

Sociology

Unit B672 (Socialisation, Culture and Identity) Revision

Sociology of Crime and Deviance

Part 1- Definitions of Crime and Deviance

Most of the time, most people follow the rules and norms of their society: that is, they conform. When they do not conform, sociologists can use different terms according to what they have done:

- **Crime** means the breaking of rules that have been made into laws by the rulers or government of the society. Different countries have different rules.
- **Deviance** means behaviour that most or all people disapprove of in the society. Such behaviour will not conform to the society's norms and values. Norms, you will remember are the unwritten rules for behaviour and are based on values which define what is thought of as good and right in society. When behaviour is serious and strongly disapproved, there will probably be a law against it. Different cultures have different norms and values, and so different ideas about what is deviant.
- **Delinquency** is a term to describe behaviour by young people that is disapproved of. Mostly it is deviant, but sometimes delinquents break laws as well, and so commit crime.

Identify and explain **two** examples of a crime.

[8]

Therefore, not all deviance is crime. Deviance applies to a very wide range of behaviour, and crime is a category within this of behaviour that is so strongly disapproved that there is a law against it. Is all crime deviant? Logically, it ought to be; but in fact it can be argued that there are some offences which may be crimes under the law, but where most people would not think of the offender as being a criminal or even as "deviant". For example, it is against the law to park on double yellow lines, and a magistrate could fine a motorist who does this, but we would not think of the motorist as a criminal.

There are several types of deviance:

Historical deviance

Deviance can only be defined in relation to particular norms, and norms change over time. For example, cigarette smoking used to be very popular and a socially acceptable activity, but is increasingly becoming branded as deviant, and smokers are now unwelcome in many places. Attitudes to

abortion and homosexuality have also changed dramatically, and homosexuality is no longer seen as being as deviant as it once was. Fashion, of course, is an obvious example of changing norms-- people today would generally be regarded as deviant who are they to wear fashions of 17th century England.

Identify and explain **two** examples of historical deviance.

[8]

Cross cultural deviance

If you travel abroad, you will quickly have to get used to the different norms that apply. In Japan, for example, the following would be normal, but might seem strange to you:

- eating with chopsticks
- bowing
- sitting on the floor
- wearing a mask over your mouth when you have a cough or cold
- not wearing shoes when indoors

Identify and explain **two** examples of situational deviance.

[8]

Situational deviance

However, because you are recognised as a foreigner, it may be acceptable for you not to do all the things Japanese people do. So whether an act is seen as deviant or not can depend on who is doing it, as well as in what situation.

These examples demonstrate that whether an act is deviant or not depends not so much of the act as on the social situation in which it happens. Deviance is socially defined

Crime is also socially defined. What is legal in one country may be illegal in another. Drinking alcohol is socially acceptable (even approved in some situations) in Britain today for adults, but is illegal in Saudi Arabia and other Islamic countries, and was illegal in the USA during Prohibition. Laws constantly change. Older laws may be dropped if they seem irrelevant, while new laws are introduced to cope with new problems or situations.

Although deviance is usually relative to the culture, situation and timeframe you are in, there have been attempts to standardise moral codes through the legal system. For example, all people in Britain are subject to the same laws, which define what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour across the country. There have also been attempts to define deviance and making it illegal across different cultures, for example through European law and United Nations rulings. By requiring that such moral codes become law in member countries, they become more universal.

Identify and explain **two** types of deviance.

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The following are some examples of rulings by the **European Union**:

- Member states should criminalise and impose penalties of a certain level for sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, as well as establishing their own jurisdiction and granting protection and assistance for children, as particularly vulnerable victims, and their families.
- All member states shall not subject anyone to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
- All member states shall ban smoking in enclosed premises open to the public, which form part of a public or private establishment.

These rulings are evidence that there is some attempt to standardise what is deviant.

“No deviant behaviour is universal.” Evaluate the arguments for and against this claim. [24]

Part 2- Controlling Crime and Deviance

Crime, deviance and delinquency are punished by sanctions. These vary enormously. For crime, the sanctions can range from fine to prison sentences to (though not in Britain today) death. For deviance, the sanctions are likely to be of much lower order. If someone pushes ahead of you in a queue, you may “tut”, or make a comment, to let the person know you disapprove. In a classroom, when a pupil is misbehaving, a teacher might simply catch the individual’s eye, or say his or her name -- or send him or her out.

Identify and explain **two** informal sanctions.

[8]

Although we normally think of deviance as something negative, sometimes people do things which are heroic or generous that very few of us would do -- someone who gives all his or her money to charity, or someone who risks his or her own life to rescue others. These are deviant too, because they are not expected. They may be rewarded rather than sanctioned. Some deviance may be tolerated, rather than rewarded or sanctioned. We often call this eccentricity; people with a reputation for being eccentric are often allowed to do things that others would not get away with.

Identify and explain **two** positive sanctions.

[8]

Social control

Social control refers to the ways in which society tries to ensure that its members conform to laws, rules and norms; that is, to make sure that they do not commit acts of crime and deviance.

The forms social control take can be divided into the formal and the informal.

Formal social control means the creation of laws and rules and using them to control people’s behaviour. The agencies of formal social control include the government, the police, judges and the courts and prisons.

Informal social control means how we are persuaded to conform most of the time through being taught and reminded about what is acceptable and what is not. The agencies of informal social control are also the agencies of socialisation. They include:

- **the family**— members of your family, particularly your parents, are very effective at discouraging you from what they see as “deviant” behaviour. This is especially true when it comes to promoting or forbidding gender specific behaviour- parents **manipulate** their children into behaving appropriately (eg it may be



- acceptable for a boy to do things a girl would not be permitted to do).
- **the education system**— teachers employ many informal sanctions to discourage certain behaviour. This can range from a “look” to a more formal punishment such as a detention for not completing work. **The Hidden curriculum** can also be employed by teachers to encourage or discourage certain behaviour from girls and boys.
 - **peer groups**— we all have a need to “**fit in**” with others and join a “**cultural comfort zone.**” The peer group is very effective in discouraging inappropriate behaviour as those members of the group who do not conform are ostracized from the group.
 - **the workplace**— certain standards of behaviour are expected from certain occupations. The work place provides formal sanctions to those who do not conform to this behaviour.
 - **the mass media**— the media presents images, perhaps in the form of stereotypes, of how individuals and groups are expected to behave. The media informally sanctions deviance by broadcasting acceptable and unacceptable standards.
 - **religion**—this is a very powerful form of social control to people who believe. In the past religions provided formal systems of control as you could be sent to prison for disobeying religious laws. Nowadays, religious controls are less formal and have an effect only on the religious (the threat of being sent to hell is still a powerful motivator for good behaviour for many!)

Identify and explain **two** informal agents of social control.

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By teaching what behaviour is not acceptable, and what the sanctions will be, they are agents of social control.

Informal social control works so well that most people behave in an acceptable way most of the time. When informal social control doesn't work, for more social control takes over and deals with the offenders.

Agencies of formal social control

The legislature

This term refers to the branch of government that is responsible for legislating, that is, for making laws. In Britain this is the **House of Commons** and the **House of Lords**, which together make up the houses of parliament.

In order for a new law to be created, a bill (the term given to a proposal, a law before it becomes law) is brought before **Parliament**. It is then debated by Members of Parliament (MPs) in the House of Commons, and by members of the House of Lords. The bill may be amended if the house votes for this. After both houses have passed the bill, it is signed by the monarch and becomes an **Act of Parliament** and has the force of law.

Many Acts of Parliament do not affect the issues of crime and deviance; they include, for example, decisions about how to spend money and changes to

education and the health services. Others, however, create new criminal offences.

An example of this was the **Criminal Justice Act 1994** that created several new offences:

- **Aggravated trespass** -- when trespassers intend to disrupt a legal activity, such as foxhunting or building a new road.
- **Travellers** -- it became an offence to camp anywhere after a local authority had asked them to leave.
- **Squatting** -- it became an offence to occupy a house for more than 24 hours after allowing Lord had obtained an eviction order.
- **Raves** -- it became an offence for a person to refuse to leave the site of an unlicensed outdoor festival or rave. Defining a rave gave the government some difficulty; it did not want to make outdoor opera performances illegal as well! In the end, the Act referred to, "sounds wholly or predominantly characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats."

Identify and explain two formal agents of social control.

[8]

The police

The role of the police force is to enforce the law and to investigate crimes.

To enable them to do this, the police have rights that all very citizens do not; they can arrest people, tell them to disperse (move on), and use reasonable force if they are not obeyed.

To a Marxist sociologist who see society as deeply divided, the police of one of the ways in which the ruling class maintains its power and wealth. The police are servants of the ruling class. They enforce laws the ruling class has passed, and make sure that the working class do not threaten the system. From this point of view, the creation of police forces was connected to the rise of capitalism rather than of industrialism. The police have been used against working-class and protest movements, as in the General strike of 1926 and the Miners strike of the mid-1980s.

Even though the police can be seen to be on the side of the powerful, they do also protect the working class against crime. This is why there is a rather ambivalent attitude to the police; many people are rather suspicious of them, disliking the feeling of being watched over, yet they turn to the police when they need them. This ambivalence is reflected also in the difference between the popular image of the smiling village bobby on a bicycle he knows everyone on his or her beat, and the police officer in riot gear crouched behind a shield.

Although the main duties of the police are solving crime, they spend a lot of time on other work. A police officer is as likely to be in the police station,

writing reports and carrying out administrative work as to be on patrol. Traffic patrols and dealing with accidents also take up a lot of time.

The recent small fall in the crime rate has not meant less work for the police. While recorded crime goes down, more incidents are reported. This may be because mobile telephones make it much easier to call the police; several people now usually report road accidents. There are however, more police to cope with the extra work; the combined police forces of England and Wales now number nearly 100,000.

Most people say they would like to see more police officers on the street, deterring crime by being seen to be around. One of the concerns expressed during the trial in April 2000 of Tony Martin for shooting two burglars on his Norfolk farm was that the police were always too far away to be useful. Some people felt they needed to be able to protect themselves, because in a rural area it would be a long time before the police arrived.

“If there were more police there would be less crime.” Evaluate the arguments for and against this claim. [24]

The judiciary

This refers to the courts, which try those accused of crimes and convict and sentence those who are found guilty. Most serious cases are dealt with by **Crown Court**, with a judge and jury. Minor offences are dealt with by **Magistrates Courts**, which are presided over by a magistrate. The courts have a variety of **sanctions (or sentences)** available to them when someone is found guilty of breaking the law --

- **Absolute discharge**-- the person is guilty but no action is taken against him or her.
- **Conditional discharge** -- no action is taken, but if the person commits another offence he or she will be sentenced for both the new crime and the first one.
- **Fine**-- the offender has to pay a sum of money. A fine is the punishment for about three quarters of all those found guilty.
- **Probation order**-- an offender who is on probation is supervised by a probation officer for between six months and three years. This means the offender is being checked up on regularly, and also that he or she gets help to stop him or her offending again. (An ASBO comes under this heading).
- **Community service order**-- the offender has to do work which is helpful to the community without being paid. Sentences are for between 40 and 240 hours.
- **Combination order**-- this is a combination of probation and community service.
- **Prison**-- this is reserved for the most serious offences.

Identify and explain **two** punishments imposed by the courts.

[8]

The penal system

This refers to the people and organisations that deal with offenders. These include prisons and probation service. Their role is to deal with people who have been found guilty of offences. The penal system has several purposes:

- To punish individuals who have been found guilty and provide **retribution** for the victims of crime.
- To **rehabilitate** offenders, to try to ensure that they will not commit further crimes. To achieve this, prisons may offer training and education, teaching skills so that offenders will have a chance to get a job and “go straight.”
- To **deter** -- the punishment acts as a warning to others of what they can expect if they break the law. The media play a part in this by reporting what sentences offenders have been given.
- To **protect** members of the public from potentially dangerous individuals.

Identify and explain **two** aims of punishment/ prisons.

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Recently there has been much debate about whether or not the penal system is effective in achieving these aims. The debate has particularly focused on the prison system and whether or not prisons rehabilitate, deter, protect or even effectively punish offenders. The fact that 70% of prisoners reoffend and sent back to prison may suggest that the prison system lacks effectiveness. However, it is difficult to think of another form of punishment which would be more or as effective given the fact that the death penalty is outlawed in many countries around the world (the USA is an obvious exception). A summary of the arguments for and against the effectiveness of prisons can be seen in the table below:

“Criminals should always be sent to prison.” Evaluate the arguments for and against this claim.

[24]



For	Are Prisons Effective?	Against
<p>Prisons are a severe punishment and deprive an offender of their liberty for sometimes years at a time. This means that they are very effective at providing the victims and the families of the victims with a sense that "justice has been done."</p>	<p>Retribution</p>	<p>Many conservative politicians argue that prisons are much too lenient these days with prisoners being allowed TVs and games consoles in their rooms and that prisons should be much harsher places where the emphasis is on punishment.</p>
<p>Prisoners are provided with opportunities to better themselves through having access to education and training in skills which will allow them to become productive members of society when they are released. Many people in prisons are from poor, deprived backgrounds and did not have access to the same opportunities as most people early in their lives.</p>	<p>Rehabilitation</p>	<p>The emphasis should not be on rehabilitation as this belittles the experiences of the victims of the criminal. Punishment should be the aim of prisons. The individuals in prison may not have had the same experiences of the majority but many people who come from deprived backgrounds do not end up in prison and so why should those that do receive benefits that ordinary citizens may not receive?</p>
<p>Most individuals are frightened of going to prison and would want to avoid the experience and would therefore not commit a crime because of the threat of being sent to prison.</p>	<p>Deterrence</p>	<p>Many murders are committed on the "spur of the moment" and are not pre-meditated. Prison would therefore do nothing to deter these people. Also, pathological and habitual criminals are not afraid of prison and keep re-offending. The re-offending rate is very high, perhaps suggesting that prisons are not effective as a deterrent.</p>
<p>Prisons are effective in isolating dangerous people who would re-offend (such as rapists and paedophiles) and therefore serve to protect more vulnerable members of society from violent and dangerous individuals.</p>	<p>Protection</p>	<p>Many people who commit crimes of a sexual nature are mentally ill- therefore although they need to be isolated from others in society, a prison is perhaps not the ideal facility for this.</p>

Prisoners used to be badly treated, for example by being beaten. This is no longer the case in Britain today. Prison is, however, a major punishment. Prisoners:

- lose their freedom
- have no proper income
- not allow the company of their families and friends (except at set visiting times)
- not allowed sexual relationships
- cannot wear their own clothing
- cannot use their own personal items
- are often in overcrowded and unpleasant conditions
- are told what to do most of the time.



There are different types of prison. Prisoners are sent to different prisons depending on how serious their offences were and whether they are likely to be a danger to others. Open prisons allow prisoners considerably more freedom than maximum security prisons.

In Britain **125 out of every 100,000** people are in prison. This is a very low rate compared to Russia and the USA, but is the second highest in Western Europe. British courts are more likely to give prison sentences, and to give long prison sentences. In recent years there have not been enough places in prison for the number of people receiving prison sentences.

Prisoners have to learn how to live in prison. They have to go through a form of secondary socialisation, learning not just the prison rules but also the norms of prison life. Prison is so different from the world outside that many prisoners find it very difficult to adjust when they are eventually released. These problems may make it more likely that they will reoffend (approximately **70% of prisoners reoffend** and need to be sent back to prison).

“Prisons are not effective.” Evaluate the arguments for and against this claim.

[24]

Part 3- Patterns of Crime

The crime rate

The crime rate rose steadily from the 1950s, when there were less than half a million crimes recorded each year, to a peak of 5.6 million in 1992. Since then the crime rate has fallen slightly. However, the trend is different for different types of crime.

The Home Office also publishes statistics about people who have been convicted of offences. From this, we know that the majority of convicted criminals are young men of working-class backgrounds, and that black men are over represented compared to their numbers in the population.

Questioning the figures

The crime figures do not give us the full picture of crime. They are a count only of the number of crimes recorded by the police. How many other crimes are there? And what kind of person commits those crimes? In order for a crime to reach the official statistics and be recorded, two things have to happen:

- the crime has to be reported to the police. This doesn't always happen, and there are many reasons why a crime might not be reported:
- the victims and/or witnesses may be too frightened of the consequences.
- they may feel the police will not or cannot do anything.
- If it is a theft of an uninsured item, they may feel there is no point in reporting it because there is no chance of getting it back.
- they may not want to get the offender into trouble- it may even be a member of their family.
- the police have to record the incident as a crime. There may not be enough evidence to do this (for example the wallet reported stolen white have been lost) or the police may decide not to proceed further.

Identify and explain **two** reasons why crime is not reported to the police. [8]

The police influence the figures in other ways. Police forces do not always record crime in the same way. If several houses close together are broken into at the same time, this may be recorded as one crime or as several. Some forces do not record thefts of goods below a certain value, but the set value varies. The police have considerable discretion over how they categorise incidents (for example whether an attack is an assault with intent to rob or just assault). The police also have priorities that lead to the uncovering of some crimes book may help conceal others; they concentrate their resources on places where they think trouble is likely, such as inner-city areas and “problem” it states rather than suburbs.

The dark figure

The **British Crime Survey** is one way in which researchers have attempted to get a more complete picture of crime. By asking a representative sample of people whether they have been a victim of (this is called a victim survey) the survey hopes to count crimes that were not reported to the police, for whatever reason. These unreported crimes have been called “**the dark figure**” -- they are like the part of an iceberg below the water, invisible but very important.

The dark figure, according to the British Crime Survey, is several times larger than the recorded crime figure. There are important differences between the reporting rates of different crimes. For example, it seems that a higher proportion of violent offences are being reported. This means that a rise in recorded violent offences might not mean that there are more violent offences, just that more are being reported! On the other hand, burglary and theft seem to have risen more rapidly than the figures for recorded crime suggest.

Even these surveys underestimate crime. Crimes of which companies and organisations, rather than individuals, are victims will not show up in these surveys. Victims of some crimes, such as sexual assaults, may still be unwilling to admit them.

Self-report studies

An alternative way of trying to get a more accurate figure of crime is to ask people what crimes they have committed. This is called a self-report study. It runs into the following problems:

- People may not cooperate.
- Even if they do, they may not tell the truth.
- Self-report studies are usually done with teenagers, who are less able to refuse.
- Self-report studies are usually about delinquency, which includes noncriminal behaviour, rather than crime.

“Crime cannot be accurately measured.” Evaluate the arguments for and against this claim.

[24]

Gender and crime

According to official statistics, men commit far more crime than women. Overall, nearly 5 times as many men as women are found guilty or cautioned. Theft and handling goods is the most common offence for both men and women; however, there are three times as many men as women committing these offences.

Why do women commit less crime?

- Socialisation. Boys and girls are socialised differently. Girls are expected to be more passive, while boys are encouraged to be more active and also to be tough and be able to fight when necessary. These differences may make it more likely that boys will get into trouble with the police later.
- Opportunity. Females often have less opportunity to commit crime than men. As children and teenagers, girls are usually more closely supervised; parents will want to know where they are, what they are doing and when they will be home. Boys are often given (or take) more freedom. Later, women are usually responsible for looking after children. This also restricts opportunities for crime.

Identify and explain **two** reasons women commit less crime than men. [8]

Do the statistics underestimate female crime?

The statistics only record crimes reported to the police and recorded as crimes. It may be that the types of crime women to commit are less likely to be reported; perhaps women are better at concealing the evidence.

Self-report studies with teenagers do tend to show that the gap between boys and girls offending is much smaller than the official statistics suggest. However, such studies are usually about delinquency rather than specifically criminal behaviour, and it is never certain whether respondents are being truthful.

Are women committing more crimes than in the past?

The number of offences by women has been rising faster than the rise in crimes in general. It seems that women are committing more offences that used to be the case. Explanations for this can be developed from the reasons given above for women's lower rates of crime:

- Changing socialisation -- the socialisation of girls today includes the importance of being assertive and resourceful, rather than always relying on a male. The media have played a part in this, for example through role models such as the Spice Girls.
- Greater opportunity -- women now have similar opportunities than men, including opportunities to commit crime. They go out to work more, and go out more at night.

Women in the criminal justice system

There are over 2000 women in prison in Britain, a big increase over the last 20 years. The vast majority are in prison for non-violent offences, often for not paying fines so that they had money to look after their children.

Our women treated more leniently by the police and courts? The idea that they do has been called the chivalry factor, taking up the idea, strong in the past in British culture, that men should protect women. The suggestion is that the police are more likely to caution rather than charge women, and that the courts are likely to impose lighter sentences, particularly if the woman has or is expecting children (it is not usually considered relevant if a man on trial has children).

An alternative theory says that, for some offences, women are actually treated more harshly. This happens when the offence involves neglect or abuse of children. Because we see caring for children as a woman's natural role, it seems unnatural and outrageous when this does not happen.

Women as victims

There are crimes of which women are much more likely than men to be victims. These include rape, sexual assault and domestic violence. These are all offences that are believed to be seriously underestimated in official statistics because the victims do not always report them.



Feminists and others have argued that the criminal justice system has not taken these offences seriously enough in the past. The police and courts have treated insensitively women who have been raped. In court women have been questioned about their sex lives and even being cross-examined by the rapist. Women are afraid of being victims of these crimes, and this can affect their lives. For example, they may avoid going out especially alone, at night or to certain areas. While these are sensible precautions, most assaults and rapes are not by strangers but by people the victim already knows.

“Women are less likely to commit crimes than men.” Evaluate the arguments for and against this claim. [24]

Age and crime: juvenile delinquents

Are the statistics accurate?

Self-report studies and other research tend to confirm that young people commit a loss of offences, though usually fairly minor ones. However, there some reasons for doubting that this is the whole picture:

Teenagers at wonder quite close social control, watched over by parents and at school by teachers. The police also see them as potential troublemakers. So it may be that offences they commit are highly likely to be noticed.

On the other hand, crime by older people may be under recorded; they are more likely to be in occupations where white-collar crime, which we know to be under recorded, is possible.

What is delinquency?

Delinquency refers to the undesirable antisocial behaviour of young people. It may include some crime, but it also covers deviant behaviour that is not criminal, such as defying authority, chewing tin from school and so on. It can cover staying out late, swearing, outrageous dress or tattoos and body piercing. For girls, sexual activity under the age of 16 may be a cause for concern.

The phrase often used as juvenile delinquent, and the word juvenile is as vague as delinquency. In Britain children under 10 cannot be charged with criminal offences, and it is unusual for those under 40 to be charged unless there is clear evidence of intent. After they reach the age of 17 young people are treated as adults.



Delinquency in the past

It seems that it has always been the case that older people complain about the behaviour of young people, and say they it isn't like it was when they were young. In the 1840s people complained about gangs of "street Arabs"; then it was "hooligans" in the 1890s and all sorts of groups -- Teddy Boys, skinheads, punks and so on -- in the second half of the 20th century.

Explanations of delinquency

Some of the factors linked to delinquency are:

- family problems such as the breakdown of the parents marriage
- failure at school
- use of alcohol and drugs.

Identify and explain **two** explanations for juvenile delinquency.

[8]

Peer groups and subcultures

Peer groups are particularly important for teenagers. Peer groups may encourage delinquent behaviour. Sometimes the peer group they have clear norms and values that indicate the existence of a subculture.

The sociologist **Albert Cohen** suggested that delinquency was caused by the “status frustration” boys who were failing at school found. They needed the approval of others and a feeling of success, but could not get this at school where they were labelled as failures. Their reaction was to turn the schools they use upside down. Their subculture was based on rudeness, disobedience and breaking the rules. They could win status in the eyes of their peers by breaking the rules, and at the same time get some revenge.

Identify and explain **two** reasons why young people might join a subculture. [8]

While Cohen argued that there were delinquent subcultures, others do not think that delinquents have different values to everyone else. The values that get people into trouble -- such as being tough, or a taste for risk and adventure -- are widespread, at least among boys and men. There are perfectly legal ways to express these values -- sport and outdoor activities, for example. Where delinquents are different is that they express these values in the wrong way, at the wrong time.

The sociologist **David Matza** suggested that everyone has two sets of values:

- Conventional values, which most people keep to most of the time
- subterranean values, such as aggression, greed and sexuality.

Everyone shares the subterranean values, but we can only express them at certain times and in certain places. Delinquency of people who follow subterranean values in the wrong places and the wrong times. They “drift” into trouble-- and usually out again.

Social control

It has been argued that social control is weaker over teenagers than other age groups. Adults usually have responsibilities that limit the scope they have to commit crime. They have to look after children and have to pay for a house, a car and so on. Teenagers are not tied down in these ways; they do not usually have to earn a living or support and care for others.

What can be done about delinquency?

In a sense, juvenile delinquency sorts itself out -- young people grow up. But this may not be until after they have done considerable damage, both to themselves, by messing up their education and even getting a criminal record, and to the victims of their antisocial behaviour.

As well as the measures taken against crime in general, the government has been looking at new measures:

- Curfews -- young children not to be out without an adult after a set time.
- Parental responsibility -- encouraging parents to intervene more to try to prevent delinquency. Part of this may be to make parents pay compensation to victims of their children's crimes.
- Providing activities to keep young people occupied such as after-school clubs.
- Reducing exclusions from school -- on the grounds that being allowed to stay on and allow someone to move away from trouble by being able to study and perhaps get qualifications.

Identify and explain **two** ways delinquency might be controlled.

[8]

Minority ethnic groups and crime

Afro-Caribbean people and crime

Afro-Caribbean people are about seven times as likely as white and Asian people to be in prison. There are two possible explanations for this:

- that Afro-Caribbean people do commit substantially more crime
- that the criminal justice system is racist and works against them, for example by giving harsher sentences.

In fact, these two explanations can both be true; if Afro-Caribbean people do commit more crime this can be in response to an unjust, racist system.

Afro-Caribbean people tend to live in inner city areas where opportunities are limited. They do not do as well at school on average as white children, and suffer high rates of unemployment, partly as a result of discrimination. Crime then may be a way of surviving in difficult circumstances.

The relationship between Afro-Caribbean people and the police has been a source of concern for many years. The police have tended to accept the evidence of the official statistics, that black people are more likely to be involved in crime. They



have policed areas such as Brixton in London sometimes in a very heavy-handed way. Young blacks are seven times as likely to be stopped and searched than white people. There are few black police officers. Sometimes the police feel like invaders in enemy territory while the local population feel they are victimised and harassed. The result is to increase the number of young Afro-Caribbean people get into trouble.

Asian people and crime

The proportion of British Asian people in prison is roughly the same as their proportion in the population. Compared to Afro-Caribbean people, there has been less concern about Asian people. They are seen as more law-abiding as result of:

- Greater economic success (though this applies much more to Indian people than to Pakistani or Bangladeshi people)
- stronger family and community ties providing effective social control
- a distinct culture which provides a feeling of belonging and an alternative source of status
- the strength of religious belief.

In the past few years, there have been predictions that crime by young British Asian people will grow. This is partly because there will be more Asians of the age at which people commit most offences. Like Afro-Caribbean people, British Asian people have been victims of discrimination and racism.

Many young Asian people deal growing anger at what they see as police indifference to the harassment and violence they face, and organise into gangs in self defence. Riots in Bradford in 1995 also helped break down the stereotype of Asian people as passive victims of violence.

The criminal justice system

There is evidence that the criminal justice system treats ethnic groups differently, both as offenders and victims. Black people are more likely to be charged rather than caution, and to get tougher sentences for the same offences, and whites. On the other hand, crimes of racial harassment, violence and even murder, of which minorities are victims, are often not properly investigated.



Racial harassment and violence

Although the police keep records of racially motivated incidents, it is difficult to be sure how many there are. This is because the racial motive is not always clear, and because the police themselves are often reluctant to admit that race is involved.

In 1999 the **Joseph Rowntree Foundation** found that harassment is part of daily life for many black and Asian people, and that the authorities are reluctant to take it seriously. Victims (often women) described how they had to accept daily abuse, and find ways to cope, such as keeping children indoors and never going out alone. The constant abuse has serious effects on mental and physical health.

In 1999 a report by human rights watch said that Britain had one of the highest rates of racially motivated crime in Europe; it estimated 32,500 assaults and 26,000 acts of vandalism a year. The report documented 14 racist murders between 1991 and 1994 (including that of Stephen Lawrence) as well as severe beatings and people forced to leave their homes. The report also expressed shock at the number of incidents of police brutality, including unlawful killings, against members of minorities.

The Stephen Lawrence case

In April 1993 a black teenager, Stephen Lawrence, was stabbed to death at a bus stop in London by a gang of white youths who were heard to use racist abuse. Despite there being many witnesses, some of whom gave them names, the police failed to investigate the murder fully. Because of the persistence of his parents, who refused to give up, the case became a national scandal, especially where the identities of the killers became known and they could not be prosecuted.

The eventual inquiry found the police had mishandled the case, and describe the Metropolitan Police as institutionally racist. It recommended urgent measures to increase the number of police from minorities and to improve awareness of race issues.

“Members of ethnic minorities are more likely to commit crime.” Evaluate the arguments for and against this claim. [24]

It seems that there is a strong link between a person's position in the social class hierarchy and their likelihood of committing a crime. In simple terms, the lower their class position, the higher their criminality. Indeed, working-class young people have the crime rate that is about eight times higher than that of upper or middle class youth. When you look at the prison population, it is a similar story, with working-class people being hugely overrepresented. Crime rates in inner city areas and council estates are also typically higher than in moral areas or the suburbs. These areas, of course, are largely working-class.



However, many sociologists believe that (in comparison to the crime rates of ethnic minority groups) the crime rates in relation to class say more about the structure of society rather than the reality of the situation

“Working class youth are more likely to commit crime.” Evaluate the arguments for and against this claim. [24]

Part 4- Explanations of Crime and Deviance

Socialisation, home and family

Socialisation is the process by which we learn to conform to society's norms. One explanation for crime and deviance is that they happen as a result of socialisation going in some way. For example, it has been suggested that for boys in lone parent families, not having a father around as a role model can lead to antisocial behaviour. The boys, it is said, do not learn to channel their energy into supporting a family.

Longitudinal research has tried to follow what happens to individuals over a long period of time, to see if there was a link between what happens in childhood and what happens later in life. For example, older child who is hyperactive or cruel to animals be more likely to be criminal in later life? One suggestion has been that some children develop antisocial behaviour very young, reasons such as

- poor parenting.
- a troubled family life with arguments, violence and alcohol and drug abuse
- their own low reasoning ability. ("It is clear that problem children tend to grow up into problem adults, and that problem adults tend to produce more problem children." **Farrington in Oxford Handbook of Criminology**).



Peer groups and subcultures

Another agency of socialisation is the peer group. The explanation here is that the peer group may have norms and values that approve of and encourage delinquent or criminal behaviour. These may take over from the norms and values learned in primary socialisation.

For example, the teenager may join a gang that is involved in delinquency. If the gang has a well developed set of norms and values which are clearly different from the norms and values of the rest of society, we can call it a subculture.

Some possible features of a subculture, and how they might cause delinquent behaviour:

- Little value placed on education -- truancy, bad behaviour in school.
- No respect for authority -- rudeness to teachers and other adults.
- Dislike of school rules -- breaking those rules, or testing the boundaries.
- No respect for public property -- vandalism, graffiti spraying.
- Enjoyment of thrills and risk -- fights, "twoocking" (taking a car without the owner's permission).

In some areas, a criminal subculture of involving adults may exist. Crime may be a way of life in a particular area, such as an inner city. A young person may be introduced by adults to the world of crime early on, in a minor role, and gradually progress to a full criminal career.

Lack of opportunity

Another set of explanations of crime suggests that it happens most when people are unable to get the things they feel they are entitled to. Where there are few jobs or it is impossible to get good qualifications, people may turn to crime to get the rewards, such as money and prestige that other people are able to achieve by legal means.

This seems to apply most when you might not expect it -- when living standards are rising. We have already seen the crime rose fast as during the period after World War II, when many people were becoming better off. It had not risen much during the depression of the 1930s. This suggests that it is not simply living in poverty that causes crime, but being aware that most people are doing better than you are. Sociologists call this “**relative deprivation.**”

The nature of society

Marxists and other writers emphasise how society is divided between the rich and poor, the haves and have-nots. For them, crime is the inevitable outcome of a society based on conflict and exploitation. Our economic system, capitalism, is based on:

- materialism -- valuing the ownership of material goods more highly than, for example, spiritual values
- consumerism -- wanting more and better consumer goods such as cars, clothes, the latest technologies
- competition -- companies compete for customers, and as customers we compete with other people, to be better off and own more and better consumer goods.

The media, through advertising and the lifestyles they show us, constantly encourage these values, making us one more and more (even though we may not need it). The system encourages greed and selfishness. It is hardly surprising then that some people turn to crime to get what society is telling them they should want.

According to Marxists, the laws are made and enforced by the ruling class. Since the ruling class has the most property, the law protects property. This can be seen sometimes in very severe punishments for large deaths, such as a bank robbery, while the sentences for violent offences may be lower. Marxists would say this shows that a capitalist society places a higher value on property than on human life. The thing is that wealthy and powerful people do or treated less severely than the things working class people do. For example, a company evading tax is seen as much less serious than a person making a false claim for Social Security -- even if the amount the government is worse off by as result is much greater. In the words of a popular saying, “There’s one rule for the rich and another for the rest of us!”

“Poverty is the biggest cause of crime.” Evaluate the arguments for and against this claim. [24]

Labelling

Labelling is an inevitable part of social life, away we make sense of what is going on around us. It is rather like stereotyping; we think of someone in terms of one or a few characteristics we have decided are important.

How does this apply to deviance? Most people commit acts that could be called deviant at some time -- yet only a few of them for of as being deviants. So some people get labelled, whereas others do not. This can happen in a school, for example some pupils get a reputation for being troublemakers while others who break the rules just as much may not get thought of in this way.

Labels are negotiable

When someone is labelled, they do not have to accept this label. They may change their behaviour, so that people think that what led to the label was "out of character", a one-off event that will not be repeated. The labelled a person may be able to persuade others to agree with him or her -- or he or she may have to accept the label.

Master status

Some particular deviant identities are very strong. If one of these labels "sticks" to someone, we will change the way we think about that person. We may even look back at things in the past and reinterpret them; what may have seemed innocent or normal at the time may look different once a person has been labelled as, say, "a sex offender" or a "thief". The label has then become the most important thing about the individual, his or her master status. Someone labelled in this way is likely to change the way he or she thinks about himself or herself. This is because it is difficult to continue to claim that a label is wrong when everyone around you is convinced it does fit you. For example, people in a mental hospital may be convinced they should not be there at first, but because doctors, staff and other patients all treat them as if they were mentally ill, they may come to feel that they really are.

So not all labels on the negotiable. Some "stick" more than others, and are difficult to shake off. Other labels which are likely to become master statuses include paedophile, homosexual, drug addict and murderer.

Who labels?

We all apply labels as part of everyday life. This may make little difference; a teacher may not even be aware of how he or she is labelled by pupils, and in any case the pupils may have different opinions. However, the agencies of social control are in much stronger position is to apply labels and make them stick. In the case of criminal offences, it is the cause who apply labels by finding someone guilty of an offence, and the police who make this possible by charging them and providing evidence will stop

Who gets labelled? Whether someone gets labelled or not depends partly on who he or she is. Behaviour that is tolerated in one person may not be acceptable from another person. Class, gender, age and ethnicity can all be involved in this.



The sociologist **Aaron Cicourel** did participant observation with the police in California. He found that the police had a stereotype of what the typical young offender was likely to be like -- black, from a working class area and with an "attitude" towards authority. Those who fitted the stereotype were far more likely to be arrested and charged than those who did not. A middle-class white boy involved in similar delinquent activity would be warned but not charged,

especially if his parents supported him (for example by explaining how he was a good boy really, how disastrous and arrest would be for his education and so on). This means that wealthy and more powerful members of society are more able to avoid labels than the poorer and less powerful.

A deviant career?

Being labelled makes it harder to continue with a normal life. People will treat the labelled person in terms of the label -- as a drug addict, a thief and so on. This can become a self-fulfilling prophecy; that is, the person ends up more strongly committed to the deviance, and may even have a "deviant career."



"Criminals are created by society." Evaluate the arguments for and against this claim.

[24]