

strain theories

Science



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Strain theories look through a structural scope to examine crime in society. When people fail to meet societal goals, they feel a strain in their lives. An increase in strain can lead to an increase in crime.

Strain can be felt throughout any community, large or small. I'm from a town of 3,000 people in rural Iowa. Even though it is much smaller than a city such as Denver, problems with crime and delinquency still exist. A summer drought reduces the profits during harvest and leads to much strain throughout the community since agriculture is the main industry. This puts the whole town into a sort of slum, which leads to increased crime and delinquency. For example, low-waged employees steal from employers or neighbors due to their frustration over lack of income. Teenagers often commit more vandalism and petty thefts since their parents are spending more time at the bar to distract themselves from the harsh times and less time at home with family.

According to Merton's strain theory, anomie is the inability to satisfy natural appetites such as wealth and social status. When people from my community feel anomie, they tend to fall into the "retreatism" category of the five adaptations. They consider the work they do in the fields or time with their family a lost cause and turn to alcohol for their problems. There are plenty of "regulars" at the local bar because that is a place where they can escape their problems and gossip about others. This illegitimate coping mechanism might make them feel good for a short time, but it does them no favor over the long run.

Another vantage point of crime is through general strain theory, which focuses on negative relationships. Like I mentioned before, a drought is <https://assignbuster.com/strain-theories/>

highly detrimental to agriculture and leads to a “ blockage of a positively valued goal”. This might also fall under the anticipated strain category because farmers spend every day of the summer worrying about rain, and a lack of it builds up the strain they feel. This creates an overall low social control over teenagers and it becomes especially bad when parents take out their frustrations over money on their children, as this leads to a high negative emotionality and low constrain- a. k. a. the perfect recipe for delinquency.

The empirical article did a great job of summarizing strain theory. It reasoned that people feel negative emotions when they experience strain, and those negative emotions are likely to lead to illegitimate coping mechanisms. Once an individual begins using illegitimate coping mechanisms, it can be very difficult to change directions and use legitimate strategies. It truly becomes a test of character when people experience strain, and the unfortunate fact-of-the-matter is that there will always be those who chose the wrong path in life.