WHAT IS CRIMINOLOGY- This my work

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Criminology is an academic and scientific basis for understanding the most difficult social issues in our times: crime and criminal behavior. While many think of criminology as everyday work of the criminal system, its focus is to identify the causes of crime, but not to develop the punishment for the crime in society today (North Central College, 2023). By combing fields like sociology, psychology, and biology, criminology offers researchers to study the causes of abnormal behaviors and the societal responses to abnormal behaviors over time.

Criminology vs. Criminal Justice

To understand criminology, one must establish what makes criminology different than criminal justice. According to East Carolina University (2024), criminology is largely research focused on studying the causes for criminal behavior, and the patterns of criminal behaviors. Criminal justice, however, refers to the real systems and organizations such as police agencies, the court system, and correctional facilities that are used to react to and address crime after it occurs (Maryville University, n.d.). Criminology helps these systems by providing research ideas that guide the way society can prevent crime and support offender rehabilitation. An example of the differences between the two disciplines would be that while a criminal justice professional may focus on arrest steps, a criminologist studies the social and mental reasons that pushed the person's decision to commit a crime.

History of Criminology

The foundations for criminology were established during the eighteenth century in the Enlightenment era. Cesare Beccaria's 1764 work, titled On Crimes and Punishments, was important in establishing the Classical School of criminology. From the classical school

perspective, people make rational choices and have free will, therefore, people choose to engage in criminal behavior when the reward outweighs the risk. As such, the most effective way to prevent crime is through a legal system that has clearly defined and swift punishment that is reasonable with the offense (Maryville University, n.d.).

The Positivist School in the 19th century formed a response to the Classical School of Criminology. Unlike the Classical School, which focused on individual choice, the Positivist School employed scientific methods to find both internal and external factors that can lead to a person committing a crime. Although early positivists such as Cesare Lombroso were later found to be incorrect in their theory that biology is a factor in criminal behavior, today's Positivists are much more interested in identifying and studying the social environment and psychological traits of those who commit crimes (North Central College, 2023). This shift helped establish criminology as a form of science that uses data and research to better understand and predict behavior. (Florida National University, 2024).

Social and Modern Views

Criminology owes much of its current form to sociology, particularly the work of the Chicago School. The primary focus of this school is on social disorganization which argues that crime develops from social and physical environments such as poverty and weak community support systems rather than to personal flaws (Maryville University, n.d.). Social process theories assert that individuals develop criminal behaviors due to interaction with other individuals, and that being labeled as a criminal will often result in further deviant behavior (North Central College, 2023).

In recent years, criminology includes specialized areas such as Biosocial criminology that examines the relationship of genetics and environment and the development of criminal behavior, and Feminist criminology that focuses on how gender-based roles and power relate to the development of victims and offenders (East Carolina University, 2024). With this different perspective, there is an increased understanding of what is involved in today's crime.

Real World Use and Impact

Research is one thing, but criminology research can have a direct impact on the level of public safety as well as a positive influence on fairness in society. Programs that are based on research such as the UCR (Uniform Crime Reporting) and NCVS (National Crime Victimization Survey) allow professionals to understand trends in crime and ultimately assist in determining where resources are needed most (Maryville University, n.d.). In addition to researching theories, criminology has recently transitioned into researching the "ecology of crime," which studies how environmental elements can either encourage or discourage crime (Florida National University, 2024).

One significant finding in criminology indicates that harsher punishments are often less successful at discouraging crime than making sure people believe they are likely to be caught (Maryville University, n.d.). As a result, this new understanding is influencing the way police investigate crimes by focusing on more community-based approaches to prevent crime. Modern criminologists are also researching social systems issues including racial inequity and the "school to prison pipeline" with an ultimate goal of ensuring everyone have equal access to the justice system (East Carolina University, 2024).

Conclusion

Criminology remains a vital area of study today, as it helps reduce criminal behavior and promote fairness through the understanding of biological, psychological, and social causes of criminal behavior. The focus is no longer solely on punishing offenders but rather developing prevention methods that are more effective and less harsh. By expanding its use of technology and examining larger social inequalities, criminology will continue to provide a wide range of information to support safer and stronger communities.

Citation

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