

## Access to Higher Education Unit

This unit forms part of an Access to HE Diploma. If delivering the graded version of this unit, please refer to the Provider Handbook for details on grading descriptors and the application of these across units within your programme.

**Unit Title:** Psychological Explanations for Violent Crime

**Graded Unit Reference Number:**

**Ungraded Unit Reference Number:**

**Module:** Criminology; Psychology

**Level:** Three [3]

**Credit Value:** Six [6]

**Minimum Guided Learning Hours:** 60

Learning Outcome (The Learner will):	Assessment Criterion (The Learner can):
1. Understand the principles of psychoanalytic theories in relation to violent crime	1.1 Discuss psychoanalytic theories of violent crime with reference to Freud's theory of personality.
	1.2 Evaluate Bowlby's theories of maternal deprivation and affectionless psychopathy.
2. Understand the principles of learning theories and their explanations for violent offending	2.1 Assess the relevance of Edwin Sutherland's differential association theory to an understanding of violent crime.
	2.2 Evaluate the contribution of social learning theorists such as Bandura and Akers in explaining violent crime.
3. Understand the principles of cognitive theories in relation to violent crime	3.1 Outline the work of Yochelson and Samenow in their study, The Criminal Personality.
	3.2 Analyse how Piaget and Kohlberg's theories of moral development can be used to reduce violent offending.
4. Understand theories that link mental health illnesses, as well as developmental and personality disorders, to violent behaviours	4.1 Outline statistical evidence that links mental health illnesses, developmental disorders and personality disorders to violent behaviour.

Learning Outcome (The Learner will):	Assessment Criterion (The Learner can):
	4.2 Evaluate studies that link schizophrenia and psychopathy to violent crime.

**Indicative Content**  
 Learners could cover the following:  
 (The information below is provided for guidance only and is not mandatory)

LO1	<p><b>AC1.1</b>  <b>Psychoanalytic explanations of violent crime</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of psychoanalytic theory and its assumptions about human behaviour</li> <li>• Freud’s structure of personality:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>Id</b> (instincts and drives; pleasure principle)</li> <li>◦ <b>Ego</b> (reality principle; decision-making)</li> <li>◦ <b>Superego</b> (moral conscience; internalised social norms)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Role of unconscious conflict and repression in shaping behaviour</li> <li>• Aggression and the death instinct (Thanatos) as explanations for violent behaviour</li> <li>• How imbalance between the id, ego and superego may contribute to impulsive or violent offending</li> <li>• Defence mechanisms (e.g. displacement, projection, rationalisation) and their relevance to violent acts</li> </ul> <p><b>AC1.2</b>  <b>Bowlby and early attachment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bowlby’s theory of attachment and maternal deprivation</li> <li>• Critical periods in emotional development and formation of internal working models</li> <li>• Concept of <b>affectionless psychopathy</b> and its characteristics</li> <li>• Links between disrupted early attachment, empathy deficits, and later offending</li> <li>• Evidence used to support Bowlby’s claims (e.g. studies of juvenile offenders)</li> <li>• Evaluation considerations: methodological issues, determinism, social sensitivity, alternative explanations</li> </ul>
LO2	<p><b>AC2.1</b>  <b>Differential association theory</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core principles of Edwin Sutherland’s differential association theory</li> <li>• Criminal behaviour as learned through interaction and communication</li> <li>• Role of frequency, duration, priority and intensity of exposure to violent behaviours</li> <li>• Learning of values, attitudes, techniques and rationalisations for violence</li> <li>• Application of the theory to violent crime (e.g. gang violence, domestic abuse)</li> <li>• Strengths and limitations: difficulty measuring learning, neglect of biological factors, real-world applicability</li> </ul> <p><b>AC2.2</b>  <b>Social learning theory</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bandura’s social learning theory: imitation, modelling, and vicarious reinforcement</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role of observation, identification and perceived reward in violent behaviour</li> <li>• Key concepts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Attention</li> <li>◦ Retention</li> <li>◦ Reproduction</li> <li>◦ Motivation</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Akers' reinforcement and punishment model</li> <li>• Influence of media, family, peers and subcultures on violent offending</li> <li>• Evaluation: supporting research, problems with causation, ethical issues, and policy implications</li> </ul>
LO3	<p><b>AC3.1</b></p> <p><b>The criminal personality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of Yochelson and Samenow's longitudinal study <i>The Criminal Personality</i></li> <li>• Key cognitive traits associated with violent offenders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Egocentric thinking</li> <li>◦ Hostile attribution bias</li> <li>◦ Poor impulse control</li> <li>◦ Resistance to authority</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Thinking errors and distorted beliefs that justify or minimise violent behaviour</li> <li>• Methodology of the study and its contribution to offender profiling</li> <li>• Evaluation: sample issues, gender bias, lack of predictive validity</li> </ul> <p><b>AC3.2</b></p> <p><b>Moral development and violence reduction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Piaget's stages of moral development</li> <li>• Kohlberg's levels and stages of moral reasoning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Pre-conventional</li> <li>◦ Conventional</li> <li>◦ Post-conventional</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Links between immature moral reasoning and violent offending</li> <li>• How cognitive and moral reasoning interventions may reduce violence</li> <li>• Use of cognitive behavioural approaches in rehabilitation programmes</li> <li>• Strengths and criticisms of moral development theories in criminal justice contexts</li> </ul>
LO4	<p><b>AC4.1</b></p> <p><b>Statistical and theoretical links</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of mental health, developmental disorders and personality disorders</li> <li>• Statistical patterns linking certain disorders with increased risk of violence</li> <li>• Consideration of prevalence rates versus actual risk</li> <li>• The role of comorbidity (e.g. substance misuse and mental illness)</li> <li>• Socio-environmental factors that mediate violence risk (poverty, stigma, access to treatment)</li> <li>• Ethical issues surrounding labelling and discrimination</li> </ul> <p><b>AC4.2</b></p> <p><b>Schizophrenia and psychopathy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Characteristics and symptoms of schizophrenia (positive and negative symptoms)</li> <li>• The psychodynamic and cognitive features of psychopathy</li> </ul>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Research evidence linking these conditions to violent crime</li><li>• Critical evaluation of causation versus correlation</li><li>• Media representation and moral panic surrounding mental illness and violence</li><li>• Implications for treatment, risk management, and criminal responsibility</li></ul> |
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