Gender and Crime

Functionalist Sex role Theory

Primary socialisation – Parsons, males encouraged to be tough, aggressive and risk taking mean they are more able to commit acts of violence or take advantage of criminal opportunities.

Parsons – conventional nuclear families, men take instrumental breadwinner role and woman takes expressive role in the home, boys don’t have direct access to adult role model and reject feminine models of behaviour and engage in “compensatory compulsory masculinity”

A.K. Cohen that the relative lack of male role model means the boy will more likely turn to street gang as source of masculine identity.

New right also agree with this.

Sandra Walklate criticises this theory for its biological assumptions of roles.

Lombroso – offers a biological explanation, argued that criminality is innate, argued there are very few born female criminals.

Reasons for gender differences in crime

1. Primary socialisation determines behaviours of certain genders.
2. Sociolinguistics, language shapes what you want to do, i.e. avoid derogative language to avoid that type of behaviour.
3. Social control, how much society governs our behaviour.

Crimes that females do more of than men

- Shoplifting (it’s in the woman’s world)
- Prostitution (due to a sexualised society)
- White collar crime?

McRobbie and Garber

- Argued that largely young (adolescent) females adopted the bedroom culture (spend a lot of time in their bedrooms).
- They claim that males and females are treated differently.
- Males are given more latitude and freedom.
- Females aren’t outside the home enough so therefore don’t commit crime.
- Evidence of social control.
- Adolescent females thus have less opportunity to commit crime so it influences the statistics.
- Asian females don’t commit as much crime.
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Problems

- Definition of crime is subjective i.e. different people have different view on assault
- Trust issues e.g. domestic violence
- 1 member of the house may be answering on behalf of everyone so may not know everything that’s going on
- May not give good reflection of crime

Is crime on the increase?

- Crime stats of the last 50 years suggests an increase
- May actually just be the same as before though
- Crimes that happened before may not be reported but they are now due to telecommunication
- Reporting crime was a lot of grief and effort
- Could be on the increase due to insurance
- New crimes are created
- E.g. phishing or identity theft
- Issues such as child abuse because society is more open so people are more aware and comfortable to come out about it e.g. Jimmy Saville
- Modern technology helps police
- Theft has arguably become easier e.g. shoplifting is easier and burglary is easier

Is crime a modern phenomenon?

Pearson – “history of respectable fear” argues British society is always obsessed with crime, how things are getting worse
A lot of their lives involves violence, therefore built in them not to run away, don’t want to appear weak
- Toughness is therefore key to their image, for respect and most importantly, status
- Ability to drink, womanizing, excitement, concept of fatalism, Working-class people tend to resent authority
- Miller argues this causes an increase in crime amongst Working-class, due to their culture

**Cloward and Ohlin** – Three subcultures

These could emerge in different areas

Different subcultures react in different ways to lack of legitimate opportunities and not everyone turns to “innovation” or utilitarian crime

1. **Criminal subculture**, tend to open up in working class areas because there’s contact with the legal and illegal community so goods can easily be passed on. Arise in neighbourhoods with longstanding criminal culture with an established hierarchy of professional crime, provides youth with an apprenticeship in a career in crime

2. **Conflict subculture**, high population, results in high levels of social disorganisation and there is thus no stable professional criminal network, absence of this means the only illegitimate means are within loosely organised gangs, violence gives them alternative sources of status as well as turf wars

3. **Retreatist Subculture**, people become “double failure”, fail in legitimate means(school, jobs) and illegitimate means(crime), may then turn to retreatist subculture and get into drug abuse and end up doing petty crime to pay for it

**Subcultural theory evaluation**

**Strengths**
- Helps explain crime statistics and why certain people in certain areas are pre exposed to crime
- Helps explain why a lot of crime is group crime i.e. ideas are justified because they’re confirmed by peer groups
- Explains why meaningless crime such as vandalism occurs e.g. pride and showing off to peers, giving them status that legitimate means cannot
- Helps explain why it is predominantly young people, young people still insecure and searching for identity so they look to groups and are thus more impressionable. As people age they are more secure about identity so don’t care as much about peer pressure and thus won’t commit crime even if surrounded by these subcultures

**Weaknesses**
- Is it too stereotypical? i.e. branding people in these areas because the vast majority of people in these areas is too general, not everyone will commit crime in these areas
- Is it too simplistic? Doesn’t explain why some kids get pulled into subcultures and gangs but others from similar background don’t, may be specific peer groups? May just be specific personal traits, could be parental values?
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Evaluation

- Does the media have a cathartic effect, dissipates anger and emotion out of you, stress relief. Anger and frustration is mildly released. Violent media has a cathartic impact
- Rather than desensitise people to violence, violent media could sensitisate people. Show violence can create shock and repulsion thus people modify their behaviour e.g. NSPCC, use graphic advertising, violence can make people turn away from violence rather than attract
- All the research tends to be on media and kids, assuming all kids have zombie approach and absorb everything and accept everything they see
- Anthony Smith – undertook comparative study between western TV and Japanese TV and found Japanese TV was very violent but there was very low levels of social violence and he argues this is because Japanese media shows the consequences of violence.
- Most research is carried out on kids and research carried out on kids is unreliable, kids often lie
- Assuming violent media has created violent people, and assumes cause and effect or could it be that violent people like violent media i.e. violence isn’t caused by media, just a correlation

Does the media amplify violence? (Exaggerate or distort reality)

- Yes it does

Williams and Dickinson, argue that violent crime covers 64% of space on newspaper and only 6% of reported crimes, they argue that this is because it sells more papers.

Jock Young – “drug takers”, newspapers select events which are typically present them in a stereotypical fashion and contrast them against background of normality which is typical, media twists the perception

Smith – crime in Birmingham 62% of people drew upon what they read in the newspaper or media to form a view about crime. Only 3.2% from their own experiences, media shapes the views of crime

Pearson – looked at Manchester, believed Manchester had been demonised, only stories about Manchester are negative stories

Theories on the media

Hypodermic syringe

- Media injects you with a message and you passively take it on
- Assumption is that people passively absorb anything, example is HG Wells – war of the worlds was broadcasted on the radio and caused mass hysteria

Uses and gratifications model

- Katz and Lazerfeld, influence of the media assumes the people consume it, they argue that people choose what they want to see, they thus had the ideas and views of violence anyway and confirm their views and ideas, if people read certain aspects of media they will only consume that part, the view that media has a massive influence is thus over exaggerated,

Cultural effects model