

Functionalist Explanations of Crime – Hirschi's Control Theory

A level Sociology

Starter for Ten

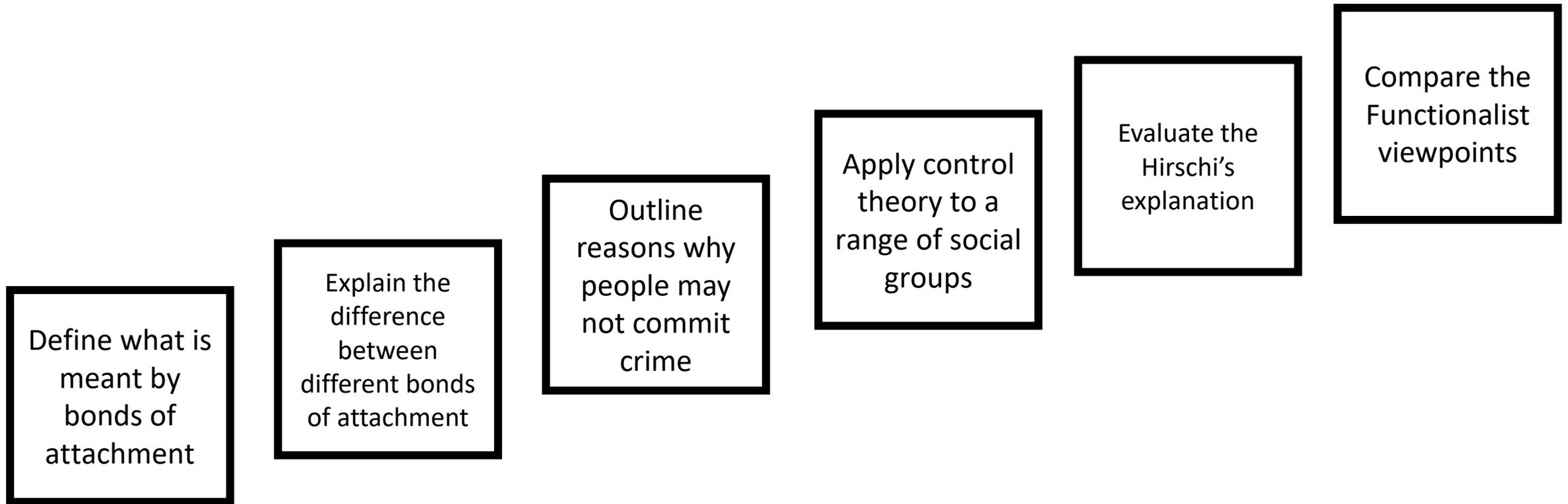
Item A

Some Functionalist Sociologists suggest that crime performs a range of functions for society – both positive and negative. Crime is seen as inevitable and universal in all societies and as a consequence can perform some positive functions for wider society; such as signifying when the norms and values of society do not reflect the consensus of the it's members.

However, other functionalists would suggest that crime is a result of structural inequality and a lack of transmitting the correct cultural norms and values, forcing people to adapt in order to prevent anomie

Applying material from Item A, analyse 2 ways in which crime and deviance can be seen as a function of social pressures (10)

The Big Question: Evaluate the contribution of Functionalists to our understanding of Crime and Deviance



E



A*

Travis Hirschi: Bonds of Attachment (1969)

- Hirschi focuses on why most people most of the time do not. How is social control achieved?

Bonds of Attachment

	Meaning
Attachment	How much do we care what others think? We might particularly care about what our spouses or children would think if we committed crimes.
Commitment	What have we got to lose? If we have a good job (for example) committing a crime puts a lot at risk.
Involvement	How involved are we with society? What takes up our time? If we work, are involved in group hobbies or leisure activities or volunteer, would we have time to commit crime?
Belief	To what extent do we <i>believe</i> obeying the law is the right thing to do? How strong is our personal moral code?

Bonds of Attachment

- Those who *are* more likely to commit crimes are those who do not have family attachments, work commitments, get involved in school or a clear moral code. As such one could paint a picture of a likely criminal as someone marginalised, young and single

Application of Hirschi (AO2 Skills)

- Which social groups might feel less commitment, attachment, involvement or belief?



What Hirschi's theory
explains

Evaluations of Hirschi

- This is useful because it introduces ideas of how to prevent crime and how to achieve social order. It offers a solution to crime by integrating members into society
- Hirschi does not really address the issue of why some members of society have secure bonds of attachment and others are more marginalised.
- Marxists and feminists would point out that there is not a value consensus that benefits all members of society and instead that society is characterised by conflict. Capitalism produces detached, marginalised individuals deliberately as it creates a **reserve army of labour** in the unemployed who help the bourgeoisie keep the wages down.

Hirschi, Merton and Durkheim

Each offers a distinctive viewpoint on crime

Hirschi and Merton see crime as a result of dysfunction in society, as does Durkheim to an extent

Durkheim is the only theorist to offer a positive function of crime . Hirschi and Merton have a more pessimistic view

Each looks at how structural issues such as integration and cultural goals impact on the individual

Task

- Mind-map the three approaches Durkheim, Merton and Hirschi put forward for criminal behaviour
- Which of these do you find most convincing? Explain your reasons in less than 100 words
- How might others view the structural approach taken by Functionalism?