5.2 Functionalist and Marxist Explanations of Crime: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Use sociological vocabulary and name sociologists where you can.

1 Evaluate the view that crime and deviance mainly benefit society as a whole (a functionalist view), rather than mainly serving the interests of the ruling class (a Marxist view). In your answer you should refer to sociologists' views and consider more than one perspective.

(Total for Question 1 is 12 marks)

2 State one similarity between the functionalist and Marxist explanations of crime.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

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3 Durkheim used the concept of 'anomie' when discussing periods of rapid social change. Define anomie.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

4 The functionalist sociologist Robert Merton offered a different explanation of why crime occurs. Explain Merton's strain theory of crime.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

5 Merton described 'innovation' as one possible response to strain. Explain what Merton meant by innovation, using an example.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

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Mark scheme · 5.2 Functionalist and Marxist Explanations of Crime: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

Level 4 A detailed, well-balanced evaluation that accurately explains BOTH the functionalist case AND the Marxist case, supported by accurate reference to named sociologists where appropriate. Strengths and weaknesses of each view are analysed, and a reasoned, supported judgement is reached. Sociological terminology is used accurately and consistently throughout. **10-12**

Level 3 A clear evaluation that explains both the functionalist case and the Marxist case, with some accurate detail. Some analysis of strengths/weaknesses. An attempt at a conclusion, which may be only partly supported. **7-9**

Level 2 Some relevant explanation of the functionalist and/or Marxist case, with limited development or accuracy. Little clear evaluation or comparison between perspectives. **4-6**

Level 1 One or two isolated, undeveloped points about crime benefiting society or the ruling class, with little or no sociological terminology or accurate detail. **1-3**

Level 0 No relevant content. **0**

Indicative content:

- Functionalist case: Durkheim argued crime performs boundary maintenance, reaffirming shared values when society reacts to it, and allows for adaptation and change as some deviance introduces new ideas that later become accepted.
- Functionalist case continued: Merton's strain theory explains crime as a response to a gap between culturally approved goals, such as wealth, and the legitimate means of achieving them, e.g. through innovation.
- Marxist case: capitalism is criminogenic, with poverty and inequality pushing some people towards crime, while crime by the wealthy (fraud, corporate crime) is also extensive but comparatively underpoliced.
- Marxist case continued: selective law enforcement means laws are enforced more strictly against working-class crime than against crime by the powerful, which Marxists argue serves and protects ruling-class interests.
- Evaluation of the functionalist case: critics argue it is too optimistic about how functional crime really is, given the real harm caused to victims, and does not fully explain who benefits from crime and who does not.
- Evaluation of the Marxist case: critics argue it can be too deterministic and focuses heavily on capitalism and social class, saying comparatively little about other patterns in crime such as gender or age.
- A balanced conclusion should weigh Durkheim and Merton's claims that crime serves genuine functions for society as a whole against the Marxist argument that recorded crime and its enforcement still systematically favour the already-powerful, without presenting either side as simply correct.

Question 2

identifies a genuine similarity, e.g. both are structural, macro perspectives explaining crime through the wider structure of society rather than individual choice **B1**

development, e.g. both link crime to economic factors, though they interpret this relationship very differently **B1**

Answer: Both are structural, macro perspectives that explain crime through the wider structure of society; both also link crime to economic factors, even though they interpret this relationship very differently.

Question 3

a state of normlessness, when social norms are weak, unclear or breaking down (oe) **B1**

development, e.g. this can occur during periods of rapid social change, when established norms lose their grip on behaviour **B1**

Answer: A state of normlessness, when social norms are weak, unclear or breaking down; this can occur during periods of rapid social change, when established norms lose their grip.

Question 4

identifies that strain arises from a gap, or disjunction, between culturally approved goals, e.g. financial success, and the legitimate institutionalised means available to achieve them **B1**

explains that individuals who are unable to achieve the approved goals through legitimate means experience strain **B1**

development, e.g. this strain can push some people towards crime as an alternative route to the goal **B1**

correctly and specifically attributes this theory to Merton's strain theory **B1**

Answer: Merton's strain theory argues strain arises from a gap between culturally approved goals, such as financial success, and the legitimate means available to achieve them; people unable to achieve these goals legitimately may turn to crime as an alternative route.

Question 5

identifies innovation as accepting the culturally approved goal, e.g. wealth **B1**

identifies that the individual rejects or lacks access to the legitimate means of achieving it **B1**

development, e.g. instead using illegitimate or criminal means to pursue the same goal **B1**

a correct example, e.g. theft or fraud as a way of acquiring money when legitimate routes seem blocked **B1**

Answer: Innovation means accepting the culturally approved goal, such as wealth, but rejecting or lacking access to the legitimate means of achieving it, and instead using illegitimate means such as theft or fraud to pursue the same goal.

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