To what extent do functionalist subcultural theories help to explain the relationship between deviance and society?

This part-question includes assessment of your understanding of the relationship between Crime and Deviance and sociological theory.

Decode:
- This question has a strong focus on sociological theory.
- The central focus is on functionalist subcultural theories which explain deviance as a result of subcultures based on values in opposition to or completely different from those of the central value system. Most of the essay should concentrate on these approaches.
- Other theoretical approaches to include – as a counter-balance/alternatives to functionalist subcultural theories include Marxists and left realists who have used the idea of subculture but in very different ways to functionalists.

Subcultural theories:
- Cloward and Ohlin, building on Merton’s strain theory: there is an illegal opportunity structure parallel to the legal one - criminal, conflict and retreatist subcultures.
- Albert Cohen: Subcultural values can provide ways for individuals seen as failures by wider society to gain respect and prestige - subcultures as a collective response to status frustration.
- Miller: rather than distinctive deviant subcultures, crime is caused by the extension of normal working class values (toughness, acceptance of violence etc.)
- Most of these subcultural theories stress subcultural values as being completely different from mainstream values.
- Functionalisists like Eisenstadt also suggested that a distinct youth culture was functional in adolescence to help young people make the transition to adult life.

Criticisms
- The theories belong to a particular period in the sociology of crime - the 1940s to 1960s - and have been superseded by newer approaches.
- Most research was about adolescent boys, focused on juvenile delinquency rather than other forms of deviance and ignored female deviance.
- Most of the theories are based on American research. British research found little evidence of distinctive subcultures but rather showed that delinquents were no different in their values.
- This idea of the ordinariness of delinquents was supported by Matza’s proposal that we all share conventional and subterranean values, but that delinquents fail to confine behave following subterranean values to appropriate situations.
- The theories tend to be deterministic - they suggest that delinquents are driven by outside forces rather than having any choice – interactionists have argued very differently.
- Marxists and left realists later used the concept of subculture, looking at resistance to hegemony by working class youth.

Evaluation
- The theories can be criticised in many ways; in particular they seem dated, deterministic and androcentric.
- However they played a part in the development of the sociology of crime, and the concept of subculture remains relevant in several perspectives.
To what extent do functionalist subcultural theories help to explain the relationship between deviance and society?

This part-question includes assessment of your understanding of the relationship between Crime and Deviance and sociological theory.

Conclusion

‘The functionalist subcultural theories of deviance belong to a particular period in the development of sociological theories of crime and deviance, and like much of functionalism can appear dated today. The subcultures written about in the 1950s are not much in evidence today; the concept of subculture has been used by later writers, but in rather different ways. In the 1990s even the idea that subcultures in some way are a response to the place in the social structure has been questioned by postmodernists who see style without substance or significance in modern youth subcultures. The exclusive focus on males in functionalist subcultural theories makes them seem a part of “malestream” sociology; they are unable to explain female deviance. Most of the theories were also about American subcultures, and even at the time there was little evidence of equivalent subcultures in Britain. British delinquents seem to have accepted the mainstream values of society rather than developing subcultural ones. Being derived from social systems approaches, the theories also tend to be deterministic, seeing the deviants as driven by outside forces rather than recognising their ability to be reflexive. Despite these significant failings, the theories formed a basis for later work; later Marxist, interactionist and New Left Realist approaches all make some use of the ideas generated.’
‘Established accounts of crime and deviance from functionalist, Marxist and interactionist perspectives are increasingly challenged by new approaches’. Evaluate this claim.

*This part-question includes assessment of your understanding of the relationship between Crime and Deviance and sociological theory.*

**Decode:**
- This question is very obviously focused on sociological theory and Crime and Deviance.
- **WARNING!** There is a real danger with questions as open-ended as this that you present a list of theories – you should keep a firm grip over the structure of the answer and try to avoid it becoming an ‘all I know about…’ kind of response.
- The question specifies what it means by “established accounts” but allows you to select which “new approaches” you will consider.
- You should not simply describe the new approaches, but explain in what ways they challenge the established accounts, and also any points of agreement or similarity.
- The new approaches you are most likely to consider are New Left Realism, Right Realism and feminism, but there are other possibilities such as the poststructuralism of Foucault applied to social control.

**New Approaches:**
- **New Left Realism** e.g. Lea and Young: Like Marxists, are clearly on the side of the working class, but unlike Marxists are more concerned with street crimes, burglary etc. than with corporate crime. Most offenders are members of the working class who are marginalised, experience relative deprivation or belong to a subculture. The majority of victims are working-class. Criticised by Marxists for not seeing crime in the context of capitalist society.
- **Right Realism and Control Theory**: covers a range of ideas but united by the view that some people will always commit crime if they see a chance to benefit, but that crime can be controlled by target hardening, surveillance etc. Advocates strong punishment to prevent crime e.g. “three strikes and you’re out” in USA.
- Both the above were responses to a feeling that the older theories were not realistic and offered few practical ways of tackling crime. The older theories were seen as excusing criminal behaviour or even romanticising it, and not being concerned for the victims of crime.
- Feminism: The older theories were part of “malestream” sociology, seeing crime by women as insignificant and unworthy of study. Feminist criminologists take female crime seriously, asking why, according to statistics, women commit fewer crimes and why men commit more. Radical feminists see crime and official responses to it as reinforcing patriarchal ideology.

**Evaluation:**
- The newer approaches all in different ways build on concepts and methods used in the older approaches.
- There was what Paul Rock called a “theory bottleneck” in the sociology of deviance in the 1970s. The older approaches seemed to offer few ways forward, and to be of little use in tackling crime. The newer approaches are a response to this.
- The newer approaches have often been more clearly focused on what can or should be done about crime and have resulted in particular polices - especially true of Right Realism (zero tolerance, target hardening, children’s curfews) but also of feminism (ways of reducing women’s fear of crime - more street lighting, CCTV etc.)
‘Established accounts of crime and deviance from functionalist, Marxist and interactionist perspectives are increasingly challenged by new approaches’. Illustrate and evaluate this claim.

This part-question includes assessment of your understanding of the relationship between Crime and Deviance and sociological theory.

Introduction

‘In the 1970s, the sociology of crime and deviance was in what Rock has called “a theory bottleneck”. The older approaches seemed to offer few ways forward; all seemed flawed and above all none seemed to generate ideas that could lead to policies that would reduce crime. Understanding crime seemed to have become completely detached from the ability to do anything about it; Marxism and interactionism in different ways seemed to condone some crime, or at least absolve the criminals of blame. The realist approaches that emerged in the 1980s were a response to these problems. Despite the differing political motivation, they focused on what could be done about crime. Right realism and associated right-wing ideas have led to a burgeoning crime control industry with a whole range of new ideas for preventing crime in specific situations (without perhaps reducing crime overall). Left realism sides with the working-class as the main victims of crime, but sees a need not only to be “tough on crime” but also to tackle the underlying problems which generate it, such as marginalisation and relative deprivation. Feminism, redressing the older concentration on men, has focused attention on social control and has also generated ideas for reducing the crimes women fear. However all these approaches build on the earlier ones, for example, taking a concept like subculture and reinterpreting it for new circumstances. There has been continuity as well as new developments in the recent sociology of crime and deviance.’

SYNOPTIC LINK CHECK
This question includes assessment of synoptic links between sociological theory and Crime and Deviance. Does the ‘de-code’ and closing paragraph (above) cover enough in the way of synoptic links to sociological theory? List below all the theory references in both the ‘de-code’ and the closing paragraph. This could come in the form of references to theories, concepts or their explanation.
Evaluate the contribution of feminist approaches to an understanding of deviance.

This part-question includes assessment of your understanding of the relationship between Crime and Deviance and sociological theory.

Decode:
- There is a clear focus on sociological theory in this question and by exploring the contribution of feminists you cannot but make lots of synoptic references to sociological theory. Using other, ‘malestream’ approaches, will also help to reinforce synoptic links to theory.
- You need to show the ways in which feminism has contributed to the understanding of deviance by comparing it to earlier “malestream sociology”
- The question is not about deviance by females only; look at feminism’s contribution to understanding of male crime, and crime in general, as well
- Show that you are aware that there are differences among feminists; do not treat it as a single set of ideas

Feminist Approaches: Characteristics and Examples
- Before the influence of feminist ideas in the 1970s, accounts of crime tended to assume that crime was a male phenomenon and looked for explanations of male crime. Female crime was regarded as rare and unimportant. For example, Albert Cohen’s work on subcultures is about boys; girls are not considered. These accounts can be described as part of “malestream sociology”.
- Feminist thinking led to the recognition not only that female crime also had to be explained, but that the apparently small amount of female crime might help to explain the higher rates of male crime.
- Heidensohn: social control explains why women commit less crime than men. Women’s opportunities to commit crime are lesser because their behaviour is more controlled. Girls are socialised differently and supervised more. Women have traditionally been confined to the home and to limited kinds of work.
- Carlen: social control theory does not explain why some women do commit crime. Women make a “gender deal” to behave in a feminine way; this involves accepting patriarchal ideology which is transmitted by family, school and media. Women who are treated as criminals have often broken the gender deal. Those who break the law but not the gender deal (remain “good” wives and mothers) are less likely to be criminalised because they are not seen as “doubly deviant”.
- Ethnographic studies of female offenders were carried out e.g. Campbell’s research on girl gangs and Carlen’s on female prisoners. While there had been earlier ethnographic studies of males, feminist thinking led to a greater use of participant observation and informal interviewing in studying crime.
- Feminism has also contributed to the recent focus on victims of crime. Some crimes of which women are often victims, such as harassment and spouse abuse, were once seen as trivial or even acceptable. The seriousness of these crimes, often committed over a long period, is now recognised.

Evaluation
- Feminism has led to a rethinking of the questions which are asked when sociologists study crime. Gender is now seen as a - perhaps the - central issue; it is certainly the best indicator in predicting crime.
- Women are now studied as both offenders and as victims of crime.
- The difference in offending rates between males and females is often now seen as the key to understanding crime.
Evaluate the contribution of feminist approaches to an understanding of deviance.

This part-question includes assessment of your understanding of the relationship between Crime and Deviance and sociological theory.

Opening Paragraph

“Before the influence of feminism began to be felt in the 1970s, studies of crime (by male sociologists) had tended to assume that crime was a male phenomenon; women were invisible. Female crime was seen as so rare as to be unimportant or to be explained by biological or psychological factors. Most earlier sociological accounts of crime, whether functionalist, Marxist or interactionist, were part of what has been called “malestream” sociology, based on male assumptions. Albert Cohen’s study of the status frustration of boys failing at school has nothing to say about girls in the same situation. Feminists not only insisted that female crime should be taken seriously, but argued that gender was a key issue in understanding crime. The apparently low rates of crime for women might help us understand why men commit so much more crime; Heidensohn described how the greater social control experienced by women reduced the opportunities to commit crime. Feminism also changed criminology in encouraging a greater use of ethnographic methods and in considering victims of crime. Crimes of which women are often victims, such as harassment and domestic violence, which had once been seen as trivial or even acceptable, began to be recognised and taken more seriously.”

SYNOPTIC LINK CHECK
This question includes assessment of synoptic links between sociological theory and Crime and Deviance. Does the ‘de-code’ and opening paragraph (above) cover enough in the way of synoptic links to sociological theory? List below all the theory references in both the ‘de-code’ and the closing paragraph. This could come in the form of references to theories, concepts or their explanation.
Assess the functionalist claim that ‘agreement on basic values means that deviant behaviour is limited to a small number of people who are punished for their behaviour.’ Illustrate your answer with reference to any other areas of sociology with which you are familiar.

This part-question includes assessment of your understanding of the relationship between Crime and Deviance and other areas of sociology.

Decode
The quotation contains three propositions which must be considered:
• that there is agreement on basic values - consensus. This view is associated with functionalists who, for example, see the process of socialisation in the home and at school as the means by which the consensus is sustained. However, this has been challenged from other perspectives such as Marxism which, for example, sees the school as a mechanism for social reproduction.
• that deviant behaviour is limited to a small number of people. It can be argued that in fact most (or even all) people break norms and laws at some time.
• that deviant behaviour is punished. Against this it can be argued that much deviant behaviour goes undetected or unpunished – some crimes such as domestic violence are largely ‘hidden’ and go unrecorded and unreported.
• Note that the question refers to deviant behaviour, not just crime.
As this question asks you to make synoptic links to other areas of sociology, you need to make as many such links as possible throughout your response.

In support of the statement
• Functionalists describe a central value system about which there is consensus. Those who do act in deviant ways will be punished to demonstrate to all the boundaries of acceptable behaviour – for example some religious sects are closed down by the state because they step outside agreed values.
• Subcultural theories: members of a subculture such as a gang may be conforming to the values of the subculture while offending against those of wider society – for example, sect members may conform to the values of the sect rather than society.

Questioning the statement
The view that there is agreement on values:
• Marxists see the apparent consensus as showing the existence of a dominant ideology. Laws serve the interests of the ruling class. For example, schools are hierarchically structured and pupils are taught to accept the authority of teachers.
• Society today can be seen as comprising many different groups with different values so there is no central value system (functionalism) or dominant ideology (Marxism). This means less agreement on what is deviant, and tolerance of a wider range of behaviour.

The view that there are only small numbers of deviants, who are punished:
• Self-report studies show that many people say that they have broken some laws - supports interactionist view that there is no real difference between criminals and non-criminals other than that criminals get labelled as such. However, the results of such research are questionable. Most offences people admit to are trivial so we need to distinguish different types of crime or deviance
• Victimisation studies and police clear-up rates suggest much crime goes undetected and unpunished. Marxists: it is white collar and corporate crime that is least likely to be punished.
Evaluation

- The statement derives from a functionalist point of view and can be challenged in several ways.
- However the fact that society defines some behaviour as acceptable and some as not does suggest some degree of consensus. There is disagreement at the moment over, for example, fox hunting and euthanasia, but general agreement on many other activities.

Assess the functionalist claim that ‘agreement on basic values means that deviant behaviour is limited to a small number of people who are punished for their behaviour.’ Illustrate your answer with reference to any other areas of sociology with which you are familiar.

This part-question includes assessment of your understanding of the relationship between Crime and Deviance and other areas of sociology.

Opening paragraph

‘The view in the question demonstrates a functionalist approach to the study of crime. The functionalist view of society in general is that it is founded on consensus; the law reflects basic moral values on which there is general agreement. Durkheim refers to the shared values as the conscience collective, which everyone is taught through the process of socialisation in the family and throughout society. The self-control everyone learns prevents most crime, but the law is necessary to deal with the small number of crimes which do occur. These crimes are necessary and beneficial, and their punishment serves as a reminder to all about what is acceptable and what is not. However, too much crime has a destabilising effect on society. Later writings in this tradition, such as Merton’s strain theory and the subcultural approaches of Albert Cohen and others, see the basic values as breaking down for individuals and groups in particular situations. This approach can be challenged in several ways. There is evidence that a huge amount of crime and deviance goes unrecorded – for example, how much classroom deviance ends up in any kind of official record? - and that most people break the law at some time; social control seems to be less strong than argued by functionalists. Marxists reject the idea of consensus on values; any apparent consensus in fact shows the hegemony of a dominant ideology imposed by the ruling class’
Evaluate sociological explanations for the increase in recent years, according to official statistics, in the crime rate.

This part-question includes assessment of your understanding of the relationship between Crime and Deviance and sociological research methods.

Decode
• This question tells you that the crime rate has been increasing but then qualifies this by adding "according to official statistics". This gives the question its particular 'spin' in terms of links to research methods – in this case, official statistics as a source of data about crime.
• Your answer should include both those explanations which accept the statistics as measuring the “real” amount of crime and those which question the statistics. Keeping this focus on official crime statistics will generate appropriate synoptic links.
• Try to relate these two sets of explanations to the positivist and interpretivist traditions; positivists are likely to accept statistics, interpretivists to question them. Again, this will keep a focus on links to methods, in this case, to methodology.
• It is unlikely to make much difference whether you interpret “recent” to mean the last 5, 10 or 25 years (though any of these would be acceptable)

Explanations which accept the statistics
• Functionalis - crime rise indicates rejection of some of society’s values - Merton’s strain theory
• New Right - crime rise as result of decline in morals and values, need to be tougher
• Hirschi’s control theory - crime rise as result of weakening of controls that normally deter
• New Left Realism - crime rise as result of growing relative deprivation and marginalisation
• Marxists and anti-racists - rise in some crime as indicating rebellion or resistance against capitalism and/or racism e.g. high levels of crime by Afro-Caribbeans
• Some feminists- rise in male crime linked to changes in masculinity - growth of “yob culture”

Explanations which question the statistics
• Marxists - statistics tend to measure mainly types of crime committed by the working class while ignoring crimes committed by those higher up the social scale
• Interactionists - statistics as social constructions - a rise in crime rate can be result of changes in measuring crime, introducing new laws, changes in policing practice
• Alternative research methods, e.g. victim surveys like the British Crime Survey, often suggest different trends (though over a period of many years the overall trend is undoubtedly up).

Evaluation
• Even according to the statistics some crimes are rising faster than others and some may even be falling. We cannot be certain whether or how fast crime is rising.
• Explanations which generally accept the statistics offer a range of reasons often associated with political standpoints. Underlying many of them is the idea that we live in a less deferential society where there are more opportunities for crime.
• Even if the statistics are questionable, it can still be useful to look at reasons why they show an upward trend.
Evaluate sociological explanations for the increase in recent years, according to official statistics, in the crime rate.

This part-question includes assessment of your understanding of the relationship between Crime and Deviance and sociological research methods.

Opening paragraph

"From the mid 1950s onwards, the official crime rate has been rising, steeply at times, in Britain, and in most other industrial countries. Although there have been periods when there have been slight falls, as in the mid 1990s, the overall trend is upwards. While all sociologists recognise that the statistics do not provide a full, accurate count of all crimes, there are significant differences of opinion about what useful information, if any, the statistics provide. It is possible that the statistics do accurately reflect changes in the total number of all crimes, that the proportion that remain unrecorded - the so-called "dark figure" - remains constant. This would mean that there has indeed been a dramatic increase in the number of crimes over the last 40 years or so. Among the explanations which accept this broad position, and look for increases in other phenomena which may be correlated or causally related, are New Left Realism, where crime is seen as related to growing relative deprivation and marginalisation, and control theory, where crime is seen as a result of the weakening of controls which used to inhibit crime. On the other hand, other approaches question the value of the statistics, seeing them as social constructions. Not only do laws change over time (in the 1990s there have been new laws against trespass and public order offences), but the interpretation of the law by police and judges changes and changing moral values affect the number of offences which come to light (for example, child abuse and racially motivated attacks have become increasingly seen as unacceptable). This means the statistics in, say, 1949, were not measuring the same phenomena in the same way as in 1999. Phenomenological approaches go even further, arguing that no act becomes a crime until it is labelled as such by agents of social control, so that there can be no hidden amount of crime."

SYNOPTIC LINK CHECK

This question includes assessment of synoptic links between Crime and Deviance and research methods. Does the 'de-code' and opening paragraph (above) cover enough in the way of synoptic links to research methods? List all the references in both the 'de-code' and the closing paragraph. Note that references to 'theory' as it relates to methodology is just as useful as direct references to particular methods or sources of data.
‘Assess the comparative usefulness of qualitative and quantitative data in the sociological study of criminal and deviant behaviour.’

This part-question includes assessment of your understanding of the relationship between Crime and Deviance and sociological research methods.

Decode

• There is a clear focus on research methods in the form of making direct comparisons between two types of data.
• Throughout your answer, constantly refer to qualitative and quantitative data in relation only to criminal/deviant behaviour.
• A logical starting point is with methodology – the link between Positivism and quantitative data and the link between interpretivism and qualitative data.
• Avoid describing the methods that create these types of data, concentrate on the characteristics of the two kinds of data and their apparent strengths and weaknesses.
• Apply the key concepts of validity, representativeness and reliability.

Qualitative data

• Briefly explain what is meant by qualitative data, identifying the main methods associated with its production.
• Refer to examples of crime/deviance studies that have used PO and unstructured interviews.
• Identify the strengths some sociologists see in qualitative data as it relates to the study of crime/deviance. Explain why interpretivist sociologists prefer its use.
• Identify the weaknesses some sociologists see in qualitative data as it relates to the study of crime/deviance. Explain why positivist sociologists criticise its use.

Quantitative data

• Briefly explain what is meant by quantitative data, identifying the main methods associated with its production.
• Refer to examples of crime/deviance studies that have used surveys and official crime statistics.
• Identify the strengths some sociologists see in quantitative data as it relates to the study of crime/deviance. Explain why positivist sociologists prefer its use.
• Identify the weaknesses some sociologists see in quantitative data as it relates to the study of crime/deviance. Explain why interpretivist and Marxist sociologists criticise its use.

Evaluation

• Locate your evaluation within the quantitative/qualitative data, Positivist/Non-Positivist debate.
• Keep to crime/deviance in your evaluation.
• Make a final judgement in terms of validity, reliability and representativeness.
Evaluate sociological explanations for the increase in recent years, according to official statistics, in the crime rate.

This part-question includes assessment of your understanding of the relationship between Crime and Deviance and sociological research methods.

Opening paragraph
'It is generally acknowledged that there are two broad methodological approaches within sociology, both with a long tradition and both with a contribution to make to our understanding of social behaviour. Structuralist sociologists operate within a Positivist framework and tend to collect and use quantitative data whereas Social Action theorists prefer to collect qualitative data. These approaches make different initial assumptions about the nature of society and social behaviour. Their different starting points generate different types of questions about criminal and deviant behaviour, lead to the use of different research techniques and have different views of the purpose of sociological research. Quantitative sociology is in the ‘scientific’ mould of investigation whereas qualitative sociology is often depicted as being more ‘humanistic’ in style. Positivist sociologists attempt to understand crime and deviance through the measurement of the extent and distribution of crime in society. This necessitates the collection of statistical data in order to uncover trends and patterns in criminal behaviour, using statistical correlations between factors to establish casual relationships. Interactionists on the other hand, see the aim of sociological investigation as the uncovering of the meanings social actors attach to events. The study of crime and deviance illustrates the differences between these two approaches in terms of what we want to know about criminal and deviant behaviour. Do we want to measure it – or understand it from the points of view of those involved?’

SYNOPTIC LINK CHECK
This question includes assessment of synoptic links between Crime and Deviance and research methods. Does the ‘de-code’ and opening paragraph (above) cover enough in the way of synoptic links to research methods? List all the references in both the ‘de-code’ and the closing paragraph. Note that references to ‘theory’ as it relates to methodology is just as useful as direct references to particular methods or sources of data.