

Criminal theories

Law



Criminal Theories

Criminology studies why an individual commits crimes and what influences them to behave in a given way. Understanding the reason that causes someone to commit crime provides an appropriate way to determine how to rehabilitate such a person (Cole, Smith and DeJong 9). Various theories have been used to explain criminal behaviors and reasons from committing crime. This paper evaluates rational choice, routine, and behavior theories in relation to crime.

Rational Choice Theory

Those who hold this theory argue that some people will commit crime based on certain circumstances. Before deciding to commit a crime, the criminal weighs out the possible results of his action including the risk of arrest, the severity of the punishment if apprehended and also the reward in monetary terms, as well as esteem with their peers or individual enjoyment (Siegel 105). The difficulty in committing the crime also counts, as well as whether the rewards are worth the effort and even the best place to commit the crime, within his neighborhood or elsewhere. If the risks perceived are small, the rewards and excitement high, the criminal gains the likelihood of committing the crime again. On the other hand, if the risks outweigh the rewards, the offender foregoes the crime: if they have a good chance of apprehension, the fear of punishment or consequences, damage to their reputation and feelings of guilt or shame (Cole, Smith and DeJong 64). Other evaluations include familiarity with the target and how easy it is to commit the crime.

Routine Activity Theory

In this theory, the criminal uses opportunistic everyday routines that involve <https://assignbuster.com/criminal-theories/>

the family such as shopping, work, leisure and schooling. These, together with factors such as lack of a guardian, the presence of a target and the motivated criminal are the context for criminal opportunities (Siegel 71). The guardian's presence would deter potential offenders from committing the crime for instance door staff, security guards, police patrols, neighbors and friends. The target should be accessible and may include an expensive car, goods that can be easily moved or expensive jewelry, while the offender may be an addict, teenage boys or unemployed people. These three elements must be present within a routine activity for crime to take place (Schmallegger 182). For instance, many homes are left unguarded during the day, making them targets of crime. The possibility of a crime being committed by the motivated offender increases when there is an accessible target and the absence of a capable guardian.

Behavior Theory

This theory argues that humans develop actions from learning experiences. People may alter their behavior according to the elicited response from others (Siegel 121). Thus, rewards support a particular behavior while punishments extinguish another. Crime, especially violent acts, is viewed as life responses that have been learnt. People are not born possessing abilities to act in violent ways but rather learn through experiences in their lives (Schmallegger 231). Though physical and mental traits may cause a person to be predisposed to violence, their violent tendencies are activated by environmental factors. Children who modeled their behavior around violent adults most likely pick up the behavior and sometimes the patterns of violence persist even in relationships. For instance, a young boy who grew watching his father beat up the mother will most likely be violent towards his

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wife and children. Similarly, children who watch violent programs and movies will most likely acquire violent behavior, and even engage in violent criminal acts.

Thus, rational choice theory postulates pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain as the motivation to crime. Routine theory observes criminal intentions, suitable target and absence of a capable guardian as acting towards promoting crime. Behavior theory observes that criminal behavior results from learning. The understanding of these theories would be critical in finding appropriate strategies to rehabilitate the affected persons.

Works Cited

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