

Kelsy Serrano

Professor Satenik

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Short Assignment #3

According to Merton's Strain Theory, people resort to deviant behavior because they are unable to use legal ways to accomplish culturally prescribed aims. Five responses to this strain are noted by Merton: innovation, ritualism, retreatism, innovation, and revolt. People can adapt in a variety of ways, such as by inventing new ways to succeed, ritualistically adhering to social norms without succeeding, retiring from societal objectives, or openly defying them.

Tommy Shakur Ross's engagement in criminal activity and gangs can be explained by Merton's Strain Theory. Tommy struggled to attain social and financial status as well as other societal aspirations because he was raised in an impoverished environment with few options for job and education. He therefore used illegal methods, including joining gangs, to accomplish these objectives. Tommy's engagement in gang activities can be interpreted as an inventive response to the limitations he faced, as he looked for different ways to succeed. Furthermore, it is possible to read his final departure from gang life and commitment to constructive activities as a kind of protest against the social institutions that initially encouraged him to act in a deviant manner.

Although Merton's Strain Theory sheds light on Tommy's connection to gangs and criminal activity, it is not without flaws. The hypothesis may potentially ignore other elements

that may also contribute to deviant behavior, such as cultural influences, family dynamics, and individual psychological issues, by focusing largely on economic goals and opportunities.

Furthermore, the theory fails to take into consideration the complexity of gang culture and how it helps people like Tommy feel like they belong and have an identity—factors that could be crucial in explaining Tommy's engagement in gangs. As a result, even if Merton's Strain Theory provides a helpful framework for comprehending Tommy's circumstances, it might not adequately convey the complexity of his motivations and experiences.