Functionalist theories of crime and deviance

**Crime & deviance is functional**

**Durkheim** believed that a certain amount of crime and deviance could be seen as positive for society.

* Necessary to generate social change - innovation only comes about if old ideas are challenged.
* Helps to clarify the boundaries of acceptable behaviour following social reactions to deviance.
* Creates social integration as it bonds society together against criminals.

**Crime & deviance is dysfunctional**

Durkheim believed that crime and deviance also acts as a threat to society. This is because the norms and values that ‘unite’ society are being challenged, thus threatening consensus, social order and stability.

**Cause of crime & deviance**

Durkheim believed that crime & deviance occurred as a result of **anomie** (normlessness). Durkheim believed that this could occur during periods of rapid social change (e.g. revolutions) when people become unsure of what societies norms and values are.

**Social order & social control**

Durkheim believed that in modern societies there was agreement or consensus over society’s norms and values, which resulted in **social order** and stable societies. Durkheim believed this occurred because society’s institutions successfully implemented **social control**. For Durkheim social control is positive(unlike interactionist and Marxist views on social control) as it creates social cohesion. Durkheim believes social control is achieved by various agencies of social control socialising individuals into socially agreed norms and values (regulation) and by integrating individuals into social groups. For example, schools bond individuals together into school communities and classes. They instil core norms & values through citizenship programmes. Religion binds people together during times of happiness e.g. weddings and sadness e.g. funerals. Religion regulates behaviour by setting down certain moral standards.

eaHeaParsons argued that sickness can be seen as deviant and has the potential for de-stabilising society. Parsons therefore sees the medical profession as performing an important social control function by restricting access to the ‘sick role’. In this way illegitimate illness (deviant illness) is minimised and social order and stability is maintained.

**Strength**

* Durkheim has served to generate a great deal of subsequent research and influence other sociological theories on crime and deviance. For example, **control theories** of crime and deviance. This suggests that Durkheim’s ideas have made a major contribution to the study of crime and deviance.

**Weaknesses**

* It is not clear at what point the “right” amount of crime (necessary and beneficial) becomes “too much” (creating disorder and instability).
* The very idea that crime can be beneficial is questionable; it is hardly likely to seem that way to the victim!
* Perhaps this reflects a more general problem in the functionalist approach, the tendency to assume that if something exists it must serve some purpose (have a function).
* This approach also does not explain why some people commit crimes and others do not, or why they commit particular offences.
* Finally, functionalism assumes that norms and laws reflect the wishes of the population; it does not consider the possibility that a powerful group is imposing its values on the rest of society.

**Merton** maintained that American/British society socialises individuals to:

* meet certain shared **goals** - the ‘American Dream’
* to follow approved **means** or ways to achieve the goals e.g. hard work and effort.

Merton argued that capitalist societies suffer from **anomie** - a strain/conflict between the goals set by society and the legitimate (law abiding) means of achieving them. Merton claimed that this strain was a product of an unequal social class structure that blocked many people’s attempts to reach the goals set by society through the legitimate opportunity structure.

Merton identified five different responses to anomie. Perhaps the most significant though was **innovation**. He used this concept to explain material crimes amongst the working class. Merton argued that some members of the working class reject the approved means (e.g. working hard in a job) and innovate and turn to illegal means to obtain the cultural goals they still desire e.g. a nice car.

**Weaknesses**

* Merton then begins to offer a functionalist account of both the **nature and extent** of deviance.
* However, as with Durkheim, **anomie** (though defined differently) is a difficult term to operationalise **how can it be measured**?
* If it is measured by the amount of crime, a circular argument is created. Merton does not explain where the goals and means have come from or whose purpose they serve. To use Laurie Taylor’s analogy, it as if everyone is putting money in a giant fruit machine, but no one asks who puts it there or who pockets the profits.
* Why do some people choose the response they do?
* Is deviance just an individual choice?
* Not all crime is for economic gain - how can this form of crime be explained using Merton’s framework?

**The Marxist critique**

* For Marxists, the appearance of consensus is an illusion; it conceals the reality of one class imposing its will on the rest of society.
* Values are manipulated by the ruling class; it is the ruling class which decides which acts should be criminalised and how the laws should be enforced.
* Laws reflect not a shared value system, but the imposition by one class of its ideology. Through socialisation, the majority adopt values which are really against their interests. If, in spite of this, the power of the ruling class is challenged, by, say strikes and protests, the ruling class can use the law to criminalise those posing the threat, and media reporting will be manipulated to give the impression that the ruling class’s interests are those of the whole nation.

**Other criticisms**

* Subcultural approaches have highlighted the group nature of some criminal and deviant behaviour. Functionalist analysis tends to see crime/deviance as an individual-society relationship.
* Interactionists have argued that this approach ignores the processes of negotiation that take place in the creation of deviance and crime.

**A Questions**

1. What promoted social order according to Durkheim?
2. Why did Durkheim see punishment as an important tool in dealing with crime?
3. Why did levels of anomie increase during the period of industrialisation according to Durkheim?

**Vocabulary**

Collective conscience – the shared moral values of society.

Sanction – punishment that encourages socially expected behaviour.

Anomie – when someone is insufficiently integrated into society’s norms and values.

**B Questions**

1. How is Merton’s use of anomie different to Durkheim’s?
2. Why is his work also known as strain theory?
3. How does Merton link crime to blocked opportunities?
4. What criticisms can be directed at Merton’s ideas?

**Vocabulary**

Anomic paradigm – five-category model to illustrate how when people's goals are beyond their means this can lead to criminal behaviour.

Strain theory – theory of crime based on how the strain between sharing the goals of society but not having the means of achieving them.

**C Questions**

1. What were Hirchi’s four bonds of attachment?
2. How would Durkheim’s stress on the importance of punishment fit in with Hirschi’s ideas?
3. What similarities are there between the ideas of Merton and Hirschi?

**Vocabulary**

Bonds of attachment – four social bonds that bind us to society’s values.

Traditional Marxist theories of crime and deviance (Also see social class and crime)

**Overview**

* Traditional Marxism sees society as a structure in which the **economic base** (the capitalist economy) determines the shape of the **superstructure** (all the other social institutions, including the state, the law and the criminal justice system).
* Capitalist society is divided into **classes:** the ruling capitalist class (or **bourgeoisie**) who own the means of production, and the working class (or **proletariat**), whose alienated labour the bourgeoisie exploit to produce profit.
* Society is based on **conflict:** The inequality of wealth and power that underpins capitalist society and the contradictions and problems inherent within such a system explain crime and deviance (as well as the legal responses to it).
* Laws are **not**an expression of value consensus (as functionalists argue), but a reflection of ruling-class ideology (the values and beliefs of the ruling class). Laws are made by the state acting in the interests of the ruling class.
* The bourgeoisie is able to keep its power partly through its ability to use the law to criminalise working class activities.

**Traditional Marxist view of crime**

Based on three main elements:

**1. Criminogenic Capitalism**

* Crime is inevitable because capitalism by its very nature it causes crime. It is based on the exploitation of the working class and this may give rise to crime:
* Poverty may mean that crime is the only way the working class can survive.
* Crime may be the only way they can obtain the consumer goods they are encouraged by advertising to buy, resulting in utilitarian crimes such as theft.
* Alienation and lack of control over their lives may lead to frustration and aggression, resulting in non-utilitarian crimes such as violence and vandalism.
* Crime is not confined to the working class. Capitalism encourages capitalists to commit **white-collar** and **corporate crimes**.
* **Gordon (1976)**: Crime is a rational response to the capitalist system and is found in all social classes.

**2. The State and Law Making** Law making and law enforcement only serve the interests of the capitalist class.**Chambliss (1975)**: laws to protect private property are the cornerstone of the capitalist economy. The ruling class also have the power to prevent the introduction of laws that would threaten their interests. **Snider (1993):** The capitalist state is reluctant to pass laws that regulate the activities of businesses or threaten their profitability. Powerless groups such as the working class and ethnic minorities are criminalized and the police and courts tend to ignore the crimes of the powerful. **Reiman (2001):** that 'street crimes' such as assault and theft are far more likely to be reported and pursued by the police than much 'white collar' crime such as fraud or 'insider trading' in the City.Thus, the more likely a crime is to be committed by higher-class people, the less likely it is to be treated as a criminal offence. In addition, certain groups in the population are more likely to be on the receiving end of law enforcement. As crime is regarded as most common among the working class, the young, and blacks, there is a much greater police presence among these populations than elsewhere, and the approach the police adopt towards them is also said to be more confrontational'. **Gordon** **(1976)** argues that the selective enforcement of the law helps to maintain ruling class power and reinforce ruling class ideology. It gives the impression that criminals are located mainly in the working class, This divides the working class by encouraging workers to blame the criminals in their midst for their problems, rather than capitalism. The law, crime and criminals also perform an **ideological function** for capitalism. Laws are occasionally passed that appear to be for the benefit of the working class rather than capitalism, such as workplace health and safety laws. **Pearce (1976)** argues that such laws often benefit the ruling class too. E.g. by keeping workers fit for work. By giving capitalism a ‘caring’ face, such laws also create false consciousness among the workers. In any case, such laws are not rigorously enforced.

Corporate crime

* Corporate crimes are offences committed by or on behalf of large companies and directly profit the company rather than individuals.
* **Slapper and Tombs (1999)**: Identified six types of corporate offence:

**1. Paperwork and non-compliance:** Offences such as where correct permits or licences are not obtained, or companies fail to comply with health and safety and other legal regulations. E.g. The Herald of Free Enterprise

**2. Environmental (or ‘green’) crimes:** Damage to the environment caused either deliberately or through negligence, and can cover a wide range of offences. While some of these maybe committed by individuals, and some are not technically illegal, the most serious offences are likely to be those committed by businesses. E.g. Illegal dumping or disposal of toxic/hazardous waste, and waste in general; Discharge or emission of dangerous or toxic substances into the air, soil or water. (Bhopal disaster); The destruction of wide areas, through oil spills or unchecked exploration or development.

**3. Manufacturing offences:** Offences such as the incorrect labelling or misrepresentation of products and false advertising, producing unsafe or dangerous articles, or producing counterfeit goods. E.g. the Ford Pinto.

**4. Labour law violations:** Offences such as failing to pay legally required minimum wages, ignoring dangerous working practices, or causing or concealing industrial diseases. E.g. health and safety violations.

**5. Unfair trade practices:** False advertising and anti-competitive practices, such as price fixing and illegally obtaining information on rival businesses.

**6. Financial offences:** Tax evasion and concealment of losses and debts.

**Explanations for corporate crime**

* Marxists like **Box (1983)** argue that the push to corporate crime is driven by the need to maintain profits in an increasingly global market.
* **Control theory** wouldsuggest that the individuals who carry out offences to benefit companies are driven by aggressive management cultures, which see business success in global markets as a key focus.

**Why corporate crimes are under-represented in official statistics**

* They often involve powerful people,who can persuade the government, the police and the public that their actions are not very serious or even illegal;
* They are often hard to detect.
* Even if these crimes are detected, they are often not prosecuted and dealt with as criminal acts. E.g. violations of health and safety legislation, price-fixing and environmental offences often lead only to a reprimand or a fine rather than to police action and prosecution through the criminal justice system.

Marxists highlight how the costs of corporate crime are not just financial but can be measured in lives. Firms, in an effort to maximise profits, can bend or ignore health and safety rules. Examples include the car ferry Herald of Free Enterprise which sank outside Zeebrugge drowning 193 people because the bow door was not closed. Crew members claimed they were so over-stretched by their employers P&O in order to achieve fast turn arounds that crucial mistakes like this were made with fatal consequences. At the inquest into the Hatfield rail crash which killed four people it was discovered that Balfour Beattie who maintained the track had known about the broken rail that derailed the train for 21 months. Although five directors were tried for corporate manslaughter, six months into the trial the judge ordered the jury to acquit them. The world’s worst offshore disaster occurred when North Sea oil rig Piper Alpha exploded in 1988 killing 168 workers. Its operator, Occidental Petroleum, was found guilty of having inadequate maintenance and safety procedures, but no criminal charges were ever brought against it. Despite regular breaches of health and safety by businesses, to date only two companies have ever been found guilty of corporate manslaughter.

* **Bhopal - The Dangers of Unrestricted Capitalism**



The events surrounding the tragedy at Bhopal provide a good case study of how capitalist enterprises can be supported by the state on a global scale. Union Carbide, an American owned multi-national company, set up a pesticide plant in Bhopal. In 1984, the plant accidentally leaked deadly gas fumes into the surrounding atmosphere. The leakage resulted in over 2,00- deaths and numerous poisonous related illnesses including blindness. Investigations since have revealed that the company set up this particular plant because pollution controls in India were less rigid than in the USA. In Snider’s terms (1993), the Indian State supported such capitalist development in the interests of allowing profits to be made. Marxists would point out that there have been no criminal charges despite the high death and injury toll. They would see the company owners as the true criminals in this scenario.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **NAME**  | **Raisa Bee**  |
|  | **AGE**  | **Died aged 16**  |
|  | **AGE AT DISASTER**  | **4**  |
|  | **NEIGHBOURHOOD**  | **Teela Jamalpura**  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|   | She died at 6.45 in the morning of 31st October 1996 in the TB Hospital. She was four years old when she was severely exposed to Carbide's toxic gases. In the interview her mother gave she recalled, "That night my little daughter was vomiting all over the place and soiling her clothes over and over. She was coughing and gasping for breath and crying that her eyes were on fire.. She was very ill for over a week and we thought the worst was over. A few months later her problems worsened and she would get acutely breathless and bring out sputum when she coughed. She continued to have burning sensation in the eyes. She got weaker and weaker and was wheezing all the time. She lost her appetite for food and stayed depressed all the time. Then we spotted streaks of blood in her sputum. We took her to different doctors and hospitals but her condition did not improve. She vomited a lot of blood before she died." The medical records available with her mother show that Raisa was admitted at the JLN Hospital on 7.8.'96 for 20 days with complaints of breathlessness, cough and anxiety attacks. Chest x-ray report dated 30.10.'96 from the TB Hospital mentions "Bilateral infiltration with cavity formation left mid zone". All three doctors in the assessment panel in the Sambhavna Clinic's Verbal Autopsy project have opined that Raisa's death is attributable to her exposure to Carbide's gases and the injuries caused to her respiratory and neuropsychiatric systems. In their opinions tuberculosis was a complication that arose out of the injury caused to her lungs. No claim for compensation for Raisa's death has been registered.  |

**White-Collar Crime.**

Edwin **Sutherland** (1960) was the first sociologist to study “white-collar crime”. He defines it as “crimes committed by persons of high social status in the course of their occupations”.

David **Nelken** (2002) questions Sutherland’s definition. White-collar crimes may be committed outside the course of occupations and some crime may be the responsibility of organisations or corporations (often called corporate crime) rather than individuals.

There are **various types of white-collar crime**.

* **Fraud and corruption** – one common type of fraud is insider dealing, in which shares in a company are bought by individuals who know that the company is about to be subject to a takeover bid. Robert Maxwell was the owner of Mirror Group newspapers before his mysterious drowning in 1991. Maxwell had used money from the pension fund of Mirror group employees to stave off the collapse of his business empire.
* **Personal harm** – According to Streeter (1997), in the late 1990s the effects of asbestos were killing 3,500 people per year. The action, which resulted in these deaths, may not have been illegal but their consequences in terms of loss of life were extremely serious.
* **Politicians and officials** – Jonathan Aitkin, a member of the last Conservative government was found to have accepted hospitality at the Paris Ritz from Mohamed Al Fayed in return for asking questions in Parliament. He was later imprisoned for trying to cover this up.

A number of **factors combine to reduce the apparent extent and seriousness** of white-collar crime.

1. White-collar crimes are difficult to detect as many do not have obvious victims.
2. In cases of bribery and corruption all those involved will benefit, so nobody is likely to report the offence.
3. In cases where the victim is the public at large (such as in misrepresentation in advertising) few members of the public have the expertise to realise that they are being misled, and government agencies do not have the resources to follow up more than a few cases.

Even if they are detected, few white-collar crimes lead to prosecutions. The power and influence of many of those involved mean that a “blind eye” is often turned or an official warning is given. Cases of professional misconduct are usually dealt with by the relevant professional association which may simply hand out a reprimand.

Official statistics probably significantly underestimate the extent of white-collar crime. As a result, crime is viewed as predominantly working class behaviour.

**Evaluation of traditional Marxist theories and explanations of crime**

**Strengths**

* It offers a useful explanation of the relationship between crime and capitalist society.
* It shows the link between law making and enforcement and the interests of the capitalist class (by doing so it also puts into a wider structural context the insights of labelling theory regarding the selective enforcement of the law).
* It casts doubt on the validity of official statistics on crime. Official statistics are of little use if they simply reflect a policy of selective law enforcement and ruling class control.
* Marxists also offer a solution to crime. By replacing capitalist society with an egalitarian Communist society, the root cause of crime would be removed.
* It has also influenced recent approaches to the study of the crimes of the powerful.

**Weakneses**

* Not all laws, however, are so clearly in ruling class interests. Many seem to benefit everyone, such as traffic laws.
* It ignores individual motivation. It is highly deterministic, rarely considering notions of individual free‑will.
* It largely ignores the relationship between crime and other inequalities that may be unrelated to class, such as ethnicity and gender.
* It over-predicts the amount of crime in the working class: not all poor people commit me, despite the pressures of poverty.
* Not all capitalist societies have high crime rates.
* The criminal justice system does sometimes act against the interests of the capitalist class. For example, prosecutions for corporate crime do occur (however, Marxists argue that such occasional prosecutions performan ideological function in making the system seem impartial).
* Left realists argue that Marxism focuses largely on the crimes of the powerful and ignores intra-class crimes (where both the criminals and victims are working class) such as burglary and ‘mugging’, which cause great harm to victims.

Neo-Marxist theories of crime and deviance

Neo-Marxists are sociologists who have been influenced by Marxism, but recognise that there are problems with traditional Marxist explanations of crime and deviance. They also seek to combine Marxism with other approaches such as labelling theory.

Taylor et al: ‘The New Criminology’

* The starting point of Taylor et al’s ‘New Criminology’ is a rejection of the traditional Marxist view that workers are driven to crime by economic necessity. Instead, they believe that crime is a voluntary act. In particular they argue that crime often has a political motive, for example, to redistribute wealth from the rich to the poor. Criminals are not passive puppets whose behaviour is shaped by the nature of capitalism. Instead they are deliberately striving to change capitalism.
* Taylor et al are trying to create what they call a ‘fully social theory of deviance’ which has two main sources:
	+ Traditional Marxist ideas about the unequal distribution of wealth and who has the power to make and enforce the law.
	+ Ideas from Interactionism and labelling theory about the meaning of the deviant act for the deviant, societal reactions to it, and the effects of the deviant label on the individual.
* In their view, a fully social theory of deviance needs to bring together six aspects:
	+ The wider origins of the deviant act in the unequal distribution of wealth and power in capitalist society
	+ The immediate origins of the deviant act – the particular context in which the act takes place
	+ The act itself and its meaning for the individual – e.g. was it a form of rebellion against capitalism ?
	+ The immediate origins of the social reaction – the reactions of those around the deviant, such as the police, family and community, to discovering the deviance.
	+ The wider origins of the social reaction in the structure of capitalist society – especially the issue of who has the power to define actions as deviant and to label others, and why some acts are treated more harshly than others.
	+ The effects of labelling on the deviants future actions – e.g. why does labelling lead to deviance amplification in some cases but not in others ?
* For Taylor et al, these six aspects are interrelated and need to be understood as part of a single theory.

**Evaluation**

* Feminist criticise Taylor et als approach for being ‘gender blind’, focussing excessively on male criminality and at the expense of female criminality.
* Left realists make two related points:
	+ Firstly, this approach romanticises working class criminals as ‘Robin Hoods’ who are fighting capitalism by re-distributing wealth from the rich to the poor. However, in reality these criminals simply prey on the poor.
	+ Secondly, Taylor et al do not take such crime seriously and they ignore its effects on working class victims.

**Marxist Sub-cultural Theory**

Another development to come out of the traditional Marxist approach was a group of sociologists at Birmingham University who sought to explain the existence of subcultures in Marxist terms. Working in the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) they explained juvenile delinquency essentially as 'resistance through rituals' and symbols. As Marxists they argued that the adult population was controlled by both ideology and economic pressures (getting and keeping a job in order to pay rent, bills, debts, etc.). Working class youth, because they were furthest removed from such ideological messages and financial pressures, were in a strong position to resist these controlling mechanisms of capitalism and developed deviant youth styles (teddy boys, mods, rockers, skinheads, punks, etc).

Several Marxist-based ethnographic studies of working class subcultures were published in Britain in the 1970s. Phil Cohen (1972) studied the emergence of 'mods' and 'skinheads' in the East End of London and concluded that youth subcultures were a symbolic solution to wider conflicts stemming from diminished employment prospects, housing policies and the dislocation and decline of the traditional working class community. Mike Brake (1985) argues that the resistance of working class youth is best understood as a ‘magical’ response; lightening up a dull and dreary world of adult and conformist values. Brake notes how every generation of working class youth faces the same exploitation of capitalism and similar problems of an education system designed to fail them followed by dead end jobs. However, although each generation may adopt different responses and forms of resistance they all become eventually trapped by capitalism’s ideological messages or the economic constraints of rent, mortgages, credit and debts.

**Questions**

**A Questions**

1. Why does Marxism see crime as a likely feature of the capitalist system?
2. What evidence is provided by traditional Marxists that there is one rule for the rich and another for the poor?
3. What criticisms can be addressed at the traditional Marxist approach to crime?

**Vocabulary**

**Proletariat** – the word Marx used for the working class.

**White-collar** – referring to middle class and above.

**Corporate crime** – illegal activities committed by firms and big businesses.

**B Questions**

1. In what ways can businesses be seen to be treated leniently when they break the law?
2. Is there evidence that businesses put profit before workers and the public’s safety?
3. How is globalisation shifting corporate crime away from the developed world?
4. What criticisms can be directed at Marxist ideas about corporate crime?

**Vocabulary**

**Corporate crime** – crimes committed by businesses against their employees, the public or the environment.

**White-collar crime** – term coined by Edwin H. Sutherland to refer to occupational and corporate crime.

**Law evasion** – firms like to appear law abiding but will locate in countries with soft enforcement of health and safety and pollution laws.

**C Questions**

1. How is Taylor Walton and Young’s theory different to traditional Marxism?
2. What other sociological theories of crime could be linked to this theory?
3. What criticisms can be directed at the ideas of The New Criminology?

**Vocabulary**

**Neo-Marxists** – literally means new Marxists or people who adopt a Marxist interpretation of contemporary society.

**Strain theory** – theory of crime based on how the strain between sharing the goals of society but not having the means of achieving them.

**D Questions**

1. How did Marxist subcultural theory explain how capitalism exerted social control on the population?
2. What are the similarities and differences between Marxist subcultural theory and functionalist subcultural theory (Albert Cohen, Cloward and Ohlin and Miller)?
3. What criticisms can be made about Marxist sub cultural theory?

**Vocabulary**

Left realism – contemporary theory of criminology developed by Lea and Young, partly out of Marxist criminology and partly as a response to New Right (Right Realism) criticisms of the sociology of crime.

Use the following terms to fill the appropriate gaps in the text.

|  |
| --- |
| capitalist; Chambliss; corporate; Croall; fully; Hadfield; idealism; Pearce; political; Snider; social; white;  |

Traditionally the Marxist perspective on crime and deviance has sought to see crime in the context of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ system. Marxists criticise other sociologists for identifying crime as a working class phenomenon arguing that this obscures the huge amount of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ collar and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ crime that exists. Hazel \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (1992) notes how corporate crime is 'softened' through the use of words like 'fiddles', 'cons' and 'rip-offs', whilst Lauren \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ argues governments are reluctant to pass laws that threaten the profitability of companies. The American Marxist William \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ identified connections in the city of Seattle between organized crime and the political and economic élite in society. Frank \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ similarly argues that members of the social élite would not creditably survive close legal scrutiny of their business or professional lives. Taylor, Walton and Young (1973) developed in The New Criminology a radical alternative to previous theories of crime. They saw criminal activity as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, as an act of 'people-fighting-back' against the injustices of capitalism. In the final chapter they discussed the concept of 'the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ theory of deviance'. However, in hindsight, Jock Young would subsequently describe his work with Radical Criminology as ‘Left \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’. Marxism still has many supporters and writers like Phil \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with his study of the nocturnal economy show how the profit motive can be a key factor behind criminal statistics.

Interactionist theories of crime and deviance

 A. Key assumptions

* They reject official statistics on crime, making them part of their subject of study.
* They reject structural causal explanations of crime and deviance (e.g. functionalist and realist).
* They look instead at the way crime and deviance is socially constructed.
* They favour in-depth qualitative approaches when investigating crime and deviance. For example, informal interviews, observation and personal documents.

B. Response to official crime statistics

* Interactionists reject official statistics on crime, seeing them as little more than a social construction. They maintain that they vastly underestimate the extent of crime and do not present an accurate picture of the social distribution of criminality. They point out that under-reporting, invisibility of white-collar and cybercrime, under-recording, selective law enforcement and artificial fluctuations in crime rates lead to biased statistics.

C. The nature of deviance is socially constructed

* Becker maintains that what we count as crime and deviance is based on subjective decisions made by ‘moral entrepreneurs’ (agents of social control). Thus he argues that deviance is simply forms of behaviour that powerful agencies of social control define or label as such. For example, doctors label overeating and lack of exercise as deviant. Psychiatrists have medicalised certain unusual behaviours as mental illnesses such as caffeine induced sleep disorder and nightmare disorder.
* For Becker the socially created (as opposed to objective) nature of crime and deviance means that it varies over time and between cultures. This can be illustrated with laws relating to prostitution. In the UK it is essentially illegal but in Amsterdam legalised brothels exist.
* **Ethnomethodologists** support the interactionist/labelling view that deviance is based on subjective decision making, and hence a social construction. They argue that ‘deviance is in the eye of the beholder’. Thus what one person might see as deviant another might not. This can be illustrated with debates about ‘conceptual art’. Some see the work of artists such as Tracey Emin and Webster and Noble as deviant or even sick, whereas others celebrate it as original and inspirational.

D. The extent of deviance is socially constructed

The labeling process

* Becker claims that the amount and distribution of crime and deviance in society is dependent on processes of social interaction between the deviant and powerful agencies of social control. Becker argues that whether a deviant is labelled depends on who has committed and observed the deviant act, when and where the act was committed and the negotiations that take place between the various ‘social actors’ (people) involved. He suggests that powerless groups are more likely to be labelled than powerful groups.
* This is supported by research evidence that shows blacks are five times more likely to be stopped and searched by the police than whites and 5 times more likely to be labelled schizophrenic than whites by psychiatrists.

 The Consequences of labelling

* **Becker** also claims that the extent of deviance in society is dependent on the effects of labelling by powerful agencies of social control. He maintains that deviance can be amplified (increased) by the act of labelling itself. He argues that the labelled gain a master status e.g. mental patient, drug addict and that this status/label dominates and shapes how others see the individual. The deviant in effect becomes stigmatised. Eventually a self-fulfilling prophecy is set into motion and a career of deviance is possible.
* Becker suggests that once the deviant label is accepted, deviants may join or form deviant subcultures where their activities can be justified and supported. In this way deviance can become more frequent and often expanded into new areas.
* Lemert supports Becker’s ideas on the consequences of labelling. He maintains that primary deviance which has not been labelled has few consequences for the individual concerned. However, he claims that once deviance is labelled it becomes secondary and impacts on the individual, e.g. in terms of gaining a master status and later developing a self fulfilling prophecy.

E. Mass media and deviancy amplification

One agency of social control interactionists consider when looking at societal reactions to deviance is the media. It is argued that the media amplify crime and deviance as they demonise deviants and create moral panics. Stan Cohen has shown to be the case with powerless groups such as mods and rockers, football hooligans, single parents etc.

* The deviance amplification spiral is similar to Lemert’s idea of secondary deviance. In both cases, the social reaction to the deviant act leads not to successful control of the deviance, but to further deviance, which in turn leads to greater reaction and so on.

F. Labelling and criminal justice policy

* Recent studies have shown how increases on the attempt to control and punish young offenders are having the opposite effect. For example, in the USA, Triplett (2000) notes an increasing tendency to see young offenders as evil and to be less tolerant of minor deviance. The criminal justice system has re-labelled status offences such as truancy as more serious offences, resulting in much harsher sentences.
* As predicted by Lemert’s secondary deviance theory this has resulted in an increase rather than a decrease in offending with levels of violence amongst the young increasing. De Haan (2000) notes a similar outcome in Holland as a result of the increasing stigmatization of young offenders.

G. Individual meanings of crime

* Phenomenologists support the interactionist view in looking at crime and deviance under the ‘microscope’. Phenomenologists focus on the individual motivations behind deviance and its episodic nature. Katz (1988) locates key meanings such as the search for excitement and establishing a reputation. Matza (1964) stresses how individuals drift in and out of delinquency as they employ techniques of neutralisation (e.g. ‘I was provoked’).

H. Evaluation of interactionist theories

**Strengths**

* Interactionist theories have served to generate a great deal of subsequent research into the effects of labelling. For example, **Rist** (1970) has shown how negative teacher expectations placed on the working class leads to underachievement and anti-school subcultures. This suggests that interactionist ideas have made a major contribution to the study of crime and deviance.
* Interactionist theories have gained empirical support. **Goffman** (1968) has shown how the hospitalisation of the mentally ill leads to mortification, self-fulfilling prophecies and in some cases institutionalisation. This suggests there is some validity in the interactionist ideas.
* Interactionist views have gainedtheoreticalsupport. For example from the ideas of **phenomenologists** and **ethnomethodologists** (as shown above). This suggests that the ideas have wider theoretical appeal.

**Weaknesses**

* Interactionist theories too readily dismiss official statistics on crime. **Realists** accept that official statistics have imperfections and are subject to bias. However, they argue that they show the basic reality of crime and can be useful for generating explanations of crime and deviance. This suggests that the interactionist response to official statistics is not adequate.
* Interactionist theories have been questioned on empirical grounds. **Hirschi** (1975) argues that it is debatable whether labelling by the criminal justice system leads to a career of deviance. He feels that other factors such as age are seen to be more important. This suggests that the validity of interactionist ideas have to be questioned.
* Interactionist theories have been criticised on atheoretical level. Whilst **Marxists** accept that labelling theory raises important questions, they argue that the theory has a weak view of power and social control. For example, the theory fails to explain **why** the nature and extent of crime and deviance is socially constructed. They also argue that interactionists fail to consider the wider structural origins of crime and deviance. This suggests that labelling theory only offers a partial view on crime and deviance.
* In contrast left realists such as **Lea and Young** (1984) attack interactionists for too readily explaining away working class/black crime as a social construction. They argue that such groups docommit more crime and there are real social reasons for it. They therefore call for a return to causal explanations of crime. They suggest that working class/black crime can be understood as a response to marginalisation, relative deprivation and subcultures. Left realists also argue that interactionist approaches side too much with the deviant and neglect the victim. Furthermore it has been suggested that interactionism lacks any practical social policy focus. Left realists put forward realistic solutions to try and reduce crime, especially in inner city areas.

 **Deviance: Interactionist Perspective**

**Labelling theory**

The labelling approach was regarded a breakthrough in the sociology of deviance when it first appeared in the 1960s. It marks a radical departure from functionalism, which sees society’s laws and norms as a reflection of a general consensus and sees deviants as people driven by social forces to break these rules. Functionalism furthermore sees deviants as different from normal people because of the effect of social pressures.

Labelling theory begins by making the observation that crime is a **social construct**. In other words a crime is only a crime because that is what we say it is. **Becker** uses the example of nudity to illustrate his point. Nudity is not regarded as deviant in the bathroom or in private between couples or family members or indeed between members of a rugby team after a match. On many beaches even in the UK, nudity or partial nudity is quite acceptable. However in most public situations nudity would be regarded as highly deviant and might lead to prosecution and the label "pervert". Becker makes the point that there is nothing in the quality of the act of nudity that is deviant, but becomes so when a deviant label is attached to it. Much the same can be said of most crimes - even murder is merely a meaning that we give to some forms of life taking activity and not others. Thus Becker claims that:

 "social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes

 deviance and by applying those rule to particular people and labelling them as

 outsiders"

Thus besides making the point that deviance is the product of meanings attached to certain acts, he also claims that the status of "deviant" or "criminal", are also labels. From this perspective, a deviant is someone to whom the label has been successfully applied.

This shifts the focus from studying the deviants to find what makes them behave as they do (I.e. social pressures), to studying those who confront them, namely the police, courts, etc. to discover how and why they label some individuals and groups.

**The deviant career**

Becker argues that before a label can be successfully applied a number of stages must be passed through. Most people commit deviant act now and then, but only some get identified as a deviant. However once identified as such a number of consequences may follow and these may include the development of a deviant identity.

Interactionists make use of the concept of **"self image"**. A person’s self concept is a result of how they believe they are seen by others and a person labelled stupid, clever, ugly or beautiful, will act in terms of that perception. An individual labelled "stupid" might react by attempting to negotiate a different definition, perhaps by acting "intelligently", and they may or may not be successful. Alternatively they might accept their new identity and live up to it e.g. by acting disruptively and seeking out others like themselves. The more they separate themselves from normal society the more they come to resemble the original label. This new identity can become a person's **master status** and all their actions are likely to be judged by others in terms of it.

**DEVIANCE AMPLIFICATION**

A well known example of the use of labelling theory is a study of drug users by **Jock Young:** **'The Role of the Police as Amplifiers of Deviancy**'. Young suggests the result of labelling marijuana users as deviant was to make their behaviour more deviant than it might otherwise have been.

According to Young the process works like this: police raids cause the drug users to see themselves as 'outsiders' - as a group set apart from society. This feeling was then translated into actual isolation. This was partly because they come to see themselves as outsiders. Partly too it reduced the risk of informers, and therefore of arrest. Since however they came into less contact with 'insiders' there was less chance of normal social control to work, so deviant behaviour increased. The more this went on the more difficult it became for drug users to return to 'normal' society. The group became increasingly secretive and began to associate with other deviant groups including heroin users. Some began to use heroin themselves and became involved in the organised crime that goes with the use of heroin. This confirmed the police in their view that marijuana users were criminal and so justified the original label. The final result was 'deviancy amplification' - the original problem became more serious because inappropriate measures were taken to reduce it.

But how did the original situation come to be defined as a 'problem' in the first place? Young puts much of the blame on the media which he suggests, turned a genuine doubt over the health risks of marijuana into a lurid stereotype of the 'dope fiend' out to corrupt the youth of the nation. This, says Young, bore very little relation to the reality but was accepted as reality by the police who acted accordingly. In any case, writes Young: "there is a very real conflict between the values of the police and those of the bohemian marijuana smoker. For whereas the policeman values upright masculinity, deferred gratification, sobriety and respectability, the bohemian embraces values concerned with overt expressivity in behaviour and clothes, and the pursuit of pleasure unrelated to - and indeed disdaining - work. The bohemian in fact threatens the reality of the policeman."

Now, as Young makes clear, the police threatened the reality of the bohemians too. The difference is that the police have the power to enforce their version of reality while the bohemians do not. The point about labelling is that some groups have the power to make the labels they give, stick.

Young's analysis may not tell the whole story. After all, the bohemians were presumably aware that they were breaking the law by using marijuana. In other words they were already acting as outsiders even before the police raids began. However labelling theory can be helpful in explaining why measures to combat crime are often unsuccessful. And the theory is also a useful reminder, that while some acts (murder for example) are condemned by all societies, other acts may be seen as criminal partly at least because they conflict with the views of groups in society which have the power to ensure that their version of reality dominates.

***See the illustration below and try to think of how this might apply to other areas of deviance. Some examples might be paedophiles, “mad dogs”, teenagers and Alco pops.***

**Crime Amplification Spiral**

 Police believe that a particular

 group of people or people in a

 area, are especially likely to

 commit crime.

Police concentrate their efforts Both the recorded and actual

on these groups or areas and increase supports the police

hence uncover more crime belief that these people are

among them. especially likely to commit

 crimes.

increase in recorded crime Increase in actual crime

rate for these groups or areas. committed

Because these groups are stopped Being labelled as 'criminal'

and questioned more by the police isolates them from non criminal

their hostility to them increases. groups. They begin to feel that

This makes them more likely to be they are different. They accept

arrested. their new identity and live up to it.

 Further increase in their

 recorded crime rate.

**Societal reaction**

The above examples of labelling theory emphasise the importance of the **"societal reaction"** (the reaction of others) to deviance rather than the deviant or the deviant act itself.

**Lemert** distinguishes between primary and secondary deviation. **Primary deviation** consists of deviant acts before they are publicly labelled. As there are probably many causes of primary deviance it is fruitless to enquire into its causes. It makes little sense to delve into the background of convicted criminals to find the causes of their deviance without examining the criminals who have not been caught. Convicted criminals are probably not a representative sample. Furthermore some deviant acts may be so widespread as to be normal e.g. use of recreational drugs.

**Secondary deviation**. The important factor according to labelling theorists is not the deviance itself but the societal reaction and the consequences of this for the deviant. Unless a person is labelled as deviant it has little effect on his or her self concept. Lemert claims that societal reaction can be a major "cause" of deviance. Thus the blame or cause of deviance has little to do with the behaviour of the deviant and everything to do with the agents of social control.

Lemert supports his claim with his study: *Stuttering among the North Pacific Coastal Indians*. He found a high incidence of stuttering among coastal tribes but the condition was unknown among similar tribes inland. Indeed the inland Indians did not even have a word for stuttering.

The coastal Indians have a rich ceremonial life involving singing, dancing and speech making. Their legends are full of references to great orators and famous speeches. Children are initiated into ceremonial life from a very early age and parents stress the importance of a faultless performance. If children do not meet these exacting standards, they shame their parents and suffer the ridicule of their peers. There is a highly developed sensitivity to any speech defect and any irregularity, is responded to by parents with guilt and shame.

Lemert's conclusion is that stuttering is actually produced by the societal reaction and he supports this by showing that among other Indians tribes, stuttering is unknown. Thus societal reaction, prompted by concern about particular forms of deviance, can actually produce these forms of deviance.

**Questions:**

1. What do interactionists mean by the ‘social construction’ of crime ?
2. How are crime statistics socially constructed?
3. What causes crime according to interactionists?
4. What are the consequences of labelling according to Howard Becker?
5. What can amplify deviance according to Lemert?
6. What role do the media play in amplifying deviance?
7. What evidence is there to support labelling theory?
8. Identify some weaknesses of labelling theory.

Realist theories of crime and deviance

* Realist approaches to the study of crime emerged in the 1980s as a response to rising crime and to what Rock called a “theory bottleneck”.
* Existing approaches seemed unable to generate ideas that could lead to reducing crime. Both Marxist and interactionist theories seemed to excuse criminal behaviour
* Marxists tended to see property crime as a justified attempt to redistribute wealth,Interactionists saw criminals as different from non-criminals only in that they had acquired the label “criminal”.
* Realists tried to counter these tendencies by focusing on the reality of crime, its consequences for the victims and the need to do something about it.
* Two versions of realist theory have developed, right realism and left realism, reflecting different political perspectives.

A. Right Realism

* Right realist theories start from the following set of assumptions:
1. People are naturally selfish
2. This selfishness must be controlled by laws
3. People weigh up the costs and benefits of actions
4. People who choose crime are responsible for their actions
5. Crime rises because the costs are not high enough to dissuade people
6. Crime can only be reduced through harsher sentences
* Right realists reject economic factors such as poverty and unemployment as responsible for crime; they point to rising crime during periods of rising living standards as evidence. They look to cultural factors, such as declining morality and respect for authority.
* Murray in the USA blamed the welfare state for creating dependency and for weakening the work ethic. An underclass comprising “fatherless families”, with boys growing up without suitable male role models and passing on anti-social behaviour to future generations, is seen as responsible for a lot of crime.
* An important element of the right realist view of crime comes from rational choice theory, which assumes that individuals have free will and the power of reason. Rational choice theorists such as Ron Clarke argue that the decision to commit a crime is a choice based on a rational calculation of the likely consequences. If the perceived rewards of crime outweigh the perceived costs of crime, or if the rewards of crime appear to be greater than those of non-criminal behaviour, then people will be more likely to offend.
* A similar idea is contained in Marcus Felson’s routine activity theory. Felson argues that for a crime to occur, there must be a motivated offender, a suitable target (a victim and/or property) and the absence of a ‘capable guardian’ (such as the police or neighbours). Offenders are assumed to act rationally, so the presence of a guardian is likely to deter them from offending.
* Felson argues that informal guardians are more effective than formal ones such as the police. For example, in the chaos immediately following Hurrican Andrew in Florida in 1982, patrols by local citizens to protect property during the absence of the police prevented looting, and crime rates actually went down during this period.

Solutions to crime

* Crime can be reduced by making it a less attractive choice. Many measures are possible, such as target hardening (e.g. making a house or car more difficult to break into), surveillance (e.g. close circuit television) and Neighbourhood Watch schemes.
* However, the crime prevention ‘industry’ has arguably only moved the crime elsewhere rather than reduce the total level.
* Wilson has argued that a minor sign of neglect, such as leaving a broken window unrepaired, could lead to a climate of disorder in which ever more serious crime became possible. Zero tolerance is a policing strategy that involves cracking down on minor infringements (graffiti, unlicensed street trading etc) to try to create a situation in which crime is less possible.

Evaluation

* Right realism ignores wider structural cause of crime such as poverty and the unequal distribution of power and wealth.
* It overstates offenders’ rationality and how far they make cost-benefit calculations before committing a crime. While it may explain some utilitarian crime for financial reward, it may not explain violent crime.
* Its view that criminals are rational actors freely choosing crime conflicts with their view that behaviour is determined by their biology and socialisation. It also over-emphasises biological factors. For example, Lily et al argue that IQ differences account for less than 3% of differences in offending.
* It is pre-occupied with street crime and ignores corporate crime, which may be more costly and harmful to the public.
* Advocating a zero tolerance policy gives police free rein to discriminate against ethnic minority youth, the homeless etc. It also results in displacement of crime to other areas. Jones points out that right realist policies in the USA failed to prevent the crime rate rising.
* It overemphasises control of disorder, rather than tackling underlying causes of neighbourhood decline such as a lack of investment.

B. Left Realism

* This view sees the causes of crime in the economic structure of society. It rejects the way earlier Left approaches seemed to almost romanticise crime and emphasises instead how the weakest sections of society bear most of the costs of crime.
* Victim surveys had shown that people in inner city areas, the lower working class, Afro-Caribbeans and Asians were most likely to be victims of “ordinary” crimes such as street crime and burglary.
* Left Realists Lea and Young looked at the impact of crime on the daily lives of vulnerable groups. The offenders were often from these groups too, but their criminality could not be excused or justified politically.
* Lea and Young used the concepts of relative deprivation, marginalisation and subculture to explain crime.
* Relative deprivation refers to the gap between the expectations people have, and the reality of what they can obtain. Afro-Caribbeans often find their paths to status and economic success blocked by discrimination. Crime can thus arise from the experiences of particular groups even if living standards in general are rising.
* Marginalised groups lack both clear goals and organisations to represent their interests. Groups such as workers have clear goals (such as better pay and conditions) and organisations (trade unions) to put pressure on employers and politicians. As such, they have no need to resort to violence to achieve their goals.
* By contrast, unemployed youth are marginalised. They have no organisation to represent them and no clear goals, just a sense of resentment and frustration. Being powerless to use political means to improve their position, they express their frustration through criminal means such as violence and rioting.
* Subcultures arise in response to such problems; they are not completely separate from wider society since they share, for example, a high value placed on material wealth. In these ways crime is related to the economic structure of society.

Solutions to crime

Accountable policing

Left realists argue that policing must be made more accountable to local communities and must deal with local concerns. Routine beat patrols are ineffective in detecting or preventing crime, and stop and search tactics cause conflict and resentment.

Tackling the structural causes of crime

However, left realists do not see improved policing and control as the main solution. Levels of offending can only be lowered if differences in levels of income, wealth and powers are reduced. Dealing with inequality of opportunity, tackling discrimination, and providing decent jobs and housing are a far more effective solution to crime than a more community-friendly policing strategy.

Evaluation of left realism

* Left realism does offer ideas about what can be done about crime, which becomes a pressing need when crime is seen as a problem faced by the working class not by capitalists.
* Young advocates a “multi-agency” approach, a coordinated strategy involving greater support for families, employment opportunities, new youth facilities, changes in police practice and so on.
* Hughes has argued that although left realism has stimulated debate it offers few new insights, often drawing heavily on older theories. It has lost sight of the importance of corporate crime’s impact on the lives of the working class. By concentrating on ethnic minorities it is also in danger of perpetuating racist stereotypes.
* The strength of realist approaches has been to take crime’s impact on our lives seriously, and to offer ways to cut crime. The policies that have been implemented have been mainly from the right - more tough on crime than on the causes of crime- and their success is highly questionable. The valuable refocusing on victims has also been turned by right realism into an insistence that we are ourselves responsible for taking steps not to become victims. The two types of realism have, however, set the ground for debate over the way forward in tackling crime.

**Questions**

1. Why is right Realism seen as a critical response to the sociology of crime?
2. Why is right Realism described as an agency theory?
3. How does Murray see the criminal behaviour of the underclass reproducing itself again and again over successive generations?
4. How is the aspiration to material goods identified by left realism similar to both the ‘strain theory’ of Robert Merton and the illegitimate opportunity structure of Cloward and Ohlin?
5. What causes of crime does Left realism take into account which Right realism does not?
6. In your opinion which theory would be better for controlling crime Left or Right Realism? Explain why you think this.
7. Are there any government policies you know about which reflect Left or Right realist thinking?

Postmodernist explanations of crime and deviance

**Overview**

* Postmodern theorists argue that we now live in a post modern world characterised by diversity and fragmentation.
* Postmodernists stress that society is changing so rapidly and constantly that it is marked by uncertainty, with society split into a huge variety of groups with different interests and lifestyles.
* Postmodernists view the category ‘crime’ as simply a social construction, based on a narrow legal definition, reflecting an outdated **meta-narrative** of the law which does not reflect the diversity of postmodern society.
* In postmodern society, people are increasingly freed from the constraints arising from social norms and social bonds to others.
* Crime as presently defined is simply an expression of a particular view of those with power of how people should conduct themselves, and denies people’s freedom, self-identity and difference.

**A New Definition of Crime**

* Postmodernists argue that it is necessary to go beyond narrow legal definitions of crime, and develop a wider conception of crime based on justice and respect for people’s chosen identities and lifestyles.
* **Henry and Milovanovic (1996)** suggest that crime should be taken beyond the narrow legal definitions to a wider conception of **social harm**, embracing all threats and risks to people pursuing increasingly diverse lifestyles and identities.
* They suggest that crime should be re-conceptualised not simply as breaking laws, but as people using power to show disrespect for others by causing them harm of some sort.
* They identify two forms of harm: **Harms of reduction** (power is used to cause a victim to experience some immediateloss or injury). **Harms of repression** (power is used to restrict future human development).
* This conception of harm includes actions which are either not illegal or not traditionally taken very seriously or perceived as part of the current crime ‘problem’.

**The Causes of Crime**

Most sociological theories of crime and deviance explain crime in relation to a **social structure** and **core values** from which the criminal deviates for some reason. For example, explanations that explain crime in relation to marginalization, relative deprivation, strain, inadequate socialisation, subcultural values, weakened social bonds etc.

* For postmodernists, society is characterised by a fragmentation of this social structure: The meta-narratives of social class, work and family, which formed people’s identity and gave them their social roles and values, and integrated them into society, have been replaced by **uncertainty** and **individual choice of identity**.
* Individuals increasingly focus on themselves, often with little regard and respect for others.
* Each crime becomes a one-off event expressing whatever identity an individual chooses, and is motivated by an infinite number of individual causes, including emotional reasons.
* E.g. low individual self-esteem may be overcome by criminal activities designed to earn respect from others by harming them.
* This may include by humiliating, bullying or intimidating victims; hate crimes directed at others simply because of such characteristics as ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or nationality etc.
* The individualism of identity in postmodern society means that the social causes of crime are undiscoverable.

**The Control of Crime**

* In the postmodernist view, the fragmentation of society is reflected in a similar fragmentation of organised crime prevention: There is a growing emphasis is placed on private crime prevention, rather than reliance on the police etc.
* E.g. Private security firms that control private ‘public’ places such as shopping complexes.
* In addition, example, policing policies become very localised and community-based, reflecting the fragmentation of society into a diverse range of smaller groupings of localised identities, such as those around ethnic and gender.
* E.g. The voluntary use of Sharia courts, among some sections of the Muslim community to deal with disputes.
* Contemporary societies use surveillance techniques to control everyone, not just offenders.
* **Foucault (1991)** pointed out that surveillance is penetrating more and more into private aspects of our lives, aided by new surveillance technology like CCTV, which monitors the movements of people in every sphere of life.
* This is accompanied by growing control of entry to streets and housing complexes in ‘gated communities’.
* In addition, vast amounts of data are collected on individuals through things like consumer tracking.
* In a postmodern society, people are regarded as consumers and customers rather than as citizens with rights.
* They are seduced and co-opted into avoidance of social harm by participation in the consumer society.
* Those who aren’t so seduced, or can’t afford to participate, face stricter control, for example through heavier and more repressive policing.

**Evaluation of Postmodernist Explanations of Crime and Deviance**

**Strengths**

* It can explain contemporary developments like widespread surveillance, for example using CCTV, and consumer tracking;
* It recognizes that there are other dimensions to the causes of crime beyond the more structural theories which have dominated in the sociology of crime and deviance;
* It explains the growing localism attached to policing strategies;
* It offers explanations for non-utilitarian crime, with no material benefit, like hate crimes and anti-social behaviour;
* It provides a fuller picture of the pattern of crime than traditionally provided, as the conception of crime as ‘harm’ encompasses a range of behaviour that has been largely neglected in the law and in sociological theories.

**Weaknesses**

* It doesn’t explain why most people don’t use their power to harm others, and why particular individuals or groups find it necessary to actively engage in acts of harm as a means of asserting their identity;
* It ignores the issues of justice and citizen rights for all, and not just for those who are significant consumers and customers;
* It doesn’t recognise that decentralised and more informal arrangements for crime control, like the use of private security firms and localised policing, to respond to local identities are likely to benefit the most well organised and articulate (middle class) groups. The poorest in society, who cannot afford to establish identities by consuming goods, nor are seen as significant customers, are likely to be neglected;
* **Lea** points out that postmodernist theories are not much more than a rediscovery of labelling theory or radical criminology, which concluded long ago that crime was simply a social construction, and that power was a crucial element in that construction.

**Questions**

1. In what ways has society changed since traditional theories about crime were written?
2. Why do we need a new definition of crime according to post modernists?
3. What kinds of actions might be categorised as ‘social harm’?
4. Why can we not identify specific causes of crime according to post modernists?
5. In what ways has the prevention and control of crime become more diverse?
6. Identify some criticisms of Post Modern theories of crime.

Sub-cultural theories of crime and deviance

**The structural origins of crime & deviance**

**Albert Cohen** accepts much of what Merton had to say on the structural origins of crime and deviance.

* Working class youths internalise mainstream norms and values through socialisation.
* Working class youths face blocked opportunities (e.g. at school) because of their position in the social class structure.
* Working class youths as a whole (groups not just individuals) suffer from **status frustration** (realise that they can not achieve in middle class terms).

**The cultural causes of crime & deviance**

Cohen extends Merton’s theory by incorporating a strong cultural element in his explanation.

* Some working class youths make a decision to completely reject mainstream norms and values. This is because of the status frustration they feel.
* Mainstream norms and values are replaced with alternative delinquent subcultural norms and values. For Cohen a high value is placed on non-financial negativistic delinquent acts. For example, joy riding, arson and vandalism.
* The delinquent subculture provides an alternative means of gaining status and striking back at an unequal social system that has branded them as ‘failures’.
* **Cloward and Ohlin** accept Cohen’s views on the structural origins of crime and deviance.
* However, Cloward and Ohlin criticise Cohen’s cultural explanation of crime. In particular, his failure to explain the variety of subcultural forms that emerge out of the social structure.
* Cloward and Ohlin maintain that the form working class delinquent subcultures take depends on access to **illegitimate opportunity structures**, i.e. access to existing adult criminal networks who will take on younger ‘apprentice’ criminals.
* **Criminal subcultures** emerge when working class youths have access to adult riminal networks. The focus of their deviance is on material crimes such as burglary.
* **Conflict subcultures** emerge when working class youths lack access to adult criminal networks but live in an environment which values defence of territory and violence. The focus of their deviance is gang related ‘warfare’.
* **Retreatist subcultures** emerge when working class youths are denied access to criminal or conflict subcultures. The focus of their deviance is on alcohol and drug abuse.
* **Walter B Miller** rejects Cohen and Cloward and Ohlin’s views on the structural origins of crime and deviance. He criticises the idea that delinquent subcultures emerge as a reaction to anomie. This is because he believes that lower class youths never accept mainstream norms and values in the first place. He therefore offers an alternative culturalview on crime and deviance.
* Lower class youths are socialised into a set of lower class values or **focal concerns**. These values include toughness, smartness, excitement and fatalism.
* Some lower class youths over conformto lower class values because of a concern to gain status within their peer group. In this situation crime and deviance follow. Delinquency might include assault.

**Strengths**

* Functionalist subcultural theories have served to generate a great deal of subsequent research, for example much research has been carried out into gangs in both the UK and USA. This suggests that subcultural ideas have made a major contribution to the study of crime and deviance.
* Functionalist subcultural theories have gained empirical support. For example, **Willis** (1979)(just for you!!!) lends some support to Miller. He claims that deviant anti-school cultures are the product of working class youths living up to the working class ‘shop floor’ culture they have been socialised into. This suggests there is some validity in subcultural ideas.
* Cohen and Cloward & Ohlin have gained recent theoretical support from **postmodernists**. **Morrison** (1995) argues that the underclass are faced with blocked opportunities because of their position in the social structure. He suggests this leads to group feelings of resentment and revenge, and crime and deviance invariably follow. This suggests that the ideas have wider theoretical appeal.

**Weaknesses**

* Functionalist subcultural theories too readily accept official statistics on crime. They thus fail to explain adult white collar crime and neglect female subcultural delinquency. This suggests that the subcultural response to official statistics is not adequate.
* Functionalist subcultural theories have been questioned on empirical grounds. **Empey** (1982) is critical of Cloward and Ohlin. He argues that delinquent boys tend to cross between the distinct subcultural divides which Cloward and Ohlin identify. This suggests that the validity of subcultural ideas have to be questioned.
* Functionalist subcultural theories have been criticised on a theoretical level. The **phenomenologist** **Matza** (1964) criticises subcultural theories for over-estimating juvenile delinquency. They do this by assuming that membership of delinquent subcultures is permanent. He argues that individuals drift in and out of delinquency, employing techniques of neutralisation (e.g. they deserved it) as they do so, and therefore crime and deviance is temporary and episodic (every now and gain). This suggests that subcultural theories only offer a partial view on crime and deviance.

**Questions**

1. How does Albert Cohen develop Merton’s idea of strain?
2. How do Cloward and Ohlin’s views on goals and values differ to Merton’s?
3. How is Miller’s explanation to juvenile delinquency different to Albert Cohen’s?
4. These sub cultural theorists were writing over 40 years ago. Are they still relevant today?

**Vocabulary**

Reaction formation – when delinquent gang members rebound from conventional failure seeking to create their own alternative status.

Status frustration – when status is denied through legitimate means, it is often sought through deviant behaviour.

Illegitimate career structure – the existence of an alternative deviant opportunity structure that exists in areas where legitimate means (good education, employment prospects and social mobility) are not readily available.

Focal concerns – a distinctive set of deviant subcultural values which Walter Miller believes the lower working class are socialised into.

Use the following terms to fill the appropriate gaps in the text.

|  |
| --- |
| anomie; blocked; bonds; Cohen; Cloward; concerns; focal; frustration; illegitimate; integrated; Merton; Ohlin; status; strain. |

According to Durkheim deviant behaviour occurs when individuals are not fully \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ into society's norms and values. Robert \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ regarded the concept of '\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_' as used by Durkheim as too vague in its original and developed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ theory to reflect the complex link between goals and means. Travis Hirschi sees the level of crime linked to the strength of '\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of attachment'. Albert \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ uses the term 'reaction formation' to describe how delinquent youths rebound from conventional failure (e.g. in schooling). He goes on to argue that faced with failure they suffer '\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_' and choose a delinquent subculture specific to the working-class values they have been socialised into. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ see the lower working class faced with blocked opportunities as often choosing an '\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ career or opportunity structure'. Miller sees young lower working-class males as socialised from early age into six '\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_'. Much subsequent research has supported earlier functionalist ideas. For example, Nightingale, Bourgois, Left Realism support Merton’s basic idea that a lot of material crime stems from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ opportunities. The work of Winlow has parallels with Cohen’s status frustration, the violent conflict subculture of Cloward and Ohlin and the masculine socialised values of Miller.

**One of the best methods of revising anything you need to know is to make a poem or set something to music. Look at this wonderful example by Marion Davies of Caerleon Comprehensive School.**

**ODE TO SUBCULTURAL THEORY**

Now Wally was a subcultural man,

Focal concerns were his game plan.

He said that boys brought up without dad

Were much more likely to turn out bad.

No man at the top left a huge hollow,

No breadwinning role for the boys to follow.

A female-led household meant problems for them

They desperately needed to prove they were men.

To show they were ‘ard was their main aim,

And breaking the law was part of that game.

From danger and defiance they got their buzz,

Even tho’ this meant trouble with the local fuzz.

They put two fingers up at success at school

To be seen as a swot was very uncool.

Their focal concerns decided what would be,

Toughness, fate and autonomy.

Now Alby Cohen wasn’t so sure,

The boys didn’t start off breaking the law.

Their goals were the same as everyone else,

Achievement at school and material wealth.

Like middle class boys they wanted success,

And tried legitimately to do their best.

They soon realised this was not to be,

When their results came out, only one ‘E.’

Alby said they suffered from status frustration,

They coped with this by goal transformation.

They needed to get status elsewhere,

Flouting authority answered their prayer.

Mainstream goals they stood on their head,

So wrong became right and bad became good.

At petty crime they could well succeed,

Gathering in gangs and smoking the weed.

Now Cloward and Ohlin said ‘hang on a mo,’

Or as they’re known to their friends, Clo and Oh.

Why is it that some boys respond by stealing?

While others find fighting or drugs more appealing?

Or to use the language sociologists use,

Criminal, conflict, retreatist, which to choose?

If there’s a criminal network in the area they dwell,

They’ll more than likely join in as well.

If this structure’s lacking, they may join a gang,

To defend their turf, around the streets they’ll hang.

If both are missing, drugs they must choose,

And live in a subculture of spliffs and booze.

So, for subcultural theory, it’s Wally and Clo,

And to complete the line-up, Alby and Oh.

Other sociologists you could add to the list,

Like the CCCS and the New Left Realists.

But that’s another poem!

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Theoretical Perspective | Theorist | Explanation of studies | Evaluation |
| Functionalism | **Kingsley Davis (1961)** | Crime & Deviance can act as a safety value |  |
| Functionalism | **Clinard (1974)** | Crime & Deviance may serve as a warning function that there is some defect in the social organisation. |  |
| Functionalism | **Durkheim (1897)** | It allows for **social change** to occur, all societies need some change to remain health and stable. | He does not offer a real explanation as to why certain people were more likely to commit deviant acts than others. |
| Functionalism | **Durkheim (1897)** | It can help **maintain social order** because it unites the rest of society in disapproval of the deviant behaviour. | Over-emphasis on the degree of consensus in society. |
| Functionalism | **Durkheim (1897)** | **Strengthens bonds** between people and **reaffirms values** when they are drawn together by horrific crimes. | He ignores the issue of power as he stresses the belief that the law reflect the interests of the majority of the population. |
| Functionalism | **Merton (1938)** | In American culture there is an imbalance or **strain** between norms and goals. The result is **anomie** as norms are too weak to control behaviour, so some individuals seek success any way they can. | He assumes that there is a **value consensus** in American society and that people only deviate because of structural strain in society. |
| Functionalism | **Merton (1938)** | There are five possible responses to **strain**: conformity, innovation, ritualism, Retreatism and rebellion. The last four responses are deviant. | **Taylor, Walton & Young (1973)** argue that the theory cannot account for politically motivated crime where people break the law because of commitment to a cause. |
| Physiological | **Lombrosso (1876)** | Criminals had **biological characteristics** which were the outward signs of an inborn criminal nature. | Sociologists criticise this viewpoint as they claim criminals are as normal as the rest of us and that we should look to the social situations for explanations of crime. |
| Psychological | **Bowbly (1946)** | Deviance is due to child’s early socialisation. He argued that persistent delinquents had suffered from maternal deprivation during the early years of their lives. | Psychoanalytic theories based on the work of Freud are difficult to test because they rely on inner processes of the mind which are not accessible to researchers. |
| Theoretical Perspective | **Theorist** | **Explanation of studies** | **Evaluation** |
| Subcultural  | **Cohen (1955)** | Working class boys want success but cannot achieve their goals because of cultural deprivation leads to educational failure. They suffer from **status frustration** and turn to deviance to achieve their goals. A deviant subculture is adopted. | **Box (1981)** Cohen’s theory only applies to a minority of delinquents. The rest accept mainstream standards of success but resent being seen as failures and turn against those who they feel look down on them. |
| Subcultural | **Cloward & Ohlin (1962)** | Just as the opportunity to succeed by legitimate means varies, so does the opportunity to succeed by illegitimate means. | Taylor, Walton and Young (1973) criticise them for assuming that everybody is committed to the success goal of achieving wealth. |
| Subcultural | **Cloward & Ohlin (1962)** | There is greater pressure on the working classes to succeed. There are 3 responses to the situation: criminal subculture, conflict subculture and retreatist subculture. | The marketisation of capitalist societies has made these theories increasingly relevant. South (1997) believes that the British drug trade closely resembles deviant subcultures. |
| Subcultural | Miller (1962) | He believed that the lower classes had their own distinctive values which were passed on from generation to generation and which actively encouraged lower-class men to break the law. He identified various “**focal concerns**” of the working classes. | Many sociologists have rejected Miller’s picture of an isolated working class whose values bear no relation to the mainstream culture. |
| Subcultural | Matza (1964) | Delinquents are, to a considerable extent, committed to the same values as other members of society. Deviance becomes possible when **techniques of neutralisation** are used which temporarily release them from the hold society has over them. | His work challenges other theories of delinquency which suggests that delinquents are “sick” or different from other members of society. He stresses the choices that all members of society have. |
| Interactionist | Howard S Becker (1963) | An act only becomes deviant when others perceive it as such. | He does not identify the origins of deviances. Why do people break the law? |
| Interactionist | Howard S Becker (1963) | Once an individual or group is labelled as criminal mentally ill or homosexual, others see them only in terms of that label. The label becomes his **master status.** | He fails to explain why certain types of people are selected as likely deviants rather than others. |
| Interactionist | Howard S Becker (1963) | Labelling also causes the labelled group to produce a self-fulfilling prophecy in which the label actually makes itself become true. | Who are the people that make the rules? |
| Theoretical Perspective | **Theorist** | **Explanation of studies** | **Evaluation** |
| Interactionist | Jock Young (1971) | A self-fulfilling prophecy is created in his study of “hippie” marijuana users in London. | The idea of the self-fulfilling prophecy is too **deterministic**. It seems to assume that, once labelled, secondary deviation and a deviant career are inevitable. |
| Interactionist | Lemert (1972) | He distinguishes between Primary and Secondary deviation. Primary deviance refers to deviant acts before they have been publicly labelled. | Many sociologists claim that the Interactionist approach fails to explain why individuals commit deviant acts in the first place (primary deviance) |
| Interactionist | Goffman | His study of mental patients shows how deviances can actually be created by the social reaction to it. | His research is outdated and may not be applicable today. However, his work was influential in producing improvements in the treatment of the mentally ill. |
| Interactionist | Cicourel (1976) | Juvenile officers in California found that officers had a similar picture of the ideal delinquent. As a result those that fit this picture were more likely to be arrested and handed over to the juvenile officers. | This confirms the idea that certain types of people are more likely to be labelled as deviant. |
|  | Stanley Cohen (1972) | The media’s reaction to deviance may lead to a deviancy may lead to a **deviancy amplification spiral, a moral panic** and more authoritarian forms of control. | **McRobbie and Thornton** (1995) argue that moral panics as described by Stanley Cohen in the 1960s, are **outdated** and have to be seen in the context of the development of the media and the growing sophistication of the audiences. |
| Feminism | Pat Carlen (1990) | Women’s crimes are largely “the crimes of the powerless”. Many women who commit crimes are powerless in various ways. Unrewarded in the family and the workplace with little power to improve their situation by legitimate means, crime is a rational alternative. | Carlen’s sample of 39 women is too small to generalise from. |
| Theoretical Perspective | **Theorist** | **Explanation of studies** | **Evaluation** |
| Feminism | Heidensohn (2002) | Women have more to lose than men if they deviate from the norms of society. Women are controlled in all aspects of their lives which prevents them from committing crimes. | Heidensohn combination of a feminist perspective with control theory provides an explanation for women’s conformity to social norms and for their low crime rate. It presents women as passive, as simply accepting their situation. |
|  | **Messerschmidt (1993)** | Men are continually constructing or presenting themselves as masculine. Crime can be part of accomplishing this masculinity. **Masculinities**: different masculinities are shaped by social class, ethnicity, age and sexual orientation. **Hegemonic masculinity**: this is the dominant and ideal form of masculinity which most men seek to accomplish through legitimate means.Subordinate masculinity:- Less desirable form of masculinity which some men seek to accomplish because they lack the resources required for hegemonic masculinity. |  |
|  | **Jock Young (1999)** | The decline in industry has resulted in a crisis for young men who never had a job and have little prospect of getting one. Some respond by creating subcultures of mashismo which glorify an exaggerated form of masculinity. | We cannot generalise from these case studies. |
|  | **Dick Hobbs (2003)** | The “night time economy” has provided opportunities for engaging in lucrative criminal activities. With the loss of many w/c jobs, these men assert their masculinity through being hard, working as bouncers and getting involved in criminal activities. | The **chivalry thesis** states that women are treated more leniently than men by the criminal justice system. |
| Feminism | **Heidensohn (2002)** | Many women feel they have been treated harshly by the criminal justice system. They see it as a male-dominated institution and feel their treatment has been unsympathetic and unjust. | The chivalry thesis states that women are treated more leniently than men by criminal justice system. |

**Social Class and Crime (Also see Marxism)**

**Patterns and trends**

* Official statistics show that working-class people, particularly those from the lower working class, are more highly represented among offenders than those from other social classes.

**Explanations for links between social class and crime**

**Social deprivation**

* There is a link between the level of crime and poverty which is a possible explanation for the most common offences of property crime, and would account for the high proportion of criminals coming from deprived backgrounds.

**Strain theory and anomie**

* **Merton’s (1968)**: Those living in deprived communities have fewer opportunities to achieve the goals they aspire to. These circumstances push people to ‘innovate’ and find alternative means reach success goals, such as crime

**Marginality, social exclusion and control and rational choice theories**

* In the most disadvantaged communities, there are likely to be the highest levels of **marginality** and **social exclusion.**
* In such communities, agencies of socialisation and social control are likely to be less effective in providing the bonds that integrate people into wider mainstream society.
* **Control theory** points to the weakening of these factors as making people more prone to offending,
* When pondering whether or not to choose crime, as **rational choice theory** suggests, potential offenders from poor areas may decide that the benefits of crime, giving them access to money and consumer goods, outweigh the costs and risks of being caught.

**Subcultural explanations**

* **Cohen**: The **status frustration** that all young people experience is particularly accentuated among working-class youth
* **Miller** and the **focal concerns** of lower-working-class subculture that often carried with them risks of brushes with the law.
* **Cloward and Ohlin (1960)**: In some working-class neighbourhoods, legitimate opportunities for achieving success are blocked, criminal subcultures may develop.

**Labelling, stereotyping and prejudice**

* The poorest sections of the working class and the areas in which they live, fit more closely the stereotypes held in police culture of the ‘typical criminal’ and criminal neighbourhoods.
* There is therefore a greater police presence in poorer working-class areas than in middle-class areas.
* As a result, there is a greater likelihood of offenders being regarded as acting suspiciously, being stopped and searched, or being arrested by the police when involved in offending. Crime rates will therefore be higher in working-class areas simply because there are more police
* The activities of the working class, and particularly working-class youth, are more likely to be labelled by the police as criminal than the same behaviour in the middle class. The prejudices of middle-class judges and magistrates may mean that, when working-class people appear in court, they are more likely to be seen as fitting the stereotype of typical criminals, and they will therefore face a higher risk of being found guilty.

**More detectable offences**

* Those in the working class tend to commit more detectable offences than those in the middle class, and so are more likely to get caught.
* The main offences committed by working-class people (burglaries, theft, and vehicle crime) are far more likely to be reported to the police and result in the prosecution of offenders than the types of crime committed by those from other social class backgrounds.

**Criticisms of these explanations**

* They don’t explain why all those in the same circumstances in the poorest sections of the working class do not turn to crime (most don’t).
* There is a vast amount of crime that remains undetected and unrecorded, or offenders haven’t been caught, so we don’t actually know who the offenders are. Official statistics therefore may not provide a representative view of offenders.

**White-collar crime**

* **Newburn (2007):** The sociology of crime and deviance has tended to focus on the crimes of the powerless rather than the powerful.
* **Sutherland (1949):** Defined white-collar crime as “crime committed by the more affluent in society, who abused their positions within their middle-class occupations for criminal activity for personal benefit” and tried to show that crime was not simply a working-class phenomenon, but was widespread throughout all sections of society.
* White-collar crime includes offences such as bribery and corruption in government and business, fiddling expenses, professional misconduct, fraud and embezzlement.

**The under-representation of white-collar** **crime**

* White-collar crimes are substantially under-represented in official statistics, including both police-recorded crime and the British Crime Survey, giving the misleading impression that most crime is committed by the working class, and that the middle class commit fewer offences.
* However, there may be many white-collar criminals who simply don’t get caught or ever have their crimes detected.
* There are several reasons why white-collar crimes are under-represented in official
statistics:
1 They are hard to detect.
2 They are often without personal or individual victims.
3 The crime may benefit both the parties concerned.
4 They are hard to investigate.
5 There is often a lack of awareness that a crime has been committed
6 Institutional protection means they are often not reported and prosecuted.
7 Even if reported, offenders have a better chance of being found not guilty.

**Explaining white-collar crime**

* Some white-collar offenders are ordinary people who have got into financial difficulty, and who use their jobs to find a way out of it through fraud and similar offences. Such low-level white-collar crime can probably be explained in much the same way as much working-class crime.

**Strain theory, anomie and relative deprivation**

* While it is hard to see successful middle-class people as having the means to achieving social goals blocked, it maybe that, despite their success, they still have a sense of relative deprivation, of still lacking things they see others having, so they innovate, and turn to crime.
* This may be fuelled by personal economic difficulties, like large debts generated by living a lifestyle above their means, or quite simply greed

**Control theory**

* The moral controls on offending may be weakened as there is often no personal, individual victim of white-collar crime, and this may weaken the perception that offenders are doing anything very wrong or harmful.
* Socialisation into self-seeking company business practices encouraging aggressive and ruthless competition with other companies may encourage this, and this may be adapted to bring some personal rewards to employees as well.

**Edgework**

* **Katz (1988) and Lyng (1990):**  Pleasure, thrill-seeking and risk-taking may be motivations for crime rather than simply material gain.

### *What is the relationship between social class and criminality in the UK?*

Maguire points out that the prison population tends to consist of young, male, poorly educated people who are likely to have experienced difficult or deprived childhoods and many of whom come from ethnic minority or mixed ethnic backgrounds. In 1992, 40 % of male prisoners had left school before the age of sixteen. People from lower social class backgrounds are significantly more likely to appear in victim and conviction statistics than people from wealthier backgrounds and it is a matter of argument as to whether they commit more crime, or they are more likely to be convicted if they do commit crimes.

In the past, much analysis of criminal behaviour worked on the false assumptions that crime statistics were an accurate representation of crime and that conviction rates gave a fair representation of criminal behaviour. Self report studies show that the majority of the population have broken the law and that middle class crimes can often be very serious indeed. For example, Murphy et al (1990) showed that football hooliganism is not limited to the working classes and Pearson (1987) found that drug offences occur in all social classes. White collar crime and corporate offences receive very little attention from the news media in comparison with youth crime such as knife crime. Levi (1993) pointed out that official statistics do not include tax fraud cases as these are rarely prosecuted by the police or followed up by the criminal justice system. Snider points out that capitalist states are unwilling to pass laws that regulate business or challenge the rights of the rich to make money. Karstedt (2004) estimates that middle class crimes such as car tax avoidance, tax fraud and damaging items once worn in order to return them to shops may cost the UK something in the region of £14 billion each year. Braithwaite, as early as 1979, concluded that working class children and adults commit the types of crime that are targeted by the police and do so at higher rates than middle class people.

There is also research evidence to show that some forms of crime are linked to poverty and deprivation. Gang crime is especially prevalent in areas of deprivation where there are fewer opportunities for work. Brodie et al (2000) and Hope and Shaw (1988) found disadvantaged communities to be vulnerable to youth crime. It is estimated that 40% of crime takes place in about 10% of local authority areas. Stratesky (2004) links this phenomenon to the concentration of power and social exclusion in post industrial communities. Willott and Griffin (1999) found that working class men in prison justified their criminal behaviour by claiming that they were supporting their families. Furthermore, because they were effectively excluded from society, they could not then be expected to follow its rules. It could be argued that these accounts are self- serving because the victims of crime are often the very weakest in the community. Living in a poor and deprived community is also to live at risk of being a victim of crimes such as car theft, vandalism, anti-social behaviour, burglary and violence. Hughes et al (2002) suggest that more than half of victims of crime have already previously been victimised. This acts as evidence that some types of crime are more likely to be associated with working class status than others, particularly crimes against property and the person.

**Questions**

1. Summarise briefly how crime relates to social class in terms of statisticis.
2. According to Merton what causes crime?
3. How do sub-cultural theorists explain crime?
4. How do interactionists explain working class crime?
5. Identify criticisms of the view that all crime is working class

**Ethnicity and crime**

**Patterns and trends**

* In 2008, the Ministry of Justice reported that, compared to white people:
* **Afro Caribbeans** were: more likely to be arrested for robbery; three times more likely to be cautioned by the police; three and a half times more likely to be arrested; if arrested, more likely to be charged and face court proceedings than to receive a caution; more likely, if found guilty, to receive a custodial (prison) sentence; five times more likely to be in prison.
* **Asians** were: twice as likely to be stopped and searched (mainly for drugs); more likely to be charged and face court proceedings than to receive a caution; more likely to receive a custodial sentence if found guilty; more likely to be arrested for fraud and forgery.
* In 2007, 26 per cent of male prisoners and 29 per cent of females were from black and minority ethnic groups (they make up about 9 per cent of the general population).
* These patterns, shown in contemporary official statistics, reflect a pattern that first emerged in the 1970s, suggesting what appear to be higher levels of criminality among some minority ethnic groups, particularly the black population.

**Explanations for links between ethnicity and crime**

* Higher crime rates might reflect that compared to white people, minority ethnic groups tend to have higher proportions of young people, those suffering social deprivation and those living in deprived urban communities, rather than greater criminality arising from ethnicity itself.

**Policing The Crisis (Hall et al, 1978)**

* Examined the moral panic over “mugging” in the early 1970s, using Marxist insights.
* Selective and stereotypical reporting represented young black men as potential muggers and given the role of folk devils. In fact, mugging (not an official category of crime in any case) was not increasing dramatically.
* Explained the moral panic in terms of a crisis of British capitalism: the state deflected attention on to a small group who could be scapegoated and on whom the state could be portrayed as cracking down firmly, using new repressive policing which would be useful in tackling future unrest.
* Young blacks were suitable for this role because of their visibility and powerlessness in the sense of lacking organisations or representatives to speak on their behalf.

**The political nature of black crime (Gilroy):**

* A Neo-Marxist who agrees that young blacks are targeted by the media and the police, but argues that black crime is different in that it is a conscious continuation, in a new context, of anti-colonial struggles in the West Indies.
* It is therefore political and potentially revolutionary, a political response to inequality and discrimination.
* Rastafarianism, for example, is not just a religion; it contains a set of revolutionary political ideas about overthrowing white authority (“Babylon”), and tends to bring its followers into confrontation with the police over, for example, marijuana use.

**Police racism and discrimination in the criminal justice system**

* The over-representation of Afro-Caribbeans in crime statistics is a social construct, created as a result of discrimination towards blacks and Asians by the police and other criminal justice agencies. There is considerable evidence of racist views held by police officers.
* **MacPherson Report** and ‘institutional racism’.
* **Reiner (2000): Canteen culture** amongst the police, including: suspicion, macho values and racism, which encourages racist stereotypes and a mistrust of those from non white backgrounds.
* **Bowling and Phillips (2002):** Higher levels of robbery among black people could be the product of labelling that arises from the use of regular stop and search procedures, which in turn leads to the self fulfilling prophecy.
* **Sharp and Budd (2005):** Black offenders were most likely to have contact with the criminal justice system in their lifetime and were more likely to have been arrested, been to court and convicted. This is despite their lower levels of offending compared to white people generally and white youths in particular.
* Black and Asian offenders are more likley to be charged rather than cautioned, remanded rather than bailed, given prison sentences rather than probation/communitity punishment compared to white people. This suggests that they are treated unfairly by the criminal justice system.

**New Left Realists**

* **Lea and Young (1984):** High levels of crime really do exist in inner city areas where there are often high numbers of members of ethnic minorities, and draw attention to the fact that those who live here are the main victims of crime as well.
* Their explanation of crime is based on the concepts of **relative deprivation,** **marginalisation** and **subculture**. Minorities suffer relative deprivation not only in areas shared with sections of the white working class (high unemployment and poor environment), but also racial discrimination and racially motivated attacks. Young unemployed blacks are marginalised in that they are unorganised and have few pressure groups to lobby on their behalf, so their frustrations are more likely to be expressed in illegal activity.
* Subcultural responses include the hustling subculture described by **Pryce** in his ethnographic study of St Paul’s in Bristol, with young blacks involved in petty street crime, drug dealing and prostitution, getting by from day to day.

**The British Asian experience**

* If police discrimination accounts for the high number of young blacks arrested, then the police must discriminate in favour of Asians, since fewer are arrested, than whites - which seems very unlikely.
* In the past, Asians did fit a police stereotype of a typical offender, the illegal immigrant.
* Explanations for the low levels of Asian criminality have been sought in the often strong and distinct culture, with family and religion providing sources of identity and ability to cope with disadvantage and discrimination. (Afro-Caribbeans, in contrast, are seen as having accepted British materialist values.)

**Evaluation**

* It has often been claimed that black crime is no higher than crime by the majority, that the official statistics reflect discriminatory practices by the police and courts. Sometimes questioning this claim can be presented as racist.
* On the other hand, however, and sometimes in the same accounts, it is claimed that high rates of some crimes, especially street crimes, are to be expected, part of the survival strategy of a reserve army of labour which finds itself unwanted, an understandable response to disadvantage and discrimination.
* Like other Marxists studying crime, **Gilroy** can be seen as reading meanings which may not be there into the behaviour of young blacks; they are unlikely to agree with his explanation of their behaviour.

**Black and Asian youths still victims of rough justice**

Rights commission warns senior police officers they must bring about change

By Robert Verkaik, Home Affairs Editor

*Monday, 15 March 2010*



**DANIEL DEME/EPA**

Police officers perform a 'stop and search' on two young men in London

Black teenagers accused of crime in Britain face discrimination in the criminal justice system, an investigation has found.

In one of the most comprehensive studies of youth justice in recent years, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) says that black and mixed-race youths are three times more likely to be denied bail than their white counterparts. The report says: "Differences in the treatment between black and mixed-race youths and white youths could not be accounted for by the severity of the crimes or defendants' criminal history, indicating that discrimination may be taking place."

The researchers also found that the disproportionate use of controversial "stop and search" powers by police still gives grounds for allegations of racism in the treatment of ethnic minorities within the youth justice system.

"Adversarial police tactics are damaging community relations, which can only be counterproductive to reducing youth crime," the report said.

Once facing court, black defendants were 3.3 times more likely and mixed race defendants 2.6 times more likely than white youths to be remanded in custody before their hearing date. This was found to have a significant impact on whether a young person subsequently received a custodial sentence imposed by the judge or magistrates, if the case proceeded.

But the report also found that when the case reached court, black youths were one and a half times more likely to have their cases dismissed or withdrawn, compared to white defendants.

Recommendations by the EHRC highlight that strong leadership by senior police officers is required if a "rule of law" approach to policing is to be widely adopted by all police officers.

In a separate report published today, the ECHR calls for a review of the use stop and search powers across the UK. The study concludes: "The evidence suggests that some forces are exercising their powers not on the basis of intelligence or reasonable suspicion but on stereotypical assumptions, which is not helping to make society safer."

Most constabularies in England and Wales were found to be continuing to use the powers "disproportionately" against ethnic minorities.

Commission chiefs have written to forces warning that they could potentially be sued over possible breaches of the Race Relations Act. The research showed that black people are at least six times as likely to be stopped as white people. For Asian people, being stopped is around twice as likely.

"Such an approach to policing erodes trust and makes co-operation harder, not just between police forces and the groups who are singled out, but also among the wider public, who are ill at ease with the idea of the state intruding unnecessarily into individuals' private lives and their freedom to go about their business," say the report's authors.

The report also warns that "the current police use of stop and search powers may be unlawful, disproportionate, discriminatory and damaging to relations within and between communities." It concludes: "We will consider taking enforcement action if we believe police forces are not sufficiently addressing this problem."

### *What is the relationship between ethnicity and criminality in the UK?*

According to the British Crime Survey, people from ethnic minorities are over-represented in crime statistics as the victims of crime. This is often more a question of their age, their social class and their locale than their ethnicity, but ethnicity alone can make people vulnerable to hate crime.

Pakistani people are more likely to be the victims of crime and to report this crime as being racially motivated than African Caribbeans or Indians. African Caribbeans are often unwilling to report racist crime to the police in the belief that this may not be taken seriously or acted upon. There is evidence to support their case, because more racial crimes are reported to the police than are recorded in crime statistics. There has been an increase in recorded instances of race crime, but this is probably because more people are more likely to report incidents and the police are morel likely to take accusations seriously.

People from some ethnic minorities are more likely to be represented in prison statistics than others. In June 2005, there were 18,750 people in prison establishments in England and Wales from Black minority ethnic groups, representing 25 per cent of the total prison population. This is an over representation of non-White prisoners. 15% of prisoners were Black or Black British, whereas 6% were from Asian heritage backgrounds.

This poses a problem for sociologists because there are two plausible conclusions that can be drawn. If the figures are an accurate reflection of criminality, then it is possible that people from some ethnic minorities are more criminal than others. Note, however, that some of this over-representation of ethnic minorities may be related to the age and social class of the populations. On the other hand, it may be that the criminal justice system itself is unequally applied and that ethnic minority criminals are treated more harshly.

There is a strong argument to suggest that the police themselves can be racist in their approach. In 2002, ICM research conducted a poll for the BBC and found that 33% of Black respondents and 30% of Asian respondents said they have been made to feel like a criminal because of the colour of their skin. The same research discovered that 18% of black and 15% of Asian respondents said they had experienced racism by the police or in the criminal justice system.

Home Office statistics for 2005 showed that members of black and minority ethnic (BME) groups were more likely to be arrested, or stopped and searched, than white people. The total number of 'stop and searches' conducted by police increased by 14% in 2005, with terrorism-related searches increasing by 9%. Black people were six times more likely to be stopped and searched by police than white people and there were nearly twice as many searches of Asian people than white people. This supports claims by sociologists such as Muncie and Heidensohn that the police operate a 'canteen culture' that is both racist and sexist.

**Questions**

1. Summarise some statistical patterns which show the relationship between ethnicity and crime.
2. Identify the main reasons for these patterns
3. What evidence is there that society and the criminal justice system are racist?
4. Some argue many ethnic minorities are in the working class and live in more deprived areas. What does this suggest about the causes of crime?
5. In your opinion are ethnic minorities more criminal or are they treated unfairly by the system?
6. Why is multi-culturalism a problem according to Functionalists
7. How can a functionalist explanation of ethnic minority crime be criticised?

The mass media and crime

**Introduction**

* Many people have little or no direct personal experience of crime. For them the media often represents their point of information about crime.
* Media outlets such as newspapers and television devote a large proportion of their content to the coverage of crime. Other forms of media such as film, novels and video games also have a similar focus.
* **Pearson:** The media has, for many years encouraged a ‘fear and fascination’ with crime.

**News Values**

* News does not just happen, it is manufactured. People make decisions on what to report, how to report it and also on what not to report.
* There exists a set of **news values** which are criteria by which editors, reporters and journalists decide if a story is newsworthy i.e. worth reporting.
* Amongst these news values are things like how dramatic they are, how unusual, can they be personalised with an individual and do they involve risk and some form of excitement.
* Crime often meets many of these news values which could explain why it gets so much media coverage.
* Also certain types of crime are more likely to get reported; violence outside a football ground has greater news value than a company which breaks health and safety laws.

**The distortion and exaggeration of crime**

* **Greer (2005)**: All media tend to exaggerate the extent of violent crime.
* Most crime is fairly routine, trivial and non-dramatic. However, TV programmes like Crimewatchoften pick up on the more serious and violent offences with reconstructions giving quite frightening, dramatized insights into the crimes committed.
* This focus on the exceptional and the dramatic is a routine feature of crime dramas on TV or film, as well as of news reports, and gives a false and misleading impression of the real extent of such crimes.
* **Williams and Dickinson** found 65% of crime stories in ten national newspapers were about violence. In the same year (1989) the British Crime Survey reported only 6% of crimes involved violence.

**Fear of crime**

* Media representations of crime tend to create distorted perceptions of crime among the majority of the public, exaggerate the threat of crime, and unnecessarily increase the public’s fear of crime.
* The work on moral panics (see below) has shown us that the public can often over-react to what is often sensational media coverage of events.
* Studies have shown that those who watch television for longer report higher levels of fear of crime than less frequent users.
* Surveys conducted over a period when recorded crime had fallen showed between 25% and 38% of respondents felt it had ‘risen a lot’.
Fear of crime is a very important issue because it seems to influence many aspects of people’s lives. For example many refuse to walk the streets after dark for fear of becoming a victim of crime yet more people on the streets at this time is likely to reduce the chance of crimes being committed.

**Media as a cause of crime**

* **Bandura**’s laboratory experiments, sought to establish a link between viewing violent images and violent behaviour.
* Others have argued that exposure to violence in the media can cause people to become ‘desensitised’ so that they lose the self control which stops them from acting in such a way.
* More recently music and videos featuring rap artists have been accused of glamorising crime and presenting it as not only acceptable but desirable as a lifestyle. This has been linked to the rise of a ‘gun culture’.
* **Lea and Young** claim that the media bombards people with a consumer orientated lifestyle where success and social acceptability are measured by the material possessions one can accumulate. This can produce a feeling of relative deprivation where many groups cannot achieve the lifestyle portrayed and hence feel socially excluded.
* This can be the trigger which encourages some to turn to crime to gain material success and hence status in society.
* However because this link is indirect it cannot be full tested.
* **Deviancy amplification** or **copycat crime**: Media attention on a particular crime leads to people copying it and thus increasing the amount of it being committed. E.g. Football hooliganism; happy slapping.

**Folk devils and Moral Panics**

* **Cohen (1972**) and others (especially **Jock Young (****1971****)**) showed how agents of social control, particularly the police, 'amplified' deviance. They also demonstrated the media's role in this process.
* Such studies were used to demonstrate how the media helped to avoid wider conflict in society by focusing our attention on the supposedly deviant behaviour of outsider groups, including youth gangs, welfare scroungers, trade union militants and so on.
* Hall argued that the way in which the crime of mugging is reported had a number of important effects for the ruling class: It leads to the **scapegoating** of black people, or immigrants in general could be blamed for society’s problems instead of the inequalities of the capitalist system; it distracted attention away from the periodic **crises of capitalism** (as a Marxist Hall argues that capitalism is an unstable system which periodically goes through severe economic and political crises); Hall suggests that media professionals have a shared culture, including elements of racism, and taken for granted assumption that the police are right, capitalism is a good thing and society was ‘breaking down’. This has the effect of **legitimating** (making seem right or fair) the position of the ruling class in capitalist society.

**Criticisms**

* Ownership & Control; it is hard to prove that owners of the mass media are acting in the interests of ruling class.
* Media professionals do not all have a shared world view
* Audience are arguably media literate and able to understand the context and process of these moral panics.

**Theoretical explanations of the mass media and crime**

**Marxists**

* The reporting of crime reflects the ideology of the ruling class, meaning:
1. The crimes of the ruling class or those at the higher end of society are under-reported. The media’s emphasis on sexual and violent crime means less importance is attached to some very large and serious **white- collar crimes** and **corporate** crimes, which rarely get reported.
2. Crimes of the working class are over-reported.
3. The reporting of crime is used as a way of maintaining control over powerless groups.

**Criticisms:**

* Marxists ignore the way in which it is poor people who as the victims of much crime committed by poor people.
* Criminal activity of those in the ruling class is reported.
* A range of media exists and it reports what ever crimes make it to court.
* If there is a bias in the media it is more the fault of the legal system than the media.

**Feminist**

* Crime reporting reinforces the stereotyping and oppression of women.
* Women are portrayed as victims
* Under reporting of violence against women, especially domestic violence.
* They are highly critical of reporting of sex crimes against women as a way to provide entertainment.

**Pluralist**

* In reporting crime the media helps to keep social solidarity.
* Crimes reported tend to reflect the things people are most concerned about and most want to see reported, thus they create demand which is met by the media.
* Different forms of media report different crimes in different ways, they are not all dominated by a single ideology or small group of owners pushing the same agenda.

**Post Modernist**

* **Baudriallard.** Media creates reality – people have no understanding of crime only the representations of crime they experience through the mass media.

**Media representations of social groups & crime**

**The Young**

* **Pearson 1983** The media look back to a golden age of well behaved youth and contrast that with the behaviour of contemporary young people. In fact youth crime statistics have been largely stable for a long time.
* Hoodies, chavs, gangs, binge drinking, and all the rest of the negative images of the young as deviant groups either waiting to or actually causing trouble.

**Social Class**

* Moral Panics about 'scroungers', chavs etc
* **Glasgow Media Group** argue that media discourse assumes the working class, especially males, are a source of actual or potential ‘trouble’ and are always capable of criminal behaviour.
* White collar and corporate crime not covered.

**Ethnicity**

* **Hall et al. (1978),** **Alvarado et al. (1987), van Dijk (1991)** and **Cottle (2000):** Black and Asian minority ethnic groups are often represented in the media in the context of violence and criminality, as scapegoats on which to blame a range of social problems, and are over-represented in a limited range of degrading, negative and unsympathetic stereotypes.

**Gender**

* Women as victims.
* Male crimes, especially of violence presented as part of ‘natural’ male hegemonic masculine identity.
* Crime presents a role model of masculinity which may influence young men. All this can be linked to the audience effects debate.

**Sexuality**

* **Crichter (2003):** There had been a moral panic about aids with the media claiming it was a ‘natural’ consequence of, mainly male, gay sexual behaviour, which they portrayed as deviant.
* Part of the discourse of much of mass media mixes gay identities with child abusers. This is entirely unjustified as sexual identity is no great predictor of the likelihood of an individual to sexually abuse children.

**Questions**

1. What are ‘news values’
2. Why do news values affect our perceptions of crime?
3. Why would the media exaggerate crime?
4. What evidence is there to support the idea that the media causes crime?
5. How might the media cause a deviancy amplification spiral?
6. How does the media encourage copycat crime?
7. What do you think post modernists mean by ‘infotainment’?

Crime control, prevention and punishment.

The role of the criminal justice system.

**What you need to know:**

* The role of the criminal justice system
* The relationship between the sociological study of crime and deviance and social policy.
* Examples of crime prevention policies from the Left and Right Realist perspectives

**The criminal justice system**

* The criminal justice system consists of agencies like the police, Crown Prosecution Service, courts, prisons and the probation service.
* These are overseen by the government departments of the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice.
* The Youth Justice Board oversees youth justice, and advises the Ministry of Justice on youth offending.
* These agencies are the main means of identifying, controlling and punishing known offenders.

**Does imprisonment prevent crime?**

* The prison system is meant to be the ultimate deterrent, both controlling crime and punishing offenders, but it doesn’t actually seem to work very well as a crime- prevention measure.
* England and Wales now have the highest imprisonment rate in the European Union.
* There is no convincing evidence that putting more people in prison significantly reduces crime.
* About 65 per cent of former prisoners released in 2004 were reconvicted within two years of being released, and for young men (18—20) it was 75 per cent.
* Imprisonment isn’t stopping people from reoffending, nor are high levels of imprisonment making much impact on reducing crime.

**Realist theories and social policies for crime prevention**

* Realist theories primarily concern themselves with explaining the crimes that matter to people and impact on their daily lives.
* These theories also concern themselves with practical crime prevention through social policy measures:
* **Left Realism** tends to emphasise the social causes of crime, which might be characterised as tough on the causes of crime.
* **Right Realism** lays more stress on situational crime prevention and being tough on the criminals.

**Left Realism and crime prevention**

* Recognise that both the offenders and the victims of the crimes that worry people most are found in those with the highest levels of marginality and social exclusion.
* They emphasise the need to tackle the material and cultural deprivation that are the risk factors for crime, particularly among young people.
* These factors include: poverty, unemployment, poor housing and education, poor parental supervision, and broken families and family conflict

**Left realist policies**

* Building strong communities to work out local solutions to local problems, and create community cohesion;
* Multi-agency working, involving everyone in the fight against crime, not just the criminal justice agencies;
* Creation of Safer Neighbourhood or Police and Community Together (PACT) groups, where local people can identify the issues that worry them, and get the police and other agencies to deal with them;
* More democratic and community control of policing to win public confidence to tackle the causes of crime, and encourage victims to report crime;
* More time spent by the police in investigating crime;
* Tackling social deprivation and the other risk factors for crime by improving community facilities to divert potential offenders from choosing crime — for example, youth leisure activities — and reducing unemployment and improving housing;
* Intensive parenting support that gets parents and young offenders together to work out solutions, and early intervention through strategies like Sure Start to help get children in the poorest communities.

**Criticism of left realist prevention approaches**

* They are ‘soft’ on crime, as they focus too much on the social causes of crime, downplaying the role of the offender in choosing to commit crime. The offender almost becomes a victim him- or herself.
* The explanations are inadequate, as the majority of those in deprived communities do not turn to crime. Social deprivation and other risk factors do not apply equally to all those in similar circumstances.
* They deflect attention away from more practical crime-prevention measures, like the tighter social control and situational crime prevention measures advocated by Right Realists.

**Right Realism and crime prevention**

* Focuses on individuals rather than on the wider social issues.
* Argue that individuals choose crime and must be dissuaded from committing crime, and, if they can’t, must be punished for it.

**Right realist policies**

1. **Situational crime prevention (SCP)**
* Derives from **opportunity theories** of crime, like **routine activity theory** and **rational choice theory:**
* **Routine activity theory:** Suggests that a crime occurs as part of everyday routines, when there are three conditions present: 1. there is a suitable target for the potential offender, which could be a person, a place or an object; 2. there is no ‘capable guardian’, like a neighbour, police, or CCTV surveillance to protect the target; 3. there is a potential offender present, who thinks the first two conditions are met (suitable target and no guardian), and then chooses whether or not to commit the crime.
* **Rational choice theory:** Sees offenders as acting rationally, weighing up the benefits and risks when they see an opportunity for crime before choosing whether or not to commit an offence.
* **SCP** aims to make potential targets of crime more difficult and risky for potential offenders by ‘designing out crime’ in particular locations by ‘target-hardening’ measures, like post-coding goods, use of anti-climb paint, CCTV, locks, premises and car alarms.
* This both reduces the opportunities for crime in particular locations and poses greater risks for offenders and encourages them not to commit an offence.
* SCP is therefore concerned with preventing crime in particular locations rather than with catching offenders.

**2.** **Increased social control**

* Linked to **Hirschi’s (1969)** **control theory:** strong social bonds integrating people into communities encourage individuals to choose conformity over deviance and crime.
* The focus is on tighter control and socialisation, by strengthening social institutions like the traditional family, religion and community, and constraining and isolating deviant individuals through community pressure.
* Policies flowing from this might include the following:
* Making parents take more responsibility for the supervision of their children, and socialising them more effectively into conformist behaviour. Those who don’t may be issued with Parenting Orders..
* Schemes like Neighbourhood Watch, which involve informal surveillance and ‘good neighbourliness’, helping to build community controls over crime.
* Cracking down on anti-social behaviour like graffiti, hoax calls, verbal abuse, noisy neighbours, drug and alcohol abuse in public places, and intimidating behaviour by groups of youths through ‘naming and shaming’ measures like Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs)
* Supervision of offenders, for example, electronic tagging to restrict and monitor their movements.
* Adopting zero tolerance policing, which involves taking steps against all crimes, even low-level offences like graffiti and vandalism, to prevent community breakdown.
* More policing and more arrests, particularly in high crime areas, to deter potential criminals by increasing their risks of being caught.
* Fast-track punishment of offenders, with more imprisonment and harsher sentences.

**Criticism of policies derived from Right Realism**

* They don’t address the wider social causes of crime that the Left Realists do.
* They don’t allow that some people may be targeted unfairly by police — for example, through stereotyping, labelling and racism, generating resentment and making problems worse.
* They assume that offenders act rationally in choosing crime and derive some benefits from it, but some crimes are impulsive or irrational and do not have any obvious gain, like vandalism or violence.
* SCP tends to be geographically limited and only prevents crime in particular locations
* SCP removes the focus from other forms of crime prevention, such as looking at wider economic and social policies which cause crime;
* SCP doesn’t pay enough attention to catching criminals or punishments to deter offenders; it doesn’t prevent crime overall, but simply **displaces**crime to softer targets in other areas.

**Theories**

**Functionalists** say they impose sanctions to reinforce social norms

**Marxists** say agents of social oppression. The police focus on the crimes of the powerless rather than crimes of the powerful.

**Feminists** say police culture is masculinist and aggressive

**Interactionalists** say police socially construct crime

**Left Realism** say poverty and deprivation create crime.

**Right realism** says we need more police to enforce good behaviour

**Concepts**

**Chivalry thesis** – police treat women better than men

**Canteen culture –** police have masculinist values

**Social construction –** create a notion of crime through interpretation at scene**Formal social control** - control exercised by the state over the lives of individuals.

**Official statistics** – police create official statistics

**Studies**

**Heidensohn** - there is a strong canteen culture reinforcing racism and sexism in society.

**McPherson Report** – institutionally racist

**Ignatieff** (1978) highlights how the development of the police and prison coincided with the development of industrial capitalism and was linked to the need to maintain social order

**Bennett (1994)** People support police use of CCTV

**Zedner** (1997) – more emphasis on victims of crime

**Reiner**, noted appalling relationships between the police and ethnic communities and low recruitment rates among ethnic groups.

**Smith and Gray** (1983) Police have desire for excitement and action

**Hall** - The police respond to media stereotypes of criminality and they then become true to the extent of being reflected in criminal statistics.

**Adler** (1987) Rape victims often feel deeply damaged and face additional and unique problems with the criminal justice system.

**Box** (1987) Social and wealth inequality is related to increases in criminality and the police can do little about it.

**Phipps** (1983) suggests that the actors in most crimes are often pathetic and inadequate victim types themselves.

**Facts**

* Agents of crime control such as the police tend to target males, working class, ethnic minorities
* New legislation and policies were introduced to increase police powers and allow the courts to give tougher sentences to offenders with the New Right and continued under Tony Blair

**Questions**

1. What organisations are involved in the Criminal Justice System
2. Research recent re-offending rates and write your opinion about whether prison prevents crime?
3. Explain why the concept of individual choice is important to Right realists.
4. How would right realists prevent further crime?
5. What causes of crime do Left realists consider?
6. What policies to prevent crime would left realists recommend?
7. Can police influence social construction of crime?
8. Are police racists?
9. What is public perception of the police?
10. Describe some research into how the actions of the police affect crime.

# Crime and Official Statistics

**There are actually 3 ways in which Crime is measured**

* official statistics – Police recorded crime – PRC All the crimes reported to the police which are recorded as a crime and processed.
* Victim surveys – Biggest of these is conducted by the Home Office and started in 1983 as the British Crime Survey (BCS) since 2010 this is now called the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). Face to face interviews are conducted with the heads of 50,000 homes selected at random and participants are asked about crimes they have been a victim of and about their fear of crime.
* Self-report studies. Small scale studies conducted by sociologists and other interested organisations which are usually anonymous questionnaires asking people what minor crimes they may have committed.

**OFFICIAL STATISTICS or Police Recorded Crime (PRC)**

This is police recorded crime, it is based on police records – on the records kept by the police of crimes which they have recorded. Each year statistics produced from police records provide an official account of the volume of crime and trends in crime. In addition, statistics complied from court records and police cautioning give a picture of those responsible for crime.

 

**The CSEW, a victimisation study**

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) is intended to find out about the prevalence of crimes that have not been reported, therefore presenting a different picture from official crime statistics which depend on police recording reported crimes. Crimes may not be reported where offences are trivial, the victim is not insured so cannot claim compensation, the offender is known and the victim fears repercussions, the victim has offences to hide or has little faith in the police. Thus a comparison with official crime statistics in 2002- 3 found that according to the BCS (British Crime Survey / previous CSEW) there were twice as many bicycle thefts and woundings and three times more thefts from the person and cases of vandalism, whereas car theft figures were similar.

The CSEW also provides information on fear of crime and precautions people take against it, which could be useful to policy makers. It also shows what sort of people are most at risk of crime.

**SELF REPORTING STUDIES - How criminal are you?**

Self-report studies of crime ask people whether they have committed a series of offences. They are usually based on a self- completed questionnaire or an interview. Respondents are presented with a list of offences and asked which they have committed over a period of time usually 12 months.

**Some Findings**

Many theories of crime are based on **official statistics** provided by government organisations such as the police and the courts. This information is often taken as an accurate measure of the total amount of crime. The data allows comparisons to be made between crimes, and with previous years. These statistics tend to show two main **trends**:

1. Some social groups appear to be more involved in crime than others. They are: The working class.

 The young.

 Males.

 Some ethnic minorities.

These groups seem to be more likely to commit crime than the middle class, the elderly, females and whites. Sociologists such as **Merton** and **Miller** have taken these statistics at face value and gone on to explain why they appear to commit a disproportionate amount of crime.

1. Crime rates in Britain remained low until the mid 1950s but have increased rapidly since then, although there was some decline in the mid 1990s. In recent years the vast majority of offences have been property offences. Often the release of crime figures receives widespread publicity and leads to a concern the country is experiencing a “crime wave”.

**Maguire** points out the official crime figures do not include all crimes. Many crimes are dealt with by other organisations such as the British Transport Police. These include tax evasion and fraud.

**Unrecorded crime** – **the “dark figure”**

Not all crimes that take place are recorded by the police. For a crime to be recorded three things must happen.

* Somebody must be aware that a crime has taken place.
* That crime must be reported.
* The police or other agency must accept that a law has been broken.

Some crimes, such as tax evasion, do not have an obvious victim, and it is these that are most likely to be unreported. However attempts have been made to estimate the amount of crime which victims are aware of but which is not reported to the police or not recorded as a crime by them.

**Victimisation Studies**.

Some of the Key findings are:

* Less than half of all crimes are reported and the reporting rate varies with different types of crime – 94% of vehicle thefts, 33.1% of acts of vandalism, 25.7 % common assaults.
* Most common reason for not reporting is “too trivial” or the police would not be interested. A tiny minority were frightened of reprisals.
* About 40% were not recoded as crimes by the police.
* Trends in the overall crime rate are broadly in line with official police figures.

**Croall** (1998) however claims that the figures are not entirely reliable because:

* 1. Crimes can only be reported if the victims are aware of them.
	2. Results are limited by respondent’s memory and their definition of events.
	3. The survey is restricted to households so does not cover crimes committed against business or organisations.
	4. The sample does not include people under 16.

Although the findings of the British Crime Survey should be treated with caution they are probably more reliable than the official statistics because they include many crimes that are not reported.

**The Characteristics of Offenders – self-report studies**.

Self-report studies attempt to discover the characteristics of criminals. They use questionnaires or interviews and ask individuals to admit to the number and types of crime they have committed. The data can then be compared to official conviction rates to discover which type of offender is most likely to be convicted.

* **Steve Box** (1981) reviewed 40 self-report studies and discovered that working class youths were no more likely to commit crime than middle class youths.
* **Graham and Bowling** (1995) found that there was no relationship between class and whether young people were prepared to admit to committing crime but lower classes were morel likely to admit to committing more serious crimes.

**Self-report studies - evaluation**.

* 1. Individuals may wish to conceal their criminal acts. However it is estimated that 80% of those who reply do tell the truth.
	2. It is likely that self-report studies identify more offenders that do the criminal statistics.

**Bias in official statistics**

Self-report studies indicate that there may be police bias against working class delinquents. Support for this view is provided by William Chambliss’s study of two American delinquent gangs:

* The working class “roughnecks” were viewed with suspicion and each of them was arrested at least once.
* The middle class “saints” were never arrested, although they carried out more serious delinquent acts than the “roughnecks”.

Chambliss claims that the police do not take middle class delinquency seriously – such activities are often dismissed as “harmless pranks”.

**Questions**

1. Describe the three main ways that crime statistics are collected.
2. What is the ‘dark figure of crime’
3. Why would someone report the theft of a car but not report the theft of a bicycle?
4. Suggest some reasons why victims may not report crimes committed against them.
5. Suggest some reasons why police officers may not record crimes reported to them.
6. What kinds of victims are most likely to be invisible?
7. What are the characteristics of most offenders?
8. Why might middle class offenders not appear in statistics as much?

Crime statistics are biased and unreliable, Discuss 40 marks

Introduction - There are three main ways that crime is measured that produce statistics. These statistics have a bearing on how we perceive the problem of crime and victimisation as they are often reported in the media.

* AO1/2 PRC collected by Police, official stats, suggest crime is mostly working-class, male and disproportionately ethnic minorities and young!
* AO2 Functionalist argue true picture but Interactionists say they are a social construction. Marxists say they benefit the powerful and target certain groups and ignore white collar crime etc , AO3 suggests they are both biased and unreliable
* AO1/2 CSEW victim surveys, Home Office 50,000 homes.collect stats on who has been a victim over past year
* AO3 This suggests 50% ‘dark figure of unreported/unrecorded crime, however many victims are not included, not very valid source, local victim surveys are better e.g Islington Victim survey. Therefore CSEW may still be unreliable.
* AO1/2 Many reasons why crimes are underreported – enbarassment, inconvenience, incriminating, fear of reprisal, feelings that police will not act or it is too trivial. AO2 This supports a left –realist view that crime is often the result of marginalisation, particularly by the police. However left-realists also argue that statistics can be used to acknowledge that there is a problem with working-class crime.
* AO3However reporting of some crimes has increased e.g domestic violence, child abuse, fraud.
* AO1/2 many reasons why crime is underrecorded by the police. Too trivial, cannot be solved, pressure to meet targets, plea bargaining (coughing) and discarding cases (cuffing), lack of evidence.
* AO2/3 This supports the interactionist view that crime statistics are socially constructed by the many processes and people involved in their production. However police practices are under closer scrutiny since complaints such as Stephen Lawrence case, just reopened.
* AO1/2 Another way is self report studies – e.g Farrington et al. 1973
* AO3 problems with validity as may not tell the truth, only trivial crimes reported, too focussed on particular groups e.g students. Still suggests that statistics are unreliable.
* AO1/2 Many victims of crime are under-represented in crime statistics e.g females, BME.
* AO2/3 Feminists argue that female victims have been particularly ignored e.g domestic violence and rape are often not reported and even not recorded by police. This suggests they are unreliable source for knowing the true level of victimisation, however more female and BME officers means things are improving and feminists have made changes to policy e.g domestic violence.
* Functionalists and Right and Left realists are very uncritical of statistics suggesting they are a true picture. However this essay suggests that there are many reasons why they do not show an accurate picture. The ‘dark figure’ of crime suggests that there are more crimes taking place than in the statistics which may explain why people continue to fear victimisation despite crime figures going down every year.

Victimology

Who are the Victims? What statistics patterns exist?

* Houses most likely to be burgled are in poorer areas
* The poor and unemployed twice as likely to be victims of violent crime
* Males more likely to report violent crime at young age whereas women at any age
* Males more likely to victim by strangers or acquaintances whereas women from partners
* Women 7 times more likely to report sexual assault
* 70% murder victims male 30% murder victims female
* Mixed race most at risk of victimization
* Asians most likely to be victims by strangers however other ethnic groups more likely to be victimized by same race/people they know
* 8.4% of people aged 16-24 have been victims of violent crime but only 0.2 for over 75
* Young people more likely to experience stealth or snatch theft.

***Hidden victims and offences***

* The British Crime Survey has its shortcomings. It fails to record the following:
* Crimes the public fail to declare because they are too embarrassing or personal or because they wish to protect the offender;
* Hence sexual abuse and domestic violence may be under-represented.
* Offences against the young, as only adults are questioned.
* Offences some of the public do not view as crimes, such as marital rape.
* Crimes which people are unaware they have been victimised by, such as fraud, corporate and state crime and environmental crime.
* ‘Victimless crimes’ such as under-age offences and drug taking
* Thus street crime is most likely to be reported, providing a skewed picture of the whole crime scene.
* It is also important to bear in mind that the BCS is based on a sample from which national trends are calculated. Local surveys, such as the famous ones conducted in Islington and Merseyside, have revealed different patterns from the national average.
* Inner city areas have untypical conditions with, for example, much higher figures of assaults against women.

***Feminist Views***

* Female victims are under represented in official statistics
* Domestic violence is the result of unequal power relationship between men and women.
* Radical feminists actually see domestic violence as a form of patriarchal power and control
* Fear of crime – constrains women from taking a more active role in society.
* Stanko (2000) suggests women have to restrict their behaviour by not appearing too provocative in behaviour / appearance
* “Gendered crime” – Heidensohn (2002) crimes against women often go unreported
* Feminists have campaigned for a wider definition of what behaviour is criminal. E.g. Campaigning for legislation against sexual harassment in the work place etc.
* 79 % of rapes are committed by men who know the victim, and over half of rapes are repeat rapes by the same offender!
* Feminists very concerned about rape and domestic violence, as they differ from many other crimes since they continue over long periods of time, and are most crimes that women experience.
* Male violence against women also takes place not only in the home but in the work place / public places
* <http://www.newsoftheworld.co.uk/news/577288/Marlon-Kings-second-victim-Lauren-Jones-Emily-Carr.html>

**Victims of race crimes**

* Victims of racist crime are under represented
* The Macpherson Report (1999) following the murder of Stephen Lawrence found ethnic minorities over-policed and under-protected and the same 22 has been said of Britain’s young people.
* In such a situation victims may be reluctant to report offences against them to the police, not only depriving themselves of justice but reducing the flow of information which can help the criminal justice system monitor and combat crime.

**Marxist and Left Realist Views**

* Victims of corporate crime or white collar crime are under represented in the official statistics
* People of minority ethnic groups are most likely at risk from personal crimes such as street robbery, partly because they are more likely to live in inner –city areas, be poor single parents.
* Some people are particularly prone to multiple victimisation.
* Being a victim of crime is a significant event in peoples lives
* Carried out victimisation studies – have found wide spread fear of crime, especially women who alter their behaviour to avoid becoming a victim of crime.
* Left realism sees real value in victim studies and one well know study is...
* Islington crime survey: 36% of local residents saw crime as a major problem,56% anxious about being burgled , 46% had been victims of street robbery, 33% avoided going out in dark for fear of sexual harassment

**Hierarchy of Victims Carabine et al (2009)**

* The term ‘secondary victimization’ is used to describe the negative attitudes someone such as a rape victim might receive at the hands of police or a judge, after suffering the ‘primary victimization’ of the offence itself.
* They focus not only on street offences but on crimes by the powerful, which may remain hidden for a long time until, for example, dishonestly managed companies collapse depriving ordinary people of their life savings. ‘Waves of harm’ are also a focus as crimes affect not only the victim but his or her family and acquaintances and sometimes strike fear even into people in similar circumstances who do not even know the victim.

**Victim Blaming**

* Criminologist Nils Christie (1986) ironically described the ‘ideal victim’, that is the stereotype of the type of victim thought to be deserving of attention by conservatives. This person was entirely blameless of the incident and going about their business, did not know the offender, was weaker than the offender, in no way controversial and was the victim of a one-off incident perpetrated by an individual rather than a corporation.

The campaign to give victims a voice have brought about the following reforms

* Impact statements in court
* Victim offender meetings

**Board theories of victimsation**

* Positivist victimology: people become victims because of where they live. Crime concentrates in some areas because criminal tend to be active in areas they know. Also more likely to commit crime in places no alarms / video cameras etc
* Less money / lower class areas.
* More crime for these people is inevitable?

**Radical victimology (has roots in Marxism)**

* Agrees people who live in poorer areas more likely to be victims but because the unequal capitalist society, poor people do not have the same choices as the higher class (Bourgeise). So poor people who live in deprived areas are victims of crime because they can’t afford to move to more expensive, crime free areas.

**Questions**

1. What does the Crime Survey for England and Wales tell us about victims in the UK?
2. How can we know the true extent of people who are victims of crime?
3. Which people are most likely to be invisible victims?
4. Why do you think victims of white collar crime are often not identified?
5. See if you can research the full cost of corporate crimes such as tax evasion to the UK.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **anomic paradigm**  | Name given to Robert Merton's model whereby he adapts Durkheim's concept of Anomie to explain crime in terms of not having the means to achieve society's goals.  |
| **anomie**  | When individuals no longer feel regulated by or integrated into a society where norms and values guiding conduct have broken down.  |
| **Becker, Howard (1928-)**  | American sociologist particularly associated with developing labelling theory. He became a leading figure in the Symbolic Interactionist movement of the 1950s and 1960s particularly through his contributions to the topics of Deviance and Education, and his support for participant observation as a research method.  |
| **British Crime Survey**  | Victim study of 11,000 citizens undertaken now annually by the Home Office as another indication of amounts and trends in crime to compare with the official crime statistics.  |
| **broken window thesis**  | Theory of James Q. Wilson, similar to A.H. Bottoms' concept of 'tipping' whereby informal social controls of law-abiding citizens keep areas respectable and largely crime-free. But if incivilities become common then areas soon decay into anti-social behaviour and more serious crimes.  |
| **Carceral****Chivalry Thesis**  | The process of locking people up, as with prison, borstal, detention centres and secure psychiatric hospitals. The idea that police and courts will treat women leniently and be less likely to impose punishment upon them. |
| **concentric zones**  | The circles identified by Shaw and McKay of the Chicago School whereby crime levels decreased the further areas of Chicago were away from the 'zone of transition'.  |
| **control theory**  | Theory of crime that is not interested in why people break the rules of society, but asks what makes people conform in the first place.  |
| **corporate crime**  | Criminal actions carried out by companies that ignore laws such as those relating to health and safety or which commit other illegal acts. . Marxists argue how both the size and significance of this is played down. Hazel Croall argues how corporate crime is 'softened' through the use of terms like 'cons', 'rip-offs' and 'fiddles'.  |
| **criminalisation**  | The way in which certain acts can become illegal as a result of changes in the law. |
| **cultural deprivation,**  | Some people do not have access to cultural capital and do not gain the social knowledge relevant for success. |
| **dark figure of crime**  | This is also known as the hidden figure of crime and refers to unreported and unrecorded crime about which little is known. |
| **fear of crime**  | People are frightened of being the victim of a crime, sometimes more than is necessary given their realistic chances of being a victim. |
| **global crime** | Crime that takes place across a number of countries, for instance drug smuggling. |
| **material deprivation**  | Lack of the physical things that you need for a good standard of living. |
| **moral panics**  | A public over-reaction to a recent event caused by exaggerated media reporting. |
| **sanctions** | Systems of punishments and rewards. |
| **self fulfilling prophecy**  | Related to education, a prediction is made and then, because it has been made, it comes or is made to come true. |
| **victim surveys** | People are asked if they have had a crime committed against them .  |
| **victimisation** | The extent to which people are the victims of criminal actions. |
| **white-collar crime** | Crime is committed by middle class professional people. The term was coined by Sutherland |
| **cuffing**  | Police slang for dishonest recording of crime to reduce the official rate, also known as 'Spanish practices'.  |
| **fascination of crime**  | The attraction and fascination of crime as reflected by the popularity of stories and representations of crime and detectives in the mass media.  |
| **focal concerns**  | A distinctive set of subcultural values which Walter B. Miller believes the lower working class are socialised into from an early age: Toughness; Physical; Smartness; Excitement; Fate; and Autonomy.  |
| **folk devils**  | A term associated with Stan Cohen to refer to deviant groups at the centre of 'moral panics'. Often their negativity is exaggerated by the media, and they are viewed generally as a threat to social order.  |
| **fully social theory of deviance**  | Approach of Radical Criminologists who attempted to develop a theory of criminology that explained crime both in terms of structure and agency.  |
| **hegemonic masculinity**  | Term Bob Connell gives to emphasize the traditional patriarchal power that men generally enjoy over women. Even if they do not exercise patriarchy in an aggressive way themselves, all men, he argues, derive benefit from cultural assumptions of male domination.  |
| **illegitimate opportunity structure**  | Term associated with Cloward and Ohlin to describe the existence of an alternative deviant opportunity structure that exists in areas where legitimate means (good education, employment prospects and social mobility) are not readily available.  |
| **Islington Crime Survey**  | Important victim study undertaken in 1986 and 1995 on a demographically representative sample of 1,600 people living in Islington, London. Identified new information on how people feared crime.  |
| **labelling theory**  | Associated with Howard Becker. Theory of deviance that argues that acts in themselves are not deviant, but rather the social reaction which subsequently labels such acts as 'deviant'. Hence also known as 'social reaction theory'.  |
| **laddette**  | Females are adopting macho characteristics in terms of their behaviour towards sex, drinking and girl gangs.  |
| **left idealism**  | Term, given in hindsight, by Jock Young to the Radical Criminology work he helped to author. The overtly political nature of this work he subsequently regarded as naive.  |
| **left realism**  | Criminal perspective associated with Lea and Young that through the ' Square of Crime' attempted to provide an accurate and realistic explanation of crime that embrace offenders, victims, the State and informal controls. Sees offenders as young, male, working class and disproportionately black.  |
| **legal definition of crime**  | Behaviour that contravenes formal rules (laws) of a society.  |
| **Merton, Robert (1910-2003),**  | American sociologist who helped develop structural functionalism to a more sophisticated level, recognising functions could be manifest, latent and dysfunctional. Merton popularised phrases like 'self-fulfilling prophecy', and although associated with functionalism, he questioned the very notion of grand theory, advocating instead 'middle-range theories', which he viewed as more appropriate in guiding empirical inquiry.  |
| **nocturnal economy**  | The leisure industry of clubbing and pubbing that has grown significantly in the past decade or so. This provides the location for many offences with three-quarters of violent crime occurring between 9pm and 3am at weekends by young males.  |
| **official Crime Statistics**  | Collected by the police on behalf of the Home Office. Most sociologists see them as under representing the true level of crime through underreporting and under recording.  |
| **opportunity theory**  | Term associated with Clarke to describe how crime is opportunistic. Opportunity is linked to the attractiveness of targets and the accessibility of targets.  |
| **panopticon**  | Model prison invented by Jeremy Bentham of a circular design in which every prisoner could be observed by the warders located in a central viewing area.  |
| **primary deviance**  | Refers to acts of deviance, before and social reaction has occurred. It is a term associated with Edwin Lemert.  |
| **rational choice theory**  | Theory of crime that argues individuals will commit crimes if the perceived benefits outweigh the perceived costs.  |
| **roughnecks**  | Name William Chambliss gave to the working class gang he compared to the middle-class 'Saints'.  |
| **secondary deviance**  | Refers to the social reaction to deviance. This reaction defines the extent to which an act is socially constructed as deviant.  |
| **square of crime**  | Model of crime developed by Lea and Young to provide an accurate and realistic explanation of crime that embraces offenders, victims, the State and informal controls.  |
| **status frustration**  | When status is denied through legitimate means, it is often sought through deviant behaviour. It is associated with Albert Cohen.  |
| **strain theory**  | Another name for Robert Merton's ‘anomic paradigm’ which shows that crime stems from a strain between sharing the goals of society and not having the means of achieving them.  |
| **subterranean values**  | Deviant values which everyone holds but adults generally learn to suppress. It is associated with David Matza.  |
| **suffragettes**  | Term the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) gave themselves in their campaign for women's votes.  |
| **suffragists**  | Female campaigners for the vote who differed from the more middle-class Suffragettes in that they advocated the vote for all people over 21, including working-class males.  |