Stereotype Of Criminal’s Appearance And Outfit

Aim –

There is no one who does not have a stereotype no matter what topics are. The stereotype is a fixed idea or belief of something and formed by social factors such as family, friends and media and so on. Thus, once people have a fixed view, it could lead to having prejudiced attitudes (McLeod, 2015). If people are given a stimulating topic such as crime, they may more express their biased opinion, caused by stereotypes. For instance, people are asked about features of a thief, the majority will say the thief will man and he wears a black mask. Thus, the essay will investigate how many people have a stereotype of offenders’ image by giving questionnaires and doing an interview with people and police officers. And two criminological psychology theories, related to criminal’s appearance and somatotype, will be written for supporting the stereotype generated by people.

Rationale –

About 3 years ago, I read the book of ‘Snow white must die’, written by Neuhaus Nele who German writer. The book was very impressive as it was the first time to read a detective story but also it intrigued me by provoking curiosity about why and how criminal takes cruel actions. Hence, I’ve interested in psychology and criminology since that day. Whenever if I have a chance to study psychology, I’ve concatenated psychology and criminology as long as it is possible. During semester 1 in social science class, for example, I conjectured that bulimia nervosa people, who are lack of control eating and momentary emotions (Engel, B., Reiss, N, S., and Dombeck, M), could steal foods when they deprived of food. So, that is why I choose the psychology issue without hesitation.

When I got this course work, I was reading the book of psychology and crime, written by David Putwain and Aidan Sammons, for study skill. The book of ‘Psychology and crime’ has both traditional and modern psychological theories and researches on a range of criminological issue. The most interesting part was ‘biologically oriented explanation of criminal behaviours’ because the section is explained how criminals’ behaviours are built and what causes make offenders, providing many studies. But while I read the part of ‘constitutional theories of criminality’, it could not convince me as theories were quite out of date and it has biased information. Even though criminologists and psychologists took experiments with several times, two explanations have many flaws. To briefly describe its thesis, being criminal is ‘innate’, they are not ‘made’ so offenders have their distinctive personality and appearance (Putwain, P., Sammons, A., 2002, P.30-31). After I read the book, I was wondering that do people normally agree with the theories and so whether people have a particular image of the criminal’s appearance and body shape. Therefore, this curiosity is the reason that I choose this topic of the stereotype of criminals’ outlooks and outfits.

In addition, offenders’ somatotype is also important to police officers. As far as police officers concerned, it depends on a suspect’s race whether to shoot an arrow in a crime scene (Correll, J. et al., 2007). It also might be caused by the stereotype of a culprit.

Content –

The Oxford English Dictionary defined a stereotype as an ‘A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or an idea of a particular type of person or thing’ such as Asian are good at math or Only anorexia women can become models. Thus, stereotypes are ubiquitous and its influence on thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

Cesare Lombroso (1876) was the first person who use scientific methods to study crime in the late nineteenth century. And he believed Darwin’s’ theory of natural selection – that criminals were “biological throwbacks on the evolutionary scale” (Vito, 2011). He argued that the climatic influences in the manufacturing of crime, the effect in geographical states, the effect in race, in the density of population, in education, in economic condition, in religion, in sex and age. Even though he researched in many areas of the production of the crimes, Lombroso’s theory of the crime was definitely explained biologically. Thus, psychological and sociological explanations are unfilled in his theory (Ellwood, 1912, P716-723).

Lombroso said criminality is inherited so criminals are not made but they are born (Putwain et al, 2002, P.30). In other words, individuals, in terms of biological viewpoint, could not create a real criminal as well as the social influences could not be a factor of being criminal. Furthermore, different subtypes of crime could be assorted through their physical features (Ellwood, 1912, P716-723). According to Lombroso’s theory, a thief could describe as they have their expressive face, manual dexterity and small wandering eyes and habitual murderers have bloodshot eyes and hawk-like noses. And sexual offenders could be identified by thick lips and projecting ears (Putwain et al, 2002, P.30).

Thief Habitual murderers Sexual Offenders

Retail-zone (2018) Wikipedia (2018) Stokes (2018)

This experiment has empirical evidence and it used scientific methods, so it had a responsibility to shift criminality away from the realm of moral and philosophical discussion and into the domain of scientific research. Lombroso assorted crime as a form of disease and a person’s difference in behaviours can lead to certain people into committing crimes. On the contrary, there are some flaws in the theory. When it comes to the experiment of the Lombroso theory, a number of samples were psychological disorder, then it might make confusion between psychopathology and criminality (Putwain et al, 2002, P.31). Moreover,

The analysed images of criminals are subjective so it cannot be generalised. And it is against ethics to judge criminals by outlook.

There is another study to the stereotype of criminals, which is Sheldon’s theory. William Sheldon was an American psychologist. He tried to associate criminals’ actions and body type or somatotype (Bernard, 2018). According to the dictionary Oxford, somatotype is ‘A category to which people are assigned according to the extent to which their bodily physique conforms to a basic type’ (Oxford English Dictionary).

There are three distinct types of physique shape: Endomorph, Ectomorph and Mesomorph and each means that ‘fat’, ‘thin’ and ‘muscular’. And each has its typical characteristics (Putwain

et al, 2002, P.31). Sheldon (1949) depicts each physique types with body build factors and psychological factors (Berg, 2012).

- Endomorph (Fat): a person who has a round body shape. Those people tend to have wide hips and narrow shoulders. Their upper arms and thighs have more fat than other body parts. But they have quite thin ankles and wrists.

So, Endomorph people tend to be sociable, tolerant, good-humored, even–tempered, relaxed and love foods. And endomorph people make others feel comfortable, but they are hedonistic.

- Ectomorph (Thin): which is a form of an opposite of the Endomorph, so people who are ectomorph' body build is 'skinny' shape. Sheldon defined that ectomorph people have five specific physic images. Narrow shoulders and hips, a thin chest and abdomen, small face compared to their body, slender legs and arms and very little body fat are ectomorphs physical body characteristics. The majority of them are likely to be self-conscious, private, introverted, inhibited, socially anxious, artistic, intense, emotionally restrained and thoughtful.
- Mesomorph (muscular): those people are between endomorph and ectomorph. Therefore, it has a large head, broad shoulders and narrow waist that is a wedge-shaped frame. They usually are powerful as they consist of muscles rather than fat. To recite some psychological features, adventurous, courageous, indifferent to what others think, competitive, assertive and bold and a love of risk. As a result, a mesomorph person's personality is more active.

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Sheldon figured out that pure somatotypes cannot exist but a person who has a large part of the temperament of mesomorph is prone to become involved in criminal behaviours (Putwain et al, 2002, P.31).

However, there are a number of defects in Sheldon's theory. He said that 'a person's level of mesomorph could predict their degree of criminality' (Putwain et al, 2002, P.31) but the statement is not reliable because it is the same with the woman is more stupid than man as they have a smaller brain. College students and delinquents were provided the same photograph, drawing mesomorph people and they assessed a scare of one to seven of mesomorphy in his investigation. The outcomes were different, the average score by the college student was 3.8 whereas delinquents' mean was 4.6 (Putwain et al, 2002, P.31). As a consequence, the standard of somatotypes is different by individuals, hence differentiating criminals according to physique shape is not valid.

Methodology-

The purposes of a study are to measure how many people have a stereotype of a criminal's lineament and body build, and how people think about two theories, which are Lombroso's and Sheldon's theories of crime. I will investigate the study through a questionnaire and interview. Also, volunteering sampling will be utilised, and the investigation will hire a woman and man investigators as investigator effect is a confounding variable. So, subjects can choose the gender of the researcher for an interview. It will take place at the University of Bath and police

station in Bath. After gathering 30 volunteers at the University of Bath, participants will receive questionnaires. Lastly, select five participants with using random sampling and do the interview with open two open questions within 10 minutes.

First of all, questions which are in questionnaires will be made with 16 questions. Half of the questions will associate with the Lombroso' theory so 8 questions will show people's appearance. The rest of the questions will ask participants about the somatotype of criminals. Five questions in Lombroso's theory have photographs of people's appearance, using both genders in order to prevent biased results. Each picture has different people' outlooks, for instance, one photo will have a man who has hawk-like noses, curly hairs and bloodshot eyes. These three features mean a series killer. The second one shows a woman who has full lips projecting eyes, that representative of rapists. The rest of the two pictures will be brought without any criminals' characteristics. And by giving four photographs, participants will be asked with the same question, that 'Does a person is a criminal?'. The rest four questions will be asking the type of crime if volunteers choose the 'criminal'.

Questions of somatotype also have 8 questions have the same structure as Lombroso's one. So, four pictures are to have different somatotypes, each has endomorph, ectomorph and mesomorph. The last one will have a bent back body shape. And ask the same question about 'does a person is a criminal?', but four questions are asking the reason for their choice.

The interview has only two questions because the aim is to know whether people will accept the two theories when investigators will explain two studies to participants. Therefore, two questions are to ask that 'do you agree with the studies' and 'why?'.

Collecting 30 volunteers until 12.00 A.M, and then bring them into a lecture room as number of subjects is only 30 people it does not require a conference hall. Two observers will explain the investigation except for the goal of the study. And all participants sit down a desk and are given the questionnaire paper at the same time. There is no time limit during the test. After finishing the questionnaire, investigators do numbering participants and choose five random numbers in order to carry out the interview. Before conducting the interview, researchers have to ask to be excused to participants about recording their voice. If they refuse to be recorded, then do note-taking about the replying instead of recording. Investigators should not give any pressure to participants such as press or hurry for an answering. They need to make a comfortable atmosphere by treating participants gently but not too much, otherwise, they might feel some pressure.

It is the same to investigate the stereotype of criminals at the police station in Bath. But only 10 volunteers will be collected. And five police officer will do the interview with the same questions, space and time. Space will be a room where can involve 10 people and the time is the same as the previous one.

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