

Understanding Criminal Behaviour : An Analytical Study of Crime Patterns and Social Influences

Abstract:

This research article provides an in-depth analysis of criminal behaviour by examining the complex patterns and underlying causes of crime in contemporary society. The study explores different categories of criminal activities, including violent crimes, organized crimes, cybercrimes, and white-collar offenses, with the aim of understanding the social, psychological, and economic factors that contribute to unlawful conduct. Adopting a multidisciplinary perspective, the research integrates criminological theories, sociological insights, and psychological approaches to evaluate the motivations behind criminal actions and the effectiveness of legal and institutional responses. Through the use of case studies, empirical data, and statistical observations, the article identifies significant trends in crime and demonstrates how environmental conditions, poverty, social inequality, and individual circumstances influence criminal behaviour. Furthermore, the study discusses preventive measures, rehabilitation strategies, and policy reforms necessary for reducing crime and promoting social order. The article concludes that a comprehensive understanding of crime dynamics is essential for developing effective criminal justice policies and ensuring safer communities.

Keywords: *Criminal Behaviour, Crime Patterns, Criminology, Cybercrime, Organized Crime, Social Inequality, Criminal Justice System, Psychological Factors, Crime Prevention, Legal Reforms.*

Introduction

Criminology explores the complex nature of crime and criminal behavior, aiming to understand not just the acts themselves but also societal reactions to them. This field reveals insights into human behavior and the systems created to manage crime, guiding us through its

intricate and evolving landscape.¹ Criminology is a dynamic, interdisciplinary field that combines insights from psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, and law to explore the complexities of criminal behavior. This adaptability allows criminology to evolve with societal changes, cultural shifts, and deeper understandings of human nature, providing fresh perspectives on enduring questions.²

A key debate in criminology centers on the definition of crime, which varies across societies. What one culture sees as a crime, another may view as a norm. This relativity highlights the need for a comprehensive understanding of crime, as demonstrated by the evolving legal status of cannabis in different regions.³ Criminologists examine criminal behavior through various perspectives, including classical theory, positivism, strain theory, and critical criminology. Each lens offers unique insights into the root causes of crime and informs prevention strategies. By incorporating diverse questions, theories, and methodologies, these perspectives deepen our understanding of criminal behavior and societal responses.⁴

Delving deeper into criminology reveals the many dimensions of crime, including the evolutionary foundations of criminal behavior and the complex relationship between demographics and criminal activity. Alternative models of justice and environmental influences on criminal conduct will also be examined. This exploration aims to illuminate the intricacies of crime, its origins, and its societal consequences.⁵

Objectives

- To categorize and analyze different types of crime, including violent crimes, property crimes, and white-collar offenses, to understand their unique dynamics and societal impacts.
- To investigate the sociological, psychological, and economic factors influencing criminal behavior, exploring how these elements interact to shape crime rates and trends.

¹ Criminology: Unveiling the Study of Crime and Criminal Behavior, available at: <https://lawscope.org/criminology/>, (last visited on Feb 16, 2026)

² Criminology: An Interdisciplinary Field, available at: <https://dejurenexus.com/criminology-an-interdisciplinary-field/>, (last visited on Feb 16, 2026)

³ Crime and different approaches to crime, available at: <https://blog.ipleaders.in/crime-different-approaches-crime/>, (last visited on Feb 16, 2026)

⁴ Critical Criminology, available at: https://criminal-justice.iresearchnet.com/criminology-theories/critical-criminology/#google_vignette, (last visited on Feb 16, 2026)

⁵ J. Kristopher Brazil, Criminology, available at: [Exploring the Dynamics of Criminology Understanding Crime and Criminal Behavior.pdf](#), (last visited on Feb 16, 2026)

- To assess the impact of environmental contexts, such as urbanization, community structure, and socio-economic status, on the dynamics of criminal conduct.
- To explore the responses of legal systems to various forms of crime, analyzing the effectiveness of existing laws, enforcement practices, and rehabilitation programs.

Research Problem

A research problem in “Criminal Conduct: A Comprehensive Exploration of Crime Dynamics” could examine the multifaceted factors that drive criminal behavior, investigating how social, economic, psychological, and environmental elements shape crime. Understanding these dynamics requires analyzing individual motivations, systemic inequalities, and situational triggers that contribute to criminal acts. This study could focus on key questions: What socio-economic or psychological factors are most influential in criminal conduct? How do environmental conditions, like urbanization or poverty, exacerbate crime rates? Additionally, the role of technological advances in both facilitating and combating crime poses new challenges. This research could also explore preventative strategies, such as policy interventions or community-based programs, assessing their effectiveness in reducing crime. Overall, the study seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of crime to inform more effective, evidence-based crime prevention and criminal justice strategies.

Review of Literature

- **J. Tooby, L. Cosmides, *The psychological foundations of culture* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1992)**

In *The Psychological Foundations of Culture*, J. Tooby and L. Cosmides explore the intersection of psychology and culture, offering a foundational framework for understanding how human cognitive systems shape cultural evolution. Drawing on evolutionary theory, the authors argue that human psychological mechanisms are not only biologically shaped but also play a crucial role in the development of cultural practices. They suggest that culture is not a passive reflection of social structures but is actively shaped by the cognitive architecture of the human mind. This work challenges traditional views by proposing that cultural patterns emerge from the interaction between universal human psychological traits and the specific environments in which individuals live, thus providing a new lens for analyzing cultural phenomena.

- **R. Agnew, *Toward a unified theory of criminology: Integrating assumptions about***

***crime, people, and society* (New York University Press, New York, 2011)**

In *Toward a Unified Theory of Criminology: Integrating Assumptions About Crime, People, and Society*, R. Agnew presents a comprehensive framework aimed at unifying various criminological theories by integrating key assumptions about crime, individuals, and society. Agnew argues that existing criminological theories often operate in isolation, focusing on discrete aspects of crime without considering their interconnectedness. He proposes a theory that combines elements from different perspectives, including strain theory, social control, and social learning, to offer a more holistic understanding of criminal behavior. By addressing the complex interactions between individual characteristics, societal influences, and environmental factors, Agnew's work seeks to provide a more inclusive and flexible approach to criminology, capable of explaining a wider range of criminal phenomena.

- **K. Shusmoy Kundu¹, “Cyber Crime Trend in Bangladesh, an Analysis and Ways Out to Combat the Threat” Dhaka 1216, Bangladesh: *International Conference on Advanced Communications Technology(ICACTION)* (2018)**

In *Cyber Crime Trend in Bangladesh, an Analysis and Ways Out to Combat the Threat*, K. Shusmoy Kundu analyzes the rising trend of cybercrimes in Bangladesh and explores strategies to mitigate these threats. Kundu examines the types of cybercrimes most prevalent in the country, including online fraud, identity theft, and cyberbullying, and discusses the socio-economic impact of these crimes on individuals and businesses. He highlights the gaps in legal and institutional frameworks that hinder effective responses to cybercrime and stresses the need for stronger cyber laws, better law enforcement, and public awareness campaigns. The paper advocates for enhanced cooperation between governmental bodies, tech companies, and international organizations to build a robust defense against the growing cyber threat in Bangladesh.

- **L. Ellis, A. W. Hoskin, “The evolutionary neuroandrogenic theory of criminal behavior expanded” 24 *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 61–74 (2015)**

In *The Evolutionary Neuroandrogenic Theory of Criminal Behavior Expanded*, L. Ellis and A.W. Hoskin build upon their previous work by further developing the neuroandrogenic theory, which posits that criminal behavior is influenced by a combination of evolutionary, neurological, and hormonal factors. The authors argue that variations in brain structure and

function, particularly those involving the prefrontal cortex and limbic system, interact with androgenic hormones (such as testosterone) to affect aggressive and antisocial behavior. They expand on how these biological factors, in conjunction with environmental influences, shape the propensity for criminality. The article also explores the role of evolutionary pressures in the development of behaviors such as dominance, resource control, and risk-taking, offering a multidisciplinary approach to understanding the roots of criminal behavior.

- Criminology: Unveiling the Study of Crime and Criminal Behavior, **available at: <https://lawscope.org/criminology/>, (last visited on Oct 16, 2024)**

In the article *Criminology: Unveiling the Study of Crime and Criminal Behavior*, available at LawScope, the field of criminology is explored through its various theories and perspectives on crime and criminal behavior. The article discusses the interdisciplinary nature of criminology, highlighting its connections with sociology, psychology, law, and other social sciences. It outlines the major criminological theories, including classical, positivist, and critical criminology, and how they seek to explain the causes of criminal behavior. The article also touches on the role of the criminal justice system, social policies, and interventions in addressing crime. By unveiling the complexities of criminology, the article provides a comprehensive overview of the factors influencing criminal behavior and the approaches to studying and preventing it.

Research Methodology

The research article titled “Criminal Conduct: A Comprehensive Exploration of Crime Dynamics” adopts a Doctrinal Legal Research methodology, conducting a thorough examination of legal concepts through statutory provisions and judicial precedents. By employing logical reasoning, it identifies and distills key legal principles relevant to crime dynamics. This study primarily draws from primary legal sources, such as Acts of Parliament and higher court rulings. To enrich its findings, the research also includes content analysis and leverages a broad spectrum of secondary sources—books, academic journals, newspapers, trade publications, and organizational reports. Perspectives from academic institutions, government documents, international organizations, and reputable online sources provide further depth. This comprehensive approach ensures a nuanced exploration of criminal conduct within the legal framework, emphasizing the role of law in shaping accountability and justice.

Concept is Criminology

Criminology is a multidisciplinary field focused on studying acts defined as crimes and the societal reactions to these behaviors. While sociological theories significantly shape criminology, its interdisciplinary nature is evident in its reliance on psychology, anthropology, political science, and law to enhance research and analysis of criminal conduct.⁶ While there is a general consensus among scholars and researchers that criminology should encompass the exploration of law, the underlying causes of criminal behavior, and society's responses to criminal acts, ongoing debates persist regarding the precise definition of what constitutes a crime and the boundaries of the criminological domain.⁷

At its core, crime is defined as any action widely recognized as wrong or harmful, codified by law, and subject to state-imposed sanctions for violations. However, criminologists recognize that this definition is socially constructed and evolves with historical, cultural, and social contexts. For example, the criminalization of cannabis in the United States since 1937 has changed, with many states now legalizing it for medicinal and recreational use. Thus, some argue that relying solely on legal definitions of crime is overly restrictive, potentially excluding harmful acts while including those with minimal or no harm.⁸ As an alternative perspective, some criminologists suggest that criminology should not solely consider crimes as defined by the law but should also encompass acts that draw social disapproval or non-legal sanctions, such as ostracization .

Hagan proposed multiple dimensions for defining crime, including legal definitions, social harms, cross-cultural norms, labeling, and power dynamics. He suggested broadening the definition to include acts that cause blameworthy harm, are publicly condemned, or state-sanctioned. Scholars agree that legal definitions alone do not encompass the full spectrum of criminal acts.⁹

Incorporating an inclusive definition of crime is vital for a comprehensive understanding of crime and its responses within criminology. Some scholars suggest integrating evolutionary

⁶R. Durrant, T. Ward, *Evolutionary criminology: Towards a comprehensive explanation of crime* 2 (Academic, Kidlington, 2015)

⁷R. White, L. Eisler, et. al., *Crime & criminology: An introduction to theory* 28 (Oxford University Press Toronto, 2018)

⁸*Supra*, note 6

⁹R. Agnew, *Toward a unified theory of criminology: Integrating assumptions about crime, people, and society* 187 (New York University Press, New York, 2011)

sciences to explore the deeper causes of criminal behavior rooted in our species' evolutionary history. While evolutionary theories have been historically associated with oppressive practices, contemporary perspectives reject determinism. A biosocial paradigm has emerged, examining how genetic variations and environmental factors influence traits related to crime and antisocial behavior. Recent advancements in evolutionary biology and psychology align more closely with current criminological theories, enriching the field's understanding of criminal conduct.¹⁰

Current Perspectives of Criminology

Criminology is an interdisciplinary field primarily shaped by sociology but encompassing multiple disciplines. As social, historical, and cultural contexts have evolved, various competing perspectives have emerged, each seeking to understand crime and responses to it by focusing on different factors. These perspectives—classical theory, positivism, strain theory, and critical criminology—ask distinct questions and construct unique frameworks for analyzing and responding to crime and its underlying causes.¹¹

Classical Theories of Criminology

Before the Enlightenment, ancient legal codes like the Code of Hammurabi faced inconsistent interpretation and execution, often leading to disproportionate punishments, as highlighted by Cesare Beccaria. This era marked a shift from feudalism to a system granting individual rights regardless of social class. Enlightenment thinkers influenced the criminal justice system by asserting that humans are rational beings capable of free will. Classical criminologists argued that crime results from individual choices, emphasizing the state's duty to establish laws ensuring equal treatment for all citizens.¹²

Classical theorists argued that when a crime occurred, it breached the social contract, an implicit agreement where citizens surrendered some individual rights in exchange for state protection. Cesare Beccaria asserted that crime affected all of society, and, as such, it was the state's responsibility to restore order.¹³ Additionally, philosophers like Jeremy Bentham contended that all human behavior could be distilled into the pleasure-pain principle, which

¹⁰J. P. Wright, P. F. Cullen, "The future of biosocial criminology: Beyond scholars' professional ideology" 28 *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 237–253 (2012)

¹¹*Supra*, note 7, p. 24

¹²F. E. Hagan, L. E. Daigle, *Introduction to criminology: Theories, methods, and criminal behavior* 63 (Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, 2018)

¹³*Supra*, note 7

posits that individuals act to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. Therefore, classical theories of crime emphasized punishments that were not vindictive but served as deterrents, preventing both the offender from committing further crimes and dissuading other citizens from criminal acts. Consequently, the state's role was not only to define what constituted a crime but also to determine a punishment commensurate with the offense. In essence, by calculating the cost-benefit ratio of criminal behavior, the state aimed to ensure that the prescribed punishment was sufficiently severe to act as a deterrent, thus negating the potential rewards of criminal actions.¹⁴

While classical criminological theories have significantly shaped international criminal justice systems, critics highlight ongoing inequalities in how laws are applied, with certain populations disproportionately represented. Additionally, the perception of proportional sentencing varies; individuals of lower socioeconomic status may view monetary fines as more punitive than those with greater financial resources, often correlating with higher socioeconomic status. This disparity underscores the uneven impact of the justice system on different social groups.¹⁵

Positivist Perspectives of Criminology

In the nineteenth century, as European nations expanded through colonialism and the natural sciences adopted the scientific method, positivism emerged as a framework to understand the world and tackle social issues scientifically. Criminology adopted this trend, seeking to integrate scientific principles and evolutionary insights to analyze crime. Positivists emphasized two key areas: understanding individual differences that lead some to deviate and commit crimes, and examining social factors, such as the family unit, that fail to maintain societal order.¹⁶

In contrast to classical theorists, who concentrated on legal aspects and the nature of the offense, positivists shifted their focus to the offender and the individual and social characteristics contributing to criminal behavior. This shift significantly impacted the definition of crime, as it expanded beyond the purely legalistic view to include deviations from the norm, such as mental illness and deviant social roles. One of the most notable positivists was Cesare Lombroso, an Italian physician who attempted to classify people based on Charles Darwin's theory of

¹⁴*Ibid*

¹⁵*Ibid*

¹⁶*Supra*, note 7, p. 3-39

evolution.¹⁷ Initially, Lombroso proposed that criminal behavior resulted from atavism, a regression to an earlier stage in human evolution. However, he later refined his classification to include various criminal typologies, suggesting, for instance, that female offenders displayed characteristics traditionally associated with men.¹⁸

Given the deterministic nature of positivist criminological theories, their responses to crime often leaned toward restrictive measures. While classical theorists favored proportionate sentences, positivists advocated for indeterminate sentences based on the offender's characteristics, emphasizing interventions like treatment or containment to prevent societal disruption. Critics argue that positivist theories fall short in explaining all types of crime, including white-collar offenses, and have been misused to justify the oppression of specific populations, particularly in racial contexts. Furthermore, their heavy focus on individual and micro-level factors often neglects broader social conditions, such as poverty, that also influence criminal behavior.¹⁹ Nonetheless, some contemporary scholars still embrace positivist interpretations of criminal conduct, as exemplified by the work of authors like Raine.²⁰

Strain Theories of Crime

As sociology emerged as a distinct discipline, criminologists increasingly focused on the distribution of opportunities in society and how interpersonal interactions impact crime, especially in the context of global changes following World War II. This shift led to the development of strain theories, which viewed crime as a social phenomenon rooted in social processes and structures. Unlike positivist theories that attribute crime to individual shortcomings, strain theorists argued that criminal behavior breaches societal norms—accepted values and behaviors. They contended that crime results not from individual deficiencies but from social strains; when individuals lack equal access to resources like wealth, they may pursue alternative, inappropriate means to meet their needs.²¹

Strain theorists proposed that addressing crime effectively required a combination of individual rehabilitation and institutional reform to enhance access to social programs. They recommended removing the causes of strain by increasing access to social programs targeting

¹⁷C. Lombroso, *Criminal man* 61 (Duke University Press, Durham, 1911)

¹⁸*Ibid*

¹⁹*Supra*, note 12, p. 73

²⁰A. Raine, *The anatomy of violence: The biological roots of crime* 85 (Vintage Books, New York, 2014)

²¹*Supra*, note 19

individuals at risk of experiencing strain, such as job finder clubs or after-school programming, while simultaneously reducing the strain experienced by these individuals.²²

Critical Perspectives of Crime

Critical theories of crime delve into the structures of power within society and how power is institutionalized to favor specific groups of citizens. For example, critical feminist criminologists examine how the law and the criminal justice system are structured to oppress women. Therefore, many critical criminologists are dedicated to uncovering the underlying power dynamics that influence the treatment of different citizen groups and proposing solutions to address these issues.²³

Categorize critical criminologists into two theoretical orientations: structuralists, who focus on power as an inherent aspect of social institutions (e.g., the criminal justice system), and postmodernists, who scrutinize how "knowledge production shapes human experience while simultaneously generating conflict over meaning," as seen in the distinctions between terms like "prostitute" and "sex trade worker".²⁴ Structuralists perceive the marginalization of certain social groups as the root cause of crime, while postmodern approaches highlight how dominant discourses or prevailing beliefs define what constitutes a crime. Both structuralists and postmodernists aim to unveil the underlying power dynamics that influence the experiences of various social groups within the criminal justice system. However, structuralists focus on empowering marginalized groups and achieving equitable resource distribution, while postmodernists concentrate on constructing an inclusive society by challenging the dominance of beliefs that criminalize specific groups.²⁵

While various perspectives have advanced criminology, Durrant and Ward noted that evolutionary approaches have had limited influence in the field. Additionally, some criminologists recognize that criminology is still evolving and lacks comprehensive solutions for crime prevention. Durrant and Ward suggest that integrating an evolutionary perspective with existing theories could enhance understanding and lead to more effective laws and legal

²²*Ibid*

²³ Female criminology: a critical analysis, available at: <https://blog.ipleaders.in/female-criminology-critical-analysis/>, (last visited on Feb 14, 2026)

²⁴*Supra*, note 7, p.76

²⁵*Ibid*

structures. This chapter aims to explore how an evolutionary approach can enrich the field of criminology.²⁶

Evolutionary Logic of Criminology

The study of criminology is not merely an exploration of crime as a static element in society. It also reflects our concern for the welfare of society. Humans are inherently social beings, relying on each other for survival and well-being, which naturally leads to a concern for the welfare of society. However, criminal behavior poses a unique challenge. Why does criminal behavior emerge and disrupt social welfare? And why do criminals, despite the potential costs, often reap benefits from their actions? These questions can be addressed through an evolutionary perspective, which offers nonarbitrary explanations for the subject matter of criminology and its conceptualization.²⁷

From an evolutionary viewpoint, we can understand the origins of the law and why societies create legal systems. The law defines what constitutes a crime and responds to criminal acts. However, the evolutionary perspective helps answer why laws exist at all. It links the creation of laws to human morality, encompassing concepts of right vs. wrong, fairness vs. unfairness, and justice vs. injustice. These moral impulses and intuitions have evolved within humans due to their fitness consequences in social groups. Consequently, an evolutionary perspective provides a deeper, nonarbitrary explanation for the development of crime and legal systems within human societies.²⁸

Furthermore, evolutionary perspectives can shed light on our varying standards of conduct based on the victim of a crime and the surrounding context. In-group members, those within our community, have likely been subject to the earliest forms of moral conduct and punishment. This includes offenses like cheating, theft, and assault against in-group members. In contrast, crimes against out-group members may not be punished as severely, particularly in the context of war.²⁹

²⁶*Supra*, note 6

²⁷R. Durrant, T. Ward, "The role of evolutionary explanations in criminology" 4 *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Criminology* 1–37 (2012)

²⁸F. B. M. de Waal, "Putting the altruism back into altruism: The evolution of empathy" 59 *Annual Review of Psychology* 279–300 (2008)

²⁹M. Daly, M. Wilson, *Homicide* 88 (Transaction, New York, 1988)

The distinction between in-group and out-group conduct aligns with evolutionary logic, which predicts that regulating behavior within the in-group should have been a paramount concern for early human societies due to the fitness consequences of these actions within the group. This perspective helps explain why international law did not become a global preoccupation until relatively recently, as societies initially focused on governing their in-group members in ways that promoted their survival and reproductive successes.³⁰

The concept of crime can be examined through an evolutionary lens, viewing it as a conflict between individual desires and the collective desires of a social group, often driven by competition for limited resources and mates. Certain behaviors classified as crimes, such as cheating, theft, assault, or even homicide, may provide reproductive advantages in specific contexts, enhancing an individual's chances of survival and reproduction. However, these competitive behaviors must be tempered by prosocial, empathic, and moral traits to maintain cooperation and social cohesion within the group.³¹

Prosocial, cooperative behaviors have their own benefits, enhancing an individual's survival and reproduction by promoting the well-being of the group. These acts can result in greater status and mating opportunities. Moreover, in contexts where biological kin are prevalent, altruistic acts often reflect investments in the reproductive success of closely related kin, thus benefiting one's inclusive fitness. This dual nature of competition and cooperation in human behavior is well-suited to the evolutionary perspective and provides a more comprehensive understanding of crime and the underlying motivations for both criminal and prosocial behavior.³²

In essence, an evolutionary perspective offers valuable insights into the origins of the law, the moral foundations of crime, the differentiation between in-group and out-group conduct, and the underlying motivations for competitive and cooperative behaviors within human societies. It enriches the field of criminology by providing nonarbitrary explanations and a deeper understanding of these complex issues.³³

The Evolutionary Perspective on Demographics and Criminal Activity

³⁰J. Tooby, L. Cosmides, *The psychological foundations of culture* 19–136 (Oxford University Press, New York, 1992)

³¹*Supra*, note 28

³²W. D. Hamilton, "The genetical evolution of social behavior: I" 7 *Journal of Theoretical Biology* 1–16 (1964)

³³*Ibid*

The strong and reliable connection between sex and age demographics and criminal activity, particularly in violent, sexual, and "petty" crimes, can be explained through an evolutionary perspective. Three foundational principles in evolutionary theory help elucidate why these demographic variables are such powerful predictors of criminal involvement:

1. Parental Investment Asymmetry: This principle, based on Trivers' work, refers to the inherent differences between males and females in their capacity to invest in offspring. In mammals, females bear the responsibility for gestation, placentation, and lactation, which places them in the role of primary caregivers. Males, in contrast, are more likely to provide parental investment through acquiring food, securing resources, and ensuring safety. This division of labor is crucial for raising offspring in early human societies, where both sexes played complementary roles in child-rearing.³⁴

Based on this principle, criminal activity is expected to differ based on sex and age. Young mothers, particularly those with limited access to resources and social support, might be more inclined to engage in infanticide if they believe they cannot provide for their children. In contrast, young, unmarried men, who are not yet fathers, may be more prone to high-risk behavior as they seek to demonstrate their competence, establish their social standing, and appeal to potential partners. This supports the observed patterns where young, unmarried men are at the highest risk of committing violent and criminal acts.³⁵

2. Reproductive Success-from-Multiple Mates: This principle, rooted in Bateman's research on reproductive differences, suggests that males can impregnate multiple females quickly, unlike females. This reproductive asymmetry drives males to seek multiple partners to enhance reproductive success, leading to riskier behaviors. Consequently, men are more likely to engage in impulsive, sexually-oriented actions, resulting in higher rates of crimes, especially sexual and violent offenses.³⁶

3. Reproductive Variance Asymmetry: This principle highlights the greater variability in male reproductive success, where some men can reproduce with multiple partners while others may not reproduce at all. Competition for reproductive opportunities can drive risky and criminal

³⁴S. B. Hrdy, *Mother nature: Maternal instincts and how they shape the human species* 78 (Ballantine, New York 1999)

³⁵*Ibid*

³⁶M. Daly, M. Wilson, *Homicide* 76 (Transaction, New York, 1988)

behaviors, particularly among young males. As they enter puberty and perceive a competitive environment, this anxiety over reproductive variance increases, leading to a higher likelihood of criminal activity in adolescent and early adult years.³⁷

These evolutionary principles provide a valuable framework for understanding the strong links between sex, age demographics, and criminal behavior across societies. They elucidate not only the predictive nature of these variables but also the reasons behind them. By recognizing the evolutionary roots of these patterns, criminology can effectively address criminal behavior, particularly among young males, through social policies and interventions that align with their natural tendencies.³⁸

Life History Theory on an Evolutionary Perspective on Crime and Behavior

Life History Theory (LHT) provides an evolutionary framework for understanding crime, positing that organisms make trade-offs in development regarding growth, maintenance, and reproduction when resources are limited. In response to ancestral and modern environments characterized by scarcity, LHT suggests organisms evolve flexible strategies to enhance survival and reproductive success. Criminal and antisocial behaviors can emerge as life history strategies prioritizing immediate reproduction and offspring quantity over quality. Environmental cues of unpredictability and competition shape these strategies, influencing the likelihood of engaging in criminal conduct. LHT enriches criminology by linking factors such as sex, age, and socioeconomic status to the development of these adaptive strategies.³⁹

Understanding Criminal Behavior Through Evolutionary Neuroandrogenic Theory

Evolutionary Neuroandrogenic Theory (ENA) is a comprehensive model that explains the proximate mechanisms behind criminal behavior while exploring the evolutionary reasons for such actions. ENA includes two components: the evolutionary aspect, addressing the "why," and the neuroandrogenic aspect, focusing on the "how." The central concept is "competitive/victimizing behavior," which spans actions that can harm others, from benign competitive activities to criminal acts like theft or assault. ENA posits that female mate choice has historically favored males with resource provisioning traits, driving competitiveness and

³⁷*Ibid*

³⁸*Supra*, note 27

³⁹B. B. Boutwell, J. C. Barnes, "A unified crime theory: The evolutionary taxonomy" 25 *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 343–353 (2015)

sometimes coercion. The neuroandrogenic component highlights how androgens, particularly testosterone, facilitate these behaviors through changes in neural structures, explaining the higher prevalence of crime among men and the rise in criminal behavior post-puberty.⁴⁰

Variations in Criminal Justice Systems

Evolutionary perspectives can offer valuable insights into alternative forms of justice, challenging the traditional rational-based retributive and rehabilitative approaches of the criminal justice system. This system, often focused on retribution, emphasizes culpability and proportional punishment to deter future offenses. While rehabilitation aims to reintegrate offenders into society, an evolutionary view suggests that humans have developed an innate sense of justice that motivates them to punish norm violations. However, the role of forgiveness is crucial, as strict tit-for-tat strategies may not be optimal in larger social groups, highlighting the complexity of justice beyond mere retribution.⁴¹

In contrast to the retributive approach, relational honor-based systems, often found in indigenous communities and early human societies, take a different view of human nature. These systems assume that humans are inherently relational, and individuals are seen as integral parts of their social groups. In this framework, when infractions occur, they are considered relational injustices, and the emphasis is on making reparations to restore harmony within the community.⁴²

Restorative justice, which has been incorporated into some modern legal systems, aligns with the principles of honor-based systems. It recognizes that offenses affect not only the victim and the offender but also the broader community. In restorative justice models, the focus is on repairing the relationships between the offender, victim, and the community, with an emphasis on reparation. Punishment can be part of the process but is not the primary focus. Key tenets of restorative justice include recognizing the community's role and the offender's obligations to repair the harm done. This approach promotes community empowerment and healing.⁴³ Restorative justice models also emphasize the importance of forgiveness and reintegrative

⁴⁰L. Ellis, A. W. Hoskin, "The evolutionary neuroandrogenic theory of criminal behavior expanded" 24 *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 61–74 (2015)

⁴¹A. Walsh, "Evolutionary psychology and the origins of justice" 17 *Justice Quarterly* 841–864 (2000)

⁴²L. Little Bear, *Jagged worldviews colliding*. In M. Battiste (Ed.), *Reclaiming Indigenous voice and vision* 77–85 (UBC Press, Vancouver, 2000)

⁴³H. Zehr, H. Mika, "Fundamental principles of restorative justice" 1 *The Contemporary Justice Review* 47–58 (1998)

shaming, wherein the offender is given an opportunity to make amends and remain a welcomed member of the community.⁴⁴ Forgiveness and cooperative strategies can transform patterns of mutual cheating and ensure that valuable contributors to the community are not permanently excluded.

It is noteworthy that restorative justice models have been integrated into legislation targeting youth, recognizing that strict punitive strategies may not be suitable, especially during adolescence, a period characterized by a discrepancy between skill and biology. This reflects a more holistic and relational approach to justice that aligns with an understanding of human nature as inherently social and interconnected.⁴⁵

Findings:

- Evolutionary theory links the origins of laws and legal systems to human morality, encompassing concepts of right and wrong, fairness, and justice, which have evolved due to their social fitness consequences.
- Early human societies prioritized regulating in-group behavior, focusing on offenses like cheating and theft, explaining the delayed development of international law as initial governance centered on internal group dynamics.
- Criminal behavior emerges from conflicts between individual desires and others' needs, driven by competition for limited resources and mates, with acts like theft serving as survival strategies in specific contexts.
- Humans possess both competitive and cooperative traits; competitive behaviors may offer reproductive advantages, but must be balanced with prosocial and moral qualities to maintain cooperation within social groups.
- Evolutionary principles explain the link between sex, age demographics, and crime; young, unmarried men may engage in high-risk behaviors to demonstrate competence and enhance social standing amid mate competition.
- Life History Theory suggests individuals make trade-offs in growth, maintenance, and reproduction based on environmental cues, influencing crime likelihood, with faster life history strategies correlating with increased crime risk.

⁴⁴A. Walsh, "Evolutionary psychology and the origins of justice" 17 *Justice Quarterly* 841–864 (2000)

⁴⁵*Ibid*

- Evolutionary Neuroandrogenic Theory explores the mechanisms behind criminal behavior, emphasizing female mate choice and how testosterone-driven masculinization influences male competitiveness, resource provision, and status-seeking behaviors.

Conclusion

The integration of evolutionary theory into criminology provides a novel and insightful perspective on the origins of criminal behavior, the evolution of legal systems, and the motivations driving crime. This approach illuminates several critical aspects of criminology, including the evolutionary basis of laws, the distinction between in-group and out-group behaviors, the dynamics of competition and cooperation in human interactions, and the significant impact of sex and age on criminal activity.

By offering nonarbitrary explanations for criminological phenomena, the evolutionary perspective enhances our comprehension of the intricate issues surrounding criminal behavior and its societal ramifications. It posits that crime, often viewed as a violation of social norms, is deeply rooted in the competitive nature of humanity and the conflicts arising between individual desires and the collective aspirations of social groups. Moreover, evolutionary theory highlights the necessity of balancing competitive tendencies with prosocial and moral characteristics to foster cooperation within communities. This perspective also elucidates why men typically exhibit higher rates of criminal behavior than women and why crime rates tend to rise during the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Evolutionary models such as Life History Theory (LHT) and Evolutionary Neuroandrogenic Theory (ENA) provide comprehensive frameworks for understanding the factors that influence criminal behavior and its variations across different sexes and age groups.

Furthermore, applying evolutionary theory challenges conventional retributive approaches to criminal justice, advocating for alternative models like restorative justice that emphasize repair, reconciliation, and forgiveness. These models resonate with an understanding of human nature as fundamentally social and interconnected, reflecting a more holistic and relational view of justice. Overall, the incorporation of evolutionary theory into criminology enriches the field by offering a deeper insight into the evolutionary origins of laws, the motivations behind criminal behavior, and the potential for more empathetic, community-centered approaches to justice. It encourages scholars and practitioners to explore the

evolutionary foundations of human behavior and social systems when addressing the complexities of crime in society.

Suggestions

- Researchers in criminology should consider incorporating evolutionary perspectives into their studies to enhance their understanding of criminal behavior. Collaborating with experts in evolutionary biology and psychology can provide valuable insights into the underlying factors influencing criminal conduct.
- Policymakers and practitioners within the criminal justice system should explore alternative models, such as restorative justice, which prioritize repairing relationships and reintegrating offenders into the community. This approach can lead to more effective and empathetic strategies for addressing criminal behavior.
- Understanding evolutionary factors contributing to criminal behavior should guide targeted prevention and intervention strategies, addressing risk factors in demographics like young males and fostering opportunities for prosocial development to reduce criminal activity.
- Promoting public awareness about the evolutionary foundations of crime should encourage nuanced understanding, reduce stigmatization, and foster empathy for individuals involved in the criminal justice system, enhancing rehabilitation-focused societal perspectives.
- Recognizing evolutionary influences on male and female criminal behavior should lead to gender-specific approaches, with tailored interventions and support systems aimed at effectively reducing crime among both genders.
- Conducting longitudinal studies on the development of criminal behavior from childhood to adulthood should provide valuable insights into the age-crime curve and factors influencing behavioral changes over time.
- Addressing ethical considerations in incorporating evolutionary perspectives into criminology should involve creating robust ethical guidelines to ensure that research and interventions respect individuals' rights and dignity within the criminal justice system.

- Engaging in comparative analyses of justice systems, including restorative justice models, should offer insights into their effectiveness, benefits, and limitations, allowing policymakers to learn from successful implementations in diverse contexts.
- Engaging local communities and stakeholders is crucial when adopting alternative justice models. Community involvement can help tailor restorative justice approaches to specific cultural and social contexts, enhancing their effectiveness. As criminology continues to evolve, integrating evolutionary perspectives represents just one step in its ongoing development. Researchers and practitioners should remain open to new paradigms and approaches that contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of crime and justice.

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