**Crime and Deviance with Methods in Context**

Crime and Deviance Revision



The specification

**1 Different theories of crime, deviance, social order and social control**

* Different definitions of crime, deviance, social order and social control
* The distinction between sociological theories of crime and other theories (eg biological, psychological); crime and deviance as socially constructed
* Functionalist theories of crime: Durkheim, anomie, collective conscience; Merton’s strain theory; manifest and latent functions; functionalist subcultural theories
* Marxist and neo-Marxist theories of crime: classical Marxism, laws reflecting class interests; Neo-Marxism, hegemony, the CCCS studies, critical and new criminology
* Interactionist theories of crime: labelling theory, the self-fulfilling prophecy
* Feminist theories of crime: patriarchy, male control of women’s lives
* Control theory and other contemporary approaches to crime: social bonds, communitarianism, situational prevention; postmodern theories; Foucault on individualisation and surveillance
* Realist theories: New Left Realism and Right Realism
* The relevance of the various theories to understanding different types of crime, and their implications for social policy.

**2 The social distribution of crime and deviance by age, ethnicity, gender, locality and social class, including recent patterns and trends in crime**

* Study of statistics and other evidence on the social distribution of crime by age, ethnicity, gender, locality and social class, including recent patterns and trends
* Issues related to and explanations of the social distribution of crime and deviance by age: juvenile delinquency and youth crime
* Issues related to and explanations of the social distribution of crime and deviance and ethnicity: explanations from different theories, racism in the criminal justice system
* Issues related to and explanations of the social distribution of crime and deviance and gender: explanations of the rates of male and female crime, the gendering of crime, chivalry thesis, the gender deal
* Issues related to and explanations of the social distribution of crime and deviance and locality: rural and urban crime
* Issues related to and explanations of the social distribution of crime and deviance and social class: explanations from different theories; white collar crime; occupational crime.

**3 Globalisation and crime in contemporary society; the mass media and crime; green crime; human rights and state crimes**

* Globalisation and crime: examples and explanations of globalised crimes such as web-based crimes, global trades in drugs, weapons and people; global corporate crime
* Mass media and crime: media’s role in social construction of crime including moral panics and amplification; crime and news values and agenda setting; representations of crime (both fact and fiction)
* Green crime: definitions, criminalisation of environmental offences; extent, enforcement of green crimes: environmental laws, corporate and state environmental crimes, crimes against non-human species
* Human rights and state crimes: international rules and norms and examples of violations of them; human rights violations; state crimes.

**4 Crime control, prevention and punishment, victims, and the role of the criminal justice system and other agencies**

* Crime control, prevention and punishment: contemporary policies, linked to the theories studied under point 1; surveillance, zero tolerance, anti-social behaviour orders, expansion of imprisonment
* Victims of crime: statistics and other evidence on victims of crime; ethnicity, age and gender; different theoretical accounts, eg positivist and radical victimology
* Role of the criminal justice system and other agencies.

**5 The sociological study of suicide and its theoretical and methodological implications**

* Durkheim’s classic study of suicide, including typologies
* Interpretivist responses to Durkheim, eg Atkinson, Douglas
* Realist approaches, eg Taylor’s ‘people under trains’
* The theoretical and methodological implications of the different approaches of the study of suicide.

The exam format

Choose **one** Section and answer **all** the questions from that Section.

**Section A: Crime and Deviance with Theory and Methods**

You are advised to spend approximately 45 minutes on Questions 0 1 and 0 2

You are advised to spend approximately 30 minutes on Questions 0 3, 0 4 and 0 5

You are advised to spend approximately 45 minutes on Question 0 6

**Total for this section: 90 marks**

**Crime and Deviance**

**0 1 Examine the effectiveness of situational crime prevention as a means of reducing the impact of crime on society (Item A). *(12 marks)***

Read **Item A** below and answer the question that follows.

**Item A**

Situational crime prevention (SCP) involves intervening in the immediate situations in which crime takes place to reduce its likelihood or seriousness. It often involves ‘designing crime out’ of products, services and environments, for example by use of anti-climb paint, CCTV and security guards in shops, better street lighting, metal detectors at airports, neighbourhood watch schemes andthe re-designing of housing estates.

SCP does not rely on intervening in children’s socialisation to prevent them mbecoming criminals later, or on the threat of punishments to deter current criminals. Instead, it makes specific changes aimed at influencing the decision or ability of offenders to commit particular crimes in particular situations. Like rational choice theory, SCP sees criminals as acting rationally. By making certain crimes less rewarding, more risky or needing greater effort, SCP makes criminals less likely to choose to commit them.

**0 2 Assess the usefulness of conflict theories for an understanding of crime and deviance in contemporary society. *(21 marks)***

**Methods in Context**

**0 3 Identify and briefly explain one problem of using victim surveys to study victims of crime. *(3 marks)***

**0 4 Identify and briefly explain two problems of studying crime by interviewing serving prisoners about their behaviour. *(6 marks)***

Read **Item B** below and answer the question that follows.

**Item B**

Some sociologists argue that much youthful criminal activity, such as vandalism, shoplifting, street crime and excessive drug use, can best be understood as motivated by thrill-seeking through risk-taking or ‘edge work’. For example, as Katz (1988) argues, shoplifting can be seen as a thrilling and gratifying adventure, whose ‘buzz’ can be more important than any need by the shoplifter for the item stolen. For some thieves, the stolen item has more of a symbolic than a material value, as a trophy of the ‘game’.

Members of educated and privileged groups may also indulge in thrill-seeking crimes, such as computer hacking or illicit stock market manipulation. However, the ‘thrills and spills’ of edge work as a motivation for crime tend to appeal particularly to young men from marginalised social groups as a way of expressing their masculinity.

**0 5 Using material from Item B and elsewhere, assess the strengths and limitations of covert participant observation as a means of investigating ‘edge work as a motivation for crime’ (Item B, line 10). *(15 marks)***

*This question requires you to* ***apply*** *your knowledge and understanding of sociological*

*research methods to the study of this* ***particular*** *issue in* ***crime and deviance****.*

**Theory and Methods**

**0 6 ‘Sociology cannot and should not be a science.’To what extent do sociological arguments and evidence support this view? *(33 marks)***

**DIFFERENT THEORIES OF CRIME, DEVIANCE, SOCIAL ORDER AND SOCIAL CONTROL**

**FUNCTIONALIST THEORIES OF CRIME AND DEVIANCE**

**A. Emile Durkheim:**

**1. 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 behavior following social reactions to deviance.

Creates social integration as it bonds society together against criminals.

**2. 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.

**3. 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.

**4. 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.

**B. Robert Merton and Strain theory**

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?

**FUNCTIONALISM - AN OVERVIEW**

**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.

**However...**

* Functionalism represents a sociological approach to crime distinct from the biological and psychological approaches which preceded it.
* It is correct to assume that to some extent, for societies to survive there must be some agreement on values, but functionalists tend to focus on this and fail to consider the power of different groups and the existence of contrasting value systems.

**2. SUB-CULTURAL THEORIES OF CRIME AND DEVIANCE**

**FUNCTIONALIST SUB-CULTURALTHEORIES**

1. **Albert Cohen**

**1. The structural origins of crime & deviance**

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).

**2. 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’.

**2. Cloward and Ohlin**

**1. The structural origins of crime & deviance**

Cloward and Ohlin accept Cohen’s views on the structural origins of crime and deviance.

**2. The cultural causes of crime & deviance**

However, Cloward and Ohlin criticise Cohen’s cultural explanation of crime. In particular, his failure to explain the variety of subcultural forms that emerges 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.

**3. Walter Miller and ‘focal concerns’**

**1. The structural origins of crime & deviance**

* 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.

### 2. The cultural causes of crime & 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.

**Evaluation of functionalist sub-cultural theory**

**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) 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.

**B. Marxist sub-cultural explanations**

* The Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies saw youth subcultures within a wider structural context - they were responses to the problems of growing up working class in a capitalist society.
* The subcultures cannot actually change the circumstances the youths find themselves in, they can only provide what Brake calls a “magical” solution.
* The style and content of the subculture - the music, clothes, slang etc. - are seen as important, and differing between groups because each group is responding to a different situation.
* These styles denote resistance to the hegemony of capitalism, and can be “read” by sociologists, as in Phil Cohen’s study of skinheads.

**Criticisms**

* Stanley Cohen, however, argues that this decoding and interpreting of subcultures is flawed by its explicit political intent; it is designed to prove that working class youth subcultures are an aspect of class conflict. The claim to have a special insight into what the style means is dubious, especially if the interpretation is not recognised by members of the subculture; the interpretations probably say more about the sociologists than the subculture.
* This “resistance through rituals” tradition was focused very much on working class boys who joined highly visible subcultures. The majority of young people, who did not join subcultures, attracted little attention. The middle class tended to be ignored, although Jock Young described the hedonism of Notting Hill hippies in ‘*The Drugtakers’*.
* Feminists criticised the concentration on males, but also used the insights of this approach to study girls, as in McRobbie’s work on “bedroom culture” (which offers reasons for the absence of girls from street culture).

**C. Left realist sub-cultural theories**

* Lea and Young’s New Left Realism, applied the concept of subculture to ethnic minorities in particular.
* Ethnic minority subcultures such as Rastafarianism had been studied earlier in the “resistance through rituals” tradition.
* Lea and Young argued that young blacks had values distinct from their parents, based on their aspirations within British society. The barriers to achieving these aspirations leads many young blacks into petty crime. Asian cultures, on the other hand, were seen as providing clear alternatives to mainstream culture and alternative sources of status and reward, leading to lower crime rates.

**Criticisms**

* The importance of the style of subcultures has been called into question by postmodernist ideas which claim that there is no meaning to be decoded. Redhead, in his study of rave culture, found no underlying meanings of the kind Marxists had claimed for earlier subcultures.

**D. New Right sub-cultural theories**

* This approach argues that there is an underclass in modern industrial society that has its’ origin in a rejection of mainstream norms and values. Welfare systems encourage this subculture which is characterised by single parents, an unwillingness to work and high levels of crime.
* Murray claims that the underclass is responsible for a great deal of recorded crime.
* The only way to change this and to reduce crime is to make criminal activity so ‘expensive’ for the potential criminal in terms of loss of liberty, financial cost etc. as to deter them. Removal of benefits would also pressurise people into work.

**Criticisms**

* Taylorhas argued that the rise of an underclass is not the result of the growth of a rejectionist subculture, but the product of changes in the economic structure in post-modern societies. The collapse of older industries and the communities they once supported and the decline in demand for unskilled labour have led to a rise in crime. This is nothing to do with norms and values.

**E. Overall evaluation of sub-cultural theories**

* However it can be argued that the notion of subculture depends on the existence of a dominant culture, and in a fragmented postmodern world it becomes harder to claim one exists. If subcultures have become no more than meaningless fashions, then the concept of subculture, which has proved so flexible in its use by a range of sociologists from different perspectives, may have outlived its usefulness.
* Matza criticises functionalist and subcultural theories as being too deterministic. He rejects the view that deviance and crime result form the direct and unavoidable impact of social forces on groups and individuals.
* Matza points out that most ‘criminals’ and ‘deviants’ do in fact conform most of the time to mainstream norms and values. They are not as ‘different’ to non-criminals as early sociological theories seemed to make out. A lot of crime is casual.
* Matza argues that individuals and groups often neutralise the mainstream norms that influence behaviour. This can be done through processes of denial - of responsibility, effect etc.

QUESTIONS THAT COULD BE ASKED ON THIS:

Short answer and short essay questions

**Item A**

‘Strain’ theory, first developed by Merton (1938), argues that rule-breaking is the result of a strain between society’s culturally approved goals and the legitimate means of achieving them. Deviance occurs if society fails to provide its members with legitimate ways of achieving the goals it sets them, or if it places more emphasis on achieving these goals by any means necessary, rather than ‘playing by the rules’.

For example, Merton argued, American society emphasises that its members should strive for the goal of ‘money success’. However, the working class in particular are often denied the chance to achieve this goal via the legitimate opportunity structure of educational and career success. Faced with cultural pressure to gain wealth, they therefore ‘innovate’, adopting illegitimate means such as theft. For Merton, this explains the higher crime rate found in this social class.

01. Examine the effectiveness of Merton’s ‘strain’ theory (**Item A**). *(12 marks)*

02. Assess the view that delinquent subcultures are the main cause of crime. *(21 marks)*

Short essay mark scheme

**17-21**

These answers will show a thorough, conceptually detailed and wide-ranging knowledge and understanding of theoretical and empirical material on delinquent subcultures and crime. Answers will be broad ranging and will show a clear understanding of relevant debates and issues. These may include: anomie and blocked opportunity structures; status frustration; cultural deprivation; marginalisation and relative deprivation; the underclass; labelling, self-fulfilling prophecy and deviant career; folk devils, moral panics and deviance amplification; symbolic resistance; gender and subculture; delinquency, leisure and drift; edgework and risk; different typologies of subculture (eg criminal, conflict, retreatist; independent versus reactive) etc. A range of perspectives is likely to feature in relation to the question.

**Higher in the band**, knowledge will be more comprehensive and detailed, and/or links between

theoretical and empirical aspects more explicit and developed, and understanding will be clearer

and more complex.

In answering this question, candidates may refer to some of the following sources and/or relevant alternative ones: Becker; Brake; Campbell; Cloward and Ohlin; A K Cohen; M Cohen; S Cohen; Hall; Lea and Young; Lyng; Merton; Messerschmidt; W B Miller; Morris; Murray; Young.

3. 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’).

**G. Evaluation of interactionist theories**

**Strengths**

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

QUESTIONS THAT COULD BE ASKED ON THIS

Short answer and short essay questions

**Item A**

According to a study of anti-social behavior orders (ASBOs) by the Youth Justice Board (2006), some parents and magistrates thought they were in a ‘diploma in deviance’ and they believed that youths saw them as a ‘badge of honour’. Many youths did not regard the the threat of custody as a deterant to breaching their order.

The study also found that the orders were disproportionately used against ethnic minorities: blacks and Asians were about two and a half times more likely than whites to be given an ASBO.

The study found that it was not uncommon for young people to openly flout the prohibitions placed on them by the order. Figures show that by 2008 two-thirds had breached their orders.

**02 Using material from Item A and elsewhere, assess the view that crime and deviance are the product labeling processes. (21 marks)**

**Examiner’s advice:**

This question carries 9 AO1 marks (knowledge and understanding) and 12 AO2 marks ( interpretation, application, analysis and evaluation).

Start with an account of labeling theory, identifying and explaining its key concepts, such as the social construction of deviance, selective enforcement, primary and secondary deviance, the self-fulfilling prophecy, master status, deviant career and the deviance amplification spiral.

Use studies to illustrate some of these concepts. Make sure you also use the Item – e.g. you could link labeling to the ‘badge of honour’, the ethnic patterns to police stereotyping of ethnic minorities, and the high rate of breaching of orders to secondary deviance and the self-fulfilling prophecy. You should evaluate the view, e.g. by considering other causes of crime (eg strain, subcultures, poverty) and by examining some of the criticisms of labeling theory.

**4. TRADITIONAL MARXIST THEORIES OF CRIME AND DEVIANCE**

**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.

**3. Selective Enforcement**

* 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.

**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.

**Weakness**

* 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.

**5. 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 al’s 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.

QUESTIONS THAT COULD BE ASKED ON THIS:

Short answer and short essay questions

**Examine some of the ways in which Marxists explain crime. (12 marks)**

**Examiners Advice:**   
You should start with the idea that Marxists see capitalism as criminogenic because it creates the conditions for crime through exploitation competition. You need to examine both traditional

Marxist and neo-Marxist approaches. The key ideas of traditional Marxists include the ruling class to make and selectively enforce the law, the ideological functions of the law, the way criminalisation is used to divide working class, and the idea that capitalism creates crime in all classes but largely only convicts the working class.

You should evaluate this approach e.g. in terms of its determinism and from this go on to consider neo-Marxism (critical criminology). Key as to cover include the idea of crime as a political choice or act of rebellion, and the incorporation of ideas from labelling theory. To evaluate you could use left realist criticisms that it ignores the reality of crime.

**6. 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.

1. **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.

**Tackling 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.

**Tackling 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 THAT COULD BE ASKED ON THIS:

**Feminist explanations of crime and deviance**

**Overview**

* Feminist criminology developed in the late 1960s and into the 1970s, and was closely associated with the emergence of the Second Wave of feminism.
* Feminists argue that male dominance in society is reflected in a male dominance of mainstream theories of crime, which was seen as **‘malestream’ sociology** (about men, for men and by men).

**Why has sociology often ignored women in the study of crime?**

**Heidensohn** suggests several reasons why Functionalist, Marxist, subcultural and interactionist approaches to crime all tended to ignore women:

1. Sociology was (and to a lesser extent still is) dominated by men, who tended to accept stereotypical ideas about females. They found female crime uninteresting and unimportant.
2. Those who did try to study it struggled to find useful examples (e.g. female gangs).
3. Male sociologists were attracted by the apparent glamour of some male deviance, of gangs, drug taking etc, and they would have had difficulty in gaining access to female groups and subcultures even had they been interested.
4. All these early theories of crime can be undermined by asking how they would account for females. For example, Albert Cohen’s work on status frustration among working class adolescent boys failing at school has no account of how girls reacted to similar situations and experiences

**How much female crime?**

* There have been several attempts to find out whether women really do commit little crime. Official figures show that five times as many crimes are committed by men as by women, with considerable variation between types of crime.
* It has been suggested that this is because women are better at concealing evidence of crimes they have committed.
* Self report studies tend to show that men do commit more crime, but that the ratio is considerably smaller - more like 1.2 male crimes for every female one, rather than 5:1.
* Such studies do have considerable problems; as well as difficulty in knowing whether respondents are telling the truth, the research tends to be done only with teenagers and about trivial offences.
* **Box** suggests that for serious offences the 5:1 ratio suggested by official statistics is accurate.

**Treatment by the criminal justice system - harsh or lenient?**

* It is possible that the low numbers of women in the official figures may be the result of different treatment by the police and courts.
* It has been suggested that there is a “**chivalry factor**” which leads to leniency towards women; the police may be more likely to caution than to charge, the courts to acquit or impose lesser sentences.
* This can be seen as reflecting the assumption (by men) that females involved in crime are likely to have been “led on” by a male companion.
* On the other hand it has also been claimed that women are sometimes treated more harshly, especially when the offence involves breaking expectations of female behaviour, such as harming children. There may be a double standard, with leniency for lesser offences but harsher treatment when gender role expectations are broken (**doubly deviant, Smart 1976)**.
* Overall it seems then that females do commit considerably less crime than males, although not to the extent suggested by official statistics.

**Why do women commit less crime than men?**

* **Heidensohn** has suggested a set of factors relating to **differential social control** explains why women conform more.
* Females are socialised differently; the roles which girls learn stress caring, softness and attractiveness and are less likely to lead to potentially deviant behaviour than male roles which approve aggression and toughness.
* The crimes which women commit do seem to be related to female gender roles; shoplifting to the role of mother and provider and prostitution to the role of sex servant.
* **Heidensohn** argues that women, being subject to greater social control, have fewer opportunities for crime.
* In the domestic sphere they usually have responsibilities which curtail outside activities.
* They are less likely to be in occupations where white collar crime is possible, and many public spaces have greater danger and difficulty for women than for men.   
  **Lees** has shown how what teenage girls can do is constrained by the negative labels they can acquire among peers by transgressing even in small ways.

**Why then do some women commit crime?**

* **Carlen** carried out research with female offenders. Her respondents had rejected or not entered into the “**gender deal**”. Patriarchal ideology promises women a satisfying life through bringing up children and supporting a husband - being a good wife and mother.
* Carlen’s women had rejected these roles, sometimes because of very negative experiences of family life as children. In doing so they escaped a powerful area of social control, raising the possibility of offending.

**Evaluation Feminist explanations of crime**

**Strengths**

The feminist perspective has contributed a number of points to the study of crime and deviance, including the following:

* A new focus on female offending and the experiences of women in the criminal justice system;
* The application of existing theories, criticisms of them, and the development of new theories, to explain female deviance;
* A new focus on the various types of victimization suffered by women, particularly from male physical and sexual violence, including rape and domestic violence;
* A challenge to the popular misconception that women enjoy ‘chivalry’ from the criminal justice system, and are treated more leniently than men;
* An important new focus on gender and gender identity issues in explaining deviance, and the adaptation of existing theories to refocus them on gender rather than simply offending — feminists have raised questions in control theory, for example, concerning how men and women experience different levels of control, and in labelling theory concerning why female offending carries higher levels of stigmatization than male offending.

8. 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.

**Exam Questions: Old spec**

**Assess the usefulness of conflict theories for an understanding of crime and deviance. (40 marks)**

This part of the question includes assessment of your understanding of the connections between Crime and Deviance and sociological theory.

Knowledge and Understanding (20 marks)

**17-20** Answers in this band will show a very good knowledge and understanding and will successfully meet the synoptic requirements of the question.

These answers will show a thorough, conceptually detailed and wide-ranging knowledge and understanding of theoretical and empirical material on conflict theories. They will show a clear understanding of the debates surrounding such theories (e.g. about economic determinism, positivism, non-utilitarian crime and deviance, the relation between class, gender and ethnicity,the chivalry thesis, structural versus action understandings of conflict etc) and of how these inform different studies. Answers will be broad ranging, dealing with a range of different conflict theories, such as varieties of Marxism, feminism, NLR, labelling theory etc.

Higher in the band, knowledge will be more comprehensive and detailed, and/or links between theoretical and empirical aspects more explicit and developed, and understanding will be clearer and more complex.

**sources and/or relevant alternative ones:** Marx; Hall; Gilroy; Taylor, Walton & Young; Pearce; Chambliss; Sutherland; Gouldner; Becker; Heidensohn; Messerschmidt; Carlen; Smart; Walklate; Box; Campbell; Farrington & Morris; Dobash & Dobash

**(a) Identify and briefly explain two criticisms made of Merton’s strain theory. (8 marks)**

* it ignores *non-utilitarian* crime: because it sees crime as motivated only by the desire for money success, it fails to explain crimes such as vandalism, violence etc;
* it *ignores collective deviance*: it fails to see that some deviance is the product of subcultural *norms and values*, not just individuals striving to achieve societal goals;
* it ignores *law-making*: by focusing simply on who breaks the law, it fails to consider who makes the law and who benefits from it.
* it wrongly assumes value consensus;
* it takes *official statistics* for granted;
* it ignores actors. capacity to choose.

**(c) Assess the view that delinquent subcultures are the main cause of crime. (40 marks)**

Knowledge and Understanding (20 marks)

11. 16 Answers in this band will show a reasonably good knowledge and understanding and will be reasonably successful in meeting the synoptic requirements of the question.

Higher in the band, there will be knowledge of both theoretical and empirical material on

delinquent subcultures and crime, and slightly more breadth or conceptual detail. Material from different perspectives may also feature (eg functionalist, neo-Marxist, interactionist), reflecting a wider understanding, though there may be more concern with reporting findings of studies from such perspectives, than with linking the theoretical and empirical aspects.

17. 20 Answers in this band will show a very good knowledge and understanding and will successfully meet the synoptic requirements of the question.

These answers will show a thorough, conceptually detailed and wide-ranging knowledge and understanding of theoretical and empirical material on delinquent subcultures and crime.

Answers will be broad ranging and will show a clear understanding of relevant debates and issues. These may include: anomie and blocked opportunity structures; status frustration; cultural deprivation; marginalisation and relative deprivation; the underclass; labelling, self-fulfilling prophecy and deviant career; folk devils, moral panics and deviance amplification; symbolic resistance; gender and subculture; delinquency, leisure and drift; edgework and risk; different typologies of subculture (eg criminal, conflict, retreatist; independent versus reactive) etc. A range of perspectives is likely to feature in relation to the question.

Higher in the band, knowledge will be more comprehensive and detailed, and/or links between theoretical and empirical aspects more explicit and developed, and understanding will be clearer and more complex.

Sources and/or relevant alternative ones: Becker; Brake; Campbell; Cloward and Ohlin; A K Cohen; M Cohen; S Cohen; Hall; Lea and Young; Lyng; Merton; Messerschmidt; W B Miller; Morris; Murray; Young.

**(c) Crime and deviance are a result of a strain between the goal of .money success and the socially approved means of achieving it.. Assess this view. (40 marks)**

Knowledge and Understanding (20 marks)

11. 16 Answers in this band will show reasonably good knowledge and understanding and will be reasonably successful in meeting the synoptic requirements of the question.

Higher in the band, there will be knowledge of both theoretical and empirical material on strain and crime and deviance, and slightly more breadth or conceptual detail.

Material from different perspectives may also feature (eg functionalist or left realist subcultural theories, neo-Marxism, interactionism), reflecting a wider understanding, though there may be more concern with reporting findings of studies from such perspectives, than with linking the theoretical and empirical aspects.

17. 20 Answers in this band will show a very good knowledge and understanding and will successfully meet the synoptic requirements of the question.

These answers will show a thorough, conceptually detailed and wide-ranging knowledge and understanding of theoretical and empirical material on strain and crime and deviance. Answers will be broad ranging and will show a clear understanding of relevant debates and issues.

These may include: anomie and blocked opportunity structures; Merton’s typology; materialism and individualism; utilitarian and non-utilitarian crime; individual and collective deviance; status frustration; cultural deprivation; marginalisation and relative deprivation; the underclass; labelling; cross-cultural comparisons; delinquency and drift; edgework etc. A range of perspectives is likely to feature.

Higher in the band, knowledge will be more comprehensive and detailed, and/or links between theoretical and empirical aspects more explicit and developed, and understanding will be clearer and more complex.

sources and/or relevant alternative ones: Adler; Becker; Cloward and Ohlin; A K Cohen; Durkheim; Gouldner; Heidensohn; Lea and Young; Marx; Merton; W B Miller; Murray; Reiner; Savelsberg; Taylor et al; Young.

9. THE SOCIAL DISTRIBUTION OF CRIME AND DEVIANCE

What you need to know:

* Understand the social distribution of crime by **age**, including recent patterns and trends in crime.
* Understand the social distribution of crime by **ethnicity**, including recent patterns and trends in crime.
* Understand the social distribution of crime by **gender** including recent patterns and trends in crime.
* Understand the social distribution of crime by **locality**, including recent patterns and trends in crime.
* Understand the social distribution of crime by **social class,** including recent patterns and trends in crime.
* Understand sociological explanations for the differences.

**Trends in Crime**

* Official statistics show that from the 1930s - early 1950s, there was a gradual rise in recorded crime, with a steeper rise between the 1950s and the early 1980s. There was a rapid increase in crime from the 1980s.
* Crime in England and Wales peaked in 1995, since when it has fallen by 48 per cent according to the **BCS**.
* Although crime remains at a much higher level than in the 1960s and earlier, the crime level now seems to have stabilized.

**Age and Crime**

**Patterns and Trends**

* The peak age for offending is between 15 and 18, with young males much more likely to offend than females.
* Young people have always been over-represented in the crime statistics, and in deviant activity in general.
* **Official statistics** show that roughly half of all those convicted are aged 21 or under, and a 2002 **self- report survey** found that almost half of Britain’s secondary school students admitted to having broken the law.

**Explanations for links between age and crime**

**Status frustration** **(Cohen, 1971)**

* Young people are frustrated at being caught in the transition between child and adult status / lack of an independent status in society.
* The peer group provides some support for an identity and status that is independent of school or family, and therefore takes on a greater importance among young people.
* The lack of responsibilities and status, and the search for excitement and peer-group status, mean that many young people drift into minor acts of delinquency and clashes with the law.
* Peer-group pressure may also give young people the confidence and encouragement to involve themselves in minor acts of delinquency, which they would not engage in on their own.
* This problem of status frustration affects all young people, and explains why many of them, from all social classes, occasionally get involved in delinquent and deviant activity. However it is a problem suffered by lower working class young people (the largest group of criminal offenders) than any other group.

**Peer-group status and the focal concerns of lower-working-class subculture Miller (1962)**

* Lower-working-class young males are more likely to engage in delinquency because their subculture has a number of **focal concerns**, which carry with them the risk of law-breaking.
* The six focal concerns are: **trouble**; **toughness**; **smartness**; **excitement**; **fatalism**; **autonomy**.
* These focal concerns are shared by many lower-working-class males of all ages, but they are likely to become exaggerated in the lives of young people as they seek to achieve peer-group status by, for example, constantly demonstrating just how much tougher, more masculine, smarter and willing they are to get into fights than their peers.

**Edgework and the peer group**

* Writers like **Katz (1988)** and **Lyng** **(1990)** suggest that much youthful criminal activity is motivated by what is called ‘edgework’, rather than material gain.
* The pleasures of thrill-seeking and risk-taking, and the ‘buzz’ generated by the excitement involved in living on the edge in acts like shoplifting, vandalism, doing drugs, fighting etc is a gratifying seductive adventure, and more important than any worry about the risk of being caught or need for items stolen.
* **Peer-group status** can be achieved through such activities, which take on a symbolic value as a trophy of the risk-taking game.
* The peer-group offers support and encouragement for such activities, and group involvement increases the chances of getting away with it.
* This pursuit of excitement and thrills may apply to all young men, and increasingly to young women as well, but are likely to appeal most to those from the lower working class (links to Miller).

**The peer group and weakened social bonds**

* **Control theory**: Criminal and deviant activity become more likely when individuals’ bonds to society and the controls that help to prevent crime and deviance, such as social integration through the family, school, workplace and community, are weakened.
* E.g. The period of status frustration can weaken these bonds, as they are temporarily displaced by the peer group, where deviance may become a means of achieving status and respect from peers.

**Delinquency, drift and techniques of neutralization**

* **Matza (1964):** Status frustration weakens young people’s sense of identity. This, in combination with the weakened bonds of control, means that young people lack a sense of identity and direction.
* In this period of **drift**, the peer group can provide a sense of identity, excitement and status, which again, this makes young people vulnerable to occasional acts of delinquency.
* However, they have no commitment to criminal or deviant values, as occasional acts of delinquency are accompanied by **techniques of neutralization;** justifications used to excuse or neutralize any blame or disapproval associated with deviance.
* **Matza**: Young people recognise wrongdoing and condemn it in others because when they do commit delinquent acts and are caught, they seek to justify or excuse their particular offences in terms of mainstream social values.
* **Matza** identifies **five techniques of neutralization** used by delinquents when they try to neutralize their guilt:

**1 Denial of responsibility:** Claiming that the circumstances were unusual. E.g. Being drunk or on drugs at the time the offence was committed.

**2 Denial of injury to the victim:** E.g. In cases of vandalism of rich people’s property, for which insurance will pay.

**3 Denial of victim:**Denying that the victim was a victim at all. E.g. After beating up a bully in order that he will stop bullying others.

**4 Condemnation of condemners:**E.g. claiming that the people who condemn their behaviour had no right to do so, as they were being unfair or unjust, or were just as bad or corrupt themselves.

**5 Appeal to higher loyalties:**E.g.saying that they were only fighting because they had to stop their brother being bullied.

* The period of status frustration generally disappears as people get older, as young people begin to establish clearly defined and independent adult status and are integrated into society as they take on responsibilities like a home, marriage or cohabitation, children, and paid employment. (Links to idea of **‘stages of life’:** Young people have freedoms (including those to commit crime) which disappear with age (financial and personal commitments- ‘settling down’)
* The peer group subsequently diminishes in significance as a source of status, and most young people consequently give up delinquency in early adulthood.

**Police stereotyping**

* All the reasons above mean that the police are likely to see young people as the source of problems, and this stereotype involves them in spending more time observing and checking youths. As a result, more get caught, become defined as offenders and appear in the statistics.
* This questions the accuracy of the statistics and focuses on the reasons why the actions of young men are more likely to be treated as crimes.

**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.)
* It is likely that Asian crime levels are associated with class, with middle-class groups less likely to offend.

**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.

**Gender and Crime**

**Patterns and trends**

* **Official statistics** show that males in most countries of the world commit far more crime than females. By their 40th birthday, about one in three males have a conviction of some kind, compared to fewer than one in ten females.
* Men are responsible for about four **known**offences for every one committed by women, they are more likely to be repeat offenders, and in general they commit more serious offences.
* **Men are many times more likely to be found guilty or cautioned for offending than women,** for example: about 50 times more likely for sex offences; about 14 times more likely for burglaries; about 8 times more likely for robbery and drug offences; about 7 times more likely for criminal damage; about 5 times more likely for violence against the person (though this is much greater for violence which results in serious injury).

**Why do females appear to commit less crime than men?**

**Sex-role theory and gender socialization**

Gender socialization encourages women to adopt feminine characteristics such as being more emotional, less competitive, less tough and aggressive, and more averse to taking risks than men. Women’s traditional roles involve being wives, mothers, housewives (and often workers). These combine to make many women both more afraid of the risk-taking involved in crime, as well as giving them fewer opportunities than men to commit crime.

**The gender deal and the class deal**

**Carlen (1988):** Women are encouraged to conform to:

1. **The class deal:**The material rewards that arise from working in paid employment, enabling women to purchase things like consumer goods and enjoy a respectable life and home;
2. **The gender deal:**The rewards that arise from fulfilling their roles in the family and home, with material and emotional support from a male breadwinner.

* Most women accept and achieve these deals and the rewards and security arising from them, and therefore conform and do not commit crime.
* However, the rewards arising from the class or gender deals are not available to some women, due to poverty, unemployment, abusive partners etc.
* Such women may then make a rational decision to choose crimeas it offers the possibilities of benefits like money, food and consumer goods which are not otherwise available.

**Social control**

* **Heidensohn:** Patriarchal society imposes greater control over women, reducing opportunities to offend.
* This patriarchal control operates in:

1. The **private domestic sphere**: Responsibilities for domestic labour and childcare provide less time and opportunity for crime and women face more serious consequences if they do become involved. Teenage girls are likely to be more closely supervised by their parents than boys, reducing their chances of getting into trouble.
2. The **public sphere**: Women are faced with controls arising from fear of physical or sexual violence if they go out alone at night. Women also face the threat of losing their reputation of being ‘respectable’ if they engage in deviance, for example through gossip, the application of labels like ‘slag’ or ‘slapper’ by men etc
3. The **workplace:** Women are often subject to sexual harassment and supervision by male bosses which restricts their opportunities to deviate. Plus, womens’ subordinate position (e.g. glass ceiling), prevents women from rising to senior positions where there is greater opportunity to commit fraud etc.

* These put greater pressure on women than men to conform, because of their greater risks of losing more than they might gain by law breaking.

**The chivalry thesis**

* Paternalism and sexism on the part of the criminal justice system, such as the male-dominated police and courts, means that women are treated more leniently than men.

**Evidence for the chivalry thesis:**

1. Women are consistently treated more leniently by the law (e.g.first offenders about half as likely to be given a sentence of immediate imprisonment as their male counterparts).
2. Female offenders are generally regarded by the police as a less serious threat than men, and are therefore more likely to benefit from more informal approaches to their offences, such as cautions or warnings rather than being charged (this is partly because they generally commit more minor offences like shoplifting, and they are more likely to admit their offences, which is necessary before the police can issue a caution).

**Evidence against the chivalry thesis:**

1. Although women are far less likely to commit serious offences than men, those who do are likely to face more severe punishment, particularly for violent crime, as it violates socially acceptable patterns of feminine behaviour.
2. **Carlen (1997)**: Sentences handed out to women by the criminal justice system are partly influenced by the court’s assessment of their characters and performance in relation to their traditional roles as wife and mother, rather than simply by the severity of the offence. Consequently, violent women are perceived by the criminal justice system in far worse terms than men—they are seen as ‘really bad’ because they violate the norms of traditional feminine behavior (**doubly deviant)**. Men are in general far more violent than women, but are given comparatively lighter sentences for similar levels of violence because they are perceived as just overstepping the mark of what men are expected to be like anyway.
3. Women offenders are more likely to be remanded in custody (put in prison) than men while awaiting trial for serious offences, but in three-quarters of cases, women do not actually receive a prison sentence when they come to trial.
4. Many women in prison appear to have been sentenced more severely than men in similar.

**Growing female criminality: Changing gender roles and ‘laddette’ culture**

* There is a growing increase in the proportion of crime committed by females, most noticeably by young women.
* E.G. In 1957, men were responsible for 11 times as many offences as women, but by 2008 that ratio had narrowed to 4:1. The number of crimes committed by girls aged 10—17 in England and Wales went up by 25 per cent between 2004 and 2007, with significant increases in minor assaults, robberies, public order offences and criminal damage.
* **Adler (1975):** Women in contemporary Britain have more independence than in the past, and they are becoming more successful than men in both education and the labour market.
* At the same time, some of the traditional forms of control on women are weakening, particularly among younger women.
* **Denscombe (2001)**: There has been a rise of the ‘laddette’ culture, where young women are adopting behaviour traditionally associated with young men, as they assert their identity through binge drinking, gang culture, risk-taking, being hard and in control, and peer-related violence etc.
* There is some evidence that the police are now reacting in a more serious way, taking more action and prosecuting girls involved in such behaviour rather than dealing with it informally by other means, which would increase the statistics for such offences.

**Why do males commit more crime than women?**

**Sex-role theory and gender socialization**

* Men’s traditional role has been that of family provider/breadwinner, and the types of behaviour they are encouraged to adopt is as the independent, self-confident, tough, competitive, aggressive, dominant and risk-taking.
* The male peer group reinforces these tendencies, particularly among younger men, and this can lead to higher risks of crime and delinquency.
* Men’s traditional roles in employment, their lack of responsibility for housework and childcare etc, give men more independence than women, and more opportunities to commit crime.

**The assertion of masculinity**

* **Connell (1987, 1995)**: There is a **hegemonic masculinity** (a male gender identity that defines what it means to be a ‘real man’; men who don’t want to be regarded as ‘wimps’, abnormal or odd are meant to accomplish this masculinity).
* It features such things as toughness, aggression, competitiveness, control, success and power over (and subordination of) women.
* It is the masculinity that was identified earlier by Miller as a focal concern of lower-working-class subculture.
* **Messerschmidt (1993:** Men sometimes turn to crime and violence as a means of asserting their masculinity when legitimate and traditional means of demonstrating masculinity and being ‘real men’ (success at school, having a steady, reliable, well-paid job, a stable family life) are blocked.
* Those lacking legitimate masculine- validating resources are most likely to be those from more deprived backgrounds (the most common criminals).
* The nature of hegemonic masculinity might also explain why middle-class men try to assert masculinity through ruthlessness, ambition and thrill-seeking in business, leading to white-collar and corporate crimes.
* The nature of hegemonic masculinity might also explain why men from all social classes commit domestic violence and rape.

**Evaluation of the masculinity thesis**

* It doesn’t explain why most men who don’t have access to legitimate means of asserting masculinity don’t turn to crime
* Not all male crime can be interpreted as an expression of masculinity.

**Postmodernity and male crime.**

* De-industrialisation has meant that traditional jobs done by mainly male working class have declined and in some cases disappeared.
* These jobs had provided opportunities for men to express their masculinity through hard physical labour/ being major bread winner.
* In their place many jobs that have been created have been seen as feminine such as office work or in retail sales.
* **Winlow (2001):** Studied bouncers in pubs and clubs in Sunderland and found this type of job was acceptable to them because of its masculine image.
* The job gave them paid employment as well as a sense of toughness (looking the part- called **‘bodily capital’)** but it also provided access to various criminal ways of making money via drug dealing, selling goods illegally and protection rackets.
* They were also able to be violent as part of their job even though this often bordered on criminal activity.
* The criminal activities of these men as a way of asserting their masculinity.

**Locality and Crime**

**Patterns and trends**

* Official crime statistics show that recorded crime higher in urban areas than in rural areas, and is also higher in particular areas/neighbourhoods of towns and cities.
* The British Crime Survey and police recorded crime show that rural areas, compared to urban areas: have lower rates of all types of crime; have a lower proportion of people with high levels of worry about crime; have lower levels of worry about high levels of anti-social behaviour in their area (e.g. vandalism, graffiti, and using drink or drugs in public places).
* **Marshall and Johnson (2005)**: Anxiety and worry about all crime types is less in rural areas compared to urban and inner-city areas. Rural residents see themselves as less likely to become a victim of crime than those in urban areas.
* Rural areas have a higher risk of burglaries among high-income households than among lower-income ones (a reversal of the pattern found in urban areas).

**Explanations for links between locality and crime**

**The Chicago School and the zone of transition (ecology of crime)**

* **Shaw and McKay (1931, 1942):** Certain parts of cities have higher levels of crime than others. These are called zones of transition.
* These are run-down areas, with poor and deteriorating housing, where the poorest people live, and where there is a high turnover of population. There is therefore little social stability, and a concentration of social problems like crime, prostitution, poor health and poverty.
* This ‘zonal hypothesis’ gave rise to three related concepts, which were used to explain crime and deviance by locality:

1. **Social disorganization:** The high rates of population turnover prevented the formation of stable communities, and weakened the hold of established values and informal social controls over individuals, which in more stable and established communities discourage deviance and crime.
2. **Cultural transmission:** In areas of social disorganisation, different delinquent values develop to which children living in such communities are exposed. These delinquent values are passed on from one generation to the next.
3. **Differential association:** If people associate with others who more commonly support crime over conformity, and live in a situation where it seems that ‘everyone’ is involved in deviant or criminal behaviour, then they are more likely to commit crime themselves. It is more probable that this will occur in zones of transition.

* Rural communities generally lack the social disorganisation found in zones of transition. Inhabitants change addresses much less frequently than urban-dwellers.
* **Marshall and Johnson (2005):** Rural areas are more ‘close knit’, with higher levels of social interaction between people in the area, including kin relations. People are likely to know other members of the community through informal knowledge of their family and community history, rather than through their formal positions, like their job.

**Evaluation of zones of transition**

* **It ignores choice**: Why don’t all those in similar positions turn to crime? It doesn’t explain why some choose to commit crime while others do not.
* It is unclear how subcultures form and cultural transmission is possible.If zones of transition are so socially disorganized, with a constantly changing population, then it is hard to see how a delinquent subculture develops, and is able to pass its ideas on between generations, as there must be at least some continuity and stability for this to be possible.

**More opportunity for crime**

* **Brantingham and Brantingham (1995):** Urban areas have more crime generating and crime attracting areas than rural areas (e.g. shopping precincts, warehouses, businesses, leisure facilities, transport hubs, large insecure car parks and areas like red-light districts) that offer more opportunities for crime, and attract offenders who go there in search of crime.

**Policing styles**

* There is a greater police presence in urban areas, so more crime is likely to be detected. Police in urban areas are less likely to have roots in the community and to know who the offenders are, so they adopt more formal procedures for dealing with offenders, such as arresting and charging them.
* In rural areas, they maybe less like1y to arrest offenders, especially in the case of more trivial offences, preferring merely to issue informal warnings.

**Less chance of being caught**

* In the large cities, life is more impersonal. Strangers are more likely to go unrecognised, and are therefore more able to get away with offences.
* In rural communities, there is a higher level of natural surveillance as people recognise each other and strangers are more likely to be noticed, which can discourage offending because of the higher risks of being caught.

**Social deprivation**

* Social deprivation and social problems, such as poor housing, unemployment and poverty, are at their worst in the inner cities.
* These have been linked to crime, as people try to achieve success by illegal means that others can achieve by approved and legal means.

**Social Class and Crime**

**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.

**Exam Questions: Old spec**

**(c) Assess sociological explanations of social class differences in crime rates (Item A). (40 marks)**

17. 20 Answers in this band will show a very good knowledge and understanding and will successfully meet the synoptic requirements of the question.

These answers will show a thorough, conceptually detailed and wide-ranging knowledge and understanding of theoretical and empirical material on class differences in crime rates. Answers will be broad ranging and will show a clear understanding of relevant debates and issues. These may include: structural versus action or positivist versus interpretivist approaches, rates as social facts or as social constructs, sources of data (official statistics, victim studies, self report studies etc), anomie, subculture, opportunity structures, marginalisation, relative deprivation, poverty, differential association, white-collar and corporate crime, selective enforcement, typifications, etc. A range of perspectives is likely to feature.

Higher in the band, knowledge will be more comprehensive and detailed, and/or links between theoretical and empirical aspects more explicit and developed, and understanding will be clearer and more complex.

In answering this question, candidates may refer to some of the following sources and/or relevant

alternative ones: Becker; Bonger; Box; Chambliss; Cicourel; Cloward and Ohlin; A.K. Cohen; Graham & Bowling; Gordon; Lea & Young; Marx; Merton; W.B. Miller; Morris; Murray; Pearce; Snider; Sutherland; Wilson; Young.

**(c) Using material from Item A and elsewhere, assess sociological explanations of genderdifferences in patterns of offending, victimisation and punishment. (40 marks)**

AO1: Knowledge and Understanding 20 marks

17. 20 Answers in this band will show very good knowledge and understanding and will successfully meet the synoptic requirements of the question.

These answers will show thorough, conceptually detailed and wide-ranging knowledge and

understanding of theoretical and empirical material on gender and offending, victimisation and punishment. Answers will be broad ranging and will show clear understanding of relevant debates and issues. These may include patriarchy; gender role socialisation; access to illegitimate opportunity structures; control theory; the relationship between class/ethnicity and gender (eg gender and class .deals.); masculinity and offending; the liberation thesis; the marginalisation thesis; women as victims; differential law enforcement; sentencing policy; the chivalry thesis; official and other sources of data, etc. Varieties of feminism, as well as other perspectives, are likely to feature.

Higher in the band, knowledge will be more comprehensive and detailed, and/or links between theoretical and empirical aspects more explicit and developed, and understanding will be clearer and more complex.

In answering this question, candidates may refer to some of the following sources and/or relevant alternative ones: Adler; Box; The British Crime Survey; Campbell; Carlen; AK Cohen; Dobash and Dobash; Farrington and Morris; Graham and Bowling; Heidensohn; Hirschi; Lea and Young; Lyng; Messerschmidt; Pollak; Smart; Walklate.

**Exam Questions: Answer guidance**

**Item A**

The so-called ‘chivalry thesis’ argues that women are treated more leniently than men by the criminal justice system. As a result, criminal statistics underestimate the true extent of female offending.

For example, Otto Pollak (1961) argued that men - including police officers, for example— are socialised to be protective towards women and thus are less likely to charge them or prosecute them. Similarly, when they appear in court, female defendants are treated more sympathetically by male judges and jurors. Pollak also argues that women are accustomed to deceiving men, for example in faking orgasm during sex. This skill in deceit means that their crimes, such as poisoning and infanticide, are less easily uncovered.

Using material from item A and elsewhere, assess the value of the ‘chivalry thesis’ in understanding gender differences in crime. (21 marks)

This question carries 9 AOl (knowledge and understanding) marks and 12 A02 (interpretation, application, analysis and evaluation) marks.

Start by using the Item to help you outline the chivalry thesis, adding your own examples (e.g. what sorts of offences might policemen let c women but not men for?). You should examine relevant evidence in support of the thesis — e.g. Graham and Bowling’s and Flood-Page et al’s self-report data, or studies showing a higher rate of cautions or lower rate of imprisonment for women in similar cases.   
You also need to evaluate the thesis. Start by presenting evidence arguing that women are not treated more leniently, such as Buckle and Farrington, Farrington and Morris or Box. You can put this material into theoretical context by introducing a feminist perspective to argue that women are often treated more harshly, especially if they deviate from gender norms, whether as defendants or as victims (as in many rape cases).

**Essay Questions**

**“The most noticeable thing about women in criminological research is their absence! What explanations can you offer for the, “invisibility” of women? (12 marks)**

**Examine sociological explanations for the lower rates of recorded crime in rural compared to urban areas. (12 marks)**

**10. GLOBALISATION AND CRIME IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY; THE MASS MEDIA AND CRIME; GREEN CRIME; HUMAN RIGHTS AND STATE CRIMES**

**What you need to know:**

* Links between **globalization** and crime: Examples and explanations.
* The role of the **mass media** in the social construction of crime
* Links between the **state** and crime and explanations
* **Green crime** and explanations

**Crime and Globalization**

* Globalization is the growing interdependence of societies across the world, with the spread of the same culture, consumer goods and economic interests across the globe.
* Corporate crimes are increasingly global and transnational.
* Growing globalization and global communications offer new opportunities for crime and new means of carrying out crimes.
* Local and national crime is increasingly interlinked with crime happening in other countries through global criminal networks.
* This globalization of crime means that a crime committed in one country may have its perpetrators located in another country; without the cooperation of other states, it may be impossible for a police investigation in any one country to track down and convict the offenders.
* **Karofi and Mwanza (2006)** suggest that global crimes include, among others, the international trade in illegal drugs, weapons and human beings; money-laundering; terrorism; and cybercrime.

1. **The international illegal drug trade**

* The global illegal drug market was estimated by the United Nations at $321 billion, which was higher than the GDP in 88 per cent of the countries in the world.
* The international drugs trade provides the drugs that are available in local communities in the UK, and drug addiction is responsible for a high proportion of acquisitive crime (theft) as people steal to support their drug habits.
* A report by the Audit Commission in 2002 suggested that half of all recorded crime in England and Wales was drug-related.

1. **Human-trafficking**

* Human-trafficking is the illegal movement and smuggling of people, for a variety of purposes (prostitution, forced labour, the illegal removal of organs for transplants etc).
* There is also a related global criminal network dealing with the trade in illegal immigrants: smuggling into countries at high costs those people who are unable to legally enter.

1. **Money-laundering**

* Money-laundering is concerned with making money that has been obtained illegally look like it came from legal sources.
* Money-laundering uses modern communications technology to launder ‘dirty money’ by moving it around the world electronically through complex financial transactions. This makes it very difficult for law-enforcement agencies to track the sources of money, and hard to identify which country is responsible for law-enforcement.

1. **Cybercrime**

* Cybercrime refers to a wide range of criminal acts committed with the help of communication and information technology, predominantly the Internet.
* Cybercrimes are global, in the sense that many online frauds, illegal pornography, hacking, identity theft offences and so on in the UK often have their offenders outside the country.
* Examples of cybercrimes include: Internet-based fraud, child pornography and paedophilia; terrorist websites and networking, hacking; phishing, identity theft.

1. **Globalisation and Crime**

* **Taylor** links global crime to the way the capitalist system has developed.
* Two important features have been the rise of **transnational corporations (TNCs)** which are companies that operate across national borders, and the deregulation of financial and other markets.
* These have produced a number of consequences which are felt by people throughout the world.
* The ability of TNC’s to move production to cheap labour areas has produced widespread exploitation in many countries included the use of forced and child labour.
* In Western countries such as Britain it has contributed to deindustrialisation where many manufacturing jobs have disappeared. As a result crime has increased as people seek illegitimate ways of reaching the success goals of society.
* Globalisation has also increased the opportunities for financial fraud on a massive scale as millions of pounds can be moved across the world in a matter of seconds.
* Taylor also links the growth of the drugs trade to globalisation in that it has had an impact on both the supply and the demand for illegal substances.
* On the supply side money raised from the sale of drugs can often be hidden behind legitimate companies set up to allow such funds to be ‘laundered’.
* On the demand side many areas of Britain and the U.S.A. have become so deprived that the drugs trade offers not only some form of escape from the effects of poverty but also business opportunities for those wishing to make money in one of the few ways available to them.

**Marketisation and Crime**

* **Currie** has argued that the way a society reacts to globalisation can affect the levels of crime.
* Countries like the U.S.A. which has removed most government controls on private companies and the economy experience very high levels of inequality.
* Basically the impact of globalisation on national economies is often to make a number of individuals considerably richer whilst forcing large numbers of other people into poverty.
* The impact of this has been to create major areas of concentrated deprivation where crime has flourished partly out of economic necessity but also because there is little in the way of community spirit and informal social control.
* Of course it should be remembered that it is not possible to establish a link which proves that crime levels are directly caused by the economic policies of governments.

**11. 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**](JavaScript:parent.bookWindow('../books/bookstz.html#Young_1971'))**)**) showed how agents of social control, particularly the police, '[amplified](JavaScript:parent.remoteStart('../popups/devamp.html'))' 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.

12. 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.

**13. STATE CRIMES**

**Introduction**

* State crimes are those linked to governments or other agencies involved in the running of countries.
* Whilst states are responsible for making laws they must also act within them and there is also international law on a range of human rights issues.
* However the situation is complicated because states not only make the laws in their country they also enforce them.
* The victims of state crime are often relatively powerless individuals or groups and this makes it even more difficult for them to get justice.

**Examples of State Crimes**

* The torture and illegal treatment or punishment of citizens;
* Corrupt or criminal policing;
* War crimes, involving illegal acts committed during wars, like the murder, ill- treatment, torture or enslavement of civilian populations or prisoners of war, and the plundering of property;
* Genocide, involving the mass murder of people belonging to a particular ethnic group with the aim of eliminating that group.
* State-sponsored terrorism.
* Violations of human rights.

**Understanding State Crimes**

* **Cohen:** A concern with human rights and state crimes has been one of the major developments in criminology in recent years.
* This is because criminology has increasingly focused on the victims of crime and organisations such as Amnesty International have raised public awareness of the misuse of power by various states.
* In addition there has been a huge increase in the powers of the state both formally, as they pass more laws, and informally as they use new technology to monitor and control their citizens.
* **Globalisation,** which has increased the inter-connectedness of states, has also made countries more vulnerable to the influence of others.
* **Cohen** has been especially interested in how states attempt to conceal or justify their illegal activities. He argues this often involves a three stage **spiral of denial:**

**Stage one:** Complete denial that any crime took place.

**Stage two:** An attempt to change how the act or acts are described, for example something was ‘an accident’.

**Stage three:** involves providing a justification for the actions such as the state was protecting its members.

* In this way states often seek to excuse their crimes once they have failed to cover them up.
* **Chambliss**: State crime is often the result of **strain,** meaning that the state is torn between different sets of objectives. He claims that many of the state crimes carried out by the CIA including torture, kidnapping and executions took place at a time when they felt under extreme pressure to guard against the threat posed to the country by communism.

**The individuals who commit state crimes**

* **Milgram:** People who inflict pain and suffering might be psychologically normal but be acting out of character because of pressure from the role they are playing.
* **Kelman and Hamilton** support this in their study of **crimes of obedience:** individuals learn to ignore ordinary moral rules when ordered by those in authority. They are able to convince themselves that such activities are routine. Often they are convinced that those they are fighting are sub-human and therefore normal standards of decency do not apply to them.

**14. GREEN CRIME**

**Introduction**

* The end of the 20th century saw a growing concern about environmental issues and they began to be part of political debates in many countries.
* Globalisation could partly explain this raised awareness. One reason was because it became apparent that actions in one part of the world were having effects across the globe, especially with things like climate change.
* At the same time those most concerned about environment issues were able to organise themselves and campaign across national boundaries due to the developments in new technology (e.g. Internet).

**What is Green Crime?**

* Green crime is an illegal activity which has an impact on the environment. This can involve the actions of individuals, private companies or even nation states.
* Until quite recently certain events such as flooding, drought or famine were seen as ‘natural’ disasters which suggested they were events outside the control of people.
* However increasingly scientists and others became aware that many of these events were linked to human activity such as deforestation or the emission of greenhouse gases.
* **Beck** has argued that in developing ways of producing the resources we need the Western world has produced a new set of risks.
* Many of these risks involve threats to the environment and they are global in nature. Taking climate change as an example, Beck argues we have created a **‘global risk society’**

**Green Criminology**

* Traditional criminology has been concerned with studying acts which clearly break a well defined set of laws.
* More radical theorists have argued that this approach is out dated and needs to be widened to study newer issues.
* **Rob White** has argued that criminology should study any action which causes **harm** either to individuals or the environment regardless of whether or not a law has been broken.
* This is important because a considerable amount of harm is done to the environment by actions which do not appear to break any specific law.
* For example hunting and trading in certain animals often only becomes illegal when they become threatened with extinction yet the harm has been done long before laws are passed.
* Also environmental harm crosses national boundaries but often these countries have very different laws.
* Therefore actions within the law in some countries could have serious environmental effects in others.
* Such a radical approach is similar to a Marxist view of ‘crimes of the powerful’. They point out that those with power are able to define what is and is not illegal.
* In the same way some of the major perpetrators of green crimes and able to avoid their actions being classed as illegal.
* E.g. The logging companies who destroyed much of the Amazon rainforest. Their ‘legal’ commercial activities have had a massive impact on not only the native people but also on the environment world wide.

**15. CRIME CONTROL, PREVENTION AND PUNISHMENT, VICTIMS, AND THE ROLE OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM AND OTHER AGENCIES.**

**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 Lest 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.

**16. THE SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF SUICIDE AND ITS THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS**

**What you need to know:**

* Durkheim’s study of suicide.
* Interpretivist responses to Durkheim.
* Realist approaches to suicide
* The key theoretical and methodological implications of the study of suicide

**Introduction**

* Suicide has received a huge amount of attention from sociologists, the main reason being that **Durkheim** used this topic to illustrate his own **positivist methodological approach.**
* Suicide has become an area in which different methodological approaches have been tested and disputed, with some sociologists supporting Durkheim’s approach to explaining suicide; others trying to develop and improve his theory; whilst others have rejected his whole approach.

**Durkheim: Positivism and Suicide**

* In 1897 Durkheim published his book ‘**Suicide: A Study in Sociology**’ which used a **positivist** approach to study suicide**.**
* **Positivism:** believes society can be studied scientifically and that sociology should model itself on the logic and methods of the natural sciences. Positivists see human behaviour as formed by social forces external to the individual. Positivists aim to observe patterns in society and related human behavior and develop laws of cause and effect to produce laws to explain these patterns.
* Wanted to show that even a highly individual act like suicide is a product of **social forces** (e.g. demographic characteristics, values, beliefs etc) and that explaining the **suicide rate** in any society did not depend on understanding the consciousness, intention or mental/psychological state of the suicide victim.
* Also chose to study suicide because of the availability of quantitative **suicide statistics** from a number of European countries. These statistics were seen as being **social facts.**
* **Lukes (1992):** Social facts have three main features: They are external to individuals; they constrain individuals, shaping their behavior; they are greater than individuals: they exist on a different ‘level’ from the individual.
* Durkheim believed that suicide statistics could be used to find the sociological causes of suicide rates and that he could establish correlations, and, could uncover the patterns that would reveal the **causal relationships** at work in the production of suicide rates.
* Ultimate aim: To demonstrate that sociology was as rigorous a discipline as the natural sciences.
* **Patterns in suicide rates:** Durkheim discovered that thesuicide rates of the European societies in question were fairly constant and stable; there were significant differences in the suicide rate between societies; there were consistent variations in the suicide rate between different groups within the same society. He believed it was impossible to explain these patterns if suicide was seen solely as a personal and individual act. Thus, sociology was just as scientific as physics, chemistry or biology.
* **Causes of suicide:** Durkheim suggested that suicide was determined by two social facts:  
  **1.** **Social Integration:** The extent that individuals feel a sense of belonging to a social group/society and feel an obligation to its members. Achieved through family, religious institutions etc.  
  **2. Moral Regulation:** The extent to which individuals actions and desires are kept in check by norms and values. Achieved through social control and socialization.
* Suicide results from either too much or too little social integration and moral regulation.

**Durkheim’s four types of suicide**

**1.** **Egoistic Suicide:** The individual is **insufficiently integrated** into the social groups and society to which he or she belonged. E.g. The higher rate of suicide associated with **Protestantism** results from its being a less strongly integrated church than the Catholic church. Also linked to (a lack of) **family relationships**.

**2. Altruistic Suicide:** The individual is **so well integrated** into society that they sacrificed their own life out of a sense of duty to others.

**3. Anomic Suicide** Takes place when society **does not regulate the individual sufficiently**. (there is anomie, or normlessness). E.g. Economic booms/slumps when traditional norms and values are disrupted by rapid social change, producing uncertainty in the minds of individuals as society’s guidelines for behaviour became increasingly unclear.

**4. Fatalistic Suicide** occurs when society **restricts the individual too much**. Suicide as an escape from a future of unending despair and hopelessness. E.g. Slaves.

**Evaluation**

**Strengths**

* Supported by positivists E.g. **Halbwachs (1930)** claimed Durkheim’s work was “in principle…unassailable” and undertook his own research which confirmed Durkheim’s findings.

**Weaknesses:** **Positivist criticisms**

* **Halbwachs (1930)**: Durkheim had overestimated the importance of religion in determining the suicide rate.
* **Gibbs and Martin (1964):** Durkheim was not positivist enough, using concepts that could not be directly observed or measured.
* The four types of suicide are based on assumptions about what group membership means to the individuals concerned. E.g. Durkheim assumesthat the Catholic religion is a more integrating religion than Protestantism, but individual Catholics may not see it that way. Thus, he is putting his own subjective interpretations onto the data. This is ‘unscientific’.
* Durkheim’s work rests on official suicide statistics, which he regards as a true record of the number of suicides. These might actually be social constructions.
* See other theories criticisms below.

INTERPRETIVE THEORIES OF SUICIDE

Criticise Durkheim’s approach and favour qualitative research methods. E.g. **Douglas** and **Atkinson.**

**J.D. Douglas’** **‘The Social Meanings of Suicide’ (1967)**

* Sees **suicide statistics as the result of negotiations** between the different parties involved,rather than objective facts. The decision as to whether a sudden death is suicide is made by a coroner and is influenced by other people, such as the family and friends of the deceased.
* E.g. When a person is well integrated into a social group, his or her family and friends might be more likely to deny the possibility of suicide, both to themselves and to the coroner. With less well-integrated members of society this is less likely to happen.
* This bias could explain Durkheim’s findings: While it might appear that the number of suicides is related to integration, in reality the degree of integration simply affects the chances of sudden death being recorded as suicide.
* Also, **it was ridiculous for Durkheim to treat all suicides as the same type of act** without investigating the meaning attached to the act by those who took their own life.
* Each act has a different motive behind it and a social meaning that is related to the society and context in which it took place.
* In order to categorise suicides according to their social meanings it is necessary to carry out **case studies** (based on interviews with those who knew the person well, analysis of suicide notes and diaries) to discover the meanings of particular suicides.
* There are 4 most common social meanings of suicide in Western industrial society:   
  **1. Transformation of the self**: Suicide as a means of getting others to think of you differently / self punishment to show repentance for wrongdoing.  
  **2. Transformation of the Soul:** Suicide as a means of escaping the misery of this life/ way of getting to heaven.  
  **3. Sympathy Suicide:** Suicide as a cry for help.  
  **4. Revenge Suicide:** Suicide as a means of getting revenge by making others feel guilty.

**Evaluation**

**Weaknesses**

* **Steve Taylor (1989)**: Douglas fails to recognise the value of Durkheim’s work.
* **Sainsbury and Barraclough (1968)**: The rank order of suicides for immigrant groups in the USA correlates closely with that of suicide rates for their countries of origin, despite the fact that a different set of coroners (American rather than those in their home countries) were involved. This suggests that statistics may reflect the real differences between groups, rather than coroners’ opinions.
* **Phenomenologists:** There cannot be any objective data on which to base an explanation of suicide.

**J. Maxwell Atkinson** ‘**Discovering Suicide’****(1978)**

* A phenomenologist/ethnomethodologist, who does not accept that a ‘real’ rate of suicide exists as an objective reality waiting to be discovered.
* Suicide is a construct of social actors: Official statistics on suicide are the interpretations made by officials, of what is seen to be unnatural death.
* Coroners have a ‘common-sense theory’ of suicide. If information about the deceased fits the theory, they are likely to categorise his or her death as suicide. They consider: 1. whether or not **suicide notes** were left or threats of suicide preceded death; 2 the particular **mode of dying**; 3 the **location and circumstances of death**; 4 the **mental state and social situation** of the victim.
* This view has serious implications for research that treats official statistics on suicide as ‘facts’ and seeks to explain their cause.

**Evaluation**

**Strengths**

* Most phenomenologists accept that their accounts are merely interpretations. Unlike positivists, who claim to produce objective, scientific accounts.

**Weaknesses**

* **Hindess (1973):** If suicide statistics can be criticised as being no more than the interpretations of coroners, then studies such as that done by Atkinson can be criticised as being no more than the interpretation of a particular sociologist.
* **Hindess (1973):** “A manuscript produced by a monkey at a typewriter would be no less valuable”

**The Realist Approach to Suicide**

* **Taylor (1982, 1989, 1990)** steered a middle way between the other theories .
* Conducted a study of **‘persons under trains’**, where there were no strong clues as to the reason for the death. However out of 32 cases, 17 resulted in suicide verdicts, 5 were classified as accidental deaths, and the remaining 10 produced open verdicts.
* A number of factors made suicide verdicts more likely:   
  1. A history of mental illness / some form of social failure or social disgrace.   
  2. When a person who had died had no good reason to be at the tube station.  
  3. If witnesses at the inquest were less close to the person, they were less likely to deny suicidal motives. (close friends / family members tended to deny that the person had reason to kill themselves).
* Taylor agrees that suicide statistics are highly unreliable and socially constructed and agrees with Atkinson that specific factors and common sense theories influence the verdicts reached by coroners and distort suicide figures, he thought it was still possible to identify the causes of suicide

**Types of Suicide**

* Suicides and suicide attempts are either **‘Ectopic**’ / **‘Inner Directed**’ (suicide as a private act) or ‘**Symphysic**’ / **’Other Directed’** (They result from a person’s relationship with others and communicating some message to them).
* They are also related whether people are **certain** or **uncertain** about themselves or about others.

1. **Submissive suicide:** Is **inner directed** and occurs when a person **is certain** about themselves and their life; they believe that life is effectively over and see themselves as already dead. E.g a person may have decided that their life is valueless without a loved one who has died.
2. **Thanatation: Inner directed** and occurs when a person is **uncertain** about themselves. The suicide attempt is a gamble which may or may not be survived, according to fate or chance.
3. **Sacrifice suicides:** **Other directed** and occurs when a person is **certain** that others have made their life unbearable. E.g. a man killing himself because his wife because she wants a divorce. Letters are left making it clear that he felt that his wife was responsible for his death.
4. **Appeal suicides: Other directed** resulting from the suicidal person feeling **uncertainty** over the attitudes of others towards them. The suicide attempts are a form of communication in which the victim tries to show how desperate they are, in order to find out how others will respond.

**Evaluation**

**Strengths**

* It helps to explain why some suicide victims leave notes and others do not, why some suicide attempts seem more serious than others, and why some take place in isolation and others in more public places.

**Weaknesses**

* It is based on Taylor’s interpretations of the actors’ meanings and there is no way of knowing if these are correct, especially in the case of those whose attempts were successful (since they are no longer able to explain their motives).
* Individual suicides may result from a combination of motives, with the result that they do not fit neatly into any one category.
* Taylor’s small sample of case studies, whilst useful giving insights into motives, is unlikely to be representative of all suicides.

**Conclusion**

* Whilst the disputes between positivists and interpretivists are real, even those who have strongly advocated either quantitative or qualititative approaches have not stuck rigidly to their own supposed methodological principles.
* E.g. **Douglas** criticises Durkheim for going beyond the study of social facts and also studying the subjective states of mind of individuals (such as what it felt like to be a Roman Catholic), in order to explain why their suicide rates should be so different.
* E.g. **Cicourel (1976),** who was strongly critical of quantitative methods, used a lot of use of statistical data in his study of juvenile justice.
* Many sociologists now advocate using a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

**Exam Questions: Answer guidance**

**Item A**

In a comparative study of decision making about suicide conducted by Atkinson, Kessel and Dalgaard, four English coroners and five Danish coroners were given 40 cases and asked to give their verdict on each of them.

The Danish coroners were much more likely to give a verdict of suicide compared with the English coroners. For example, out of the 40 cases, the Danes gave on average 29 suicide verdicts, whereas the English averaged only 19.25.

The study concludes that the difference is due to the fact that in Denmark, a suicide verdict can be given when suicide seems likely ‘on the

**Using material from Item A and elsewhere, assess the usefulness of different sociological approaches to suicide. (21 marks)**

This question carries 9 AO1 (knowledge and understanding) marks and 12 A02 (interpretation, application, analysis and evaluation) marks.   
You need to examine a number of theories of suicide, but you should avoid lengthy descriptions of the various suicide typologies and focus on the differences in perspective. Start with Durkheim’s positivist approach, covering key concepts such as social facts, integration and regulation. You could evaluate this by using Douglas’s ideas on the social meanings of suicide.

Make use of the Item to illustrate the idea that suicide verdicts are labels socially constructed by coroners, and that the law is one factor affecting how labels are constructed. You could use this to introduce Atkinson’s ethnomethodological approach focusing on coroners’ commonsense knowledge and the issue of the ‘real rate’. Also include reference to Taylor’s realist approach; for example, you can use it to evaluate both positivist and interpretivist approaches.