Why do some people commit crime?

Biology says that some people are more likely to commit crime because\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Sociology says that people don’t commit crime because of genes and DNA but because of social factors.

Lack of socialisation- some people aren’t properly socialised by their family and so do not know the norms and values of society. Basically they don’t understand how to behave or what actions are and are not allowed.

Peer Pressure- people of similar ages to us have a huge effect on how we behave. Many youngsters commit crime to impress friends or because they want to fit in with the actions of their peers.

School subculture- some young people (especially boys) reject the school culture and create their own subculture. They disregard school rules and authority figures. These boys may then keep these attitudes outside school and disobey Police and written laws.

Marxism- Marxists see society as being unequal with a small few owning most property and wealth. The majority of people (working class) have very little money or material possessions and so seek ways, even criminal ones of gaining more.

Labelling- labels are attached to certain individuals or groups and this can create a self-fulfilling prophecy. Many youths today are labelled delinquent or out of control and so youths act up to those labels.

Stereotyping- linked to labelling. Certain groups or individuals will be stereotyped without real cause. It’s like putting people into boxes- all young people steal from shops, all old people smell of wee, that type of thing! If people already think you are a criminal because you’re a young, working class male then you may be rejected for jobs and this could lead to criminal activities.

Homework Task:

Using all of the knowledge you now have about who commits crime and why some people commit crime **write a paragraph or create a detailed timeline** showing how a new born baby could grow up to become a criminal.

What social factors could influence his/her life and lead them down the path to prison?





Who Commits Crime?

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| Stereotypical Characteristics | Possible reasons why they are more likely to commit crime |
| Young rather than old | Peer pressure, excitement and relief from boredom of youth, lack of social control by parents, school, society in general. |
| Males more than females, but female crime figures are rising | Socialisation- boys are more macho and tough.  Women have more responsibilities with families and fewer opportunities. Police expect men to be more criminal.  Some people think feminism& the media has caused an increase in female crime as roles have changed. |
| More black people in prison however, they are also more likely to be victims of crime | Higher rates of unemployment, more likely to live in poverty and be deprived of material possessions- maybe steal to compensate. |
| Working class rather than middle or upper class | W/class are more tempted by crime as they have less life opportunities. |
| More crime is committed in inner city areas | More unemployment and poverty, more opportunities and temptations- shops, cars, people etc. Cities are more anonymous- feel like there’s less chance of being caught or recognised. |

As we already know though Statistics & Self Report Studies that provide the data and information about criminals and crimes are not entirely accurate.

So the stereotypical view we have might not be accurate.

Some people feel that there are more ethnic minorities in prison because they are more likely to be targeted, prosecuted and convicted by agencies of social control. Essentially some people think the formal social control system is racist.

Also with working class people, the types of crimes committed are easier to detect and more likely to be reported and recorded by Police. White- Collar crime against large companies might not be noticed or reported to Police.

Basically, although we have some idea of the people who are most likely to commit crime we must always realise that anyone no matter their gender, age, ethnicity or social class can and do commit crimes.

For your exam you need to understand how official statistics are useful to sociologists but also show the examiner that you are aware of the problems and inaccuracies of data on crime and deviance!