



# Biological Influences on Criminal Behavior

*Gail S. Anderson*

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In reviewing introductory texts available to criminologists, one is left with the impression that biological factors are irrelevant to the formulation of criminal behavior. Where biology is mentioned at all, it receives infinitesimal coverage. This dearth of attention could at one time be blamed on shoddy research and the legitimate fear that evidence gathered along this path would be used to support eugenics extremists. However, in the past 20 years, tremendously valuable work has been accomplished that legitimately correlates biological factors such as genetics, biochemistry, diet, and brain disease to criminal behavior.

**Biological Influences on Criminal Behavior** fundamentally questions the way most criminologists attempt to explain, let alone ameliorate the problem of human criminal behavior. Written by Gail Anderson, a highly respected expert in forensics, who also brings a much-needed biological background to the task, this resource champions contemporary biological theory by introducing criminologists to areas of research they might not otherwise encounter.

Dr. Anderson discusses basic biological concepts such as natural selection and evolution in relation to behavior, and considers genetic factors including patterns of inheritance, sex-linked traits, and propensities toward aggression. She explores studies on hormonal effects, as well as brain chemistry, and delves deeply into organic brain dysfunction. She also looks at investigations into fetal conditions and birth-related difficulties, as well as research on nutrition and food allergies. While it is steeped in scientific research, the material is presented in a way that does not require a scientific background.

The author does not suggest that biology plays *the* major role in criminal behavior; however, her carefully researched work does prove that we can gain a far deeper and more useful understanding when we objectively assess all of the factors involved.

A professor of forensic entomology in the School of Criminology at Simon Fraser University, Gail S. Anderson has a Ph.D. in medical and veterinary entomology. She serves as a forensics consultant to the RCMP and city police across Canada. Among her many accolades, she was listed in TIME magazine as one of top five innovators worldwide in criminal justice and recently received the Derome Award from the Canadian Society of Forensic Sciences.

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