins are the result of a single egg and single sperm and are therefore genetically identical.
- Researchers argue that if identical twins act in an identical way, is the result of the identical genetic inheritance, however if the behaviour differs it would be the result of environmental influences.
- Lenge conducted the first systemic twin investigation. He traced 30 twins of which one was a confirmed criminal. 13 pairs were identical, 17 pairs non-identical.
- 10 of the 13 pairs of identical twins, both members were offenders, whereas only 2 pairs of non-identical twins were found to be offenders.
- Christiansen examined 6000 pairs of twins born in Denmark 1881-1910 and all had acquired criminal records.
- The similar behaviour may be the result of not only genetics, but also similar environments. So one cannot separate environment from heredity.

### **Adoption studies:**

- If an adopted child has limited access to a biological parent who is a criminal, any association between the behaviour of the child and non-available parent can be attributed to inherited characteristics.
- A study done in Copenhagen found that 48% of adopted male offenders were found to have a biological father with a criminal record.
- The study discovered that an adoptee was more likely to commit crime if both birth and adoptive father were criminals.
- A later study concluded that there was an inherited characteristic element transmitted from the criminal parent to the child.
- In spite of these studies, environmental influences can have a significant effect on the genetic inheritance. Genetics may present a particular predisposition, however the environment can have an impressionable impact on the outcome of behaviour.

### **Eysenck's biosocial theory of crime:**

#### **Genetics:**

1. Genetics are an essential feature Eysenck's theory.
2. He pointed out there are distinctive differences between criminals and non-criminals

#### **PERSONALITY:**

- Extroversion- Introversion
- Neuroticism: Neurotic or unstable- stable
- Psychoticism: Anti-social, creative, egocentric, impulsive, touch minded, lack of empathy.

## ENVIRONMENT:

- Criminal behaviour is the result of a failed socialisation, leading to immature tendencies.
- This would explain why crime is committed by young people generally.

## BIOCHEMICAL:

- Nutrition (diet)
- Biocriminologists maintain that minimum levels of vitamins and minerals are needed for normal brain functioning and growth.
- People with deficiencies tend to manifest a number of physical, mental and behavioural problems as well as lower intelligence tests scores.
- Studies have found correlations between nutrition and antisocial or aggressive behaviour. Sugar, cholesterol and lead toxicity are the most studied substances.
- Research shows that low blood sugar is found to be common in habitually violent offenders. They present with emotional instability, nervousness, mental confusion, physical weakness, violence and anti social behaviours such as truancy, low IQ.
- Cholesterol and violent behaviour have shown to be linked.
- Exposure to lead in the diet and environment has been shown to negatively affect brain functioning, brings about ADHD and increases risk of anti social behaviour.
- Increased levels of testosterone have been known to account for aggressive behaviour in men.
- Biological changes after ovulation have been linked to irritability and aggression in women.
- Toxins such as lead, copper, inorganic gases such as chlorine have been linked to emotional and behavioural disorders.

## Neurophysiological factors:

- The study of brain activity is measured in various ways such as memorisation, visual awareness tests and verbal IQ tests.
- An EEG machine is used (electroencephalograph). It records the electrical impulses given off by the brain and can detect abnormalities in brain wave patterns.
- Minimum brain dysfunctions: (MBD) causes imbalance in the urge-control mechanism.
- It causes dyslexia, visual perception problems, hyperactivity, poor attention span and explosive behaviour.
- ADHD reflects in poor performing students, bullying, stubbornness and lack of respect for discipline.

### *Summary and conclusion:*

The link between biology and crime begins with determinism.

Factors that are beyond a person's control determine behaviour.

Biological factors almost certainly play some role in criminal conduct, although generally to a rather small extent.

Such affects are heavily mediated by, or only occur in, interaction with broader social or environmental factors.