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ASSIGNMENT: DISCUSS THE SOCIOLOGICAL FACTORS OF CRIMES.

First of all what is crime? Crime can be defined as an offence that merits community condemnation and punishment, usually by way of fine or imprisonment. This is different from a civil wrong (a tort), which is an action against an individual that requires compensation. It is also the normative definition views crime as deviant behavior that violates prevailing norms cultural standards prescribing how humans ought to behave normally. Behavior can be controlled and influenced by a society in many ways without having to resort to the criminal justice system.

Crime is a public wrong. It is an act strongly disapproved by society. Crime includes murder, dacoities, fraud, rape, etc. Each society has its own perspective of defining crime. For commission of crime, there should be a criminal intention and a criminal act. No individual is a born criminal; the criminal intention and behavior of an individual are a result of various social, economic, biological and psychological causes.

The sociological study of crime and delinquency has focused either on the social structural factors (e.g., poverty and social disorganization) believed to generate such behavior or on the arenas (e.g., family, school, and peer groups) in which socialization to conventional or criminal values and behavior are affected. Both approaches explicitly or implicitly recognize that some form of learning takes place. For the most part, however, these approaches have not explicated the social process nor the behavioral mechanisms by which criminal behavior is produced. A notable exception is the social learning theory first proposed by Burgess and Akers (1966a) and elaborated upon by Akers (1973, 1977). The theory was originally called the “differential association-reinforcement theory” to acknowledge the two traditions that were melded to form the revision. Burgess and Akers employed the principles and vocabulary of operant conditioning to specify the learning process alluded to in Edwin Sutherland’s influential theory of differential association.

Crime and criminal behaviors, as well as their causes, have always been a topic of social controversies because sometimes, two individuals may come from the same environment or family background, but they turn out to be so different from one another later in life. One might become a law-abiding citizen while the other, a criminal. Often times, it's because of how they were raised as well as who they chose to surround themselves with.
As a society, of course when things like that happen the majority of us always find ourselves struggling to find a correct and acceptable explanation for this.

THERE ARE SOCIOLOGICAL FACTORS AFFECTING CRIMES WHICH ARE:

1) Poverty Level and Job Availability:
statistically, poverty goes hand-in-hand with crime. Where poverty is prevalent in a community, that community will experience higher levels of crime. Generally, it's not the poverty itself that leads to higher crime rates but the factors associated with poverty, such as chronic joblessness, less access to quality schools, employment, role models and the real or perceived lack of opportunity. Crime offers a way for less-advantaged people to access goods they may not otherwise afford. Often, the prize outweighs the risk of being caught, since impoverished people may believe they have less to lose than does a wealthy person. This means that a person that doesn’t have job tends to be idle and that way start invoking in crimes such as kidnapping people in order to get a ransom or going around houses so as to rob the people. The person trends to do anything for money which leads then to committing lot of crimes in the society.

2) Social Level of Morality
Different homes and communities have different degrees of morality. In some families and communities, deviant behavior is tolerated and encouraged. In others, even minor transgressions are reported and corrected. People's upbringing and social environment can shape their view of the world and directly affect their decisions in the future. For example, research shows that people who have been physically, sexually or emotionally abused as children are three times more likely than non-abused adults to commit acts of violence. In communities where crime is tolerated, a person may commit a crime simply to fit in with his peers.

3) Age of the Population
There's a correlation between the crime rate and the age of the population. Specifically, most crimes are committed by people in their teens, 20s and 30s, especially in areas where the population is both young and transient. Violence in particular is a young man's crime; it has been said that the most effective law enforcement tool is a 30th birthday. Some commentators suggest that the country's aging population is the primary reason why the U.S. crime rate has fallen in recent years.
All this that have been listed above are few sociological factors that make people commit crimes in the society.

CRIME CAUSATION: SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES

1).Strain theory
Strain theory focuses on why people engage in crime according to strain theory. They experience strain or stress, they become upset, and they sometimes engage in crime as a result. They may engage in crime to reduce or escape from the strain they are experiencing. For example, they may engage in violence to end harassment from others, they may steal to reduce financial problems, or they may run away from home to escape abusive parents. They may also engage in crime to seek revenge against those who have wronged them. And they may engage in the crime of illicit drug use to make themselves feel better.
A recent version of strain theory is Robert Agnew's 1992 general strain theory. Agnew's theory draws heavily on previous versions of strain theory, particularly those of Robert Merton, Albert Cohen, Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin, David Greenberg, and Delbert Elliott and associates. Agnew, however, points to certain types of strain not considered in these previous versions and provides a fuller discussion of the conditions under which strain is most likely to lead to crime.

2) Social learning theory
why do people engage in crime according to social learning theory? They learn to engage in crime, primarily through their association with others. They are reinforced for crime, they learn beliefs that are favorable to crime, and they are exposed to criminal models. As a consequence, they come to view crime as something that is desirable or at least justifiable in certain situations. The primary version of social learning theory in criminology is that of Ronald Akers and the description that follows draws heavily on his work. Akers's theory, in turn, represents an elaboration of Edwin Sutherland's differential association theory (also see the related work of Albert Bandura in psychology).
According to social learning theory, juveniles learn to engage in crime in the same way they learn to engage in conforming behavior: through association with or exposure to others. Primary or intimate groups like the family and peer group have an especially large impact on what we learn. In fact, association with delinquent friends is the best predictor of delinquency other than prior delinquency. However, one does not have to be in direct contact with others to learn from them; for example, one may learn to engage in violence from observation of others in the media.

3) Social disorganization theory
The leading sociological theories focus on the immediate social environment, like the family, peer group, and school. And they are most concerned with explaining why some individuals are more likely to engage in crime than others. Much recent theoretical work, however, has also focused on the larger social environment, especially the community and the total society. This work usually attempts to explain why some groups like communities and societies have higher crime rates than other groups. In doing so, however, this work draws heavily on the central ideas of control, social learning, and strain theories.
Social disorganization theory seeks to explain community differences in crime rates (see Robert Sampson and W. Bryon Groves; Robert Bursik and Harold Grasmick). The theory identifies the characteristics of communities with high crime rates and draws on social control theory to explain why these characteristics contribute to crime.

4) Critical theories
Critical theories also try to explain group differences in crime rates in terms of the larger social environment; some focus on class differences, some on gender differences, and some on societal differences in crime. Several versions of critical theory exist, but all explain crime in terms of group differences in power.

5) Feminist theories. Feminist theories focus on gender differences in power as a source of crime. These theories address two issues: why are males more involved in most forms of crime than females, and why do females engage in crime. Most theories of crime were developed with males in mind; feminists argue that the causes of female crime differ somewhat from the causes of male crime.

Gender differences in crime are said to be due largely to gender differences in social learning and control. Females are socialized to be passive, subservient, and focused on the needs of others. Further, females are more closely supervised than males, partly because fathers and husbands desire to protect their "property" from other males. Related to this, females are more closely tied to the household and to child-rearing tasks, which limits their opportunities to engage in many crimes.

References:

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Akers, Ronald L. [*Social Learning*](https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences-and-law/sociology-and-social-reform/sociology-general-terms-and-concepts/social-28)*and Social Structure.* Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998.