

Psychological Theories

There are many theories regarding psychological causes of crime, including:

- Intelligence and crime
- Psychoanalytic theories
- Psychoanalysis
- Humanistic psychological theory

Intelligence and Crime

The idea that crime is the product primarily of people of low intelligence has been popular occasionally in the United States.

A study in 1931 showed no correlation between intelligence and criminality.

Psychoanalytic Theories

Psychoanalytic theories of crime causation are associated with the work of Sigmund Freud who believed that people who had unresolved deep-seated problems were **psychopaths**.

psychopaths

Persons characterized by no sense of guilt, no subjective conscience, and no sense of right and wrong. They have difficulty in forming relationships with other people; they cannot empathize with other people. They are also called sociopaths or antisocial personalities.

Psychoanalysis

The principal policy implication of considering crime symptomatic of deep-seated problems is to provide psychotherapy or psychoanalysis in order to resolve the symptoms associated with the problems.

Psychoanalysis

The problems with the idea that criminals are biologically or psychologically “sick” are:

1. The bulk of the research on the issue suggests that most criminals are no more disturbed than the rest of the population.
2. Many people with psychological disturbances do not commit crimes.

Psychoanalysis

3. Psychoanalytic theory ignores environmental circumstances.
4. Much of the theoretical structure of psychotherapy is scientifically untestable.

Humanistic Psychological Theory

Abraham Maslow and Seymour Halleck developed theories similar to Freud's but based on the assumption that human beings are basically good.

Humanistic Psychological Theory

Maslow believed that human beings are motivated by five basic levels of needs, and that people choose crime because they cannot (or will not) satisfy their needs legally.

Humanistic Psychological Theory

Halleck views crime as one of several adaptations to the helplessness caused by oppression.