Psychological explanation: psychodynamic explanations

Psychodynamic explanations of offending

An inadequate superego: can lead to immoral behaviour

- Blackburn argued that if the superego is somewhat inadequate then the id is given 'free rein' and is not properly controlled – an uncontrolled id means that criminal behaviour is inevitable

Weak superego: absence of same-sex parent

- During the phallic stage the superego is formed in response to the Oedipus/Electra complex
- If the same-sex parent is absent during this stage the child cannot internalise fully-formed superego as there is no opportunity for identification

Deviant superego: child internalises deviant values

- Internalises the same-sex parents moral attitudes to form their superego
- Internalised moral attitudes are deviant this would lead to a deviant superego and to offending behaviour later in life

Over harsh superego: criminal acts satisfy need for punishment

- Excessively punitive or overly harsh superego means that the individual is crippled by guilt and anxiety
- Superego = strict rules and is unforgiving
- May unconsciously drive the individual to perform criminal acts in order to satisfy the superego's overwhelming need for punishment

Loss of attachment leads to affectionless psychopathy

- Bowlby argued that a warm, continuous relationship with a mother-figure was crucial to future relationships, well-being and development
- Loss of attachment in infancy [maternal deprivation, within the critical period] lead to affectionless psychopathy [lack of empathy and guilt] and increased likelihood of delinquency

44 thieves study

- Supports Bowlby's maternal deprivation hypothesis
- Found that 44 juvenile thieves, 14/44 showed signs of affectionless psychopathy and 12/14 had prolonged separation from their maternal figure in infancy [critical period]
- Control group only 2 had experiences prolonged separation [maternal deprivation]
- Bowlby concluded = effects of maternal deprivation had caused affectionless psychopathy and delinquent behaviour among juveniles

Psychological explanations: differential association

Differential association theory

A set of scientific principles to explain offending

- Sutherland; attempted to develop a set of scientific principles that could explain all types of offending
- Believed there were clear cause and effect links between backgrounds of criminals and non-criminals
- Social experiences = should clearly predict criminal behaviour
- Theory was designed to ignore race, class or ethnic background

Crime is learned through interactions with SO's

- Acquired through the process of learning
- Learning occurs through interactions with SOs that the child associates with such as family and peer group
- 'differential' association = the degree to which a person associated with individuals – spend time with some people more than others; SO's
- Criminality arises from 2 factors:
  1. Learning attitudes towards crime
  2. Learning specific techniques [criminal acts]

Crime occurs if exposure to pro-crime values outweighs anti-crime values

- When someone socialised into a group they will be exposed to certain values and attitudes
- Values and attitudes towards the law some = pro-crime, others = anti-crime
- Sutherland argues = if no. of pro-crime attitudes outweighs the no. of anti-crime attitudes than the individual will go on to offend

We can make a mathematical prediction about committing crime

- DAT proposes that it should be possible to mathematically predict how likely it is that an individual will commit crime
- Prediction = based on our knowledge of the frequency, intensity and duration of an individual's exposure to deviant and on-deviant norms and values

Both criminal techniques and attitudes are learned

- Learn particular techniques of crime from SO's
- E.g. how to break into someone's house through a locked window or how to disable a car stereo before stealing it

Reoffending may be due to socialisation in prison

- Sutherland's theory = account for why so many convicts released from prison go onto reoffend
- Reasonable to assume that whilst inside prison inmates will be exposed to pro-criminal attitudes and also learn specific techniques of offending for more experienced criminals which they put into practise upon their release

Psychological explanations: Eysenck's theory

Eysenck's theory of criminal personality

Three personality dimensions

- Introversion – extroversion
- Neuroticism – stability
- Psychoticism – socialisation
- The dimensions combine to form a variety of personality characteristics or types

Innate, biological basis for personality types

- Personality types are innate and based on the nervous system we inherit
- Extraverts = underactive NS which means that they seek excitement and stimulation and engage in risk-taking
- Neurotic individuals = high level of reactivity in the sympathetic NS; respond quickly to threats. Tend to be nervous, jumpy and over-anxious so their behaviour is difficult to predict
- Psychotic individuals = high levels of testosterone; cold, unemotional and prone to aggression

Criminal personality = N, E and high P

- Criminal personality is a combination
- Neurotics; unstable, therefore prone to overreact to situations of threat
- Extraverts seek more arousal and thus engage in dangerous activities
- Psychotics are aggressive and lacking empathy

Criminal beh is concerned with immediate gratification

- Eysenck = criminal beh as developmentally immature in that is is selfish and concerned with immediate gratification
- Criminals are impatient and cannot wait for things so are more likely to act antisocially

High E and high N scorers lack ability to learn [be conditioned]

- Process of socialisation children are taught to become more able to delay gratification and more socially orientated
- Eysenck believed that people with high E and N scores = NS made it difficult for them to learn [conditioned]
- Less likely to learn anxiety responses to antisocial impulses

Personality can be measured using the EPI

- Notion that personality can be measured is central to Eysenck's theory
- Developed EPI [Eysenck's personality inventory]
- EPI; psychological test that allocates respondents along the E and N dimensions to determine their personality type
- Later scale = introduced to measure psychoticism

Psychological explanations; cognitive explanations

Levels of moral reasoning

Stages of moral development

- Kohlberg = peoples decisions and judgements about right and wrong can be identified in his stage theory of moral development
- Higher the stage the more sophisticated the reasoning

Criminals at preconventional level

- Kohlberg et al. used a moral dilemma technique an found criminal offenders tend to be at the preconventional level, non-criminals progress to the pre conventional level and beyond
- Preconventional level; need to avoid punishment and gain rewards and less mature, childlike
- Offenders may commit crime if they can get away with it or gain rewards [money respect etc…]

Offenders more egocentric and show less sympathy

- Research shows that offenders are often self-centred [egocentric] and display poorer social perspective-taking skills [chandler et al.]
- Individuals who reason at a higher level tend to sympathise more and exhibit behs such as honesty, generosity and non-violence

Cognitive distortions

Faulty and biased thinking helps criminals justify behaviour

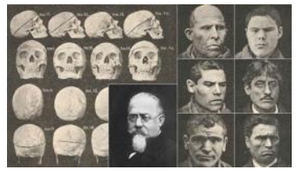
- Cognitive distortions = errors or biases in people's info processing system characterised by faulty thinking
- Occasionally exhibit faulty thinking, but research shows that this is much more typical way for criminals to interpret beh and justify their actions

Hostile attribution bias: ambiguous situations judged as threatening

- Schönenberg and Justye; found violent offenders were more likely than non-offenders to perceive ambiguous facial expressions as angry and hostile
- Offenders misread non-aggressive cues [being looked at] and this can trigger a disproportionate and violent response

Minimalisation; downplaying the significance of the crime

- Reduces a person's sense of guilt
- Burglars may describe themselves as 'doing a job' or 'supporting my family' as a way of minimalizing the seriousness of their actions and their sense of guilt
- Pollock and Hashmall; 35% of a sample of child molesters argued that they were just being 'affectionate' and the crime was non-sexual and 36% stated that the victim consented



Biological explanations

Historical explanation: atavistic form

Lombroso's historical approach laid foundations of profiling

- Lombroso was an Italian physician [1876]
- Proposed that criminals were 'genetic throwbacks' – a primitive sub species who were biologically different from non-criminals; atavistic form
- This laid the foundation for modern offender profiling

Offenders lack evolutionary development

- Seen as lacking evolutionary development
- Savage and untamed nature meant that they would find it impossible to adjust to civilised society ad would inevitably turn to crime
- Lombroso saw criminal behaviour as an innate tendency and thus was proposing a new perspective [for his time] that the criminal was not at fault; in this his ideas were revolutionary

Atavistic features biologically determined

- Criminal sub-type could be identified as being possessions of physiological 'markers'
- Atavistic characteristics are biologically determined
- Mainly features of the head and face; criminals are physically different from non-criminals

Cranial and other physical and emotional features

- A narrow, sloping brow
- A strong prominent jaw
- High cheekbones
- Facial asymmetry
- Dark skin and existence of extra nipples, toes and fingers
- Other aspects apart from physical features; insensitivity to pain, use of criminal slang, tattoos and unemployment

Different criminal types have different physical traits

- Specific physiological 'markers' were linked to particular types of crime
- Murderers; bloodshot eyes, curly hair and long ears
- Sexual deviants; glinting eyes with swollen and fleshy lips

Lombroso's research

- Examined the facial and cranial features of 383 dead criminals and 3839 living ones
- From this research he proposed atavistic form
- Concluded that 40% of criminal acts could be accounted for by people with atavistic characteristics

Biological explanations: genetic and neural

Genetic

Twin studies suggest genetic predisposition to criminal behaviour

- Lange ; studied 13 MZ and 17 DZ twins where one of the twins had spent time in prison, ten MZ twins had a co-twin who was also in prison but this was only true for 2 DZ twins]
- Karl Christiansen; studied 87 MZ and 147 DZ pairs and found a concordance of 33% for MZ's and 12& for DZ's
- supports the view that offending may have a genetic component

Candidate genes; MAOA and CDH13

- Tiihonen et al, genetic analysis of 900 offenders revealed 2 genes may be associated with violent crimes
- MAOA; controls serotonin and dopamine and is linked to aggressive behaviour
- CDH13; linked to substance abuse and ADHD
- High risk combination led to individuals being 13X more likely to have a history of violent disorder

Diathesis stress model

- Influence on offending, this influence is likely to be at least partly moderated by environmental factors
- A tendency to criminal behaviour may come by a combination of : genetic predisposition [diathesis], a biological or psychological stressor or 'trigger' such as a criminal role model or dysfunctional upbringing

Neural

APD; Antisocial personality disorder

- Neural difference in the brains of criminals and non -criminals
- APD is associated with lack of empathy and suffered by many convicted criminals

Less activity in the prefrontal cortex = less emotional regulation

- Raine et al. 11% reduction in the grey matter in the PFC of people with APD compared to a control group
- Part of the brain that regulated emotional behaviour

Mirror neurons (empathy) may not always be turned on

- Keysers found that only when criminals were asked to empathise did they show an empathy reaction [controlled by mirror neurons in the brain]
- Suggest APD individuals do experience empathy but may have a neural 'switch' that turns on and off
- Normally -functioning brain the empathy switch is permanently on