Glocal subcultures

Glocal subcultures, Malone (2002) suggests, are a more recent form of hybridity in contemporary societies. Glocal involves **global** styles and identities filtered through **local** subcultural groups (hence 'glocal'). Styles existing on a global scale are given a unique local interpretation and twist through their incorporation by different cultural groups.

As Malone suggests, hip-hop exists as a **global youth culture** based around a particular style and identity. However, the meaning of this style is interpreted differently by youth in different countries, depending in part on their own local cultural background and traditions, so it is also glocal.

Glocalised youth subcultures are, by definition, hybrids since they involve mixing and matching a variety of different cultural traditions in the context of a global youth style. They have obvious advantages for their members: they are able to key into a global (virtual) community of youth who all have a common understanding of this style (reflecting Thornton's (1996) concept of **subcultural capital**), while simultaneously being part of a local subcultural community that allows hip-hop styles, for example, to be adapted to particular individual tastes.

OCR examination questions

1 Identify and explain two features of girl subcultures. (17 marks)

2 Identify and explain two features of hybrid subcultures. (17 marks)

3 Outline and evaluate Marxist views of the role of youth subcultures in society. (33 marks)

4 Outline and evaluate the view that the role of youth culture is to assist in the transition from childhood to adulthood. (33 marks)

Youth and deviance

In this section we explore the idea of 'problem youth' in more detail by looking at the extent to which young people engage in deviant/criminal behaviour and at various sociological explanations for that involvement.

Key concepts

Deviance

All societies develop **rules** (norms) to guide the behaviour of their members, and 'deviance' refers to any and all behaviours that 'break the rules'. Deviance, therefore, is behaviour that deviates from the norm:

➤ **Criminal deviance** involves breaking **formal**, legal rules (**laws** or **formal norms**).

➢ **Non-criminal deviance** involves breaking **informal** non-legal rules (**informal norms**).

This distinction is important because it reflects a *qualitative difference* between deviance and crime:

➢ **deviance** — rule-breaking behaviour of *any kind*
➢ **crime** — rule-breaking related to legal norms; while crime is always deviant, not all deviance is criminal

While everyone 'breaks the rules' at some point in their life, not everyone engages in criminal rule-breaking and, for this reason, it would be interesting to know how and why some people and groups engage in higher levels of crime than others.

Crime

Crime, as we have suggested, is a particular form of deviant behaviour. Not only is it considered more serious than, say, forgetting to send a friend a card on their birthday (it might be embarrassing but you're not going to be sent to prison); it is also much easier to measure. This follows because we have an **objective standard** (the law) against which to compare behaviour.

For example, if you stand on a street corner and start shouting abuse at anyone who passes by, you're committing a crime and will probably be arrested. A failure to remember a friend's birthday may have certain personal consequences, but these are unlikely to include arrest and imprisonment. While both are technically deviant, how people **react** to them will be very different.

> **?**   Identify and explain one difference between crime and deviance.

For these reasons — because crime is a more **serious** form of deviance and easier to **measure** — we are going to focus on the relationship between youth and crime, rather than youth and deviance. Young (2001) suggests four ways to measure crime in our society.

➢ **Official crime statistics**: record crimes **reported** to the police.
➢ **Victim surveys**: record crimes people have experienced, but not necessarily reported; these include both sociological surveys (such as the **Islington Crime Surveys** (Young et al. (1986, 1990)) and official government surveys such as the **British Crime Survey**.
➢ **Self-report surveys**: ask people to admit to crimes they have committed.
➢ **Agency surveys**: Maguire (2002), for example, notes we can collect 'systematic information about unreported crime' by studying things like hospital admission and treatment records.

Although these sources give us a good idea about the nature and extent of crime, they are by no means perfect indicators, for the following reasons.

Crime and criminals

Not everyone who breaks the law is a criminal; the latter is a label given to someone convicted of a crime. While two people can commit exactly the same crime (such as stealing a car), if one is never convicted he or she does not appear in the official crime statistics and, as far as anyone knows, is not a criminal. This creates problems if we are interested in studying the social and psychological characteristics of 'young criminals'.

Defining youth

This is a problem because to understand the relationship between youth and crime we need to have a standard definition of youth — and, as we've already seen, there are a number of different definitions. Legally, for example, the lower limit for criminal responsibility in England is 10 years old. Normally, we would probably classify someone this age as a child rather than a youth. In Belgium, for example, the age of criminal responsibility is 18.

The upper limit is normally taken to be 18 (all under 18 are classified as 'minors' or 'juveniles'), but this again could perhaps be too low (since some definitions of youth set the upper limit around 25).

? Suggest one reason why it is easier to measure crime than deviance.

Delinquency

This concept is frequently used to refer to relatively minor forms of criminal behaviour (something that, in recent years, has come to be seen as 'anti-social behaviour', although it does, of course, include actual criminal behaviour) committed by 'young people'.

Juvenile delinquents are generally taken to mean those under 18 convicted (or suspected) of committing criminal or 'anti-social' acts. Legally, however, the **Police and Criminal Evidence Act** (1984) defines a 'juvenile' as anyone aged between 10 and 16. The fuzziness of definitions (both legal and sociological) is something we need to keep in mind when analysing the relationship between youth and criminal deviance.

Social construction

Problems of definition notwithstanding, a wider issue we need to consider is the idea that concepts of crime and deviance are **socially constructed**. As Becker (1963) suggests, societies not only 'create deviance' by making the rules governing criminal behaviour (without rules there can be no deviance); they do so in different ways at different times:

➤ **Historical**: Homosexuality was a criminal offence in England until 1967.
➤ **Cross-cultural**: Drinking alcohol in a bar is legal at 18 in England, in Saudi Arabia it's a criminal offence.
➤ **Context**: The same behaviour can be interpreted differently depending on who does it and why they do it. A soldier killing an enemy in war is not deviant; the same soldier killing a civilian is a criminal.

➢ These differences led Becker to argue that deviance (including crime) is:
➢ **not** a quality of what you do
➢ a quality of how someone **reacts** to what you do

Labelling

This means we need to think about crime, in particular, as **labelling** — a concept that has two main qualities:

➢ **Name**: We need ways to identify what we see (such as 'youth' as opposed to 'child').
➢ **Characteristics** attached to the label: When we think about a label we also think about a range of things that describe it.

The characteristics associated with the label 'youth' are significant in terms of:

➢ **Social identities**: How you think about 'youth' will affect how you behave towards 'young people'. If you see them, for example, as 'sullen, thuggish, violent criminals' then you're probably going to avoid them whenever possible — unless you're a police officer, in which case we may see the development of a self-fulfilling prophecy.
➢ **Self-fulfilling prophecy**: A prediction about behaviour (prophecy) that itself brings about the predicted behaviour (self-fulfilling). For example, if you 'know' who is more likely to commit crime in our society (because crime statistics tell you it's young people rather than the elderly), then you're more likely to watch youth behaviour more closely. The closer you watch, the more likely you are to uncover evidence of crime — which confirms your original belief because more young people are arrested and convicted. Campbell et al. (2000), for example, found that nearly 70% of persistent young offenders were already known to the police.

> **Crime and deviance as socially constructed 1**
>
> **C** onstruction
> **L** abelling
> **I** dentities
> **P** rophecy

A further aspect to labelling is that some labels have more power than others. Becker, for example, argues that **master labels** are important because, once attached, everything about an individual is interpreted in the light of the label. Someone publicly labelled a 'paedophile', for example, is likely to have all of their behaviour interpreted in the light of this label (hence the idea of a 'master status' — one that defines everything about you).

? Briefly explain how youth can sometimes be considered a 'master status'.

Moral panics

A combination of master labelling and self-fulfilling prophecies can help to create what Cohen (1972) has called **moral panics** — a situation where an individual or group is:

➢ **labelled** by the media
➢ **defined** (in a '**moral crusade**') as 'a threat to society's values'
➢ **presented** in a 'stereotypical fashion'
➢ **made the target of** 'demands for action' from the authorities (a '**moral clampdown**')

In relation to youth and deviance:

➢ **Labelling**: The behaviours of young people are frequently defined and publicised in the media as a 'social problem'.

➢ **Self-fulfilling prophecies** develop when the media looks closely at these behaviours.

➢ **Moral panics** occur when the 'behaviour of youth' seems to be spiralling out of control (as judged by sensational media reporting). What Cohen calls 'folk devils' are created — people whose behaviour causes public panic and alarm and who should, in consequence, be severely punished.

Examples of periodic moral panics relating to youth are not difficult to find. See for example:

➢ Cohen's analysis of mods and rockers 'fighting in seaside towns' in the early 1960s (a good example of a self-fulfilling prophecy: the media 'predicted trouble' between these 'mortal enemies' and both groups duly turned up looking for where the action was supposed to be)

➢ Critcher's (2000) analysis of 'rave culture' and the panic that developed around the use of Ecstasy

➢ Young's (1971) analysis of drug takers in Notting Hill: an example of both the way illegal drug taking is consistently associated with youth and, more significantly, the idea of deviancy amplification

Deviancy amplification is Wilkins's (1964) argument that an over-reaction (by the police, public and politicians) can lead ultimately to the criminalisation of large numbers of people for behaviour that was originally mildly deviant.

> Crime and deviance as socially constructed 2
>
> **P** anic
> **A** mplification

We should, however, note that the concept of moral panic is not without its critics:

➢ McRobbie (1994) argues it has been over-used, especially by the media, to describe behaviour that is not immoral and does not justify a panic.

➢ McRobbie and Thornton (1995) also argue the media have become so sophisticated in their understanding of how amplification and moral panics work that 'moral panics, once the unintended outcome of journalistic practice, seem to have become a goal' — a way of whipping up public excitement to sell more newspapers.

Pattern and trends in youth deviance according to social class, gender and ethnicity

Age

A consistent finding of statistical and survey methods is the **correlation** between age and deviant behaviour. Youth (the 10–25 age group) have far greater involvement in crime than their older counterparts — a relationship Hirschi and Gottfredson (1983)

argue is constant both historically and across different societies. It can, however, be qualified in relation to categories like:

➢ **Class**: Working-class males have higher rates of offending.
➢ **Ethnicity**: Black males have higher rates of conviction.
➢ **Gender**: Males have consistently higher rates of offending.

Kanazawa and Still (2000) suggest 'crime and other risk-taking behaviour' peaks 'in late adolescence and early adulthood' (Table 10.2).

Table 10.2   Offenders by age (England and Wales) in 000s

Age group	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
10–19	156 (32%)	160 (34%)	169 (34%)	175 (34%)	179 (34%)	152 (31%)
10–29	330 (68%)	320 (68%)	331 (66%)	341 (67%)	349 (67%)	323 (65%)
30–60+	155	153	159	165	170	175
All	485	473	490	506	519	498

Source: Hughes and Church (2010)

Hales et al. (2009) found, over a 4-year period, a small minority of young offenders (4% of 10–25-year-olds) were disproportionately responsible for around one third (32%) of all offences committed by this age group.

Looking more specifically at the most serious (**indictable**) offences, in 2005:
➢ 15% were committed by those aged 10–17.
➢ 12% were committed by those aged 18–20.

In terms of less serious 'anti-social behaviour', 40% of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) issued in 2007 were to those under 18.

> **?**   Identify one pattern and one trend in age-related crime.

Explanations

Some explanations focus on the idea there is something unique about 'youth' that makes them more criminal:

Socialisation and social control

Maruna (1997) notes young people have fewer social responsibilities and ties; **informal social controls** are consequently less effective and there is a greater likelihood of **risk-taking behaviour** (such as crime).

Social distance theory

Conversely to the above, Maruna argues certain activities and responsibilities *distance* (mainly) older people from (public) situations in which opportunistic criminality occurs. These include:
➢ finding employment

➢ staying in education
➢ getting married
➢ starting a family

Peer-group pressure

Criminal behaviour may confer the status that many youths lack through education, the workplace and the like. FitzGerald et al. (2003) suggest two peer-related factors in youth criminal activity:

➢ **Cultural**: 'Image-conscious' youth need to maintain and constantly update a sense of image and style (clothes, mobiles and so forth).
➢ **Economic** (the need for money to finance their image): They found where family financial support was absent, crime was a source of funding.

Lifestyle factors

Young people are more likely to:

➢ be involved in activities in the *public domain* (such as pubs and clubs) that bring conflict with other youths, the police and so forth. Campbell et al. (2000), for example, found 'Boys who hung around in public places were more likely to be offenders.'
➢ have a lifestyle conducive to opportunistic (unplanned) crimes.

Other explanations

Other explanations focus less on youth itself and more on how those in authority *react* to youth behaviours:

➢ **Spatial targeting**: The police focus on groups (young people) and places (clubs, pubs, etc. where large numbers of youth meet).
➢ **Social visibility**: Young people, especially those under the influence of drink and drugs, are more likely to commit crimes where witnesses are present.

Social class

Where **official crime statistics** don't distinguish between classes, it's harder to disentangle the relationship between class and youth crime. However, one way we can do this is to look at **risk factors**: those most closely *correlated* with crime relate more to working-class than middle-class youth.

McAra and McVie's (2009) 10-year longitudinal **Edinburgh study** found a strong correlation between criminal convictions and:

➢ leaving school at the earliest opportunity
➢ exclusion from school at 14

The Youth Justice Board (2005) identified four areas and risk factors most closely correlated with those young people convicted of crimes:

1 **Family**
   ➢ deprived households
   ➢ absconding from home

- ➢ inconsistent adult supervision and boundary setting
- ➢ significant adults involved in criminal activity

2 Education
- ➢ underachievement
- ➢ lack of attachment to school/own education

3 Community
- ➢ associating with predominantly pro-criminal peers

4 Personal
- ➢ offending to obtain money for substances
- ➢ lacking understanding of the effect of behaviour on victims

Pitts (2008), however, argues that youth involvement in **serious crime** is most closely related to living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, rather than to the individual, family or educational characteristics of the children who live there.

> **?** Suggest two explanations for trends in youth crime.

Explanations

Risk factors relate to **convicted** youth and we need to consider the **dark figure of crime**: most crime in our society (with notable exceptions such as murder and car theft) goes unreported — reported crime is, therefore, just the tip of the iceberg. This means explanations based around the social and individual characteristics of convicted youth may not necessarily apply to those who commit crimes but are never caught.

Lifestyles

Working-class youth are more likely to experience:
- ➢ **socialisation** problems within the family (inconsistent adult supervision and boundary setting)
- ➢ **encouragement** to commit crimes through both greater parental involvement in crime and peer pressure through association with criminal peers
- ➢ **poverty and disadvantage** in home and neighbourhood life (including high levels of unemployment); Smith (2006) suggests poverty has negative impacts on family life and educational achievement and makes working class youth more open to criminal behaviour

Middle-class youth are less likely to be involved in 'lifestyle offending' (various forms of street and opportunistic crimes), for reasons of:
- ➢ **Status**: A criminal record is likely to affect potential career opportunities.
- ➢ **Education**: They stay in education longer and have greater career development opportunities.
- ➢ **Economics**: They are less likely to turn to crime for income to support their lifestyle.

Spatial targeting

Police resources are focused on areas and individuals where crime is highest — working-class spaces such as clubs, pubs, estates or designated 'crime hotspots' — something that contributes to a *self-fulfilling prophecy*.

Social visibility

Working-class youth 'street' crime has a high visibility — clear victims, witnesses and little attempt to hide criminal behaviour; detection and conviction rates are consequently higher.

Status deviance

Many crimes are not committed for economic reasons alone; some relate to power and prestige within a social group and involve a combination of *risk-taking* and the idea of 'thumbing your nose' at authority. Smith et al. (2005) suggest working-class youth contact with the police is more likely to be **adversarial** (conflict-based) and hence more likely to involve arrest (rather than cautions or warnings).

Gender

While young males and females commit much the same *types* of crime (theft, drug offences and assault being the main categories), Maguire (2002) notes higher **male** involvement is a feature of all societies, past and present.

Campbell et al. (2000) note that:

➢ For **women**:
  ➢ **Under 16**: The most common offences are criminal damage, shoplifting, buying stolen goods and fighting.
  ➢ **Over 16**: There is less criminal damage and shoplifting, more fraud and buying stolen goods.
  ➢ **Over 21**: There is a fall in all types of offending (fraud or buying stolen goods were most common offences).
➢ For **men**:
  ➢ **Under 16**: Around 12% of boys admitted to fighting, buying stolen goods, theft and criminal damage.
  ➢ **16–17**: There is a similar pattern of offending, but more than one third of offences involved fighting.
  ➢ **18–21**: Here is the highest level of offending, with increased fighting but decline in shoplifting and criminal damage. Entry into work brings new opportunities for fraud and theft.

Although the overall **trend** in both male and female crime over the past 15 years is **downwards** (with one or two exceptions — male violence has increased), the average male and female prison population has steadily increased over the past 30 years (Table 10.3):

Table 10.3   The average prison population in England and Wales (000s)

	Males (000s)	Females (000s)
1978	40.409	1.387
1988	47.113	1.759
1998	62.194	3.105
2008	78.158	4.414

Source: Hughes and Church (2010)

Nacro (2009) argue that although there has been a rise in both detected female criminality and female imprisonment in recent years, this doesn't necessarily mean young women are engaging in higher levels of crime. Changes to the way the police handle female deviance (a reduction in the use of informal measures when responding to girls' misbehaviour and a greater readiness to arrest young women) are more likely to explain this increase.

Overall, the peak offending years for youth are:

➢ female: 14–15
➢ male: 16–19

Both male and female offending declines gradually with age. Smith (2006) notes girls stop offending at an earlier age and the decline in their offending is also more rapid than for boys.

With regard to **Anti-Social Behaviour Orders**, Hughes and Church (2010) note males were ten times more likely than females to receive an ASBO in 2007.

? Identify and explain one difference between trends in young male and female criminality.

Explanations

➢ **Masculinity and identity formation**: Davies relates risk-taking to ideas about masculinity and femininity — risky behaviour, such as street crime, is associated with 'being male'. McIvor (1998) argues young male criminality is linked to a range of risk-taking behaviours 'associated with the search for masculine identity in the transition from adolescence to adulthood'
➢ **Opportunity structures** reflect different forms of participation in the *public* and *private* domains. Davies (1997), for example, notes how young men have fewer home and family responsibilities and consequently greater opportunities for crime. Where young men and women have *similar* opportunity structures (such as McMillan (2004) notes for shoplifting) they commit similar levels of crime. The effect of changing opportunity structures is also significant — older youth are more likely to be in work and so commit offences (fraud and theft) that reflect this new status.

➢ **Risk**: Males and females have different attitudes to 'risk-taking'. Lyng (2004), for example, uses the concept of '**edgework**' to refer to various forms of 'voluntary risk-taking' — young males in particular engage in behaviour that continually pushes at behavioural boundaries ('exploring the edges') in dangerous, sometimes life-threatening, ways. This includes crimes committed for the 'thrill' and 'danger' as much as the economic reward.

➢ **Socialisation and control**: Young males have greater levels of freedom of movement and association than females and they spend more time in the public domain — places where crimes are more likely to occur.

> Explanations for the gender difference in deviance
>
> **P** Masculinity
> **P** Opportunity
> **P** Risk
> **P** Edgework
> **P** Socialisation

? Suggest two reasons for lower levels of female criminality in our society.

Ethnicity

The Commission for Racial Equality (2004) suggests **ethnic minorities** are more likely to be:

➢ **victims** of household, car and racially motivated crimes
➢ **arrested** for notifiable offences
➢ Nacro found minority ethnic youth were more likely to be:
➢ **remanded** in prison (refused bail)
➢ **over-represented** in the prison population

Imprisonment

The Youth Justice Board (2009) found that while black youth made up 3% of the general population aged 10–17, they accounted for:

➢ 7% of those brought to the attention of the youth justice system
➢ 14% of those receiving a custodial sentence
➢ 33% of those given long-term detention

Offending rates

There is little difference between ethnic minority young people in terms of overall offending. Young black males are, however, at greater risk of gun crime/murder (as both victims and offenders).

Victims

Asians have a higher risk of being victims of household crime, whereas black minorities are at greater risk of personal crimes such as assault.

Explanations

➢ **Demographics**: Ethnic minority groups have two significant characteristics:
   ➢ **Social class**: They are more likely to be working class.
   ➢ **Age**: They have a younger age profile than both the white majority and the UK population as a whole.

These characteristics are significant because of the relationship we have noted between class, age and crime.

➢ **Social control**: The relatively low levels of female Asian offending can be partly explained by higher levels of family surveillance and social control. Similarly, black minority youth are more likely to be raised in single-parent families than their white peers, and this type of family profile is statistically associated with higher rates of juvenile offending.

➢ **Over-representation**: One set of explanations for black over-representation in prison focuses on what Young and Mooney (1999) argue is **institutional police racism** (a belief running through the police service in greater levels of minority criminality). Black youth have far greater chances of being:

➢ **Targeted** by the police as potential/actual offenders: Clancy et al. (2001) note that when all demographic factors are controlled for, 'being young, male and black increased a person's likelihood of being stopped and searched'.

➢ **Arrested and prosecuted**: Urban areas (such as London and Manchester) had a lower ratio of black/white arrest rates than rural areas (such as Norfolk, where blacks were eight times more likely to be arrested than whites). Significantly perhaps, black suspects were also more likely to be acquitted in both magistrate and Crown courts.

Sociological explanations of the patterns and trends

We can look briefly at how different sociological perspectives have explained the patterns and trends in youth crime and deviance.

Functionalism

When we looked at functionalist perspectives on the role of youth culture we identified two ideas that we can develop to help explain the relationship between youth and crime:

➢ **Transition**: Youth is seen as a period of transition between childhood and adulthood.

➢ **Anomie**: According to Merton (1938), this is '**normative confusion**' — not knowing, or being unable to follow, the norms expected of different statuses. In other words, youth is a status where young people are potentially confused about how they're supposed to behave because they exist 'between childhood and adulthood'. Without clear normative guidance from various **reference groups** — parents, teachers, peers, the media and so forth — young people are likely to become deviant (as we've seen with the 'risk factors' associated with youth crime).

For Merton the relationship between youth and anomie related to the ability of societies to provide routes not just into adulthood but, most importantly, into the *successful* performance of adult roles: 'success' could be measured in a range of ways:

➢ **economic** — getting a good, well-paid, high-status job

➢ **psychological** — surviving youth unscathed by a criminal record

➢ **cultural** — successfully achieving a desired role (such as motherhood)

What mattered, therefore, was the ability of societies to provide the **means** by which young people could successfully achieve adult **ends** (or goals) — one of the most significant being the desire for **status**:

➢ **Middle-class youth**, for example, were less likely to be deviant because their future was mapped out in terms of success at school, going to university and then into a well-paid, high-status, professional career.

➢ **Girls** were less likely to turn to crime because their future adult roles were also partially mapped out in terms of movement from their parents' family (where they were subject to more rigorous forms of social control) to a family of their own. Status could, therefore, be successfully achieved via this route.

➢ **Working-class boys**, on the other hand, experienced greater problems in their search for status — their relatively low educational achievement, for example, meant the 'middle-class route' to status was effectively blocked. They were also less likely to see status success in terms of family roles because concepts of successful masculinity stressed being able to provide for a partner and children.

> The functionalist view of youth and crime
>
> **T** ransition
> **A** nomie
> **M** eans
> **E** nds

A range of theories developed to explain the relationship between male working-class youth and deviant behaviour:

Status frustration

Cohen (1955) argued youth subcultures enabled some young males to achieve status (or 'respect') among their peers. Hargreaves (1967), for example, showed how boys who were denied status in school developed **oppositional subcultures** through which they gained peer status by rejecting the behaviours valued by the school (being attentive and respectful to teachers, working hard, regular attendance and so forth).

Opportunity structures

Cloward and Ohlin (1960) gave a wider picture of the search for status. Where young working-class boys were denied a route to status through 'legitimate opportunity structures' such as work, they developed alternative ways of finding it through different kinds of subculture:

➢ **Criminal**: These subcultures developed in stable communities with successful criminal *role models* ('crime pays') and a *career structure* for aspiring criminals.

➢ **Conflict**: Without community support, *gang cultures* developed by providing 'services' such as prostitution and drug dealing.

➢ **Retreatist**: Boys unable to join criminal or conflict subcultures (they failed in both legitimate and illegitimate job markets) retreated into 'individualistic' subcultures based on drug abuse, alcoholism and petty crime.

Focal concerns

While the explanations above focus on how some young people react to **status denial**, another way of looking at the problem can be found in Miller's (1958) argument that some working-class youth developed a 'route into adulthood' that brought them into conflict with the values of wider society through **focal concerns** that emerged from the realities of working-class life 'at the bottom of society'. These led some male youth to develop values, norms, identities and lifestyles that brought them into conflict with wider society. The focal concerns Miller identified are:

➢ **Trouble**: Working-class life is tough, occasionally violent, and young males quickly learn to identify 'trouble' and how to handle it — abilities that confer status on the individual.

➢ **Toughness**: The ability to handle 'trouble' (to see violence as a means of resolving problems) involves being able to 'take care' of both yourself and your mates. Once again, toughness is an important source of status.

➢ **Excitement**: Working-class boys were denied self-expression in places like school (something to be tolerated) and work (invariably dull, menial and boring). Lack of employment also meant 'fun' couldn't be easily bought. However, excitement could be created in a variety of ways — such as through the 'edgework' of crime.

➢ **Smartness**: If status was just about being tough, most young men would fail the test, but it could be gained in other ways. Being clever or witty, capable of telling a good joke, making a funny comment or defusing 'trouble' without losing face were seen as valuable attributes.

➢ **Fate**: Working-class boys were fatalistic ('whatever will be, will be'), mainly because their lives lacked power or the ability to influence what happened to them. This, in turn, produced a fatalistic attitude to risky behaviours — whatever happened to them was going to happen regardless.

➢ **Autonomy**: A feeling of control over their lives was expressed through their behaviour towards 'middle-class' authority figures (teachers, social workers, government officials, police officers, etc.). By refusing to cooperate, working-class youth gained a (fleeting) sense of freedom.

These ideas come together in something like Parker's (1974) study of youth gangs in Liverpool, where the significant point to focal concerns is that they involve behaviours highly likely to bring them into contact and conflict with authority.

> **?** Briefly explain the concept of 'status frustration'.

Marxism

We can illustrate Marxist approaches by looking at two general ways they have focused on and explained youth behaviour: in terms of deviance and crime.

Deviance

The CCCS approach, as we have already outlined, has focused on the two general themes of loss and resistance.

Loss

This theme is based around the idea that youth deviance — especially among working-class males — is a **response** to something being taken away or 'lost'. Cohen (1972), for example, argued that the break-up of working-class communal life created a 'cultural vacuum' in the lives of young men in particular — a sense of loss they attempted to rectify by adopting a range of communal styles and behaviours (from mods and rockers to skinheads) that brought them into conflict with wider society.

Resistance

Resistance is the second key theme in the CCCS approach. Some youth more than others experience the impact of rapid **social and technological changes** in ways that are disruptive and disturbing. These include things like:

➢ unemployment
➢ low wages
➢ deskilling (the idea that what was once skilled manual work has been reduced to mundane and repetitive tasks controlling the machines that do the work)
➢ high-rise housing estates that lack any facilities for young people

Some young men at the sharp end of social changes who, because of their position at the bottom of society, lack the power to do anything more than protest about these changes, develop forms of **cultural resistance** through subcultural groups. As the CCCS literature suggests, these represent **symbolic** or **magical** attempts to resist the changes impacting on their lives. The cultural styles and deviant identities they create are conscious and meaningful alternatives to the way those in positions of power would like them to behave.

For **middle-class youth**, resistance to social changes tends to take more tangible forms, sometimes expressed in terms of a **counter-culture** such as living in a style that rejects 'capitalist consumer values' or participating in environmental groups (resisting road building, for example, or the destruction of natural habitats for houses and out-of-town shopping malls) or peace camps (resisting the militarisation of society). Middle-class deviance has tended to take a more directly **political** form (such as the demonstrations against increased university tuition fees in 2010). Brake (1977) has also suggested that middle-class youth subcultures (such as hippies) tend to be reasonably well organised around a particular 'philosophy of self' — one that stresses individual development, 'doing your own thing' and so forth and that brings them into conflict with dominant cultural norms.

Crime

A more recent approach is Lea and Young's (1984) argument from **left realism** that crime and deviance are more likely to occur when each of three conditions is met:

➢ **Relative deprivation**: Poverty in itself is not a cause of crime; what is significant is how deprived people *feel* compared to others. Young, working-class males are likely to see themselves as relatively deprived when they look at their middle-class peers.

➢ **Marginalisation** relating to social status: Young, working-class men are frequently 'pushed to the margins of society' through educational failure and low-pay, low-status work. Politically, the authorities are not interested in listening to their problems or grievances (the response of the powerful is more likely to involve tougher policing and increased surveillance). Where young men see themselves as having nothing to lose, crime becomes an option.

➢ **Subculture** (although *neo-tribes* would probably fit just as neatly): the ability to form groups is a **collective response** to a particular social situation. In this instance, the form of the subcultural group is determined by feelings of *relative deprivation* and *marginalisation*. Specific subcultural values are not independent of the culture in which they arise and, for Lea and Young, it is precisely because working-class youths *accept* the general values of capitalist society that they indulge in criminal behaviour — the pursuit of desired ends by illegitimate means.

Labelling

Labelling theory approaches youth deviance from a different direction. Rather than thinking in terms of individuals or groups having particular **qualities** that lead to deviant/criminal behaviour, labelling theories focus, as Becker (1963) argues, on how the powerful **react** to the behaviour of young people. To understand youth deviance, therefore, we need to look at:

➢ how and why some groups in society are **negatively labelled** (as social problems, for example)

➢ the effect of negative labelling on those labelled

As we've seen, the behaviour of young people is more likely to be negatively labelled (youth subcultures and styles, for example, invariably break conventional social norms) — although negative labelling is more likely to be applied to some youth rather than others:

➢ **gender**: males rather than females

➢ **class**: working-class rather than middle-class

➢ **ethnicity**: black youth rather than white; as Cashmore and McLaughlin (1991) put it when referring to police labelling: 'Young blacks over the past twenty-odd years have been officially defined as a social problem and given special treatment.' A similar, if more recent, process has, Kundnani (2004) argues, occurred among young Asians since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, with 'racial profiling' being used to target particular groups.

The general idea, therefore, is that **powerful** groups (such as the police, media and politicians) shape our perception of **powerless** groups (such as young, black, working-class males) through a **labelling process** that justifies whatever action (from increased imprisonment to a range of quasi-judicial actions — ASBOs, curfews, dispersal zones) the authorities want to take against 'deviants'.

This can lead to what Wilkins (1964) described as a **Deviancy Amplification Spiral**: the behaviour of some individuals or groups (**primary deviation**) is singled out for attention, condemnation and action, which leads to **secondary deviation** (increased deviant behaviour as the targeted group reacts to the initial labelling process). This, in turn, justifies further action against 'deviants' — such as widespread arrests, new laws to deal with 'the problem' and so forth — that leads ultimately to the criminalisation of behaviour that may initially have been only mildly deviant.

One (unintended) outcome of this negative labelling process is, Becker (1963) argues, a **deviant career**. The successful application of a label 'confirms the individual' as deviant, both to themselves and others around them (teachers, employers and the like). This can block participation in normal society (a youth with a criminal record, for example, may be unable to find work), which, in turn, means the deviant seeks out the company of similar deviants, resulting in increased involvement in deviant behaviour.

OCR examination questions

1 Identify and explain two characteristics of moral panics involving young people. (17 marks)

2 Identify and explain two ways in which youth deviance is influenced by social class. (17 marks)

3 Outline and evaluate labelling explanations of youth and deviance (33 marks)

The experience of youth in education

The experience of schooling

Education is a form of secondary socialisation involving two related processes that constitute the experience of schooling.

The formal curriculum

The **formal curriculum** is the things schools exist to teach (maths, physics, history and so forth). Gaining qualifications in these subjects is a significant part of the educational experience for many young people.