

SOCI2013: General Sociology January Intersession 2024

Chapter 7: deviance and crime I



Chapter outlines

What is deviance?

Functional perspectives on
deviance

Conflict perspectives on deviance

Symbolic interactionist
perspectives on deviance

What is deviance?



Oakland County Sheriff's Office/Handout/Reuters

- Ethan Crumbley (center) and his parents all face charges related to the Michigan school shooting which took the lives of four people and injured seven others. What explains criminal behaviors such as these?

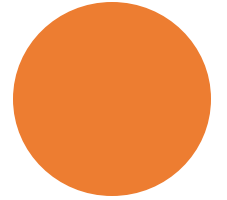


What is deviance?/Deviance

- Deviance is any behavior, belief, or condition that violates significant social norms in the society or group in which it occurs.
- Deviance is a relative term, a deviance behavior in one may be conformist behavior in another
- Do you consider Post Malone's appearance to be deviant? In what types of groups might he be considered a conformist?

What is deviance?/Who defines deviance

- For sociologists, deviance is related to social situations and social structures rather than to the behavior of individual actors
- These women in Chicago in 1922 were arrested for their swimwear that violated the modesty laws of the era.
- Deviant behavior varies in degree of seriousness



What is deviance?/Social control

Social control refers to the systematic practices that social groups develop in order to encourage conformity to norms, rules, and laws and to discourage deviance.

Internal social control: internal social control takes place through the socialization process. Individuals internalize societal norms and values that prescribe how people should behave and then follow those norms and values in their everyday lives.

external social control involves the use of negative sanctions that proscribe certain behaviors and set forth punishments for rule-breakers and nonconformists. In contemporary societies the criminal justice system, which includes the police, the courts, and the prisons, is the primary mechanism of external social control.

Functional perspectives on deviance

Sociologist Emile Durkheim believed that deviance is rooted in societal factors such as rapid social change and lack of social integration among people.

anomie—a social condition in which people experience a sense of futility because social norms are weak, absent, or conflicting.

According to Durkheim, as social integration (bonding and community involvement) decreased, deviance and crime increased.

Functional perspectives on deviance/Strain theory

people feel strain, or pressure, when they are exposed to cultural goals that they are unable to obtain because they do not have access to culturally approved means of achieving those goals.

The goals may be material possessions and money; the approved means may include an education and jobs. When denied legitimate access to these goals, some people seek access through deviant means.

Functional perspectives on deviance/ Opportunity Theory: Access to Illegitimate Opportunities

- for deviance to occur, people must have access to illegitimate opportunity structures—circumstances that provide an opportunity for people to acquire through illegitimate activities what they cannot achieve through legitimate channels.
- Members of the El Paso, Texas, group typify how gang members use items of clothing and gang signs made with their hands to assert their membership in the group and solidarity with one another. Researchers have found that some gang members may have insufficient legitimate means to achieve conventional goals of status and wealth but have illegitimate opportunity structures through which they can achieve these goals.



Conflict Perspectives on Deviance

- conflict theory/Deviance and Power Relations
 - norms and laws are established for the benefit of those in power and do not reflect any absolute standard of right and wrong. As a result, the activities of poor and lower-income individuals are more likely to be defined as criminal than those of persons from middle- and upper-income backgrounds
 - Blacks are more likely than Whites to be arrested, and after arrest, they are more likely to be convicted; and get longer prison sentences; black adults are 5.9 times as likely to be incarcerated compared to Whites, and Latinxs are 3.1 times as likely

Conflict theory/Deviance and Capitalism

Marxist/critical theory—
views deviance and
crime as a function of
the capitalist economic
system.

The laws and the
criminal justice system
protect the power and
privilege of the capitalist
class

Conflict theory/Feminist Approaches

- women's deviance and crime are a rational response to the gender discrimination that women experience in families and the workplace.
- Lower-income and minority women typically have fewer opportunities for education and good jobs.
 - This young woman is being arrested after a local group of sex workers was broken up by Dallas police officers. Which feminist theory of women's crime might best explain the offenses of women like the one pictured here?



Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives on Deviance

Deviance is learned in the same way as conformity—through interaction with others

Differential Association Theory and Differential Reinforcement Theory

People have a greater tendency to deviate from societal norms when they frequently associate with individuals who are more favorable toward deviance than conformity. From this approach, criminal behavior is learned within intimate personal groups such as one's family and peer groups.

Symbolic
Interactionist/Rational
Choice Theory

- Deviant behavior occurs when a person weighs the costs and benefits of nonconventional or criminal behavior and determines that the benefits will outweigh the risks involved in such an action.

Symbolic Interactionist/Control Theory: Social Bonding

- Conformity is often associated with a person's bonds to other people.
- According to control theory, strong bonds—including close family ties and compatible friendship groups—are a factor in explaining why many people do not engage in deviant behavior. How might spending quality time with one's family or good friends discourage delinquent behavior and crime among young people?



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istock.com/SrijanPaw

Symbolic Interactionist/Labeling Theory

- deviance is a socially constructed process in which social control agencies designate certain people as deviants and they, in turn, come to accept the label placed upon them and begin to act accordingly

