

Control Theories

Criminal Justice

Two theories that ask why most people conform rather than why some offend.

Social bond theory

- Asks why people conform, not why they offend
- Attachment to others whose view matters
- Commitment to a stake worth losing
- Involvement in conventional activity
- Belief in the legitimacy of the rules

Self-control theory

- Low self-control formed early, then stable
- Impulsive, risk-seeking, short time horizon
- Predicts accidents and ill health as well
- Criticised as close to circular reasoning
- Later work finds self-control can change

THE DIFFERENCE THAT MATTERS

Both explain restraint rather than motive: assume the temptation, then explain who resists it.

Educational reference. The claim that self-control is fixed after childhood is contested by later longitudinal work.