

COMPARING EXPLANATIONS OF OFFENDING BEHAVIOUR

Use the table below to compare the explanations for offending with respect to: explanation for criminal behaviour, the role of parents and childhood, determinism types/free will and biological influences. Some boxes have been filled in for you.



| Explanation | Explanation for criminal behaviour | The role of parents and childhood | Soft or hard determinism and free will | Biological influences on behaviour |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| Psychological explanation: Cognitive explanations (level of moral reasoning and cognitive distortions) | This sees criminal behaviour as resulting from having a lower level of moral reasoning than non-criminals and because of faulty information processing called cognitive distortions. This means that crime is seen as resulting from internal processes. | | | |
| Biological explanations: Atavistic, neural and genetic factors | | | This is hard determinism as criminal behaviour is caused by genetic influences and neural factors which biologically determine criminal behaviour. Free will can't change the influence these have so people are not seen as in control of the crimes they commit. | |
| Psychological explanation: Eysenck's theory of the criminal personality | | Parents have a role in socialising a child to delay gratification and be less selfish. However, people with high E and N scorers are difficult to condition because of their nervous systems so will act antisocially. This means parents have little effect on the personality and behaviour of the criminal as inherited factors affect the development of criminal behaviour more. | | |
| Psychological explanation: Differential association | | | | Biological factors are seen as having little influence on the development of criminal behaviour. Criminal behaviour is the result of socialisation, which is learned from the people around you. |
| Psychological explanation: Psychodynamic explanations | Offending occurs because the superego is deficient or inadequate so the id is given free rein. Maternal deprivation causes affectionless psychopathy where a person lacks guilt and feelings for others, which leads to delinquent behaviour. | | | |

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- ANSWERS

Suggested answers are given below, though some responses are open to argument.



| Explanation | Explanation for criminal behaviour | The role of parents and childhood | Soft or hard determinism and free will | Biological influences on behaviour |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| <p>Psychological explanation: Cognitive explanations (level of moral reasoning and cognitive distortions)</p> | <p>This sees criminal behaviour as resulting from having a lower level of moral reasoning than non-criminals and because of faulty information processing called cognitive distortions. This means that crime is seen as resulting from internal processes.</p> | <p>Parents and childhood influence the way that schemas develop and can influence a child's understanding of what is right and wrong. These can affect the development of cognitive distortions and faults in information processing.</p> | <p>This is soft determinism as thought processes cause the criminal behaviour but free will is seen as having some influence on criminal behaviour because a person is free to choose whether to act on their irrational thoughts.</p> | <p>The way that information is processed is biological; however, these are refined through the experiences a person has in their environment</p> |
| <p>Biological explanations: Atavistic, neural and genetic factors</p> | <p>Criminal behaviour results from offenders being genetic throwbacks who inherit genes that predispose them to commit crimes. Reduced activity in the prefrontal cortex can also cause criminal behaviour as this is involved in regulating emotional behaviour.</p> | <p>Parents influence the development of criminal behaviour only through genetic influences. Childhood environmental experiences influence criminal behaviour slightly.</p> | <p>This is hard determinism as criminal behaviour is caused by genetic influences and neural factors which biologically determine criminal behaviour. Free will can't change the influence these have so people are not seen as in control of the crimes they commit.</p> | <p>Crime is an innate tendency that may be genetically determined or the result of abnormalities in the brain structure or function.</p> |
| <p>Psychological explanation: Eysenck's theory of the criminal personality</p> | <p>Criminal personality causes criminal behaviour. Each person has high or low levels of extraversion, psychoticism and neuroticism. Neurotic-extraverts seek excitement, are not easy to condition and are unstable. Psychoticism is also linked to crime, where a person is unemotional and prone to aggression.</p> | <p>Parents have a role in socialising a child to delay gratification and be less selfish. However, people with high E and N scores are difficult to condition because of their nervous systems so will act antisocially. This means parents have little effect on the personality and behaviour of the criminal as inherited factors affect the development of criminal behaviour more.</p> | <p>Personality is determined by the genetic factors, which means that an individual is biologically determined to be a criminal so has little free will.</p> | <p>Our personality traits are biological in origin and come about from the nervous system that we inherit so the criminal personality has a biological basis.</p> |
| <p>Psychological explanation: Differential association</p> | <p>Offending is seen as learned in the same way as any other behaviour, through the relationships and associations we form with the people around us. If these people have values and attitudes that are pro-criminal, then a person will offend.</p> | <p>The family are seen as crucial in determining whether an individual is likely to engage in criminal activity. If a family supports criminal behaviour and see it as reasonable then this will affect the child's value system.</p> | <p>This is soft determinism because free will is seen as having some influence on criminal behaviour because a person learns to be a criminal through their relationships and associations with others but is free to choose whether they act on the pro-criminal attitudes they learn.</p> | <p>Biological factors are seen as having little influence on the development of criminal behaviour. Criminal behaviour is the result of socialisation, which is learned from the people around you.</p> |
| <p>Psychological explanation: Psychodynamic explanations</p> | <p>Offending occurs because the superego is deficient or inadequate so the id is given free rein. Maternal deprivation causes affectionless psychopathy where a person lacks guilt and feelings for others, which leads to delinquent behaviour.</p> | <p>The development of the superego and moral understanding occurs through the interaction with parents during the phallic stage of development when children identify with their same-sex parent. Inadequate or deviant superegos lead to crime. Without a mother-figure affectionless psychopathy can develop. This is where a person lacks guilt and empathy for others and is linked to crime.</p> | <p>This is hard determinism because criminal behaviour is determined by the inadequate and deficient superegos. They enable the id to have free rein and not be properly controlled. This means a person has no free will to act differently as the id works at an unconscious level and so can't be controlled.</p> | <p>There are some biological influences on criminal behaviour as a person is born with biological drives such as Thanatos – the drive to be aggressive.</p> |