hard how it accounts for state crimes such as genocide or torture.
Explains deviance by individuals but not group deviance, such as delinquent subcultures.

SUBCULTURAL STRAIN THEORIES

Subcultural strain theories see deviance as the product of a delinquent subculture with different values from those of mainstream society. Subcultures provide an alternative opportunity for those who are denied the chance to achieve by legitimate means - working class.

A.K. COHEN: STATUS FRUSTRATION (1955)

Agrees with MERTON, deviance is a lower class phenomenon. Results from inability to achieve mainstream success goals by legitimate means.
CRITICISES MERTON on two grounds:
(a) Merton sees deviance as an individual response to strain, ignoring that much deviance is committed in or by groups, especially amongst the young.
(b) Merton focuses on utilitarian crime committed for material gain, such as theft or fraud. Ignores crimes such as assault and vandalism which have no economic motive.

Focuses on deviance among working class boys- argues they face anomie in the middle class dominated school system. Suffer from CULTURAL DEPRIVATION and lack the skills to achieve. Inability to succeed leaves them at the bottom of the status hierarchy.

Unable to achieve by legitimate means- boys suffer STATUS FRUSTRATION. Create a problem of adjustment to the low status they’re given by society. Resolve frustration by rejecting mainstream middle class values and turn instead to other boys in their same situation by forming or joining a delinquent subculture.

ALTERNATIVE STATUS HIERARCHY

Subculture’s values are characterised by spite, malice, hostility and contempt for those outside it. Delinquent subculture inverts the values of mainstream society- turns them upside down: what society condemns, the subculture praises and vice versa.
Offers the boys an alternative status hierarchy in which they can achieve. Failed in legitimate opportunity structure, the boys create their own illegitimate opportunity structure in which they can win status from their peers through their delinquent actions.

STRENGTH: offers an explanation of non-utilitarian deviance among the working class. Unlike MERTON, whose concept of innovation only accounts for crime with a profit motive, COHEN’S ideas of STATUS FRUSTRATION, VALUE INVERSION and ALTERNATIVE STATUS HIERARCHY help to explain non-economic delinquency such as vandalism, fighting and truancy.

HOWEVER, like MERTON, COHEN assumes working class boys start off sharing middle class success goals only to reject these when they fail. Ignores the possibility that they didn’t share these goal sin the first place and so never saw themselves as failures.

CLOWARD AND OHLIN: THREE SUBCULTURES