

Emile Durkheim

Boundary Maintenance

Crimes serve a positive function of uniting society is their condemnation of criminals. This serves to reinforce the collective conscience and reaffirm society's commitment to its norms and values

Erosion of social norms

Excessive criminal and deviant activity can act as a sign that society's norms and values are no longer functional. High rates of criminality suggest that society is not functioning correctly – they are a warning sign

Part of Functionalist view of Crime and Deviance – focused on impact on society of crime

Adaptation and Change

Deviant behaviour acts as a way of challenging social norms. As the behaviour becomes accepted by more and more people then it becomes part of the norms and values of society leading to gradual evolution of society

'Safety valve'

Some crimes act as a way of releasing the frustrations of society and averting greater damage to social order. Polsky and Davis suggested that pornography and prostitution served as a release of tension that reduced other crimes

Evaluations: Durkheim failed to explain the reasons for individual crime although many of his ideas on impacts of crime still have contemporary relevance



Theories of Crime and Deviance