

New 2018 Specification

AQA

Sociology

EXAM NOTES

For A Level (Year 2)

Beliefs in Society
Crime and Deviance
Theory and Methods

BOOK 2

Published by Educationzone Ltd
P.O. Box 56829
London
N21 3YA
United Kingdom

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

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About the Exam Notes

Written with examination success in mind!

- These exam notes have been written by Sociology examiners and experienced teachers, with only one purpose in mind — **exam success**. Using these exam notes will help students achieve the best possible grade in their Sociology exam.
- We have provided the depth of information required for your Sociology examinations, both in terms of knowledge and evaluation, which makes these exam notes more concise than general Sociology text books, and more comprehensive than standard revision guides (which often lack the depth of evaluation required to achieve an A grade).

We have focused on the 'evaluation' part.

- Contrary to popular belief, learning and memorising lots of facts and theories will not get you a grade A or B in your exam. The exam requires you to be able to 'analyse' and 'evaluate' sociological knowledge, this does not mean jotting down a few brief criticisms at the end of your essay. The analysis and evaluation that you make, needs to be expanded upon and explained in an effective manner. With this in mind, we have written a lot of the evaluation points using the three-step rule: identify, expand and conclude. We have done this for you in this book to demonstrate what a 'developed' evaluation point looks like. Please try and remember this technique and demonstrate it in your exam.

Practice Exam Questions

- We have given you lots of Practice Exam Questions at the end of each exam note to practise. We have covered most of the different types of questions you may be asked for each topic both at AS and at A Level. If you are taking the A level course, it is a good way of testing and practising both your knowledge and examination skills. You may realise some of the questions require the same answers, but are worded differently, this was deliberate, just so you are familiar with the different way the questions can be worded.
- Please visit www.sociologyzone.co.uk for exam notes, Practice Exam Questions, mark schemes, model answers and much more.

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Section 1

Beliefs in Society

AQA Specification

Beliefs in Society



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

- ideology, science and religion, including both Christian and non-Christian religious traditions
- the relationship between social change and social stability, and religious beliefs, practices and organisations
- religious organisations, including cults, sects, denominations, churches and New Age movements, and their relationship to religious and spiritual belief and practice
- the relationship between different social groups and religious/spiritual organisations and movements, beliefs and practices
- the significance of religion and religiosity in the contemporary world, including the nature and extent of secularisation in a global context, and globalisation and the spread of religions

The AQA specification:

- Different theories of religion

The exam requires that you are able to:

- ▶ Describe the functionalist theory of religion.
- ▶ Evaluate the functionalist theory of religion.

Introduction

To functionalists, religion is an important part of society as it helps **integrate** people together by sharing common beliefs, morals, and opinions. This creates a **value consensus** in society (people sharing the same values).

By sharing the same values this unites people together and creates **social solidarity/cohesion** in society. It is important for individuals to co-exist in society in a harmonious way otherwise without integration society can be prone to breaking down and falling into disorder and conflict. As such religion helps maintain the same values and social norms held collectively by all in society which is important for maintaining **social control** and order in society.

Therefore, the contribution of religion in society and to the individual is both **positive** and beneficial.

Durkheim and Religion

Durkheim's famous publication '*Elementary Forms of Religious Life*' (1912), analyses the role and function of religion based on secondary sources collected by anthropologists on the small primitive Aboriginal Arunta tribe in Australia (Durkheim had never visited the small tribe). Durkheim focused on researching a primitive tribe because he believed that by studying this basic form of religion which has not been manipulated by man, he hoped to gain insights and apply his findings to more sophisticated religious systems (e.g. Christianity).

- **Totem.** Durkheim points out that members of the tribe would often worship a totem (e.g. object such as plant, animal carving) which is seen as **sacred symbol** by the group. The existence of an *external object* like the totem is an important one, as this allows rituals and ceremonies such as collective worshipping to take place. This helps **integrate the group** together and reinforce the tribe to their **shared identity**. This ultimately provides a sense of belonging within their community.
- **Sacred and the profane.** Durkheim found that the *totem*, places and other rituals were viewed by the tribe as being sacred (reverences or having a special meaning) and anything that was not connected to the totem was seen as *profane* – that is not sacred, such as everyday activity that does not have any religious significance or meaning. The distinction between the sacred and profane is an important one because the sacred allows its members to come together and celebrate collectively. This creates a **collective conscience**; the sharing of the same beliefs, morals, values, opinions. This is important, because if individuals are left to their own for along amount of time, without sacred objects being at the centre of the group, the beliefs and convictions of the group will weaken, whereas sacred object helps reinforce the collective conscience.
- **Worshipping of society.** Durkheim argues that the tribe as a 'group' exists because of the totem. The collective worship around the totem is really the worshipping of the tribe itself. The worshipping towards the sacred objects is not really towards the object itself as such, but must mean something more significant. He claims that its members are really (unconsciously) *worshipping their own social group's identity*.

Malinowski: Psychological Function

- **In times of uncertainty/risk.** Malinowski's (1954) theory on the role of religion was based on a study of a small-scale tribal society in the Trobriand Islands. In studying the Trobriand Islanders, Malinowski found that fishing in

the lagoon was not preceded by rituals (no risk) but fishing in the open sea, amid conditions of uncertainty and risk, was always preceded by rituals. This led him to believe that religion helps provide security and *explanations* in times of uncertainty and crisis (unpredictable or uncontrollable events) e.g. death, illness, unemployment etc. Religious explanations help produce confidence and a feeling of control in times of crisis and fear.

- **Anomie.** Parsons (1965) argues that religion helps deal with 'life crisis' which would otherwise lead to **anomie** (break down of norms of behaviour) that can threaten the stability and order in society. Religion gives meaning to ultimate questions (e.g. life after death) and to the meaningless and inexplicable suffering and evil (e.g. cancer in babies). Belief in concepts such as immortality, heaven, funeral ceremonies, helps in the stability of a healthy society, as it provides meaning to such events.

Parsons: Reinforcing Core Values

- **Parsons** (1965) argues that one function of religion is to reinforce the core values of society and that religion helps make them sacred (e.g. not stealing, or committing adultery, murder) which helps re-affirm society's social values. This helps promote social stability and order in society. For example, the Ten Commandments in the bible reinforces the social values. The commandment 'thou shalt not commit adultery' demands that families stay together, thus reinforcing social cohesion. 'Thou shalt not steal' refers to the respect for private properties, a religiously respected societal value.

Bellah: Civil Religion

- **Civil religion.** Robert Bellah (1970) on the analysis of American society argues that the religious beliefs will eventually die as society becomes more secular and more diversified. However, he argues that certain social activities perform the same functions of uniting people together just like religion has done, which he calls *civil religion*. These are non-religious events, in which people are united by a faith in their shared nationalism which is expressed through ritual, ceremonies and beliefs (e.g. royal weddings, memorial days, flag waving, and national team sport) which help integrate its members in society in a similar way to that of religion. This unity of society can be achieved by civil religion.

✓X Evaluation

✓ Conflict theories

Marxists and feminists accept the functionalist view that religion can promote social stability. *However*, they offer a differing perspective in that they do not see it as beneficial for society as a whole. Marxists see religion as benefiting the ruling class, whereas feminists see religion; benefiting a patriarchal society, reinforcing the status quo of men. This suggests that the functionalist view of religion is partially correct according to feminists and Marxists but would disagree on the outcome.

✓ Rise of new religions and fundamentalism

There is empirical evidence to support the functionalist view of religion. The growth of new religious movements across the globe proves that religion is a universal necessity, and thus in a sense it could be argued that it is functional as people need religion. Also, the rise of extreme fundamentalism could be seen as a reaction to the weakening of society's norms and values in a postmodern world, and may be a response to the threat of anomie in today's society.

X Postmodernists

Postmodernists argue that functionalists view religion as less significant in modern multi-cultural societies, where a diverse range of religious beliefs and practices mean religion can no longer play the role of uniting and integrating people as did in a traditional society with one monotheistic faith. This would suggest that the functionalist view is no longer valid in a modern diverse society.

X Rise in new age movements

The growth of new age movements suggest that people have become disillusioned by institutional faiths, as they may no longer provide an adequate explanation and security, as suggested by Malinowski and Parsons. People now seek other forms to help with life crisis, such as emphasis on spirituality, self-healing and personality improvement therapies. This would suggest that the functionalist view that mainstream religion provides meaning and emotional support in a modern society may to some extent no longer be valid.

X Religion can bring conflict

Religion can be a source of conflict and tension within a society. For example, the conflict in Northern Ireland between the Protestants and Catholics, or in Iraq between Shia and Sunni Muslims. In the UK, rising tensions of Muslim communities can often lead to conflict and culture clashes e.g. Bradford riots. Or between societies such as the Arab-Israeli conflict in Palestine, Iran-Iraq war in the 80s. This shows that the function of religion does not always unit and integrate its members but that it can at times be dysfunctional for society.

X Methodological flaws in Durkheim's research

Durkheim only studied a small number of Aboriginal tribes which meant that; a) his sample was small making it non-representative and therefore hard to generalise his findings to society as whole; b) there is also the issue of applying his study of a primitive tribe to a large diverse modern society; c) finally, his research findings are based on secondary sources not on first hand evidence, therefore giving rise to errors, bias and misinterpretation. Such methodological issues question the validity of his research findings, and thus his theories as it is based on such research evidence.

X Methodological flaws in Malinowski research

Malinowski's study was carried out in the 1950's on a small scale non-literate Trobriand Islanders which means that the research findings are non-representative and not applicable to modern complex industrialised societies. Again such methodological issues question whether we can generalise the research findings beyond the tribe the research was based upon.

X Religion can be psychologically damaging

The functionalist view ignores the potential psychological damage religion can have on people. The concept of damnation, sin, and hell can often leave people, especially young children, feeling anxious and terrified. Religious laws that are broken can often evoke feelings of fear, guilt, and low self-esteem in people and in some cases lead to people committing suicid.



Exam Questions

1. Outline and explain **two** functions in which religion can play in society [10 marks]
2. Outline and explain **two** limitations of the functionalist view of religion [10 marks]
3. Applying material from **Item...** and your knowledge, evaluate the claim that religion brings about harmony and consensus. [20 marks]
4. Applying material from **Item...** and your knowledge, evaluate the claim that religion is more likely to be a source of conflict than of cohesions. [20 marks]

Section 2

Crime and Deviance

AQA Specification

Crime and Deviance

AQA

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.

The AQA specification:

- Different theories of crime

The exam requires that you are able to:

- ▶ Describe the functionalist explanation of crime and deviance.
- ▶ Evaluate the functionalist explanation of crime and deviance.

Functionalism and crime

Durkheim's functionalist theory of crime

Functionalist sees the aim of society is to encourage **value consensus**, which means that individuals must agree conform and comply to the same values, norms and goals of acceptable behaviour, rather than their own. By bringing individuals to agree on the same core principles, this will help bring a harmonious and cohesive society.

Durkheim reasons why crime occurs:

Durkheim (1858-1917) argues that not everyone can comply with the rules of society that is why crime will occur. He suggests that crime and deviances are not only is it 'normal' but a **universal** and **inevitable** part of all societies. Some reasons why individuals do not conform to the core values:

- **Socialisation.** Successful socialisation occurs when individuals conform to the values and norms of acceptable social behaviour in society. Socialisation is very important as it helps maintain **social order** and **control** in society. Not every is socialised effectively (e.g. poor upbringing) to sharing the same basic values that everyone agrees to which may result in the rise in crime and deviance.
- **Social change.** Durkheim writing at a time of considerable change, where western societies were moving from pre-industrial towards industrial. The rapid rise of industrialisation, the demand for division of labour (specialised job) led to the rise of individualistic lifestyle, as well as the decline of religious influence and. This resulted in society becoming fragmented which made it hard for its members to comply with the same rules as in pre-industrial societies.

The consequence of rapid social change, resulted in **anomie** (normlessness i.e. 'lawless'). Individual moral constraints to comply with the agreed values are weakened, as people become different from each other in a modern society, leading to individual desires and expressionism. This according to Durkheim could lead to the rise of crime and deviant behaviour. Therefore, he saw the growth of modern industrial societies as one of the causes for breakdown of social cohesion resulting in anomie.

The positive functions of crime

Durkheim claims, only when crime is extremely high and low that it becomes disruptive for society. A *moderate* amount of crime and deviance can benefit society because it performs positive functions which help maintain social order. Durkheim believes there are four essential functions that crime and deviance perform for society:

1. **Reaffirms moral boundaries.** Crime helps us reinforce and maintain our moral behaviour – our shared norms and values. Through the public outcry and punishment of the offenders, this helps reaffirms the moral boundaries of accept behaviour in society. It unites individuals together against what is unacceptable behaviour (e.g. 7/7 London terrorist attack, 9/11 attack on World Trade Centre); which reinforces the commitment to shared values and thus strengthens social cohesion in society.

2. **Crime encourages social change.** Durkheim suggest that while too much crime may threaten social order, too little crime may also be unhealthy because society's values and norms are too strong which prevents the possibility of social change occurs – progression in society. Deviant behaviour allows the society's values and norms to be challenged. Today's deviance sometimes becomes tomorrow's morality. For example, many people denounced Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela as criminal at the time of their arrests. But their deviant behaviour helps to bring social changes to many civil rights issues.
3. **Crime acts as safety valve.** Kingsley Davis (1936) claims that certain deviant acts can have a positive function. For example pornography or prostitution provides sexual satisfaction for sexually frustrated men without threatening the family as an institution. This is because prostitution acts a safety value as it provides a release from the pressures and strains of life without threatening the family.
4. **Crime acts as a warning device.** According to Cohen (1955) certain crime acts a warning light that there is something dysfunctional in some aspect of society that needed to be addressed. This may draws attention to the problem that leads to measure to solve it. For example, riots, protest marches and school truancy all signal that there is discontent and changes need to be made within the social system.

Merton's strain theory

Robert Merton (1938) a functionalist, expanded on Durkheim concept of anomie to explain criminal and deviant behaviour. His theory was named the **strain theory** written in the 1930s based on American capitalist society. Merton explain that causes of crime/deviance because of **structural inequality** (unequal opportunities mainly due to class position) which can lead to some people to deviate from the agreed basic rules of society. He notes the interplay of two factors which can lead to crime/deviance:

- o **Structural factors:** structural inequality i.e. unequal opportunity, notably the lower working-classes
- o **Cultural factors:** the emphasis of achieving society's cultural goas i.e. 'American Dream' (material wealth and lifestyle) but do not have the legitimate means of achieving them

Merton argues economic success can led to achieving the culturally approved goals – the American Dream. When there is structural inequality in society, most notably the working class, the opportunity to achieve the culturally approved goal places greater 'strain' (pressures and tension) on individuals to achieve them. The consequence of can leads individuals to the breakdown of norms of accepted behaviour known as '*anomie*' which can result in criminal or deviancy. Merton identified five types of **modes of adaption** (responses) to the strain of anomie in attempting to achieve society's cultural goals:

1. **Conformity.** Individuals who accept the goals through legitimate means. This would be the true American dream success story, wealth and prestige through talent and hard work can be achieved by the ordinary person. In this sense, they are not criminals but law abiding citizens.
2. **Innovation.** Individuals who accept the goals of society but do not have the legitimate means of achieving them so they use illegitimate means. Such individual often tends to criminal behaviour to seek wealth. Mainly working-class who resort to result to criminal theft, burglary.
3. **Ritualism.** Individuals who accept the goals of success/money or the means of achieving them, but have lost sight of the 'end goals' (material wealth) but continue to follow the 'means' of achieving them. Those who are happy with what they have and do not aspire for greater wealth. For example, civil servants, shop workers, secretaries, nurses, teachers.
4. **Retreatism.** This type of individuals reject the goals and the legitimate means of acquiring them, often react by dropping out of society (e.g. 'new age travellers', drug addicts, alcoholics and tramps)
5. **Rebellion.** Individuals who reject the goals and means of success and ideally would like to replace them with radical alternatives to bring about social changes in society (e.g. political activists or religious fundamentalists).

Merton's modes of individual adaptation to anomie		
Responses	Goals	Means
Non-deviant		
Conformity	+	+
Deviant		
Innovation	+	-
Ritualism	-	+
Retreatism	-	-
Rebellion	+/-	+/-
Key: + = acceptance; - = rejection; +/- = reject old and substitute with new		

There are differences on how Durkheim and Merton saw anomie. Durkheim saw the result of anomie as the consequence of rapid social changes of the whole of society whereas Merton applies anomie to the disadvantage lower classes in society. In this respect, Merton's, strain theory has similarity with subcultural theory as it focuses mainly on one social group, the working class.

✓X Evaluation

Evaluation of the Durkheim theory

✓ Useful explanation.

A strength of the Durkheim's theory of crime it can offers a social explanation for the causes of crime as opposed to crime being biological (genetics) and psychological (maternal deprivation) determined which were prevalent at that time. The implication for society is that crime levels can be controlled by social engineering (i.e. social policies).

X Ignores social differences

A limitation of Durkheim's theory of crime is it fails to explain the social differences of crime. It does not account for why certain individuals, class inequality, ethnicity, or gender are more prone to commit crime more than others. This suggests that Durkheim's theory offers only a partial explanation of crime as it cannot account for the social differences that can influence who commits crime or not.

X Ignores the crimes of the powerful

Marxists are critical of Durkheim's theory because it fails to explain the relationship between power and crime. [1] It fails to acknowledge that criminal laws are made to benefit powerful social groups; [2] the bias law enforcement agencies (police and the courts) against the lower working classes. For example, police are more likely to focus of working class crimes, more likely to be arrested and prosecute than crimes of the powerful (e.g. business activities). This shows that the Durkheim's theory does not account that those in power can influence the social distribution of crime in society which leads to a bias view of criminal statistics of working class people.

X Not appropriate to modern society

Durkheim's theory may be outdated or at best, is more appropriate form more simplistic societies rather than modern multi-cultural society such as the UK. Modern industrialised socialites with it varied cultures are more fragmented and diverse, it is hard to see how there is a shared agreement on morality in society. The suggestion is that the theory is no longer applicable to contemporary society as not everyone shares the same values to strengthen social cohesion.

X Theoretical contradiction.

Durkheim's theory of crime has been criticised because there seems to be a contradiction in its theory. Does deviance help promote social stability and reaffirm moral boundaries through punishment of offenders (*point 1*); or does it prepare the way for social change through the testing of society's social boundaries (*point 2*)?

Evaluation of Merton's strain theory

✓ Explains high working class crime

Merton's theory was one of the earliest attempts to provide a sociological explanation for the high level of crime in modern societies. It provides a key explanation for the disproportionately high working class representation in criminal statistics and among the prison population.

X Unreliability of official statistics

Merton's strain theory explains why working class are over-represented in criminal statistics. However, it is generally recognised how unreliable official crime statistics can be. For example, it is well known now that white-collar and middle class crimes are more widely committed than crime statistics would have us believe. In this respect Merton has also been criticised for exaggerating working class crime and ignoring crimes of the powerful.

X Exaggeration of agreed consensus

It has been argued that Merton exaggerated the degree of consensus in America and other western capitalist societies that everyone is pursuing the goals of material wealth. This may have been true in the 1930s, but in modern plural 21 century society with a diverse of different cultures many people do not share the same material objectives.

X Strain does not necessarily lead to crime

The strain theory cannot account why some people, especially those from the working class or who are economically at a disadvantage that may experience strain do not turn to criminal activity but comply with the values of mainstream society.

X Purposeless crimes

The strain theory accounts for crimes and deviance that are economically driven. However, it fails to explain criminal acts that have been committed just for the "fun" such as vandalism, violent crimes and sexual crimes.



Exam Questions

1. Outline **two** reasons why functionalist see crime as inevitable. [4 marks]
2. Outline **three** criticisms of the functionalist view of crime and deviance. [6 marks]
3. Applying material from **Item ...**, analyse **two** functions of crime and deviance. [10 marks]
4. Applying material from **Item ...**, analyse the strain theories to our understanding of crime and deviance. [10 marks]
5. Applying material from **Item...** and your knowledge, evaluate the usefulness of functionalist approach in explaining the nature and extent of crime and deviance. [30 marks]

The AQA specification:

- Different theories of crime, deviance, social order and social control

The exam requires that you are able to:

- ▶ Describe subcultural theories of crime and deviance.
- ▶ Evaluate the subcultural theories of crime and deviance.

Introduction - Subcultural theories

Subcultural theories on crime emerged from a group of sociologists associated with the University of Chicago in the 1920's and 1930's (known as Chicago school). Their development of their theories was based on research taken place in run down cities like Chicago amongst lower juvenile working class groups. They suggest that delinquents who commit crime usually have different values and norms from mainstream culture (hence 'sub' cultural) which can lead to anti-social/criminal behaviour. Below are two main subcultural theories:

Albert's Cohen: status frustration

Cohen agrees with Merton's strain theory that crime/deviance can be the result of their inability to achieve the mainstream goals of success by legitimate (i.e. education) means, so they resort to crime. However, criticises Merton theory mainly for two reasons:

- Merton theory focused on individual responses to strain and ignores crimes committed by group (e.g. gangs).
- Merton theory focused on 'utilitarian crimes' (crimes that have monetary benefits e.g. robbery) and ignores 'non-utilitarian' crime (crimes which are not economically motivated, such as vandalism, street fights).

Based on these two weaknesses of Merton's strain theory; Cohen they focus on crimes committed in groups and non-utilitarian crimes.

- Cohen believes that all youths require status and recognition (especially at a time when adolescent identities are being formed and are conscious about their self-identity. Status and recognition is achieved by acquiring success in the goals in society – via the education system. Lower-class youths, due to educational failure lack the opportunity of accessing the material goals they aspire to. Such limited opportunities to achieve society's goals of achievement can lead to them questioning their 'self-worth' and 'status' in society. For some youths, this can lead to **status frustration**.
- The consequences of being frustrated leads to an adopting an **alternative status system** one which rejects mainstream values and are replaced with deviant values which can be criminal, such as stealing, violence, anti-social behaviour, disrespect for adult authority figures and vandalism. Such behaviours can be seen by their peers as qualities which allows delinquents to gain respect, recognition and status. Therefore, Cohen, sees the lower working-class youths are more likely to develop delinquent subcultures (i.e. a group whose values differ from mainstream society) because of status frustration. Cohen's theory suggests that vandalism, street fighting and other 'pointless' deviant activities do have a point: they enable many young people to achieve status and recognition from their peer friends in a society where they cannot achieve it by conventional means.

Cloward and Ohlin: Illegitimate Opportunity structure

Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin (1961) agree with Merton and Cohen's view that the opportunities for working-class to succeed materially by legitimate means are severely restricted. They accept that blocked opportunities lead to low self-concept and worth to become 'frustrated / strained' which leads them to reject the accepted means of how to achieve success. However, where Merton and Cohen failed to recognise is that those who lack legitimate opportunities do not necessarily mean they turn to utilitarian crimes ('innovation' - see Merton). Some resort to other forms of criminal behaviour such as drug taking, violence or being in a gang. They suggest that:

- **Illegitimate opportunities structures.** As well as accepting the unequal access to legitimate opportunity structures lead to crime, there is also a parallel opportunity structure what they call the '*illegitimate opportunities structures*'. However, even within the illegitimate opportunity structure their *unequal* access to them. For example not everyone who fails at school becomes a drug dealer.
- **Dependent on type of neighbourhood.** Cloward and Ohlin see different neighbourhoods has different deviant subcultures which provide different illegitimate opportunities. This gives youths in the neighbourhood to learn and develop a criminal career. By accepting the illegal opportunity structure, individuals can obtain society's goals. They identify three types of subcultures gangs that an individual can join, but thus will depend on the neighbourhood's characteristics:
 1. **Criminal subculture** – mainly refer to crimes that bring financial and material rewards. This type of subculture tends to form in working class neighbourhoods where youths are absorbed into utilitarian crimes. Likely to occur where there already exist an established and organised adult criminal activity. In this way youths, serve as an apprentice to criminal adults, where they can learn the tricks of the trade, and are given the opportunity to rise through the criminal hierarchy.
 2. **Conflict subcultures** – refer to 'gang' type behaviour and occurs where there is no established organised criminal world, possibly due to a high turnover of neighbourhood population. In such neighbourhood communities, with little opportunity to succeed both through legitimate means or illegitimate opportunities (such as above), youths express their frustration in the form of conflict or violent gangs as a means of obtaining status and respect.
 3. **Retreatist subcultures** – refers to young people who have failed to succeed in both legitimate or illegitimate (conflict or criminal) structures. These double failures sometimes form retreatist subcultures (dropouts) organised mainly around illegal drug use.

✓✗ Evaluation

Evaluation of Cohen's status frustration theory

✓ Crime is a collective response

Cohen's subcultural explanation links deviance with status, and explains how working class and youthful deviance is in fact a collective response, as opposed to an individualistic response, which also explains why crime is often young white working class phenomenon, as supported by official statistics.

✓ Non-utilitarian crimes

Cohen's subcultural theory is able to explain non-utilitarian crimes (crimes without monetary gain e.g. vandalism, joy-riding), something other theories fail to account for such as the functionalist, interactionism and Marxist theories.

X Partial explanation

Cohen's theory can only partially explain crime and deviance since it focuses only on working class males; it ignores middle class males and female subcultures as well as corporate and white collar crime. It also claims that crime is a group activity when at times this is clearly not so. This would suggest that subcultural theory offers **only** a partial explanation.

X Little empirical evidence

Short and Strodtbeck (1965) found little evidence to suggest that gangs reject the middle-class values of society. The young delinquent needs to be extremely intelligent to work out middle class values and then 'invert' them.

X Working class does accept mainstream values

Box (1981) argues that Cohen's theory can only be applied to a small number of delinquents. The rest of the delinquents accept mainstream culture and values. He suggests that working-class youths resent being seen as failures by teachers and middle class youths whose values they do not share. They simply turn against those who look down on them.

Evaluation of Cloward and Ohlin's Illegitimate Opportunity structure

✓ A fuller explanation than other subcultural theories

Cloward and Ohlin's explanation of crime and deviance is to some extent the most sophisticated version of the subcultural theories. It incorporates both aspects of Merton and Cohen's theory; but go one step further and show that criminal subcultures are not solely concerned with material gains, but provide additional explanations for several different delinquent subcultures that exist.

X Categorisation too simplified

Sociologists have criticised the model of illegitimate opportunity structures because in life it is difficult to accept such a neat distinction of deviant subcultures into three clear categories. For example, which category would a terrorist fall under?

X Partial explanation

Cloward and Ohlin's theory can only partially explain crime and deviance since it focuses only on working class males; it ignores middle class males, female subculture crime, and corporate and white collar crime.

X Not everyone shares the same mainstream goals

Taylor, Walton and Young (1973) claim that Cohen's (and Merton's) explanation is to some extent fundamentally flawed. It makes the basic assumption that everyone is initially committed to the same goals of success, e.g. achieving material wealth. This is incorrect as some deviant subcultural groups such as 'hippies' and 'tramps' often make a conscious decision to reject mainstream goals.

X Delinquency lead to blocked opportunities

Cloward and Ohlin theory has been criticised on theoretical grounds. The relationship between blocked opportunities which lead to delinquent criminal behaviour maybe be the other way round. Delinquency occurs first which lead to blocked aspirations and opportunities.

X Subcultural groups not frustrated by failure

Walter Miller (1962) rejects Cloward and Ohlin's views on criminal behaviour. He suggests that lower class youths never accepted mainstream norms and material values of success in the first place; they have their own distinct set of subcultural values which are different from mainstream society. These unique subcultural values include 'toughness', 'smartness', 'excitement' and 'fatalism'. These are exaggerated by lower class youth members in order to achieve status recognition from their peers. These subcultural values mean that lower class youth are more likely to be involved in crime and deviance behaviour. Therefore according to Miller, this type of lower working class subcultural group are not frustrated by failure, as it does not value material success, as suggested by Cloward and Ohlin but want to achieve their own goals as mentioned above.

X Drift theory questions subcultural theories

David and Matza (1964) challenge the subcultural theories. They argue that delinquents are not different with distinct subcultural values from other members of mainstream society but simply 'drift' in and out of trouble, and at the same time holding the same values of those of mainstream society.



Exam Questions

1. Outline **three** criticisms of the subcultural theories view of crime and deviance. [6 marks]
2. Applying material from **Item...** and your knowledge, evaluate the view that a significant number of those teenage males who join deviant subcultures do so because they feel marginalised by society. [30 marks]

Section 3

Theory and Methods

AQA Specification

Theory and Methods

AQA

Students must examine the following areas:

- quantitative and qualitative methods of research; research design
- sources of data, including questionnaires, interviews, participant and non-participant observation, experiments, documents and official statistics
- the distinction between primary and secondary data, and between quantitative and qualitative data
- the relationship between positivism, interpretivism and sociological methods; the nature of 'social facts'
- the theoretical, practical and ethical considerations influencing choice of topic, choice of method(s) and the conduct of research
- consensus, conflict, structural and social action theories
- the concepts of modernity and post-modernity in relation to sociological theory
- the nature of science and the extent to which Sociology can be regarded as scientific
- the relationship between theory and methods
- debates about subjectivity, objectivity and value freedom
- the relationship between Sociology and social policy

The AQA specification:

- The relationship between sociology and social policy.

The exam requires that you are able to:

- ▶ Describe the relationship between sociology and social policy.
- ▶ Evaluate the relationship between sociology and social policy.

Social problems and sociological problems

This exam notes look at how sociology is related to social policy. Before we examine the relationship, it is worth understanding the distinction between sociological problems and social problems: Peter Worsely (1977) was the first to offer this distinction:

- **Social problem** refers to “some piece of behaviour that causes public friction/and or private misery and call for collective action to solve it”. For example, crime, anti-social behaviour, gang culture, poverty, truancy, poor educational performance of inner city schools and so on.
- **Sociological problem** is a feature of social life that requires an explanation e.g. the decline of church attendance. Some sociological problems are not seen as a problem to social life for example a sociological researcher may carry out a study to “investigate the difference in female and male social manners in public places”.

The two overlaps: a sociological problem may be also a social problem. This is because many sociologists often focus on social problems (e.g. poverty, crime) by carrying out research with the aim of researching providing a sociological explanation and possible solutions/strategies to deal or minimise the issue.

- **Social policy** refers to the strategies or action plan set out by the governments to deal with welfare of the people (housing, health etc.,) as well as the social problems in society. Governments department (e.g. Department of Education) employ sociologists or rely on academic sociological research to help them inform and implement policies to tackle social problems by having a direct input into policy-making.

The influence of sociology on policy

The influence of sociology will have on social policy are determine by many factors. Even when sociologists carry out research into social problems, there is no guarantee that government policy-makers will act upon their findings. Below are some of the factors whether or not sociological research will influence social policy:

- **Electoral popularity.** Governments are motivated to attract voters, and they are therefore likely to be influenced by opinion polls and focus groups that are used to research public attitudes. For example, David Cameron’s, 2015 election campaign promise to give voters a referendum whether Britain should remain as a member in European Union, a policy that was favoured by the public. Equally, sociological research findings may require a social policy that will be unpopular with the voters, and thus less likely to implement it.
- **Financial constraints.** Sociological research findings that suggest appropriate social policies to be put in place could be too costly to implement. For example, eliminating poverty by increasing welfare benefits, is unlikely as financial constraints means there is sufficient government funding to feasibly do this.
- **Interest groups.** The implementation of some policies will meet too much opposition from pressure groups such as large business and pharmaceutical companies that seek to protect their own interest. For example, cigarette companies have been very effective in protecting their interest.

- **Researcher's own ideological belief.** The sociologists own ideological views can have an affect on social policy. If the researcher's own political beliefs are similar to that of the government, they have more chance in influencing policy. Critical sociologists, such as Marxist who are critical of the state are very unlikely to have influence on social policy as their view is too extreme or hostile. Different governments (Conservative, Labour etc) may prefer certain sociologist than others it all depends if they fit in with the governments ideology. Therefore, sociologists tend to have different degree of influence at different times, depending on who is in power.
- **Globalisation.** The effect of globalisation can mean the power of particular governments can be limited. For example, international organisation such as the European Union and the International Monetary Funds (IMF) may influence the social polices of individual governments. For example, the government must follow certain immigration polices laid down by the European Union.

Perspectives on social policy and sociology

Different sociological perspective have different views on the role of sociology should have in relation to social policy.

Functionalism

- Early Functionalists such as Comte and Durkheim believed that the social world can be studied using the scientific methods, namely positivism (analysing statistics data). Durkheim believed that the role of the sociologist is to provide the state with objective, scientific information on which it can base its policies on, although they themselves did not recommend exactly what social policies should be implemented. However, Durkheim did advocate social policies that help increase the amount of social solidarity – for the good of all. For example, Durkheim advocated the abolition of inheritance wealth to make society meritocratic. Later Functionalist such as Parsons, advocated policies that would support the nuclear family.
- Generally speaking, functionalist were a theoretically approach, identify and explaining the causes of social problem rather than providing practical social policies. However, functionalists see society as based on value consensus and therefore favour policies that brings about social cohesion in society such promoting the reducing crime and suicide rates, housing polices to encourage the nuclear family and so on.
- Functionalists favour policies that are sometimes referred to as 'piecemeal social engineering' – bit-by-bit change rather than a complete major change.

New Right theorists

- The New Right have been more influential on social policies than functionalism. They holds political viewpoints to the right; that is, they hold more traditional and conservative social value e.g. they disapprove single parent families and are supportive of the traditional nuclear family. The New Right are often against sociologists making social policy recommendations as they believe that the state should have a minimal involvement in social problems. The New Right see the role of sociologists as being to propose policies that promote individual responsibility and choice. For example, Charles Murray (1984) maintains that providing generous welfare as a social policy solution for poverty will makes the problem worse. This is because he believes it creates a dangerous underclass who become dependent on welfare—dependency culture.
- The New Right believe that governments social policy should be directed and supporting the traditional values of society, such up policies that encourage the traditional nuclear family and discourage single-parent families. In terms of crime, they advocate a strong 'law and order' policy – 'zero tolerance' polices. The New Right have had far more effect on the policies of the UK government than any other perspective since the 1980s, influencing both the Conservative, as well as the Labour government of 1997-2010.

The social democratic perspective

- The social democratic perspective is associated with a liberal political ideology and thus has a strong influence on left-of-centre governments such as the Labour governments in the 1960s and 1970s in the UK (but not so much on the more recent Labour governments during 1997-2010).
- The Social Democrats believe that sociologists should be and are actively involved in making social policy recommendations. They believe that their recommendations can help to eradicate the social problems they identify. The social democratic perspective favours that help reduce social inequality in society brought about by capitalism; it favours social policy that targets the major redistribution of wealth and income from the rich to the poor.
- Peter Townsend (1979) research on poverty led him to identify the extent and causes of poverty in the UK based on surveys of over 2000 households. He used the findings to put forward recommendations for policies such as more progressive taxation to fund more welfare for the poor such as higher benefit levels. The Black Report (1980) identified a range of cultural and structural causes (capitalism) of inequalities in health. The Black Report strongly argued for structural/material solutions to reduce the health divide – in fact they made 37 policy recommendations of reducing these inequalities (e.g. free school meals to poor families).

Marxism

Marxists argue that social policies serve the interest of the ruling class, those who own the means of production rather than society as a whole. They argue that social policies appear to benefit most of the population in society, but it does not – but social policies are there to continue the exploitation of the working-class people. It does this by:

- **Social policies provide ideological legitimation for capitalism.** Some policies appear to disguise the exploitation of capitalism. For example, the existence of welfare state policies appears to show that the capitalism system cares for the poor and the sick, although the welfare system does little to redistribute money from the rich to the poor.
- **Social policies help maintain the labour force.** The NHS really serves the interest of capitalism not the working-class people, because the NHS helps keep the workers to be healthy and fit, which is ideal for capitalists to continue their exploitation of workers.
- **Prevent class revolution.** Policies are designed to make token concessions to the working-class to prevent a working-class revolution. Some social policies are implemented to give concessions to the working-class, such as the creation of welfare policies as a mechanism of 'containment'; it prevents the working class from realising they are being exploited which could lead to greater unity that could lead to the development of working-class consciousness, which would cause conflict and instability for the capitalist class.

According to Marxists, the role of the sociologist is to criticise social policies that serve the interest of the rich and powerful, to challenge the social inequality, exploitation and oppression that capitalism produces and the social policies which often go against the working class.

Feminism

Feminists see society as patriarchal, - male dominated, benefiting men at the expense of women. Therefore, they see government social policies perpetuating and continuing women's subordination. Generally, feminists believe that social policies should reflect gender equality, however, different branches of feminists hold different views which ultimately affect the type of social policies that should be implemented.

- Liberal feminists advocate more equal rights between the genders and they believe this can be achieved by gradual change in society in order to create more equal opportunities. Liberal feminists have been influential on several policies. For example, liberal feminists played a part in changing legislation towards rape in the family (e.g. rape within marriage being made illegal in 1991). They also played a role towards changing policies against gender inequality. For example, laws were introduced in the 1970s, including the Equal Pay Act (1970), the Sex Discrimination Act (1975) and the Employment Protection Act (1975), which made maternity leave a statutory right.

Radical feminists take a harder line to patriarchy and advocate female supremacy over their lives – the full control without the influence or control of men. For example, they are pushing for policies that advocate separatism in which men and women live apart (separated) in order to free women totally from patriarchy. Radical feminists extreme view has had little impact on social policies on mainstream governments. However, their public campaign to have highlighted domestic and sexual violence against women has led to some improvements in the policing of crimes against women.

✓X Evaluation

✓ Functionalism ignores structural inequalities

The functionalist view on social policy has been criticised by Marxists because it does not deal with the root of the problem. For example, Marxists argue that the policies aimed at improving equal opportunity of different classes in education does not work very well (working-class children do less well academically). This is because such policies ignore the wider structural issues of poverty (material deprivation). They argue that basic structure of society needs to be changed to deal with some of the social problems in society

✓ Social democratic policies ignored by the state

Sociologists that hold a left ideological belief, such as the adopting a social democratic perspective is good example to demonstrate how social policy recommendations are not always listened to by those in government because you difference in ideologies you hold about society. For example, the Conservative government not only ruled out the Black Reports recommendations, that was commissioned by the labour government on the ground of cost but also restricted the publication of what was seen to be a politically embarrassing report. This demon

X Social democratic criticised by Marxist

A criticism of postmodernism is that it has been criticised for being self-contradictory. Postmodernism may claim that we should no longer accept metanarratives as being absolute truths, which means that we cannot accept the postmodernist view either, as it is another metanarrative that attempts to explain the world.

X Marxist views unrealistic

Marxists view of social policies have been criticised because they have no real influence on the social policies in the UK, because they are seemed to be too extreme which makes them unrealistic to be implemented in real life. Even the political influence of Marxism has dwindled greatly in many of the communist countries (Eastern Europe, Russia (formerly known as the Soviet Union), demonstrating it lack of appeal.

X Liberal feminists criticised

Radical feminists have been critical of the liberal feminist suggesting the reforms and changes of social policies to reduce sexual discrimination of women are not dealing with the real issues. For example, women are still paid less, continue to do more domestic work then men, and are still portrayed as sex object in the media. Radical feminism argues that the structure of society is dominated by a patriarchal system, a structure of power in which men control and exploit women. The solution for emancipation of women is to remove and abolish patriarchal society.