

Evolutionary theory and crime



Introduction

Cesare Lombroso was an Italian physician who was the first criminologist to employ the scientific method in his work. Darwin's theory of evolution heavily influenced much of his work. In 1876, he wrote and published *The Criminal Man*, in which he invented the term atavism. The theory of atavism claims that criminals are born, as opposed to made, and their criminal behavior is the result of prehistoric urges. Criminals were believed to be evolutionary accidents that were throwbacks to more prehistoric people. By nature they possessed a relatively underdeveloped brain, and this physical shortcoming made them incapable of conforming to the rules and expectations of complex modern society. They exhibited a lack of guilt or remorse for any wrongdoing and were unable to learn the distinction between good and evil (Buss, 2005).

Violent Crimes

A crime of violence occurs when an offender uses or threatens to use violent force upon a victim. Classifying an offense as a violent crime does not require that the offender used a weapon. The United States Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) has identified five categories of violent crime: murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. The BJS has reported that while the rate of violent crime declined steadily between the years 1994 and 2000, it began to rise slightly in 2001 and increased significantly in 2005. According to the BJS, the rise in violent crime appears to be limited to smaller to medium-sized cities and may be linked to the spread of gangs (Criminal Law Lawyer Source, 2009; Hunter & Dantzker, 2005; BJS, 2010).

Theories of Sexual Crimes

Sexual assault takes many forms including attacks such as rape or attempted rape, as well as any unwanted sexual contact or threats. Usually a sexual assault occurs when someone touches any part of another person's body in a sexual way, even through clothes, without that person's consent. Sexual assault in any form is often a devastating crime. Some types of sexual acts which fall under the category of sexual assault include forced sexual intercourse, sodomy, child molestation, incest, fondling and attempted rape. Whatever the circumstances, no one asks or deserves to be sexually assaulted (Meyer, 2000; The National Center for Victims of Crime, 2008).

The theories about why sexual offenders commit sexual violence or assault are numerous and varied. This theory suggests that the differences between men and women in current human mating patterns may be the result of strategies that created reproductive success among our human ancestors. This theory is debated, and not widely accepted by most researchers in the field. Evolutionary theories do not address the large number of assaults lacking reproductive consequences because they involve oral or anal penetration or victims who are prepubescent or male. Even those who favor evolutionary explanations for modern behavior acknowledge that evolution alone cannot account for sexual assault or intimate partner violence (Meyer, 2000).

Evolutionary Theory and Criminal behavior

What is evolution? The nature of evolution is often misunderstood, quite frequently, it is

confused terribly by creationists who are trying to argue against something they cannot define. The applications to understanding criminal behavior have supplied answers to fundamental problems that have previously escaped explanation, such as the relationship of age and sex to crime and the inverse relationship between degree of kinship and homicide, and have organized observations with a few theoretical principles, as in the area of sexual coercion (Quinsey, n. d.).

Conclusion

The study of criminal behavior today is as strong and vital as it ever has been. In many respects, it has become an even more important field of inquiry in light of violent episodes such as the recent shootings at schools, in community centers, and in churches. Understanding why these events occur is vital, particularly for the future protection of life and property.

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