ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

A MULTI-NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE EVERYDAY TO THE EXTREME

CATE CURTIS

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PERCEPTIONS AND CONCEPTS: CONSTRUCTING ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Building on the definitional issues introduced in the first chapter, the social construction and evolution of "anti-social behaviour" and related topics are discussed in this chapter. As mentioned previously, due to the transdisciplinary nature of this book, it is necessary to "do the groundwork" for the rest of the book by briefly covering key concepts from across disciplines; therefore, some material will be very familiar to some readers, while for others it will be new. In order to give some historical background to current perceptions, the chapter begins with an overview of early models and related foundational theories, such as those of Durkheim, Freud and Merton. More recent key ideas are included, such as those that emerged during the 1960s and 1970s, including the work of Bandura on social learning and that of Tannenbaum, Lemert and Becker on deviance and labelling. Classic psychological studies of obedience and conformity are mentioned, before touching on Foucault's ideas about social control.

A further focus of this chapter will be the construction of risk factors along with protective factors and the related topic of resilience, though the former will also be discussed in the next chapter with regard to the politics of risk. Though the focus is largely on the social, the role of biology is briefly over-viewed; such as genetic predisposition. Finally, public perceptions of anti-social behaviour will be discussed.

Although anti-social behaviour is currently perceived as a serious social problem and is usually near the top of the political agenda of Western countries, definitions of anti-social behaviour are somewhat problematic. There are some

common themes, but definitions vary across history, country and context. Millie (e.g., 2009) refers to Durkheim's notion of the "collective conscience": what defines a criminal (or anti-social) character is not intrinsic, but derives from the collective conscience of society. When clear behavioural norms are absent, such as during a time of social or economic change, there is a state of anomie (alienation, relative normlessness or lack of regulation). This raises the question of whose norms are given primacy; after all, it may well be the case that those who engage in anti-social behaviour are behaving within the norms of their peer group or sub-culture. Beginning with Durkheim, the following section provides an overview of the development of related concepts such as deviance, conformity and social control over time.

Emile Durkheim indirectly proposed that in industrialised societies containing social hierarchies based on economic or relational merit, anti-social behaviour is increased. In *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893 (1984 translation)), Durkheim coined the phrase "anomie". Anomie may be understood as social disorder of a breakdown between the individual and the social, derived from a mismatch between individual actions and broader social norms. Further, "The more one has, the more one wants, since satisfactions received only stimulate instead of filling needs" (Durkheim, 1951 (original work published 1897), p. 248). It follows from this that human desires can only be held back by external controls. Society imposes these controls in the form of norms. If the norms of a society are unknown, transgressed or absent, anti-social activity can flourish. Thus, Durkheim effectively proposed a sociological theory of anti-social behaviour. Robert K. Merton took Durkheim's work further to assert that social structures exert pressure upon some individuals to engage in non-conforming rather than conforming behaviour (discussed below).

Though overlapping chronologically, at first glance Freud's work may appear to have little in common with Durkheim's. Although Freud did not directly theorise about norms, social structures or anti-social behaviour, both Durkheim and Freud were concerned with human behaviour and, in particular, transgression of accepted boundaries. Freud thought that human behaviour, including aggressive behaviour, was the product of "unconscious" forces operating within the mind. In this view, behaviour that lies outside societal acceptability, including the anti-social, is the result of abnormal development of the psyche. In classical Freudian theory, the psyche is determined by early childhood experiences; therefore, the roots of anti-social behaviour are also to be found in this period, particularly in the relationship between the child and his or her caregivers. For Freud, aggression was therefore a fundamental human impulse that is repressed in the majority of well-adjusted people

who have experienced a normal childhood. However, if the aggressive impulse is either insufficiently controlled or repressed excessively, some aggression may "escape" from the unconscious and random acts of aggression and anti-social behaviour may result. Freud referred to this as "displaced aggression" (Englander, 2007). Though he was by no means a sociologist, we can draw parallels between Freud's concept of individual (or psychic) strains which result in anti-social behaviour and Merton's work on structural strains in society as a basis for deviancy.

Along with strain theory, Merton is perhaps best known for creating the term "self-fulfilling prophecy", a key element of social psychological, political and sociological theory. Self-fulfilling prophecy refers to the situation in which the expectation of a person (especially a third party) influences the way a person will behave or the outcome of a situation; for example, a teacher's expectation of bad behaviour and corresponding treatment of a student may increase the likelihood of bad behaviour from that student. In general, Merton's work in relation to anti-social behaviour can be thought of as an attempt to adapt Durkheim's ideas about anomie to specific social situations, especially Merton's (1938) analysis of the relationship between structure, culture and anomie. For Merton, "anomie" meant a disjunction between social goals and the means available for achieving them. In this respect, Merton altered Durkheim's concept of anomie, from a situation in which norms are relatively absent (it may be argued that true normlessness is impossible and beyond what Durkheim meant) to one in which individuals may experience anomie if they are *unable* to abide by the norms, or achieve the goals, of society. Merton argued that society, especially American society, was structured in such a way that the vast majority of people could not reach the expected, or socialised, goals for behaviour. The result is the occurrence of anomie because of the strain between what people have been socialised to desire and what they are legitimately able to achieve. An explanation for both conformity and deviance is thus provided.

Edwin Sutherland (1924) developed the theory of differential association at around the same time as strain theory. This theory held that the development of criminality arises from association with those who commit crime; as such, it has some commonalities with the work of Bandura (discussed below): criminal behaviour is learned in interaction, as a social process. This learning may include specific techniques as well as attitudes and justifications. The theory also initially had a broader social aspect in that conflict and social disorganisation underlie crime because they determine patterns of social interaction. Sutherland remained interested in social class as a factor in crime and is credited with first using the phrase "white-collar criminal".

Initial traces of the concept of criminalisation may be found in sociology of the 1930s, especially in the work of Frank Tannenbaum. Considered the grandfather of labelling theory, Tannenbaum (1938) argued that deviance, rather than being the behaviour of an individual, can only be created through a process of social interaction. In *Crime and Community* (1938), he described the social interaction involved in crime, arguing that although many may engage in deviant acts, only a minority come to be recognised as deviant. This "deviant" is then categorised and treated as such, even though their behaviour may be the same as others'. As a result, certain people are constructed as and "become deviant" through social judgements of their behaviour.

Edwin Lemert (1951) further developed Tannenbaum's ideas by differentiating between primary and secondary deviance. Primary deviance is often an isolated transgression which is not related to a self-identification as deviant. Secondary deviance occurs as a result of the reaction of others to the initial deviance. Through stereotyping and labelling by others, a deviant identity is adopted, and one's attitudes and behaviours are adapted accordingly; deviance and conformity result from how others respond to actions, rather than the actions themselves. Lemert considered all deviant (or anti-social) acts to be social acts, a result of social interactions which initiate a psychological process concerning one's own identity and the subsequent adoption of and justification for anti-social behaviour. Lemert's (1967) conclusion that social interaction, especially social control, causes deviancy was a pivotal point, politicising the study of deviance, crime and social control (Muncie, 2007a).

Though Lemert introduced the key concepts of labelling theory, Howard Becker became the theory's advocate. For Becker too, the origins of deviance and anti-social behaviour lay in the reactions of others rather than in the behaviour itself. Rather than a pathological act that transgressed accepted norms, deviance is created through micro-level interactions between the transgressor and others.

> Deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an "offender". The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label. (Becker, 1963, p. 9)

Thus, some people come to be defined as deviants, whereas others – who have not been subject to these interactions – do not. Further, Becker considered the attached stigma to be crucial in the development of future deviant or anti-social behaviour; a self-fulfilling prophecy follow the stigma of, and identification with,

the label. This emphasis shifted attention from the behaviours of "deviants" to those who perceive those behaviours as problems (Muncie, 2007a).

In Albert Bandura's work, we can see the coming together of the social and the individual foci. Bandura is best known for social learning theory (also known as social cognitive theory): learning is a cognitive process that occurs in a social context and takes place through explicit instruction or the observation of norms of behaviour, even in the absence of direct reinforcement. Bandura's (1973, 1977) research included analysis of the willingness of children and adults to imitate others' behaviour, in particular, aggression. He found that in addition to observing others' behaviour, learning also occurs through vicarious reinforcement: the observation of rewards and punishments received by others. Thus, Bandura's theory goes beyond traditional behavioural theories, by emphasising the roles of various internal processes in the individual, over and above reinforcing rewards and punishments.

In 1960, Bandura, with Dorothea Ross and Sheila Ross, conducted what became known as the "Bobo doll experiment", showing that children base their own behaviour upon models (in this case, adults who behaved aggressively towards a "Bobo doll"). When the adult models were praised for aggression, the children were more likely to be aggressive and indeed, to invent new forms of aggression. However, when they observed the models being punished, the children ceased their aggression towards the doll. The results were highly influential in psychology, helping to shift the focus from pure behaviourism to cognitive psychology. Many of Bandura's innovations came from his use of empirical and replicable investigation, which were foreign to a field of psychology dominated by the theories of Freud.

While on the topic of mid-century social psychology, mention must be made of the work of Stanley Milgram, Solomon Asch and Muzafer Sherif (see, e.g., Asch, 1951; Milgram, 1963; Sherif, 1958; Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961). Motivated by the events of WWII, their research aimed to understand obedience and conformity through questions such as "Why do we go along with the group, even when we disagree?"; "In what circumstances will we obey orders that go against our own morals and values?". Findings included the importance of the presence of an authority figure; the perceived norms of the specific situation or group; the number and behaviour of others present; including observers, colluders and dissenters. In all of these experiments, we can see tensions between self-governance and social influence.

Foucault noted that from early modernity, European society evidenced increasing concern with social control as a practice of government (in the sense of governing others' behaviour and governing one's own). He (1979)

described this as disciplinary social control because of the reliance on the observation, training and control of individuals to improve them, whether to transform criminals into law-abiding citizens, new recruits into disciplined soldiers, or patients into healthy people. He argued that the purpose of this discipline and social control is to render individuals docile; disciplinary social control is a key to the creation of a normalising society. When norms, rather than legal mechanisms, are used to govern our lives, society can be said to be controlled through socialisation and normalisation. This stands in contrast to the use of formal justice procedures which are used only when laws are broken (Little & McGivern, 2014).

Donoghue (2008) observes that while the works of Foucault and of Donzelot (1980) in particular have examined the crucial disciplinary role exercised by welfare and social workers in controlling populations, including those implicated in anti-social behaviour, Rose (1985), Garland (1985) and Squires (1990) have examined the interchange between those interventions relating to welfare, care and protection and those relating to control. These issues will be discussed further in the next chapter. More recently, Parr and others have argued that the social constructionist approach prevalent in post-Foucauldian governmentality concepts is limited and would benefit from the critical realist lens. This would assist progression beyond description and deconstruction of discourses to further explain underlying material realities (Parr, 2009).

Contemporary debates and research include the evaluation of risk factors and their role in prevention; resilience and protective factors; notions of risk and resilience more broadly and their critique (though such critiques will be included in the next chapter); and the prediction of adolescent-onset versus life-course persistent offenders.

RISK FACTORS

In this section, risk factors will be discussed, beginning with macro-social and moving to the individual. It should be noted that (unsurprisingly) exposure to multiple risk factors increases the likelihood of engaging in anti-social behaviours. However, the area of risk and resilience has been a topic of increasing concern over recent years, in part as a corollary of concern over anti-social behaviour. As mentioned in the previous chapter, although there is a substantial body of research on risk with regard to anti-social behaviour, significant problems with the risk factor approach remain, in particular in regard to the way conceptions of risk and resilience are socially constructed. Further critique of the risk factor paradigm, and of the notion of resilience, will be included in the next chapter.

Structural or Societal Factors

We can see an interaction of class, ethnicity, economic adversity and "justice" interventions in the overrepresentation of indigenous young people in the justice systems of Australia, New Zealand and Canada, and African-Americans in the US, for example. White and Cunneen (2006) argue that institutionalised racism, which includes the distribution of resources, labelling and victim-blaming as well as targeting of specific groups by a punitive justice system, is at the heart of much anti-social behaviour, especially that engaged in by marginalised youth.

Low socio-economic status appears to predict anti-social behaviour, though some (e.g., Farrington, 2015) would argue that this seems to be because parents in these situations have poor parenting skills and/or significant personal and social problems. Conversely, it could be argued that socio-economic disadvantage creates situations in which positive parenting is difficult to maintain, for example, because of stress, long hours of work and so forth.

Neighbourhood Factors

At the neighbourhood or community level, urban living, disadvantage and disorganisation (e.g., changes in state welfare and housing policies, poverty, resident mobility and low social cohesion) are linked to high rates of anti-social behaviour. However, it is unclear whether living in these communities increases anti-social behaviour or that people at risk of anti-social behaviour live in these areas due to limited life chances, given that they are likely to be suffering from a range of disadvantages.

Discussed further in the next chapter with regard to the "broken windows theory", it may be that living in neglected neighbourhoods creates a norm of disrespect or lack of care for others. These neighbourhoods may also be considered in Durkheimian terms as engendering anomie. Regardless, such neighbourhoods are characterised by a lack of opportunity.

Interpersonal Factors

A variety of aspects of the interpersonal context are implicated in anti-social behaviour, as defined by most of the academic literature. These include family circumstances and the influences of peers.

Family factors

An insecure attachment style, whether ambivalent or avoidant, is associated with anti-social behaviour. In particular, parental negativity and rejection is linked to externalising behaviours such as disruptiveness and aggression (Kochanska & Kim, 2012); indeed it appears to be the case that the parent–child relationship

is characterised by *mutually* adversarial communication and behaviour, building resentment and hostility (Kochanska, Barry, Stellern, & O'Bleness, 2009). This links to the oft-replicated finding that poor parental supervision is a reliable predictor of offending (as discussed by Farrington, 2015, among others). In addition to the poor relationship itself, poor attachment may generalise to other relationships, leading to a failure to identify with values and norms regarding obedience, and insufficient development of internal control, alongside a negative attitude to authority. Of course, there may be any number of underlying structural and social factors that impinge upon parental ability to provide supervision, such as working long hours as well as the parents' own individual issues.

Although many studies have shown a link between broken homes and anti-social behaviour, obviously most young people from broken homes do not engage in particularly problematic behaviour. Factors that increase the likelihood appear to be parental discord, many changes of primary caregiver and separation from a biological parent before the age of 10 (Farrington, 2015). Family conflict and violence in general are established risk factors (Ireland & Smith, 2009). Unfortunately, the child from a dysfunctional home is more likely to miss potential positive influences elsewhere.

Having a teenage mother also appears to increase risk, though this is influenced by changes in caregivers, maternal characteristics such as intelligence, and other family factors including harsh discipline, disruption and parenting styles (Jaffee, Caspi, Moffitt, Belsky & Silva, 2001). These, in turn, may be the result of a lack of social support and financial resources (and therefore may be mediated by the provision of such resources and support).

Anti-social behaviour appears to be a common characteristic of some families. As discussed with regard to Bandura's social learning theory, harsh or physical punishment models coercive and aggressive behaviour, establishing such actions as normal strategies for dealing with challenging situations. In addition to intergenerational transmission, which may be based on any of the social factors mentioned above as well as genetic predisposition, anti-social behaviour frequently occurs in siblings.

In addition to the somewhat more severe family factors mentioned above, a general milieu lacking in positive experiences is associated with anti-social behaviour; this may include lack of engagement on either the part of the young person or the family (often developing into a reciprocal pattern); few positive family activities; a lack of involvement in family activities on the part of fathers; and a lack of clear rules.

In sum, family factors influence poor parenting and anti-social behaviour in a number of ways, including parental absence and disruption, poor or non-existent parental relationships and the impacts of poverty. These families

are often characterised by harsh or inconsistent discipline, limited positive interactions and poor attachment.

The Influence of Peers

Anti-social behaviour results in, and may also be caused by, rejection by the "normal" peer group, and in the case of young people, the reinforcement of pro-social behaviour is likely to be absent at home and possibly school and other social contexts. Having peers and friends who engage in anti-social behaviour is strongly associated with engaging in anti-social behaviour oneself; this is particularly true of those aged under 18, who are to engage in anti-social behaviour with others. Those aged over 18 are more likely to act alone or begin to withdraw from anti-social behaviour (see Hemphill, Heerde, Herrenkohl, & Farrington, 2015, for a brief review and further reading). The influence of peers will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Gender and Anti-social Behaviour

Concerns about an apparent increase in (young) women engaging in problematic behaviour, more typically seen as "men's" behaviour, such as excessive alcohol consumption, physical fights and crime, have been increasing, alongside some arguments made that it is the result of gender equality (Adler, 1975; Simon, 1975). Though some of these concerns date back decades, thorough research into the topic is rather sparse.

In many countries, the rate of imprisonment of women has increased disproportionately over recent decades. This may be understood as a corollary of the feminisation of poverty: social factors such as an increase in single-parent families, the concentration of women in poorly paid jobs, gender roles which place the burden of care of dependents on women (thus reducing opportunities for paid work) and neo-liberal policies which have resulted in the stagnation or reduction of wages and salaries and of welfare assistance in real terms may underlie increasing anti-social behaviour and thus increasing imprisonment of women. This increase in economic marginalisation may be linked to girls' and women's increased involvement in dishonesty, such as shop-lifting and benefit fraud. An unanticipated outcome of the feminist movement may also be at play; Adler discussed the "dark side of women's liberation" which may be applied to "ladette" behaviour. While there have certainly been some changes in gender roles for young women (also discussed in relation to girls in gangs; see Chapter 5), there appears to be clear evidence for a correlation between public policy, anti-social behaviour and women's imprisonment. Morash (2006) gives examples from the US and UK; with regard to the UK, she draws a link between

cuts to youth wages and welfare benefits and prostitution, alongside rhetoric around imprisonment or confinement in state facilities for girls' protection.

The supposed increase in women's criminal behaviour is most dramatic with regard to serious crimes and violence, including more use of weapons. Despite this, there has been little investigation of the underlying reasons. However, it has been argued that men and women who engage in anti-social behaviour have similar social profiles: low socio-economic status, dysfunctional family background, abuse, poor educational achievement, un(der)employment and belonging to a minority ethnic group (Murdoch, Vess, & Ward, 2011; Steffensmeier & Allan, 1996). It would appear that women who engage in violence frequently have a history of sexual abuse, view violence as normative and have a negative view of themselves, others and the world in general (Murdoch, Vess, & Ward, 2010).

Conversely, Rennison (2009) argues that there has been almost no change in the violent crime gender gap in the US if age and race are taken into con-sideration; results clearly point to gender stability regardless of the race or age of the offender. In the rare cases where there has been a statistically significant difference, it was due to a greater decline in male offending rates compared to the decline in female offending rates.

The early onset of puberty is linked to anti-social behaviour (and depression and a range of other negative outcomes) in girls (Caspi & Moffitt, 1991). However, this is moderated by context; for example, girls at mixed-sex schools appear to be more at risk than girls at single-sex schools. This may be due to difficulty maintaining friendships with same-age peers due to salient physical differences, association with older peers who may have different norms, increased risk of sexual assault and of substance use, and lower academic achievement (Mendle, Turkheimer, & Emery, 2007).

Further, Merlo and Chesney-Lind (2015) convincingly argue that maltreatment and abuse of girls is at the heart of an increase in the arrest and imprisonment of girls, presenting the US data on the prevalence of "dual status" girls (girls who have been both victims and offenders) in the justice system. This argument has some similarities to that of Murdoch, Vess, and Ward (2011; see Chapters 3 and 7, this volume) with regard to violent offenders in New Zealand. Based on this argu-ment that the failure to protect girls from harm is related to increased anti-social behaviour, Merlo and Chesney-Lind conclude with a programme that focuses on reducing harm in order to prevent future offending.

Masculinity, femininity and alcohol

Recently the role of alcohol use in conforming to ideas of masculinity, and contest-ing ideas of femininity, has been explored. Public and excessive consumption of

alcohol with other men has long been a traditional indication of masculinity in many Western cultures. However, over recent decades, this association has been eroded, partly through increased alcohol consumption by women (McCreanor et al., 2013; Willott & Lyons, 2012). Griffin, Szmigin, Bengry-Powell, Hackley, and Mistral (2013) argue that femininity is profoundly contradictory, calling for young women to be independent but not "feminist"; to look and behave "sexy" but not be "sluts"; and to drink but not to "drink like men". While it appears that men have achieved greater choice (though mediated by class), women's freedom and empowerment in this regard is largely illusory.

Individual Factors

Individual risk factors for anti-social behaviour may be broken down further into socio-psychological and biological factors, though there is often an overlap between the two, or a combination of socio-psychological and biological is indicated.

Poor school achievement is often found in those who engage in anti-social behaviour (Farrington, 2015). While this has often been linked to low intelligence or cognitive deficit, it may be an artefact of social factors, such as non-attendance, a lack of valuing of education by peers or family or difficulty concentrating for a variety of reasons such as poor nutrition, tiredness and problems or distractions at home. Impulsiveness or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) may also be factors. Nonetheless, an association between poor educational achievement and anti-social behaviour has been demonstrated repeatedly (Hemphill et al., 2015).

Psychological factors

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) developed self-control theory (a "General Theory of Crime") in the early 1990s. Based on the observation of a consistent connection between criminal behaviour and age, they theorised that the most important factor underlying crime is an individual's lack of self-control. They further argue that self-control is determined solely through socialisation processes, especially those that occur in the family, such as parental management practices, rather than by biological and genetic influences. Individual self-control improves with maturity as a result of a range of factors, including changing hormonal levels, socialisation and the increasing costs of losing control. In addition, criminal acts are often clearly non-controlled; they are impulsive, short-sighted and opportunistic.

There is considerable evidence for the role of impulsivity in anti-social behaviour, and it may be regarded as the most strongly related individual factor

(see, e.g., Farrington, 2015; Hemphill et al., 2015; Higgins, Kirchner, Ricketts, & Marcum, 2013). However, there are many constructs that are related to impulsive behaviour, such as poor ability to delay gratification, sensation-seeking, hyperactivity and low self-control. At least some of these also have biological components, as will be discussed below.

Depression is also linked to anti-social behaviour, especially among girls (Cook, Pflieger, Connell, & Connell, 2015; Ritakallio, 2008; Teplin et al., 2006), as are some other psychological disorders, including anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (Tillfors, El-Khouri, Stein, & Trost, 2009; Vermeiren, Deboutte, Ruchkin, & Schwab-Stone, 2002), although the relationship to anxiety is less clear and appears to be related to other factors such as the presence of ADHD and the early onset of anti-social behaviour (Hodgins, De Brito, Chhabra, & Côté, 2010; Polier, Herpertz-Dahlmann, Matthias, Konrad, & Vloet, 2010).

Developmental perspectives

Psychological research over recent decades has tended to focus less on personality traits and developmental (including cognitive) aspects of the individual and, to some extent, their social context. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological (or nested) systems theory was a key influence which emphasised the importance of environmental factors. However, most developmental theories take an individual approach.

Classic studies have identified some important factors in the developmental trajectory of a person who engages in anti-social behaviour. Terrie Moffitt's work has been particularly influential, but other classic studies include those of Robins (1978) and Patterson, DeBaryshe, and Ramsey (1989). It would appear that the younger the age at which anti-social behaviour is exhibited, the more stable and severe it is likely to be; adults who exhibit anti-social behaviour will usually have exhibited clear signs in their childhood. These children probably missed potential positive influences elsewhere: they may have frequently missed school, be in the care of welfare authorities and therefore less likely to be with "normal" peers or involved in sports or other structured activities. "Late starters" are less likely to continue, probably because they missed the early social causal factors. That said, according to Robins' work, most children who engage in anti-social behaviour do not continue into adulthood. These features generally fit well with Moffitt's adolescence-limited versus life-course persistent taxonomy.

Despite its dominance in literature on the development and progression of anti-social behaviour, Moffitt's (1993) taxonomy of "adolescence-limited" and "life-course persistent" anti-social behaviour has not been without critics

(see, e.g., Skardhamar, 2009; Stattin, Kerr, & Bergman, 2010). Anti-social behaviour is most often engaged in during adolescence, but those who begin their anti-social "career" during childhood are more likely to persist into adulthood. Moffitt argues that once young people are able to take on the legitimate responsibilities of adulthood, most will do so; therefore their anti-social behaviour is limited to adolescence. However, Moffitt also argues that a small number of adolescent-onset individuals become "ensnared" by addiction, imprisonment or other circumstances that lead to their anti-social behaviour continuing across the life-course. McGee and colleagues (2015) sought to further examine these snares using Australian data and found that this group is significantly more likely to have been raped, been through a court process, and experienced unemployment, substance abuse and neighbourhood disorder, and often a combination of these. Early parenthood and dropping out of school early were not implicated – indeed some research (e.g., Giordano, Seffrin, Manning, & Longmore, 2011; Kreager, Matsueda, & Erosheva, 2010; Monsbakken, Lyngstad, & Skardhamar, 2013) suggests that parenthood can precipitate desistance from anti-social behaviour, especially for young women.

Moffitt postulated, apparently correctly, that her theory would be applicable regardless of race or ethnicity with regard to adolescent-onset anti-social behaviour, but that disadvantaged ethnic groups would be at greater risk of life-course-persistent issues (Moffitt, 1994, 2006).

Biological Explanations

Though psychological factors may have biological associations, such as abnormal levels of neurotransmitters and stress hormones, they are typically considered issues of the psyche. There are also factors that may be conceptualised primarily biologically. These include sex hormones and genetics.

Biological explanations – sex hormones

Hormones are one biological factor that may impact upon anti-social behaviour and the gender difference in engagement. Testosterone is correlated with aggressive behaviour in both men and women, though levels are typically higher in men. However, causation is unclear; it may be that aggression increases testosterone production (Morash, 2006). Boys are more commonly diagnosed with ADHD which appears to be linked to impulsivity and anti-social behaviour and may have biological influences. Although recent research on the biological bases of anti-social behaviour provides some evidence for reasons why boys and men tend to be more anti-social than girls and women, such predispositions are one factor of several.

Biological explanations – genetics

While a growing body of empirical research suggests that genetic factors are implicated in anti-social behaviours, evidence is also emerging which indicates that environmental factors moderate the effects of genetic factors. However, much remains unknown. Increased exposure to criminogenic risk factors, such as having peers that engage in anti-social behaviour and low social support, increases the impact that genetic factors have; environmental risk factors exacerbate pre-existing genetic tendencies towards anti-social behaviours, and without these environmental factors, genetic propensity remains unlikely to be realised. As environmental factors are more readily changed than genetic factors, it is logical that environmental risk factors be the focus of intervention and prevention programmes. It would appear that genetic factors are also relevant to victimisation (Beaver, 2011; Beaver, Boutwell, Barnes, & Cooper, 2009), though this is outside the scope of this book.

RESILIENCE AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Many resilience or protective factors (also sometimes called promotive factors) are simply the opposite of risk factors; for example, an authoritative parenting style is a protective factor (whereas a neglectful parent presents a risk), as is a positive school environment. An influential grandparent or inspirational youth or social worker may act as a protective factor. As with risk factors, resilience and protective factors may be individual or environmental in nature, and there is frequently an interaction between the two. The presence of these factors may lead to increased self-efficacy, appropriate levels of self-esteem, realistic future aspirations and a positive self-concept in general.

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS

Despite the attention paid by academia, policymakers and politicians, public perceptions of anti-social behaviour are unclear, although there is some suggestion that anti-social behaviour policy may have increased negative stereotypes of youth (Bannister & Kearns, 2013). As discussed by Egan, Neary, Keenan, and Bond (2012), there is a need to consider whether public concerns about young people's anti-social behaviour are motivated by a response to actual anti-social acts or subjective perceptions arising from other factors. A study of neighbourhood disorder in the US found that compared to measures of disorder derived from independent observations, factors such as neighbourhood deprivation and ethnicity strongly influenced perceived disorder.

Many contextual factors, at macro-, local and individual levels, appear relevant. Egan and colleagues' research in the UK found some evidence of negative attitudes, such as generalised stereotyping of young people, but not a broader climate of intolerance. Results showed that the heterogeneity of young people and their behaviours was recognised, suggesting that while adult residents of disadvantaged communities perceive young people's anti-social behaviour to be a serious issue, they recognise that such behaviours occur in a social context, are grounded in situational factors and involve a minority of individuals (Egan et al., 2012). It is also worth reiterating that, despite having a broad definition of anti-social behaviour, nearly three-quarters of the British public do not appear to perceive anti-social behaviour to be a problem (Home Office Development and Practice Report, 2004).

In the Netherlands, members of the public are quoted as fearful and calling for increased government action (van der Leun & Koemans, 2013). As illustrated in a quote from the British Home Office above and discussed further in the next chapter, public views of "street terror" are used by politicians as a justification for punitive policies, following claims that disorder and nuisance have grown out of hand in disadvantaged areas and that local citizens call for action. New measures have been introduced in the Netherlands, some of which are very similar to British tactics like the anti-social behaviour order (ASBO). However, a comprehensive study involving a range of stakeholders in several Dutch cities shows a relatively nuanced and varied range of perceptions (van der Leun & Koemans, 2013).

Nonetheless, perceptions of anti-social behaviour may not be linked to experience or witnessing such behaviour. Higher levels of fear are associated with an increased tendency for individuals to withdraw from community life, ultimately resulting in the atomisation of local communities and a decrease in social cohesion (creating a self-fulfilling prophecy). People adjust their behaviour to avoid fear-inducing areas, especially at certain times of the day. By thus limiting their exposure to risky situations – *and therefore anti-social behaviour* – they may report fewer such behaviours subsequently (Brunton-Smith, 2011).

With regard to public attitudes to responding to youth anti-social behaviour and crime specifically, Jones (2010) argues that despite low levels of knowledge of crime rates, options for dealing with anti-social behaviour, and the outcomes of these options, cross-national surveys suggest a punitive attitude among the general public of many Western countries, with a desire for retribution being common. It may be argued, therefore, that punitive policies are a response to the demands of citizens. However, little appears to be done to educate the public.

CONCLUSION

Theorists from across the social sciences have contributed to the understanding of anti-social behaviour. These include theories about social and psychological strains, norms, the impact of labelling, the construction of deviance and other social influences. Although some of these are reflected in our current conceptualisations, at this point in time, there tends to be a greater focus on individual than on social and structural factors.

Although a range of risk factors from the structural to the individual are recognised, policy initiatives and justice interventions also tend to focus on the individual or, in some cases, on their family (as will be discussed further in Chapter 7). This individual focus is problematic as it may be used to target individuals, potentially leading to unjust criminalisation. This targeting may also be in response to public (mis)perceptions and stereotypes. The political context in which responses to anti-social behaviour occur is the focus of the next chapter.