



# Why do children and young people commit crime?

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# What is crime?

- Smoking marijuana in Bournemouth, UK, or smoking in Toronto ???
- Being openly gay in 1960s UK ???
- Fare evasion in Germany 2022 ???

**Discuss what you think crime is and give some examples**

Social construction

Contingent on many factors



# Theories of crime

- Classical vs. Positivistic school
- Contemporary thinking:
  - Anomy and strain theories (Anomy theory by Emile Durkheim, Institutional anomy theory by Steven Messner & Richard Rosenfeld, strain theory by Robert Merton)
  - Control and bonding theories (Theory of social disorganisation by Clifford Shaw & Henry McKay, social bonding theory by Travis Hirschi (attachment, beliefs, involvement, commitment), the general theory of crime by Michael Gottfredson & Travis Hirschi)
  - Labelling approach
  - Rational choice thinking
  - Broken windows thesis
  - Life course and developmental criminology

Marxism  
Feminism  
Cultural criminology



<https://www.biography.com/scholar/cesare-beccaria>

Classical school

**Cesare Beccaria (1738-1794)**

=> the principal of justice

=> crime is the result of a person's free choice



<https://www.historyextra.com/period/victorian/the-born-criminal-lombroso-and-the-origins-of-modern-criminology/>

Positivistic school

**Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909)**

=> biological and later psychological and social factors of criminal behaviour

=> the factors of criminal behaviour are beyond the power of the individual

=> reaction to the crime - treatment or disarming (imprisonment or death penalty)



# Life course and developmental criminology

- Baggage, environment, life circumstances
- Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck 1930s – 10 -ear longitudinal study of 500 boys; predicted crime on basis of life circumstances and environmental factors
- Wolfgang et al. - Philadelphia Birth Cohort Study – 1000 males, found that a small number of people were responsible for a high number of crimes
- Moffitt's 'dual taxonomy' - biology and behaviour combined, New Zealand children.
  - Adolescent limited crime
  - Persistent over life course
- Farrington – Cambridge study - male, economic deprivation, parental separation



# The general theory of crime (self-control theory)

- Michael R. Gottfredson und Travis Hirschi (1990)
- all crime, at all times
- Low self-control predicts criminal behaviour.
- „In sum, people who lack self-control will tend to be **impulsive, insensitive, physical (as opposed to mental), risk-taking, short-sighted,** and **nonverbal,** and they will tend therefore to engage in criminal and analogous acts.“ (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990, 90-91)
- More social control, more self-control
- Socialisation institutions (family, school, neighbourhood etc.)
- The marshmallow test ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QX\\_oy9614HQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QX_oy9614HQ))



# Important variables in the environment

- ' Family, attachments, bonds
  - ' School
  - ' Friends, peers, relationships
  - ' Social environment
  - ' Transitions to adulthood
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# Why do some people commit crime and not others?

- Discussion and limitations of theories
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