Class Activities

Chapter 8: Social Structure Theories of Crime I: Early Development and Strain Models of Crime

**Class Activity 1: Durkheim and the Concept of Anomie**

**Compare and Contrast**

**Instructions:** Identifyan example of a mechanical and organic society in popular culture. For instance, can you think of cartoons that might be examples of mechanical and organic societies? Describe how your examples fit the definition of mechanical and organic societies. (You can use examples from other television shows or movies too.)

1. Describe a mechanical society.
2. Describe an organic society.
3. Describe why your selections represent each of these societal types.
4. Describe how deterrence differs in each of these societal types and is demonstrated in the cartoons you have watched.

**NOTE: One example might be the *Flintstones* (mechanical) and the *Jetsons* (organic). Another example might be *Planet of the Apes* (mechanical) and *Star Trek* (organic).**

**Class Activity 2: Cultural Context and Assumptions of Strain Theory**

**Critical Thinking (Application)**

**Instructions:** Read the following sections of the textbook: “Cultural Context and Assumptions of Strain Theory” and “Merton’s Concept of Anomie and Strain.” Answer the following questions.

1. According to Merton, what is the American Dream? Is the American Dream a myth or reality? Explain.
2. Define the term *anomie* as described by Merton.
3. When individuals cannot reach the goal of the American Dream, they experience strain. Discuss how they adapt to strain.
4. Discus one goal you have set for yourself but you have not achieved. Have you experienced strain in trying to achieve this goal? How have you adapted to the strain?

**Class Activity 3: General Strain Theory**

**Case Study (Groups Exercise)**

**Instructions:** Read the case study carefully. Answer the questions below.

You are in your dorm room studying for an upcoming exam. This is your last exam before the semester is over, and you’re looking forward to the break. You will be able to relax and spend some time with family and friends without worrying about the demands of school. Your roommate stumbles in accompanied by a group of people. It is obvious that they are intoxicated. They are being loud and obnoxious and distracting you from studying. You want to finish studying and head to bed. You need to get a good night’s rest so that you’ll be sharp for the exam. However, it looks like that’s not going to happen.

1. Merton states that individuals experience strain when they fail to achieve positively valued goals. What are the positively valued goals in the above scenario?
2. General strain theory emphasizes two categories of strain: presentation of noxious stimuli and removal of positively valued stimuli. What are the noxious stimuli in the scenario? What represents the removal of positively valued stimuli?
3. How would you handle the situation to minimize your strain? Do you think your strategy would be effective?