

Biological and genetic factors criminology essay



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Eysenck's theory of personality and crime suggests that our personality and the environment will produce antisocial behaviour. He said that our personality is biologically determined which supports the biological perspective by Mednick, Gabrielli and Hutchins. We have certain traits that are more likely to influence antisocial behaviour and if we are brought up in an environment surrounded by crime, then we are more likely to engage in criminal activity. Eysenck's measures personality in three ways; extraversion-introversion (E), neuroticism-stability (N) and psychoticism-normality (P). Extraversion-introversion ranges from a loud, impulsive and outgoing person to a quiet, shy and reserved individual. Neuroticism-stability ranges from a nervous, stressed and emotionally unstable person to a normal, emotionally stable individual. Psychoticism is where an individual is hostile, uncaring and lacks empathy; this is usually our common criminal. (Boeree, C. (2006). An example of this would be Fred West as he displayed a lot of the psychoticism traits, whereas, Harold Shipman, the GP that murdered his own patients, was described as a friendly man. (Wikinoticia. (2010). Rushton and Christjohn (1981) looked at E, N and P scores within school children and students. They found that children who showed higher levels of delinquency, also scored higher on E, N and P. Eysenck's theory is good as it provides evidence that there is a link between personality and crime. However, his theory does not explain why individuals commit a crime and his theory relies heavily on the idea that underlying criminal tendencies that produces criminal behaviour is detectable as far back as early childhood. This means that it may be possible to change the socialisation of these individuals which in turn could prevent antisocial behaviour later in life. (Quizlet. (2013).

Theorist Robert Merton believed that biology could not be the explanation of all crime in society and therefore developed his Anomie theory as he felt that rates of deviance differed from society to society and within small groups. He placed great emphasis on the role of culture and expanded on Durkheim's concept of anomie; which is where cultural norms break down due to rapid change within society. He also believed that when there was a gap between means to achieve and successful goals, anomie would occur. (Unknown. (2013). He produced five modes of adaption to explain how people respond to this gap. Conformity; is where acceptance of cultural goals and the institutional means to obtain these goals. Innovation; is where the goal is achieved, but done in an unacceptable way. Ritualism; is where some individuals accept society's norms and cultural goals. They work hard but give up the hope of success. Retreatism; is when individuals reject cultural goals and are unwilling to reach these goals. These individuals are often defined as criminals or insane. Rebellion; where individuals attempt to form a new social structure where everyone can reach attainable and equal goals. However, these individuals commit crime in order for this new social structure to be created e. g. vandalism and terrorism. Robert Merton also states that many individuals still value the goals in society such as wealth and prestige but may turn to crime in order to attain these goals. (Peters, A. (2008). This is a very general theory that does account for some crime and has also influenced other theorists to examine the different values that different groups hold within society. However, anomie only offers a partial explanation to some crimes e. g. vandalism and not extreme crimes.

Feminist Carol Smart believed that theories within criminology are more concerned with men and crime rather than the analysis of female criminality. One of the reasons offered as to why there is a lack of interest in women and crime is because there are a smaller proportion of women offenders than male offenders. Criminality of women is not considered a pressing issue as it is generally quite rare and the majority of female offenders only commit minor crimes. Therefore women aren't considered a threat to society or a social problem thus criminology shows a lack of interest in this area. Carol Smart generally focuses on the invisibility of women within the Criminal Justice System and in research in general as the majority of research is conducted by men. She also criticises the stereotypical views of women involved in crime that are shown from a biological determinist perspective. They say that women who commit crimes usually suffer from fundamental biological bodily processes such as menstruation and menopause and because of this hormonal imbalance; women are more likely to commit crime. It is also argued that women naturally oppose crime and if they do have any involvement, it is because of physical and/or mental pathology. (Smart, C. (1977). Cowie et al (1968) looked at variables that helped distinguish delinquent and non-delinquent women. They looked for things like " defective intelligence, abnormal central nervous function and impaired physical health". This was then linked to Lombroso's description of criminal women. However, this can be said to be a stereotypical view of criminal women as other factors such as poor diet and medical care can cause these characteristics. (Smart, C. (1976). Carol Smart's theory is good at recognising inequalities in the Criminal Justice System especially involving the treatment of women offenders. However, it doesn't look at other factors

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in female criminality such as class and race. Also some theorists such as Carlen (1992) do not agree with Carol Smart's idea to reject women and criminology. (Coleman, C and Norris, C. (2011).