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## The Role Of Biology In Predetermining Criminal Activity

In this assignment I will be discussing the above question, I will give an in-depth description of Cesare Lombroso and theorists alike, I will produce a paragraph explaining Biological Theories Today I will also do the following:

Describe and analyze the underlying concepts and principles of key criminological perspectives. Identify and examine the contested nature of these discourses

Formulate arguments regarding the suitability of certain approaches Apply the conventions of academic arguments to a range of academic activities

After completing all the above bullet points within my work I will finally conclude all findings and arguments leaving a conclusion at the end. A biological interpretation of formal deviance was first advanced by the Italian School of Criminology, a school of thought originating from Italy during the mid-nineteenth century. The school was headed by medical criminologist Cesare Lombroso, who argued that criminality was a biological trait found in some human beings. The term Lombroso used to describe the appearance of organisms resembling ancestral forms of life is an atavism.

The idea of atavism drew a connection between an individual's appearance and their biological propensity to deviate from social norms. Enrico Ferri took this idea farther, arguing that anyone convicted of a crime should be detained for as long as possible. According to Ferri's line of thought, if individuals committed crimes because of their biological constitution, what was the point of deterrence or rehabilitation? Garofalo is perhaps best known for his efforts to formulate a "natural" definition of the crime. According to his view, those who violate human universal laws are themselves "unnatural".

Penology: The processes devised and adopted for the punishment and prevention of crime.

Atavism: The reappearance of an ancestral characteristic in an organism after several generations of absence. Italian School of Criminology: The Italian school of criminology was founded at the end of the 19th century by Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909) and two of his Italian disciples, Enrico Ferri (1856–1929) and Raffaele Garofalo (1851–1934).

A biological theory of deviance proposes that an individual deviates from social norms largely because of their biological makeup. The theory primarily pertains to formal deviance, using biological reasons to explain criminality, though it can certainly extend to informal deviance.

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Positivism was firstly recorded by a man named Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909) he was later then Referred to as 'the father of modern-day criminology' he is most Famous for a 1876 book 'The Criminal Man' – English translation released in early 1900s his most Early work was resulted from doing autopsies performed on male criminals and subsequently, examinations of living respondents he made it known that he viewed criminals as throwbacks to a more primitive stage of human development – atavism found in a variety of inferior physiological features associated with primates, and biological regression involving a less civilised form of mentality and behaviours, he then linked it in with things such things as the shape of the head as it is said to offer a guide to the personal characteristics of the individual Lombroso stated The criminal was a separate species exhibiting a variety of mental and physical characteristics setting them apart, His work is now largely discredited

He identified three different types of criminal:

- The epileptic criminal
- The insane criminal
- The born criminal, being those with atavistic\* characteristics

To these he then added three subtypes of occasional criminals

- Pseudo-criminals (crimes of passion or other emotion)
- Criminaloids (opportunity to commit crime significant)
- Habitual criminals (fall into primitive tendencies because of factors such as poor education)

Lombroso wrote: "At the sight of that skull, I seemed to see all of a sudden, lighted up as a vast plain under a flaming sky, the problem of the nature of the criminal – an atavistic being who reproduces in his person the ferocious instincts of primitive humanity and the inferior animals.

"Thus were explained anatomically the enormous jaws, high cheekbones, prominent superciliary arches, solitary lines in the palms, extreme size of the orbits, handle-shaped or sessile ears found in criminals, savages and apes, insensibility to pain, extremely acute sight, tattooing, excessive idleness, love of orgies and the irresistible craving for evil for its own sake, the desire not only to extinguish life in the victim, but to mutilate the corpse, tear its flesh, and drink its blood."

Essentially, Lombroso believed that criminality was inherited and that criminals could be identified by physical defects that confirmed them as being atavistic or savage. For thousands of years until that point, the dominant view had been that, as the crime was a sin against God, it should be punished in a fitting manner – 'an eye for an eye', and so forth. During the

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Enlightenment, thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham and the Italian Cesare Beccaria decided that, as we were all rational beings, the choice to commit an offense was taken by weighing up the costs and benefits. If the costs were made high with harsh penalties then this would put off all but the most determined of criminals.

This was an interesting philosophy, but critics noted its flaws – not everyone is rational, and some crimes, particularly violent ones, are purely emotional, they said. Lombroso and his fellow criminal anthropologists also challenged these ideas and were the first to advocate the study of crime and criminals from a scientific perspective. In particular, Lombroso supported its use in criminal investigation and one of his assistants, Salvatore Ottolenghi, founded the first School of Scientific Policing in Rome in 1903.

Well, not every criminal is born with qualities of earlier humans, Lombroso argued. There is the crime of passion, which women tend to fall into more than men, and the crime of opportunity, which, oddly, Lombroso ties to epilepsy. “According to him,” writes Albrecht, “epilepsy is not much else than a highly strung normal function of the nerves so that some epileptics would appear to be merely highly strung impulsive natures.” Lombroso believed epileptics, with their impulsive actions, were natural criminals.

Also, there's the habitual criminal without the brain defects of the born criminal. “In consequence of a neglected upbringing, however,” writes Albrecht, “he does not gain the strength to overcome the naturally bad qualities of the child, developing them perhaps till habit makes him a criminal.” Interestingly enough, for all of the horrible predestination-style theories of Lombroso, this actually touches closer to what we now consider to be the driving factors of criminality.

While much debate still rages about what drives people into the life of crime, it seems clear that both genetic and environmental factors are at work. Men, for instance, may be more prone to aggression, but that doesn't mean all men are like my crazy uncle, who probably spent 90 percent of his waking hours starting fights. On top of socioeconomic status and education, your upbringing, as Lombroso rightly noted, likely also plays a part. But a less-than-ideal upbringing, of course, doesn't necessarily turn you into a criminal.

Enrico Ferri (1856-1929) he continued Lombroso's work by becoming the Author of the influential book 'the Positive School of Criminology' he particularly emphasized the importance of social and environmental factors in explaining criminality, as well as developing ideas of crime prevention he rejected the common notion of free will (in classicism), Ferri 1917:54\*) he then proceeded to claim 'in order to be a criminal it is rather necessary that the individual should find himself permanently or transitorily in such personal, physical and moral conditions, and live in such an environment, which become for him a chain of cause and effect, externally

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and internally that disposes him toward crime' \* book, Criminal Sociology

Garofalo is perhaps best known for his efforts to formulate a “natural” definition of the crime. Classical thinkers accepted the legal definition of crime uncritically; crime is what the law says it is. This appeared to be rather arbitrary and “unscientific” to Garofalo, who wanted to anchor the definition of crime in something natural. Most significant was Garofalo’s reformulation of classical notions of crime and his redefinition of crime as a violation of natural law, or a human universal.

A human universal is a trait, characteristic, or behavior that exists across cultures, regardless of the nuances of a given context. A famous example of a universal is the incest taboo. Exempting a very small number of small communities, all human cultures have a taboo against incest in some form. Garofalo’s presentation of crime as a violation of a human universal allows for one to characterize criminals as unnatural. As soon as criminals are marked as inhuman or unnatural, the public has a license to think of an individual convicted of a crime as completely unlike the rest of society; a whole new range of punishments are authorized, including serious social stigmatization.

## Biological Theories Today

Italian School biological explanations have not resonated in criminal justice systems in America. However, some traces still exist. Now, the conversation about crime and biological explanations focuses more on the relationship between genetics and crime than the relationship between phenotypic features and crime. Because the modern emphasis is on actual genetics rather than phenotypic expressions of genes, stereotyping of individuals with “criminal” traits or propensities is more difficult. For example, when walking down the street, you can tell who has a protruding jaw, but you can’t tell who has the genetic combination that increases one’s propensity for aggression. Though the debate has mutated, a biological explanation for deviance and crime is still commonplace.

The elements of criminal behavior are by no means a simple equation. A small percentage of crime is attributed to abnormality or genetics. Criminal activity can be explained in terms of the learning of societal norms were an individual has mistaken or been influenced to develop a way of living that is not compatible with the laws of a given society, therefore a conflict is created that may lead to a criminal confrontation.

Another aspect though is that small percentage of given societies people will suffer from abnormalities or mental infirmities that are actually the predominant cause of an individual's criminal conduct. This is exasperated by the social phenomena of stereotyping, prejudice and racism that heavily contribute to social injustice (Mcknight & Sutton ch, 5 1994). Seen in the light

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of “frustration”(Bartol, 1999, p. 124) and “escalation”(Bartol, 1999, p. 197) theories it can be seen that biological explanations of behavior are far too limited in that it is next to impossible for a person to change their genetic structures.

The conflict between in-groups and out-groups of society has been shown to be highly dependant on attitudes that are prejudiced (McKnight and Sutton 1999, p. 232). Prejudices were intolerance towards out-group member’s causes frustration and lead to frustration induced criminality. The conflict is then two-sided. In-group members incite out-group members and out-group members who are provoked exert some form of response. Following the response, the in-group members perceive the response as “provocation”(Bartol 1999, p. 197), and this is the vicious circle created were the disadvantaged or abnormal individuals find themselves in conflict with the law more often than groupers.

Therefore normal criminals and abnormal criminals are better accounted for their behavior by both biological and psychological theory through the more comprehensive theory is psychological as this takes into account biological factors as well as the environment, the individual, cognitive processes and social and group processes.

After researching into biological positivism, the use of biological theories in the current criminal justice system is identifiably lacking with more emphasis on environmental factors being seen as the causes of crime. A biosocial, multi-factor, approach has been formed over the recent years incorporating environmental, social, and biological factors (Hopkins Burke, 2009) nevertheless there seems to be an ignorance of biological factors.

The aim of this essay was to distinguish to what extent does biology predetermine criminal activity?

Biological positivism is relevant in today’s society. The research does not suggest that biological factors are the sole cause of criminal behavior for every individual offender, but that it can have an influence on an individual’s susceptibility to commit a crime (Hopkins Burke, 2009). Environmental and social factors also later contribute to shaping the offender.

Early biological theories stemmed from the work of Lombroso. Although his work is largely discredited, he laid the foundation on which much more plausible explanations could be formed. Research into contemporary biological explanations, including twins studies and hormones, has led to the conclusion that criminality in a minority of offenders is solely caused by biological factors (Hopkins Burke, 2009).

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