

Robert merton's theory of 'strain'

Sociology



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Robert Merton's Theory of Strain (Affiliation) Robert Merton developed the social strain theory in 1957 and it states that social structures within the society sometimes pressure the citizens to commit crimes (Richard & DeFlem, 2003). The theory argues that social norms and the socially accepted goals coerce citizens to conform to crimes or become members of a deviant group (Ministry of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014). Crime and deviance in a society result from the existence of certain goals that the society does not provide the means to achieve. Individuals often feel strained when they face gaps between what is right and what ought to be done and hence the need to find ways to adapt.

Robert Merton gives five types of deviance. The first type of deviance relates to innovation aimed at responding to the emphasis of wealth and lack of opportunities to get rich (Richard & DeFlem, 2003). The innovation ways include unacceptable social means like stealing and selling of drugs in order to acquire wealth and achieve the society goals. The second type of deviance relates to conforming to the society goals and the acceptable means of achieving society goals through hard work.

The third type of deviance relates to ritualism where people are unable to achieve socially accepted goals but accept and adhere to the socially accepted means to achieve the goals (Richard & DeFlem, 2003). Fourthly, individuals might decide to become retreats whereby they reject the society's accepted goals and means to achieve the goals (Richard, 2014). Retreats commit acts of deviance to achieve things that are not socially acceptable (Richard & DeFlem, 2003). Finally, individuals may reject the cultural goals, the accepted means, create, and advocate for new goals and means to replace those of the society. This refers to deviance.

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References

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Richard, F., & Deflem, M. (2003). Anomie and Strain: Context and Consequences of Merton's Two Theories. Retrieved from: [http://deflem.blogspot. com/2003/08/anomie-and-strain-2003. html](http://deflem.blogspot.com/2003/08/anomie-and-strain-2003.html)