

The effects of “personal control” and “social control” on delinquency

Personal control denotes how the juvenile manages to resist using social unacceptable methods to reach his goals. This assessment of the individual control is based in the psychological diagnosis of the development of the “super-ego”. In this case conformity means that the individual accepts the rules and norms as his or her own, or submits to them as a rational control of behaviour in a social setting – a healthy super-ego. Delinquency denotes the opposite of this.

“Social control” is the ability of social groups or institutions to make norms or rules effective. Conformity resulting from social controls tends to involve submission to the rules and norms of society.

Reckless' theory

There are pushes (drives) and pulls which tend to tempt a person towards delinquency. Prevention requires the exercise of control by factors which insulate the individual against such temptations. Drives, pulls and insulation could arise within the individual or outside him.

Internal elements which push the individual towards criminality

*Psychological desires or propensities
(restlessness and aggression)*

External factors which may push towards criminality

- *Social pressures such as poverty, family conflicts and lack of opportunities*

Pull factors are generally external and might include the availability of illegitimate opportunities, criminal peer groups and some media images

Insulators or containments against criminality might be both internal or external

- Internal insulators – the psychological position of the individual such as the development of the super-ego; a sense of direction; the ability to find alternative legitimate fulfilment; a commitment to values or laws and feelings of responsibility

External insulators – a meaningful role to play in society, reasonable expectations, a sense of belonging and identity, supportive relationships, especially in the family, and adequate discipline.

A control theory based almost exclusively on individual aspects (Gottfredson and Hirshi).

The focus is on self-control formed by early childhood socialisation, particularly in the family.

Elements connected to criminality:

- lack of self-control of the individual
- the opportunity for committing crimes

If the opportunity to commit a crime arises, then the person with low self-control will commit it, while the person with high self-control will not

Self-control

a subjective state whereby an individual is more vulnerable to the temptations of the moment than is another

A person who lacks self-control:

- will lack diligence and tenacity
- will be impulsive
- will be unable to postpone gratifications
- is self-centred and indifferent to the needs and sufferings of other people
- is risk-taking, short sighted, non verbal and short-tempered;
- easily frustrated
- prefers physical activity to mental or cognitive experience

The second requirement for an offence to be committed is that the opportunity be present.

Opportunity:

- must clearly maximise immediate pleasure
- must involve simple mental and physical tasks
- must involve a low level of risk or detection

Sociological control theories

human beings are born with the freedom to break the law and will only be stopped from doing so either by preventing any opportunities arising, which would be not possible, or by controlling their behaviour in some way.

Law-breaking is natural, and law-abiding behaviour needs to be explained

Control theory does not mean that people who perform criminal activities lack morality; they just exhibit a different morality

Roshier (1989) claims that there are seven factors that can be used as rewards to persuade us to conform or, by their denial, as punishments to threaten us

1. Affection – the human need for affection is very strong and almost universal. Therefore, many people will refrain from criminality in fear of losing it
2. Status – the way people outside the family view us, e.g., colleagues and peers. Individuals need to elicit feelings such as respect and admiration from others. In most cases, fear of a bad reputation will act as a barrier to criminality. Equally, if the other person or group admires law-breaking, it can militate towards criminality

3. Stimulation – many obtain this directly through a job or from leisure activities; or vicariously through friends; or through fiction and the media. Punishment, whether by fines, community service or prison, removes or reduces these possibilities
4. Autonomy – most people need to feel their independence and power over their own destiny. If law-abiding ways of self-expressions are not present, then it might be that people will resort to criminality

5. Security – a desire for comfort and physical safety. Punishments often threaten this security by threatening the discomfort of prison, or by removing from us the money which can provide these comforts
6. Money – this is necessary for what it can obtain. Wealth may bring with it status, autonomy and security, and can be used to increase the number and types of stimulation available. It is therefore very important to conformity and control, which has meant that the fine is the most frequently used punishment in developed societies
7. Belief – something the individual chooses to accept