

Introduction

-The functionalist view of crime looks at society as a whole and not the individual. It seeks to explain the nature of crime within society. Other theories such as Marxism and feminism may critique the functionalist view. Two key thinkers who support functionalism are Durkheim and Merton.

Conclusion

To conclude, functionalists believe that the working class and those less fortunate are more likely to become criminals and deviate from the standards of the rest of society. This is due to factors such as status frustration, illegitimate means and strain theory. Theorists such as Matza and Miller critique this theory while Sutherland and Cressey promote the functionalist view.

Crime is necessary it helps maintain social order.

-One such function is boundary maintenance, meaning that public displays of punishments in courts are seen by all and the values that were broken by the crime become strengthened as society are reminded of the consequences of breaking the laws of society.

-Furthermore, Durkheim also argued that boundary maintenance also serves as an integrating function for society. Durkheim explained when a crime occurs there is public outrage strengthening community bounds and social cohesion, this reinforces value consensus and the collective conscience.

-However, Durkheim ignored that fact that crime does not always produce social solidarity - in some cases it could cause isolation and divisiveness. For example, women/elderly reading about crimes that affect them may be afraid to go out at night - therefore not producing a sense of community - quite the opposite. Salvesberg (1995) (individualism/collectivism).

Merton's Strain theory

-Merton argues that society places an emphasis on success and achievement, but not everyone has the means.

-According to this theory societal structures can pressure individuals into committing crime, due to the stress of achieving goals. In turn this creates Merton's idea of anomie as individuals are unable to follow the dominant norms of society.

-This is due to the dysfunctional balance between goals and means available to achieve them.

-He argued that society set certain goals and provide socially approved means. Writing in the USA Merton saw the main goals as wealth and power, as represented in the American dream, which claimed even the poorest had legitimate opportunities to reach the highest level of society.

Merton's Strain theory (cont)

-Therefore, Merton has explained how those without legitimate means or have been pressured to succeed, turn to deviancy due to frustration. The five responses being conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion. However, Merton's view assumes there is a value consensus that everyone strives for 'monetary success' and ignores the possibility that some may not share this goal.

failed to consider illegitimate opportunity

-Cloward and Ohlin criticise Cohen, as he failed to consider the illegitimate opportunity structure. This is where in one area there may be a thriving criminal subculture, while in another this subculture may not exist. Thus, in the first area adolescence has more opportunity to be a successful criminal, as adult criminal networks take on a younger 'apprentice' criminal.

-They believe there is greater pressure on the working class to deviate because they have less opportunity to succeed by legitimate means. They identify three responses to this situation, criminal subcultures such as burglary, conflict subcultures such as organised crime and retreatist subcultures such as alcohol abuse. Thus, explaining how the working class are more likely to become criminals.

-Although, Taylor, Walton and Young contest this for assuming that every individual is committed to the success goal of achieving wealth. For example, hippies make a conscious choice to reject conventional goals.

crime is inevitable and a normal aspect of life.

-It is inevitable because not every member of society can be as equally committed to the collective sentiments of society. It is impossible for all to be alike'. This means it is also functional, it only becomes dysfunctional when the rate is too high or too low.



crime is inevitable and a normal aspect of life. (cont)

-If collective sentiments are too strong there will be little deviance, but neither will there be any change or progress in society. He believes all societies need change to remain stable and healthy, if society acts positive towards deviancy it will become nondeviant.

-Therefore, the collective sentiments need to have 'moderate energy, so they do not crush originality. An example of social change through deviance is the suffragettes.

-Thus, showing how social order is maintained by shared values and how to understand the functionalist view of crime.

-On the other hand, Taylor Walton and young argue that crime itself is not functional for society. It is instead just the publishing of crime and public punishment that helps unite society.

deviance among middle class boys.

-In his subcultural theory of status frustration, Cohen focuses on deviance among middle class boys. He argues that lower working-class boys want success but cannot achieve their goals because cultural deprivation leads to educational failure and dead-end jobs.

-They suffer from status frustration and turn to criminal paths to achieve success.

-An alternative set of norms and values is adopted, known as delinquent subculture, which reverses mainstream culture by valuing activities such as stealing, vandalism and truancy

-These boys gain status by striking back at a system that deemed them as failures. Therefore, explaining how functionalists believe working-class boys are more deviant than others.

-However, Box argues Cohen's theory only applies to a minority of delinquents. The rest accept mainstream standards of success but resent being seen as failures and turn against those who label them as these or look down on them.

why most people dont commit crimes.

-Hirschi focuses on why most people do not commit crimes rather than why they do. He identifies four social bonds that keep people closely connected to the value consensus and ensures social control and order.

-According to this theory, those unlikely to commit crimes are those with strong attachments, commitments, beliefs and are involved. Therefore, suggesting those who do commit crimes are marginalised young and single, due to weakened bonds. Individuals with stronger bonds to society or societal institutes are less likely to engage in criminal behavior, for example Farrington and West found 6% of their w/c male study did 50% of crime.

-Therefore, Hirschi explains that his control theory suggests that social bonds are necessary to reduce crime. However, it ignores the reasons for deviant behaviour for each person, not all forms of crime are easily applicable to the four variables. For example, white collar crime, these people are usually well integrated into society with strong bonds.



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Published 19th May, 2024.

Last updated 19th May, 2024.

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