3.5 Victimology: Explaining Patterns of Victimisation: 30-minute Pack

AQA 7192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. For five questions you must write full sentences: Q5, Q8, Q9, Q16 and Q15. Use sociological vocabulary where appropriate. Time guidance: 30 minutes.

1 Identify one piece of evidence a positivist victimologist might seek to support the idea of victim proneness.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 Compare briefly two differences between positivist and critical approaches to victimology in how they explain who becomes a victim.

(Total for Question 2 is 4 marks)

3 Item B: A hypothetical policy briefing. "Local police recorded burglary rates have fallen by 8% in the last year, but local victim support services report a 12% increase in calls from repeat victims. Community groups say low-income areas still feel under-policed." Using Item B and your own knowledge, evaluate positivist and critical approaches to victimology. Make a judgement about which approach, if either, offers the most useful basis for policy responses to victimisation.

Using Item B and your knowledge, evaluate positivist and critical approaches to victimology.

(Total for Question 3 is 12 marks)

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4 Define the term 'victim precipitation' as used in discussions of victimology in the study of crime.

(Total for Question 4 is 2 marks)

5 Identify and explain one feature of Von Hentig's concept of the 'victim prone' person in positivist victimology.

(Total for Question 5 is 2 marks)

6 Outline two criticisms of positivist victimology, in the context of explanations of who becomes a victim of crime.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

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Mark scheme · 3.5 Victimology: Explaining Patterns of Victimisation: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

identifies evidence, e.g. statistical correlations showing higher victimisation rates for particular characteristics like age or living alone	**B1**
brief development, e.g. such correlations would be used to argue certain traits increase victim risk	**B1**

Answer: A positivist victimologist might look for statistical correlations showing higher victimisation rates for particular characteristics, for example age or living alone, to argue these traits increase victim risk.

Question 2

identifies first difference, e.g. positivist focuses on individual characteristics while critical focuses on social structures and power	**B1**
development of first difference	**B1**
identifies second difference, e.g. positivist aims to predict risk and suggest policing responses, critical aims to address inequality and structural causes	**B1**
development of second difference	**B1**

Answer: One difference is positivist approaches focus on individual characteristics, whereas critical approaches focus on social structures and power; another is positivists aim to predict risk and inform policing, while critical approaches aim to address inequality and structural causes of victimisation.

Question 3

Level 1 Simple statements about positivist or critical ideas with little or no use of Item B and limited application to policy, showing limited sociological understanding.	**1-3**
Level 2 Some accurate description of positivist and critical approaches and limited use of Item B to support points. Arguments are straightforward with limited evaluation and no sustained judgement.	**4-6**
Level 3 Clear explanation of both approaches, with relevant use of Item B to evaluate strengths and weaknesses. Some balanced evaluation and an emerging judgement about policy relevance.	**7-9**
Level 4 Detailed, well-focused evaluation that uses Item B effectively. Competing strengths and limitations of positivist and critical approaches are compared, and a supported and clear judgement is reached about which approach best supports useful policy responses.	**10-12**

Indicative content:

- Explain positivist approach: seeks victim characteristics and statistical associations, useful for targeting prevention and policing; links to Von Hentig and victim proneness, and to victim precipitation ideas.
- Use Item B to show positivist strength: falling recorded burglary rates might reflect successful targeted policing based on risk profiles, but rising repeat victim calls suggest prediction alone may miss concentration of harm.
- Explain critical approach: focuses on structural causes, power, inequality and under-policing of deprived areas; links to Left Realist concerns about relative deprivation and community insecurity.
- Use Item B to show critical strength: increase in repeat victim calls and community claims of under-policing support critical claim that structural factors and policing priorities matter more than individual traits.
- Evaluate limitations of positivism: risks victim blaming, may rely on correlations that mask causes, and may not address repeat victimisation or hidden victims shown in Item B.
- Evaluate limitations of critical approaches: may underplay individual-level risk and the usefulness of predictive data for immediate prevention; structural change is slower and harder to implement as policy.
- Consider mixed or pragmatic policy solutions: using positivist data for targeted prevention alongside structural measures such as investment in low-income areas and support for repeat victims, informed by Item B.
- Reach a balanced conclusion: either argue a combined approach is most useful for policy, or argue one approach is preferable with justification using Item B evidence about repeat victims and community perceptions.

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Question 4

identifies that victim precipitation is the idea that the victim may have played some part in provoking or initiating the event that led to their victimisation (oe) **B1**

development, e.g. this can mean verbal provocation, behaviour or actions that increased the risk of attack **B1**

Answer: Victim precipitation is the idea that the victim may have played some part in provoking or initiating the event that led to their victimisation, for example through words or actions that increased the risk of attack.

Question 5

identifies a feature, e.g. Von Hentig suggested some victims have characteristics that make them more likely to be targeted, such as being young or socially isolated **B1**

development, e.g. explains how the characteristic can increase risk, for example social isolation can reduce support and increase vulnerability **B1**

Answer: Von Hentig suggested some victims have characteristics, such as being young or socially isolated, that make them more likely to be targeted; for example social isolation can reduce support and so increase vulnerability.

Question 6

first criticism, e.g. it blames victims by focusing on their characteristics rather than on offenders or social structure **B1**

development of first criticism, e.g. this can lead to victim blaming and ignore wider causes such as inequality **B1**

second criticism, e.g. it is often based on small samples or anecdotal evidence, making generalisation problematic **B1**

development of second criticism, e.g. Von Hentig and early positivists relied on case descriptions rather than representative data **B1**

Answer: Two criticisms are that positivist victimology blames victims by focusing on their characteristics rather than offenders or structural causes, risking victim blaming, and that it often relies on small or anecdotal samples, as early positivists did, so findings may not generalise.

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