Deviance, Crime & Social Control

Chapter 5

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Deviants...Who Are They??

When we hear the word, “deviants”...what and who do you think of??

- Perverts?
- Rule Breakers?
- Lack of a moral code?
We often contrast “those people” aka “deviants” to people like “us” aka “conformists”

What if the line between “deviants” and “conformists” is too vague?

What if the true “deviants” are us??
Step 1: Me and my deviant friends

Step 2: Local Organizations and Community--Micro: Violations of local ordinances: theft, burglary and local corruption

Step 3: National Organizations, Institutions and Ethnic Subcultures--Meso: Violations of state laws: crimes within and by corporations
Step 4: Society--Macro: Federal crimes (treason, tax fraud); state crimes (domestic terrorism); Internet fraud

Step 5: Global Community--Macro: Global Environmental Destruction; International Terrorism; Human Rights Violations
Deviance

- Any violation of societal norms or social expectations (results in negatives reactions from others)
- Deviance is Relative
- People are defined as deviant
- Rules opposing deviance involves social power
4 Major Functions of Deviance

1.) Affirming values and norms
2.) Clarifying moral boundaries
3.) Promote social unity
4.) Encourage social change
According to structural-functionalist theorists, deviance can be problematic or functional for society.

Establishes guidelines for what is considered unacceptable, what behavior is necessary to maintain social order and bonding people together to oppose deviant behavior.

Functional because it provides jobs for those who deal with deviants
Deviance can signal problems in society that need to be addressed.

Can also break the conventional ways of thinking...therefore leading to new innovations by scientists, inventors and artists.

May be rejected thinkers or inventors at one time yet celebrated for genius work much later.
Durkheim’s Concepts of Deviance

- Deviance is an integral part of all societies and is normal to all healthy functioning societies
People are socialized into an understanding of their society’s norms and values.

People are never 100% socialized.

To reach 100% socialization, not a single person within society could think a deviant thought.
Utopia would require perfection in society.

The uniformity that is necessary to achieve a state of Utopia is not possible in human society.

- People are too different
- Too distinct in their sociological experiences
- Different norms and values
- Beliefs vary by religion, culture, etc.
Durkheim provides the following example:

Consider a monastery

To outsiders, the monks appear to be living in a perfect society aka utopia.

Deviance can still occur. To many of us, missing morning prayer is innocent but such action is a form of deviance, strays from the norms that they have been socialized into.
Deviance is socially constructed.

Members of groups in societies define what is deviant.

Consider the following: tattoo’s, piercings, etc...are these acts of deviance?

Depends on who is doing the judging.
Some acts are deviant at one time and place and not at others.

For example: Stem Cell research has been viewed as unacceptable and a violation of U.S law because of the ethical concerns about using or destroying human cells.

In some countries, there is a lack of moral restrictions and scientists are allowed to proceed with their research.
An individual’s status or group may be defined as deviant.

Example: Hurricane Katrina

- Blacks are looters
- Whites as resourceful
- Heterosexual vs Homosexual…”flaunting sexuality”
Popular belief: Some acts are inherently deviant.

Fact: Deviance is relative to time, place and status of the individual.

Deviance is not inherent in certain behaviors but is defined by people and their governments.

Definition of deviance vary depending on the social situation or context in which the behavior occurs.
Take into consider the role that status may play when deeming a person or person’s actions as deviant

Often times, those with “higher statuses” are less likely to be suspected of violating norms and being characterized as “criminal”
Please form groups of 3.

Discuss acts that you have witnessed as deviant in the following situations: 1.) Time & Place; 2.) Government Policies; 3.) Family culture/norms

How has socialization (culture & society) shaped our views on what is and what is not deviant?
Misconceptions About Deviance

- Some acts are inherently deviant
  - Relative to time, place and status of the individual
  - Ex: Homosexual affairs in ancient Greece were seen as acceptable...but in today’s world, we know that there is a great debate taking place regarding homosexuality and the legality of marriage, adoption, etc.
We know from previous discussions that deviance is not inherent in certain behaviors but is defined by people and their governments.

Some people may be defined as deviant because they do not fit into the dominant system of values and norms.

May be seen as disruptive, a liability or a threat to the system.
Definitions of deviance also vary depending on the social situation or context in which the behavior occurs.

If we take the same behavior and place it in a different social context, perceptions of whether the behavior is deviant may change.

Consider topless beaches in Greece, Spain and other Mediterranean countries vs. the U.S policies.
Popular belief: Those who deviate are socially identified and recognized.

Most of us deviate from some norm at some time.

Please note that only about $\frac{1}{3}$ of all crime that is reported to the police in the U.S ever leads to an arrest.

This means that $\frac{2}{3}$’s of crimes are never officially handled through formal, legal structure and the perpetrators avoid being labeled as deviant.
Popular belief: Deviants purposely and knowingly break the law.

Deviance is often driven by emotions, encouraged by peers, caused by disagreements over norms or a result of conditions in the immediate situation.
Popular belief: Deviance occurs because there is a dishonest, selfish element to human nature.

Most people who commit deviant acts do not attribute their own deviance to basic dishonesty or other negative personality traits.
Crime: When the criminal justice system gets involved and formal penalties are imposed by society.

Laws reflect opinions of what is considered right or wrong at a particular time and place in a society.

We know that laws are amended because public opinion is always shifting.
For example: In the 1920’s, 42 out of the 48 states had laws forbidding interracial marriage. In our society today, those laws no longer exist. The majority opinion regarding interracial marriage has evolved and therefore, laws reflect the changing times.
Consensus Crimes: Members of society are in general agreement about the seriousness of deviant acts.

Ex: Premeditated murder, rape and kidnapping are consensus crimes that are considered wrong in most nations.
Conflict crimes: occur when one group passes a law over which there is disagreement or that disadvantages another group.

Ex: Laws concerning public disorder, chemical (drug and alcohol) offense, prostitution, gambling and political disenfranchisement.

Ex: Prop 8...any law that may define marriage as “man and woman”...

Public opinion is divided.
Micro-Level Explanations of Deviance

- No one is born deviant.
- Individuals learn to be law-abiding citizens or to be deviant through the process of socialization as they develop their social relationships.
Rational Choice Theory: when individuals make decisions, they calculate the costs and benefits to themselves.

Believe that punishment--imposing high “costs” for criminal behavior, such as fines, imprisonment or the death penalty--is a way to dissuade criminals from choosing crime.
Social Control Theory: contends that most people are law-abiding citizens because the desire to fit into the group encourages conformity with the norms.

Why do some people become deviant while others conform?

Social Control Theory suggests that deviance is to be expected unless a person has an investment in the existing social system.
If people were truly free to do whatever they wanted, they would likely commit more deviant acts.

Social norms and sanctions restrict our potential desire to commit deviant acts.

Predictability is sought.
Control Theory contends that people are bonded to others by four powerful factors:

1.) Attachment to other people who respect the values and rules of the society. Individuals do not want to be rejected by those to whom they are close.

2.) Commitment to conventional activities (school, jobs, etc) that they do not want to jeopardize.
3.) Involvement in activities that keep them so busy with conventional roles and expectations that they do not have time for mischief.

4.) Belief in the social rules of their culture, which they accept because of childhood socialization and indoctrination into conventional beliefs.
If any of the variables are weakened, there is a strong possibility that the individual may engage in deviant acts.

These factors increase conformist behavior.
Differential Association Theory: refers to two processes that can result in individuals learning to engage in crime.

1.) Association with others who share criminal values and commit crimes results in learning how to carry out a criminal act.

2.) Learning in a particular social context--socialization into a counterculture--results in reinforcement of criminal behavior.
Focuses on the process of learning deviance from family, peers, fellow employees, political organizations, neighborhood groups such as gangs and other groups in one’s surroundings.

Surrounding yourself with people who make dropping out of school cool and a norm.

Close friends who are sexually active as teens...teen pregnancy may be a form of prestige amongst a group of peers.
The possibility of becoming deviant depends on four factors:

1.) The duration of time spent with the group
2.) The intensity of interaction
3.) The frequency of interaction
4.) Priority of the group in one’s friendship networks
Individuals learn motives, drives, rationalizations/attitudes and they develop techniques that influence behavior and cause them to commit deviant acts.
Labeling Theory: focuses on how people define deviance—what is or is not “normal”.

Society’s response to unacceptable behaviors and labeling as deviant those who violate society’s norms.

Labels people carry affect their own and others’ perceptions, resulting in conformity or deviance.
Labeling theorists define two stages in the process of becoming a deviant.

1.) Primary Deviance: a violation of a norm that may be an isolated act.

Ex: Based on a dare by friends, a young teenager may shoplift.

Most people commit acts of primary deviance.
2.) Secondary Deviance: if an individual continues to violate a norm and begins to take on a deviant identity.

- Publicly recognized deviance, identified as a deviant.
- Arrested for a “crime”...publicized in the newspaper...people may limit their interactions with you...hard to find a job...few options...

- “Felons” face this reality everyday.
Self-fulfilling prophecy: a belief or a prediction becomes reality and affects one’s actions.

Individuals may come to see themselves as deviant because of harassment, ridicule, rejection by friends and family and negative sanctions.

Calling a child “dumb”...accepts the label...
Meso-level analysis: focuses on ethnic subcultures, national organization and institutions inside a nation.

Macro-level theories: focus on societies and global social systems.
Anomie: normlessness, to describe the breakdown of norms caused by the lack of shared, achievable goals and lack of socially approved means to achieve goals.

When norms are absent or conflicting, deviance increases.

According to Durkheim, normlessness is “a condition of weak, conflicting or absent norms and values that arise when societies are disorganized”.
Normlessness is typical in rapidly urbanizing, industrializing societies; at times of sudden prosperity or depression; during rapid technological change or when a government is overthrown.

Macro-level events such as economic recessions or wars, show how important solidarity is to an individual’s core sense of values.
Strain Theory: difference between the society’s definitions of goals and legitimate means or ways of attaining goals can lead to strain in the society.

Focuses on contradictions and tensions between the shared values and goals of a society on the one hand and the opportunity structures of the society on the other.
1.) Conformity means embracing the society’s definition of success and adhering to the established and approved means of achieving success.

2.) Innovation refers to use of illicit means to reach approved goals.

3.) Ritualism involves strict adherence to the culturally prescribed rules, even though individuals give up on the goals they hope to achieve.

Ex: Kanye West, “she’s so self conscience, she has no idea what she’s doing in college, that major that she majored in don’t make no money, but she wont drop out, her parents will look at her funny”
4.) Retreatism refers to giving up on both the goals and the means.

5.) Rebellion entails rejecting the socially approved ideas of success and the means of attaining that success. It replaces those with alternative definitions of success and alternative strategies for attaining the new goals.

Deviant behavior results from retreatism, rebellion and innovation.
To understand retreatism, rebellion and innovation, we must explore the social conditions that lead to different levels of access to success.
Conflict Theory assumes that conflict between groups is inevitable.

Because many societies today are heterogenous groupings of people, the differences in goals, resources, norms, and values between interest groups and groups on power often cause conflict.

Looks at deviance as a result of social inequality or of the struggle between groups for power.
Deviance is often related to social class status, interest groups or cultural conflict between the dominant group and ethnic, religious, political, regional or gender groups.

Wealthy and powerful elites want to maintain their control and their high positions.

Pass laws and define what is deviant.

Minority groups and subcultures challenge the norms of the dominant groups and threaten consensus in society.
How do we reduce deviance and crime??

Must change the structure of society

Eliminate inequality