**Biological theories of crime**

Biological theories of crime, having achieved initial prominence over a century ago. These theories have persisted in one form or another right up to the present. These theories are grounded in the concept of biological determinism, a notion suggesting that the causes of crime are the result of some biological or physical element. The concept further elaborates that criminals may be born not made. Biological theorists hold the view that human commit crime due to irregularities in their physical and mental structure. Some of these theories are as discussed below.

**Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909) biological theory of crime.**

Most closely associated with the biological school of thought are the findings of Cesare Lombroso. He was an Italian army physician and a prize doctor. Lombroso was often referred to as “father of modern criminology”. He wrote a book “Criminal Man” in 1878. Lombroso conducted systematic observations and measurements of the physical attributes of criminals. He believed that he saw in these individuals some of the same characteristics as those found in savages or prehumen people. Lombroso developed these ideas during his work as prison physician. One offender, a famous prisoner by the name of Villella, attracted Lombroso special interest. Lombroso conducted a postmortem examination of Villella and discovered a depression in the interior back part of his skull, that he called the “median occipital fossa”. Lombroso recognized this feature as a characteristic found in apes. Due to these characteristics, the criminals opt to commit crimes. Moreover, Lombroso maintained that the criminals could be identified by certain stigmata of degeneration. He identified some physical abnormalities and believed that criminal can be identified from these abnormalities which includes;

* Slanting forehead
* Excessive dimensions of the jaws and cheekbones
* Ears of unusual size
* Peculiarities of eyes
* Abnormal teeth
* Excessively long arms
* A sparse beard
* Twisted nose
* Wooly hairs
* Fleshy and swollen lips
* The presence of tattoos

Lombroso also noted some non-physical abnormalities as cause of crime. The non-physical abnormalities include;

* Lack of morality
* Excessive vanity
* Cruelty

Having been heavily influenced by Charles Darwin’s evolutionary doctrines, Lombroso concluded that the criminal was an atavism, a “throwback” to a more apelike ancestor. (atavism means that the evolution process of these persons is not fully completed that why they commit crimes). Thus, he maintained, the criminal was born a criminal. The atavistic features were apparent in both male and female criminals alike.

**Criticisms:** Only after four years of his death in 1913, Lombroso theory was criticized by Charles Goring. Goring criticized Lombroso work on the following points.

* Lombroso work suffered from poor research design and measurement.
* His hypothesis was not fully supported by his, or others, data. He further states that not all criminals have characteristics that Lombroso described of a criminal man.
* This theory ignores other factors of crime causation as social and psychological.
* Lombroso theory is applicable on offenders involved in physical violence, it ignores white collar criminals.

**Heredity theory of crime.**

Many biological theorists have suggested that criminal tendencies might be inherited. Among the most frequently cited investigations in this regard is a study of the Jukes family conducted by Richard Dugdale in 1874. Dugdale traced 709 members of the Jukes family back to the year 1790 and found that 20% had been either habitual thieves or prostitutes, or had been prosecuted for bastardy. Dugdale concluded that their criminality has been caused by bad heredity.

**Aberrant Chromosomes** **theory**

This theory is presented by Kenneth J. Peak.Peak advances in the field of molecular biology and micro pathology during the second half of the 20th century suggested a link between chromosomes abnormality and criminal behavior. Chromosomes are the part of each living cell nucleus that carry hereditary information in the form of genes. The normal chromosomal pattern that featured two similar sized chromosomes is the female XX pattern. The normal male pattern is XY including two dissimilar chromosomes. But an XYY pattern has also been observed among some men. In the XYY pattern, the chromosomes that control the inheritance of sex-linked characteristics are abnormal. Researches speculates that one in every 700 males possesses an XYY chromosomal makeup, resulting in the physical characteristics of tallness, severe acne, long arms and other skeletal irregularities. The psychological attributes of mental illness, aggressiveness, social isolation and criminality are also postulated.