

LOMBROSO – ATAVISTIC THEORY

- Lombroso was the first person to give criminology scientific credibility. Before this time criminal behaviour was seen as something criminals chose to do, Lombroso challenged the idea that criminals were evil or even that they had a choice in whether they chose to be criminals.
- There is research which supports Lombroso, for example: **Wu et al. (2016)** – found that facial features do give criminals away. 1,856 Chinese men (half of who had criminal convictions) were added to an artificial intelligence programme which went on to identify 83% criminals with only 6% of all men being incorrectly identified.
- In some respects, Lombroso was ahead of his time, he labelled prisons 'criminal universities' and suggested prisoners came out much worse than when they went in; given today's **recidivism** rate this is very perceptive, and his work can also be seen as the foundation of offender profiling.
- Critics point out that not everyone with atavistic features is a criminal, in fact the majority are not. If atavistic features are the cause of criminality then they should always be associated with criminal behaviour, and this simply is not the case.
- Lombroso ignored the reasons for criminal disfigurement and deformity; It may be that people from very difficult backgrounds, who we might expect to show a higher rate of criminality are also more likely to experience accidents, disease or malnutrition which could account for their appearance. Also, they might be shunned by society and be forced into criminality in order to survive.

SHELDON'S – SOMATOFORM THEORY

- Some studies (e.g., Putwain and Sammons) have confirmed the link between body build and criminality, although it is not clear that this is a direct causal link and the correlation is small. Similarly, Glueck and Glueck (1956) found in their research that in a sample of delinquents, 60% were mesomorphs, while in a non-delinquent sample there were only 31%.
- Sheldon's research was based on a reasonable sample size and importantly he used a control group. This means his methods were more reliable and scientific than Lombroso.
- One fairly obvious problem with this theory is that people's bodies change. If there was a causal link between criminality and body shape people would commit more crime if their body shape changed. This doesn't make any kind of sense.
- Criminality among mesomorphs even if it is real is probably much better explained by factors such as age, social class and education. Also, there are lots of examples of endomorph and ectomorph criminals, again the theory doesn't really stack up.

BRAIN ABNORMALITIES

- Case studies such as Phineas Gage show that there is a close relationship between brain and behaviour. Also the evidence from brain imaging techniques such as MRI and PET scan is reliable and has scientific credibility.
- Mc Isaac et al. (2016) found that people who have suffered serious head injuries are twice as likely to end up in prison (0.5% compared to 0.2%). Female prisoners were even more likely to have survived traumatic brain injuries. For women with these injuries, the risk of winding up in a Canadian federal prison was 2.76 times higher than it was for uninjured women.
- While brain injuries can be linked to criminality in a few extreme cases, they don't explain most criminality. Brain injuries are rare, criminals are not. It seems brain injuries can only explain a small fraction of crimes.
- Similarly, research which suggests a different pattern of activity in murderers' brains such as Raine et al., must also account for the many murderers who do not show this pattern. Also, most people with an abnormal brain activity are not violent, criminals or murderers.

TWIN STUDIES

- Christiansen looked at offending behaviour in identical (MZ) and non-identical twins. He found that the concordance rate was 33% for MZs and only 12% for DZs.
- This suggests that there is a strong genetic component in offending behaviour as MZ twins share the same environment and 100% of their genes, whereas DZ twins share the same environment but only 50% of the same genes. the difference between MZ and DZ twins must be attributable to their genetic make-up as their environments is the same.
- Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that offending behaviour is at the very least partly inherited (due to genes).

- One issue with twin studies is that the assumptions that MZ and DZ twins differ only in their genetics maybe false.
- MZ twins are likely to look more similar than DZ twins and are likely to be treated in a very similar way. For example they are usually dressed the same and given the same toys to play with. DZ twins on the other hand, may look quite different to each other, and may even be a different gender. MZ twins who tend to elicit special response based on their perceived similarity from those around them.
- This is important because it means that we cannot assume that offending behaviour is inherited on the base

ADOPTION STUDIES

- Some Adoption studies are another way to examine the influence of genes and environment is to look at what happens when children are adopted.
- Adopted children have a genetic link with their biological parents (nature) but the environmental link (nurture) is broken as they grow up in a new family. If they are more similar to their birth family than their adopted family then this must be because of genetic influences.

Adoption studies are not without problems, among them:

- The age of adoption may mean the adopted children have already been influenced by either their 'birth' parents or their foster environment.
- In addition, Information about a biological family is not always available.
- The adoption process is not always random, as often children are placed with parents similar to their biological families.

XYY THEORY

- There is research which supports XYY theory - some studies that suggest XYY men are over-represented in the prison population. There are 15 sufferers per 1,000 in prisons but only one per 1,000 in the general population.
- Case histories of famous criminals also support XYY theory. The serial killer John Wayne Gacy is said to have XYY syndrome. Gacy was extremely violent and sexually assaulted, tortured and killed at least 33 men in the USA.

- However, evidence to support XYY theory is not conclusive; Theilgaard (1984) researched XYY men and compared them to XY men. He found the characteristic of aggression was not associated with the XYY men.
- Also, studies have found that genetic abnormalities are widespread throughout the general population and therefore do not explain aggression.

Learning Theories

Social learning theory was based on the famous BoBo doll experiment of Albert Bandura:

- The BoBo doll experiment showed the model did have an effect on the child's, the model's behaviour was copied or imitated, often very closely. Children were likely to imitate the behaviour of role models, even if that behaviour was wrong.
- The experiment and variables, such as the gender and actions of the model, were controlled, thus allowing greater accuracy. The study has been replicated with slight changes and similar results have been found.

Many people are critical of this experiment and argue it over-simplifies learning in the real world:

- The situation involves a child and adult model in a very artificial situation. The child and the model are strangers to one another; this is not really how learning occurs in the 'real' world. 'Modelling' typically takes place within the family where children are familiar with their role models.
- Also, in the real-world role models will often offer guidance as to what is appropriate behaviour, they will explain what is right and wrong, in Bandura's experiment this did not happen.

There are also criticism of the theory of social learning:

- The theory does not account for people who turn to crime, even though they have not been exposed to criminal role models. In these cases, criminal behaviour may be better explained by innate factors (nature) such as genes or brain abnormalities.

PSYCHODYNAMIC THEORY

- Just because Freud's theories are rather odd or unusual it doesn't make them automatically wrong.
- Psychodynamic theories have contributed to research about crime and behaviour. In particular, the focus on childhood experiences and the importance of them on future behaviour should not be underestimated.
- The id, ego and superego relate to different parts of the brain, and their functions and development. The limbic system is the brain's emotion centre, rather like the id, and the pre-frontal cortex is responsible for rational decision making, just like the ego.

- The Psychodynamic theories of offending are no longer accredited by psychologists due to the difficulty of testing concepts such as unconscious mind.
- These theories are very unscientific and lack objective interpretation. It is a very subjective process where different researchers may draw different conclusions.
- Freud's main method, the case study is not regarded as a scientific method. He knew his patients and therefore could not be objective. Also, the case study method involves people recalling things from early childhood; research has shown that our memory for events that happened in childhood is very unreliable

PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY

- The Eysenck Personality Inventory (The EPI) has research which suggests it is a valid (accurate) test. For example, Dunlop et al. (2012) found that both extraversion and psychoticism, as well as lie scales, were good predictors of delinquency.
- Another study by Van Dam et al. (2007) found that only a small group of male offenders in a juvenile detention centre had high scores on all three of Eysenck's variables.

- The EPI is a 'self-report' measure and as such is subject to some of the disadvantages of this method. People can give deliberately false answers or the answer that they think the researcher want (social desirability). This makes the test less valid.
- It is very unlikely that personality can explain the broad range of crimes that criminal's commit. It seems implausible that the sort of person who spontaneously robs people in the street would be in the same kind of person that spends month planning a complicated fraud.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND MARXISM

- A key strength of Marxism is that it provides an explanation for crime that covers all social classes and a wide range of offences.
- It also highlights the impact of selective law enforcement and how white-collar crime is under-policed
- Importantly, how inequality in society can lead to criminal behaviour, and demonstrates how the law reflects differences in power between the social classes.

- A limitation is that while it is overly focussed on the issue of social class but largely ignores other non-class inequalities such as, gender or ethnicity.
- It suggests that crime is inevitable in a capitalist system because the proletariat are exploited by the bourgeoisie but this is to ignore the fact that many, if not most working-class people are law-abiding and do not commit crime. In addition, not all capitalist societies have high crime rates (consider Japan and Switzerland or example, these are very law-abiding capitalist societies.
- White-collar crime and the crime of the rich and the powerful are taken seriously and are prosecuted. Cases such as Bernie Madoff and Jeffery Epstein would suggest that all are accountable to the law.

FUNCTIONALISM

- Durkheim shows us that crime has a number of benefits for society and that a society that didn't have crime, probably wouldn't have much of a future, as crime and deviance are important drivers of social change. Durkheim also suggests other functions of crime such reinforcing the boundaries between right and wrong and enhancing social cohesion, as people unite against wrongdoers.
- A key strength of functionalism is that helps to explain why crime exists in all societies and why attempts to eliminate or even reduce crime never seem to fully work.

- Durkheim suggests societies need crime but how much crime does a society need? It's simply not possible to know what is the 'right' level of crime.
- Some societies seem to thrive with relatively high rates of crime, e.g. the USA and others have low rates of crime, Japan for example, again, which level is 'right'.
- Durkheim's is almost certainly correct when he says that crime has a function but to the burgled pensioner or the battered partner, it probably doesn't seem very functional at all. It is not a victim 'centric' theory and can appear to excuse very bad acts as being good for society.

INTERACTIONISM AND LABELLING THEORY

- Labelling theory draws attention to the consequences of being labelled a deviant including complex social phenomena such as 'the self-fulfilling prophecy' and 'master status'.
- It shifts the focus onto how the police 'create' crime by applying labels based on their stereotypes. This selective law enforcement may explain why the working class, ethnic minorities and other marginalised groups are over-represented in the official crime statistics.

- Labelling theory fails to explain why the person and the behaviour attract the label in the first place. Crime is real and not just a set of 'labels' that have been randomly applied to a bunch of people.
- It sometimes appears to ignore the victim of crime and may appear sympathetic to the 'criminal'. In fact, it goes further and turns the 'wrongdoer' into the 'victim'.
- It paints a very passive view of criminals. Criminals do not need a label to know they are doing wrong. Plus, labelling does not always lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy

RIGHT REALISM

- Right realists propose stiffer sentences, more surveillance and zero tolerance as solutions to the problems of crime. In this sense they can be seen as far more practical than other theoretical approaches such as Marxism and labelling theory.
- Research (e.g., Flood-Page et al. 2000) supports the view of the decline of the family as an important factor in the backgrounds of offenders. They found children, particularly males, from lone-parent backgrounds and stepfamilies were more likely to offend than those who lived with two natural parents.

- It accepts official statistics uncritically, this is wrong. Marxist and labelling theory have shown that selective law enforcement means that the crime of the rich and powerful, receive less attention than they should. White collar crime is arguably as big, if not a bigger threat to society than the misdemeanour of people living on the margins of society.
- Ignores wider structural causes of crime such as relative deprivation and the increasing gap between rich and poor. Countries with less income inequality have less crime than those countries where it is great. The new right ignore this simple fact – poverty causes crime.

LEFT REALISM

- Shows us that relative deprivation and marginalisation are important in the factors in the backgrounds of both the perpetrators, and victims of crime.
- Left-realism offers practical solutions to the problems of crime. Left-realists suggest crime in an area can be reduced by reducing exclusion and marginalisation; improving the economic conditions of young people; improving community-police relations; and improving police effectiveness, particularly in relation to detection and clear up rates amongst other measures.

- Left-realism fails to explain why the majority of young people and ethnic minority youth in a given area are NOT drawn into criminality and offending. Crime pulls some people in but certainly not all – a good theory of crime must explain why some people resist crime.
- While **relative deprivation** is good at explaining many types of acquisitive crime (e.g., street crime, burglary) it is less good at explaining violent crimes such as rape, assault, and hate crimes.
- Also, left-realism is good at explaining crime which is committed by groups such as drug related crime, but not as good with crimes such as burglary as these are usually committed by individuals rather than gangs.