

Introduction

Marxists argue crime is a product of structural forces which reflects inequality that exists within a capitalist society. The types of crime that exist are inevitable and will need to be resolved with the overthrow of capitalism. Marxists argue capitalism breeds the values of greed and competition which led to the need for consumer goods and products causing people to commit crime. Marxists such as Gordon, enforce this ideology. Whereas Becker would argue against Marxist ideology.

criminogenic capitalism.

-The first main explanation of crime that Marxists believe in, is criminogenic capitalism. This means by its very nature, capitalism causes crime. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the proletariat which therefore, means it is damaging to the working-class and may cause crime to increase. Gordon argues crime is a rational response to the capitalist system.

-Poverty may mean that crime is the only way the working-class can survive, as this may be the only way they can obtain the consumer goods encouraged by capitalist advertising. This then results in utilitarian crimes for monetary gain, such as theft. However, Marxists believe crime is not only a working-class phenomenon, but it also occurs at all levels of society.

-For example, white-collar crime is carried out by the ruling class, such as embezzlement of money. Although, the official statistics make it appear as a mainly working-class phenomenon and cause society to view it as such.

-Postmodernist criminology rejects Marxist criminology, as they would argue that this view is not believable or defensible.

ideological function of crime and law.

-Pearce argues, laws are often passed which are aimed at benefiting the working-class, such as workplace health and safety laws.

-However, such laws often also benefit the ruling bourgeoisie by keeping workers fit for work and loyal to employers. This creates a false consciousness amongst workers, making it seem like laws are introduced to benefit them, when in reality they benefit capitalism.

-This introduces the idea of the American dream, as workers believe they are being treated equally in the workforce. Therefore explaining, how Marxists believe that even in legal

ideological function of crime and law. (cont)

-circumstances, capitalism creates crime by enforcing social class differences. However, other theories such as functionalists and interactionists, would argue that Marxists reject other theories of crime such as Durkheim's idea of anomie, and Becker's labelling theory, etc.

critical criminology

-Neo-Marxists often look at critical criminology based on Marxism and interactionism. Hall looks at a fully social theory of deviance during his theory of policing the crisis. It focused on a moral panic surrounding muggings in Britain in the 1970s.

-The British newspapers repeatedly reported incidents of mugging, which led to a wave of concern of threats to society. This was built on the idea of a collective fear of an 'enemy within, mainly young, black men.

-Hall argued, the idea of a black mugger was a scapegoat for other social issues occurring at the time such as the economic decline. By representing the black youth as a threat to the fabric of society, the moral panic served to divide the working-class on racial grounds and weaken oppositions to capitalism.

-This therefore caused the working-class to turn against black males and reinforces capitalist ideology of exploitation and discrimination. However, if crime is a response to oppression, then surely the most oppressed people and the poorest would be the most criminal.

-These are usually the oldest in society and women. In reality both of these groups are underrepresented in crime figures, therefore critiquing the Marxist view

Conclusion

In conclusion, Marxists often focus on social class and the effects of capitalism on society. They argue ideas such as the state and law enforcement, control and encourage the corruption and exploitation that the ruling class creates. Therefore, creating class differences within society. Theorists such as Karl Marx push the Marxist narrative. Whereas feminists such as Carlen, would critique Marxism as being biased against women, as there is little focus on gender.



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state and law making.

-other main explanation of crime that Marxists believe in, is the state and law making. Marxists view law making and enforcement as only serving in the interest of the capitalist class. Chambliss argues, that laws to protect private property are the 'cornerstone' of a capitalist society. They suggest that much of what takes place in the creation of rules is non-decision-making.

-For example, the right of homeowners to keep houses empty, is put before the right to shelter. Many issues such as the way wealth is distributed never reach the point of discussion.

-Therefore, capitalism engraves ruling class ideology into society through the law, further explaining the Marxist view of crime. Although, perhaps the distribution of power is not as simple as some Marxists suggest. Jones gives the example of insider trading, which is illegal, this suggests capitalists do not always get the laws they want, and that society is not ruled by capitalism

justice system selectively reinforces law.

-This is when government officials (police, judges, etc. choose whether or how to punish a person who has violated the law.

-Gordon argued that this helps to maintain ruling class power, which gives the impression that criminals are mainly located in the working-class and cause law-enforcement to patrol these areas more intensely. While these powerless groups are criminalised the police and courts tend to ignore the crimes of the powerful.

-For example, people who commit white collar crime and tax evasion are barely prosecuted, whereas benefit fraud often is 'doing the double'. This therefore, reinforces capitalist ideology as the working-class are being exploited through the criminal justice system.

-However, Left realists believe that Marxists put too much emphasis on corporate crime. Lea and Young talk about other crimes done by subcultures such as burglary which cause greater harm than Marxist invol. Their victims are usually working class and the consequences can be devastating for them.

black criminality is a myth.

-In close relation, Neo-Marxists also believe that black criminality is a myth. Paul Gilroy suggests that police statistics on black crime do not reflect the reality of what is happening on the streets, but instead the preconceptions of the police.

-Interactionist Cicourel argues, that these preconceptions stem from typifications made by the police and often encouraged by the media, causes criminality within the working-class and ethnic minorities. The media and police were operating on stereotypes and labels of young black men, as more criminal than others, creating inequality within society.

-Thus, explaining how Marxists believe, black criminality is a myth by questioning the validity of police statistics.

-However, this has been criticised for failing to examine the impact of gender in crime. In fact, more recently Young and Walton acknowledge that has a problem with their earlier ideas of critical criminology.



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