

Comparison of theories for violence



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Violence is not by any means an easy term to define. There are multiple understandings in which will be explored through the topic of crime and deviant behaviour. Within this issue, it will be further developed through three different theories of interest; Biological theory, Ecological explanations and Personality approach. The theories explain different perspectives of why violence might occur and through these explanations, we are therefore able to acknowledge how these particular understandings help shape responses to the risk or extent of violence.

Explaining what violence is, it ought to be a complex understanding. How many people understand what violence is and where violent behaviours can originally come from, can be understood through sociological and theoretical engagement within different contexts. It is a difficult term to pinpoint what the definition of violence is because there are many different explanations. Larry. R. expresses the term as “ One often hears the term ‘ senseless violence’ in a case where a serious violent incident was apparently unprovoked or has arisen from ‘ insignificant’ insults or altercation”. The concept of senseless refers to a form of mental illness or pathology that might contribute towards problematic or hysterical behaviour. Another definition cited by Stanko (2001) quotes “ violence is any form of behaviour by an individual that intentionally threatens to or does physical, sexual or psychological harm to others or themselves.” There is also the idea of violence being presented in one acceptable context, however, if presented in another context it could be seen as not acceptable. Opinions on violence are flexible as it can depend on the environment, and because it comes in different forms, there are different ways to interpret it. For example,

slamming a door after you go through is a violent action but does not have an impact on anyone else, however, slamming a door on someone is a violent performance that harms someone.

Biological theories is an extremely useful explanation whilst understanding violence. When trying to understand crime and deviance, biological considerations are an effective approach when gathering knowledge upon why people act in deviant manners. The biological theory wishes to explain how thoughts, feelings and behaviours are linked to deviant performances. One of the main questions asked is “ Are people born criminal?” which is famously where Cesare Lombroso argued his theory that deviant behaviour is genetically inherited. He also believed that criminals could be identified from their physical appearance. His first theory was based on physical appearance which believed was an essential notion to perceiving deviant behaviour. This concept was further developed by an American psychologist William Sheldon. It was the idea that the bodily structure, was related to crime. Three noticeable body types were identified; endomorph that relates to soft and round, mesomorph which is muscular and athletic and ectomorph that expresses skinny and fragile. Raine et al (2000) supported belief in continuing to argue “ three-year-olds who are taller than their peers are more likely to become bullies”. This is an example in relation to physical appearance. It shows that different body types and appearances create a dominance between peers. It displays crime and deviant behaviour have been illustrated through the biological theory and expresses shows is contributes to deviant behaviour. This theory, has helped create an understanding of violence; how criminal and deviant behaviour can be

interpreted and understood. The biological theory has helped frame responses to reducing the risk and incidence of violence. Although it is not a natural way for newborns to be created, “ designer babies” could potentially be creating a solution towards criminal behaviour. This is essentially editing your unborn babies genetics for them to be successful and have the traits you want. It is virtually changing an infant to the parent’s desires, to do the best for their child. I can not agree and believe it is an appropriate way of reducing deviance and crime, but if parents can choose the traits they want their child to obtain, this could be a way to scale down the amount of violence in society. However, this explanation alone would probably be insufficient to appropriately explain why crime and deviance behaviour occurs, therefore studying alternative theories seem most constructive.

One understanding is not plentiful in grasping an insight into the idea of deviance and crime through violence. Social Learning explanations is another theory to help understand this. It is a theory that defines as a learning process, therefore violence is accomplished through experience and emulating others. Edward Sutherland came up with the Differential Association Theory, who suggested that criminal behaviour is transmitted through generations via learning of others. He stated that criminal behaviour establishes significantly within someone depending on how they socialise and peers groups they involve themselves in. In support of Sutherland’s Theory, Albert Bandura carried out a modelling experiment in relation to the Differential Association Theory. His study aimed to observe how children reacted when adult models were brutally attacking a bobo doll. The children were put in a room whilst the adult model was instructed to apply violence

behaviours towards the bobo doll. A second experiment was carried out, instead this time the adult was instructed to play with the doll calmly. Bandura found that those exposed to aggressive behaviour towards the model were far more likely to apply violent behaviour towards the doll than those who were in the more controlled groups within the experiment. This is an example of deviant and aggressive behaviour being learned through interactions with others and their environment. It also shows the Social Learning approach is a significant theory when understanding the concept of deviance and crime, through violence. Having this considerable understanding of violence and deviant behaviour, Social Learning explanations have helped how we respond to teaching on non-violence. Adapting the environments for deviant people by associating them within the correct groups, is a fundamental response in reducing criminal behaviour. Rehabilitation and/or Education can be a positive strategy to help prevent abnormal demeanour, by removing these groups of people away from their norms and placing them in an environment amongst more regular and natural attitudes. By doing so, new behaviours can be learned from other peers, and therefore will gradually determine this way of life.

Theories on personality are also fundamental approaches when gathering an understanding of why deviant and criminal behaviour occurs. Sigmund Freud's Psychosexual Child Development Theory significantly focuses on the importance of childhood experiences. He believed that experiences that happen in childhood have an immense consequence in constructing our personalities later on in adulthood life. Throughout Freud's theory, this expresses that children exposed to traumatic involvement in early

development can potentially cause issues later on. This explains, for example, if children are brought up and developing their early lives in abusive and destructive environments, there is a likely chance of these actions reflecting in their personalities later on in adulthood. Erikson (1958, 1963) expresses that personality evolves through a predetermined order of eight stages of psychosocial development. Furthermore, he states that in each stage a person experiences a psychosocial crisis which expresses it can determine a positive or negative for personality development. The eight stages include: Trust vs. Mistrust, Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt, Initiative vs. Guilt, Industry vs. Inferiority, Identity vs. Role Confusion, Intimacy vs. Isolation, Generativity vs. Stagnation, and Ego Integrity vs. Despair. The eight positive personality stages are crucial to raising a child as opposed to the negative stages. Personality theory is another approach that is paramount when gathering a further understanding of crime and deviant behaviour. Essentially, crime and deviance within his approach occur due to significant gaps within personalities in the parents that sustainably reflect on the child. Concerning the eight stages, if you are allocating your child to the negative and not advised stages of development, it reflects on them and their personality later on in adulthood. The understanding of this theory has helped how we can respond to the risk or incidence of violence. Further education on the stages of personality could essentially be a successful response to minimizing deviant behaviour in young ones early. By doing so, it is a crucial exercise in preventing potential further criminals, if adults are successful in raising a child.

As explained, many different perspectives of violence contribute towards shaping responses to reduce the number of criminals and deviant behaviour that occurs. As of multiple viewpoints, it shows you the different responses appropriate for each theory. The biological theory is an aspect of violence that expresses violent behaviour is genetically inherited, however, another aspect develops a theory on violence being a learning process, and furthermore, the last theory emphasises on the idea of violence being influenced depending on the childhood experiences. These three theories and understandings of interest, acknowledge responses to decrease deviance in society.

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