

The cause of aggressive crime



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The Causes of Violent Crime Violent crime is a difficult topic to understand from an internal perspective, as many individuals do not associate themselves with violence and thus cannot understand the reasoning of the perpetrator. For this reason, criminologists and psychologists have suggested many theories for the causes of violent crime. Prior to understanding these schools of thought, my own personal view on the matter was that people who are driven to violent crime do so because of behavioural factors stemming from a negative home environment. For example, I felt that a lack of impulse control is important in violent crime, as studies have shown that it can be (Roy & Linnoila, 1988), and that this could have come from an inability to manage anger through parenting control. I also felt that this could be linked to seeing others commit violent acts, particularly during development. Many others feel a similar way, as the suggestion that violent video games can be triggering for young people has shown (Siegel, 2011). This is part of the sociological positivism theory of crime, and relies on the thought that a person is not necessarily born bad, but is a result of many different interacting factors in his or her history. However, there are three other theories about the causes of violent crime, including biological positivism, psychological positivism and rational cause (Siegel, 2011). After studying this topic in more detail, it seems as though rational cause theories may be more applicable to other forms of crime (such as tax evasion, which require more thought) than to violent crime. In this sense, my views on violent crime have not changed, as I had never held the belief that someone makes a choice in their own right to become aggressive or violent. However, it is interesting to consider biological and psychological theories for crime, as there appear to be a lot of different elements that

interact to create a person susceptible to violent impulses (Fajnzyblber, Lederman & Loayza, 2002). Psychological positivism suggests that violence and aggression may be a result of offender mental illness or that they may have a personality disorder (Blackburn, 1993). This illness or disorder may have stemmed from biological factors or be a result of trauma, so it includes some aspects of sociological positivism (Blackburn, 1993). Biological positivism also helps to illustrate that there are different biological features of a person that may cause them to be more violent or aggressive, such as having a lower heart rate (Blackburn, 1993).

I felt that psychological positivism was perhaps the most significant theory in helping me develop my ideas on the causes of violent crime because it involves elements of my previous thoughts about upbringing, but also incorporates scientific research and many would argue elements of biological positivism too. However, many people argue that biological positivism is the least important of the theories as it suggests that criminals are predetermined to commit crime, a thought which has largely been discounted (Siegel, 2011). Many of those who are imprisoned for aggressive crime do show signs of personality disorder (Blackburn, 1993). I think the reason that many people find this theory hard to understand or to apply to criminal behaviour is that it could be seen as letting people ‘off the hook’, and persuading criminal justice to put them into mental institutions rather than hospitals (Blackburn, 1993). However, this is not necessarily the case. Additionally, recognizing a psychological component for violent crime could help prisons to treat the illness alongside using punishment, which may be more beneficial than punishment alone.

References

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