

Chapter 3

3.1 Critical Thinking What is a theory? Why is it important to understand the various theories of criminal behavior?

A **theory** is an assumption (or set of assumptions) that attempts to explain why or how things are related to each other. It is important to understand criminological theories because they influence policy; to understand the implications of a given policy, one must understand the theories behind it.

3.2 Critical Thinking

1. Name four of the ways that classical criminologist Cesare Beccaria thought were best to prevent or deter crime. Do you agree with Beccaria? Why or why not?

They are: (1) to enact clear, simple, and unbiased laws; (2) to educate the public; (3) to eliminate corruption from the administration of justice; and (4) to reward virtue. Opinions of this will vary; some people want to add to the list, some feel that the list misses the point, and others will agree with it.

2. What are main differences between classical and neoclassical theories?

Classical theory focuses on free will, and neoclassical theory concedes that certain factors (such as insanity) can inhibit the exercise of free will.

3.3 Critical Thinking

1. What are the five key assumptions of the positivist school of thought?

These assumptions are: 1) Human behavior is determined and not a matter of free will, 2) Criminals are fundamentally different from noncriminals, 3) Social scientists can be objective, 4) Crime is frequently caused by multiple factors, and 5) Society is based on consensus, not on a social contract.

2. How would you describe body-type theory? What is the major criticism of this theory?

Sheldon's body-type theory states that everyone's body type is a combination of three main types: the endomorph, mesomorph, and ectomorph. The main criticism is that mesomorphs (who have a higher tendency to be delinquent) are more likely to be delinquent because of social selection, not because of biological inferiority.

3. Explain psychoanalytic theory and some of the problems associated with it.

Psychoanalytic theory basically states that crime, like other disorders, is symptomatic of more deeply seated problems; if these problems are solved, criminal behavior will disappear.

Problems with this theory include: 1) Research suggests that most criminals are no more psychologically disturbed than the rest of the population, 2) Psychological disturbances are not

necessarily the causes of criminal behavior, and 3) Much of psychotherapy is scientifically untestable.

4. Explain learning theory. Do you think this theory has merit?

Learning theory states that people learn new responses, such as criminal behavior, through imitating or modeling other people. People's opinions of learning theory vary.

3.4 Critical Thinking

1. How would you explain labeling theory?

Labeling theory states that the criminalization process the ways that people and actions are defined as criminal creates a negative social reaction that can lead to further crime.

2. What is peacemaking criminology? Is this theory realistic?

Peacemaking theory suggests that the solution to crime is the reduction of suffering caused by social. It emphasizes inner rebirth and empathy. This theory can be realistic on an individual level, but difficult to implement in policy.

3. Explain feminist theory and its key criticisms.

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CRITICAL THINKING ANSWER KEY

Feminist theory attempts to correct the overemphasis on male offenders in criminological thought by focusing on female offenders, victims, and on gender disparities in the system. Its key criticism is that it overemphasizes gender.