

Trait Theories Chapter 5

Foundations of Trait Theory

The view that criminals have physical or mental traits that make them different began with the Italian physician and criminologist-Cesare Lombroso. Crime producing interactions involve personal and environmental factors

- Biological Positivism
 - All true knowledge is acquired through observation-not conjecture
 - Scientific method must be used for research to be valid
- Cesare Lombroso
 - Believed criminals are born with primitive physical traits known as atavistic anomalies
 - *Mesomorphs*-athletic appearance; active, aggressive, violent, most likely to become criminals
 - *Endomorphs*-heavy builds & slow moving; lethargic; less violent, more stolen property
 - *Ectomorphs*-tall, thin, less social, more intellectual; least likely to commit crime
- The legacy of Biological Criminology
 - Influences antisocial behavior
 - Improper diet can cause chemical and mineral imbalance that lead to cognitive and learning deficits
 - Abnormal levels of androgens produces antisocial behavior
- Sociobiology
 - The idea that the gene is the ultimate unity that controls human destiny, but environment and experience also have impacts
- Contemporary Trait Theories
 - View of crime causation

Biosocial Theory

- Biochemical Conditions and Crime
 - Smoking/Drinking
 - Exposure to Chemicals/Minerals
 - Diet & Crime
 - Sugar Intake
 - Hormonal Influences
 - Premenstrual Syndrome
 - Environmental contaminants
 - Lead Ingestion
 - Allergies
 - ADHD
 - Tumors, Lesions, Injury, Disease
 - Neurophysiological Conditions & Crime
- Arousal Theory
 - Different people's brains function differently in response to environmental stimuli
 - Factors that determine levels of Arousal include:
 - Brain Chemistry

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- Heart Rate
 - Autonomic Nervous System
- Genetics and Crime
 - Antisocial behavior is inherited
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- Evolutionary Theory
 - Human traits that produce violence and aggression have been advanced through evolution
 - Behavior patterns are inherited, impulsive behavior becomes intergenerational
- Evaluation of the Biosocial Branch of Trait Theory

Psychological Trait Theories

- Psychodynamic Theory
 - Ego is shaped by learning and experience, superego reflects morals and values
 - Criminals suffer from weak or damaged egos
 - Crime is manifested by feelings of oppression and an inability to develop defenses and rationales to keep their feelings in check
- Attachment Theory
- Behavioral Theory
 - People aren't born with the ability to act violently; rather, they learn to be aggressive through life experiences
- Cognitive Theory
 - Crime-prone people have cognitive deficits and use information incorrectly when making decisions
 - Believes that crime can satisfy personal needs

Psychological Traits and Characteristics

- Personality and Crime
 - Sociopathic, psychopathic, or antisocial people cannot empathize with others and are more prone to problems
 - Childhood complications can lead to higher crime
- Intelligence and Crime
 - Determined genetically-ancestry determines IQ
 - Low intelligence is linked to criminal behavior
 - Nurture theorists argue that intelligence is not inherited