

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q4(c)

With suitable examples, explain how conformity and deviance coexist in a society as propounded by R.K. Merton

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · Sociology GS 1 · 10 marks · Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx

Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx - Historical materialism, mode of production, alienation, class struggle; Emile Durkheim - Division of labour, social fact, suicide, religion and society; Max Weber - Social action, ideal types, authority, bureaucracy, protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism; Talcott Parsons - Social system, pattern variables; Robert K. Merton - Latent and manifest functions, conformity and deviance, reference groups; Mead - Self and identity.

Core demand of the question

- Robert Merton argued that conformity and deviance coexist in society. Comment
- Keep the comment within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

- **Merton:** goals and means can be malintegrated; several adaptations follow.

Conformity is one adaptation, not the opposite of structure.

Innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion coexist with it.

Exam culture and blocked mobility illustrate strain.

Deviance is patterned, not a pure moral accident.

Introduction

Robert K. Merton's **strain theory** treats deviance as a normal product of the same structure that produces conformity. When culturally approved goals and legitimate means are unequally matched, people adapt in several ways. Conformity and deviance therefore sit together, not as health versus disease.

Body

The same structure, several adaptations

- **Conformity:** accept goals and means. This is the statistical majority in a stable order.
- **Innovation:** accept goals, reject means. Crime as "success" by illicit route is structurally invited where mobility ideology is loud and jobs are scarce.
- **Ritualism:** abandon goals, cling to means. The timid bureaucrat of the iron cage is deviant relative to the success goal, yet formally obedient.
- Retreatism and rebellion complete the set, including political challenge to both goals and means.

Why they coexist

- **Anomie** here is a malintegration of culture and opportunity, developed from **Durkheim**.
- A society that preaches contest mobility through education will manufacture both exam conformity and cheating, coaching mafias, and dropouts.

Comment

- Deviance is not only a failure of socialisation. It is a patterned answer to strain.
- **Labelling and power, which later critics stressed, still sit on this structural base:** who is called innovator and who is called criminal.

Flow diagram

Cultural goals -> Strain
Unequal means -> Strain
Strain -> Conformity
Strain -> Innovation ritualism rebellion

Conclusion

Merton's point is that one opportunity structure yields conformity and deviance together. **Innovation**, **ritualism**, and rebellion are siblings of the conforming majority. Indian exam and gig economies illustrate strain without needing a separate "pathological" society.

Facts & figures

Strain theory

Merton: deviance as adaptation when approved goals and legitimate means are mismatched.

Innovation

Acceptance of success goals with illicit or extra-legal means.

Ritualism

Abandonment of ambitious goals with rigid clinging to rules.

Anomie

In Merton, a split between culture and opportunity structure, developed from **Durkheim**.

WRAP Exams · Write. Read. Analyse. Practice. · <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/sociology-gs-1/2021/with-suitable-examples-explain-how-conformity-and-deviance-coexist-in-a-society-as-propounded-by-r-k-merton/> · ask@wrapexams.com · wrapexams.com