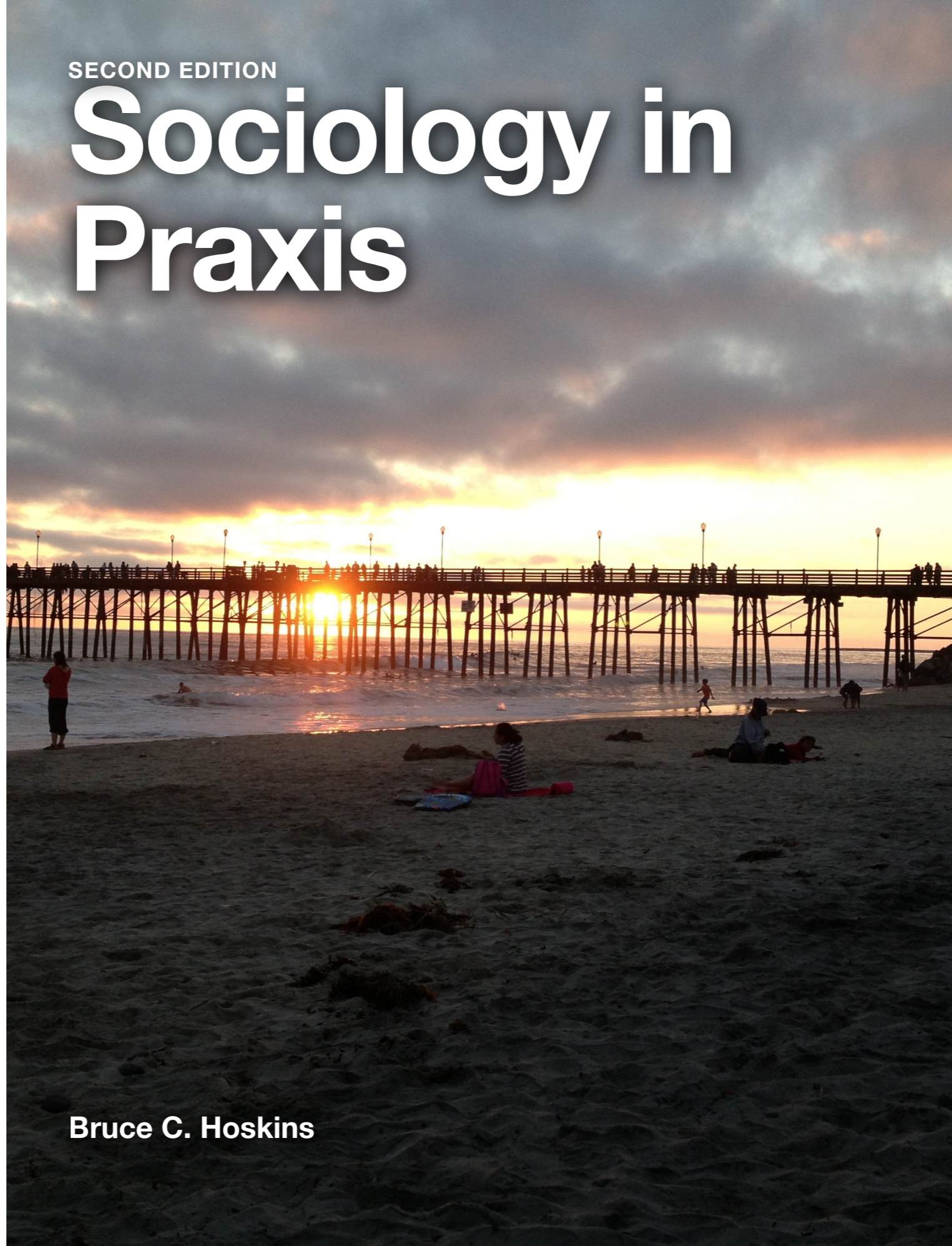


SECOND EDITION

# Sociology in Praxis



Bruce C. Hoskins

Chapter 6

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# Deviance and Society



## Section 1

# Defining Deviance

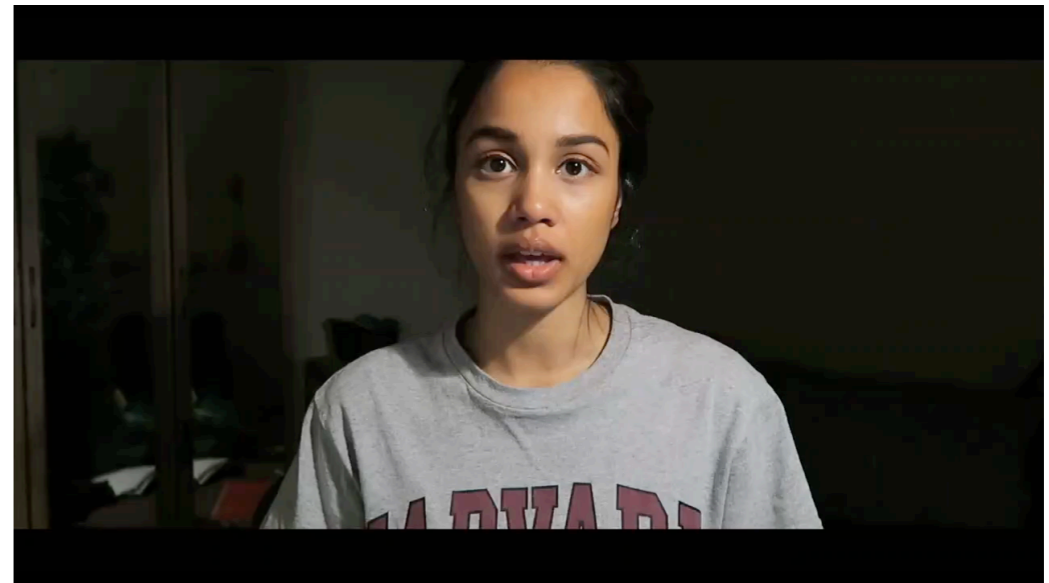
Every social institution, from families to governments, is fundamentally defined by their desire for **social control**, which refers to the techniques and strategies for preventing undesirable behavior in any society. At the interactive level, there are two concepts that we are guided by: obedience and conformity. **Obedience** is compliance with higher authorities in a hierarchal structure. If our parents tell us to take out the trash, we are obeying them because traditionally they are understood as a higher authority. If the police flash their lights at us, we typically pull over because we have been socialized to comply and if we do not there could be serious consequences. Most of us respect the authority of the police so much that even if they make a request that we do not need to submit to, i.e. asking to search your car without giving probable cause, we will usually obey even though we should not.

On the other hand, **conformity** is the act of going along with individuals of our own status who have no special right to direct our behavior. In other words, we obey what people say because they are authorities in our lives, but we conform to what others believe because of our general desire to fit in with whom we

consider important. (View Movie 1.1) If our parents say that our clothes are too tight, our shorts are too short, or pull up your

### Movie 1.1 Poetry in Praxis

*Expectations* by Taz



1) <https://youtu.be/yNYVyzBtDvY> - Video

2) *What is the poem about?*

3) *What larger social factors is the poet concerned about?*

4) *What do you think the poet believes is the problem?*

5) *Is the poet suggesting a solution? If so, do you agree or disagree? If not, what do you think might help?*

pants we are obeying our parents. However, if we wear a yellow shirt with a picture of Smurfette on the front and our friends say, “What were you thinking when you got dressed this morning?” and you never wear that shirt again, then you are conforming because your peers do not have any real power or authority in your life to force your actions.

Conformity is comforting to most people because it promotes order and continuity; however, this concept can have dangerous consequences. A social psychology experiment by Solomon Asch revealed that even when presented with obviously wrong data, people will conform to the group about a third of the time and that three-quarters (75%) of people in the experiment conformed to the group at least once. Over 30% of people will conform to the group when the group is obviously wrong. This social fact leads to a phenomenon known as **groupthink**, which is the tendency of highly cohesive groups to make poor decisions because the

members are unwilling to threaten the group’s solidarity. This concept lies at the center of bullying and has led to some of the worst atrocities in human history. Many Germans during World War II knew that the incarceration, brutalization and outright

murder of Jewish people was wrong, but they conformed to what was happening because they did not want to break the group’s perceived solidarity. Many White people knew that the massive amounts of public lynchings of Black people during the late 18th and early 19th centuries was wrong but would say nothing because of the desire to not go against the group.

However, what needs to be remembered is that solidarity is often just perceived and not real. In our lives, many of us have been hanging out with a group of friends and someone suggests something “stupid” to do, i.e. toilet paper a person’s house,

bullying a particular person, causing a fight at a party, stealing something from a clothing store, breaking a window with a rock,

## Movie 1.2 Poetry in Praxis

*Bully* by Jasmine Williams



1) <https://youtu.be/m6D7r2neMwU> - Video

2) *What is the poem about?*

3) *What larger social factors is the poet concerned about?*

4) *What do you think the poet believes is the problem?*

5) *Is the poet suggesting a solution? If so, do you agree or disagree? If not, what do you think might help?*

etc. Most of the time people can withstand the peer pressure of doing such an act, but if the group is bored, then anything can happen. Once an authority figure catches you, i.e. someone's parents or the police, then you may say that you thought swimming naked in the neighbor's pool was a bad idea, but Blake wanted to do it. But then Blake says they do not know what you are talking about and that Miguel wanted to do it. But then Miguel is confused because he thought that Dante was the one that suggested that they swim naked in the neighbor's pool. All the while, Brent is staying quiet because he knows that he is the one that proposed the idea, but he did not think they would get caught because the neighbors were supposed to be away for the weekend. In this fictional example that many of us may fall into, four out of five people thought that the idea was wrong, but they all thought that "everyone" wanted to do it. This example is why it is important to state what you really think about a crazy idea

because you could give other people in the group the ability to stand with you in disagreement.

**Deviance** is behavior that violates the standards of conduct or expectations of a relatively powerful person, group or society. Deviance is a *universal* concept because every gathering of individuals, from peer groups to entire civilizations, has a fundamental understanding of what is considered deviant behavior. However, as widespread as this concept may be, it is also *relative*. In other words, what is deviant to do in one cultural group can be COMPLETELY normal to people from another cultural group. (View Movie 1.3)

### Movie 1.3 More on How Culture Defines Deviance



- 1) <https://youtu.be/tKfrL8sKEAw> - Video
- 2) *What are some of the main points of this video?*
- 3) *What examples does the author use to make his point?*
- 4) *Can you think of examples of how different cultures define deviance in your own life? Explain.*

Another example of something that is normal in the US is the consumption of meat. We are the number one consumer of meat products from hot dogs, chicken legs to filet mignon. However, in Israel asking for a pulled pork sandwich would be looked at with

disdain, while trying to order a steak in many parts of India would be considered sacrilegious.

However, the most important sociological element of deviance is that the people with the greatest status and power in a particular society define it. The best example of how high-status people define deviance is the disparity in prison sentences between people who have been convicted of trafficking crack cocaine versus pure cocaine. (View Movie 1.4)

### **Movie 1.4 Crack versus Cocaine**



- 1) <https://youtu.be/YHxdww1IBw0> - Video
- 2) *What is the main point of this video?*
- 2) *What example(s) did the author use to illustrate his point? Do you agree or disagree? Explain.*
- 3) *Can you think of any other examples of how people in power define deviance to their advantage? Explain.*

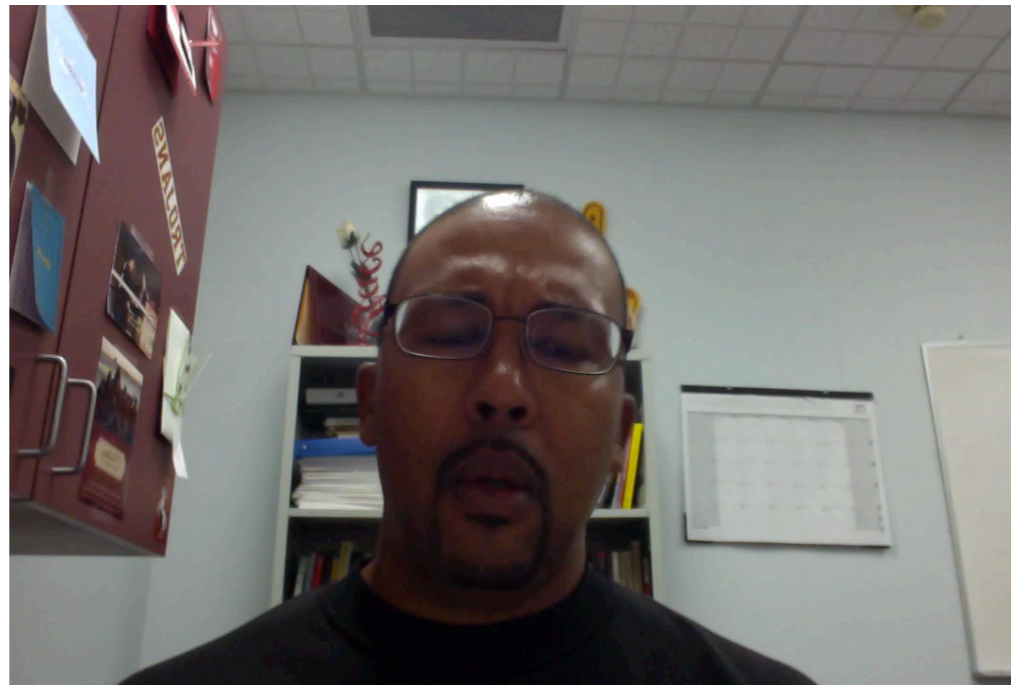
# Criminalizing Deviant Behavior

When enough people believe that a particular behavior is undesirable, they create more formal processes to deal with it. **Laws** are the formal norms enforced by the state, while **crime** results when someone is in violation of a formal statute for which some governmental authority applies prescribed penalties. So the law says that people in moving vehicles must stop at a red light, while a crime occurs when someone goes through the light without stopping. However, not all crimes are considered equal.

When someone thinks of crime, they are generally thinking of **index crimes**, which are the eight types of crime reported annually

by the FBI in the Uniform Crime Reports: murder, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft and arson. (View Movie 1.5) However, **white-collar crime**, illegal acts committed by affluent, high-status, “respectable” people in the course of their occupations, cause far more financial harm than street crime. The Bureau of Justice Statistics estimated in a 2006 report that burglary and robbery cost taxpayers less than \$4 billion a year, while securities fraud costs approximately \$15 billion, auto repair fraud \$40 billion, health care fraud \$100-400 billion, while the Savings and Loan Crisis of the 1980’s to 1990’s by itself cost anywhere

## Movie 1.5 Interesting observations of Index Crimes



- 1) <https://youtu.be/YGgTybpJZg8> - Video
- 2) *What is the main point of this video?*
- 2) *What example(s) did the author use to illustrate his point? Do you agree or disagree? Explain.*
- 3) *Can you think of any other examples that would make dating more difficult that are socially constructed? Explain.*

between \$300-\$500 billion. The monetary value associated with these crimes do not include the socio-psychological damage, e.g. deterioration of trust, lack of faith in US dollar, violence/suicides resulting from severe financial loss, done to the nation as a whole.

Other types of crime include victimless and organized crime.

A **victimless crime** is created when society uses criminal law to attempt to prohibit the exchange of strongly desired goods and services between willing adults. The strongest examples of these types of crimes are prostitution, drugs, and gambling. Usually, these kinds of crimes are tied into a society's sense of morality and allowing these behaviors, no matter how desirable, would suggest a decaying of fundamental social principles. (View Movie 1.6)

**Organized crime** is criminal activity conducted by relatively large-scale and highly structured gangs or syndicates that routinely use corruption and violence to maximize their profits. Interestingly enough, much of the money

that is generated from organized crime happens because they are managing victimless crimes, namely the purchase of drugs. The Mafia gained a lot of its wealth by facilitating the consumption of alcohol during the Prohibition years of 1920-1933 and they, along with other criminal organizations, continue to make money through narcotics and other illicit drugs.

### *The purpose of punishment*

All crimes have a specified punishment whether it is a \$1000 fine for littering or life imprisonment for first-degree murder. Societies usually develop a philosophy for punishing people, which fall into four primary categories:

1) **Retribution** is the belief that it is morally necessary for the offender to suffer in turn. This perspective is summed up in the phrase, "an eye for an eye," In other words, if someone is caught stealing a car then they should have to pay for

the car or spend time in jail/prison that is comparable to the cost of the car.

## **Movie 1.6 Poetry in Praxis**

*16-year-old prostitute by Kizz*



1) <https://youtu.be/z49bJyjCE2o> - Video

2) *What is the poem about?*

3) *What larger social factors is the poet concerned about?*

4) *What do you think the poet believes is the problem?*

5) *Is the poet suggesting a solution? If so, do you agree or disagree? If not, what do you think might help?*



2) **Deterrence** is based on the idea that we need to make the negative aspects of committing a crime outweigh the potential benefit of the offense. Singapore whips people with a cane for many minor offenses such as vandalism. You can be stoned to death for committing adultery in Mali. And you would have your hand chopped off for stealing in Iran. In the US, deterrence manifests itself in long mandatory sentences for first-time offenses, i.e. selling drugs.

3) **Rehabilitation** argues that crime is not necessarily the fault of the individual, but of society, therefore we should be able to cure the criminal by teaching them skills while they are in prison. This viewpoint fundamentally believes that people deserve a second chance, if not a third and a fourth. Philosophically, this perspective recommends that drug offenders go to a rehabilitation clinic rather than jail, and encourages people in prison to earn high school degrees and/or to learn a trade such as carpentry.

4) **Incapacitation** centers on the idea that perpetual offenders should be locked up for the rest of their lives. The three strikes laws that emerged in the early 1990's, which allows judges to dramatically increase the prison sentence for someone who has committed three or more violent crimes or serious felonies, embodies this philosophy. (View Movie 1.7)

## Movie 1.7 Poetry in Praxis

*Prison Letter* by Ant Black



1) <https://youtu.be/8HuiTXrEOOo> - Video

2) *What is the poem about?*

3) *What larger social factors is the poet concerned about?*

4) *What do you think the poet believes is the problem?*

5) *Is the poet suggesting a solution? If so, do you agree or disagree? If not, what do you think might help?*

## Section 3

# Why Do People Deviate?

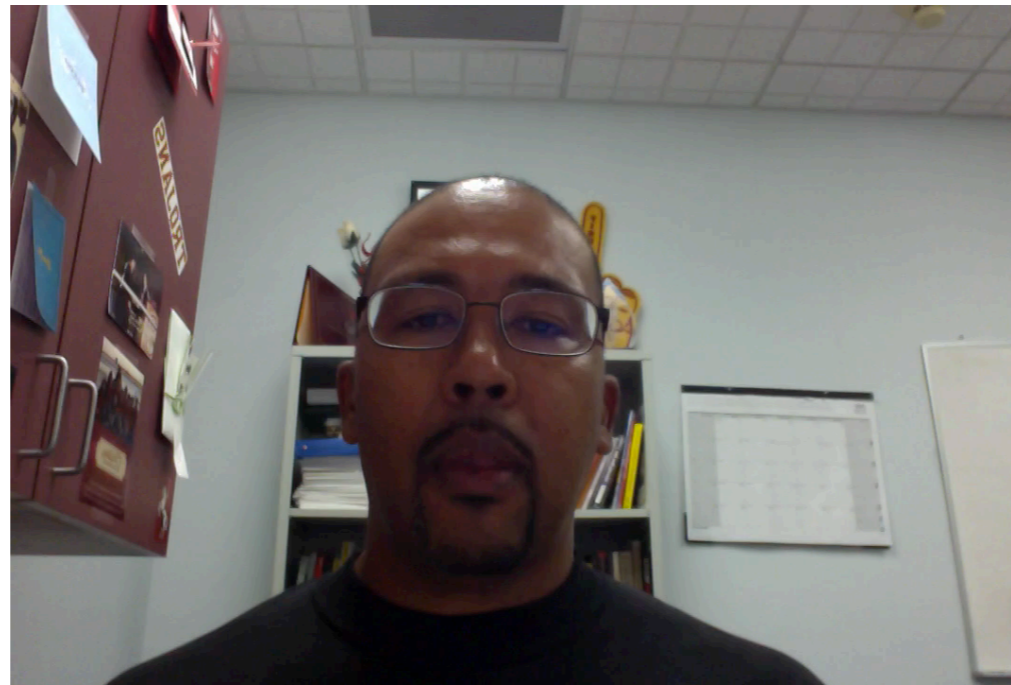
**Sociological positivism** states that there are concrete social factors that one can point to in order to determine if a person will commit a crime. However, what continues to be the case is that several factors acting all at once are what contributes to any one person committing a crime. Therefore, the theoretical perspectives on deviance focus on a particular social aspect that contributes to a person committing different acts versus suggesting that there is only one reason why anyone would deviate.

Their focus on the distribution of power and resources in society leads *conflict theorist* to believe that deviance is a result of **strain**

**theory**, which states that deviance results from blocked opportunities. This perspective works well when explaining why a Jean Valjean steals a loaf of bread to feed his starving sisters and why Fantine enters a life of prostitution and sells her hair and teeth to care for her child in *Les Miserables*. (View Movie 1.8)

*Functionalists* point to the breakdown of social norms as the main contributor of deviance and so focus their attention on **social disorganization theory**, which attributes increases in crime and deviance to the absence or breakdown of cooperative relationships and social institutions. Research demonstrates that children are far

### Movie 1.8 Strain Theory and Deviance

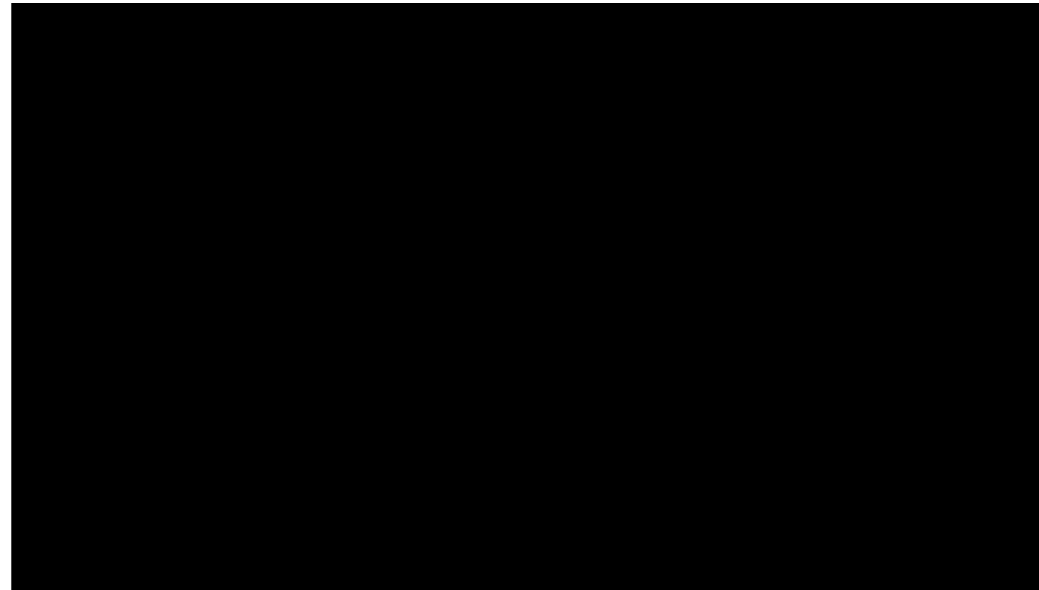


- 1) <https://youtu.be/gD-oJrF5bXU> - Video
- 2) *What is the main point of this video?*
- 3) *What example(s) did the author use to illustrate his point? Do you agree or disagree? Explain.*
- 4) *Can you think of any other examples that would make dating more difficult that are socially constructed? Explain.*

more likely to engage in deviant behavior if they come from divorced or single-parent families rather than a two biological parent social setting. We also know that neighborhoods that regularly participate in local social institutions, e.g. sports leagues, religious organizations, etc., have lower crime rates.

The focus on small group relationships leads *symbolic interactionists* to the concept of **differential association**, which holds that violations of rules results from exposure to attitudes favorable to criminal acts and is usually learned through heavy interaction with small, intimate groups. In other words, people learn how to be deviant from the people that are closest to them. Research supports this idea showing that individuals who are raised in abusive (physical, drugs or otherwise) homes are more likely to create abusive homes themselves.

### **Movie 1.9 *Deviant White Guys* by Strange Fruit Sociology**



- 1) <https://youtu.be/AmMKhu8adwY> - Video
- 2) *What are some of the main points of this video?*
- 3) *What examples do these professors provide for you to consider? Are their other examples? Explain.*
- 4) *Do the professors think this is a problem? Do you believe what they are proposing is a problem? If so, suggest a possible solution that may help.*

Another aspect of this concept is summed up in the saying; you are whom you hang out with. Very few people snort cocaine for the first time without having learned this behavior from someone else close to them. Differential association is why many of our

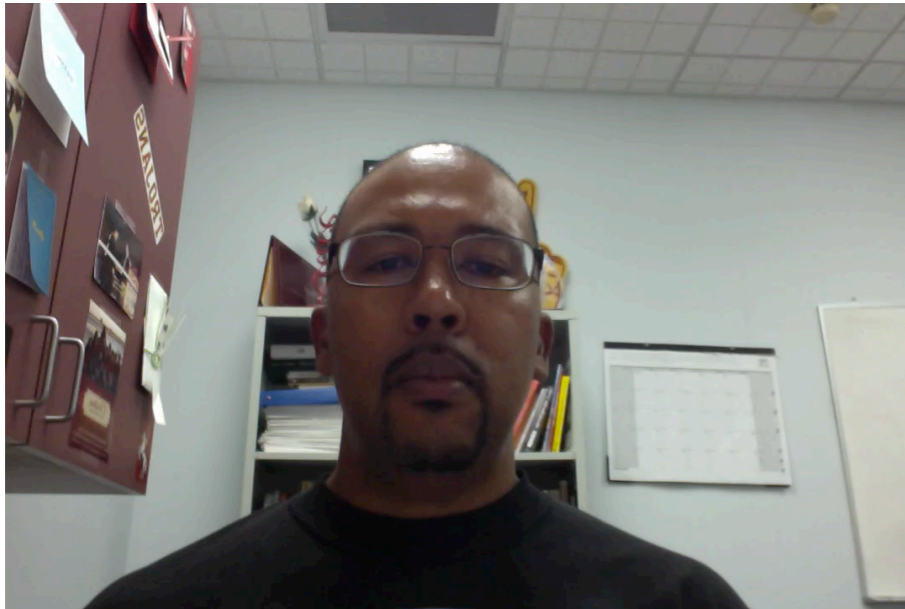
parents have told us not to hang out with a particular person or group of friends. Although you may have argued with it at the time, usually it comes to pass that if you hang out with a group that is doing something deviant, then you will conform to that same behavior. Therefore, it is equally important that you spend time with people that are trying to do the same things that you are doing, i.e. go to college, have a career, value marriage, etc., so that you also learn these behaviors. (View Movie 1.9)

Another concept that symbolic interactionist evaluate is **labeling theory**, which explores how the label of deviant is applied to particular people and the ways in which this identity influences their subsequent behavior. One aspect of this concept explores how people react when given a label of deviance, i.e. troublemakers,

disruptive student, hoodlums, gangsters, thugs, etc., and how these labels are socially enforced through **stigma**, which are labels used to devalue members of certain social groups.

### **Movie 1.10 The Stigma of a Felony**

*New York Times* July 7, 2016



- 1) <https://youtu.be/8HuiTXrEOOo> - Video
- 2) *What is the main point of this video?*
- 3) *What example(s) did the author use to illustrate his point? Do you agree or disagree? Explain.*
- 4) *Can you think of any other examples of labels that stigmatize? Explain.*

# Chapter Review

## **Chapter Vocabulary** \*\*\*parentheses indicate page number\*\*\*

Social Control (2)  
Obedience (2)  
Conformity (2)  
Groupthink (3)  
Deviance (4)  
Laws (6)  
Crime (6)  
Index Crimes (6)  
White-Collar Crime (6)  
Victimless Crime (7)  
Organized Crime (7)  
Retribution (7)  
Deterrence (8)  
Rehabilitation (8)  
Incapacitation (8)  
Sociological Positivism (9)  
Strain Theory (9)  
Social Disorganization Theory (9)

Differential Association (10)

Labeling Theory (10)

Stigma (11)

## **Key Terms** \*\*\*need to illustrate concept with an example\*\*\*

Groupthink

Strain Theory

Social Disorganization Theory

Differential Association

Labeling Theory

## **Bullet-point answer questions:**

- What are the three sociological understandings of deviance?
- What are the eight types of index crimes?
- What are the four primary philosophies for punishment?
- Name three of the crimes that are commonly understood as victimless.

### ***Short answer questions:***

- What is the difference between obedience and conformity and give an example of both?
- What is the difference between white collar crime and organized crime and give an example of both?
- What are the four types of punishment philosophies and give an example of each one?
- What is the difference between strain theory and differential association theory and give an example of both?

### ***Critical thinking questions:***

- Which theories do each of the three sociological perspectives argue is the reason why people deviate and explain why they support them?
- Define the sociological imagination and explain how your understanding of deviance is a result of wider social factors.

# Transcriptions

## Movie 1.1 Poetry in Praxis

### *Expectations* by Taz

Expectations will be the death of me From day one we are told what is expected of us, Conform, go to school, get the grades You have to be the best, no room to screw up We put our fate in the control of others and wait to be judged Define ourselves by grades and numbers, forever believing that we're not good enough because our actions do not match our expectations. We are expected to know what we want to do for the rest of our lives at the age of just sixteen despite up until that point, having no real life experiences, I mean how could we, at what point were we given the opportunity? The opportunity to grow as individuals, discover ourselves, live free from scrutiny From day one it is drilled into our heads that our main goal in life, is stability and financial security. Anything else is time wasted. Teachers will tell us that if you want success in this life then you need to go to a university It doesn't matter if it doesn't feel right right now, once you've graduated things will become clear. 6 years on now and I find myself here. Thoughts about my future terrify me I can't sleep, or eat It's the reason for my dark thoughts at night, the

cause of my anxiety, Because I don't have a 5 year plan, and for some reason that makes me feel guilty. See my biggest fear in life is to settle. Just the thought of it haunts me in my sleep, I've seen too many people give up and live a life full of regrets and I don't want that to be me. To choose stability over your dreams is to let society win. And I can't do that, I'm sorry. Get a 9-5 job, buy a house, get married before 30. work, eat, sleep repeat the average 21st century daily routine No passion or drive, we're just living machines who's only motivation in life is making enough money Ask yourself - Are you living or merely existing? I'm 22 yet I fear that I know very little about real stuff Like what the world looks like on the other side or how it feels to be in love To settle now, would be to give up on discovering who I really am, I want to learn and explore, If I don't get lost now, how will I ever grow? And maybe I am wasting time, and nothing will come of it but I have to take that chance, I need to know for sure. I'm sorry but I cannot be what you want me to be because to do that would be sacrificing everything that makes me me, and settling for a life where I'll never truly be happy I've spent my whole life trying to please others, and it gets tiring and lonely I am forever trapped by the expectations of society and I fear that I'll never escape

from this feeling. I am calm on the outside, but on the inside I am screaming. See despite how hard I try, I don't know what I'm doing with my life, But my gut instinct tells me that the path you've got in mind, It isn't right - at least not for me My life should not be dictated by a degree I chose to do when I was sixteen because everyone around me told me that university was the right thing for me. I look back now and I can't help but disagree. But the truth is, I say I have all these ambitions and dreams how I want to change the world, spread love and positivity but I fear soon I will have to face reality - I am a university graduate who stacks shelves for a living The doubts in my head will soon take over and the passion inside will die I'll surrender to the pressure of society and settle for a comfortable life One with no passion, no hopes, no desires, Just the same old routine Never to know what it feels like, to be alive.

## **Movie 1.2 Poetry in Praxis**

*Bully* by Jasmine Williams

I faced a bully inside of a dressing room I was trying on a dress when I caught her starring me down eye to eye toe to toe I would have said I was shaking in my boots but I wasn't wearing any because you know I was naked but I spoke first conviction daring in my voice I will love myself today no more hiding my reflection avoiding mirrors just to hide myself from myself I said look I'm done with the shenanigans okay this is my time to be seen I said I will start loving these scars and burns they're not evidence of

how I am ruined but a reminder of where I have been I still have far to go I would love to see that pinky toe with the missing toe nail a reminder that furniture will not move out of the way for me in the dark No more living in the dark no more loving in the dark I'm going to love myself naked and full sun like bright and bold the moles they connect the dots the x marks the spots I have arrived I thought this show was a custom-designed one of a kind for me these marks are the gold of godlike smooth curves thighs hand gripping hips full soft lips both sets this skin be smooth its all brown sugar it's addicting you see I have finally found myself and I don't have a plan on getting lost so the man I choose to spend the rest of my life with well he better know how to read a map and he better be good at it you see this birth mark on the side of my hip is the yellow brick road that was once less traveled my heart is a compass I used to think to myself to know we're in cold force that click my feet three times to find to home and I made it back here naked in this body loving it in full my cups swell over all the time no more downsizing double d's I said look I will slap the shit out of you with this left titty if need be my heart my soul my mind my body it all belongs to me see I have forgotten that I belong to him see I am not confined to your words anymore no not fat not ugly not good enough I am more than that especially being naked I would love naked cook naked dance naked drive naked cry naked I hope they speak butt ass naked there all the masks and insecurities you will not bully me anymore and I just lookedat her y'all like was sup just looked at he that



familiar face staring back at me put my clothes back on smiled so gracefully and politely excused myself from that dressing room.

### **Movie 1.3 More on How Culture Defines Deviance**

Alright, so let me talk to you about the relationship between the idea of defining deviance as it relates to someone's culture now I've already mentioned to you before at least I hope so that I that I'm black and Japanese my father's African-American my mother is Japanese and things that got me in trouble as I was coming up because I was raised primarily by my Japanese mom things that got me in trouble culturally when I was interacting with people from the United States versus things that didn't get me in trouble when I was interacting with my mother so think about this in Japanese culture you're not supposed to look an authority figure straight in their eyes. In Japanese culture that's seen as a challenge and that is rude and disrespectful, okay. In the United States if you don't look at authority figures in their eyes people think that you're lying or that you're trying to get out of something or that you're trying to you know make up something on the fly or something like that. I got caught on that one all the time another one is taking off your shoes before getting into the house now in my household Japanese household there's a lot of people who do this rule but in Japanese culture this is like a standard right, in the United States it is not a standard in Japanese culture it is a standard take your shoes off before you get into someone's house because they don't want you trudging all the mud and all

the dirty stuff into their house they want to keep things clean in United States what I found out is that, one: it's a mixed rule, two: is that if you're in a household that doesn't take off their shoes you think that taking off your shoes before going to someone's house is nasty and I always thought the reverse like walking into someone's house with your shoes on is nasty but what Americans are thinking or the people who don't have that rule their thinking why would I want to smell your feet you know as you're walking into my house and so that's what's funny and then the last thing in talking about this, this idea of culture and deviance is that how is a house supposed to smell now look if you start going around to other people's houses just go to different people's culture houses right like look I was used to hanging out with black folks I was used to how the house smelled i was obviously with my Japanese mom I was used to how her house smelled but when I would go over to let's say my white friend's house there I don't know what the smell was I just know that it was different and it was hitting me very differently than how it was used to along with my Filipino brothers and sisters out there along with my Mexican brothers and sisters I don't know what it was but their house smelled and I would have called it that it stank however I know when they come over to my house that they would think that my house stank also and so that's just a little something about how your culture can help you define what deviance is.

## **Movie 1.4 Crack versus Cocaine**

So the idea that deviance is defined by the people that have the most power and status in a particular society is clearly seen when we look at the prison sentences that are connected to being in possession of crack cocaine vs. powder cocaine okay, so for the people who don't know. Crack cocaine which I'll just call crack from now on is a mixture of about ten percent cocaine and ninety percent baking soda along with any other additives and preservatives and before the Fair Sentencing Act of 2010 you would have to hold onto about 5 grams of crack in order to get a mandatory five-year prison sentence while you would have to hold on to 500 grams of powder cocaine in order for you to get the same five-year prison sentence now that should just sound crazy but after the Act was passed they reduce the 500 grams down to 50 grams but that's still 10 times more cocaine that you would have to hold onto vs. crack now if you're thinking about this in pure logic the prison sentences should actually be in reverse because you need cocaine in order to make crack but this is where status and power come into play, right? Because people who have the highest status and power in our society, rich people, tend to be the ones that use cocaine, right? And often times they're white also while the people who use crack are more likely to be poor and often times people of color and so this is where of the idea of power and status can come into play and so then what does this mean? What this means then is that rich people, right, are more likely to give themselves a lesser prison

sentence because what they see themselves doing is much more normal even though, right, it should actually be seen as more deviant because you need cocaine in order to actually make crack.

## **Movie 1.5 Interesting observations of Index Crimes**

So one of the patterns that I see emerge out of what we report for index crimes is that there's four types of stealing that are reported one of them is robbery right that's stealing from a person burglary which is stealing from a house larceny is stealing from a store and then motor vehicle theft is stealing like a car or motorcycle or something like that and statistically speaking these are crimes that are more likely to be committed by poor people but don't get me wrong folks rich people definitely steal its just as a society we have different names for them and we tend to call the stealing that rich people do things like embezzlement fraud tax evasion those are types of stealing right and we even have a different name for them they're called white-collar crimes and so if we think about that along with the social and monetary cost to our society we get a very different idea of who's making the rules here because street crimes which are all those index crimes along with some others Street Crimes cost us about 15 billion dollars a year all give or take right which is a lot of money but white collar crimes cost us like over 200 billion dollars a year but pound for pound white collar crimes get sentenced to lesser sentences than what we would call street crimes and so the what is this suggests

this is telling us then that this is another example of where power and status come into play because if it's rich people who are more likely to commit these crimes and that they're also the ones that are most likely making the laws then it makes sense then that the people that are in a higher power and statuses are going to make lesser penalties for the crimes that them and their colleagues are more likely to commit.

### **Movie 1.6 Poetry in Praxis**

*16 year old prostitute* by Kizz

I try to find memories in her bone structure and her freckles and her eyebrows along the curvature of her smile but I find a stranger in her face every time nothing to connect her back to someone I once loved as a child she's just a ghost of who she never had a chance to become forced to wear skin and bones that don't belong to her anymore it's too painful so I try not to remember but her song keeps me up at night so I can't forget that she sells pussy on the corner of Lexington and 23rd Ave ten blocks away from the middle school she never graduated from five blocks away from the crack house she spent weekends dragging her mother out of she never had a chance her dreams ceased to exist on the lips wrapped around the tip it was poked in she didn't choke and realization coated her throat and like a big girl she swallowed because the world does not stop to cry over the problems of a lost cause with hesitation I pause her face resembles someone I saw hope in now she's floating where she

pokes and soaks in the higher doses her arms are like calendars she keeps dates and varicose veins as her track lines like timelines documenting days I remember at nine we promised we'd never touch that stuff that we'd never turn into our mothers I swore I'd never touch prescription pills I guess you forgot that rock kills families and causes daughters to be strangers with mothers maybe if we had strong ones we would have been birthed into something phenomenal but we had no how of how to do pamphlets for parents growing up so we constructed our self into unfinished projects she's a reincarnation of her so she sells pussy between morning sickness her love is just a dollar bill away she's drugged in a daze a common slave to the cocaine she shorts up trains he's a friend of the lady that puts some food on her sons plate that makes me think that this must have been instinct like the hustle of the streets was encoded underneath trick baby grows up turning trick and this is nothing like pretty woman she will never be a princess her needs whole see rips the wounds on her skin are permanently reopened right inside sidewalks her scabs tell stories of bedsty back alleys in Harlem she holds NewYork underneath her hip bone but she's tired of the stench the stench of semen on her lip on her thighs of sweat in her clothes she taught her all that he knows how to use all that her mother gave to her she calls him dad just like the ones she ran away from because he was rapping her at 13 she sold pussy because lemonade stands profits can't afford to feed the empty mouths of her little sisters and brothers when her mothers smoked away all she ever was paid so put a fee on her body and

preyed unanswered prayers for a better day but from the street corner she was never safe so she sells pussy behind second baptist church on third and that's the closest she's been to Jesus in over a decade she used to never miss a Sunday used to sing hands and tunes like an angel but her wings were clipped the moment she let him slip in so now her body sings anthems beat boxing the box springs pop and her lips lock in the fading of the trouble of her heart sound of knees giving private parts are the mixture of her crying because every inch hurts and she has no more words but she'll always keep this song like home "he is my survival story, story" she doesn't have one just a song of empty streets of police sirens of sex request whispered on ears I can hear her song from time to time when the city is quiet I can hear the sound of her feet wandering these streets like a nomad to nowhere her begging son never fails to break my heart she lives in my eardrums now so I'll never forget her sound because her face her face is just too hard to remember.

### **Movie 1.7 Poetry in Praxis**

*Prison Letter* by Ant Black

Some of these kids, some of these kids write poetry like clenched fists raised risk, higher than the spirit of our ancestors and our sister should be treated like Queens, but they don't treat us like kings, but he don't write like that. Some of these kids, some of these kids write poetry about love, they say love is the warmth of Mother's Day, others say love is "Enchilada Hot Plate Sunday".

Others say love is like family sitting on the other side of the fence, they know it exists if they could just sit in here long enough, and he has sat long enough. Six years is long for us, but my sixth sense is strong enough to know the most important part about poetry is the hope it brings to the spirit of an individual, and the individual most heaven-sent element about being a poet is the God-given ability to listen. So I listened intently, and he intensely read poem after poem, page after page, never took a break, but the way he fumbled his words warned me of an education system he clearly fell through the cracks of, he had a quiet demeanor, but was quite eager to share every single poem owning his experience as America's neglected child, even smiled as he showed us the cover tagged in Olde English, it just said "Poetry". I wanted to tell him after that first poem, "You reminded me why I write poetry", after the second poem, "You've given me enough inspiration for a lifetime of writing", after the third poem "You made me realize why God saved my life on a Colorado night when the car crashed and flipped three times, gazed high, prayed to the savior, pinching my flesh to see if I was alive. Your last six poems I felt alive!" I had to say something, I tried interrupting, he ignored my notion, just kept going, reading every poem as if each poem was a hope of a six year bid, locked up as a kid, Bloods and Crips, shirt tucked in, hands folded under armpits, and the pen. His mother sends every fourth four page letter, is never received, it is believed the reason he can't have a pencil in a cell is not because of safety, not about shanking, its cuz guards don't want them tagging on history book pages. All i could think about

was saying was, "Homey, as long as you write, there is not a cell small enough to silence your spirit, locks don't exist in poetry, your freedom lies between your thumb, your pointer, and your middle finger, so you can even hold up your middle finger while pointing at these rules of thumb, and when the authorities come, you can hold your head higher than the planets, plan their existence in your notepad...All I could think about saying was, "Homey, as long as you write, there is not enough concrete in the world that could build a wall thick enough to confine your heart's imagination, there is not a cell small enough to silence your spirit, locks don't exist in poetry, your freedom lies between your thumb, your pointer, and your middle-finger, so you can even hold up your middle-finger while pointing at these rules of thumb, and when the authorities come you can hold your head higher than the planets, plan their existence in your notepad, go back to the choice that caught you a case, change every decision that was made, change the games that you play, change the words that you say from 'Keep it real', 'Do what it do', do some change the world type words like 'I am confidence and truth in truth". I was the only one in the room holding things back, his mentor shed a tear as he cried when he came through, but for me, when it came time for me to tell this young man how much he touched my soul, all I could say was "Thank you", but the truth was, he made me whole.

## **Movie 1.8 Strain Theory and Deviance**

Strain theory is normally used to describe why poor people commit crimes however as a sociologist I would argue that strain theory can be used to explain why wealthy people commit crimes also case in point would be, power plant owners, and so we look at the history between power plants and let's say environmental laws, that environmental laws have been created and they block opportunities of power plant owners to make profit, right, because if the environmental laws are followed it's going to cost the power plant owners a lot of money, a lot of profit, because that they have to change their company, they have to change their practices, in order to be able to follow these environmental laws and we continue to see these lawsuits, these class-action lawsuits, one of the main ones that happened was in a movie called Erin Brockovich, I know this is old, but it is definitely something worth watching to really talk about how companies know that they're doing horrible things to the environment in the hopes that they don't get caught quite honestly, and so then when it comes to these environmental laws, I don't know if I can affect your opinion about that, and I honestly I don't want to. What I want you to think about is that as a person I actually have a solution for environmental laws I say that we actually get rid of environmental laws all together for the power plant owners, okay. The law that I want to put in place though, is that power plant owners along with all the people who own the power plant, right, that they have to live within 10 miles of the power plant. I

guarantee you that if we have them live next to their own power plant, I guarantee you that they'll follow tougher restrictions than the environmental laws will ever put on them, and so anyway that's just something to think about.

### **Movie 1.9 *Deviant White Guys* by Strange Fruit Sociology**

ANT: Alright ask me what I did for a winter break would did you do for winter break I decided to start watching Breaking Bad

BRUCE: you know I'm Breaking Baddy right I'm a baddy

ANT: but I started I made the commitment I'm gonna do this it's probably gonna take me a full five or six years but I'm going to do this

BRUCE: it sounds like you're not going to want to watch this but go ahead

ANT: I'm going to watch Breaking Bad so I now know your a Breaking Bad fan

BRUCE: yes I'm all in

ANT: I know you like The Walking Dead you like all that stuff

BRUCE: I like deviant White guys

ANT: tell me about deviant White guys

BRUCE: you know what I've been able to like analyze and I kid you know my sociology never shuts off it's like people try to think you know can you just sit back and enjoy a movie

ANT: yes I can

BRUCE: however I'm always going to analyze it and so when I'm watching my TV shows I watch Walking Dead I watch Breaking Bad I watch Dexter all the way through I was very disappointed at the end by the way and all my dexter people they know what I'm talking about anyway so they left it like, anyway I am gonna stop, they left it like there was supposed to be another season and that's not what you're supposed to do you're supposed to go all in on one side all in on the other side they didn't do that they went right in the middle and that pissed everybody off but anyway but when you're thinking about like you know how race plays in this idea of deviant white guys you know deviant white guys they're allowed to be so deviant and yet so lovable all the same time and I really think that has a lot to do with them being White um please don't misunderstand this I know there's a lot of characters out there that are people of color but when it comes to like likeability and stuff like that when you make a White guy into the deviant one they become so likeable the way that with Walter White and everything the whole idea of him is that he's supposed to be learning how to do all of this stuff he's supposed to learn how to make meth he's supposed to learn how to sell drugs he supposed to learn how to become Heisenberg and all that stuff

he needs to learn all of that but if you were to change the race on him and you so lets say you made him a Black dude well a lot of things have to change now right it's like now look don't be mad now we're not talking about meth we're talking about crack and when you're talking about crack you don't have to have a very sophisticated IQ in order to figure out crack but meth for whatever reason is supposed to be like this big heavy type of thing the other thing about you know being a Black dude is that if they were Black you wouldn't assume you couldn't have the innocence that was constructed along with Walter White's character there's this sense of innocence like he doesn't know anything he's really just just trying to be do right to his family while if you saw a Black dude you would be like oh he's getting his hustle on and your perception of these characters even though you could try to do that with you know with your writing and whatnot but the playability the likability of those characters it does have a lot to do with race and whatnot and that was something that I've noticed and continue to notice as I'm watching other shows that I like like walking dead and things like that and whatnot but so what about you

ANT: this sounds like what you're speaking to is the concept of legibility right and what basically Mark Anthony Neal writes a book called Looking For Leroy and he talks about how Black male characters fit into one two or three maybe four molds because they are legible to society and any sort of role or character that fits outside of this mold the hip-hop mold the poor

crack head or the bum or the struggle right or the anyway if you fit outside this mold your illegible and characters that are illegible they don't sell their confusing we don't really know what to do with them right and so I think in hearing about these characters and this you know the Breaking Bad character these are not new tropes right and they occur not just in these horrific sort of like Dexter on Showtime or Breaking Bad these shows that occur outside of you know broadcast networks we've seen everything from comedy right Charlie Sheen and Two and a Half Men

BRUCE: yes!

ANT: even a Ted Danson character in Cheers right how he can be sort of a jerk and mean-spirited but yet he's still this loveable guy all of these characters what what the issue is and this really comes out of feminist studies this ain't even really out of ethnic studies or Black studies really this is feminist studies that that gives us this language is that these White male characters are allowed to be dynamic complex they're allowed to be redeeming throughout and at various levels they can do the most horrific grossest things but they're doing it for this reason and so they get redeemed and it's not just at the end of the show whereas female characters very narrow we only have one or two types of role stereo types anything outside of that is illegible right so I think it's that this is one of the cool opportunities on at least on what we're doing with Strange Fruit is to look at the intersection of both race

and gender as it relates to these characters I don't know I still want to watch it

BRUCE: dude you definitely want to watch it anyway I don't want to ruin anything so I'm not gonna ruin it you said something about this Gustavo character now I'm like oh I gotta see Gustavo what is Gustavo gonna do well that's basically the ideal of like when that Gustavo although I like the character I like to character a lot that just goes to show you the kind of complexity that people can basically handle it's like the only reason why he was complex because he was a Black dude that spoke Spanish that's it that's really all that made him complex while you know while Walter White like there's amazing levels of complexity to him regarding how he interacts with his wife his interactions with Jesse and all that you know how he comes this thing called Heisenberg this person called Heisenberg it's like I said the level of detail is amazing

ANT: and so you know those are the kind of things while the only person that I can really even think of that even comes close to something like that is Denzel Washington yeah and it wasn't with Training Day because he got killed in Training Day so there wasn't a whole bunch of redemption there but like Flight that was as close as you get that was very complex but the redemption level was he still went to jail yeah and he started talking to that was it he didn't save the world anyway imma stop now well I'm gonna

watch breaking bad watch that but first I'm going to watch Empire.

### **Movie 1.10 The Stigma of a Felony**

*New York Times* July 7, 2016

Amy Out Britton and her boyfriend were driving from Monroe, Louisiana, to Houston, Texas, when the Houston Police officers pulled them over for failing to signal a lane change, and so the police officers when they pulled them over, they asked to search their car because they suspected Amy and her boyfriend of possessing drugs. Amy knew she didn't have any drugs and knew that she was innocent, and so she let the police search her car, unfortunately the police found a crumb of evidence on the floor of the car and after administering a roadside chemical test. It identified that crumb as having traces of cocaine in it, and so although Amy felt she was innocent, she was arrested and taken to jail. In jail, the defense attorney tells her that the DA's office has given her a plea deal, the plea deal is that if she pleads guilty to this felony offense of drug possession, that she would get a 45-day sentence and then, but she would most likely only serve half of that. Now, Amy Out Britton, along with thousands, upon thousands of other Americans take this deal. So she takes the deal, she gets the 45 days sentence and she only serves 21 days; however, after the 21 days she was fired from her job of managing properties, it was a good job that she had, she was fired from that job and now she has to look for new job with



felony on her, with a felony on her record and this proves to be near impossible, and she's reduced to menial jobs and low-paying jobs for four years and seemingly forever. However, years later, literally years later, the crime lab tests that crumb of evidence and they find out that it had no control substance in it at all and so the real question that I have, right, not only are felt people with felonies is it hard for them to find a job, but who are the people who are taking these plea bills in the first place, right? And so the people who are most likely to take these please deals are people who have public defenders assigned to them and so those are most likely to be poor people or poorer people right? And then one of the bigger things that get taken away from people with felonies on the record is their right to vote, and so what's happening is that how I forgot the whole drug test part.