Unit 4 Tutorials: Victimology and Future Models of Criminology

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An Overview of Victims' Rights

by Sophia

WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will be introduced to the terminology related to victims and their rights in the field of criminology. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Victim or Survivor?

In previous lessons, we have been looking at crime primarily from the lens of people who commit crimes. However, the next several lessons will see us shift our focus to learning about the victims of crimes. We'll start here by looking at victim rights; in the coming lessons, you will learn about theories related to victimization and the impact victimization has on victims and society.

People who experience victimization self-identify in many ways—some as "victims" and many as "survivors," while still others use terms like "thriver" or "overcomer" (Ben-David, 2020). For many people who experience victimization, none of these words accurately reflect their experiences, and they prefer not to use labels (Bouris, 2007). Within much feminist scholarship and the broader anti-violence against women movement, the term "survivor" is preferred since the word "victim" may be associated with weakness or passivity (Abdullah-Khan, 2008). Still, much of the historical or theoretical writing in victimology refers to "victims." "Victim" is also a legal term recognized within the criminal justice system and is used in victim rights legislation, though there are diverse definitions in legislation and someone can become a "victim" without proceeding through the criminal justice system (Wemmers, 2017).

For our purposes, we will refer to people who have experienced crime as survivors and use the term "victim" when referencing historical, theoretical, or legal contexts. In the following sections, you will learn about some of the rights that victims and survivors of crimes have in the United States.

2. Victim Rights in the United States

The crime victims' movement began as an outgrowth of the rising social consciousness of the 1960s and 1970s. Its continued strength was derived not just from the social forces through which it began but also from the

leadership of individuals, some of whom personally survived tragedy and others who brought compassion and insight as witnesses to such tragedy.

The victims' movement in the United States involved the convergence of five independent activities:

- The development of a field called victimology
- The introduction of state victim compensation programs
- The rise of the women's movement
- The rise of both crime and dissatisfaction with the criminal justice system
- The growth of victim activism

A key event that began to shape the narrative around victims' rights involved a woman fighting for support for her child in a case that eventually reached the Supreme Court.

IN CONTEXT

The Case of Linda R. S. v. Richard D. (1973)

Article 602 of the Texas Penal Code stated that any parent who refused to provide support for their child would be guilty of a misdemeanor. Texas courts consistently held that this statute applied only to parents of legitimate children. *Linda R. S. v. Richard D.* (1973) was one unwed mother's attempt to persuade the court that there was a constitutional problem with this interpretation. Since Linda was the mother of a daughter born out of wedlock, she claimed that Richard was her child's father. Richard refused to pay child support for Linda's daughter. The local district attorney declined to act on her behalf, claiming that Article 602 didn't apply to illegitimate children. Linda brought a lawsuit on behalf of herself, her daughter, and other parents and children in the same situation. She claimed that the state's interpretation of Article 602 discriminated between legitimate and illegitimate children and, therefore, violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. She sought a judgment that Article 602 was unconstitutional in its application to only fathers of legitimate children. She also asked the court to order Richard to pay child support. The district court found that Linda lacked standing and dismissed the case, but the United States Supreme Court determined that it would hear the case.

Ultimately, the Court determined that the victim could not demonstrate a link between the prosecutor's alleged discriminatory enforcement of the child support statute and the woman's failure to secure child support payments, and as such, the victim did not have standing to seek the relief she requested. The Court reached this conclusion because even if the criminal statute was equally enforced against fathers of children born to unmarried women, those prosecutions would not necessarily result in the payment of child support. Despite the outcome, the Court noted that the legislatures could enact statutes creating victims' rights, which then would create standing in court.

The societal shift to how victims were perceived continued into the 1980s. In response to public concern about violent crimes and a larger focus on victims of crimes, President Ronald Reagan established the Task Force on

Victims of Crime in 1982. This task force recommended finding a balance between upholding victims' rights and ensuring due process for defendants. It proposed measures such as safeguarding witnesses and victims against intimidation, mandating restitution in criminal cases, establishing guidelines for treating victims and witnesses fairly, and expanding victim compensation programs (Siegel, 2023).

LEARN MORE

Want to read more about the Task Force on Victims of Crime? You can find the **Task Force's full report from the Office for Victims of Crime**.

Subsequently, Congress enacted the Omnibus Victim and Witness Protection Act, which mandated the use of victim impact statements during sentencing in federal criminal cases, provided enhanced protection for witnesses, enforced stricter bail laws, and required restitution in criminal cases. In 1984, the Comprehensive Crime Control Act and the Victims of Crime Act granted federal funding for state projects assisting and compensating crime victims.

Another significant development was the Crime Victims' Rights Act of 2004, which granted crime victims the right to participate in the justice system, receive information, and be consulted on decisions made by the Justice Department and other relevant agencies involved in crime detection, investigation, or prosecution. Courts were also mandated to ensure that victims were granted the rights outlined in the law (Siegel, 2023).

The following sections will discuss some of these rights in greater detail, including victim advocates, victim impact statements, and victim compensation programs.

2a. Victim Advocates

Many victim service organizations appoint counselors to act as advocates for victims. **Victim advocates** play a crucial role, especially when victims need to engage with the justice system. Victim advocates can do the following:

- Advocate for police to keep investigations open and request the return of stolen property
- Push for prosecutors and judges to protect survivors from harassment and retaliation by making "no contact" a bail condition
- Assist survivors in making statements during sentencing hearings and probation and parole revocation procedures

Advocacy is particularly beneficial in helping survivors comprehend the justice system's workings and guiding them through the process.

EXAMPLE Survivors of sexual assault may receive assistance from a rape victim advocate who stands by their side as they navigate the legal and medical systems.

Advocates prepare survivors and witnesses by explaining court procedures, such as how to testify, how bail functions, and what to do if the defendant issues a threat. Victim programs also offer transportation to and from the court, and counselors remain in the courtroom during hearings to explain procedures and provide support (Siegel, 2023).

TERM TO KNOW

Victim Advocate

An individual who is trained to support victims of crimes.

2b. Victim Impact Statements

A **victim impact statement** is a written or oral statement made to the court by direct or indirect survivors to discuss the impact of criminal victimization (Scott, 2016). The statement may include a description of the physical, financial, and emotional effects of the crime; it may be prepared by the survivor themselves, by someone on behalf of the survivor (e.g., a parent, a spouse, or a child), or by the survivors of deceased victims (Scott, 2016). The decision to submit a victim impact statement is voluntary.

Victim impact statements can be introduced at various stages of the legal process, but they are usually introduced at sentencing or parole hearings. They have been found to be therapeutic for survivors of crime because they allow the victim or survivor to be acknowledged by the criminal justice system and to express their pain and experience while providing valuable information to the court. Victim impact statements can help the judge give a sentence more reflective of the true harm caused to the survivor and can help induce feelings of remorse in the offender (Scott, 2016).

Although judges can take victim impact statements into account, they are not required to use these statements as a basis for a harsher sentence.

Some survivors of crime may choose not to prepare a victim impact statement as they may feel uncomfortable describing their feelings in a public setting, may fear retaliation from the offender, may find recalling the crime traumatic, or may feel dissatisfied if their recommendations are not followed by the judge (Scott, 2016).

Victim Impact Statement

A written or oral statement made as part of the legal process allowing crime victims to speak during the sentencing of the convicted person or at subsequent parole hearings.

2c. Victim Compensation Programs

One of the main objectives of victim advocates has been to advocate for legislation establishing crime **victim compensation programs**. These programs provide survivors with compensation from the state to cover expenses related to the crime they experienced. However, compensation programs vary widely between states, and many state programs face challenges because of insufficient funding and inadequate organization within the criminal justice system. Compensation may cover medical bills, lost wages, future earnings, and counseling. In cases of death, the victim's survivors may receive assistance for burial expenses and loss of support.

In 1984, the federal government established the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), which grants funds to state compensation boards from fines and penalties imposed on federal offenders. These funds are distributed annually to states to support their crime victim compensation programs, as well as victim assistance programs like rape crisis centers and domestic violence shelters. VOCA funds are used to cover survivors' medical expenses, provide economic assistance for lost wages, compensate for the loss of loved ones, and offer mental

health counseling. The fund is sustained by fines and penalties paid by convicted federal offenders, and the fund balance is currently over $6 billion (Siegel, 2023).

TERM TO KNOW

Victim Compensation Program

A program that offers reimbursement to crime victims for a variety of crime-related expenses, such as medical costs, mental health counseling, or lost wages.

SUMMARY

In this lesson, you first learned about the terminology used to describe **victims or survivors** of crime. While the term "victim" is still used, many people prefer the term "survivor" to emphasize the strength and resilience that is necessary to overcome the difficulties of being the victim of a crime.

You also learned about **victim rights in the United States**. Starting in the 1980s, there was greater focus on how to help people who have been crime survivors. This lesson highlighted some of the primary pieces of legislation on this issue and the programs available to survivors of crime. **Victim advocates** play a role in helping survivors get the services they need, navigate legal processes, and learn about their rights. At sentencing, survivors can provide a **victim impact statement**, which gives them an opportunity to discuss how the crime impacted them physically, emotionally, and financially. Lastly, **victim compensation programs** were created to help cover some of the financial costs of victimization, including medical costs, lost wages, or other financial burdens associated with the crime.

In the next lesson, you will be introduced to different theories of victimization.

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TERMS TO KNOW

Victim Advocate

An individual who is trained to support victims of crimes.

Victim Compensation Program

A program that offers reimbursement to crime victims for a variety of crime-related expenses, such as medical costs, mental health counseling, or lost wages.

Victim Impact Statement

A written or oral statement made as part of the legal process allowing crime victims to speak during the sentencing of the convicted person or at subsequent parole hearings.

Theories of Victimization

by Sophia

WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the different theories within victimization or victimology. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Theories of Victimization

Benjamin Mendelsohn first introduced the term “victimology” at a lecture for the Rumanian Psychiatric Society in 1947, followed by an article in 1956 calling for the creation of a discipline of victimology that would be independent of criminology and would bring needed attention to victims of crime. For this contribution, Mendelsohn is often called the “father of victimology” (Wemmers, 2017). Mendelsohn’s (1956) early work also explored relationships between survivors and perpetrators, focusing on how responsible survivors were for what happened to them.

One of the central concerns of victimology was identified by Marxist criminologist Richard Quinney, whom you first learned about in the last Challenge. Quinney (1972) famously asked, “Who is the victim?” and argued that “the victim” is a socially constructed phenomenon. In other words, for someone to be recognized as a survivor, there needs to be some agreement within society. This means that societal power dynamics will influence collective understandings of victimization, allowing some people to be more easily recognized as survivors when they are harmed (McGarry & Walklate, 2015).

Criminologist Nils Christie developed a typology of the “ideal victim,” suggesting categories of people who are most likely to receive “the complete and legitimate status of being a victim” when they are harmed. Christie (1986) suggests that this is most likely to happen when the survivor is perceived as weak, is engaged in a respectable activity, is not seen as responsible for contributing to their victimization, and does not know the offender.

HINT

Recall that you learned about how the media portrays the "ideal victim" way back in the first Challenge. In this definition, the socially constructed survivor is seen as weaker than their attacker, as blameless, and as someone with whom the audience will readily sympathize.

The opposite is also true: When people's experiences of victimization do not align with these characteristics, they may not be recognized as legitimate survivors.

EXAMPLE Scott (2021) argues that single offenses that occur in public spaces with strangers tend to receive harsher penalties from the criminal justice system than offenses that occur in private, even when these are repeat offenses by a person in a position of trust.

This can lead to an erosion of trust in the criminal justice system and, subsequently, reluctance to report future victimization.

In the following sections, we will examine some common theories and perspectives used to explain why victimization occurs, such as victim precipitation theory, routine activity theory, and lifestyle theories. We will also discuss critical victimology.

1a. Victim Precipitation Theory

Victim precipitation, also known as victim facilitation, refers to situations where the survivor was the initial aggressor in the action that led to their harm or loss. The theory was first coined by Marvin Wolfgang in his 1957 study of homicide. Wolfgang examined 588 homicides that occurred in Philadelphia between 1948 and 1952 and found that in a quarter of his sample, the victim was the first to engage in physical violence, or in other words, the victim was the initial aggressor. A major criticism of this theory is the assumption that the victim and the offender enter an interaction as equals, dismissing any power imbalances or dynamics at hand (Scott, 2016).

Research like Wolfgang's (1957) has given rise to the phenomenon of **victim blaming**, which occurs when the survivor of a crime is held responsible, in whole or in part, for their own victimization. Blame stems from a belief that there are specific actions people can take to avoid being harmed. When such actions are not followed, others are not likely to sympathize with the survivor as they see the crime as avoidable if the survivor had chosen to take the appropriate measures. Victim blaming can take the form of negative social responses from legal, medical, and mental health professionals; the media; immediate family members; and other acquaintances (Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime [CRCVC], 2009).

You may ask yourself, "Why do people blame survivors?" Some research has suggested that blaming crime survivors helps reassure the person assigning blame that they are safe; as long as they do not act as the survivor did at the time of their victimization, they will be unharmed (Karmen, 2020). Another reason victims are blamed is **attribution error**, which occurs when individuals overemphasize personal characteristics and devalue environmental characteristics when judging others (CRCVC, 2009). People who make this error view the individual survivor as partially responsible for what happened to them and ignore situational causes.

EXAMPLE If a survivor was sexually assaulted by someone while attending a party, some individuals might blame the survivor for being assaulted based on what they were wearing or their consuming alcohol at that time rather than take into consideration the motivation of the offender.

Victim blaming can have serious and negative effects on survivors, who have been deemed at fault even though they bear no responsibility for the crimes committed against them. Victim advocates argue that victim blaming undermines survivor status while simultaneously excusing the offender for the crime (Petherick, 2017). Survivors who receive negative responses and blame tend to experience greater distress and are less likely to report future victimization (CRCVC, 2009).

TERMS TO KNOW

Victim Precipitation

A situation in which the survivor was the initial aggressor in the actions that led to their harm or loss.

Victim Blaming

The act of holding a survivor of a crime entirely or partially at fault for the harm that befell them as the result of the crime.

Attribution Error

An individual's tendency to attribute another's actions to that person's character or personality while attributing their own behavior to external situational factors outside of their control.

1b. Routine Activity Theory

Routine activity theory was first proposed by Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson in 1979. Cohen and Felson (1979) suggested that the risk of criminal victimization increases when there is an intersection of the following:

1. The presence of a motivated offender
2. An availability of suitable targets
3. A lack of capable guardianship (i.e., someone who could intervene to prevent the crime from being committed)

Without any one of these three elements, the likelihood of a crime occurring decreases. This theory has met with some criticism in the context of victimology as it assumes that a survivor can lessen the offender's motivation by being less of a suitable target (Scott, 2016). Furthermore, it assumes that equality exists between all three parties—the survivor, the offender, and the guardian—ignoring the different power imbalances at play. We will discuss routine activity at greater length in a future lesson.

TERM TO KNOW

Routine Activity Theory

A criminological theory predicting how changes in social and economic conditions influence crime and victimization.

1c. Lifestyle Theories

In the context of victimology, **lifestyle theories** focus on how peoples' activities and behaviors contribute to their likelihood of being victimized.

EXAMPLE According to lifestyle theories, choices like associating with certain groups, being out late at night in public places, or residing in urban areas can increase the risk of victimization. Conversely, taking precautions such as staying home at night, living in rural areas, avoiding public places, having a stable income, or being married can lower the risk of victimization.

These theories propose that crime is not just a random event; it is influenced by how individuals lead their lives and their environments. Individuals who lead high-risk lifestyles, which may involve activities like drinking, drug use, late-night outings, and spending time away from home or on the streets, face a significantly higher likelihood of becoming victims of crime.

These lifestyle-related risks persist into adulthood, as individuals who engage in criminal behavior increase their likelihood of becoming victims of crimes like homicide themselves. The connection between victimization and a criminal lifestyle is likely more about exposure to risk than about an inherent inclination for victimization (Siegel, 2023). In other words, individuals who are involved in certain lifestyles often find themselves near violent and dangerous individuals or places, increasing their own risk of victimization.

TERM TO KNOW

Lifestyle Theories

A group of criminological theories that focus on how peoples' activities and behaviors contribute to their likelihood of being victimized.

1d. Critical Victimology

Critical victimology combines the concept of the "ideal victim" with **intersectionality**, or framing how identities are layered with each other, in an effort to deconstruct victim blaming by calling attention to the ways race, gender, class, and other identities shape social constructions of victimization (Spencer & Walklate, 2016).

EXAMPLE Critical victimologists would recognize that the movement opposing violence against women has increased the resources available to female survivors of intimate partner violence and sexual violence but that women who are Indigenous, trans, or homeless may not have equal access to those resources and may be treated differently within victim services or the criminal justice system. Similarly, male survivors of intimate partner violence or sexual violence have reported difficulties accessing services or being believed when they ask for help (Cohen, 2014).

TERMS TO KNOW

Critical Victimology

A theory that draws attention to the social processes that victimize some people and not others.

Intersectionality

A framework that examines how race, class, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity layer on each other to multiply the effects of victimization or criminalization.

SUMMARY

In this lesson, you were introduced to different **theories of victimization**. These theories attempt to determine what role, if any, the survivor plays in a crime. One such theory is **victim precipitation**, which refers to situations in which the survivor was the aggressor in the interaction that led to them suffering harm. However, this theory has often resulted in victim blaming, or holding the survivor responsible for their own victimization.

You also learned about **routine activity theory**. This theory suggests that the risk of criminal victimization increases with the intersection of a motivated offender, an availability of suitable targets, and a lack of capable guardianship. Similarly, **lifestyle theories** focus on how peoples' routine activities and behaviors contribute to their likelihood of being victimized. Lastly, you learned about **critical victimology**, which examines how race, gender, class, and other identities shape social constructions of victimization.

In the next lesson, you will learn about the impacts that victimization has on people and communities.

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ATTRIBUTIONS

TERMS TO KNOW

Attribution Error
An individual's tendency to attribute another's actions to that person's character or personality while attributing their own behavior to external situational factors outside of their control.

Critical Victimology
A criminological theory that draws attention to the social processes that victimize some persons and not others.

Intersectionality
A framework that examines how race, class, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity layer on each other to multiply the effects of victimization or criminalization.

Lifestyle Theories
The criminological theories that focus on how peoples' activities and behaviors contribute to their likelihood of being victimized.

Routine Activity Theory
A criminological theory predicting how changes in social and economic conditions influence crime and victimization.

Victim Blaming
The act of holding a survivor of a crime entirely or partially at fault for the harm that befell them as the result of the crime.

Victim Precipitation

A situation in which the survivor was the initial aggressor in the actions that led to their harm or loss.

PEOPLE TO KNOW

Benjamin Mendelsohn

Romanian criminologist associated with creating typologies for victims.

Impacts of Victimization

by Sophia

WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about what survivors may experience after a crime, as well as some of the services available to them. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Impacts of Victimization

Victimization can affect people physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

EXAMPLE When survivors are unable to work or miss work because of the time involved in talking to police or lawyers or attending court, they can lose their income or housing and accumulate debt.

Criminologist Andrews and associates (2003) found that some survivors experience permanent disabilities or long-term symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which can include the following:

- Dissociation
- Hyperarousal
- Avoidance
- Feeling trapped in negative thought patterns or moods

The impact of victimization can vary based on the characteristics of the crime, the characteristics of the survivor and their relationship to the offender, and postcrime factors like receiving access to timely and effective support (Karmen, 2020). After victimization, survivors are suddenly forced to navigate many new and complicated realities, potentially interacting with health care providers, media, police, and victim service providers, all while grieving and being presented with complicated choices about how to move forward (Roebuck et al., 2020).

For many survivors, there is so much work to do after experiencing violence that it can take a while before they have the time and space to process what has happened. Throughout this time, friends and family may not know what to say and may be silent to avoid causing further distress, or they might offer unhelpful advice (Brison, 2002).

THINK ABOUT IT

Certain common responses to others' hardships, while well-meaning, may have the impact of minimizing their experiences. Consider the following words survivors often hear in reference to either their own experience after a crime or the loss of a loved one:

- "They are in a better place now."
- "Everything happens for a reason."
- "You're lucky it wasn't worse."
- "I understand what you're going through."
- "You shouldn't have had so much to drink."
- "You need to forgive them and move on."

How might each of these statements impact a survivor, either positively or negatively?

2. Resilience, Post-traumatic Growth, and Post-traumatic Change

While the pain of victimization may never fully subside, many survivors find ways to move forward with their lives, navigating and negotiating their way through adversity—this is known as the process of **resilience** (Ungar, 2004). Some survivors identify that doing this work of moving forward also contributes to **post-traumatic growth** (PTG) or positive psychological change after facing adversity.

Criminologists Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) found that trauma survivors commonly report growth in five domains:

1. New possibilities
2. Relating to others
3. Personal strength
4. Spiritual change
5. Appreciation of life

Growth-related language provides an optimistic framework for some survivors, while others resist the idea of PTG. **Post-traumatic change** is a broader concept that incorporates post-traumatic stress and PTG responses to violence but also creates room to consider how survivors experience changes that are hard to frame as negative or positive or seemingly contradictory emotions, such as a survivor feeling proud of their advocacy work while finding it humiliating at the same time (Roebuck et al., 2022).

TERMS TO KNOW

Resilience

The ability to cope mentally and emotionally with a crisis or to return to precrisis status quickly.

Post-traumatic Growth

A positive psychological change experienced because of struggling with highly challenging, highly stressful life circumstances.

Post-traumatic Change

A psychological and emotional transformation that individuals may undergo after experiencing a traumatic event or series of events.

3. Survivor Reactions to Services

> *"When people ask what the worst thing was to ever happen to me, I don't say the sexual abuse or rape. I say it was the trial."*
>
> —Female survivor of childhood sexual assault (Roebuck et al., 2020)

Some survivors choose not to participate in services to avoid **revictimization**, or the process of feeling victimized for a second time by the criminal justice system and legal processes (Ahlin, 2010). Emotionally, survivors may not be able to cope with this level of stress and may feel unprepared to initiate contact for services or continue seeking services to help them with their recovery.

EXAMPLE Some survivors have reported a recurrence of their PTSD symptoms during court proceedings (Kilpatrick & Acierno, 2003).

Criminologist Paterson and associates (2006) contended that there are several possible explanations for survivors' refusal of or withdrawal from these services, similar to the reasons for not reporting victimization to police:

- A close relationship to the perpetrator
- The gender of the victim or survivor
- Fear

Patterson also found that some survivors of crime were more hesitant to share their experiences with victim service providers for fear of having any information used against them in the future. Moreover, survivors were less likely to engage in victim-based services when they were less satisfied with the criminal justice system.

EXAMPLE Survey respondents often felt frustration when information was limited, inaccurate, or confusing (Department of Justice Canada, 2005).

Dissatisfaction again arose when participants were forced to contact criminal justice professionals on their own and from receiving inconsistent information from criminal justice professionals due to changes in staffing. Survivors were less likely to seek out services as disappointment from previous interactions influenced their perceptions of victim-based services (Department of Justice Canada, 2005).

TERM TO KNOW

Revictimization

The process of victimizing someone again, often through the criminal justice system.

4. Trauma- and Violence-Informed Care

The trauma sustained from a crime can have long-term impacts on a victim or survivor, regardless of whether the violence itself is ongoing or occurred in the past. In recent years, the criminal justice system has renewed its interest in the development and implementation of trauma-informed practices to support victims or survivors of crime. **Trauma- and violence-informed care** (TVIC) approaches are policies and practices that recognize the connections between violence, trauma, negative health outcomes, and behaviors (Trauma-Informed Care Implementation Resource Center, 2021). TVIC approaches expand on the concept of trauma-informed practice to account for the intersecting impacts of the criminal justice system, interpersonal violence, and structural inequities on a person's life. In other words, these approaches bring attention to broader historical and social conditions and institutional forms of violence rather than seeing problems as solely the result of a person's psychological state (Varcoe et al., 2016).

This shift in language to include "violence" in relation to trauma and care is critical as it underscores the importance of the relationship between violence and trauma. TVIC approaches can do the following:

- Increase safety, control, and resilience for people who are seeking services in relation to experiences of violence or people who have a history of experiencing violence
- Minimize harm to and retraumatization of victims or survivors in a safe and respectful manner, acknowledging both individual and systemic violence (Varcoe et al., 2016)

Service providers, organizations, and systems may not be aware that they can cause unintentional harm to people who have experienced violence and trauma. Retraumatization can occur for crime survivors in many ways.

EXAMPLE A crime survivor may feel retraumatized when asked to retell their story of victimization to different individuals or organizations throughout a criminal investigation. They may have to tell their story to the attending officer who was first to respond to the crime, to a doctor who treated their injuries, to a detective overlooking the criminal case, to a victim support worker to access victim compensation, and to a judge in a trial for the crime. This can be deeply upsetting to the survivor.

TVIC approaches can help make systems and organizations more responsive to the needs of all people and provide opportunities for practitioners to effectively support their clients. By practicing universal trauma precautions, service providers can offer safe care and support. Organizations can develop structures, policies, and processes that can foster a culture built on an understanding of how trauma and violence affect people's lives.

EXAMPLE An organization that provides shelter for victims of violence may help prevent retraumatization by not requiring victims to disclose experiences of abuse in order to access housing. The

organization may also hire staff with lived experience of partner violence who can better understand and support the victims they serve.

TERM TO KNOW

Trauma- and Violence-Informed Care

Policies and practices that recognize the connections between violence, trauma, negative health outcomes, and behaviors.

SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that the **impacts of victimization** can be physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. It is also important to recognize people's **resilience, post-traumatic growth, and post-traumatic change** after they have been a victim or survivor of a crime. Many people can move on with their lives and get past the adversity; others even report personal growth after being victimized.

There are various services available for victims and survivors, but **survivor reactions to services** can vary. In fact, some survivors choose not to use services to avoid revictimization. Using these services often requires a survivor to retell their story to multiple parties throughout the justice process, causing them to relive the trauma from their original victimization. That is why it is important to have **trauma- and violence-informed care** that recognizes the connections between violence, trauma, negative health outcomes, and behaviors.

In the next lesson, you will learn about how victimization affects certain populations of people differently.

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TERMS TO KNOW

Post-traumatic Change

A psychological and emotional transformation that individuals may undergo after experiencing a traumatic event or series of events.

Post-traumatic Growth

A positive psychological change experienced because of struggling with highly challenging, highly stressful life circumstances.

Resilience

The ability to cope mentally and emotionally with a crisis or to return to precrisis status quickly.

Revictimization

The process of victimizing someone again, often through the criminal justice system.

Trauma- and Violence-Informed Care

Policies and practices that recognize the connections between violence, trauma, negative health outcomes, and behaviors.

Special Populations

by Sophia

WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about special populations of people and how they experience victimization. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Women

As you now know, not everyone faces the same risks of victimization, and some populations face unique challenges when it comes to victimization. Women can face unique challenges when it comes to victimization because of a variety of social, cultural, and economic factors.

Women are more likely to experience gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and intimate partner violence (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], n.d.-b). This type of violence is often rooted in power imbalances between men and women and can be exacerbated by cultural norms that perpetuate gender inequality. Some cultures normalize violence against women and discourage women from speaking out about their experiences.

Similarly, women may face social stigma and shame associated with being a victim of violence or abuse. This can lead to underreporting of incidents as women may fear judgment or retaliation from their communities or even their own families. Moreover, economic dependence on a perpetrator can make it difficult for women to leave abusive situations (National Domestic Violence Hotline, n.d.). Some women rely on their partners for financial support, making it challenging to escape situations of abuse without the means to support themselves and any dependents.

Women may also encounter barriers within the legal system when seeking justice for acts of violence or abuse. This can include biases among law enforcement officers, lack of access to legal resources, and inadequate protection mechanisms. In many regions, there is a lack of adequate support services for victims of gender-

based violence, such as shelters, counseling, and legal assistance (Heron & Eisma, 2021). This can leave women feeling isolated and without access to the resources they need to heal and rebuild their lives.

Additionally, women's experiences of victimization are influenced by intersecting factors such as race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and disability. Marginalized women, such as those belonging to racial or ethnic minority groups, may face additional barriers and discrimination when seeking support and justice (National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, n.d.).

Addressing these challenges requires efforts at the societal level to combat gender inequality, promote women's rights, and ensure that victims of violence have access to the necessary support and resources. Other efforts can include the following:

- Implementing laws and policies that protect women from violence
- Providing education and awareness programs to challenge harmful gender norms
- Expanding support services for victims

2. LGBTQIA+ Populations

LGBTQIA+ populations face unique challenges when it comes to victimization due to systemic discrimination, social stigma, and lack of legal protections. They are at a higher risk of experiencing hate crimes and targeted violence (Dowd, 2020) because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. These targeted attacks can include physical assault, verbal harassment, and other forms of violence motivated by homophobia, transphobia, or biphobia.

Furthermore, LGBTQIA+ individuals suffer higher rates of domestic violence and sexual assault. However, they may be hesitant to report instances because of fear of discrimination or disbelief from law enforcement, social services, or the broader community. They may also fear outing themselves or their partners (Human Rights Campaign, 2022).

Aside from physical violence, there are other types of victimization that LGBTQIA+ individuals face:

- They are disproportionately affected by family rejection, which can lead to homelessness and housing instability (CDC, n.d.-c). Many LGBTQIA+ youth are kicked out of their homes or face hostility from their families when they come out, which can leave them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse on the streets.
- They often encounter discrimination in employment and housing, which can result in economic insecurity and limited access to safe and affordable housing (Human Rights Campaign, 2024). Discriminatory practices may include being denied housing or job opportunities based on sexual orientation or gender identity.
- They experience disparities in health care access and quality because of discrimination and a lack of culturally competent care (Casanova-Perez et al., 2022). This can result in delayed or inadequate health care services, exacerbating health issues and increasing vulnerability to victimization.
- They experience intersecting forms of discrimination based on factors such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and disability. Marginalized LGBTQIA+ individuals, such as those belonging to racial

or ethnic minority groups, may face compounded discrimination and increased vulnerability to victimization (Semenza, 2022).

Addressing these challenges requires efforts to combat discrimination, promote LGBTQIA+ rights, and ensure access to supportive services for LGBTQIA+ individuals who have experienced victimization. These efforts may also include implementing laws and policies that protect LGBTQIA+ individuals from discrimination, providing LGBTQIA+-inclusive education and training for service providers, and expanding access to LGBTQIA+-affirming support services.

3. The Elderly

The elderly face unique challenges in victimization because of physical frailty, social isolation, and cognitive decline. As people age, they may become physically frail and less able to defend themselves against physical assault or abuse (Bachman, 1992). This can make them more vulnerable to various forms of victimization, including the following:

- Physical violence
- Financial exploitation
- Neglect

Furthermore, many elderly individuals experience social isolation and loneliness, which can increase their vulnerability to victimization (Tung et al., 2019). Social isolation may result from factors such as the loss of a spouse or friends, mobility limitations, or living alone. Lack of social support networks can leave elderly people more susceptible to exploitation by caregivers, scammers, or even family members.
The elderly are apt to be victims of elder abuse, including physical, emotional, sexual, or financial abuse and neglect. Perpetrators of elder abuse may be family members, caregivers, or others in positions of trust (CDC, n.d.-a). Similarly, elderly individuals receiving care in health care settings, such as nursing homes or assisted living facilities, may be at risk of mistreatment or neglect by caregivers. Issues such as understaffing, inadequate training, and lack of oversight can contribute to instances of abuse or neglect in these settings. Elder abuse can go unrecognized or unreported because of factors such as shame, fear of retaliation, or dependence on the abuser for care.

Elderly individuals are often targeted for financial exploitation because of their accumulated wealth and perceived vulnerability (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, n.d.). Such practices can include the following:

- Scams
- Fraudulent schemes
- Identity theft
- Abuse of power of attorney

Cognitive decline associated with aging may also make the elderly more susceptible to such manipulation and coercion. Some methods for addressing the victimization of the elderly can include implementing policies and

programs to detect and prevent elder abuse, providing support services for victims, promoting social connections and community engagement among older adults, and enhancing legal protections for vulnerable elderly individuals.

4. Populations With Mental Illness

Individuals with mental illness face unique challenges in regard to victimization because of a combination of factors related to their mental health conditions and societal attitudes toward mental illness. Individuals with mental illness may be more vulnerable to exploitation and victimization because of the following:

- Impaired judgment
- Cognitive deficits
- Difficulty assessing risk

This vulnerability can make them targets for various forms of abuse (Azimi & Daigle, 2021) within both the criminal justice system and institutional settings. Individuals with mental illness are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system and are at higher risk of victimization within correctional facilities (Blitz et al., 2008).

> EXAMPLE Inmates with mental illness can face harassment, violence, and exploitation from other inmates or staff, exacerbating their mental health conditions and increasing their vulnerability to victimization.

Likewise, individuals with mental illness receiving care in institutional settings, such as psychiatric hospitals or group homes, may be at risk of mistreatment or abuse by staff or other residents. Issues such as overcrowding, understaffing, and inadequate training can contribute to instances of neglect or abuse in these settings (Auslander & Penney, n.d.).

Similar to the other special populations, the experiences of victimization among individuals with mental illness are often shaped by intersecting factors such as race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. Marginalized individuals facing multiple forms of discrimination may be at even greater risk of victimization and may encounter additional barriers to accessing support and resources (NAMI Dane County, 2022).

Some methods for addressing the victimization of individuals with mental illness include reducing the stigma and discrimination surrounding mental illness, improving access to mental health treatment and support services, enhancing training for professionals working with populations with mental illness, and strengthening legal protections for vulnerable individuals.

5. People Experiencing Incarceration

People who are incarcerated face unique challenges with victimization because of their incarceration status and the prison environment. They are at risk of experiencing violence within correctional facilities, including the

following:

- Physical assault
- Sexual assault
- Verbal harassment

The hierarchical structure of prisons, coupled with overcrowding and understaffing, can contribute to a culture of violence where people housed in prisons may be victimized by other prisoners or even by correctional staff (Wolff et al., 2009).
The power dynamics within prisons can exacerbate vulnerability to victimization.

> EXAMPLE Inmates may be victimized by more powerful or influential prisoners who use intimidation or coercion to exert control (Edgar & Martin, 2002).

Reporting incidents of victimization may result in retaliation from other inmates or disciplinary action from prison authorities, discouraging victims from seeking help or justice. Additionally, people with disabilities or mental health issues who are incarcerated may be particularly susceptible to victimization because of their perceived vulnerability.

Even if they wish to report incidents of abuse, people who are incarcerated often have limited access to support services for help with their victimization. Counseling, advocacy, and other resources may be scarce or unavailable, leaving victims without the means to cope with their experiences and seek justice. They may also experience neglect or inadequate health care within correctional facilities, which can exacerbate health issues that occur because of victimization. Medical needs may be overlooked or delayed, and people may face barriers to accessing mental health treatment or support services (Reingle-Gonzalez & Connell, 2014).

Some methods for addressing the victimization of incarcerated people can include improving conditions within correctional facilities, implementing measures to prevent violence within prisons, and enhancing mental health and health care services in prisons.

SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that various special populations experience unique issues when it comes to victimization. **Women** are more apt to experience gender-based violence, domestic violence, and sexual assault. Much of this violence is rooted in power imbalances between men and women and is exacerbated by cultural norms. **LGBTQIA+ populations** face challenges because of systemic discrimination, social stigma, and lack of legal protections. Members of the LGBTQIA+ community often experience hate crimes and violence targeted at their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

The elderly face unique challenges because of their physical frailty, social isolation, and cognitive decline. They are more vulnerable to certain types of victimization, including elder abuse, financial exploitation, and neglect. **Populations with mental illness** face an increased risk of victimization because of their mental health conditions and societal attitudes toward mental illness. They may be more apt to experience victimization because of impaired judgment and perceived cognitive deficits.

Lastly, **people experiencing incarceration** often experience violence within correctional facilities, including physical and verbal assault. The hierarchical structure of prisons and problems with overcrowding and understaffing can contribute to a culture of violence for incarcerated people.

In the next lesson, you will have an opportunity to take what you have learned in this Challenge so far and apply it to a case study.

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Case Analysis: Sex Crimes

by Sophia

WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will determine if the theories within victimology fit with the sex crimes case presented to Rolling Hills PD. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Rolling Hills PD Explores Sex Crimes

Throughout this Challenge, we looked at the struggles that victims or survivors may face after enduring a traumatic experience. The relationship between the survivor, the police, and the criminal justice system can be fragile, with the survivor sometimes preferring not to report the incident.

Click on the plus sign to review victim precipitation theory: +

Victim precipitation theory suggests that victims may contribute to or initiate criminal acts against themselves.

Click on the plus sign to review victim blaming: +

Victim blaming occurs when the victim of a crime is held responsible, in whole or in part, for their own victimization. Blame stems from a belief that there are specific actions people can take to avoid being harmed. When such actions are not followed, others are not as likely to sympathize with the victim because they see the crime as preventable if the victim had chosen to take the appropriate measures to avoid potential harm. Another reason victims are blamed is attribution error, which occurs when individuals overemphasize personal characteristics and devalue environmental characteristics when judging others.

Click on the plus sign to review symptoms of PTSD: +

Criminologist Andrews and associates (2003) found that some survivors experience permanent disabilities or long-term symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which can include the following:

- Dissociation
- Hyperarousal
- Avoidance
- Feeling trapped in negative thought patterns or moods

Click on the plus sign to review routine activity theory: +

Routine activity theory focuses on the convergence of three elements—motivated offenders, suitable targets, and the absence of capable guardians—as the key factor contributing to the occurrence of crime.

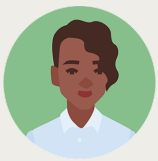
Click on the plus sign to review revictimization: +

Revictimization is the process by which victims feel victimized for a second time by the criminal justice system and legal processes. Emotionally, victims may not be able to cope with this level of stress and may feel unprepared to initiate contact for services or continue seeking services to help them with their recovery.

CONVERSATION BETWEEN COWORKERS

"There's another case that involves Lily Spencer."

"The missing person from the Orchid Keeper case?"



"It's unfortunate that after that whole situation at the Red Orchid, she was again a

victim."

1a. The Case of the Repeat Victim

Watch and listen as Detective Henson and Professor Joon investigate the case of a person who was victimized for a second time.

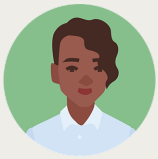
WATCH

1b. The Debrief

Detective Henson and Professor Joon will see how the theories and perceptions within victimization fit into this case of assault.

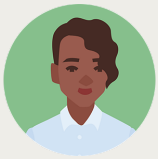
CONVERSATION BETWEEN COWORKERS

"The victim precipitation theory really does not help with survivors engaging in the criminal justice system."



"Or, really, with any victim wanting to report an incident, because of the fear and blame that may occur from friends and family."

"Lily certainly had a past, but that does not mean the assault was her fault."



"Detective Henson, you're right. Lily deserved better from the criminal justice system."

SUMMARY

In this lesson, you watched and listened as **Rolling Hills PD explored sex crimes**. Unfortunately, in the **case of the repeat victim**, victim blaming occurred because of Lily's past and made it difficult for justice to be served.

Just like Detective Henson and Professor Joon did in the **debrief**, we will see how modern

criminologists use the elements of victim precipitation theory and routine activity theory in the next lesson.

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Critiques of Victimology

by Sophia

WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the critiques of theories of victimization and how criminologists currently use these theories. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Critiques of Victim Precipitation Theory

Victim precipitation theory, which suggests that victims may contribute to or initiate criminal acts against themselves, has faced several critiques over the years. One of the primary criticisms of victim precipitation theory is that it can potentially lead to victim blaming (Timmer & Norman, 1984). Suggesting that victims somehow provoke or contribute to their victimization can absolve perpetrators of their responsibility and place undue blame on the victims themselves.

Furthermore, some critics argue that emphasizing victim precipitation could potentially justify acts of violence against victims, particularly in cases where the perpetrator claims that the victim provoked them. This can perpetuate harmful attitudes and behaviors that condone violence and aggression. Victim blaming is something that society has tried to move away from, and this theory continues to perpetuate it.

Critics also argue that victim precipitation theory tends to overlook the broader social and structural factors that contribute to crime and victimization. These factors can include poverty, inequality, discrimination, and the lack of access to resources and opportunities, which play a significant role in shaping individuals' vulnerability to victimization.

EXAMPLE People experiencing homelessness are often the victims of crime because of their circumstances and lack of adequate living conditions (Turner et al., 2018).

While victim precipitation theory offers a valuable perspective on certain aspects of victimization, it is important to consider its limitations, especially in understanding the complex dynamics of crime and victim–offender interactions.

2. Critiques of Routine Activity Theory

Recall that routine activity theory primarily emphasizes the convergence of motivated offenders with suitable targets and the absence of capable guardians. However, critics argue that it does not sufficiently address the underlying motivations and social dynamics that drive criminal behavior. Factors such as socialization and psychological influences are often overlooked in routine activity theory's explanation of crime (Mustaine & Tewksbury, 2000).

Similarly, critics contend that routine activity theory neglects the structural factors that shape crime patterns. It tends to focus on immediate situational factors without adequately considering the larger social, economic, and political contexts in which crime occurs. This limitation restricts the theory's ability to address issues of inequality, poverty, and discrimination and other systemic factors that drive a lot of crime (Kubrin et al., 2009).

Although routine activity theory provides a useful framework for understanding the situational dynamics of crime, its limitations mean that it should be supplemented with other perspectives to develop a more comprehensive understanding of crime and victimization.

3. Critiques of Lifestyle Theories

Lifestyle theories in criminology propose that individuals' activities and lifestyles play a significant role in their likelihood of becoming victims. While these theories have gained prominence and have contributed valuable insights to understanding crime, they also face several critiques.

One of the primary criticisms of lifestyle theories is that they can be perceived as blaming the victim for their victimization. By focusing on individuals' lifestyles, these theories imply that victims are responsible for the crimes committed against them.

Additionally, lifestyle theories tend to overlook broader structural factors that shape individuals' risks of victimization. They often fail to consider socioeconomic disparities, racial inequalities, and other systemic issues that influence victimization. Critics argue that focusing solely on individual behaviors obscures the larger societal factors at play (Kubrin et al., 2009).

Furthermore, some critics argue that lifestyle theories have a limited scope and may not adequately explain variations in crime rates across different contexts or populations. The following factors are often overlooked in these theories, limiting their applicability in different settings:

- Cultural norms
- Community dynamics
- Historical contexts

While lifestyle theories have contributed valuable insights to criminology, they are not without their shortcomings and have been subject to various critiques regarding their explanatory power, focus, and potential to perpetuate victim-blaming narratives.

4. Critiques of Critical Victimology

Critical victimology challenges mainstream victimology for its focus on individual victims and their characteristics while neglecting broader structural and societal factors. Despite these contributions to understanding the social context of victimization, critical criminology itself has faced several critiques.

For one, critics argue that critical victimology tends to overemphasize structural factors such as poverty, inequality, and oppression while underplaying the role of individual agency and behavior. While acknowledging the importance of social contexts, this theory overlooks the diversity of victim experiences and the ways in which individuals navigate their social environments (Miers, 1990).

Similarly, critics contend that critical victimology portrays victims as passive recipients of harm, overlooking their agency and resilience. By framing victims primarily as products of oppressive structures, critical victimology may neglect the ways in which individuals resist victimization, seek support, and advocate for change within their communities.

Furthermore, while critical victimology offers valuable theoretical insights, critics argue that it sometimes lacks empirical rigor and methodological precision (Miers, 1990). Some scholars have criticized its reliance on qualitative methods and ideological frameworks, suggesting that it may prioritize advocacy over empirical research and scientific inquiry. While advocacy is an essential aspect of critical scholarship, critics caution against allowing ideological commitments to overshadow empirical evidence and academic research.

Although critical victimology has made significant contributions to the study of victimization and social justice, it is not immune to critique. Scholars continue to debate the strengths and limitations of critical approaches to victimology, highlighting the importance of maintaining a balanced and nuanced understanding of victimization that integrates both structural and individual factors.

BIG IDEA

Let's compare the concepts, proponents, assumptions, and limitations of the theories within victimology from this lesson.

	Concepts	Proponents	Assumptions	Limitations
Victim precipitation theory	Victim precipitation and victim blaming	Marvin Wolfgang	The victim's behavior leads to their victimization.	This theory leads to victim blaming, justifying why someone should have been the victim of a crime because of something they did.
Routine activity theory	Motivated offender, suitable target, and lack of capable guardian	Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson	A crime is likely to occur in the presence of three elements—a motivated offender, a suitable	It does not adequately address the motivations of offenders.

			target, and the lack of a capable guardian.	It neglects the social and economic conditions related to crime.
Lifestyle theories	Risky behaviors	Glenn Walters	People who engage in certain lifestyles are more apt to be victimized.	These theories blame victims for how their lifestyles contribute to their victimization.
Critical victimology	Intersectionality		Crime is a product of social, economic, and political inequalities. Society must address the root causes and challenge victim-blaming narratives.	It lacks methodological rigor. It neglects the agency and resilience of victims.

SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about the limitations of the various theories of victimization. **Critiques of victim precipitation theory** state that this theory leads to victim blaming and that it neglects the structural factors that influence victimization. **Critiques of routine activity theory** suggest that the theory does not adequately address offenders' motivations for committing crimes. Like victim precipitation theory, it neglects how structural factors impact people's risk of victimization.

Critiques of lifestyle theories similarly suggest that these theories perpetuate victim blaming. These theories also may not adequately explain variations in crime rates across different contexts or populations. Lastly, **critiques of critical victimology** argue that this theory implies that victims only play a passive role and thus neglects how victims are resilient and can be advocates for change. Critical victimology has faced additional criticism for lacking empirical rigor.

In the next lesson, we will move away from discussing victimology, and we will begin examining environmental and feminist criminology.

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Theoretical Approaches Within Environmental Criminology

by Sophia

WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the origins and various theoretical approaches within the area of environmental criminology. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Origins of Environmental Criminology

The field of criminology referred to as **environmental criminology** can also be broadly described as spatial criminology (Hipp & Williams, 2020). **Spatial criminology** concerns the relationship between physical spaces and crime. C. Ray Jeffery first coined the term "environmental criminology" in 1979. This new school of thought incorporated elements of the classical school of criminology, such as the deterrence of crime before it occurs. However, it also focused on the environment within which crime occurs (Andresen et al., 2010).

The environment broadly consists of the following:

- The physical design of places (e.g., architecture)
- The built environment (e.g., types of buildings, roadways, and land use)
- Legal and social institutions

Jeffery (1979) suggested that we must also consider ourselves part of that environment, because we respond, adapt, and change as a result of the environment we inhabit. Moreover, environmental criminology is obviously concerned with criminal behavior, which is one form of adaptation to an environment.
Oscar Newman (1972), whose view on this topic is similar to that of C. Ray Jeffery, discussed what are known as defensible spaces. **Defensible spaces** are designed to help prevent crime. They use the layout and features of places to increase their safety, often by making it easier for people to watch out for each other and harder for

criminals to hide or commit crimes without being noticed (Andresen et al., 2010). There is a large volume of literature that investigates the role of the environment in crime, which ranges from changes in social conditions to the constraints imposed by the built environment to the choice of structure that constrains the environment (Jeffery, 1979). With that said, most of what we call environmental criminology today seeks to understand crime through the perspective of our ever-changing environment.

Essentially, environmental criminology is an umbrella term used to encompass a variety of theoretical approaches (Felson, 2017). At the most basic level, those who study environmental criminology are focused on the criminal event and not the individual criminal (Sidebottom & Wortley, 2016); that is, they are interested in the spatial distribution of crime, victimization, or offenders in society. Exploring the physical and social characteristics of these spaces can help in understanding the distribution of crime (Snaphaan & Hardyns, 2019).

> EXAMPLE The number of police officers patrolling a location is an important source of information for an environmental criminologist. The social composition of a neighborhood and the physical layout of a street are also important factors to consider (Bruinsma et al., 2018).

We will continue to examine the theoretical approaches that form the backbone of environmental criminology.

TERMS TO KNOW

Environmental Criminology
A branch of criminology that focuses on criminal patterns within built environments.

Spatial Criminology
A branch of criminology concerned with the relationship between physical spaces and crime.

Defensible Space
A physical space designed to minimize crime.

2. Theoretical Approaches Within Environmental Criminology

There are three main theories that comprise the broader field of environmental criminology:

1. Routine activity theory
2. Geometric theory
3. Rational choice theory

In the next few sections, we'll look at each theory in depth.

2a. Routine Activity Theory

One of the main theories associated with environmental criminology is **routine activity theory**, which you were briefly introduced to in a previous lesson. Routine activity theory predicts how changes in social and economic conditions influence crime and victimization. It was first introduced in 1979 by Lawrence Cohen and Marcus

Felson, who defined routine activities as “any recurrent and prevalent activities which provide for basic population and individual needs, whatever their biological or cultural origins” (Cohen & Felson, 1979). Essentially, the activities we engage in are all associated with our routine activities, are commonplace, and involve multiple people moving through space and time (Felson, 2017).

> EXAMPLE These activities can range from extracurricular to work-related to school-related activities—like going to work, attending school, seeing one’s friends, or running errands.

Routine activity theory is closely associated with human ecology (Andresen, 2010), which is significant because it considers the importance of time. In the context of time, human ecologists state that ecology is defined as “understanding how a population survives in an ever-changing environment” (Andresen, 2010). So, where we work, where we live, and where we mingle are where we spend our time; however, also knowing *when* we are at those specific places and locations is crucial. As such, routine activity theory acknowledges the important interplay between space and time in everyday activities, including criminal activity.

Routine activity theory focuses on crimes that involve the following:

1. A motivated offender
2. A suitable personal or property target
3. The absence of a guardian capable of preventing such a violation

For a more detailed explanation of these three elements, refer to the routine activity theory table below. These elements help explain why crime is likely to occur as they converge in space and time (Felson, 2017).

Routine Activity Theory: The Three Essential Elements of Crime	
Motivated offender	This is an individual who is capable of and willing to commit a criminal activity. This is an individual who has the intent to commit a crime against another individual or property. The motivated offender has everything they need to commit a crime, physically and mentally.
Suitable Target	This is any type of individual or property that the motivated offender can damage or threaten in the easiest way possible. There are four different attributes of what makes a target suitable (VIVA): • V: value (the value of achieving the target) • I: inertia (the physical obstacles of the target, e.g., weight, height, or strength) • V: visibility (the attribute of exposure that solidifies the suitability of the target) • A: access (the placement of the individual or object that increases or decreases the potential risk of the intended attack)
Absence of a suitable guardian	This refers to a person or object that is effective in deterring an offense: The presence of guardianship in space and time can prevent or stop crime.

	This includes adults and formal authorities, such as private security guards and police; it could also include security cameras.

Adapted from “The Place of Environmental Criminology Within Criminological Thought,” by M. A. Andresen, in M. A. Anderson, P. J. Brantingham, & J. B. Kinney (Eds.), *Classics in Environmental Criminology* (pp. 21–44), 2010, Routledge. Copyright 2010 by Simon Fraser University Publications.

For a visual illustration, see the Crime Triangle.

Routine activity theory has traditionally been used to explain residential breaking and entering, burglary, domestic violence, and physical assault. This theory provides significant insight into the causes of crime as it pertains to a particular place (e.g., drug dealing locations) and among victims (e.g., domestic violence survivors). The theory explains why crime is often concentrated in specific locations and contributes to the understanding of the uneven spatial and temporal distribution of crimes.

TERM TO KNOW

Routine Activity Theory

A criminological theory predicting how changes in social and economic conditions influence crime and victimization.

2b. Geometric Theory

The second theoretical framework associated with environmental criminology is **geometric theory**. The geometric theory of crime explains patterns of crime based on the geographic dimension of human activity patterns. The focus here is not on the motivation for crime but rather on the perceived opportunities for crime that exist within the urban spatial structure.

In the geometric theory of crime, the term used for the environment is **environmental backcloth**—a term coined by Brantingham and Brantingham (1981) that represents the built environment, social and cultural norms, institutions, and the legal environment. It also recognizes the changing nature of our environment. To better understand the geometry of crime, Brantingham and Brantingham (1993) classified four elements of cities:

1. Nodes
2. Paths
3. Districts
4. Edges

These elements are described in more detail in the table below.

Considerations of the Complexity of Crime and the Physical Environment	
Nodes	Consist of places within the city that a person travels to and from. May be business, entertainment, or industrial districts in the context of large urban centers. Represent the places in which we spend most of our time: home, work, recreational sites, entertainment venues, or shopping areas.
Paths	The channels that we use to move from node to node, often limited by streets, walkways, and public transit.
Districts	Regions within the city that have commonalities and identifying features.
Edges	The boundaries between districts that may be physical and distinct (such as literally crossing railroad tracks) or subtle (such as the gradual change as one passes from one neighborhood to the next).

Adapted from “The Place of Environmental Criminology Within Criminological Thought,” by M. A. Andresen, in M. A. Anderson, P. J. Brantingham, & J. B. Kinney (Eds.), *Classics in Environmental Criminology* (pp. 21–44), 2010, Routledge. Copyright 2010 by Simon Fraser University Publications.

We can use nodes and paths to generate maps to examine where we spend our time and the pathways between those spaces (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1981). Essentially, these maps represent our activity space, which becomes our awareness space. We become familiar with and attached to different places, so we feel more comfortable in some spaces than others (Andresen, 2010).

Understanding awareness space is important because we use it to manage risk by avoiding or limiting time in places where we are uncomfortable. Similarly, criminals favor their own activity spaces to commit crimes and identify targets. They search areas for criminal opportunities that intersect with *their* activity space.

Understanding how someone moves through an environment can provide an understanding of how potential offenders move through that same environment. Subsequently, when our activity spaces overlap with those of potential offenders, we can become victims of crime (Andresen, 2010). This overlap can occur throughout the day as potential victims share nodes and pathways with potential offenders.

Motivated offenders can blend into the environment and are able to search for targets, such as in the following cases:

- Motor vehicle theft, which will increase at nodes and along paths that have a higher degree of motor vehicle theft opportunities (e.g., unguarded parking lots)
- Assault, which will increase at nodes that have a high degree of concentration of individuals, such as at closing time in an entertainment district with bars and nightclubs

In this framework, the concept of edge is also important, as crime often occurs at the boundary between two or more districts (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1993). Edges are locations with an elevated risk of criminal victimization, which are often physical boundaries (e.g., a body of water) outlining a change from one area to the next.

TERMS TO KNOW

Geometric Theory

A criminological theory explaining patterns of crime based on the geographic dimension of human activity patterns.

Environmental Backcloth

An environment that sets the framework for people's daily activities, such as a road network or areas of different land uses.

2c. Rational Choice Theory

The third theoretical framework that we'll discuss is **rational choice theory**, which we briefly touched upon in an earlier lesson. This theory was first introduced in 1987 by Ronald Clarke and Derek Cornish. The fundamental concept within rational choice theory is **rationality**, which refers to the role of reasoning in human behavior. This theory views crime as the outcome of someone thinking through the possible rewards and downsides of a criminal act. It suggests that a potential offender must make four primary choices:

1. Whether or not to commit a crime
2. Whether or not to select a particular target
3. How frequently to offend
4. Whether or not to desist (i.e., stop) from crime

However, Cornish and Clarke (1987) argue that we must consider the choices for each type of crime independently from those for other crimes. In other words, the environmental cues for one crime differ from those for another crime.

EXAMPLE If a person commits a property crime like motor vehicle theft, this does not mean the same person will commit sexual assault.

When considering how rational choice theory fits into environmental criminology, it's important to note that environmental criminology is closely connected with **situational crime prevention**. Situational crime prevention attempts to reduce the opportunity for specific crimes by manipulating the immediate environment.

EXAMPLE To prevent stealing, some stores have installed electronic access control inserts. This is a practical strategy that focuses on deterring criminal events.

Additionally, environmental criminology theories assume that because offenders behave rationally, we can predict their actions, prevent further crime, and reduce criminal activity. Thus, rational choice relates to environmental criminology in terms of the interplay between individual reasoning and environmental cues, and situational crime prevention manipulates the environment to act on the rational calculations of potential offenders.

TERMS TO KNOW

Rational Choice Theory

A criminological theory suggesting that potential offenders make rational decisions about whether or not to commit a crime.

Rationality

The role of reasoning in human behavior.

Situational Crime Prevention

An attempt to reduce the opportunity for specific crimes by manipulating the immediate environment.

SUMMARY

In this lesson, you were introduced to the **origins of environmental criminology**. Environmental criminology, or spatial criminology, concerns the relationship between physical spaces and crime. These theories focus on designing defensible spaces to prevent crime.

You also learned about three **theoretical approaches within environmental criminology**. **Routine activity theory** looks at people's everyday routines and how they might be related to crime. This theory suggests that three elements must be present at the same time and place for a crime to occur: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian. **Geometric theory** explains patterns of crime based on the geographic dimension of human activity patterns. This theory examines how nodes, paths, districts, and edges of cities can contribute to crime. Finally, **rational choice theory** assumes people operate with rationality, calculating whether to commit a crime. In relation to this theory, the practice of situational crime prevention aims to reduce the opportunities for crime by manipulating the immediate environment in which crimes are likely to occur.

In the next lesson, you will have the chance to apply what you learned about environmental criminology to a case study.

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TERMS TO KNOW

Defensible Space
A physical space designed to minimize crime.

Environmental Backcloth
An environment that sets the framework for people's daily activities, such as a road network or areas of different land uses.

Environmental Criminology
A branch of criminology that focuses on criminal patterns within built environments.

Geometric Theory
A criminological theory explaining patterns of crime based on the geographic dimension of human activity patterns.

Rational Choice Theory

A criminological theory suggesting that potential offenders make rational decisions about whether or not to commit a crime.

Rationality

The role of reasoning in human behavior.

Routine Activity Theory

A criminological theory predicting how changes in social and economic conditions influence crime and victimization.

Situational Crime Prevention

An attempt to reduce the opportunity for specific crimes by manipulating the immediate environment.

Spatial Criminology

A branch of criminology concerned with the relationship between physical spaces and crime.

Case Analysis: Occupational Crime

by Sophia

WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will determine if routine activity theory can explain an occupational crime case. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Rolling Hills PD Explores Occupational Crimes

Throughout this Challenge, we learned about the interplay between individual reasoning and environmental cues. Both environmental and spatial criminology look at the spatial distribution of crime, victimization, and offenders in society.

Click on the plus sign to review routine activity theory: +

Routine activity theory predicts how changes in social and economic conditions influence crime and victimization. Routine activity theory focuses on crimes that involve the following:

1. A motivated offender
2. A suitable personal or property target
3. The absence of a guardian capable of preventing such a violation

Click on the plus sign to review geometric theory: +

The geometric theory of crime explains patterns of crime based on the geographic dimension of human activity patterns. The focus here is not on the motivation for crime but rather on the perceived opportunities for crime that exist within the urban spatial structure. To better understand the geometry of crime, Brantingham and Brantingham (1993) classified four elements of cities:

1. Nodes

2. Paths
3. Districts
4. Edges

Click on the plus sign to review rational choice theory: +

The fundamental concept within rational choice theory is rationality, which refers to the role of reasoning in human behavior. This theory views crime as the outcome of someone thinking through the possible rewards and downsides of a criminal act. It suggests that a potential offender must make four primary choices:

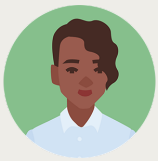
1. Whether or not to commit a crime
2. Whether or not to select a particular target
3. How frequently to offend
4. Whether or not to desist (i.e., stop) from committing a crime

Can changes in social and economic conditions influence crime and victimization?

CONVERSATION BETWEEN COWORKERS

"It's interesting how someone's surroundings can influence behavior."

"The perfect storm."



"You're right. Let's see how this works with this next case."

1a. The Case of Easy Access

Watch and listen as Detective Henson and Professor Joon investigate a case of embezzlement.

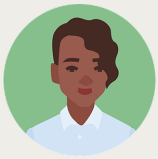
WATCH

1b. The Debrief

Detective Henson and Professor Joon will see how the elements of routine activity theory explain why Peter decided to embezzle the company's money.

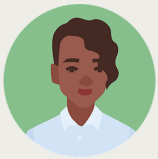
CONVERSATION BETWEEN COWORKERS

"While the company implemented stricter controls and oversight measures, Peter had a permanent reminder of his actions."



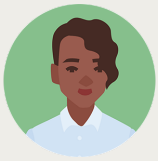
"He succumbed to temptation, but why?"

"He found a suitable target? Or because he largely went unsupervised?"



"Or was it because he was motivated?"

"What was the motivation? . . . Maybe he was bored."



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you watched and listened to the **Rolling Hills PD exploring occupational crimes**. According to spatial and environmental criminology, the mundane life and daily routine of accountant Peter Harris, his lack of supervision, and the availability of financial accounts led Peter to commit embezzlement in the **case of easy access**.

Detective Henson and Professor Joon then **debriefed** the case and analyzed why Peter may have committed embezzlement. In the next lesson, we will look at another modern criminological theory: feminist criminology.

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Foundations of Feminist Criminology

by Sophia

WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the foundations and different types of feminist criminology. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Foundations of Feminist Criminology

Feminist criminology highlights issues of inequality and power rooted in **patriarchy**, and the intersecting and embedded oppressions of race, colonialism, class, sexuality, and gender within the context of crime and criminality. It is helpful to begin with a brief definition of feminism. While a central definition can be challenging because there are many kinds of feminism, each with its own unique focus, there are features common to every type of feminism that we can use to establish a solid foundation when exploring feminist criminology.

Primarily, **feminism** argues that women suffer discrimination because they belong to a particular sex category (female) or gender (woman) and that women's needs are denied or ignored because of their sex or gender. Feminism centers the notion of patriarchy in an understanding of inequality, and it largely argues that major changes are required to various social structures and that institutions must establish gender equality. The common root of all feminisms is the drive toward equity and justice.

TERMS TO KNOW

Feminist Criminology

A school of criminology that developed as a reaction to the general disregard and discrimination of women in the traditional study of crime.

Patriarchy

A system of society or government in which men hold power and women are largely excluded from it.

Feminism

The advocacy of women's rights on the basis of equality between the sexes.

2. Types of Feminism

Feminist perspectives in criminology comprise a broad category of theories that address the theoretical shortcomings of criminological theories that have historically rendered women invisible (Winterdyk, 2020). These perspectives have considered factors such as patriarchy, power, capitalism, gender inequality, and intersectionality in female offending and victimization. The six main feminist perspectives are outlined below.

2a. Liberal Feminism

According to Winterdyk (2020), **liberal feminism** focuses on achieving gender equality in society. Liberal feminists believe that inequality and sexism permeate all aspects of the social structure, including employment, education, and the criminal justice system. To create an equal society, these discriminatory policies and practices need to be abolished.

From a criminological perspective, liberal feminists argue that women require the same access as men to employment and educational opportunities (Belknap, 2015).

EXAMPLE A liberal feminist would argue that to address the needs of female offenders, incarcerated women need equal access to the same programs as incarcerated men.

The problem with the liberal feminist perspective is the failure to consider how women's needs and risk factors differ from men's (Belknap, 2015).

TERM TO KNOW

Liberal Feminism

A type of feminism that tries to achieve gender equality in society.

2b. Radical Feminism

Radical feminism views the existing social structure as patriarchal (Winterdyk, 2020). In this type of gendered social structure, men structure society to maintain power over women. Violence against women then functions as a means to further overpower women and maintain men's control (Gerassi, 2015).

According to this theory, the criminal justice system also becomes a tool utilized by men to control women. It is only by removing the existing patriarchal social structure that violence against women can be addressed (Winterdyk, 2020).

TERM TO KNOW

Radical Feminism

A type of feminism that calls for a radical reordering of society to eliminate male supremacy.

2c. Marxist Feminism

Like the radical feminist perspective, **Marxist feminism** views society as being oppressive against women. However, where the two differ is that Marxist feminism sees the capitalist system as the main oppressor of women (Belknap, 2015). According to Marxist feminism, women are a group of people who are exploited within a classist, capitalist system. Exploitation in a capitalist system results in women having unequal access to jobs or only having access to low-paying jobs. This unequal access has led to women being disproportionately involved in property crime and sex work (Winterdyk, 2020).

Like other Marxist perspectives, Marxist feminism suggests that it is only through the fall of capitalism and the restructuring of society that women may escape the oppression they experience.

TERM TO KNOW

Marxist Feminism

A type of feminism that analyzes the ways in which women are exploited through capitalism.

2d. Socialist Feminism

Socialist feminism represents a combination of radical and Marxist theories (Belknap, 2015). Like radical feminists, socialist feminists view the existing social structure as oppressive against women. However, rather than attributing these unequal power structures to patriarchy, socialist feminists instead consider them the result of a combination of patriarchy and capitalism. Addressing these unequal power structures calls for the removal of capitalist culture and gender inequality.

Socialist feminists also argue that these differences in power and class can account for gendered differences in offending, particularly in terms of how men commit more violent crimes than women (Winterdyk, 2020).

TERM TO KNOW

Socialist Feminism

A type of feminism arguing that class and gender are mutually reinforcing systems of oppression.

2e. Postmodern Feminism

Ugwudike (2015) outlines how **postmodern feminism** focuses on the construction of knowledge. Unlike the other perspectives outlined above, which suggest there is “one reality” of feminism, postmodern feminists believe that women’s diversity needs to be highlighted when considering how gender, crime, and deviance interact to inform women’s reality.

Postmodern feminists acknowledge the power differentials that exist within society, including gendered differences, and they focus on how those constructed differences inform dominant ideas about gender. Just as it considers the relationship between gender, crime, and deviance, postmodern feminism looks to account for how other variables, like race, sexuality, and class, influence women in society (Ugwudike, 2015).

TERM TO KNOW

Postmodern Feminism

A type of feminism that analyzes ideas that have led to gender inequality in society.

2f. Intersectional Feminism

Winterdyk (2020) notes that some academics add a sixth perspective. **Intersectional feminism** addresses the failure of the perspectives above to consider how gender intersects with other inequalities, including race, class, ethnicity, ability, gender identities, and sexual orientation (Belknap, 2015).

Some of the theories above attempt to paint the lived experiences of all women as equal, whereas intersectional perspectives acknowledge that women may experience more than one inequality. According to intersectional feminism, there is an inherent need to examine how these inequalities overlap to influence women's pathways to offending or their risk of victimization.

TERM TO KNOW

Intersectional Feminism

A type of feminism that considers the different ways each woman experiences discrimination.

3. Waves of Feminism

Feminist activism has proceeded in four waves:

1. The first wave of feminism began in the early 1900s with the suffragette movement and advocacy for women's right to vote.
2. The second wave of feminism started in the 1960s and called for gender equality and attention to a wide variety of issues directly and disproportionately affecting women, including domestic violence and intimate partner violence, employment discrimination, and reproductive rights.
3. Beginning in the mid-1990s, the third wave focused on the diverse and varied experiences of discrimination and sexism, including the ways in which aspects such as race, class, income, and education impacted such experiences. It was in the third wave that we saw the concept of intersectionality being put forth as a way to understand these differences.
4. The fourth wave began around 2010 and is characterized by activism using online tools like social media as well as efforts to be more sex positive, body positive, and trans inclusive (Sollee, 2015). This wave has been defined by "callout" culture, in which sexism can be openly acknowledged and challenged (Munro, 2013). The #MeToo movement, for instance, has been a significant part of the fourth wave.

While all of these waves are important, the second wave arguably had the greatest impact on feminist criminology. In the 1960s and 1970s, American society was full of unrest, with demonstrations and marches fighting for civil rights for African Americans, advocating for gay and lesbian rights, and protesting the Vietnam War. Marginalized groups called out inequality and oppression, demanding change. It was during this time of social change that feminist criminology was born.

The emerging liberation of women meant newfound freedoms in the workforce and in family law, including the availability and acceptability of divorce, but these relative freedoms rendered gender discrimination even more visible. As such, feminist activism also brought attention to the inequalities faced by women who had been victims of crime.

> EXAMPLE The breadth and extent of domestic violence, specifically men's violence against women within intimate relationships, was demonstrated by the need for domestic violence shelters and the voices of women trying to escape violence. Conversations at the national level led to government-funded shelters as well as private donor funding from those who saw the need for safe havens from abuse.

At the same time, people began to recognize the historic and systemic trauma suffered by women involved in the criminal justice system as offenders, including abuse, poverty, homelessness, and other systemic discriminations.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, feminist scholars highlighted the absence of women within existing frameworks of criminology. As Chesney-Lind and Faith (2001) highlight, feminist theorists during this time challenged the masculinist nature of criminology by pointing out the omission and misrepresentation of women in criminological theory.

SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about the **foundations of feminist criminology**. Feminist criminology is based on the concept of feminism, which argues that women suffer discrimination because of their sex or gender. There are six **types of feminisms**, all of which attempt to address inequalities through specific considerations.

Liberal feminism focuses on achieving gender equality in all aspects of society, while **radical feminism** calls for a reordering of society in which male supremacy is completely eliminated. **Marxist feminism** analyzes the ways in which women are exploited through a capitalist system. Similarly, **socialist feminism** argues that class and gender are mutually reinforcing systems of oppression. **Postmodern feminism** analyzes the factors that have led to gender inequality in society, and **intersectional feminism** takes into account the different ways each woman experiences discrimination and oppression.

Finally, you learned about the different **waves of feminism**. There have been four waves spanning from the early 1900s until now. The second wave is most relevant to feminist criminology, as it occurred in the 1960s and 1970s when there was much social change in the country. During this period, the criminal justice system began to focus on women as both offenders and victims.

In the next lesson, we will continue examining feminist criminology and its influences on the field of criminology as a whole.

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TERMS TO KNOW

Feminism
The advocacy of women's rights on the basis of equality between the sexes.

Feminist Criminology
A school of criminology that developed as a reaction to the general disregard and discrimination of women in the traditional study of crime.

Intersectional Feminism
A type of feminism that considers the different ways each woman experiences discrimination.

Liberal Feminism
A type of feminism that tries to achieve gender equality in society.

Marxist Feminism
A type of feminism that analyzes the ways in which women are exploited through capitalism.

Patriarchy
A system of society or government in which men hold power and women are largely excluded from it.

Postmodern Feminism
A type of feminism that analyzes ideas that have led to gender inequality in society.

Radical Feminism

A type of feminism that calls for a radical reordering of society to eliminate male supremacy.

Socialist Feminism

A type of feminism arguing that class and gender are mutually reinforcing systems of oppression.

The Evolution of Feminist Theories

by Sophia

WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the need for feminist criminology as well as the issues that brought this area of criminology to the surface. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. The Emerging Need for Feminist Criminology

When feminist criminology emerged in the 1970s, the focus was on how women were accounted for (or not accounted for) in criminological theories. Feminist criminologists recognized that theories of crime and deviance regarding women's offending tended to take one of three paths:

1. Theories were openly misogynistic, meaning they negatively portrayed women or situated them as "less than" men.
2. Theories were gender blind, meaning they ignored gender.
3. Theories took a superficial "add women and stir" approach, meaning they were primarily about men and simply assumed the same explanations for crime and deviance could be applied to women.

Cesare Lombroso, whom you learned about in a previous lesson, is referred to as the "father of criminology" (Belknap, 2015). His theory has come to be seen as misogynistic, positioning women as "less than" men and discussing them in a negative manner; thus, Lombroso's theory serves as a prime example of the first path that theories tend to take regarding women's offending.

IN CONTEXT

In the late 1800s, Lombroso studied both male and female incarcerated offenders in Italy, examining their physical characteristics to see what differentiated criminals from noncriminals. He developed the

concept of the born criminal—individuals who were more primitive and less evolved than noncriminals and thus more prone to engage in criminal activity (Williams & McShane, 2010). Lombroso argued that women were typically less evolved than men, but their criminal tendencies were balanced by their lack of intelligence and passive natures. Deutschmann (2007) summarized Lombroso's gendered approach:

> *"The typical woman . . . was characterized by piety, maternal feelings, sexual coldness, and an underdeveloped intelligence. Criminal women, on the other hand, were either born with masculine qualities (intelligence and activeness) conducive to criminal activity or encouraged to develop these qualities through such things as education and exercise."* (p. 163)

The second path theories take regarding female offending is exemplified by the original social bond theory from Travis Hirschi, which ignored gender and the female experience. You will recall that social bond theory examined why people conform to rules and laws and avoid offending. Hirschi (1969) suggested that four key bonds discouraged criminal activities:

- Attachment
- Commitment
- Involvement
- Belief

When initially testing his theory, Hirschi focused exclusively on boys, even though both girls and boys were included in his sample (Belknap, 2015). As a result, the female experience is invisible in social bond theory. Hirschi's focus on boys and men was not unique at the time; social bond theory represents just one example of how a degree of gender blindness was common in many criminological theories.

Lastly, Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) opportunity theory demonstrates the third path that theories on crime and deviance tended to take regarding women's offending. Drawing on the idea of strain as the gap between socially prescribed goals and the inability to achieve those goals, Cloward and Ohlin argued that there were both legitimate and illegitimate ways to achieve goals, and these opportunities differed based on someone's race, neighborhood, class, and gender (Williams & McShane, 2010).

However, instead of theorizing how men and women may experience strain differently, Cloward and Ohlin viewed boys as having "legitimate concerns" around money and status and viewed girls as experiencing "frivolous concerns" related to finding romantic partners (Belknap, 2015). While they mentioned gender in their theory, Cloward and Ohlin made assumptions about women's goals and ignored the unique strains faced by women, such as the following:

- Discrimination
- Parenting and child-rearing responsibilities

- Limited education and employment opportunities
- Disproportionate victimization

The majority of criminological theories were thus not only centered on men in their explanations, but they were also mainly the work of male theorists. This reality called for a new theorizing of women, created by women, related to both victimization and criminalization. Feminist criminologists argued that gender should be a key factor in understanding crime and criminality.

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2. Issues Calling Attention to Feminist Criminology

The following key issues brought feminist criminology to the surface:

- Gender-based violence, including domestic violence
- Sexualized violence against women
- Differential and unequal treatment of women as offenders

In the sections below, we will examine how feminist criminology has shaped our understanding of women's victimization and offending.

2a. Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence is disproportionately experienced by women around the world (World Health Organization, 2024). Gender-based violence refers to violence experienced by people because of their gender. It can refer to physical, verbal, psychological, economic, or sexual violence. It is often at the hands of domestic partners or traffickers.

> EXAMPLE Female victims account for two thirds of victims of police-reported family violence. Women are also much more likely to be murdered by their male intimate partners than male partners are to be murdered by their female partners. In fact, women make up approximately 80% of all victims of intimate partner homicide (Conroy, 2021).

The following trends have been found for gender-based violence:

- The trend of the disproportionate victimization of women grows larger when looking at the victimization of women along intersectional social positions and identities.
- Women with disabilities experience double the rate of violent crime compared to women without disabilities (Cotter, 2018).
- Bisexual women and transgender individuals face higher levels of violence compared to their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts (Jaffray, 2020).
- When considering intersections of transphobia and racism, experiences of violence are higher among non-White transgender and nonbinary individuals (Chih et al., 2020).

2b. Sexualized Violence

Not only do women experience sexualized violence at disproportionately higher rates than men, but women are also much more likely to be blamed for their own victimization, such as in cases of sexual assault.

Victim blaming has also been pervasive when women report sexual assaults to police. A recent investigation revealed that police dismiss 20% of sexual assault claims because they do not believe a crime has been committed (Doolittle, 2017). Fear of victim blaming is thus one of the reasons for the underreporting of sexual assaults.

> EXAMPLE Conroy and Cotter (2017) reveal that over eight in 10 sexual assaults are not reported to the police, a proportion that has remained constant over several decades. Reasons for the lack of reporting include the victims' feelings of shame, guilt, and worry about what people will think of them should their assault be known.

Feminist criminology points to the role of patriarchy, colonialism, capitalism, and other social structures and societal relationships in the disproportionate victimization of women (Bruckert & Law, 2018). It challenges social institutions, including the criminal justice system, to acknowledge and address the disproportionate impact of gender on women's victimization. Due to systemic factors, feminist criminologists acknowledge the following (Comack, 2018):

- Women are more likely to suffer from childhood sexual abuse than men.
- Alcohol or substance use is often a coping mechanism that may result in an increased likelihood of contact with the criminal justice system.
- There is a high proportion of incarcerated women who have experienced trauma.

In essence, feminist criminologists ask us to examine how the criminalization of women is intertwined with the victimization of women.

2c. Criminalization of Women

Comack (2020) argues that criminology has been justified in focusing on men as offenders because the majority of police-reported offenses are committed by men. Although they comprise a much smaller proportion than male offenders, female offenders are still represented in adult, youth, and violent offense statistics (Belknap, 2015). Accordingly, feminist criminology suggests that we must consider the unique pathways of women as offenders to inform criminal justice system responses.

As you have learned, traditional criminological theories rarely account for female offending. With the rise of feminist criminology in the 1970s, a variety of theories have since attempted to explain female offending.

IN CONTEXT

Adler and Simon's **liberation thesis** accounted for female offending by connecting the women's liberation movement with what was believed to be an increase in female crime rates in the 1960s and 70s (Belknap, 2015). This theory attempted to address the gender-ratio crime problem and account for changes in women's crime rates (O'Grady, 2018). The argument was that women's liberation led to a

convergence in gender roles and increased opportunities for employment for women. Increased employment was then linked to increased opportunities for crime, including corporate and white-collar crime, leading to a convergence in crime rates (Tavcer et al., 2018).

Another example is Hagan and colleagues' **power control theory**, which outlined the role of social control in accounting for gendered differences in crime. Hagen et al. theorized that the gendered power dynamic between parents was replicated with their children (Belknap, 2015):

- In a patriarchal home, where women had less power, children were socialized into gendered roles. Boys were encouraged to take risks and were given more freedom, while girls were more restricted in their activities and socialized to be obedient and quiet. In such households, girls had fewer opportunities to engage in deviance.
- However, in egalitarian households, with equal power between parents, relatively equal freedoms and levels of parental supervision were given to daughters and sons, which allowed for more opportunities for girls to engage in deviant behavior.

Feminist theories have also attempted to account for female offending through the cycle of violence. The cycle of violence suggests that girls and women who experience trauma are more likely to be arrested later in life. Some evidence suggests that when faced with a traumatic experience, a person may turn to substance use as a coping mechanism. This type of coping method can lead to increased involvement with the criminal justice system if individuals are using illegal substances, engaging in illegal activity to support their substance use, or engaging in illegal activity due to their substance use (Barker, 2018).

TERMS TO KNOW

Liberation Thesis

A criminological theory stating that as women achieve similar social standings and employment patterns to men, they start to resemble men's criminal behaviors as well.

Power Control Theory

A criminological theory stating that class, gender, and type of family structure (e.g., egalitarian or patriarchal) will influence the severity of the social/parental control practiced, which will, in turn, set the "accepted norm" for the child/individual. This norm will then control the level of delinquency of the individual.

SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about **the emerging need for feminist criminology**. Historically, theories on women's crime and deviance have often been misogynistic, ignored gender, or assumed that theories focused on men could always be applied to women in the same way. Feminist criminology aimed to change this, and there were several **issues that called attention to feminist criminology**.

These issues include the disproportionate amount of **gender-based violence** targeting women and girls, as well as the overrepresentation of women and girls in instances of **sexualized violence**. Scholars have also examined the **criminalization of women**, which often involves the relationship between victimization and offending. In the next lesson, you will have the chance to apply feminist theories to a case study about domestic violence.

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TERMS TO KNOW

Liberation Thesis

A criminological theory stating that as women achieve similar social standings and employment patterns to men, they start to resemble men's criminal behaviors as well.

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Case Analysis: Domestic Violence

by Sophia

WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will determine if elements of feminist theory fit in with a case of domestic violence. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Rolling Hills PD Explores Domestic Violence

We have examined two different criminological theories in this Challenge, and we will now see how the perspectives in feminist theory fit in with a domestic violence case. Feminism maintains that women suffer discrimination because they belong to a particular sex category (female) or gender (woman) and that women's needs are denied or ignored because of their sex or gender. Feminism centers the notion of patriarchy on understanding inequality and largely argues that major changes are required to various social structures and institutions to establish gender equality. The common root of all types of feminism is the drive toward equity and justice and the correction of past criminological theories that rendered women invisible.

Click on the plus sign to review radical feminism: +

Radical feminism views the existing social structure as patriarchal. In this type of gendered social structure, men structure society in such a way as to maintain power over women. Violence against women, including domestic violence, functions to further overpower women and maintain men's control. The criminal justice system also becomes a tool utilized by men to control women.

Click on the plus sign to review socialist feminism: +

Socialist feminism views the existing social structure as oppressive to women. Socialist feminists argue that differences in power and class can account for gendered differences in offending, particularly in how men commit more violent crimes than women.

Click on the plus sign to review postmodern feminism: +

Postmodern feminists acknowledge the power differentials that exist within society, including gendered differences, and focus on how those constructed differences inform dominant ideas about gender. Of particular importance is the acknowledgment of how other variables like race, sexuality, and class influence women's reality.

Click on the plus sign to review power control theory: +

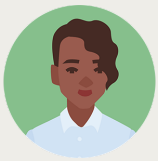
Power control theory outlines the role of social control in accounting for gender differences in crime. In a patriarchal home, where women have less power, children are socialized into gendered roles. Boys are encouraged to take risks and given more freedom, while girls are more restricted in their activities and socialized to be obedient and quiet. In such households, girls have fewer opportunities to engage in deviance. However, in egalitarian households, with equal power between parents, relatively equal freedoms and levels of parental supervision are given to daughters and sons, which allows more opportunities for girls to engage in deviant behavior.

Is the misuse and abuse of power and control by the perpetrators central to understanding domestic violence?

CONVERSATION BETWEEN COWORKERS

"Cases of violence against women are really disheartening to me."

"Most of the theories that we have looked at so far revolve around or just study men."



"You know, I am glad feminist criminology has become more popular. And with that, let's look at this next case."

1a. The Case of a Will to Fight

Watch and listen as Detective Henson and Professor Joon investigate the case of an abusive relationship.

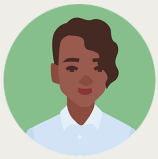
WATCH

1b. The Debrief

Detective Henson and Professor Joon will see how the theories within feminist criminology fit into this case.

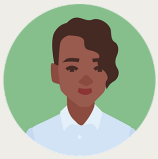
CONVERSATION BETWEEN COWORKERS

"We can see a lot of evidence of patriarchy here."



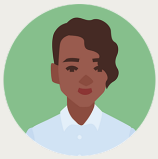
"Certainly, in how she was treated by officers when she reported the incident."

"I'm glad that she continued to fight and showed that it is possible to overcome adversity and advocate for change."



"True. It is also necessary to understand how each person in this case grew up."

"Two different households, two different outcomes."



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you watched and listened as **Rolling Hills PD explored domestic violence**. Despite being an activist for marginalized groups, Emma found herself in an abusive relationship. Denied help by the police, she sought other forms of assistance and resources to rebuild her life in a **case of a will to fight**.

Just like how Detective Henson and Professor Joon did in the **debrief**, we will see how modern criminologists use the theories and perspectives within environmental and feminist criminology in the next lesson.

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Critiques of Feminist and Environmental Criminology

by Sophia

WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the critiques of both environmental criminology and feminist criminology. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Critiques of Environmental Criminology

As you learned previously, environmental criminology looks at the relationship between the physical environment and opportunities for crime. It has been praised for shifting its focus from criminals to noncriminals, aiding in a better understanding of crime events and their prevention. Second, it argues that offenders make rational choices in crime situations and are born with similar natures to noncriminals, challenging the view that evil is a condition that generates crime.

Environmental criminology also shows the benefits of a situational perspective and rejects the “nothing works” doctrine that suggests the government can do nothing to reduce crime through the criminal justice system (Bruinsma & Johnson, 2018). These theories have thus helped illustrate that there are fresh ways of thinking about crime and crime prevention. However, like any set of theories, environmental criminology is not without limitations.

One common critique of environmental criminology theories is that they can hinder our understanding of the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples. First, they have neglected the study of motivated offenders, treating them as a given in the crime event. These theories fall short of understanding the underlying and possibly motivating factors of committing a crime:

- Systemic oppression
- Colonization
- Legislated poverty

Critics argue that a more detailed study of offenders could demonstrate how people become involved in criminal events. That is, what conditions are present that create an environment in which crime is most likely to occur, and how do these motivations differ for Indigenous peoples?

Second, critics suggest that environmental criminology theories need to develop a fuller understanding of the risk of victimization. There are many individual-level factors related to risk exposure, but these theories fail to look at why some individuals are more or less exposed to risk. Additionally, some critics believe that there are insufficient theoretical explanations of why different individuals take specific risks under certain circumstances.

Furthermore, many people decide to relocate to a new neighborhood or city to build a better life. However, the nature of systemic oppression in the United States means that these challenges are not just isolated incidents but are ingrained into the fabric of society. Systemic oppression can be traced to the history of colonization, where communities were displaced and marginalized, setting the stage for ongoing inequalities, such as economic inequality, racial discrimination, and lack of access to resources. These issues are not just localized but are distributed throughout the United States. Understanding this systemic nature is crucial for addressing the root causes of oppression and working toward a more equitable society.

2. Critiques of Feminist Criminology

Recall that feminist criminology is a school of criminology that developed as a reaction to the disregard of women in the traditional study of crime. A key critique of feminist criminology is its exclusive focus on women. In response, proponents of feminist criminology argue that it offers more comprehensive theories about criminality and crime, as well as inclusivity in understanding the circumstances of the victimization and criminalization of both men and women and the disproportionate factors that affect them in unique ways.

> EXAMPLE The work by Connell (2005) highlights how patriarchy and inequality disproportionately affect men as well and how existing gendered notions of masculinity and femininity are harmful to everyone.

Another critique of feminist criminology is its tendency to focus on the experiences of White and cisgender women and to ignore or minimize the experiences of non-White, transgender, or other marginalized women. Feminist criminologists argue that while this may be a valid critique of early feminist criminology, there has been a renewed and concentrated focus on intersectionality—the framework that examines how race, class, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity layer on each other to multiply the effects of victimization or criminalization (Crenshaw et al., 1995).

> BIG IDEA
>
> Let's compare the concepts, proponents, assumptions, and limitations of the theories within this lesson.

	Concepts	Proponents	Assumptions	Limitations
Environmental criminology	Defensible spaces and situational	Ronald Clarke and Derek Cornish, Lawrence Cohen	It examines how physical spaces impact crime.	It does not consider how social factors or inequalities

	crime prevention	and Marcus Felson, and C. Ray Jeffery		contribute to crime.
Feminist criminology	Multiple types of feminisms, waves of feminism, and patriarchy	Marie-Andrée Bertrand and Frances Mary Heidensohn	It seeks to understand and challenge gendered power dynamics in the criminal justice system, examining how these dynamics influence crime rates, criminalization, and responses to crime.	It only focuses on how patriarchal societies affect women, but not men. It focuses on experiences of cisgender, White women.

SUMMARY

In this lesson, you first learned about the **critiques of environmental criminology**. While environmental criminology has contributed to making spaces less prone to crime, it comes with limitations. Most notably, environmental criminology does not consider how systemic oppression and inequality affect someone's risk of victimization or likelihood of committing a crime.

You also learned about the **critiques of feminist criminology**. The major critiques are that it does not address how men can be impacted by inequality, and it does not always focus on how different women can experience multiple layers of discrimination and inequality.

In the next lesson, you will investigate some integrative models of criminology.

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Integrative Models of Criminality

by Sophia

WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the different components and applications of integrative models of criminality. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Integrative Models of Criminality

Integrative models of criminality aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of why people engage in criminal behavior by integrating different theories and factors. These models recognize that criminal behavior is complex and often influenced by a combination of biological, psychological, social, and environmental factors.

By combining these perspectives, integrative models seek to provide a more comprehensive understanding of criminal behavior than any single theory can offer.

> EXAMPLE An integrative model might consider how biological factors (e.g., genetics or brain chemistry) interact with psychological factors (e.g., personality traits or cognitive processes), social factors (e.g., family dynamics or peer influences), and environmental factors (e.g., poverty or neighborhood characteristics) to influence someone's likelihood of engaging in criminal behavior.

In this lesson, we will look at four models that integrate theories from individual, evolutionary, and cultural approaches in their application to criminal behavior:

1. Developmental taxonomy explains the development of antisocial behavior as affected by biology, socialization, and the stages of development.
2. The general aggression model explains the biological, personality, cognitive, and social learning factors that influence an aggressive act.
3. The risk-need-responsivity model provides a method for offender assessment and treatment by examining the needs underlying criminal behavior.

4. Trauma-informed systems of care combine the neurobiology of trauma with an analysis of the trauma-inducing aspects of the criminal justice system.

1a. Developmental Taxonomy

Developmental taxonomy was popularized by Terrie Moffitt (1993), and it describes two types of offenders differentiated by their biology, parenting, personality, and socialization:

- Life-course-persistent offenders
- Adolescence-limited offenders

Life-course-persistent offenders are rare and have maladaptive behaviors from an early age continuing into adulthood. Neurological differences causing impulsivity and reactivity are believed to underlie their behavioral problems. Without intervention, difficulties with peers and school can result, snowballing into later problems such as dropping out of school and engaging in criminal activity. Early social rejection from peers is a major risk factor for later antisocial behavior (Cowan & Cowan, 2004), and individuals who feel rejected by their peers often eventually associate together (Laird et al., 2009). The individuals following this life-course trajectory are considered the smallest group of offenders, but they are responsible for a disproportionate amount of crime. Conversely, **adolescence-limited offenders** engage in minor antisocial behavior during a developmentally normative stage in their teenage years but have an otherwise normal early childhood. Adolescence-limited offenders determine that the benefits of a criminal lifestyle are not worth the risk, and they change their behavior in early adulthood. According to developmental taxonomy, these individuals can easily make such a change because they have well-developed social and educational skills.

Developmental Taxonomy
A criminological theory that suggests crime and deviance are committed by two unique groups: adolescence-limited offenders and life-course-persistent offenders.

Life-Course-Persistent Offender
A person who engages in crime and deviance throughout their life.

Adolescence-Limited Offender
A person who only engages in crime and deviance during adolescence.

1b. The General Aggression Model

The **general aggression model** (GAM) explains how various factors, including biology, personality, cognition, and social learning, work together to produce an aggressive incident (DeWall et al., 2011). The GAM is structured in terms of responses to a situation:

- Inputs (aspects of the person and situation)
- Outputs (results from decision-making that was either thoughtful or impulsive)

Impulsive actions are more likely to be violent than thoughtful actions. Once a person uses violence, the theory suggests that it becomes a tactic the person is more likely to use again in the future, forming a behavioral

pattern. Whether violence happens or not in response to a situation depends on how the individual involved perceives and interprets the social interaction, their expectations of various outcomes, and their beliefs about the best ways to respond.
With the GAM, it is assumed that aggression is primarily learned. Other factors, such as environmental stress, play an important role in instigating the aggression.

TERM TO KNOW

General Aggression Model

A comprehensive, integrative framework for understanding aggression. It considers the role of social, cognitive, personality, developmental, and biological factors in aggression.

1c. The Risk-Need-Responsivity Model

Bonta and Andrews (2017) developed the **risk-need-responsivity model** (RNR) for assessing and treating offenders after many decades of researching the factors most closely related to criminal and violent behavior. Their model incorporates social learning, cognition, personality, and social factors. The RNR model has three main parts:

1. The “risk” principle
2. The “need” principle
3. The “responsivity” principle

The first part, the “risk” principle, involves assessing offenders on the eight risk factors that research indicates are most directly linked to criminal behavior. The intensity of treatment should match the level of risk, with individuals who score higher receiving more rehabilitation efforts. The eight criminogenic risk factors are outlined in the table below.

Criminogenic Risk Factors (Bonta & Andrews, 2017)	
History of criminal behavior	How early crime starts; frequency and variability of criminal behavior
Antisocial personality pattern	Having traits such as impulsivity, sensation-seeking, hostility, and callousness
Antisocial associates	Having friends who are involved in crime
Antisocial attitudes	Having cognitions that rationalize antisocial behavior or disdain toward the law and justice system
Substance Abuse	Misuse of alcohol and drugs
Family / Marital Issues	For youth offenders, having parents who provide little warmth or control; for adult offenders, having family/intimate relationships that are unsupportive or with antisocial people

Leisure	Few positive social leisure activities
Work / Education	Poor performance or low satisfaction with work or school

The second part, the “need” principle, states that treatment should focus on addressing the needs associated with each risk factor found for the offender. Factors that the offender scores low on can be set aside in favor of rehabilitation focused on reducing the risk factors they score high on.

> EXAMPLE Offenders scoring high in the work/education risk factor would be enrolled in alternative education or job retraining, while those scoring high in the antisocial attitudes risk factor would be referred to individual or group therapy.

The third part, the “responsivity” principle, states that treatment should be provided in a way that optimizes the offender’s successful response to the treatment. Treatment should be evidence based but also implemented in a way that considers the individual’s learning style, motivation needs, and other characteristics that might impact treatment success.

TERM TO KNOW

Risk-Need-Responsivity Model

A criminogenic model providing a method for offender assessment and treatment by examining the needs underlying criminal behavior.

1d. Trauma-Informed Systems of Care

A **trauma-informed approach** draws on the interplay of neurobiology and adverse childhood experiences to explain the development of criminal behavior. It offers approaches to law enforcement, mental health treatment, and rehabilitation that seek to avoid re-traumatization. Existing systems of care can inadvertently contribute to the creation of toxic environments that interfere with mental health recovery and criminal rehabilitation. In the process, these systems may undermine the well-being of police and mental health workers so that their own experiences of trauma on the job reduce their ability to effectively address criminal behavior.

Staff who work within a trauma-informed environment are taught to recognize how organizational practices may trigger painful memories and re-traumatize clients with trauma histories.

> EXAMPLE Staff can recognize that using restraints on a person who has been sexually abused or placing a child who has been neglected and abandoned in a seclusion room may be re-traumatizing and interfere with healing and recovery.

Trauma-informed care also aims to recognize the impact of historic events on current practices. Preliminary research indicates that incorporating culturally relevant programming leads to higher completion rates and more effective treatment outcomes, including lower odds of reoffending (Gutierrez et al., 2018).

The trauma-informed approach adheres to six key principles rather than a prescribed set of practices or procedures. These principles, which are outlined in the table below, may be generalizable across multiple types of settings, although their terminology and application may be setting or sector specific.

Six Principles of Trauma-Informed Care (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014)

Safety	The staff and the people they serve, whether children or adults, feel physically and psychologically safe.
Trustworthiness and transparency	Organizational operations and decisions are conducted with transparency, with the goal of building and maintaining trust with clients and family members, among staff, and with others involved in the organization.
Peer support	Peer support and mutual self-help are key vehicles for establishing safety and hope, building trust, enhancing collaboration, and utilizing personal stories and lived experience to promote recovery and healing.
Collaboration and mutuality	Importance is placed on leveling power differences between staff and clients and among organizational staff, from clerical and housekeeping personnel to professional staff to administrators, promoting meaningful sharing of power and decision-making.
Empowerment, voice, and choice	Throughout the organization and among the clients served, individuals' strengths and experiences are recognized and built upon. The organization fosters a belief in the greater importance of the people served; in resilience; and in the ability of individuals, organizations, and communities to heal and promote recovery from trauma. Staff facilitate recovery instead of controlling recovery.
Cultural, historical, and gender issues	The organization actively moves past cultural stereotypes and biases (e.g., assumptions based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religion, gender identity, and geography); offers access to gender-responsive services; leverages the healing value of traditional cultural connections; incorporates policies, protocols, and processes that are responsive to the racial, ethnic, and cultural needs of individuals served; and recognizes and addresses historical trauma.

TERM TO KNOW

Trauma-Informed Approach

A criminogenic model that integrates adverse childhood experiences to explain the development of criminal behavior, offering treatment and services to avoid re-traumatization.

SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about four **integrative models of criminology**. **Developmental taxonomy** describes two types of offenders: life-course-persistent offenders, who offend throughout their lives, and adolescence-limited offenders, who only offend during adolescence. The **general aggression model** explains how various factors, such as biology, personality, cognition, and social learning, work together to produce aggression.

The next two models involve integrative ways that the criminal justice system can best address the needs of offenders and victims. The **risk-need-responsivity model** provides a method for offender assessment and treatment by examining the needs underlying criminal behavior. **Trauma-informed systems of care** combine the neurobiology of trauma with an analysis of the trauma-inducing aspects of

the criminal justice system to find treatment methods that will avoid re-traumatization.

In the next lesson, you will learn about life course theory.

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TERMS TO KNOW

Adolescence-Limited Offender

A person who only engages in crime and deviance during adolescence.

Developmental Taxonomy

A criminological theory that suggests crime and deviance are committed by two unique groups: adolescence-limited offenders and life-course-persistent offenders.

General Aggression Model

A comprehensive, integrative framework for understanding aggression. It considers the role of social, cognitive, personality, developmental, and biological factors in aggression.

Life-Course-Persistent Offender

A person who engages in crime and deviance throughout their life.

Risk-Need-Responsivity Model

A criminogenic model providing a method for offender assessment and treatment by examining the needs underlying criminal behavior.

Trauma-Informed Approach

A criminogenic model that integrates adverse childhood experiences to explain the development of criminal behavior, offering treatment and services to avoid re-traumatization.

Life Course Theories

by Sophia

WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the various aspects and applications of life course theory and age-graded theory. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Life Course Theory

Life course theory views criminal behavior as a complex and evolving process influenced by various individual traits and social experiences. As people move through life, their perceptions and experiences change, leading to shifts in their behavior. This theory suggests that early relationships and behaviors can set the course for later life. Initially, individuals must learn to adhere to social norms and function effectively. As they mature, they are expected to consider careers, leave home, form lasting relationships, and eventually start families. These transitions typically occur in a specific sequence:

- Completing education
- Entering the workforce
- Marrying
- Having children

However, some people may face challenges with maturing because of family, environmental, or personal issues. Transitions can also occur prematurely or later, disrupting the expected sequence.

> EXAMPLE A teenager becoming a parent may be forced to leave school early. Such interruptions can have long-term consequences, affecting educational opportunities, career development, and mental health (Siegel, 2023).

Early involvement in delinquent behavior can make it difficult for individuals to change their criminal lifestyles as they grow older.

EXAMPLE Joining gangs can lead to antisocial behavior even after leaving the gang. Gang membership is associated with lower educational attainment, making it harder to find stable employment later in life.

However, some individuals who have been in trouble during adolescence may still find success in adulthood, especially if they can secure regular employment and maintain stable relationships, which can help them move away from criminal behavior.

Below, you will learn about some factors that make it more likely for people to commit crimes throughout the different points of their lives.

TERM TO KNOW

Life Course Theory

A criminological theory focusing on the individual and following such individuals throughout life to examine their offending careers.

1a. Disruptions and Criminality

According to life course theory, the likelihood of engaging in criminal behavior is a dynamic process influenced by life's ups and downs.

EXAMPLE Positive experiences can steer some people away from crime, while negative ones can push them back into it.

Disruptions in life transitions can be harmful and contribute to criminality, particularly for those already at risk due to socioeconomic issues or family problems. In this view, criminal behavior is not caused by a single factor but is instead the result of various influences that change as people grow.

Significant factors at one stage of life may lose importance later on. Adverse events can accumulate, which means that as people experience more setbacks, the likelihood of experiencing further ones increases. This cumulative effect can sustain criminal behavior from childhood into adulthood (Siegel, 2023).

1b. Life's Influences

Life course theories acknowledge that as individuals grow older, the factors that shape their behavior evolve. Critical life transitions—from childhood to adolescence, adolescence to adulthood, and singlehood to marriage—bring about changes in social interactions. Initially, family dynamics play a significant role. Criminal behavior tends to run in families, and having criminal relatives is a strong predictor of future criminal behavior. During later adolescence, interactions with peers and experiences in school become more influential. In adulthood, work achievements and long-term relationships may become the primary factors shaping behavior.

However, the capacity for change diminishes with age as individuals become more entrenched in a criminal lifestyle. Factors that may help someone resist criminality during their teenage years, such as success in school and positive family relationships, may have little impact once they enter their 20s.

1c. Problem Behavior Syndrome

The life course perspective also suggests that criminal behavior can be seen as just one of several social challenges youths at risk may face, a concept known as **problem behavior syndrome** (PBS). According to this

perspective, crime occurs alongside many other interconnected antisocial behaviors.

PBS is associated with individual-level personality issues, family difficulties, substance abuse, poor health, and educational struggles (Nall, 2019). Individuals with one of these problems often exhibit symptoms of the others. All types of criminal behavior, such as violence, theft, and drug offenses, may be part of a broader PBS, indicating that different forms of antisocial behavior share similar developmental pathways.

TERM TO KNOW

Problem Behavior Syndrome

A condition characterized by the presence of certain problematic behaviors in adolescents, such as substance use, risky sexual activity, delinquency, and truancy.

1d. Early-Onset Offending

Life course theory suggests that children who eventually become serious offenders often begin their path of deviant behavior at a very young age, sometimes even before starting school. The earlier this criminal behavior starts, the more frequent, varied, and sustained their criminal activities tend to be as they grow older (Van Hazebroek et al., 2019).

EXAMPLE Aggressive and antisocial behavior during a child's school years can be a strong predictor of continued troublesome behavior and aggression in adulthood.

These early-starting criminals are often involved in a range of aggressive acts, from being cruel to animals to engaging in violence against their peers. In contrast, those who start later are more likely to be involved in nonviolent crimes like theft. Early involvement in delinquency can set off a negative cycle in a young person's life: They may experience tension with their family, lose connections with positive peers, and find fewer opportunities to engage in healthy activities like sports. Instead, they become more involved with deviant peers and adopt a delinquent lifestyle.

Several factors can contribute to early-onset offending (Siegel, 2023):

- Some adolescents may experience early puberty, which can lead them to engage in behaviors they are not emotionally mature enough to handle.
- Early-maturing children might start spending time with older peers who introduce them to risky behaviors like substance abuse.

This path tends to be persistent; once on it, adolescents who engage in criminal behavior are likely to continue their misconduct into adulthood, transitioning from one form of deviant lifestyle to another (Van Hazebroek et al., 2019).

2. Age-Graded Theory

Most theories about crime focus on why people engage in criminal behavior. However, in their 1993 work *Crime in the Making*, Robert Sampson and John Laub shift the focus to whether individuals can find paths back to conformity after their behavioral trajectory has been interrupted or facilitated by certain life transitions or turning

points throughout their lives. Sampson and Laub developed a life course perspective on crime called **age-graded theory**. Its fundamental principles include the following (Unlu et al., 2021):

- Importance of individual traits and childhood experiences: Understanding the onset of delinquency and crime requires considering individual traits and childhood experiences. However, these factors alone cannot explain why some people continue to engage in criminal behavior into adulthood.
- Impact of experiences in young adulthood and beyond: Experiences in young adulthood and beyond can alter criminal trajectories. Positive experiences can steer individuals toward a law-abiding life, while negative experiences can perpetuate criminal behavior.
- Cumulative disadvantage: Repeated negative experiences can lead to a cumulative disadvantage. When people have many serious issues during adolescence, it can limit life opportunities, reduce employability, and strain social relationships, increasing the risk of continued offending.
- Role of positive life experiences and relationships: Positive experiences and relationships can help individuals reintegrate into society and deviate from a criminal path.
- Informal social control and turning points: Positive life events, such as gaining employment or getting married, can create informal social control mechanisms that restrict opportunities for criminal behavior. These events are referred to as turning points in crime.
- Human choice: While some individuals persist in crime because they find it profitable or a useful way to cope with frustration, others choose not to engage in criminal behavior because they see more conventional paths as being beneficial and rewarding. Human choice plays a role in criminal behavior and should not be overlooked.

In highlighting the importance of life events that help adult offenders stop criminal behavior, Laub and Sampson distinguish between trajectories, transitions, and turning points (Unlu et al., 2021). A **transition** consists of a life milestone, while a **trajectory** is a pathway within someone's life. Both transitions and trajectories can have positive or negative impacts.

EXAMPLE Graduating from college and securing a stable job would be a positive transition, while joining a gang would represent a negative trajectory.

Samson and Laub argued that criminal careers are dynamic and that some transitions function as significant life events that change the direction of a person's life trajectory for the better. They refer to these events as **turning points**.

EXAMPLE Marriage and career milestones are identified as critical turning points (Siegel, 2023). Adolescents who are at risk of criminal behavior can lead conventional lives if they find stable employment or have successful careers. Even individuals with a history of legal trouble may move away from crime if they encounter a turning point, such as an employment opportunity by an understanding employer.

TERMS TO KNOW

Age-Graded Theory

A life course theory of crime examining how a criminal's behavioral trajectory can be interrupted or facilitated by certain life transitions or turning points throughout their life.

Transition

An important milestone in someone's life.

Trajectory

A pathway or line of development throughout life.

Turning Point

An event that encourages someone to stop committing crimes. However, it can sometimes be an event that encourages someone to resume committing crimes.

SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about **life course theories**, which view criminal behavior as an evolving process influenced by various individual traits and social experiences throughout people's lives. Specifically, **disruptions and criminality** can make some people more likely to commit crimes at certain points in their lives. **Life's influences** from childhood to adulthood are dynamic rather than static. People face ups and downs in their lives, which can influence whether they commit crimes or stay on the path of conformity. Furthermore, some individuals exhibit **problem behavior syndrome**, which is characterized by individual-level personality issues, family difficulties, substance abuse, poor health, and educational struggles. Individuals who exhibit PBS are often the same ones who offend at an early age, a pattern known as **early-onset offending**.

You also learned about Sampson and Laub's **age-graded theory**, which suggests that while people may commit crimes at certain points in their lives, they can find paths back to conformity if important life events help them stop offending. Sampson and Laub differentiate between trajectories, transitions, and turning points, which are the events and paths that people take to either continue offending or lead a life without crime.

In the next lesson, you will learn about the critiques of integrative theories and life course theories of crime.

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TERMS TO KNOW

Age-Graded Theory

A life course theory of crime examining how a criminal's behavioral trajectory can be interrupted or facilitated by certain life transitions or turning points throughout their life.

Life Course Theory

A criminological theory focusing on the individual and following such individuals throughout life to examine their offending careers.

Problem Behavior Syndrome

A condition characterized by the presence of certain problematic behaviors in adolescents, such as substance use, risky sexual activity, delinquency, and truancy.

Trajectory

A pathway or line of development throughout life.

Transition

An important milestone in someone's life.

Turning Point

An event that encourages someone to stop committing crimes. However, it can sometimes be an event that encourages someone to resume committing crimes.

PEOPLE TO KNOW

Robert Sampson and John Laub

American criminologists who developed the age-graded theory of crime.

Artificial Intelligence and Crime

by Sophia

WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about how artificial intelligence is used by both criminals and the criminal justice system. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Criminals and Artificial Intelligence
2. Artificial Intelligence in the Criminal Justice System

1. Criminals and Artificial Intelligence

Criminals use **artificial intelligence** (AI) in many ways to help them commit crimes, especially **cybercrimes**, or criminal activities that either target or use a computer, a computer network, or a networked device. AI is a broad term for computer systems capable of performing complex tasks, such as reasoning, making decisions, or solving real-world problems. This technology provides cybercriminals with new tools and capabilities that can significantly enhance the scale and effectiveness of their attacks. AI can be used to do the following:

- Automate attacks, such as those to crack passwords, or SQL attacks to exploit vulnerabilities in databases
- Generate more convincing phishing emails by analyzing and mimicking the writing style of legitimate senders, making it harder for users to identify them as malicious
- Develop more sophisticated malware that can adapt its behavior based on the target's defenses, making it harder to detect and remove (Cohen, 2024)
- Assist with identity theft in several ways, leveraging its capabilities to enhance malicious activities
- Create realistic audio, video, and images, which can be used to create fake identities or to impersonate someone else in fraudulent activities
- Analyze patterns in user behavior and find ways to bypass security measures like two-factor authentication

Criminals use AI for **social engineering**, which involves deceiving people into providing confidential information that can be used for fraudulent purposes (Interpol, n.d.). AI analyzes large amounts of data from social media and other sources to create highly personalized scams.

EXAMPLE AI may analyze a target's interests, behaviors, and relationships to craft a phishing email that appears to be from a trusted source or create realistic voice clones of individuals, which can be used in phone scams to impersonate someone known to the victim, such as a family member, friend, or coworker.

Additionally, social engineering scams can involve AI-powered **chatbots** engaging with potential victims on social media or messaging platforms, gathering information that can be used in a social engineering attack. This collected information is often used to then create fake social media profiles that appear to be genuine, allowing criminals to establish trust with potential victims before launching an attack. Lastly, AI is used to manipulate social media algorithms to amplify fraudulent messages or to spread disinformation, making it easier to deceive victims (Interpol, n.d.).

IN CONTEXT

One of the largest known social engineering attacks was carried out by a man named Evaldas Rimasauskas (Huddleston, 2019). He and his team created a fake company that claimed to be a legitimate computer manufacturer working with Google and Facebook. Rimasauskas also established bank accounts in the company's name.

The scammers then targeted specific employees at Google and Facebook with phishing emails, sending invoices for goods and services that the fake company supposedly provided. However, the invoices directed the employees to deposit money into the scammers' fraudulent accounts. Between 2013 and 2015, Rimasauskas and his team swindled the two tech giants out of more than $100 million (Huddleston, 2019).

To protect yourself from cyberattacks and the potential misuse of AI, it is essential to keep software updated; use strong, unique passwords; and enable two-factor authentication. Additionally, be cautious of phishing attacks and use secure connections for sensitive transactions. Limit data sharing, keep backups of important files, and stay informed about cybersecurity threats. When using AI, review privacy policies and monitor financial statements for unauthorized transactions (Ready.gov, 2022).

TERMS TO KNOW

Artificial Intelligence
A computer system that is able to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and translation between languages.

Cybercrime
A type of criminal activity carried out using digital devices and/or networks. It involves the use of technology to commit fraud, identity theft, data breaches, computer viruses, and scams.

Social Engineering
The use of deception to manipulate individuals into sharing confidential or personal information that may be used for fraudulent purposes.

Chatbot
A computer program designed to simulate conversation with human users.

2. Artificial Intelligence in the Criminal Justice System

Just as people can use AI to commit crimes, the criminal justice system can also use AI in a variety of ways, including the following:

- **Predictive policing**, which uses data analysis and AI technologies to identify potential criminal activity and deploy law enforcement resources more effectively
- **Crime mapping**, in which algorithms analyze historical crime data to identify patterns and trends in criminal activity
- **Facial recognition technology**, which identifies and verifies the identity of an individual from a digital image or video frame
- Analysis of evidence
- Identification of victims
- Prison management

Police departments across the country have been using AI algorithms to examine data from different sources, such as surveillance cameras, license plate readers, and social media, to identify possible threats and forecast patterns of criminal activity. This information is used to create crime maps that help law enforcement agencies allocate resources to areas with a higher likelihood of crime.
In other words, AI identifies "**hot spots**" where crime is concentrated, allowing law enforcement to target these areas with increased patrols and other crime prevention measures (SATPALDA, 2024). While this can help reduce response times and improve overall effectiveness, critics argue that AI algorithms may perpetuate existing biases in the criminal justice system, leading to unfair treatment of certain communities (Cogent Infotech, n.d.). Thus, it is essential for law enforcement to ensure that AI is used ethically and responsibly.

Another way that the criminal justice system has been using AI is through facial recognition technology, as noted earlier. Police departments use facial recognition to compare images of suspects from surveillance cameras or other sources with databases of known criminals to identify and locate those suspects. This same facial recognition process can also be used to help identify victims of crime.

> EXAMPLE AI can help locate missing persons by comparing images of individuals reported missing with databases of images, such as driver's license photos (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2023).

Some law enforcement agencies may even use facial recognition to control access to secure facilities, such as police stations and government buildings.

The criminal justice system also uses AI to analyze evidence in various ways, which can enhance the investigation and prosecution of crimes. AI algorithms process and compare large amounts of data quickly and accurately, helping forensic analysts identify matches and generate leads in criminal investigations. These types of evidence include the following:

- Forensic evidence, such as fingerprints, DNA samples, and ballistic evidence

- Video footage and images from which valuable information, such as objects, people, or vehicles of interest, can be extracted
- Audio recordings, from which potentially relevant voices, sounds, or keywords can be identified
- Text data, such as emails, social media posts, and other electronic communications, from which potentially relevant patterns, sentiments, and relationships can be identified (Lunter, 2023)

As in the example with facial recognition, AI can assist police in identifying victims of various crimes, including human trafficking, kidnapping, or cybercrimes. It can analyze patterns in data, such as financial transactions or online behavior, to identify potential victims of fraud, exploitation, or abuse. Also, it can analyze social media posts or online chat messages to identify language patterns indicative of distress or victimization. AI can even analyze images and videos for signs of abuse or exploitation, such as bruises or other injuries (Rigano, 2018). Lastly, AI is used to improve various aspects of prison management, making facilities safer and more efficient.

> EXAMPLE AI-powered surveillance systems can monitor inmate activity and detect unusual behavior, such as fights or unauthorized movements (Bala & Trautman, 2019). This helps prison staff respond quickly to potential security threats.

AI can also analyze existing surveillance footage to detect the presence of contraband, such as drugs or weapons, in prison facilities. This helps prevent the smuggling of contraband into prisons and enhances the overall security of facilities.

TERMS TO KNOW

Predictive Policing
The use of mathematics, predictive analytics, and other analytical techniques in law enforcement to identify potential criminal activity.

Crime Mapping
A method used by analysts in law enforcement agencies to map, visualize, and analyze crime incident patterns.

Facial Recognition Technology
A technology capable of matching a human face from a digital image or a video frame against a database of faces.

Hot Spot
An area of concentrated criminal activity.

SUMMARY

In this lesson, you first learned about the relationship between **criminals and artificial intelligence**. In recent years, AI has become increasingly more prevalent. Criminals have been using it to enhance their ability to commit crimes, especially in cyberspace. That said, **artificial intelligence is also being used in the criminal justice system** to combat crime. So far, AI has been used to help with investigations, analyze evidence, and keep prison facilities safer.

In the next lesson, you will have an opportunity to examine a case study dealing with cybercrime.

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TERMS TO KNOW

Artificial Intelligence

A computer system that is able to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and translation between languages.

Chatbot

A computer program designed to simulate conversation with human users.

Crime Mapping

A method used by analysts in law enforcement agencies to map, visualize, and analyze crime incident patterns.

Cybercrime

A type of criminal activity carried out using digital devices and/or networks. It involves the use of technology to commit fraud, identity theft, data breaches, computer viruses, and scams.

Facial Recognition Technology

A technology capable of matching a human face from a digital image or a video frame against a database of faces.

Hot Spot

An area of concentrated criminal activity.

Predictive Policing

The use of mathematics, predictive analytics, and other analytical techniques in law enforcement to identify potential criminal activity.

Social Engineering

The use of deception to manipulate individuals into sharing confidential or personal information that may be used for fraudulent purposes.

Case Analysis: Cybercrime

by Sophia

WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will determine if the elements of integrative models of criminality fit in with a case involving cybercrime. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Rolling Hills PD Explores Cybercrime

In this Challenge, we have briefly touched on the integrative models of criminality that incorporate theories from individual, evolutionary, and cultural approaches in their application to criminal behavior. By combining these perspectives, integrative models seek to provide a more comprehensive understanding of criminal behavior than any single theory can offer.

Click on the plus sign to review the four integrative models of criminology: +

1. **Developmental taxonomy** explains the development of antisocial behavior as affected by biology, socialization, and stages of development.
2. The **general aggression model** explains the biological, personality, cognitive, and social learning factors influencing an aggressive act.
3. The **risk-need-responsivity model** provides a method for offender assessment and treatment by examining the needs underlying criminal behavior.
4. **Trauma-informed systems of care** combine the neurobiology of trauma with an analysis of the trauma-inducing aspects of the criminal justice system.

Click on the plus sign to review the difference between adolescence-limited offenders and life-course-persistent offenders: +

Adolescence-limited offenders engage in minor antisocial behavior during a developmentally normative stage in the teenage years but have an otherwise normal early childhood. Adolescence-limited offenders determine that the benefits of a criminal lifestyle are not worth the risk, and they change in their early adulthood.

Life-course-persistent offenders are rare and have externalizing behavior from an early age, continuing into adulthood. Neurological differences causing impulsivity and reactivity are believed to underlie their behavioral problems. Without intervention, difficulties with peers and school result, snowballing into later problems such as dropping out of school and criminal activity. Early social rejection from peers is a major risk factor for later antisocial behavior, and these individuals often eventually associate together.

Click on the plus sign to review life course theory: +

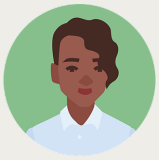
This theory suggests that early relationships and behaviors can set the course for later life. Initially, individuals must learn to adhere to social norms and function effectively. As they mature, they are expected to consider careers, leave home, form lasting relationships, and eventually start families. These transitions typically occur in a specific sequence, such as completing education, entering the workforce, marrying, and having children.

Will a more comprehensive approach to criminology be able to explain certain criminal behavior?

CONVERSATION BETWEEN COWORKERS

"No single theory can explain everything."

"We can't pigeonhole people either. As people physically grow and change, their opinions, behaviors, and actions will also change."



"I think I have a case for you then."

1a. The Case of More to Lose

Watch and listen as Detective Henson and Professor Joon investigate how criminal behavior may change over time.

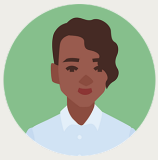
WATCH

1b. The Debrief

Detective Henson and Professor Joon will see how the integrative theories fit into this case of malware and bad decisions.

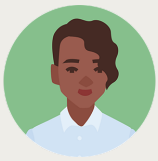
CONVERSATION BETWEEN COWORKERS

"Did Prashant see the error of his ways?"



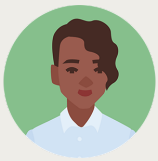
"He initially began a criminal career in malware when he was a teen. He could've continued that journey."

"He found a mentor at his university telling him of the dangers of continuing down this path."



"The initial opportunity was an easy way to make money for someone who came from nothing."

"But with the right support and opportunities, individuals can rise above their circumstances and contribute positively to society."



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you watched and listened as **Rolling Hills PD explored cybercrime**. According to the integrative theories of criminology, without the right support and opportunities, Prashant would have continued a life of crime in this **case of more to lose**.

Just like how Detective Henson and Professor Joon did in the **debrief**, you will see how modern criminologists use the theories you have learned about throughout this course in the next lesson.

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Critiques of Integrative Models and Life Course Theories

by Sophia

WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the critiques and limitations of integrative models and life course theories in criminology. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Critiques of Developmental Taxonomy

Developmental taxonomy describes a dual taxonomy of offending—that is, there are life-course-persistent offenders, who engage in crime throughout their entire lives, and adolescence-limited offenders, who only engage in crime as adolescents. This theory has faced some critiques.

For one, it tends to overemphasize categories. Critics argue that the taxonomy's division of offenders into distinct categories (life-course-persistent and adolescence-limited) oversimplifies the complexity of criminal behavior. It may not accurately capture the diverse pathways and experiences of individuals involved in crime because it only considers these two categories.

Another criticism of the dual taxonomy theory is that it is based on studies that look back at parts of people's lives to figure out patterns of behavior. This approach, which is also common in life course theories, can weaken the evidence supporting these theories. However, it is important to note that this type of research is often the only feasible option because of the limited resources and research methods available (Ferreira, 2016).

2. Critiques of the General Aggression Model

The general aggression model explains how various factors, including biology, personality, cognition, and social learning, work together to produce an aggressive incident. This model also has limitations.

Critics argue that it is overly complex and lacks clarity in its theoretical framework. The model incorporates multiple factors, such as biological, psychological, and social influences, making it difficult to pinpoint specific causal relationships (Milburn, 1980).

Some critics also question the empirical support for the general aggression model, suggesting that more research is needed to validate its key concepts and predictions. The model's reliance on laboratory experiments and self-report measures may also raise concerns about the generalizability of its findings to real-world settings (Ferguson & Dyck, 2012).

3. Critiques of the Risk-Need-Responsivity Model

The risk-need-responsivity model is not a theory predicting criminal behavior, but it is a model that provides a method for offender assessment and treatment by examining the needs underlying criminal behavior. Like the theories we have discussed thus far, it has made contributions to the field, but it also has limitations.

One criticism of this model is that it does not consider what the person who is receiving help wants or thinks. Some people argue that therapists who use this model only try to build a good relationship with offenders to make themselves feel more important, instead of really helping the person change their life in a positive way (Lutz et al., 2022).

Critics also say that the risk-need-responsivity model does not give therapists enough tools to connect with and help offenders in therapy. It is also difficult to properly implement the model, which makes it challenging to assess whether it is effective or not (Ward et al., 2007).

4. Critiques of Trauma-Informed Systems of Care

Like the risk-need-responsivity model, trauma-informed systems of care are not a criminological theory. Rather, they form a model that integrates adverse childhood experiences to explain the development of criminal behavior, offering treatment and services to avoid retraumatization. However, implementing trauma-informed systems of care can be challenging because of several factors.

First, trauma is complex. It can manifest in various forms (e.g., physical, emotional, and psychological) and can result from a range of experiences (e.g., abuse, neglect, and violence). Understanding and addressing these complexities requires specialized knowledge and training.

Furthermore, trauma-informed care often requires additional resources, including funding, training, and staffing, which may be limited or unavailable in many settings. Shifting to a trauma-informed approach also requires changes in organizational culture, including attitudes, beliefs, and practices, which can be challenging and time consuming. Additionally, training staff can be challenging because of high turnover rates in some settings or

resistance to change among staff. Lastly, measuring the effectiveness of trauma-informed care requires collecting and analyzing data, which can be complex and resource intensive (Huo et al., 2023).

Despite these challenges, the benefits of trauma-informed care, such as improved outcomes for survivors and a more supportive environment for all individuals, highlight the importance of continuing efforts to overcome these obstacles.

5. Critiques of Life Course Theory

Recall that life course theory focuses on peoples' lives to examine their offending careers over time. Of course, this theory has several limitations that are important to consider.

First, this theory tends to focus on individual-level factors and life events, such as marriage or employment, and how these factors impact crime. However, it often ignores broader structural factors, such as poverty, racism, and inequality, which are known to significantly influence criminal behavior (Teruya & Hser, 2010).

Moreover, life course theory has been criticized for its limited attention to gender differences and the diversity in life experiences.

> EXAMPLE The theory may not fully account for the different pathways to desistance for men and women or for individuals from different racial or ethnic backgrounds (Teruya & Hser, 2010).

Its focus is primarily on the criminal life experiences of white men, which overlooks the experiences of many other people who find themselves within the criminal justice system.

6. Critiques of Age-Graded Theory

Recall that age-graded theory examines how a criminal's behavioral trajectory can be interrupted or facilitated by certain life transitions or turning points throughout their life.

One key concern with this theory is its causal sequencing. Can individuals who stop committing crimes secure a suitable partner, get married, and find stable employment? Or is it the case that individuals who have found a partner and steady employment can then desist from crime? Laub and Sampson argue for the latter, but there is also evidence suggesting that individuals who desist from crime undergo a cognitive transformation, and only after leaving a criminal lifestyle can they attain partners, jobs, and other benefits that support their lifestyle change. Those "aging out" of crime, seeking to end their criminal behavior, may only be ready to marry and settle down after they have decided to quit criminal activities, not the other way around. Further research is necessary to establish the temporal sequence of this relationship (Siegel, 2023).

Another issue surrounding age-graded theory is the validity of the relationships it suggests in today's context. The theory relies on data collected over 50 years ago from a sample that lived in a vastly different world compared to contemporary society.

EXAMPLE The subjects did not consume violent video games or TV shows, marriage was more common, divorce rates were lower, and issues like globalization and widespread job losses were not as prevalent.

Similarly, the implications of joining the military may differ today compared to the time of the original study. Future researchers should, therefore, assess whether the theory's fundamental principles still hold, considering these societal changes (Siegel, 2023).

BIG IDEA

Let's compare the concepts, proponents, assumptions, and limitations of the theories within this lesson.

	Concepts	Proponents	Assumptions	Limitations
Developmental taxonomy	It explains the development of antisocial behavior as affected by biology, socialization, and stages of development.	Terrie Moffitt	There are two types of offenders. Life-course-persistent offenders are rare and have maladaptive behaviors from an early age continuing into adulthood. Adolescence-limited offenders engage in minor antisocial behavior during a developmentally normative stage in their teenage years but have an otherwise normal early childhood.	It puts people into only two categories.
General aggression model	It explains the biological, personality, cognitive, and social learning factors influencing an aggressive act.	Craig Anderson and Brad Bushman	It is assumed that aggression is primarily a learned behavior. Other factors, such as environmental stress, play an important role in instigating aggression.	The model is overly complex. There is a lack of empirical research.
Risk-need-responsivity model	It provides a method for offender assessment and treatment by examining the needs underlying criminal behavior.	James Bonta and Donald Andrews	This model is based on the idea that offenders are different and that interventions should be tailored to the specific risks and needs of each individual. This model aims to reduce re-offending rates and improve outcomes for offenders.	It does not consider what the individual receiving the treatment wants.

Trauma-informed systems of care	These systems combine the neurobiology of trauma with an analysis of the trauma-inducing aspects of the criminal justice system.	Roger Fallot and Maxine Harris	These systems recognize the widespread impact of trauma and emphasize the importance of creating environments sensitive to trauma survivors' needs. These systems involve understanding the prevalence and impact of trauma, recognizing the signs and symptoms of trauma, and responding in a way that avoids retraumatization.	The effectiveness is difficult to measure.
Life course theory	It views criminal behavior as a complex and evolving process influenced by various individual traits and social experiences.	Robert Sampson and John Laub	Life course theory highlights the importance of understanding the complex interplay between individual characteristics, life events, and social contexts in shaping criminal behavior over the life course.	There is limited attention on gender or racial differences in offending patterns as most research examines the lives of white men.
Age-graded theory	It examines how a criminal's behavioral trajectory can be interrupted or facilitated by certain life transitions or turning points throughout their life.	Robert Sampson and John Laub	Many factors contribute to someone engaging in crime or not. These factors include individual experiences, cumulative disadvantages, turning points, and agency. Certain factors can promote criminality as well as prevent it.	There are issues with causal sequencing, or the relationship between the variables. In this case, does the turning point or the desisting from crime come first?

SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about the critiques of integrative and life course theories in criminology. **Limitations of developmental taxonomy** include an over-reliance on categories and the need to go back in time to examine patterns that have occurred over people's lives. The **general aggression model has been criticized** for being too complex, while the **risk-need-responsivity model** and **trauma-informed systems of care** have both been known to have issues with proper implementation.

A **critique of life course theory** is that it often ignores many of the structural issues that contribute to crime. Historically, it has also not given enough attention to the experiences of women or people of color. Lastly, **age-graded theory is often criticized** for its causal sequencing, as well as its potential lack of relevance in today's times.

In the next lesson, we will conclude with a brief overview of the criminological perspectives that we have discussed throughout the course.

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Comparing and Contrasting Existing Criminological Theories

by Sophia

WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will review the major criminological perspectives that you have learned throughout this course. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. A Recap of Criminological Perspectives

Now that you have learned many of the primary criminological perspectives and theories, it is time to review how the field has evolved over time. Remember, criminologists investigate the origins of crime, with some focusing on the following:

- Individual factors include decision-making, psychology, and biology.
- A psychological perspective sees crime as linked to personality, development, or social learning.
- Social factors, such as neighborhood conditions, poverty, socialization, and group dynamics, are believed to influence criminal behavior. This perspective argues that people are shaped by their environment, and those in disadvantaged conditions are more likely to turn to crime.
- Crime can result from economic inequality, where the wealthy benefit at the expense of the working class. Economic disparity leads to class conflict, which can manifest in violence and crime. According to this view, crime is more a product of class struggle than individual shortcomings or societal conditions.

Determining the singular cause of crime is challenging because most people living in disadvantaged environments do not become criminals. This suggests that factors beyond the environment play a role in

criminal behavior. Criminologists are still uncertain why some individuals in similar circumstances choose criminal behavior while others abide by societal norms.
Let's look at a summary of some ideas you have learned from these different perspectives.

1a. Classical Criminology

In the mid-1700s, social thinkers began advocating for a more rational approach to punishment, emphasizing a balanced and fair relationship between crime and punishment. This shift can be attributed to Cesare Beccaria, an Italian scholar who was among the first to explain why people commit crimes systematically (Cadoppi, 2015). Beccaria argued that individuals act in their self-interest, seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. People commit crimes when they believe the benefits outweigh the risks of punishment.

According to this view, to deter crime effectively, punishment should be sufficient—neither too lenient nor too severe. Excessive punishment could lead criminals to commit more serious crimes, while lenient measures would fail to discourage criminal behavior.

> EXAMPLE If rape were punishable by death, rapists might be more likely to kill their victims to avoid detection, as the punishment for murder would be the same (Siegel, 2023).

Beccaria's ideas laid the foundation for classical criminology, which suggested that individuals can choose criminal or lawful paths to solve problems or meet their needs. He posited that crime is appealing when it offers substantial benefits with minimal effort and that fear of punishment can deter criminal behavior.

1b. Positivist Criminology

In the 19th century, a new worldview emerged that challenged classical theory and offered a fresh perspective on the causes of crime, influenced by the rise of the scientific method in Europe and North America.

Positivism emphasized the use of the scientific method in research, arguing that research is objective, universal, and independent of cultural influences. Positivism logically explained social phenomena by identifying necessary and sufficient conditions for their occurrence, suggesting that measurable and observable laws govern human behavior and natural phenomena (Siegel, 2023).

In Italy, Cesare Lombroso, often called the "father of criminology," pioneered the study of criminal anatomy by examining the bodies of executed criminals. He concluded that serious and violent offenders exhibited inherited criminal traits. Lombroso believed these "born criminals" had "atavistic anomalies," making them physical throwbacks to more primitive human ancestors who were savage, often characterized by large jaws and strong canine teeth (Baum, 2011). While his ideas shaped discussions in the early 20th century, they have fallen out of favor for being deterministic.

1c. Sociological Criminology

While biological perspectives influenced criminology, another group of researchers focused on the social changes in the 19th century. The foundation of sociological criminology can be attributed to Émile Durkheim. Durkheim argued that crime is normal because it is impossible to envision a society without criminal behavior. He believed crime is inevitable due to the vast differences among people and the various methods they use to

fulfill their needs. Durkheim suggested that crime can be beneficial, sometimes even necessary, for society as it can lead to social change (Boyd, 2015).

Durkheim discussed the consequences of transitioning from a small, rural society to a modern, urban one, with the division of labor and personal isolation. Due to structural changes, this shift led to anomie, norm, and role confusion. An anomic society experiences moral uncertainty and a loss of traditional values, potentially leading to confusion and rebellion (Boyd, 2015).

Durkheim's ideas were solidified through research in the early 20th century by scholars at the University of Chicago, creating the approach to criminology known as the Chicago school. These urban sociologists studied how neighborhood conditions, particularly poverty, influenced crime rates. They found that social forces in urban areas created environments conducive to crime, with some neighborhoods becoming "natural areas" for criminal activity (Cumbler, 2005). In these areas, critical social institutions like schools and families were unable to control behavior effectively due to poverty's disruptive effects, leading to high crime rates.

During the 1930s and 1940s, other sociologists linked criminal behavior to an individual's socialization and learning, including their relationship to education, family life, and peers. They found that children exposed to conflict-ridden homes, inadequate schools, or deviant peers were more likely to engage in criminal behavior. Many of these ideas argue that individuals learn criminal attitudes from older, more experienced lawbreakers.

1d. Conflict Criminology

Karl Marx, in works like the *Communist Manifesto*, highlighted the harsh labor conditions of early industrial capitalism. He argued that a society's mode of production—how it creates and distributes goods—determines its character. In industrial societies, the critical relationship is between the capitalist bourgeoisie (owners of production) and the proletariat (laborers). According to Marx, the economic system dominates all aspects of life, with people's existence centered around production (Marx, 1867/2004). He believed that the exploitation of the working class would lead to class conflict, ultimately leading to the downfall of capitalism.

Marx's ideas laid the groundwork for conflict theory, which posits that interpersonal conflict, including crime, influences human behavior. During the social and political turmoil of the 1960s, criminologists examined how social conditions in the United States contributed to class conflict and crime. This era gave rise to critical criminology, which criticizes the economic system for creating conditions that foster a high crime rate. Critical criminologists have remained influential in the field since this time.

1e. Integrative Approaches

Since the 1950s, researchers have begun to seek more comprehensive views of crime causation. These views often combine sociological, psychological, and economic factors to explain why people commit crimes.

These theories often focus on studying known delinquents to identify factors that predict continued criminal behavior. Integrative approaches suggest that the start and persistence of a criminal career are influenced by both internal and external factors.

1f. Contemporary Criminology

Over the past 200 years, various schools of criminology have continually evolved. Classical theory has transformed into modern rational choice theory, which suggests that criminals make rational decisions based on the benefits and costs of committing a crime, as well as the fear of punishment (Siegel, 2023).

Lombroso's biological positivism has evolved into contemporary biosocial and psychological trait theory, which considers that a complex interplay of biological, psychological, and environmental factors influences criminal behavior. This theory no longer suggests that a single inherited trait can explain criminality but emphasizes the interaction of various factors such as diet, hormones, personality, and intelligence.

The Chicago school's focus on sociological influences on crime has evolved into social structure theory (Siegel, 2023), which argues that an individual's position in society's social structure determines their behavior. Those at the bottom of the social hierarchy, unable to succeed through conventional means, experience strain and frustration, leading to criminal behavior.

The idea that socialization influences criminal behavior remains popular, with social process theorists emphasizing that individuals learn criminal behavior through interaction with and modeling after admired individuals. Some offenders may also turn to crime due to broken social bonds.

Many criminologists still see social and political conflict as the primary cause of crime. Critical criminologists argue that crime is linked to the inherently unfair economic structures of advanced capitalist countries. Meanwhile, feminist criminology is an example of conflict criminology, which looks at the inequalities resulting from patriarchal societies.

Finally, life course theorists focus on identifying the personal traits and social conditions that lead individuals to pursue criminal careers throughout their lives.

BIG IDEA

See the chart below to compare the different criminological perspectives we discussed throughout this course.

Perspective	Description
Classical/choice perspectives	Crime results from individuals exercising their free will and making personal choices.
Biological/psychological perspectives	Crime is a function of internal forces, such as neurological, genetic, personality, or mental traits.
Structural perspectives	Crime rates are a function of neighborhood conditions and cultural forces.
Process perspectives	Crime is a function of socialization, including learning or upbringing.
Conflict perspectives	Crime is a function of political or economic forces, such as competition for power.
Integrative/life course perspectives	People change over the course of their lives, and there are many factors that contribute to crime.

SUMMARY

In this lesson, you were given a **recap of criminological perspectives** and the main ideas you learned related to criminological theories. These ideas started with **classical criminology**, which was the first school of criminology to examine crime from a rational perspective. Prior to this school, it was thought that crime was caused by supernatural forces. The classical school was followed by **positivist criminology**, which looked at science and how individual traits contributed to crime.

You then reviewed **sociological criminology**, which focuses on how social forces and socialization contribute to crime, while critical or **conflict criminology** examines inequalities in society and how those inequalities are related to crime. More recent ideas take **integrative approaches**, considering how free will, traits, and society shape people's criminal paths over their lifetimes. **Contemporary criminology** continues to evolve; as the world changes, criminologists adapt their ideas to fit people in modern society.

This lesson concludes your criminology course with Sophia. Now that your journey with this course is finished, you can reflect on the complexity and ever-evolving nature of crime and criminology. Criminology is a profound exploration of human behavior, societal structures, and the pursuit of justice. It challenges us to examine the underlying causes and the systems designed to address them. It is crucial to remember that our understanding of crime and criminology is not static; rather, it adapts to new challenges and perspectives. By embracing the dynamic nature of criminology, we can reach a more comprehensive understanding of why crime occurs.

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Terms to Know

Adolescence-Limited Offender

A person who only engages in crime and deviance during adolescence.

Age-Graded Theory

A life course theory of crime examining how a criminal's behavioral trajectory can be interrupted or facilitated by certain life transitions or turning points throughout their life.

Artificial Intelligence

A computer system that is able to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and translation between languages.

Attribution Error

An individual's tendency to attribute another's actions to that person's character or personality while attributing their own behavior to external situational factors outside of their control.

Chatbot

A computer program designed to simulate conversation with human users.

Crime Mapping

A method used by analysts in law enforcement agencies to map, visualize, and analyze crime incident patterns.

Critical Victimology

A criminological theory that draws attention to the social processes that victimize some persons and not others.

Cybercrime

A type of criminal activity carried out using digital devices and/or networks. It involves the use of technology to commit fraud, identity theft, data breaches, computer viruses, and scams.

Defensible Space

A physical space designed to minimize crime.

Developmental Taxonomy

A criminological theory that suggests crime and deviance are committed by two unique groups: adolescence-limited offenders and life-course-persistent offenders.

Environmental Backcloth

An environment that sets the framework for people's daily activities, such as a road network or areas of different land uses.

Environmental Criminology

A branch of criminology that focuses on criminal patterns within built environments.

Facial Recognition Technology

A technology capable of matching a human face from a digital image or a video frame against a database of faces.

Feminism

The advocacy of women's rights on the basis of equality between the sexes.

Feminist Criminology

A school of criminology that developed as a reaction to the general disregard and discrimination of women in the traditional study of crime.

General Aggression Model

A comprehensive, integrative framework for understanding aggression. It considers the role of social, cognitive, personality, developmental, and biological factors in aggression.

Geometric Theory

A criminological theory explaining patterns of crime based on the geographic dimension of human activity patterns.

Hot Spot

An area of concentrated criminal activity.

Intersectional Feminism

A type of feminism that considers the different ways each woman experiences discrimination.

Intersectionality

A framework that examines how race, class, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity layer on each other to multiply the effects of victimization or criminalization.

Liberal Feminism

A type of feminism that tries to achieve gender equality in society.

Liberation Thesis

A criminological theory stating that as women achieve similar social standings and employment patterns to men, they start to resemble men's criminal behaviors as well.

Life Course Theory

A criminological theory focusing on the individual and following such individuals throughout life to examine their offending careers.

Life-Course-Persistent Offender

A person who engages in crime and deviance throughout their life.

Lifestyle Theories

The criminological theories that focus on how peoples' activities and behaviors contribute to their likelihood of being victimized.

Marxist Feminism

A type of feminism that analyzes the ways in which women are exploited through capitalism.

Patriarchy

A system of society or government in which men hold power and women are largely excluded from it.

Post-traumatic Change

A psychological and emotional transformation that individuals may undergo after experiencing a traumatic event or series of events.

Post-traumatic Growth

A positive psychological change experienced because of struggling with highly challenging, highly stressful life circumstances.

Postmodern Feminism

A type of feminism that analyzes ideas that have led to gender inequality in society.

Power Control Theory

A criminological theory stating that class, gender, and type of family structure (e.g., egalitarian or patriarchal) will influence the severity of the social/parental control practiced, which will, in turn, set the “accepted norm” for the child/individual. This norm will then control the level of delinquency of the individual.

Predictive Policing

The use of mathematics, predictive analytics, and other analytical techniques in law enforcement to identify potential criminal activity.

Problem Behavior Syndrome

A condition characterized by the presence of certain problematic behaviors in adolescents, such as substance use, risky sexual activity, delinquency, and truancy.

Radical Feminism

A type of feminism that calls for a radical reordering of society to eliminate male supremacy.

Rational Choice Theory

A criminological theory suggesting that potential offenders make rational decisions about whether or not to commit a crime.

Rationality

The role of reasoning in human behavior.

Resilience

The ability to cope mentally and emotionally with a crisis or to return to precrisis status quickly.

Revictimization

The process of victimizing someone again, often through the criminal justice system.

Risk-Need-Responsivity Model

A criminogenic model providing a method for offender assessment and treatment by examining the needs underlying criminal behavior.

Routine Activity Theory

A criminological theory predicting how changes in social and economic conditions influence crime and victimization.

Situational Crime Prevention

An attempt to reduce the opportunity for specific crimes by manipulating the immediate environment.

Social Engineering

The use of deception to manipulate individuals into sharing confidential or personal information that may be used for fraudulent purposes.

Socialist Feminism

A type of feminism arguing that class and gender are mutually reinforcing systems of oppression.

Spatial Criminology

A branch of criminology concerned with the relationship between physical spaces and crime.

Trajectory

A pathway or line of development throughout life.

Transition

An important milestone in someone's life.

Trauma- and Violence-Informed Care

Policies and practices that recognize the connections between violence, trauma, negative health outcomes, and behaviors.

Trauma-Informed Approach

A criminogenic model that integrates adverse childhood experiences to explain the development of criminal behavior, offering treatment and services to avoid re-traumatization.

Turning Point

An event that encourages someone to stop committing crimes. However, it can sometimes be an event that encourages someone to resume committing crimes.

Victim Advocate

An individual who is trained to support victims of crimes.

Victim Blaming

The act of holding a survivor of a crime entirely or partially at fault for the harm that befell them as the result of the crime.

Victim Compensation Program

A program that offers reimbursement to crime victims for a variety of crime-related expenses, such as medical costs, mental health counseling, or lost wages.

Victim Impact Statement

A written or oral statement made as part of the legal process allowing crime victims to speak during the sentencing of the convicted person or at subsequent parole hearings.

Victim Precipitation

A situation in which the survivor was the initial aggressor in the actions that led to their harm or loss.

People to Know

Benjamin Mendelsohn

Romanian criminologist associated with creating typologies for victims.

Robert Sampson and John Laub

American criminologists who developed the age-graded theory of crime.