Changes in The Concepts of Crime and Deviance

Time

Homosexuality is much more acceptable.
Smoking is now a lot less acceptable

Culture

In the US it is considered acceptable for the police and the public to carry guns.
In Japan, people eat with chopsticks.

These cultural things would be considered deviant in British society, and progressive issues would be considered deviant a hundred years ago.

Informal Social Control

Norms

Rules and guidelines on how people are expected to behave.

Mores

Norms based on the moral judgements of the social group.

Customs

Traditional patterns of behaviour and belief.

Examples of informal social control:

- **Family**
- **Mass media**
- **Religion**
- **Peers**
- **Schools**
- **Work**

Social Class and Crime

Poor socialisation

People who are poorly socialised may have different norms and values to the rest of society, leading to deviant and criminal behaviour.

Social Class and Crime (cont)

Anomie

People may feel resentful over the disint-egration of traditional norms and values.

Status frustration

People may feel frustrated about their social status and class, causing them to act out against the rest of society.

However, it has been suggested that the criminal justice system is simply biased against people of the working class and that the law is more strictly enforced while crimes committed by the upper class are under-reported.

Ethnic Minorities and Crime

Ethnicity

The criminal justice system is often seen as being "institutionally racist".
Additionally, members of minority groups are often victims of racial harassment and violence.
Afro-Caribbean people are over-repr-esented in crime statistics in particular.

The Dark Figure of Crime

Victim Surveys

These ask people about crimes they have been a victim of which have not been reported to the police. These show a figure of crime which is unrepresented in the public statistics.

The Dark Figure of Crime (cont)

Self-Report Studies

These studies ask a target population what crimes they have committed. This method has some issues.

- **People may not cooperate**
- **People may lie**

These are usually carried out on teenagers who may exaggerate the truth to impress peers.

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Formal Social Control

Legislature	Makes laws
Police	Enforces laws
Judiciary	Deals with law-breakers
Penal System	Carries out sentences

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The Legislature

1.
> A bill is brought before Parliament.

2.
> It is debated by MPs in the House of Commons.

3.
> It is then debated by the House of Lords

4.
> Alterations are made if agreed.

5.
> Both houses must agree to pass the bill.

6.
> Once the Queen signs it, it becomes an Act of Parliament and has the force of law.

An example of a recently created law is that of the Criminal Justice Act of 1994, which created criminals of those who camped after a local authority asked them to leave, as well as those who refused to leave a house for more than 24 hours after the landlord sent an eviction order.

Measuring Crime

The Home Office

A government department responsible for domestic British issues.
It regularly publishes statistics about the number of crimes committed.
However, they may not be accurate and may not tell us the whole story about crime.

White-Collar and Corporate Crime

Occupational Crime

This refers to crime committed by opportunities that are left open in the criminal's occupation.
These can range in magnitude, from stealing small amounts of money as a cashier in a supermarket or by stealing large amounts working at a bank.
Often, occupational crimes are dealt with by the company rather than the law. This is due to the bad publicity that the company would get, so occupational crime is often unreported.

Gender and Crime

Gender

Statistics show that women commit less crime than men. This may be for many reasons:

- Socialisation - boys and girls are socialised differently. Valuing competitiveness over empathy in boys may result in an increased inclination to commit crime.

- Opportunities - Women may have fewer opportunities to commit crime, due to being less likely to work or face confrontation.

However, the **chivalry factor** or the idea that 'men should protect women' may affect statistics in that the police are more likely to caution than charge women, and courts are likely to impose lighter sentences.
Alternatively, women can be treated more harshly for offences such as neglect or abuse of children due to caring for children being considered a women's "natural role".

Explanations of Crime

Biological Explanations of Crime

- Lower levels in seratonin**
- A criminal "gene"
- The existance of "criminal families"

Psychological Explanations of Crime

- Crime is often related to illnesses such as schizophrenia
- Psychological disorders such as kleptomania

Sociological Explanations of Crime

- Peer groups and subcultures
- Socialisation, home and family
- Lack of opportunity
- The nature of society

Functionalist Explanation of Crime

Functionalists believe that society is based on an agreement about norms and values, and laws come from that agreement.
They believe that crime can be useful to society because it strengthens people's will to stick with these norms and values. We see the punishment given to the deviants and criminals and seek to stay within our society's norms and values.

The Police

The role of the police is to

- Prevent crime

- Protect life and property

- Arrest offenders and maintain public order

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The Police (cont)

Marxists believe that police are there to maintain the power of the ruling class. Additionally, they have been accused of having **institutionalized racism**.

The Judiciary

The role of the judiciary is to deal with alleged offenders and to convict those found guilty of a criminal offence.
The **Crown Courts and Magistrates Courts** deal with criminal law. Serious cases such as murder, rape and arson are tried by a **judge and jury** at a **Crown Court**.

The Penal System

This refers to both prison and probation services. Their role is to deal with people who have been found guilty of offenses.
The purposes are
- **To punish those who have been found guilty**
- **To reform offenders** in order to prevent further offenses via education and training in order to give them a chance to get a job
- **To deter potential offenders.** This is aided by the media.

Problems with Official Statistics

Detection
Crimes may go unnoticed, such as forgery or fraud, which means they are not recorded in official statistics.

Reporting
Not all crimes are even reported to the police. **Victim surveys** show that many who are victims of crime choose not to report it to the police.
This could be because it's
- **Too petty**
- **Too private**
- **No loss to victim - "victimless"**
- **Think police can do nothing to help**
- **Companies may not want publicity**

Recording
The police may not record a crime if they think it is too trivial, if the complainant decides not to proceed or if there isn't enough evidence.

Policing
The amount of policing may affect the figures by their own activities.
For example, at Christmas they may clamp down on drinking and driving, so more reports of this are recorded.

Age and Crime

Age

> Self-report studies have shown that young people commit more crime than adults, albeit minor ones.
> However, teenagers are under close social control from parents and teachers, so the offences they commit are more likely to be noticeed. Additionally, adults are more likely to commit white-collar crime which is known to be under-recorded.

Age and Crime (cont)

Delinquency

> Factors linked to delinquency could be:
> - **Family problems**
> - **Failure at school**
> - **Use of alcohol and drugs**
> - **Peer groups and subcultures**

Marxist Explanations of Crime

Marxists explain crime relative to the society we live in and who has power in it.
They say that **capitalist society** is based on values such as materialism, consumerism and competition between people, and that these things encourage people to commit crime to get ahead. Additionally, the media continually reinforce these values.
Marxists believe that crime is a by-product of the way that capitalist society is organized.

Labelling Theory

This refers to the label that is given to mainly criminals, who then find it difficult to reintegrate into society.
For example, someone who is caught stealing a book may be sent to prison and never offered a good job due to being labelled and considered a criminal. This becomes the person's **master status** and they find it difficult to remove it.
Many people whose **master status** is that of a criminal will even turn back to crime due to others' opinions of them. This is known as a **self-fulfilling prophecy**.

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