

A Level Sociology Knowledge Organiser

Crime in contemporary society (crime and deviance)

The media and crime

Media representations of crime (distortion)

Over- represents violent and sexual crimes (46% in media reports, 3% in police stats) – leads to society thinking these crimes are more common

Under-reports white collar/corporate crimes, over-reports blue collar– leads to working class being scapegoated as criminal

Portrays stereotypes of criminals (e.g. young, working class men, migrants etc) – leads to labelling / scapegoating of groups

Increases fear of being a victim of crime and may highlight risk for certain groups (e.g. females, older people) – could lead to greater control over women due to fear of victimisation

× But the media may have less power to influence our perception of crime due to new media/variety of information, audience not passively accepting what they are shown

The media as a cause of crime

Promotes relative deprivation – consumerism, materialistic goals – unachievable by working classes – turn to utilitarian crime (links to bulimic society / strain theory)

Labelling and a self-fulfilling prophecy – groups labelled by the media could accept label and act criminally (moral panic)

Greater opportunities for crime – use of social media, ‘new’ crimes being established e.g. revenge porn.

Glamourising and desensitising violence – could make violence seem acceptable/desirable

× But media may offer ways to catch offenders (e.g. social media channels), other factors are more important

Moral panics and deviancy amplification

The process: media sensationalises act of certain group, become labelled, moral panic created, group become folk devils, self-fulfil prophecy and confirm criminal/deviant label

Positive views: Functionalists – can reaffirm collective conscience and social control, highlights issues

Negative views: Marxists – can scapegoat working classes, reinforces ruling class ideology (e.g. Hall’s study), makes profit

× But media may have less power due to new media, ‘risk society’ means moral panics less likely to occur

Globalisation and crime

The growing interconnectedness of societies, with the spread of the same culture, consumer goods and economic interests

Types of crime	International drug trade (transport/ communication)
	Human/people trafficking (transport/ communication)
	Money laundering (communication/ technology)
	Cyber crime (technology)
	Global criminal groups – transnational organised crime, established mafia, newer mafia, concept of McMafia
Reasons	TNCs – environmental crimes, crimes against workers e.g. Rana Plaza factory collapse
	Disorganised capitalism / fewer jobs / work outsourced
	Growing inequality / relative deprivation / people trafficking
	More opportunity / dark web / technology
Issues	Global risk society / hate crimes
	× Official statistics may not be accurate, can be difficult to study globalised crime

Green crime

Definitions	Traditional criminology: acts that violate environmental laws (but laws may be different globally)
	Green criminology: any act that harms the environment (eco-centric view)
Types	Primary – direct effect on environment (e.g. deforestation)
	Secondary – indirect effect (e.g. dumping waste)
Examples	Bhopal disaster – built plant where safety standards were low (emitted toxic gases)
	Volkswagen – deliberately sold cars with high emissions (leading to greater pollution)
Reasons	Globalisation / manufactured risks
	Anthropocentric view / people before environment
	Capitalism / maximise profit / TNCs / few laws
Issues	Less punishment / less deterrence
	× Difficult to define, laws may vary between cultures, difficult to measure extent

Human rights and state crimes

Definitions

Green and Ward: A violation of law committed by or on behalf of governments (but laws differ, state has power to create them)

Schwedingers: A violation of human rights committed by or on behalf of governments (but no agreement on human rights)

Explanations

Government has power to create laws, will not label own acts as criminal (e.g. Nazi Germany – Nuremberg laws)

Governments deny what is happening (spiral of denial), justify actions (e.g. Guantanamo bay)

Techniques of neutralisation – excuse and justify actions to society

Crimes of obedience – authorisation, dehumanisation, routinisation – justifies actions of those carrying out crimes

Issues

× No official statistics, lack of data from governments on state crimes, reliance on unreliable secondary sources, dangerous for sociologists to investigate

Examples of state crimes

- Genocide: WWII Germany, Rwanda
- Illegal detention/torture: Guantanamo Bay
- Assassinations: Alexander Litvinenko
- Corruption / embezzlement