

# Criminological Theory Past To Present Essential Readings

Criminological Theory Past To Present Essential Readings Deciphering Crime A Journey Through Criminological Theory Essential Readings Past to Present Understanding crime isn't just about catching criminals it's about understanding the why behind their actions For centuries scholars have grappled with this complex question developing a rich tapestry of criminological theories This blog post serves as your guide through this fascinating field highlighting essential readings and offering practical applications to help you grasp these pivotal concepts Image A collage showcasing portraits of key figures in criminology Cesare Lombroso Emile Durkheim Robert Merton etc alongside relevant book covers

**Part 1 The Classical School Laying the Foundation 18th/19th Centuries** The Classical School spearheaded by thinkers like Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham shifted the focus from supernatural explanations of crime to rational choice They argued that individuals weighing potential pleasure against pain commit crimes when the perceived benefits outweigh the risks Essential Reading *On Crimes and Punishments* by Cesare Beccaria This foundational text advocates for humane and proportionate punishment emphasizing deterrence as the primary goal of the criminal justice system Practical Example Think about shoplifting The Classical School would argue that a shoplifter weighs the potential gain a desired item against the risk of being caught and punished a fine jail time A harsher penalty increased risk would theoretically deter the act

**Part 2 The Positivist School Beyond Free Will 19th/20th Centuries** The Positivist School countered the Classical School's emphasis on free will arguing that biological psychological and social factors influence criminal behavior Cesare Lombroso's work on born criminals is a controversial but significant example Essential Reading *The Criminal Man* by Cesare Lombroso This book while controversial today due to its flawed methodology is historically significant for introducing biological factors into the study of crime It's crucial to read it critically acknowledging its limitations

**2 Practical Example** Consider the impact of poverty and lack of opportunity on crime rates Positivist theories suggest that social factors like these can significantly increase the likelihood of criminal behavior Image A graph depicting crime rates correlated with socioeconomic factors

**Part 3 Sociological Theories The Social Context of Crime 20th Century onwards** Sociological theories examine the social structures and processes that contribute to crime These include Strain Theory Robert Merton Argued that societal pressure to achieve success when legitimate means are unavailable leads to crime Essential Reading *Social Theory and Social Structure* by Robert K Merton Practical Example An individual from a disadvantaged background might resort to drug dealing illegitimate means to achieve financial success societal goal Social Control Theory Travis Hirschi Focuses on the bonds that tie individuals to society suggesting that weak bonds increase the likelihood of deviance Essential Reading *Causes of Delinquency* by Travis Hirschi Practical Example Strong family ties and involvement in community activities can act as deterrents against criminal behavior Labeling Theory Howard Becker Examines how societal reactions to crime can shape an individual's identity and future behavior Essential

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