
The relation of different factors to crime

Females do commit considerable amount of crimes (National Statistics 2016), however there is a large difference between male and female offending.

Early on in society, Scientists explained the reason for committing crime in terms of biology, suggesting that there was an innate desire within certain people to commit crime (Lombroso & Ferrero 1898), however there were very few females who were born criminal. In recent years, theories have developed beyond an innate criminality, pointing towards a social explanation of gender differences in crime.

Talcott Parsons' (1956) explanation of the relationship between gender and crime is based on gender difference rather than biological assumption about sex differences Parsons believes that there are clear and obvious gender roles within the nuclear family, e.g. the father having a role away from the home, as an economic provider for the family as well as a leader, while the mother adopts a caring role, providing an emotional support system for the family.

Heidensohn (1996) argues that because the patriarchal society enforces greater control over women, they have less opportunity to commit crime. Patriarchal control is in operation throughout society, in work, at home and in public. Women are often put into subordinate positions at work, where there is a 'glass ceiling' that thwart women's prospects to rise to more powerful senior positions, where there are more opportunities for white collar crimes. Women's domestic roles as careers within the home have kept them confined, with little opportunity to get out and be exposed to crime, let alone become criminal. Daughters as a group usually experience patriarchal control, i.e. having a curfew, being required to do housework, being discouraged from relationships, reducing opportunities to engage in deviant behavior outside of the home. Throughout modern history, an increasing amount of media coverage on rape culture and sexual violence has prevented full participation of women in society. It has played a sizeable role in instilling fear in women of rape, sexual violence, and a ridicule of clothing and makeup resulting in a "bad reputation". Women often feel unsafe in public and therefore stay at home, where there are less opportunities for crime.

As stated in Adler's Liberation Thesis (1975), as women become liberated from the Patriarchy their offending will become like men's. She argues that freedom from the patriarchy is causing a rise of female crime as women are becoming more equal to men, they therefore have similar opportunities to commit crime. Women have now reached a place where they are adopting traditionally male roles in workplaces, at home, and in general. There are more females in powerful positions, allowing a path into white collar crimes that in the past weren't available to them. This view somewhat overlooks that female crime rate began rising in 1950s before women's liberation. The majority of female criminals comes from a working-class home, and has not been fully able to experience women's liberation.

Evidence strongly suggests most offenders are males, (National Statistics 2016) however what has been overlooked is what it is about being male that leads men to offend. There tends to be a focus on masculinity as a way of explaining higher offending rates.

James Messerschmidt (1993) argues that the concept of masculinity is socially constructed to be an 'accomplishment' and a title that has to be kept up and presented to others. He argues that there is a variation of masculinities that co-exist within society. Most men desire to achieve a hegemonic masculinity as it is the most prestigious, dominant form. Others have subordinate masculinities for example gay or lower-class men who have no wish to achieve a hegemonic masculinity or lack the resources to do so. Class and difference is also used as a resource among men to accomplish masculinity, the difference lies in the type of crime, middle-upper class males commit white collar and corporate crime to accomplish hegemonic masculinity, poorer groups may use street robbery to achieve a subordinated masculinity.

Messerschmidt moves towards a circular argument, almost using masculinity as an explanation of criminal activity, because males who commit crime tend to have violent and controlling characteristics. He does not explain why not all men use crime to achieve masculinity; he uses this concept as an explanation for almost every male wrongdoing, from blue to white collar.

Parsons (1956) Boys are raised to be active, aggressive, and risk taking. They are socialized into discarding any female gender roles, and to focus on the Male-Breadwinner role which involves work outside of the home. They are encouraged to adopt aggressive, anti-social behavior to prove their masculinity, and their role as a man.

Ethnicity and crime

Official crime statistics are believed to overrepresent black and ethnic minorities, there are around 80,000 men currently in UK prisons, of those, approximately 72% are white, 13.7% are black, 7.1% are Asian, and 7.1% are mixed, or other. The population of the UK however, consists of only 3% Blacks, 6.9% Asians, and 2% Mixed. (ONS 2011) However, these statistics aren't completely representative of one minority or group's likelihood of committing offences, they represent their involvement within the Criminal Justice System. Discrimination by Police, or Police strategies may be the reason for differences in arrests or Stop-and-Search procedures, however differences in ratio of Black and ethnic minorities in comparison to White people, are seen by some as a result of harsher punishments to minorities.

Supporters of Left Realism views, such as Lea and Young (1984) argue that minorities and black people, especially young men are committing more crimes than other ethnicities, and that official statistics are correct in their representation. Lea and Young recognize that many of the unjustified arrests and incarcerations of young minorities are due to a certain amount of racism within the Police. However, even though there may be a racist presence, it is not the cause of the ethnic differences in official statistics, as a large proportion of crimes are reported to them by the public. Also, the simple explanation of racism within the Police Force would not explain the much higher rates of conviction of Black people over Asians, assuming that the Police are particularly discriminatory against Black people over any other race or ethnicity. Lea and Young believe that the difference in offending between Black and ethnic minorities, and the White majority are fairly represented, the cause being the difference in levels of marginalization and deprivation.

Lea and Young's views on Police racism as a marginal issue within the debate surrounding ethnic minorities' representation in crime statistics is often criticized. There is a recurring argument that arrest rates for Black people may be higher than that of Asians because the two

groups are stereotyped differently within British society, seeing Black people as aggressive and suspicious, and Asians as passive and respectful.

Hall et al (1979) and Gilroy (1982) discard the view that the statistics replicate reality, they believe that they are the result of a socially constructed process that stereotypes minorities as a criminal type that are more deviant in society than the rest of the population.

Gilroy argues that there is a myth that was created by stereotypes of Black and Asian people, that depicts them as criminals, or prone to criminal activity. He however, believes that they are no more criminal than any other group in society, but because the Criminal Justice system act on discriminatory stereotypes, minorities have a higher presence in official crime statistics because they are more criminalized.

Hall et al. argue that there was a rising concern and panic over black muggers during the 1970s (Hall et al. Policing the Crisis 1979). At the time was a steep decline in the economy which resulted in a high level of unemployment and substandard living conditions, the state became fractured, with riots and strikes leading to civil unrest. By creating a common enemy, the black mugger, it helped to congeal a broken nation. As a result, society encouraged and overlooked random stops and searches of young Black men. This categorization of Black youths led to the magnification of deviancy within that group. Hall's perspectives are much more inclusive, merging the categorization, moral panic, magnification of crime, and the reaction of the nation.

Class and crime

Marx (1818-1883) argues that the social and economic factors within society are the main causes of criminality. Working class crime is viewed only as a political act made by the Proletariat against the Bourgeoisie, because the exploitation of the working class causes it. This view sees dominant groups in society as maintaining their dominance by use of the law. Upper class, white males are usually those who identify with the dominant group while those who are poor or are part of any minority are automatically categorised into the subordinate group within society. These poorer groups have much more in the way of man-power however the dominant groups suppress them with laws and regulations to keep from a rebellion.

Chambliss, W.J. (1975) argues that the concept of crime is constructed by the dominant groups of society, and acts are only defined as crime when it is of their interest. This means that crime is constructed by the ruling class when questions are raised as to their exploitation of the rest of society, for example when the public go on strike to oppose an injustice. Therefore, the concept of crime only exists because those who benefit from its presence are the ones who created it.

Marxists, such as Chambliss, claim that wealth and power are the key factors in determining who suffers under the law. He also sees deviance and criminal activity as an expected product of Capitalism, and that this system generates a society of greedy, hostile, self-interested individuals which is a strong motivator of crime across all classes. Individuals across all classes use whatever means they have to get ahead, crime is merely a byproduct. Therefore, in areas of low income, drug dealers, prostitutes, and muggers use what they have to accumulate what they can. However, in areas of high income, salarymen, politicians, and lawyers have subtler yet effective resources available.

Chambliss is quite extreme in his view and does not take into account that individuals in upper and middle classes would not necessarily need to commit any crimes to stay alive or feed drug habits, and therefore don't often get scrutinized by the law. Working class members of society however, frequently find themselves offending to steal food for their families, robbing shops to feed their substance addiction, or are coerced by gangs or peers. They are likely to be low paid, with a lack of education and skills with a multitude of opportunities to commit crime constantly surrounding them, whereas the middle and upper class may be more inclined to conform to social rules as a reputation of deviance is harmful to their status. They also have less need to support others or find an income as they may already have alternative sources of income, from parents or steady jobs.

Marxists view crime as everchanging throughout different societies depending on their economic and social structures. However, it will always persist under Capitalism as it promotes inequality and class conflict.

Age and crime

The relationship between age and crime has long been of interest to Criminologists and other researchers alike. Adolphe Quetelet (1842) for example, found that the majority of those committing or being involved in crime were adolescents or were in early adulthood.

The Edinburgh Study (2003) was a longitudinal study in Scotland into why young people get involved in offending and how they disassociate themselves with the criminal sphere. It found that the majority of youth offending was from working class families, which peaked from ages twelve to fourteen, and decreased from there. However, the age of conviction is a few years higher at around seventeen to twenty. Young people who live in urban areas have more opportunity for crime, there are more shopping centres, houses, cars, and offices, which lead to small crimes such as theft, which could be the reason for a smaller conviction rate for younger offenders. There are fewer opportunities for younger people to commit serious work-related crimes, such as embezzlement or computer fraud, because their jobs are usually low paid and low level and therefore have little experience in serious work or positions of authority. However, for older offenders, there are more opportunities for increasingly serious crimes, which could also be one factor contributing to their higher conviction rates.

The age of twenty-five is where criminal activity seems to take a steep decline as people take on new responsibilities in society such as a career, partner, parent. The impact of imprisonment seems much more serious because of how it will affect the offender's life and responsibilities. Young people however, do not have these responsibilities which may lead to an adverse effect, where more crime is being committed because of a lack of responsibilities and concern for others.

Peer groups may pressure others into conforming to their norms and values, promoting deviant behaviour such as missing lessons in school or underage drinking, creating a gateway into more dangerous groups or gangs, allowing for more opportunity to offend as well as the encouragement and pressure to do so. For some, taking part in criminal activity may be a basis for building on social status within a peer group or family, proving that they are able to commit crimes that require skill, or be the toughest person in the group. Peer influence is one of the main contributions that will determine whether a young person will engage in criminal activity,

such as substance abuse, as part of their adolescent life or not (Reed, M.D. & Rountree, P.W. 1997). Substance abuse may pave the way towards a more criminal future, encouraging further deviant behaviour and offending to fund an addiction.

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