

# Edexcel Psychology A-level

# Unit 3: Criminological Psychology

Notes



### Part 1: Defining and Measuring Crime:

- Crime is considered as any illegal act which is punishable by incarceration or another type of punishment, after consideration by a judge and jury in a legal trial. However, there exist historical and cultural issues with defining 'crime'.
- Historical issues show that what was considered a crime at one point in history, may not be considered a crime according to modern standards e.g. homosexuality only being illegalised in the UK in 1967, through the Sexual Offences Act of 1967.
- Similarly, cultural issues in crime face this same problem. For example, smacking a child in one culture may be seen as acceptable or even encouraged as a form of 'tough love', whereas this is not the case in the UK - smacking a child so that a mark is left is now punishable by law, according to the 2004 Child's Protection Act.
- As well as issues in defining crime, there are also issues in measuring crime, for which there are 3 main methods: Official Statistics, Victim Surveys and Offender Surveys.
- Official Statistics describe the number of crimes reported to and recorded by the police, which have been processed and published by the Home Office on an annual basis.
- Victim surveys involve 50,000 randomly selected households to self-report the number and types of crimes which have been committed against them during the past year, and is published by the Crime Survey for England and Wales annually.
- Lastly, offender surveys target a randomly-selected cohort of criminals, who give details of the types and frequency of crimes they have committed across a set time period (e.g. during the last year), as recorded by The Offender Crime and Justice Survey. This is particularly useful for governmental organisations as a view of the patterns and risk factors for crime at a national scale, and so can be used to inform crime prevention/management strategies.

— A particular problem associated with official statistics is its susceptibility to concealing the 'dark figure' of crime i.e. where 75% of crime goes unreported. This may be due to a lack of standardisation of police recording policies in relation to crime, as well as the victim fearing revenge/retribution or feeling untrustworthy of the police. The effects of these indiscrepancies was demonstrated by Farrington and Dowds (1985) who found that sudden increases in incidence rates of theft could be explained by a change in police recording policies, where thefts under £10 were recorded. This therefore suggests that official statistics may be an inaccurate representation of crime!

+ Victim surveys have the advantage, over official statistics, that the 'dark figure' of crime is less likely to be concealed or evident due to the self-report technique, where individuals may feel that there are less repercussions for their actions.

— However, victim surveys suffer from the serious methodological problems associated with self-report techniques and, specifically, the idea of 'telescoping', where the victim may mistakenly believe that a crime had been committed against them significantly more recently than it actually had been, due to the trauma and distress associated with it. Therefore, victim surveys may be no more accurate than official statistics.

+ Offender surveys have been particularly useful in informing crime prevention and management strategies due to showing the patterns and risk factors of offending behaviour. Therefore, this demonstrates a real-life practical application.

— On the other hand, the data collected from Offender Surveys may be distorted or biased because it has been collected from offenders. These offenders may want to over-exaggerate their crimes to give themselves a feeling of accomplishment and grandeur, or under-exaggerate their crimes to diminish responsibility. This means that too much reliance cannot be placed upon the honesty and integrity of offenders in self-report measures.

### Part 2: Offender Profiling: The Top-Down Approach:

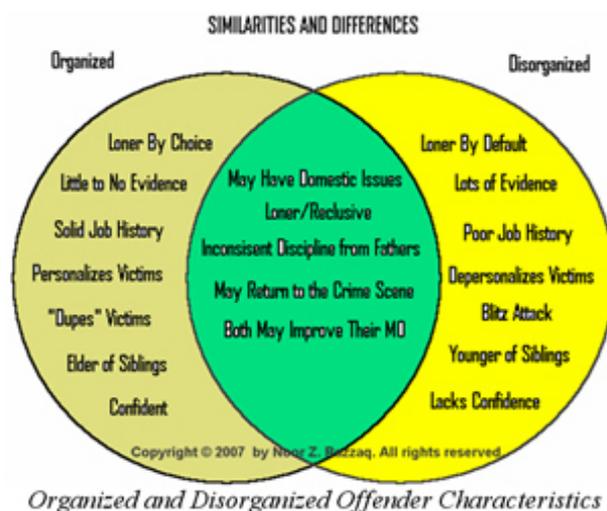
- The top-down approach uses a pre-established typology and the FBI method of profile generation to assign offenders to one of two categories: organised or disorganised offenders.
- Profile generation includes 4 steps: crime scene classification, crime reconstruction, data assimilation and profile generation.
- Organised offenders are socially and sexually competent, showing evidence of planning and so are unlikely to leave the body or clues at the crime scene. They tend to have a specific 'type' of



## Forensic Psychology

- victim (e.g. just like in the case of Ted Bundy) and appear to carry out the attack in an almost surgical manner.
- Disorganised offenders have the opposite characteristics, showing no evidence of planning and so frequently leave the body and clues at the crime scene e.g. blood or hair. Their attacks appear to be random, with no specific target and more likely to occur close to their own home or operational base (thus, they are described as ‘marauders’). They are socially and sexually incompetent, often living alone and being unemployed.
  - This is all in line with the aims of offender profiling - by reducing the list of suspects, the police can investigate a narrower field of enquiry and so increase the likelihood that the case will be solved.

— The main limitation is that the top-down approach can only be used to explain crimes where there have obvious, visible characteristics (e.g. rape and sadistic murder) and so are unlikely to be effective in identifying criminals who are responsible for burglary or middle-class crimes, such as financial fraud. This means that the top-down approach may only be an effective method of offender profiling for ‘blue-collar’ crimes.



— It is unlikely that all offenders are able to be identified as either organised or disorganised. Therefore, due to this oversimplification of the classification system, it may be more useful to study the motives that each criminal has, as suggested by Keppel and Walter (1999). In this way, seemingly contradictory crimes can still be explained e.g. a criminal who leaves no clues at the crime scene but appears to be sexually incompetent and who carried out an impulsive attack on a stranger.

— There is evidence to support the existence of an organised offender type, but the same cannot be said for the disorganised type, as suggested by Canter et al (2004). These researchers used the statistical technique of smallest space analysis to analyse the data from 100 murders in the US, with comparisons of each made to 39 typical traits of both offender types. The fact that disorganised offenders cannot be identified as distinctly different from organised offenders suggests that this system lacks validity and breadth.

### Part 3: Offender Profiling: The Bottom-Up Approach:

- The bottom-up approach, in contrast to the top-down approach, uses no pre-established typology but develops a profile as the crime scene and eyewitness testimonies are increasingly analysed. The two hallmarks of the bottom-up approach are investigative psychology and geographical profiling.
- Investigative psychology is the process whereby each crime is recorded onto a database. Then, the details of each new crime are matched with this database in order to develop hypotheses about the likely characteristics, social demographic and motivations of the culprit. Therefore, there is a much greater emphasis on scientific methods of investigation and statistical analysis, compared to the top-down approach.
- Investigative psychology emphasises the importance of time and place (due to their consequent links with geographical profiling) as well as the idea of ‘interpersonal coherence’, which suggests that the manner in which the offender treats the victim reflects their interpersonal functioning/understanding in real life.
- Geographical profiling suggests that each offender has an operational base, which can be inferred through mapping the locations of previous crimes. This should form a circular shape, where the operational base or ‘centre of gravity’ is at the centre, and can also be used to predict future crimes through the analysis of a jeopardy surface.



## Forensic Psychology

- This is all based on the assumption that the way and signature of offenders in carrying out their crimes are constant i.e. they have the same 'modus operandi'. Offenders can be classified as marauders (carrying out crimes close to the centre of gravity) or commuters (carrying out crimes far away from the centre of gravity), according to Canter and Larkin (1993).

— The bottom-up approach is almost certainly a useful method of offender profiling, but it does not always lead to the correct identification of the offender, and so may be considered a failure in this sense, as suggested by Copson (1995). He found that information from an offender profile only led to the successful identification of the offender in 3% of cases, but was useful 83% of the time. This suggests that offender profiling is best reserved for simply narrowing the field of enquiry, as opposed to being relied upon as a chief means of offender identification.

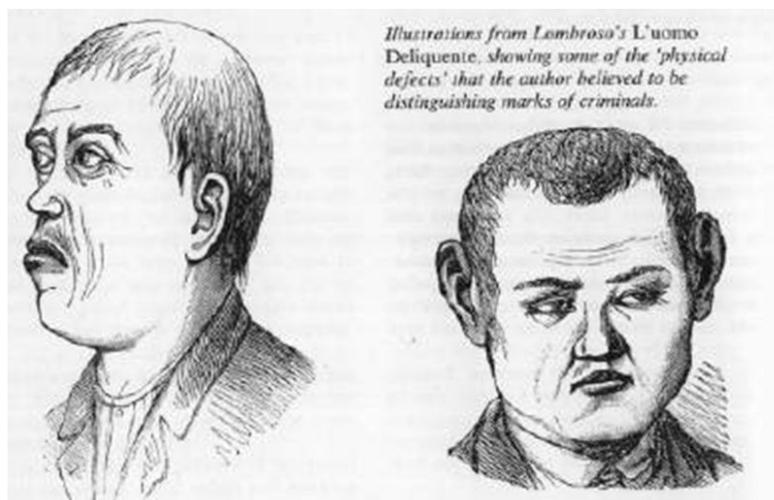
+ A key advantage of the bottom-up approach, compared to the top-down approach, is its reliance on scientific methods of enquiry and the use of statistical analysis. For example, many supporting studies have used the method of smallest space analysis to establish correlations between two variables or offender characteristics. This is more scientific and based on psychological theory compared to the top-down approach, which is over-simplistic.

+ There is evidence to support the use of smallest space analysis in geographical profiling, as a way of narrowing the field of enquiry and identifying offenders as either marauders or commuters, as suggested by Lunn and Canter (2001). Following the smallest space analysis of 120 serial murder cases, the researchers were able to identify characteristic traits of spatial consistency, such as the presence of a jeopardy surface (which could be used to predict the locations of future crimes) as well as the centre of gravity (which was often the offender's operational base). Therefore, this is particularly useful in establishing the modus operandi of the offender!

### Part 4: Biological Explanations: Atavistic Form:

- This is the historical approach to offender profiling and was proposed by Lombroso. He suggested that criminals were 'genetic throwbacks' who were not accustomed to the social norms of normal, civilised society and so in this sense were more suited for crime. Criminals could be identified by signature atavistic characteristics i.e. specific facial and cranial features.
- These atavistic characteristics included long ears, dark skin, extra toes and nipples, and curly hair.
- Certain atavistic characteristics were associated with certain crimes. For example, murderers were identified as having bloodshot eyes, fraudsters had reedy lips, whilst sexual deviants had glinting eyes. This has been considered by many modern criminologists as the foundation of offender profiling and criminology.
- Lombroso based his theory upon studying the cranial features of 383 dead and 3839 alive criminals, whereby approximately 40% of crime could be explained using the offender profiles based upon certain atavistic characteristics.

— Many modern researchers, such as DeLisi (2012), have branded Lombroso and his atavistic theory as racist. For example, just because an individual had certain atavistic characteristics, does not mean that they are or are destined to become criminal. Following this logic, it appears that certain races are more likely to become criminal than others, such as African Americans, amongst whom curly hair is common. Therefore, this may have led itself to giving 'scientific justification' for discriminatory practices and eugenics e.g. William Shockley's Voluntary Sterilization Bonus Plan.



— A second major weakness is that the atavistic form theory is considered by



**many as unscientific.** The dated methodology adopted by Lombroso did not use statistical analysis or a control group from another culture. Since the entire sample was Italian, we do not know whether the findings of atavistic characteristics are significant and if so, to what confidence level. Comparisons with a control group are needed to establish statistical significance, particularly through the additional use of random allocation (which controls for the confounding effects of individual participant variables).

+ **Lombroso may be considered as 'the father of criminology'**, as suggested by Hollin (1989). This is because Lombroso's methods of attributing certain atavistic or cranial features to certain types of criminals with specific traits, was the basis from which modern criminal profiling was developed from. Although not entirely scientific due to the lack of a control group and no statistical analysis, Lombroso's conclusions can still be considered as credible, considering the large sample size (over 3800 participants in total!).

### Part 5: Biological Explanations: Genetic and Neural Explanations:

- Genetic explanations of offending mainly focus on the heritability and role of candidate genes in the development of criminal behaviour.
- For example, Christiansen et al (1977) found concordance rates of 33% for identical (87 MZ) twins but only 12% concordance for non-identical (147 DZ) twins. Since MZ twins share 100% of their genetic information with each other, whereas DZ twins share only 50%, then this suggests that there is a moderate genetic or heritable basis of criminal behaviour.
- However, the concordance rates for MZ twins is not 100%, and so this suggests that an interaction between the environment and genetics together produces the outcome of criminality, as suggested by Mednick et al (1984), and so the traditional diathesis-stress model can be used to account for this.
- Candidate genes each represent slight genetic variations which increase the risk of developing criminal behaviour, in this case, as suggested by Tiihonen et al (2014). Abnormalities in the MAOA and CDH-13 genes, which both code for neurotransmitters such as serotonin and dopamine and so are also implicated in the development of ADHD, increases the likelihood of becoming criminal by 13-fold. This gives further support to the role of a genetic diathesis in the development of criminality.
- Neural explanations mainly focus on individuals with antisocial personality disorder (APD), a disorder which is very common amongst criminals. For example, Raine et al (2000) found that criminals have a lower volume and activity level (11% reduction) in the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for logical thinking and decision making. Therefore, this supports the idea that criminals may have difficulties in regulating their emotions and so make irrational decisions.
- Neural abnormalities associated with criminality were further supported by Keyzers et al (2011), who found that criminals appear to have a 'neural switch' which they can use to turn their capacities for empathy on or off. This may explain why and how criminals lack empathy towards their victims.

— **A key methodological issue with the use of twin studies as a means of investigating the genetic basis of behaviour is** that such studies assume that the only difference between twins is the amount of genetic information they share. This is an incorrect assumption and would be better addressed through the use of an interactionist approach. For example, the fact that MZ twins are likely to share the same environment as opposed to normal siblings may explain why MZ concordance rates are higher than for normal siblings, despite both sharing 50% of their genes. This suggests that causal conclusions about the genetic basis of criminality have incorrectly been reached.

+ **Strong support for the use of a diathesis-stress model in explaining criminality comes from Mednick et al (1984).** After analysing the court convictions of 14,427 adoptees with adoptive and biological parents, the researchers concluded that "siblings adopted separately into different homes tended to be concordant for convictions, especially if the shared biological father also had a record of criminal behaviour". This supports the idea that criminality is only

<sup>1</sup> Genetic influences in criminal convictions: evidence from an adoption cohort. S. A. Mednick, W. F. Gabrielli, Jr, B. Hutchings, Science. 1984 May 25; 224(4651): 891–894.



## Forensic Psychology

likely to be an outcome if a genetic susceptibility is paired with environmental (criminal) stressors, as predicted by the diathesis-stress model.

— The focus on the role of genetics and neural activities as a means of explaining criminal behaviour suffers from the problem of biological reductionism, as suggested by Katz et al (2007). Although it does appear that criminality runs in families, so do other risk factors associated with criminality e.g. a high frequency and intensity of exposure to pro-criminal attitudes (similar to Sutherland's Differential Association Theory), a lack of educational opportunities, economic deprivation etc. Therefore, it is important not to stereotype children from criminal families as 'criminal' as this may lead to the realisation of self-fulfilling prophecies.

### Part 6: Psychological Explanations: Eysenck's Theory:

- Eysenck suggested that there was a specific criminal personality (neurotic-extravert) which could be measured across two dimensions initially (neurotic-stable and extravert-introvert), with the third dimension of psychoticism being added at a later date.
- The criminal personality theory has considerable links with biological explanations of criminality because the theory views criminal behaviour as being due to the activity of the nervous system, which is attributed to specific personalities. For example, extraverts have an underactive nervous system and so are continuously looking for new stimulation, which may explain their nervous and impulsive nature.
- The type of personality a person has and the activity of the nervous system which they inherit, both affect the extent to which the individual is affected by socialisation, which occurs in childhood and aims to teach children essential social communication skills as well as the value of delayed gratification. Those with a (criminal) neurotic-extravert personality are unable to perceive antisocial behaviour as negative or undesirable, and so act accordingly.
- Personality can be measured across the 3 dimensions using the EPI i.e. Eysenck's Personality Inventory.

— The EPI takes on a reductionist approach to assessing and measuring personality, as suggested by Mischel (1988). Personality traits are unlikely to all be accounted for using only 3 dimensions and measured by being assigned a single number. These traits are also likely to change depending on who we interact with and under what circumstances, thus not always being stable. This means that such a reductionist approach may not offer an accurate account of personality.

— Eysenck's criminal personality theory may also suffer from cultural bias, due to the largely Western culture from which the sample was drawn, as suggested by Bartol and Holanchock (1979). For example, these researchers found that a group of Hispanic convicts were less extravert compared to non-criminals (a control group), which suggests that Eysenck's theory is not universal and so lacks generalisability to all cultures.

— The criminal personality theory shares a weakness similar to the top-down approach, and that is an oversimplification of the classification of criminals. It is unlikely that there is only one criminal personality type, as suggested by Digman's Five Factor Model which suggests that there are additional dimensions along which personality can be measured.<sup>2</sup> These include extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience (or Intellect).

### Part 7: Cognitive Explanations for Offending Behaviour:

- Kohlberg suggested that there are 3 universal levels of moral reasoning, each characterised by a certain logic. These include the pre-conventional level (punishment orientation), the conventional level (maintenance of the social order) and the post-conventional level (morality of contract and individual rights).
- Kohlberg proposed that criminals have a childlike, immature sense of reasoning, and so reason at the pre-conventional level, whilst non-criminals will reason at the conventional or post-conventional levels, thus being able to display more civilised and empathic behaviours, as suggested by Chandler (1973).

---

<sup>2</sup> Personality Structure: Emergence of the Five-Factor Model, J M Digman, *Annual Review of Psychology* 1990 41:1, 417-440



## Forensic Psychology

- Cognitive distortions are a major feature of cognitive explanations for offending behaviour. These distortions are examples of dysfunctional thought processing where we show errors in our logic. The two main types of cognitive distortions attributed to criminality are hostile attribution bias (HAB) and minimalisation.
- Hostile attribution bias is the tendency for offenders to view emotionally ambiguous or non-threatening situations as hostile and threatening, and so is an automatic reaction to novel situations, as suggested by Schönberg and Justye (2014). When 55 violent offenders were exposed to pictures of facial expressions which were neither clearly hostile nor clearly neutral, the overwhelming majority viewed the images as aggressive or hostile. This may be the result of being a 'rejected' and 'aggressive' child, according to Dodge and Frame (1982).
- Minimalisation is particularly common amongst sex offenders, and is used as a coping mechanism for guilt or regret, where offenders will under-exaggerate the significance of their crimes and the emotional consequences suffered by their victims, as suggested by Pollock and Hasmall (1991). In their sample, an astounding 35% of child molesters attempted to justify their crimes as non-malicious and simply being a way of showing their affection, whilst 36% did not accept committing a crime at all as they perceived the child as consenting!

— Cognitive theories may not be able to explain all examples of offending behaviour, and specifically not all types of crimes. For example, impulsive crimes appear to be carried out by offenders with no reasoning whatsoever, whilst middle-class financially-driven crimes are more frequently carried out by offender who display pre-conventional reasoning, as suggested by Thornton and R.L.Reid (1982). As suggested by Langdon (2010), intelligence may be a more important factor in determining the likelihood of an individual committing a crime, and is a more quantifiable and objective characteristic compared to levels of moral reasoning. Therefore, cognitive explanations are only suited towards explaining specific types of crime.

— Although Kohlberg's three stages of moral reasoning are comprehensive, other researchers have suggested a different method of organising and naming these stages, for example Gibbs (1979). His ideas of mature and immature reasoning are very similar to Kohlberg's levels, with immature reasoning being represented by the pre-conventional level and mature reasoning being represented by the conventional level, whilst the 'culturally biased' post-conventional level was removed. Therefore, this suggests that the theoretical basis of Kohlberg's ideas were sound, but a modern update on the organisation of his theory increases the validity.

+ An improved understanding of cognitive biases and their relationship to specific crimes and criminals has a real-life practical application, particularly in the case of sex offenders. Since such offenders are especially susceptible to using minimalisation to justify their crimes, cognitive therapies such as CBT may specifically tackle this problem and result in reduced recidivism rates. This offers a refreshing alternative or addition to the traditional morality solution to criminality, which would be lengthy incarceration with few opportunities for learning and rehabilitation.

### Part 8: Psychological Explanations: Differential Association Theory:

- Sutherland's (1924) Differential Association Theory suggests that crime is essentially a learned behaviour, and can be explained using the principles of social learning theory where the 'role models' are criminal peers or a 'criminal university' (in the form of a prison). The scientific emphasis of this theory suggests that it is possible to accurately predict the likelihood that an individual will become criminal, based on their exposure to pro-criminal and anti-criminal attitudes.
- Observers/individuals learn general attitudes towards crime as well as the skills and knowledge required to carry out specific crimes. If the frequency and intensity of an individual's exposure to pro-criminal attitudes is greater than their exposure to anti-criminal attitudes (using the same mathematical terms of frequency and intensity), then it is highly likely that the individual will become criminal.

— Although Sutherland placed a great scientific emphasis upon his theory, the frequency and intensity of exposure to criminal attitudes is very difficult to objectively and reliably measure. This means that any conclusions or predictions drawn about the likelihood that an individual will become criminal is likely to be lacking in validity. Even if such a measure was created, it would



likely be a self-report measure which does not avoid the problems of retrospective research and memory decay.

— It is incorrect to assume that simply because an individual has been exposed to more pro-criminal attitudes compared to anti-criminal attitudes, then this does not necessarily mean that they will become criminal. Such a determinist approach may lead to increased crime itself through the realisation of self-fulfilling prophecies or, in addition, may lead to 'scientific justification' for discrimination and justification.

+ A major advantage of Sutherland's Differential Association Theory is that it offers a refreshing approach towards the explanation of crime - one where the environment, as opposed to the individual, is blamed. This means that the extreme policies of eugenics (the solution for criminality from a biological perspective) are rightfully not an option as a method for dealing with offending behaviour. Therefore, this theory provides a fair and realistic explanation of crime which does not hold the individual entirely accountable, and rightfully so!

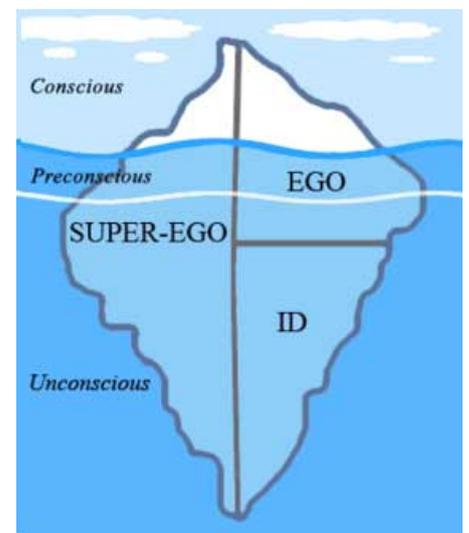
### Part 9: Psychological Explanations: Psychodynamic Explanations:

- Blackburn (1993) suggested that there are 3 types of inadequate superegos (formed at the end of the phallic stage and containing the child's internalised sense of right and wrong from their same-sex parent, as suggested by Freud) which are all associated with criminality.
- The deviant superego means that the child will internalise abnormal moral standards from their criminal parents. The weak superego is present due to a lack of identification with the same-sex parent during the phallic stage, perhaps because they were absent. Finally, the over-harsh superego craves for punishment due to being accustomed to such a feeling because the child had grown up with over-harsh parents.
- Either way, a dysfunctional superego means that the id is able to exercise control and be selfish/demand instant gratification, thus leading to the selfish and impulsive characteristics of criminals.
- The idea of an inadequate superego was based upon Bowlby's theory of maternal deprivation, where the absence of a mother-figure or mother-substitute during the critical period of attachment formation (the first 2 years of life) would result in irreversible emotional and intellectual consequences, namely affectionless psychopathy (SEE ATTACHMENT TOPIC) and mental retardation, as demonstrated in Bowlby's 44 juvenile thieves study.

— There is evidence contradicting the findings of Bowlby's 44 juvenile thieves study. For example, Lewis (1959) found that maternal deprivation during childhood was not indicative or a reliable predictor of the likelihood of becoming criminal in the future, nor were maternally deprived children at a significant disadvantage in terms of forming close relationships during adulthood. Therefore, this decreases the validity of Blackburn's conclusion that inadequate superegos are a reliable predictor of criminality.

— A second weakness of psychodynamic explanations for criminality is that they suffer from gender bias, according to Hoffman (1975). For example, in line with Freud's psychodynamic approach, girls should be at a greater risk of becoming criminal because they suffer from penis envy instead of castration anxiety, and so their superego has been internalised to a smaller extent compared to boys. However, statistical evidence does not support this idea. Instead, girls within the phallic stage actually display a greater appreciation of the value of delayed gratification compared to boys!

— The third weakness of psychodynamic explanations is their lack of scientific rigour. For example, the superego/an individual's internalised sense of right and wrong is embedded within the unconscious tripartite personality, meaning that such a concept cannot be empirically and objectively measured. Therefore, since the superego is a concept which cannot be proven wrong, this suggests that, according to Popper's criterion of falsification, that it is unfalsifiable and therefore pseudoscientific. This does little to increase the scientific credibility of psychology.



### Part 10: Dealing with Offending Behaviour: Custodial Sentencing:

- The aims of custodial sentencing are deterrence (to put off both society and individuals from committing crimes), incapacitation (to protect the public from the criminal), retribution (following the 'eye for an eye' philosophy but ensuring that the punishment is in accordance to the severity and type of crime committed) and rehabilitation (opportunities for training and treatment further reduce the rates of recidivism through addressing the distal cause of offending).
- However, the effects of custodial sentencing include stress, depression, institutionalisation and prisonisation. Institutionalisation is a particular problem because the monotonous and constant rhythm of prison life may impair the offender's ability to adjust to normal life beyond the prison walls. In addition, according to <sup>3</sup>Constantino et al (2016), 7.5% of women and 6.3% of men in prison suffer from depression.
- The emphasis on retribution and the monotony of prison life within Britain has contributed towards some of the highest recidivism rates in Europe e.g. 57% will reoffend within a year after release, according to the Ministry of Justice. Norway, on the other hand, <sup>4</sup>has one of the lowest European recidivism rates but a far greater focus on rehabilitation, as opposed to traditional punishment.
  - **Prison does not affect each individual in the same way.** For example, the extent of the effects will depend on the dispositional traits of the convict, the length of their prison sentence, any previous experiences in prisons and the type of prison in which they served previous sentences (e.g. maximum security) and the number/gender of prison officers. This means that custodial sentencing can be more or less effective for certain individuals, and so should not be viewed as a universally effective method of dealing with all types of offending behaviour.
  - + **However, the main advantage of custodial sentencing is that prisoners are surrounded by opportunities for learning and training.** For example, sex offenders may partake in compulsory CBT schemes to reduce the effects of their minimalisation (a type of cognitive distortion) and so reduce the likelihood of recidivism. Violent offender can partake in anger management schemes, whilst others may opt for token economy systems (behaviour modification) or restorative justice in return for a more lenient prison sentence. Therefore, this suggests that prison is a useful method of dealing with offending behaviour.
  - **The use and favourability of custodial sentencing may be affected by political motives,** as suggested by Davies and Raymond (2000). The majority of the public favours custodial sentencing as the main method for dealing with offending behaviour because society typically wants to see the criminal suffer and be remorseful for their actions. This may lead some political parties to focus on toughening up prisons and prison sentences in an attempt to please the public and appear as 'tough on crime'. Despite this, custodial sentencing still produces high recidivism rates and so is not as effective as it is portrayed to be.

### Part 11: Dealing with Offending Behaviour: Behaviour Modification in Custody:

- Behaviour modification in custody largely features token economies, which are systems based upon operant conditioning principles, and mainly reinforcement.
- Reinforcement (which can be negative or positive) increases the likelihood of a desired behaviour being repeated. In the context of custody, this means that selected socially-desirable behaviours are more likely to be repeated by offenders.
- Every time a desired behaviour is carried out by an offender, they receive a token. This acts as a secondary reinforcer because its value is derived from being able to be swapped for a 'privilege' or reward, which is known as a primary reinforcer. Rewards may include exercise time outside of the prison grounds or access to a favourite TV show. Therefore, through positive reinforcement,

<sup>3</sup> CONSTANTINO, Patricia; ASSIS, Simone Gonçalves de and PINTO, Liana Wernersbach. The impact of prisons on the mental health of prisoners in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. *Ciênc. saúde coletiva* [online]. 2016, vol.21, n.7 [cited 2017-08-14], pp.2089-2100. Available from: <[http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S1413-81232016000702089&lng=en&nrm=iso](http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1413-81232016000702089&lng=en&nrm=iso)>. ISSN 1413-8123. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1413-81232015217.01222016>.

<sup>4</sup> An article detailing the differences between British and Norwegian Prison systems can be found here: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/feb/25/norwegian-prison-inmates-treated-like-people>



## Forensic Psychology

the offender is more likely to repeat these desirable behaviours because they are motivated by achieving the same reward each time.

- The effectiveness of token economy systems was demonstrated by Hobbs and Holt (1976) who studied 125 criminal male juveniles in the Alabama Boys Industrial School. The researchers found that across 14 months, there was a significant increase in the displaying of desirable behaviours for the majority of the boys (all 3 cottages). This suggests that token economy systems can be used to improve the running of the prisons by decreasing the violence and conflicts within such a setting.

— In comparison to anger management, behaviour modification can be seen as only treating the proximal cause of offending, whereas anger management can address the distal (main/direct) cause of offending. For example, behaviour modification only temporarily improves the behaviour of offenders, as long as they are motivated by rewards and these rewards are given immediately after the displayed behaviour (in order to avoid a sense of delayed gratification). However, these same rewards may not be present in life outside prison, where citizens are expected to abide to social norms and rules without always be rewarded directly. Therefore, behaviour management may be a short-term solution to offending behaviour.

— Secondly, some have questioned the ethical basis of the use of token economy systems, such as Moya and Achtenburg (1974). These researchers took particular concern with the idea that participation in such schemes is compulsory in many prisons, and failure to do so (perhaps due to mental illness) would mean that prisoners are denied certain 'rewards' which may be seen as rights by many others e.g. the opportunity to call home or have family visits. Therefore, it is important to conduct a cost-benefit analysis to assess the utility of token economy systems.

+ A key strength of behaviour modification systems is that they are flexible (can change according to the aims of each institution) and easy to implement. For example, token economy systems used in psychiatric hospitals may be very different from those used in maximum-security prisons, and so as long as the implementation of the rules and tokens is consistent (as suggested by Bassett and Blanchard, 1977), a significant improvement in prisoner conduct is likely to be seen.

### Part 12: Dealing with Offending Behaviour: Anger Management:

- As suggested by Novaco (1975), anger management focuses on identifying and dealing with the emotions which precede anger, as opposed to preventing anger in the first place (which is an unlikely outcome for many). This is an 'eclectic' approach in the sense that offenders are taught skills from a variety of different approaches in psychology, such as communication skills (social) and 'positive self-talk' (cognitive).
- There are three stages involved in anger management, whereby the aim is to increase the offender's self-awareness of their anger and to also increase their self-efficacy in dealing with this anger. These are cognitive preparation, skill acquisition and application practice.
- Cognitive preparation takes on a cognitive approach, where offenders identify and rationale the patterns of emotion which occurs before, during and after aggression. This helps them to understand and predict why and when they are likely to become angry.
- Skills acquisition is when the therapist teaches the offender techniques which can be used to manage their anger, and prevent them from spiraling out of control. These can include breathing techniques, the use of meditation and positive self-talk (which increases the offender's self-efficacy). This is a form of direct learning, where the therapist demonstrates the techniques and the offender copies them.
- During application practice, the offender applies the skills learnt above to a real-life situation which would normally trigger anger e.g. during a role play. Their behaviour, if the techniques are successfully implemented, is then positively reinforced by the therapist.
- The effectiveness of such programmes was demonstrated by Keen et al (2000), who found that the majority of prisoners who'd partaken in the National Anger Management Package were able to control their anger to a greater extent and were more aware of such anger, compared to the beginning of the therapy.

— Anger management therapies may be guilty of making the incorrect assumption that violent offences are caused by an inability to control anger, as suggested by Loza and Loza-Fanous (1999). In fact, there may be very few or no differences between violent and non-violent offenders



## Forensic Psychology

in terms of their anger, which draws questions over the validity of the use of anger management for the majority of violent offenders. It could be the case that such use could be exploited by offenders in return for rewards or a more lenient prison sentence!

— In practice, as suggested by Blackburn, anger management is likely to have little effect on controlling anger in real-life. This is because the therapist will not be present to positively reinforce any desirable behaviours, and the prisoner may find themselves surrounded by stimuli/cues which trigger such anger. Therefore, this suggests that such therapies are best reserved for improving prisoner's conduct within prisons (rehabilitation), as opposed to providing a long-term solution to offending.

+ A key strength of anger management is the idea that it incorporates behavioural theories and skills from a variety of different psychological approaches. For example, cognitive preparation focuses on the cognitive basis of aggression, whilst application practice focuses on the behaviourist principles of operant conditioning and positive reinforcement. This is a strength because it suggests that anger management recognises the variety of different triggers and bases of aggressive behaviour (and so is not an over-simplification!).

### Part 13: Dealing with Offending Behaviour: Restorative Justice:

- According to Braithwaite (2004), restorative justice (RJ) programmes take on a different perspective/emphasis compared to the other three methods. RJ places emphasis on 'giving the survivor a voice' and showing the offender the emotional consequences of their behaviour. The focus is placed upon positive outcomes, and mediated discussions between the offender and 'survivor' (victim) do not need to occur within traditional courtroom settings.
- In order for the offender to show remorse for their actions, apologies can be made and they can also pay for any damages to the survivor's property or fix it themselves. The guidelines as to what survivors, offenders and mediators are advised to do are set by the Restorative Justice Council.
- The effectiveness of RJ schemes was demonstrated by Latimer et al (2005), who found that RJ was significantly more effective than <sup>5</sup>traditional nonrestorative approaches in terms of increasing victim and offender satisfaction, restitution compliance and reducing recidivism.

— RJ schemes may take a naïve approach to dealing with offending behaviour because they assume that the offender and survivor will always show remorse when participating. This may not always be the case, especially considering that the offender may receive a shorter prison sentence or more rewards for participating in the scheme, whilst survivors may want revenge on their criminal, in the form of physical or verbal abuse. Therefore, although RJ is useful in theory, it may be less so in real life.

— RJ has also been criticised by feminists, particularly when used in cases of domestic abuse or violence. This is because RJ does not place the offender and victim on an equal power balance, as the victim will seem accusatory of the offender. Therefore, in cases where there is such a power imbalance as in domestic abuse cases, RJ schemes can fail to adequately place the blame upon the offender, as well as being traumatic and distressing for the survivor. This means that RJ cannot be used as a way of dealing with offending behaviour for all crimes, and so has limited utility.

+ RJ shares a similar strength with behaviour modification/token economy systems, in that both are flexible and easy to implement. RJ can be modified for prisons, psychiatric institutions and schools, according to the specific problems faced in these organisations. The increasing use of RJ may encourage methods of conflict resolution other than violence and aggression because the offender is made aware of the consequences of their actions first-hand.

### Part 14 – Factors Affecting the Accuracy of Eyewitness Testimony: Misleading Information:

---

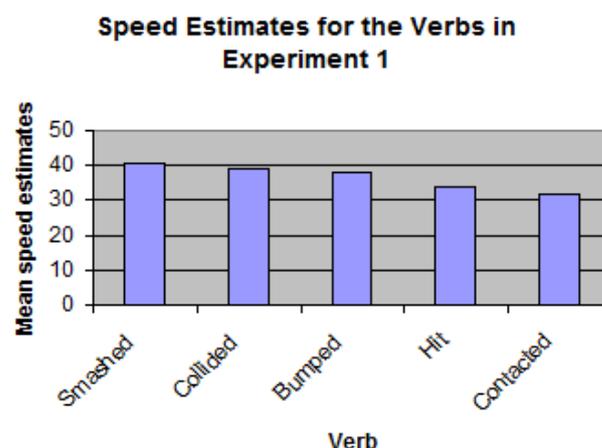
<sup>5</sup> The Effectiveness of Restorative Justice Practices: A Meta-Analysis

Jeff Latimer, Craig Dowden, Danielle Muise The Prison Journal Vol 85, Issue 2, pp. 127 - 144, First published date: August-19-2016



## Forensic Psychology

- Eyewitness testimony refers to the information recalled about a crime by an eyewitness. The accuracy of such an account can be reduced through the influence of misleading (incorrect) information in the form of leading questions and post-event discussions.
- The effects of leading questions on the accuracy of EWT was investigated by Loftus and Palmer (1974) where participants watched a film clip of a car crash and then gave speed estimates of the cars based on the leading question of “About how fast were the cars going when they x into each other?”, with each group being exposed to a different critical verb. Those exposed to the verb “smashed” gave a speed estimate 8.7 mph greater than those who’d heard “contacted”. Therefore, this shows that leading questions, because of the way they are phrased, suggest that there is a correct answer.
- The effects of leading questions can be explained using the idea of response bias (i.e. these questions only influence the participants to give a certain answer), whereas Loftus and Palmer’s study supports the substitution explanation (i.e. leading questions change the eyewitness’ memory of the crime), as those who’d heard the word “smashed” were more likely to report having seen broken glass 2 weeks after the crime (despite there being no broken glass) compared to those who’d heard the word “contacted”.
- Post-event discussions describe the discussions that take place between co-witnesses after the crime has taken place, and is subject to the influence of media and TV reports on the crime, as well as participants’ pre-conceived expectations of how they would imagine the crime. Gabbert et al (2003), using a matched-pairs design, showed participants a film clip of the same crime scene, but with different details for each member. After engaging in post-event discussions with the other member of each pair and individually completing a test of recall, the researchers found 71% inaccuracy rates of information gained through such discussions, compared to a 0% control group rate who had worked alone throughout.
- Post-event discussions also demonstrate the idea of ‘memory conformity’, where we are more likely to pick up upon incorrect ideas or details because we believe that we are wrong and the other person is right.



— A key methodological criticism for studies of EWT is that they often use the same, young target to identify. This, as argued by Anastasi and Rhodes, may be affected by own age bias, which describes the tendency to recall others from your own age group with a high degree of accuracy, with a lower accuracy rate for those from other age groups. This means that participants aged 55-78 years may be inaccurately represented as having a lower accuracy of EWT, due to the frequent use of young targets.

— Demand characteristics may also reduce the reliability of the findings, as argued by Zaragosa and McCloskey, who suggest that participants often want to be as helpful and attentive as possible. This means that, through the mechanism of social desirability bias and the ‘Please-U’ effect, when in doubt over their answer to a question, they are likely to give an answer which seems most beneficial or expected of the researcher, thus biasing the results and reducing the likelihood that the same results will be demonstrated again.

— The artificial tasks and stimuli used by both Loftus and Palmer, alongside Gabbert, reduces the ecological validity of the findings and the mundane realism of the methodology. For example, the film clips of the car crashes do not expose participants to the anxiety of experiencing a real-life car crash. This anxiety may either have a negative (Johnson and Scott) or positive (Yuille and Cutshall) effect on the accuracy of EWT, thus biasing the findings.

### Part 15 – Factors Affecting the Accuracy of Eyewitness Testimony: Anxiety:



## Forensic Psychology

- Anxiety is a physiological response to external pressures, characterised by an increased heart rate, vasoconstriction of blood vessels, increased sweat production etc. Anxiety can have either a positive or negative effect on the accuracy of EWT.
- Johnson and Scott (1976) demonstrated that anxiety has a negative effect on the accuracy of EWT. The high-anxiety condition overheard a heated argument in the neighbouring room, with the sound of smashing glass and a man walking through the waiting room with a bloody paper-knife, as opposed to a greasy pen in the low-anxiety condition. When asked to identify the man, participants in the high-anxiety condition experienced 16% lower rates of accurate recall, compared to the low-anxiety condition. This may be explained by the tunnel theory of memory and the weapon focus effect, where our attention is drawn towards the weapon as a source of anxiety.
- The positive effect of anxiety on the accuracy of EWT was demonstrated by Yuille and Cutshall (1986), who followed up 13 eyewitnesses, 5 months after a real-life shooting at a shop in Canada. The researchers found that eyewitness accuracy was still high after this period, with an 11% higher accuracy of recall for those eyewitnesses who ranked their anxiety as 'high' (compared to 'low') at the time of the shooting and using a 7-point anxiety scale. There were, however, small discrepancies over estimates of height, weight and clothing. This supports the idea that heightened anxiety draws our attention to external cues through the 'fight or flight' response, where such attention may have given us an evolutionary advantage by increasing our chances of escaping and survival.

— The Yerkes-Dodson Law suggests that there is an 'inverted-U' relationship between increasing arousal and increasing performance (in this case the accuracy of EWT), with moderate arousal yielding the highest levels of performance. However, this can be considered as an overly-simplified explanation of anxiety because it does not take into account the multiple factors which make up arousal i.e. cognitive, behavioural, emotional etc.

— The weapon focus effect may be testing for the effects of surprise rather than anxiety. For example, Pickel found that the highest levels of accuracy of EWT were experienced in the condition with high unusualness i.e. a raw chicken in a hairdressing salon. This suggests that the weapon focus effect can only be used to explain certain influences of anxiety on the accuracy of EWT.

— There are significant ethical issues associated with exposing participants to distressing images of a car crash (Johnson and Scott) and forcing them to recall traumatic crimes which have occurred in the past (Yuille and Cutshall). This breaches the BPS guideline of the right of the participant to be protected from psychological harm, thus meaning that a cost-benefit analysis would be needed to compare the associated ethical costs with the benefits of increased knowledge of the effects of anxiety on the accuracy of EWT.

— Real-life studies, particularly with the use of field studies, are particularly susceptible to the biasing effects of extraneous variables which have not been controlled. For example, Yuille and Cutshall could not have controlled the influence of post-event discussions, which has been suggested to reduce the accuracy of EWT, as demonstrated by Gabbert et al. This, alongside media influences in the form of TV report, and the effects of individual schemas, means that field studies of EWT may be flawed in that they lack reliability.

### Part 16 – Improving the Accuracy of Eyewitness Testimony: Cognitive Interviews:

- The cognitive interview is a method of interviewing eyewitnesses, which is thought to be particularly effective in increasing the rates of accurate recall, by considering the theories discussed previously. The stages are as follows:
  - 1. Report everything = Even seemingly insignificant details may be important or trigger the recall of larger events, by acting as a 'cue' (think back to retrieval failure!).
  - 2. Reinstatement of the context = Recalling the weather, location and mood of the day prevents context-dependent forgetting by reminding the eyewitness of their external cues at the time.
  - 3. Change the perspective = Recalling events from the perspective of the victim or persecutor prevents the eyewitness' account from being affected by their own schemas or pre-conceived perceptions of how the crime, in their opinion, happened.



## Forensic Psychology

- 4. Reverse the order = Recalling events in a different order, other than chronological, reduces the ability of the eyewitness to lie (as it is simply difficult) and also reduces the impact of schemas on their perception of events.
- The enhanced cognitive interview was developed by Fisher et al (1987) and focuses on the social dynamics of the interactions between the eyewitness and the interviewer e.g. knowing when to make eyecontact and when to diminish it (increases the likelihood that the eyewitness will be calm and comfortable) as well as increasing rapport with the eyewitness (increases the likelihood that they will answer truthfully about personal or sensitive topics).

— **The cognitive interview may have little practical value**, due to being too time-consuming and requiring specialist skills. For example, Kebbel and Wagstaff argued that only a few hours of training, as is possible for many police forces, is insufficient to adequately train interviewers, especially for the enhanced social understanding required for the enhanced cognitive interview. Therefore, this lack of time for training may explain why some forces may be unimpressed with the CI.

— **The CI does not only increase the recall of correct information by 81%**, but also increases the recall of incorrect information by 61%, as suggested by Kohnken et al (1999). This appears counterintuitive when considering that the chief aim of the CI was to improve the accuracy of recall of correct information and so increase the reliability of eyewitness testimonies as a whole.

+ **The entire CI need not be used to reap the benefits**, as Milne and Bull (2002) suggested, where context reinstatement and report everything produced the greatest accuracy of recall of correct information as compared to any other combinations of steps. This means that even if police forces do not have enough time to train the entire force for all of the 4 steps involved in the CI, even gradual changes from the standard police interview can increase the accuracy and reliability of eyewitness testimony.

### **Part 17: Introduction to a Key/Contemporary Study:**

- Valentine and Mesout (2009) investigated the accuracy of eyewitness identification under stress in the London Dungeon, as measured by each participant's ability to identify strangers within this setting. Physiological arousal was measured using a heart monitor, where there is a positive correlation between the state of arousal and the heart rate.
  - The researchers found that <sup>6</sup>“High state anxiety was associated with reporting fewer correct descriptors of the target person, more incorrect details and making fewer correct identifications from a lineup. There was no effect of trait anxiety on eyewitness memory”.
- + The method of collection of data was empirical and objective. This allows for reliable conclusions to be drawn. However, it should be considered that physiological arousal is not the only aspect of arousal - there are emotional and cognitive elements too which should be considered. Therefore, these findings only coincide with the Yerkes-Dodson Law, and so may be a reductionist explanation of the effect of anxiety on the accuracy of eyewitness testimony.
- + The methodology is high in mundane realism because the eyewitnesses were not told that they would have to identify their offender after the incident. This accurately reflects real-life circumstances where eyewitnesses usually do not pay specific attention to their offender, and so this reduces the effects of demand characteristics on the findings, where if informed prior to the beginning of the study, the participants may have paid more attention to the offender in an attempt to please the researchers.
- + Such research provides a baseline for further research into the effect of other elements of stress/arousal on the accuracy of eyewitness testimony, such as cognitive and emotional factors. The methodology is flexible, allowing for replication in other stress-provoking situations, such as a fairground ride or an imminent job interview! This supports the theoretical basis/use of such research.

<sup>6</sup> Valentine, T. and Mesout, J. (2008), Eyewitness Identification Under Stress in the London Dungeon, accessed from <http://www.valentinemoore.co.uk/trv/londondungeon.pdf>

