

Criminal thinking essay sample



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What motivates a person to commit murder? Why an individual is violent hinges on two opposing theories. Berry-Dee and Morris (How to Make a Serial Killer, 2008) conclude that it is a matter of nature and nurture. Conversely, Samenow (Inside the Criminal Mind, 2004) argues that it is a matter of choice, influenced by their thought process.

This controversial issue can affect the sentence in a murder case in that an insanity plea can lessen the sentence whereas if the murderer is held responsible for his own actions, he will get the maximum penalty. Berry-Dee and Morris differ from Samenow in their theory, background, influences, perceptions, use of language and evidence to argue the reasons why killers commit murder. Berry-Dee and Morris state that killers come from a long history of abuse and parental distortion (2008).

According to the FBI (2008), recent research indicates that how an adult relates to society is dependent on the quality of attachment with their parents and caregivers, and the extent of violence they were exposed to as children. Their findings indicate that “ a child’s adverse upbringing can increase the risk of problems with self-control” (2008), or that the killer was insane during the act of murder. Samenow argues that violent criminals chose to commit murder, and know right from wrong; their crimes require detailed planning, logic and self control.

Most children with these same backgrounds do not become criminals (2004), while many who had a very stable childhood did. Christopher Berry-Dee is an author, former Special Forces HM Royal Marines Commando ‘ Green Beret’ Intelligence Officer, Director of ‘ The Criminology Research Institute’ and

owner of 'The New Criminologist', the oldest (45 years) and most prestigious criminology journal in the world. He has made movies and TV documentaries and is consulted by the FBI.

He has Criminal Thinking interviewed more serial killers than anyone alive today, and associates with a full scope of criminal justice professionals, along with the leading mafia from the USA to Eastern Europe (www.amityvillemurders.com p. 1). His detailed interviews with serial killers has influenced his perception regarding violent criminality. His military background may have influenced his perception of senseless murder as a weakness or defect.

Berry-Dee's co-author, Steve Morris, is editor of The New Criminologist, a documentary true crime consultant, TV researcher and an international authority on the study of serial murder and sex crime (amityvillefaq.com). This experience has molded his perception, which concurs with Berry-Dee's. Though these two authors have extensive experience and gained knowledge by interviewing criminals, Samenow argues that due a criminal's propensity toward dishonesty, the information collected from interviews is unreliable.

He further contends that criminals consider themselves victims of society rather than victimizers to it, therefore distorting the facts gathered from the previous authors (2004) Stanton E. Samenow, Ph. D. , is a clinical Psychologist, has spent thirty-four years researching, consulting and providing expert witness in reference to criminal behavior (2004). This knowledge has reversed his previous perceptions that people who turned to crime were victims of psychological disorder, an oppressive social

environment, or an advantaged background which was led astray by poor parenting or peer pressure (2004).

Both books, though they conflict, contain professional and appropriate (no slang or profanity), language within the text and their vocabulary was easily understood. Barry-Dee and Morris use auxiliaries like could and can, which are vague and lack authority: "...we hope to show how widely different backgrounds and upbringings can lead to the same result-an Criminal Thinking unrepentant serial killer" (2008). Samenow is more resolute in that he uses absolutes like is, not and are.

Criminals think differently from responsible people. What must change is how the offender views himself and the world. Focusing on forces outside the criminal is futile" (2004). This is far more compelling and resonates a stronger tone. The authors' points were effectively presented based on extensive research. Berry-Dee and Morris conducted multiple interviews with sadistic killers, concluding that they became murderers due to some inherent defect or violent upbringing, or that their behavior was beyond their control.

These authors, however, lack the expertise that Samenow possesses, which posits more reliable validity to his findings. He states that "...no matter how bizarre or repugnant the crime, he is rational, calculating, and deliberate in his actions-not mentally ill" (2004). Dr. Samenow psychologically analyzes the same information from interviews and concludes that criminals are accountable for choosing to murder, which is evident by their controlled and calculated behavior.

The authors' evidence is based on criminal interviews and their distinct expertise in criminality. Their perceptions were influenced by what these violent criminals told them, which were usually unreliable due to fabrications. Though they have many years of experience with violent criminals, the determining factor distinguishing the validity of the opposing arguments is Samenow's Ph. D. in psychology, making his conclusions more tenable than Berry-Dee and Morris on criminal thinking.