

Chapter Goals



General context of individual views of delinquency

- Be familiar with and distinguish between the two branches of individual-level theories of delinquency
- Know the principles of choice theory
- Discuss the routine activities theory of delinquency
- Know the principles of general deterrence theory
- Discuss the concept of general deterrence theory
- Trace the history and development of trait theory
- Be familiar with the branches and substance of biological trait theory

Case Profile: Eric's Story



ERIC WAS DIAGNOSED WITH ADHD AT THE
AGE OF 8

- Struggled academically
- Was defiant at home
- Substance abuse
- His family and him went to therapy
- Referred to the Adolescent Domestic Abuse Program
- Has become a regular speaker and volunteer at the Adolescent Domestic Abuse Program

Choice Theory



- Philosophers formed the Core of Rational Choice Theory
- Choice Theory holds that the decision to violate the law comes after a careful weighing of the benefits

Delinquents choose to commit crime because they find violating the law attractive...

The Rational Delinquent



- The view that delinquents *choose* to violate the law remains a popular approach to the study of delinquents
- In reality, many youths from affluent families choose to break the law
- Delinquent motives include:
 - Economic need/opportunity
 - Problem solving
 - False expectations
 - Opportunity

Routine Activities Theory



- Developed by Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson
- The view that crime is a normal function of the routine activities of modern living
- Predatory crimes- violent crimes against persons

Choice Theory and Delinquency Prevention



General Deterrence

- Crime control policies that depend on the fear of criminal penalties, i.e long prison sentences for violent crime

Specific Deterrence

- Sending convicted offenders to secure incarceration facilities so that punishment is severe enough to convince them not to repeat their criminal activity
- Choice theory helps us understand criminal events and victim patterns

Trait Theories: Biosocial and Psychological Views



- **Origins of Trait Theory**
 - The school of thought is generally believed to have originated with the Italian physician Cesar Lombroso
 - Criminal atavism- idea that delinquents manifest physical anomalies that make them biologically and psychologically similar to our primitive ancestors
 - For most of the 20th century, most delinquency research focused on social factors such as poverty and family life

Biosocial Theories of Delinquency



- Focuses on the association between biological makeup, environmental conditions, and antisocial behaviors
- There's evidence that a child's diet may influence his/her behavior
- Hormonal levels are an explanation of why there are gender differences in delinquency
 - It's possible that increased levels of testosterone are responsible for excessive violence among teenage boys

Neurological Dysfunction



Teenage Brains

Teenage brains make them crime prone

ADHD

Condition in which a child shows a developmentally inappropriate lack of attention and impulse

Learning Disabilities

Studies show that arrested children have a higher LD than children in the general population

Arousal Theory

Psychological Theories of Delinquency



- Many delinquent youths have poor home lives
- Psychodynamic Theory
 - Branch of psychology that holds that the human personality is controlled by the unconscious mental processes
- Behavioral Theory
 - Argument that personality is learned throughout life during interaction with others
- Cognitive Theory
 - Studies the perception of reality and the mental processes required to understand the world we live in

Critiquing Trait Theory Views



- The research methodologies that are employed are invalid and/or poorly designed
- Personality and IQ are spread evenly across the social structure

If individual traits were the true cause of delinquency, then it too should be spread evenly across society, but it isn't.

Trait Theory and Delinquency Prevention



- Prevention efforts should be directed at strengthening a youth's home life and relationships
- Individual approaches have been used to prevent adjudicated youths from engaging in further criminal activities
- Critics argue that the more we try to help youths, the more likely they will be to see themselves as different or as troublemakers

Conclusion



- Ability to distinguish between the 2 branches of individual-level theories of delinquency
- Know the principles of choice theory
- Familiarity with the branches and substance of biological trait theory
- The various psychological theories of delinquency

Key Terms



- Choice Theory
- Trait Theory
- Free will
- Utilitarian
- Classical criminology
- Hot spot
- Biosocial Theory
- Bipolar Disorder
- Cognitive Theory
- Neuroticism
- Nature Theory
- Nurture Theory
- Extraversion
- Learning disabilities
- Psychodynamic Theory
- Criminal Atavism
- Co-offending
- General deterrence
- Predatory crimes



The End

Chapter 3

Individual Views of Delinquency:
Choice and Trait