Routine Activity Theory Crime Opportunity and Prevention Strategies

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Theoretical And Intellectual Background Of Routine Activity Approach

The routine activity Approach is a sub-model of the crime opportunity Approach that mainly discusses issues related to crime. The theorists who are considered as the proposers of the Approach (Marcus Felson and Lawrence E. Cohen) were trying to offer answers to the questions of why the rate of crime had risen at a higher rate in the United States. The Approach is reported to have come into existence between the years 1947 and 1974 (Cohen et al., 1981). The Approach remains one of the most important and widely applied theories in criminology. The approach offers a distinct perspective of criminology, as opposed to other theories; it relates crime as an outcome of the environment an individual is living. Crime is treated as an event, a product of the ecological and environmental factors that a person is living. This makes the Approach different since it diverts the academic attribution of criminal activities to mere offenders. The main theme of the Approach refers to crime being merely affected by societal matters like unfairness, idleness, and poverty. After the Second World War, regardless of the fact that the economy of the Western nations was at its peak, criminal activities existed. The degree to which criminal activities rose during this period is higher than at any time in history. Felson and Cohen claim that the abundance of society's prosperity guarantees more space for crime to take place.

Three criteria must be met for crime to occur in regard to the Approach. First, there must be an appropriate target, an inspired offender and, more importantly, the existence of a proficient caretaker. The Approach overall assumes that a high estimate of crime takes place as a result of individuals who are in their daily activities, people who are in constant contact with seeing sizeable opportunities to commit criminal activities. Many studies have proved to support the Approach as opposed to the notion that an individual leaves their homes with complete knowledge that they are undergoing a theft. The latter acclaims the actors as hydraulic, and there are minimal in comparison to the opportunistic type.

Casual Arguments

In the routine activities Approach, crime can only take place where the three primary elements converge. The Approach also holds that time and space matter a lot since crime cannot take place in the absence of one element. The offender (motivated) must determine the target and think whether it is suitable for the activity to take place. A capable guardian must also be absent for the criminal activity to take place (Cullen et al., 2010). An accessible target can be a place, a person or an object. There are a number of acronyms used to refer to the accessible targets; they include:

1. VIVA (Value, Inertia, Visibility, Access)
2. CRAVED (Concealable, Removable, Available, Valuable, Enjoyable, Disposable).

The Approach tries to alter at most one of the elements that make it possible for misconduct to take place. To make a crime prevention strategy effective, it must make the target, the presence of capable guardians, or the offender to be unavailable.

A capable guardian refers to any figure with a 'human element.' These are individuals who, by their presence at the point of crime, might deter the possibility of a potential offender from perpetrating a crime. CCTVs also act as potential guardians in this context, but a person must monitor the gadget on the other side for it to remain effective or possess the 'human element.'

The three main things that must be available help create a chain known as the analysis triangle (crime triangle) (Cohen et al., 1981). The crime triangle analyzes the elements of a crime and the potential responses that intervene in each element of a crime.

Studies Challenging Routine Activity Model

The theorists (Cohen and Henson) piloted a research activity that was aimed at determining whether involvement in crime is gender-based. The study was initiated to offer a scheme that would determine the difference in masculinity and the critical role that gender plays in criminal activity engagement. Over five hundred students were examined. The test's main aim was to determine whether the daily activities of the students were formless or structured. The findings were that the sexual characteristics effect regarding both trivial and serious cases of crime victimization was, to a great extent, influenced by an individual's lifestyle. Cullen & Henson (2010), claim that the most feasible lifestyle accrued to the criminal activities indulgence is the delinquent lifestyle.

Regarding the study, it is possible to claim that gender plays a significant role in committing crime. The research showed that men are more exposed to crime than women. Men possess a more dangerous way of life when compared to that of women. The study also showed that the lifestyle of girls proved to be more structured than that of men. The fact is that in girls, there is more supervision regarding their daily activities, while for boys, little is done. This makes the males more open to

criminal activities, while for women, there is more shelter, hence little exposure to crime. The idea can also be employed to the age of individuals. For instance, the age group that has the highest rate of susceptibility to delinquency lies between the stages of 15 to 20. The issue can be recognized as a reference that individuals in the adolescent stage tend to have a more unstructured way of life in comparison to people who are settled and hold jobs. The fact that responsibilities obscure a person from a wide range of activities happening outside their place of work makes it possible for them to have no relation to criminal activities. In contrast, having a lifestyle that is unrestricted makes a person more prone to activities that may trigger incidences of crime. The notion that a person only needs to identify a possible instance of conducting a crime might be present in people with formless lifestyles.

Routine Activity Approach's Feasibility In Fighting Crime

An approach requires being valid for it to be considered usable. The validity of an approach is resolute through testing it in various circumstances. Experiments are used to prove the validity of the Approach or to object it and regard it unusable, in case there are 'holes' in the Approach, it is suggested to be revised. Elizabeth Groff experienced the Routine Activity Approach, and results are recorded in the article "Replication for Approach Analysis and Experimentation (Groff, 2008)." Groff began with the supposition where the researcher inferred that as the number of hours used away from home increased, the chances of a person getting involved in criminality also increased. She did not use factual individuals in her study but instead used computer-simulated models.

The models incorporated varying environmental data and crime rates from the selected areas. Elizabeth found it concluded that crime tended to follow five patterns in a rhyming way. The patterns are highlighted as "high clustering rate in a certain location, the absorption of crime targeted areas, limited offenders accountable for the crime, negligible victim accounting for a great number of the victimizations, and non-static arrangements of offenses in a stipulated time" (Groff, 2008). The characters in the model existed on the basis of the time they spent outside their homes, ranging from 30% to 70%. This accrued that people who took 70% of their time outside the living area had more collisions with police and other administration agencies. With the use of the information and other relevant data from her research, Groff concluded that the hypothesis remained right, hence making the experimentation a source of encouragement regarding the idea of the Routine activity Approach (Groff, 2008).

Navarro and Jasinki also tried to use the Routine activity Approach to decipher people with the highest risk to involved in cyber bullying. They found that the three things discussed by the Routine activity Approach ("RAT") were prevailing in the online world. Concerning motivated offenders, Jasinki discovered that there are large numbers online (Jasinki & Navarro, 2012). Individuals stand defenseless while wired to the internet and, therefore, become 'suitable targets.' The other trait,

which is lack of supervision, is more prone in the online realm. There is a notion for parents to think that the parental controls installed on their home computers can be replacement guardians; nonetheless, this happens not to be the case. The parental controls do not have the ability to filter what young people post on websites. They only give a number of sites that the youths are allowed to access but do not limit their activities, such as what they post or read. In this way, the Approach explains why cyberbullying has become prevalent in the modem world (Jasinki & Navarro, 2012).

Areas Future Studies Need To Expound

Regardless of the Routine activity Approach being a renowned Approach in criminology, it does offer solutions to some of its attributions. There is a need for the theorists to expound on the issue of motivated offered. There is no concrete evidence of the manner the offenders are motivated. Without a clear explanation of how the offenders become part of the crime chain, the Approach remains invalid. The Approach can, therefore, be ascertained as a description of crime rather than an explanation. With Jeffery, the pointed issues make it possible to conclude that the Routine activity Approach is applicable in offering explanations as to why crime tends to be more prevalent for certain groups (Jeffery, 2013). The Approach is also a description of the reason certain types of crime are more prominent than others. To conclude, the theorists need to advance their research to determine the possible reasons that might trigger opportune offenders.

Routine Activity Approach Policy Implications

In light of the policy implications of the Routine Activity Approach, there are proposals demanding that with the reduction of one among the main elements (target, offender, and guardian) the rate of crime can be reduced. According to Ontario, when the time spent at home is increased, the probability of a teenager getting involved in crime is lowered. Also, the possibility of an adult getting in contact with influential scenes that might trigger crime is minimized. The character also claims that when the amount of time spent by individuals with their parents is increased (guardian), the ability to commit a crime is low (Cullen et al., 2010). Since the Approach holds that criminal activity is only ventured in the availability of an opportunity rather than having a concrete plan of committing a crime, increasing the level of guardianship and time spent indoors can reduce incidences of crime. The law, however, does not guarantee ways of accomplishing the strategies discussed above. Due to the fact that it is not possible to mandate the time individuals should spend while away from their apartments, it becomes difficult to deal with a crime related to the discovery of opportune moments. Nevertheless, there are considerable attempts by the governments aimed at encouraging the youth to remain in homes during the noted crime prime hours. The introduction of curfews for any person under the age of 18 makes it possible to control the number of potential perpetrators of crime by making sure they are eliminated from the crime scenes.

The other recognizable action is the introduction of after-school programs. The classes are primarily

targeted to make the after school hours for youths be occupied. The effect is that the possibility of having a free lifestyle (which contributes to criminal activities) is reduced. The programs provide alternatives that are safe for the children (Garofalo, 2017). They also offer healthy environments where the young generation can practice their aggressive behaviors without inducing harm. The activities constitute the arrangement of midnight basketballs and other activities geared to make sure that the minds of the youth are occupied with constructive ideas.

These activities have also proved to offer suitable and reliable guardian alternatives in the absence of parents. The fact that the activities help in giving children responsibilities to occupy their minds during the ultimate criminal periods makes them the best substitutes. A large number of criminal activities are proposed to be practiced during the after-school hours and late nights. Having the children occupied and far from the institutions where they might be exposed to criminal activities is recommended. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services (CYS) and other organizations that deal with the welfare of children also suggest the increment of 'the certainty, celerity, and severity of legal sanctions (Ontario). The above measures are aimed at increasing the deterrence of the youth from engaging in criminal activities. Depicting crime as unappealing is the first step to decreasing crime's first phase (the motivated offender). However, the last aspect of the crime of challenging to decrease; through the enacting of community policing, it can be curbed. Officers and public organizations are all advised to take the necessary measurements and make sure that the problem is dealt with from the ground. Community policing refers to the idea of involving the community in solving the crime and, more importantly, formulating strategies for eradicating criminal cases. The activity helps increase community safety since all members are involved in the process (Marcus, 2005). Citizens are taught the ways they can keep an eye out for themselves and their immediate neighbors to lessen the chances of becoming victims of crime. A healthy neighborhood is being encouraged in every community to ensure that the communities inhabit people of reputable character.

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