

# [Crime theory is a very complex area](https://assignbuster.com/crime-theory-is-a-very-complex-area/)

Crimetheory is a very complex area since the way crime is understood is continuallychanging and new theories are always being proposed and tested.

The way criminologistsview crime can be separated into two main groups including the orthodox viewand the radical view. The orthodox perspective takes a legalistic viewpoint andfocuses on crimes that are defined as crimes by the legal system. While theorthodox viewpoint claims to encompass behaviors defined as criminal by thelegal system, the main area of study is on street crimes and not white-collarcrimes (Lynch and Michalowski, 2010, p66-67).

The Radical viewpoint on the other hand, does not limit the focus tobehaviors that are defined as criminal by the legal system, but includesbehaviors that may not be defined as criminal, but still cause harm. Radicalcriminologists also focus on white-collar crimes and crimes against thepowerless carried out by the powerful. Understanding why some behaviors aredefined as criminal and punished while others are not, is another way theradical viewpoint differs from the orthodox (Lynch and Michalowski, 2010, p 67-69). While both street crime andwhite-collar crime cause harm and need to be studied, the difference in theamount of focus put on these crimes may not be proportional to the amount ofharm caused by these crimes. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation’sUniform Crime Report’s (UCR) 2016 published data, violentcrime includes murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault while propertycrimes include burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. It isestimated by the US Department of Justice that serious street crimes annuallyhave a financial cost of around $17 billion while the costs of fraud bybusinesses is around $400 billion as estimated by the Association of CertifiedFraud Examiners (Lynch and Michalowski, 2010, p 70-71).

These estimates oncrime rates can influence prevention, detection, and policies aimed at reducingcrimes. The costs of occupational crime on businesses have been welldocumented, however, this area has not seen very much empirical research bycriminologists.  The crimes committed bythose in positions of power have received the most attention by criminologistsand many occupational studies emphasize features of occupational offenders (VanGelder, & de Vries, 2016).   RadicalCriminologists have understood white-collar crime as crimes committed by thosein positions of power. The phrase white-collar crime was originally attributedto Sutherland who focused on the high-class nature of the white-collar criminalwhich was opposed to the popular explanation of crime that focused on poverty (Dorminey, Fleming, Kranacher, & Riley Jr., 2012).

While many white-collar crimes arecommitted by those in power, the scope of understanding must be widened toencompass many other types of white collar crimes. An example of this can beseen in occupation crime “ The Term Occupational Crime refers to crimescommitted through opportunities created in the course of a legal occupation” (Cromwell, & Birzer, 2013, p193). Occupational Crime is a type of white collar crime but can be committed by anemployee at any level and not just corporate elites. FraudTheories            There are many theories used that have proposed toexplain fraud and these theories have evolved over time. While Sutherland isgiven credit for the term white-collar crime, an individual he was mentoringcame up with the fraud triangle to explain how fraud occurs. Cressey arguesthat for an individual to commit a fraudulent act, there is a financialpressure, a way that an individual believes they can commit the fraud, and theact of excusing the behavior to the point that the perceived action is not seenas breaking any trust (Dorminey et, al.

, 2012). Whereas the fraud triangleexplains the circumstances surrounding fraudulent acts, the triangle of fraudaction explains what steps that are taken when committing a fraudulent act. Thetriangle of fraud action proposes that for a fraudulent action to occur, theremust be the act and how it was committed, concealment which includes coveringup the fraudulent action, and conversion which includes making it seem as ofthe fraudulent act was legitimate (Dorminey et, al.

, 2012). Movingpast the fraud triangle, the author discusses the fraud scale which was basedon an analysis of fraud conducted by Albrecht in the 1980’s. Albrecht claimedthat those who commit occupational fraud were not easy to put into specificgroups or identify characteristics of them and that fraud as a whole is not aneasy crime to anticipate. The fraud scale proposes that the higher the pressureon an individual, the greater the opportunity to commit fraud, and the lower anindividual’s personal integrity is, the greater the risk an individual willcommit fraud. The fraud scale also proposed that when pressure is low, thereare fewer opportunities to commit fraud, and when personal integrity is high, the chances of an individual committing fraud are lower (Dorminey et, al.

, 2012). Theacronym M. I. C. E. or money, ideology, coercion, and ego has also been used toexplain fraud. While the desire for money and ego or entitlement areself-explanatory, ideology refers to individuals who believe that they arecommitting the fraud for a higher cause or for a higher reason and the reasonsfor committing the fraud justifies why they commit it. Coercion is used as anexcuse for committing fraud and suggests that the only reason the individual committedthe fraud is because they were pressured into it by someone else (Dorminey et, al.

, 2012). Thefraud diamond has more layers than the previous theories discussed and includesthe abilities that different individuals who commit fraud have. The frauddiamond seeks to further the fraud triangle by adding in the differentattributes that may increase an individual’s ability to commit fraud. The frauddiamond includes the benefits individuals receive by committing fraud, the rolethat chances open to an individual to commit fraud play, and how individualsjustify the crime, but also places emphasis on the ways an individual’s traitsplay a role (Dorminey et, al., 2012).  TheA-B-C model for fraud looks at three different types of fraud by starting withthe individual and ending with societal explanations of fraud.

The A-B-C modelstarts with the individual or the bad apple, then a bad bushel or group, andbad crop or culture. The individual or bad apple focuses on the type of personwho commits fraud while the bad bushel addresses the characteristics of groupsthat can increase or decrease the chances of fraud. The bad crop on the otherhand is centered around higher-level issues such as a societal or businessesculture affect fraud (Dorminey et, al., 2012).  UsingCrime Prevention Through Environmental Design to Explain Occupational Crime            CrimePrevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a crime theory that focuseson the environment in which crimes take place and uses an analytical orproblem-solving techniques reduce crime. CPTED is unique because it encompassesmultiple theories and seeks to bring multiple parties in addition to lawenforcement in order to reduce crime or unwanted behavior. A goal of CPTED isto change various aspects of setting where crime can take place which includedetermining who is able to be in an area, ways to open space so that people inan area can be watched by others, and clearly define who has control over anarea and make sure the area is well sustained (Zahm, 2007). CPTED has been usedto reduce street crimes such as robberies and there is evidence to suggest thatit can be successful in these areas (Casteel & Peek-Asa 2000).

If there isresearch to suggest that CPTED can be useful in preventing robberies, then itmay be useful for reducing occupational fraud. Theenvironment is a key part of CPTED and controlling what is being done in thearea, who has access to the area, and making sure there are individuals whowill protect the area. Examples of this includes using paths, fences, gates, doors that limit access, signs, and guards to reduce crime in an area.

(Zahm, 2007). While these examples focus is on street crime prevention, the same techniquescan be applied to occupational fraud. Employees access to various financialsystems can be controlled, preventing access to systems when there are noguardians around, and making sure only employees who need access have access toareas that are susceptible to fraudulent activity. Designing areas forindividuals to be in the open using lighting, windows, and landscaping are waysCPTED can be used to prevent crime. (Zahm, 2007).

These same tactics can beused when combating occupational fraud through the use of multiple levels ofapproval for financial payments, oversight of what sites individuals are onduring work, setting up desks so that coworkers can see what employees are doing. CPTED seeks to prevent crime by keeping areas clearly defined and preventingareas from becoming run down (Zahm, 2007). This strategy can be applied tooccupational fraud by making sure that systems are continually updated so theyare not susceptible to fraud, clearly designating who has access to varioussystems and areas, and adding in cameras, locks, and alarms where they areneeded.   ConclusionThereare many different theories on how to prevent crime and many strategies forusing theory to reduce crime. New theories are being developed, tested, andchanged continually and strategies for implementing them go through a similarprocess. If there is research to support a crime prevention theory on one areaor for one type of crime, then it is possible that it may work in other areasor for other types of crime and research should be done to test them.

Thispaper sough to expose a gap in the research for fraud theory and propose usinga CPTED model for reducing occupational fraud. Given how criminologistsevaluate crimes and the harm they cause, it is important to innovate and fillthe gaps in research while strengthening prior research.