

Criminology

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Psychological and Biological Theories of Crime Psychological and Biological Theories of Crime Different psychologists and researchers have provided different reasons for why an individual commit crime. Biologists believe that genetics and biology of an individual is the reason behind his her criminal activity. Psychologist believes that criminal activity is a learned behavior and an individual commits criminal activity because he learns to do so due to his experience and interaction with the environment. Sheldon produced a theory of crime in which he linked certain body types with criminal behavior. He stated that three forms of bodies exist, these include those who are fat, thin or muscular (Siegel, 2011, p. 497). Sheldon came up with a conclusion stating that those individual who had a fat body figure were quite relaxed and those who had a thin body shape were quite restrained, but those who have a muscular body shape were very energetic and had an eye for adventure. He was of the opinion that those who were muscular in body shape and design were more likely to participate in deviant activities, he even stated that one individual can have a body which comprised of different types of bodies. This means that he believed that an individual can be thin, fat and muscular at the same time. He concluded that level of criminal activity was dependant on the level of muscular body. A person having a higher level of muscular body would indulge in higher level of crimes and vice-versa. In his study he used photographs as samples to conduct his research, he took the photographs of collage pupils and the photographs of criminals, he figured out that criminals were much muscular than college students and thus he stated that those who had a muscular body were indulged in criminal behavior or were going to be indulged in deviant behavior in future. There are several weaknesses associated with this theory,

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firstly, Sheldon ignores the fact that environment plays a major role in influencing behavior. He ignores the fact that it is environment in which an individual is brought up that may make an individual commit crime. For example: a person living in poverty might commit crime to satisfy his/her needs and wants. Secondly, several follow up studies reported findings against Sheldon's opinion. For example: Sutherland claimed that the selection of criminals conducted by Sheldon was not consistent with the official definition of criminals (Sorokin, 2002, p. 509). When the data gathered by Sheldon was reanalyzed in accordance to the official definition of criminals, no match between muscular body type and deviant activity was figured out. Several psychological theories regarding occurrence of crime have been produced, one such theory is Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical theory of the 1800s (Siegel, 2011, p. 497). According to him, the experiences an individual faces during childhood, shapes his life as an adult. According to him, an individual is divided into three parts, the id, ego and super ego and id is regarded as the most undeveloped part of an individual. He states that the id is in control of an individual's requirement of sleep, food and basic necessities. He even stated that ego is in complete control of the id and sets boundaries for an individual. He lastly stated that an individual conducts moral reasoning through the super ego part. According to his theory and his followers, criminals have a personality that is highly dominated by id. This means that a criminal's ego part has no control over the id and the id seeks to obtain instant gratification. Those individuals who experience weak ego even experience issues such as weak skills of socializing, heavy dependence on friends and family members and are quite immature. The basic idea behind the psychoanalytical theory of crime is that the experiences that an

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individual has during childhood, leads to damaging effect on an individual's ego and thus the individual experiences issues in complying with the society and its norms. One of the weaknesses of this approach is that Freud has used a reductionist approach in determining why crimes take place and why criminal activity takes place (Kastenbaum, 2000, p. 174). This means that Freud has reduced to defining very hard to understand human behaviors in the light of the mechanics of an individual's cognition. Therefore, Freud has completely ignored the impact of genetics and other fields such as biochemistry on human behavior. Another downside of his approach to crime is that his approach is quite determinist in nature, this means that he has credited early human experience as the cause of adulthood behavior and have eradicated the thought that individuals have the ability to determine their own behavior (Kastenbaum, 2000, p. 174). References Kastenbaum, R. (2000). *The psychology of death* (3rd. ed.). New York: Springer. Siegel, L. J. (2011). *Criminology: the core* (4th ed.). Australia: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning. Sorokin, P. A. (2002). *The ways and power of love: types, factors, and techniques of moral transformation* (Timeless classic pbk. ed.). Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press.