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| **Psychological explanations: Eysenck’s theory AO1** | | | |
| **General personality theory**  Hans Eysenck was an important figure in personality and intelligence research during the 1950’s and 60’s. Eysenck (1947) proposed that behaviour could be represented along two dimensions: **introversion/extraversion** (E) and **neuroticism/stability** (N). The two dimensions combine to form a variety of personality characteristics or traits. Eysenck later added a third dimension – **psychotic** (P). | | | |
| **Biological basis**  According to Eysenck, our personality traits are biological in origin and come about through the type of nervous system we inherit. Thus, all personality types – including the criminal personality type – have an innate, biological basis. **Extraverts** have an underactive nervous system which means they constantly seek excitement, stimulation and are likely to engage in risk – taking behaviours. They also tend not to condition easily and do not learn from their mistakes. **Neurotic** individuals tend to be nervous, jumpy and over-anxious, and their general instability means their behaviour is often difficult to predict. | | | |
| **The criminal personality**  The criminal personality type is neurotic-extravert- a combination of all the characteristics and behaviours described for both neuroticism and extraversion. In addition, Eysenck suggested that the typical offender will also score highly on measures of pschoticism – a personality type that is characterised as cold, unemotional and prone to aggression. | | | |
| **The role of socialisation**  In Eysenck’s theory, personality is linked to criminal behaviour via socialisation processes. Eysenck saw criminal behaviour as developmentally immature in that it is selfish and concerned with immediate gratification – they are impatient and cannot wait for things. The process of socialisation is one in which children are taught to become more able to delay gratification and more socially oriented. Eysenck believed that people with the high E and N scores had nervous systems that made them difficult to condition. As a result, they would not learn easily to respond to antisocial impulses with anxiety. Consequently, they would be more likely to act antisocially in situations where the opportunity presented itself. | | | |
| **Measuring the criminal personality**  The notion that personality can be measured is one that is central to Eysenck’s theory. He developed the *Eysenck Personality Inventory* (EPI), a form of psychological test which locates respondents along the E and N dimensions to determine their personality type. A later scale was introduced that is used to measure psychoticism.  **Psychological explanations: Eysenck’s theory AO3** | | | |
| **Evidence supporting Esenck’s theory**  P: One strength of Eysenck’s theory of the criminal personality is that it has supportive evidence.  E: Sybil Eysenck and Hand Eysenck (1977) compared 2070 male prisoners’ scores on the EPI with 2422 male controls. Groups were subdivided into age groups, ranging from 16 to 69 years. On measures of psychoticism, extraversion and neuroticism – across all age groups – prisoners recorded higher scores than controls.  E: This is a strength because the findings accords with the predictions of the theory that the criminal personality type is neurotic-extravert.  L: | **The idea of a single criminal type**  P: One weakness of Eysenck’s theory of the criminal personality is that the idea that all offending behaviour can be explained by a single personality type has been criticised.  E: For example, Moffitt (1993) proposed several district types of adult male offender based on the timing of the first offence, and how long offending persists. Further, Eysenck;s criminal type is out of step with modern personality theories. Digman’s (1990\_ five factor model of personality suggests that alongside E and N, there are additional dimensions of openness.  E: This is a weakness because it suggest that multiple combinations are available for a criminal personality, so therefore a high E and N score does not mean offending is inevitable as the theoy suggests. | **Cultural bias**  P: Another weakness of Eysenck’s theory of the criminal personality is that it doesn’t take into account cultural differences in personality.  E: For example, Bartol and Holanchock (1979) studied Hispanic and African American offenders in a maximum security prison in new york and divided these into six groups based on their criminal history and the nature of their offence. It was revealed that all six groups were found to be less extravert than a non-criminal control group.  E: This is a weakness Eysecks theory cannot be generalised to everyone as Bartol et al suggested there sample wasn’t extraverted because it was a very different cultural group that was investigated by Eysenck.  L: | **MAID** |