

Classical criminology is a theoretical framework that focuses on the concept of free will and rational decision-making in the commission of crime. The ideas associated with classical criminology have informed evidence-based policing, which seeks to use research and data to guide law enforcement practices. In this essay, I will discuss how classical criminology informs evidence-based policing using drug crime as an example.

Classical criminology is based on the idea that individuals are rational beings who choose to commit crimes after weighing the benefits and risks of their actions. According to this theory, people will only commit crimes if they perceive the benefits of doing so to be greater than the potential costs.

This means that if the risks associated with drug crime are increased, individuals will be less likely to engage in this type of criminal behaviour. Classical criminology emphasises the importance of swift and certain punishment to deter crime. Evidence-based policing is a philosophy that advocates for the use of empirical research and data to guide law enforcement practices. This approach emphasises the importance of using research to understand the causes of crime and to develop effective strategies for preventing and reducing criminal activity. Some models of evidence-based policing include Problem-Oriented Policing (POP), Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment (SARA), and hotspot policing. POP is a problem-solving approach that focuses on addressing the underlying causes of crime rather than simply responding to criminal activity. SARA is a problem-solving model that emphasises the importance of data analysis and community engagement in developing effective strategies for crime prevention. Hotspot policing involves focusing law enforcement resources on specific areas where crime is known to be concentrated.

Classical criminology can be used to understand the reasoning behind these evidence-based policing methods. For example, the emphasis on swift and certain punishment in classical criminology supports the use of hotspot policing, which seeks to target high-crime areas and deter criminal activity through increased police presence. Additionally, the focus on addressing underlying causes of crime in POP and SARA aligns with the classical criminology idea that reducing the benefits of crime will deter individuals from engaging in criminal activity.

When applied to drug crime, evidence-based policing and classical criminology suggest that effective strategies for reducing drug-related criminal activity should focus on increasing the perceived costs of engaging in drug-related behavior. This could include using hotspot policing to target areas with high drug activity, as well as developing programs to address the underlying causes of drug addiction and drug-related crime.

One strength of classical criminology is its emphasis on deterrence and the idea that swift and certain punishment can deter criminal activity. However, critics argue that this approach ignores the social and economic factors that contribute to criminal

behaviour. Evidence-based policing is often criticised for its heavy reliance on quantitative data, which may overlook the qualitative experiences of those affected by criminal activity. In conclusion, classical criminology informs evidence-based policing by emphasising the importance of swift and certain punishment to deter criminal behaviour. Models such as POP, SARA, and hotspot policing align with the principles of classical criminology and can be used to address drug crime and other types of criminal activity. While classical criminology and evidence-based policing have strengths, they must be applied in conjunction with a nuanced understanding of the social, economic, and cultural factors that contribute to criminal behaviour.

