

INTRODUCTION:

Theories of social control use social factors to explain how people are restrained from committing crime.

Hirschi attributed delinquency and crime to social aspects such as family, peers and education.

DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS:

Social bonding theory is a social control theory that focuses on one's bond with others.

Hirschi- elements of crime

HIRSCHI'S THEORY:

Hirschi argues that the quality of the bond between a person and society is a direct cause of delinquent behaviour. He quotes: "Delinquent acts result when an individual's bond to society is weak or broken."

Hirschi identified 4 dimensions of the social bond:

- ❖ Attachment: degree of a person's attachment to significant others.
- ❖ Commitment: a person's investment in society.
- ❖ Involvement: a person's participation in activities such as communal sports.
- ❖ Belief: trust and faith in society's rules and regulations.

These 4 elements influence the bond between the individual and society. Hirschi asserts that the question criminologists should be asking is "to what extent do these bonds have to weaken before delinquent behaviour and crime is committed?"

ASSUMPTIONS OF HIRSCHI'S THEORY:

- Humans are self centred.
- Human behaviour needs to be controlled and regulated.
- Society's rules and regulations constitute moral order.
- The strength or weakness of a person's bond with society directly impacts on crime.
- The bond formed with the moral order consists of elements that maintain and reinforce conformity.
- The elements of the bond are: attachment to significant others; commitment/investment in conventional society (obeying/respecting the law) ; involvement in conventional activities (sport) ; belief in society's values (knowing right from wrong)
- If one element becomes weak or absent, the individual feels greater freedom to pursue their own interests, which can lead to crime.

EVALUATION:

Social control theory is greatly supported and has various advantages:

- ✓ It is amenable to empirical observation.
- ✓ It has given valuable insight into delinquent behaviour.
- ✓ Researchers are increasingly using this theory to develop integrated theories of delinquent behaviour.

CONCLUSION:

Social control theory views people as self interested and regards delinquent behaviour and crime as natural, so the question that really needs to be answered is why do people conform to society's rules and regulations?

When these institutions are weak or disintegrate the bond that ties the individual to the moral order or society is weakened, and ultimately provides the individual a greater degree of freedom to become involved in delinquent or criminal behaviour.

Social control theory is popular and probably best reflects the public's view of why people commit crime.