


## CRIME AGAINST PROPERTY IN THE LIGHT OF THEORIES OF MOTIVATIONS FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CRIME

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### ABSTRACT

The article presents reflections on the motivations of crime from a socioeconomic perspective, highlighting the need for an integrated and multidisciplinary approach. The objective is to discuss how the concentration of income and social and economic inequalities can influence criminal behavior, for this we take crimes against property as a reference. The study uses an empirical analysis based on the theories of social and economic character of crime. The discussions address how the unequal distribution of income and the problem of social economic mobility in Brazil can influence the increase in crimes against property, considering that economic and social inequality, combined with cultural pressures and the lack of clear social norms, creates an environment conducive to deviant behaviors. The discussions also indicate that economically marginalized individuals and deprived of legitimate opportunities are more likely to adopt criminal behaviors as a way to achieve imposed social objectives. The need for a more complex and multifocal understanding of the motivations of crime is defended, requiring connections with the various areas of knowledge and the integration of this debate with the elaboration of effective public policies that address the socioeconomic roots of crime.

**Keywords:** Theories of motivations. Social inequality and crime.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the field of studies of the motivations of crime, several theories have offered important subsidies for the understanding of the phenomenon of criminal behavior. Studies and data analysis have revealed advances and deeper understandings about patterns of motivations that have led individuals to develop criminal behaviors, which have greatly helped in the formulation of strategic decisions in the prevention and fight against crime. Despite this considerable advance in academic studies and productions in this field of investigation, we still witness a theoretical distance between the various approaches to the motivations of crime, in the analysis of the information collected and in the theoretical formulations resulting from these analyses. A more holistic, intertwined and multidisciplinary approach could provide valuable reflections in this investigative path, and consequently favor the development of more effective and successful public policies, to the extent that, given the complexity and dynamism of crime, criminal actions will present new modalities and consequently new complexities and new challenges to the same extent, imposing the need for new reflections and actions in the fight against and prevention of crime.

In the search for a more comprehensive understanding, this article aims to raise discussions around the possibility of building theoretical connections between the approaches of the theories of the motivations of crime of a socioeconomic nature, seeking to develop a broader and more spectral look at the phenomenon of the motivations of crime, centered on the analysis of crime against property, and this type of crime in Brazil, according to the Yearbook of the Brazilian Forum on Public Security (2018-2022), grew by 430%, leveraged by the practice of crime against property, while robberies had a substantial decrease of 40%, which notably shows the evolution of a type of crime driven by current behavior patterns and technological means.

The choice for theories of the motivation of crime of a social and socioeconomic nature is due to several aspects, but mainly due to the fact that Brazil presents serious distortions in income distribution, which may be echoing in the manifestation of criminal behavior. Junior (2014) suggests that the harmful effect of economic growth can be enhanced in case of worsening social inequality, since this inequality represents an increase in the expected benefit of crime when the income of the richest portion grows and a lower opportunity cost for crime when the income of the poorest population decreases, The confrontation generated by an increase in inequality can also trigger the weakening of moral values that could distance the individual from the world of crime.



## THEORIES OF MOTIVATION AND THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTER OF CRIMINALITY

The debate on how the concentration of wealth and income production in a small class has generated social problems that are difficult to overcome by government programs, or by the autonomy of the market itself, is not recent, however, understanding how these factors can be drivers of criminal behavior is still a debate that needs to be deepened and when they are carried out they are usually associated only with the homicide rate.

Junior (2014) informs that inequality can aggravate the crime situation to the extent that income and benefits grow only for a small portion of the population, simultaneously reducing the opportunity cost for crime among the poorest, whose income can decrease due to inequality. In other words, when the rich get richer, the financial motivation for crime intensifies, and when the poor get poorer, the temptation to turn to crime as a means of survival increases.

Fajnzylbe & Araújo Jr (2001) indicate that other factors may influence the connection between income concentration and crime. For example, the frustration felt by low-income people when they observe the prosperity of others, can arouse feelings of injustice and marginalization, increasing the propensity for criminal behavior. In addition, economic inequality can erode informal mechanisms of social control, such as community cohesion and shared values, which typically serve to regulate the behavior of individuals. When the disparity between rich and poor is wide, these support networks and social norms can weaken, creating an environment where crime becomes more possible.

The distortions created by inequality, aligned with the social objectives imposed by the model of economic and social success, may be creating an environment that favors criminal behavior, mainly due to the lack of perspective of social mobility in terms of ascension, which the country presents, and that, on the other hand, the risk of losing economic power in the large portion of the population is much greater.

According to the WEF - **World Economic Forum**, through the Global Social Mobility Report (2020), Brazil is ranked 60th out of 82 economies in a social mobility ranking. The survey reveals the great difficulty that individuals belonging to the less favored classes in the country have in terms of their ability to ascend economically. The Report, in making a comparative analysis between countries surveyed, points out how the levels of social mobility, related to the time that a given individual can ascend socially between one country and another, present strong distortions, showing drastic situations for individuals located at the bottom of the social scale in less developed countries, as in the case of Brazil, reach those who are higher up the social pyramid.



The WEF Report (2020) shows that the number of generations needed for a low-income family to reach the average income varies significantly between countries, in France for example, it takes six generations to reach the average income, while in Denmark it takes only two generations, and three in Sweden, Finland and Norway. In South Africa and Brazil, this time dramatically rises to nine generations, that is, 180 years.

In terms of income distribution, this scenario becomes even more complex, Barbosa Et al (2020) indicates that, in the last three years of the Continuous PNAD series (2012-2018), the real income of the poorest half of the population decreased, with a sharper relative drop for those closer to the bottom of the distribution. In contrast, the richest half of the population experienced an increase in income, with those closest to the top seeing the greatest relative growth. These data indicate that, while a larger portion of the population experiences a process of increased impoverishment, a small portion continues to accumulate more wealth. Barbosa et al. (2020), continues his analysis by informing that, in an even smaller section of the poor population, the real income of the poorest 10% was lower in 2018 than in 2012, indicating a greater impoverishment of this portion of the population, already penalized by the lack of resources.

The studies pointed out by the authors also reinforce the consolidation of this trend of income concentration and lack of access to wealth and income by a large part of the population. According to Barbosa et al. (2020), in 2018, the economic recession experienced by a large part of the Brazilian population was already showing signs of recovery for the richest half of Brazilians, and the increase in the average per *capita* household income in 2018 was, in fact, the result of growth concentrated only by the increase in the income of the richest, while the poorest 10% continued to lose purchasing power, and the rest of the poorest half obtained minimum balances or remained in the process of loss in productivity and income. In the total balance of the period, a portion of those located among the richest 10%, the situation in the final year of the series is more favorable than in the initial year: this group now controls a larger fraction of income than it did previously – which, as we have seen, is true both from the relative and absolute points of view (BARBOSA et al., 2020. p. 21).

Resende and Andrade (2011) indicate that the variable income inequality influences crime indicators, especially for crimes against property. Their studies revealed significant information about income inequality as a major driver of infraction dynamics in more densely occupied urban regions. The authors' studies also reveal that there is an ambiguous role of this influence when it comes to crime against the person, becoming prominent only in cases of homicides. According to the authors, the explanation for this correlation of intentional



deaths is the consequences of property crimes. This may suggest that income inequalities may be a determining factor for crimes against property, but not so determinant for crimes against life or against the person.

The data from the references mentioned above show that, in the social and economic dynamics, there is an imbalance in the access to the production of wealth and income, mediated by the models of stable relations by the individual in the context in which they live. Thus suggesting a need for an articulated approach between theories of social interaction and theories of socioeconomic character.

In addition, the moral values that usually discourage the individual from engaging in criminal activities can be weakened in a context of growing social inequality. Caliman (2008), when debating Merton's theory of anomie, argues that marginalization is seen as a discomfort resulting from the inability of some individuals to find adequate means to achieve the ends accepted by society. The motivation for delinquent behavior is directly proportional to the difference between the individual's aspirations and the means available to achieve them; Those most affected by this discrepancy or pressure are the poorest. We can then indicate that, when there is a significant disparity between rich and poor, the social fabric is eroded, creating an environment conducive to conflict and the weakening of the sense of belonging to this fabric. According to Caliman (2008), deviation would be a characteristic phenomenon of the lower social classes, since they are the ones who often face the discomfort caused by the discrepancy between goals (aspirations) and the means to achieve them. This environment can decrease the effectiveness of moral values in preventing crime, leading to an increase in crime.

Mendonça et al. (2002), when approaching the studies of the motivations of crime, indicate that social interaction can be defined by the insertion of the individual within a certain utility, which includes attributes of other individuals and that exert influence on this utility. The authors use as an example the logic that the promotion of one individual indirectly affects the usefulness of another individual. Another way pointed out by the authors is the influence that other individuals, especially family members or close people, can exert on the behaviors of the subjects who live in this sphere of relationship.

Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi (2009) argue that criminal acts can be attributed to the convergence of opportunities or circumstances that facilitate the commission of these crimes, a phenomenon that, they argue, is exacerbated by the absence of self-control, which refers to a person's ability to resist immediate impulses in favor of long-term goals, especially avoiding behaviors that could lead to crime, This self-control would be a personal characteristic that develops throughout childhood and



adolescence, influenced by the interaction between parents and children, individuals with low self-control tend to seek immediate gratification, have difficulty following social norms, and are more likely to engage in delinquent and criminal behaviors. This complex interplay of factors not only promotes transgression, but also underlines the importance of social and psychological context in understanding criminal behavior.

Mendonça et al. (2002) report that there is a central conception present in the studies, associated with the probability of an individual who engages in criminal behavior, which according to the authors, is influenced by variables related to social interaction. For example, it is frequent, in the approaches of the literature that deal with the subject, to assume that people from stable family environments have a reduced probability of involvement in criminal activities. In addition, factors such as marital status, religion, substance use, residential location, among others, are often used as indicators of social interaction in these studies. The underlying economic outlook suggests that individuals with certain characteristics would face a higher opportunity cost when engaging in certain behaviors that could make it difficult to access desired consumption goals.

For Silveira (2004), the central point addressed by research in the area of theories of social interaction lies in the finding that communities marked by a concentration of social challenges, such as poverty, cultural diversity and unemployment, tend to have a limited capacity to prevent and control crime. The presence of these characteristics makes such neighborhoods less attractive, leading residents to abandon them as soon as they have the means to do so. Silveira (2004) also indicates that the high housing mobility and the transitory nature of family life in these places prevent people from staying long enough to develop a solid sense of social cohesion and belonging to a community. In addition, the lack of residential stability contributes to the weakening of social ties, making it difficult to build a solid community identity.

This same idea is defended by Shaw and McKay (1969), who focused on the impacts of social disorganization on crime rates, suggesting that the approach centered on the individual treatment of delinquents may have a limited impact on reducing crime rates. Instead, the emphasis is on the pressing need to develop comprehensive programs that aim not only at punishment, but at transforming the living conditions of the subjects.

In the field of socioeconomic theories, we can mention, for example, theories that study how the relationship between production and consumption, combined with the models and lifestyles of the subjects, can influence the involvement in illicit activities. Among the theories that study criminal behavior from this study approach, we can mention the Economic Theory of Rational Choice proposed by Becker (1968), Anomie proposed by





Robert Merton (1938) and Lifestyle proposed by Hindelang, Gottfredson and Rofalo (1978), which highlight the importance of social dynamics in their various aspects such as; the interactions and insertions of individuals in the various social contexts, economic issues and models of behaviors and lifestyles, which concern how these individuals who are inserted in a certain social context interact and are influenced by these means, or how they are having access to wealth that is produced by this environment, and how this economic and social structure exerts an influence on the lives of these individuals, more precisely, how the combination of these elements can either encourage or deter criminal behavior.

The Theory of Anomie, proposed by Robert K. Merton (1938) points to the imbalances between socially established goals and the legitimate means available to achieve them. In a society that values the accumulation of wealth, the lack of legitimate means can lead to frustration and the use of illegal strategies to achieve success. This theory emphasizes the importance of socioeconomic conditions in predisposing to criminal behavior, especially in contexts where legitimate opportunities are scarce. Merton (1938), through the theory of social Anomie, describes that the causes of deviant and criminal behavior in society are linked to the model of how the cultural objectives imposed by a society, such as the achievement of economic success, social status and prosperity, create the obligation in the subjects, that, in almost all cases, these same individuals, they do not find equal access to legitimate means to achieve these goals, consequently leading to the possibility of developing deviant behaviors.

Thus, Merton (1938) defines anomie as a social condition that is characterized by a mismatch between the cultural goals defined by society and the means approved to achieve them. This may mean that the anomie proposed by Merton (1938), depending on the degree of equity in which a given society makes available to the subjects the methods to achieve these objectives, will exert pressure on the judgment of which truly legitimate methods are available to achieve them and in the absence of access to such methods, deviant behavior may occur.

For the Rational Choice Theory proposed by Becker (1968), crime results from a conscious analysis, where individuals evaluate the costs and benefits of their actions. As in the theory of Anomie, societal pressures to achieve material success, combined with the absence of clear norms, can favor rational decision-making that maximizes perceived gains, even by illegitimate means. Becker (1968) suggests that the decision to commit or not commit a crime is linked to the perception that the potential gains are greater than the risks. There is an evaluation of factors such as; the chance of being caught, the harshness of the penalties, and the financial benefits that the criminal act can provide.



From the perspective of rational choice theory, the behavior of the individual is understood as the result of a conscious analysis of the costs and benefits associated with what can be considered as criminal behavior. Becker (1968) proposes the reflection that participation in criminal activities occurs only when individuals perceive a positive advantage after this evaluation, in addition, we can associate this reflection with the fact that there may be a significant relationship between economic inequalities and the lack of clarity and cohesion of social norms, and this combination may distort behaviors due to social pressure to achieve personal success through the accumulation of material goods, as proposed by the theory of Anomie proposed by Merton (1938).

Mendonça et al. (2003) proposed that when the individual has a referential consumption pattern imposed by society's models, a component of dissatisfaction arises resulting from the non-satiety that this consumption, if not achieved, can manifest. This dissatisfaction, from the perspective of the economic and rational theory of crime, may suggest that, depending on the degree of satisfaction or in the absence of it, the individual may be led to break with patterns of behavior hitherto accepted as a reference. In the idea proposed by Merton (1938) that deals with social anomie, we can suggest that, as there is an increase in the levels of demand necessary to maintain the degree of satisfaction, the requirement of the degree of income necessary for the subject to stay out of crime also increases, Mendonça et al. (2003), points out that there is a proportional increase between the degree of dissatisfaction and the increase in income. Thus, the decision to commit a crime is not only motivated by economic deprivation, but also by the discrepancy between socially imposed consumption patterns and the consumption pattern of the individual who can potentially develop criminal behavior.

In an intersection with rational choice theory, the approaches to lifestyle characteristics proposed by Hindelang et al (1978) indicate that those who provide a higher expected return for the criminal face a higher probability of becoming victims, indicating that the criminal needs to perform an analysis of the probabilities of maximizing his profits in a possible choice of a victim. This is because, even in the face of the same risk of imprisonment, the aggressor perceives the opportunity to obtain greater gains by choosing victims who offer a more substantial return on the crime. In summary, the protection strategies adopted by potential victims play a crucial role in minimizing the risk of personal victimization.

From the point of view of the lifestyle theory proposed by Hindelang et al (1978), the propensity of the individual to become a potential victim could be explained from some characteristics that could increase the person's vulnerability, increasing the





probability of becoming the target of activities of this type of crime, such as: individual factors, which encompass personal characteristics such as age, sex, socioeconomic situation, level of education, marital status, possibilities of antisocial behavior, among others.

Aspects such as the lack of precaution in the use of social networks, participation in pages whose activities present a high degree of risk, in addition to the high exposure of the lifestyle that some individuals present, can further enhance the willingness to originate possible victims. Making an analysis of the crime against property from the perspective of the rational theory of crime, we could suggest that the agents who are committing the criminal act are making it from a logical decision, in which they meticulously examine the financial implications, power and meeting the specific demands of the group, before committing the crime. As argued by Becker (1968), the offenders in the case acted logically and rationally considering the pros and cons of their actions, evaluated the financial benefits, the potential to acquire control over the victim and the opportunity to satisfy a specific demand.

In the crime against property, the criminal, based on the logic of the theory of rational choice, can identify this practice as an effective means to obtain economic advantages, influence or satisfy specific requirements. From the point of view of social anomie, this behavior can be explained by the disconnection between cultural objectives, such as financial success, and the conventional means available to achieve them, resulting in the search for alternatives, such as involvement in criminal activities, in the case under discussion, in crimes against property. Merton (1938) suggests that refusal to accept institutionalized goals and means can result in rebellion about the rules that guarantee the balance of social behaviors. Thus, individuals seek to replace the established norms with others that are less institutional and legal, but more convenient to achieve the goals of the individual with a propensity for crime.

As previously analyzed, in terms of the analysis of factors that strongly influence criminal behavior, the approach made by the social anomie proposed by Merton (1938) suggests that social inequality, which is accentuated by the inequity in the distribution of economic resources and access to goods and services, can act as a catalyst for the emergence of deviant behaviors. This suggests that in situations where certain layers of society face significant obstacles to achieving financial success, in addition to being on the margins of social production and access to basic services for quality of life, the pursuit of materially valued goals can lead to alternative strategies, including criminal activities, as evidenced in economically marginalized communities



Thus, the interaction between the pressure to achieve high socio-financial goals Merton (1938), when combined with the absence of objective social norms, creates an environment conducive to anomie, where the clear definition of acceptable behavior is replaced by ambiguity, thus increasing the probability of social deviations. This complex dynamic underscores the importance of considering not only economic disparities in isolation, but also how these inequalities interact with social pressures and the lack of normative guidance. Analysis from this perspective can enable better understandings of how criminal behaviors are being shaped.

## REFLECTIONS ON A PHENOMENON STILL UNDER DISCUSSION

A possible answer is that crime is a complex and multifactorial phenomenon, which involves biological, psychological, social, economic, cultural, political aspects, among others. Each individual has a life story, a personality, an education, a motivation, an opportunity and a choice that can influence their behavior. In addition, each society has a set of norms, values, laws, institutions, and systems that can favor or discourage the commission of crimes.

In this sense, there is no single cause of crime, but rather a combination of factors that can vary according to the context and type of crime. For example, some crimes may be more related to factors of impulsivity generated by the need to immediately achieve social goals, or by the simple lack of empathy. Still others may be more associated with social factors, such as poverty, inequality, exclusion, discrimination or violence.

From this perspective, Merton's Theory of Anomie (1938) highlights how the dissonance between cultural objectives and legitimate means can lead to criminal behavior, behavior resulting from the unfolding of a rational evaluation, in which the offender carefully weighs the risks involved and is convinced that the benefits outweigh the costs, covering aspects such as the probability of being captured, legal implications and emotional damage inflicted on the victim, an evaluation of costs and benefits made by the individual when deciding to commit the crime as proposed by Becker (1968), in the Theory of Rational Choice. Also facilitated by certain behaviors and habits that can expose people to a greater risk of involvement with crime, either as victims or perpetrators as proposed by Hindelang, Gottfredson and Rofalo (1978), in the proposed Lifestyle theory. This decision can also be influenced by the disintegration of social bonds, as suggested by Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi (1969) in the theory of social control. Individuals with weak ties to family, school, or community feel less responsibility to follow social norms, increasing the propensity for criminal behavior.



Therefore, to understand and prevent crime, it is necessary to adopt a holistic and interdisciplinary perspective that considers the multiple dimensions that involve human beings and society. It is also necessary to recognize that there are no simple solutions, but rather strategies that require time, effort, and cooperation from all sectors and social actors.

Discussing these theories is particularly relevant due to the growing impact of economic inequalities and the rapid social transformations currently experienced. With globalization, urbanization, and technological innovations, new forms of crime emerge and social and economic pressures become more complex. Creating what Caliman (2008) understands to be a behavior resulting from deviance and marginality that presents a tangle of contradictions that classical criminology cannot clarify. One of these contradictions is the conflict between egalitarian intentions, which are laudable but utopian, and concrete reality, which is unequal and unjust. Thus, any effort to legitimize the rationality of the penal system becomes useless, as it does not address the understanding and resolution of the problems that give rise to crimes, deviation and marginality.

Understanding the motivations behind criminal behavior, based on these theories, can help in the development of more effective and fair public policies. In addition, addressing the socioeconomic roots of crime makes it possible to promote interventions that not only punish but also prevent crime, strengthening social cohesion and economic well-being.

These theories, by highlighting the relevance of socioeconomic factors, provide a comprehensive understanding of criminal behavior. They explain how individual cost-benefit assessments, dilution of social norms, and lifestyle impact all contribute to the decision to engage in illicit activities. Integrating these perspectives is essential for developing effective public policies that address both the social and economic causes of crime. Against a backdrop of growing inequalities and declining social norms, understanding these dynamics is crucial for formulating strategies that promote justice and social cohesion.

This analysis, when seen through the prism of social mobility and the search for social ascension, a typical situation of contemporary societies, raises the degree of assertiveness of this debate. The search for a better life and social ascension, which in themselves are already personal challenges, but which, in the midst of an excluding society and with high income distribution gaps, has greatly demanded efforts from individuals, especially those belonging to less favored social classes. Here it is important to underline that belonging to a class does not mean stereotyping the individual as a potential criminal, because crime is not exclusive to poor classes, but a "democratic" phenomenon that affects the various social strata, of course, with distinct characteristics of the role of the criminal in



each of them. For some, the fear of being frustrated in the face of the challenge, they are led to opt for less collective paths, falling into the involvement of criminal practices, including the practice against property. Criminal behavior, in this context, can emerge as a response to a system that seems to exclude those who fail to meet established standards.

By focusing on the analysis of the motivations of crime from the perspective of the various approaches to the motivations, we understand the complexity of the theme and the inexistence of the possibility of being fully understood by a single theoretical perspective. To consider the subsidies offered by the various theories for the understanding of criminal behavior, in a broader and more complex perspective.

Crime being this multifaceted phenomenon, which involves a variety of factors that may or may not connect, requires reflection from the same perspective. Socioeconomic factors, such as poverty and inequality, can significantly influence crime rates because they are directly linked to consumption models, in the midst of a society that is represented by the acquisition of goods as indicative of citizenship, but cannot be dissociated from psychological factors, such as low self-esteem and impulsivity, or from cultural factors, such as social norms and community values.

The understanding of these multiple faces of crime leads us to the need for a holistic understanding, because only in this perspective can we think about effective public policies. Focusing only on punitive measures or specific issues may incur in failures, as the approach requires a deeper reflection on criminal behavior. On the other hand, policies that adopt a multidisciplinary approach have the potential to combine preventive and punitive strategies in an integrated way. This means not only dealing with the socioeconomic factors that contribute to crime, but also understanding and addressing the various aspects that influence the individual's choices in committing crime.

Preventive and punitive measures, aligned with a deep understanding of the social and individual dynamics involved in crime, have the potential to be more effective in reducing crime and fostering safe and resilient communities.

It is also necessary to understand that social and economic transformations, driven by globalization and technological innovation, generate new forms of crime and new social and economic pressures. A multidisciplinary debate allows theories to adapt and respond to these changes, offering new analytical tools and innovative solutions to deal with emerging challenges. This is crucial to understand phenomena such as the increase in cybercrime and the evolution of criminal practices in a context of growing inequality.

The importance of a multidisciplinary debate between the various theories of crime motivations cannot be underestimated. Only through the integration of multiple theoretical



perspectives is it possible to achieve a more complete and deeper understanding of criminal behavior. This understanding, in turn, is fundamental for the development of more effective public policies, more comprehensive prevention and rehabilitation programs, and a more cohesive and just society. The complexity of the criminal phenomenon requires an approach that recognizes and values the contribution of different disciplines, promoting a continuous and collaborative dialogue between them.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The purpose of this article is to make the correlation between the theories that deal with the motivations of crime focused on the field of social and economic interactions using crimes against property as a reference point, this debate emphasizes a possible bias which presents strong empirical evidence of how social and economic inequalities, Combined with cultural pressures and a lack of clear social norms, they can create an environment conducive to criminal behavior, which is mediated by the possibility of profit maximization on the part of the criminal.

These reflections enable the construction of ideas that defend the position that criminality cannot be explained by a single cause, and it is important to look at complex combinations of factors such as individual impulsiveness, issues of social conditions such as poverty, inequality and exclusion that can vary according to the context and type of crime, highlighting the dissonance between cultural objectives imposed by a society marked by inequalities and concentrations of income, in which the legitimate means to achieve such objectives will not always be within the reach of all subjects.

In this perspective, debating crime against property in the light of theories of the motivations of crime of a social and economic nature, can subsidize valuable and necessary reflections on the complexity that crime presents, offers a deep analysis of the motivations of crimes against property, because by enabling the connection between the social and economic fields, allow us to broaden the field of vision to aspects that underlie many studies on crime, since isolated approaches may fail to capture the true origin of the manifestations of criminal behavior in a given context, especially contexts that present relevant social and economic contradictions such as social inequalities, societies with high levels of income concentration and poverty.

In the theories discussed in this article, Merton's Theory of Anomie and Becker's Theory of Rational Choice, for example, serve as support for reflections on how social and economic pressures, especially in societies marked by inequalities, can stimulate the emergence of criminal behavior. Anomie, for example, puts into debate the mismatch



between socially sedimented cultural objectives and the legitimate means that are socially or legally validated to achieve them, suggesting that individuals whose experiences occur in contexts of inequalities, without the social and economic structure to achieve such imposed social objectives, can resort to crime as an alternative.

In the case of the theory of social interaction, which considers social networks and community ties as points that exert important influences on criminal behavior, we can understand that in contexts of intense inequality, social ties can weaken due to issues that can hinder closer social interactions such as long working hours, lack of infrastructure to ensure a good education and monitoring of school life, indisposition of time for solitary experiences are issues that can weaken social relations and erode community norms and informal social control, also increasing the propensity to crime.

Rational Choice Theory suggests the reflection that individuals, in a society whose income distribution is extremely unequal, will possibly have their chances of legitimate opportunities to achieve their social goals reduced, and with this, there may be the temptation of a possible inclination to illicit means to achieve such economic goals. This dynamic can be rationalized through the possible benefits perceived by crime after analyzing the cost-benefit that a criminal act can present, thus showing how inequality can aggravate crime in certain contexts.

Thus, it is possible to glimpse reflections that the presence of poverty and exclusion can be important factors for criminality, either by the weakening of social control mechanisms, or by the decrease in the effectiveness of moral values that are strengthened by social and family life, or by the lack of viability of many to achieve their social objectives through legitimate means. Understanding property crime offers a powerful lens for developing more effective interventions. This leads us to new possibilities of reflection, including that of rethinking a cultural change about the various aspects that involve crime and how society sees crime and punishment.





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