

Sociological Views of Delinquency

Assignment One

10 Points

Submit answers to Sections A and B to the DropBox.

Section A

According to your text, what social factors are critical in the causation of juvenile delinquency?

Parental nurturing and family socialization are the cause juvenile delinquency. If a parent does not deter bad behavior, the child gets to develop other bad behaviors and commit crimes that are bigger and worse.

Section B

You have just been appointed as a presidential adviser on urban problems. The president informs you that he wants to initiate a demonstration project in a major city aimed at showing that government can do something to reduce poverty, crime, and drug abuse. The area he has chosen for development is a large inner-city neighborhood with more than one hundred thousand residents. It suffers from disorganized community structure, poverty, and hopelessness.

Predatory delinquent gangs run free and terrorize local merchants and citizens. The school system has failed to provide opportunities and educational experiences sufficient to dampen enthusiasm for gang recruitments. Store, homes, and public buildings are deteriorated and decayed. Commercial enterprise has fled the area, and civil servants are reluctant to enter the neighborhood.

There is an uneasy truce between the varied ethnic and racial groups that populate the area. Residents feel that little can be done to bring the neighborhood back to life. You are faced with suggesting an urban redevelopment program that can revitalize the area and eventually bring down the crime rate. You can bring any element of the public and private sector to bear on this rather overwhelming problem--including the military! You can also ask private industry to help in the struggle, promising them tax breaks for their participation.

Questions

1. Use at least two specific social structure theories that you think would best explain this scenario. (Social structure includes social disorganization, anomic. strain and cultural deviance). Identify them and discuss their basic premises. See your text and class notes for these. Explain how they fit and what the implications for prevention would be. Social structure theory best fits the description of the happening in the inner city slum. Structures such as institutions, courts, schools are valueless. They do not play their role in reinforcing the best behavior into the people. The anomic strain theory also fits the inner city slum. In the slum, people strain to meet their basic needs and as such many tend to use crime since there is law and order breakdown.

2. How does living in such an area contribute to higher delinquency rates? Poverty and unemployment are related. When people cannot be employed, they become poor and cannot afford their basic needs. They will use crime to get money to satisfy their basic needs and get a social bonding with other members of the gang.

3. Is poverty related to delinquency - think back to the information from OJJDP - also see your text; or is poverty merely an excuse and delinquency a matter of personal choice? Explain your answer. This should be based on facts not anecdotal information. Poverty is directly related to delinquency. Poor people who are unemployed will use all

means possible to meet their basic needs.

4. Based on your readings, what types of programs do you feel could break the cycle of urban poverty? What would you do and why? Education programs, social programs such as providing youth employment, Breaking the gangs and disorienting them can lower the number of vulnerable individuals. People who are educated make better choices than those who are not.

5. Would reducing the poverty rate produce a lowered delinquency rate? Why or why not? Reducing poverty will reduce the delinquency rate. Employed people will take children to school, meet their basic needs to a level that they have not time for joining gangs and committing crimes.

Assignment 2

1. Discuss how a strain theorist might explain adolescents' greater propensity for crime. Compare Agnew's with Merton's. Merton argues that the level of living and expectations in the United States pushes many adolescents to achieve societal goals such as wealth and career. If they fail, they use crime to get wealth. On the contrary, Agnew argues that adolescents participate in crime due to the loss of their valued possessions such as family, failure to achieve valued goals such as career and wealth status. They can also engage in crime because of experiencing negative stimuli such as abuse.

2. What are the policy implications of this theory for juvenile justice? Policies formulated in the theory of Juvenile justice posit that child offenders should be put in separate jails and given different forms of punishment to reduce recidivism and increase reformation rates and levels.

3. What is a "social bond"? It is the bond created by society's attachment to family, social norms, involvement of social activities and the belief that the activities are significant in their lives. It is like a common value shared by the society.

4. Give examples for each of the four dimensions identified in Hirschi's theory.

Attachment to family for example respect for each other, value of birthdays, weddings, and education of family members.

Commitment to social norms such as reporting bad behavior, punishing children, going to church etc.

Involvement in activities such as graduations, birthday parties among others.

Belief in all things that work for the positive growth of the society, for instance, belief in opposite sex marriages.

5. Speculate as to how recent changes in the family, community and school might influence each dimension of Hirschi's social bond concept.

Changes in the family affect how people relate in school and even in the community. One institution affects the function of the other. For example, if a person is abused at home, they can abuse other people in school or in the community.

6. In what ways might a weak or broken social bond also be the result of a "flawed individual" or "flawed society?" A weak social bond is usually exploited fully and it leads to the spread of negative values. For instance, in a family where children are abused, they will abuse others in society and weaken the value of human respect and communal love for each other. People will view others in a

distrustful manner.

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