succeed. Another response is innovation, this is when individuals accept the goals but use illegitimate means such as theft to achieve them, these types of people are more likely to be from the lower working class category. Ritualism is another response Merton describes, which is when individuals have given up achieving their goals but they have internalised the legitimate means of doing so but they do not try and achieve any goals because they don’t have hope. Another aspect is retreatism, which are individuals who reject the goals of society and dropout of things, potentially becoming drug addicts. Lastly, Merton describes rebellions as people who reject the existing goals that society have and replace them with new ones bringing about revolutionary change. These types of people could be radical politicians and hippies.

However, Merton is criticised as his idea of strain theory assumes there is a value consensus on everyone striving for ‘money success’, and it ignores the fact that not everyone in society shares the same goal.

A sociologist called Albert Cohen agrees with Merton’s opinion that deviance mainly occurs within the lower class. It is because the working class are not able to succeed their goals through legitimate means because of their lack of opportunity available to them because they cannot afford it. However, although Cohen agrees with Merton on this, he criticises his explanation of deviance with two reasons. The first reason is that Merton sees deviance as an individual response to strain which ignores the fact that most deviance is actually done by groups and gangs, contradicting Merton’s opinion about who commits the crime. In addition, Cohen says that Merton focuses mainly on utilitarian crime committed for material gain, for example theft. However, there is a large amount of crime committed today that is done with most likely no economic motive to gain something, including crimes such as assault and vandalism. Cohen focuses on deviance from working class boys. He found that they suffer from cultural deprivation and lack the skills to achieve, the boys face anomie in the middle class dominated school system. These boys suffer from status frustration. They have a problem with their low status that society has put on them and they resolve their frustration by rejecting middle class values and they therefore form their deviant subculture with other boys who feel the same as them.

Cohen says that the values that the subculture has are evil and hostile. The boys gain status by contradicting the rules that exist in society. For example, society appreciates regular school attendance, but within the boys’ subculture, they will gain status from not attending school and disrespecting the property through vandalism. Cohen says that this gives the boys an alternative status hierarchy, where they can gain some status from their peers through deviant activities and reaching their goals through illegitimate means. Unlike Merton, Cohen offers an explanation of non-utilitarian deviance through his idea of status frustration, value inversion (turning societies mainstream values upside down) and alternative status hierarchy to explain their non-profit motive for their delinquent behaviour.