

A functionalist perspective on prison sociology essay



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Choose a social institution (i. e. family, education, religion, prison, economy, mass media) and explain it using the three major sociological perspectives:

Functionalist Perspective

Conflict Perspective

Interactionist Perspective

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Abstract

The social institution that I chose is prison; I chose the prison system because I wanted to see how prisoners are seen by society and why according to these three major perspectives.

Functionalist Perspective –

Functionalists such as Charles Darwin and Emile Durkheim view society as a system of highly interrelated structures or parts that operate harmoniously. (Tischler, pg. 21)

The functionalist, interactionists they more so are subjective to the aspects of social life, instead of the objective structural aspects of social systems.

The interactionists, is shifted away from stable norms and values, and toward continually readjusting the social process.

Conflict theorists, on the other hand, such as Karl Marx and David Hume, view society as constantly changing in response to social inequality and social conflict. (Tischler, pg. 21)

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Crime-Functionalist Theory

Functionalists believe that crime and deviance are inevitable and necessary for a society. Crime shows other member of the society what is right and wrong. Social consensus decides how right and wrong is determined. Crime can lead to social change, say the functionalists, because the existence of crime proves to the people in society that the government does not overly control the citizens. Crime can also help the economy of a society by creating jobs for law enforcement officers, psychiatrists, probation officers and the like. Even in the functionalist society, too much crime can be bad for the group, causing it to lose the standard harmony and eventually causing the society to collapse. (www. criminology. fsu. edu)

Crime-Conflict Theory

How conflict theorists see crime, and the laws governing them, are products of a struggle for power and control. According to the conflict theorist, a select few powerful individuals and groups make the laws, and those laws are enforced to outlaw any behavior that threatens their interests. The poor and powerless are much more likely to be arrested and convicted for serious crimes such as rape and murder, than the more powerful and wealthy. The crime rate among the poor is very high because of a lack of opportunities that were meant to improve the economical status and living conditions. The poor also lack education, skills, and a strong support system that is necessary for individuals to become productive, valued members of society (www. unc. edu.)

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Symbolic Interactionist Theory

Sociology has another theory that could also explain race relations according to dominant and subordinate groups like whites and blacks in America is the Symbolic Interactionist theory. This theory focuses on how we “ learn conceptions and meanings of racial and ethnic distinctions through interactions with others and how meanings, labels, and definitions affect racial and ethnic groups” (Mooney 176). One example the author uses is simply the difference in terms that use the word white and black and the difference in the connotations of these terms. For example, typically words that contain the word black are negative, such as blacklist, blackball, and black sheep. Studies clearly still demonstrate that whites are seen as more intelligent, harder working and more self-supporting than blacks. This labeling helps lead to the very thoughts we have about minorities, which in turn helps perpetuate their subordinate place in society.

In addition, there are many ways to begin to try to level the playing field. Reforms like affirmative action seem to be a start in the right direction but are not strong enough, particularly since white women more than anyone else benefit from affirmative action. It seems that a more realistic approach might be in the areas of housing and living wage. To really help the situation, people need to be able to live. They need places to live that they can afford, that are not in already crime-ridden neighborhoods. People need to be able to make enough money to live comfortably, so providing a living wage as well as health insurance to all workers would be a start. Great reforms also need to be made in the field of education. No Child Left Behind is nowhere

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near enough. Accountability is great, but schools need the resources to teach kids and be held accountable for their learning.

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It may be that the whole aspect of school funding needs to be completely overhauled, so that no matter what a person's property tax base is, their children receive a quality education. People need to really look at institutionalized discrimination, such as those that are still in existence in the housing market and things like racial profiling. There are no easy answers to these problems, but they are not simply the problems of black people; they are societal problems. Progress has certainly been made, but in outlawing practices like Jim Crow laws, discrimination has become more covert than ever before. Outlawing discriminatory practices did not end those practices. Outlawing them did tell people eventually that those practices were socially unacceptable.

However, many people simply became smarter about hiding their prejudices under other disguises. We need to dig deeper to rid society of their underlying ideas about race. We need to educate people about the truths of white privilege and make efforts to undo the long-lasting effects. (Moore, 2008)

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Conclusion

In my conclusion, I have to agree with the symbolic Interactionist theory to look at society as it really is and not how we want it to be. If we look at <https://assignbuster.com/a-functionalist-perspective-on-prison-sociology-essay/>

society how it really is then and only then can we start changing the way we all view each other.

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