Year 2 Sociology

**Paper 3: Crime and Deviance with Theory & Methods**



Booklet 4: Left and Right Realist explanations of crime

Name ­­ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# Specification Content:

What you need to know for **Crime and Deviance**  in your Paper 3 exam.

Students are expected to be familiar with sociological explanations of the following content:

* crime, deviance, social order and social control
* the social distribution of crime and deviance by ethnicity, gender and social class, including recent patterns and trends in crime
* globalisation and crime in contemporary society; the media and crime; green crime; human rights and state crimes
* crime control, surveillance, prevention and punishment, victims, and the role of the criminal justice system and other agencies.

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| **Questions may be based specifically on the following areas:** | | Do I have completed Notes? | Have I made revision Notes? | Have I memorised this info? | Have I practised exam style questions? |
| Right realist explanations of crime. Causes and solutions | Wilson, Murray, Wilson & Kelling, Felson |  |  |  |  |
| Left realist explanations of crime. Causes and solutions. Relative deprivation, subcultures and marginalisation | Young, Lea & Young |  |  |  |  |

Exam Structure:

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| **These topics will appear in paper 3 of the A’Level.** 2 hour written exam 80 marks in total (50 for this bit)   * 33.3% of A-level Crime and Deviance: short answer and extended writing, 50 marks (4 marks, 6 marks, 10 marks, 30 marks) |

Think back

Labelling theory and critical criminology regard crime as being socially constructed. Realists see crime as a real problem to be tackled. All realists argue that crime is a real problem to be tackled. They all agree that the crime rate has risen.



Opinions…….?

|  |
| --- |
| What causes crime? |
| How might crime be fixed? |

# What is the difference between right and left realists?

# Right realism

# Explanations for crime

Starting point

* People are naturally selfish
* This selfishness must be controlled by laws
* People weigh up the costs and benefits of actions
* People who choose crime are responsible for their actions
* Crime rises because the costs are not high enough to dissuade people
* Crime can only be reduced through harsher sentences

Right realists see crime as a real and growing problem that destroys communities. The focus is on practical crime control measures. The stance towards offenders is tough focussing on reduction and punishment. They criticise other theories for being too sympathetic to the criminal.

# Causes of crime

Biology

Wilson and Herrnstein

Socialisation and the underclass

Charles Murray

Rational choice

Clarke

Wilson and Felson

They believe that the perceived the costs of crime are low and the risks of being caught are small. Wilson claims that a rational teenager may decide that it makes more sense to steal cars than to wash them to make money. Felson argues that for a crime to occur there must be a motivated offender, a suitable target and the absence of a ‘capable guardian’. Offenders are seen as acting rationally so a guardian (policeman / neighbour) may deter them.

# How should crime be solved?

Situational crime prevention

Right realists do not think the solution is to target the causes of 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**in his article “*Broken Windows*” 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 as people no longer care about their community or environment. By tackling these minor signs of neglect people will be less likely to commit crime in that area. **Wilson and Kelling** say that damage to a neighbourhood must be put right straight away. Or problems of crime will quickly get out of hand.

Case studies

Marcus Felson (1998) gives an example of a situational crime prevention strategy. The Port Authority bus terminal in New York City was poorly designed and provided opportunities for crimes – for example the toilets were a good place to steal luggage, deal drugs and engage in homosexual sex. Re-shaping the physical environment to ‘design out’ crime led to a large reduction in crime. For example, replacing the large sinks which homeless people used for washing reduced the numbers of homeless people hanging around the bus station.

Another example of where situational crime prevention has been successful is around suicide prevention. In the early 1960s, around half of all suicides in Britain were the result of gassing. At that time, Britain’s gas supply came from highly toxic coal gas, but from the 1960s coal gas was gradually replaced by less toxic natural gas, and by 1997, suicides from gassing had fallen to bear zero, with the suicide rate overall witnessing a corresponding decline (ie people hadn’t simply switched to other means of killing themselves

* ***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.

Does zero tolerance work?

# Evaluation of Right Realism

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* Has had significant impact on criminal and social policy such as situational crime prevention strategies.
* Zero tolerance policing has also been used
* Anti-social behaviour orders are linked to right realism. These were civil orders but if they were breached they would become a criminal offence.
* Ignores wider structural causes of crime such as poverty.



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* Overstates offenders rationality and how far they make cost – benefit calculations before committing a crime.
* The view of criminals are rational decision makers is contrary to their view that behaviour is determined by biology and socialisation.
* Overemphasises biological factors.

# Left realism

Left realism has developed since the late 1980’s and is closely linked to the work of Jock Young and John Lea.



Lea Young

# Explanations for crime

Lea and Young focus on 3 main areas

Relative deprivation; Subculture and Marginalisation

***Relative deprivation***  - this is the idea that poverty does not generally cause crime but it will lead to crime when deprivation is **relative**. A group experiences deprivation when it feels deprived in comparison to other similar groups.

How might the media contribute to this?

Relative deprivation can occur at any stage of the social spectrum. This is why luxuries as well as necessities may be stolen and white-collar criminals may desire lives even more luxurious than their own. Young also uses this to explain violent crime, as relative deprivation can cause frustration, which in turn can cause violence.

***Marginalisation*** is when some groups find themselves politically and economically ‘on the edge’ of mainstream society.

Why might this be?

***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 may express their frustration through criminal means such as violence and rioting.

***Subcultures –*** where have we met this already and which theorists?

Left realism is closely linked to and their concepts of blocked opportunity and reaction to a failure to achieve mainstream goals. For Left Realists a subculture is a group’s collective solution to relative deprivation.

Different groups may respond differently to this problem. Some may turn to crime to close the ‘deprivation gap’ others may turn to religion for spiritual comfort.

Subcultures still subscribe to values and goals of mainstream society (materialism and consumerism)

‘full immersion in the American Dream : a culture hooked on Gucci, BMW, Nikes’



**Young - Late modernity and the bulimic society**

Young has developed Left Realism more recently to link crime to changes in society linked to late modernity. Modern society is media saturated, everyone is included in consumer culture through advertising etc raising everyone’s expectations of what life will be like. When this is accompanied by social and economic exclusion it c an lead to crime. Likened to bulimia. People gorge themselves on the media but economic circumstances force them to ‘vomit’ out their raised expectations which leads to frustration, resentment and anger. This is worsened by 3 features of late modernity.

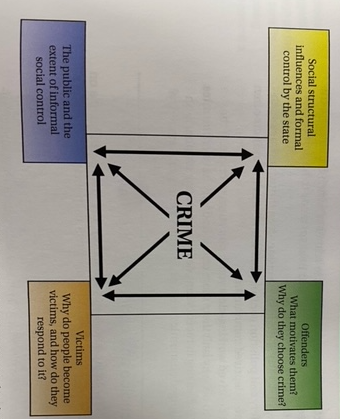
* 1. Growing individualism. There is growing emphasis on the individual
  2. Weakening of informal controls - traditional social structures like the family and close – knit communities have been breaking up.
  3. Growing economic inequality and economic change. Globalisation has meant the gap between rich and poor has grown. Those at the top can participate in the global economy (footballers, music stars) while there has been a decline in traditional manufacturing etc at the bottom end.

Young talks about a conflict between ‘cultural inclusion’ and ‘social exclusion’. This is similar to Merton’s notion of ‘anomie’.

One feature of later modernity is that crims is now found throughout the social structure. Crime is also nastier (eg hate crimes). Boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable crimes are changing and informal controls are less effective.

**How do we tackle crime?**

We need to understand the relationship between the 4 elements that make up the ‘square of crime’ in order to think about how crime should be tackled.



Left Realists argue that there are only two real ways to tackle crime:

1. ***Improve Policing and Control.***

**Kinsey, Lea and Young**argue that the low police clean up rate does not act as a deterrent against crime. They argue that the public must become more involved in determining the police’s priorities and style of policing. 90% of crime known to the police are reported to them by the public, however due to the low clean up rate the public are losing faith in the police and therefore are no longer offering the information. As a result the police have resorted to *military policing*meaning that they are swamping high crime areas with police and using random stop and search tactics. However these tactics have not led to a reduction in crime but to alienate to community even further.

Left realists therefore argue that policing should be made more accountable to the public. The police need to improve their relationship with the public by spending more time investigating crimes, changing their priorities from over policing minor crimes and under policing crimes such as domestic violence and racism, and involving the public in the creation of police policies.

Left Realists also believe that crime control cannot be left to the police alone but it needs to be a *multi-agency approach*which would involve agencies such as social services, schools, housing departments, leisure services as well as voluntary organisations and victim support as well as the public at large.

* ***Deal with the structural causes of crime.***

Although left realists agree with the Marxists that social inequalities are the main cause of crime, they do not believe that revolution is the answer. Left realists believe more in reform as a way to address the social inequalities, as well as becoming more tolerant of diversity and stop labelling whole groups as criminal.

# Evaluation of Left Realism

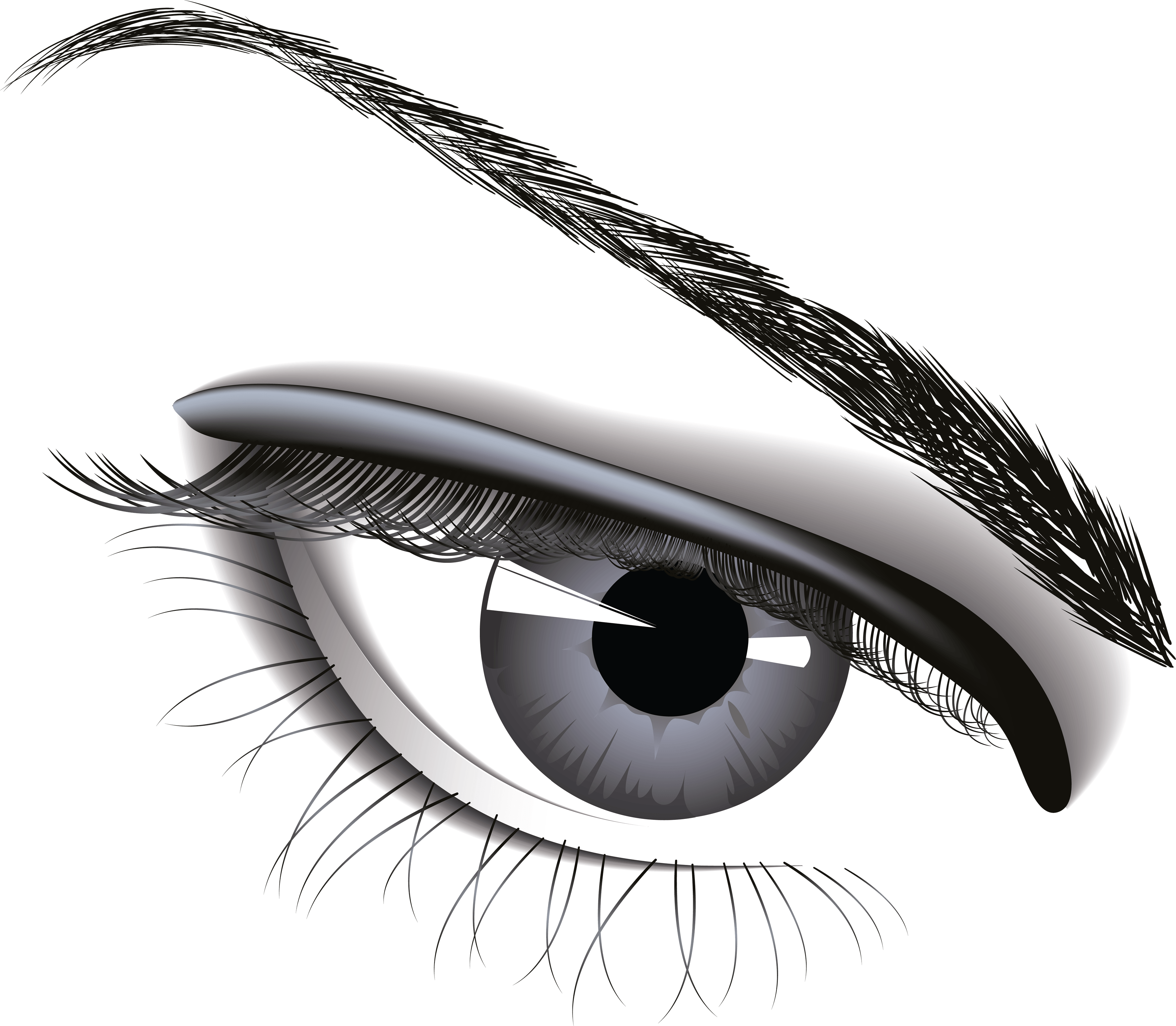
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* Henry and Milovanovic
* Interactionists
* Relative deprivation cannot fully explain crime
* Focus on high-crime inner city areas gives and unrepresentative view



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Comparison and topic summary (from p 102)

Eye on the exam

Possible exam questions

4 markers

Give 2 causes of crime according to Left Realists

Give two examples of things that Right Realists say would reduce crime

10 marker

Right Realist theories have had a significant influence on government policy, especially because they appear to offer practical answers to the problem of crime. Like many sociologists, they see childhood experiences as very important in determining behaviour in later life. they focus on the idea that some people are naturally more aggressive or less intelligent than others, and they stress the need to ensure the crime does not go unpunished.

Applying material from item A8, analyse two explanations for the causes of crime put forward by the right realists. (10)

30 marker

Item B10Realist approaches view crime as a real and growing problems and not just a social construction. Right Realist argue that due to factors such as the inadequate socialisation of some people, crime, particularly in urban areas, is a serious problem that needs addressing. Left realists, while agreeing with governments need to be tough on crime, argue that social policy is should also be tough on the causes of crime.

Applying material from item B10 and your own knowledge, Evaluate the usefulness of Realist approaches to crime. (30)