

Crime is socially constructed criminology essay



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Nowadays hard to imagine daily life without news telling us stories about shocking tragedies happening around the world. Unfortunately almost everybody is interested in actions that can harm somebody. In media even existing a victim hierarchy (more sensational victim goes on top) of attraction interest of audience. People are 'measure' beings. It is in our habits to judge ourselves and people around us. Rules are governing everywhere; it sets correct and incorrect behaviour of society members.

Norm and rules should be conformed and existence of social control is aimed to ensure it. During social control process behaviour of individuals and groups is regulated by formal and informal agents. In process of socialization operates internal social control, here people adopt and learn norms from parents, peers, media, and etc. This type of control is targeted to individual's conscience; meanwhile more concentration of sociologists gets external social control ruled by formal agents as police, courts, and etc.; and negative sanctions (punishing the various forms of deviance). (Goode, 1994)

It is very important to understand difference between deviance and crime because first leading to second. " Sociologists refer to behaviour that is regarded as wrongdoing, that generates negative reaction in individuals who witness or hear about it, deviant behaviour, both deviant behaviour and traits or conditions that generate a similar condemnatory, rejecting reaction in others are called social deviance or simply deviance". (Goode, 1994, p. 1)

Crime is a form of deviant behaviour. Deviance can be stated as a violation against norms and values of a wider society. For example one person accepts as a norm to be a part of sub-culture- Goths. This individual support

their ideas and traditions, but another thinks different because of his life experience or other impact factor (e. g. taste) that acting and dressing as Goths is incorrect and it becomes deviant. In this case it is legal (actually to be a Goth) but some of deviant behaviour can lead to criminal activity (e. g. smoking in public place). Overall, crime is more about breaking formal norms, but deviance-informal.

Crime is socially constructed, this is a fact. Interactionist school of sociology tells us that the social order contain a variety of social groups where each acting in a way he understands the reality.(Muncie and McLaughlin, 1997) They react on certain behaviours and state people as being different from their morality or cultural norms. These ' different' are labelled as deviants or even criminals. " Social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infractions constitute deviance and by applying those rules to particular people and labelling them as outsiders". (Becker, c1991; p. 9) However, crime changes across cultures and times, for example to take homosexuality. In not long time ago, 1895, Oscar Wilde was sentenced to two years' hard labour; (Online) homosexuality counted as a mental disorder and was subject of brutal punishment. Nowadays, in many countries ' crime' label for homosexuality is removed. Another example of changes is violence in family against women and children. It was a little interest from police and laws about this problem not a long time ago. This actions was counted as a ' right of men' to ' make discipline' harming more weak members of family. Because of feminist and women's right activists campaigns to support victims, made a great work, and now violence in families is a serious crime. These kinds of interactions another time prove that crime is socially

constructed. It seems too ideal from the angle of reality, but actually it is important to understand another point that who make rules to control society?

According conflict theory, the law is created by powerful and privileged and benefits exactly to them so making powerless - criminals. (Pond, 1999)

Regarding Becker, unprivileged and powerless people, no matter of level of injury and damage they done, are likely to be arrested, judged; powerful people create illusions, that those who are at the bottom of social hierarchy (measured in case of income level, race, education degree)- are more 'dangerous' in society. This powerful elite creates environment where ordinary people become dependent of state and its social control agents who protect from 'lawlessness', but also often victimizing ordinary people one or another way.(Becker, c1991) Media is one of the major tool to 'help' people 'understand' what they need to be more afraid of. "There is more to crime and criminals than the state reveals. But most people cannot see it" (Becker, c1991, p. 15)

In conclusion, is sensible to summarize main aspects of all above. Firstly, talking about deviance is important to underline that it varies depending to cultural groups; individuals labelled as deviant only if others define them that way and that powerful and powerless are involved in social power. It is interesting that regarding functional theory of crime, especially Durkheim, deviance perform four functions essential to society: deviance proves cultural values and norms; the way people respond to deviant behaviour clarifies society moral boundaries; society becomes more united; and the last but not the least of importance, deviance support social change.

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Generally speaking, understanding of deviant behaviour and crime can lead to better society. (Macionis and Plummer, 1997)