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| 3. Functionalist (consensus) explanations of crime and deviance | | |
| **Introduction/key assumptions**   * They **accept official crime statistics**. They thus seek to explain rising crime levels, committed in the main by working class, young (juvenile), often black, males, in urban areas. * Offer a **structural** **causal** explanation of crime & deviance – focusing on the way society is organised, the offender’s social background, upbringing or social position. * Assume a **value consensus** – agreement over norms and values (shared culture). | | |
| **Early functionalist theories**   * Sharing culture produces solidarity – binds individuals together * Two key mechanisms to achieve solidarity: * Socialisation – instils shared culture into members, ensures individuals internalise the same norms and values * Social Control – rewards for conformity, punishments for deviance (ensures we act in a way that that society expects) | **Subcultural strain theories**  Emerged out of the weaknesses of Merton’s anomie theory. Subcultural theories attempt to explain the collective/group nature of crime and deviance through the concept of subcultures. Subcultures provide an alternative deviant opportunity structure for those faced by blocked opportunities (e.g. the working class). | **Evaluation of functionalist subcultural strain theories** |
| **Durkheim (1893)** | **Cohen (1955)** | ☹ Cloward and Ohlin agree with Merton and Cohen that most crime is working-class, thus ignoring crimes of the wealthy. Their theory also over-predicts the amount of working-class crime.  ☺ unlike Cohen, they provide an explanation for different *types* of working-class deviance i.e. subcultures. However, they draw the boundaries too sharply between these: South (2014) found that the drug trade is a mixture of both ‘disorganised’ crime like conflict subculture, and professional ‘mafia’ style criminal subcultures.  ☹ strain theories have been called ‘reactive’ theories because they explain subcultures as forming in reaction to the failure to achieve mainstream goals. They have been criticised for assuming that everyone starts of sharing the same mainstream success goals.  ☹ Miller (1962) argues that the lower class has its own *independent* subculture separate from mainstream culture, with its own values. This subculture does not value success in the first place, so its members are not frustrated by failure. Although Miller agrees deviance is widespread in the lower class, he argues that this arises out of an attempt to achieve their *own* goals, not mainstream ones.  ☹ Matza (1964) claims that most delinquents are not strongly committed to their subculture, as strain theories suggest, but merely drift in and out of delinquency (phenomenology).  How can you use other theories to contradict functionalist theories?  E.g. Interactionism?    **Recent Strain Theories**  Recent strain theorists have argued that young people may pursue a variety of goals other than money success. These include popularity with peers, autonomy from adults, or the desire of some young males to be treated like ‘real men’.  Like earlier strain theorists, they argue that failure to achieve these goals may result in delinquency. They also argue that middle-class juveniles may too have problems achieving such goals, thus offering an explanation for middle-class delinquency. |
| Crime is inevitable - according to Durkheim ‘crime is normal…an integral part of all healthy societies’. There are at least two reasons why C&D are found in all societies; firstly, not everyone is equally effectively socialised into the shared norms and values so some indivdiuals will be prone to deviate and secondly, there is a diversity of lifestyles and values so different groups develop their own subcultures with distinctive normas and values, and what the members of the subculture regard as normal, mainstream culture may see as deviant.  **Crime and deviance can be functional (positive)**   * ***Necessary to Generate Social Change*** – all change begins as deviation from social norms e.g. the authorities often persecute religious visionaries who espouse a new ‘message’ or value-system. However, in the long run their values may give rise to a new culture and morality. If those with new ideas are suppressed, society will stagnate and be unable to make necessary adaptive changes. * ***Creates Social Integration*** – bonds society together against certain crimes and criminals e.g. terrorism. * ***Boundary Maintainance*** - Helps clarify the boundaries of acceptable behaviour e.g. speeding may be tolerated but paedophilia is certainly not.   **Crime and deviance can be dysfunctional (negative**)  Too much crime and deviance can threaten value consensus, social order and social stability. This is because the norms and values that ‘unite’ society are broken and challenged.  **Structural causes of crime and deviance**  Crime & deviance is caused by anomie (normlessness). This is when people become unsure of societies norms and values. This typically happens during periods of rapid social change (e.g. revolutions).  **A positive view of social control and social order**   * Socialisation - agencies of socialisation instil shared norms and values to create a value consensus. This agreement then creates social order and stability. For example, families and schools instil the values of achievement and respect for authority. Religion instils the value of not committing adultery. * Sanctions - crime & deviance is controlled by negative sanctions/punishments for deviance e.g. imprisonment and positive sanctions/praise for conformity e.g. praise for working hard at school.   **Other functions of crime**  Davis (1937; 1961) argues that prostitution acts as a safety valve for the release of men’s sexual frustrations without threatening the monogamous nuclear family. Similarly, Ned Polsky (1967) argues that pornography safely ‘channels’ a variety of sexual desires away from alternatives such as adultery, which would pose a much greater threat to the family.  Cohen states that deviance acts as a warning that an institution is not functioning properly.  **☹ Theoretical evaluation**  **Left realists** claim Durkheim neglects the victim when focusing on the positive functions of crime. Victims of crime can suffer both physical and psychological harm and may stay indoors for fear of repeat victimisation. | **Structural causes of crime & deviance**  Cohen accepts much of what Merton had to say on the structural causes of crime and deviance, however he criticises Merton’s explanation of deviance on two grounds:   * Merton sees deviance as an individual response to strain, ignoring the fact that much deviance is committed in or by groups, especially among the young * Merton focusses on utilitarian crime commited for material gain, such as theft or fraud. He largely ignores crimes such as assault and vandalism, which may have a more economic motive.   Cohen focusses on the following issues:   * Working class youths socialised into the ‘American/British Dream’. * Working class youths face blocked opportunities because of their low position in the social class structure (e.g. obtaining poor qualifications because of material and cultural deprivation). * Working class youths suffer from **status frustration** because they are unable to achieve mainstream success goals legitimately.   **Cultural causes of crime & deviance**  Cohen extends Merton’s theory by incorporating a strong cultural element into his explanation:   * Some working class youths completely reject mainstream norms and values because of the status frustration they feel – they *invert* these values (turn them upside down) * Mainstream norms and values are replaced with alternative delinquent subcultural norms and values. A high value is placed on negativistic (non-money making) delinquent acts. For example, joy riding, arson and vandalism. * The delinquent subculture provides an alternative means of gaining status and striking back at an unequal society. |
| **Cloward & Ohlin (1961)** |
| **Structural origins of crime & deviance**  Cloward and Ohlin accept Cohen’s views on the structural causes of crime and deviance.  **Cultural causes of crime & deviance**  Criticise Cohen for failing to recognise the different types of crime that emerge out of the ‘illegitimate opportunity structure. They argue that different neighbourhoods provide different illegitimate opportunities for young people to learn criminal skills and develop criminal careers. They identify three subcultures that result:   * **Criminal subcultures** - have access to criminal networks. Commit material (utilitarian or money making) crimes such as burglary. * **Conflict subcultures** - lack access to criminal networks but juveniles live in an area with high population turnover which values gang violence e.g. certain parts of Glasgow. * **Retreatist subcultures** – lack access tocriminal or conflict subcultures. Typical deviancy is alcohol and drug abuse. |
| **Merton (1949) – strain theory** |
| **Cultural and structural causes of crime**   * Individuals socialised to meet certain shared **goals** (values) - the ‘American Dream’. * Individuals socialised to follow approved **means** (norms) to achieve the goals e.g. doing well at school and working hard in a job. * Many societies suffer from **anomie** - a strain/conflict/imbalance between the goals set by society and the law abiding means of achieving them. * Disadvantaged groups e.g. working class and blacks are unable to obtain the goals legitimately because they experience blocked opportunities (e.g. material and cultural deprivation, failing schools, discrimination) at school and so underachieve. * Merton argued that some members of the working class **innovate** - they reject the approved means (e.g. working hard at school/in a job) and turn to illegal means (crime) to obtain the goals they still desire (e.g. drug dealing, prostitution, street robbery). * Other adaptations to anomie, depending on social class background, are **conformity, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion.**   **☹ Theoretical evaluation**   * **Merton** sees deviance as an individual response to anomie, and therefore does not adequately account for the collective (group) nature of crime & deviance e.g. delinquent subcultures * **Merton’s** theories do not account for non-utilarian crime (crime to make money) e.g. violent crimes, vandalism etc – also it would be hard for this theory to account for crimes such as genocide or torture * Take OS at face value * Marxists argue that it ignores the power of the ruling class e.g. make laws that criminalise the poor but not the rich * Assumes there is ‘value consensus’ and everyone strives for ‘money success’ – ignores possibility that many may not share this goal |
| **In conclusion** functionalist theories highlight important links between the social structure, culture and crime & deviance. Recent strain theories recognise that failure to achieve non-material goals such as popularity with peers may also cause delinquency. They also argue that capitalist economies generate greater strain to crime. However they ignore issues of power. The police are a powerful agent of social control who shape patterns of crime and deviance through biased policing against powerless groups (e.g. the working class and blacks). | | |