crime learning curves, *British Journal of Criminology*. Les auteurs de cet article sont toutefois réservés sur la classification des prédictions qu'ils ont analysées parmi la "petite délinquance". Le poids de leur argumentation est qu’elles appartiennent à une classe intermédiaire.


Neil Boyd’s *The Beast Within* is a genuine tour de force on perhaps the best predictor of violence-gender. In an accessible volume of less than 200 pages, Boyd presents persuasive evidence on the biological underpinnings of male violence. By so doing, he takes issue with the politically correct notion that social factors alone explain gender differences in aggression. His respected standing in the Canadian criminological community and the absence of dogma lend additional credibility to the book.

Boyd laments the devalued status of biological explorations into violence:

Today the influence of biology is given little consideration in either the academic world or the agencies that deal directly with male violence. Those who study or write about violence or who counsel violent men rarely take the role of genetics into account. Sociologists, social workers, and criminologists develop their careers on the principle that violence has environmental roots. Anyone who draws attention to the relationship between biology and male violence is seen as a status quo apologist...

Indeed, even a casual survey of criminology textbooks quickly reveals the scant attention accorded biological, relative to sociological, theories and the focus on discredited work (e.g., Lombroso’s views on “atavism” and more recent work on men with an extra “y” chromosome). Sound, current research on bio-genetic influences is largely ignored, thereby perpetuating this sociological bias.

Boyd attributes this preference for social-psychological over biological explanations both to our receptivity to more obvious and visible explanations (e.g., parental abuse) and to our need for moral denunciations. Bio-genetic explanations are said to preclude such denunciations as they diminish the role of free
will in criminal behaviour. In reality, determinism of any kind, including the social form, negates the role of individual accountability. A third reason for the devalued status of biological theories might be the perceived dangerousness of biological interventions. Social engineering may appear more palatable and to offer more promise to social scientists than the biological version.

The dangers of social engineering are clear and perhaps best exemplified by the atrocities and excesses of Pol Pot’s Cambodia and the Chinese cultural revolution. As Boyd points out, however, the visceral rejection of biological explanations stems from the Nazi belief in genetic determinism and from various racist ideologies. The repugnance of the latter views has led to an overcompensation by criminologists. Boyd writes:

By diminishing the role of biology and overemphasizing the role of environment, our culture has abandoned the tenets of science in favour of the forces of political correctness. We have handed over our thinking about violence to ideologically driven theoreticians – those who believe in an environmentally influenced view of the world: men and women emerge from the womb with a genetic heritage but are best seen as vessels waiting to be formed by their experiences... In suggesting that the key to male violence is found in culture, these social scientists are indulging in the conceit that Darwin exposed a century ago, pompously declaring that we human beings have evolved beyond our mammalian ancestors.

Boyd notes that men have been responsible for an overwhelming majority of homicide and other violence, both historically and cross-culturally. Such differences are found, regardless of the levels of violence in a society. The quality of male violence, too, differs from that committed by females. In the realm of family violence, women tend to kill their partners after enduring a history of abuse. Men, on the other hand, stalk and kill their partners after subjecting them to long-standing abuse, kill after learning of adultery, commit familicidal massacres, and kill during sexual assaults. Honour killings – where female family members are killed for the loss of virginity or adultery – can also be added to this list. Women rarely engage in any of these acts.
Group violence, whether in the form of more contemporary "swarmings" by youth or genocidal rampages in Bosnia, Rwanda, or East Timor, is also perpetrated predominantly by males. Such predatory violence and intergroup raiding, Boyd asserts, closely resembles that seen among males members of our closest relatives genetically, the chimpanzees.

Aside from the parallels with other species, Boyd presents the following evidence of biological influences and sex differences in aggression:

- Psychologists, some of whom are feminists, have observed higher levels of aggression among boys than among girls, even among children as young as three years of age. Presumably, children at that age have not yet picked up all the nuances of traditional gender roles; that is, if one adopts the dubious assumption that most children today are still raised in accordance with sexual stereotypes.

- Girls exposed to very high levels of testosterone while in the womb, despite being raised as girls, exhibit preferences for toys that resemble the preferences of boys as opposed to other girls (e.g., trucks rather than dolls).

- Men, by virtue of superior size, strength, and speed, as well as better visuomotor coordination, commit more serious acts of violence, even in contexts in which women, too, may display considerable aggression (e.g., spousal violence).

- Men are more likely to be sexually aroused by erotic material that objectifies women, whereas women are more likely to be stimulated by sexual scenes observed within a romantic context. These differences in arousal patterns, as well as anatomy, may predispose men to commit predatory sexual acts against strangers, both in a civilian and military context (e.g., mass rapes in Bosnia).

- The male hormone testosterone may account, in part, for differential violence among the sexes, as suggested by a diverse array of investigations. Boyd's approach to this issue is laudable, as he avoids drawing simplistic causal
inferences. While noting that no definitive causal link has been established between testosterone levels and aggression, Boyd asserts that: 1) many species display changes in aggression with the manipulation of testosterone levels shortly after birth; 2) reducing testosterone levels of sexual predators through anti-androgens reduces sexual violence by decreasing sexual interest; 3) the age-crime curve for men is closely linked to the elevation and decline of testosterone levels; 4) men have, on average, ten times the level of testosterone as do women and gender differences in violence are commensurate with this fact; and, 5) steroid-using males have displayed increasing hostility and aggression.

While asserting the importance of biological influences on male aggression, Boyd allows for environmental influences in the pacification of men. He notes that single men are more likely to murder than married men, arguing, along the lines of social control theory, that the former have less to lose from criminal convictions and incarceration, both materially and emotionally. Partnerships with women, he adds, moderate the aggressive predilections of men through the cooperation and compromises required to sustain them.

Boyd suggests additional ways of "calming the beast" within men, including: 1) the regulation, rather than criminalization of drug consumption, thereby preventing the violence associated with the illicit drug trade; 2) a cessation of our glorification and tolerance of violence, including violence in sport; 3) community support networks for men at especially high risk of violence; 4) programs and services for children at risk; and 5) harnessing the strengths and altruism of the male through socially constructive pursuits.

With these generalities, Boyd does, to some extent, skirt around specific psychological interventions (e.g., cognitive-behavioural approaches for abusive men) and, more importantly, contentious pharmacological and surgical interventions that might flow from the recognition of criminogenic factors that are biological in origin. Another shortcoming includes the lack of sources cited for a number of assertions made in the book.
Finally, Boyd might have discussed research (e.g., from the field of behavioural genetics) on the manner in which genetic and environmental influences interact. He appears to give the impression that these influences are mutually exclusive, rather than linked in complex ways. Aside from the dictates of culture, the innately higher level of aggression displayed by male children may account for differences in the way the environment acts on the two sexes. Parents may provide "masculine" toys and encourage physical aggression among boys, observing that boys are more inclined toward "rough and tumble" behaviour than are girls. Such encouragement then unleashes the "natural" aggression of boys. Among boys, those who are hyperactive and particularly aggressive may evoke a very overindulgent (due to parental capitulation) or oppressive environment at home, which in turn fuels their aggression.

These shortcomings aside, Boyd's command of a wide range of relevant literature, along with the book's accessibility to readers with diverse backgrounds, should stimulate considerable interest in it. The book is essential reading for social scientists adopting a multidisciplinary perspective and open to challenging decades of sociological hegemony regarding the roots of violence.

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Canadian Corrections n'est pas une première pour Curt Griffiths puisqu'il a déjà publié dans les années quatre-vingts, avec son collègue John Ekstedt, Corrections in Canada: Policy and Practice. Toujours critiques, les auteurs présentent un historique des peines et de leurs objectifs ainsi qu'un portrait très contemporain de ce que sont les systèmes correctionnels au Canada, c'est-à-dire le Service correctionnel du Canada (SCC) pour les condamnés à une peine de deux ans et plus d'emprisonnement et les services correctionnels de responsabilité provinciale/territoriale pour les condamnés à une peine de moins de deux ans.