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| 10. Learning table on right realist (new right/social control theories) explanations of crime & deviance | | | |
| **Key assumptions**  They largely accept official statistics on crime.  They reject approaches that explain crime and deviance away as a social construction (e.g. Interactionist & Marxist).  They offer instead a causal explanation of crime and deviance.  They believe in offering practical solutions to reduce real crime problems.  They favour quantitative local victim surveys when investigating crime and deviance. | | | |
| Right realism/new right/social control theories | **Evaluation - ☺ ☹ (GET SET)** | **Evaluation - in contrast** | **Synoptic links** |
| **Response to official crime statistics**  Right realists recognise that official statistics have problems with underreporting, underrecording, biased policing etc. However, they argue that this should not lead to their rejection as they do show the basic reality of crime. That is, that crime is a growing social problem and is largely committed by lower working class male juveniles, often black, in inner city areas. They suggest that sociologists should supplement official crime statistics with victim surveys to gain a more valid measure of crime.  **Causes of crime**  Like left realists, right realists explain the real problem of crime in causal terms and not as a social construction. However, they reject left realist explanations. Instead they focus on inadequate social control which they partly blame individuals for and society at large.  **1. Breakdown in the moral fabric of society**  **Marsland** (1988) argues that crime and deviance is linked to the breakdown in the moral fabric of society. It is suggested that schools and religion have become less effective agencies of social control. Marsland believes that this has led to a decline in morality (e.g. knowing right from wrong) and as a consequence crime has increased.  **2. Growing underclass**  **Murray** (1990) locates the causes of contemporary crime to a growing underclass. He maintains that children from fatherless single parent families are more likely to commit crime. Murray argues that they are inadequately controlled as they lack a male role model and authority figure . Murray also suggests that over-generous welfare has served to create a dependency culture. He claims that welfare dependents have become content to live off benefits and crime as their work ethic has been eroded.  **3. Breakdown in social order**  **Wilson** (1975) suggests that crime is linked to a breakdown in social order in some communities. He argues that disorder in certain neighbourhoods (e.g. where criminal damage, physical assaults, unruly behaviour, drug pushing etc are rife.) breads more crime and deviance as sense of community and civility is lost, and with it informal social control. 4. Opportunity **Cornish and Clarke’s** (1986) suggest that crime is linked to the situations in which deviants find themselves. They argue that individuals engage in crime when opportunities present themselves which involve little risk. For example when there is a lack of social control. This explanation links the growth in crime, especially in inner city areas and housing estates, to increased opportunities and targets, and lack of crime prevention. 5. Rational choice **Cornish and Clarke** (1986) also believe that crime can be understood as a rational choice. They argue that deviants weigh up the costs and benefits of crime, and actively choose to commit crime. Cornish and Clarke suggest that crime is seen as attractive, especially amongst juvenile offenders, because of a ‘lenient’ criminal justices system which offers ‘soft’ social control.  Practical solutions  Like left realists, right realists put forward practical solutions to reduce crime in a ‘risk’ society. They favour social control polices that help to deter crime.  Citizenship education  Reduced welfare provision  Zero tolerance policing  Target hardening e.g. security locks.  More and longer custodial sentences. | Strengths 1. Right realist theories have served to generate a great deal of subsequent research. For example, right realistideas have helped shape much current **Home Office** research into crime as well as stimulate a range of victim surveys. This suggests that left realist ideas have made a major contribution to the study of crime and deviance.  2. Right realist theories have gained empirical support. Research by **Flood-Page *et al.*** (2000) for the Home Office offers partial support for Murray’s views on ‘family decline’. They found children (especially males) from lone parent backgrounds and step-families were more likely to offend than those who lived with two natural parents. This suggests there is some validity in the right realist ideas.  3. Right realist views have gainedtheoretical support. **Control theorists** are sympathetic to right realist views as they raise important questions about the way in which formal and informal social control determines levels of crime and deviance. This suggests that the ideas have wider theoretical appeal. Weaknesses 1. Right realist theories too readily accept official statistics (although they do acknowledge they have problems). They thus fail to explain adult white-collar crime and neglect female subcultural delinquency. This suggests that the right realist response to official statistics is not adequate.  2. Right realist theories have been questioned on empiricalgrounds. Research by **Flood-Page *et al.*** (2000) shows there is some link to family structures and offending. However, they suggest that single parenthood or belonging to a step-family is not in itself a cause of crime. They argue the key factors to consider are the quality of family relationships and levels of parental supervision. This suggests that the validity of right realist ideas have to be questioned.  3. Right realist theories have been criticised on atheoreticallevel. Whilst **postmodernists** accept that right realism has put forward a well rounded theory (a square of crime) they criticise their attempt to create a grand totalising theory (meta-narrative) of crime and deviance. They claim that all knowledge is uncertain and therefore no single theory can claim to offer the truth in terms of explanations or solutions to crime. This suggests that left realist theories only offer a partial view on crime and deviance. | **Left realism**  Left realists support right realists in so far as they recognise there are real crime problems to be explained, and that real practical solutions are needed. However, they are critical of right realists for locating the underlying causes of crime in terms of inadequate social control. They argue that social inequality is a more significant factor. They point to factors such as marginalisation and relative deprivation, and the consequent growth of criminal and deviant subcultures. | Research methods/methodology  Right realists largely accept official crime statistics and therefore acknowledge the advantages of them. However, they do not deny they have problems. Supplement official crime statistics with national victim surveys and therefore stress the advantages of this quantitative survey technique.  Theories/perspectives  Right realism  Other topics  **Education**  Education in becoming a less effective institution of social control, leading to a breakdown in the moral fabric of society. They favour see citizenship education as a means of reducing crime.  **Family & Households**  The rise of single parent families as a cause of crime.  **Religion**  Because of secularisation religion is a less effective institution of social control, leading to a breakdown in the moral fabric of society.  **Power & politics**  Explain crimes committed by the powerless. Recognise governments have a role to play in solving crime through social policy. |
| In conclusion perhaps the greatest strength of the rightrealist approach is that it recognises that crime and deviance cannot be explained away as a social construction. They recognise that crime and deviance is a real problem in contemporary society and demands causal explanation.  Moreover, right realists put forward a complete approach to crime and deviance, as they not only consider the offender, but victims and agents of social control. However, right realism can be attacked for neglecting to study white-collar crime. | | | |