

# PSYC3020 Exam Notes

## 1. INTRODUCTION TO FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY → 1

1. Define Forensic Psychology
2. Describe and critically evaluate theories of crime
  - A. Historical perspectives
  - B. Sociological theories
  - C. Biological theories
  - D. Psychological theories
  - E. Social-psychological theories

## 2. CRIMINAL OFFENDERS: SENTENCING AND RISK ASSESSMENT → 8

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1. Types of deception and lies
2. Behavioural indicators of deception
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4. A whole approach to detecting deception
5. Difficulties in lie detection

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1. Background
2. The misinformation effect
3. Different ways of encountering misinformation
4. Why does the misinformation effect occur?
5. Factors influencing susceptibility to the misinformation effect
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## 5. POLICE PSYCHOLOGY → 30

1. Give reasons why some police engage in unethical behaviour
2. Describe Australian research on police ethics
3. Define police discretion, know when it is commonly used, and list factors influencing arrest decisions
4. Discuss the sources and consequences of police stress
5. Discuss the prevention and management of police stress

# **1. INTRODUCTION TO FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY**

## **Learning Objectives**

- 3. Define Forensic Psychology**
- 4. Describe and critically evaluate theories of crime**
  - F. Historical perspectives**
  - G. Sociological theories**
  - H. Biological theories**
  - I. Psychological theories**
  - J. Social-psychological theories**

## **ONE**

### **What is Forensic Psychology?**

No real consensus of what Forensic Psychology is

- Some people (e.g. Blackburn, 1996) argue that the term Forensic Psychology should only be used to denote the:  
“direct provision of psychological information to the courts, that is, to psychology in the courts” – i.e. it refers to the application of psychology in the courtroom
- However some psychologists have wanted to widen this usage to cover all aspects of psychology that are applied or relevant to the legal process.

### **The Broad Definition**

- *The application of psychological knowledge and theories to all aspects of the criminal and civil justice systems, including the processes and the people* e.g. criminal investigation, sentencing, judge and jury decision-making, assessment for readmission into society, interviewing witnessing and suspects, how victims are treated/processed, function of police, perpetrators – all knowledge from different fields of psychology are applied

Why do people commit crimes?

- Because you can get away with it
- Poverty
- Accidentally etc.
- There are a lot of ways

Martin Bryant

- Committed the Port Arthur massacre – is he evil or is there another explanation for his behaviour?
- It turns out he has a personality disorder
- We always try to figure out why people behave in a particular way, especially when unexpected, negative events occur, like crimes.

## TWO - A

### Theories of Crime: Historical Perspectives

Theories of crime are as old as crime itself

- It is important to try to find an explanation – because we can perhaps solve crime
- *Aristotle: "Poverty is the parent of revolution and crime."* – focused on the society not the individual
- *Religious explanations* – around the middle ages, saw crime is the manifestation of sin
- *Sir Francis Bacon: "Opportunity makes a thief."* – similar to Aristotle: crime is determined by the situation
- *Philosophers such as Voltaire and Rousseau emphasised free will, hedonism, and flaws in social contract* – people are rational beings that exercise their own free will

### Classical School of criminology:

- *Law-breaking occurs when people, faced with a choice between right and wrong, freely choose wrongly i.e. the free-will perspective* – we weigh up pros and cons of a situation and act accordingly e.g. I'm going to steal the bread because the bread outweighs the potential punishment
- *Punishment should be proportionate to crime committed*
- Insisted that *punishment should be is very likely and very swift*: this will make people less likely to commit crime

### Positivist School of Criminology

- *Early 1800s-towards the 1900s*
- *Emphasises factors determining criminal behaviour rather than free will e.g. personality factors*
- Believe *punishment should fit the criminal rather than the crime*
- *Seeks to understand crime through scientific method and analysis of empirical method* – the first school of Criminology to use science to confirm theories about crime

E.g., Positive theorist: *Cesare Lombroso*

- Darwin very popular around this time
- *Believed criminals were atavistic human beings*
- *Throw-backs to earlier stages of evolution who were not sufficiently advanced mentally* for successful life in the modern world
- We should be able to *look at physical characteristics*: criminals are more likely bald for e.g. – *identified various 'criminal' physical features*

E.g., Positive theorist: *Ernest Hooton*

- Took this idea – and then took data to back up the ideas that different physical characteristics correlated with particular crimes
- *Took physical measurements of 14,000 criminals and 3000 civilians*
- *Burglars: short heads, golden hair, undershot jaws*
- *Robbers: long wavy hair, high heads, short ears, broad faces*

- *E.g. looked at Ned Kelly and noted that cranial regions for combativeness and destructiveness were dangerously overdeveloped, while those for cautiousness and conscientiousness were underdeveloped*

Although early positivists saw themselves as scientists, their science was crude and their conclusions are not taken seriously today

### Modern Theories of Crime

- *Modern theories of crime are based on Positivism*
- We will group theories that explain aggressive crimes into 4 categories:
  1. Sociological theories
  2. Biological theories
  3. Psychological theories
  4. Social-psychological theories

## **TWO - B**

### 1. Sociological Explanations

- Explain crime as *the result of social or cultural forces that are external to any specific individual, that exist prior to any criminal act*, and that emerge from social class, political, ecological, or physical structures affecting large groups of people
- *Individual differences are largely deemphasised*

Two Types of Sociological Theories

1. Structural Explanations
2. Subcultural Explanations

#### Structural Explanations

- People have similar interests and motivations (i.e. people are generally the same), but *differ dramatically in opportunities to employ their talents in socially legitimate ways* (i.e. some employ their skills and ultimately get a good job, whereas some will not have the opportunity to go to Uni – and *because they still have the same desires, they will go about attaining things in illegal ways*)
- Dysfunctional social arrangements and differential opportunity (e.g., inadequate schooling, economic adversity) thwart people from legitimate attainment
- *Discrepancies between aspirations and means create strains that lead to crime*

#### Subcultural Explanations

- Crime originates when *various groups of people endorse cultural values that clash with the dominant, conventional rules of society*
- E.g., *gangs enforce unique norms* about how to behave

Cons of Sociological Theories

- *Crimes are often committed by people who have never been denied opportunities* e.g. Winona Ryder caught shop-lifting



- *Adoptees who had both biological and adoptive criminal parents were 14x more likely to be criminal than those with no criminality in background*
- *Suggests even though your environment is not criminal, if your genetics involve criminal behaviour, you are more likely to commit criminal acts*
- *Thus, it can be argued that carriers of 'criminal genes' should not be fully held responsible for their criminal behaviour – because it is partly due to their biology*

#### Genetic theories unpopular

- *Fear that if we attribute crime even partly to genetic factors, then social and environmental causes will be neglected*
- *Concern that it will lead to some people being designated genetically "inferior" and this could lead to forced sterilisation, genocide...*
- *The extent to which any behaviour is inheritable within one group of people can not explain differences between groups of people*
- *It is unclear what exactly is inherited*

#### 5 possibilities about what is inherited:

- *Constitutional predisposition*
- *Neuropsychological abnormalities*
- *Autonomic nervous system differences – criminals found to be less aroused therefore need to do these activities to gain arousal*
- *Physiological differences – e.g. lower levels of serotonin, higher testosterone*
- *Personality and temperament differences*

## TWO - D

### 3. Psychological Theories

- *Crime results from personality attributes possessed by the potential criminal*
- *Emphasize individual differences about the way people think or feel about behaviour*

#### Types of psychological theories

1. Psychoanalytic Theories
2. Personality Traits
3. Personality Disorder

#### Psychoanalytic theories (Freud)

##### 3 different potential explanations for criminal behaviour:

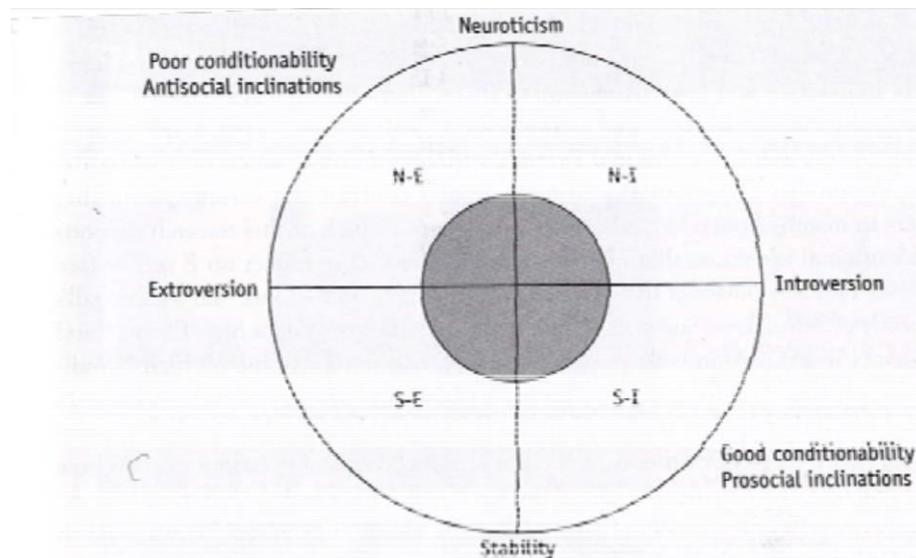
1. *A weak ego and superego that cannot restrain the anti-social instincts of the id*
2. *A means of obtaining substitute gratification (sublimation) of basic needs that have not been satisfied*
3. *Thanatos, the desire of animate matter to return to the inanimate (i.e. the death-wish), leads to dangerous or self-destructive behaviours or may*

result as in unconscious efforts to get caught .g. drawing texta on face as a mask that does not wash off the next day so gets caught

- The most commonly blamed factor is inadequate identification by a child with his or her parents
- Theories are no longer favoured in modern criminology because *research doesn't support*

### Personality Traits

- Eysenck believed that there are three major, largely unrelated, components of personality
- *Extraversion*: active, assertive, creative, carefree, lively, sensation-seeking, venturesome
- *Neuroticism*: anxious, depressed, emotional, guilt feelings, irrational, low self-esteem, moody, shy, tense
- *Psychoticism*: aggressive, antisocial, cold, creative, egocentric, impersonal, impulsive, tough-minded, lacking empathy
- Everyone has these traits but to different degrees
- According to Eysenck, criminals show higher levels of all of these traits
- Extraversion/Neuroticism interaction: need lots of stimulation and under-aroused: don't learn as fast from negative situations, and also respond very harshly towards them, so more likely to engage in criminal behaviour



**Figure 1.2** Eysenck's Model of Personality and Its Relationship to Conditionability and Crime

### Personality Disorder

- Antisocial Personality Disorder:  
"...a pervasive pattern of disregard for, and violation of, the rights of others that begins in childhood or early adolescence and continues into adulthood." (DSM-IV)  
- Focus on behaviour
- Psychopathy:

- Typically engage in *frequent criminal activity for which they feel little or no remorse*
- Psychopaths account for a small percentage of law violators, but *they commit a disproportionately large percentage of violent crimes*
  - Focus on personality traits

## TWO - E

### 4. Social-Psychological Theories

- Bridges gap between *environmentalism of sociology and individualism of psychological or biological theories* – i.e. it is an interaction of both
- *Crime is learned (from environment), but theories differ on what and how it is learned*

3 types of social-psychological theories

1. Control theories
2. Learning theories
3. Social-labeling

#### Control theory

- People will behave antisocially unless they learn, through a combination of inner controls and external constraints on behaviour, not to offend – i.e. *people will do socially-unacceptable things, unless there are external controls in environment then you will not behave in this way e.g. parents, teachers, friends, rules*
- *It is largely external containment (e.g., social pressure and institutionalised rules) that controls crime, but if these controls weaken, control of crime must depend on internal restraints* – i.e. *when the external controls are not around it depends on internal controls that will prevent you from committing crime*

#### Learning Theory

- People *directly acquire specific criminal behaviours through different forms of learning*
- *Operant learning theory*: a person behaves criminally when such behaviour is favoured by *reinforcement* that outweighs punishment e.g. steal something, get away with it, positive reward, repeat stealing behaviour
- *Social learning theory*: behaviour is learned by observation through modeling e.g. kids observe adult kicking/punching doll, then when they were left alone they performed that behaviour because they had *observed the adult enjoying that behaviour*

#### Social-labeling

- *Deviance is created by the labels that society assigns to certain acts* – i.e. society says that certain acts are illegal, they are only performed by criminals etc.
- *Stigma of being branded a deviant can create a self-fulfilling prophecy*
  - A prediction that comes true because it has been made.