# Introduction to criminology

## Abstract

This paper addresses criminology focusing on the major theories of criminal behaviors. The article progresses by stating, defining and explaining three approaches to understanding criminal behavior: psychological, social and biological approaches. While psychological and physiological approaches are illustrated, the paper details the different sociological views on crime as highlighted by Wilson and Herrnstein to provide a comprehensive crime theory. Sociological approaches defined in the article are structural strain theory, Differential association theory, social control theory as well as the labelling theory

## Introduction to criminology

Criminology approach is the way of preventing and handling crime via strict examination of why individual perpetrate such offences. In this case, different theories have been employed for finding best way to solve this challenge. In addition to this, three diverse criminal behaviors models emerge: biological, psychological as well as sociological models (Miller, 2012). Separating these models often seems hard and thus each of them plays a foremost role in the behavior interpretation. Fundamentally, while psychological approaches might be employed across theses models, each has some precise ones’ which can help to implement across various crime control policies.

## Theories of criminal behavior

### Psychological Approaches

Different fundamental assumptions exist and which reflect in every psychological criminal behavior approach. Following this further, the primary analysis unit is the individual (Miller, 2012). In that, the individual person is assumed to be liable for actions or practices he/she engaged in. Within individuals, behavior is driven by personality because it is the key element of motivation. On the same note, crime might be a product of inappropriate, abnormal or dysfunctional mental processes within the personality of the individual (Listwan, Van Voorhis & Ritchey, 2007). Besides, a person might have a criminal behavior purpose in case it presents particular felt necessities. Normality is explained by social consensus; in that, what is termed as “normal”, “acceptable”, or “typical” by most people in a specific social group. Additionally, abnormal or defective mental processes might result from a range of factors like inner conflicts adjustments, improper conditioning or inappropriate learning and inappropriate role models’ emulation. In other words, psychological principles-based crime control policy focuses on individuals and attempts to manage criminal behavior from this approach. Any policy that aims to prevent crime through targeting individuals like self awareness promotion, training, rehabilitation, education or identification criminal behavior risks are naturally psychological. Research has it that, an individual’s behavior is the best future behavior predictor (Listwan, Van Voorhis & Ritchey, 2007).

### Sociological Approaches

In the sociological approaches, experts are identifying conduct from a sociological viewpoint. Most sociological theories assume that a criminal behavior primarily is affected by combination of economic, social environment as well as political aspects (Wilson & Herrnstein, 1986). Therefore, an offender might not be seen as a bad person because these approaches trend in looking at the social factor of an individual’s condition, evaluating his/her neighborhood, race, family, intelligence, media and political influence, education, career and job, income level, as well as childhood history for determining why the person became a criminal. Various theories seek to elaborate criminal behavior like the Social Structure approach (consisting of b strain, cultural and social disorganization theories of deviance) anomie theory, differential association, social control theory and neutralization theory (Wilson & Herrnstein, 1986).

The theory of structural strain traces the origin of crime to the tensions that result from a gap between goals of a culture and the strategies available to people for attaining these goals (Wilson & Herrnstein, 1986). The theory states that a society is made up of both social structure and culture and in this case, suggest goals for individuals in a society. On the other hand, social structure offers the means for individuals of attaining these goals.

The main Differential association theory idea suggests that criminal behaviors are learned by communicating with other individuals (Wilson & Herrnstein, 1986). In this case, the interaction attitude, values and techniques to thing is acquired motivating future conduct and which is termed as a criminal act. In fact, the more one observes delinquent acts, which the environment does not criticize, the more the likelihood of the person to commit these acts.

The Social control theory is a functional theory type suggesting that crime happens when a group’s or person’s social bonds attachment is weakened (Wilson & Herrnstein, 1986). The view explains that socialization is essential to create conformity to every social guideline, and it through breaking of this conformity that crime happens. Pursuing this further, in the social control approach, if a person’s social bounds are weak, the person is a higher likelihood of engaging in a criminal act; individual consider what other people think about them by trying to align with the social anticipations due to their bond with others.

The labelling theory assumes that all acts are not intrinsically criminal. Rather than that, criminality definitions are designed by people in power by formulating laws and interpreting these laws through correctional institutions, police as well as courts. Crime is thus not a characteristic set of groups or people, but instead, it is an interaction process between criminals and non-criminals and the defined criminality context (Wilson & Herrnstein, 1986).

### Biological Approaches

According to the biological theories, a criminal behavior results from some flaw in the biological make up of a person (Listwan, Van Voorhis & Ritchey, 2007). The causes of such flaws might be brain abnormalities, heredity and neurotransmitter, which could result from trauma. Several theories share the biological approaches like Y chromosome theory Trait theories and Lombroso’s theory. Some criminal acts exist involving artificial human biology interference such as brain stimulation, psychosurgery as well as chemical control methods (Miller, 2012).

According to the psychodynamic theorists, the offender’ personality is id dominated (Miller, 2012). This implies that, upon them loosing control of the ego, their stunt gratification id takes over. Other challenges resulting in the ego control are immaturity, poor social skills, as well as overdependence on other people. Other theorists assume that a criminal is moved through unconscious necessity of being persecuted by the past crimes. So, crime is a feelings’ manifestation of oppression as well as individuals’ inability of developing the appropriate psychological defense or rationales of controlling such feelings.

## References

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