3.4 Green Crime and State Crime as Categories of Harm

AQA 7192 · about 60 minutes · Write-in edition

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Write full sentences for the longer, 10-mark and 12-mark questions. You should spend about 75 minutes in total, roughly 10 minutes on the two longer questions and the rest on shorter items.

1 Define 'ecocentric' as it applies to green criminology, and give one implication this perspective has for how harm is measured.

(Total for Question 1 is 4 marks)

2 Explain one methodological challenge researchers face when trying to measure primary green crimes such as species decline.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

3 Identify and explain one reason why some acts that harm the environment are not classified as crimes in many countries.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

4 Using Item B and your knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of green crime and state crime, and reach a supported judgement.

(Total for Question 4 is 12 marks)

5 Define what sociologists mean by a 'primary green crime' in the study of environmental harm.

(Total for Question 5 is 2 marks)

6 Identify and explain one way primary green crimes differ from secondary green crimes in the context of environmental harm.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

7 Item A: Short research summary on measuring state crime, to be used for the following 10-mark question. Item A: In a comparative study, researchers found two main problems when trying to define and measure state crime. First, states often control information and limit independent investigation, producing gaps in reliable data. Second, what counts as a 'state crime' can be disputed, for example whether severe human rights abuses that occur during wartime are classified as crimes or as legitimate acts of state security. The researchers gave examples from several countries where different political regimes either denied abuses or justified them as necessary for national security.

Using Item A and your sociological knowledge, analyse two reasons why state crime is difficult to define or measure.

(Total for Question 7 is 10 marks)

8 Define Green and Ward's definition of state crime as used in studies of state wrongdoing and human rights violations.

(Total for Question 8 is 2 marks)

9 Identify and explain one of Cohen's 'states of denial' that states use to justify or conceal wrongdoing.

(Total for Question 9 is 4 marks)

10 Describe one example of a state crime from the twentieth or twenty first century, naming the type of crime and a brief reason it is classified as state crime.

(Total for Question 10 is 3 marks)

Mark scheme · 3.4 Green Crime and State Crime as Categories of Harm

Question 1

defines ecocentric, e.g. a viewpoint that gives intrinsic value to the natural environment and non-human life (oe)	**B1**
development of definition, e.g. contrasts with anthropocentric views that prioritise human interests	**B1**
gives one implication, e.g. measuring harm must include ecological impact indicators, such as species decline, ecosystem services loss or biodiversity measures	**B1**
brief development of the implication, e.g. these measures may not be captured by criminal statistics focused on legal breaches	**B1**

Answer: Ecocentric means valuing the natural environment and non-human life for their own sake rather than only for human benefit. This implies measuring harm by ecological indicators such as species decline, habitat loss or reduced ecosystem services, which are not always captured by legal crime statistics.

Question 2

identifies a methodological challenge, e.g. lack of baseline ecological data or long timescales for species decline	**B1**
development, e.g. without baseline records and with slow ecological change it is hard to attribute declines to specific events or actors	**B1**

Answer: One challenge is the lack of baseline ecological data and the long timescales involved in species decline, making it difficult to attribute change to a single event or actor and to measure the scale and timing of harm accurately.

Question 3

identifies a reason, e.g. lack of legal definition or regulatory gaps	**B1**
brief explanation, e.g. laws may not cover certain types of environmental harm or penalties may be weak, so harmful acts are treated as regulation breaches not crimes	**B1**

Answer: One reason is gaps in legislation or weak legal definitions, so some harmful acts are treated as regulatory breaches with civil penalties rather than criminal offences, meaning they are not recorded as crimes.

Question 4

Level 1 Provides a basic response with limited sociological explanation or application to Item B, showing little evaluation or unsupported assertion.	**1-3**
Level 2 Provides clear sociological points and some use of Item B, with limited evaluation. Arguments for one side may be developed but counter-arguments are weak or underdeveloped.	**4-6**
Level 3 Good evaluation with developed use of Item B and several sociological perspectives. Arguments are balanced, showing an understanding of explanations such as corporate profit motive, state policy and alternative views.	**7-9**
Level 4 Thorough, well-developed evaluation that integrates Item B with multiple sociological explanations and evidence, addresses limitations and counter-arguments, and arrives at a clear, supported judgement.	**10-12**

Indicative content:

- Arguments that support state responsibility and corporate profit motives: Item B links large scale industrial agriculture and state sanctioned projects to habitat loss and displacement; Marxist or green Marxist explanations emphasise capitalist profit motives and state-corporate collusion to prioritise development and accumulation over environmental protection.
- State crime perspective: Green and Ward and others argue that when states sanction harmful projects they can be party to both green crime and state crime, especially if human rights abuses or displacement take place, supporting the idea that state responsibility is central.
- Role of globalisation and neoliberal policy: policies promoting foreign investment and deregulation can increase corporate opportunities to cause environmental harm with state encouragement, a structural explanation linking global capitalism to green crimes.
- Alternative or complementary explanations: some interactionist or ecological sociology perspectives focus on definitional issues and cultural values, arguing that differing cultural attitudes towards nature shape what is seen as harm; legalistic accounts emphasise gaps in law and enforcement rather than motives alone.
- Limits of attributing all harm to profit or the state: not all environmental damage is intentional; some arises from unintended consequences, lack of knowledge, or technological change. Also states may sometimes enact environmental protections and punish polluters, showing variation in state behaviour.
- Methodological and ethical considerations: evidence of state complicity may be concealed, as in Item B, making it hard to prove intent or criminality; this supports cautious evaluation rather than a single-cause explanation.
- Empirical evidence and case studies: reference to real cases, such as state-backed infrastructure projects causing displacement, corporate pollution scandals and mixed international responses, strengthens argumentation.
- Conclusion should weigh the strength of structural explanations linking profit and state policy against alternative explanations and conclude how far sociologists would agree, offering a supported judgement that state responsibility and corporate motives are important but not sole causes.

Question 5

identifies that a primary green crime directly damages the natural environment, for example pollution or species decline (oe) **B1**

development, e.g. examples such as air pollution, illegal dumping that causes water contamination, deforestation or wildlife extinction **B1**

Answer: A primary green crime directly damages the natural environment, for example air or water pollution, land contamination, deforestation or actions that cause species decline.

Question 6

identifies a valid difference, e.g. primary green crimes are direct harms to ecosystems, while secondary green crimes involve breaches of regulatory law or corporate/state wrongdoing **B1**

explains the identified difference, e.g. primary crime example like oil spills directly damage habitats, whereas secondary crime example like falsifying emissions tests shows a failure of institutions to prevent harm **B1**

gives a second valid difference or further development, e.g. primary crimes may be visible ecological damage, secondary crimes involve social or legal processes that allow damage to occur **B1**

explains the second point, e.g. secondary crimes can include state or corporate evasion of laws, which may be motivated by profit or political priorities **B1**

Answer: Primary green crimes directly damage ecosystems, such as oil spills or industrial toxic discharge, while secondary green crimes involve breaches of regulations or institutional failure, such as companies falsifying emissions tests or states allowing illegal dumping. Primary crimes result in visible ecological harm, whereas secondary crimes show how social or legal processes permit that harm.

Question 7

Level 1 A basic answer that makes one or two simple points about difficulties in defining or measuring state crime, with minimal use of Item A or sociological knowledge. **1-3**

Level 2 A clear answer that analyses one or two relevant difficulties, using Item A and some sociological knowledge, but with limited development or balance. **4-6**

Level 3 A good answer that analyses two distinct and relevant reasons, integrates Item A with sociological concepts, and provides developed examples or explanations. **7-8**

Level 4 A thorough analysis of two well-explained reasons why state crime is difficult to define or measure, with strong integration of Item A, multiple developed examples and clear sociological insight. **9-10**

Indicative content:

- State secrecy and control of information, as Item A states: governments may restrict journalists, limit access to archives and block investigations, reducing available data and creating under-reporting.
- Political definitions and contested legality: what one group calls a human rights violation another defends as legitimate state action in war or emergency, producing disagreement over whether acts should be called crimes.
- States may use propaganda or denial strategies to conceal abuses, linking to Cohen's states of denial: denial of injury, denial of victim, denial of responsibility, and appeal to higher loyalties.
- International variation in laws and institutions: differences in human rights protections, judiciary independence and willingness of other states to intervene complicate cross-national measurement.
- Methodological problems: reliance on secondary sources, NGO reports or refugee testimonies can raise issues of reliability and representativeness but may be the only evidence available.
- Practical and ethical barriers to research: investigators face danger, restricted access and ethical issues when interviewing victims of state violence, reducing data quality and quantity.

Question 8

identifies that state crime refers to illegal or deviant acts carried out by, or with the complicity of, state agencies or officials (oe) **B1**

development, e.g. examples include genocide, torture, war crimes and systematic human rights violations **B1**

Answer: Green and Ward define state crime as illegal or deviant acts carried out by, or with the complicity of, state agencies or officials, including genocide, torture, war crimes and other systematic human rights violations.

Question 9

identifies one state of denial, e.g. 'denial of injury', 'denial of the victim', 'denial of responsibility', or 'appeal to higher loyalties'	**B1**
explains the identified denial, e.g. denial of injury argues no-one was really harmed	**B1**
applies it to state behaviour, e.g. a state may claim that security operations caused no civilian harm or that civilians were 'collateral damage'	**B1**
further development or example, e.g. denial of responsibility might appear when officials blame a few rogue individuals rather than state policy	**B1**

Answer: Example answer: 'Denial of injury' is a state of denial where perpetrators claim their actions did not cause real harm. Applied to states, governments may claim that military operations did not injure civilians or that environmental policies did not cause serious ecological damage, or they may blame accidents rather than deliberate policy.

Question 10

identifies a correct example and type, e.g. genocide in Rwanda 1994, state torture in a military dictatorship, or forced disappearances	**B1**
development, e.g. why this counts as state crime, such as the involvement or complicity of state forces	**B1**
brief contextual detail to support the example	**B1**

Answer: Example: the Rwandan genocide (1994) is classed as a state crime where state actors and allied militias carried out mass killings of Tutsi civilians, showing state involvement and organised policy to target a group.