Weaknesses

Is crime and deviance an individual's choice – could be because of
It doesn't explain why some people choose to conform to one
STRAIN THEORY – Merton
subcultures are dysfunctional and they help cement social norms through a moral consensus.

Merton maintained the American/British society socialises individuals to
Meet certain shared goals – e.g. American dream, to follow approved means or ways to achieve the goals – e.g. hard work and effort (meritocracy)
Merton argued that capitalist societies suffer from anomie – a strain/conflict between the goals set by society and the legitimate (law abiding) means of achieving them.
Merton claimed that this strain was a product of an unequal social class structure that blocked many peoples attempts to reach the goals set by society through legitimate opportunity structure.

Merton identified 5 different responses to anomie:

1. CONTRADICTION - follow norms and values to achieve even if there is no chance of success. It reinforces cohesion and solidarity.
2. INNOVATION - accept goals and success criteria. Uses creative means of success, e.g. crime (robbery/hood)
You want nice things but you don't have the funds, think outside the box, so they commit fraud or set up a shopping ring to get them.
3. RETRIBUTION - completely reject norms and values. Sees success as unachievable. E.g. homeless people may give up – under no attempt may not attempt to work – seem to care about crime.
4. REBELLION - rejection of society leads to creation of a new one. e.g. civil rights movements - everyone should be equal.
They fight for what they want.
5. CONFORMITY - is an alternative choice could be because of poverty rather than liking the look of someone's phone.

Subcultural Theories

The role of norms and values -
- Subcultural theories are fairly similar to Merton's in that they explain the position of individuals within the structure of society.
- However, they say that individuals lower down in the structure develop groups with norms and values that differ from those of the mainstream.
- For example, working class youths may develop norms that promote and reward criminal behaviour.
- They share many norms and cultural behaviour with the rest of society but are different enough to be a subculture.

Illegitimate opportunity structure

Cohen (1960) – argued that Merton had failed to appreciate that there was a parallel opportunistic structure to the legal one called the illegal opportunity structure – an illegitimate way of life that certain groups in society have access to.
According to Cohen, the illegitimate opportunity structure has 3 possible adaptations or subcultures:
1) Criminal - stealing local criminal subculture that has successful role models (e.g. in a job). They then innovate to turn criminal means to achieve the goals of the mainstream.
2) Relinquishment - leaving crime and engaging in legitimate work and leisure. Merton always told halt.
3) Retreat - those who become involved in criminal activity.

Cohen has also pointed out that there are no distinctive subcultural values – all members of society have their own subterranean values.

Subterranean values – MATZA

Most of the time we can control these values but occasionally they flair up. E.g. at a Christmas party.
They run alongside law abiding values.
There are no distinctive subcultural values – all members of society have their own subterranean values.

Subterranean values - what are they?

- Masculinity
- Subcultural theory is semesterally male subcultural theories.
In order to explore more offending behaviour, it is important to explain what the criminal subculture is.

Cohen and Ohlin have explained subcultural theories.

CRITICISMS OF COHEN AND MERTON

- Cohen is criticized for underestimating the role of group culture.
- Cohen's work has been criticized for not taking into account the social and cultural context.

Contemporary Alternatives to Subculture

Pavitt (1982) – argues that Cohen's theory only accounts for a minority of delinquent behaviour. He suggests that individuals do not share the same values.

STRENGTHS OF SUBCULTURAL THEORY

- Functionalist subcultural theories are used as a starting point for other approaches
- Functionalist subcultural theories have gained EMPIRICAL support.

WEAKNESSES

- Cohen is criticized for overestimating the role of group culture.
- Cohen's work has been criticized for not taking into account the social and cultural context.

CRITICISMS OF COHEN AND MERTON

- Cohen argues that theories only account for a minority of delinquent behaviour
- Box says the w/c boys do not share the m/c values.
- To Box, the delinquents are angry and those who look down on them. E.g. middle class boys and teachers. That's where they get their anger from.

- Box says the w/c boys do not share the m/c values.

Food Controversies

Walter Miller CRITIQUE OF COHEN

- Suggested that deviance was linked to the culture of lower class males.
- Suggested that the working class male has less focus on the possibilities of achieving crime.

- Most of the time we can control these values but occasionally they flair up. E.g. at a Christmas party.

- There are no distinctive subcultural values - all members of society have their own subterranean values.
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