*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

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Introduction: 250w

Crime theory hold an important place in the criminological field. Many theories of crime can provide valuable insight about criminal behaviour which can from 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. Interactionist theory…. Hereby, understanding these theories in relation to crimes, which describe the underlying motivation or reason, can assist criminologists 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. 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.

Domestic violence overview: eg violent crime. 352w

Violent crimes are often caused by an offender that uses or threatens to use force on a victim. 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. 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 it’s 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 socioeconomically background (ABS 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 woman 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. Social theory can help to understand even further with a strong grasp of a study of human society through the feminist theory. Together, these theories can detail the cause of an offender’s motive, which can assist in resolving, treating and potentially preventing further domestic violence.

Crime theory 1: Psychological: Social learning theory. ~250w

What is this the subtype? Eg psychological, explain what that is. Introduce the theory itself. Describe it in depth. Provide a source or journal article describing it and how it relates to normal actions. Then introduce its role in crime.

Psychological theories of crime act to aid in understanding of how individuals can behave in the manner that they do. This theory often focuses on the individual’s mind, up bring 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. 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. 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 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.

Crime theory 2: social explanation: feminist theory ~250w

Repeat

Crime theory 2 feminist theory in violence. ~300w

Conclusion: 150w

Reiterate what crime theory is and why we need it. Reasons in domestic violence and the discussed subtypes. Reiterate the need in dv and preventative measures that can stem from these crime theories.

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