

Analysis of marxist theories of crime



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According to Karl Marx, crime is as a result of the social structures and the economic system that is implemented

Karl Marx is a renowned scholar who came up with different kinds of theories to explain the various situations in the world of sociology and economics. In his school of criminology, he largely focuses on conflict criminology and why things change and the role of society in these changes. He acknowledges that the shift from one society to another is not at all smooth as there are obstacles for example, crime.

According to Marxism, for the different societies in the world, there exist different social classes. These are based on what each group owns and what it is therefore in control of. The conflict was persistent due to the ownership of the means of production which included land, labor and tools. Hence, the conflict was between the owners and the non-owners of the various means of production. As a result, there was a rise of the two social classes; the working class (less powerful) and the ruling class (more powerful).

In a capitalist economic system, the main means of production include factories and machineries. As a result, the owners of these means of production are out to gain all that they can from the implementation of these means of production. However, they still need labor in order to complete the production process. Their main objective is to maximize profits and as such, they result to minimization of the labor costs as much as possible. As a result, the working class is angered by the low wages and is ultimately tired of the exploitation by the persistent means of production owners. Eventually, the working class tends to alienate itself from the overbearing production

process. The working class will therefore try anything in its power so as to overthrow the owners who have continuously been exploiting their labor.

(Crutchfield, 2000)

In their continuous endeavor to overthrow the dominating ruling class, there is competition among them and things become harder. Karl Marx notes that in due course, the working class realizes that the means of production owners also dominate the political divide. As such, their needs are well catered for in the formation of the laws that govern them. They not only have economic control, but also political control. It is then that the working class realizes that they are trapped in their course for freedom and equality.

The working class therefore becomes vulnerable and results to crime. After all, there is hardly any way out as the owners of means of production have completely dominated the economy. The poor continue to be poor while the rich become richer. Marxist argued that it was only through theorists like them coming out to clearly inform the working class of who their enemies really are that the conflict resolution would advance and eventually the working class would achieve their sole objective of having some form of control. He argued that with the underpinnings of the capitalist system being brought to light, the fall of this system would be hastened and a communist system would be eventually reached. A system where there were no rights to private property and hence, a society free of classes and oppression.

(Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2009)

Though he did not largely dwell on deviance, Karl largely mentioned about criminal tendencies. He even ironically mentions that had there been no

criminals, then personnel such as judges and the police would have no jobs. Marx largely dwells on the societal pressures in doing wrongs other than the individual motives of being immoral. This is largely supported by some scholars for example, Merton who argues that the problem of alienation is mainly due to the social structure other than social change since the society presents equal goal to be achieved yet there are no equal means of achieving the set out goals and objectives. It therefore becomes a form of survival for the fittest. Deviance therefore, is as a result of incompatibility of what the society expects of the working class and the social structure that is in existence.

It is accepted by all sociologists that for a society to function effectively, there needs to exist some sort of social order. Laws that govern a state should be for the sole interest of the state. However, there seems to emerge a group that is always leading. This could be as a result of the power that they solely possess. The emergence of such a group could be as a result of efficiently and effectively using power. According to Marx, it is also a huge possibility that the group owns the means of production and is hence in control. A good example is the case of British Colonialism Law in East Africa that resulted in the ruling class having complete control over the coffee plantations. As a result crime becomes on the rise as the working class, though wrongfully, fights for its right.

According to the sociologist researchers, it is evident once a group of people have political power, they end embedding all ownership rights of property to themselves and the working class is left at their mercy. As a result, crime rises. Marx was for the idea that means of production should be communally

owned in a communist system. As a result, there would be less crime being committed. The only solution to the crime issue is to have a socialist revolution. For example, in Western Europe there is very minimal crime since that part of the world is more socialist as compared to the United States of America. (Marsh & Melville, 2006)

On the issue of crime, Karl Marx's theory of alienation is also applicable. Over the years, some types of crime have continuously been labeled "working class crime". The only question that is commonly left out is whether or not there are certain reasons that make these crimes to only be mostly committed by the working class group. Critically looking at it, it becomes clearer that there are certain factors that leave the working class as the sole victims of these crimes. We also note that crimes in the society do vary depending on different elements for example, age.

In case a crime has been committed, it is evident that the judgment passed is highly dependent on the social class that one belongs to. Marxism argued that the final judgment is highly dependent on one's ability to be represented by a good lawyer. However, it is notably difficult for an individual from the working class group to be able to hire a good lawyer due to the limiting factors such as financial limitations. The same analysis is persistent in terms of the punishment that the offender receives. This leads to bias and inequality.

Therefore, the main causes of criminality are hugely as a result of capitalism. For instance, the huge economic inequalities whereby the powerless (working class) are exploited by the powerful (ruling class). It is also vividly

evident that the values imposed by capitalism push the working class to committing crimes. There is also the tendency of laws to imply that working class groups are the more likely wrong doers than the ruling class. As a result, there exists conflict between the working class individuals who also believe that they are enemies yet it is the ruling class who continuously exploit them every other day. (Greenberg, 1993)

The Marxist theories do not at all rely on the available statistics on crime. They insist on the fact they are actually biased and do not at all in a clear way represent the actual distribution of criminality. They also argue that the statistics do not include the crimes of the ruling class because the laws governing such information are hugely biased. They do not allow access to some crimes; those committed by the ruling class are protected.

As a result the Realists have criticized these views by the Marxists. They agree that the official statistics may be inaccurate but they still argue that the dismissal is too readily done. They argue that the statistics would be a huge basis for the explanations of crime and deviance. This therefore is a major weakness of the Marxist theories.

Another major criticism is based on the fact that the Marxist theories do not deal with matters of gender and crime. As such, the theories are viewed to be inconclusive. For instance, in terms of gender, the theories would have dealt with issues on domestic violence. It is more likely that the working class women would be more prone to domestic violence as compared to women of the ruling class. This could be partly because the available

incomes do not meet the needs that present themselves and arguments therefore ensue resulting in domestic violence.

Generally, the level of crime is highly propagated by the fact that in our societies there exist classes and as a result there result conflicts between the different classes. The ruling class, which is more powerful, uses law to cover for their evil deeds that go unpunished. On the other hand, the working class is always punished for any crime because they are just mere subjects.

These crimes are majorly as a result of the capitalism system which only dehumanizes the individuals who have hardly any power and are therefore helpless. The only solution to all the suffering so that everyone will feel that they are receiving equal treatments is the capitalism system being scrapped off. This way, crime will be largely decreasing. For as long as people are not treated equally, criminal behavior will never cease since there will always be one group of people that will be being exploited. (Akers, 1999)

There have been suggestions by several scholars on peaceful solutions to criminology. This is such that in place of imprisonment, offenders should be practice of mediation so as to solve the arising problem. There should also be a theory why women commit less crime as compared to men, even in situations where the women are also part of the ruling class.

From the above evaluation, we all anticipate that the findings of the Marxist would be put into practice so as to ensure that there is equality all over the world. This is a free world and no one should be discriminated against just because they are not of a particular social divide. Policy makers in states

should carefully choose the best economic system to ensure equality of its people. The interest of the people should always be prioritized. The Marxists' findings are a basis for a better tomorrow.