Marxism Criminology

Name of Student

[Name of the Institution]

Marxism Criminology and Australian Society

***Introduction***

The term criminology came from the term Crimen. Which means indictment. It was the Italian professor Raffaele Garofalo who first use the term Criminologia in 1885. Late on another anthropologist named Paul Topinard used the term Criminologie for criminology. Criminology is a subject of sociology and it deals with different topics related to crimes. In criminology, we study different aspects of crime like reasons of crime, location and frequency of crime, types of crime according to their severity, consequences of crime on society and individual, how to respond crimes and in what ways we can reduce the crime rates. Till the end of the 19th century, the major focus of criminology was on the production and implementation of laws against crimes. There was the least focus on finding the reasons for crimes.

Later on, the key emphasis of criminology was on the issues like findings root causes of crimes, to develop means that can reduce the rate of crime. Many researchers tried to explain the reasons behind the criminal mindset. Each researcher gave his point of view according to his understanding and approach. Huge differences can be found among the views of different scholars on the topic of criminology. This difference of opinion gave birth to a different school of thoughts like Classical school of thought, Positive school of criminology, Neo-Classical school of criminology, Chicago school, Social Structural theories of criminology and Social network analysis for criminology. In this study, we will try to figure out key aspects of the Marxist Criminology and this theory is linked with the current situation of Australian society.

***Marxist Criminology***

Karl Marks was a famous philosopher, scholar and sociologist. He presented many theories in the field of economics and sociology. According to the Marxist School of Criminology, things can be changed with the change in the sociological environment. Marxism Criminology explains that in this world of Capitalist economic system, different crimes can emerge when people belong to the bottom of this class system try to equalize themselves with other privileged groups of persons (Akers, 1979). The wish to get equal political, social and economic rights becomes bases for crimes. This school of thought on criminology explains crime as a result of different groups in society. When people belong to the different socio-economic background have to live together, there exists a sense of deprivation among the people who do not enjoy good socio-economic status. This system divided the society into two major classes of working and ruling class (Greenberg, 1976). This difference in the socioeconomic status gives birth to different conflicts among the people of these classes. Conflict of interest becomes the reason for different crimes.

*Focus of analysis*

Marxism criminology is a school of thought that focuses on the socio-economic differences of the society for the explanation of different crimes. This school is against the capitalist system of an economy that empowers a few people. The legal system serves for the interest of the ruling elite and industrialists. According to this school of criminology, the capitalist system of economics is Criminogenic that increase the tendencies for crime among the deprived classes (Klockars, 1979). The elite class also does crimes but their socio-economic status saves them from any punishments. Socio-economic differences in society remain the focal point of interest in Marxism Criminology. It also highlights the relationship between the structural environments of society and crimes.

*Causes*

Marxism criminology explains crime with the help of the socio-economic system of the society. Karl Marks was against the capitalist system of economy and he considered capitalism as a source of crimes in the society (Cowling and Sugden, 1987). This school of thought based on these ideas of Karl Marks. Capitalism forces individuals to focus on their self-interests only. As David Gorden, a Marxist sociologist says that in capitalist societies 'dogs are eating dogs'. The capitalist system of the economy encourages persons to follow their benefits and do whatever you have to do to achieve your interests (O’Malley, 1987). This self-centred behaviour of the individual leads towards a selfish society where only self-benefits are considered as important. There is some person who enjoys great socio-economic status and all the rules of social work to protect this class (Feiwel, 1972). There exist another class of poor and they have to struggle hard for their survival. These inequalities of the capitalist system give birth to different groups in the society and each sub-group try to get more of social, economic and political rights for it (Sparks, 1980). This conflict of interest is the true cause of crime according to the Marxist Criminology.

*Nature of Offender*

According to the Marxism, there are two types of offenders according to their respective socio-economic status. There are criminals belong to the poor and working-class of the societies. They do different street crimes for their survival. People do crimes to show their anger and to let out their frustration that is a result of different socio-economic inequalities in society. People do crime when they fail to get justice from society (Yar, 2012). In Marxism Criminology, there also exist white-collar criminals who belong to the ruling and elite class of society. Their crimes are bigger than street crimes (Marx, 1973). The ruling elite of society regulates those laws that can protect their interests.

*Response to Crime*

Marxist sociologist considers crime as a result of socio-economic deprivation of the working class. Marxist sociologist David Gordon defends the working class by saying that most of the crimes that are committed by the working class are the result of the inequalities that exist in the societies. The unfair legal system, biased economic policies and bi-polar social norms forced the working class to commit crimes to get justice (Jiang and Wen-bo, 2009). Marxism Criminology considers that capitalist system of the society itself is a crime. This school claimed that the true crimes in the society are committed by the ruling elite who manipulate all socio-economic, political and legal systems to guard themselves.

*Crime Prevention*

Crime is the product of the capitalist system of societies. Inequalities that are the by-product of the capitalist system forces the working class of the society to fight to get equal political and socio-economic rights. The only way to make a crime-free society is to eliminate the class system in society (Feiwel, 1972). There should be equal economic and political rights for all the individuals of the society. If there is only one class in society and if all the individuals of the society enjoy equal economic and political status only then society can become a crime-free society.

*Operation of the Criminal Justice System*

According to the Marxist sociologists, all the institutions that are supposed to provide justice to individuals should be re-established in such a way that all the citizens of the society enjoy equal freedom. There should be a true democracy in the state-owned institutions and they should be accountable in front of the public. The rights of the public class must be safeguarded to decreases crimes.

***Australian Criminal Justice System and Crime situation***

The Australian justice system is a set of rules that guard its citizens against crimes. Australian legal system is comprised of nine different systems. Eight different systems are working in different states of Australia. There also exists one federal judicial system that is responsible for the interpretation of the laws that apply to the whole of the country (Cashin and Newman, 2009). There are Barristers and Solicitors to present the case of their clients in front of the court. There exist no law enforcement agencies in Australia. The Australian Federal Police, the National Crime Authority and then each state has its police system.

Although the overall crime rate in Australia has decreased over the last 15 year this decrease in crime rate is not applied in each category of crime. The crimes like robbery, car theft and other street crimes are decreasing over time. Crimes like murder and domestic violence are also on a declining trend. Youth involvement in crimes is also declining. But crimes like sexual assault is increasing with a very high rate. Crimes linked to drug use are also increasing. The imprisonment ratio is also increasing over time.

***Marxist Criminology and Australian Society***

Marxist Criminology links crimes with the capitalist system and other socio-economic differences in society. Australia is a capitalist economy with increasing rates in its wealth inequality. This inequality should increase crime rates in Australia. But the actual data is showing that crime rates are decreasing in Australia. This decrease in the rate of crimes can be associated with better law enforcement and better justices system. Marxist criminology does not include other factors like gender and ethnicity differences in society (Goldstraw et al., 2005). Gender-related crimes are increasing rapidly in Australia that is not explained by the theories of Marxism.

***Conclusion***

Most of the Marxist sociologist tries to explain the crimes as a result of social, economic and political differences in the society. They declared capitalism as the source of crimes. The difference in the socio-economic status of different groups of society can lead to higher rates of crime. If we relate this Marxist theory with the current situation of crimes in Australia, we find mix evidence. To decrease crime rates, Marxism Criminology suggests equal political and justice system for all classes of the society. Now we have a very progressive democracy in Australia and all institutions are working independently. As a result, the overall crime rate is declining in Australia. On the other hand, Australia is a capitalist economy and with much of income and wealth inequalities. In this case, Marxism Criminology failed to explain why the crime rate is declining in a capitalist society. Moreover, gender-related crimes are increasing in Australian society. This fact is not being explained by the Marxism Criminology.

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