

Social learning theory and the explanation of crime

Law



Biosocial Theory

According to this theory, genetics and environmental elements act together to enhancing the development of disruptive, rebellious and harmful behavior (Beaver and Walsh, n. d, p. 5).

The view of this theory is also based on the postulation that predisposition of an individual to antisocial conduct is dependent on the extent or range of interaction between genetic and environmental factors (Beaver and Walsh, n. d, p. 5).

A sub-category of the biosocial theory is situational action theory. According to this theory, antisocial behavior is a product of " Perception-choice process" that is shaped by the predisposition of an individual to crime and contact with criminal facets (Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 4). Therefore, the view of the situational action theory is that crime is either inferred or premeditated. An individual will identify and weigh all available options and pick a preference depending on the surroundings, background, and situation.

A real-life criminal case depicting a crime aroused by a combination of environmental and genetic factors is the case of Abdelmalek Buyout in Italy in 2007 who confessed of assault and murdering Walter Felipe Novoa Perez for affronting him due to his preference of eye make-up (Feresin, 2009). In his appeal hearing, findings tabled by a neuroscientist in court established the presence of genes associated with antisocial behavior in Abdelmalek Bayouts brain. An example of such a gene cited by Feresin (2009) is the " Gene encoding the neurotransmitter-metabolizing enzyme monoamine oxidase A (MAOA)". The presence of these genes, according to the

neuroscientist, increased the likelihood of behaving violently if aggravated (Feresin, 2009). This is a clear case of genetic and environmental factors acting together.

Psychological Theory

According to this theory, the capacity of an individual to control, contain or hold back their desire, wish or inclination is dependent on their level of intelligence (Bohm and Vogel, 2010, p. 53).

The view of this theory is that street crime is a product of individuals incapable of controlling their desires (Bohm and Vogel, 2010, p. 53).

A sub-category to this theory is psychodynamic theory coined in Sigmund Freud. Sigmund Freud postulated that individual connections and relationships during childhood directs individual relationships and connections during adulthood (Bohm and Vogel, 2010, p. 61). Therefore, an individual is unable to control his personality in adulthood.

A typical case illustrating an application of psychological theory is the case of a 40-year-old man outlined by Thompson (2006). A tumor in the man's brain applied pressure on the " Prefrontal lobe of his brain, the area responsible for self-restraint". As a consequence of the tumor, the man had uncontrolled desires for child pornography and sexual desires towards his stepdaughter, and also uncontrolled desires to rape his landlady. In essence, the pressure on his brain exerted by the tumor affected the man's level of intelligence and thus the lack of control.

Social Structure Theory

According to this theory, " Social Learning is the primary process linking social structure to individual behaviors" (Akers and Jensen, 2007, p. 180).

The view of this theory is that differences in social construction, traditions, and background between individuals or groups of people cause the dissimilarities in the prevalence of crime between individuals or groups of people (Akers and Jensen, 2007, p. 180).

A sub-category to social structure theory is the anomie theory that hypothesizes that human beings behave and reflect based on the collective characterization of various aspects and also common practices and shared beliefs (Bernburg, 2002, p. 729).

A typical case showing an application of social structure theory is the case of French vegan parents charged in 2011 for feeding their 11-month-old infant solely on breast milk (International Natural Hygiene Society, n. d). The couple had a shared belief that the consumption of animal products as unethical based on the way animals was slaughtered. This caused infants death. This is a typical case of infant death as a result of neglect exacerbated by a shared belief that consuming animal products was unethical.

Social Process Theory

According to Cole and Smith (2007, p. 56), social process theory " Assume that any person regardless of education, class, or upbringing has the potential to become a criminal".

The view of this theory is that individuals are prone to antisocial conduct due to situations and conditions surrounding their lives (Cole and Smith, 2007, p. 56).

One sub-category of social process theory is the labeling theory that postulates that society is responsible for creating antisocial behavior. The

view is that organizations mandated to control manners of conduct within the society enforce laws that label certain individuals as a criminal.

Conversely, these individuals accept this labeling as factual and end up being criminals (Cole and Smith, 2007, p. 56).

A good example of social process theory is the case of Lawrence King, a fifteen-year-old boy killed in a school laboratory in Oxnard for being openly gay. In essence, the society had not fully accepted gays as illustrated by the fact that Lawrence King was openly harassed and bullied in school (Cathcart, 2008). Failure to accept gays led to the labeling of being gay as a crime and hence the Lawrence Kings murder.

Social Conflict Theory

According to social conflict theory, " Capitalistic economic systems necessarily produce income inequality and lead to the exploitation of the working classes" (Gaines and Miller, 2007, p. 47).

The view of this theory is that crime is exacerbated by the huge differences in levels of income between individuals within the society.

A sub-category of social conflict theory is the racial threat theory. Racial threat theory works under the postulation that as the dimension or magnitude of marginal groups of individuals swells, the preponderance group implements strategies to limit or suppress the influence of the marginal group (Gaines and Miller, 2007, p. 48).

The murder of Joseph Stewart, a millionaire car dealer in Houston is a good example of a murder that can be construed to have been caused by social conflicts (ABC News, 2015). This case can be viewed in the perspective that Joseph Stewart was targeted owing to his financial situation. In other words,

his murder was termed an attempted robbery, meaning, individuals in low economic levels attempting to rob an individual considered of high economic status.

Developmental Theory

According to this theory, criminal conduct " Has to develop and is not simply the manifestation of some underlying or primordial condition"

(Developmental Theory and Its Application, 2004, p. 52).

The view of this theory is that an individual must go through certain experiences in his or her life for criminal conduct to develop.

One of the sub-categories of the developmental theory is Pattersons Coercion Theory. According to this theory, the social and academic abilities of a child is dependent on parental supervision (Developmental Theory and Its Application, 2004, p. 56). The view of this sub-category is that indoctrination of positive skills influences positive accomplishments.

A real-life example of a crime applying developmental theory is the case of Christian Fernandez, a twelve year old convicted of beating his 2-year-old half-brother (Hunt, 2011). Christians grandmother was reported to have been a drug addict, his father was reported to have spent time in prison, and his step-father was reported to have shot himself. In explication, Christians case typically represents a murder case caused by lack of parental supervision. This means that he lacked a figure to help him adopt acceptable behavior.