



6.1 Social construction of crime and deviance

Crime is an act that breaks laws set by government.
Deviance is an act that breaks **social norms**.

Sanctions are used when people break laws or social norms. Sanctions range from comments, dirty looks and fines to physical punishments and prison.

What is seen as a crime or deviant act varies in different cultures and over time. These are **historical and cultural variations**, which are **socially constructed** or created by each society.

6.4 Sociological theories and explanations of crime and deviance

- **Functionalist** views of crime including **anomie** and **strain theory**.
- Views that crime is caused by **delinquent sub-cultures**.
- **Marxist** views that **white-collar** and **corporate crime** are not policed as harshly as working-class crime. This is known as **differential enforcement of the law**.
- **Interactionist** views including **labelling, self-fulfilling prophecy, deviant career and moral panics**.
- **Feminist views** that females have to conform in a male-dominated society and the **chivalry thesis**.
- Understanding views on ethnicity and crime including **scapegoating** and **institutional racism**.

6.2 Social control

Social control is about how society is kept in order. Most daily life is managed through **informal social control**. Family, schools and peers are **agencies of informal social control**. Anyone can try to enforce informal social control. The police, courts and prisons are agencies of **formal social control** and are given power by the government.

Functionalists believe that social control is necessary.

Marxists and **feminists** believe that social control works in favour of the **ruling class** or men respectively.

6.5 Sources of data on crime

These are the ways in which official statistics are collected, including the **Crime Survey for England and Wales, victim surveys** and **self-report studies**. Consider the reasons why many crimes may be invisible or not be recorded, or reported resulting in a '**dark**' or '**hidden**' figure of crime.

The reason for the collection of official statistics and how they may be used might lead you to question the accuracy of **official statistics**, including **moral panics, policing styles, police bias** and **labelling**.

There are links to theories of crime including **Marxism** and **feminism**.

6.3 Patterns of criminal and deviant behaviour

Society often has a belief that there was a '**golden age**' when there was less crime. Crime rose sharply from the 1950's onwards but has reduced since the late 1990's.

People who are working class, male or from ethnic minority groups are more likely to be convicted.

There is an 'age crime curve', which shows that younger people are more likely to be convicted and people commit less crime as they age.

Poorer people are more likely to be victims of crime, as are people from ethnic minorities.

Women are affected more by domestic abuse or sexual assault, but men are more likely to be assaulted.

Classic studies

Robert K Merton – Strain theory
Albert Cohen – Delinquent sub-cultures
William Chambliss – Differential enforcement of the law
Howard Becker – Deviant career
Heidensohn – Female conformity
Pat Carlen – Women and poverty

Other useful studies

Stan Cohen – Folk Devils and Moral Panics
Otto Pollak – Chivalry Thesis