

Grawemeyer Awards

Researcher who groups juvenile crime into two types wins Grawemeyer psychology award

Psychologist Terrie Moffitt has won the 2022 Grawemeyer Award in Psychology for shedding new light on the nature of juvenile crime.

[Moffitt](#), a Duke University psychologist and King's College, London, social development professor, discovered two types of antisocial behavior in juveniles. One persists from early childhood to adulthood, is relatively rare and seen mostly in males, while the other occurs only in adolescence and is seen in both males and females.

Although both types appear to be the same on psychological tests and in illegal behaviors, Moffitt found they are distinctly different, an insight that has changed the way the courts prosecute juveniles.

Before Moffitt's initial research paper in 1993, most psychologists thought antisocial behavior in young people was a result of poor parenting or social stressors such as poverty and essentially unchangeable. However, her real-world studies of teenagers showed the behavior is often simply part of normal adolescent development.

Her research has generated hundreds of empirical tests in the social, biological and health sciences over the past 25 years that have borne out her findings.

"She and her colleagues studied the life trajectories of people with both types of antisocial behavior and built models to identify and rehabilitate them," award judges said. "Her work has become a cornerstone of how courts decide to sentence juvenile offenders."

In the 2020 book "The Origins of You: How Childhood Shapes Later Life," Moffitt and three other psychologists shared their research on 4,000 children through adulthood. The team found that although genetics and environment affect how young people develop, neither factor alone determines their behavior as adults.

Moffitt, a licensed clinical psychologist, was elected to the National Academy of Medicine and has received both early career contribution and distinguished career awards from the American Psychological Association.

Recipients of next year's [Grawemeyer Awards](#) are being named this week pending formal approval by university trustees. The annual, \$100,000 prizes also honor seminal ideas in music, world order, education and religion. Winners will visit Louisville in April to accept their awards and give free talks on their winning ideas.