Criminology is the scientific study of crime as an individual and social phenomenon. Criminological research areas include the incidence and forms of crime as well as its causes and consequences. They also include social and governmental regulations and reactions to crime. Criminology is an interdisciplinary field in the behavioural sciences, drawing especially on the research of sociologists and psychologists, as well as on writings in law. In 1885, Italian law professor Raffaele Garofalo coined the term "criminology" (in Italian, criminologia). The French anthropologist Paul Topinard used it for the first time in French (criminologie) around the same time.

Schools of thought

In the mid-18th century, criminology arose as social philosophers gave thought to crime and concepts of law. Over time, several schools of thought have developed.

Classical school

The Classical School, which developed in the mid 18th century, was based on utilitarian philosophy. Cesare Beccaria, author of On Crime and Punishment (1763-64), Jeremy Bentham, inventor of the panopticon, and other classical school philosophers argued that (1) people have free will to choose how to act. (2) Deterrence is based upon the utilitarian ontological notion of the human being a 'hedonist' who seeks pleasure and avoids pain, and a 'rational calculator' weighing up the costs and benefits of the consequences of each action. Thus, it ignores the possibility of irrationality and
studies have found that crime rates are associated with poverty, disorder, high numbers of economic deprivation tend to experience high rates of Chicago School.

Social disorganization

SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION (NEIGHBORHOODS)

Theoretical perspectives used in criminology include structural-functionalism, interactionism, Marxism, econometrics, systems theory, postmodernism, etc.

Social structure theories

SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION (NEIGHBORHOODS)

Social disorganization theory is based on the work of Henry McKay and Clifford R. Shaw of the Chicago School.[13] Social disorganization theory postulates that neighborhoods plagued with poverty and economic deprivation tend to experience high rates of population turnover.[14] These neighborhoods also tend to have high population heterogeneity.[15] With high turnover, informal social structure often fails to develop, which in turn makes it difficult to maintain social order in a community.

SOCIAL ECOLOGY

Since the 1970s, social ecology studies have built on the social disorganization theories. Many studies have found that crime rates are associated with poverty, disorder, high numbers of
people leave deteriorating neighborhoods, the most disadvantaged portions of the population may remain. William Julius Wilson suggested a poverty "concentration effect", which may cause neighborhoods to be isolated from the mainstream of society and become prone to violence.

### STRAIN THEORY (SOCIAL CLASS)

Strain theory, advanced by American sociologist Robert Merton, suggests that mainstream culture, especially in the United States, is saturated with dreams of opportunity, freedom and prosperity; as Merton put it, the American Dream. Most people buy into this dream and it becomes a powerful cultural and psychological motivation. Merton also used the term *anomie*, but it meant something slightly different for him than it did for Durkheim. Merton saw the term as meaning a dichotomy between what society expected of its citizens, and what those citizens could actually achieve. Therefore, if the social structure of opportunities is unequal and prevents the majority from realizing the dream, some of them will turn to illegitimate means (crime) in order to realize it. Others will retreat or drop out into deviant subcultures (gang members, "hobos": urban homeless drunks and drug abusers) [11].

### SUBCULTURAL THEORY

Main article: subcultural theory

Following on from the Chicago School and Strain Theory, and also drawing on Edwin H. Sutherland’s idea of differential association, subcultural theorists focused on small cultural groups fragmenting away from the mainstream to form their own values and meanings about life. Albert Cohen [12] and Lloyd Ohlin suggested that delinquency can result from differential opportunity for lower class youth [13]. Such youths may be tempted to take up criminal activities, choosing an illegitimate path that provides them more lucrative economic benefits than conventional, over legal options such as minimum wage-paying jobs available to them [14].

British subcultural theorists focused more heavily on the issue of class, where some criminal activities were seen as 'imaginary solutions' to the problem of belonging to a subordinate class. A further study by the Chicago school looked at gangs and the influence of the interaction of gang leaders under the observation of adults.

### Individual theories

#### TRAIT THEORIES

Biosocial and psychological trait theories have emerged in modern criminology, as scientific knowledge of genetics, biochemistry, and neurology has grown. Biosocial theorists believe in equipotentiality, that genetics significantly influence human behavior. They believe that biological factors, together with environmental and social factors, influence a person's propensity for crime.

Research into biosocial theories has looked at vitamin deficiency and antisocial behavior, the link between high consumption of sugar and aggressive behavior, and possible influence of hormones. Environmental contamination, particularly lead levels, and links to aggressive behavior is another research focus of biosocial theorists.

### CONTROL THEORIES

Another approach is made by the social bond or social control theory. Instead of looking for factors that make people become criminal, those theories try to explain why people do not become criminal. Travis Hirschi identified four main characteristics: "attachment to others", "belief in moral validity of rules", "commitment to achievement" and "involvement in conventional activities" [14]. The more a person features those characteristics, the less are the chances that he or she becomes deviant (or criminal). On the other hand, if those factors are not present in a person, it is more likely that he or she might become criminal.

Hirschi expanded on this theory, with the idea that a person with low self-control is more likely to become criminal [15]. A simple example: someone wants to have a big yacht, but does not have the means to buy one. If the person cannot exert self-control, he or she might try to get the yacht (or the means for it) in an illegal way; whereas someone with high self-control will (more likely) either wait or deny himself that need. Social bonds, through peers, parents, and others, can have a counteracting effect on one's low self-control. For families of low socio-economic status, a factor that distinguishes families with delinquent children from those who are not delinquent is the control exerted by parents or chaperones [16].

### Symbolic interactionism

Symbolic interactionism draws on the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and George Herbert Mead, as well as subcultural theory and conflict theory. This school of thought focused on the relationship between the powerful state, media and conservative ruling elite on the one hand, and the less powerful groups on the other. The powerful groups had the ability to become the 'significant other' in the less powerful groups' processes of generating meaning. The former could to some extent impose their meanings on the latter, and therefore they were able to 'label' minor delinquent youngsters as criminal. These youngsters would often take on board the label, indulge in crime more readily and become actors in the 'self-fulfilling prophecy' of the powerful groups. Later developments in this set of theories were by Howard Becker and Edwin Lemert, in the mid 20th century. Stanley Cohen developed the concept of *moral panic* (describing societal reaction to spectacular, alarming social phenomena such as post-War World Two youth cultures (e.g. the Mods and Rockers in the UK in 1964), AIDS and football hooliganism).
Deterrence

RATIONAL CHOICE THEORY

Main article: Rational choice theory (criminology)

Rational choice theory is based on the utilitarian, classical school philosophies of Cesare Beccaria, which were popularized by Jeremy Bentham. They argued that punishment, if certain, swift, and proportionate to the crime, was a deterrent for crime, with risks outweighing possible benefits to the offender. In Dei delitti e delle pene (On Crime and Punishment, 1763–1764), Beccaria advocated a rational penology. Beccaria conceived of punishment as the necessary application of the law for a crime: thus, the judge was simply to conform his sentence to the law. Beccaria also distinguished between crime and sin, and advocated against the death penalty, as well as torture and inhumane treatments, as he did not consider themselves rational deterrents.

This philosophy was replaced by the Positivist and Chicago Schools, and not revived until the 1970s with the writings of James Q. Wilson, Gary Becker's 1965 article titled "Crime and Punishment", and George Stigler's 1970 article "The Optimum Enforcement of Laws". Rational choice theory argues that criminals, like other people, weigh costs/risks and benefits when deciding whether or not to commit crime and think in economic terms. They will also try to minimize risks of crime by considering the time, place, and other situational factors.

Gary Becker, for example, acknowledged that many people operate under a high moral and ethical constraint, but considered that criminals rationally see that the benefits of their crime outweigh the cost such as the probability of apprehension, conviction, punishment, as well as their current set of opportunities. From the public policy perspective, since the cost of increasing the fine is marginal to that of the cost of increasing surveillance, one can conclude that the best policy is to maximize the fine and minimize surveillance.

With this perspective, crime prevention or reduction measures can be devised that increase effort required to commit the crime, such as target hardening. Rational choice theories also suggest that increasing risk of offending and likelihood of being caught, through added surveillance, police or security guard presence, added street lighting, and other measures, are effective in reducing crime.

One of the main difference between this theory and Jeremy Bentham's rational choice theory, which had been abandoned in criminology, is that if Bentham considered it possible to completely annihilate crime (through the panopticon), Becker's theory acknowledged that a society could not eradicate crime beneath a certain level. For example, if 25% of a supermarket's products were stolen, it would be very easy to reduce this rate to 15%, quite easy to reduce it until 5%, difficult to reduce it under 3% and nearly impossible to reduce it to zero (a feat which would cost the supermarket, in surveillance, etc., that it would outweight the benefits).

Such rational choice theories, linked to neoliberalism, have been at the basics of crime prevention through environmental design.

ROUTINE ACTIVITY THEORY

Routine activity theory, developed by Marcus Felson and Lawrence Cohen, drew upon control theories and explained crime in terms of crime opportunities that occur in everyday life. A crime opportunity requires that elements converge in time and place including (1) a motivated offender (2) suitable target or victim (3) lack of a capable guardian. A guardian at a place, such as a street, could include security guards or even ordinary pedestrians who would witness the criminal act and possibly intervene or report it to police. Routine activity theory was expanded by John Eck, who added a fourth element of "place manager" such as rental property managers who can take nuisance abatement measures.

Types and definitions of crime

Both the Positivist and Classical Schools take a consensus view of crime — that a crime is an act that violates the basic values and beliefs of society. Those values and beliefs are manifested as laws that society agrees upon. However, there are two types of laws:

- Natural laws are rooted in core values shared by many cultures. Natural laws protect against harm to persons (e.g. murder, rape, assault) or property (theft, larceny, robbery), and form the basis of common law systems.
- Statutes are enacted by legislatures, and reflect current cultural mores, albeit that some laws may be controversial, e.g. laws that prohibit marijuana use and gambling. Marxist Criminology, Conflict Criminology, and Critical Criminology claim that most relationships between State and citizen are non-consensual and, as such, criminal law is not necessarily representative of public beliefs and wishes: it is exercised in the interests of the ruling or dominant class. The more right wing criminologies tend to posit that there is a consensual social contract between State and citizen. Therefore, definitions of crimes will vary from place to place, in accordance to the cultural norms and mores, but may be broadly classified as blue-collar crime, corporate crime, organized crime, political crime, public order crime, state crime, state-corporate crime, and white-collar crime.

Subtopics

Areas of study in criminology include:

- Causes and correlates of crime
- Crime prevention
- Crime statistics
- Criminal behavior
- Criminal careers and desistance
- Deviant behavior
Comparative criminology is the study of the social phenomenon of crime across cultures, to identify differences and similarities in crime patterns.

See also

- Crime
- Criminal law
- Ethics
- Misanthropy
- Sociology

References


Bibliography

- Wikibooks: Introduction to sociology
- Cesare Beccaria, Dei delitti e delle pene (1763-1764)

External links

- Wikibooks has a book on the topic of Social Deviance and Crime
- American Society of Criminology
- Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC)
- Criminology Mega-Site — Dr. Tom O'Connor (Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice, Austin Peay State University)
- Stockholm Criminology Symposium
- College of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Florida State University
- The New Criminologist, the Professional Journal of Criminology
- Criminology Timeline from Middlesex University
Criminology as a discipline attracts students who are interested in crime and are concerned about how crime is defined, perceived as a problem and managed in modern society. Criminology offers a rigorous and comprehensive academic framework for examining and analysing concerns of contemporary relevance and for investigating the nature of crime and criminality in the world today. Criminology modules are delivered by various methods, from traditional large group lectures to smaller informal sessions and by the use of audio-visual material analysed in small groups.

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Criminology is the scientific study of the nature, extent, management, causes, control, consequences, and prevention of criminal behavior, both on individual and social levels. Criminology is an interdisciplinary field in both the behavioral and social sciences, which draws primarily upon the research of sociologists, psychologists, philosophers, psychiatrists, biologists, social anthropologists, as well as scholars of law. Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice. With 311 Figures and 150 Tables. Editors Gerben Bruinsma Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement (NSCR) Amsterdam, The Netherlands. VU University Amsterdam Amsterdam, The Netherlands. David Weisburd Department of Criminology, Law and Society George Mason University Fairfax, VA, USA. Faculty of Law The Hebrew University Mt. Scopus, Jerusalem, Israel.