

Cambridge AS & A Level · Sociology 9699 · Notes

Social control, conformity and resistance

AS

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What you need to know

By the end of this topic you should be able to:

1. **Explain structure and agency:** how far society shapes the individual (**structure**) and how far individuals shape their own actions and society (**agency**), and the difference between **structuralist** views (functionalism, Marxism) and **interactionist** views.
2. **Explain why people conform** to what society expects of them, including **sanctions**, **social pressure**, **self-interest** and **social exchange**.
3. **Explain how social order is maintained**, including through **power**, **ideology**, **force** and **consensus**.
4. **Explain how sociologists account for deviance and non-conformity**, including **subcultures**, **under-socialisation**, **marginalisation**, **cultural deprivation** and **social resistance**, and weigh these explanations against each other.

Understand it

Key words: conformity, deviance and social control

- **Conformity** means behaving in line with the norms and values of a group or society: queuing, obeying the law, wearing what is expected at work.
- **Deviance** is behaviour that breaks the norms of a group or society and is likely to attract disapproval. It is wider than **crime**, which breaks written laws. Talking loudly in a library is deviant but not criminal; some crimes, such as speeding, are so common that many people barely see them as deviant.
- Deviance is **relative**: what counts as deviant differs between societies, over time and between situations. Tattoos, once linked to sailors and prisoners in many Western societies, are now mainstream; killing is criminal, except in war.
- **Non-conformity** is any failure to follow expected norms. It can be passive (not voting, dropping out) or active (protest, rebellion).

- **Social control** is every way a society keeps people's behaviour within accepted limits. **Formal social control** is carried out by official bodies using written rules (police, courts, schools, employers). **Informal social control** comes from everyday relationships (family, friends, neighbours, colleagues) using unwritten norms.

Structure and agency

Sociologists disagree about how free individuals really are.

Structuralist views (macro, "top-down") say society is a structure of institutions, norms and values that exists before each person is born and shapes how they think and act.

- **Durkheim** called these external pressures **social facts**: ways of acting that exist outside the individual and constrain them, such as laws, language and moral rules. His study of suicide argued that even this most personal act follows social patterns.
- **Functionalists** such as **Parsons** see people as socialised into shared values, so they **want** to do what society needs. Order rests on **value consensus**.
- **Marxists** also see behaviour as shaped by structure, but by the economic structure of capitalism: the ruling class controls institutions and ideas, so most people conform without seeing they are being exploited.
- **Criticism**: structuralist views can be **deterministic**. Wrong called this the **over-socialised** view of people, as if humans were puppets. They struggle to explain why some people resist.

Interactionist views (micro, "bottom-up") say people actively create the social world through everyday interaction.

- People give **meanings** to situations and act on those meanings. Norms are negotiated, not simply obeyed.
- **G.H. Mead**: the self has a socialised part (the "me") and an active, creative part (the "I").
- **Becker** (labelling theory): deviance is not a quality of the act itself but the result of others successfully **labelling** it as deviant. Labels can lead to a **self-fulfilling prophecy**, where a person comes to see themselves as deviant and acts that way.
- **Goffman**: people manage the impressions they give, choosing how to present themselves in each setting.
- **Criticism**: interactionists can ignore the power of structures such as class, gender and the law, which limit people's choices whatever meanings they hold.

Bringing them together. **Giddens** used the term **structuration**: structures shape our actions, but our actions also reproduce or change the structures. A school's rules shape pupils, but pupils who keep breaking a rule can force it to change. Most sociologists now accept that both structure and agency matter; the debate is about how much each counts.

Structure and agency run through the whole topic. Explanations of deviance that stress **structure** (cultural deprivation, marginalisation, Merton's strain theory) treat deviance as caused by people's position in society; those that stress **agency** (social resistance, labelling, rational choice) treat it as something people choose, interpret or have imposed on them by others.

Why people conform

1. Sanctions. Sanctions are reactions that reward conformity or punish deviance. They come in four kinds, shown in the grid below.

- **Positive sanctions** reward behaviour so that it is repeated: praise, a smile, a prize, a promotion.
- **Negative sanctions** punish behaviour so that it is not repeated: a telling-off, being left out, a fine.
- **Formal sanctions** are given by official organisations under written rules: a court's prison sentence, a school's detention or expulsion, an employer's warning, dismissal or promotion, an exam certificate, a medal.
- **Informal sanctions** are given in everyday relationships, without written rules: approving or disapproving looks, gossip, ridicule, sarcasm, **ostracism** (being shut out of a group), a parent grounding a child, a friend's compliment.

	Positive <i>(rewards conformity)</i>	Negative <i>(punishes deviance)</i>
Formal <i>official bodies, written rules</i>	certificate medal or award promotion	fine or prison detention or expulsion dismissal from work
Informal <i>everyday relationships</i>	praise approving smile being included	ridicule or gossip disapproving look ostracism

Most conformity is not driven by fear of punishment: once norms are **internalised** in socialisation, people follow them because they believe they are right. Sanctions mostly back up what has been learned.

2. Social pressure. People conform because they want to belong. The wish for acceptance by family, peers, colleagues or a community is a strong pull, even without any formal rules.

- **Peer pressure:** young people adopt the dress, slang and attitudes of their friends to avoid ridicule or exclusion.
- **Asch's** experiments showed that many people will give an answer they can see is wrong rather than disagree with a group.
- **Conformity to expectations of roles:** people act as a "good parent", "good employee" or "good student" because others expect it and judge them on it.
- Social pressure can also push people **towards** deviance, when a group's own norms reward rule-breaking (see subcultures below).

3. Self-interest. People conform because it pays them to. This idea comes from **rational choice** thinking: individuals weigh costs and benefits.

- Conforming at school and work brings qualifications, pay rises and promotion; deviance risks losing them.

- **Hirschi's social bond (control) theory** asks why most people **don't** offend. His answer: bonds to society. **Attachment** (caring what others think), **commitment** (having a lot to lose, such as a job or a place at university), **involvement** (being too busy with legitimate activities) and **belief** (accepting the rules). The stronger these bonds, the more a person has invested in conforming.
- **Marxists** add that many workers conform to keep their jobs, not because they agree with the system.

4. Social exchange. Social exchange theory (Homans, Blau) sees every relationship as an exchange of rewards and costs: approval, help, friendship, status, money. People conform to the expectations of others because this keeps rewarding relationships going; a person who breaks the group's norms loses those rewards. Unlike plain self-interest, exchange stresses **reciprocity**: each side gives something and expects something back, so conformity is built into ongoing relationships (helping a neighbour so they will help you, keeping a promise to keep a friend).

Evaluation. Functionalists stress **shared values** (people conform because they agree); rational choice and exchange theories stress **calculation** (people conform when it pays); Marxists and feminists stress **power** (people conform because they have little choice). Interactionists remind us that people interpret and negotiate rules, so conformity is never total.

How order is maintained

Social order means social life is predictable and stable enough for people to get on with each other. Sociologists disagree about **how** it is kept.

Consensus (functionalism). Order comes from **value consensus**: agreement on shared values learned through socialisation.

- **Durkheim**: a **collective conscience** (shared beliefs and morals) binds society together. In simple societies this is **mechanical solidarity** (people are alike); in modern societies it is **organic solidarity** (people depend on each other through a specialised division of labour). When shared norms weaken, as in fast social change, people face **anomie** (normlessness), and deviance rises.
- **Parsons**: values are internalised through socialisation, and the family, education and religion pass them on.
- **Criticism**: it assumes everyone shares the same values and ignores conflict, inequality and whose values become "shared".

Power. Weber defined power as the ability to get your way even against others' resistance. He separated **coercion** (power through force) from **authority** (power accepted as legitimate). Authority can be **traditional** (based on custom, such as a monarch or tribal elder), **charismatic** (based on a leader's personal qualities) or **rational-legal** (based on rules and office, such as a police officer or prime minister). Most modern order rests on rational-legal authority: people obey the law because they accept the system that made it.

Ideology (Marxism and feminism). Order is kept because people accept ideas that serve the powerful.

- **Marx**: the ruling class also controls the ruling ideas, spread through the media, education and religion. Workers develop **false class consciousness**, accepting inequality as fair or natural.

- **Gramsci**: the ruling class rules mainly by **hegemony**, winning consent through ideas and leadership, and uses force only when consent breaks down.
- **Althusser**: **ideological state apparatuses** (family, education, media, religion) control people's minds; **repressive state apparatuses** (police, courts, army, prisons) control their bodies.
- **Feminists**: **patriarchal ideology** makes male dominance look natural, so women's conformity to domestic roles is presented as their choice.

Force. Where consent fails, the state uses **coercion**: police, courts, prisons and the army. Weber saw the state as claiming a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. Examples: arresting protesters, curfews, military rule. Force is costly and tends to provoke resistance, so most societies rely on it as a last resort; regimes that rule mainly by force are usually unstable.

Linking them. Most sociologists see these as working together: consensus and ideology produce everyday conformity, power and authority organise it, and force stands behind them for those who do not conform.

Explaining deviance and non-conformity

Paper 1 Question 3 has named each of these as the main or best cause of deviance. Learn each one, with its sociologists, its link to structure or agency, and its weaknesses.

Under-socialisation (inadequate socialisation). A person **was** socialised but not well enough, so they never fully took in mainstream norms, values and self-control.

- **Parsons** and functionalists: the family is meant to pass on society's values; when primary socialisation fails, deviance follows.
- **Murray** (New Right): a growing **underclass**, supported by generous welfare benefits, has many lone-mother families and boys growing up without working fathers as role models. Children learn neither self-discipline nor the value of work, so crime rises.
- **Secondary socialisation** can also fail: anti-school peer groups, a lack of positive role models in the community, or harmful media.
- Feral children are **no** socialisation, not under-socialisation, and get no credit in these answers.

Cultural deprivation. A related but different idea: some **groups**, usually working-class or poor, are said to lack the norms, values, attitudes and language skills of mainstream culture, because of how they are brought up. Socialisation happened, but it passed on a "deficient" culture.

- Examples of the supposed deficits: **immediate gratification** (wanting rewards now) rather than **deferred gratification** (working for rewards later); fatalism; weak language skills (**Bernstein's** restricted code); little value placed on education.
- **Miller** argued that lower-class culture has **focal concerns** (toughness, excitement, smartness, trouble), which lead young men into conflict with the law.
- The deviance follows because these groups are poorly equipped to succeed by legitimate means and their norms clash with the law.
- **Difference from under-socialisation**: under-socialisation is about **individual** failures in socialisation (often blamed on families); cultural deprivation is about the culture of a whole **group** or **class**.

- **Criticisms:** it blames the victims; critics argue working-class culture is **different**, not deficient (**cultural difference**), and **Bourdieu** argued middle-class culture is simply valued more by institutions (**cultural capital**).

Subcultures. A **subculture** is a group within a society with norms and values that differ in some ways from the mainstream while sharing others. Deviance is not a lack of socialisation but socialisation **into different norms**.

- **Merton** (strain theory, structural): society sets shared goals (money, success) but blocks legitimate means for some groups; the resulting **strain** or anomie leads some to **innovate** (crime for money), **retreat** (drop out) or **rebel**.
- **Cohen:** working-class boys who fail at school suffer **status frustration**. They form delinquent subcultures that turn mainstream values upside down, gaining status from vandalism, truancy and fighting.
- **Cloward and Ohlin:** different neighbourhoods offer different illegitimate opportunities, producing **criminal conflict** (gang violence) and **retreatist** (drug-using) subcultures.
- Examples students use: youth subcultures (teddy boys, mods and rockers, skinheads, punks, goths, emos), anti-school subcultures linked to class, gender and ethnicity (**Willis, Sewell**), religious sects and cults.

Marginalisation. **Marginalised** groups are pushed to the edges of society: excluded from good jobs, education, housing, political representation and decent services. This is also called **social exclusion**. Examples: the long-term unemployed, some ethnic minorities facing racism, homeless people, some young people and disabled people.

- **Lea and Young** (left realism) linked crime to three things: **relative deprivation** (feeling poorer than others one compares oneself with), **marginalisation** (no organisation or voice to pursue grievances legitimately, so frustration comes out as crime and rioting) and **subculture** (a group response to these problems).
- Marginal groups may commit crime to gain resources they lack (theft, burglary), and with little stake in society they feel weak ties to its dominant values.
- Marginalisation also explains **why some groups are labelled**: powerless groups are more heavily policed (stop and search), so more of their behaviour is recorded as deviant.

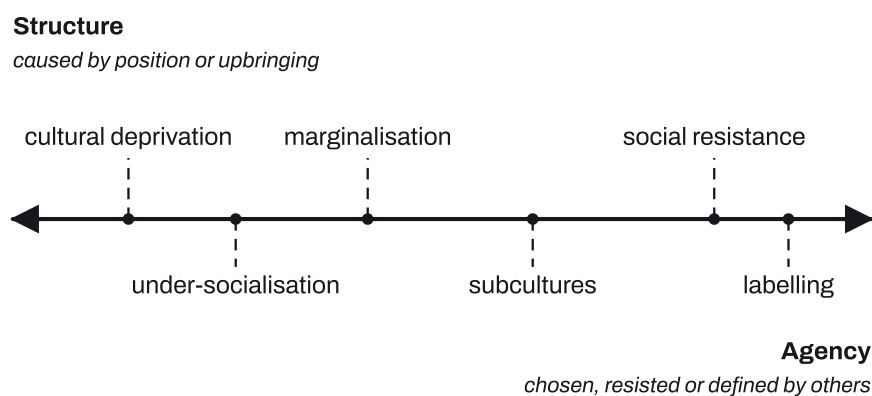
Social resistance. Deviance is a deliberate or symbolic challenge to the dominant culture and power structure. This is a view that stresses **agency**: people are not failed products of socialisation but actors resisting it.

- The **Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies** (CCCS; neo-Marxist) saw working-class youth subcultures as **resistance** to capitalism and ruling-class culture, carried out through style.
- **Hebdige:** punks used **bricolage**, taking everyday objects such as safety pins and bin liners and giving them shocking new meanings to mock respectable society.
- **Willis's** "lads" resisted school by having a "laff", truancy and rejecting qualifications; ironically this prepared them for manual work.

- Resistance can be **active** (open, organised and political: protests, campaigns such as anti-racist movements) or **passive** (quiet, everyday and symbolic: dressing in an unconventional style, listening to music that criticises authority, quietly refusing to follow a norm). It can also be **overt** (visible) or **covert** (hidden).
- Feminist examples: young women resisting patriarchal beauty norms in their dress or self-made magazines.

Other explanations to use in evaluation.

- Labelling** (Becker): deviance is created by the reactions of the powerful; a label can produce a **deviant career**.
- Anomie** (Durkheim, Merton): weak or conflicting norms in a fast-changing society.
- Biological**: **Lombroso** claimed criminals were born with distinct physical features; later research looks at genes and brain chemistry.
- Psychological**: **Eysenck** linked crime to personality types; **Bandura** showed children imitating aggression they had watched (social learning).
- Rational choice**: people commit crime when the benefits seem to outweigh the risks.



How the explanations compare

Use these to argue that a named cause is **not** the main one. In every case say **why** the rival explanation fits the evidence better, not just that it exists.

Explanation	Strongest point	Main weakness
Under-socialisation	Links deviance to family breakdown and weak role models	Hard to define or measure; can't explain middle-class and white-collar crime by well-socialised people
Cultural deprivation	Explains why crime figures are higher in poorer groups	Blames the victims; ignores cultural difference and middle-class crime
Subcultures	Shows deviants are socialised into different norms, not too few	Mostly about young males; many subcultures are short-lived and more conformist than claimed
Marginalisation	Ties deviance to exclusion, poverty and lack of a voice	Most marginalised people do not offend; figures may reflect policing, not behaviour

Explanation	Strongest point	Main weakness
Social resistance	Gives deviants agency and meaning	Reads political meaning into style; much youth style is now bought, not rebellious; ignores most adult crime

Postmodern criticism of resistance: in a consumer society, subcultural styles are quickly **commodified** (sold in high-street shops), losing their shock value. **Muggleton** and **Maffesoli** see today's youth groups as loose, temporary **neo-tribes** that people drift in and out of, chosen for identity and fun rather than resistance.

Key facts and formulas

There is no formula list in Sociology. "Learn it" means you must remember it.

Key term	Status
Deviance: behaviour that breaks a group's or society's norms; crime: behaviour that breaks written laws; deviance is relative	Learn it
Social control: formal (official bodies, written rules) and informal (everyday relationships, unwritten norms)	Learn it
Sanctions: positive (reward) or negative (punishment), each formal or informal	Learn it
Structure: society shapes the individual (functionalism, Marxism); agency: individuals shape their actions and society (interactionism); structuration (Giddens) combines them	Learn it
Four reasons for conformity: sanctions, social pressure, self-interest, social exchange (Homans, Blau)	Learn it
Hirschi's social bonds: attachment, commitment, involvement, belief	Learn it
Four ways order is maintained: power, ideology, force, consensus	Learn it
Weber's authority: traditional, charismatic, rational-legal	Learn it
Gramsci: hegemony; Althusser: ideological and repressive state apparatuses	Learn it
Under-socialisation: an individual poorly socialised into mainstream norms (Parsons, Murray); not feral children	Learn it
Cultural deprivation: a group whose culture is said to lack mainstream norms, values and skills (immediate gratification)	Learn it
Subcultural theories: Merton (strain), Cohen (status frustration), Cloward and Ohlin (three subcultures), Miller (focal concerns)	Learn it

Key term	Status
Marginalisation: exclusion to the edges of society; Lea and Young: relative deprivation, marginalisation, subculture	Learn it
Social resistance: CCCS, Hebdige (bricolage, punks), Willis (the lads); active vs passive resistance	Learn it

How to do it

We have tagged 17 Paper 1 questions for this topic (2021–2026). Each of the 9 Question 3s has an (a) and a (b) part, which count as different types, so the counts add up to 26.

Question type	Questions
Explain the view that one factor is the main cause of deviance (10 marks)	9
Give one developed argument against that view (6 marks)	9
Describe two social sanctions (4 marks)	6
Evaluate explanations of deviance in an essay (26 marks)	2

1. Explain the view that one factor is the main cause of deviance (9 questions)

Question 3(a), marked in levels: Level 3 (8–10) needs **two** clear, developed points, each supported by sociological material (a concept, theory or study) and tied to the view. One developed point plus one weaker point is Level 2 (4–7). Causes asked so far: under-socialisation or inadequate socialisation (3), subcultures (2), cultural deprivation (2), social resistance (1), marginalisation (1).

1. **Define the named cause in one sentence**, so the examiner sees you know it (examiners keep reporting candidates confusing under-socialisation with no socialisation, or writing about cultural groups that are not subcultures).
2. **Point 1**: state it → explain the chain from the cause to deviant behaviour → support it with a named sociologist, study or concept → link back with the question's words ("...so inadequate socialisation leads to deviance").
3. **Point 2**: a **different** reason built the same way.
4. **No long introduction and no criticism**. Arguments against belong in (b), and material that argues for a rival cause gets no credit here.

Points that work for each cause:

- **Under- or inadequate socialisation**: failed primary socialisation in the family (no consistent norms, sanctions or self-control) → deviance (Parsons); Murray's underclass, welfare dependency and absent fathers as role models; failures in secondary socialisation (anti-school subcultures, lack of community role models). **Never** feral children.

- **Cultural deprivation:** the group's upbringing lacks mainstream norms and values (immediate gratification, fatalism, low value on education) → they cannot succeed legitimately and their norms clash with the law; weak language skills and pre-school learning; Miller's focal concerns.
- **Subcultures:** different norms and values from the mainstream; Cohen's status frustration and delinquent subcultures; Cloward and Ohlin's opportunity structures; youth styles (skinheads, punks, goths); anti-school subcultures (Willis, Sewell).
- **Social resistance:** the CCCS view of youth styles as resistance; Hebdige's punks and bricolage; Willis's lads; active versus passive resistance with an example of each.
- **Marginalisation:** exclusion from jobs, education and political voice → crime to gain resources and weak ties to dominant values (Lea and Young); marginalised groups joining subcultures; heavier policing and labelling of powerless groups.

2. Give one developed argument against that view (9 questions)

Question 3(b), marked in levels: Level 3 (5–6) needs **one** clear, developed argument backed by sociological material. Only one argument is credited, so write one well.

1. **Pick the single strongest argument.**
2. State it → explain it → support it with a study, theory or concept → **say explicitly why it shows the named cause is not the main one.** Examiners repeatedly cap answers that describe a rival explanation without linking it back to the named cause.

Arguments that work:

- **A rival explanation fits better**, applied directly: "Cohen's boys were socialised, but into different norms, so the cause is subculture, not inadequate socialisation"; "marginalised groups are more heavily policed, so their deviance may be a labelling effect".
- **It can't explain middle-class or white-collar crime** (fraud, tax evasion), committed by people who were well socialised, culturally advantaged and not marginalised.
- **It is hard to define or measure** (under-socialisation, cultural deprivation), so the claim can't be tested.
- **It blames the victim** and ignores **cultural difference** (against cultural deprivation).
- **Most people in the group do not offend** (against marginalisation and cultural deprivation).
- **Youth-focused and short-lived** (against subcultures and resistance); subcultures are often more conformist than claimed; postmodern commodification of style and neo-tribes (against resistance).
- **Biological or psychological explanations** (Lombroso, Eysenck, Bandura), as long as you say why they challenge the named cause.

3. Describe two social sanctions (6 questions)

Question 1, 4 marks: for each of two sanctions, **1 mark** for identifying it and **1 mark** for describing it (what it is, or how it encourages people to behave in the expected way). Only two are credited. The question names a kind: informal (2 questions), positive (2), negative (1), formal (1).

1. **Check the kind asked** and use the grid above: formal means given by an official body under written rules; informal means given by family, friends, colleagues.
2. **Identify** each sanction in a few words: "Ostracism by peers."
3. **Describe** it in one sentence: who applies it, for what, and how it changes behaviour.
4. Pick two clearly different sanctions; taking them from **two different agents** (parents and peers, a court and an employer) keeps them distinct. Positive and negative can both count unless the question names one.
5. Keep it short. Don't describe **deviant acts** or **agencies of social control** instead of sanctions; a police force is not a sanction, a fine is.

4. Evaluate explanations of deviance in an essay (2 questions)

Section B essays: "Evaluate sociological explanations of deviance" (marked as **AO1** knowledge 8, **AO2** application 8, **AO3** evaluation 10, so $8 + 8 + 10 = 26$ marks) and "Evaluate cultural explanations of deviance" (one five-level scheme). Evaluation carries the most marks.

1. **Introduction (short)**: define deviance and say it is relative; say sociological explanations stress social causes rather than individual ones.
2. **Explain a range of explanations, 4–5 developed paragraphs**: under-socialisation (Parsons, Murray), cultural deprivation, subcultures (Merton, Cohen, Cloward and Ohlin), anomie (Durkheim), marginalisation (Lea and Young), social resistance (CCCS, Hebdige, Willis), labelling (Becker). Name the study and apply it to deviance each time.
3. **Evaluate inside each paragraph**: use the explanations against each other (subcultural theory challenges cultural deprivation; labelling challenges all theories that trust crime statistics; resistance theory adds the agency that structural theories leave out). Use the comparison table above.
4. **Evaluate from outside sociology**: biological (Lombroso) and psychological (Eysenck, Bandura) explanations and rational choice. Say what they add (measurable evidence) and what sociologists say they miss (why deviance varies between societies and over time).
5. **Structure versus agency** is a strong thread: structural explanations can be deterministic; agency-based ones can ignore the constraints of class and poverty.
6. **Conclusion**: a justified judgement, for example that combined approaches (Lea and Young join deprivation, marginalisation and subculture) explain more than any single cause, or that the best explanation depends on the kind of deviance.

For "cultural explanations", focus on the explanations based on norms and values (under-socialisation, cultural deprivation, subcultures, anomie, resistance) and evaluate them with structural (Merton, marginalisation, Marxist) and individual (biological, psychological) explanations.

Worked examples

Example 1

Describe two formal positive social sanctions. [4]

Sanction 1. A promotion at work (1): an employer rewards an employee who meets targets and follows company rules with a higher position and pay, encouraging them and others to keep conforming (1).

Sanction 2. A school prize or certificate (1): a school officially recognises a student's good attendance or achievement at a ceremony, which rewards hard work and shows other students the behaviour the school values (1).

Each is identified, is clearly formal (an official body) and positive (a reward), and is described with how it shapes behaviour: **4 marks**.

Example 2

‘Marginalisation is the main reason some groups act in deviant ways.’

(a) Explain this view. [10]

(b) Using sociological material, give one argument against this view. [6]

(a) Marginalisation means being pushed to the edges of society, shut out of secure jobs, good education, decent housing and political influence. One reason it causes deviance is that marginal groups lack legitimate ways to gain resources and status. Lea and Young argued that when such groups also feel **relative deprivation**, comparing themselves with others who have far more, their frustration can lead to theft, burglary and other crime to get what they cannot get legally. This explains why recorded crime is concentrated in deprived inner-city areas, supporting the view that marginalisation is the main reason for deviance. **(Point 1: clear, developed and supported by theory.)**

A second reason is that marginalised groups have **no voice**. Lea and Young pointed out that unemployed young people have no trade union or organisation to press their grievances, so anger is expressed through rioting and violence rather than through politics. With little stake in society, their ties to its dominant values are weak, and some form subcultures that reject those values. So marginalisation produces both the motive for deviance and the loss of the bonds that normally prevent it. **(Point 2: clear, developed, with concepts and evidence.)**

Two clear, developed points, each with sociological material and linked to the view: **Level 3 (8–10 marks)**.

(b) Against the view, marginalisation cannot explain **white-collar and corporate crime**. Fraud, tax evasion and insider trading are committed by well-paid professionals who are fully included in society, have political influence and every legitimate route to success. Sutherland's concept of white-collar crime showed this deviance is widespread but rarely punished. If deviance is common among the most included groups,

exclusion cannot be its main cause; the higher recorded crime of marginal groups may instead reflect where the police look, as labelling theorists argue. **(One clear, developed argument with sociological material, applied to the view: Level 3, 5–6 marks.)**

Example 3

Evaluate the view that social order is maintained mainly through shared values. **[26]**

Plan. The view is the **consensus** (functionalist) side. For: Durkheim, Parsons, internalisation and the low need for force in stable societies. Against: Marxist ideology and hegemony, Althusser, Weber on power and authority, force, feminism, interactionist agency. Judgement: shared values matter, but they are partly produced by the powerful, and force backs them up.

Introduction. Social order means social life is stable and predictable. The view is that order rests on value consensus; conflict theorists argue it rests on power, ideology and force.

For the view (AO1/AO2).

- **Durkheim** argued that a **collective conscience** binds people together, through mechanical solidarity in simple societies and organic solidarity in modern ones. When shared norms weaken, anomie and deviance rise, which shows how much order depends on them.
- **Parsons:** values are internalised through primary and secondary socialisation, so people **want** to conform. Sanctions mostly back up what people already believe.
- **Evidence:** most people obey most laws without a police officer present; this suggests agreement, not fear.

Against the view (AO3).

- **However**, Marxists argue the "shared" values are the ruling class's values. Gramsci's **hegemony** explains how consent is manufactured through the media and education, so consensus is real but not freely reached; this directly challenges the functionalist claim that values serve everyone.
- **Althusser** shows that ideological state apparatuses work alongside **repressive** ones; when ideology fails, as in strikes or protests, the state uses police and courts. Order therefore rests partly on **force**, which consensus theory ignores.
- **Weber** suggests people may obey because they accept **rational-legal authority**, not because they share values; they can disagree with a law and still obey it.
- **Self-interest and exchange:** rational choice and social exchange theory suggest many conform because it pays, which is calculation, not shared values.
- **Feminists** argue women's conformity to domestic roles reflects patriarchal ideology and economic dependence.
- **But** interactionists show people negotiate rules daily, and the existence of subcultures and resistance shows values are not fully shared. Order may be more fragile and more negotiated than either side suggests.

Conclusion. Shared values explain much everyday conformity, but those values are shaped by powerful groups and backed by force. Order is best seen as a mix of consent, power and coercion; the view is therefore only partly convincing.

How it would be marked. A range of detailed points with named concepts and studies (AO1 Level 4, 7–8); each applied to how order is maintained (AO2 Level 4, 7–8); evaluation that is explicit ("However", "this directly challenges"), weighs the evidence and reaches a justified conclusion (AO3 Level 5, 9–10). In the exam, develop each bullet into a full paragraph.

Common mistakes

- **Confusing under-socialisation with no socialisation.** Feral children had no socialisation and earn nothing in an under-socialisation answer. Under-socialisation means socialisation happened but was inadequate.
- **Not knowing the named cause.** Examiners report many answers that could not define subculture, cultural deprivation or marginalisation. Define it in your first sentence.
- **Describing disadvantage without the link to deviance.** Long accounts of what marginalised groups lack, with no explanation of how this leads to deviant behaviour, stay in low levels.
- **Using (b) material in (a).** A rival cause (material deprivation, subcultures in an under-socialisation answer) is not credited in part (a). Save it for (b).
- **Only one point in (a).** Two developed points are needed for Level 3. Skip the introduction.
- **Asserting, not comparing, in (b).** Outlining another explanation and saying it is "more important" is not enough; show why it explains the deviance better than the named cause.
- **More than one argument in (b).** Only one is credited.
- **Wrong kind of sanction.** For a "formal" question, a general description that doesn't make the official source clear earns nothing. For an "informal" question, writing about the police or a court is wrong.
- **Naming agencies or deviant acts instead of sanctions.** "The police" or "bullying" is not a sanction; "a fine" or "ridicule" is.
- **Over-long Question 1 answers.** Two short identified-and-described sanctions get full marks.
- **Evaluation by juxtaposition** in the essay. Placing theories side by side is weak; say which one explains deviance better and why.

How to get the marks

- **"Describe"** (Question 1, 4 marks): identify each sanction (1), then describe it so its kind and effect are clear (1). Two only; bullet points are fine.
- **"Explain this view"** (Question 3(a), 10 marks): two points, each developed with a concept, theory or study and linked back to the view's exact words: "...which supports the view that cultural deprivation is the main cause of deviance."
- **"Using sociological material, give one argument against"** (Question 3(b), 6 marks): one argument, developed, with named material, ending with **why** the named cause is not the main one.

- **"Evaluate"** (26 marks): a range of explanations with named studies, evaluation that is **clear, explicit and sustained**, and a conclusion that answers the question. AO3 (10 marks) is the largest share.
- **Sociological material** means concepts (status frustration, relative deprivation, hegemony, bricolage), theories (functionalism, Marxism, interactionism, left realism, postmodernism) and studies (Cohen, Murray, Willis, Hebdige, Lea and Young). Named theories aren't required for full marks, but named evidence is.
- **Use the question's exact cause.** "Inadequate socialisation" and "under-socialisation" are the same idea; "cultural deprivation" is about a group's culture; "social resistance" is about deliberate challenge. Keep every point about the named one.

Quick check

1. What is the difference between deviance and crime? Give an example of an act that is deviant but not criminal.
2. Describe two informal negative sanctions.
3. Explain the difference between under-socialisation and cultural deprivation.
4. Give one way order can be kept through ideology and one way through force.
5. 'Social resistance is the main cause of deviance.' Give one argument against this view in two or three sentences, naming sociological material.

Answers

1. **Deviance** breaks the norms of a group or society; **crime** breaks the written law. Swearing loudly at a funeral is deviant but not criminal.
2. **Ridicule** (1): friends mock someone who dresses or behaves in a way the group dislikes, so they change to avoid embarrassment (1). **Ostracism** (1): a peer group shuts out a member who breaks its norms, and the fear of losing friends makes members conform (1).
3. **Under-socialisation** is about an **individual** who was poorly socialised, for example through inconsistent parenting, so they did not fully learn mainstream norms. **Cultural deprivation** is about a whole **group** or class whose culture is said to lack mainstream values and skills, such as deferred gratification.
4. **Ideology**: the media and education spread the idea that society is fair and success is earned (Gramsci's hegemony), so people accept inequality. **Force**: police arrest protesters or courts imprison offenders (Althusser's repressive state apparatuses).
5. Postmodernists argue that subcultural styles are quickly **commodified** and sold in shops, so dressing as a punk or goth is now a consumer choice of identity, not resistance; Muggleton's research found young people saw their style as personal expression rather than politics. So resistance cannot be the main cause of deviance today; it also says little about adult or white-collar crime.

Past questions to try

- **9699/12/O/N/23 Q3**: explain and argue against social resistance as the main cause of deviance.
- **9699/13/M/J/23 Q3**: marginalisation as the best explanation of deviance.
- **9699/12/O/N/22 Q1**: two formal social sanctions.
- **9699/12/F/M/22 Q3**: subcultures as the best explanation of deviant behaviour.