**Possible crime exam questions**

**Functionalism, strain, subcultural theories**

* Outline two reasons why functionalists see crime as inevitable [4]
* Outline three reasons why some crime and deviance may be necessary and beneficial for the well-being of society [6]

Item A: Many people see deviance as being dysfunctional and negative for society because it represents the potential for social breakdown. However, some sociologists suggest that deviance might actually be functional for society and act as a warning. For example, imprisonment, fines, and so on are not simply there to punish offenders; they convey other messages as well. Society’s values are also not fixed and new ideas sometimes emerge to challenge existing values.

* Applying material from item A, analyse two functions of deviance [10]

Item B: Strain theories focus on the ways in which people may resort to crime of deviance when they are unable to achieve socially approved goals by legitimate means. For example, Merton argues American culture emphasises achieving success, but an unequal structure limits some individuals’ opportunity to do so legitimately. This may induce frustration in the individuals concerned. Some strain theorists see the response to this situation as a group reaction, in which individuals create or join deviant subcultures.

* Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate the contribution of strain theories to our understanding of crime and deviance [30 marks]

**Planning the 30 mark question:**

*Proposed essay structure*

**Introduction:**

* ‘As the Item states...’
* Outline the debate – view in the question VS opposing view.

**Main Body:**

* 3 paragraphs on the view in the question (including AO2 & AO3 )
* 2 paragraph on opposing view
* 1 paragraph on other possible views/ arguments.

[However, if you want to evaluate within the paragraphs as you go that is fine]

**Conclusion:**

* Discuss main strengths and weaknesses of the arguments, say something new

**Suggestion to help plan:** Consider the different strain theories, focusing most of your attention on Merton’s strain theory and subcultural strain theories of A K Cohen and Cloward and Ohlin, but mention recent strain theories too.

Para 1: Examine Merton’s idea of the ‘strain to anomie’ and his typology of adaptations to strain- give examples. Link to how he is different to Durkheim.

Para 2: Use Merton’s focus on the individual and utilitarian adaptations to lead into subcultural strain theories, explaining how they criticise and build on his ideas (Cohen). Evaluate Cohen.

Para 3: Do this again with Cloward and Ohlin. Evaluate Cloward and Ohlin.

Para 4: Evaluate using Miller and Hirschi – use issues such as determinism, neglect of power, and who makes the law, and reliance on official statistics.

Para 5: If possible (although we haven’t covered it yet) consider other theory’s views e.g. Marxists- you could do some additional reading.

Conclusion: are strain theories useful to understand crime and deviance.

**Labelling/interactionism**

* Outline two ways individuals might be labelled [4 marks]
* Outline two ways in which crime and deviance are socially constructed [4 marks]
* Outline three consequences of labelling [6 marks]
* Outline two criticisms of labelling theory [10 marks]

Item: Labelling theorists argue that an act is not inherently criminal; it only becomes so when it is labelled as such. They are interested in the ways that labelling affects the actions of those with the power to label acts as criminal, such as the police and courts. Being labelled can also have important effects on individuals whom the label is attached, and labelling a group as criminal can even lead to higher rates of crime being recorded.

* Applying material from the item, analyse two effects of the labelling process on individuals and groups [10 marks]

Item: Rather than look for the initial cause of the deviant act, as functionalists do, labelling theorists ask how any why some groups and acts come to be labelled as criminal or deviant while others do not. Coming from an interactionist perspective, they argue that what we mean by crime or deviance is the outcome of the same processes of social interaction- between police officer and suspect, for example- as any other social behaviour. Therefore to understand crime and deviance, we must grasp the meanings involved in the interaction.

* Applying material from the item and your knowledge, evaluate the contribution of labelling theory to our understanding of crime and deviance [30 marks]

**Marxism/neo-marxism**

Outline two features of corporate crime [4 marks]

Outline three reasons why white collar crime may have low rates of prosecution [6 marks]

Item: Marxism sees capitalist society as divided along social class lines. The ruling class own the means of production and use their power to exploit the working class in pursuit of profits, often resulting in workers living in poverty. This relationship then determines the shape of the superstructure – that is, all the other institutions that make up society, including the state, the law and the criminal justice system. Capitalism is also intensely competitive, with companies and individuals motivated to seek profit.

Applying material from the Item, analyse two ways in which Marxists see class and crime as related [10 marks]

Item: Some sociologists focus on the ‘crimes of the powerful’. Crimes committed in the interests of businesses and other large institutions can be far more harmful and costly than street crimes that we tend to think of as ‘real crime’. Corporate crime can involve breaking criminal laws but may also include breaking other kinds of law. Some sociologists argue that corporate crime results from pressures to succeed, leading to employees pursuing business aims by illegitimate means. However, others claim that it is the product of capitalism.

Applying material from the Item and you knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of corporate crime [30 marks]

Note: Begin with examining problems with defining corporate crime. Examine its scale in terms of harms caused. Consider reasons for its relative invisibility and under-reporting. Examine strain theory, labelling theory and Marxism as explanations of corporate crime, including how some of these have been combined. Evaluate by questioning how far these theories over-predict the amount of corporate crime.

Item: Some Marxist sociologists argue that capitalist society is criminogenic, that is, crime is an in-built and natural outgrowth of a capitalist society. Crime is a rational response to the competitiveness and inequality of life in capitalist society, and the law reflects ruling-class interests and ideology.

Applying material from the Item and your knowledge, evaluate the usefulness of Marxist approaches to understanding of the causes of crime [30 marks]

**Left and right realism**

Outline two realist solutions to the problem of crime [4 marks]

Outline two right realist explanations for crime and deviance [4 marks]

Outline three reasons people might commit crimes according to left realists [6 marks]

Item A: Right realist theories have had a significant impact on government policies, especially because they appear to offer practical answers to the problem of crime. Like many sociologists, they see childhood experiences as very important in determining behaviour in later life. They focus on the idea that some people are naturally more aggressive or less intelligent than others, and they stress the need to ensure that crime does not go unpunished.

Applying material from Item A, analyse two explanations of the causes of crime put forward by right realists [10 marks]

Item B: Left realists see crime as a real problem, especially for the disadvantaged groups who are its victims. They see the causes of crime as located in the structure of late modern society, with its high levels of exclusion and insecurity. Their views on how to tackle the problem of crime have had some influence on official policy, particularly under New Labour governments.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate the contribution of left realism to our understanding of crime and deviance [30 marks]

**Trends: ethnicity, gender, statistics**

**Crime Statistics**

Outline three reasons why official statistics may not provide a valid picture of the pattern of crime in society [2 marks]

**Ethnicity**

Outline two reasons why members of some ethnic groups are more likely than others to receive custodial sentences [4 marks]

Item: The risk of being a victim of crime appears to vary by ethnic group, both in term of ‘ordinary’ crimes and racially motivated crimes. This is shown in victim surveys. Surveys are based on the assumption that people are aware of what is happening to them. All suspected crimes have to go through a process of being reported and investigated before they are officially categorised as a crime. The role of the police is crucial to this process.

Applying material from the Item, analyse two explanations of the apparent differences in the rates of victimisation of ethnic groups [10 marks]

Item: Official statistics suggest that there is a clear relationship between ethnicity and offending. These show black people and to a lesser extent Asians as being over-represented in the criminal justice system. In the view of some sociologists, this is because at each stage in the system, from policing through to sentencing, institutional racism distorts the picture of ethnic patterns of offending. However, left realists argue that there are real differences in offending rates and these differences can be explained in terms of factors such as relative deprivation and marginalisation.

Applying material from the Item and you knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of the relationship between ethnicity and offending [30 marks]

Note: This question will need you to consider whether statistics represent reality or not. You will need to examine left realists’ views first and then compare and contrast with different theoretical views and types of statistics.

**Gender**

Outline two differences between the recorded patterns of male and female offending [4 marks]

Item A: Most criminals are men. The most consistent finding of research into crime in different societies and over many decades is that there is a clear link between crime and masculinity. However, the kind of crimes committed varies between different groups of men. So too does what counts as being a ‘real-man’ and the resources to achieve it. Changes over time in the economy and the employment structure – such as de-industrialisation, for example – may also affect men opportunities to express their masculinity.

Applying material from Item A, analyse two reasons why men commit crime [10 marks]

Item B: Official crime statistics indicate that there are significant gender differences in the commission of crime. Only about 20% of convicted offenders are female, and they are far less likely to commit homicide, carry out violent crime or be repeat offenders. However, some sociologists believe that these statistics underestimate the true extent and seriousness of female crime. They argue that the leniency of the criminal justice system may result in fewer girls and women ending up in the crime statistics than men.

Applying material from the Item and your knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of female crime [30 marks]

Note: start with what the patterns of female offending actually are. Consider what official statistics tell us and whether they are supported by self-report or other studies. Examine functionalist and feminist explanations of why crimes are lower. Use Carlen’s study to examine the ‘exceptions’ who do offend. Bring in debates about whether the criminal justice system is still lenient towards women, or whether liberation has had an impact.

**Media**

Outline two ways the media might amplify deviance [4]

Outline three news values [6]

Outline three reasons why the media might exaggerate the extent of crime in society [6]

Item A: Some sociologists claim that the media do not just report criminal and deviant behaviour, but may actually be a cause of crime and deviance. Some media portrayals of crime may appear to be very realistic. The media also present a number of different lifestyles in a wide range of types of programmes, such as ‘reality’ TV, advertising, documentary and fiction, which some audiences may see as attractive. The same or similar crime storylines and images may be constantly repeated.

Applying material from Item A, analyse two ways in which the media may cause crime [10]

**Global and state crime**

Outline two types of green crime [4]

Outline two types of state crime [4]

Outline two ways in which crime has been globalised [4]

Outline two examples of transgressive criminology [4]

Outline three ways states can commit criminal acts [6]

Outline three explanations of state crime [6]

Outline three patterns of globalised crime [6]

Item A: In common with other ‘crimes of the powerful’, state crime is not easy to define and sociologists have looked beyond conventional definitions of crime. Some sociologists have define state crime in an international rather than national context, while others have seen it in relation to a higher moral context. Other sociologists have gone beyond the usual definition of crime as law-breaking but seeing state crime in terms of the damage states can cause.

Applying material from Item A, analyse two ways in which state crime can be defined [10]

Item B: The process of globalisation has made the world more interconnected and increased the scope for crime. Some forms of globalised crime are based on trafficking one commodity or another, while others involve green crimes against the environment. Green crime has been given a lot of attention because of the extent of damage to the environment caused, often by large transnational corporations. Some sociologists have analysed the relationship between globalisation and crime using traditional criminological approaches. However, others see the relationship as being the inevitable product of capitalism.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of the relationship between globalisation and crime [30]

**Control, punishment and victims**

Outline two features of critical criminology [4 marks]

Outline two ways in which situational crime prevention may reduce the incidence of crime in an area [4 marks]

Outline three ways crime can be controlled [6 marks]

Outline three reasons why increasing surveillance in society may not be effective in reducing crime and disorder [6 marks]

Item A: Who is counted as a victim of crime is socially constructed, as it depends on the attachment of the label of ‘victim’. Some may deny their victimisation, and there are many unreported and unrecorded victims who never come to the attention of the criminal justice system, such as victims of domestic and sexual violence, and of white- collar and corporate crime.

Applying material from Item A, analyse two reasons why victimisation in crime is considered to be socially constructed [10 marks]

Item B: Punishment of criminals may act in various ways: as a retribution or revenge; as rehabilitation to prevent reoffending; as deterrence to others; as restoration of the harm caused to victim; as social protection from those who are dangerous; as reinforcement of social values; or as an assertion of the power and authority of a sovereign or of a dominant social class.

Applying material from Item B and your knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of the role of punishment in the prevention and reduction of crime [30 marks]

*This requires you to compare and contrast the different theoretical and suggested approaches to punishment. You need to try and weigh up approaches that may be better than others and consider problems with certain arguments.*