

Item B – 30 marks

Strain theories focus on the ways in which people may resort to crime or deviance when they are unable to achieve socially approved goals by legitimate means. For example, Merton argues that American culture emphasises achieving success, but an unequal structure limits some individuals' opportunity to do so legitimately. This may induce frustration in the individuals concerned.

Some strain theorists see the response to this situation as a group reaction, in which individuals create or join deviant subcultures.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate the contribution of strain theories to our understanding of crime and deviance.

Item B – 30 marks

Unlike other sociological perspectives such as Marxism, Functionalist sociologists have a positive view of crime and deviance, seeing it as a necessary and useful part of social life. Functionalist sociologists believe that crime performs a range of important social functions such as maintaining boundaries and promoting social change. However, critics argue that crime is an inevitable feature of an unequal society and, therefore, is a sign of social dysfunction.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate functionalist explanations of crime and deviance.

Item B – 30 marks

Some sociologists would argue that a lack of opportunity in society is one of the main reasons why individuals commit crime. Some argue that without legitimate means of achieving in society, individuals may turn to crime. However, it could also be argued that a lack of opportunity does not necessarily result in crime: women, for example, have a much lower rate of offending than men, despite our male-dominated society.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate the view that a lack of opportunity in society is the main cause of criminality.

Item B – 30 marks

Functionalists see society as based on value consensus. Crime and deviance are a threat to this consensus and yet at the same time, they can be functional for society under some circumstances. Functionalists also see the value consensus itself as a cause of crime and deviance, for example when some individuals try to achieve approved goals by illegal means. However, some functionalists see deviance as a collective rather than purely individual phenomenon.

Applying material from Item B and your own knowledge, evaluate the usefulness of functionalists contributions to our understanding of crime and deviance.

Item B – 30 marks

Interactionism is a micro-approach that looks at how individuals construct society through their social interactions. Labelling theory explains how actions become labelled as criminal or deviant in society. Labelling theorists argue that crime is a social construction; an act is only criminal when society views it as criminal. In this way, laws create criminality and norms create deviance.

Applying material from Item B and your own knowledge, evaluate the usefulness of labelling theory in explaining crime and deviance.

Item B – 30 marks

Labelling is a social process that occurs in areas of social life such as education, the media and the criminal justice system. Labels are often based on stereotypes of individuals or groups based on social characteristics such as class, age, gender, ethnicity or disability.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate the view that labelling is the main cause of criminality.

Item B – 30 marks

Rather than look for the initial causes of the deviant act, as functionalists do, labelling theorists ask how and why some groups and acts come to be labelled as criminal or deviant while others do not. Coming from an interactionist perspective, they argue that what we mean by crime or deviance is the outcome of the same processes of social interaction – between police officer and suspect, for example – as any other social behaviour. Therefore to understand crime and deviance, we must grasp the meanings involved in the interaction.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate the contribution of labelling theory to our understanding of crime and deviance.

Item B – 30 marks

Some Marxist sociologists argue that capitalism itself causes crime. A system that makes some people very rich and others very poor is likely to lead to crime on the part of some of the poor, both in order to get food and shelter and out of frustration at the unfairness of the system.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate the usefulness of Marxists approaches in understanding crime and deviance.

Item B – 30 marks

Some sociologists focus on the 'crimes of the powerful'. Crimes committed in the interests of businesses and other large institutions can be far more harmful and costly than the street crime that we tend to think of as 'real crime'. Corporate crime can involve breaking criminal laws but may also include breaking other kinds of law. Some sociologists argue that corporate crime results from pressures to succeed, leading to employees pursuing business aims by illegitimate means. However, others claim that it is the product of capitalism.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of corporate crime.

Item B – 30 marks

Some Marxists argue that crimes committed by the bourgeoisie tend to be ignored or they are able to afford to get away with it (through paying for the best lawyers or bribing officials). However, functionalist subcultural theorists point out that people on lower incomes are more likely to commit crimes owing to status frustration and blocked opportunities.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations for the distribution of crime and deviance by social class.

Item B – 30 marks

Left realists see crime as a real problem, especially for the disadvantaged groups who are its victims. They see the causes of crime as located in the structure of late modern society, with its high levels of exclusion and insecurity. Their views on how to tackle the problem of crime have had some influence on official policy, particularly under New Labour governments.

However, some critics claim that left realists focus too narrowly on inner-city crime and ignore the crimes of the powerful.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate the contribution of left realism to our understanding of crime and deviance.

Item B – 30 marks

Right realists see crime as a social problem requiring practical solutions. They often have similar views on the causes of crime to those of the New Right. These views inform the policies they support. Left realists and other sociologists oppose such views and therefore support different policies, such as those which improve the equality of opportunity.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate right realist explanations of both the causes of crime and the solutions to crime.

Item B – 30 marks

Official statistics appear to show differing rates of criminality for different ethnic groups. For example, white people are less likely to be convicted of crime than members of some other ethnic groups. However, some sociologists are critical of official statistics. The statistics only show those who are dealt with by the criminal justice system.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of differences in offending between ethnic groups.

Item B – 30 marks

There is a significant overrepresentation within the prison system of ethnic minorities, and, in particular, of black people. Statistics show that despite constituting only 2.8% of the population, black people make up 11% of the prison population. Sociologists would attribute these trends to a range of factors. However, others suggest that the police statistics miss out some crimes committed by the white middle classes as these are less likely to be investigated by the police.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate the view that ethnicity is the most significant cause of crime.

Item B – 30 marks

Official statistics suggest that there is a clear relationship between ethnicity and offending. These show black people and to a lesser extent Asians as being over-represented in the criminal justice system. In the view of some sociologists, this is because at each stage in the system, from policing through to sentencing, institutional racism distorts the picture of ethnic patterns of offending.

However, left realists argue that there are real differences in offending rates and that these differences can be explained in terms of factors such as relative deprivation and marginalisation.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of the relationship between ethnicity and offending.

Item B – 30 marks

Official crime statistics indicate that there are significant gender differences in the commission of crime. Only about 20% of convicted offenders are female, and they are far less likely to commit homicide, carry out violent crime or be repeat offenders.

However, some sociologists believe that these statistics underestimate the true extent and seriousness of female crime. They argue that the leniency of the criminal justice system may result in fewer girls and women ending up in the crime statistics than men.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of female crime.

Item B – 30 marks

According to crime statistics, men are more likely than women to commit crime. However, the statistical difference may be due to the way in which the criminal justice system deals with men and women. In some cases, the nature of female crimes mean that they are less likely to be recorded. Men and women seem to commit different types of crime. Those committed by women are seen as more serious if they go against expected gender norms. For men, crime can be seen as an expression of masculinity and a way of gaining social status.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of gender differences in the patterns of crime.

Item B – 30 marks

The majority of crimes in society are committed by males. Statistics show that four out of five crimes committed in England and Wales were by men; and men were also statistically more likely to be repeat offenders or to be embark on criminal careers. However, it is important to note that the rate of female criminality has been understated in sociological research. Females are also more likely than men to commit property offences (except burglary).

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate the view that men commit more crime than women.

Item B – 30 marks

A media-generated moral panic occurs when the media present an exaggerated over-reaction to an issue which as a result makes the issue seen a much greater problem than it actually is. Usually, a group is represented as a 'folk-devil' – a threat to society. This media amplification initiates a spiral of distortion, stereotypical representation and condemnation by powerful groups in society.

However, this approach has been criticised for failing to explain why particular moral panics develop in the first place.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of media-generated moral panics.

Item B – 30 marks

Sociological research into the mass media suggests that it may have a negative influence on our behaviour and may in fact cause crime. Some researchers have commented on the way in which the media can cause violent crime as audience members may copy violent media images. Similarly, there is a great deal of pressure towards material consumption that can also influence criminality. The media itself can also be a tool for crime, especially through the internet. However, not all sociologists would accept that the mass media causes crime, arguing instead that it is due to the nature of society or the social characteristics of the individual.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate the view that the mass media causes crime.

Item B – 30 marks

The process of globalisation has made the world more interconnected and increased the scope for crime. Some forms of globalised crime are based on trafficking one commodity or another, while others involve green crimes against the environment. Green crime has been given a lot of attention because of the extent of damage to the environment caused, often by large transnational corporations.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of the relationship between globalisation and crime.

Item B – 30 marks

There is a debate between criminologists about whether harm to the environment should really be considered a crime: often no law has been broken. There are many different types of environmental damage and they are global in character, not stopping at national borders. Where environmental damage is considered green crime is when it results from human activities.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations for the types and patterns of green crime.

Item B – 30 marks

Because states are able to create or change their own laws, this power can enable them to commit acts that elsewhere can be considered criminal. This can include the violation of human rights, which would still be against international law. Human rights are a useful concept for understanding state crime. There are many forms of state crime. One of the most serious is genocide, such as the Nazi holocaust, during the Second World War.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of the types and patterns of state crime.

Item B – 30 marks

State crimes refer to any “illegal or deviant activities perpetrated by, or with, the complicity of state agencies”, according to Green and Ward. There are four key categories of state crime, political crimes, those committed by the security forces, economic crimes and social/cultural crimes. Sociologists are particularly concerned about state crimes as they believe they have been under-investigated by the police and therefore have been used as a way of controlling or oppressing less powerful groups in society. Because the state itself is the source of law, it is difficult to challenge and the state can also have a wide-reaching impact upon members of society.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate the view that state crimes are one of the most serious forms of crime.

Item B – 30 marks

Victimisation has become an issue of increasing sociological importance; therefore greater emphasis has been placed upon identifying the social groups most at risk of victimisation and the sociological explanations for these trends. Marxist sociologists would argue that the poor are also the most likely social group to be victims of crime because a sense of status frustration and material deprivation drove the poor to criminal activities. Other social factors that played a part included age (with younger people being more at risk of victimisation), as well as minority ethnic groups and young men in particular.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate the view that class is the main issue influencing the likelihood of being a victim of crime.

Item B – 30 marks

Sociologists disagree about the role of the police in contemporary society. Consensus theorists would argue that the police work on behalf of the community and are part of that community, while conflict theorists see the police as a hostile army of occupation imposed on working class and minority ethnic communities.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of the role of the police in contemporary UK society.

Item B – 30 marks

Sociologists have different views on the causes of crime and therefore also on how to prevent crime. Some argue that the best way to prevent crime is to reduce the opportunities to commit it. These sociologists claim crime exists because criminals believe they can get away with illegal acts.

Other sociologists believe inequalities in society are the cause of crime. They argue that crime prevention must deal with the social conditions that result in individuals being at risk of turning to crime.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of the impact of crime prevention strategies.

Item B – 30 marks

There are a range of sociological approaches which argue that they offer the most effective solution to crime prevention. On the one hand, some sociologists argue that situational crime prevention (reducing opportunities for crime) is the most effective method; whereas others suggest environmental crime prevention has a bigger impact (changing the environment to prevent crime from occurring). A further approach considered by sociologists is social or community prevention which suggests stronger bonds and social controls could play the biggest role. However, more traditional approaches to preventing crime focus on the impact of punishment and the different punitive measures that can be implemented to prevent crime.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate the view that punishments are the best way to prevent crime.