Class Activities

Chapter 6: Modern Biosocial Perspectives of Criminal Behavior

**Class Activity 1: Nature Versus Nurture: Studies Examining the Influence of Genetics and Environment**

**Attack the Text (class debate)**

**Instructions:** This chapter is about nature versus nurture. For this assignment, have students take a side, either nurture is more important or nature is more important. Separate the class based on their side. Now, have them work together to form the arguments to support their side, including support from the textbook.Next, have them present their arguments and counter arguments. At the end of the class, assess whether anyone has changed his or her mind and how the general public assesses the importance of this debate in policy decisions regarding criminals.

**Class Activity 2: Ranking Regions/Countries as Most Likely for Assault**

**Application Exercise (Paired Exercise)**

**Instructions:** Define the following terms: *neurotransmitters, dopamine,* and *serotonin*. Please answer the following questions.

1. Identify two types of crimes that someone with insufficient dopamine might commit. Explain your answer. Be sure your answer is related to the definition of dopamine.
2. Identify two types of crimes that someone with insufficient serotonin might commit. Explain your answer. Be sure your answer is related to the definition of serotonin.

**Class Activity 3: Brain Injury**

**Critical Thinking Group Exercise (Case Study)**

**Instructions:** Please read the following section of the textbook: “Brain Injuries.” Together, discuss how injury to the frontal lobes or temporal lobes of the brain might result in criminal behavior. Read the scenario below and apply what you know about brain injury.

John is 35 years old. He has been incarcerated off and on for the last 20 years. His criminal record indicates that he has mostly served time for property offenses including burglary, fraud, and vandalism. One day, John is in the dayroom playing cards with some other inmates. He has lost several hands of poker and he now owes another inmate, David, $50.00 in commissary, which is money John does not have. John gets angry and accuses David of cheating. David jumps across the table and hits John in the face. Two more inmates jump in to assist David. It turns out that John owes them commissary, too. During the fight, John falls backward and hits his head on the concrete floor. Correctional officers break up the fight and they call EMS to take John to the hospital. Doctors determine that John has a traumatic brain injury that will require an operation. John recovers from his injury, but the frontal lobe of his brain sustained permanent damage. After his injury, John frequently violates institutional rules. He often refuses to comply with the orders of correctional officers and staff. In addition, he has been involved in two additional fights since his injury.

1. Do you think John’s behavior is linked to his injury? Why or why not?
2. Do you think John should be punished for his behavior? If so, what type of sanction would you give him? Explain you answer.
3. As the prison warden, you must maintain the safety and security of your facility. How would you deal with John’s behavior?