

Q: State the Brief history and evolution of criminology. Express how the subject emerged, express the theories existed and their reason of Decline.

I: Introduction

Criminology, the scientific study of crime, criminals, law enforcements and the justice system emerged formally during the Age of Enlightenment in the 18th Century. It developed as a move away from the supernatural or purely religious explanations of crime, to a more rational, systematic, and later, scientific explanation.

Criminology, as a scientific study as we know now was brought into existence during the age of Enlightenment by two most influential figures,

Cesare Beccaria (1738 - 1794), an Italian journalist and philosopher, and Jeremy Bentham (1748 - 1832), an

English reformer and a philosopher

(A) Re-Criminology (Middle Ages)

(i) The Theory of Demonology

Crime was viewed as a result of demonic possession or spiritual temptation (sin). The response to this was exorcism, torture, or a brutal execution (capital punishment).

Decline

The rise of secular thought and realism during Enlightenment challenged this thought.

(B) 18th Century: The Classical School

(i) Theory of Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham

This theory was a reaction against the cruel, arbitrary, and inconsistent justice of pre-enlightenment era.

This school emerged in 1764 emphasizing the rationality principle, human rights and deterrence.

The core idea was that individuals possess free will and are rational actors who weigh the potential pleasure of crime against the pain of punishment. This was called **Utilitarianism**.

Decline :

It failed to account for individual differences such as mental illness, age, and external factors like poverty or social conditions which clearly influence human behavior.

The assumption of a perfectly rational actor was too simplistic.

(c) The 19th Century: The Positivist School.

The theories of the major 19th century represent a revolution in the early study of criminology. These were formulated by **Cesare**

Lombroso, **Enrico Ferri**, and **Raffaele Garofalo** (The Italian School)

Reason of Existence :

A shift from abstract philosophy to scientific methods (determination, observation and measurement) to study the criminal rather than the crime. It was influenced by the growth of biological sciences i.e. (Darwin's Evolution Theory)

(1) Biological Positivism Theory:

The theory was presented in the late 19th century by Cesare Lombroso. He argued that criminals are biologically different or **atavistic** (less evolved) and could be identified by physical features (stigmata). Crime is determined by biological traits (born criminals).

Reason of Decline

Later studies fail to replicate Lombroso's findings. The theory was criticised for its flawed methodology, ethnical concerns (racial and class bias), and its overly simplistic and deterministic view was that it ignored social influence.

(II) Psychological Positivism (Late 19th Century - Early 20th Century)

The theory was brought forth after the failure of the biological theory that deemed a person a criminal by birth. The Psychological theory suggested crime is caused by mental deficiency, personality disorders, or psychological trauma.

Reason of Decline

While useful for individual cases, it was not generalized enough to explain crime across population or a social group, and it overlooked the role of environment.

(D) The Early 20th Century - The Chicago School - Sociological Criminology

The evolution of criminology emerged in the early 20th century through the Chicago School, theories coined by **Robert Park, Ernest Burgess, Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay**. It poured focus on the rapid urbanization and industrialization in cities like (Chicago), which created social problems. It applied ecological and sociological concept to crime.

(1) Social Disorganization Theory 1942.

The theory argued that crime is a product of the social environment. Areas characterized by poverty, high residential mobility and ethnic heterogeneity suffer from social disorganization, which weakens social institutions (family, school, police) and leads to breakdown of social control.

Reasons of being Challenged:

The critics argued that the theory sometimes blamed the victims (poor communities) and did not adequately

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explain crime in a more stable or affluent area so why some individuals in disorganized areas are not criminals.

(E) Mid-20th Century - Theory Expansion and Refinement.

(1) The Strain Theory - 1950s

To explain crime in a society emphasized by the **American Dream** (wealth and success) and that these do not provide equal means to all.

The theory was coined by **Robert Merton** who elaborated that crime is a result of social pressure, or strain experienced by individuals (often in lower classes) who cannot achieve socially approved goals through legitimate means leading to crimes.

Reason for Challenges:

The theory was criticized for focusing too heavily on lower-class, utilitarian crime, and for not experiencing non-utilitarian, violent or white collar crimes. It led to more complex revisions (eg. Agnew's General Strain Theory).

(F): Differential Association Theory.

The theory of Differential Association was coined by **Edwin Sutherland** in **1939**. He argued that Criminal behavior is learned through interaction with others, especially within intimate personal groups, where a person learns techniques for committing crime and the specific direction of motives, drives, rationalization, and attitudes.

Reason for Challenges

It struggled to explain the phenomenon of **crime of pleasure and passion** or why some people exposed to "definitions favourable to crime" do not offend. This theory later defined into **Social Learning Theory**.

(G): Late 20th Century: Critical and Control Theories

(i) Social Control Theory

The theory was coined by **Travis Hirschi** **1969** which marked a paradigm shift from "why do people commit crime" to "why don't people commit crime?".

It assumes everyone is capable of crime.

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It embarked on the core idea that social bonds (attachment, commitment, involvement, belief) to conventional society prevent people from committing crimes. Weakened bonds leads to deviance.

This theory remains a highly influential and widely tested theory, but critics note it can be tautological (measuring a bond by the absence of crime).

(II) Labeling Theory

The Labeling Theory in 1963 was coined by Howard Becker who challenged the focus on the offender's act by focusing on the reaction of society and the state. The core idea of the theory suggests that Criminal behavior is a consequence of the process by which a person is labeled (i.e.: "deviant", "criminal") by official sources. This label can lead to secondary deviance as the person internalizes the identity.

Reason of challenge?

Critics argued that it failed to explain the initial cause (primary deviance) of the criminal act and seemed to suggest that by merely removing the label would stop the behavior, overlooking original responsibility.

(H) Critical Criminology (1970 onwards)

Influenced by **Marxism** and the conflict theory, it challenged the idea that law is neutral.

The core idea emphasizes that crime is a product of **social inequality, power struggles, and capitalism**. The law and Criminal Justice System primarily serve the interest of the powerful.