



GSOC.CR6 Crime Statistics and the Media

AQA 8192 · Calculators not allowed · about 75 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

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

- 1** Stanley Cohen's study of clashes between Mods and Rockers is best known for introducing the concept of a...

- ☐ A) self-fulfilling prophecy
☐ B) moral panic
☐ C) strain
☐ D) class deal

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

- 2** Sociologists use the term 'moral panic' to describe a distinctive media and public reaction.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

- 3** Cohen's 1972 study examined media coverage of British youth subcultures in the 1960s.

(a) Explain what Cohen meant by a 'folk devil'. (2)

(b) State the example Cohen used in his original study. (2)

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

4 Cohen's study also described how media coverage can escalate a social reaction over time.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

5 The media does not only report on crime; it can also help enforce social norms.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

6 There is ongoing debate about whether media content can be a cause of crime.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

7 State one criticism often made of the moral panic concept.

(Total for Question 7 is 2 marks)

8 State one criticism sometimes made of Cohen's original study.

(Total for Question 8 is 2 marks)

9 A national survey that asks a sample of the public directly whether they have been a victim of crime in the past year is an example of a...

- ☐ A) self-report study
- ☐ B) victim survey
- ☐ C) folk devil
- ☐ D) moral panic

(Total for Question 9 is 1 mark)

10 Explain one strength of using a victim survey, such as the Crime Survey for England and Wales, alongside police-recorded crime statistics.

(Total for Question 10 is 2 marks)

11 Explain one way media reporting of crime can distort public understanding of how common certain crimes really are.

(Total for Question 11 is 2 marks)

12 A local newspaper runs a series of front-page stories about a rise in a particular type of anti-social behaviour among teenagers in one town, using dramatic headlines and repeatedly interviewing worried residents, even though police data shows only a small real increase. Local councillors then call for a night-time curfew for under-18s.

Using your knowledge of moral panics and deviancy amplification, explain what is happening in this scenario.

(Total for Question 12 is 6 marks)

- 13** Sociologists disagree about how much of a role the media plays in causing crime and deviance, as opposed to simply reacting to and amplifying it.

Evaluate the view that the media is the main cause of crime and deviance in society. In your answer you should refer to sociologists' views and consider more than one point of view.

(Total for Question 13 is 12 marks)

- 14** Media outlets do not report every crime equally; some stories are chosen over others.

(Total for Question 14 is 2 marks)

- 15** State one reason official crime statistics and media coverage of crime can give the public two very different impressions of crime trends.

(Total for Question 15 is 2 marks)

- 16** Explain how social media might allow a deviancy amplification spiral to develop more quickly than through traditional print or broadcast media alone.

(Total for Question 16 is 4 marks)

- 17** State one way police forces or other official bodies sometimes try to correct exaggerated media impressions of a crime trend.

(Total for Question 17 is 2 marks)

Mark scheme · GSOC.CR6 Crime Statistics and the Media

Question 1

- **B1** B (moral panic)
- **Answer: B**

Question 2

- **B1** an intense wave of public concern and disapproval about a particular group or issue, often fuelled by exaggerated or sensationalised media coverage (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. can lead to calls for tougher laws or policing
- **Answer: An intense wave of public concern and disapproval about a particular group or issue, often fuelled by exaggerated or sensationalised media coverage, which can lead to calls for tougher laws or policing.**

Question 3

- (a) **B1** identifies a folk devil as a group presented by the media as a visible, easily identifiable threat to society's values
- (a) **B1** development, e.g. often blamed disproportionately for wider social problems or anxieties
- (a) **Answer: A folk devil is a group presented by the media as a visible, easily identifiable threat to society's values, often blamed disproportionately for wider social problems.**
- (b) **B1** identifies Mods and Rockers, British youth subcultures of the 1960s
- (b) **B1** development, e.g. whose seaside clashes received highly sensationalised media coverage
- (b) **Answer: Mods and Rockers, rival British youth subcultures of the 1960s, whose seaside clashes received highly sensationalised media coverage in Cohen's study.**

Question 4

- **B1** identifies a deviancy amplification spiral as a process in which media coverage exaggerates and sensationalises a group's deviance, provoking a stronger societal and criminal-justice reaction
- **B1** development, e.g. the stronger reaction, such as more policing attention, can produce more recorded incidents involving that group
- **B1** further point, e.g. the media then report these further incidents as proof the original concern was justified
- **B1** concludes this feeds further exaggerated coverage, forming a spiral
- **Answer: A deviancy amplification spiral is a process in which exaggerated media coverage provokes a stronger societal and criminal-justice reaction, such as more policing attention, which then produces more recorded incidents that the media report as proof the original concern was justified, feeding further exaggerated coverage.**

Question 5

- **B1** identifies that media coverage can publicise and shame rule-breaking behaviour, discouraging others from copying it
- **B1** development, e.g. or celebrate and promote socially approved behaviour
- **B1** a correct example, e.g. investigative journalism exposing wrongdoing can lead to public pressure for change
- **B1** further point, e.g. this can happen without any new law being passed, making it a form of informal rather than formal control
- **Answer: The media can act as an informal agency of social control: publicising and shaming rule-breaking can discourage others from copying it, and investigative journalism exposing wrongdoing can create public pressure for change, without any new law being passed.**

Question 6

- **B1** identifies that some argue exposure to violent or criminal content in the media can encourage imitation or 'copycat' behaviour
- **B1** development, e.g. particularly in a small number of vulnerable individuals
- **B1** identifies the counter-argument: critics argue this claim is difficult to prove
- **B1** development, e.g. since most people who consume such media never offend, so a simple direct-cause link is not well supported by evidence
- **Answer: Some argue media content can encourage imitation or copycat behaviour, particularly among a small number of vulnerable individuals; critics respond that this is difficult to prove, since most people who consume such media never offend so a simple direct-cause link is not well supported**

Question 7

- **B1** identifies a recognised criticism, e.g. it can be difficult to say in advance whether a wave of media concern is an exaggerated moral panic or a proportionate response to a genuine, growing problem
- **B1** brief development
- **Answer: It can be difficult to say in advance whether a wave of media concern is an exaggerated moral panic or a proportionate response to a genuinely growing problem.**

Question 8

- **B1** identifies a recognised criticism, e.g. it focused on a specific historical case, the 1960s Mods and Rockers, from a very different media era
- **B1** development, e.g. some sociologists question how far its findings about media amplification apply unchanged to modern media, such as social media
- **Answer: Cohen's study focused on a specific 1960s case from a very different media era, and some sociologists question how far its findings apply unchanged to modern media environments such as social media.**

Question 9

- **B1** B (victim survey)
- **Answer: B**

Question 10

- **B1** identifies it can capture crimes never reported to the police, giving a fuller picture of the true extent of crime
- **B1** development, e.g. comparing the two sources can reveal how much of the dark figure of crime police-recorded statistics are missing
- **Answer: A victim survey can capture crimes never reported to the police, so comparing it with police-recorded statistics can reveal how much of the dark figure of crime the official figures alone are missing.**

Question 11

- **B1** identifies that media coverage tends to focus disproportionately on rare, dramatic or unusual crimes, since these are seen as more newsworthy
- **B1** development, e.g. this can make audiences believe such crimes are more common, or that crime overall is rising, than official statistics actually show
- **Answer: Media coverage focuses disproportionately on rare, dramatic crimes because they are seen as more newsworthy, which can make audiences believe such crimes are more common, or that crime overall is rising, than official statistics show.**

Question 12

- **B1** identifies the newspaper's sensationalised, repeated coverage as consistent with a moral panic
- **B1** identifies the teenagers being presented as a folk devil, a visible scapegoat for wider anxieties
- **B1** explains the mismatch between the dramatic coverage and the small real increase in police data as characteristic of media exaggeration relative to the actual scale of the issue
- **B1** explains the councillors' call for a curfew as an example of a stronger societal or control reaction following amplified media coverage
- **B1** identifies this stronger reaction as illustrating the amplification spiral
- **B1** accurate use of terminology throughout (moral panic, folk devil, deviancy amplification)
- **Answer: The newspaper's dramatic, repeated coverage of a small real rise in anti-social behaviour is consistent with a moral panic, presenting local teenagers as a folk devil; the gap between the sensationalised coverage and the modest police data, followed by councillors calling for a curfew, illustrates a deviancy amplification spiral, where media exaggeration provokes a stronger control response.**

Question 13

- **Level 4** (10-12): A detailed, well-balanced evaluation that accurately explains BOTH the case that the media can cause crime AND the case that its main role is reacting to and amplifying crime, supported by accurate reference to Cohen's study. Strengths and weaknesses of each view are analysed, and a reasoned, supported judgement is reached. Sociological terminology is used accurately and consistently throughout.
- **Level 3** (7-9): A clear evaluation that explains both the media-as-cause case and the media-as-amplifier case, with some accurate detail. Some analysis of strengths/weaknesses. An attempt at a conclusion, which may be only partly supported.
- **Level 2** (4-6): Some relevant explanation of the media's role in crime, with limited development or accuracy. Little clear evaluation or comparison between the two views.
- **Level 1** (1-3): One or two isolated, undeveloped points about the media and crime, with little or no sociological terminology or accurate detail.
- **Level 0** (0): No relevant content.
- **Indicative content:**
 - Case for the media as a cause of crime: claims that exposure to violent or criminal content can encourage imitation or 'copycat' behaviour, particularly among a small number of vulnerable individuals.
 - Case for the media as a cause of crime continued: some argue repeated media coverage can desensitise audiences to violence or glamorise certain deviant lifestyles.
 - Case for the media mainly amplifying, rather than causing, crime: Cohen's concept of the moral panic and folk devil shows the media often exaggerating and sensationalising existing deviance rather than originating it.
 - Case continued: the deviancy amplification spiral shows how media coverage can provoke a stronger societal reaction, which produces more recorded incidents, which the media then reports as confirmation, without the media having caused the underlying behaviour.
 - Evaluation of the media-as-cause case: critics argue direct-cause claims are difficult to prove, since the great majority of people who consume violent or criminal media content never offend.
 - Evaluation of the amplification case: some sociologists question how far Cohen's 1972 findings, from a very different media era, apply unchanged to fast-moving modern and social media.
 - A balanced conclusion should weigh the media's better-evidenced role in amplifying, labelling and reacting to crime and deviance against the more contested and harder-to-prove claim that media content directly causes offending.

Question 14

- **B1** the qualities, e.g. drama, unusualness or shock value, that make a story more likely to be selected and prominently reported by the media (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. this shapes which crimes the public hears most about, regardless of how common they actually are
- **Answer: The qualities, such as drama, unusualness or shock value, that make a story more likely to be selected and prominently reported by the media; this shapes which crimes the public hears most about, regardless of how common they actually are.**

Question 15

- **B1** identifies a genuine reason, e.g. official statistics can show a long-term fall in some categories of crime, while media coverage of dramatic individual cases can create an impression that crime is getting worse
- **B1** brief development
- **Answer: Official statistics can show an overall long-term fall in some categories of crime, while media coverage focused on dramatic individual cases can create an impression that crime is getting worse.**

Question 16

- **B1** identifies that social media allows stories, images and comments to be shared and reshared very quickly to large audiences
- **B1** development, e.g. this can accelerate the amplification spiral Cohen described
- **B1** further point, e.g. generating an intense reaction to a story within hours rather than the weeks a 1960s newspaper story might have taken
- **B1** correct link back to Cohen's original spiral concept explained in Q4
- **Answer: Social media allows stories, images and comments to be shared very quickly to large audiences, which can accelerate the amplification spiral Cohen described, generating an intense reaction within hours rather than the weeks a 1960s newspaper story might have taken**

Question 17

- **B1** identifies a genuine method, e.g. publishing official statistics or public statements to reassure the public
- **B1** brief development, e.g. aiming to provide a more accurate picture alongside media coverage
- **Answer: Police forces or official bodies sometimes publish official statistics or public statements to reassure the public and provide a more accurate picture alongside media coverage.**