

Biosocial crime prevention

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Modern crime prevention would benefit from a greater biosocial approach to delinquency and offending that is rooted in family, school and community intervention strategies, according to a research team led by University of Maine sociologist Michael Rocque.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, criminologists contended that [deviant behavior](#) was biologically or mentally predisposed—that some people were "born" to commit crimes. It wasn't long before those theories, which went so far as to include calls for eugenics, were considered unethical and immoral, and lost favor as socially unacceptable.

Today, there is again a growing body of literature on the importance of biological risk factors in crime prevention—cognitive deficits; impulsivity and negative temperament; [conduct disorder](#) and aggression;

and mental and physical health. But unlike criminological theories in the 1900s, crime prevention research now focuses on the importance of social context and the need to address biological/psychological risk factors early in life.

In a paper published in the *Journal of Criminal Justice*, Rocque, a UMaine alumnus and a sociology instructor, and two colleagues—Brandon Welsh of Northeastern University and Adrian Raine of the University of Pennsylvania—examine the relevance of biology in modern crime prevention.

In particular, the research team looked at the newest form of crime prevention—developmental prevention—that focuses largely on early biological risk factors for delinquency and criminal offending that result from the interaction between the person and the environment.

Developmental crime prevention recommendations are in keeping with traditional sociological approaches—from improving the [family environment](#) to address risks of [antisocial behavior](#), to stepping up prenatal care to ensure healthy child development. This biosocial approach looks at crime prevention strategies rooted in programs focused on families and parenting, preschool, mental and physical health, and nutrition.

"Today's bio-crime prevention approaches recognize the importance of the environment and of early intervention," according to the research team. "These strategies seek to improve lives rather than remove people from society. In that sense bio-crime prevention is a positive development—one that deserves more attention from the criminological community."

Provided by University of Maine

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