

### Item B

Official statistics appear to show differing rates of criminality for different ethnic groups. For example, white people are less likely to be convicted of crime than members of some other ethnic groups.

However, some sociologists are critical of official statistics. The statistics only show those who are dealt with by the criminal justice system.

Using material from **Item B** and elsewhere, assess sociological explanations of differences in offending between ethnic groups.

(30 marks)

### Examiners report

Most students offered a reasonable answer to this question. The best answers produced a range of different perspectives and explicitly contrasted the view that some ethnic groups are more criminal than others with views on the social construction of statistics. The best responses did this well, providing conceptually-detailed and well-supported accounts. Gilroy and Hall were very popular, as were Left Realist, Marxist and labelling theories.

More successful responses developed this argument by using a range of relevant material to illustrate how some ethnic groups are targeted by the police, including relevant contemporary examples such as police brutality in the USA and the London riots. These examples were often compared and contrasted with the treatment of other ethnic groups, and the impact of events such as 9/11. Such responses also considered examples of the claimed criminality of various ethnic groups, and explanations of why this might be the case, such as relative deprivation, marginalisation and the formation of subcultures.

Most students drew from the Item to produce a balanced debate on whether there was a real link between ethnicity and crime, or whether any perceived link was a social construction. A Marxist analysis was often included, but not always done particularly well, usually being based on social class rather than ethnicity, without explaining the link between these two factors. The majority of students were able to cite institutional racism and the McPherson enquiry, if only briefly. Others gave lengthy accounts of the Stephen Lawrence case without applying this fully to the question. Discussion of labelling and social construction was often located in the area of education, with the assertion that students moved easily from being labelled in school to criminal activity. Too often there was considerable confusion or conflation of perspectives, especially functionalist, realist and Marxist ideas. Many students offered previously prepared evaluation of studies rather than thinking through how such evaluation actually linked to the question set. Although many responses reached the middle band by using a wide range of material, such answers were limited to the lower end of this mark band due to a lack of depth, evaluation or developed analysis.

Many, weaker answers drifted into discussion of social class (and even gender) rather than focusing on ethnicity. Some responses failed to make any distinction between ethnic groups, stating that all minority ethnic groups were unemployed, poverty-stricken, workshy and/or delinquent. Some answers had limited reference to racism but with no development of the link to differential levels of offending. Such responses showed limited understanding of the material presented.