

## Topics to be Covered

### Introduction

- a. Criminology- Definition and Scope
- b. Brief introduction to pre- classical and classical theories of crime
- c. Positive theories of crime- constitutionalism and morphological theories, psychological and psycho-analytical theories
- d. Sociological theories of crime- differential association, sub- culture, ecological and anomie theory

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## Criminology - Definition and Scope

### Definition of Criminology:

Criminology is a multidisciplinary field that scientifically studies crime, criminal behavior, and the responses of society to criminal activity. It seeks to understand why people commit crimes, how these behaviors are shaped, and the consequences of such behaviors for both individuals and society. Criminologists also examine how laws are made, how crimes are punished, and how the criminal justice system operates in response to criminal actions.

The main aim of criminology is to uncover the causes of crime and offer solutions for preventing it, while also ensuring that society's responses to crime are just and effective. Criminologists employ various methods of research, including qualitative and quantitative techniques, to study patterns of crime, societal reactions, and the efficiency of crime control measures.

### Scope of Criminology:

The scope of criminology is vast and spans multiple disciplines and subfields. It is not confined solely to the study of crime but also extends to the understanding of the criminal justice system, societal reactions to crime, and the development of strategies for crime prevention. Some key areas within the scope of criminology include:

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#### *1. Causes of Crime:*

One of the most fundamental aspects of criminology is understanding the reasons why individuals engage in criminal activities. Criminologists look at a variety of factors to explain criminal behavior, including:

- **Biological Factors:**

- Biological criminology suggests that some individuals may be predisposed to criminal behavior due to their genetic makeup or neurological characteristics. For instance, research has explored whether abnormalities in the brain or inherited traits

can contribute to violent or antisocial behavior. Some theories propose that genetic inheritance, hormonal imbalances, or neurobiological factors such as brain injuries can affect behavior.

- **Psychological Factors:**

- Psychological criminology focuses on the mental and emotional state of individuals. Theories suggest that criminal behavior can arise from mental illness, personality disorders, childhood trauma, or abnormal cognitive development. Psychologists often investigate how personality traits (e.g., impulsivity or aggression) and experiences (e.g., childhood abuse) influence one's likelihood of committing crimes.

- **Social Factors:**

- Social factors, including poverty, lack of education, and socialization in deviant environments, are also seen as key contributors to criminal behavior. Sociological criminology, for example, suggests that individuals who grow up in areas with high crime rates or who lack access to stable family structures are more likely to engage in criminal activities.

- **Environmental Factors:**

- Crime is also heavily influenced by the environment in which individuals live. The concept of **social disorganization** (from the Chicago School of Sociology) suggests that communities with weak social institutions, high levels of poverty, and social fragmentation are more likely to experience higher rates of crime.

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## 2. *Crime Prevention and Control:*

Criminology also focuses on the development and evaluation of strategies for preventing and controlling crime. This area examines the effectiveness of laws, policies, and interventions aimed at reducing crime rates. Some approaches include:

- **Deterrence:**

- The belief that the fear of punishment will prevent individuals from committing crimes. Criminologists study whether harsh penalties, such as long prison

sentences, actually deter criminal behavior or if alternative methods like rehabilitation programs are more effective.

- **Rehabilitation:**

- This approach focuses on reforming offenders through education, therapy, or social programs to prevent reoffending. The goal is to address the root causes of criminal behavior, such as substance abuse or mental health issues.

- **Community Policing:**

- Community-based crime prevention initiatives, where the police work closely with local communities to build trust and reduce crime, are also an important area of criminological research.

- **Social Policies:**

- Criminologists also examine broader social policies and their impact on crime prevention. For instance, the effectiveness of welfare programs, youth engagement initiatives, and educational reform in reducing crime among at-risk populations.

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### *3. The Functioning of Criminal Justice Institutions:*

Another essential area of criminology is the study of criminal justice institutions, which include law enforcement agencies, courts, and prisons. Criminologists study how these institutions function and how they interact to deal with crime.

- **Law Enforcement:**

- Criminologists analyze the role of the police in maintaining law and order, investigating crimes, and making arrests. Issues such as police misconduct, racial profiling, and the effectiveness of crime-fighting strategies are often explored.

- **Courts:**

- The judicial process is another key area of criminological study. Criminologists examine how the courts handle criminal cases, including issues related to fairness, sentencing practices, plea bargaining, and the influence of social and political factors on judicial outcomes.

- **Prisons and Corrections:**

- Criminology also investigates the effectiveness of prisons and other correctional facilities in rehabilitating offenders. The study includes research on overcrowding, conditions in prisons, recidivism (reoffending), and alternatives to incarceration, such as parole, probation, and restorative justice.

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#### *4. The Impact of Crime on Victims and Communities:*

Criminology also looks at the consequences of crime for both individuals and society at large. The impact of crime is not only felt by the offenders but also by the victims, their families, and the wider community.

- **Victimology:**

- Victimology is a subfield of criminology that focuses on understanding the experiences of crime victims. It explores the psychological, social, and financial effects of crime on victims, as well as how society responds to them. Victimologists investigate issues like victim blaming, the criminal justice system's treatment of victims, and the ways in which victims can be supported during and after the legal process.

- **Social Impact:**

- Crime can have a profound effect on communities. High crime rates can lead to fear, social distrust, and disintegration of community bonds. Criminologists examine the broader social consequences of crime, including how it may affect property values, community cohesion, and local economies.

- **Public Perception of Crime:**

- Criminologists also study how crime is perceived by the public, which is often influenced by media coverage. Public fear of crime may not always correlate with actual crime rates, and criminologists seek to understand the psychological and social factors that shape these perceptions.

## Pre-Classical and Classical Theories of Crime

### *Pre-Classical Theories:*

Before the Enlightenment and the emergence of rationalist ideas, crime and criminal behavior were often explained through supernatural and religious lenses. Pre-classical theories were largely influenced by myths, superstition, and the prevailing religious and cultural beliefs of the time. These explanations focused on the moral and spiritual dimensions of crime, viewing it as a result of evil forces or divine intervention. Two prominent pre-classical theories include:

- **Demonic Possession Theory:**
  - One of the earliest explanations for criminal behavior was the belief in demonic possession or the influence of evil spirits. People who committed crimes or acted in deviant ways were often seen as being controlled by malevolent forces, such as demons or the devil. Crime was thus viewed as a sign of spiritual corruption or the presence of evil spirits within an individual. This led to harsh punishments, such as exorcisms, public humiliation, or even execution, in an attempt to rid the person of these supposed evil influences.
- **Divine Retribution Theory:**
  - In religious contexts, crime was often interpreted as a form of divine punishment. It was believed that individuals who committed crimes were being punished by God or the gods for their immoral actions. This theory linked crime directly to sin and viewed the criminal as someone who had violated divine law. The punishment was seen as a means of restoring moral order and divine justice. It was believed that both the individual and society would be restored to righteousness through divine retribution.

These early theories lacked empirical support and failed to consider human behavior in a systematic or scientific way. Crime was largely attributed to forces outside the individual's control, leaving little room for social, psychological, or rational explanations.

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### *Classical Theories:*

Classical criminology emerged during the Enlightenment period in the 18th century, which was a time of intellectual and philosophical change. This new perspective emphasized reason, free will, and individual rights. Classical theorists rejected supernatural explanations for crime and instead focused on human behavior, arguing that individuals were rational actors who made conscious choices. They believed that crime was the result of individuals pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain, and that punishment should serve as a deterrent to prevent further criminal acts. Two key figures in the development of classical criminology were **Cesare Beccaria** and **Jeremy Bentham**.

- **Cesare Beccaria (1764):**

- Cesare Beccaria is widely regarded as one of the founding figures of classical criminology. In his influential work *"On Crimes and Punishments"*, Beccaria argued for a more rational and humane criminal justice system. He believed that individuals commit crimes because they are motivated by self-interest and the desire to gain pleasure while avoiding pain. According to Beccaria, the punishment for a crime should be proportionate to the offense, aiming to deter crime by making the consequences of criminal behavior clear and predictable.
- Beccaria also advocated for the rights of the accused and opposed cruel and arbitrary punishments, such as torture and capital punishment. He emphasized that laws should be clear and publicly known, and that the justice system should ensure that individuals are treated fairly and impartially. His ideas contributed significantly to reforms in legal systems across Europe and laid the groundwork for modern criminal law.

- **Jeremy Bentham (1789):**

- Jeremy Bentham was another key figure in the development of classical criminology. He is best known for developing the concept of **utilitarianism**, which asserts that the best actions are those that maximize overall happiness and minimize suffering. Bentham applied this principle to the criminal justice system, arguing that punishment should be used to deter crime and promote the greatest good for society. In his view, punishment was justified only if it resulted in a net benefit for society, such as the reduction of crime and the maintenance of social order.

- Bentham's concept of utilitarianism also emphasized the importance of proportionality in punishment. He believed that punishment should be tailored to the crime, not excessive, and should aim to prevent future crime by creating a rational incentive for individuals to avoid criminal behavior. He also introduced the idea of the **panopticon**, a design for prisons that would allow for constant surveillance of inmates, reflecting his belief in the role of deterrence in controlling crime.
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#### Key Concepts of Classical Criminology:

##### 1. **Rational Choice Theory:**

- Classical criminology is built on the assumption that individuals are rational beings who make decisions based on a cost-benefit analysis. They weigh the potential benefits of committing a crime against the possible consequences or punishments. Crime is seen as a calculated decision rather than an impulsive or irrational act.

##### 2. **Deterrence:**

- A central tenet of classical criminology is the concept of deterrence. The idea is that the fear of punishment will prevent individuals from committing crimes. Deterrence is divided into two types:
  - **General Deterrence:** The effect of punishment on society at large, discouraging people from committing crimes because they fear similar consequences.
  - **Specific Deterrence:** The effect of punishment on the individual offender, discouraging them from committing future crimes due to the personal experience of punishment.

##### 3. **Proportional Punishment:**

- Classical criminology stresses that punishment should be proportional to the crime committed. The severity of the punishment should reflect the seriousness of the offense in order to ensure fairness and prevent excessive or cruel penalties.

##### 4. **Equality before the Law:**



- A key idea in classical criminology is the belief that all individuals should be treated equally before the law. This means that the law applies to everyone, regardless of social status, wealth, or background, and that individuals should be punished based on their actions, not their identity.
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## Positive Theories of Crime

Positive criminology focuses on identifying the factors that cause criminal behavior, often rooted in biological, psychological, and social influences. Unlike classical criminology, which emphasizes free will and rational decision-making, positive theories argue that criminal behavior is determined by factors beyond the individual's control. Positive criminology includes **constitutionalism and morphological theories** as well as **psychological and psychoanalytic theories**.

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### *Constitutionalism and Morphological Theories:*

These theories focus on the physical characteristics and body types of individuals to explain criminal behavior. They are based on the belief that some individuals are biologically predisposed to commit crimes due to certain physical traits or genetic factors.

#### 1. **Cesare Lombroso and the Theory of the "Born Criminal" (Late 19th Century):**

- Cesare Lombroso, an Italian criminologist, is often referred to as the father of **positive criminology**. He proposed the controversial theory that criminals are biologically different from non-criminals. According to Lombroso, criminality is inherited and can be identified through specific physical traits, a concept he called **atavism**. Lombroso suggested that these traits were evolutionary throwbacks, marking criminals as "primitive" or "less evolved" than non-criminals.
- He identified certain physical characteristics, such as a sloping forehead, prominent jaw, asymmetrical face, and long arms, which he believed could indicate a predisposition to criminal behavior. Lombroso's theory of the "born criminal" laid the foundation for future biological theories but was criticized for being overly deterministic and lacking empirical support.

#### 2. **William Sheldon and the Somatotype Theory (1949):**

- Building on Lombroso's work, **William Sheldon**, an American psychologist, developed the **somatotype theory** in the mid-20th century. Sheldon classified body types into three categories: **endomorphs**, **mesomorphs**, and **ectomorphs**.

- **Endomorphs:** Soft, round body types, typically associated with sociable and relaxed behavior.
  - **Mesomorphs:** Muscular, athletic build, which Sheldon believed to be more prone to aggression and criminal behavior.
  - **Ectomorphs:** Thin, fragile bodies, generally associated with introverted and anxious personality traits.
- According to Sheldon, **mesomorphs**, with their muscular and athletic builds, were more likely to engage in criminal activities due to their impulsive, risk-taking behavior. Although Sheldon's theory was influential in the development of criminological thought, it has been criticized for linking physical appearance to criminality without sufficient evidence to support the claim.
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#### *Psychological and Psychoanalytic Theories:*

Psychological and psychoanalytic theories of crime focus on the mental and emotional factors that influence criminal behavior. These theories emphasize the role of personality, developmental issues, and unresolved psychological conflicts in shaping individuals' tendencies toward criminal actions.

#### **1. Psychological Theories of Crime:**

- Psychological criminology explores how individual psychological factors, such as personality traits, emotional development, and mental disorders, contribute to criminal behavior. These theories focus on how an individual's unique psychological profile may predispose them to criminality.
- **Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory:**
  - **Sigmund Freud**, the father of psychoanalysis, introduced the idea that criminal behavior could be a manifestation of deep-seated psychological issues. According to Freud, the development of criminal behavior can be traced to unresolved conflicts from early childhood experiences. Freud's psychoanalytic theory suggests that individuals may commit crimes as a

result of unconscious impulses, desires, or repressed memories that are not fully processed in the conscious mind.

- Freud posited that individuals who struggle with the **id** (instinctive drives), **ego** (reality and rational thought), and **superego** (moral conscience) might develop maladaptive behaviors. If these psychological structures are unbalanced, the individual may resort to criminal activities as an outlet for their repressed desires or frustrations.
- For example, individuals who experience severe repression or trauma in their formative years may turn to crime as a way of expressing unconscious anger or frustration. Freud's theory also suggests that criminal behavior could be linked to a failure in the development of the **superego**, which is responsible for instilling moral and ethical values.
- **Behavioral Psychology and Crime:**
  - Another psychological approach to criminology is **behaviorism**, which focuses on learned behavior. According to behaviorist theories, criminal behavior is not an inherent trait, but rather learned through interaction with the environment.
  - In the **operant conditioning** framework, individuals are conditioned to behave in certain ways based on the consequences of their actions. Positive reinforcement (rewards) or negative reinforcement (removal of unpleasant stimuli) can encourage criminal behavior, while punishments can discourage it.
  - The **social learning theory**, developed by Albert Bandura, suggests that individuals learn criminal behavior through observation and imitation of others, especially in environments where criminal acts are seen as rewarded or unpunished. Children growing up in criminal households, for example, may learn to adopt similar behaviors through modeled actions.

## 2. Psychoanalytic Theory of Crime:

- The **psychoanalytic approach** to crime takes Freud's ideas further by focusing on the role of the unconscious mind in criminal behavior. This theory emphasizes how unresolved inner conflicts and repressed emotions, particularly from early childhood, influence behavior in adulthood.
  - According to psychoanalytic criminology, individuals who experience neglect, abuse, or trauma during childhood may develop dysfunctional coping mechanisms. These unresolved conflicts can manifest in criminal actions later in life. For instance, an individual who was neglected or mistreated might commit crimes as a form of rebellion, self-punishment, or a misguided attempt to gain control over their lives.
  - **The id, ego, and superego** are central to the psychoanalytic theory of crime. A criminal may have an overactive **id** (impulsive desires and instincts), a weak **ego** (inability to balance reality), or an underdeveloped **superego** (lack of moral judgment), leading them to engage in criminal acts that are emotionally motivated rather than rationally planned.
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## Sociological Theories of Crime

Sociological theories of crime explore how societal structures, interactions, and cultural norms contribute to criminal behavior. These theories emphasize that crime is not solely the result of individual psychological or biological factors, but is influenced by social, cultural, and environmental forces. Below are the key sociological theories of crime:

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### *1. Differential Association Theory (Edwin H. Sutherland, 1939):*

**Overview:** Differential Association Theory suggests that criminal behavior is learned through social interactions. Individuals learn values, techniques, and motives for committing crimes from those they associate with, such as family, peers, or subcultures.

#### **Key Points:**

- **Learning through Social Interactions:** Criminal behavior is learned through interactions with others, particularly those who already engage in criminal activities.
- **Association with Criminals:** The more an individual associates with people who have criminal attitudes and behaviors, the more likely they are to adopt these behaviors themselves.
- **Values and Norms:** Criminal behavior is learned along with values and techniques, which are often contrary to mainstream societal norms. This learning process involves learning both how to commit crimes and why these actions are rationalized or justified.
- **Frequency, Duration, and Intensity:** Sutherland argued that criminal behavior is more likely to occur if the person is exposed to criminal influences frequently, for long periods, and in a close or intense manner.

**Example:** A teenager who spends most of their time with peers involved in gang activities may adopt the values and techniques of the gang, eventually engaging in criminal acts themselves.

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## 2. Subculture Theory (Albert Cohen, 1955):

**Overview:** Subculture Theory explains how certain groups or subcultures in society develop their own distinct norms, values, and beliefs that may conflict with mainstream society, leading to deviant behavior or crime. These subcultures form as a response to societal pressures and marginalization.

### Key Points:

- **Formation of Subcultures:** Subcultures arise when groups of people, especially youth, feel alienated or excluded from the mainstream society, and develop their own sets of values, norms, and practices.
- **Delinquent Subcultures:** Delinquent subcultures may form in response to perceived injustices, such as economic hardship, lack of opportunity, or social rejection. These subcultures may glorify behaviors considered criminal or deviant by the broader society.
- **Rebellion or Survival:** Members of delinquent subcultures may engage in criminal activities as a way to rebel against societal expectations or to survive in environments where legitimate opportunities are scarce.

**Example:** Youth from lower-income neighborhoods who face limited opportunities may form gangs that value theft, violence, and drug dealing, which are seen as acceptable behaviors within the subculture, even though they are viewed as criminal by society.

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## 3. Ecological Theory (Chicago School):

**Overview:** The Ecological Theory, associated with the Chicago School of Sociology in the early 20th century, focuses on how environmental factors, particularly in urban areas, contribute to crime. The theory emphasizes the role of social disorganization, poverty, and the breakdown of community structures in fostering criminal behavior.

### Key Points:

- **Social Disorganization:** Crime is more likely to occur in areas characterized by social disorganization, which includes poverty, high population turnover, lack of community cohesion, and weakened social control mechanisms.
- **Urban Environment and Crime:** The Chicago School found that crime rates were higher in areas with social instability and economic disadvantage, where residents lacked strong social ties and community engagement.
- **Environmental Influence:** The theory suggests that the environment plays a significant role in shaping behavior. In disorganized communities, individuals may feel less accountable to social norms, leading to higher incidences of crime.

**Example:** In inner-city neighborhoods with high poverty rates and unstable housing, residents may feel disconnected from societal values, leading to higher rates of crime, such as gang violence, drug trafficking, and property crimes.

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#### 4. Anomie Theory (Emile Durkheim, 1893):

**Overview:** Anomie Theory, developed by Emile Durkheim, focuses on the breakdown of societal norms and values during periods of rapid social change or stress. Durkheim argued that anomie, or normlessness, occurs when individuals feel disconnected from societal goals and norms, leading to deviant behavior and crime.

### Key Points:

- **State of Normlessness:** Anomie occurs when individuals are unable to find clear guidance from societal norms, especially during times of rapid social or economic change. This lack of direction leads individuals to act in ways that deviate from established norms.
- **Deviance as a Response:** Durkheim argued that deviance and crime were natural responses to anomie, as individuals struggle to adapt to a society with unclear or conflicting norms.



- **Social Solidarity:** Durkheim believed that a strong, cohesive society is one in which shared norms and values guide behavior. When this solidarity weakens, crime and deviance become more prevalent.

**Example:** During periods of economic depression or rapid urbanization, people may lose trust in social institutions, leading to an increase in crime, such as fraud, theft, or organized crime.

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### 5. Strain Theory (Robert K. Merton, 1938):

**Overview:** Robert K. Merton adapted Durkheim's Anomie Theory into his **Strain Theory**, which explains that crime occurs when individuals are unable to achieve culturally prescribed goals (such as wealth, success, or social status) through legitimate means. The strain between societal goals and the available means to achieve them leads individuals to resort to criminal behavior.

#### Key Points:

- **Cultural Goals and Institutional Means:** Merton argued that society sets cultural goals (e.g., financial success) and provides institutionalized means (e.g., education, hard work) to achieve these goals. However, not everyone has equal access to these means.
- **Adaptation to Strain:** When individuals are unable to achieve societal goals through legitimate means, they may experience **strain** and turn to alternative methods, such as crime. Merton identified five different adaptations to strain:
  - **Conformity:** Accepting both societal goals and means.
  - **Innovation:** Accepting societal goals but using illegitimate means to achieve them (e.g., drug dealing).
  - **Ritualism:** Abandoning societal goals but rigidly adhering to societal means (e.g., working in a low-paying job).
  - **Retreatism:** Rejecting both societal goals and means (e.g., drug addicts).
  - **Rebellion:** Rejecting societal goals and means and attempting to replace them with new ones (e.g., revolutionary movements).

**Example:** A person who lacks access to education and opportunities may resort to criminal behavior, such as theft or drug trafficking, to achieve financial success.

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