3.5 Victimology: Explaining Patterns of Victimisation

AQA 7192 · about 60 minutes · Write-in edition

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: 60 minutes.

1 Explain two strengths of using the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) when studying patterns of victimisation, including hidden victims and repeat victimisation.

(Total for Question 1 is 4 marks)

2 Identify and explain one way Left Realist ideas link to critical victimology when explaining patterns of victimisation.

(Total for Question 2 is 4 marks)

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

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

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

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

5 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 5 is 12 marks)

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

(Total for Question 6 is 2 marks)

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

(Total for Question 7 is 2 marks)

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

(Total for Question 8 is 4 marks)

9 State one example of a 'hidden victim' in the UK context and briefly explain why they might be hidden from official statistics.

(Total for Question 9 is 2 marks)

10 Item A: Hypothetical Crime Survey extract for a medium UK town. "Survey respondents aged 18 to 30 reported a household burglary rate of 12 incidents per 1000 people last year. Respondents living alone reported 30 incidents per 1000 people. Respondents on low incomes reported 25 incidents per 1000 while the town average was 15 per 1000." Using Item A and your own sociological knowledge, analyse two reasons why people who live alone, and two reasons why people on low incomes, might be more likely to become victims of burglary in this town.

(Total for Question 10 is 10 marks)

Mark scheme · 3.5 Victimology: Explaining Patterns of Victimisation

Question 1

identifies a strength, e.g. the CSEW captures crimes not reported to the police, helping reveal hidden victims	**B1**
develops the strength, e.g. by surveying households it uncovers victimisation the police data miss, improving representativeness	**B1**
identifies a second strength, e.g. the CSEW records repeat victimisation and frequencies, not just single incidents	**B1**
develops the second strength, e.g. this helps understand the concentration of crime on a small number of victims and informs prevention	**B1**

Answer: The CSEW captures crimes not reported to the police, revealing hidden victims by surveying households and improving representativeness, and it records repeat victimisation and frequencies, which helps show the concentration of crime on a small number of victims and informs prevention strategies.

Question 2

identifies a link, e.g. Left Realism highlights relative deprivation and community breakdown as causes of victimisation	**B1**
explains how this fits critical victimology, e.g. critical approaches focus on structural inequality and power as causes of victimisation	**B1**
develops explanation, e.g. relative deprivation can increase property crime and thus increase victimisation in deprived areas	**B1**
applies to victimology, e.g. critical victimology therefore looks beyond individual blame to social causes	**B1**

Answer: Left Realism's emphasis on relative deprivation and community breakdown links to critical victimology because both focus on structural inequality and power as causes of victimisation; relative deprivation can increase property crime and victimisation in deprived areas, so critical victimology looks beyond individual blame to social causes.

Question 3

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 4

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 5

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.

Question 6

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 7

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 8

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.

Question 9

identifies an example, e.g. victims of domestic abuse who do not report to the police **B1**

brief development, e.g. they may be hidden due to fear, shame, economic dependency or lack of trust in authorities **B1**

Answer: An example is victims of domestic abuse who do not report to the police; they may be hidden because of fear, shame, economic dependency or lack of trust in the authorities.

Question 10

identifies that living alone is associated with higher burglary rates in Item A	**B1**
explains a positivist reason for living alone increasing risk, e.g. less guardianship and more opportunity for offenders	**B1**
develops that explanation with application to Item A, e.g. 30 per 1000 versus 12 per 1000 shows a clear opportunity effect	**B1**
gives a second reason for living alone increasing risk, e.g. living alone can mean delayed reporting or reduced social support	**B1**
applies this second reason to Item A, e.g. delayed reporting may increase repeat victimisation driving up the observed rate	**B1**
identifies low income is associated with higher burglary rates in Item A	**B1**
explains a structural or critical reason why low incomes increase victimisation risk, e.g. poorer areas may have less secure housing and weaker community guardianship	**B1**
applies the structural reason to Item A, e.g. 25 per 1000 for low incomes suggests material factors in opportunity and target attractiveness	**B1**
offers an alternative reason for low income groups, e.g. higher visibility of valuable goods, or policing priorities leaving some areas more vulnerable, and links to Item A	**B1**
accurate use of Item A data and sociological concepts throughout to support analysis	**B1**

Answer: Living alone and being on a low income are linked to higher burglary rates in Item A. Living alone increases opportunity for offenders because there is less guardianship, shown by the higher 30 per 1000 rate versus 12 per 1000 for 18 to 30s overall; living alone can also delay reporting and reduce social support, increasing repeat victimisation. Low income may raise risk for structural reasons: poorer households may have less secure housing and weaker community guardianship or receive lower policing priority, consistent with the 25 per 1000 figure; alternatively low income areas can make some targets more visible or attractive, and these explanations use both positivist opportunity ideas and critical structural ideas applied to Item A.