

Exam focus

Top tips for answering questions

- ✓ This unit is examined by a written paper lasting 2 hours and you will need to divide up your time carefully.
- ✓ The paper is marked out of 90 and you have to answer three questions in total. The first is worth a combined total of 33 marks, the second 24 marks and the third 33 marks.
- ✓ The exam board recommend that you spend 45 minutes on Question 1, 30 minutes on Question 2 and 45 minutes on Question 3. It is vital that you answer all questions fully.
- ✓ To help you plan your time you should write out the time your exam starts and the time at which you should be moving on to the second and third questions.

Crime and deviance

- ✓ Question 1 on crime and deviance will have an item linked to it. This should give you ideas about how to respond to one part of the question.
- ✓ Make the point clearly about the difference between crime and deviance when discussing the two.
- ✓ Remember to mention that both crime and deviance are **relative**. This means they vary between societies and change over time.
- ✓ If a study is about class differences in crime you might be able to apply it to other differences such as age, gender or ethnicity.

Methods in context

- ✓ Question 2 examines your ability to apply your knowledge of research methods to the study of crime and deviance.
- ✓ It is vital when discussing any method that you relate your point specifically to how it can be used to study this topic.
- ✓ Remember that there are some research methods which are specific to the study of crime and deviance: victim surveys and self-report studies.
- ✓ In your revision make a list of all of the research methods and then find an actual study which used a particular method so that you can quote it in your answer.

Theory and methods

- ✓ Question 3 is on theory and methods and takes the form of an essay. As it is worth more than one-third of the marks you must leave enough time to answer it fully.
- ✓ If the question asks you to 'assess' it expects you to be able to give plus and minus points, so don't make your answer one-sided.
- ✓ Remember sociological theories often have quite a lot in common with each other, so you could discuss this, e.g. Marxism and feminism are both conflict theories.
- ✓ If you are discussing a particular sociological perspective try to give examples of how it views society, e.g. how do functionalists view the family?

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Specimen question: Crime and deviance; Theory and methods

1 Read Item A and answer the parts a) and b) that follow.

Item A

Early sociologists were interested in what purpose or function crime served. However, soon the emphasis shifted towards trying to explain why some groups appeared to be much more criminally inclined than others. Social class background was a major focus for a long time and one area of research came to be known as sub-cultural theory.

Later other groups became the object of study, notably some ethnic minorities. Once again sub-cultural theory was one of several explanations for differences in levels of crime. As sociology itself began to change there was a willingness to look at gender differences in crime; something which had been largely ignored by earlier researchers.

- a) Examine the reasons for gender differences in levels of recorded crime. (Item A) (12 marks)
- b) Assess the usefulness of sub-cultural theories for an understanding of crime and deviance in contemporary society. (21 marks)

When discussing gender do not just talk about women, include men in your answer.

Note the word 'recorded' here. You could discuss if there is a significant level of unrecorded crime.

Assess should be a familiar command word by now. You need to weigh up both sides and make a judgment.

2 Read Item B and answer parts a) and b) that follow.

Item B

Opinions are divided on the best way to study crime and deviance. Positivists may prefer more quantitative data and often they base their studies very heavily on official crime statistics. Others seek to generate their own statistics by using such methods as self-report or victimisation studies.

However, some statistics can never tell us the full story of crime and deviance. There is a long history of observational studies in this area going back to at least the 1940s. One problem for those undertaking such research is the difficult decision to be made regarding whether to be covert or overt in their investigation.

- a) Identify and briefly explain
- i) one advantage of using covert participant observation to study levels of crime. (3 marks)
- ii) two disadvantages of using covert participant observation to study levels of crime. (6 marks)
- b) Using material from Item B and elsewhere, assess the strengths and limitations of using official statistics to study crime and deviance. (15 marks)

In your answer it would be a good idea to include a definition of this term.

These are also concepts worth defining in your answer.

Make sure you know and can explain this distinction before you start your answer.

There is 1 mark for the identification and up to 2 for the explanation so make sure you give a short but accurate explanation of your point.

Look closely at the Item and identify which points you could use in your answer.

Make sure you cover both and do not leave your answer totally one-sided.

- 3 'There is little point in attempting to make sociology a science as the task is impossible.'
- How far do different sociologists agree with this statement? (33 marks)

A good place to start planning your answer is to decide what the term science means.

Make sure you look at different views on this quote.

Exam focus

Exemplar response: Candidate A

1a) Some people think women commit less crime than men because of their nature. It is not very lady like to fight, rob and steal and so most women do not do these sorts of things.

This is a basic introduction. The candidate has briefly identified a gender based pattern of crime and has suggested an acceptable reason for it. It would be better if some sociological insight was provided here; for example, the idea of not being 'lady like' could be linked to social norms or to gender role socialisation to make it more sociological.

On the other hand men are brought up to be tough and to look after themselves. Boys will fight from an early age and so when they grow up they will think that this is normal behaviour. This is one reason why they are more likely to be changed with things like GBH.

It is a good idea in a question on gender to discuss both men and women. There is also a hint of the points mentioned previously about social norms and socialisation. However, there is no real explanation or development so the candidate has missed an opportunity to discuss things like gender differences in upbringing.

It is proved that men drink more than women and are more likely to take drugs. A lot of crime is either because people are drunk out on the streets at the weekend or because they need money for drugs and so get involved in mugging or robberies. This is why men do these things more than women.

There are a couple of valid points here but what is lacking is any form of sociological insight. This paragraph could have been written by someone who had not studied the subject. To score well the candidate would need to make some links to sociology. One way they could this would be to discuss norms of masculinity and femininity in our society and perhaps to link crime to relative deprivation.

There is also the influence of the peer group. Many boys and young men want to appear tough in front of their mates and so are more likely to get in trouble with the law. Males enjoy getting involved in edgework. Girls don't need to impress their peers in this way as they are more interested in something called bedroom culture.

This paragraph contains two highly relevant sociological concepts or three if you include peer group. This shows an awareness of some sociological literature. However, the candidate has failed to explain what either edgework or bedroom culture mean so has missed the chance to score well. It should also be said that the idea of a bedroom culture might now be quite dated and the answer could explore if the gender gap in crime is narrowing.

So we can see the reasons why men commit more crime than women and why they get caught more. Crime is more of a male thing and most women would never get involved in it.

This is a weak conclusion. The answer has only briefly looked at a couple of reasons for higher levels of crime and has said nothing about men being more likely to be caught/charged. This is a missed opportunity because the candidate has missed out on the significance of the idea of recorded crime and so has not explored the idea of differences in treatment by the agents of social control.

(5 out of 12 marks)

1b) A subculture is any group with its own norms and values. Often these groups will go against the norms and values of wider society and end up breaking the law. This is the theory of Cohen who said young males who fail at school suffer from status frustration. One of the things they do is form anti-school subcultures and end up breaking the rules. When they leave school this carries on and so they become law breakers. He said this is the key to understanding crime in our society.

It is a good idea to start with a definition. Also, the use of a study to illustrate the point works well. The concept of status frustration could be defined more clearly and also it would improve the discussion if the candidate explained how the subculture provides the status that its members are denied by wider society.

Cloward and Ohlin said there were different types of subcultures, criminal, conflict and retreatist. If there was a criminal gang the young men could join it and engage in crimes for profit like burglaries. If there wasn't this gang they would form a conflict subculture which would just get involved in useless crimes like fighting and vandalism. If they couldn't join this they would retreat into things like drug taking. But they don't say why some join one sort of subculture and some join others.

Whilst there is quite good knowledge here it is not fully applied to the question. It is not clear who these young men are, unless it is a reference back to those mentioned in the previous paragraph. The attempt at evaluation is rather weak as the writers do attempt to suggest why certain groups form linked to the sort of community they live in.

Miller said young working class men have a set of values he called focal concerns. These included things like toughness, sharpness and excitement. Because of these they engaged in activities which brought them into conflict with the police. The toughness made them get into fights, the sharpness meant they tried to con or rob people and for excitement they did things like shoplifting and joy-riding. So these focal concerns are what explain a lot of crime in young working class males.

Once again this is an appropriate use of a study and there is not only some knowledge but a degree of analysis as the candidate explains each of the focal concerns. It would add to the answer if they made clear that this is a different sort of subculture from the others discussed as it does not form as a reaction to lack of success but is already part of the community in which these young men grow up.

Matza does not agree with these theories. In fact he does not think delinquent subcultures really exist. He said most boys drift in and out of law breaking and gangs. Some get more involved than others but none of them really have norms and values which are different from wider society. He says you can see this because when they are asked about their crimes they try to justify them with things like denial of the victim or denial of responsibility. He claims this shows that they still have mainstream values because they are trying to make excuses for behaviour they know is wrong.

The candidate shows good knowledge of another theorist and is able to use the study to make an evaluative point. So far all of the discussion has been about working class young males and the answer would benefit by widening the focus to perhaps look at other groups such as females or other social classes.

So we can see that some sociologists think that subcultures are the key to understanding crime. Sometimes they can help us to understand crimes that don't seem to make sense like joy vandalism. However people like Matza think sub cultural theory is over rated because most people do not have norms and values outside of mainstream society.

This is a brief but fairly effective conclusion. There is an evaluative point in favour of sub-cultural theory and a criticism of it. A good point is that the candidate has summed up what they have said in their answer.

The knowledge in this answer is quite detailed and accurate. The interpretation of the question is a little narrow as it only focuses on one group and there is no consideration of interactionist or conflict theories of subcultures. The answer would be improved if it could widen this focus. There is some analysis of focal concerns but concepts such as status frustration and techniques of neutralisation (from Matza) need to be explained in more detail. There is some good evaluation but, once again, if the candidate had explored other types of sub-cultural theories this would have given them more scope to discuss advantages and disadvantages.

(13 out of 21 marks)

2a) Advantage = avoids the Hawthorne Effect. People will continue to act normally because they don't know they are being studied.

Disadvantage 1= unethical. They have not got informed consent and are involved in deception.

Disadvantage 2= can be dangerous. If a group who are criminal find out they are being spied on they might turn violent because they suspect the sociologist is in the police.

There is no problem with the layout of this answer but the candidate has made a very common mistake. The advantage scores 1 for an identification but the explanation is not linked to the study of crime and so does not score. In order to gain the extra 2 marks the candidate would need to explain that the group would not feel inhibited from committing crimes and so the research would see their criminal behaviour.

(1 out of 3 marks)

The same is true of the first disadvantage; the explanation is true of the method in general but is not linked to crime so only scores 1. However, the second disadvantage is explained in terms of crime and so scores the full 3 marks.

(4 out of 6 marks)

Total: 5 out of 9 marks

2b) Official statistics are a very good way to study crime. One advantage is that they are cheap. Because they already exist there is no cost to the researcher and so they can have all the statistics they need. This also means it is a quick method because you do not have to take a long time interviewing people or handing out questionnaires and waiting for them to come back.

This is a reasonable start. The candidate has explored some practical advantages of official statistics. This could allow them to move on to more theoretical issues, as the item seems to be pointing to.

Another good thing about the statistics is that they go back a long way. This benefits the researcher as they are able to clearly spot trends over time. They can see if crime overall is on the increase and if certain types of crime, such as murder, are more common now than in the past.

The candidate links the advantage clearly to the study of crime. The issue of trends is an important one and there is more the candidate could do here to improve their answer. For example, trends concerning age, class, gender and ethnic differences could be identified as could the impact of changes in the law on levels of recorded crime.

A third advantage of using official statistics is that they are not biased. Because someone else has recorded them then the researcher has not influenced them. If they had done a questionnaire or interview they would have decided the questions so there could be bias in them such as leading questions. By using official statistics you would avoid this problem which makes the study more reliable.

There is a potentially relevant point in here but it is not fully developed. There is no specific link to the study of crime and the candidate seems to be confusing validity with reliability. As yet there has been no reference to the item which is a pity because it refers to positivism and this could allow the answer to start to explore theoretical issues.

However there are a lot of problems with the official statistics on crime. For one thing there is the 'dark figure of crime'. This is all the crimes that don't get reported. There are a lot of reasons why crimes do not get reported including

- too frightened
- know the person who did it e.g. husband
- don't trust police
- don't think its important enough e.g. small amount of money stolen
- doing crime themselves e.g. drug dealing.

This paragraph starts well with the issue about unreported crime, however, after this the answer loses its way. It is not a good idea to write lists in an essay, especially as it means that the points cannot be fully explained or expanded so they cannot gain marks for analysis. In addition, there is no development of what underreporting does to the statistics and why this presents a problem to anyone using them. Also the way crimes are recorded is significant as is the path between a crime happening and a crime statistic appearing. These are all areas which the candidate could discuss in order to improve the answer.

So there is a big problem with studying the crime statistics because of all of the crimes which are missing. Another problem is that what counts as a crime changes over time. Some things are no longer considered a crime such as having a small amount of drugs for personal use. Other things have become a crime just recently such as using a mobile phone while driving. Because of these things the statistics can not always be trusted and therefore can't be used by sociologists.

The issue of the relative nature of crime is a good one to raise. The candidate really needs to go on to develop the point. This could be done by discussing how comparisons of levels of crime do not always compare like with like and that more laws often leads to more recorded crime. Also it is not strictly true that the statistics cannot be used by sociologists. Some argue the omissions are not that serious and others argue the statistics are still of use in understanding the commonsense assumptions of the agents of social control.

So we can see that using official statistics to study crime has both advantages and disadvantages. It is clear that it is a popular way to study crime but not all sociologists agree with it. As the Item says, some would rather use participant observation where you can experience things at first hand.

This is a weak conclusion which says very little. It would be better to say why it is a popular method and/or to state why some do not agree. Also the reference to the item adds nothing and the conclusion is not the time to make first use of it.

(7 out of 15 marks)

3 Science is usually seen as subjects like physics, chemistry and biology but some people think sociology should be able to join them. Other people do not think this is possible. One of the things that makes sociology different is that it is studying people so you can't really study them in the same way as you study things in physics or chemistry.

There are a couple of reasonable points in this opening paragraph and the candidate does try to introduce the idea of a debate. The best point is about the subject matter of sociology being different but this is not really explored. It would be better if there could be some discussion about what science actually involves and this could then be used to explain why it might be difficult to apply this to the study of human behaviour.

Durkheim tried to make sociology a science in his study of suicide. He used the official statistics on suicide from lots of different countries to find out which groups had the highest levels. By comparing statistics for different countries and different groups he was being like a scientist because he was comparing things and he was trying to be objective by not letting his personal opinions get in the way. He claimed his study was scientific because other people could check out his statistics to see if they were right.

This is quite a reasonable application of a potentially relevant study. Also, there are two of the key features of scientific investigation, objectivity and replication, mentioned. It would be helpful if the candidate could explain how Durkheim's methodology could be seen to be a form of science and how some might argue if he really was objective in his analysis of the data.

Durkheim found that suicide was higher among Protestants, city dwellers and unmarried men. He also said there were four types of suicide such as anomic, altruistic and egoistic. What caused these suicides was how well people were knitted into society. If they did not have many ties they were more likely to commit suicide because they felt nobody cared. If you were in a strong religion like Roman Catholics were you were part of a group so you felt people cared more about you.

This paragraph adds little to the answer. There is some fairly accurate knowledge but it is not related to the question. The candidate needs to keep the focus on how the methodology involved might or might not be seen as scientific. For the purposes of this question Durkheim's findings are not really relevant unless they are used to discuss the idea that people's behaviour is directed by social forces which can be objectively measured.

Other sociologists have followed Durkheim and tried to make sociology like a science but others don't agree that it can be. Weber argued we needed to get empathy with the people being studied and see things from their point of view. This is why he would prefer a method like participant observation where the researcher takes part in the thing they are studying. This allows them to experience 'life as it is lived'.

The point about Weber suggesting empathetic understanding is a good one although it is not true that he advocated participant observation. This is where the candidate could move into a discussion of Weber's idea of value freedom as being a reworking of traditional positivist views on objectivity. Also, the point about participant observation would be better kept for later in a discussion about interactionist approaches.

Interactionists like Becker do not believe you should try to make sociology like a science. He argued that it was necessary to understand things from the point of view of those involved which is why he did participant observation with drug users to study how they were labelled and what effect the label had. He said you would not be able to understand this by being totally detached from the people. This was the same with Atkinson who studied suicide. He did not use the same method as Durkheim but instead he observed and interviewed coroners to see how they came to a verdict. He said the suicide statistics were a social construction.

This is a good paragraph as it begins to explore reasons why some see scientific methods as inappropriate for the study of society. The point about social construction is an important one and it could be developed more in order to make a contrast between different views on how sociologists can investigate the social world.

Another thing which goes against sociology as a science is the Hawthorne Effect. This was a study of a factory where the workers were being measured on their effort. Whatever happened they worked harder and it turned out that they were doing this because they knew they were being studied. This tells us that people will change their behaviour if they know they are being studied so it is another reason to do participant observation without them knowing.

This is a valid point about the problems of studying people as opposed to inanimate objects. The candidate could have described how the factory study had attempted to manipulate variables in order to measure their effect. This would have allowed a more detailed investigation of what the scientific approach involves.

So it is clear that opinions are divided on this question. Some see sociology as being like a science if it uses the methods of the natural sciences. Others see human behaviour as too complex and unpredictable to make any study of it scientific.

There is a brief but adequate summary of two positions here. However, it is unfortunate that two points which are central to the question are mentioned in the conclusion but do not feature much in the actual answer. If the candidate had explored what the methods of the natural sciences entailed and also discussed in more detail how human behaviour can be unpredictable, this would have greatly improved the focus of their answer.

Knowledge and understanding is broadly accurate but limited and so the AO1 score for this is 9 out of 15. Interpretation of the question is also fairly limited but there is some successful application of appropriate material so the AO2(a) mark is 4 out of 9. There is some analysis of Durkheim's work but evaluation is limited to stating opposing views so the AO2(b) mark is also 4 out of 9.

Total: 17 out of 33 marks

Overall, Candidate A has scored 47 out of 90 which should translate to a grade C.

Exemplar response: Candidate B

1a) Sociologists have noticed that men are much more likely to have a criminal conviction than women and there are many more men in prison. However it is not clear if this is just because men are more criminal or if this has something to do with attitudes of those people who enforce the law.

This is an excellent start. The candidate has clearly identified two gender differences relating to crime and has introduced a note of caution about crime statistics. There is the basis here for later development of issues surrounding recorded crime.

Some people link gender differences right back to early socialisation. It has been noted that girls are under much stricter control by their parents than boys and also that boys are encouraged to show aggression. These factors could explain why men grow up to be more likely to commit crime and also why women are more passive. Certainly it is true that as teenagers much stricter control is placed on females by parents and this reduces the opportunities for them to be on the streets and getting into trouble.

The candidate has explored the idea of differences in socialisation and social control well and has explained how these might lead to differences in crime. Perhaps they could point out that such differences might be less marked today and indeed there seems to be more involvement in crime amongst young women.

It could also be the case that women have fewer opportunities to commit crime than men. Domestic responsibilities mean women are more restricted to the home and because they often look after children they may have more to lose if they are caught and sent to prison which makes them more law abiding. On the other hand men may have less to lose and also they are more likely to have opportunities for crime as they spend more time outside of the home either at work or in their leisure time.

There is a good balance here between discussing men and women. The points raised are valid but once again it would improve the answer if the candidate could discuss how far these explanations are still true today.

Not everyone accepts that the gap between male and female crime is as great as the statistics suggest. Pollack said there was the chivalry thesis where women got treated more favourably than men. Because society does not expect women to be criminal they don't fit the stereotype and therefore police treat them more leniently and let them off. Also judges don't want to send women to prison so they get lighter sentences. Also they can use PMT as a defence so juries might not convict them. Feminists do not agree with this and Pat Carlen has said women are often treated more harshly than men. If they are convicted they are seen as 'doubly deviant' because they have broken the laws of society but also gone against the norms of how women are expected to behave.

This is a very strong paragraph. The candidate has picked up on the idea of recorded crime and explored why the statistics might be misleading. There is good use of studies and concepts and the concept of a chivalry thesis is evaluated.

Even if the figures for crime are not totally accurate it is still true that men dominate many crimes. Feminists such as Dobash and Dobash have shown that domestic violence is one of the biggest crime problems of today. It is only recently that women have been prepared to report this and that the police have begun to take it seriously. For this reason recorded crime rates might even hide a lot of male crime so the gap might be still as big.

This is a good attempt to probe deeper into the question. The discussion of domestic violence is linked appropriately to the question and the candidate tries to explain how gender differences do still have significance.

So we can see that men might be more criminal because of their upbringing and women might be more law abiding because of the domestic role they play in society. However we should not always accept crime statistics at face value. Because they are socially constructed it is not clear if the gender differences are real or if they are a result of police and courts stereotypes.

This is a good conclusion as it returns to the question and seeks to answer it. It also provides a neat summary of what has been discussed in the answer. So overall this is a well focused answer. However, what it lacks is any discussion of changes in gender patterns of crime. The answer assumes that the so-called gender gap remains the same and it misses the opportunity to discuss recent social trends such as changes in gender socialisation, girl gangs, ladette culture etc. It needs this more contemporary focus to lift it higher into the top band.

(10 out of 12 marks)

1b) A sub culture can be defined as a culture within a culture. Members have their own set of values and often these are deviant because they are different from what most people accept as normal. For example some youth cultures have their own fashion and music which society does not see as normal. Other sub cultures might be criminal in that they see nothing wrong in breaking the law and this is where a lot of research has been done.

This is a very good start as the term is clearly defined and an important distinction is made between deviant and criminal subcultures. This is also a useful illustration of a deviant subculture.

Early studies of subcultures saw them as a reaction against social conditions. Albert Cohen believed young working class males who failed at school became frustrated at their lack of position in society (status frustration). To cope with this they formed subcultures which took the norms of society and inverted them. What this did was to provide members status from within the group to make up for their lack of status in wider society. This is a strong theory because it can explain crimes with no reward such as vandalism.

There is a good use of a study here. The key concept is defined and the candidate explains not only why the subculture forms but how it helps its members. There is a good evaluative point at the end. The paragraph could be improved by also considering any weakness of this theory, for example that it only concentrates on young, lower class boys.

However some have argued that Cohen assumes all deprived young men develop a criminal subculture and develop values different from mainstream society. Matza says in fact most people 'drift' in and out of delinquency. This is true not only of lower social classes but also middle class youth who get attracted to the thrill of crime. Lyng called this edgework where many young people get a kick out of living dangerously. Sometimes this can be legal such as snowboarding or bungee jumping. Other times it can involve law breaking such as street fighting or joy riding. This does not mean those involved reject society's values because they are law abiding most of the time.

It is a good idea to present a counter argument here and also to widen the discussion to include other social classes. There is good use of concepts in the paragraph and the points are clearly explained. A little more detail on the Matza study would be a good idea rather than jumping straight to the next theory although the candidate does link them well.

Interactionists have also studied subcultures. Becker claimed that labelling a group as deviant can become a master status. The group then come to accept the label and act that way. Jock Young found this with drug users in Notting Hill where they became more of a subculture because of how they were treated by the police. You can also see this in Stan Cohen's study of moral panics where the group becomes more deviant as it gets picked on more.

There is a lot of good material here and the discussion has widened to look at a different theoretical approach. However, the major problem with this paragraph is that it mentions a lot of studies but gives very few details. So the knowledge is good but there is little analysis of the material. A better idea would be to perhaps only discuss two of the three studies here but to explain in more detail how each helps us to understand subcultures better.

The New Right think that crime is due to the underclass. This is a group of people who are detached from mainstream society. Murray claims they live off welfare and see nothing wrong with crime. He blames single parent families for not socialising their children properly. This group is like one big subculture because they are not part of mainstream society and do not have the same norms and values. Without a clear idea of right and wrong the children grow up to accept crime. His critics say he is stereotyping all poor people and he can't explain why people from 'good' homes can also end up committing crime.

This is an interesting use of Murray's work which is well applied to the question. There is good analysis of how crime might arise within this group and also there is an attempt at evaluation by suggesting some possible criticism. A little more explanation of each criticism would improve the answer.

From a different perspective some writers have looked at how young black males often form subcultures as a reaction against the racism and lack of opportunity they experience in society. Lea and Young claimed that the subculture is a form of defence because the members are marginalised from wider society. With few opportunities available to them the young black men reject the values of society and replace them with their own. This brings them in to conflict with the police and as a result they end up featuring in the crime statistics.

Once again there is sound knowledge here of another perspective. There is also an attempt to discuss issues of ethnicity but it is not clear what the racism and lack of opportunities are which appear in the first sentence. A good way to expand this point would be to suggest that this analysis is similar to the Albert Cohen material discussed at the beginning of the answer. By linking up these studies the candidate could gain extra marks.

So we can see that there have been many theories which have linked crime to subcultures. Many of these have helped us to understand crime better but each has their strengths and weaknesses. Although they do help us to understand crime they tend to only look at young working class males so they ignore crimes by other groups.

There is a good evaluative point at the end here. It could be expanded by suggesting that these theories concentrate on this group because the crime statistics suggest they have higher levels of crime and this is also why issues of gender and higher classes are not often addressed in sub-cultural theories.

Overall the knowledge in this answer is extensive and accurate. There is a good focus on the question. Analysis is good in places but could be extended in the parts where studies or concepts are mentioned but not really explored. There is some evaluation of some of the approaches.

Total: 17 out of 21 marks

2a) An advantage is it gives a truer picture of crime, this is because the criminals will act normally but if they knew someone was watching they might commit less crime for fear of being reported.

This scores the full 3 marks as the advantage is clearly explained in terms directly linked to crime.

(3 out of 3 marks)

The first disadvantage is that it could be considered unethical. The researcher might have to get involved in crime to keep their cover and this would be considered morally wrong.

The second disadvantage is that it would be hard to record findings. Criminals would be suspicious of someone taking notes and might think they are a police informer. So the research depends on memory which might not be accurate.

Both of these are acceptable disadvantages and both are explained in terms of studying crime, so full marks, 6 out of 6.

(9 out of 9 marks)

2b) As Item B says it is mainly positivists who favour the use of official statistics in the study of crime. The main reason for this is that the method uses quantitative data, this means it is based on statistics and consists of facts and figures. Anti-positivists do not think the statistics will give a valid picture of crime.

This is a very good introduction. The item is quoted but also developed. Quantitative data is explained and anti-positivists are identified as those who question their validity.

The benefit of the statistics on crime is that they can be used to clearly identify patterns and trends. For example it is possible to plot rises in crime and to pinpoint which areas have the highest levels. An illustration of this was the work of the Chicago School. They used the crime statistics to show that crime was at a peak in the zone of transition. Once they had found this they were able to focus on this area in order to explain why crime was so high.

This is a very strong paragraph. The advantage is clearly expressed with an appropriate illustration. The fact that it is backed up with an actual study scores extra marks.

Perhaps at some stage the candidate might be able to evaluate this study's use of the crime statistics.

Crime statistics have also allowed researchers to identify which groups in society have the highest levels of recorded crime. For example for many years it has been clear that men outnumber women 7 to 1 in crimes committed and over 90% of the prison population is male. When it was noted that the gender gap was narrowing to something like 5 to 1 sociologists were able to focus on this to try to explain the reasons for this change.

There is another good point here. The candidate shows good knowledge of crime patterns and trends but does not just state them. Instead the figures are used to illustrate how statistics can be used to direct research questions. Also the candidate has picked up on something mentioned in the earlier item and made use of it. This is a good idea as other parts of the exam paper can often provide the stimulus to consider something when answering a different question.

The same is true of ethnic minorities. By studying official statistics it is possible to see if some ethnic groups have higher levels of recorded crime. If this is the case the sociologist can then go on to investigate the reasons for this which might be due to relative deprivation or as a result of police racism. Sociologists who did this included left realists Lea and Young.

Whilst this discussion is clearly relevant and the candidate is aware of another study making use of some statistics there are a couple of missed opportunities here. Lea and Young tended to use victim studies because of the gaps in official crime statistics. This would be a good way into introducing a critical note about such statistics. Also, the mention of police racism could be the chance to begin to explore the claim that crime statistics are socially constructed.

However the critics of official statistics say they do not tell the whole story of crime. This is because they only refer to recorded crime. There are lots of crimes which go unrecorded. A good example of this is domestic violence. For many years women were frightened to report this and often if they did it was not taken seriously. This has now changed and they are now much more willing to report it and the police are more likely to record it. This could mean that what seems to be a big rise in domestic violence might just be a rise in reporting.

There is a very relevant point made here and it is backed up with an excellent illustration which shows a high level of analysis. There is also clear evidence of evaluation as the candidate is able to point out that what seems to be a rise in crime might not be so.

A second problem is that the police might record crime in different ways. Cicourel found that a fight between boys in a middle class area might be seen as high spirits. The same fight in a working class district is likely to be regarded by police as a crime and treated as such. In this way the crime statistics might be misleading.

There is a good point here and again it is well backed up by quoting a study. The paragraph could be extended by looking at Cicourel's study in a little more depth. He found that there were a series of stages between an event and a crime statistic and the candidate has only referred to one of these. His study also pointed out that higher levels of policing or concentration on certain areas or certain crimes could lead to distortions in the statistics.

Another problem is that the official statistics tell you how much crime has been committed but they don't tell you why. Any study which only uses the crime statistics would not be able to identify causes of crime so would need another study to follow this up. For this reason using official statistics to study crime is probably best if it is used with another method in order to get a fuller picture of the true nature of crime.

This paragraph provides another issue with statistics and combines it with a reasoned conclusion which returns to address the question. This is a very solid way to end the essay, however there are a few things which could make this even better. One would be to return to the work of the Chicago School mentioned earlier. This study did as the candidate suggested and followed up the statistically analysis with a study of causes using observational techniques. Also, a good way to end would be to refer back to the positivist approach which was in the item and also was discussed earlier in the answer.

(13 out of 15 marks)

3 There has been much debate about sociology and science. Some believe the subject can be scientific if it follows the procedures of natural sciences. Others disagree and argue sociology needs to adopt its own methods of study. There is also some disagreement about what exactly science is and so it is not clear what sociology needs to do be like a science.

This is a strong opening paragraph. The candidate clearly sets out some of the key issues, especially the point about what science is. One thing to improve this introduction would be if there was a little discussion as to why sociology might need its own methods, for example, due to the difference in the subject matter.

Early sociologists such as Comte and Durkheim were in doubt that the subject could be a science and they sought to establish it as one. This was because at that time science was seen as the superior form of knowledge and in areas like medicine it was helping to explain how things worked. They wanted sociology to be like this and to become the 'queen of sciences' which could help explain how society worked and how to fix it if it went wrong.

There are several good points here. The only thing that is missing is some discussion of how the early writers thought sociology could make itself into a science. Some discussion of the principles of positivism would be a good addition at this point.

The philosopher Karl Popper has outlined what it means for something to be called a science. He saw it as involving the formulating and testing of a hypothesis with the aim of being able to make predictions. The testing of hypotheses involved what he called the 'principle of falsification' In other words hypothesis had to be tested in order to try to prove them wrong. As long as they stood up to the test they could be accepted and this would allow the researcher to make predictions. Once a hypothesis had been tested over and over again it could become a theory.

This is a detailed and accurate account of one theory of science. The point about falsification is clearly explained and there is correct use of technical terms. There is no mention of sociology in this paragraph but it does provide the opportunity for it to be discussed later.

Positivist sociologists believe we can get theories about human behaviour because there are things called social facts. It is the job of sociologists to discover these facts. This is what Durkheim set out to do in his study of suicide. He claimed to have proved that suicide was caused by certain social situations which caused some people to take their own lives.

Whilst this is a good area to discuss it is not totally clear what social facts are. A brief definition which refers to them being things outside of the individual which help to shape their behaviour would help to make the good point about Durkheim's study clearer. There is no mention of how Durkheim intended to investigate these social facts.

Critics have argued that very little sociology meets the strict rules of science. This is because we cannot reduce human behaviour to one simple cause and effect relationship. People act in the way they do as a result of many different influences. A good example is where some have tried to prove a link between violence on T.V. and violent behaviour. Because it is impossible to isolate the one variable of media influence from all other factors such as upbringing and peer group pressure it is not possible to test a hypothesis that media violence causes real life violence.

This is an excellent paragraph. The candidate picks out one issue and explores it in some depth. The illustration is very relevant and shows the ability to apply knowledge from any area of sociology to answer this question. It would be possible to identify and discuss other issues, such as 'people's behaviour may lack predictability', in order to build on this very strong discussion.

There are also some who argue that not all natural scientists always follow the procedures it is claimed they do. Many scientific discoveries come about as a result of luck or accident instead of the systematic testing of hypotheses. An example of this is the discovery of penicillin. Also some scientists may not accept the work of others like when people rejected Einstein's ideas because he was Jewish.

There are a couple of very valid points here and it would help if they were tied in more closely to the question. The candidate seems to be suggesting not only is science less precise than it claims but also personal values play a part in it. This would be a good area to explore as it could lead into a discussion of value freedom in science and also within sociology.

Within sociology there are those who think it is not possible to be scientific in the study of human behaviour. The postmodernist Lyotard has argued there is no such thing as objectivity. Everyone sees things through their own values and so sociologists do not discover facts they construct them. Many sociologists argue it is necessary to develop different ways of studying people and that it is important to use subjective values to gain empathy with the people being studied.

There are two very worthwhile points here but it would be better to keep them apart and explore each in turn. The postmodernist idea of no objective reality is a controversial one which has generated a lot of debate. The second point about the need to seek empathy is one which would allow the candidate to discuss how sociologists have attempted to do this.

In conclusion it was the early sociologists who thought it was possible to make the subject a science. However it is not clear if sociology can borrow the methods of the natural sciences. What is clear is that a lot of sociology does not follow the path laid down by Popper with the testing of hypotheses. Many sociologists prefer to see the subject as a social science which can use some of the methods of the natural sciences but also is able to develop its own way of studying the social world.

The best thing about this conclusion is that it directly addresses the question. It is also a good summary of what has been covered in the answer and has not tried to introduce new points. Perhaps the only thing that is lacking is a brief mention of why it might not be possible to use natural scientific methods in the study of society.

The knowledge in this answer is quite sound and the understanding is accurate. There is a good grasp of the work of Popper and a little on postmodernism. The gap in the knowledge concerns the interpretivist position which is not fully explored. However the AO1 score for this is 12 out of 15.

The answer keeps its focus throughout and all of the material introduced is relevant. Once again the only drawback is the rather narrow interpretation of the question to exclude interpretivism. The AO2 (a) mark is 6 out of 9.

With AO2 (b) skills analysis is strong in parts as the answer explores what science is. Evaluation is often just by setting up opposing views but the discussion of the media and violence research scores well for both of these skills. AO2 (b) mark is also 6 out of 9.

Total: 24 out of 33 marks

Overall, Candidate B has scored 73 out of 90. This is clearly an A grade answer and if this standard was repeated across all the units it should be enough to gain an A*.