

Psychological and biochemical theories of violent behavior

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We have seen experts from various medical fields develop various psychological and biochemical theories over the past half century in the hopes of explaining the root cause or causes of violent behavior. As a society we have witnessed these two factions debate about whose theory is based on fact and which should be considered a work of fiction. The psychological beliefs pertaining to violent behavior are based upon certain neurological situations that exist in the human brain while the biochemical theory relies on the chemical exposure of a person in relation to the violence that seems to govern his life. In this paper, I shall discuss the basis for both theories and its supporting data with the intention of finally deciding which particular theory is the most effective in predicting criminal behavior and violence. Based upon the information from the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services (2010) the psychological theory of violence in relation to criminal behavior is rooted in the relationship of a person's individual character in relation to his environment. To quote the Ontario Ministry study (2010) ; “ psychologists focus on how mental processes impact individual propensities for violence. Psychologists are often interested in the association between learning, intelligence, and personality and aggressive behaviour. “ The psychological theory is that man was not born a violent creature. Rather, he turns to violence when he does not have any choice due to a lack of certain influences in his life that should have made him or her a peace loving person. Further studies in the area by the Ontario Ministry (2010) show that tests such as ;

“ The Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) and the Multidimensional

Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) have frequently been used to assess the personality characteristics of young people. The use of these scales has consistently produced a statistically significant relationship between certain personality characteristics and criminal behaviour. ... testing also suggests that crime-prone youth are also impulsive, paranoid, aggressive, hostile, and quick to take action against perceived threats..."

However, Masters (n. d.) argues that violence that is triggered in certain individuals is based upon his exposure to biochemicals in his daily life. It is Masters' belief that brain chemistry, environmental toxins, and violent crimes are all linked in a certain manner. Masters (n. d.) cites the congressional ban on leaded gasoline to explain the biochemical theory on violence. He explains that;

" While the correlation between each year's sales of leaded gasoline (as a measure of average exposure to fumes from tetraethyl lead) and that year's crime rate is virtually nil, the correlation rises sharply as the time lag between leaded gas sales and violent crime rates is extended; with a lag of 17 years, the correlation is over 0. 90. Since children 17 years or younger rarely engage in violent crime, the very high correlation between lead gas sales and violent crime rates 18 to 26 years later points to fetal or neonatal exposure to lead as a significant but not generally noted factor in violent crime... these data suggest that the drop in U. S. homicide rates since 1991 was facilitated by the Congressional ban on leaded gasoline. "

Although there have been scientific studies that support this particular theory, the reality of the debate is that neither side can claim to hold the actual, truthful explanation on the matter. That is because both theories can

be supported by actual life experience and factual data. Both theories can predict the cause of violence within a person to a certain verifiable degree. The proof of the cause of the violent behavior will depend upon the exposure and situation of the person in question. From their, the correct biochemical or psychological theory shall then be used to explain the behavior.

Sources

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