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| 11. Learning table on crime, deviance & ethnicity |
| **Key assumptions –**1. Blacksare over-represented in official crime statistics given their proportion in the population. 2. Asian groups are underrepresented in official crime statistics. 3. **Self-report study** data shows that black, white and Asian young people have similar rates of offending. 4. The **BCS** shows that blacks and Asians are more likely to be victims of a range of crimes than whites and that they also fear more crime than whites. |
| **Interactionist/labelling theory** | **Evaluation - ☺ ☹ (eet)** | **New criminology** | **Evaluation - ☺ ☹ (eet)** | **Left realism** | **Evaluation - ☺ ☹ (eet)** | **Synoptic links** |
| Response to OCSInteractionists **reject** the official statistics, seeing them as little more than a social construction. They point out that Afro-Caribbean’s are over-represented in the statistics and therefore the statistics do not present an accurate picture of the social distribution of criminality. The extent of ethnic minority crime and deviance is socially constructedInteractionists abandon attempts to offer causal explanations of black crime and deviance. Instead they examine the social processes that lead certain ethnic minority groups to be over-represented in official crime statistics. Contemporary interactionists share **Becker’s** (1963) idea that the social distribution of crime and deviance is dependent on processes of social interaction between the deviant and powerful agencies of social control. Interactionists suggest that powerless groups such as blacks are more likely to be policed and labelled deviant than other ethnic groups. For example blacks are more likely to be stopped and searched by the police than whites. Interactionists go on to argue that labelling can serve to amplify black deviance as a ‘master status’ can be gained, which can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy. | Strength1. Interactionist theories have gained empirical support. **Smith** (1986) notes that areas of high ethnic minority concentration often get labelled and consequently receive more police patrols than comparable areas. This suggests there is some validity in the interactionist ideas.Weaknesses1. Interactionist theories have been questioned on empirical grounds. **Steven’s and Willis** (1979) question the potential biasing effect of the police on crime statistics. This is because they point out that the police initiate only 8% of recorded crimes. This suggests that the validity of interactionist 2. Interactionist theories have been criticised on atheoretical level. The **New Criminology** argues that the theory has a weak view of power and social control. For example, the theory fails to explain **why** the extent of black crime and deviance is socially constructed. They also argue that interactionists fail to consider the wider structural origins of black crime and deviance. This suggests that labelling theory only offers a partial view on crime and deviance.  | **Response to OCS**New criminologists **largely reject** official statistics, seeing them as a social construction. They point out that Afro-Caribbean’s are over-represented in the statistics because of police bias. However, they do accept that black crime and deviance needs to be explained in terms of causal processes as well.**The causes and social construction of ethnic minority crime and deviance** New criminologists such as **Hall *et al****.* (1978) have attempted to explain ‘black mugging’ and the Toxteth riots in terms of wider causes (e.g. long term unemployment. Immediate causes (e.g. police racism). In addition they also look at processes of social construction (e.g. moral panics and media amplification, selective law enforcement, and the consequences of labelling).  | Strength1. The new criminology has gained empirical support. Various **Home Office** researchstudies have shown that black males are 5x more likely to be stopped and searched than white males. This suggests there is some validity in new criminology ideas.Weaknesses1. The new criminology has been questioned on empiricalgrounds. **Hirschi** (1975) argues that it is debatable how far the criminal justice system has an effect on whether the labelled continue in their criminal careers. He feels that other factors such as age are seen to be more important. This suggests that the validity of new criminology ideas have to be questioned.2. The new criminology has been criticised on atheoreticallevel. **Black** **feminists** criticise the theory for failing to consider issues surrounding black women’s experience of crime. For example, **Player** (1989) notes that black women are treated more harshly by the courts than white women. This suggests that the new criminology only offers a partial view of crime and deviance.  | Response to official crime statisticsLeft realists largely accept official crime statistics and therefore do not believe that blacks are significantly over-represented in them. They recognise that the statistics have problems (e.g. in terms of police bias) but that this should not lead to their rejection. They suggest that sociologists should supplement official crime statistics with local victim surveys as they have the advantage of revealing social patterns in victimisation and fear of crime (which they believe is highest amongst ethnic minority communities).The causes of ethnic minority crime and devianceLeft realists such as **Young** (1997) attempt to explain the real problem of black street crime (but also white and Asian too) in terms of three related causal factors.MarginalisationYoung suggests that fundamental changes have occurred in the social structure since the 1980s and as a consequence a growing number of black, (and white and Asian) youths are finding themselves marginalised or socially excluded. For left realists this marginalisation is an underlying pressure for crime and deviance, but not in itself a direct cause.Relative deprivationYoung argues that crime is most likely to follow when individuals or groups feel relatively deprived. They maintain that some blacks (and some whites and Asians) often feel worse off than comparable groups and that these feelings of social injustice sometimes result in crime and deviance. SubculturesLeft realists claim that criminal and deviant subcultures emerge in all ethnic communities (but especially black) as response to marginalisation and relative deprivation. Criminal and deviant subcultures allow groups of individuals to feel socially included and serve to facilitate crime and deviance by making such behaviour seem acceptable.  | Strength1. Left realist theories have gained empirical support. **Jones *et al.’s*** (1986) local Islington crime survey shows that crime is real problem for many inner city residents. They found that levels of victimisation and fear of crime were high, especially amongst black and Asian groups. They attribute this too their locality and racism. This suggests there is some validity in the left realist ideas.Weaknesses1. Left realist theories have been questioned on empiricalgrounds. **Hughes** (1991) suggests that left realists have little empirical research to back up their causal explanations of black (and even white or Asian) offending. This is because they have largely relied on victim surveys and therefore have little information on what motivates criminals to offend. This suggests that the validity of left realist ideas have to be questioned.2. Left realist theories have been criticised on atheoreticallevel. **Right realists** reject the focus on social and economic causes of ethnic minority crime and concentrate instead on inadequate social control. For example, the decline in the moral fabric of society. This suggests that left realist theories only offer a partial view on crime and deviance.  | Research methods/methodologyInteractionists reject ocs. Would therefore stress the limitations of OCS.New criminologists largely reject ocs. Would therefore stress the limitations of OCS. Left realists largely accept ocs. Would therefore stress the advantages of OCS.Theories/perspectivesInteractionism, new criminology, and left realism.Other topicsLinks can be made to **power and politics**. **Interactionists** – selective labelling by powerful agents of social control against powerless groups such as blacks. Leads to more crime amongst powerless groups – sfp etc. **New criminology** Explain crimes committed by powerless groups such as blacks in terms of unemployment/police racism etc.Look at selective labelling by powerful agents of social control against powerless groups such as blacks. Leads to more crime amongst powerless groups – sfp etc. **Left realism**Explain crime committed by powerless groups such as blacks in terms of: marginalisation, relative deprivation and subcultures. |
| In conclusion left realism offers a strong theory. This is because it recognises that official statistics on ethnicity and crime have problems, but they do not just dismiss them. Left realism can and has been used to account for recent growths in Asian street crime. Furthermore the theory does not just consider offenders but also victims and formal and informal social control. However, all sociological theories need to look more closely at Asian crime and deviance. Recent media documentaries such as Unreported Britain (2002), suggest that crime and deviancy is growing in some Asian communities and locate the causes in terms of feelings of relative deprivation, boredom, loss of respect for religion and changes in cultural identity. |