

Identify the Biological and Psychological explanations on crime (9)

Biological explanations for crime see deviance in terms of the biological make-up of individuals whereas Psychological explanations maintain that the causes of deviance lie within a faulty mind. This essay will examine both theories.

Causes of criminal behaviour are most prominently explained in Freud's psychoanalytic theory, which suggests that an individual's well-being is dependent on a healthy interaction amongst the Id, (Innate) Ego (Reality) and the Superego (Society). The psychoanalytic theory is the search for causes of crime within the make up of an individual. It explains that delinquency is caused by disturbances or abnormalities in an individual's emotional development from early childhood. Freud believes that some people have antisocial tendencies in the unconscious of their mind that branches back to a traumatic early childhood, and cause long-term psychological problems. Therefore, crime would occur if there was a malfunctioning of the Id (too much), an underdeveloped Superego (no conscience), or an overdeveloped Superego (desire to be caught and punished). However, the Psychoanalytic theory has lack of empirical support, focuses only on internal factors (excludes societal factors) and centralises on treatment rather than prevention.

Eysenck (1982) explains deviance in terms of personality types, which he believed were largely inherited. He defined three basic elements of personality, Extraversion, Neuroticism and Psychoticism.

Eysenck suggested that extroverts were more likely to commit crime. He believed that this was because they take more risks and take longer to learn society's norms. His theory also suggests that Extroverts are harder to condition than introverts and that introverts think more carefully about their crime, where extroverts would commit a crime spontaneously. Eysenck's theory has been criticised for being too subjective, and there is little evidence to support unstableness or emotionality and crime.

Lombroso in 1876 argued that the criminal is a separate species, a species that is between modern and primitive humans. He argued that the physical shape of the head and face determined the "born criminal". These people were primitive and were unable to adapt to modern morality. His view was based on genetics. "The born criminal" was said to have had large jaws, high cheek bones, large ears, extra nipples, toes or fingers, and were insensitive to pain. Lombroso went further and suggested that from the surveys he had carried out in prison, he could detect physiological differences between different types of criminal. Lombroso's work is heavily criticised as it is very racist and sexist, he focused only on Italian criminals, and criminality can not be predicted solely on the basis of physical features.

William Sheldon believed that people could be classified into three body shapes, which correspond with three different personality types.

1. Endomorphic (fat and soft) tend to be sociable and relaxed.
2. Ectomorphic (thin and fragile) are introverted and restrained
3. Mesomorphic (muscular and hard) tend to be aggressive and adventurous.

His theory suggested that Mesomorphs were more predisposed to crime, compared to ectomorphs or endomorphs. However, the working class tend to be stockier in build due to their manual labour jobs and he rated his subjects' body types himself, which account for weaknesses in his theory.

In conclusion sociologists reject biological and psychological explanations of Crime. They have been criticised on a theoretical level. This is because they do not take into account social factors (such as poverty) and only offer a partial view on crime and deviance.