

CMY3701 summary/essay of Eysenck's biosocial theory of crime for 15 marks

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C. Deyzel

Eysenck's biosocial theory of crime (15 Marks)

This is a summary of Eysenck's biosocial theory of crime, including my own examples; I used these as my own exam preparation and managed to obtain a distinction. Please do not submit this essay as an assignment, there are direct quotes from the study guide. Use these for exam revision ONLY.

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1. Introduction

Hans Eysenck was one of the most influential personality psychologists of the 20th century; he was the champion of the scientific approach to psychology in general and to personality in particular. His approach emphasised the integration of basic psychological theory with an experimental approach to the study of individual differences. During his life his work on behaviour genetics, ability, dimensions of personality and a biological basis to personality went from being disbelieved to accepted wisdom for the field. Eysenck theory is regarded as a biosocial theory, since he believed that genetic factors contributed significantly to human behaviour, but only showed themselves under the influence of environmental or social factors.

2. Definition of a key concept

2.1 Biosocial criminology

Biosocial criminology is an interdisciplinary field that aims to explain crime and antisocial behaviour by exploring both biological and environmental factors.

2.2 Genetics

Genetics is an essential feature of Eysenck's theory. As far as crime is concerned, he was convinced that evidence from the study of twins brought up together and separately supported the hypothesis that there is a substantial inherited component to crime. He also placed importance on adoption studies.

3. Constitutional factors

Eysenck argued that there are physical differences between criminal and non-criminals and he was particularly interested in the influence of body types, that is, the notion put forward by Sheldon. *William Sheldon believed that people could be classified into three body shapes, which correspond with three different personality types. Examples of physical differences are beak like noses or body shapes (big and muscular), slanted head, long arms etc.*

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4. Personality

Eysenck identified two main components to a person's personality:

- **Extroversion**, which runs from extroversion to introversion and is often referred to as the E scale. Characteristics of extroversion are active, assertive, creative, carefree, dominant, lively, sensation seeking and venturesome. *Someone that has an extroversion personality trait would be someone who love to socialise in big crowds and like to go on adventures, they may take control over the planning of an event and be certain of themselves.*
- **Neuroticism**, which runs from neurotic or unstable to stable and is often referred to as the N scale. Characteristics of neuroticism are anxious, depressed, emotional, guilt feelings, irrational, low self-esteem, moody, shy and tense. *Someone that has the neuroticism trait would respond poorly to stressors, interpret ordinary situations as threatening and see minor frustrations as hopelessly difficult.*

These two components are continuous and most people fall in the middle range. Eysenck later introduced a third personality dimension, which he called **psychoticism** (P scale). This dimension could well be referred to as a psychopathic dimension since it is generally evidenced by aggressive, cold and impersonal behaviour. Other characteristics are antisocial, creative, egocentric, impulsive, tough-minded and lacking empathy. The individual who is high on the psychoticism scale tend to be solitary, uncaring, cruel and will not fit in with others. Eysenck associates extremes of this dimension with criminality – the higher the P score, the higher the level of offending.

5. Environmental influences

Eysenck argued that criminal behaviour is the result of a failure of socialisation, as a result of this failed socialisation, certain adult individuals possesses significantly immature tendencies. These immature tendencies include being concerned solely for oneself and wanting immediate gratification for one's own needs. Introverts tend to learn quickly as a result of conditioning, whereas extraverts learn much more slowly. This slowness leads to poorer socialisation and hence criminality. Such an argument explains why crime is characteristically the activity of younger people – they have not had the time to become completely socialised.

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6. Conclusion

Please provide own conclusion. Remember to indicate that this is your opinion, for example “this student is of the opinion that...” This is what you think about the theory. This is not a summary of your essay.