



Personality and antisocial behaviour: study of temperamental dimensions

Estrella Romero ^{a,*}, M. Angeles Luengo ^a, Jorge Sobral ^b

^a*Department of Clinical Psychology and Psychobiology, Faculty of Psychology, Campus Sur,
15706 Santiago de Compostela, Spain*

^b*Department of Social Psychology, University of Santiago de Compostela,
Santiago de Compostela, Spain*

Abstract

Personality variables have been considered as major determinants of delinquent behaviour in various theoretical models and numerous empirical studies. Particular attention has been paid to “temperament” variables, which are considered to have a biological basis. In the present study, we examined relationships between self-reported antisocial behaviour and a number of temperament variables (extraversion, neuroticism, psychoticism, impulsivity, sensation seeking) in three subject groups: 435 school-attending male adolescents, 529 school-attending female adolescents, and 95 institutionalized delinquent male adolescents. This study design, unlike that of most previous studies of this type, allowed control for the factor of institutionalization, and included a longitudinal analysis, in that questionnaires were administered to the school-attending subjects twice with a 1-year interval. The results confirm that several temperament variables, characterized by high sensitivity to reward and/or weak response to punishment signals, are closely associated with antisocial behaviour. Our findings suggest that personality variables should be included in criminological models, and taken into account in intervention programs. © 2001 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Delinquency; Adolescents; Extraversion; Neuroticism; Psychoticism; Impulsivity; Sensation seeking

1. Introduction

A wide range of variables have been considered as risk factors for juvenile delinquency (see for example Rutter, Giller & Hagell, 1998). Of these, personality variables were for many years

* Corresponding author. Fax: +34-981-521581.

E-mail address: pcamero@usc.es (E. Romero).

attributed scant importance (Farrington, 1992; Romero, Sobral & Luengo, 1999): the powerful influence of sociology on criminological theory, a certain fear of biological reductionism, and the internal crises of personality psychology itself came together to create a climate in which personality factors were dismissed as unimportant (Stitt & Giacopassi, 1992). More recently, however, there has been what might be called a 'rediscovery of the person' in criminology (Andrews & Bonta, 1994). In the face of strong evidence that macrosocial variables cannot fully explain delinquency, and that there is great interindividual variability in the behaviour of subjects exposed to criminogenic conditions, increasing interest is turning to individual differences, even in schools of thought with a strong sociological influence (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

Particular attention is being paid to what have been referred to as the 'temperament' variables, a group of characteristics assumed to depend on the individual's biological substrate, and showing a relatively high degree of stability over the lifespan (Bates & Wachs, 1994; Strelau, 1998). In criminal psychology, Eysenck's three fundamental dimensions (extraversion, neuroticism, psychoticism), together with impulsivity and sensation seeking, have received particular attention.¹

It has been hypothesized that delinquency is related to all three Eysenck dimensions. Extraversion, associated with a low level of corticoreticular arousal, hinders conditioning and thus the acquisition of social norms. As neuroticism tends to amplify acquired behavioural tendencies, Eysenck (1964) predicts that subjects with high extraversion and neuroticism scores are those at highest risk for antisocial behaviour. In 1976, the dimension psychoticism was introduced into Eysenck's system (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1976), and since that time has likewise been considered to be a predictor of criminal behaviour, in view of the hostility and emotional insensitivity characteristic of subjects with high scores on this dimension.

Impulsivity has also been the subject of increasing attention as an explicator of antisocial behaviour, despite the conceptual and methodological confusion surrounding this construct (Gerbing, Ahadi & Patton, 1987; White, Moffitt, Caspi, Bartusch, Needles & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1994; Romero, Luengo, Carrillo & Otero, 1994). The classical conceptions of psychopathic personality (Cleckley, 1976; Gough, 1948; Hare, 1980) include as defining characteristics a lack of behavioural self-control, an orientation toward immediate gratification, and difficulty in carrying through long-term plans, all of which are implicit in the impulsivity construct. Approaches derived from Gray's model (for example, Newman, 1987) have suggested that reward sensitivity and difficulty in processing punishment signals make impulsive subjects prone to antisocial behaviour. The theoretical approach adopted by Wilson and Herrnstein (1985) proposes that impulsive subjects have a short time horizon, and are thus not adequately dissuaded by the typically delayed negative consequences of delinquent acts. Finally, in more recent models (e.g. Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1994), low self-control is considered to be a key factor underlying many types of deviant conduct, in association with situational opportunity.

¹ Historically there has been considerable controversy about the concept of temperament (Strelau, 1998). Currently, however, most researches seem to agree that the defining characteristics of temperament include a biological origin and temporal stability. At the same time, and although there is disagreement as to exactly which dimensions of personality should be included in this domain, dimensions such as those cited are commonly considered as 'temperament' in the recent literature (Angleitner & Ostendorf, 1994; Strelau; Zuckerman, 1994b).

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات