

# [Functionalism and crime assignment](https://assignbuster.com/functionalism-and-crime-assignment/)

[Sociology](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/sociology/)

Functionalists such as Druthers state that deviancy allows for social changes o occur and this is important for societies in order for it to remain healthy and stable. Druthers also States that crime moves from functional to dysfunctional when the level of crime is either too high or too low – if crime is too high, it threatens the social order whereas if crime is too low, there will be no social change. However functionalism assumes crime performs positive functions for society e. G. Rumoring solidarity, but it ignores how it might affect individuals. Morton argues that people engage in deviant behavior when they cannot achieve socially approved goals by legitimate means. Morton concluded from his American study that the vast majority of individuals share the same goals but don’t have equal access to the means of achieving these goals. For Morton, deviance is the result of a strain between the goals a culture encourages individuals to aim for and what the structure of society actually allows them to achieve legitimately.

For example, the ‘ American Dream’ emphasizes ‘ money success’. Americans are expected to peruse this goal by legitimate means such as education and hard work. The ideology claims that American society is meritocracy, but in reality poverty and discrimination lock opportunities for many to achieve by legitimate means, and when individuals fail or are excluded from this system, it creates anomie.

The resulting strain between the cultural goal and the lack of legitimate opportunities produces frustration and pressure to resort to illegitimate means such as crime. Morton seeks to explain different patterns of deviance and argues that an individual’s position in the social structure affects how they adapt to the strain theory – the five adaptations that he identified are conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreating and rebellion.

Marten’s theory forever can be criticized on several grounds. Marten’s theory is too deterministic as not all working-class people deviate, and it ignores the power of the ruling class to make and enforce the laws. Like Morton, Cohen also thinks that much deviance results from the lower classes’ inability to achieve mainstream success goals by legitimate means, however criticizes some of Marten’s explanations. Cohen notes that working class boys face anomie in the middle class education system.

He states that the working class boys are culturally deprived and lack the skills to achieve, leaving them at the bottom of the status hierarchy. As a result, the boys suffer from frustration and they resolve it by rejecting mainstream middle class values and turn instead to others in the same situation, forming a subculture. For Cohen, the subculture offers an illegitimate opportunity structure for boys who have failed to achieve legitimately.

The subculture provides an alternative status hierarchy where they can win status through criminal actions. Its values are spite, hatred, hostility and contempt for those outside it. The subculture inverts mainstream values – what society praises, it condemns. Unlike Morton, Cohen offers an explanation of non-utilitarian evince. But he assumes that working class boys start off sharing middle class goals, only to reject them when they fail, so Cohen ignores the possibility that they never shared these goals and so weren’t reacting to failure.

Collard and Olin agree with Morton that working class youths are denied legitimate opportunities to achieve and that their deviance stems from their response to this. But they note that not everyone adapts to a lack of legitimate opportunities by turning to utilitarian crime. In their view, the main reason for these differences is not only unequal access to the legitimate opportunity structure, but unequal access to illegitimate opportunity structures.

Different neighborhoods provide different illegitimate opportunities to learn criminal skills and develop criminal careers. They identify three types of subcultures that result and these are criminal subcultures, conflict subcultures and retreats subcultures. However like Morton and Cohen, Collard and Olin ignore crimes Of the wealthy and the wider power structure, and over-predict the amount of working class crime. Marxist say that crime is inevitable in capitalism because capitalism is renouncing – it’s very nature causes crime.