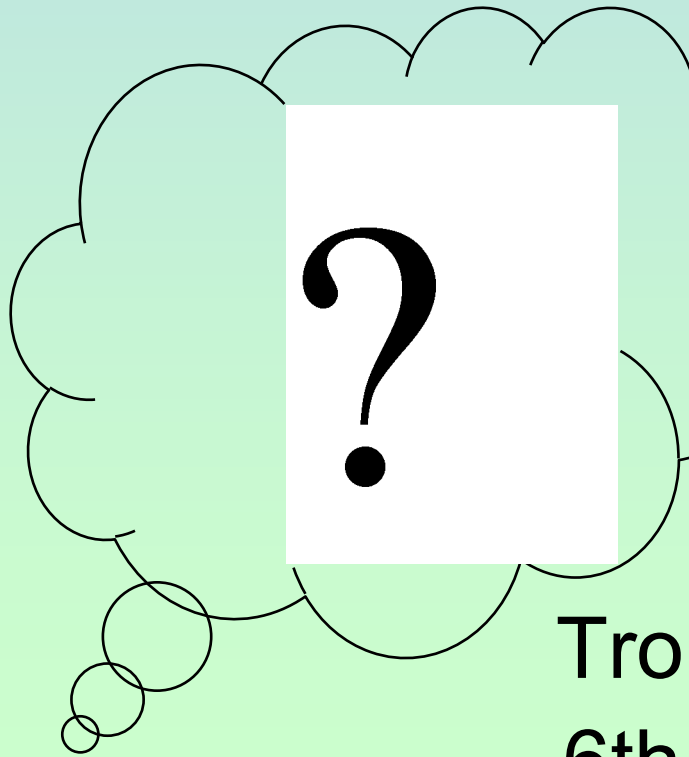


Criminological Theory Making Sense of Young People's Offending



Troubles of Youth
6th October 2008

Outline

- Deterrence Theory
- Individualistic Positivism
- Sociological Positivism
- Strain Theory
- Social Disorganization
- Status Frustration
- Interactionist Criminology
- Marxist Criminology
- Feminist Criminology
- Control Theories

Deterrence Theory

- Core Belief
 - people obey the law because the costs of not doing so outweigh any perceived benefit
 - Costs:
 - Degree of Punishment
 - Likelihood of Punishment
 - Benefits:
 - Personal Gain of criminal act
- Rational Choice / Utilitarian

Individual Positivism

- Core Belief
 - Causal influences in offending can be identified in the recurring psychological, social and biological characteristics of offenders
 - IQ; familial background; genetic disorders etc. reduced the ability to conform and self-control: lacking conscience
 - Actions pre-determined: not a choice

Sociological Positivism

- Society held together by strongly shared 'collective conscience'
- Societies have varying degrees of social control: affected by social and economic conditions
- A certain level of crime is functional, but too much or too little threatens societal cohesion: requires social reform

Strain Theory

- Strain: the means of achieving culturally accepted goals are, for some people, inadequate.
- Result: unrealistic aspirations in the face of a constraining social structure
- Crime represents one means of adapting to strain

Social Disorganization

- Communities operate as agents of informal social control
- Networks and social capital work to suppress disorder in organized communities
- Communities can become disorganized by changes in social, economic and residential patterns
- Crime itself can act to further disorganize communities

Subcultural Theory

- Like strain, individuals become frustrated by gaps between aspirations and realities
- Not just monetary rewards: status is the target for many individuals
- Adaptation not just an individualistic response: communities and groups will adapt
- Subcultures: group adaptation/inversion of mainstream values
- Differential association: the presence of different forms of deviant behaviour will shape subcultural forms
- A recognition of a variety of “goals”: material, status, honour, respect, excitement

Interactionist Criminology

- The process of becoming defined as “deviant” involves an interaction between individual and society
- Stigma induced in individual in the face of negative response, stereotypes etc.
- One response to the threat to “self” is to search out support networks
- Individuals can redefine their “master status” as criminal

Marxist Criminology

- Crime is defined by its role within a capitalist, class-conflict-riven society
- Crime driven by inequalities
- Criminal justice system developed to target greatest threats to economic order
- Concern about crime used to mask true nature of capitalist inequalities
- Emphasis of working class crime / Underplaying of ruling class crime

Feminist Criminology

- Crime is defined by its role within patriarchal society, characterised by gender-inequalities
- Criminal justice system policy and practice serve to reinforce and define gender roles and inequalities
- Offending by men used to perform/ maintain masculinity, both in the public and private sphere
- Female offenders are constructed against criminal and gender norms

Control Theories

- Human nature is intrinsically without bounds
- “Conscience” needs to be imposed, to maintain social order
- Deterrence and surveillance can produce control, but social roles and responsibilities produce more fundamental control mechanisms.

For next week's seminar

- Complete the lecture notes, and in particular, complete the “Strengths”, “Weaknesses” and “Notes of Interest” columns with reference to the particular situation of young people.