

Q. What is the meaning of Anomie?
Discuss Robert Merton theory of Anomie
in detail.

Anomie:

Concept of anomie was given by Emile Durkheim in his 1893 book, The Division of Labor in Society. The word anomie is derived from Greek word:

Anomos = Without norms

Anomie refers to a state of normlessness or break down of society rules. In an anomic society, values, customs, and norms have broken down or become inoperative during periods of rapid social change, such as war or famine, leading to social instability and individual despair.

Robert Merton theory of anomie:

Theory of anomie or strain theory is a sociological theory explaining why people

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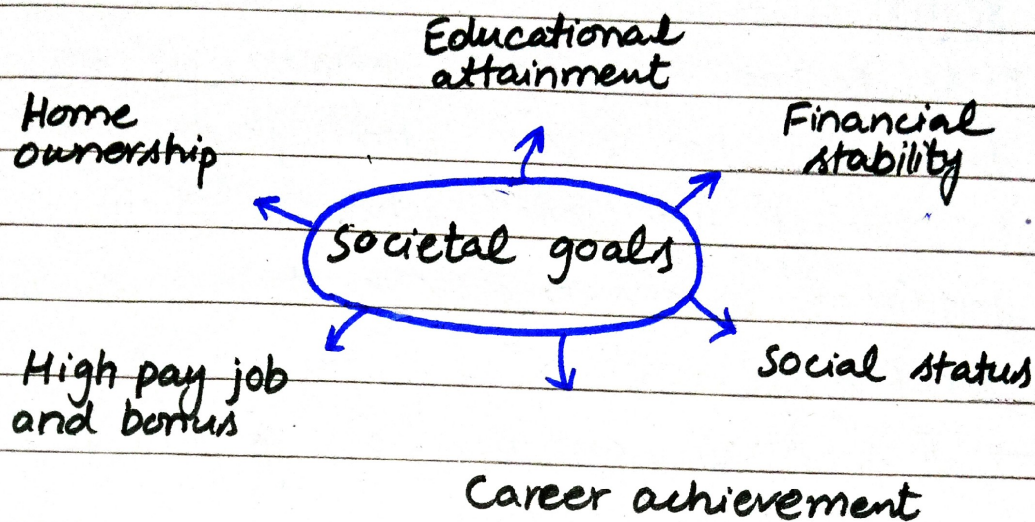
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commit crimes or break rules. It was developed by Robert Merton in **1930s**. According to this theory;

“Crime occurs when there is mismatch between societal goals and available means to achieve them. This gap creates strain and leads person to indulge in deviant behavior or crime.”

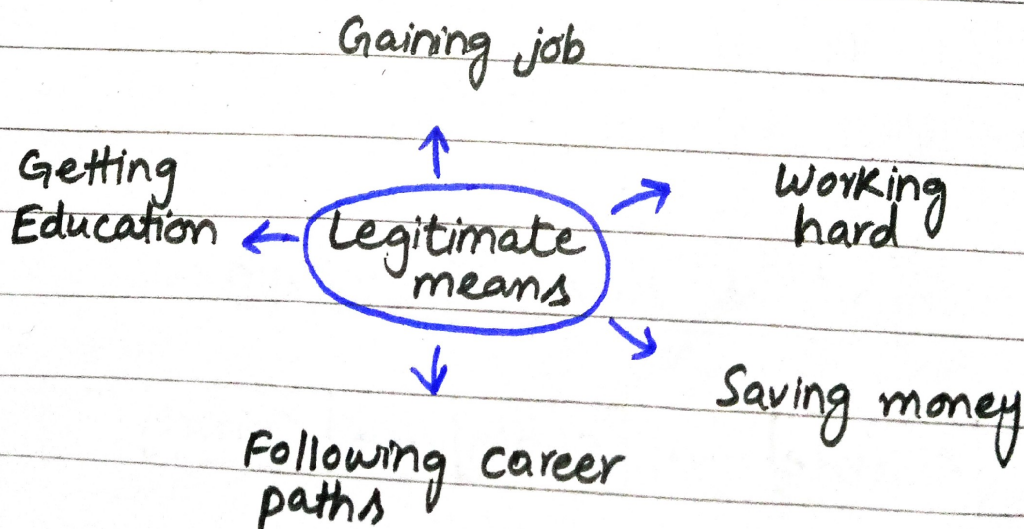
Societal goals in strain theory:

Every society sets a number of goals for the individuals. These goals are often promoted through institutions, such as schools, media, government policies, creating shared expectations for what a “successful life” looks like.



Legitimate means in strain theory:

Society not only sets goals, but also the approved or lawful ways to achieve them. But these legitimate means are not easily accessible to everyone and this is where the problem arises.



Strain:

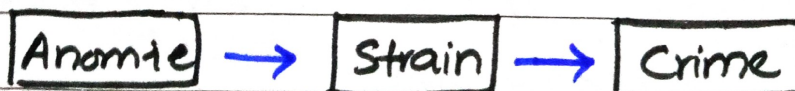
It is a feeling of anger, helplessness, or frustration that arises when people can not reach their goals because their legitimate means to achieve them are blocked

→ This strain can be societal and individual

Examples:

- 1- Frustration at being unable to achieve financial stability despite work hard may push them toward theft, fraud or illegal side hustle
- 2- Inability to compete for higher-status jobs may increase the temptation to cheat, lie about qualifications or engage in illicit work.

Flowchart of theory of anomie:



Adaptation - Five ways people respond to strain

Institutionalized means

		accept	reject	
Cultural Goals	accept	Conformity	Innovation	
	reject	Ritualism	Retreatism	
				new means
				new goals
				Rebellion

Robert Merton described five ways or responses to strain -

1- Conformity - Accept goals + accept means

Conformist agrees with societal goals and follow legitimate, socially approved methods to reach them, even if opportunities are limited.

Example:

A student works hard in school, applies for job, and continues to pursue a professional career despite facing a competitive job market and economic downturn.

2- Innovation - Accept goals + reject means

Innovators still aim for society's goals but use unapproved or illegal means to achieve them. These individuals commit crimes at high rate than others.

Example:

An underemployed person sells drugs or engages in fraud to make money because legal jobs don't pay enough to meet financial aspirations.

3- Ritualism - Reject goals + accept means

Ritualists abandon society's high-value goals, such as wealth or status but continue to follow the approved rules and routines.

Example:

A long-term employee stays in a low-paying clerical job without seeking promotion, simply maintaining the daily work pattern with pursuing career advancement.

4- Retreatism - Reject goals + reject means

Retreatists reject both society values and legitimate ways of achieving them, effectively dropping out of conventional life. This often involves social withdrawal or self-destructive behaviour. They exhibit moderate likelihood of crimes.

Example:

An individual leaves school, avoids work, disengages from mainstream society, possibly turning to substance abuse or living in isolation.

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5- Rebellion - Replace goals + replace means

Rebels reject existing cultural goals and means but go further by substituting them with new visions and strategies. They seek to change the social system, often challenging authority and existing institutions, thus prone to **high rate of crimes**.

Example:

A radical political movement rejects the goal of wealth accumulation, instead advocating for collective ownership, and pursues it through protests, civil disobedience, or revolutionary action.

Therefore, Robert Merton's theory of anomie is very important in understanding reasons for crime and suggests that crime is not just about individual choice. It can be a response to the structure of society - a misalignment between intended goals and available means to achieve them.

Q. Discuss social disorganization theory in detail.

Social disorganization theory is a sociological theory of 20th century given by Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay in 1942. Unlike other theories that focus on what kind of individuals commit crimes, this focuses on the area where most offenders come from. Thus, this theory creates a link between the conditions of the neighbourhood and crime.

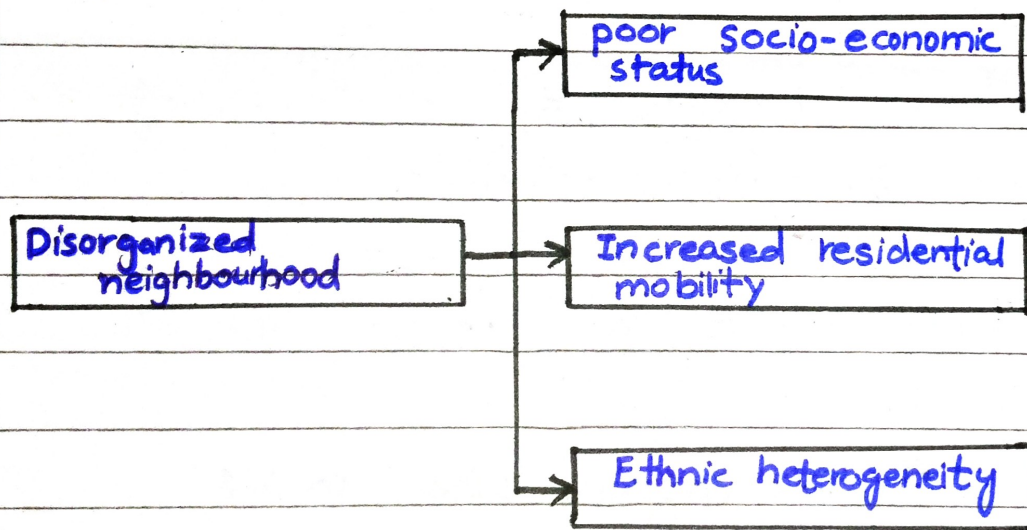
Clifford and Henry proposed the idea that;

“Crime happens when social institutions like family, schools, community and religion in the neighbourhood are weak and cannot control people's behavior.”

These disorganized neighbourhoods force individuals to commit crimes which they otherwise avoid.

Characteristics of disorganized neighbourhood

Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay described three characteristics of disorganized neighbourhood.



1- Poor socio-economic status

Areas where economic condition of people is poor, poverty is on rise, resources are scarce and education is absent, these are more prone to

crimes- In order to survive, delinquent behaviours in the form robbery, dacoits and street crimes act as sole mode of fulfillment of needs and desire.

Kutch area of Sindh is marked by increased incidents of crimes due to poor socio-economic status of individuals there

2- Increased residential mobility

Places where people keep coming into or moving out ^{increasingly} of have seen a number of crimes. They lack a sense of neighbourhood and deep connections that may stop or prevent them from indulging in crimes. This absence of deep interrelations allow them to maintain their delinquent behavior unchecked and uncontrolled.

3- Ethnic heterogeneity

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If the society is heterogenic, consisting multiple tribes, sects, ethnicities, cultures, and religions, there are more likely to commit crimes. Absence of sense of oneness or unity keeps them isolated from each other and they are more prone to engage in deviant behavior and they ultimately commit crimes.

Disorganized neighbourhood. and sense of control

Communities with weaker socio-economic conditions, ethnic heterogeneity, and residential instability will have weaker social ties to each other and weak capacity for guardianship. This happens because:

Difficulty in communication

Divergent interests

Lack of interest in relationship building

Weak Social Control

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- Low SES
• Ethnic heterogeneity
• Residential mobility
-
- Space local friendship network
• poor civic participation
• Unsupervised teenage peer group

Lack of
control

Great social
disorganization

Crime

Flowchart of social disorganization theory

Applicability of social disorganization theory in reducing crime rate

According to main postulates of this theory, crime rate in an area can be reduced by improving socio-economic conditions, improving

community ties, community policing and improving living environment as crime is a social problem not just individual-based issue.

Thus, social disorganization theory provides a nuanced understanding of how person's neighbourhood induce them to indulge in crime and improving person's environment and socio-economic conditions can leads to growth, prosperity, stability by reducing crime rates.