Crime as Learned Behavior

Crime like all other behaviors is learned. In order to rehabilitate offenders, criminal justice systems should first aim at understanding the dynamics surrounding social learning. Central to the discussion is how social learning theories provide insight on how the organism learns. Special reference is made to Albert Bandera’s Social Cognitive Theory (1986); specifically focusing on his principles of reciprocal determinism which explain how one’s personality traits, environmental factors, and overt behavior influence one another to finally produce a behavior (in this case the criminal in criminal acts). Thus, it is not enough for criminal justice systems to fight crime by focusing only on personality traits meaning that the other factors (environmental and overt behavior) are given less attention. The thesis herein is the social hierarchy of crime indicating that the root causes of criminal acts can be located in society’s systems. Therefore, criminal behavior, like all other behaviors is a by-product of social institutions, which are in themselves by-products of social systems. The case of corruption as an aspect of crime socialization in Kenya is used to illustrate these conclusions.