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| **Left realism (type of conflict theory)** | **Right realism (New Right)** |
| **Taking Crime Seriously**   * Crime is a real problem, and one that particularly effects disadvantaged groups, and they accuse other sociologists of not taking crime seriously * Marxists have concentrated on crimes of the powerful e.g. corporate crime, but LR argue that this neglects working-calss crime and it’s effects * Neo-marxists romanticise working-class criminals as latter-day Robin Hoods, but LR say that working-class criminals mostly victimise other working-class people, not the rich * Labelling theorists see working-class criminals as the victims of discriminatory labelling by social control agents, but LR argue that this approach neglects the real victims – working-class people who suffer at the hands of criminals * Young (2011) argues that this led to an aetiological crisis – a crisis in explanation – for theories of crime e.g. critical criminology and labelling theory tend to deny that the increase was real, instead they argue that it was just the result of increased reporting, or an increased tendency to label the poor (in other words the increase in stats was just a social construction, not a reality) * LR argue that the increase was too great to be explained this way – more people were reporting crime beacause more people were becoming a victim of crime * Victim surveys show that disadvantaged groups have a greater risk of becoming victims, especially of burglary, street crime and violence e.g. unskilled workers are twice as likely to be burgled as other people * Diasdavntaged groups als have agreater fear of crime and it has a greater effect on their lives e.g. fear of attack may prevent women from going out at night * These groups are also however less likely to report crimes against them, and the police are often reluctant to deal with crimes such as domestic violence, rape or racist attacks. * **Lea and Young (1984) Identify three related causes of crime: relative deprivation, subculture, and marginalisation:**  Relative deprivation  * Refers to how deprived someone feels in relation to others, or compared with their own expectations * Leads to crime when people resent others unfairly having more and resort to crime to obtain what they feel they are entitled to * Although people are better off nowadays, they are also now more aware of relative deprivation due to advertising and the media, which raises expectations for material posessions – so those who cannot afford them resort to crime instead * Young (1999) stated that ‘the lethal combination is relative deprivation and individualism’ (individualism is the concern with oneself and one’s own individual rights, rather than those of a group) – it causes crime by encouraging the pursuit of self-interest at the expense of others * Increased individualism is causing the disintegration of families and communities (undermines values of mutual support and selflessness) * This weakens the informal control these groups have, creating a spiral of increasing anti-social behaviour, aggression and crime  Subcultures  * For left realists, a subculture is a group’s collective solution to the problem of relative deprivation * Some may turn to crime to close the ‘development gap’, while others may find that religion offers them spiritual comfort and what Weber calls the ‘theodicy of disprivilege’ – and explanation for their disadvantage * Religious subcultures may encourage conformity e.g. within the African Caribbean community in Bristol, Ken Pryce (1979) identified a variety of subcultures, including hustlers, Rastafarians, ‘saints’ (Pentecostal churchgoers) and working-class respectables. * Young (2002) notes, there are ghettos in the USA where there is full immersion in the American Dream: a culture hooked on Gucci, BMW, Nikes’. However, opportunities to achieve these goals legitimately are blocked so they resort to street crime instead  Marginalisation  * Marginalised groups lack both clear goals and organisations to represent their interests * Workers have clear goals (such as better pay and working conditions) and and often have organisations (such as trade unions) to put pressure on employers and politicians – as such they do not need to resort to violence to achieve their goals… * … However, unemployed youth are marginalised; they have no organisation to represent them and no clear goals, just resentment and frustration – they express their frustration through criminal means such as violence and rioting   **Late Modernity, exclusion and crime**   * Young (2002) states we are in the stage of late modernity – instability, insecurity and exclusion make crime worse * 1950s and 1960s were the ‘Golden Age’ of modern capitalist society – stability, security and social inclusion with full employment, comprehensive welfare state, low divorce rates and strong communities – general consensus about right and wrong, and lower crime rates * Since 1970s, deindustrialisation has occurred and loss of unskilled jobs means increased unemployment (especially for young or ethnic minorities) many jobs are short-term or low paid * These changes have destabilised families and community life ( as well as New Right policies to hold back welfare spending) – increased exclusion of those at the bottom * Greater inequality between rich and poor has increased relative deprivation: * Media-saturated late modern societies promotes cultural inclusion: even the poor have access to the media’s materialistic, consumerist cultural messages * There is a greater emphasis on leisure, personal consumption and immediate gratification, leading to higher expectations for the ‘good life’ * Despite the ideology of meritocracy, the poor are denied opportunities to gain the ‘glittering prizes of a wealthy society’ * Young stated that there was widespread resentment of the undeservedly mhigh rewards that some receive (e.g. footballers, ‘fat-cat’ bankers), as well as ‘relative deprivation downwards’ where the middle class who have to be hardworking and disciplined to succeed in an increasingly competitive work environment resent the stereotypical uncerclass as idle, irrespeonsible and hedonistic, living off underserved state handouts * As a result, the amount and types of crime are changing in late modern society; crime is found throughout the social structure, and is also ‘nastier’ with an increase in hate crimes (often a result of relative dperivation downwards, as in the case of racist attacks against asylum seekers) * Reactions to crime are also changing: the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour has become blurred, informal controls (such as the family or community) are less effective as they have disintegrated – late modern society is a high-crime society with a low tolerance for crime   **The Falling Crime Rate**   * Young (2011) points out that since the mid 1990s the crime rate has fallen substantially, but because crime is a social construction it may continue to be seen as a problem e.g. the Crime Survey for England and Wales (2014) found that 61% thought crime had risen, not fallen.   **The Rising ‘anti-social behaviour rate’**   * Since the 1990s, governments have aimed to control a widening range of behaviour, introducing ASBOs in 1998, and IPNAs (Injunctions to Prevent Nuisance and Annoyance) in 2015 * These measures have several key features: * blurred the boundaries of crime (‘incivilities’ became crimes, e.g. breaching the ASBO is itself a crime thus creating more crime * were subjective by definition (Anti-social behaviour has no objective definition - it is in the eye of the beholder) * proved to have flexibility (ASBOs have been used against people wearing hoodies, making a noise, letting off fireworks, flyposting or begging, among others. The subjective definition means that the net can be constantly widened to generate an almost endless number of infringments).   **Tackling Crime**   * Kinsey, Lea and Young (1986) – police spend too little time actually investigating crime. The public must become more involved in deermining policing style and priorities. * Police are losing publice support (especially with ethnic minorities and the young) – they rely instead on military policing e.g. ‘swamping’ an area and using random stop and search tactics – this in turn alienates communities and is a viscious circle; locals no longer trust the police and don’t provide them with information, so the police resort to military policing and so on. * LR argue that policing must be made accountable to local communities and deal with local concerns – police should spend more time investigating crime, changing their prioirties (they over-police minor drug crime, but under-police racist attacks and domestic violence) and involve the public in making policing policy * A multi-agency approach is needed – local councils’ social services, housing departments, schools and leisure services, as well as voluntary organisations and victim support and the public should be involved   **Tackling the structural causes**   * Major structural changes needed – must deal with inequality of opportunity, unfairness of rewards, tackle discrimination, provide decent jobs for everyone, and improve housing and community facilities, become more tolerant of diversity and cease stereotyping whole groups as criminals   **Left Realism and Government Policy**   * LR had influenced more policies than any other theorists of crime – 1997-2010 New Labour stance of ‘tough on crime, tought on the causes of crime’ * New Labour’s New Deal for unemployed youth and their anti-truanting policies attempted to revers the exclusion of young people at risk of offending * But Young says many of these policies are doomed attempts to recreate the ‘Golden Age’ of the 1950s – New Deal did not lead to secure, permanent jobs, and ASBOs did not recreate a sense of community | * **Right Realists criticise other theories for failing to offer any practical solutions to the problem of rising crime.** * **They reject the idea put forward by Marxists that crime is a result of poverty and inequality, stating that the elderly tend to be poorer but they have a very low crime rate.** * **They state crime is a result of three factors: individual biological differences, inadequate socialisation and the individual’s rational choice to offend.**   **1. Biological differences**   * **Wilson and Herrnstein** (1985) believe crime is caused by a combination of biological and social factors (**biosocial factors**) – some people are innately more strongly predisposed to commit crime than others * Biological traits such as aggressiveness, extroversion, risk taking and low IQ predispose such people to commit crime * Herrnstein and Murray (1994) argue that the main cause of crime is low intelligence, which they also see as biologically determined   **2. Socialisation and the underclass**   * **Murray** (1990) sees the growth of the **underclass or ‘new rabble’** as the key cause of crime – they fail to adequately socialise their children * The welfare state’s ‘generous revolution’ since the 1960s allows increasing numbers of people to become dependent on the state * This has led to the decline in marriage and the growth of lone parent families, because women and children can afford to live off benefits, and if the father is around, men no longer have to take responsibility for supporting their families * He argues children from fatherless single parent families are inadequately socialised and controlled as they lack a male role model and authority figure. * **Murray** also suggests that over-generous welfare has served to create a **dependency culture** where the underclass have become content to live off benefits and crime as their work ethic has been eroded. * **Murray** believes some young males turn to criminal role models on the street and gain status through crime rather than supporting their families through a steady job. * **Bennett et al (1996)** argues that crime is a result of “growing up surrounded by deviant, delinquent, and criminal adults in a practically perfect criminogenic environment - that is, [one] that seems almost consciously designed to produce vicious, predatory, unrepentant street criminals’.  3. Rational choice  * Assumes individuals have free will and the power of reason * **Clarke (1980)** argues that the decision to commit a crime is a choice based on rational calculations of the likely consequences * If the **rewards outweigh the costs**, or if the **rewards are greater than those of non-criminal behaviour**, then people will be likely to offend * Argue that perceived costs of crime are low and so the crime rate has increased – there is little chance of being caught and the punishments are lenient   **Tackling Crime**   * RR do not believe it is possible to deal with the causes of crime (e.g. biological or socialisation) as these are difficult to control – instead they seek practical measures to make crime seem less attractive * Their main focus is on control, containment and punishment of offenders rather than eliminating underlying causes or rehabilitating them * Policies should reduce the rewards and increase the costs of crime to the offender e.g. by ‘target hardening’, greater use of prison and ensuring punishments are given soon after the crime (attempt to maximise the deterrent) * Zero tolerance: Wilson and Kelling’s (1982) article ‘Broken Windows’ argues that it is essential to maintain the orderly character of neighbourhoods to prevent crime taking hold. * Any sign of deterioration e.g. graffiti or vandalism must be dealt with immediately * ‘Zero tolerance’ towards prostitution, begging and drunkenness - police should focus on controlling the streets so law-abiding citizens feel safe * Supporters of the ‘zero tolerance’ policing claim that it achieved huge reductions in crime after it was introduced in New York |
| **Evaluating Left Realism**   * Henry and Milovanovic (1996) argue that it accepts the authorities’ definition of crime as being street crime commited by the poor, instead of defining the problem as being one of how powerful groups do harm to the poor * Marxists argue that it fails to explain corporate crime, which is much more harmful * Interactionists argue that because LR rely on quantitative data from victim surveys, they cannot explain offenders’ motives * The use of the subculture theory means LR assume that value consensus exists and that crime only occurs when this breaks down * Relative deprivation cannot fully explain crime because not all those who experience it commit crime – the theory over-predicts the amount of crime * Its focus on high-crime inner-city areas give an unrepresentative view and makes crime appear a greater problem than it is | **Evaluating Right Realism**   * It ignores wider structural causes such as poverty * It overstates offenders’ rationality and how far they make cost-benefit calculations before committing a crime - while it may explain some utilitarian crime, it may not explain impulsive or violent crime * Its view of criminals as rational actors freely choosing crime conflicts with its claim that their behaviour is determined by their biology and socialisation. It also over-emphasises biological factors: acoording to Lilly et al (2002), IQ differences account for less than 3% of differences in offending   ***Zero-tolerance: An urban myth? (and other criticisms…)***   * Young (2011) argues that it’s ‘success’ was a myth peddles by politicians and police keen to take the credit for falling crime – the crime rate in New York had already been falling since 1985 – nine years *before* zero tolerance – and was also falling in other US (and foreign) cities that didn’t have zero tolerance policies * It is preoccupied with petty street crime and ignores corporate crime, which is more costly and harmful * It gives the police free reign to discriminate against minorities, youth, the homeless etc * It over emphasises control of disorder, rather than tackling the causes of neighbourhood decline such as lack of investment * Zero tolerance and target hardening just lead to displacement of crime to other areas |
| **Compating Right and Left Realism**   * Both see crime as a real problem and believe that the fear of crime is rational * However, they come from different ends of the political spectrum: RR are neo-conservatives, while LR are reformist socialists * This is reflected in how they explain crime: RR blame individual lack of self-control, while LR blame structural inequalities * Political differences are also reflected in their aims and solutions: the right prioritise social order (achieved through a tough stance against offenders, while the left prioritise justice (achieved through democratic policing and reforms to create greater equality) | |