

# Advanced criminology

[Law](#), [Criminology](#)



Anthropological research data has shown that violence is an inherent conduct among the primate species (Walker, 2001). In society, criminal violence is a common occurrence and legislators have suggested that the behavior of criminals be analyzed in order to identify any psychological patterns that are consistent among these particular types of individuals.

In the past few decades, neurobiologists have proposed that an individual's condition, which encompasses empathy, morality and free will, is holistically influenced by the frequency of stimulation and assembly of the neurons of an individual. Such notion is contradictory to the concept of Cartesian dualism, which states that the brain and the mind are two independent entities that coordinate with each other.

To date, the accumulation of research reports from the field of neuroscience is gradually affecting the concepts and effectivity of the justice system because of the shifting in the concept of human behavior and response to different stimuli. Neuroscience has influenced our current understanding of the multiple factors that govern violent behavior among criminals.

#### NATURE VERSUS NURTURE THEORY OF CRIME

The theory of nature versus nurture pertains to the controversy on whether inherent qualities of a biological organism, which is depicted as "nature", is related or influenced by the experiences, condition or situation of that particular species ("nurture"). The concept that the human being develops specific behavioral patterns based on their environment is termed *tabula rasa* or blank state.

This notion is considered to be a major influence in the development of an individual. These external settings of an individual play a major role in the psychology of an individual, including his anti-social, aggression and criminal behavior.

It has thus been questioned for several decades whether criminals are born or could these particular individuals emerge after successive events in their lives that result in the transformation of a normal individual to a criminal.

To date, there is much debate over the mechanism behind the entire concept of criminality. Biologically or non-biologically influenced, criminality remains an elusive subject that still needs to be comprehensively analyzed.

The 19th century classic report of Phineas Gage regarding the anti-social behavior that emerged after massive damage of the prefrontal cortex of his brain from a railroad accident is now considered as the birth of the field of forensic neurology (Harlow, 1848).

Today, computerized imaging of his fractured skull has shown that the autonomic and social nerve systems are the specific damages that were affected, thus resulting in a totally different individual. Such observation, together with research results gathered from war veterans, has led to the conclusion that violent criminal behavior is caused by injuries to the frontal lobe of the brain.

It has then been proposed that injury to the prefrontal cortex of the brain causes a condition that has been coined as acquired sociopathy or pseudopsychopath (Blair and Cipolotti, 2000). It is interesting to know that there is an 11% reduction in the size of the grey matter of the prefrontal

cortex among patients diagnosed with anti-social personality disorder (APD) (Raine et al., 2000).

A related observation has also been observed between intelligence and alterations in the grey matter of the prefrontal cortex.

The temporal lobe of the brain has also been determined to influence an individual's emotional response and aggression, wherein lesions in the amygdale of the temporal lobe result in an individual's failure to recognize fear and sadness among the faces of other people (van Elst et al., 2001).

The connection between the decreased expression of the monoamine oxidase A enzyme and reactive violence has already been established (Caspi et al., 2002).

Monoamine oxidase A is responsible for the catabolism of monoamines such as serotonin (5-HT). The working hypothesis currently accepted is that the prefrontal-amygdala connection is altered, resulting in a dysfunctional aggressive and violent behavior, resulting in criminality in particular individuals.

Ernest A. Hooton (1887 - 1954) is a highly acclaimed physical anthropologist and evolutionist. Much of his work focused on interindividual variations based on physiological and anatomical characteristics, including measurements of buttock-knee lengths as the main basis for constructing seats for the Pennsylvania railway trains.

Hooton was also recognized for his concepts in primatology and comparative anatomy as basis for explaining differences in the human as well as primate species.

He was successful in describing a primary race, of which can be further subdivided in several racial subtypes. He is a proponent of the concept of eugenics, which involves genetic selection of traits that are deemed beneficial to the current population.

The field of eugenics has been an interest in the field of biology and medicine because it facilitates the creation of new haplotypes that may be positively selection in the course of evolution.

Hooton's work is also significant to our current scientific concept of crime because he persistently attempted to prove that criminal have biologically distinct characteristics from non-criminals.

His anthropological work on physical differences based on a population of approximately 13, 873 male prisoners from 10 different states across the United States. His results strengthened his claim on the biological causes of violence and aggression and that his claimed that criminal behavior is a simple representation of an inferior type of human species that has degenerated.

Unfortunately, Hooton was inadequate in integrating the concept of population genetics into his research because he haphazardly took 3, 023 men from the general population to conduct a comparative analysis of physical differences. His measurement of foreheads, eyelids, ears, cheekbones, jaws, chins and shoulders resulted in a confusing supportive evidence for his claim.

He explained in one of his published works that biology plays a major role in the development of individuals and society and that the environment is wrongly blamed for any failure that befalls an individual (Hooton, 1939).

The research claim of Hooton had sparked more effort into determining the basis behind criminality. Other researchers from different fields of specialization ridicules Hooton's work, describing it as the comical attempt in defining criminal behavior.

The general reaction to Hooton's claim that criminals are biologically inferior was condemned. Sociologists refused to accept the notion that physical unattractiveness is strongly correlated to criminal behavior.

The advent of eugenics in combination with criminality has sparked interest in designed specialized techniques that may be applied to individuals that show physical and anatomical features that are consistently observed among criminals.

An advocate of Hooton's concept on the physical basis of criminality would assertively promote selective management of populations in order to eventually generate a prime standard of individuals in the next generation that is distinct from the features that Hooton described that are strongly correlated with criminality.

An advocate of the biological connection of criminality would employ the concept of eugenics in screening individuals that show a potential to show criminal and anti-social behavior. To make things more complex, the features that Hooton described may also be used as criteria in admission to schools and workhouses.

An extreme reaction would even result in construction of facilities that would enclose candidates or suspects for criminal behavior. A biological discrimination would thus be observed and this unfair basis of screening individuals would create more chaos in society.

Eugenics may also be translated as a screening tool in picking which criminals will be kept in prison and which individuals will be freed and this action will be mainly based on the biological features of whether the criminal may be rehabilitated or transformed into a normal non-aggressive person.

The so-called degenerate individuals would be kept off the streets in order to prevent interaction with non-degenerate individuals, as well as to prevent future crimes in the community. In addition, society would be introduced to the option of strictly selecting partners for marriage because they will be taught to pick partners that show obvious physical differences from the consensus physical features of criminals.

#### THE GENERAL THEORY OF CRIME

The self-control theory as proposed by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) couples an argument regarding the driving force behind criminality and the features of a criminal act. Gottfredson and Hirschi contend that crime is similar to other out of control and unlawful actions such as alcoholism and smoking because it generates in an individual a temporary yet immediate feeling of gratification.

This kind of action is created by a condition that is characterized by low self-control. The authors claim that the condition of having poor self-control is an innate condition that is set in place during the early childhood at around 7 or 8

years of age. In relation to the mechanism behind criminality, the authors explain that crime is a straightforward action that results in gratification in an individual.

Such perception of crime is associated with a number of implications to the general theory of crime. Firstly, the general theory of crime presents that crime is an uncomplicated action that does not need any strategic preparation or intricate knowledge.

Secondly, the general theory of crime is related to a number of elements that are included in the theory of routine activities because just like other uncontrolled acts, crimes are not planned and it is easy for individuals with low self-esteem to be easily motivated to commit such acts.

In addition, criminality is strongly influenced by external factors such as the scarcity of easy targets as well as the presence of associates that are capable of helping or even performing a criminal act.

The theory of crime by Gottfredson and Hirschi regarding the early age of 7 or 8 also entails that the longitudinal analysis of crime is not necessary and that age-correlated theories of crime are confusing.

The general theory of crime of Gottfredson and Hirschi also considers the fundamental argument regarding age and the unlawful act. It is actually different from what is presented at general courses in criminology regarding the analysis of age-crime correlations and social factors that are related to crime.

A distinction of the general theory of crime of Gottfredson and Hirschi is that the age-crime linkage is very different through time, location and culture that



the age-crime correlation is irrelevant of any social explanation. Their general theory of crime also describes that criminals continue to perform unlawful acts of crime even during marriage and eventually end up as unmarried criminals.

The same thing goes with offenders who are currently employed—these individuals generally continue on as offenders and the only difference after some time is that they lose their jobs.

The general theory of crime of Gottfredson and Hirschi thus presents an argument against the connection of crime with marriage and employment thus showing that a criminal is incompetent in maintaining a relationship in a marriage or a commitment to work because he is commonly known as person of very low command of his control.

Their presentation of the force behind criminality is thus focused on self-control and the authors point out that most investigations regarding criminality do not include this concept.

The authors explain that most of the concepts on crime describe the possible notions of the criminal. Gottfredson and Hirschi thus provide a revolutionary concept of crime that describes that the nature of crime is actually simple because it easily connects the concept of individuals and their immediate environment.

They proposed that most crimes are easily performed because there is no need for complex preparations. In addition, a criminal act does not actually impart a lot of deleterious consequences. They describe that crimes usually

happen late at night or very early in the morning to any individual. There is also no requirement for training or skills to perform a criminal act.

The authors also explain the concept that crime does not pay because most criminal acts result in small to negligible benefits. In the cases that do provide any benefits, the criminals tend to fail with the criminal act or they are highly exposed thus resulting in a lot of risks such as being caught and eventually put in jail.

The general theory of crime of Gottfredson and Hirschi also present the conditions that make a situation conducive to crime. They describe that routine activities play an important factor for a crime to happen because these provide the predictability of the movements and activities of the target individual.

Criminals often study how their target victim goes around, comes home or leaves the house. If the target individual has a routine schedule that is very predictable, the criminal will have a very easy way to know the best time for him to invade the house of the target victim.

The same factors also influence other criminal acts such as rape, wherein the target female victim may probably pass through the same route late at night and the criminal may pick a day at that particular time when not so much people are around and he can attack his victim at the particular time when the female victim is walking along the street late at night. These settings of predictability of routine activities are actually very beneficial to the criminal and this outweighs the risks of performing the criminal act.

Other theories of crime that do not consider these features of crime generally analyze other factors that are not consistent with the empirical information about crime (Walker, 2001). The other theories actually claim that each crime has a different force that pushes the criminal to perform such unlawful act.

In addition, other theories state that substantial knowledge and training are needed in order for a criminal to successfully perform a crime. The general theory of crime of Gottfredson and Hirschi thus provides a simple yet comprehensible explanation of the force behind criminality.

#### SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF CRIME

There are several sociological theories in the field of criminology. The Social Control Theory explains that the utilization of the socialization procedure and social learning results in self-control and decreases the chances that an individual will succumb to an anti-social type of behavior.

This theory was strongly addressed by Travis Hirschi and it follows the Positivist, Neo-Classical and Right Realism schools of thought (Akers, 2000). This theory resulted from the Functionalist concepts of crime and suggests that there are four modes of control.

The first mode of control is direct, which pertains to imminent punishment based on unlawful action. This mode of control is also associated with rewards in the case the compliance of the individual is observed.

The second mode of control is indirect, which pertains to desistance in performing unlawful acts due to his conscience. Another mode of control is

internal, which is related to self-identification of delinquency and its associated pain and disappointment to the people around the individual.

A fourth type of control is satisfaction, wherein an individual will not perform an evil act if he is content with his current conditions. Hence the Social Control Theory suggests that individuals will not perform any criminal act if their relationships, value and beliefs are intact.

The Strain Theory of criminology explains that the society and its related levels and sublevels persuade individuals to perform criminal acts (Agnew, 1992). This theory was proposed by Emile Durkheim and was further supported by Merton, Cohen and Messner and Rosenfeld. It has been determined that strain may be of two levels.

Structural strain pertains to the processes in society that influence an individual's perception of his needs. On the other hand, individual strain pertains to the hostility and suffering that an individual experiences during his search for things that will make him happy. Hence the strain theories present the connection between structural and functional bases for criminal actions.

The structural basis for criminality explains the processes behind actions, as well as finding an event with a bigger concept of sites, distances and associations. The functional basis for criminality explains how independent sections fit and result as a bigger system. Hence all systems are influenced by sections that cooperate with each other and that any impediment that occurs in a particular section will result in a failure of the entire system.

This means that either a replacement or a repair should be performed in order to make a system functional again.