

Lecture 6:

from correlates to causal models: biology and psychology

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theory

- Why not skip all the boring theories and just deal with the real?
  - Movies or documentaries about delinquency
  - "War stories"
  - Journalistic/descriptive accounts
- What are the criteria for good theories?
  - Logical consistency
  - Generality
  - Testability
  - Empirical Validity
  - Usefulness!

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levels

- What are we trying to explain
- Which level of analysis is most important?
  - Individual
  - Group
  - Society
  - Time
  - Situation

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## causality

- Criteria for establishing causality?
  - Association
  - Temporal order
  - Lack of spuriousness

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## biology and psychology

- Origins: Biological positivism and Lombroso (1905) p. 72 quote
  - Darwin's *Origins* (1859) and *Descent* (1871)
  - Criminals resemble "*primitive races*"
- Today: twin studies and interactions between heredity and environment

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## neuropsychology

- Terrie Moffitt's (1993) Typology
  - "Life-course persistent" (LCP) vs "adolescent-limited" (AL)
  - Onset of LCP is (way) earlier
    - tied to deficit disorder and learning problems
  - AL follow age-crime curve
    - Fewer deficits, more opportunities
  - Complicated picture today

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## individual treatment

"We don't need no stinking theories..."

- 1915 Chicago: Healy's individualized treatment
  - Early identification, classification, and treatment
- Prediction
  - Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) and the Glueck Social Prediction Table
  - False positives and false negatives
  - Inaccurate 50-75% of time
- Prevention
  - The Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study
  - No diff in school, personality & family
  - No diff in delinquency (29% experimental versus 28% control at follow-up)

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## Lundman's pessimism

- "Prevention projects don't work and they waste money, violate the rights of juveniles and their families, inspire bizarre suggestions and programs, and fail to affect the known correlates of urban delinquency" [**ouch**]
- Need a theory, or set of related ideas about causes of delinquency, to prevent or control it

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## Recent optimism

- Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising ([www.soc.umn.edu/~uggen/4141](http://www.soc.umn.edu/~uggen/4141))
  - Perry preschool (1962)
  - Nurse home visits (1990s)
- Promising
  - family counseling
  - esp. multi-systemic therapy (MST) for serious and chronic offenders

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## next

- Rational choice and deterrence theories
  - Recommended: B&B Chapter 7
- Scared straight policy response
  - Lundman Chapter 7
- Cobain Chapters 11 and 12

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