

Criminological theory into action

[Science](#)



Criminological Theory into Action Ashley Willis American InterContinental University Abstract Criminological Theory is the backbone of criminal policy. What is understood through the study of criminals can accurately be used to enhance the criminal system. This paper looks at three criminal policies (Expungement of Records, DARE, and Rehabilitation Programs) through the lens of criminological theory. The focus of the paper is primarily on Juvenile offenders, as I hope to work in the juvenile system upon graduation. Turning Criminological Theory into Action

Criminological theories provide important information regarding the motives for crime and understanding the individual criminal. However, one of the most important applications of criminological theory is the development of policy from it. This paper looks at three policies: Expungement of Records, D. A. R. E, and Rehabilitation programs with the attempt at making theoretical connections to them. Expungement of Records The expungement process includes the destroying or sealing of criminal records (Funk & Polsby, 1998).

After a criminal is convicted of a crime, they may apply for expungement but is usually only granted if the criminal proves that they are rehabilitated or if they enter expungement as a bargain with the state for turning over evidence in a related or unrelated case. The most applicable form of expungement, however, occurs when a Juvenile's records are sealed as they enter adulthood (Funk & Polsby, 1998). This is a controversial policy, as some professionals feel that expungement is a method of excusing crime that has an overall negative effect on recidivism (Funk & Polsby, 1998).

The theoretical framework for expungement of records is Labeling Theory (Funk & Polsby, 1998). Born out of the humanistic movements of the 60's <https://assignbuster.com/criminological-theory-into-action/>

and 70's, labeling theory boldly states that society is to blame for delinquency (Funk & Polsby, 1998). However, the theory goes further to explain the repercussions of holding onto criminal records, particularly for youth (Funk & Polsby, 1998). Howard Becker (1963) described this effect beautifully when he stated " deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an ' offender'.

The deviant is one to whom the label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label" (Funk & Polsby, 1998). While it is clear that expungement is not a good choice for every juvenile or criminal with a record, one can definitely see, through the lens of labeling theory that it is necessary in some cases. Walking through life with the label ' criminal' will help the individual stay in that mindset and lead to future criminal activity. A lot of how an individual functions in society relies on the labels they carry.

In certain cases, removing the criminal label may be the boost that juveniles, or other criminals may need to shed their criminal skin and move forward to more productive labels. D. A. R. E D. A. R. E is one of the most recognizable programs for drug prevention among American youth. " Used in nearly 80% of the school districts in the United States, in 54 other countries around the world" (Hason, 2007), D. A. R. E intends to make children aware of the implications of drug and alcohol use.

During these programs, drug culture is explained (so that the child knows what to look for in a drug user), the dangers of drug use is explained and drugs, alcohol and tobacco are all shown to the children in the classroom as <https://assignbuster.com/criminological-theory-into-action/>

associated imagery so that the child may report any drug use in the homes or know what they are facing when presented with peer pressure. Although generally viewed by society as a positive program, evidence stacks up to support the ineffectiveness of DARE programs (Hason, 2007).

Proponents of the program argue this belief: " In Houston, Texas, where a study showed a shocking 29% increase in drug usage and a 34% increase in tobacco usage among students participating in DARE, the police chief defended it by saying he would use the results to ' fine-tune the program to better serve the children'. " (Hason, 2007) One has to wonder what goes wrong here. The program is designed to inhibit drug use among the youth of our society; why is it that it is actually failing them? Criminological Theory can both back up and disprove DARE programs.

The program itself operates to combat the effect of Neutralization Theory (Goode, 2012). Neutralization theory requires that the individual rationalizes the act of drug use before doing it; they may state that what they were doing wasn't harmful or that it didn't hurt anybody; they may deny responsibility or turn it around on the adults who condemn them (Goode, 2012). What the DARE program does is tries to take away the denial so that society can easily say back to the user: " You knew the dangers, you are responsible.

You took a DARE program and were warned of the dangers and you were also given tools to help resist the temptation and walk away from it". In theory, DARE takes the denial out of the act. However, the program ignores the danger of exposing children, who would otherwise not be exposed to the subculture of drug use (Goode, 2012). Differential Association theory states that all behavior is learned and thus drug abuse is no different (Goode, 2012).

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For every child that is setting in DARE class and thinking about the negative consequences of drug use, there is likely a child which is picking up on the techniques of drug usage (Goode, 2012).

Since the programs go into such detail regarding drug and alcohol use, it can actually work as an educational program or motivating factor for some. For those kids who don't want to conform; who want to play the ' bad guy' role, DARE is likely to open doors rather than close them, as is their intended purpose. Rehabilitation Programs Rehabilitation programs must be implemented into a corrections system, if that system is to become effective (Southerland, 2012). It is much safer to say that a criminal will be less likely to commit crime once reintroduced to society, if they have gone through a rehabilitation program.

Many models exist for rehabilitation programs exist but most of them try to explain the reasons why offenders are committing criminal acts in the first place (Southerland, 2012). From this analysis, the offender is given a program that fits their personal needs (Southerland, 2012). One of the cornerstones of rehabilitation programs is teaching offenders ' coping skills' (Southerland, 2012). If the offender is charged with a drug related crime, they may be taught methods for resisting drugs; if the crime is theft, they may be coached on finding a job so that themotivationfor theft can be removed.

The idea is that the offender comes out of the system with the ability to function in society; whereas they were having issues before. Agnew's Strain theory basically states that societal strain leads to criminal activity (Florida State University, n. d.). These strains can be classified as " failureto achieve <https://assignbuster.com/criminological-theory-into-action/>

positively valued stimuli...the loss of positively valued stimuli...the presentation of negative stimuli” (Florida State University, n. d.). While it is not possible to ‘ fix’ a criminals life and give them everything they need; it is possible to give the criminal techniques for dealing with these types of strain.

It is the aim of the rehabilitation program to provide criminals with tools to combat this strain. If you give a criminal a resume and interview class, they are more likely to get a job. If you give a criminal with a drug problem drug rehabilitation, they are more likely to keep that job and theoretically speaking, if the criminal has a job they will be less likely to feel societal strain (Florida State University, n. d.). It is important to learn criminological theories in order to enhance insight into the criminal motive.

However, it is most important to understand how much these theories relate to the criminal system and policies which are implemented to protect the individual from the draw of criminality. As an aspirin professional in this field, the study of criminological theory is both necessary and ongoing. References Florida State University. (n. d.). Robert Agnew's General Strain Theory. Retrieved from Florida State University: <http://www.criminology.fsu.edu/crimtheory/agnew.htm> Funk, T. M. , & Polsby, D. D. (1998).

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