Item

Societies attempt to prevent or control crime in various ways. These may range from simple prevention strategies to rough punishments aimed at deterring would-be-offenders. They may also include policies to tackle the underlying causes of crime.

One important type of crime control today is surveillance. This involves monitoring people’s behaviour. Surveillance may also include profiling people in terms of their gender, nationality or other characteristics to determine what level of risk they pose.

**Applying material from the item and your knowledge, evaluate sociological contributions to our understanding of crime prevention and control [30]**

Over the years many governments and theorists has tried many ways of dealing with crime and deviance. Durkheim argues it is inevitable and in every society and therefore means there will always need to be ways of dealing with it. As item B states methods of control and prevention include punishment, policies to tackle underlying causes of crime and also surveillance.

The item also states one type of control method available today is surveillance, which includes monitoring people’s behaviours. This has particularly grown in modern industrial societies because of a wide range of technology available including CCTV and even traffic cameras. It is argued surveillance works in a number of ways to prevent crime including identifying criminals for prosecution, which can act as a deterrence for many potential criminals. However, Foucault and his theory of the panopticon describes self-surveillance as guards and other shop owners may be able to see you via CCTV, but you can’t see them. This uncertainty of whether you’re being watched or not often means people will be on their best behaviour just in case they’re being watched. Surveillance is also on the increase as a form of preventing crime through the widespread use of phones. This lead to a synoptic surveillance where watches each other, not just the authoritative figures. This raises standards as even police recognise recorded evidence as being useful. However, surveillance is criticised by feminists as a way for men in a patriarchal society to take advantage of women by constantly watching them. Marxists would also argue surveillance also doesn’t help in the prevention of corporate crime such as fraud, which can be argued costs more than ordinary street crime (Tombs).

Another method of control mentioned in the item is punishment which can have many functions including deterrence. Punishment in modern society includes custodial sentences and community service. This can act as a deterrent as punishment is associated with a criminal record which can receive social stigma, as argued by Goffman, and also difficulty in obtaining a job. This means to avoid this more people are less likely to turn to crime. Punishment also includes functions such as rehabilitation of offenders and prison has at time provided education to help criminals integrate into society and prevent further crime from happening. However, this is often an expensive process which other people may argue isn’t deserving for people in prison. Punishment techniques such as prison are also criticised as they don’t work. 2/3 of those who go to prison would go back to prison at some point; it’s argued prisons are a place where the bad get worse. For example, Goffman argued prisons were places where criminals socialised each other into further criminal behaviour. Marxists also argue that they have an ideological function as they absorb a large percentage of the unemployed population, who do not count on official statistics and give capitalism a better look; that there are less unemployed people, when in reality they are in prison.

Right realists believe crime is a result of biological differences, rational choice and socialisation. Charles Murray argued rising crime is a result of the generous welfare system which leads to an underclass of poor single mothers who can’t socialise boys properly that leads to crime. For Murray a way of preventing and controlling crime is to abolish welfare funding as in his view it applauds bad behaviour.

Other right realists would argue crime prevention and control should include pre-emptive protection and zero tolerance policing. Pre-emptive methods would include target hardening such as locks on doors and windows to ensure it is harder to be a victim of crime. This was based on Wilson and Kelling’s Broken Windows thesis in which signs of deterioration should be dealt with before developing into serious problems. This also reduces the opportunities for criminality, which Clark argues are a result of a rational choice. However, left realists such as Lea and Young would favour dealing with the underlying issues of marginalisation and relative deprivation. Merely tidying up an area or providing more security doesn’t help deal with the issues that lead to crime being committed in the first place.

Whereas right realists favour a zero tolerance approach because they think people are generally selfish and making an example of a criminal is better than putting tax payer’s money into solving poverty issues. Young is critical of this approach because he argued it led to military style policing. For example in New York where this was piloted the crime rate was already dropping a year before it came in. Meaning that politicians could take credit for a trend that was already happening.

In conclusion, item B included a number of ways crime and deviance may be prevented or limited, each method often with strengths and weaknesses. However, some methods have been proved to work, for instance the Perry Pre-School Project which aimed to reduce inequalities at pre-school age found that compared with a control group the children had taken party in the project after 40 years, for every $1 spent on the project $817 was saved in welfare, prison and other costs. This then leads to the question why its not more common. The answer therefore is there are a lot of factors which influence the type or method of control or prevention which a country may use. This includes funding as many projects may be expensive and may not help a government gain votes as many people want lower taxes. So although approaches favoured by left realists may lead to solutions they are expensive and therefore not favoured.

30/30 – taken from an actual AQA exam in 2017