



## **Chapter 7: Crime and Deviance – Abnormal Sociology**

### **Summary of Learning Objectives**

#### **Module 1:**

##### **7.1.1: Discuss how deviance is socially constructed.**

Deviance involves the violation of social norms and is defined when members of society assign meanings to behaviors. The definition of deviance varies by time in history, location, and social context resulting in the social construction of the concept. For example, it was deviant to divorce in the 19th century but has become a norm in contemporary society. It is deviant to burp in the U.S., but socially acceptable after a delicious meal in India. During Mardi Gras, women flashing and public intoxication are not considered to be deviant or criminal during the citywide party. This is an example of the social context defining the concepts. Groups, communities, and even nations define what is considered deviant behavior and can vary significantly.

##### **7.1.2: Apply the labeling theory to the three types of deviance.**

The labeling theory was developed by Lemert and Becker and focuses on how individuals are labeled as deviant. Everyone engages in primary deviance, in which a rule is broken or a

speeding ticket is acquired, but not everyone acquires a label. Continued engagement in deviant acts (secondary deviance) normally results in people of authority labeling the individual as a deviant. Maurice forgot that he had an exam when he arrived early for class and panicked. As a pre-med student he could not afford to fail the midterm biology class so he quickly wrote some key terms on his hand. The professor noticed him cheating on the exam and called him into his office. Maurice explained the situation and since it was his first time engaging in academic dishonesty, he pleaded for leniency. From that point on, the professor and seemingly all of his other professors treated him as if he was a habitual cheater. He thought his essays were graded unfairly from that point on and that he had lost all respect from his professors. Eventually he resorted to frequent cheating and justified it because becoming a doctor was more important than making the grades honestly, which is an example of tertiary deviance.

### **7.1.3: Develop an argument that supports crime being a learned behavior.**

The differential association theory, developed by Sutherland, indicates that deviance and criminal behavior is learned through association with individuals who are engaging in this type of activity. The more frequent the association, the more likely the individual is to become deviant. Consider an pre-adolescent who grows up in a high crime neighborhood and comes home from school while her parent is still at work. Most of the girls who live in her apartment complex are teenagers and they all hang out after school. She looks up to them and spends numerous hours with them daily. Several times a week they all go shoplifting. Her friends wear the latest fashion due to their theft of clothing at numerous department stores in the city. Her mother can't buy her new clothes so she learns from her friends how not to be detected by the

hidden cameras and employees at several department stores. Soon she is regularly participating in the shoplifting excursions.

**7.1.4: Describe the how the agents of social control impact the process described by the social control theory.**

The social control theory indicates that social bonds serve to control the behaviors of individuals within society. The elements of the social bonds are attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. When any of the elements are deficient, the social bonds are likely to weaken and increase the odds of deviance. The agents of social control provide control mechanisms for individuals in the forms of informal and formal social controls. Informal social controls such as school, religion, and peers help individuals with each of the elements of social bonds. Formal social control mechanisms are the police, government, and court systems, and are required when an individual turns to crime due to losing connection with members of society.

**7.1.5 Summarize the limitations and weaknesses of the three micro level theories of deviance.**

The labeling theory does not focus on the individual process of deviance, but rather on the labeling by others. It does not explain why some individuals accept and some reject the labels. The differential association theory does not stress the individuality and rationality of persons and how some can resist the temptation to choose deviant behavior even after repeated

exposures to a deviant setting. The social control theory does not provide an explanation for deviants and criminals who have close ties to family and friends.

## **Module 2:**

### **7.2.1: Create examples for each of Merton's modes of adaptation for the structural strain model**

The conformist accepts the culturally defined goals and the means by which to achieve them.

As a student, you are an example of a conformist because you are working toward a college degree, which is highly regarded in the U.S. as a means to achieve a successful career. An

innovator accepts these goals but may not have the means to achieve them. Therefore,

alternative means are developed, as in the case of an adolescent that breaks into cars to steal electronics. A retreatist rejects both the culturally defined goals and the institutional means of

achieving the goals. A drug addict who quits his job and is content begging at a busy

intersection is a retreatist. Ritualists accept the goals but give up on striving to achieve them.

The elderly often discontinue striving toward the goals and are example of ritualists. Rebels

reject the goals and the means and replace them with their own goals and means.

### **7.2.2: Illustrate how the dominant class can limit the economic success of lower classes.**

The dominant class controls the resources and creates and administers the laws, which can

advantage the wealthy. By maintaining the majority of resources, the wealthy can control the

circumstances of the poor in regard to entry into elite schools and jobs. This results in

structural disadvantages and discrimination and a struggle for the limited resources. One strategy to acquire more of the resources is to turn to illegitimate means (crime).

### **Module 3:**

#### **7.3.1: Explain the criminal justice system and different types of crime.**

The criminal justice system enforces the laws of the society. It is made up of law enforcement, courts and the prison system. The seven categories of crime historically enforced by the criminal justice system include violent crime, property crime, public order crime, white-collar crime, corporate crime, organized crime and political crime. Additional categories of crime discussed in this section include cyber-crime, hate crime and terrorism. The incidents of crime in a given community are known as the crime rate. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) maintains a database of the crime rates across the United States, but the accuracy of the statistics have been called into question because collection methods vary across communities.

#### **7.3.2: Examine the issues associated with policing, police misconduct and police brutality**

The police are on the front line of the criminal justice system. They have the discretion to stop, search, arrest, and charge individuals for their behavior when that behavior violates social norms. Misconduct occurs when police officers improperly apply their discretion such that it becomes abuse of power or police brutality. The case of Rodney King was used to illustrate the extremes of police brutality. The larger implications of problems with policing are that innocent people may be impacted by the deviance of the officers and thus wrongly ensnared in the criminal justice system.

**7.3.3: Describe the role of the prosecution, the defense and the courts in the American justice system.**

There are three parts to the justice system: prosecution, defense and the courts. A prosecution lawyer's job is to provide evidence and witnesses that will support the states charge against the accused criminal. The defense lawyer's job is to provide evidence and witnesses that will support the accused criminal's innocence. The court, run by judges, oversees the trial process, with juries weighing the arguments of the prosecution and defense to determine the guilt or innocence of the accused criminal. Statistics call into question the fairness of the court system and the decisions of the jury. Evidence indicates that sentences are often affected by the race of the juror and accused, with African Americans receiving harsher sentences from white juries.

**7.3.4: Analyze the demographic makeup of prisoners in the United States penal system.**

Minorities make up sixty percent of the prison population although they are only thirty percent of the general population. Research indicates that African Americans, Hispanics and Whites do not experience the criminal justice system in the same way. Although fewer women are in prison than men, African Americans and Hispanics are also over represented in female correctional facilities. Women in prison were often the victims of past abuse, and frequently suffer from mental illness. Research indicates that women often receive lighter sentences than men for identical crimes. Reasons for the lighter sentence include society assuming that women's deviant behavior is a result of playing a supporting role in their partner's actions, or concern about the familial disruption that would result from incarceration. Arguably our

collective conscience or attitudes and beliefs about women make it difficult for society to reconcile women's roles as caregiver with that of criminal.

## **Module 4:**

### **7.4.1: Examine the incidence of capital punishment around the world.**

Capital punishment involves taking the life of someone who has been convicted of a crime. Index crimes refer to eight forms of crime identified by the FBI, and catalogued in the Uniform Crime Report. The United States is one of twenty-two nations around the world to carry out executions in 2015. Research indicates that racial bias and discrimination are broadly present in the application of capital punishment. Minorities are more likely to receive the death penalty for killing of whites, and white juries are more likely to impose the death penalty on minority defendants.

### **7.4.2: Apply the sociological imagination to the private trouble and public issue of capital punishment.**

The cases of Kimberly McCarthy and Todd Cameron Willingham are used to demonstrate the personal troubles and public issues associated with the death penalty. Specifically the topic of people being wrongly imprisoned and executed is highlighted in terms of the unequal and unjust application of capital punishment in the United States.

## **Module 5:**

### **7.5.1: Analyze deviance by way of the products sold around the globe.**

Deviance in the future will increasingly involve transnational crimes, or crimes that cross national and international borders. While human trafficking, drug smuggling and terrorism are all examples of this forms of deviance, the issue of counterfeit goods is used to illustrate how transnational crime impacts us all on a regular basis. Forged goods in this multi-billion dollar industry run the gamut from purses to toothpaste, with many items being illegally manufactured to be sold specifically in the U.S and Middle East. The impact of counterfeiting includes loss of revenue to the real product manufacture; inferior items purchased by the customer and possibly even serious health risks to users of some items.

#### **7.5.2: Predict the changing nature of deviance and privacy in the future.**

Social responses to deviance in the future will probably involve surveillance, or the use of technology to monitor the action and behavior of others. Many different forms of surveillance are common in society, with Britain having the highest number of monitoring cameras in the western world. The reasons given for using surveillance technology include the deterrence effect and an effort to reduce the likelihood of deviance. Concerns about excessive surveillance include worries over the invasion of privacy and uncertainty about how gathered information would be used. The Patriot Act of 2001 illustrates some of the more recent changes to the laws governing citizen surveillance. Even relatively benign items like smart phone apps have been found to be tracking and storing information about users. The future of surveillance will probably include greater use of technology to monitor citizens.