

Three Social Structures and Crime Theory

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Regarding the ways of analyzing the theoretical approaches to the examination of the criminal justice system as a whole, sociological theories seem to be meaningful due to their conventional focus on the relations among various sociological groups. More precisely, the vast majority of sociological theories based on the study of crime put the most emphasis on configuring relationships among groups, institutions, and other engaged players with the aim of envisioning crime as natural consequences of social processes and established links between numerous players. With regards to the most frequently considered and researched sociological theories, scholars commonly agree on the relevance of social disorganization, strain, and culture conflict theories. Other than that, sociological theories are partially based on the implications of economic and class struggles within a certain social community. As for the most influential and rational theoretical explanations of crime, social structure theories, which were mentioned above, it seems the elements of poverty, a lack of education, subcultural values, and a lack of marketable skills are the dominant causes of crime. Although it may be generally agreed that social structure theories bear responsibility merely for the social part of crime in the broader structure of criminology, their importance should not be underestimated in ongoing criminal justice discourse, eventually raising the necessity to review them separately by paying extreme attention to their applicability in the theoretical analysis of crime and its origins.

Social Disorganization Theory

First and foremost, social disorganization theory stands out as a field of knowledge that encompasses the notions of social pathology, which in turn reviews society as an organism.

Consequently, the core of social disorganization theory is the deconstruction of the crime from the perspective of perceiving it as a disease or certain pathology in a living organism, which is society. Originating in aggregate with the school of social ecology in the Chicago School of Criminology, social disorganization theory was steadily developing in the time frame between the 1920s and 1930s. Although the theory of social disorganization is now associated with the early and somewhat outdated accomplishments of social structures in criminology, the advocates of this particular perspective emphasize its relevance in the improvement of criminal legislation, development of proper crime prevention, and overall breakthrough in understanding the origins of crime (Xiong, 2015, p. 39). Considering the roots of the theory itself, one may indicate the potential correlations of the social disorganization with Durkheim's descriptions on social transformations and criminogenic patterns.

Having mentioned the historical background of the theory, one may also highlight the usability of social disorganization theory in coping with internal factors within a society, which generally transition themselves into crime. In contrast, the theoretical foundations and numerous sub-groups within social disorganization theory have not identified a single and coherent definition of the basic concepts of the theory (Xiong, 2015, p. 50). The presence of numerous contradictions between the sub-groups of social disorganization theory has deleterious implications on the conclusions focused on the links between the causality of crime and social disorganization as a whole. Subsequently, it is unclear how the theory of social disorganization covers structural subjects of criminology, eventually leading to controversial outcomes. One of the most commonly accepted findings of social disorganization researchers is the existence of bilateral relations between social disorganization and crime, which states that social

disorganization results in the drastic increase of crime rates, whereas the increasing rate of crime is capable of exacerbating the social disorganization of a specific community (Xiong, 2015, p. 50). Overall, a brief review of social disorganization theory reveals that the theoretical foundations of this perspective are often contradicting, at the same time, being in sharp contrast with empirical bits evidence.

Strain Theory

Secondly, strain theory refers to the lack or insufficiency in the relationship between socially accepted goals and objectives as well as socially approved means and tools to accomplish these purposes. Consequently, the most fundamental point of strain theory relies upon the argumentation that depicts individuals unable to succeed in society through legitimate means to become obliged to turn the avenues into more criminal facilities to achieve certain economic and social recognition and status. What stands out in strain theory is the division of adjustments in individual patterns to achieve society's goals, including conformity, retreatism, rebellion, ritualism, and innovation (Zembroski, 2011, p. 245). By referring to each of these adjustments as particular modes of adaptation, researchers review the ways through which crime originated simultaneously with one's inability to achieve society's goals without delinquency. Conformity, in this regard, means that an individual tends towards accepting commonly chosen cultural goals and institutionalized means (Zembroski, 2011, p. 245). Retreatism refers to the dominantly deviant alternative of genuinely rejecting the social objectives and means of their accomplishment.

As for the mode of rebellion, scholars argue this framework to be rather an uncommon one, which aims to substitute both the means and goals of viable alternatives. Considering

ritualism, one may underline its role in ensuring guarantees of accepting cultural goals without their factual agreement (Zembroski, 2011, p. 245). Lastly, innovation is the last identified tool, which simultaneously accepts goals and rejects tools for accomplishment. Therefore, most of the depicted modes lead to a failure of generating a fulfilling and meaningful social link between members of a community, eventually leading to the choice of response forms by various players within a single society (Zembroski, 2011, p. 246). Notwithstanding, strain theory seems to have a rather narrow focus on one's forms of responses to social instability; however, this theoretical school is decent for observing individual behaviors and conducting empirical analyses based on individual reactions.

Culture Conflict Theory

Thirdly, culture conflict theory, or the theory of differential association, understands crime as the logical consequence of clashes between numerous interests, beliefs, and cultural groups. With regards to the root cause of crime, culture conflict theory is fully assured of group conflicts as the applicable climate for the emergence of criminogenic behavior. Unlike primitive undifferentiated theories on cultural discrepancies, culture conflict theory aims to research modern industrialized societies (Matsueda, 2017, p. 123). Subsequently, it is apparent that culture conflict theory puts a lot emphasis on reviewing normative cultural conflicts within modern communities. Also, the discourse of culture conflict theory aims to specify the ways through which the normative conflicts within society may produce noticeable and trackable acts of crime or any related criminogenic behavioral patterns (Matsueda, 2017, p. 124). As for the commonly accepted framework for measuring crime in the structure of culture conflict theory, scholars point out the determination of crime within a group by the extent to which it is

structured in favor of crime or against it. While organized communities for crime tend to form mafia gangs, the system of insider trading, and the institutions of professional criminals, those who oppose crime conduct drastic measures to form comprehensive legal systems, local organizations, and modern institutions of education, family, and religion (Matsueda, 2017, p. 125). Nonetheless, the theory of culture conflict is mostly interrelated with the internal conflicts within specific communities to assess the probability of a specific clash of values to result in criminogenic behavior.

Final Remarks

Having scrutinized three distinctive sociological perspectives on social structure and its correlation with crime, one may point out unveiled specifications that differentiate theoretical sociological perspectives of crime. The theory of social disorganization aims to reconfigure the roots of crime in the form of social pathology by assessing the stability of connections between social institutions, separate individuals, and communities as a whole. Strain theory aims to reveal the distinctions in socially accepted goals and means between various members of a certain community. As for culture conflict theory, it relies on internal value conflicts as sources of crime with its analysis of the probabilities of criminal behavior. Consequently, the application of social theories is feasible for analyzing crime from a sociological perspective, whereas the choice of the theory highly depends on the context and circumstances of the social structure of a specific social group.

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