

CRM101 INTRODUCTION TO CRIMINOLOGY

Assessment Task 2 major essay

“Describe the key dimensions and trends of a major area of crime and the relevance of crime theories in explaining the problem. “

To complete this task you should choose:

- the large area of crime covered in either week 5 or week 6 of the course, and
- two of the following three areas of crime theory: psychological, sociological or interactionist

Name: Jacob Gordon Francis Cumner

Student number: 1090587

Tutorial time : WED 08:00AM - 10:00AM

Tutor's name: Bricklyn Horne

Word count: 2054

Referencing Style: Harvard



theories

Crime ~~theory~~ hold an important place in the criminological field. Many theories of crime can provide valuable insight about criminal behaviour which can form a foundation for the field to better assist in reducing crime. These theories gravitate around explaining backgrounds, prior behaviours or risk factors that can result in criminal behaviour which allows criminologists to make predictions relating to these crimes and the criminals that commit them (Mazerolle 2015). However, with the constantly shifting societal changes, these theories are continually being assessed so that they can stand the test of time and space, allowing these theories to be widely applicable (Mazerolle 2015). These theories are categorised into three major groups based on their focus: psychological, social and interactionist.

Psychological theories attempt to describe emotional or biological causal connections to the crime whereas social based theories seem to connect underlying cause of the crime to how society is structured (Bull 2015, Smallbone & McKillop 2015). Hereby, understanding these theories in relation to crimes, which describe the underlying motivation or reason, can assist criminologists ^{to} identify, describe, prevent and treat against major crimes, both violent and non-violent in nature. One of the more prevalent violent crimes in Australia is the occurrence of domestic violence (~~ABS.gov.au 2015~~). Several theories exist to explain why domestic violence occurs so frequently, particularly theories relating to psychological and societal basis. Here, this essay will detail some of the theories surrounding domestic violence and their impact.

Violent crimes are often caused by an offender that uses or threatens to use force on a victim (Cartwright 2015). This can include crimes where the violent act has an aim as well as crimes in which violence has no purpose or premeditation, typically as a result of rage. This results in a large category which covers a number of different crimes including homicide, kidnapping/abductions, assaults, stalking and domestic violence (Cartwright 2015). In particular, domestic violence has been of increasing focus in past decades by law enforcement and crime professionals due to increasing prevalence, insidious nature and its potential to result in more serious and fatal conclusions. Domestic violence is defined as abuse towards family members, most commonly a spouse, which can include verbal or emotional assaults, sexual assault and physical assaults which can often ultimately lead to homicides. In Australia, domestic violence is so wide spread it currently accounts for an estimated average of 640 victims per 100,000 persons, where the victims and aggressors can be of any gender, age and socioeconomical background (ABS.gov.au 2015). However, some

of these factors can be biased, such as women typically being victims of violent male attackers. A survey by IVAWS (International Violence Against Women Survey) was conducted in December 2002 and June 2003 that interviewed 6,677 women aged 18 to 69 years in Australia about experiences with violent current and/or former male partners. This survey indicated that 34% of women experienced one form of violence during their life time where 1% of these women experienced sexual violence by a partner (Cartwright 2015). Hereby, exemplifying an obvious trend that persists in domestic violence that contribute to potential theories around the crime. Crime theories can be utilised to better understand the offenders' behaviour. Psychological theory could help explain behavioural theories and social learning theories that underpin reasons why an offender may resort to domestic violence (Smallbone & McKillop 2015). Social theory can help to understand even further with a strong grasp of human society through the feminist theory (Bull 2015). Together, these theories can detail the cause of an offender's motive, which can assist in resolving, treating and potentially preventing further domestic violence.

Psychological theories of crime act to aid in understanding of how individuals can behave in the manner that they do (Smallbone & McKillop 2015). This theory often focuses on the individual's mind, upbringing and the situations that individuals find themselves in to lead to this behaviour. For instance, difficult childhood experiences are often associated with criminal or delinquent behaviour later in life due to developing psychological abnormalities or abnormal familial or societal roles (Smallbone & McKillop 2015). One particular sub-theory that explains some of these psychological phenomena is the use of social learning theory. This social learning theory suggests a person's behaviour can be learnt or modelled from the environment and people observed (Bandura 1977). Therefore, this emphasises the necessity to understand the people or environment that a particular person is involved with. In particular, adolescents and children still developing cognitive function in their formative years are particularly sensitive to their social environment. Here, if the child is surrounded by abuse, crime and neglect, they can often develop a warped understanding of society, authority and family bonds which may contribute to criminal behaviour (Bandura, Ross & Ross 1963). A strong example of this is the notorious hitman and psychopath, Richard Kuklinski, whom experienced physical and emotional abuse from his parents from early childhood (Biography.com 2016). Additionally, Kuklinski later grew to abuse his own wife, presumably due to observing this behaviour between his own parents (Thio 2004). Unfortunately, this is

not an isolated occurrence where children often grow up in hostile environments, similar to this example, later commit domestic violence in their adult lives.

Domestic violence is commonly considered a vicious cycle, where children witnessing parental violent disputes can often repeat this with their later partners ~~and so on~~. This is perfectly modelled by the social learning theory due to the intergenerational transmission of this violence. In 1992, it was estimated that at least a third of children, witness parental domestic violence where some experience repeat occurrences (Straus 1992). This had rapidly increased to an estimated 59% of children witnessing domestic violence in Australian homes, based on a 2005 study (ABS.gov.au 2006). Correlating to this is the steady increase in domestic violence rates, which may be due the aforementioned cycle. To support this, a 2013 study analysed adolescents that either did (47% of participants) or did not witness parental domestic violence and how that affected their later life based on observed aggression to close friends. It was revealed that, for males only, witnessing domestic violence between parents increased the relative risk of perpetrating violence by 2.70 fold, compared to their non-violence-witnessing counterparts (Mandal & Hindin 2013). This data indicates that the social learning theory may indeed be strongly implemented in this vicious cycle of domestic violence, where understanding what it entails can help prevent its perpetration. Social learning theory indicates that younger children are the unfortunate likely perpetrators of furthering this vicious cycle. Hereby, counselling children that witness this domestic violence by reinforcement of proper family values, limiting violent attitudes and educating on proper conflict resolution could provide as an effective preventative measure to limit further perpetration (Amir & Aslinia 2010). In addition to this, parents could be educated on the effects of domestic violence to the children by public service announcements, similar to the recent 2016 Australian Family domestic violence campaign which had emphasised 'ending the violent cycle' (ABC News 2016). Domestic violence is a serious problem in Australia, however, by applying psychological theory of social learning, better understanding of the issue and how to reconcile it can reduce the unfortunately high domestic violence rates.

Where most types of crime theory seem to focus on biological or psychological underpinnings of crime, sociological theories focus on studying human behaviour in society. Unlike, biological reasoning which focus on the individual and their abnormalities, sociological theories of crimes believe that the societal setting creates the conditions or

environment that would motivate a person or group of people to commit crime (Bull 2015). This could describe individuals that were not born as criminals, as a biological theory would suggest, but become criminals due to circumstance established by the current state in society (Zembroski 2011). For instance, this could describe the trend between the lower socioeconomic classes, established by society's treatment of the poor, and their high crime rates in crimes such as petty theft or burglary to retrieve food or funds (ABS.gov.au 2013). Commonly, sociological theories focus on inequality in society as the underpinning causes of crime. In particular, the feminist theory focuses on gender inequality as an underlying causal link to crimes, particularly those violent or sexual in nature (Bull 2015). Here, it is females that seem to be more disadvantaged than males, prone to be on the receiving end of domestic violence or sexual abuse. In this society, and many others, women are considered commodities, used for child rearing and raising, housekeeping and sexual objects (Siegel 2005). Often conflicts arise if a woman tries to break this mould or men become insecure due to the increasing female power resulting in a resentment that could escalate to violence (Siegel 2005, p255). Sociological explanations such as the feminist theory can assist in understanding domestic violence causes and may aid in prevention from a societal perspective.

Feminist theory can help us understand how and why crimes like domestic violence occur, be it physical or emotional in households across Australia. It also features heavily on how gender can be incorporated in statistics. For instance, official statistics have found about that 80% to 90% of violent crimes are committed by males, where women are the victims of sexual assault at a rate of approximately 85% and abductions at 55%, indicating a bias towards women as victims and males as the perpetrators (Bull 2015). This is certainly reflected in domestic violence, where an obvious skew is present detailing women as the predominate victims. Feminist theory could explain that this occurs based on the current societal structure, where women are still considered the weaker sex. As such, these women can become the victims due to being considered weaker, physically and emotionally (Siegel 2005). Yet, at the same time, this theory pins males as always being the aggressor in domestic violence, which is not entirely the case (ABS.gov.au 2015). While women may not perform physical violence, they can be very aggressive in terms of emotional abuse. Violence towards women in domestic violence far outweighs violence from women, however, the emotional abuse is almost equal between both genders in domestic violence setting (ABS.gov.au 2014). Hereby, describing a limitation to the feminist theory that must be considered when looking at

domestic violence statistics and victims. The understanding of the feminist theory in crime can assist in understanding underlying causes of domestic violence, where this understanding can be translated to prevention or treatment measures. For instance, female victims or targets of domestic violence can be educated on the typical danger signs exerted by men, such as early resentment or ongoing power struggles with their partner, to act as a preventative measure (Walker 1984). Similarly, perpetrator programmes may assist in reconciling destructive behaviour to assist in reshaping their actions towards women (Diemer *et al* 2013). Furthermore, understanding the limitations for this theory, such as the common notion of women as victims and males as the perpetrators, can help understanding why male victims of domestic violence may not report their attacker, where it is considered shameful to admit women as the offender (Drijber *et al* 2012). Overall, understanding the feminist theory and its limitations can help both men and women in a situation rife with domestic violence.

In conclusion, crime theories reduce crime or assist in reconciling the issues that underpin crime, whether these issues be biological/psychological or societal. These can help describe violent crimes, such as domestic violence which rates as one of the higher occurring forms of violent crime in Australia. In particular, psychological crime theories, such as the social learning theory, explain how the cycle of domestic violence is able to be perpetuated through generations, thus contributing to its destructiveness. In addition to this, social crime theories, such as the feminist theory, describe the cause behind domestic violence to be due to inequality towards women, thus describing their higher rates as domestic violence victims. However, this theory is not all inclusive as males are increasingly becoming the victims in typically male perpetrated domestic violence. As these theories both describe the causes, certain treatments and preventative measures can be derived from these to limit or prevent further violence, predominately surrounding increased education regarding domestic violence or how society treats women. Hereby, these theories help describe, treat and prevent certain crimes, however, need to be adjusted as new societal norms and psychological/biological information becomes available, to accurately achieve these results.

Reference List:

ABC News. (2016). \$30m DV campaign to focus on 'influencers'. [online] Available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-04-20/dv-campaign-to-focus-on-influencers/7340120> [Accessed 2 May 2016].

Abbassi, A. and Aslinia, S. (2010). Family Violence, Trauma and Social Learning Theory. *Journal of Professional Counselling: Practice, theory, and research*, 38(1), pp.16-27.

ABS.gov.au. (2006). 4906.0 - Personal Safety, Australia, 2005 (Reissue). [online] Available at: [http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4906.02005%20\(Reissue\)?OpenDocument](http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4906.02005%20(Reissue)?OpenDocument) [Accessed 2 May 2016].

ABS.gov.au. (2013). 4529.0 - Defining the Data Challenge for Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence, 2013. [online] Available at: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4529.0main+features100012013> [Accessed 7 May 2016].

ABS.gov.au. (2013). *4529.0 - Defining the Data Challenge for Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence, 2013*. [online] Available at: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4529.0main+features100012013> [Accessed 7 May 2016].

ABS.gov.au. (2014). *4102.0 - Australian Social Trends, 2014*. [online] Available at: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0main+features602014> [Accessed 8 May 2016].

ABS.gov.au. (2015). 4510.0 - Recorded Crime - Victims, Australia, 2014. [online] Available at: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4510.0~2014~Main%20Features~Experimental%20Family%20and%20Domestic%20Violence%20Statistics~10000> [Accessed 1 May 2016].

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Bandura, A., Ross, D. and Ross, S. (1963). Imitation of film-mediated aggressive models. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 66(1), pp.3-11.

Biography.com. (2016). *Richard "The Iceman" Kuklinski Biography*. [online] Available at: <http://www.biography.com/people/richard-the-iceman-kuklinski-21360091> [Accessed 8 May 2016].

Bull, M. (2015). Social explanations. In: H. Hayes and T. Prenzler, ed., *An Introduction to Crime and Criminology*, 4th ed. Melbourne: Pearson, pp.220-236.

Cartwright, J. (2015). violence. In: H. Hayes and T. Prenzler, ed., *An Introduction to Crime and Criminology*, 4th ed. Melbourne: Pearson, pp.98-117.

Diemer, K., Humphreys, C., Laming, C. and Smith, J. (2013). Researching collaborative processes in domestic violence perpetrator programs: Benchmarking for situation improvement. *Journal of Social Work*, 15(1), pp.65-86.

Drijber, B., Reijnders, U. and Ceelen, M. (2012). Male Victims of Domestic Violence. *J Fam Viol*, 28(2), pp.173-178.

Mandal, M. and Hindin, M. (2013). From Family to Friends: Does Witnessing Interparental Violence Affect Young Adults' Relationships With Friends?. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 53(2), pp.187-193.

Mazerolle, P. (2015). The role of Theory. In: H. Hayes and T. Prenzler, ed., *An Introduction to Crime and Criminology*, 4th ed. Melbourne: Pearson, pp.191-203.

Siegel, L. (2005). *Criminology: the core*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth

Smallbone, S., & McKillop, N. (2015). Psychological explanations. In: H. Hayes and T. Prenzler, ed., *An Introduction to Crime and Criminology*, 4th ed. Melbourne: Pearson, pp.204- 219.

Straus, MA. 1992. Children as witnesses to marital violence: a risk factor of lifelong problems among a nationally representative sample of American men and women. In: *Children and Violence: Report of the Twenty-Third Ross Roundtable on Critical Approaches to Common Pediatric Problems*. (98-119). Columbus, OH: Ross Lab.

Thio, A. (2004). *Deviant behavior* (7 ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Walker, L. (1984). *The battered woman syndrome*. New York: Springer Pub. Co.

Zembroski, D. (2011). Sociological Theories of Crime and Delinquency. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 21(3), pp.240-254.