Journal Article Questions

# Chapter 3: The Classical School of Criminological Thought

Article 1: Bowers, W., & Pierce, G. (1980). Deterrence or brutalization: What is the effect of executions? Crime & Delinquency, 26(4), 453–484. Retrieved from

http://journals.sagepub.com/stoken/default+domain/QFiaJyBaXjX7VSeMbvU2/full

In this study, we find that in New York State over the period 1907–63 there were, on the average, two additional homicides in the month after an execution. Controls for time trends, seasonality, the effects of war, and adjustments for autocorrelation tend to confirm this finding. Such a “brutalizing” effect of executions is consistent with research on violent events such as publicized suicides, mass murders, and assassinations; with previous studies of the long-term effects of the availability and use of capital punishment; and with a small number of investigations of the short-term impact of executions in the days, weeks, and months that follow. This suggests that the message of executions is one of “lethal vengeance” more than deterrence. The resulting sacrifice of human life challenges the constitutionality of capital punishment.

Questions that apply to this article:

1. What did the authors control for in the study? Why?

2. What where their results?

3. What is the message of execution according to the authors?

Article 2: Jacobs, B., & Piquero, A. (2012). Boundary-crossing in perceptual deterrence: Investigating the linkages between sanction severity, sanction certainty, and offending. International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 57(7), 792–812. Retrieved from

http://journals.sagepub.com/stoken/default+domain/ged2yi9t6BdjVPsMR2uH/full

Severe punishments have historically been the bedrock of criminal deterrence, but criminologists have long documented that such threats are often ineffective. Instead, it has been the certainty of sanctions that has been most emphasized and that has garnered empirical support. In a departure from prior research, the question motivating this study is whether increases in the threatened severity of sanction threats alter the perceived certainty of detection irrespective of any objective changes in detection certainty, and then how such perceptions relate to offending. To the authors’ knowledge, scant attention has been paid to examining the possibility of this “boundary-crossing,” or the extent to which two core dimensions of deterrence, objective and perceptual certainty, cross, intersect, or interact with one another. Using data from a sample of young adults, the authors find mixed support for “boundary-crossing”: Although combinations of objective certainty and severity did not necessarily result in substantive differences in perceptions of certainty and severity, an individual’s own perceived certainty and severity related to offending differently depending on the information provided to them about the objective certainty and severity of punishment

Questions that apply to this article:

1. How did the authors test their hypotheses?

2. What did the authors find regarding the linkages between sanction severity, sanction certainty, and offending?

3. The authors state that boundary crossing may “call into question aspects of the phenomenon of discounting.” Explain this.

Article 3: Ferrajoli, L. (2014). Two hundred and fifty years since the publication of On Crimes and Punishments: The currency of Cesare Beccaria’s thought. Punishment & Society, 16(5), 501–519. Retrieved from

http://journals.sagepub.com/stoken/default+domain/HImTA2YvNZafFyzbNEfr/full

This essay highlights three aspects of the extraordinarily current relevance of Cesare Beccaria’s *On Crimes and Punishments* in the 250th year since its publication. The first aspect concerns criminal law, which Beccaria founded anew as a *system of individual safeguards* against the arbitrariness and excess of punishment—a normative model still largely to be realized today. The second aspect consists in the *constituent* character of Beccaria’s thought. Together with other Enlightenment thinkers, he paved the way for the political doctrine of limited public powers—the doctrine that would usher in, well beyond the boundaries of criminal law, the contemporary and still largely unaccomplished constitutionalism of legal safeguards and fundamental human rights. The third aspect of Beccaria’s relevance consists in the critical and propositional role he assigned to philosophical reflection vis-a-vis positive law, on the ground of its axiological foundations and a militant defence of the values inherent in the legal artifice.

Questions that apply to this article:

1. Identify the three aspects of the current relevance of Beccaria’s *On Crimes and Punishments*.

2. What makes each of the three aspects continue to be current?