

**ITEM B: STATE CRIME**

*State crimes refer to any "illegal or deviant activities perpetrated by, or with, the complicity of state agencies", according to Green and Ward. There are four key categories of state crime: political crimes, those committed by the security forces, economic crimes and social/cultural crimes.*

*Sociologists are particularly concerned about state crimes as they feel they have been under-investigated by the police and therefore have been used as a way of controlling or oppressing the less powerful groups in society. Because the state itself is a source of law it is difficult to challenge and the state can also have a wide-reaching impact upon members of society.*

**Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate the view that state crimes are one of the most serious forms of crime. (30 marks)**

Some sociologists would agree that state crimes are one of the most serious forms of crime in society; however, others would disagree and argue that corporate or petty crimes, green crimes or crimes as a result of globalisation are more serious.

According to Item B, "state crimes refer to any "illegal or deviant activities perpetrated by, or with, the complicity of state agencies" (Green and Ward). Item B also states that there are four main types of state crime. The first of these is political crimes. These can include corruption whereby the government carries out illegal or immoral activities in order to ensure its sustained power and social position. Other examples of political state crimes can include censorship, where an individual's freedom of speech is restricted or where they are unable to freely access information (as is the case in China). The second form of political crime is crimes by the security forces or the police which often involve the mistreatment of members of society. Examples of this could include genocides such as in Rwanda or the torture and disappearance of political dissidents such as in Chile. A third category of political crime is economic crime, for example violating laws relating to health and safety and finally the fourth category of state crimes is social and cultural crimes such as institutional racism.

Sociologists would argue that state crime is one of the most serious forms of crime because it is extremely widespread and is committed on a mass scale. Because the state is hugely powerful it is able to cause harm to significant numbers of people. A particularly famous example of this occurred in Cambodia in the 1970s under the Khmer Rouge government led by Pol Pot. It is estimated that under this

*A clear introduction that includes an outline of the argument.*

*Immediate reference to Item B and clear use of sociological evidence.*

*Definitions and descriptions of the four types of state crimes are analysed and examples are given.*

*Paragraph links back to the original question and offers clear analysis of the issue.*

*There are appropriate examples given.*

government up to two million people (which equated to around  $\frac{1}{5}$  of the country's population) were killed by the state. Sociologists would point to the way in which it is inevitable that crimes such as these will occur wherever there is great political power (Michaelowski and Kramer, 2006). The state has a monopoly over violence which also allows it the potential to cause great physical harm and to oppress populations by threatening harm. Though the mass media has given some attention to such crimes, these tend to focus on third-world countries such as Cambodia; however, there are numerous examples of Western countries which have also used violence and torture (such as Americans in Iraq or the IRA in Northern Ireland). This is because the mass media is dominated by Western countries in terms of its ownership and therefore they are more able to cover up their illegitimate activities to allow them to continue. It is also particularly difficult to exert authority over states committing such crimes because of the principles of national sovereignty, which means that the state is the ultimate authority within its own borders and so it is difficult for external nations to intervene (such as the United Nations).

This leads on to the view that the state is its own source of law which means it is able to decide what is defined as criminal. The state also takes control over the criminal justice system and the ways in which it prosecutes offenders. However, state crime undermines the justice system as it is able to define its own actions as not being criminal. This was the case in Nazi Germany, as the state allowed the state to disable people against their will.

The evidence so far suggests that the most serious form of crime is state crime because it is far reaching, undermines the criminal system and causes significant harm for the population. However, other sociologists would argue that it is important to consider the impact of other forms of crimes such as green crime. Green crime can be defined as any crime that causes harm to the environment and has become a much more significant crime in society as it has global reach. This is because green crime affects the ecosystem which has an impact on us all. For example, pollution in the atmosphere from industry can cause acid rain to fall on innocent countries. Green criminologists would argue, therefore, that these forms of crime are more serious than state crimes because they have global reach and because like state crimes they are difficult to police due to national sovereignty and borders which means there is no shared

*Sociological studies are used as supporting evidence and are developed as a distinct point.*

*Synoptic links are made to the mass media topic.*

*Development of the argument with appropriate examples given.*

*Reference back to the original question and with clearer evaluation.*

*New sociological concepts are introduced and the opposing arguments are well developed with appropriate examples given.*

legal system to control these practices.

Other sociologists would argue that we should be more concerned by the growth of the global criminal economy which has come about as the result of globalisation and which includes crimes such as trafficking, sex tourism, cyber-crimes, smuggling, money laundering and international terrorism. Sociologists would argue that we should be particularly concerned about the global criminal economy as it is growing at an alarming rate and like green crime it had a significant reach which is hard to police. The global criminal economy also operates on a supply–demand basis which creates exploitative relationships between third-world countries who supply the industries in the developed world.

However, other sociologists would argue that the most serious forms of crime occur on a daily basis. Petty crimes such as street crimes seem to be the main focus of the police’s attention as these are the ones that are most likely to be reported to them by the public, or which they come across during their everyday patrols. Marxist sociologists are concerned about this because they tend to concentrate on working class areas and populations and this can bring about negative relationships with the police and an over-representation of the working classes in the prison populations. However, critics would suggest that we should actually be more concerned with the white-collar crimes of the middle classes which involve crimes such as tax evasion, fraud and other business related crimes which the police fail to investigate as they conflict with the money making potential of the capitalist system. This suggests that crimes are being overlooked by the legal system and so we cannot trust crime statistics as an accurate reflection of criminal behaviour.

Based on the evidence, sociologists would suggest that there are a significant range of different forms of crime, some of which are considered more serious than others by different sociologists. State crimes, however, could be seen as more damaging than most forms of crime as they have a wide reaching population and because they threaten the legal system itself which is supposedly there to protect the population, and yet it is undermined by crimes committed by the state and law enforcement agencies who can devise the laws and policies to suit themselves and their interests. Although other types of crime raise concerns about the nature of society and the economic system and the impact

*Further evaluation which makes synoptic links to the issues of globalisation.*

*Clear examples are given and there is explicit reference back to the original question.*

*Continued evaluation which makes reference to sociological theories and which introduces new key concepts.*

*Specific examples are given to illustrate points.*

*A clear conclusion that makes explicit reference to the original question and which recaps key points from the body of evidence.*

of globalisation on criminality, it is still the case that state crimes are one of the more significant forms of crime as they take place in a privatised environment of state borders.

[1156 words]

Examiner style comments: **Mark band 25-30**

This essay falls within the top mark band. It is full of examples to illustrate points made and it has a clear focus on the question. There is explicit use of Item B early on and the essay has a clear focus on the question. There is reference to both sociological studies and theories (although these could be more developed to extend the essay further). Good synoptic links have been made to other areas.