

## **Introduction**

Crime is defined as an act which is prohibited by criminal law. These criminal activities are prohibited for the protection of society as a whole, or a section of society. Each country has its own series of prohibited criminal acts. In England, if a criminal act is committed, the persons responsible are issued punishment of a fine, community service or imprisonment. Although criminal activity is seen by society to be morally wrong, and is punishable, people still continue to commit crime.

Forensic psychology attempts to apply psychological principles to the criminal justice system. For many years psychologists have tried to explain why some individuals will continue to commit crime. There are now several different psychological approaches that are used to explain crime, including the biological approach, the behaviourist approach, the humanistic approach, the cognitive approach, and the psychodynamic approach.

## **Biological Approach**

The biological approach focuses on how our brain structure, physiology and our chromosomal and genetic make up can affect our behaviour. It would suggest that our physiological components predispose us towards a certain type of behaviour.

## **Lombroso's Theory**

In the late eighteenth century a number of studies were carried out by phrenologists, who studied the shape and structure of the human head. They believed that there was a link between the shape of the skull and the structure of the brain that it contained; suggesting certain abnormalities in the cranium could be related to criminal behaviours.

Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909) was a physician and criminal anthropologist. He measured the facial features of prisoners in Italian jails and identified physical characteristics, that he believed indicated criminality. Individuals that had these features were considered to be a more primitive type of human being. Among the features which Lombroso identified were the following: an over-sized brain; squinting eyes; prominent eye-brows and a projecting jaw.

Lombroso believed that these primitive humans could not adjust socially or morally to civilised society, could not distinguish right from wrong, had no remorse or guilt and therefore could not form meaningful relationships. Lombroso determined, "Some people are born with a strong, innate predisposition to behave antisocially," (*Lombroso's Criminals*; Lombroso, 1876).

## **Evaluation of Lombroso's Theory**

Lombroso made a major contribution to establishing the study of criminal behaviour and was responsible for moving the study of criminology towards scientific research, indicating that biological influences could affect criminality.

However Lombroso's experiments cannot be considered to be valid because he never compared his criminal sample to a non-criminal control group or took account of racial and ethical differences. He recorded inaccurate measurements, which were not based on proper statistical techniques or an accurate understanding of human physique. Also a large proportion of Lombroso's sample had psychological disorders. This would mean that there was no distinction between psychopathology and criminality.

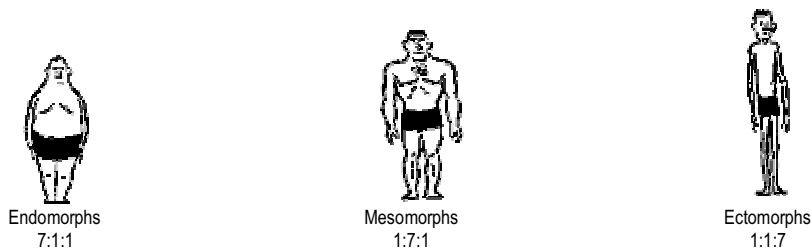
On another negative note, identifying criminals by physical characteristics can cause stereotyping and prejudice, that indirectly can cause self fulfilling prophecy to occur. Self fulfilling prophecy is when you become what you have previously been labelled as; because it is what you feel is expected of you.

Lombroso's work is now regarded as being of historical interest only, his importance is as a pioneer of criminological studies rather than as the originator of a useful explanation of criminal behaviour.

## **Sheldon's Theory**

In 1949 Sheldon attempted to link criminal behaviour to somatotype. According to Sheldon, there are three somatotypes: endomorphs, mesomorphs, and ectomorphs. Endomorphs have a round, soft body type, linked to a comfortable, sociable temperament. Mesomorphs have a muscular body type, with an energetic, aggressive temperament. Ectomorphs have a thin, fragile body type and are withdrawn in temperament. Sheldon believed that temperament was related to somatotype and suggested that the temperament of mesomorphs may lead them to becoming more likely to engage in criminal activity.

Sheldon obtained a group of 200 young delinquents, which he divided into delinquents and criminal delinquents, and compared their somatotype to a control group of 200 college students. He rated their somatotype between 1 and 7.



For example, a true endomorph would score 7:1:1, a true mesomorph would score 1:7:1, and a true ectomorph would score 1:1:7. A balanced body type would score 4:4:4.

Sheldon's results are recorded and summarised as follows:

Somatotype	Students	Delinquents	Criminal Delinquents
Ectomorph	3.4	2.7	1.8
Endomorph	3.2	3.5	3.4
Mesomorph	3.8	4.6	5.4

The results show that the students had equal distribution of somatotypes; however the delinquent group had a higher rate of mesomorphy as did the criminal delinquent group, who were predominantly mesomorphic.

### Evaluation of Sheldon's Theory

In evaluating Sheldon's experiment, his classification of somatotypes was unreliable. The delinquents and criminal delinquents were not subdivided based on legal definitions of the terms. Other studies on somatotypes that did divide the delinquents using legal definitions have found conflicting results. There were also no matching control on factors such as social class, residential area, or size of sample, and the somatotype was not scored on the actual body type at the time of the experiment, but scored as a predicted adult body type, when fully grown.

Another explanation of why criminal delinquents were predominantly mesomorphic could be that mesomorphy is caused by higher testosterone levels, thus testosterone could also be the cause of the increased aggression.

From a social perspective, stereotyping in the courts by the jury is known to lead to tougher looking, mesomorphic people being sentenced more harshly, resulting in there being more convicted mesomorphs. It is clear from this research that psychologists must look into other avenues for explanations of criminal behaviour, because mesomorphy occurs in criminals but is not essential for criminal behaviour occur.

### Eysenck's Theory

Eysenck claims that personality is determined by biological constitution, determined by genes. He then explains that certain personality traits are more likely to lead to anti-social behaviour. "What is inherited are certain peculiarities of the brain and nervous system that interact with certain environmental factors and thereby increase the likelihood a given person will act in a particular antisocial manner in a given situation," (Ages of Crime & Psychology, 1989, p. 104).

According to Eysenck's theory of personality, there are three dimensions of temperament: extraversion-introversion, neuroticism-stability and psychoticism-normality.

Extraverts have a need for excitement and are impulsive and optimistic. They also have a very short temper. Introverts are reserved, cautious and non-aggressive. Biologically this is caused by the nature of the Reticular Activating System. In extraverts the RAS inhibits incoming sensations, resulting in the need

to seek further stimulation. In introverts the RAS amplifies stimulation, therefore less stimulation is needed. In theory extroverts will be driven into criminal activity in the search for further stimulation.

Neuroticism-stability is driven by the Autonomic Nervous System. The ANS releases adrenaline into the bloodstream. Neurotics have a more reactive ANS and are more nervous and anxious. Those at the stable end of the spectrum are emotionally stable and less panicky. Eysenck believes that neurotics are more likely to adopt criminal behaviour because they are driven by strong emotional impulses.

In terms of psychoticism-normality there has been very little research done to date, but it is claimed to be a characteristic found in a large proportion of the criminal population. It is characterised by an aggressive, unsociable, uncaring approach to others.

### **Evaluation of Eysenck's Theory**

A positive opinion of Eysenck's theory is that it does recognise both biological and environmental factors.

However, an argument against it would be that there have been other studies that claim that sensation seeking is not related to extraversion, but to an excitable central nervous system (Smith et al, 1989). Some theorists argue that boredom arises from increased, not decreased arousal (Zuckerman et al, 1969). Also, other researchers have identified other personality traits other than the ones that Eysenck has identified, that are related to criminal behaviour (McGurk et al 1981).

### **Structural Brain Abnormalities**

Mitchell and Blair (1999) suggest psychopathy is a lack of empathy with others. They propose humans, like animals terminate aggressive attacks when the victim shows a submissive signal. In humans this signal is a sad or fearful facial expression. They also suggest that a brain structure called the amygdala, linked with emotion, increases activity when a person is shown a picture of a sad face. The degree of activity is directly proportional to the degree of sadness on the face.

These findings suggest that in psychopaths the functioning of the amygdala is impaired and they do not feel the emotion needed to terminate an attack. Psychopaths therefore cannot socialise in the usual way. Relating this theory to criminality, a psychopath does not feel guilt or empathy for others that they have affected by carrying out a criminal offence.

### **Evaluation of Structural Brain Abnormalities**

An advantage of this theory is that a structural brain abnormality can be identified and measured through medical testing.

However, it has only been proven that a dysfunctional amygdala causes a risk factor to psychopathy, but it is not a certain factor to psychopathy. This theory also does not account for non-psychopathic people who have structural brain abnormalities. It would be unsafe to assume that all people with a dysfunctional amygdala are psychopaths as this would cause labelling, and would change the way that individuals are treated by society, indirectly causing them to not be able to socially relate to people – a characteristic of psychopathy, again an example of the self fulfilling prophecy.

### **Genetic Research into Criminality**

Family studies are based on proving that criminal behaviour exists to a significant extent in a family over several generations. In 1979, Osborn and West reported that 40% of sons of criminal fathers will get a criminal record themselves, whereas only 13% of sons of non-criminal fathers will. The most famous study of recurring criminality is the analysis of the Jukes family in the U.S.A. (Dugdale, 1910). Out of 1200 family members there were 57 murderers, 60 thieves, 50 prostitutes and 140 general criminals.

Apart from the general conclusion that convicted offenders tend to come from families with a criminal record, such studies were unable to identify any specific inherited features. Although there is a correlation between criminality of fathers and sons, the process of social learning in childhood, is just as likely to account for such statistical relationships as genetic factors. Also these studies fail to distinguish effectively between the impact of inherited characteristics and environmental factors which are common to both parents and children.

Twin studies are useful for identifying hereditary and environmental factors from each other because there are two types of twins. Monozygotic (MZ) twins are developed from a single egg which splits after fertilisation and produces two offspring which are genetically identical. Differences between such identical twins are taken to be produced primarily by environmental factors. Dizygotic (DZ) twins develop from the fertilisation of two eggs. They do not share the same genetic characteristics. By comparing the effects of environments on identical and non-identical twins it is possible to determine the extent to which hereditary features play a part.

It is claimed by Christiansen (1977) who studied 3586 pairs of twins from the Danish islands that there is a 35% concordance rate for criminality in MZ twins and 13% in DZ twins. The figures produced cannot be discarded and do indicate that criminal tendencies are to some degree inherited; however other factors must also be considered. To begin with, 35% concordance indicates a high influence of 65% of environmental factors. Also the higher concordance rates in MZ twins could be related to the fact they are treated more similarly because they look the same. In addition DZ twins can consist of both males and females, whereas MZ twins are the same sex. It is known that there are fewer convicted female criminals.

A good way to achieve more accurate results would be to compare MZ twins reared apart; however there is not a large enough sample to achieve sufficient results.

Adoption studies are when people have been born to one set of parents, but raised by another. If genetic factors are more dominant, then the similarities should be with the biological parents, however if the environmental factors are more dominant, the person in question should have similar characteristics to their adoptive parents. Crowe (1972) found that when a biological mother of an adoptee had a criminal record, so did 50% of the adopted individuals by the age of eighteen. In a group of children whose mothers had no criminal record, the concordance rate was only 5%. Hutchins and Mednick (1975) examined criminality in the biological fathers and adoptive fathers. If both fathers had a criminal record 36.2% of their sons would. When the biological father had a criminal record 21.4% of sons would and when the adoptive father had a criminal record only 11.5% of sons would.

The figures do indicate that genetics have a greater influence than environmental factors. Adoption studies are not very reliable though, because the adopted child may be placed into a similar environment to which they were adopted from. Also some children are adopted years after their birth so their early experiences may contribute to criminality. Adopted children of criminal parents could also be affected by problems incurred during pregnancy.

Chromosomal studies identify at least one possible link between a specific genetic abnormality, the XYY chromosome, and crime of a violent nature (Sandberg et al, 1961). Normal human cells contain 46 chromosomes. Individuals receive half their chromosomes from each parent and in this way genetic transmission occurs. One particular pairing of chromosomes determines sex e.g. female XX, male XY. Some individuals have abnormal chromosomal combinations, and if the presence of an extra Y chromosome in males is created, it is suggested that there is a greater predisposition to anti-social behaviour of a violent or sexual kind.

There is however no evidence that the vast majority of criminals have this or any other chromosomal abnormality. It is fair to say that even if an extra Y chromosome may carry a slightly higher risk of

behavioural problems, not all people with this abnormality will be criminals, and likewise, not all criminals have this abnormality. This study only explains why a very small percentage of criminals may be predisposed to committing violent or sexual crimes.

### **Evaluation of Genetic Research**

Evidence does suggest that genetics do contribute to criminality. It is also certain that some heritable behavioural traits contribute to the types of crime that people commit. Twin studies have produced some supportive results and family studies suggest that criminality does run in families. Social learning, inherited characteristics and environmental factors also need to be accounted for. If there was a large enough sample of MZ twins reared apart, this may help to do so.

To a certain degree, adoption studies have also favoured genetics, rather environmental factors. However, there are several unreliable factors e.g. similarities in environment and early experiences through pregnancy and after birth. Sandberg's (1961) theory has suggested that an extra Y chromosome does carry a risk of behavioural problems, but can only account for predisposition in a small percentage of criminals.

Genetics cannot be considered to be the only cause of criminality. It therefore can only be assumed that criminality results from genetic predispositions that interact with specific environmental situations.

### **Evaluating Biological Theories**

In both Lombroso's and Sheldon's experiments there is little recognition of environmental factors. Lombroso's work is not considered to be a valid explanation of criminality because of the lack of a non-criminal control group and no account of racial and ethnic differences. His theory can also cause stereotyping and prejudice, that can cause self fulfilling prophecy to occur. Conflicting results to Sheldon's experiment also conclude his theory to be unreliable. It can therefore be said that mesomorphy does occur in criminals but is not essential for criminal behaviour occur. Eysenck's theory does recognise both biological and environmental factors; however, other studies have been conflicting: Smith et al, 1989, Zuckerman et al, 1969 and McGurk et al 1981. Sandberg's (1961) additional Y chromosome theory does account for predisposition of violent crime in a small percentage of criminals.

In terms of structural brain abnormalities a dysfunctional amygdala does contribute to developing psychopathic tendencies. It is wrong though to assume all people with a dysfunctional amygdala are psychopaths as this would cause labelling, and would change the way that individuals are treated by society, indirectly causing them to not socially relate, a characteristic of psychopathy, again an example of the self fulfilling prophecy.

Evidence does suggest that genetics do contribute to criminality. It is also certain that some heritable behavioural traits contribute to crime type. Twin studies and family studies support this, as do adoption studies to a point. Genetics cannot be considered to be the only cause of criminality. It therefore can only be assumed that criminality results from genetic predispositions that interact with specific environmental situations.

Biological theories draw attention to the fact that our biology can influence a certain degree of our behaviour. They also account for differences in personality that occur from birth, and therefore cannot have been learned. Biological theories also link genes to intelligence and social interaction, which in turn can be linked to criminality.

It is however very unlikely that a person can only be influenced solely by their biology and not their environment. Biological theories do not explain how crime rates change with age and completely ignore social causes of crime e.g. role models, and therefore cannot explain criminality outright, however they do

account for the fact that a person may be biologically predisposed to criminality, which is then re-enforced by the environment they are brought up in.

## **Behaviourist Approach**

The behaviourist approach is dominated by learning theories and believes that all behaviour develops because it is learnt from another source. It is believed that behaviour is learnt through either classical conditioning or operant conditioning. Classical conditioning involves associating one thing to another. Operant conditioning involves learning the consequences of your actions. It suggests that if an action is reinforced it will be repeated and if punished it will not be. When applied to criminal behaviour, if the criminal activity brings rewards, then it will be repeated. This is an example of operant conditioning. Also, if it brings consequences e.g. prison, then it is less likely to be committed again.

## **Pavlov's Theory**

Pavlov's theory is an example of classical conditioning. Pavlov would ring a bell before he served food to his dogs. The food would make the dogs salivate. Pavlov realised that the bell by itself would induce salivation in the dogs. Pavlov rang a bell without presenting food to the dogs. He then checked to make sure that the dogs were not salivating. Pavlov cultivated the connection between the dog's food and the sound of the bell. He did this by simply ringing the bell before serving food. This process was repeated for several months. Each time, Pavlov would check to make sure the dogs were salivating. Pavlov then rang the bell, but did not present the food. After ringing the bell, Pavlov confirmed that the dogs were salivating. The bell was directly associated with the food which triggered the salivation reflex. As a result, the dogs salivated because they heard the bell.

## **Evaluation of Pavlov's Theory**

Pavlov's classical conditioning experiment with dogs can be used to explain how people develop behavioural problems. The ability to benefit humans by using animals maybe seen as a stronger factor and a more important one compared to an animals welfare. If this experiment does not have any significance to humans, it means that the suffering an animal goes through is not justifiable, which is necessary to comply with ethical guidelines. Also animal results cannot necessarily be applied to humans. It is argued that animals do not have the same qualities as a person.

## **Watson and Rayner's Theory**

Little Albert was an orphan from a hospital. Watson and Rayner evaluated Little Albert at the age of nine months and found the infant to be unusually calm and well behaved. Nothing seemed to disturb or frighten him, other than extremely loud and abrupt noise. Watson could make Albert fearful by placing a steel bar behind the baby's head and smacking it with a hammer.

Two months after their initial visit, Watson and Rayner attempted to condition Little Albert to fear a white rat. Rayner supervised the baby while Albert had the opportunity to play with the rat. Watson stood behind the infant with a hammer and steel bar. Every time Little Albert reached for the rat, Watson smacked the bar with the hammer. After several incidents, Little Albert had been classically conditioned; he exhibited extreme fear at the presence of the rat alone. Every time Albert was shown the rat he began to cry and attempted to crawl away.

Little Albert was adopted by a family just after completion of the experiment. Later, Watson wrote that even though he believed that Albert's fear would persist and modify his personality throughout his life, he could not extinguish the child's conditioned fear because he could not find him.

## **Evaluation of Watson and Rayner's Theory**

Other research suggests that not all phobias have prior traumatic incidences and therefore do not support this theory. Clearly there are also ethical concerns with Watson and Rayner's experiment. They caused severe distress to a child that was too young to give consent, and never reconditioned him afterwards, implying that the child in question will have suffered into adulthood and will continue to suffer a phobia for the rest of his life.



### **Bandura's Approach**

Bandura (1963) suggested that there are three influences on behaviour: external reinforcement, vicarious reinforcement and self reinforcement. External reinforcement is thought to be through operant conditioning, learning the consequences of your actions. Vicarious reinforcement is learning by watching other people, also known as observational learning. Self reinforcement involves the sense of achievement felt internally.

Social learning theory suggests that behaviour is influenced by anticipation and attitudes. Based upon previous experiences, people develop expectations about what the consequences will be. People also create environments, rather than waiting for things to happen e.g. criminal experiences.

### **Evaluation of Bandura's Approach**

Much of Bandura's work was focused on observational learning of aggressive behaviour, and not generalised to criminality. It has however, been used to advance differential association theory, which does lend itself to criminality. See Sutherland's Approach.

### **Sutherland's Approach**

Sutherland used social learning theory to advance differential association theory. Originally it suggested that the social organisations that people socialise in, determined whether they will participate in criminal activities. According to Sutherland criminal behaviour is learned through social interactions. Some subcultures in society accept criminal activity more than others. Individuals come into contact with both types of attitudes, if they are in contact with attitudes that favour crime, more often or in a stronger way, they will consider crime acceptable.

This theory can therefore explain why an individual is driven into crime and why crime rates can differ in certain areas. Sutherland developed nine principles on which the theory is based:

1. Criminal behaviour is learned, not inherited.
2. The learning of criminal behaviour is through association with other people.
3. Most of association occurs with family and friends.
4. Learning involves: technique, drives, attitudes and rationalisations.
5. Learning involves exposure to definitions, either favourable or unfavourable to law breaking.
6. If there are more favourable than unfavourable ones, then a person becomes a delinquent.
7. Differential associations vary in frequency, intensity and importance for each individual.
8. Criminal behaviour is learned the same as all other forms of learning.
9. Criminal behaviour is an expression of need, as is non-criminal behaviour.

This theory suggests that the main factors that influence behaviour are who a person associates with, how long for, how frequently and how personally they are linked.

### **Evaluation of Sutherland's Approach**

This theory moved the emphasis on individual's lack of morality, to problems in society. Positively, Sutherland's theory acknowledged that it was not just psychopaths that became involved in crime, but anyone who was placed amongst a crime favourable society. Sutherland also identified crimes committed daily in middle class society e.g. incorrectly filling out of tax return forms.

On the negative side this theory struggles to explain crimes of passion and impulse. It also fails to explain offences by people who have not been raised to have deviant values. This theory is an untestable theory. You cannot measure the extent of influence from one person to another.

Also, it suggests nothing about individual differences and susceptibility to the influence of other people, however, there is no evidence to suggest it is inaccurate, and it has been used as the basis of other theories such as the differential association reinforcement theory of Akers (1979).

## **Evaluation of the Behaviourist Approach**

Firstly, Pavlov's theory lends itself well to explaining how people develop behavioural problems. It is however, argued the same principle cannot be applied to humans, which suggests the distress the animal goes through is not justifiable and doesn't comply ethically. Watson and Rayner's theory does not explain how people develop a fear, without having a traumatic incident associated with it. There are also ethical concerns with Watson and Rayner's experiment as no unconditioning took place. Bandura's theory was focused on observational learning of aggressive behaviour, and not generalised to criminality. It has been used to advance Sutherland's which highlighted problems in society. Sutherland's theory acknowledged anyone in a favourable society could become involved in crime, not just psychopaths.

Positively, learning theories emphasises the importance of environmental factors. They demonstrate influence of reinforcement and observation on behaviour and explain why criminality runs in families. The difference in crime rates between males and females is also explained, as they socialise in different groups.

On the negative side this theory struggles to explain crimes of passion and impulse. It also fails to explain offences by people who have not been raised to have deviant values. This theory is an untestable theory because you cannot measure the extent of influence from one person to another. Also there are other suggestions to criminality running in families could be genetics, and also these biological differences could account for the difference in crime rates between men and women. Behavioural theories also do not account for adolescents that abandon crime after a particular age. The studies that are used to test learning theories lack ecological validity as they are set in labs and may not produce the same outcomes in real life.

Behavioural principles are simple principles that are applied to varied behaviour that is too complex to measure. It could be said that behavioural theories do explain a small proportion of petty crime, but not the majority of crimes.

## **Humanistic Approach**

The humanistic approach is the least scientific approach and has great emphasis on: an individual's uniqueness, the human potential for growth and self-actualisation and realises the importance of approaching the problem from the client's point of view.

The concept of one's self is all-important, and is essential in promoting development and well-being. It is believed that self-acceptance is lowered by experiences of failure or troubled relationships, and to recover, self-esteem must be raised. It is also believed that unconditional positive regard is needed to have a good, successful relationship. When someone has unconditional positive regard they can deal with conflicting emotions and learn to accept themselves.

### **Counselling**

The most common concept in this approach is the counselling theory, developed by Rogers (1951). Counselling is a very successful approach. It can be issued to individuals or group of people with a common problem. The emphasis is nondirective, client centred, empathetic and accepting. In therapy the therapist enables the client to reveal their own problems. The therapist's role is non-judgemental and they show unconditional positive regard to the patient. This approach is person centred and the client is in control. The aim is for the client to be self accepting and self directing.

Similar techniques are used in groups or family therapy. In family therapy one member may have problems, but this indirectly affects other members and therefore they can all help to resolve the situation by joining in with therapy.

The most important factor of this theory is that the importance of self-esteem has been proven experimentally. For example, Coppersmith (1986) found that young boys who were higher in self-esteem tended to be higher in competence.

### **Evaluation of the Humanistic Approach**

This approach is not directly concerned to explaining criminal behaviour. It does suggest that conflict between self and ideal self leads to anxiety, which could then cause maladaptive behaviour. Also it indicates that neurotic behaviour is caused by parents giving unconditional love. This causes individuals to seek approval from others and neglect their own self-actualisation.

This is a modern approach that relates very well with society, especially as it helps to treat addiction and depression that are becoming more and more popular in today's society. It is a widely acceptable approach that is concerned with non-serious disturbances e.g. addiction and depression. It can also be used with minimal training or experience, for example the Samaritans.

A disadvantage with the humanistic approach is that it has such a wide application can mean that counselling can become a substitute for a good relationship. In fact it may be that the approach is a good relationship, rather than specialist psychotherapy.

Another disadvantage is that an individual must be able to communicate well with the therapist; therefore people with lower communication abilities cannot gain from therapy. It is a class and culture specific theory, and is not readily susceptible to scientific analysis.

## **Cognitive Approach**

The cognitive approach suggests that our behaviour is influenced by our mental processes such as our perception, attention, problem solving capabilities and thinking patterns. In cognitive psychology the main assumption is that our cognition works like an information processing system i.e. a computer. We receive a stimulus, our brain processes the data received and we then respond in a given way. This is known as the S-R approach (stimulus - response approach).

## **Yochelson and Samenow's Theory**

Yochelson and Samenow (1976) claimed that criminality is an attribute of personality. It is suggested personality develops over life span and is influenced heavily by interaction in childhood with parents. They believe that criminal behaviour results from the rational thinking process. Meaning that due to thinking errors, criminals behave in a way that is socially unacceptable. Yochelson and Samenow interviewed 240 male offenders from prisons and psychiatric hospitals; from this they identified a list of forty thinking errors that criminals will poses. They also suggest that crime cannot be impulsive.

## **Evaluation of Yochelson and Samenow's Theory**

This theory does not account for impulsive crimes, nor has it established that these thinking errors do not occur in the non-criminal population as there was no control group used in their experiment. Also, thinking patterns that have been identified by Yochelson and Samenow, have also been identified as personality disorders in DSM-III-R, and therefore do not constitute to unique personality type. This approach is very limited in explaining criminality.

## **Kohlberg's Theory**

Kohlberg's (1976) theory is concerned with how moral thinking development occurs, which can be related to criminality. He suggests that moral reasoning advances with age. He investigated moral reasoning in adults and children using a number of moral dilemmas. The participant is given a moral dilemma and is asked which course of action to take. Kohlberg was interested in the participants reasoning behind their decision. Below, outlines the types of moral reasoning evident in each stage.

<b>Level</b>	<b>Stage</b>	<b>Description</b>
Pre-Conventional	Obedience and Punishment	Right and wrong are determined by what is punishable.
Conventional	Conformity	Right is defined as what pleases others.
Post Conventional	Social Contract and Moral Rights	Right and wrong are determined by individual values and opinions.

## **Evaluation of Kohlberg's Theory**

It is reasonable to suggest that crime is a choice of moral action; therefore criminals will have a lower level of moral reasoning. However, it was not Kohlberg's intention to produce a theory of crime and he only considers moral reasoning and not actual behaviour. Secondly, the relationship between criminality and moral reasoning differs according to the type of crime. Finally, Blackburn (1993) notes that it is unknown how moral reasoning interacts with: actual behaviour, personality and situational factors.

Kohlberg's theory is not a theory of crime and can only be considered as complementary to any other theories.

## **Cornish and Clark's Theory**

In 1987 Cornish and Clark developed the rational choice theory of crime. RCT is based on the facts that criminals commit crime to benefit and their decision to commit crime considers whether the benefits outweigh the costs. RCT states that offenders choose particular types of crimes for specific reasons. To understand why they have chosen a specific crime, we need to understand the influencing factors.

### **Evaluating Cornish and Clark's Theory**

There have been several other studies that support the idea of rationalising, for example, Rettig (1966), Feldman (1977) and Bennet and Wright (1984). Although research supports RCT there are a couple of considerations: Firstly, research that involves convicted criminals may suggest that the theory only applies to unsuccessful criminals, and that successful criminals may use a different method. Secondly, not all crimes are premeditated.

For this reason RCT cannot be considered a theory of crime, but an explanation of how some individuals approach certain types of crime.

### **Evaluating Cognitive Theories of Crime**

Cognitive psychology is not restricted to the study of thought and knowledge. This approach can be related to almost all areas of psychology. Another positive note is that, the cognitive approach does explain how crime patterns change with age. It is however, very mechanistic and lacks human elements e.g. emotion. Cognitive theories of crime cannot explain all types of criminal activity such as impulsive crimes, and can therefore only offer an explanation to pre-meditated crime.

Kohlberg's theory was not designed to be a theory of crime, so it is very limited to explaining criminal behaviour. It does however explain moral reasoning so it can be considered as complementary to any other theories. Yochelson and Samenow's theory does not account for impulsive crimes, nor has it established that thinking errors do not occur in the non-criminal population as there was no control group. Some of the thinking patterns that have been identified as personality disorders in DSM-III-R, and therefore are not unique personality types.

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It is reasonable to suggest that crime is a choice of moral action; therefore criminals will have a lower level of moral reasoning, which is not necessarily true. Secondly, the relationship between criminality and moral reasoning differs according to the type of crime. Blackburn (1993) notes that it is unknown how moral reasoning interacts with: actual behaviour, personality and situational factors.

The cognitive theories of crime do not explain reasons for criminal behaviour, but they do explain moral reasoning and how crime is actually approached, therefore they can be used in combination with other theories to explain criminal behaviour.

## Psychodynamic Approach

Sigmund Freud developed a theory about human behaviour as a result of his own experiences in treating physical disorders for which there were no apparent physiological causes. A number of basic concepts outline the Freudian theory:

- The nature of human nature is governed by an instinctual energy source called libido. This directs human behaviour in the direction of pleasure seeking activities. Freud also identified a second basic urge in humans which he called thanatos, a death wish which showed itself in self destructive aggression. These twin forces, sex and aggression form the basis of all human behaviours.
- Individuals are not aware of these forces because they are rooted in that part of the mental system called the unconscious. The unconscious is a store of people's profoundest desires and strongest, most enduring feelings. This accounts for the carrying out of behaviours that cannot be explained.
- What happens in childhood has an irreversible effect on adult behaviour and personality. In order to understand problems in adulthood it is necessary therefore to uncover events from childhood and to confront them by bringing them into consciousness.

According to Freud human personality consists of three parts:

1. The id is the basic pleasure seeking instinct.
2. The ego is the part of the mind concerned with intellectual activities such as thinking, perceiving, remembering, and it acts as a mediator between the id and the real world, directing the basic urges in ways that are compatible with reality.
3. The superego represents the social rules and conventions which individuals acquire from parents and other authority figures in childhood.

The three parts of the psyche are not independent of each other, but interact with each other. The id may push in a certain direction of behaviour which the ego indicates is impossible in the real world. Even if basic desires can be satisfied in reality the superego may provide restraints because it would not be socially acceptable to engage in such behaviours. The tension between the id, the ego and the superego cause anxiety and guilt. Often these feelings are repressed into the unconscious part of the mind, but they still affect behaviour and may be the basis of various disordered or irrational actions such as fantasies or crimes.

Personality develops through five psychosexual stages, which depend upon outlets for satisfying the libido. These stages are: The oral stage, the anal stage, the phallic stage, the latency stage and the genital stage. The oral stage focuses on pleasure that is obtained through the mouth such as sucking. The anal stage focuses on the expulsion and retention of faeces. The phallic stage is characterised by physical attraction to the parent of the opposite sex, coupled with fear and jealousy of the same-sexed parent, the Oedipus complex, which is resolved through identification with the parent of the same sex. The latency is an age of no great sexual significance and the genital stage sees the development of full heterosexual relations.

Events at these stages will influence the kind of adult personality that emerges.

A number of possible occurrences can develop:

- Fixation, which is where an individual may remain fixed in a particular stage because of the desirable feelings associated with it.
- Regression, which is where a person may go back to an earlier stage of development because it has been omitted previously and behave in some way that is basically childish.
- Traumatic incidents at any stage can be lodged in the unconscious memory and lead to strange behaviours in adulthood.

All of these can affect personality development and can be uncovered using psychoanalytic techniques.

There are two main forms of psychoanalytic explanations as applied to criminal behaviour.

1. An attempt is made to explain the actual nature of the criminal acts. These behaviour-specific explanations offer a number of causes for crimes:

- Criminal behaviour can be attributed to a traumatic incident of which the memory has been repressed.
- Criminal behaviour can be regarded as a displaced form of an otherwise natural activity.
- The offence can be explained as a symbolic expression of some desire which the offender is not allowed to express more directly.
- Repeated offences can be attributed to an unconscious desire for punishment arising from guilt over feelings or actions which the offender regards as wrong.

2. An attempt is made to account for the development of a criminal personality. Personality specific explanations are more common in modern psychoanalytic theory.

- Weakness of the ego can explain the absence of a normal degree of self-control and a tendency to operate in a fantasy world, free from the constraints of real life.
- An underdeveloped superego would produce a lack of guilt feelings even for the most extreme behaviours towards others.
- Psychopathy can be interpreted as arising from a lack of close physical contact in early childhood with adults, producing an inability to relate to other people at all.

### **Bowlby's Maternal Deprivation Theory**

This theory is based on the importance of the various stages of development through childhood. Any serious interruption in maternal care during a critical phase of development will lead to personality disturbances, including criminality, later in life. This idea is called maternal deprivation. This concept can apply to a number of different types of situations:

- It can mean separation from the mother at a crucial stage of development. Evidence suggests that the presence of a mother figure is important at certain ages, although it does not have to be the natural mother.

- It can mean an institutionalised upbringing in which the child is brought up in a children's home or orphanage where there is no established mother-figure with whom to identify. Evidence suggests that this can be very damaging to personality and other aspects of development.
- It can mean the type of maternal care that is provided for a child. Evidence suggests that factors such as the amount and type of communication, amount of affection demonstrated, and general domestic atmosphere may affect potential delinquency.

In 1946 John Bowlby did a study on 44 juvenile thieves and found that 17 of them had been separated from their biological mothers for periods of over six months during their first five years of life. 14 of the boys had severe personality disturbances, which Bowlby called affectionless character, and 12 of those had experienced maternal deprivation. Basically, it suggests that because a child receives maternal deprivation, their superego is inadequately formed.

The concept of maternal deprivation has become accepted as a potential cause of lasting personality disorder, although care has to be taken not to overstate the argument. Research since Bowlby has indicated further possibilities:

Golfarb's (1943) study of institutionally deprived infants indicated that this led to retarded intelligence and affectionless personality characteristics resulting in difficult and antisocial behaviour.

Andry (1960) argued that defective paternal leadership, especially as a role model was just as important as maternal deprivation.

McCords (1959) study of delinquency in Boston compared criminality with the quality of maternal care with the following results: the lowest conviction rate was amongst boys with normal, loving mothers; a higher conviction rate was found amongst boys with overprotective and anxious mothers; the highest conviction rates were amongst boys with neglectful mothers.

Part of the reason why maternal deprivation has been the focus of so much attention is because it is seen to be related to a number of features of late twentieth century family life that are associated with delinquency.

- **Family Size:** Practically all investigations report that delinquents tend to come from large families, although Ferguson (1952) in his Glasgow study identified overcrowding as more important than actual numbers in the family.
- **Working Mothers:** There is no direct evidence to link delinquency with the children of working mothers, to any greater degree than with those of non-working mothers. Much depends on the provision of an appropriate and consistent mother-substitute.
- **Broken Homes:** In the Glueck's (1950) study of delinquency 60% of the offenders came from homes broken by separation, divorce, death or prolonged absence of a parent.

### **Evaluation of Bowlby's Maternal Deprivation Theory**

Many other studies have supported Bowlby's theory, though there is no further evidence to suggest maternal deprivation is directly linked to criminality. Bowlby's experiments has also been criticised for using an unrepresentative sample and poor matching of control groups.

In this theory Bowlby suggests delinquency is caused by separation. However, it could be that the lack of a bond causes delinquency, rather than actual separation, as many children are separated from their parents



but still maintain a bond, and do not show delinquent characteristics. Another problem is that he did not distinguish between disruption, distortion or privation of attachments.

Also, it is wrong to assume that every person that has no mother figure will become a delinquent. It is thought that Bowlby overestimated the extent of impact of early experiences.

### **Evaluation of the Psychodynamic Approach**

Because psychodynamic theories concentrate on information that is stored in the unconscious, it is untestable. Most of its evidence comes from case studies of offenders undergoing psychotherapeutic treatment. It tends to consider behaviour after the event and to work back from there to its causes. Not only can this create a distortion in linking cause and effect, but it has little value in predicting behaviour or identifying potential offenders. It deals primarily with abnormal behaviours and regards criminal actions as expressions of some kind of disorder. Where the motives for an offence are clear and obvious then it has relatively limited value.

"The psychoanalytic theories have not proved to be particularly useful either in furthering our understanding of crime or in devising effective methods of intervention," (M. A. Frisvold & J. C. Ser, *The Crime Decision-Making Process*, 1983).

Another problem with this approach is that current statistics for crime rates between men and women do not support it, as it suggests that women have a weaker superego than males, which suggests that they will commit crime more than men. This is not the case; there is new research that indicates women have higher moral orientation than men (Hoffman 1977).

This theory is also limited in the types of crimes that it can explain. Kline (1987) suggests that there are many crimes that are deliberately planned and followed through, that are motivated through rational thought, not irrational thought. It should also be considered that neurotic conflicts may result from criminal behaviour, but do not cause it.

Nevertheless, the psychodynamic approach cannot be ignored. It is the only theory that addresses emotional factors in terms of crime, and is also more plausible, as most crimes have no obvious gain and are incomprehensible. The notion that unconscious processes are an important determinant of behaviour is one that is strongly held by psychologists.

## Evaluation

I believe that biological theories can influence a certain degree of our behaviour. I think that both Lombroso's and Sheldon's experiments lend little to explaining criminality; however Eysenck's theory is a better theory recognising both biological and environmental factors. Evidence does suggest that genetics do contribute to criminality. It is also certain that some heritable behavioural traits contribute to crime type. The main criticism I have of the biological approach is that it does not incorporate any environmental factors; I therefore believe that criminality results from genetic predispositions that interact with specific environmental situations.

The behavioural theories do emphasise the importance of environmental factors, but I do not regard the behaviourist approach to have as much significance in explaining criminal behaviour. Sutherland's theory has positive elements because it acknowledges that anyone can become involved in crime. However the behavioural approaches do struggle in other areas such as in explaining crimes of passion and impulse. Behavioural principles are simple principles that are applied to varied behaviour that is too complex to measure. I can only suggest that behavioural theories can explain a small proportion of non-serious offences.

The humanistic approach suggests that conflict between self and ideal self leads to anxiety, which could then cause maladaptive behaviour, which I do agree with. However I regard this approach to be a good relationship, rather than specialist psychotherapy. It is a class and culture specific theory, and is not readily susceptible to scientific analysis; therefore I do not regard it as explaining crime very well.

On a positive side, the cognitive approach can be applied to almost all areas of psychology. Cognitive theories of crime cannot explain all types of criminal activity such as impulsive crimes, and can therefore only offer an explanation to pre-meditated crime, but I think that they do explain moral reasoning and how crime is actually approached; therefore they can be used in combination with other theories to explain criminal behaviour.

My most favourable approach to explaining crime is the psychodynamic approach. It is a shame that information stored in the unconscious is untestable. These theories do tend to consider behaviour after the event and to work back from there to its causes. They have little value in predicting behaviour or identifying potential offenders. The psychodynamic approach is the only theory that addresses emotional factors in terms of crime, and is also more probable, as most crimes are inconceivable.

In conclusion to what explains crime, some criminal attributes are learnt through social learning but I do not regard this approach to explain majority of criminal activity. I also do not regard the humanistic approach to lend itself to explaining criminal behaviour.

The cognitive approach can certainly explain the way in which crime is approached, although not the actual reasons that trigger people to commit crime. I think that there is a lot of evidence to support the biological approach of criminality, though I can only assume that criminality results from genetic predispositions that interact with specific environmental situations. The psychodynamic approach is an excellent approach to explain criminality. It is a shame that it is an untestable theory. It is a better approach for explaining behaviour rather than predicting it.

I believe that there needs to be a genetic predisposition towards crime and that if such a predisposition exists then the types of crime we commit can be related to unconscious processes that occur, caused by our early experiences. The cognitive approach can then explain the way in which the crime was approached.