

Historical and Theoretical Approaches to Offending in People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

William R. Lindsay and John L. Taylor

Introduction and Historical Roots

Social theory, public policy, and clinical practice have long been susceptible to manipulation and distortion concerning offenders with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Crime and the issues surrounding crime can be incendiary topics for the media, then the public, and consequently politicians. Fear of crime can lead to the easy manipulation of public perception concerning the culpability of one section of society or another. People with IDD have a long history of being the target of such unwarranted scapegoating.

During the 19th century there were several important influences that came together with such potency that it seems to have taken those involved by surprise. First came the development of the concept of institutions as a solution to educating people with IDD. In 1844 John Conolly, chief physician at the at Hanwell Asylum in London visited two institutions in Paris – the Salpêtrière and the Bicêtre, opened by Edouard Seguin, a French physician who pioneered educational approaches for children with IDD (Seguin, 1846). Conolly witnessed humane management of “idiots,” education of even the most disabled, and a huge reduction in the use of restraint. His enthusiasm for Seguin’s regime was reflected in his writings (Conolly, 1847), which were circulated throughout Britain and North America. This resulted in widespread enthusiasm for institutional care. One early North American institution for people with IDD was opened in South Boston in 1847 for people “condemned in hopeless idiocy” (Trent, 1994). The originators of these establishments were influential and similar institutions opened in New York and Philadelphia. The early institute superintendents wrote of the educative potential of these places and created the concept of idiocy as a social construction while offering an ostensibly humane solution in the form of institutions.

By 1858, however, influential figures were already asserting a link between idiocy and delinquency. Isaac Newton Kerlin, a very important figure in the field of IDD who coined the term “moral imbecile” (1858), published a series of 22 case illustrations in which he wrote, of one case:

He was a moral idiot, he recognised no obligation to God nor man and having some appreciation of the value of money and property, nothing that could be appropriated was safe from his reach....His honest face covered the most mature dishonesty. (Kerlin, 1858, p. 48)

Here, there is not only the explicit linkage of low intelligence and moral decrepitude, but also an attribution of cunning and culpability – together with an expedient view of capacity – that was to seep into the wider culture and society. These early associations found fertile ground in the latter part of the 19th century following the revelations of Mendelian laws of heredity and Charles Darwin’s writings on evolution and natural selection.

Subsequent institution superintendents were particularly successful in exploiting the supposed links between IDD and criminality to make an argument for the expansion of their services, with medicine rather than education becoming the dominant ethos. Consequently, increasingly persuasive arguments were made for removing people with IDD from society for their own, as well as for society’s, good. State funding followed, leading to the expansion of many such establishments and the increasing segregation of people with IDD (Scheerenberger, 1983). Institution heads in the US began to be perceived as having unique knowledge of the issues in IDD and they certainly believed that, segregated from wider society, people with IDD could become self-sufficient in isolated communities. Martin Barr, chief physician of the Pennsylvania Training School for Feeble-Minded Children, said in his 1897 Presidential address to the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Persons that “the imbecile, separated from the world and forbidden to marry, shall become a self-supporting, self-respecting citizen” (Barr, 1897, p. 3), while Mary Dunphy (1908), superintendent of Children’s Institutions, Randall’s Island in New York city, wrote that “it is in the interests of the public as well as for their own sakes, that [people with IDD] be prevented from coming in to contact with those of normal minds.” As others had done, Dunphy put her protective remarks in a threatening context, saying “moral instincts are almost always lacking in the mentally deficient so even in ordinary intercourse...they are a menace to the welfare of society” (p. 334). The reader may experience no small sense of schadenfreude on learning that after surviving a series of scandals Mrs Dunphy was dismissed as superintendent of the New York City Children’s Hospital and Schools and publicly disgraced by the New York City State Board of Charities in 1915.

Up until the middle of the 19th century, people with IDD were generally considered a burden on, rather than a menace to society. Scheerenberger (1983) wrote that during the 18th and 19th centuries, living conditions were harsh and unremitting for people with IDD especially in urban areas with growing industrialization. In rural areas, they tended to work long hours in poverty but in industrial settings were unable to maintain employment or be accepted into apprenticeships. As mentioned, the impetus for change was Darwin’s theory of evolution and the establishment of Mendelian laws of heredity which Galton (1869) employed to argue for the role of

genetics in individual greatness in his book *Hereditary Genius*. Others, notably Goddard (1912), applied the same methods of dynastic study to IDD, with devastating effect.

In fact, these authors were part of a general movement sympathetic to eugenics which increasingly regarded IDD as a menace. Scheerenberger (1983) notes that:

By the 1880s, mentally retarded persons were no longer viewed as unfortunates or innocents who, with proper training, could fill a positive role in the home and/or community. As a class they had become undesirable, frequently viewed as a great evil of humanity, the social parasite, criminal, prostitute, and pauper. (p. 116)

In 1889, Kerlin developed his theories on the association between IDD and crime and argued that crime, rather than being the work of the devil, was the result of an individual's inability to understand moral sense and also their physical infirmity, both of which were nonremediable and inherited (Kerlin & Broomall, 1889). Others also linked IDD to a range of social vices including drunkenness, delinquency, prostitution, and crime. Barr (reported by Trent, 1994) stated:

One hundred thousand of the feeble minded in the United States alone, consistently increasing by birth and immigration....crowd our schools, walk our streets and fill alike jails and positions of trust, reproducing their kind and vitiating the moral atmosphere. Science and experience have searched them out. (in Trent, 1994, p. 144)

For Barr, the solution was to increase the number and capacity of the institutions for the protection of both the person with IDD and the public. Here we see both the insinuation of moral deficiency and, importantly, the underpinning and validation from "science" which is an early indication that scientists (many of us writing and reading chapters in this book) can follow and amplify, through their perceived dispassionate legitimacy, the prevailing culture of the day. In this passage from Barr there is also mention of another pernicious insinuation, that those with IDD are particularly fecund and will, therefore, increase significantly in numbers and the threat they pose to moral rectitude.

Goddard (1910) developed this trope using arguments on Mendelian laws of heredity and the innovation of mental testing. Interlinking these developments he introduced the term "feeble-mindedness" to include all forms of cognitive impairment and intellectual disability. Those with the mental age of two years or less were termed "idiots"; those with a mental age of three to seven years were "imbeciles"; and those with a mental age of eight to 12 years "morons." Crucially, the addition of the latter category more than doubled the number of people assimilated into the feeble-minded rubric. His interest in genetics led Goddard to conclude that there was a causal relationship between feeble-mindedness and social vice. The conceptualization of people with IDD, and their sudden and alarming apparent growth in numbers, escalated this group from a mere social burden to a social menace. Goddard (1911) and others proposed two solutions for this increasing problem – segregation and sterilization – which continued to have a significant impact for decades to come.

In the spirit of Galton and his work on genius, several authors, including Goddard (1911) published pedigree studies apparently confirming the inherited nature of

feeble-mindedness and its causal link to crime. Trent (1994) summarizes these studies writing that they “reinforced the belief in the linkage of rapidly multiplying mental defectives and a host of social problems: crime, prostitution, abusive charity, juvenile delinquency, venereal diseases, illegitimate births, and drunkenness” (p. 178).

The advances being made in mental testing had similarly damning effects on people with IDD. With the introduction of the categories of mild intellectual disability (mental deficiency) and borderline intelligence the supposed prevalence of those with feeble-mindedness more than trebled immediately. Terman (1911), one of the pioneers of psychometric testing, wrote that “there is no investigator who denies the fearful role of mental deficiency in the production of vice, crime and delinquency...not all criminals are feeble minded but all feeble minded are at least potential criminals” (p. 11). In his book, *The Criminal Imbecile*, Goddard (1921) concluded that “probably from 25% to 50% of the people in our prisons are mentally defective and incapable of managing their affairs with ordinary prudence” (p. 7). From 1910 to around 1925, with the influence of Mendelian theories of inheritance, advances in mental testing and concerns about increasing numbers, the association between intellectual disability and delinquency transformed into an acceptance that feeble-mindedness caused crime. In a contemporary review of the available scientific studies, MacMurphy (1916) concluded:

Mental defectives with little sense of decency, no control of their passions, with no appreciation of the sacredness of the person and the higher reference of life, become a centre of evil in the community, and inevitably, lower the moral tone...perverts and venereal diseased are overwhelmingly mental defective, as in public drunkenness and shoplifting and the picking of pockets are acts of the feeble minded and one of the large proportions shown by statistics. (from Scheerenberger, 1983, p. 153.)

As an enthusiastic contributor to this narrative, Fernald (1909, 1912) initially wrote and spoke emphatically about the link between intellectual disability, its widespread prevalence, and a range of social problems including prostitution, crime, sexual perversion, poverty and their menace to the community. He said that “every imbecile... is a potential criminal...the unrecognised imbecile is a most dangerous element in the community” (Fernald, 1909). However, despite his significant influence as a persuasive orator, unlike many contemporaries he also seems to have paid some attention to empirical evidence. He reviewed the discharges from the institution with which he was involved from 1890 until 1914 and the results startled him. Although less than half of the 1,537 individuals who had been discharged during this period could be followed up, he found that around 60% of the men and 36% of the women who could be followed up were doing well in the community. These positive results, although not remarkable by modern standards, were a surprise to him and others working with the certainty of the causative link between intellectual disability and crime (Fernald, 1919). Consequently he altered his position considerably and began advocating innovative programs and even community placement:

We know that a lot of the feeble minded are generous, faithful and pure minded. I never lose an opportunity to repeat what I am saying now, that we have really slandered the feeble minded. Some of the sweetest and most beautiful characters I have ever known have been feeble minded people. (Fernald, 1918, reported in Trent, 1994, p. 158)

However, many of his contemporaries were not persuaded (e.g., Goddard, 1921) and, in any case, the damage had been done already. Scheerenberger (1983) reported that in the opening address to the American Association on Mental Deficiency in 1921, Goddard made hugely pejorative references to people with IDD filling the courts and paralyzing schools. This zeitgeist continued and over a decade later, Glueck (1935) studied 500 delinquent juveniles with IDD and concluded that IDD was a complicating factor in crime, that a far higher proportion of boys with IDD fell into delinquent groups, and that they were less able to participate in rehabilitation programs. In the same vein, Sutherland (1937) concluded that between 20% and 50% of delinquents residing in prisons had IDD.

There is no doubt, then, that IDD and crime were inextricably related in a manner which fostered a cultural prejudice. This cultural prejudice is perhaps typified by Terman's (1911) resonating phrase "The fearful role of mental deficiency" which, coming from such an authoritative – and presumably for the time enlightened – source gives us today a flavor of the extent of these views. These views were pervasive over five decades and can still be detected when local services for people with IDD wish to establish a home in a particular residential area. Service managers and workers are familiar with the outcry that can ensue when local residents fear that the presence of people with IDD will have a deleterious effect on their neighborhood (e.g., Gallagher, Wilson, Hirschfield, Coggeshall, & MacKenzie, 1999). These fears are, of course, misplaced as people with IDD are generally sociable and extremely good neighbors; however, it is salutary to note how pseudoscience covered in a cloak of respectability can stoke public prejudice based on misperceptions of threat. Thankfully, we may have entered an era where IDD and crime are no longer inextricably linked. Nobody with any credibility continues to suggest that IDD is as a causative factor in crime. However, cognitive ability has continued to be of especial interest in relation to delinquency and crime.

Intelligence and Crime

In a review of the role of intelligence in the development and delinquency, Hirschi and Hindelang (1977) concluded that the relationship between intelligence and delinquency was at least as strong as the relation of either class or race and delinquency. They also reported that in the 1960s and 1970s this relationship was denied by many influential writers, in spite of the available scientific evidence. In a study of 9,242 juvenile males, Reiss and Rhodes (1961) found that the rate of referral to juvenile court for those boys with the lowest IQs was slightly more than twice that found for individuals with the highest IQ. In addition, they found that IQ and occupational status varied at around the same rate with delinquency. Hirschi (1969), in an examination of over 3,600 boys in California found that IQ was a stronger predictor of delinquency than the education of the father or parental occupation. West and Farrington (1973) reported the results of a longitudinal study of 411 boys conducted over a period of 10 years. By comparing those boys with IQ scores of 110 or more with those who had IQ scores of less than 90, they found that a quarter of the former group had a police record while half of the latter group had such a record. Further analysis revealed that, whereas one in 50 of those with an IQ scores over 110 were

recorded recidivists, one in five of those with IQ scores of less than 90 reoffended. West and Farrington concluded that “low IQ was a significant precursor of delinquency to much the same extent as other major factors” (pp. 84–85).

In their influential thesis, *The Bell Curve*, Herrnstein and Murray (1994) used statistical methods to make a persuasive argument that low intelligence was the primary variable in commission of crime, antisocial behavior and other social problems such as unemployment, illegitimacy, and being on welfare. They used a large national database in the US comprising 12,686 respondents between the ages of 14 and 22 years. The measure of cognitive ability used in the database was the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) which correlates highly with measured IQ. The indices of criminality utilized were: (1) involvement with the criminal justice system (from being stopped by police through to being arrested, convicted, and incarcerated); and (2) self-reported crime. They reported that the proxy IQ measure (the AFQT) was the best predictor of these indices of crime and that this remained the case when socio-economic status and coming from a broken home were controlled for in the analyses. AFQT scores accounted for between 1.5% and 9.6% of the variance in the regression, depending on the criminality variable being analyzed.

The relationship between low intelligence and delinquency/criminality has been demonstrated repeatedly by these and a range of other authors (e.g., Goodman, Simonoff, & Stevenson, 1995; Kierkegaard-Sorensen & Mednick, 1977; Rutter, Tizard, & Whitmore, 1970). It is clear, however, that these authors are referring to low intelligence rather than intellectual disability specifically. This association became so influential that a number of researchers (e.g., Dorfman, 1995; Sternberg, 1995) began to challenge the data on which these conclusions had been drawn. The American Psychological Society established a Task Force to investigate the issues and it noted that Herrnstein and Murray (1994) employed a very limited definition of intelligence and, while the available evidence suggested that intelligence was related to social outcomes, these relationships were markedly varied. It was noted that “correlations are highest for school achievement, where they account for about a quarter of the variance. They are somewhat lower for job performance, and very low for negatively valued outcomes such as criminality” (Neisser et al., 1996, p. 83). In fact, reported correlations of IQ with antisocial outcomes such as criminality are invariably lower than 0.2, which is a small effect size accounting for no more than 4% of the variance.

Cullen, Gendreau, Jarjoura, and Wright (1997) reviewed this research in detail. Using the same database, they correlated IQ with a number of available factors that Herrnstein and Murray (1994) had ignored. Like Neisser et al. they found that the proxy measure of IQ used in this analysis accounted for no more than 4% of the variance for criminogenic variables and that the relationship of IQ to criminal indicators was “weak to modest” (p. 291). They also found that other sociological variables such as social bonds, attitudes towards crime, and living without a father were much stronger predictors of crime. Although the relationship between IQ and crime held up in all analyses, it was among the weakest of the risk factors. Factors such as antisocial lifestyle, antisocial beliefs and attitudes, and having delinquent associates are much stronger predictors of criminality and have larger effect sizes (Andrews & Bonta, 1994).

A landmark study by Hodgins (1992) involving an administrative Swedish sample that was analyzed retrospectively established IDD as a significant risk factor

for offending behavior. However, no clinical assessment or formal measurement of IQ was conducted in the study. The *intellectual handicap* group comprised just 1.3% of the total cohort of 15,117 so it seems that the study was missing around about 50% of people with IDD we might expect to see in a normal distribution. This is perhaps explained by the fact that those included in the intellectual handicap group comprised 192 people who had been placed in special classes in high schools in Stockholm. So, it looks as though the intellectual handicap subjects were low functioning intellectually but were not necessarily IDD. The type of offenses committed by this group appears to confirm this. Just under a quarter of offenses (23.7%) committed by males in the intellectual handicap group were labeled *traffic* (mainly drunken driving and driving without a licence). A more detailed analysis of this study by Lindsay and Dernevik (2013) is provided in Chapter 3 of this volume.

Whilst the relationship between IQ and offending is no more than modest, it is robust. However, most studies involve participants with IQs in the 80–120 range and there is some evidence that when participants with IQs around one–two standard deviations below the mean (<80) are included, the relationship with offending is less straightforward. For example, McCord and McCord (1959) found that while the offending rate for those in the low average IQ group (81–90 IQ points) was higher than that for those with above average IQ, those in the lowest IQ group (less than 80 IQ points) had an offending rate lower than that for the low average group. Maughan, Pickles, Hagell, Rutter, and Yule (1996) and Rutter et al. (1997) followed up children who had severe reading difficulties in school. It might be presumed that a proportion of the children with severe reading difficulties would have associated intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. The authors were surprised to find that in adulthood the rate crime among those who had had significant reading difficulties was lower than that in the general population comparison group. Similarly, antisocial behavior in childhood was less likely to persist into adulthood when it was accompanied by severe reading difficulties.

Emerson and Halpin (2013) investigated the mediating effects of poverty and deprivation in relation to IQ and crime using a large demographic sample of young people, 3% of whom had mild IDD. This study is described in detail in Chapter 3 but, in summary, teenagers with IDD were significantly more likely than other children to be exposed to all socioeconomic risk factors; however, when these risk factors were controlled for in the analysis, IDD was significantly associated with *lower rates* of antisocial behavior. Similarly, data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth project in the US, reported by Mears and Cochran (2013), indicated that the relationship between IQ and offending is curvilinear, with lower IQs (<85) associated with lower levels of offending.

Gray, Fitzgerald, Taylor, MacCulloch, and Snowden (2007) compared 145 offenders with IDD and 996 mentally disordered offenders and found that the IDD group had a significantly lower number of previous convictions (average 8.3) than the non-IDD group (average 11.8). On following-up these individuals up for between two and 12 years, they found that the IDD group had a reconviction rate of around half that of the non-IDD group. At the two-year follow-up point, 4.8% of the IDD group and 11.2% of the non-IDD group had committed violent offenses while 9.7 of the IDD group and 18.7 of the non-IDD group had committed general offenses.

On balance, then, it would seem that while there is a clear relationship between offending behavior and intellectual functioning, when studies are extended to include

people with IQs below 80–85, the relationship does not appear to be simple or linear. Certainly there is no convincing evidence that people with IDD commit more offenses or have a higher rate of recidivism than other types of individuals without IDD. A final point is that all of the research in this area has concerned delinquent behavior rather than white-collar, corporate, or government crime. Cullen et al. (1997) specifically excluded white-collar crime in their analysis of Herrnstein and Murray's (1994) data as they considered this type of crime to be suited to a more cognitively able group.

Theories of Offending and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

There is a plethora of theoretical writing on criminality that fits broadly into three categories. First, there is the positivist group of theories that take the position that particular people are predestined to criminal behavior. These theories include the view that low IQ is a potent risk factor for crime and also include biological and genetic theories, as well as theories that emphasize the immutable effects of child-rearing practices, and other factors that affect psychological conditioning. The second group of theories view the criminal as a victim of an unequal society that interprets their actions as criminal while ignoring the antisocial behavior of other less vulnerable groups. The most relevant (in the present context) of these is labeling theory, which holds that certain people and groups are more likely to attract deviant, stigmatizing, and criminal labels than other groups. Because of this bias there is differential application of the law and conventions toward those groups by social control (state) agencies while, in turn, the experience of being thus labeled has a deleterious effect on identified individuals. The third group of theories is the rational actor model that proposes that people choose to commit crime in the same way as they choose to involve themselves in any other activity. This model emphasizes deterrence as a solution to crime since it will lead to greater self-control to avoid punishment. These individualistic theories have often been employed (or misused) to support “get tough” policies in dealing with crime.

Theories invoking predestined criminality

Family and adoption studies We have already dealt with the extensive research on the modest but consistent relationship between IQ and crime and there is a wealth of additional research reviewing the individual characteristics that are associated with criminal and antisocial behavior. Genetic and adoption studies have been conducted to determine the extent to which certain inherited characteristics affect the likelihood of criminal behavior. Most studies of antisocial behavior in children or criminal behavior in adulthood record the relatively high frequency with which these variables are associated with similar problems in parents, notably fathers (Farrington, 1995, 2003). Kandel et al. (1988) compared the sons of 92 fathers who had received at least one prison sentence with the sons of 513 fathers who were not registered with the police. They found the risk of serious criminal behavior was 5.6 times greater among the cohort whose fathers had been imprisoned than among the cohort whose fathers had no offense histories. Farrington and West (1995) found that convicted

teenagers in their sample tended to have fathers and mothers who also had convictions with 5% of families in the sample accounting for half the total convictions. Farrington et al. (2006) studied the families of 1,395 boys aged 8–14 years and found that if one relative had been arrested there was a high likelihood of the boy being arrested. The most important relative in predicting the boy's arrest was the father. The obvious difficulty with these and similar comparisons is that environmental variables and genetic variables are confounded.

When looking for evidence on the impact of genetic factors, researchers often turn to well-designed twin studies. If there is greater concordance for a particular trait in identical rather than fraternal twins, this is taken as evidence for the genetic basis of that characteristic. Silberg et al. (1996a, 1996b) reported findings from the Virginia Twin study on around 1,400 twin pairs. They found that in the 6% of the population that showed multiple behavior problems (e.g., oppositional behavior, conduct problems, reading difficulties, hyperactivity, emotional difficulties) variance was largely accounted for by genetic factors. In contrast, the group of children showing antisocial behavior only (typified by conduct disorder in the absence of hyperactivity), the behavior was almost entirely attributed to environmental factors. The group with hyperactive behavior plus conduct disorder showed a mixture of the two with genetic factors predominating to some extent. Genetic factors seemed to be associated with a complex mix of antisocial and hyperactivity problems whilst environmental factors seemed to be associated with antisocial behavior reported by teenagers themselves rather than parents. Other researchers have drawn this distinction. Moffitt, Caspi, Dickson, Silva, and Stanton (1996) noted the difference between early-onset antisocial behavior which was highly persistent and antisocial behavior that emerged in adolescence and which was more transient and associated with peer subcultures. Christiansen (1977) analyzed data on 3,586 twin pairs and found 52% concordance for criminal behavior in identical male twins and 22% concordance for fraternal male twins. This comprehensive study, with its large between-group differences, suggests a role for heritability in delinquency.

Adoption studies have also been used to try to separate out the influences of environment and genetics on behavior. Mednick, Gabrielli, and Hutchings (1984) conducted studies on adopted children within the context of the register of 14,427 Danish adoptees. The main results were that if neither the biological nor adoptive parents had criminal histories, then 13.5% of their children committed crime. If the biological parents were noncriminal and the adoptive parents were criminal the figure was only marginally greater at 14.7%. If the biological parents were criminal and the adoptive parents were noncriminal the figure then rose to 20%. The results suggest that children who have had no contact with their biological fathers are more likely to commit crime if their biological father had a history of crime. In the full cohort, 6,129 adopted children were identified. The probability of a conviction for property (but not violent) crime for a child rose with the number of convictions for the biological parent from 0 to 3 or more. Economic depression, age at adoption, adoptive parents' knowledge of the biological parents' criminal record, and whether the biological parent offended before or after the adoption had no effect on the results. In a similar study on the large Swedish population Bohman, Cloninger, Sigvardsson, and Von Knorring (1982) found similar results.

There have been some attempts to explain crime in terms of genetic abnormality. It has been hypothesized that the presence of an extra Y chromosome in males might be

associated with severe aggression. This hypothesis was derived from a number of case studies and small case series. For example, Price and Whatmore (1967) studied men in institutions reporting that those with an extra Y chromosome tended to be convicted at an earlier age, come from families with no history of criminality, and had committed motiveless property crime. In a study of 31,436 male offenders born in Copenhagen, however, Witkin, Mednick, and Schulsinger (1977) found only 12 men with an extra Y chromosome. Furthermore, many of the crimes they had committed were minor and not violent. Witkin et al. (1977) thought that the overrepresentation of XYY men in institutions might be a result of cognitive impairment rather than criminality. Therefore, it would seem that this particular theory of chromosomal abnormality as a cause of crime has been successfully challenged (Thielgaard, 1983).

Psychological predisposition Theories that propose psychological (and sociological – see the Section entitled *Social Control Theory*) predisposition to crime overlap significantly with rational choice explanations of crime. Eysenck (1977) constructed a general theory of criminal behavior based on conditioning and personality characteristics. Any explanation of adult behavior that invokes conditioning will concentrate on developmental processes and these are extensively reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3 of this volume. Eysenck (1977) asserted that people have certain learning abilities which can be conditioned by the environment; that is, people learn the rules and norms of society through developmental processes. He then argued that a combination of different personality characteristics affect the ability to learn law-abiding behavior and compliance with society's conventions. In terms of personality dimensions (see Chapter 11 for a more detailed explanation), Eysenck (1977) found that violent offenders had low neuroticism scores but this finding has not been replicated by other researchers (McEwan & Knowles, 1984). Eysenck also found that the Extroversion characteristic of impulsivity featured strongly in those with criminal propensities and this finding has been validated (Farrington, 1995).

The most comprehensive explanatory psychological development model, linking psychological characteristics and antisocial and criminal behavior is that of Patterson and his associates (Granic & Patterson, 2006; Patterson, Reid, & Dishion 1992; Reid, Patterson, & Snyder, 2002). In this extensive study series based on learning and reinforcement theory it was found that, from as early as 18 months, some families promoted a child's coercive behavior such as temper tantrums and hitting because those behaviors have functional value in terminating conflict within the family. With repeated transactions, these behaviors are strengthened and become firmly established. In nondistressed families, in which prosocial behaviors are reinforced, the child learns that interactions such as talking and negotiating result in the termination of conflict. In distressed families, not only are coercive behaviors promoted but prosocial behaviors may not be particularly effective in terminating conflict (Snyder & Patterson, 1995). Therefore, as these children develop, they fail to learn prosocial behavior, problem-solving and language skills but become highly skilled in demonstrating antisocial behaviors.

Patterson and Yoerger (1997) related learning theory to the development of early and late onset delinquency. In early onset delinquency, the combination of the emergence of coercive behavior and a high-frequency conflict within families accounted for almost half of the variance in the development of antisocial behavior in boys as young as six or seven years (Snyder & Patterson, 1995). In late-onset delinquency, boys were better adjusted

and in possession of more prosocial behaviors by the time they reached early adolescence. However, they were not as skilled or as well-adjusted in interpersonal skills as nondelinquent boys. At this point, antisocial peer subgroups had a major influence on their prospects of delinquent behavior. It follows that the ability of parents to monitor the amount of time their children spend with deviant peers also then becomes crucial. Patterson and Yoerger (1997) made the observation that almost all adolescents have some contact with deviant peers. However, the extent of the contact is related both to parental monitoring and to the power of the reinforcement by the delinquent subculture.

This model is obviously dynamic, with developmental changes in the child and adolescent interacting with interpersonal conditions with reciprocal causation. Granic and Patterson (2006) developed this model to include cognition and emotion. They noted that repeated experience will set up an expectancy of coercion in the adolescent, leading to an anger response or contempt in relation to the expectancy of conflict. Repeated exchanges will interact with parents' feelings of anxiety and apprehension about future exchanges. Parents then anticipate that future interactions will be aversive and, with repeated confirmation, fewer and less intense triggers are necessary to evoke negative cognitive and emotional responses.

In a related series of studies, Dishion, Patterson, and Griesler (1994) and Dishion, Spracklen, Andrews, and Patterson (1996) conducted analyses of peer interactions. They found that pairs of delinquent adolescents reacted positively to each other in response to deviant talk on topics such as stealing and fighting thus reinforcing each other's antisocial behavior. They also found that these negative patterns grew more rigid over time suggesting an interaction in these dyads of antisocial behavior and social reinforcement.

Social learning theory proposes that behaviors which are consistently punished will be internally represented as anxiety-provoking or "wrong." Bandura (2001) developed these ideas to encompass vicarious learning, the effects of which are that individuals would tend to adopt the behavior patterns, attitudes, and eventually the values of those whom they respect and with whom they had a close relationship.

Psychological predisposition theories are relevant in any consideration of offenders with IDD. They are wide-ranging but they all suggest that individuals have tendencies toward offending that are influenced to some extent by genetics, developmental, social, and psychological processes. Parenting practices, school experiences, learning opportunities, and peer group influence are extremely important in the development of criminal careers and are factors to which people with IDD and inherent cognitive impairments and deficits are particularly susceptible. In a 22-year prospective study Huesmann, Eron, and Yarmel (1987) investigated the relationship between intellectual functioning and aggression. They proposed that aggression interferes with intellectual functioning through a dual process. In early childhood, those with lower intellectual functioning are prone to developing aggressive behavior because of difficulties in learning more complex nonaggressive, prosocial interpersonal skills. Aggressive behavior, in turn, may result in failure to develop intellectually, due to its isolating and alienating effects that minimize opportunities for effective education.

Ideas invoking the offender as victim of an iniquitous society

In its extreme manifestation, this approach takes the position that no behavior is inherently deviant. It only becomes aberrant when society makes rules and creates conventions that can then be transgressed. This thesis is not particularly persuasive or

relevant but it does become important when one considers that rules and conventions can be applied differentially to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups within society. There is an important literature on negative social comparison and stigma in relation to people with IDD. People with IDD are vulnerable to the negative effects of social comparison because, in integrated community settings, comparisons with nondisabled peers are likely to be unfavorable (Dagnan & Waring, 2004; Szivos-Bach, 1993). There is some evidence, therefore, regarding labeling theory applied to people with IDD, but this has concerned its effects on psychological distress and not criminal behavior.

There are some limited areas of research that are tangentially linked to this hypothesis. First is the idea that deviant subcultures may accept people of lower intelligence because they can be the butt of humor, can take on menial tasks, and can serve as the “fall-guy” in criminal situations. Conversely, such people may be attracted to deviant subcultures simply because they are accepted – no matter the cost. Anecdotally it is supposed that in criminal groups it is the person with IDD who is caught – that is, the “patsy” – while the others evade police detection and arrest. In fact there is no evidence for this hypothesis bar self-report. There is no research evidence that indicates that people with IDD are apprehended more frequently than people without IDD. It is the case that, once apprehended, people with IDD may be treated somewhat differently than are other groups. Some of this work is described in detail in the current volume (Chapters 4 and 6). People with IDD may be incarcerated more frequently than those without IDD. Finally, research evidence over the years has suggested that once incarcerated, people with IDD spend long periods in secure settings (Butwell, Jamieson, Leese, & Taylor, 2000; Walker & McCabe, 1973). Similarly, people with IDD compulsorily detained in hospital under mental health orders due to their aggressive or offending behavior have significantly longer periods of detention than those detained with other types of mental disorder (Care Quality Commission, 2011). This provides some evidence for labeling bias in terms of the perception and treatment of offenders with IDD.

Classical criminology theories

The idea that crime is a rational choice dates back to the 18th century with the writings of Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham and the utilitarian philosophy incorporating the notion of free will (Beirne, 1993). These ideas led to an emphasis on social control based on appropriate punishment in order to promote greater self-regulation and conformity. The central notion is that people will try to avoid punishment and, therefore, if the consequences of particular choices are aversive enough, they will not engage in illegal activity. The main difficulty for this deterrence theory is that while it makes sense intuitively, it has no empirical support (Doob & Webster, 2003). Most offenders do not think that they will be caught and several authors have made the point that, given the unlikelihood of being caught, the surprising thing is that so many people are law-abiding (e.g., Eysenck, 1964).

It is undoubtedly the case that ideas of classical criminology have combined with research and theory on individual predispositions to create some of the most influential contemporary ideas about criminal behavior. These include social control theory and desistance theory.

Social control theory The established relationship between lower social economic status, deprivation, and higher crime rates encouraged the development of sociological theories to explain these links, the most influential of which was control theory (Hirschi, 1969). Attention is paid both to the positive learning of criminal behavior through association with criminal subcultures and to the development of self-control through appropriate social learning for being law-abiding. Hirschi proposed that the success of social training was dependent on four factors: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. *Attachment* refers to the extent to which the individual identifies with the expectations and values of others within society, such as teachers and parents. *Commitment* invokes a rational element on criminality. Individuals make subjective evaluations about the loss that they will experience following possible arrest and conviction. *Involvement* relates to the point that most people are engaged in everyday activities such as work, education, or other occupational activities and have little time or opportunity to consider or engage in delinquency. The less involved individuals are with the day-to-day activities of society, the more likely they are to engage in criminal activity. *Belief* refers to the extent to which people accept and identify with the society's laws and conventions.

There is a wealth of empirical support for this theory. Schuerman and Kobrin (1986) found that within any particular urban area, the displacement of semiskilled and unskilled workers who experienced long-term unemployment was a major factor in the increase in crime in that area. There is also a good deal of evidence that negative attitudes to schoolwork and authority are associated with delinquent and antisocial activity (Elliott, Huizinga, & Ageton, 1985). Box (1987) also demonstrated the way in which the impact of economic recession led to an increase in criminal activity. This research suggests that the disruption of attachment and commitment between the individual and society results in failure to internalize values that promote social conformity. In this way, control theory shares similarity with Patterson et al.'s social developmental studies (1992, 1997). It also has parallels with desistance theories of criminality.

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) developed control theory further, suggesting that people with low self-control tend not to consider the long-term cost associated with engaging in crime when opportunity to offend is presented. Such people with low self-control have difficulty resisting short-term gain. Hirschi further developed the Hirschi and Gottfredson (2004) revision of the theory to incorporate his previous research suggesting that poor parenting practices and the development of social bonds are crucial in the development of self-control in relation to social deviance. Conversely, the development of such social bonds and identification with society is likely to lead to desistance.

Desistance theory Desistance is not so much a theory as the observation of years of anecdotal and empirical observation. Most young offenders grow out of crime (e.g., Maruna, 1997, Rutherford, 1992). Various studies have suggested different trajectories for different groups of offenders over the lifespan (see Chapter 3), but all studies acknowledge that the majority of offenders desist from criminal behavior as they get older. Moffitt (1997) identified two groups: (1) childhood onset offenders; and (2) adolescent onset offenders. The latter group desisted with offending behavior earlier than the former. Livingstone, Stewart, Allard, and Ogilvie (2008) identified groups of early adolescent onset, late adolescent onset, and chronic offenders, while

Ward et al. (2010) reported four groupings of moderate-rate offenders, low-rate offenders and two groups of high-rate offenders (adolescent-peaking and adult-peaking). In all models there is a significant reduction in offending into early and middle adulthood (Farrington et al., 2006).

Sampson and Laub (2002) recognized that age has a very strong relationship with desistance from offending. They reviewed a wealth of data to demonstrate that no matter what grouping the offender fell into (e.g., early-onset, late-onset, chronic, low rate or higher rate) over time the desistance phenomenon held true. While there is undoubtedly a relationship between age and desistance, this is confounded by the fact that finding work and entering marriage, representing attachment and commitment to society, also increases with age. Farrington and West (1995) have written about the complex relationship that is likely to exist between maturing, decisions to marry and find work, and the cognitive processes involved in maintaining work and marriage and the ways in which these processes sustain desistance.

Conclusions

The historical roots of the perceived association between IDD and crime and delinquency are deep and far reaching in their influence through the decades up to the present. Building on this misguided linkage the view that low intelligence and criminality were intrinsically linked, or even causative took hold during the 20th century and has persisted into current times. As a consequence many people with IDD have been segregated from society and isolated geographically and culturally, with many suffering abuse and neglect as a result. Policies of deinstitutionalization have challenged this mind-set to some extent, but poorly conducted research using ill-defined terms and unclear descriptions of study populations has helped to maintain this long-view of people with IDD as a threat or menace to the wider community.

The early chapters of this volume address in more detail many of the issues outlined in this chapter concerning including prevalence offending behavior by people with IDD, epidemiology, pathways into offending, legal issues, criminal justice system responses, and ethical issues.

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