FACTBOOK

AO1 and AO3

FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY

Forensic Psychology

Offender Profiling

One of the key contributions from Forensic Psychology to the science of crime is a means of identifying a perpetrator of a crime, through offender profiling.

By definition offender profiling is a behavioural and analytical tool that is intended to help investigators accurately predict and profile the characteristics of unknown offenders.

Offender profiling aims to identify the perpetrator of a crime on the basis that the characteristics of an offender can be deduced from the characteristics of the offence and the interaction with the crime scene.

Offender profiling (also known as psychological profiling) refers to a set of investigative techniques used by the police to try to identify perpetrators of serious crime.

Offender profiling is an attempt to describe the characteristics of an offender by analysing the behaviour of the offender at the crime scene or multiple crime scenes.

Holmes & Holmes (1996) defined the goals of offender profiling as conducting social and psychological assessments, carrying out a psychological evaluation of belongings and using a variety of interview strategies to gather information.

According to Holmes & Holmes (1996) social and psychological assessments are used to create a criminal profile which contains basic information about the offender, such as age, race and social status.

Holmes & Holmes (1996) suggest an offender profile should provide suggestions as to any possessions the offender may have that would associate them with the crime or the crime scene.

Also according to Holmes & Holmes (1996) different interview strategies should be used when effectively interviewing a suspect.

Offender profiling is an investigative tool used to help catch criminals. It involves narrowing the search for a perpetrator by providing the police with insights into their likely qualities based on an analysis of the behaviour required to commit the crime.

Offender profiling techniques are most commonly used in violent crimes such as murder and rape and in serial crimes where multiple crimes appear to be similar.

Offender profiling is an investigative technique employed by the police when solving crimes, in order to help identify a list of likely suspects.

Professional offender profilers may be asked to work alongside the police during high profile murder cases.

Offender profiling techniques can vary but profiles usually include an analysis of the evidence alongside careful scrutiny of the crime scene, in order to generate a prediction about the possible characteristics of an offender.

The study of offender profiling is explored in Investigative Psychology.

Top-down Approach

The top-down approach to offender profiling is also known as the American approach.

Originating in the USA as a result of work carried out by the FBI in the 1970s, the top-down approach compiles profiles using pre-established typology and works down to assign offenders to one of two categories based on witness accounts and evidence from the crime scene.

The top-down approach to offender profiling which was developed by the FBI during the 1970s and 80s was based on interviews with 36 convicted murderers including Ted Bundy and Charles Manson. A database was then compiled to help detectives pick out characteristics of the types of people that committed such crimes.

The top-down approach began by gathering data from in depth interviews from prolific serial criminals and concluded that data could be categorised into organised or disorganised crimes/murders.

The top-down approach to offender profiling is applied to new crimes to help identify a perpetrator. It is called a top-down approach because it starts with a theory about the type of person that committed the crime and evidence from the crime scene is used to profile the criminal.

In a top-down approach the profiler looks at other similar cases (where criminals have been interviewed) in order to build a picture of typical offender profiles.

Offender profilers who use the top-down method will collect data about a murder or crime scene and decide on the category it best fits.

Each category in a top-down profile will have certain characteristics, which in a future situation can be matched, in order to predict what other characteristics would be likely. This could be used to find the offender.

A key classification in offender profiling using the top-down approach is to consider organised versus disorganised criminals.

Hazelwood & Douglas (1980) made a distinction between organised and disorganised types of offender.

An organised offender is one who shows evidence of planning, targets a specific victim and tends to be socially and sexually competent with higher-than-average intelligence.

A disorganised offender is one who shows little evidence of planning, leaves clues and tends to be socially and sexually incompetent with lower-than-average intelligence.

The categories of organised and disorganised offenders generally correlate with a particular set of social and psychological characteristics that relate to the individual.

Organised offenders show evidence of having planned the crime in advance. The victim is deliberately targeted and the offender usually maintains a high degree of control during the crime. There is often little evidence left behind at the crime scene.

Many organised offenders are of above average intelligence, in a skilled professional occupation and are usually married and may even have children.

Disorganised offenders show little evidence of planning, suggesting that their offences may be spontaneous or opportunistic. The crime scene tends to reflect the impulsive nature of the crime.

Many disorganised offenders have a lower-than-average IQ unusually work in unskilled jobs or may even be unemployed. They typically have a history of sexual dysfunction and failed relationships, and tend to live alone, relatively close to where the offence took place.

Conducting an FBI profile using the top-down approach involves 4 key stages of construction; data assimilation, crime scene classification, crime reconstruction and profile generation.

In the top-down approach to offender profiling, data assimilation involves reviewing the evidence from the crime scene, pathology reports and eyewitness reports.

In the top-down approach to offender profiling, crime scene classification is where the offender is categorised as either organised or disorganised.

Crime reconstruction in the top-down approach to offender profiling is where investigators make hypotheses about the behaviour of victim and try to predict the sequence of events leading up to the crime.

During the profile generation of a top-down approach to offender profiling, predictions are made about the likely characteristics of the offender such as demographic background or physical characteristics.

Evaluation

The top-down approach to offender profiling was developed by the FBI and arose out of actual practise which means the approach has high ecological validity.

Ault & Reese (1980) reported a case in which seven rape case files were sent to the FBI and an offender profile was constructed. The police narrowed down a list of suspects to 40 males who met the profile characteristics. They focused on one male, who was later arrested and convicted of all the offences.

Ault & Reese (1980) found that the top-down approach to offender profiling was effective in matching the characteristics of the profile to the perpetrator of seven rape cases.

There is research support for a distinct category for an organised offender. Canter (2004) conducted an analysis of 100 American murders each committed by a different serial killer, using a statistical technique called smallest space analysis.

Canter (2004) looked at correlational data in order to assess the co-occurrence of 39 aspects of serial killings. This included whether there was torture or restraint, if there was an attempt to conceal the body, the type of weapon used and the cause of death. Many of these features matched the FBI 's typology for organised offenders.

Offender profiling is not scientific as it has a theoretical basis and relies on subjective evaluations made by investigators.

Offender profiling is mainly used with serial crimes and violent crimes such as murder and rape and may not be as effective when used with other less serious types of crime.

However, Meketa (2017) reports that top-down offender profiling has recently been applied to burglary, leading to an 85% rise in solves cases in three US states.

Canter (2004) tested the organised/ disorganised typology and found no evidence that crime can be categorised this way, as many crimes contain elements of both typologies.

Some studies have suggested the organised and disorganised types of offender are not mutually exclusive.

Godwin (2002) argues that it is difficult to classify killers as one or the other type of offender. A killer may have high intelligence and sexual competency but may be spontaneous in their behaviour and leave clues at the crime scene.

Some research suggests that organised and disorganised offending behaviour should be seen as one on a continuum of characteristics rather than as two separate categories.

A new detection method includes the two types of organised and disorganised categories but also adds an interpersonal (where the offender usually knows the victim) and an opportunistic category (generally young inexperienced offenders).

The top-down approach to offender profiling is based on the principle of behavioural consistency, however it ignores individual characteristics such as personality.

Mischel (1968) argues that people's behaviour is much more driven by the situation that they are in rather than their personality, however individual differences must be taken into account when applying an offender profile.

Canter (2004) suggested that a bottom-up approach may be more effective in offender profiling.

Bottom-Up Approach

The bottom-up approach to offender profiling is a way of creating an offender profile based on psychological theories in the UK.

The bottom-up approach to offender profiling aims to generate a picture of the likely offender through systematic analysis of evidence at the crime scene.

Central to the bottom-up approach is the need to demonstrate consistencies within the action of offenders and identify differences between them.

The bottom-up approach is based on psychological theories and methodology, which attempt to formulate new theories that will explain why criminal behaviour occurs.

The bottom-up approach to offender profiling does not begin with fixed typologies but instead is data-driven and scrutinises the details of the offence.

The bottom-up approach to offender profiling is known as the British approach.

Bottom-up profiling is more grounded in psychological theory than the top-down approach.

The bottom-up approach works on evidence collected at the crime scene in order to develop hypotheses about the likely characteristics, motivations and social background of an offender.

In the bottom-up approach the profiler uses Investigative Psychology and geographical profiling to inform the search.

In bottom-up profiling the profiler makes no initial assumptions about the perpetrator until a statistical analysis of the data from the crime scene has been compared to a database of existing crimes.

In the bottom-up approach to profiling a statistical database is created which acts as a baseline for comparison. Specific details of an offence can be matched against the database to reveal important information about the offender.

It is called a bottom-up approach to criminal profiling because a profile of the offender is built from the data rather than imposed by the investigator at the outset.

Bottom-up profiling is a cognitive and social approach as it analyses the interactions between the perpetrators and others in order to understand their behaviour.

Investigative Psychology was developed in the UK by David Canter et al (1990) and has 5 key ideas that are used to analyse the crime.

Canter et al (1990) suggest that crimes can be analysed on the basis of forensic awareness, significance of time and place, criminal experience, interpersonal coherence and criminal characteristics.

Interpersonal coherence in offender profiling is the way in which the offender behaves at the crime scene, including how they interact with the victim, as this may reflect a pattern in their everyday lives.

Forensic awareness describes those individuals who have been the subject of police interrogation before, and their behaviour may show evidence of 'covering their tracks'.

Some offenders are forensically aware and will do what they can to remove physical evidence from the crime scene.

The significance of time and place is important in offender profiling and may provide information about where the offender lives.

The discipline of Investigative Psychology is an attempt to apply statistical procedures, alongside psychological theory, to the analysis of the crime scene evidence.

Investigative Psychology aims to establish patterns of behaviour that are likely to occur or coexist across crime scenes.

Investigative Psychology is a form of bottom-up profiling that matches details from the crime scene with statistical analysis of typical offender behaviour patterns based on psychological theory.

Geographical profiling was developed by Canter (2008) and analyses the time and place in which a crime took place.

Geographical profiling uses information to offer a pattern of behaviour, based on where the offender encountered the victim, how they were attacked and where they were disposed of.

Looking at patterns in geographical profiling tells the investigator about the perpetrators familiarity with the area and offers information about the likelihood that they live close by or have travelled to commit the crime.

Geographical profiling is a form of bottom-up profiling based on the principle of spatial consistency where the offenders operational base and possible future offences are revealed by the geographical location of their previous crimes.

Geographical profiling is a technique used in offender profiling to take information from the crime scene locations and link them to a likely offender.

Geographical profiling uses information about the location of linked crime scenes to make inferences about the likely home or base of an offender. This is known as crime mapping.

The assumption of geographical profiling is that serial offenders will restrict their crime to geographical areas they are familiar with.

The geographical technique uses a computer system called Criminal Geographic Targeting in which crime data is analysed to produce a 3D model known as a jeopardy surface.

A jeopardy surface is the area identified by a geographical profiler which is thought to be the home/ work/ social base of the offender and which should be focused on in an investigation.

Canter & Larkin (1993) offer a theory which suggests that the pattern of offending usually forms a circle around an offender's home or base.

Canter & Larkin (1993) claim this leads to describe offenders in one of two ways; a marauder (who operates in close proximity to their home) or a commuter (who is likely to have travelled a distance away from their usual residence).

Canter & Gregory (1994) assumed that most offenders like to operate in areas they know well and suggest that many offenders have a crime range of at least 2 miles.

Spatial decision-making can offer criminal profilers an important insight into the nature of the offence (whether it was planned or opportunistic). As well as revealing other important factors about the offender such as their mode of transport, employment status and approximate age etc.

Evaluation

One strength of Investigative Psychology is that research evidence supports its use in practise.

David Canter provided a criminal profile for the police in the 1980s to assist in the capture of John Duffy (the railway rapist). Canter analysed geographical information from the multiple crime scenes and combined this with details of similar attacks in the past to draw up a profile of Duffy.

Canter & Heritage (1990) conducted an analysis of 66 sexual assault cases using ‘smallest space analysis’. Several behaviours were identified as common and each individual displayed a characteristic pattern of such behaviours. This helped establish whether two or more offences were committed by the same person.

When two or more offences are understood to be committed by the same person this is referred to as ‘case linkage’.

The bottom-up approach is based on data and relies on statistical analysis which makes it more objective and scientific.

Evidence in Investigative Psychology supports the bottom-up approach in that people are consistent in their behaviour, and patterns can be seen in order to predict their behaviour in the future.

Lundrigan & Canter (2001) collected information from 120 murder cases involving serial killers in the USA revealed spatial consistency in the behaviour of the killers. This supports the view that geographical information can be used to identify an offender.

Geographical profiling is not limited to very serious crimes it can also be effective in investigating property crime too.

However, one limitation is that geographical profiling may not be sufficient on its own. Even if this information is correct, critics claim that other factors are just as important in creating a profile. Ainsworth (2001) suggested that the timing of the offence and age and experience of the offender are more important factors to consider.

Offender profiling has a mixed history with regard to its use by different police forces. Copson (1995) surveyed 48 police departments and found but the advice provided by the criminal profiler was judged to be useful information in 83% of cases.

Copson (1995) investigated whether offender profiling improves the effectiveness of experienced detectives. In a survey of 184 police officers who had used criminal profilers, 50% felt the profile had been useful and 14% felt the profile helped solve the crime.

Copson (1995) revealed that in only 3% of cases did the criminal profile lead to the accurate identification of an offender.

Kocsis (2002) found that chemistry students produced more accurate criminal profiles on a solved murder case than experienced senior detectives.

There have been cases where criminal profiles have been used to advise the police on a likely offender, which have turned out to be the wrong individual. The case of Rachel Nickell was one example of this.

Criminal profiles are like case studies which means we cannot assume that just because one works, they will all be effective.

A criminal profile is a subjective opinion which may be biased by the beliefs of the profiler, and an inaccurate profile will mislead the investigation.

Biological Explanations of Offending Behaviour

Historical Approach (Atavistic Form)

Atavistic explanations are rooted in evolutionary theory, which argues that biological characteristics are innate and passed down through generations.

The term "atavism" refers to the reappearance of primitive traits or characteristics from an ancestor's past.

Lombroso (1876) recorded one of the first systematic studies of criminal features, and developed an atavistic theory of crime, which proposes a biological basis for offending behaviour.

Lombroso (1876) argued that criminal physiology was qualitatively different from that of non-criminals. He believed that criminals represented a form of primitive human, unsuited to living in a civilised society.

Lombroso (1876) believed that criminals were throwbacks to earlier stages of human development, with physical characteristics such as large jaws, prominent cheekbones, and sloping foreheads indicating their animal-like nature.

Critics argue that Lombroso's research was flawed due to small sample sizes and reliance on subjective judgments about facial features.

Lombroso's evidence was based on a survey of criminals heads and bodies, which included a sample of 383 dead skulls and 3829 living ones.

Lombroso used his medical training to conduct scientific measurements of the skulls of convicts. His work spanned many years and he created a list of atavistic features.

Lombroso (1876) suggested that criminals are biologically distinct and have primitive features such as a prominent jaw, high cheekbones and large ears.

Lombroso (1876) claimed that 40% of crimes were perpetrated by atavistic people.

Atavistic theories take a historical view that criminals can be identified by that primitive characteristics or body types.

Sheldon (1949) proposed three main body types; endomorphs, ectomorphs and mesomorphs.

Sheldon (1949) looked at 200 photos of criminals and 200 photos of students in a control group. He rated them on a scale of 1 to 7 for mesomorphic body types. He suggested that delinquency is associated with such body types.

Endomorphs have a body type that is soft and round, whereas ectomorphs have a body type that is thin and delicate and mesomorphs have a body type that is hard and muscular.

Evaluation

Lombroso's (1876) sample only consisted of criminals, which lacks reliability as he had no control group for comparison.

Lombroso did not include a control group in his research, so it is difficult to establish whether atavistic features would only be found amongst criminals.

Lombroso can also be criticised as he failed to screen out individuals with learning difficulties in his sample. This reduces the validity of his findings.

Goring (1913) applied Lombroso's theory to a population of prisoners in London. His work included a control group; however no link was found between criminal behaviour and physical appearance.

Much of the research into the historical explanation (atavistic form) of criminal characteristics is correlational, so cause and effect cannot be established. It could be there are other explanations for the physical characteristics associated with the atavistic form.

Sheldon (1949) rated photographs himself in order to support his theory about body types and criminal behaviour. This is highly subjective and biased.

A problem with Sheldon's research was the lack of objectivity as he only used male participants which may not represent females, so is androcentric. Also, there was no way of knowing if they had committed any crime so it could just be coincidence.

The historical approach to offending behaviour is extremely reductionist and argues that criminal behaviour results entirely from your biological makeup.

The historical approach to offending behaviour is very deterministic as it proposes that biological factors predispose individuals to a life of crime.

Some studies argue the individuals with the features identified by Lombroso may have become criminal as a result of reduced social opportunities based on their appearance. This limits the cause-and-effect implication.

The historical view of offending behaviour lacks temporal validity as this approach is outdated and has since been discredited for a lack of valid and reliable evidence to support it.

Genetics

Genetic explanations for offending behaviour focus on inherited characteristics within the genotype.

The genetic explanation for offending behaviour proposes that there may be genes which run in families predisposing individuals to engage in criminal behaviour.

One gene associated with an increase in aggressive behaviour is the MAOA gene, which is referred to as the warrior gene.

Monoamine oxidase A is an enzyme that is encoded by the MAOA gene, and a mutation in such results in a deficiency.

MAOA is an enzyme that in humans is encoded by the MAOA gene, which degrades neurotransmitters such as dopamine, noradrenaline and serotonin.

A mutation in the MAOA gene results in a deficiency in the biochemical use of neurotransmitters such as serotonin and dopamine.

There are several different variations of the MAOA gene and the connection between a version (3R) of the gene and antisocial behaviour has been found.

Research has shown that people with low activity from the MAOA gene displayed higher levels of aggression than individuals with high activity from the MAOA gene.

Brunner (1993) suggested that low MAOA activity in combination with abuse experienced during childhood results in an increased risk of adult aggressive behaviour.

Brunner (1993) studied 5 males from the same family in the Netherlands who had all committed aggressive violent crimes. Following analysis of their DNA it was identified that they had disturbed monoamine metabolism and a deficit in the MAOA gene.

Mednick et al (1987) studied the criminal records of Danish children adopted outside their biological family between 1924 and 1947. They found that having a criminal biological father increased the risk of criminality.

Mednick et al (1987) used data from the Danish adoption data bank, which covers more than 14,000 children. Criminal conviction rates of male adoptees were compared with those of their biological and adoptive parents. It was found that 20% had a biological parent convicted of crime.

Caspi et al (2002) conducted research into the relationship between maltreatment and delinquency. The sample consisted of 1647 New Zealanders born in 1972-73. Participants completed questionnaires at ages 18, 21 and 26 years old.

In Caspi et al (2002) participants were asked about their experiences of physical or emotional neglect, physical or emotional abuse and sexual abuse by age 18. They also reported on any involvement in delinquent activities such as theft, vandalism and assault.

The findings from Caspi et al (2002) suggest that there is a genetic link to offending as the rate of criminal convictions among sons whose fathers were criminals was significantly greater than the rate of criminal convictions among sons whose fathers were not criminals.

Twin and adoption studies have been carried out to investigate the heritability of offending behaviour. In twin studies concordance rates between MZ and DZ twins are compared.

Adoption studies involve comparing criminal features of adopted children with the criminal history of their biological parents and their adoptive parents.

Hutchings & Mednick (1975, 1994) found that in a sample of male adoptees, 86% of those with a criminal conviction had a biological father who had also been convicted. This suggests a strong genetic influence on criminal behaviour.

In the genetic explanation of offending behaviour it is assumed that if criminal behaviour is genetic there will be a greater similarity in the criminal behaviour of their biological family members.

Christiansen (1977) studied crime in 3586 twins in Denmark and found concordance rates of 33% for MZ twins and 12% for DZ twins.

Raine et al (1993) found MZ twins to have a 52% concordance rate for criminal behaviour compared to only 21% in DZ twins.

Farrington et al (1996) conducted a longitudinal family study using 411 males from 397 families over 24 years. They found that in 75% of families where parents were convicts, they also had a convicted child.

Farrington et al (1996) suggested that criminal behaviour is transmitted in families, and this supports the genetic explanation.

Some studies have identified genetic mutations resulting in chromosomal abnormalities. Super-male syndrome (males with an extra Y chromosome on the 23rd pair) is associated with an increased risk of criminal behaviour.

Super-male syndrome is a genetic mutation in which males have an additional Y chromosome at conception.

Price et al (1966) linked the genetic mutation of XYY to violent crime by suggesting that these men may lack empathy and behave more aggressively.

Evaluation

If offending behaviour were genetic, we would expect higher concordance rates in identical (MZ) twins as they share 100% of their DNA. In most studies this is not the case suggesting there must be environmental influences.

The genetic explanation of offending behaviour fails to consider external environmental influences and so ignores the nurture side of the debate.

Using adoption studies as evidence for the genetic explanation of offending behaviour cannot isolate factors in the nature versus nurture debate.

It is hard to separate the influence of nature from nurture; this limits the credibility of twin studies and family studies in explanations for offending behaviour.

Deterministic explanations like the genetic explanation give criminals an excuse to argue that they are not responsible for their crimes.

Limiting the genetic explanation to a simple gene sequence is too reductionist and deterministic.

Theilgaad (1984) found a higher proportion of XYY men than expected in a prison population, suggesting there may be a biological explanation for offending behaviour.

However, many men with XYY chromosome patterns do not commit crime, and many criminals do not have XYY genes.

Neural Explanations

Neural explanations of offending behaviour focus on neurochemicals and structural differences in the brain.

Evidence suggests there may be neural differences in the brains of offenders and non-offenders. Much of the evidence in this area has involved individuals diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder (formally psychopathy).

Antisocial personality disorder is associated with reduced emotional responses, a lack of empathy for the feelings of others and a lack of remorse or guilt.

Noradrenaline which is associated with the fight or flight response shows raised levels in offenders more likely to display aggressive behaviour.

Serotonin which is a mood regulator and is involved in impulse control could influence the likelihood of an offender acting impulsively.

Low levels of serotonin may be related to impulsivity, reduced inhibition, and heightened reactivity to stressors.

Researchers have identified links between low levels of serotonin activity and aggressive behaviour.

Brunner et al (1993) found evidence from a case study of a family of violent criminals that showed differences in the way serotonin was metabolised.

Dopamine is released in the reward pathways of the brain when we do something pleasurable. For some offenders, this feeling of reward is gained by acting aggressively.

Drug use can affect dopamine levels in the brain and lead to addiction. Addiction can make a person more vulnerable to criminal behaviour.

Structures in the brain, specifically the limbic system and the amygdala are associated with aggression.

The limbic system which includes the hippocampus and the amygdala process emotional information. The amygdala has been implicated in psychopathic behaviour.

The amygdala is the part of the brain that controls emotions, particularly fear.

Amygdala damage can lead to an increased risk of criminal behaviour as it reduces emotional responses such as guilt or remorse which are important factors in controlling impulses.

A smaller than average amygdala is linked to a lack of empathy and lack of guilt and remorse, which may explain some criminal behaviour.

Research by Adolphs et al (1994) found that patients with bilateral amygdala lesions were unable to recognise facial expressions associated with negative emotions like anger and disgust.

Raine et al (1997) found murderers to have less activity in the left side of the hippocampus and amygdala and more activity in the right side, therefore they are less likely to experience emotion.

Damage to the prefrontal cortex (PFC) has been linked with violent offences due to its role in decision making and self-control.

A case study by Damasio et al (1985) found that damage to the ventromedial region of the PFC was associated with increased aggression and violence.

The prefrontal cortex which is responsible for rational thought and decision making has been implicated in criminal behaviour where there is evidence of damage to this area of the brain.

Kandel & Freed (1989) reviewed evidence of frontal lobe damage and antisocial behaviour and found people with such damage tended to show more impulsive behaviour and emotional instability.

The anterior cingulate cortex links the limbic system to the prefrontal cortex, damage to this area has been associated with criminal behaviour.

Raine et al (1997) found murderers pleading not guilty for reasons of insanity, to have less activity in their prefrontal and parietal areas.

People with antisocial personality disorder (APD) are called emotionless psychopaths, who lack emotion and feeling and are more likely to commit crime.

Keysers (2011) suggest that criminals with antisocial personality disorder do have the ability to empathise, but they have a neural switch that can be turned on and off. This switch is being controlled by mirror neurons in the brain.

Raine et al (2000) analysed the brain volume in people with antisocial personality disorder and compared them to a control group. They found 11% less volume of grey matter in the prefrontal area for those with antisocial personality disorder.

Rauch et al (2006) found reduced activity in the frontal lobe due to trauma was associated with antisocial personality disorder and subsequent criminal behaviour.

Evaluation

Raine et al (1997) argue that differences in activity in the amygdala (which is part of the limbic system) seen in murderers can provide support for theories of violence.

Further research by Raine (2000) shows that people with psychopathic personality traits have reduced frontal lobe volume.

The use of advanced brain scanning techniques increases the objectivity and reliability of the findings that link neural explanations to offending behaviour.

Research into the neurochemical effects on behaviour cannot conclusively prove cause and effect, so lacks experimental validity. It could be that chemical imbalances may be caused by pre-existing mental health conditions.

Much of the research on the neural explanations for offending behaviour have been done on animals for ethical reasons therefore lacks generalisability.

It is impossible to demonstrate clear cause and effect with neural explanations, as other factors may be responsible for brain differences such as diet or brain damage from birth.

Not everyone with problems in their neurology go on to commit crime, which suggests that the neural explanation of offending fails to consider individual differences such as personality.

Biological explanations for offending behaviour are reductionist and fail to consider a combination of contributing factors.

Farrington et al (2006) studied a group of men who scored highly on a psychopathy questionnaire and found various risk factors which contributed to their criminal behaviour.

Farrington et al (2006) suggest that factors such as issues in childhood like being raised by a convicted criminal parent or being physically neglected contributed to the development of antisocial personality disorder.

Much of the research into the neural explanations of offending behaviour have sample groups such as murderers which are not generalisable to others.

No direct causal link has been found between neurological function and criminal behaviour.

Psychological Explanations of Offending Behaviour

Psychological explanations of offending shift focus away from biological causes of crime and suggest psychological reasons such as cognitive, social, behavioural and psychodynamic explanations for criminal behaviour.

Eysenck's Theory of the Criminal Personality

Eysenck (1947) suggests that offending behaviour arises from personality traits that predispose us to offending.

Eysenck (1947) proposed that behaviour could be represented along 2 dimensions; introversion-extraversion (E) and neuroticism-stability (N). The two dimensions combined to form a variety of personality characteristics or traits. Eysenck later added a third dimension of psychoticism-sociability (P).

According to Eysenck personality traits are innate and come about through the type of nervous system we inherit. He suggested that the criminal personality had an innate biological basis.

Eysenck (1964) argued that criminal behaviour was influenced by personality characteristics which are linked to biological differences between individuals.

Extraversion has a biological basis within the ascending reticular activating system (ARAS) which is responsible for the general arousal of the nervous system. It is connected to the cerebral cortex and governs the arousal of the brain.

Extraverts have an underactive nervous system which means they constantly seek excitement and stimulation and are likely to engage in risk-taking behaviours.

Neuroticism has a biological basis within the limbic system which controls our emotional reactions and is easily triggered.

Neurotic individuals have a high level of reactivity in the sympathetic nervous system, which means they quickly respond to situations of threat (fight or flight). This means they tend to be nervous, jumpy and overanxious and their behaviour is often difficult to predict.

With psychoticism, hormone levels are implicated, particularly testosterone, which is associated with aggressive behaviour. In addition levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin are also affected.

Psychotic individuals are suggested to have higher levels of testosterone making them more prone to aggression, as well as having less emotional responses, such as a lack of guilt or remorse.

Eysenck suggested that criminals are more likely to have characteristics which are high in extraversion (E) neuroticism (N) and psychotic (P) traits.

According to Eysenck criminals are usually higher in personality traits like P, N, E.

Psychotic traits suggest criminals are more prone to aggression and lack empathy.

Neurotic traits suggest criminals are unstable and prone to overreact to situations of threat.

Extraversion traits suggest criminals seek more arousal and are more likely to engage in dangerous activities.

In Eysenck's theory, personalities are linked to offending behaviour via socialisation processes. These are ways that we interact with the environment around us, and how we are taught behaviour from being a young child.

Eysenck saw offending behaviour as developmental immaturity associated with immediate gratification.

The notion that personality can be measured is one that is central to Eysenck's theory. He developed the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ), which is a psychological test that determines personality along the PNE dimensions.

An individual who scores highly on measures of extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism are more likely to engage in criminal behaviour.

Evaluation

Eysenck's theory offers a way to measure personality through the use of a psychological test (EPQ) which means that criminal personalities can be reliably compared across the population.

Supporting evidence from Eysenck & Eysenck (1977) suggest that criminals have innate characteristics which make them more likely to behave in particular ways.

Eysenck & Eysenck (1977) compared 2070 prisoners scores on the EPQ with a group of 2422 controls. On all measures of extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism, across all age groups, prisoners recorded higher average scores than the control group.

Eysenck & Eysenck (1977) conducted research which agrees with the predictions of the criminal personality theory, the offenders rated higher than average across all three dimensions on the EPQ.

McGurk & McDougall (1981) investigated the link between criminality and personality type. 100 students defined as delinquents and 100 students in a control group, completed Eysenck's personality questionnaire. They found a significant difference in scores suggesting a relationship between personality type and delinquent behaviour.

Heaven (1996) found that high psychoticism (P) levels were predictive of criminal behaviour.

One problem with measuring criminal behaviour using the personality test is the high risk of social desirability, individuals may respond in ways they think the researcher wants them to.

Personality is a very subjective, hypothetical concept to measure, so lacks validity.

Eysenck's theory is reductionist as many other factors must contribute to offending behaviour.

Cultural factors are not considered in Eysenck's theory of personality.

Bartol & Holanchock (1979) studied Hispanic and African American offenders in a maximum security prison in New York. They found that offenders were less extravert than a control group.

Farrington et al (1982) conducted a meta-analysis of relevant studies and reported that offenders tended to score higher on measures of psychoticism but not extraversion and neuroticism.

Kussner (2017) found inconsistent differences on EEG measures in the brains of extraverts and introverts, which casts doubt on Eysenck's theory.

It is too simplistic to assume that criminal behaviour is the result of personality characteristics alone.

Eysenck's theory of offending behaviour is too deterministic. It is possible to have high extraversion or neurotic scores and not commit crime.

Moffitt (1993) drew a distinction between offending behaviour that only occurs in adolescence and that which continues into adulthood. She argued that personality traits alone were a poor predictor of how long offending behaviour would go on for.

Research suggests that Eysenck's theory is too simplistic and offending behaviour is more likely to be determined by an interaction between personality and the environment.

Cognitive Explanations

Cognitive explanations focus on the way we process information and how this impacts on our behaviour.

Offending behaviour is directly influenced by our habitual thought processes.

Mandracchia et al (2007) studied 435 prisoners in six prisons in Texas. They aimed to identify the defining characteristics of criminal thinking.

Mandracchia et al (2007) concluded that criminal thinking is defined by 3 styles; control, cognitive immaturity and egocentricity.

Mandracchia et al (2007) suggest that criminal thinking allows self-indulgent and rash behaviours that are contrary to accepted social standards.

Level of Moral Reasoning

Kohlberg (1958) proposed a theory of moral development.

Kohlberg proposed three levels of moral reasoning each level with two stages.

Moral reasoning refers to the way a person thinks about right and wrong.

Level 1 of Kohlberg's theory was called 'pre-conventional' morality.

In Kohlberg's level 1 of moral reasoning the focus is on right or wrong depending on the outcome of the behaviour.

The pre-conventional level suggests that children learn what is right or wrong based on the consequences of their actions – if they can get away with it. They also learn to conform to rules in order to gain rewards.

The pre-conventional level is characterised by a need to avoid punishment and gain rewards and is associated with less mature moral reasoning.

Level 2 of Kohlberg's theory was called 'conventional' morality.

In Kohlberg's level 2 of moral reasoning, morality is internalised from others and society.

The conventional level corresponds to an increased understanding of other peoples' intentions and how to win praise from them. Children learn to obey rules to gain praise and begin to realise the importance of authority.

Level 3 of Kohlberg's theory was called 'post-conventional' morality.

In Kohlberg's level 3 of moral reasoning the focus is on individual abstract ideas of justice, which govern behaviour.

The post-conventional level suggests that children understand the idea that moral actions are expressed by the majority and that rules enable a democratic state. It is also marked by the development of a set of self-defined ethical principles based on wider, universal concepts of right and wrong.

Kohlberg (1968) was the first researcher to apply the concept of moral reasoning to offending behaviour.

Kohlberg proposed that people's decisions and judgements on issues of right and wrong can be summarised in a stage theory of moral reasoning. This implies the higher the stage, the more sophisticated the reasoning.

Kohlberg based his theory on people's responses to a series of moral dilemmas, such as the Heinz dilemma.

Kohlberg conducted extensive research using moral dilemmas. Some used the narrative which featured a person committing a crime, and asked participants to decide what was right and what was wrong.

Many studies have suggested that offenders tend to show a lower level of moral reasoning than non-offenders.

Kohlberg et al (1973) used his moral dilemmas and found a group of violent youths were at a significantly lower level of moral reasoning than non-violent youths, even after controlling for social background.

Palmer & Hollin (1998) compared moral reasoning between delinquents and non-delinquents. Participants were given a series of moral dilemmas and asked what they would do in each scenario. The results showed that the delinquent group showed less mature moral reasoning.

Offenders are more likely to be classified at the pre-conventional level of Kohlberg's stages, whereas non-offenders have generally progressed to the conventional level and beyond.

Chandler (1973) suggests that offenders are often more egocentric and display poorer social perspective-taking skills than non-offender peers.

Individuals who reason at higher levels tend to sympathise more with the rights of others and exhibit more conventional behaviours such as honesty, generosity and non-violence.

Evaluation

Kohlberg's theory is useful in that it provides an insight into the mechanics of the criminal mind, by suggesting offenders maybe more childlike and egocentric when it comes to making moral judgments than the law abiding majority.

Walker (1989) showed that moral development happens over time, supporting Kohlberg's stages.

Ashkar & Kenny (2007) found a sample of juvenile delinquents showed pre-conventional levels of morality when interviewed about their specific crime, but conventional levels when asked about crimes other than their own.

Kohlberg's theory has been criticised for being an artificial way to investigate moral reasoning, as there are no real consequences. Therefore this idea lacks ecological validity.

Much of Kohlberg's research was conducted on male participants making it androcentric.

Moral thinking is not the same as moral behaviour.

Krebs & Denton (2005) proposed that moral reasoning as suggested by Kohlberg, is more likely to be used to justify behaviour after it has happened.

Thornton & Reid (1982) found that people who committed crimes for financial gain (robbery) were more likely to show pre-conventional moral reasoning than those convicted of impulse crimes (assault).

Thornton & Reid (1982) suggest that levels of moral reasoning may depend on the offence, and Kohlberg's theory may not apply to all forms of crime.

Cognitive Distortions

Cognitive distortions are errors or biases in people's information processing system which are characterised by faulty thinking.

Gibbs (1993) suggested that people use cognitive distortions to rationalise their behaviour.

Cognitive distortions may blame other people and mislabel an offenders behaviour or actions.

Researchers linked cognitive distortions to the way in which offenders interpret other people's behaviour and justify their own actions.

Criminals make attributions for their crimes that allow them to reduce their feelings of guilt.

Cognitive distortions can make some people more likely to commit crime because of the way they process information.

There are two types of cognitive distortion; hostile attribution bias and minimalisation.

Hostile Attribution Bias

Attribution bias is the tendency to explain a person's behaviour by referring to their character rather than any situational factor.

Attribution bias can be internal or external. An internal attribution bias is when a person accepts responsibility for their own behaviour and see the cause as within themselves, whereas an external attribution bias is when a person sees the cause of their behaviour as outside of them.

Many offenders will adopt an external attribution bias, which allows them to blame someone or something in the environment, rather than take responsibility for their own actions.

Gudjonsson & Bownes (1991) found that violent offenders had the highest external attribution compared to other offenders.

Gudjonsson & Bownes (2002) examined the relationship between the type of offence and the attributions offenders made about their criminal behaviour. They concluded that violent criminals are more likely to make external attributions for their crimes.

Hostile attribution bias is the tendency to interpret the behaviour of others as threatening, aggressive or both.

People who exhibit the hostile attribution bias think that ambiguous behaviour from other people is hostile and directed at them personally.

Offenders often respond to perceived hostility in a violent or aggressive manner.

Evidence suggests the propensity for violence is often associated with a tendency to misinterpret the actions of others and to assume that others are being confrontational when they are not. This is called a hostile attribution bias.

Dodge et al (1990) gave 128 boys in a young offenders institute a task to assess hostile attributions. They found a correlation between attributional biases and reactive angry aggression.

Offenders may misread non-aggressive cues and this may trigger an often violent response.

Schonenberg & Jusyte (2014) presented 55 violent offenders with images of emotionally ambiguous facial expressions. When compared to a control group, the violent offenders were significantly more likely to perceive the images as angry or hostile.

Cognitive distortions may begin in childhood and correlations have been made between aggressive children and those with hostile attribution biases.

Cognitive distortions are one way of understanding the criminal mind, they help us see some of the reasoning behind the actions criminals make.

Minimalisation

Minimalisation is an attempt to deny or downplay the seriousness of an offence.

The cognitive bias of minimalisation operates to minimise the actions of the offender, in order to reduce their feelings of guilt. They manage their own emotions by rationalising their actions in a way that fails to recognise the impact on other people.

Kennedy & Grubin (1992) found that a majority, in a sample of sex offenders blamed their crime on the actions of the victim.

Minimalisation is often used to excuse or protect the perpetrator from feeling guilt over their actions. For example, a shoplifter may claim that a large supermarket is making large profits and will not miss a few items.

Bandura (1973) refers to minimalisation by applying a euphemistic label to behaviour. For example criminals may believe their actions are justified as they are doing it for the good of their family.

A moral disengagement mechanism identified by Bandura (1973) is euphemistic labelling. This mechanism refers to the process of altering language in order to detract from the emotional intensity of the reality being referenced.

Research studies suggest that individuals who commit sexual offences are particularly prone to minimalisation.

Barbaree (1991) found among 26 incarcerated rapists, 54% denied they had committed an offence at all and a further 40% minimised the harm that they had caused to the victim.

Evaluation

One strength of cognitive distortions as an explanation for offending is its application to therapy.

Cognitive explanations for offending offer a potential treatment for crime, as changing cognitions should alter behaviour. This is often done through CBT or restorative justice programmes.

Cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) aims to challenge irrational thinking and encourages offenders to face up to what they have done and establish a less distorted view of their actions.

Harkins et al (2010) suggest that reduced incidents of denial and minimalisation in therapy is highly associated with a reduced risk of reoffending, and accepting responsibility for their own crime is an important aspect of rehabilitation.

Howitt & Sheldon (2007) gathered questionnaire responses from sexual offenders and found that non-contact sex offenders used more cognitive distortions than contact sex offenders. Those with a previous history of offending were also more likely to use distortions as a justification.

Holtzworth-Munroe & Hutchinson (1993) showed a potential link between hostile attribution bias and domestic violence.

Gudjonsson & Bownes (2002) found that violent criminals and offenders showed a strong consistency in the way they attributed blame to their crimes.

One limitation of the idea of cognitive distortion depends on the type of offence that has been committed, as many distortions are not used in the same way by all offenders.

Minimalisation does not explain the cause of offending behaviour but rather is used to justify it and remove guilt. This is a coping strategy that can differ between individuals.

Most research into the cognitive explanations of crime use hypothetical situations/ scenarios which lack ecological validity, as there are no consequences in such cases.

Cognitive theories help us understand how some offenders think, but they rely on the self-reported information from offenders themselves which may be subjective.

Cognitive theories do not help predict future offending behaviour, so may not be that useful in helping reduce crime.

Differential Association Theory

Sutherland (1939) proposed the differential association theory.

The theory of differential association is a social explanation for crime.

Differential association theory assumes that criminal behaviour is learned through interaction with others.

Differential association suggests that criminal behaviour allows individuals to learn the values, attitudes, techniques and motives from other people.

The differential association theory is based on principles from the learning theory which suggests that criminal behaviour is learned through association or interaction with others.

The principal part of the learning of criminal behaviour occurs within intimate personal groups.

The process of learning criminal behaviour by association with criminal and anti-criminal patterns involves all of the mechanisms that are involved in any other learning (e.g. classical conditioning, operant conditioning, social learning theory).

Differential associations may vary in frequency, duration and intensity.

Criminal behaviour is often learned from other people around the individual that are also committing crime.

Offending behaviour arises from two factors; learned attitudes towards offending, and the learning of specific offending techniques.

Learning attitudes stems from social interactions where individuals are exposed to the values and attitudes of the group. If these beliefs are negative or anti-social, offenders are more likely to learn and conform to these norms.

Learned attitudes towards offending can be positive or negative.

Positive attitudes towards offending include the belief that it will bring rewards such as money, status, power, excitement etc.

Negative attitudes towards offending include the belief that it brings punishment such as imprisonment, fines, loss of job etc.

Learning techniques in criminal behaviour occur when individuals are exposed to pro-crime attitudes and are shown particular techniques for committing offences.

Socialisation in prison can also encourage offenders to adopt learned criminal techniques, which may help them commit more crime on the outside.

Many criminals, despite time in prison will go on to reoffend and it is reasonable to assume that whilst inside prison they learn specific techniques to aid offending from other people.

The differential association theory of offending is supported by the Cambridge Study in delinquency development by Farrington et al (2006).

Farrington et al (2006) conducted a longitudinal study using 411 boys from the East End of London. Results showed at 41% had criminal convictions between the ages of 10 and 50 years, and 91% of those who started committing crimes between 10 and 13 years were reconvicted at least once.

Farrington et al (2006) identified key risks for criminality such as poor parenting, poverty, family criminality and low school achievement.

Alarid et al (2000) found that differential association could explain convicts offending as a product of their social associations.

Osborne & West (1982) found that 40% of the sons of convicted criminals also had convictions by the age of 18, whereas only 13% of sons of non-criminal fathers had a conviction.

Walmsley et al (1992) found that 1/3 of the prison population in the UK also had relatives in prison too.

Evaluation

Differential association theory can explain all types of offending not just violent crime.

The theory of differential association has been shown to have some validity, as on the surface it helps explain anti-social behaviour such as gang related crime, where gang members learn from each other.

Sutherland (1939) was fundamental in the social explanation of crime as his theory moved emphasis away from biological accounts of offending.

Sutherland's (1939) differential association theory accounts for offending within all sectors of society, from the working class to the middle class.

The differential association theory supports the nurture debate, suggesting offending behaviour is caused by environmental factors.

Social explanations of crime are very deterministic, focusing on factors in the environment which ignores any influence from free will.

Differential association does not explain crimes of passion or impulsive, opportunistic crime.

The social explanation of crime fails to explain individual differences such as morality or thinking styles.

Sutherland's (1939) differential association theory lacks scientific credibility as many of the concepts he describes are not testable because they cannot be operationalised.

Differential association runs the risk of stereotyping individuals who come from less affluent backgrounds or are exposed to more crime in their community.

The differential association theory does not explain why some people who are exposed to criminality do not go on to become criminals themselves.

The differential association theory does not account for genetic factors which may play a part in criminal behaviour.

Psychodynamic Explanations

Psychodynamic explanations originate from the work of Sigmund Freud. Although Freud himself did not address the issue of offending behaviour, other psychologists have attempted to apply some of his key theories to this behaviour.

Psychodynamic explanations describe innate instincts and unconscious drives that influence the mind and impact on behaviour.

Freud describes the unconscious mind as a controlling force on all human behaviour. This idea suggested behaviour was driven by an instinctual energy that has come to be known as the 'libido'.

According to Freud the libido controls behaviour at an unconscious level. This is evident in his theory of psychosexual development.

Freud's theory of psychosexual development is made up of five key stages that determine a child's development. These stages are the oral, anal, phallic, latency and genital stage.

Freud believed that fixation during the psychosexual stages of development, leads to characteristic behaviours in adulthood.

During the phallic stage children experience either the Oedipus (boys) or Electra (girls) complex. They resolve this by identifying with the same-sex parent and internalise their behaviours. This might explain why children imitate their parents behaviours.

Freud developed a tripartite theory of personality which included the Id, Ego and Superego.

Freud's personality theory (1923) saw the psyche structured into three parts; the Id, Ego and Superego

The Id instinct is known as the pleasure principle and seeks to satisfy the libido with immediate gratification. This stage occurs between the ages of 0-2 years.

The Ego is the mediator who tries to balance the demands of the Id instinct and the Superego. This is known as the reality principle and occurs between the ages of 3-4 years.

The Ego engages in secondary process thinking, which is rational, realistic, and orientated towards problem-solving.

If the Ego fails in its attempt to use the reality principle, and anxiety is experienced, unconscious defence mechanisms are employed, to help ward off unpleasant feelings such as anxiety.

The Superego is known as the morality principle and has the function of persuading the Ego to turn to moralistic goals rather than simple, realistic ones and to strive for perfection.

The Superego is developed during the phallic stage which is approximately 5-6 years old.

The Superego which works on the morality principle exerts its influence by punishing the Ego through guilt or wrongdoing, whilst rewarding it with pride for good moral behaviour.

The Superego consists of two systems; the conscience and the ideal self. The conscience can punish the Ego through causing feelings of guilt.

The ideal self (or ego-ideal) is an imaginary picture of how you ought to be, and represents career aspirations, how to treat other people, and how to behave as a member of society. Behaviour which falls short of the ideal self may be punished by the Superego through guilt.

The Superego's function is to control the Id's impulses, especially those which society forbids, such as sex and aggression.

The Superego is the product of nurture and it is developed through interaction with parents and is concerned with knowing what is right and wrong.

According to Freud unconscious aspects of the Superego include the standards that we try to live up to (our ego-ideal), which lead to the experience of guilt or 'conscience' when we fail.

One psychologist that uses Freud's psychodynamic explanations is Blackburn (1993). He argued that if the Superego is inadequate then offending behaviour is inevitable.

Blackburn (1993) argued that if the Superego is deviant, the Id instinct is given free rein to control immediate instincts which may be inappropriate behaviours.

One suggestion for offending behaviour is a weak or deviant Superego.

An underdeveloped or weak Superego suggests a lack of identification with the same-sex parent. This means the Superego is unable to control the Id's instincts and need for immediate gratification.

The absence of a same-sex parent during the phallic stage means there is no chance to identify with that parent and internalise their moral code, so the Superego is not sufficiently punitive and does not cause guilt.

If a same-sex parent with whom the child identifies in the phallic stage of development is immoral, the child will internalise a deviant moral code.

An overdeveloped or strong Superego makes a person feel guilty all of the time so may engage in criminal behaviour in order to be punished.

An over-harsh Superego is based on identification with a parent who has firm rules but forgives transgressions.

If the Superego is so overcontrolling it stops even trivial behaviour that it regards as immoral, resulting in a build-up of pressure until the person is overwhelmed. This may explain why some offenders erupt into violence.

A deviant Superego develops when a child internalises the moral values of a deviant parent. This will increase the likelihood of offending behaviour.

The effect of an inadequate superego is to allow primitive, emotional demands to become the uppermost in guiding moral behaviour. This means that lack of guilt is relevant to understanding the offending behaviour.

According to Freud (1936) thoughts and desires that cause anxiety or guilt are managed by the Ego. Offending behaviour results from Ego defences which are employed to manage these negative feelings.

Defence mechanisms such as denial, displacement and sublimation are unconscious processes which protect the ego from harm. These mechanisms may be employed by offenders to reduce their feelings of guilt.

Sublimation is a defence mechanism where a strong, socially unacceptable desire is expressed in an alternative form of behaviour. For example, a desire to kill a sibling, may be sublimated to animal cruelty.

Another psychologist following on from Freud's work is Bowlby (1952) and his idea of maternal deprivation. He argued that a break in the maternal bond during childhood increases the likelihood of delinquent behaviour.

Bowlby's work on attachment explains how the theory of maternal deprivation can affect a child's development later in life.

Bowlby claimed that if a child loses a continuous and loving relationship with their mother in the first two years of life, the results are irreversible affectionless psychopathy, intellectual retardation and delinquency.

Bowlby argued that the ability to form meaningful relationships in adulthood was dependent upon the child forming a strong emotional bond with a mother figure. Failure to establish this attachment during the first few critical years, increases the likelihood that the child will experience a number of damaging and irreversible consequences later in life.

Bowlby proposed that disruption of the attachment relationship with the mother in early childhood affects a child's internal working model. This framework forms the foundation for expectations and behaviours in future relationships.

Bowlby believed that disruption of the primary infant-caregiver relationship could lead to a higher incidence of juvenile delinquency, emotional difficulties and antisocial behaviour.

Bowlby suggested that maternal deprivation affects a child's internal working model, and without empathy they become less caring towards others. This may explain why some people go on to offend.

Bowlby (1952) created the theory of maternal deprivation following his research on 44 thieves.

Bowlby (1944) studied the behaviour of 44 delinquent thieves who had experienced a break in the maternal bond during the critical period in early childhood.

Bowlby (1944) interviewed 44 boys and their families and found that the delinquents displayed particular personality traits such as affectionless psychopathy, which is characterised by a lack of guilt, empathy and feeling for others.

Bowlby suggested that the negative effects of maternal deprivation are responsible for developmental issues later in life.

Bowlby (1952) reported that 60 children who had spent time apart from their mothers in a tuberculosis sanatorium before the age of 4 showed lower achievement in school.

Evaluation

Psychodynamic explanations were some of the first to link early childhood experiences to moral behaviour and offending.

Psychodynamic explanations also draw attention to the emotional basis of offending. This is a factor which is largely ignored in other explanations such as those in the cognitive approach.

Goreta (1991) conducted a Freudian-style analysis of 10 offenders referred for psychiatric treatment. In all those assessed, disturbances in Superego formation were diagnosed.

Goreta (1991) claimed that offenders experienced unconscious feelings of guilt and the need for self-punishment. Goreta explained this as a result of an over-harsh Superego.

The idea of an inadequate superego is not generally supported. If this theory were correct, we would expect harsh, punitive parents to raise children who constantly experience feelings of guilt and anxiety. This is not the case.

Kochanska et al (2001) found that parents who rely on harsher forms of discipline tend to raise children who are rebellious and rarely express feelings of guilt or self-criticism.

Much of the research into the psychodynamic explanations of offending are correlational associations which do not account for other external factors.

Lewis (1954) analysed data from interviews with 500 young people and found that maternal deprivation was a poor predictor of future offending.

Freud's theory has been criticised because there is little empirical evidence supporting his ideas about the role of unconscious processes in crime. It also fails to explain why only a small proportion of people commit crimes despite having similar backgrounds or psychological profiles.

Individual differences play a part in understanding offending behaviour and these may not be considered in the psychodynamic explanations.

Many people without a same-sex parent with whom they can identify, grow up to be perfect law abiding citizens.

Freud claimed greater fear in boys leads to a stronger Superego than in girls, which should mean that males are more moral. However statistics show that males commit more crime.

Freud's theory suggests that girls developer weaker Superego compared to boys. This is due to a lack of intense emotion associated with the castration anxiety felt during the Oedipus complex.

According to Freud a girl's Superego, and sense of morality is not as developed as those of boys. This would imply that women should be more prone to offending than men. However statistics based on prison populations tend to show that men in the UK are 20 times more likely to be imprisoned than women.

Hoffman (1975) found little evidence of gender differences in offending behaviour concerning morality. He suggested that in fact little girls tended to be more moral than little boys.

Psychodynamic explanations are very unscientific as they lack credible supporting evidence.

Psychodynamic theories are difficult to test scientifically because they concern unconscious motivations.

The validity of Bowlby's theory is low because in longitudinal research there is such a large gap between the initial maternal deprivation and the subsequent delinquent behaviour. During this time there are other uncontrolled variables that may have affected whether a person engages in criminal behaviour.

Bowlby's research is gender biased as the theory is based on findings from studies using boys who had experienced separation from their primary caregiver. This is androcentric.

The outcome of Bowlby's research focused on the disrupted bond between a child and its mother, which can have negative implications by placing blame on mothers.

Psychodynamic theories are very deterministic and fail to account for free will in offending behaviour.

Freudian explanations of offending behaviour are criticised for being too simplistic and ignoring the complexity of human nature.

Many supporting research studies for the psychodynamic explanation of offending behaviour have small samples and therefore are not generalisable.

These theories lack predictive validity as they are unable to forecast who will offend and how it will happen.

Freudian explanations of offending behaviour are culturally bound as they were developed during a specific period in history when social norms were different than today.

Dealing with Offending Behaviour

Recidivism

Recidivism is the rate at which people reoffend after punishment.

Recidivism is the relapse into criminal behaviour after being convicted and punished for a crime.

Recidivism is a key measure of the effectiveness of the criminal justice system.

Recidivism rates in ex-prisoners tell us to what extent prison acts as an effective deterrent.

It is difficult to obtain clear figures for recidivism rates as it can depend on whether the figures are within a year of release or longer.

Typically in the UK, the Ministry of Justice reports proven figures within one year of release (this means the person has been caught).

Yukhnenko et al (2019) reported recidivism rates to be about 45% in the UK.

The UK Ministry of Justice (2013) showed that 47% of prisoners reoffended within a year of release from prison. This increases to 59% for offenders who serve a sentence of less than one year.

It is suggested by the UK Ministry of Justice (2013) that 73% of under 18s convicted of a crime will reoffend within a year of release.

Recidivism rates vary with time period after release, age of offender and crime committed. There are also cross-cultural variations. The USA, Australia and Denmark regularly record rates in excess of 60%, whereas in Norway rates are as low as 20% (Yukhnenko et al, 2019).

Yukhnenko et al (2019) suggested that recidivism rates are significantly lower in Norway because there is less emphasis on incarceration and more emphasis on rehabilitation.

The data on recidivism may be unreliable as only those who are caught reoffending are included in the statistics. In reality the true figures are likely to be much higher.

The data on the causes of recidivism may not be valid, as when offenders are asked why they reoffend, they often lack insight into their own motivations and blame the system rather than taking accountability themselves.

The National Audit Office (2012) suggested that reoffending is estimated to cost the UK economy between £9.5 and £13 billion per year.

As the cost of reoffending is so high it is important that sentencing has an agenda of rehabilitation and education.

Equipping offenders for life after prison is a major challenge for the criminal justice system.

Gillis et al (2005) found a 15% drop in recidivism rates when prisoners were given training and support to enter the workplace on their release from prison.

There are many reasons why prison is not effective and reoffending rates are high such as institutionalisation, ineffective punishment and mental health or substance misuse issues.

Institutionalisation is a feeling of dependence from an inmate towards life in prison. For some prisoners, the routine of life in prison is better than that outside. They often cannot cope with the demands of life and end up reoffending in order to return to prison.

Ineffective punishment suggests that prison is not working. In many cases there is a long delay between committing the crime and being admitted to prison, this lessens the effect of punishment.

Many people sentenced to prison have pre-existing mental health disorders and addictions, some of which may have played a part in why they committed the crime. For many prisoners, these issues are not treated and so when they are released, they reoffend.

Custodial Sentencing & the Psychological Effects

Once an offender is convicted of a crime, sentences are issued which may include going to prison.

Custodial sentencing involves a convicted offender spending time in prison or another closed institution such as a young offenders institute or psychiatric hospital.

Dealing with offender behaviour is an important part of the criminal justice system.

A custodial sentence involves the offender serving the time in either a prison or a young offenders institute.

Custodial sentencing is when an offender is sent to prison for a time which is dependent on the severity of their crime.

Custodial sentencing aims to act as a deterrent by providing an unpleasant experience to put offenders off from engaging in criminal behaviour in the future.

Custodial sentencing aims to act as a deterrent through social learning and vicarious reinforcement, by showing the negative consequences of crime and stopping other people becoming criminals.

Custodial sentencing is a form of retribution which makes the criminal pay for what they have done. It also acts as a form of confinement so they cannot reoffend.

Custodial sentencing can include rehabilitation of the criminal to help reduce the risk of reoffending once they are released.

Custodial sentences aim to protect the public, rehabilitate the offender, show retribution or punishment and deter others from offending.

Incapacitation is where the offender is taken out of society to prevent them from reoffending as a means of protecting the public.

The need for incapacitation can depend upon the severity of the crime and the nature of the offender. More violent or serial offenders will need to be kept on remand or imprisoned.

While in prison the public is protected, as criminals cannot commit more crime. This is most effective with dangerous, violent offenders.

Custodial sentencing offers rehabilitation to help offenders change their behaviour or gain qualifications which may help them when they are out of prison.

Prison should provide opportunities to develop skills and training or to access treatment programmes (e.g. drug addiction or anger management), as well as giving the offender a chance to reflect on their crime.

Custodial sentencing is a way for offenders to show retribution and pay back their debt to society. The time in prison often reflects the severity of their crime.

Many people see prison as the best possible form of retribution and believe that alternatives are soft options.

Onepoll (2015) found that 47% of respondents in a recent survey say the primary purpose of prison is to punish the offender for their crime. Many believed that current prison regimes are too soft and would not deter future criminals.

Custodial sentencing should deter other offenders from committing crime; however many criminals are caught in a cycle of reoffending.

Cullen & Minchin (2000) tracked prisoners and found 57% reoffended within two years, and for younger males the rate was 76%.

Walker & Farrington (1981) found the length of sentence made little difference to whether or not criminals reoffended.

Prison can have negative psychological effects on offenders.

There are several psychological effects associated with serving time in prison; stress and depression, institutionalisation and prisonisation.

Stress and depression are common psychological effects of imprisonment. Offenders could already suffer from mental health conditions but also the stress of the prison experience can increase the likelihood of developing psychological effects.

Bukshel & Kilmann (1980) found common reactions to imprisonment were restlessness, anxiety and sleeplessness.

According to a Ministry of Justice (2015) survey, many prisoners have pre-existing mental health problems and many more develop them in prison. It is estimated that 26% of female inmates and 16% of male inmates suffer from mental health.

Suicide is a serious psychological effect of imprisonment. Within prison 10% of suicides occur within the first 24 hours.

40% of suicides in prison are within the first month and 80% within the first year.

Studies of prison suicide have highlighted the importance of both individual and institutional factors.

Many risk factors for suicide have included a history of mental health, substance misuse and relationship difficulties.

Institutionalisation is where offenders adapt to the norms and routines of prison life and may become so accustomed to these, they are no longer able to function on the outside.

Some prisoners become dependent on the institution for a routine in their normal lives. In prison they are told when to wake up, when to sleep and when to eat. Many offenders prefer this routine and find it difficult to control their own lives on the outside.

Prisonisation refers to the way in which prisoners are socialised into adopting an 'inmate code'. Behaviour that may be considered unacceptable in the outside world may be encouraged and rewarded inside prison.

Evaluation

Custodial sentencing is an effective way of keeping dangerous, violent offenders away from society, preventing any further crime.

One strength of custodial sentencing is it provides an opportunity for training and treatment.

Shirley (2019) at the Vera Institute of Justice, claims that offenders who take part in college education programmes are 43% less likely to reoffend following their release.

The Stanford prison study (Zimbardo, 1973) shows how easy it is for people to become institutionalised in prison.

Hollin (1992) found that some prisoners preferred prison to their own home life due to the regular meals and routine, suggesting it is not effective as a deterrent.

One limitation of custodial sentencing is the negative psychological effect on prisoners.

According to Dooley (1990), self-harm and suicide rates in prison are high, especially amongst younger inmates and those on remand. This supports the view that mental health is affected by imprisonment.

Snow (2006) found that prisoners displaying mental health issues such as depression were at higher risk of suicide and self-harm.

Bartol (1995) suggested that for many offenders, imprisonment can be brutal, demeaning and generally devastating.

According to the Ministry of Justice a record 119 people killed themselves in prisons in England and Wales in 2016. This was an increase of 32% on the previous year according to The Guardian (2017).

A study conducted by the Prison Reform Trust (2014) found that 25% of women and 15% of men in prison reported symptoms of psychosis (e.g. schizophrenia).

Prison can have negative psychological effects on mental health.

There may be confounding variables that influence the link between prison and its psychological effects.

The importation model argues that prisoners may import some of their psychological problems which makes it difficult to know if the problem lies with the prison regime or within the individual.

It is difficult to generalise the psychological effects of imprisonment because prison regimes vary and individuals cope with prison life in different ways.

There are many studies that support the view that oppressive prison regimes may be detrimental to psychological health which could impact on rehabilitation.

Reoffending rates after custodial sentences suggests that prison neither rehabilitates nor deters.

The prison population in the UK continues to rise suggesting custodial sentencing is not an effective deterrent to criminals.

Prison is expensive compared to other types of sentencing such as community orders.

According to the National Audit Office there is no correlation between the number of people in prison and criminal offences, suggesting confinement is not working.

Loss of contacts and employment make it more difficult for the offender to stay out of trouble in the future.

A limitation of custodial sentencing is offenders may learn to become better criminals.

Prison is sometimes referred to as a ‘school for crime’ and imprisonment gives younger inmates an opportunity to learn from experienced offenders.

Offenders may acquire criminal contacts whilst in prison that they may follow up when they are released, this undermines any rehabilitation process.

It is difficult to measure the effectiveness of custodial sentences without in depth longitudinal research.

Rehabilitation in prison is not currently effective as recidivism rates are high.

Behaviour Modification in Custody

One of the aims of custodial sentences is to provide rehabilitation for prisoners. This includes behaviour modification such as token economy programmes.

Behaviour modification is based on operant conditioning where desirable behaviours are reinforced.

Token economy programmes are examples of behaviour modification and can be used within institutions to encourage desirable behaviour.

Token economies modify behaviour by giving tokens for desirable behaviour, which can be exchanged for genuine rewards.

Tokens act a secondary reinforcers which are issued by prison staff when the prisoner exhibits desirable behaviour. These are later exchanged for genuine rewards a prisoner values, such as cigarettes or phone cards.

In prison tokens are exchanged for genuine rewarding items or privileges, such as phone calls, time in the gym or extra food. These are examples of primary reinforcers.

Tokens can be removed when prisoners demonstrate undesirable behaviour. The threat of losing tokens acts as negative reinforcement for more desirable behaviour.

Token economy programmes can be used in prisons to encourage desirable behaviour and manage aggressive behaviour with inmates.

Desirable behaviour in a token economy programme must be objective and measurable and agreed with prison staff and inmates in advance.

Staff and prisoners using token economy programmes should be made aware of the scoring system before it begins. Staff will need training at the start of the programme.

Evaluation

One strength of behaviour modification imprisons is it there is evidence to support its use.

Cohen & Filipczak (1971) compared two groups of young male prisoners. One group was reinforced with tokens exchangeable for phone calls, tobacco and family visits. The other group was a control group which did not receive any treatment. Prisoners on the token economy programme showed more desirable behaviour and less reoffending for up to two years.

Hobbs & Holt (1976) tested young offenders in institutions and found that the behaviour of prisoners improved when they were placed on a token economy programme compared to a control group.

Field et al (2004) found a token economy programme used with young people with behavioural problems was generally effective, especially if the rewards were immediate.

Behaviour modification is relatively straightforward to set up within a prison environment.

Token economy programmes are dependent on the individual motivation of the offenders. The rewards also have to have some genuine value otherwise the system does not work.

Rice et al (1990) found that token economy programmes only work on some prisoners and that many of the improvements are only short term.

Token economy programmes must be administered fairly and consistently, if this is not the case, they are not effective.

Reppucci & Saunders (1974) found that token economy programmes often vary in consistency between prisons and can vary within the same prison itself. This means they are not effective as a form of behaviour modification.

Bassett & Blanchard (1977) suggest the success of token economy programmes depends on a consistent approach from prison staff. They found any benefits were lost if staff applied the techniques inconsistently.

Token economy programmes can be seen as a form of social control and it could be argued that this breaches the human rights of prisoners by only giving them the things they want when they perform appropriately.

Token economy systems are limited to the institution in which they are used, often they do not work outside of this, so lack ecological validity.

Offenders could easily play along with a token economy system in order to access the rewards but may not produce any change in their overall behaviour.

Once out of prison many offenders quickly regress back to their former behaviour, suggesting that behaviour modification is limited to the controlled environment of prison.

Behaviour modification may not have a long term benefit, as the desirable behaviours may be quickly lost when prisoners are released.

Alternative treatments which use more cognitive skills such as anger management may lead to more permanent behavioural change.

Moya & Achtenberg (1974) describe behaviour modification as manipulative and dehumanising.

Many Human Rights Campaigners argue that the controlled access to privileges in token economy programmes are unethical.

Anger Management

Anger management is an intervention aimed at reducing recidivism by using cognitive behavioural therapy to tackle violence and aggression. It is often used with offenders in prison.

Anger management programmes in prison assume that offenders commit crimes because they cannot control their anger.

Anger management aims to modify the effect of anger and decrease the likelihood of offending by changing how the perpetrators of violence respond to the physiological changes that they experience during angry outbursts.

Anger management was a technique developed by Novoco in the 1970s and has been widely used to combat the effects of anger with prisoners.

Novoco (1975) suggests that cognitive factors trigger the emotional arousal which generally precedes aggressive acts.

Becoming angry is reinforced by the individuals feeling of control in that situation and as such anger management programmes are a form of CBT.

Novoco (1974) described anger management as a form of CBT, involving 3 stages; cognitive preparation, skill acquisition and application practice.

Cognitive preparation in anger management encourages offenders to recognise their feelings of anger and any events that may trigger an angry response.

In cognitive preparation, prisoners are encouraged to talk with a therapist and identify triggers that make them feel angry. They are then encouraged to think about whether these thoughts are rational and how other people might see the situation.

In cognitive preparation an offender is required to reflect on past experience and consider the typical pattern of their anger. They then learn to identify situations which act as triggers for their anger.

Skill acquisition in anger management teaches offenders techniques to control their angry responses in order to deal with situations differently in the future.

During skill acquisition prisoners are taught coping strategies and skills that allow them to control their anger and handle their emotions more effectively. This can include relaxation training or assertiveness training.

In skill acquisition offenders are introduced to a range of techniques and skills to help them deal with anger provoking situations.

During skill acquisition prisoners are encouraged to use positive self-talk to encourage calmness. This helps them rationalise their thought processes and helps to relax the mind.

Assertiveness training is used in skill acquisition and teaches prisoners how to communicate more effectively in anger provoking situations.

Many prisoners will need to deal with their physical reaction to anger, so relaxation techniques or meditation are used as part of the skill acquisition process.

Application practise in anger management encourages offenders to practise the skills they have learnt through role play, in order to control their anger in a non-threatening environment.

During application practise in anger management offenders are encouraged to try out the skills they have learnt and get feedback from others about how they handled the situation. This is often done in small groups using role play.

Application practise requires a certain amount of commitment from the offender in that they must see each scenario as real. If they deal with the situation appropriately, they will be given positive reinforcement by the therapist.

Keen et al (2000) studied the progress made with young offenders who took part in a nationally recognised anger management programme and found the final outcome after a month was generally positive.

The National Anger Management Package was developed by the UK prison service in 1992. The programme is intensive and usually involves eight 2-hour sessions.

Ireland (2000) investigated the usefulness of group based anger management programmes with young male offenders. Pre and post programme self-report anger scores were taken from an experimental group of prisoners and a control group. Offenders on the anger management programme showed significant reductions in angry outbursts.

Ireland (2000) found 92% of offenders on an anger management programme improved on at least one measure and 48% improved on two measures. It was concluded that anger management programmes successfully reduce anger and disruptive behaviour.

Evaluation

Anger management gives offenders an insight into why they experience anger and provide them with skills to control it.

Anger management programmes have a more positive outcome on reducing recidivism rates when compared to other forms of behaviour modification.

Anger management tries to tackle the underlying causes of offending which includes the cognitive processes that trigger angry outbursts, and subsequent offending behaviour.

Anger management may give offenders an insight into the cause of their criminality and allow them to self-discover ways of managing themselves outside the prison setting.

Anger management programmes are effective in reducing anger within prisons but only if they are well managed.

Ireland (2004) tested anger management programmes on a prison population and found a 92% improvement in behaviour compared to a control group. This suggests that anger management is an effective treatment.

Blackburn (1993) suggest that whilst anger management has some short term benefits there is very little evidence that it reduces recidivism in the long term.

Application practise on an anger management programme does not reflect a real world situation, so role-playing behaviours lack ecological validity.

Individual differences play a part in the success of anger management programmes as they are reliant on the intrinsic motivation of the offender themselves.

Anger management programmes are not effective with offenders who do not commit crime related to aggression and violence. This means the treatment is not effective for all offenders.

One limitation of anger management is that success may depend on individual factors.

Howells et al (2005) conducted an investigation with Australian offenders and found that participation in an anger management programme had little overall impact when compared to a control group.

Anger management programmes require a high level of offender motivation, so will only be effective with those who wish to change.

Anger management programmes fail to consider individuals who may produce more testosterone, which might be responsible for their aggressive behaviour.

Much of the data on anger management programmes relies on self-reports and therefore may lack validity, as prisoners might exaggerate their improvements.

It is hard to measure whether anger management programmes produce long term benefits, as individual cases are not followed up outside of prison.

Anger management will only be effective in reducing hostile aggression (which stems from anger), as not all aggression is hostile.

In prison it is often advantageous for offenders to hold a higher status in the hierarchy by behaving more aggressively. This may limit the uptake on anger management programmes.

Anger management programmes are expensive to run as they require the services of highly trained specialists who are used to dealing with violent offenders.

Anger management suggests there is a relationship between anger and offending which may not be the case. Loza & Loza-Fanous (1999) found no differences in levels of anger between offenders classed as violent and those classed as non-violent.

Restorative Justice Programmes

Restorative justice is an idea to encourage offenders to appreciate the consequences of their actions. Offenders will meet with victims or their families to repent or help explain the circumstances surrounding the crime.

Collaboration between offenders and victims is at the heart of restorative justice and this is fundamentally different from all other forms of punishment.

Restorative justice aims to get criminals to empathise with the victim and understand the human consequences of their crime. In doing so it is hoped that this changes their cognitions. It also provides the victim with a voice to express their feelings.

During restorative justice, an offender will meet with the victim or family to see the consequences of their actions and allow the victims to have their say.

Restorative justice programmes are carried out by trained mediators who supervise the meeting. They are usually in a non-courtroom setting.

It is important that restorative justice programmes have active participation from those involved in the process and the focus is on a positive outcome for both victims and offenders.

Restorative justice may occur pre-trial or could run alongside a prison sentence or offer an incentive to reduce the length of a sentence.

Restorative justice can be used as an alternative to prosecution, particularly in young offenders where it might serve as a final warning.

Restorative justice programmes can be face to face encounters or practical reparation where offenders do something positive to account for their actions.

The Restorative Justice Council (RJC) is an independent body whose role is to establish clear standards for the use of restorative justice.

Some restorative justice programmes do not involve the victim as they may be ordered by the court.

Evaluation

The Restorative Justice Council (RJC) reported the results of a seven-year research project (Shapland et al, 2008), where 85% of survivors reported satisfaction with the process of meeting their offender face to face.

Shapland et al (2008) reported 78% would recommend restorative justice to other people experiencing a similar situation.

According to Strang et al (2013) who conducted a meta-analysis of 10 studies, compared offenders who experienced face to face restorative justice with those who just experienced custodial sentencing. The restorative justice group was significantly less likely to reoffend.

Bain (2012) found lower recidivism rates with adult offenders who had experienced one to one restorative justice.

Many studies suggest that restorative justice has a positive impact on reoffending maybe more so for some types of offence than others.

Restorative justice programmes are often relatively cheap and easy to administer.

Sherman & Strang (2007) conducted a large scale multicultural study and found that restorative justice changed offenders perspectives and reduced recidivism.

Sherman & Strang (2007) also found that victim's mental health benefited from restorative justice by reducing post-traumatic stress.

Restorative justice programmes often have high attrition rates and only work when both the victim and the perpetrator is highly motivated to complete the programme.

Wood & Suzuki (2016) argue that restorative justice is not survivor-focused but is perhaps only a way of helping rehabilitate offenders. This suggests that the needs of the survivor may be seen as secondary to the need to rehabilitate the offender.

Much of the evaluation of restorative justice programmes depend on self-report data from victims and offenders. This information is often unreliable and can be subject to social desirability.

Victims are often reluctant to meet the offender, so restorative justice may not work in all cases.

In cases of domestic violence, restorative justice may not be an appropriate way of dealing with offender behaviour.

Liebman (2016) argues the main concern with domestic abuse cases is the power imbalance, and the pressure put onto the victims. This has serious ethical implications.

It is difficult to measure the effectiveness of restorative justice without in depth longitudinal research.

One limitation of restorative justice is that offenders may abuse the system. Not all offenders benefit from restorative justice and may go on to reoffend. Are they taking part because they genuinely regret their behaviour or is it just to tick a box.