Identify and explain two ways in which the media may cause crime (10 marks)

The media is accused of being a negative influence on people’s values and their behaviour, specifically to those more vulnerable to become inspired by the bad behaviour such as the young, the lower classes and the uneducated. The media is said to cause deviant behaviour through images that encourage this attitude. Media images are harmful because of imitation, which is when these ‘role models’ act in negative ways to society and the people affected produce ‘copy cat’ behaviour and as a result act in such ways due to the representation in the media images. Additionally, the use of all the negative media images result in a person becoming desensitized. As there is so much violence shown in day to day life, it becomes normal for someone to view this and they do not feel as many emotions towards the violence and it becomes a ‘normal’ thing for them. The media images also create crime by transmitting the knowledge of criminal techniques. These techniques give potential criminals ideas in how they may want to act and how to do them, such as crime shows. Advertising in the media images may also stimulate a desire for unaffordable goods such as cars and televisions that people may not have had before. This can cause an uncontrollable need for these people to gain these goods, resulting in them using crime such as theft in order to have the items they think they need. Examples of crime as a result of media images may include the ‘video nasties’ in the 1980s and rap lyrics which contain harmful and explicit content. Also, the computer game ‘Grand Theft Auto’ has been criticised for its violent acts which may ultimately lead to people who play these games to be desensitized and imitate the players.

Media portrayals of what is ‘normal’ rather than a criminal act, is what may make more people commit crimes. Left realists argue that the mass media helps increase the sense of relative depravation (feeling poor compared to other people) among poor social groups. The media presents a ‘normal’ life of what is deemed to be how a good life is lived - materialistic and full of consumer goods, fun and leisure. People who are not living these lives, feel like they are poor compared to these, therefore relative deprivation stems from this. People who cannot afford these lives feel left out and therefore, may be led to commit crimes to try and reach this lifestyle. This is due to the pressure to conform and the restriction to achieve this life through legitimate means, therefore the media promotes crime as people do not see the criminal actions as bad, instead they see it as normal.