KRM 310 (A): CRIMINOLOGY THEORY

UNIT 3: BIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Testosterone (10 Marks + 5 Marks case study)

Testosterone has been related to the most aggressive and antisocial crimes such as:

- Rape
- Murder
- Assault

The claim is that this male sex hormone adversely affects the central nervous systems (CNS) causing:

- aggressive behaviour and
- a heightened libido

Studies on monkeys:

- indicated that testosterone was related to aggressive behaviour in monkeys and testosterone levels varied with environmental condition
- males in separate cages had very similar testosterone levels, and when each was individually introduce to a single female the increases in testosterone were of similar size. But when they were introduced into a mixed social grouping, the high ranking, dominant and aggressive monkeys produced large quantities of testosterone but the low ranking monkeys produced only very small quantities. When they returned to separate cages, there was again no difference in testosterone levels of high and low ranking monkeys.[1]

The same male hormone exists in humans and has similar effects:

- whilst earlier studies fund higher testosterone levels in offender and a strong link between violent male offending and high levels of testosterone, those links are not conclusive/strong as had been expected following the animal studied.

A factor which some have argued limits the usefulness of these studies on humans is that:

1. They don't separate differing forms of aggression – they usually consider only actual bodily violence, whereas human aggression is frequently verbal.
2. Within both verbal and physical aggression/violence, there is a difference between persons who seek out /cause violent situations and those who defend themselves if violence is forced upon them.

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[1] It is unclear whether the association between aggression and testosterone in monkeys is proof od biological causation.

3. The complexity of human personality requires attention: social dominance, sensation seeking, assertiveness, extroversion, sociability, aggression.

Dan Olwens found:

- A connection between testosterone and both verbal and physical aggression: provoked aggression (a response to threatening/unfair behaviour) was linked to higher testosterone and in unprovoked aggression, the relationship with testosterone was complex
- He also found a weak, indirect relationship between testosterone and general antisocial behaviour.
- In conclusion, TESTOSTERONE WAS ONLY ONE OF THE MANY FACTORS AFFECTING AGGRESSION.

Daisy Schalling:

- Discovered that high testosterone levels in young males were associated with verbal aggression but not with actual physical aggression or fighting.

High testosterone boys = protecting their status by threats. (Tended to shun