

GCSE Sociology

Crime & Deviance

Revision Guide



GCSE SOCIOLOGY – CRIME & DEVIANCE - 1

What is crime & deviance?

Crime: An act that is against written rules and is punishable by law e.g. theft

Deviance: Behaviour that does not conform to societies norms and values e.g. laughing at a funeral

Murder = Is criminal and also considered deviant

Listening to illegally downloaded music = Is criminal but may not be seen as deviant

Our view can be affected by:

Social context: Drinking wine at 6am or 8pm / Eating with your fingers with friends or in a restaurant on a first date / Taking off your clothes in the street or in the shower

Culture: Wearing a crop top in the UK or United Arab Emirates

History: Homosexuality now and in the 1950's

This means crime and deviance *is* **socially constructed**

Social Control

Formal social control: Involves official institutions to keep society in order e.g. police, courts, prison system

Formal sanctions: Custodial sentences (prison) / Community sentences (unpaid work, curfews, tagging) / Fines

Informal social control: Based on non official individuals or groups such as family, friends, teachers showing approval or disapproval

Informal sanctions: Leaving you out, detentions, grounding, naughty step



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Perspectives on Social Control

Functionalists:

- Social control helps keep society in order
- Without the police society would fall into chaos
- The courts protect society from dangerous criminals

Marxists:

- Social control is used to control workers but is not applied to the ruling classes
- The police are biased against the working classes e.g. Hillsborough victims were treated as criminals
- The courts are unfair and operate to protect the interests of the rich and powerful

Feminists:

- Social control benefits men and keeps women under control (e.g. through gossip)
- Police abuse their power e.g. Sarah Everard case

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Why do people commit crime?



Inadequate socialisation

(Functionalism): A poor upbringing where a young person was not taught right from wrong or was exposed to negative role models

Poverty (Marxism): People commit crime such as theft in order to survive

Influence of subcultures

(Functionalism): Albert Cohen found working class boys in particular suffer from **status frustration**

Strain Theory (Functionalism): Merton suggested people aspire to achieve the 'American Dream' (Nice car, house etc). When they cannot achieve this through legal means (a good job) they turn to crime

Psychological: People commit crime due to psychological problems

Why do people commit crime?

Labelling theory (Interactionism):

Becker suggested that certain groups are labelled as criminal (e.g. working class boys) and will be treated negatively by society such as being repeatedly stopped and searched or finding it more difficult to get a job. The individual may absorb the label (**self fulfilling prophecy**) and become deviant. They may participate in a **deviant career** and it may eventually become central to their identity (**master status**)

Relative Deprivation:

People view the lifestyle of others and commit crime to attain the same lifestyle e.g. the bank manager and the bank teller

Biology: People commit crimes due to genetics or the influence of biology such as PMT or post natal depression



Measuring Crime



Official Statistics: Data from the Government (police)
+ Allow for easy comparisons & ability to spot trends
+ From a reliable source
- Will not include unreported or unrecorded crime (**hidden/dark figure**)

Victim Surveys: Data collected from households of their experience as victims of crime
+ May contain more of the hidden figure
- Will not contain victimless crimes

Self Report Studies: Data collected from individuals in terms of their participation in crime
+ May contain more of the hidden figure
- Respondents may lie



Gender & Crime



Women commit less crime:

- Impact of gender socialisation
- Fewer opportunities
- More domestic responsibilities
- May be treated differently by the criminal justice system (let off or more lenient sentencing) – Chivalry Thesis
- Treated more harshly by the criminal justice system (broken the law and expected gender role) – Double deviance thesis

Women committing more crime:

- Liberation of women giving them access outside the home and in the workplace

Ethnicity & Crime

Ethnic minorities committing more crime:

- Inaccurate statistics – police target ethnic minorities and there may be bias within the criminal justice system
- Labelling – Police are more likely to label and target ethnic minorities e.g. for stop and search
- Link to social class – Ethnic minorities are more likely to experience poverty
- Media reinforces stereotypes creating mistrust and hostility in communities



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Class & Crime

Working class committing more crime:

- Inaccurate statistics – police target working class areas and working class crimes tend to be easier to spot.
- Socialisation that certain crimes are okay to commit
- Material deprivation – committing crime to obtain goods
- Link to poor performance in schools. People taking alternative routes to success
- Labelling – Police are more likely to label and target the working class e.g. for stop and search
- White collar crime (financial crime) and corporate crime (business crime) harder to spot, are often dealt within the workplace, not looked for by the police



Age & Crime

The young commit more crime:

- Status frustration – Lack of independence combined with a lack of responsibilities lead to a drift into crime and deviance
- Peer pressure – young people are more susceptible to peer pressure (subcultural theory)
- ‘Edgework’ – Young people seek risk taking, thrills, and the buzz
- Inadequate socialisation of the young and the negative influence of the media
- Police stereotyping of the young (labelling)



Debates – Are the media biased in the reporting of crime?



Moral Panics (Stanley Cohen)

Moral panic – an over the top reaction to an incident that leads to fear and hysteria

- An incident occurs and is reported in an exaggerated way by the media – **deviancy amplification**
- A group is identified as the **folk devil** and are blamed for the societal problem
- The community become fearful of the folk devils and a moral panic is created
- The community demands actions from the authorities
- The authorities respond by cracking down on the folk devils

News Values – Some crime stories are more likely to be reported e.g. if involve children or celebrities, high level of violence, unusual or rare.



Debates – How should we treat young offenders?

- Age of criminal responsibility in the UK is 10

They should be put in prison (custody):

- They deserve to be punished
- They are a danger and the public need to be protected
- They need to learn societies norms and values

They should not be put in prison (custody):

- 73% reoffend within a year
- Cost of young offender institutes
- Education would be more worthwhile

Debates – Does the media create crime?

It does create violence:

- Hypodermic syringe approach suggests the media makes violent behaviour appear normal
- Bandura – Bobo doll study – copycat violence
- Drip, drip effect – the amount of violence makes it seem normal
- Desensitisation – people no longer react negatively to violence



Debates – Should society imprison or rehabilitate?

Aims of punishment: retribution (revenge) / rehabilitation / protection of the public / acts as a deterrent / reparation (making amends for what you have done)

Criminals should be imprisoned:

- They deserve to be shamed and have their freedom taken away
- Prison acts as a deterrent for others
- Keeps the public safe

Criminals should be rehabilitated:

- Reoffending rate is high
- Prison is too easy
- Prison doesn't make criminals take responsibility for what they have done
- Prison doesn't address the problem that caused the crime in the first place



It does not create violence:

- People are active not passive
- People use media to fulfil their own needs
- Media violence makes people more sensitive to it in real life
- Violence on screen is cathartic – it releases any need to do it in real life

CRIME MERTON

Method: Official statistics

Functionalist

American society is built on the idea of being successful and everyone aspires to a great lifestyle, nice car/ house etc (American Dream)

Not everyone can achieve this due to factors such as poor education, lack of jobs which creates strain

Reactions to strain include **innovation**—the working class find new ways to achieve goals (through crime)

Referred to this as **Strain Theory**



CRIME BECKER

Method: Observations

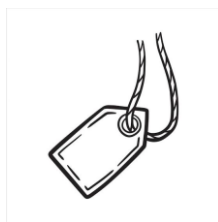
Interactionism

Some people in society are more likely to be **labelled** as criminals by society and the authorities

The label can be hard to shake off creating frustration and may make it hard to get a job leading to crime

He called this **self fulfilling prophecy**—people commit crime after being labelled

This creates a **master status** where the person lives a **deviant career** and is always seen as a criminal



CRIME COHEN

Method: Questionnaires

Functionalism

Looked at **working class boys**

The working class become frustrated at not being able to achieve and gain respect in society

Create their own **deviant sub culture** and commit crimes such as vandalism and stealing

Achieve success through illegal means

Called this theory **Status Frustration**



CRIME CARLEN
Method: Unstructured interviews
Feminist Working class women are controlled by the promise of rewards and this allows them to avoid crime Class deal—women work for fair pay which allows them to buy goods Gender deal—women give love and domestic labour and in return gain material support from the breadwinner If these rewards break down working class women may turn to crime 

CRIME HEIDENSOHN
Method: Secondary—Work of other sociologists
Feminist Women are controlled by patriarchy which means they are less likely to commit crime Controlled at home—expected to complete domestic tasks and look after children reducing the opportunity to commit crime Controlled at work—women are less likely to be in powerful positions which would provide opportunity for crime Controlled in public—women fear street violence and damage to reputation reducing opportunity for crime