
3 Juvenile Delinquency

Theories of Causation

Many theories have been advanced to explain the cause of juvenile delinquency. Some are quite sophisticated, whereas others are predicated on rather basic “instinctive” conclusions that may or may not have a basis in fact. Many juvenile curfews are based on an instinctive conclusion that youths are likely to be victimized or get into trouble after certain hours. For example, in August 1994 the Town of Vernon, Connecticut, enacted its first juvenile curfew law.¹ It forbade persons under 18 to be in any public place or business. The rationale was that town leaders had noticed groups of juveniles loitering in town, and prior to the law a teenager had been murdered. Surveys also indicated that youths were fearful about gangs, weapons, and victimization. According to leaders, the curfew was passed for the protection of young people and to reduce the incidence of delinquency.

From Sunday through Thursday, the prohibited hours were from 11:00 P.M. until 5:00 A.M., and on Friday and Saturday the prohibited hours were from 12:01 A.M. until 5:00 A.M. Unfortunately for the town leaders, the curfew law was held to be unconstitutional because it unfairly restricted the right of free movement, and hence the equal protection rights of juveniles.

From the time of the first civil communities, every society has declared certain modes of behavior to be unacceptable or criminal in nature. Early customs and laws mandated compliance and punishment for the greater good of the group, city, or nation. In the modern era, the codification of norms of behavior is universal, and within contemporary societies the designation of some behaviors as criminal is fairly uncomplicated by definition: Most people have an instinctive understanding that criminal deviance involves egregiously (outrageously bad) illegal acts for which perpetrators can be punished. A less instinctive—and more technical—definition requires that these acts involve:

A positive or negative act in violation of penal law; an offense against the State. . . . An act committed or omitted in violation of a public law. . . . Crimes are those wrongs which the government notices as injurious to the public, and punishes in what is called a “criminal proceeding,” in its own name. . . . A crime may be defined to be any act done in violation of those duties which an individual owes to the community, and for the breach of which the law has provided that the offender shall make satisfaction to the public.²

It is important to remember that the concept of juvenile delinquency is a relatively modern development, as is the notion of juvenile justice. As discussed in Chapter 2, premodern societies simply punished juvenile offenders as if they were nothing more than young criminals. Very often, this approach was rooted in the presumption that the causes of delinquency are inseparable from criminal causation, and that all such behavior should be similarly punished.

Practitioners and researchers have sought for generations to explain why juveniles engage in criminal deviance. Is such behavior a matter of individual choice? Can our understanding of biology and psychology explain delinquency? To what extent do environmental factors influence juvenile deviance? Are juvenile delinquents likely to become adult criminals? Historically, professionals have proposed a number of factors that theoretically explain delinquent behavior. Each theory represents the height of scientific understanding in each era. This is important, because policies derived from these theories have not only sought to isolate juvenile offenders but have also tried to manage the root causes of their behavior. Thus, punishments, rehabilitative techniques, detentions, and other controls have been designed to target the accepted explanatory factors.

This chapter investigates the causes of delinquency. Several historical theoretical models—from ancient explanations through the modern era—are discussed. Models developed during ancient and medieval eras will seem quite ridiculous from our modern vantage point, largely because many of them were based on little more than superstition and quasi-science (nearly scientific, but not quite). Similarly, many models developed during the modern era have reflected scientific and ideological biases of the time—all of which were accepted as “rational” explanations by contemporary experts. Nevertheless, if we are to understand present theory we must investigate contemporary contexts and the past. This is necessary not only because we consistently build new insight upon previous constructs, but also because it is likely that experts in the not too distant future will question some commonly accepted explanations from the present era.

Table 3.1 summarizes the types of theories of criminal causation explored in this chapter’s discussion and their basic hypotheses.

The discussion in this chapter will review the following themes:

- Foreword to Theories of Juvenile Deviance
- Superstition and Myth: Early Theories of Delinquency and Crime
- Choice and Responsibility: Theories of the Classical School

TABLE 3.1 THEORIES OF CRIMINAL CAUSATION

Human society has developed innumerable explanations for criminal causation. Theoretical traditions have been developed throughout the ages as representing each society's understanding of themselves and their environment. In prescientific societies, superstition represented an amalgam of spiritual and natural understanding. After the European Enlightenment, theoretical traditions represented an attempt to find the true root causes of deviance.

This table summarizes the theoretical traditions that were developed to explain why some members of society violate the norms and customs of the group.

Theoretical Traditions	Sources of Deviance	Quality of Influence	Critiques of Theoretical Traditions
Early theories	Forces of nature Spirits/demons/devils	Deterministic	Unscientific superstition
Classical School	Rational personal choice	Free will	Politically motivated Heavy emphasis on punishment Little regard for rehabilitation
Biological theories	Evil, shown through facial features Brain development or underdevelopment Evolutionary primitiveness Heredity Body types	Deterministic	Rooted in quasi-science Overly deterministic
Psychological theories	Personality & childhood dysfunction Stimulus-response/reward-punishment Psychopathic personality	Modified deterministic	Not explanatory for all people/groups
Sociological theories	Normlessness Strain between means & goals Social structures/social ecology Learning from social interactions	Modified deterministic	Too much emphasis on poor classes Minimal emphasis on other factors Difficult to operationalize
Critical theory	Societal inequities Dominant & subordinate group conflict Capitalism, racism, & repression	Modified deterministic	Overly ideological Impractical for policy making

- Physical Qualities and Causation: Biological Theories
- The Mind and Causation: Psychological Theories
- Society and Causation: Sociological Theories
- The Impact of Injustice: Critical Theory

CHAPTER PERSPECTIVE 3.1

Teenage Drug Use and Delinquency

Many theories of causation have been developed to account for deviant behavior among adults and juveniles. It is safe to conclude that none of these explanations fully account for all cases of crime and juvenile delinquency. However, experts agree that a correlation exists between drug use and deviance.³

Alcohol and tobacco are the drugs of choice for many juveniles. Many adults tacitly condone smoking and drinking because cigarette and alcohol consumption are socially acceptable among adults. Even adults who do not condone teenage drinking often remark that “at least it’s not drugs.” Illicit drugs, such as cocaine, marijuana, and LSD, are not culturally acceptable among most segments of the adult population, and their use by juveniles is roundly condemned.

Among juveniles, abuse of illicit drugs is linked to a range of problems. Illicit drug use among juveniles has been a national problem since the late 1960s, with annual data reporting that sizable percentages of high school students have used drugs. During the decades following the 1960s, larger numbers of juveniles began using drugs at younger ages, and drugs have been associated with delinquency.⁴ One point must be clearly understood when considering these data: Drug use is *itself* a form of juvenile delinquency.

What is the association between drug use and other types of delinquency? Part of the answer lies in the sort of behavior often associated with youthful drug users: truancy, poor academic performance, run-ins with adult authorities, participation in the juvenile justice system, and counter-cultural or “underground” lifestyles. These behaviors are common among many drug users, and juveniles are often prone to experimentation when exposed to these lifestyles.

Juveniles who traffic in drugs are by definition delinquents or criminals (if prosecuted in the criminal justice system). A good deal of juvenile drug dealing is conducted by street gangs. Some gangs have become known as so-called drug gangs because of their heavy involvement in the drug trade. Drug gangs are loose associations of youths whose primary activity is to reap a profit—often substantial earnings—from drug sales. The drug trade can be exceptionally dangerous, so that this type of illicit enterprise is also associated with guns, violence, intimidation, and extortion.

Foreword to Theories of Juvenile Deviance

Although many theories have been propounded (put forward for consideration) to explain juvenile deviance—a number of which are discussed in this chapter—no single theory has been universally accepted by experts. Many theories have been designed to explain particular aspects of deviance (and have reasonably done so) but were not designed to explain *all* aspects of deviance (and have not done so). Also, every theory has adherents who focus on the strengths of the theory and critics who point out its weaknesses.

Theories claiming to have found “the” explanation for juvenile deviance are readily criticized because they cannot easily account for significant and

unique distinctions based on gender, race, class, and culture. Causes of juvenile deviance span socioeconomic, racial, regional, and gender categories. Factors commonly accounting for deviant behavior include family dysfunction, substance abuse, low self-esteem, disadvantaged communities, and peer pressure.⁵

As a foreword to discussing these theories, we shall consider a general background to causes of juvenile delinquency, first by summarizing common factors influencing juvenile behavior and then by presenting a profile of juvenile deviance.

Fundamentals: Common Factors Influencing Juvenile Behavior

Juveniles who live in unstable homes and social environments are deemed to be *at-risk* children because of their vulnerability to detrimental influences. Depending on the type and degree of these influences, unstable environments can induce antisocial behavior in children, often resulting in criminally deviant behavior later in life. Juvenile deviance is influenced by a number of factors. Among these are family, socioeconomic class, and educational experiences.

Family. Family background is one of the most potent influences on juvenile development. Norms, values, models of behavior, and other imprints emanate from the family unit, and these factors create an internalized “blueprint” for the child’s personality, beliefs, and attitudes.⁶ It is within the family unit that children receive most of their information about how to interact with other people and society. Healthy and nurturing families instruct members on how to interact using functional norms of behavior, whereas unhealthy family environments instruct members on how to interact using dysfunctional norms. Thus, dysfunctional families transfer dysfunctional norms to their children.

When antisocial and criminal norms exist within families, laypersons and experts agree that this can lead to one readily observable outcome: Criminal dysfunctional and deviant behaviors run in some families. For example, an association exists between marital instability and delinquency, so that the manifestations of a discordant marital environment—such as stress, estrangement, coldness, and unhealthy boundaries—produce a disproportionately high incidence of delinquent behavior in children who grow up in these environments.⁷ Families that disintegrate into divorce can also exhibit a higher incidence of delinquency if the resulting arrangement continues to promote intra-family dysfunction. This certainly does not mean that all single-parent homes are likely to produce dysfunctional children; the key is whether the family unit is healthy. Discord and divorce in two-parent households are much more disruptive than stable, loving one-parent households.⁸



Photo 3.1 Growing up in the city. Two youths display a tough attitude.

Socioeconomic Class. Past conventional wisdom held that children from poor and working-class backgrounds—that is, youths born into the “dangerous classes”⁹—are much more likely to engage in delinquent behavior. The historical analysis presented in Chapter 2 illustrates how juvenile reform efforts such as the Child-Saving Movement focused their attentions on urban poor and working-class youths, many of whom were children of immigrants. Even as late as the 1950s and early 1960s, experts argued that class background was a significant explanatory variable for delinquent propensities.¹⁰ This presumption has since been vigorously challenged, as statistical data began to indicate during the 1960s that delinquency is also quite common among middle-class youths.

Reasons for middle-class delinquency include parental pressure, peer pressure, uncertainty for the future, experimentation with intoxicating substances, experimenting with alternative lifestyles, and strong youth subcultures. Having considered (and accepted) the observation that middle-class delinquency is a significant problem, one must also keep in mind that theorists continue to identify certain dysfunctional norms among very poor urban subcultures. Research on the inner-city **underclass** has found that large numbers of the urban poor are caught in a chronic generational cycle of poverty, low educational achievement, teenage parenthood, unemployment, and welfare dependence.¹¹ Underclass theorists argue that antisocial behaviors have become entrenched norms within chronically impoverished inner-city environments, so that delinquency and criminality are now endemic facts of life.¹²

Educational Experiences. Educational experiences are, in many ways, a coequal influence on juvenile development, along with family and socioeconomic factors, because school environments can shape many youths' sense of opportunity and self-worth. For example, school dropouts and poor academic performers exhibit a higher incidence of delinquency and crime than graduates and academic achievers.

Academic achievement is considered to be one of the principal stepping-stones toward success in American society. In an ideal environment, opportunities for education, mentoring, and encouragement to excel should be equally available for all children. Unfortunately, educational opportunities are not equally available to all youths for a number of reasons. Socioeconomic and demographic factors can also have an impact on educational opportunities and performance,¹³ so that poor children often experience a very different educational environment in comparison to middle-class children. This is particularly apparent in inner-city, underclass environments, where educational achievement is frequently not a strong norm of behavior.¹⁴ For example, norms of behavior on school grounds can be problematic depending on whether socially accepted values are instilled for academic competition, deportment, and study habits. Underachievement in school can also be exacerbated by teachers' perceptions and expectations based on appearance, gender, race, and socioeconomic class.

A Profile of Juvenile Deviance: Inception, Progression, and Outcome

Readers should think of *deviance* as encompassing the following concepts:

- *Deviance.* "Behavior that is contrary to the standards of conduct or social expectations of a given group or society."¹⁵
- *Criminal deviance.* Antisocial behavior by persons who violate laws prohibiting acts defined as criminal by city, county, and state lawmakers or the U.S. Congress. Both adults and juveniles (those waived into criminal courts) can be convicted of crimes.
- *Juvenile deviance.* Antisocial behavior by youths, which includes status offenses (violations of laws exclusively governing juvenile behavior) and delinquent acts (behavior that would be criminal if juveniles were tried as adults).

Several features of youthful antisocial behavior can be identified to outline the theoretical progression from juvenile delinquency to adult criminality. This outline should not be taken as a definitive description of this process, or as advocating its inevitability. Rather, it is a summary delineation of central factors that can explain the relationship between delinquency and criminality.

Inception of Juvenile Deviance: A Life of Crime? Do child offenders become adult criminals? If so, what effect does one's age at the *inception* of deviant

behavior have on the progression of this behavior toward criminality? Research on these questions has identified a relationship between the early inception of delinquency and later adult criminality.¹⁶ These studies indicate that the likelihood of a person's chronic wrongdoing decreases as one's age of inception increases. In other words, the older one is when one commences breaking the law, the less likely he or she is to continue committing offenses. Long-term delinquency tends to be found among those who begin their careers earliest in life.

Progression of Juvenile Deviance: Habitual Behavior. Habitual (chronic) juvenile delinquency is characteristically associated with age of inception, and yet it is not necessarily associated with increased incidence or with expertise (specialization) in certain offenses. In other words, although an early inception of juvenile deviance is associated with chronic wrongdoing, this does not necessarily mean that the number of offenses increases with early inception. Some studies have found that arrests increase after 13 years of age and crest at age 17, while other studies hold that this may be true for some types of offenses, but not all.¹⁷ Juvenile delinquents also tend to be *generalist* offenders, in that they typically commit a variety of offenses rather than develop an area of expertise.¹⁸

Thus, it appears that age of inception can be a factor for habitual *continuation* of deviant behavior as youths mature, but not necessarily for acceleration in numbers of all offenses, nor for the development of expertise.

Outcome of Juvenile Deviance: Criminality. Many adult criminals were juvenile delinquents, so that for many criminals the progression toward criminality does indeed begin at a young age. Delinquents who become criminals tend to be people who never overcame the environmental and idiosyncratic (uniquely personal) factors that led them to engage in chronically deviant behavior. These individuals are career criminals who have essentially accepted deviant lifestyles that last well into adulthood, often ending with long periods of incarceration. However, this is not always the case. Some delinquents quit engaging in antisocial behavior and never progress into adult criminality. In essence, they "outgrow" delinquency in the same manner that most functional juveniles mature into behaviors that result in responsible adulthood. Reasons for individuals halting their delinquent behavior include maturing into responsibility, fear of punishment (being "scared straight"), and an acceptance of mainstream values and lifestyles.

Superstition and Myth: Early Theories of Delinquency and Crime

Early human communities thought it necessary to devise culturally acceptable explanations for why adults and juveniles violate the rules and laws of

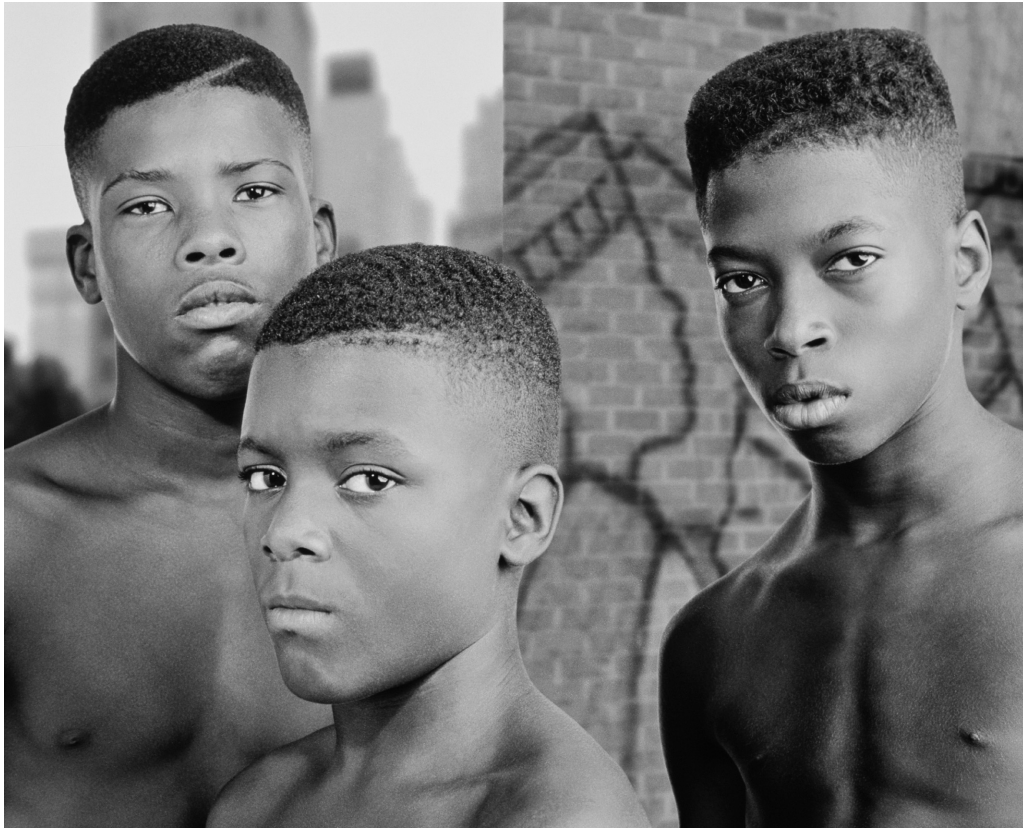


Photo 3.2 At-risk youths? Young boys pose in front of a graffiti-covered wall. The age of inception for delinquent behavior is an important factor for future criminal behavior.

the group. The purpose of these explanations was to formulate systematic parameters for identifying the sources of social order, reasons for disorder, and sanctions against those responsible for breaking norms of behavior. Keeping in mind that ancient and medieval society conflated what we now term *delinquency* with criminality, it is instructive to explore several pre-modern explanations for criminal deviance.

Many early attempts to explain deviance were grounded in spiritualism and naturalism.¹⁹ That is, social stability came from a harmonious relationship with forces beyond the corporeal world, and human criminality was a consequence of a wrongdoer's inappropriate connection with supernatural powers or nature-based influences. Offenses were essentially spiritual "sins" or crimes against the natural order, and punishments were considered to be in accordance with nature or divinely sanctioned. This presumption of linkage between order, disorder, and nonhuman influences became part of the body of laws and traditions in many early societies, albeit with a number of cultural adaptations.

In this section, two early theories of delinquency and criminality will be examined. These include **naturalism** and **demonology**.

Naturalism

Naturalism refers to the ancient practice of linking human affairs to the natural world and inferring that human behavior is derived from the forces of nature. Just as the tides are affected by the sun and the moon, so too are human passions and fortunes. All that is necessary is for humans to become adept at understanding how the forces of nature work, and develop the ability to interpret these forces. Naturalism is therefore a **deterministic theory** of criminal causation, because it eliminates individual responsibility for one's lack of responsible self-control.

Ancient civilizations around the Mediterranean region often concluded that human behavior is driven by nature. Natural "signs" were observed to divine the course of human events, and offerings were given to appeal for favors, or to appease perceived signs of punishment. For example, the Romans had a propensity for studying flights of birds and reading the entrails of sacrificial beasts to divine their fortunes. Romans also believed that the moon, or *Luna*, influenced human behavior. Our word *lunatic* comes from the ancient belief that criminal or otherwise bizarre behavior is caused by phases of the moon. The Greeks consulted oracles, such as the famous one at Delphi, who sometimes divined fortunes by inhaling sacred vapors, hallucinating, and babbling fortunes that required interpretation by holy guides. Burnt offerings were also made to discern the will of the gods and appease them. Greeks believed a great deal in living one's life as virtuously as possible, and that a virtuous person was a good person. One method for determining one's virtue was to observe the contours of one's body, because virtue was manifest in human appearance. Thus, good people were pleasing to the eye, and people literally stood naked before the court while officials debated their virtue.

Demonology

For many centuries, humans believed that evil creatures—demons or devils—wielded great influence over humans, sometimes possessing them and making them commit offenses against the greater good. Criminal behavior and delinquency were not considered to be a consequence of free will; instead, these offenses were manifestations of conflict between creatures of evil and chaos against deities of goodness and order. Demonology is also a deterministic theory of criminal causation.

When people committed crimes against society, they were also committing offenses against the deified order, and remedies and punishments were meted out accordingly. Painful ordeals (i.e., torture) were devised to elicit confessions or drive out the demonic spirits. Driving out evil demons,

known as *exorcism*, was frequently quite excruciating. For example, a number of ancient cultures engaged in the practice of drilling holes in the skull (known as *trephining*), which supposedly allowed evil spirits to depart from their human “host.” Medieval and Renaissance-era Christians considered crimes to be offenses against God and the Roman Catholic Church, and used burning, maiming, breaking, and beating to drive out supernatural invaders. These were also effective techniques for producing confessions of possession, although suspects who refused to confess were often considered to be so under the influence of the devil that they were unsalvageable. Basically, confession was evidence of possession, and *failure* to confess was evidence of possession.

Should the spirits or demons refuse to leave their human host (either with or without confessions), the possessed person was executed. Clearly, these tests and remedies were torturous ordeals *ab initio*, so that the suspected human host was quite an unlucky person at every phase of the inquiry. As a sidebar, it should be noted that mental illness was also explained as evidence of spirit possession, with similar methods used for salvaging the unfortunate human host.

Choice and Responsibility: Theories of the Classical School

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, new theorists investigating criminal and delinquent causation began to apply scientific methods to explain deviant behavior. These theorists—the first true criminologists—focused on the personal responsibility of individuals for their behavior. The new theories they developed roundly rejected naturalism and demonology as explanations for delinquency and criminality, an approach that was typical of the rationalism of the European Enlightenment. Rationality and humanitarianism were at the heart of Enlightenment philosophy, and this was reflected in the new approaches for explaining and responding to deviant behavior.

Crime and Free Will

The Classical School is typical of **free will theories of criminal causation**, which regard deviant behavior as a product of individual rational choice. Such rational choice is grounded in the human desire for pleasure and aversion to pain. Because of this emphasis on human-centered rationality, classical theorists argued that perpetrators should be held personally accountable for criminal and delinquent acts, and punished accordingly. Since the criminal’s calculus for making this choice is the acquisition of a benefit from criminal behavior (pleasure), society must develop policies to increase the costs for this benefit (pain). Thus, punishment would become increasingly harsher as one’s deviance becomes more egregious; the costs of crime must always outweigh

the benefits. Having made this observation, it should be noted that the Classical School was actually quite progressive in the history of theories of causation. Its basic assumptions are the following:

- Humans are fundamentally rational and enjoy free will. Crime is an outcome of rationality and free will. People choose to engage in criminal rather than conformist behavior.
- Criminality is morally wrong and is an affront against social order and the collective good of society.
- Civil society must necessarily punish criminals to deter individual wrongdoers and other would-be criminals.
- Punishment should be proportional to the nature of the criminal offense, and never be excessive. It must also be a guaranteed response to criminality, and meted out quickly.

The Classical School originated with the writings of Cesare Beccaria in Italy, who published *An Essay on Crimes and Punishment* in 1764.²⁰ His discussion of why crime occurs and how society should respond to it was groundbreaking, and it resulted in widespread debate. Beccaria advocated the then-radical proposition that punishment should be swift, certain, and proportional. He also argued that both corporal and capital punishments should be abolished, and that most (if not all) criminal laws should be revised accordingly. The philosopher Jeremy Bentham in England promoted Beccaria's thesis in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, primarily in his book *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*.²¹ Bentham believed that humans rationally seek pleasure and avoid pain, so that rational people can be deterred from criminal deviance. Nevertheless, criminals conclude that the pleasure derived from crime counterbalances the pain of punishment. Bentham further argued that deterrence would be accomplished by the *certainty* of punishment, and by making the severity of each punishment surpass any benefit derived from the crime.

Because free will and rational choice are at the center of Classical criminology, it naturally represents a rejection of deterministic theories of deviance. However, as debate was joined during the nineteenth century on the question of what constitutes free will and choice, the Classical School modified its philosophy by acknowledging that juveniles and mentally ill adults do not have the same capacity to make rational choices as do mature, sane adults. Therefore, special consideration was gradually developed for these classes of offenders. This modification is sometimes referred to as the **neoclassical** approach to deviance.

The American Context

The Classical School had a significant resurgence in the United States during the latter quarter of the twentieth century. Central values of

Classical School philosophy were adapted to the American cultural context as part of the nation's crackdown on juvenile delinquents and criminals. As a consequence, the underlying philosophy of American criminal justice has shifted away from attempting to rehabilitate offenders and moved toward punishment, incapacitation, and deterrence. In many states, there is a fundamental Classical School presumption that juvenile and adult offenders have exercised free will and made a rational choice, so that any mitigating circumstances involving an individual's social history or family background are deemed secondary to his or her calculation to break the law.

As applied within the American context, offenders commonly receive mandatory sentences for specified offenses, and most states have passed legislation to punish offenders in proportion to their crimes. For example, aggravating circumstances such as the use of firearms are punished more severely. Many juvenile delinquents are now waived into the adult system, and individual criminals receive longer and more severe sentences. Nationally, more prisons have been built and more offenders have been imprisoned.

On a final note, it is interesting to consider that what was once a groundbreaking and radical philosophy during its time has come to be labeled as a conservative policy in the modern era. An ongoing criticism of the modern approach to the Classical School is that it does not take into account a criminal's idiosyncratic circumstances. It is also criticized by civil libertarians as weighing too heavily in favor of punishment, without incorporating philosophies of rehabilitation.

Physical Qualities and Causation: Biological Theories

Biological theories refer to the effect of congenital (inherited physical) traits on human behavior. They present strongly deterministic explanations of delinquency and criminality, and hold that some people are "naturally born criminals" with physical qualities that govern their deviant tendencies. These qualities include genetic, biological, and biochemical profiles that theoretically cause, or have a strong effect upon, one's propensity for deviant behavior. This thesis has existed for many centuries, and it began to receive scientific—or what we would now consider to be *quasi*-scientific—credence during the late eighteenth century.²²

The central implication of biological determinants is that free will is at best a secondary cause of delinquency. Rather, the blame for deviant behavior shifts to internal physical qualities, which explain one's predisposition for criminal conduct. In this section, several biological theories of delinquency and criminality are examined. These include:

- An Honest Appearance: Physiognomy
- Bumps on the Head: Phrenology
- Evolutionary Primitiveness: Atavism
- The Bad Seed: Heredity
- Body Types: Somatotyping

An Honest Appearance: Physiognomy

The concept of an “honest face” or an “evil face” has been deeply ingrained in human culture, probably since prehistory. Medieval-era Europeans ascribed moral and behavioral traits to physical appearance. In particular, facial characteristics were deemed to be indicators of moral character, so that facially pleasing people were more likely to be given the benefit of the doubt than facially “displeasing” people. This practice, known as **physiognomy**, is arguably similar to the naturalistic approach to physical virtue adopted by the ancient Greeks. Many researchers from the Enlightenment through the late nineteenth century supported these observations as scientifically valid findings. Physiognomists dutifully reported the soundness of a variety of physiognomic traits and measured their prominence among criminals and other undesirables in comparison to the general population.

In the modern era, which is supposedly guided by scientific principles, many laypersons continue to adopt physiognomic attitudes toward others. Protruding eyebrows, receding foreheads, sinister noses, jutting jawbones, and certain *looks* on faces are popularly considered to be indicators of deviance. These attitudes hearken back to eras of quasi-scientific research.

Bumps on the Head: Phrenology

A variation (or progression) on the theme of physiognomy was the proposition that human behavior is determined by bodily functions emanating from the organs. Premodern theorists had long posited that secretions from the stomach, kidneys, heart, spleen, and other organs affect moods, emotions, and conduct. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Franz Gall systematically promoted his theory that the brain is the source of all personality, including deviant personality. His theories, eventually systematized as **phrenology**, caught on among many members of the scientific community, who focused their research on head shapes.

Lumps, bumps, indentations, protuberances, and other cranial features were considered by phrenologists to be indicators of brain development. Scientists devised brain “maps” that sketched out the specific locations of certain feelings, emotions, and behavioral attributes. An underdeveloped location on the skull suggested underdevelopment of that portion of the brain, and overdeveloped skull locations suggested overdevelopment of

portions of the brain. Using brain maps as guides, experts believed that they could postulate criminal/delinquent skull shapes, as well as creative, intelligent, insane, and unintelligent skull shapes. The skulls and brains of deceased criminals were studied by phrenologists in laboratories to support their position. Phrenology was a viable theory throughout the nineteenth century, and lingered to the beginning of the twentieth century. It arguably still exists at the level of popular culture, in films and carnivals.

Evolutionary Primitiveness: Atavism

Cesare Lombroso, an Italian prison physician, departed from Gall's phrenological movement by examining a variety of physical anomalies in humans. In his influential book *The Criminal Man* in 1876,²³ Lombroso argued that criminals could be identified by primitive physical anomalies present at birth. To him, these anomalies do not *determine* criminality, but they are indicators of criminal *predisposition*. Although his theory was less deterministic than that of the phrenologists, who relied on the shape of one's skull as a determinant for criminality, his approach was certainly deterministic in the sense that for Lombroso some people are literally born as criminals.

Lombroso made postmortem observations of criminals and concluded that they are anthropologically less developed humans—evolutionary throwbacks who are intellectually undeveloped compared with modern humans. Criminals are therefore *atavistic* creatures with uncivilized criminal dispositions, and the characteristic of these people was called **atavism**. Lombroso's approach used the growing fascination of nineteenth-century scientists with the theories of Charles Darwin, author of *The Origin of Species* and founder of modern evolutionary science.²⁴ It was therefore quite natural for Lombroso to suggest that criminality and evolution are linked. Because physical abnormalities are indicators of evolutionary primitiveness, Lombroso identified the following traits as evidence of atavism:

- Bent noses
- High cheekbones
- Lack of earlobes
- Prominent lips
- Elongated arms
- Jutting jaws

Since Lombroso's conclusions were observational, he recognized that not all criminals exhibited these physical features. He theorized that passions such as avarice and opportunism could be caused by societal and other environmental inputs. Thus, biology and life experiences can combine to “trigger” criminality in some people.

Although modern criminologists reject Lombroso's theory of evolutionary primitiveness, he is recognized as being one of the founders of the

Positivist School of criminology. His theory of congenital predisposition toward delinquency and criminality greatly influenced later positivist inquiry into deviant behavior. Positivists began to theorize that biology, society, and environment can affect human behavior, and that these influences can lead to criminality among those who are predisposed toward deviant behavior. Lombroso's contribution was to suggest that biology and culture in combination are central causes of delinquency and crime.

The Bad Seed: Heredity

Delinquency and crime often run in families. The question of why this occurs has been a subject of criminological inquiry for some time. Hereditary explanations of causation hold that criminality in some families is hereditary, and that deviance is genetically encoded in those born into the family group. Thus, a *bad seed* is theoretically inherited and passed from generation to generation. Richard Dugdale's research on the Juke family, published in 1877, was among the first scientific studies that systematically argued in favor of a genetic basis for immorality, crime, and delinquency.²⁵

The validity of hereditary explanations can logically be tested by studying the behavior of siblings, twins, and children raised away from their criminally inclined biological parents. Studies of adopted children indicate that a greater incidence of deviance occurs among those whose biological father has been a criminal in comparison to when the adoptive father has engaged in criminal behavior. Other research on twins has indicated that identical twins have a higher likelihood for delinquency and criminality than fraternal twins. However, there is an important caveat that must be kept in mind when considering research on heredity: Research has not identified a 100% correlation between heredity and crime, and studies have not identified an explanatory variable for hereditary deviance. Other explanatory factors must also be considered, such as personal experiences and environmental influences. In other words, the genetic "bad seed" argument does not explain correlations between heredity, family dysfunction, underclass cultural norms, and antisocial group dynamics.²⁶

Chromosome theory represents an example of the modern approach to heredity theory. Chromosomes, which are composed of DNA, contain the genetic code for human gender differences. Gender is determined from chromosomal arrangements, so that women typically have an "XX" pattern and men have an "XY" pattern. Some people have anomalous patterns, which include "XXX" for some women and "XYY" for some men. During the 1960s, scientists investigated the theoretical implications of the "XYY" pattern. Research was reported in 1965 suggesting that "XYY" males are more prevalent in prison populations than in society.²⁷ These "super males" were reported to be more aggressive than typical "XY" males, and therefore more prone to criminal deviance than "XY" males. Subsequent research challenged these findings and the methodology used, in particular the fact

that less than 5% of males exhibit this pattern, and therefore the theory has little predictive value.²⁸ However, chromosome theory represents an important example of how modern scientific knowledge can be used to update older theories. Research continues on possible connections between chromosomes and criminality.

Body Types: Somatotyping

Another revision of older theories consigned human body types to three categories, percentages of which theoretically exist in different individuals. This practice, known as **somatotyping**, sought to identify certain body types that are more likely to be found among offenders. William Sheldon and other researchers promoted somatotype research during the mid-twentieth century. In his book *Varieties of Delinquent Youth*,²⁹ Sheldon identified three somatotypes that he argued are prevalent in male juveniles, classified as follows:

- Mesomorphs: People who are muscular, sinewy, narrow in waist and hips, and broad-shouldered
- Ectomorphs: People who are fragile, thin, narrow, and delicate
- Endomorphs: People who are pudgy, round, soft, short-limbed, and smooth-skinned

Sheldon assigned a scale of 0 to 7 for the prevalence of each somatotype in individuals, with 0 being a complete absence of the type, and 7 indicating a strong prevalence. He concluded that a high degree of mesomorphy and a low degree of ectomorphy were found in juvenile delinquents and other aggressive, violent individuals. Although many experts criticized his theory, other researchers concurred with Sheldon's conclusion that delinquents and other offenders are more likely to be muscular mesomorphs than thin ectomorphs or pudgy endomorphs.³⁰ Critics responded that somatotyping is inherently inaccurate and subjective and does not adequately explain the role of environmental factors on the predisposition of some to engage in deviant behavior.³¹

Table 3.2 summarizes the attributes of several biological theories of criminal and delinquent causation.

The Mind and Causation: Psychological Theories

The relatively new science of psychology has significantly influenced criminology, so much so that psychological theories of delinquency and criminality figure prominently among many explanations of deviance given by practitioners and researchers. Psychological theories have also become

TABLE 3.2 BIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF DELINQUENT CAUSATION

Biological theories were developed as deterministic explanations of delinquency and criminal behavior. They have historically sought to discover physiological bases for deviance and have generally applied the scientific knowledge of their time to this endeavor. New discoveries and theories have continually supplanted older approaches.

This table summarizes several biological theories developed to explain delinquency and criminality.

Theory	Indicators of Deviance	Effect on Behavior	Critique of Theory
Physiognomy	Facial features Physical features	Goodness or evil Honesty or dishonesty Crime and delinquency	Quasi-scientific Not supported empirically
Phrenology	Brain development Contour of the skull	Feelings, emotions, attitudes Crime and delinquency	Quasi-scientific Not supported empirically
Atavism	Primitive physical anomalies Anthropological traits	Intellectual regression Congenitally deviant predisposition	Quasi-scientific Not supported empirically
Heredity	Criminality in family Extra "Y" chromosome in males	Congenital deviance	Not 100% correlation Other intervening factors exist
Somatotyping	Body features Relative percentage of mesomorphy	Predisposition for deviance Aggression, violence	Inherent inaccuracy and subjectivity

well-known to the general public, as evidenced by the extent to which they are prominently featured in popular culture productions such as novels, films, and television shows. Most of these theories have stimulated a great deal of debate among experts and laypersons, largely because they are fundamentally subjective in nature and their explanatory value is disputable.

Psychological theories ascribe deviant behaviors to cognitive and personality disorders brought on by one's environment, brain chemistry, or some other condition. Such theories are not as rigorously deterministic as other approaches to causation, because they allow for some degree of free will—albeit a disordered free will. In this sense, they are a modified (or less complete) form of determinism. Several elements are commonly present in psychological explanations of delinquency and crime:

- Criminals and delinquents do not (or cannot) differentiate right from wrong.
- Psychological abnormalities are caused by a number of factors, including detrimental behavioral conditioning, diseased minds, and learning from toxic environments.
- Offenders have disordered or abnormal personalities.
- Some offenders cannot control themselves.
- Personality develops during childhood, which affects behavior during adulthood.

Several psychological theories of delinquency and criminality are examined in this section, including:

- Psychoanalytic Theory
- Conditioning Theory
- Psychopathology Theory

Personality, Behavior, and Childhood: Psychoanalytic Theory

Early theorists of psychoanalysis, such as Carl Jung³² and Sigmund Freud,³³ attempted to construct systematic models to explain human personality. The personality systems they designed created classifications to explain interlinkages between one's personality and behavior. Sigmund Freud was the founder of psychoanalysis, and his research is the foundation for psychoanalytic theory.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Freud wrote that individual personalities have three fundamental components, which strongly affect one's behavior:

- *Id*. Primal, selfish drives and desires. All persons are born with the basic desire for self-gratification, with no regard for others. Infants were considered by Freud to be perfect examples of the predominance of the id.
- *Ego*. The rational mind. As children mature, the ego places checks on the id's desires and channels them into behavioral choices. Selfishness is suppressed, and consideration is given by youths to the welfare of others.
- *Superego*. The guiding moral conscience, which weighs the ego's choices and labels them according to the personality's definitions of right and wrong. Guilt, shame, and other emotions reflect the influence of the superego. As humans mature, the libido, or sex drive, emerges. The libido is checked by the interplay between an individual's id, ego, and superego.

Healthy development of the id, ego, and superego occurs early in life, so that early experiences are critical for future adult behavior. Troubling or

traumatizing events during childhood can become catalysts for delinquency and criminality. Juvenile delinquents and adult criminals are, according to psychoanalytic theory, persons without sufficiently developed egos and superegos. If the moralistic superego is weak, a person can easily act out on his or her primal urges without remorse (an unchecked id), and mislabel deviance as acceptable behavior. When people without superegos act out on these urges, their behavior is socially unacceptable. Such behavior, if illegal, forces society to define the individuals as delinquents or criminals, and to deal with them accordingly. Thus, people who have poorly developed superegos and egos are incapable of acting outside of their own interests and are roughly analogous to *psychopaths* in the modern era. Psychopaths, also termed *sociopaths*, are deemed to be unable to empathize with other people's feelings or well-being.

Freud also argued that human personalities are formed during several phases of childhood development. Abnormal personalities and other psychological imbalances begin to form during these phases, and can reflect the phase in which the problem developed. For example, according to Freudian theory, if a person regresses to or becomes fixated in their phallic phase of development (ages three to five years), they may become sexually deviant and engage in illicit sex practices such as prostitution or rape.

Learning by Experiencing: Conditioning Theory

It is a truism that every person's future behavior is conditioned by past experiences. In other words, we learn from lifetime events and base our decisions, perceptions, and conduct on these events. According to conditioning theorists, these experiences—or environmental stimuli—underlie socially acceptable behavior, as well as delinquency and criminality.

The pioneer behind conditioning theory is Ivan Pavlov, a Russian physiologist who conducted behavioral experiments on dogs during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³⁴ The basic attributes of his experiments were stimulus–response and reward–punishment. His laboratory dogs were stimulated to respond with certain behaviors. Pavlov's methods were remarkably simple: The dogs were rewarded when they responded correctly, and punished when they responded incorrectly. Pavlov's most famous experiment involved conditioning dogs to salivate at the ring of a bell. He initially rang a bell each time the dogs were fed (which stimulated them to salivate), and eventually simply rang the bell without food. The result was that the dogs were stimulated to salivate even though no food was given. Extrapolating these observations to human behavior, Pavlov's experiments theoretically demonstrate that behavior is predicated on lifetime stimuli.

During the latter half of the twentieth century, B. F. Skinner and other researchers promoted behavioral psychology.³⁵ Their underlying theory of stimulus–response added to the progression of conditioning theory. Many behaviorists concluded that human criminals and delinquents could be conditioned to continue their behavior in a manner similar to Pavlov's dogs.

According to this school, environmental stimuli operate either as punishers or reinforcers. Criminals and delinquents are stimulated (reinforced) by their environment to continue acting out deviantly until they are punished in some manner. Therefore, when offenders are repeatedly rewarded for their deviance and receive no punishment for breaking the law, they are likely to continue until the authorities catch them.

Psychopathology Theory

The concept of the psychopathic personality was developed during the 1950s to describe criminals who behaved cruelly and seemingly with no empathy for their victims. The observation that some criminals are apparently unable—that is, they have no capacity—to appreciate the feelings of their victims led to a great deal of research on this behavior. In essence, free will is a secondary motivation for this type of delinquent or criminal. The condition was wholly developed and described by 1964 in the book *The Mask of Sanity*, written by Hervey Cleckley.³⁶

Psychopaths (sociopaths) are considered to be people who have no conscience—in Freudian terms, no superego. They are severely dysfunctional in their relationships with other people, and are fundamentally selfish, unpredictable, untruthful, and unstable. The term is sometimes used to describe very aggressive delinquents and criminals who act out spontaneously without an observable motive. This aggressiveness and impulsiveness are typical manifestations of the psychopathic personality, which is why many become lawbreakers.

Table 3.3 summarizes the attributes of several psychological theories of criminal and delinquent causation.

Society and Causation: Sociological Theories

The foregoing theories of causation have focused on the personal idiosyncrasies of individuals to explain delinquency and crime. These personal attributes—such as an individual's physical or psychological makeup—have been used by researchers and practitioners to formulate theories of deviance and to design policies to deal with lawbreakers. However, one commonality is that all of these theories look at the personal (internal) attributes of people. In the alternative, and using an *external* approach, sociologists have examined the role of societal factors to explain human behavior.

Sociologists study interrelationships between individuals, socioeconomic groups, social processes, and societal structures. They have long examined the association between societal factors and criminal causation, focusing on the effects of society on individual and collective behavior. Sociological theories are not strongly deterministic, in that they tend to explain *predispositions* toward criminal deviance, and they therefore allow for some degree of free will.

TABLE 3.3 PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES OF CAUSATION

Psychological theories of causation apply research and theory of psychology to criminology. As new understandings of the human psyche are proposed, psychologists have had an important explanatory impact on theories of causation. Although psychological theories are not strongly deterministic, they do provide insight on predispositions for deviant behavior.

This table summarizes several psychological theories developed to explain delinquency and criminality.

Theory	Indicators of Deviance	Effect on Behavior	Critique of Theory
Psychoanalysis	Weak superego Incomplete personality development	Psychopathology Regressed or fixated personality	Not explanatory for all people/groups
Conditioning	Responses to environmental stimuli	Crime and delinquency	Not all people respond to these stimuli Not explanatory for all people/groups
Psychopathology	Dysfunctional personality Lack of conscience	Unpredictability, instability Aggressiveness Crime and delinquency	Difficult to diagnose linkage to crime Need further research

Beginning in the 1920s, the Chicago School of Sociology (centered at the University of Chicago) pioneered modern sociological research. A great deal of research and a number of theories since that time have been developed, and continue to be developed, to improve our understanding of the relationship between society and human deviance. Several elements are commonly present in sociological explanations of delinquency and crime:

- Socioeconomic conditions and pressures shape individual and collective behavior.
- Inequality and deprivation are associated with delinquency and criminality.
- Subcultural norms are often at odds with accepted norms of society, creating tensions that can result in subcultural conflict with the greater society.
- Delinquency and crime are associated with underclass conditions such as poverty, neighborhood degeneration, low educational achievement, inadequate housing, and family dysfunction.

Several sociological theories of delinquency and criminality are examined in this section, including:

- Anomie and Strain Theories
- Social Ecology (Structural) Theory
- Differential Association Theory

Norms, Means, and Ends: Anomie and Strain Theories

Durkheim and Anomie Theory. The great sociologist Emile Durkheim first studied anomie during the late nineteenth century.³⁷ The concept generally refers to a state of “normlessness” vis-à-vis the accepted norms of the greater society. *Norms* are rules, and a consensus, about the way people should behave in society. Durkheim concluded that after social upheavals such as wars, traditional norms of behavior no longer work, thus causing societal normlessness. Suicide, crime, and other crises exist in societies that do not develop effective norms. Anomie refers to a broad breakdown of norms in society, or a disconnection between an individual from the norms of his or her society’s contemporary values. Durkheim’s theories have had great influence on sociology, continuing well into the modern era.

Merton’s Strain Theory. Anomie was applied to criminology during the 1930s by Robert Merton and others, who studied the tension between socially acceptable goals and the means one is permitted by society to use for achieving those goals.³⁸ Merton’s theory focused on the *availability* of goals and means. He posited that the greater society encourages its members to use acceptable means to achieve acceptable goals. In the United States, “acceptable means” include hard work, prudent savings, and higher education. Acceptable goals include comfort, leisure time, social status, and wealth. However, not all members of society have an equal availability of resources to achieve society’s recognized goals, thus creating *strain* for these less empowered members. Strain is manifested as a desire to achieve these goals, and one’s inability to acquire the legitimate means to attain them. In theory, those who do not have access to acceptable means may resort to illegitimate and illicit avenues to achieve their goals. In other words, those without resources and access may become delinquents or criminals to achieve comfort, leisure, status, and wealth.

The implications of Merton’s and his fellow researchers’ findings are clear: Lack of opportunity and inequality are central causal factors for delinquency and crime. However, anomie and strain theory have been criticized for placing too much emphasis on deviance emanating from the poorer classes, and for failing to adequately explain why so many youths and adults who suffer from strain do not turn to delinquency or crime.

Concentric Urban Zones: Social Ecology (Structural) Theory

Another contribution from the University of Chicago in the 1920s was research on the *structural* sources of criminal deviance.³⁹ Urban researchers conducted longitudinal studies (studies over time) on Chicago communities, which were mapped and classified into concentric urban zones.⁴⁰ They observed that some urban zones had a higher incidence of crime over time,

regardless of which ethnic group moved into the zone. Researchers concluded that the social structures of these areas affected the quality of life for inhabitants. By definition, urban “structural conditions” include overcrowding, poor sanitation, inadequate transportation, unemployment, poverty, poor schools, transience, births out of wedlock, and low employment. These factors contribute to high delinquency and crime rates because of resulting widespread social instability.⁴¹

Social ecology research generally describes prevalent physical and social structures that affect the quality of life in American cities. These studies commonly report the following urban “ecological” factors:⁴²

- Explanations for deviance must take social structures into account.
- Delinquency and crime rates in urban areas vary markedly in identified neighborhoods and other designated concentric zones.
- Rates of delinquency and crime are highest in urban core zones—the inner city—and lowest outside of these cores.
- Other problems common to the underclass also exist in inner-city neighborhoods and other designated zones.

Social ecology theory has been criticized for overreliance on social structures to explain delinquency and crime. According to critics, other factors such as anomie or in-migration of criminally inclined people (who drive out law-abiding residents) can also explain deviance. Nevertheless, research on social ecology is likely to continue to be conducted and refined.

Differential Association Theory

Edwin Sutherland described the theory of differential association in his 1939 book, *Principles of Criminology*.⁴³ Differential association is a process of social learning, in which criminals and law-abiding people learn their behavior from associations with others. People imitate or otherwise internalize the quality of these associations. Delinquency (and criminality) are learned behaviors that are acquired from interacting with others who participate in criminal lifestyles, so that the difference between offenders and nonoffenders lies in individual choices. In other words, offenders and nonoffenders strive for similar goals, but they choose different avenues to achieve those goals. These choices are based on the lessons they take from exposure to certain kinds of life experiences. In particular, those with strong attachments to delinquents are more likely to become delinquents, and people who grow up in criminal milieus will adopt deviant values that can result in delinquency and crime.

Although differential association theory has been criticized for relying on variables that are difficult to operationalize, it remains a potent and influential approach to explaining delinquency and crime. Its appeal is perhaps grounded in its proposition that all persons possess the same learning processes, which are developed through communicating and interacting with groups of people. The difference between criminals and noncriminals

TABLE 3.4 SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF CAUSATION

Sociologists have historically studied the role of people and groups in society, and the effect society has had on its members. For sociological theorists, the broader society has certain inherent features and structures that cause some members to engage in delinquent and criminal behavior. These theories sometimes reflect the political ideology of the times in which they were designed.

This table summarizes several sociological theories developed to explain delinquency and criminality.

Theory	Indicators of Deviance	Effect on Behavior	Critique of Theory
Anomie and strain	Normlessness Strain between means and goals	Illicit attainment of goals	Too much emphasis on poorer classes Not explanatory for all people/groups
Social ecology	Quality of life Surrounding and social structures	High crime and delinquency rates	Failure to consider other factors
Differential association	Dysfunctional environment Dysfunctional associations	Illicit achievement of goals Achievement of illicit goals	Difficult to operationalize variables

is that they base their choices on different lessons learned from their different experiences. Norms and values are similarly learned, but some people internalize deviant norms and values.

Table 3.4 summarizes the attributes of several sociological theories of criminal and delinquent causation.

The Impact of Injustice: Critical Theory

Critical theories of causation challenge the “orthodoxy” of criminology by arguing that deviance is a product of inequities created in all societies. These inequities are endemic to socioeconomically hierarchical societies, which allow many members of society to prosper, but which also prevent many members from participating in this prosperity. Two critical theories of delinquency and criminality are examined in this section:

- Conflict theory
- Radical criminology

Conflict Theory

Conflict theories of causation hypothesize that social tensions and conflicts are indelible features of society. Conflicts arise between dominant groups and “subordinate” classes, races, genders, political groups, ethnic

groups, and other defined outsiders in society.⁴⁴ The fundamental characteristic of these tensions is that they often pit the *haves* against the *have-nots*, with the latter being labeled as criminals or insurgents during these conflicts. Because such tensions are indelible, they can at best be controlled by social institutions rather than completely eradicated. In practice, this means that the have-nots must be coerced to obey the laws and rules of those in power.

From this perspective, laws and rules are simply instruments of control used by ruling elites to maintain control of key institutions, and thereby shut out others who might challenge the authority of the elites. The focus of conflict theories is on the entire economic and political system, and the socioeconomic tensions theoretically created by this system.

Radical Criminology

During the 1960s and 1970s, a good deal of theory and research on delinquency and criminality reflected the political and social discord of the period. Critical theorists challenged previous conventions of criminal causation, arguing that delinquency and criminality were caused by society's inequitable ideological, political, and socioeconomic makeup.⁴⁵ Proponents of the emergent radical approach argued that because power and wealth have been unequally distributed, those who have been politically and economically shut out understandably resort to criminal antagonism against the prevailing order. According to radical criminologists, these classes will continue to engage in behavior labeled as criminal until society remedies the plight of the powerless and disenfranchised.

Critical theories similar to radical criminology frequently use Marxist theory to critique the role of capitalist economics in creating socioeconomic inequities.⁴⁶ Marxist perspectives on criminology argue that the ruling capitalist classes exploit the labor of the lower classes and co-opt them by convincing them that capitalism is actually beneficial for them.⁴⁷ Marxist-oriented radical criminologists hold that ruling elites have used their own interpretations of justice to maintain their status. Hence, the criminal justice system is inherently exploitative and unfair toward criminals who originate from the lower classes. The fact that African Americans, Latinos, and the poor are overrepresented in prisons is explained as a manifestation of the inherent unfairness at the core of the existing capitalist "establishment."

One readily apparent criticism of critical theories is that they rely exclusively on political and economic ideologies to explain delinquency and criminality. Other factors are given cursory attention. Few empirical findings support the ideology-based premises of critical theories, and few workable policy recommendations have been made. For example, policies based on the precepts of Marxist radical criminology would require a fundamental reordering of the political and economic system in the United States. This is impractical, unpopular, and highly unlikely to occur.

Chapter Summary

A large number of theories have been developed to identify and explain the causes of juvenile and criminal deviance. Early attempts to explain deviance applied the then-accepted notion that natural and supernatural forces affect human fortunes and behavior. Some of these early deterministic theories held that the natural world is reflected in human appearance and behavior; others held that possession by demons and devils is responsible for criminality and mental illness. Superstition was supplanted by rationalism during the European Enlightenment. Classical School theorists were protocriminologists who focused on individual responsibility for delinquency and criminality. The Classical School's approach is grounded in free will theories of causation, which apply rationalism to explain each criminal's decision to break the law.

The propagation of modern scientific methods of inquiry included the application of empirical reason to the new field of criminology. Biological explanations of causation are deterministic theories that study the effects of congenital traits on human behavior. Although many early biological theories—physiognomy, phrenology, and atavism—are quasi-scientific by modern standards, they represent a serious effort to bring scientific rigor to the study of criminal causation. Biological inquiry continues unabated, with new fields of inquiry such as DNA research providing new bases for exploring the causes of delinquency and criminality. Social sciences such as psychology and sociology have also been the source of a rich diversity in theories of causation. Psychological explanations are grounded in several research traditions, such as psychoanalysis, conditioning, and psychopathology. These explanations are not as deterministic as biological theories, for they leave open the possibility of deviant free will. Sociological approaches examine the effects of social structures and processes on the behavior of individuals and groups of people. Societal conditions theoretically affect people's collective perceptions of the availability of opportunities and the intensity of deprivations, so that delinquency and crime are reactions to certain types of environments. Critical theory is counterconventional in the sense that it challenges orthodox theories of criminal causation. In essence, they lay the blame for delinquency and crime on socioeconomic and political inequalities. Conflict theory and radical criminology represent typical critical approaches, arguing that fundamental changes must be made in society to remedy criminal deviance.

Chapter 4 presents an overview of approaches and techniques used to measure the incidence of delinquency, crime, and victimization. This is an important field of inquiry because policies are frequently based on the interpretation of statistical data.

Questions for Review

1. In general, what are the underlying theories for explaining juvenile deviance?

2. What were the primary theories of causation in the premodern era?
3. What are the main presumptions of the Classical School?
4. What are the roles of choice and responsibility in the Classical School?
5. What are the main presumptions of biological theories?
6. How have biological traits been used to explain deviant behavior?
7. What are the main presumptions of psychological theories?
8. How have psychological traits been used to explain deviant behavior?
9. What are the main presumptions of sociological theories?
10. How have sociological factors been used to explain deviant behavior?
11. What are the main presumptions of critical theories?

Key Terms and Concepts

The following topics were discussed in this chapter and are found in the Glossary:

Anomie and Strain Theories	Juvenile Deviance
Atavism	Naturalism
Chromosome Theory	Neoclassical Approach to Deviance
Classical School of Causation	Physiognomy
Conditioning Theory	Positivist School of Criminology
Conflict Theories of Causation	Psychoanalytic Theory
Criminal Deviance	Psychopathology Theory
Critical Theory	Radical Criminology
Demonology	Social Ecology (Structural) Theory
Deterministic Theories of Criminal Causation	Somatotyping
Deviance	Underclass, The
Differential Association Theory	
Free Will Theories of Criminal Causation	

DISCUSSION BOX**Pop Culture and Delinquency**

This chapter's Discussion Box is intended to stimulate critical discussion about the alleged association between popular culture and teen behavior.

Conventional wisdom in the United States holds that a causal relationship exists between popular culture and juvenile misbehavior. Many laypersons and experts blame television, films, and music for a perceived decline in values and norms among young people. The argument is that popular entertainment offers a glamorous interpretation of harmful lifestyles that include drug use, sexual irresponsibility, and irreverence toward parental authority. When seen on the big screen or heard on CDs, these lifestyles are theoretically attractive to teenagers. This analysis concludes that teenagers do imitate these lifestyles, and that by glorifying these behaviors the film and music industries bear responsibility for the supposed decline in healthy values and norms among juveniles.

A logical extension of this analysis is that popular culture is also associated with juvenile delinquency. It is a fact that films marketed to juveniles are often violent; it is also a fact that many rock and rap songs contain violent lyrics. If these forms of entertainment promote deviance, and if some teenagers are inclined to act out on glamorized popular themes, is it not logical to conclude that popular culture contributes to juvenile delinquency?

Discussion Questions

1. Does popular culture contribute to delinquency?
2. If an association exists, what are the policy implications? What would you do?
3. Is the presumption that inner-city music causes violent delinquency a racist presumption?
4. What analysis would a conditioning theorist give? A conflict theorist?
5. Who should be responsible for monitoring or regulating popular culture directed to teenagers?

Recommended Web Sites

The following Web sites investigate and discuss theoretical causes of juvenile delinquency and violence.

Birth Psychology and Violence (APPPAH):⁴⁸ <http://www.birthpsychology.com/violence/index.html>

Center for Substance Abuse Research: <http://www.cesar.umd.edu/>

Juvenile Justice Bulletin, October 1998: http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/jjbulletin/9810_2/contents.html

Partnerships Against Violence Network: <http://www.pavnet.org/>

Youth Crime Watch of America: <http://www.ycwa.org/>

Note: The Web site URLs and exercises below are also from the book's study site: <http://www.sagepub.com/martin>

Web Exercise

Using this chapter's recommended Internet sites, conduct an online investigation of the causes of juvenile delinquency.

- What are common sources of juvenile deviance and violence?
- What are some of the common approaches used by agencies to explain and address the causes of juvenile delinquency?
- How effective do you think these organizations are?

For an online search of the causes of delinquency, students should use a search engine and enter the following keywords:

“Juvenile Deviance”

“Youth Crime”

Recommended Readings

The following publications provide discussions on the causes of delinquency and criminal deviance.

Belknap, J. (1996). *The invisible woman: Gender, crime, and justice*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Bohm, R. M. (2001). *A Primer on delinquency and crime theory* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Lynch, M. J., & Groves, W. B. (1989). *A primer in radical criminology* (2nd ed.). Albany, NY: Harrow and Heston.

Milovanovic, D. (1997). *Postmodern criminology*. Hamden, CT: Garland.

Walker, S., Spohn, C., & DeLone, M. (1996). *The color of justice: Race, ethnicity, and crime in America*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Notes

1. See Janet Ramos, Angel Ramos, and Richard Ramos v. Town of Vernon and Rudolph Rossmly, 353 F.3d 171 (2d Cir. 2003).

2. Black, H. C. (1968). *Black's law dictionary: Definitions of the terms and phrases of American and English jurisprudence, ancient and modern* (rev. 4th ed., pp. 444–445). St. Paul, MN: West Publishing.
3. For a discussion of research findings on drug use and delinquency, see Calhoun, T. C., & Chapple, C. L. (Eds.). (2003). *Readings in juvenile delinquency and juvenile justice* (p. 236, et seq.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
4. See Crowe, A. H. (1998, May). *Drug identification and testing in the juvenile justice system*. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
5. See DuRant, R. H., & Cadenhead, C. (1994, April). Factors associated with the use of violence among urban black adolescents. *Journal of Public Health, 84*, 4.
6. For a critical review of research on the intricate relationship between family background and teen delinquency, see Smith, C. A., and Stern, S. B. (1997, September). Delinquency and antisocial behavior: A review of family processes and intervention research. *Social Service Review, 71*, 3.
7. See Gorman-Smith, D., Tolan, P. H., Loweber, R., & Henry, D. B. (1998, October). Relation of family problems to patterns of delinquent involvement among urban youth. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 26*, 5.
8. For a groundbreaking study of the effects of divorce on children and parents, see Wallerstein, J. S., & Kelly, J. B. (1996). *Surviving the breakup: How children and parents cope with divorce*. New York: Basic Books.
9. For a discussion of criminal justice and the “dangerous classes,” see Shelden, R. G. (2001). *Controlling the dangerous classes: A critical introduction to the history of criminal justice*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
10. See Cloward, R. A., & Ohlin, L. E. (1966). *Delinquency and opportunity: A theory of delinquent gangs*. New York: Free Press.
11. For an excellent discussion of the underclass, see Wilson, W. J. (1987). *The truly disadvantaged: The inner city, the underclass, and public policy*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
12. For a discussion of the underclass and gang behavior, see Bursik, R. J., & Grasmick, H. G. (2000). The effect of neighborhood dynamics on gang behavior. In J. Miller, C. L. Maxson, & M. W. Klein (Eds.). *The modern gang reader* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing.
13. See Alwin, D. F., & Thornton, A. (1984, December). Family origins and the schooling process: Early versus late influence of parental characteristics. *American Sociological Review, 49*, 6.
14. See Blair, S. L., & Legazpi Blair, M. C. (1999, Summer). Racial/ethnic differences in high school students' academic performance: Understanding the interweave of social class and ethnicity in family context. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 30*, 3.
15. Rush, G. E. (2000). *The dictionary of criminal justice* (5th ed., p. 106). New York: Dushkin/McGraw-Hill.
16. See Blumstein, A., Farrington, D. P., & Moitra, S. (1985). Delinquency careers: Innocents, amateurs, and persisters. In M. Tonry & M. Norval. *Crime and justice: An annual review* (6th ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press; see also

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