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# Getting the most from this book

## Exam tips

Advice on key points in the text to help you learn and recall content, avoid pitfalls, and polish your exam technique in order to boost your grade.

## Knowledge check

Rapid-fire questions throughout the Content Guidance section to check your understanding.

## Knowledge check answers

- 1 Turn to the back of the book for the Knowledge check answers.

## Summaries

- Each core topic is rounded off by a bullet-list summary for quick-check reference of what you need to know.

## Exam-style questions

## Commentary on the questions

Tips on what you need to do to gain full marks.

## Sample student answers

Practise the questions, then look at the student answers that follow.

Test paper 3

09 Read Item C and answer the question that follows.

**Item C**

Positivists argue that sociology can and should model itself on the natural sciences and study society objectively. They believe that there is no place for values in sociology and that sociologists should discover laws about human behaviour in order to make improvements to society.

However, others not only believe that it is impossible to keep values out of research but that sociologists should be committed and take the side of powerless groups.

Applying material from Item C and your knowledge, evaluate the claim that sociology can be value free. (20 marks)

You should spend about 30 minutes on this question. You may find it useful to use the template for an item-based essay question on page 51. You could begin by outlining the view of classical positivist sociologists who argue that a scientific sociology can be value free. This should be contrasted with Weber's view that while values can be kept out of the data collection process, they are essential in the other three stages of research. Include the debate between modern positivists and committed sociologists as well as the view of interpretivists and postmodernists. You should also include other factors that may prevent sociology from being value free, such as the influence of funding bodies and the careers of sociologists.

**Student answer**

(01) ■ One criticism of situational crime prevention is displacement. Policies such as increasing street lighting may mean that criminals wanting to break into a car will simply move to another area that is less well lit.

■ Left realists would argue that situational crime prevention does not deal with the causes of crime. Making sinks smaller in public toilets may stop the homeless bathing there but will not help them to get off the streets.

Two appropriate points explained with examples.  
4/4 marks awarded

(02) ■ The media may increase crime through starting moral panics. For example, Islamophobia may increase the number of religious hate crimes.

■ The media may desensitise the audience by constantly showing violent images. This will mean that people come to see violence as normal which may increase criminal behaviour.

■ The media may cause relative deprivation through constantly advertising the latest 'must-have' consumer goods. This may encourage the socially excluded to steal items that others have but they can't afford.

Three appropriate points are explained with examples.  
6/6 marks awarded

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## Commentary on sample student answers

Read the comments showing how many marks each answer would be awarded in the exam and exactly where marks are gained or lost.

# About this book

This guide is for students following the AQA A-level Sociology course. It deals with the topic of crime and deviance with theory and methods.

There are two main sections to this guide:

- **Content Guidance** — this provides details of the topics of crime and deviance and sociological theory. There is also a section examining the link between theory and sociological methods. Topic areas on crime and theory examine key ideas and arguments, stating the main points of evaluation, and include the key concepts and key thinkers. The defined words are key words for this specification.
- **Questions & Answers** — this shows you the kind of questions you can expect in the A-level Paper 3 examination. The questions are followed by sample A\*-grade responses.

## How to use this guide

When you study crime and deviance topics and theory and methods in class, read the corresponding information from the Content Guidance sections to become familiar with the topic. You should use these sections to complete your own revision notes, for example on each theory and topic within crime and deviance. You should then complete one of the test papers. It is advisable to focus on questions on one topic area, theory or whatever at a time. After you have completed your own answers you should compare them with the sample student answers provided. These and the comments that follow them can be used to amend your revision notes.

The A-level specification is shown in detail on the AQA website: [www.aqa.org.uk/7192](http://www.aqa.org.uk/7192). Follow the links to Sociology A-level (7192).

# Content Guidance

This section outlines the major issues and themes of **Crime and deviance** and **Theory and methods**.

The content of **Crime and deviance** falls into the following areas:

- crime, deviance, social order and social control
- the social distribution of crime and deviance by ethnicity, gender and social class, including recent patterns and trends in crime
- globalisation and crime in contemporary society; the media and crime; green crime; human rights and state crimes
- crime control, surveillance, prevention and punishment, victims, and the role of the criminal justice system and other agencies

The content of **Theory and methods** falls into the following areas:

- consensus, conflict, structural and social action theories
- the concepts of modernity and postmodernity in relation to sociological theory
- the nature of science and the extent to which sociology can be regarded as scientific
- the relationship between theory and methods
- debates about subjectivity, objectivity and value freedom
- the relationship between sociology and social policy

*Note that sociological methods, which you will have studied in Year 1, are covered in Student Guide 1, Education with theory and methods.*

## Crime and deviance

### ■ Sociological theories of crime and deviance

#### Functionalism, strain and subcultural theories

- Durkheim (1897) believed that crime was inevitable and would be an increasing problem in modern society as rapid social change and diversity could potentially result in **anomie**. However, he felt that a certain level of crime was a normal part of a healthy society and would lead to various positive functions such as allowing positive social change to occur and acting as a **safety valve** to prevent more serious crime. The criminal justice system and punishment also have the function of reminding people of the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and promoting social solidarity through reaffirming shared values.
- However, Durkheim's theory has been criticised for focusing on social control and conformity rather than explaining why some groups commit more crime than others. Merton (1938) developed a functionalist explanation of crime and deviance and acknowledged that crime could be **dysfunctional** for society. He argued that deviance occurred as a result of the strain between socially accepted goals such

**Anomie** A feeling of normlessness. Crime and deviance are likely to occur when people are unsure about or are less committed to shared values and rules.



as achieving material success (the American dream) and socially approved ways of achieving these goals such as hard work in school and the workplace.

- Merton argued that in the USA the main cultural goal was the American dream but that, despite notions of meritocracy, some sections of society lacked the **legitimate opportunity structures** to achieve this goal. This would create anomie for individuals who were excluded from institutional means and would result in crime and deviance (see Table 1).

**Table 1** The strain to anomie: Merton's goals-and-means scheme

Response	Goals	Means	Example	Likely social group
Conformity	Yes	Yes	University-educated professional	Middle class
Innovation	Yes	No	Organised crime gang member or petty thief. Commits <b>utilitarian crime</b>	Working class (due to inadequate socialisation)
Ritualism	No	Yes	Routine office worker who follows the rules but has no interest in promotion or a career	Lower middle class (may have been over-socialised to conform)
Retreatism	No	No	Dropouts of society	Addicts, 'tramps' etc.
Rebellion	Different goals	Different means	Those wanting to create a new 'social order'	Political radicals and revolutionaries

**Utilitarian crime** Crime committed for financial gain.

- **Subcultural** theories of A. Cohen and of Cloward and Ohlin — these developed Merton's notion of **strain** and agree that the lack of **opportunity structures** can be used to explain working-class crime and deviance.
- A. Cohen argues that working-class boys would value success goals initially but that failure in school due to a lack of legitimate opportunity structures would lead to **status frustration**. As a result of this frustration the boys collectively inverted and replaced middle-class values of educational success with alternative goals and ways of achieving status, such as truanting.
- Cloward and Ohlin identify three working-class subcultures that result from varying degrees of access to **illegitimate opportunity structures**:
  - **Criminal** Have access to illegitimate opportunity structures and utilitarian crime as they are socialised into a 'life of crime' by members of organised criminal gangs.
  - **Conflict** Have little access to illegitimate opportunity structures due to a lack of organised crime gangs in their area but can achieve status through gang violence.
  - **Retreatists** Have no access to either legitimate or illegitimate opportunity structures. They may have failed in the other two types of subculture and 'retreat' into a world of drugs.

### **Status frustration**

When people are dissatisfied with their position in society.

### **Illegitimate opportunity structures**

Illegal means of achieving success, such as being in a gang and committing crimes such as theft.

### **Exam tip**

Be prepared to link basic functionalist concepts and arguments to their explanation of crime and deviance. As a structural, consensus theory, functionalism argues that crime occurs when social solidarity is threatened by a lack of effective social control mechanisms and when institutions such as the family are failing to socialise people into a shared culture.

- Miller argues that when working-class men are deviant it is because of their distinctive culture. He argues that lower-working-class culture is characterised by **focal concerns**, which act as a release from the boredom of people's lives and mean that they will inevitably be involved in criminal and deviant activities. For example, the focal concern of 'toughness' will lead to crime such as fighting while 'excitement' will lead to crimes such as joyriding.

Table 2 Comparison of Merton and subcultural theory

Agree with Merton	Disagree with Merton
Merton and the subcultural strain theories of Cohen and of Cloward and Ohlin argue that working-class people initially share mainstream values of success	Miller's version of subcultural theory states that lower-class culture is separate from mainstream values. It does not share the middle-class goal of the 'American dream'
Merton and subcultural strain theories argue that crime is higher among the working class as they have less access to legitimate opportunity structures such as good education	Cohen and also Cloward and Ohlin argue that working-class people adopt a collective, not individual, response to strain by joining a subculture
Working-class crime is often caused by the need for financial gain. Merton's innovator is similar to Cloward and Ohlin's criminal subculture member, who may commit utilitarian crimes such as burglary	Crime can also be non-utilitarian. Cohen's subculture gained status from truanting and vandalising school property. Cloward and Ohlin's conflict subcultures earned status through winning 'turf wars'
Deviants might 'drop out' of society such as Merton's retreatism response and Cloward and Ohlin's retreatist subculture, whose cultural values may both focus around drug use	Cloward and Ohlin's retreatist subculture members are 'double failures' as they lack access to illegitimate opportunity structures (criminal and conflict subcultures) as well as legitimate ones

**Interactionist** Matza (1971) argues that rather than there being a distinctive subculture, groups in society use a set of deviant '**subterranean values**' that exist below mainstream values. People normally keep these values under control but they occasionally emerge in situations such as after drinking too much at the office party or the end of Year 13 holiday in Ibiza. Matza argues that when this occurs we use **techniques of neutralisation** (sets of excuses) to justify our deviant actions, such as the 'denial of responsibility': 'That wasn't me, I was drunk'.

## Evaluation

- **Merton** Are there just five types of adaptation and common goals in society? The American dream may not be applicable to the UK today.
- **A. Cohen** Are working-class deviants aware that they are 'inverting' middle-class values? Delinquent behaviour such as truanting may be done just 'for a laugh'.
- **Cloward and Ohlin** There may be more than three types of subculture and an individual may be involved in more than one, such as a small-time drug dealer who is also a user.
- **Miller** There is little evidence to suggest that focal concerns are restricted to working-class males. Does a completely separate, homogeneous working-class subculture exist? However, **New Right** sociologists such as Murray (1990) would support Miller's ideas, arguing that there is now a distinct **underclass** whose values encourage deviant and criminal behaviour.

**Focal concerns** The main things that are valued in a culture.

### Exam tip

To develop analysis, compare Merton's strain theory and subcultural theories with the left realists Lea and Young's version of subculture (see Table 3 on page 13). While they have different views on the causes, both believe that members of subcultures may be unable to achieve society's cultural goals due to blocked opportunity structures.

- **Interactionists** such as Matza argue that separate subcultures do not exist and that we all '**drift**' between conformity and deviant '**subterranean values**'.
- **Marxists** argue that strain and subcultural theories ignore corporate crime. Marxist subcultural theorists such as Brake (1980) argue that working-class subcultures, such as punk and skinhead youth subcultures, develop as a resistance to capitalism rather than through strain (see page 7).
- **Feminists** argue that strain and subcultural theories are 'malestream' and ignore female crime and deviancy, such as the increase in 'girl gangs'.
- **Postmodernists** such as Maffesoli (1996) argue that rather than there being rigid subcultures resulting from causes such as strain, young people belong to 'neo-tribes' that are fluid and diverse. Rather than being based on deviant working-class values, neo-tribes result from different lifestyles that are influenced by a range of factors that are often media-led.

### Knowledge check 1

Outline two criticisms of subcultural theories of crime.

## Interactionism: labelling theory

Interactionists disagree with the functionalist view of crime and deviance in a number of ways:

- Rather than deviance producing social control, interactionists argue that agents of social control are the cause of crime and deviance.
- Rather than using an absolute definition of deviance, interactionists adopt a relative definition and argue that there is no fixed view of what constitutes deviant behaviour. As Matza argues, people 'drift' in and out of deviance.
- Rather than seeing official statistics as reliable and as generally accurate in reflecting patterns of crime, interactionists regard them as being socially constructed and lacking validity. **Phenomenologist** Cicourel argues that due to police using **typifications**, crime statistics say more about the way the police operate than actual levels of crime.

Interactionists focus on **labelling theory** and how agents of social control — such as the police, the judiciary and the media — have the power to define less powerful groups as deviant. **Becker** (1967) argues that social groups create deviance by making rules and then labelling those who do not conform to these social controls as 'outsiders'. He argues that '**moral entrepreneurs**' (such as politicians) have power over individuals and are able to redefine behaviour and laws into what they feel is acceptable.

**Lemert** (1951) differentiates between **primary deviance**, which constitutes deviant acts that have not been labelled, and **secondary deviance**, which is the **societal reaction** caused by acts being publicly labelled. For labelling theorists, societal reaction to being labelled as deviant has many different consequences:

- The individual can be **stigmatised** and excluded from 'normal society', as **Goffman** demonstrated when people are labelled as mentally ill.
- The label can become an individual's '**master status**' — the main way that others see them (e.g. being viewed as a 'junkie' rather than as a father or boss). This is likely to have a negative impact on an individual's self-concept, and a **self-fulfilling prophecy** will occur as they will begin to see their identity in terms of the label.

**Typifications** Shared concepts used to make sense of the world such as stereotypes that working-class or black people are more criminal than other groups.

- **Becker** argues that further societal reaction, such as discrimination in the workplace, may lead to the labelled person following a '**deviant career**', resulting in them joining a subculture with others who have been similarly labelled.
- **Young's** (1971) study of hippy drug users illustrates how aspects of secondary deviancy, such as police persecution and labelling, led to a self-fulfilling prophecy where drug-taking and other subcultural deviant behaviour increased. This process, where labelling and an increased attempt to control behaviour actually create more deviance, is called the **deviancy amplification spiral**.
- **S. Cohen's** (1972) study of mods and rockers (see Table 5 on page 25) is another example of how labelling, in this case by the media, can lead to deviance amplification via a **moral panic**.
- **Braithwaite** (1989) distinguishes between **disintegrative shaming**, where the criminal is negatively labelled and excluded from society, and **reintegrative shaming**, which labels the act as bad but not the person themselves. Braithwaite argues that reintegrative shaming avoids the negative effects of societal reaction and can lead to lower levels of crime, as offenders will be made aware of the impact of their behaviour and will be accepted back into society without being stigmatised.

### Evaluation

- + Interactionism illustrates how deviance is a relative concept and how deviance, crime and crime statistics can be socially constructed.
- + It draws attention to the importance of labelling and its consequences.
- + It demonstrates the impact of agents of social control at a micro level and how they may create more deviance.
- – Labelling theory is too deterministic as individuals can reject labels and not follow the deviant career. However, Becker does acknowledge that individuals have the power to resist labels.
- – Labelling theory only focuses on trivial forms of deviance and is not useful in explaining more serious crimes, such as murder.
- – **Akers** (1967) criticises labelling theory for blaming societal reaction for an individual's deviant behaviour. He felt the act itself is more important than societal reaction and that individuals are aware that they are breaking the law.
- – Interactionism fails to explain why people commit deviant acts in the first place.
- – **Left realists** argue that labelling theory is too sympathetic to the criminal and ignores the victims of crime.
- – **Marxists** argue that it ignores the wider, macro origins of labelling and that labelling reflects the power of the ruling class in a capitalist society.

### Knowledge check 2

Outline two strengths of interactionist theories of crime.

## Marxism

Rather than social control benefiting everyone, as functionalists suggest, Marxists argue that it benefits the ruling class and works against working-class people's interests by preventing them from rebelling against the injustices of capitalism. Marxists agree with interactionist criticisms of the functionalist view of crime and deviance that official statistics on crime are invalid due to the law being selectively

- OCS suggest that crime is largely a working-class phenomenon. The vast majority of the prison population are from socially deprived backgrounds and most people who appear in court are from working-class backgrounds. As has been outlined in the previous section, different sociological theories have different explanations regarding why members of the working class appear disproportionately in OCS. While those who adopt a positivist approach, such as functionalists, accept the validity of OCS in showing a realistic picture of crime, theories based on an interpretivist approach argue that OCS are **socially constructed** and are based on the institutional biases of the criminal justice system. Marxists would agree that the law is selectively enforced and would argue that offences associated with the middle class, such as white-collar crimes, are largely ignored, whereas working-class offences, such as street crime, are targeted by the police.

### Summary

After studying these sections, you should be aware of sociological explanations of crime, deviance, social order and social control. You should be familiar with the following:

- functionalism, strain and subcultural explanations
- Marxist and neo-Marxist explanations
- labelling theory and the social construction of crime
- right and left realist approaches to the causes of crime and deviance
- sociological explanations of patterns of crime in relation to social class, e.g. selective law enforcement and white-collar crime
- different methods of measuring crime: official crime statistics, and victimisation and self-report surveys

### Knowledge check 5

Outline two strengths of victim surveys.

## Ethnicity and crime

- Black people, and to a lesser extent Asian people, are over-represented in OCS at all stages of the criminal justice system (CJS). In 2019, people from BAME (black, Asian and minority ethnic) backgrounds made up 25% of the prison population but only constituted 14% of the general population. Black people accounted for 13.7% of the prison population but only made up 2.7% of the general population. Conflict theories, such as interactionism and Marxism, argue that such statistics reflect levels of discrimination towards minority ethnic groups (MEGs) rather than real rates of offending and have made several criticisms of the CJS.
- **Phillips and Browning** (2007) argue that MEG communities are likely to feel 'over-policed and under-protected'. This is reflected in statistics from 2018 showing that black people are eight times as likely (and Asian people three times as likely) as white people to be **stopped and searched** by the police. Phillips and Browning suggest that as a result of this deliberate targeting by the police, some black people act out the label of potential criminal and commit street crime.

# Questions & Answers

## ■ How to use this section

Following this introduction, this section of the guide contains three test papers on **Crime and deviance with theory and methods** in the style of the questions you can expect in the A-level Paper 3 examination. The content, timings and mark allocation of these papers are shown below.

The questions are followed by a brief analysis of what to watch out for when answering them. An A\*-grade response to each question is given, with commentary explaining where marks are gained or lost. The A\*-grade responses represent one way of achieving an A\* grade. However, there is no such thing as a perfect essay. An A\* grade can be achieved in a number of different ways. The advice below offers some suggestions on how this can be achieved.

The information in this guide can be used for the following exam papers:

### Paper 3 Crime and deviance with theory and methods

The exam paper is allocated 2 hours.

- **Crime and deviance** Short answers (4- and 6-mark questions) and extended writing (10- and 30-mark questions). 50 marks
- **Theory and methods** Extended writing (10- and 20-mark questions). 30 marks

### Paper 1 Education with theory and methods

- **Theory and methods** Extended writing (10-mark question). 10 marks

There is also a 10-mark 'Outline and explain' question on Paper 1 on Theory and methods, so the questions in this guide will be useful practice for this exam as well. The Content Guidance section in this guide, particularly the material on sociological theory, can be used to help prepare for the 10-mark essay question in this paper (refer to Student Guide 1, Education with theory and methods, for practice papers for the 10-mark questions on Theory and methods and for a more detailed coverage of sociological methods).

The extended writing questions for 20 and 30 marks will make a specific reference to an 'item'. You should always make use of the item but should never copy out material from it. Try to refer to it and use it to make your own point in your own words. However, for the 10-mark 'apply' question it is essential to quote the item.

## Examinable skills

AQA Sociology examination papers are designed to test certain defined skills. These skills are expressed as assessment objectives (AOs). There are three AOs and it is important that you know what these are and what you have to be able to do in an exam to show your ability in each. Further guidance on each of the AOs is given below. In practice, many answers to questions, particularly those carrying the higher marks, will contain elements of all three AOs.

## Test paper 2

(01) Outline **two** ways that globalisation may lead to an increase in crime.

(4 marks)

Remember to use bullet points and give an extra point if you have time. You could refer to an increase in crimes resulting from issues such as deregulation, outsourcing, international terrorism and trafficking, and also note how globalisation has created new offences such as cybercrimes. Try to give an example and ensure you refer to global factors increasing crime.

(02) Outline **three** functions that punishment may perform for society.

(6 marks)

Remember to use bullet points and give an extra point if you have time. As well as functions such as deterrence, incapacitation and rehabilitation, you could refer to how Marxists view punishments as serving the needs of capitalism. Try to give an example of a punishment to illustrate the function that it performs for society.

(03) Read **Item A** below and answer the question that follows.

### Item A

The role of the criminal justice system is to identify, catch and punish unlawful individuals. It consists of institutions such as the police, courts and prison. Conviction rates for different social groups may be influenced by factors such as social exclusion and inequalities in society.

Applying material from **Item A**, analyse **two** reasons for ethnic differences in criminal conviction rates.

(10 marks)

You should spend about 15 minutes on this question. Divide your time fairly equally between the two reasons and write a paragraph on each. You could structure each paragraph as suggested on page 50. There is no need to write a separate introduction or conclusion. You are only required to give two reasons, and these must be applied from material in the item.

The first 'hook' in Item A is the reference to the 'criminal justice system' (CJS). This should lead to a discussion of how the CJS can discriminate against minority ethnic groups (MEGs), which may lead to them appearing disproportionately in the official crime statistics. For example, you could discuss how the police may believe the 'myth of black criminality' (Gilroy) and so be more likely to stop and search people in the black community, or how the 'moral panic' regarding black muggers (Hall) was brought about by the activities of the police and media labelling. This *must* be applied to how this may have led to ethnic differences in criminal conviction rates — for example, by showing how these two processes would have increased conviction rates for people in the black community. This could be evaluated by reference to right and left realist arguments that these neo-Marxist views are too sympathetic to the criminal and that black crime is not politically motivated.



The second 'hook' in Item A is the reference to 'social exclusion and inequalities in society'. This should lead to a discussion of the left realist view that while statistics on ethnic differences in conviction rates are accurate, they also may reflect how racism in society has led to certain MEGs being socially excluded. For example, you could note that certain MEGs may face racism in society that leads to marginalisation and relative deprivation. This *must* be applied to how this may have led to ethnic differences in criminal conviction rates. For example, you could discuss how higher levels of unemployment and poverty may lead to real differences in relative deprivation which can lead to higher levels of offending. This could be evaluated by reference to the neo-Marxist view that left realists underestimate the impact of police racism, or criticisms from a right realist perspective.

(04) Read **Item B** below and answer the question that follows.

### Item B

For traditional Marxists the very nature of capitalist society causes crime and deviance. The ruling class not only have the power to exploit the working class but are able to make and enforce laws in their own interests.

However, neo-Marxist theories generally take a less deterministic approach and some call for a 'fully social' theory of deviance.

Applying material from **Item B** and your knowledge, evaluate the usefulness of different Marxist theories in understanding crime and deviance in contemporary society.

(30 marks)

You should spend about 45 minutes on this question. It may be helpful to use the template for an item-based essay question on page 51. Use the first two sentences of the item to introduce the traditional Marxist view, but don't simply copy the material. As well as outlining how capitalism is criminogenic and uses selective law making and enforcement as stated in the item, you should also refer to the ideological functions of crime and the law. Use the last line of the item to introduce the neo-Marxist views of Taylor, Walton and Young. This can be developed through a discussion of the attempts to apply the fully social theory by Hall and Gilroy in their neo-Marxist studies of ethnicity and crime.

You should refer to the criticisms of different Marxist views from other perspectives, including left and right realists. Rather than simply listing the explanations of crime and deviance offered by other perspectives, you should discuss how they have different views on the causes of crime and deviance. Also, discuss the similarities between theories, such as between interactionist theory and Marxism and their emphasis on the law being selectively enforced by powerful agents of social control.



**(05)** Outline and explain **two** reasons why sociology cannot be regarded as a science. (10 marks)

You should spend about 15 minutes on this question. Divide your time fairly equally between the two reasons and write a paragraph on each. You could structure each paragraph as suggested on page 52. You should only write about two reasons and there is no need to write a separate introduction or conclusion.

A good way to structure your answer is to base one paragraph on interpretivist criticisms of the positivist view that sociology can be an objective science, and the second paragraph on alternative views on the nature of science, such as Popper or Kuhn or the postmodernist view. For the interpretivist paragraph, you could use the case study of suicide and refer to arguments from interactionists and ethnomethodologists as to why this topic cannot be studied in a scientific way. Alternatively, you could write one paragraph on Popper and one paragraph on Kuhn. Remember there are no marks for evaluation for this question.

**(06)** Read **Item C** and answer the question that follows.

### Item C

Interactionists argue that rather than being controlled like puppets, individuals have free will, and that society is constructed through people's interactions. They tend to adopt a micro approach to understanding society and use qualitative methods to uncover the meanings people give to their actions.

However, other sociologists advocate taking a 'top-down' approach and reject these methods as being unscientific and unreliable.

Applying material from **Item C** and your knowledge, evaluate the usefulness of interactionist theories and research for our understanding of contemporary society. (20 marks)

You should spend about 30 minutes on this question. It may be helpful to use the template for an item-based essay question on page 51. A good way to start would be to outline the basic arguments of symbolic interactionists such as Mead and Blumer. This could then be developed via application of topic areas such as education and crime and deviance — for example, how Becker argues that 'underdogs' in society are labelled by agencies of social control such as teachers and police. This could be evaluated by reference to other theoretical views on issues such as the causes of working-class underachievement and patterns of crime, for instance Marxist and functionalist views.

Other versions of social action theory, such as Goffman, phenomenology and ethnomethodology, could then be compared with symbolic interactionism and evaluated. Ensure that you include a section on the research methods used by interactionists. Again, topic areas such as education and crime and deviance could be used to discuss the interpretivist versus positivist methodological debate.

**Student answer**

- (01) ■ Globalisation can lead to an increase in crime as in a postmodern era, countries are more connected through developments in transport and media. For example, the drugs trade has increased as drugs can be transported more easily around the world, increasing opportunities to commit this type of crime. Similarly, drugs can be purchased online on the 'dark web'.
- Globalisation has meant that it is easier for TNCs to outsource, i.e. relocate their factories to developing countries. This can lead to an increase in crime as not only can TNCs more easily break health and safety laws and exploit workers in these countries (paying less than the legal minimum wage) but it may encourage insecure workers to turn to crime due to their increased poverty.

Two points are explained with examples. There is actually too much detail here as two examples have been given for each point.

**4/4 marks awarded**

- (02) ■ Deterrence. The fact that harsh punishments, such as long prison sentences, may stop reoffending may be functional for society because crime will be reduced as criminals are made an example of.
- Incapacitation. If someone is put in prison or (more controversially) is chemically castrated, it has the function of making people feel safer in society as they know that that individual is no longer able to offend again.
- Rehabilitation. If the punishment is used to reform offenders (e.g. through education or therapy), it can have the function of enabling them to make a positive contribution to society through working rather than going back to a life of crime.

Three appropriate points, with examples, have been made.

**6/6 marks awarded**

- (03) The first reason for ethnic differences in criminal conviction rates is, as Item A states, the 'criminal justice system' (CJS). Research suggests that some minority ethnic groups (MEGs) may be treated more severely by the CJS and that this is the reason why they are more likely to appear in the crime statistics. Neo-Marxists such as Gilroy argue that black criminality is a myth created by racist stereotypes held by the police. Those in the CJS, such as the police and courts, act on these stereotypes resulting in MEGs being criminalised, which is reflected in the crime statistics. For example, research suggests that black people are seven times more likely than white people to be stopped and searched by the police. As a result, they are more likely to be charged and convicted of an offence. Similarly, Holdaway observed a racist 'canteen culture' in the police which led to black people being over-policed. This is supported by the fact that the Metropolitan Police admitted that they were