

# 1: Sociological Approaches to Deviance

## What is Deviance

**Deviance** is the behavior that **breaks rules**, or **violates people's expectations**

Deviance is **not always bad**.

Responses to crime and deviance:

- Formal attempts at control (arrest)
- Informal control (ridicule, sometimes subtle)

## Sociological approaches to deviance

### The Three Cs

The key to understanding sociological approaches to deviance and control

Careers

- Sequences and activities that characterize a person's life
- Not necessarily related to employment/profession

Cultures

- Sets of ideas, beliefs, practices, and values that group members share

Communities

- Social groups formed around common activities and shared culture

## Functionalism

Functionalists believe each institution has a function or role to perform in society

Working together, social institutions achieve a balance or equilibrium in society

### Early functional theories

**Emile Durkheim**

- crime was **unavoidable**, universal, and **helped renew commitments** to social boundaries

- In Suicide (1897), Durkheim insisted we can never fully understand suicidal behaviour if we only look at individual psychology.
  - 4 types of suicide
  - Egoistic (sense of not belonging, people not integrated in community, excessive individualism)
  - Altruistic (Dying for a cause, sacrificing for society)
  - Fatalistic (End life because of a sense of fatalism)
  - Anomic (Anomie, a lack of moral direction, shared values, culture)
- Suicide rates increase with the stress that accompanies **social, cultural, or economic shifts** within societies

### The Chicago School

- social disorganization leads to deviant behavior
- Forces of modernization (industrialization, immigration, urbanization) disrupt traditional lifestyles, leading to increased deviance and crime

### Differential organization

- communities with separate values and understandings may clash
- Neighborhoods with high crime rates and much deviance aren't "disorganized", they are differently organized
  - Structured around values that are at conflict with society at large
  - The values are learned and passed on

### Robert Merton: Structural inequality and anomie

- crime/deviance increases when the social structure of a society prevents people from attaining culturally defined goals through legitimate means
- Some people may have to commit crime to attain money
- Anomie is the gap between goals and means
- 5 types of response
  - Conformity (people accept goals and means)
  - Innovation (accept goals but reject means)
  - Ritualism (accept means but reject goals)
  - Retreatism (reject goals and means)
  - Rebellion (reject goals and means, substitute own goals and means)

### Cloward and Ohlin: Differential Illegitimate opportunity

- Development of anomie theory
- Address how many poor people lack illegitimate ways of attaining goals
- Contends that we have to look both at illegitimate and legitimate opportunity structures

## Social Control Theories

Social control theories are attempts at explaining why only some members of a group become deviant.

### Durkheim's Egoism

- Suicide is a deviant act
- People who were well-integrated into social life and had strong social ties (marriage, children, religion) were least likely to commit suicide.
- People who had weak social ties committed suicide due to egoism (excessive individualism).

### Social Networks and deviant careers

- Anyone can have deviant impulses, but only some act on them
- Social control theorists: people conform to rules when they develop a **stake in conformity** (they feel they will gain by conforming, lose by not conforming)

### Family bonds and delinquency

- Chicago School sociologists noted that "social disorganization" in inner cities led to **broken families**
- This leads to less parental control and greater juvenile delinquency

### Albert Riess (1951):

- Delinquency caused by primary social groups (family usually) failing to reinforce social norms in children

### Travis Hirschi (1969): **Social bond theory.**

- The strength of a child's relationship with parents has the biggest effect on delinquency.

### John Hagan (1985):

- Difference in delinquency between boys and girls due to differences in socialization

### Parenting Styles

Family researchers have identified four parenting styles:

- Authoritative: high acceptance of child, high control over child
- Authoritarian: low acceptance of child, high control over child
- Unengaged: low acceptance of child, low control over child
- Permissive: high acceptance of child, low control over child

### Parental Control

- How firmly, consistently, and fairly parents make and enforce rules for children is as important as love and stability.
- Enforcement of rules related to delaying instant gratification
- Rule-enforcement is a form of attachment between parents and children—a way parents show concern for children.

### Gottfredson and Hirschi: Self Control, "A General Theory of Crime"

- Low self control is the general concept around which all known facts about crime can be organized

- Crime has certain universal characteristics (unplanned, unskilled, high risk, immediate gratification, indifferent to cost on others)

## Symbolic Interactionism (Herbert Blumer)

1. People act towards things based on the meaning that they have for them
2. Meaning are learned through social interactions
3. Meanings are reinterpreted and changed over time

Nurture, not nature.

**Symbolic interactionism** focuses on how **social structure** and **understandings of reality** develop as **people interact with others**

Dramaturgy

- elements of human interactions are dependent upon time, place, and audience.

The definition of the situation → the way an individual (actor) views reality

- these views (definitions) are passed between people
- Conflict arises when people have conflicting definitions

The construction of social problems

- Blumer: proposed that social problems develop in two stages
  1. **Social recognition**: conditions recognized as concerning
  2. **Social legitimating**: society cements the problem as a threat to social stability
- Moral panic: certain groups become the focus of widespread attention for their conflicting views (definitions)
  - Can lead to widespread change in collective social meanings

## Labeling Theory

- Deviance is a social label that some groups use to describe and stigmatize others
- Being fixed with a “deviant” label increases deviant behavior due to the impacts of the label on social status, life status, and sense of self

## The development of self and socialization

Jean Piaget

- Young children are egocentric
  - They have no sense of self as distinct from other people
  - Children become aware of themselves as they become aware that other people are distinct from them

- The self is a social product, emerging from interactions with others

#### Edwin Sutherland: Differential Association Theory

- deviance is learned through socialization
  - Learned in association to others in intimate social relationships
  - Views about deviance learned through culture
  - Deviant behaviors occur when there is an excess of favorable definitions of deviance compared to unfavorable theories

## Social Reaction and Labeling

#### Charles Cooley (1902): Looking Glass Self:

- emphasized the role of social environment in the development of self concept.
- People form concepts of themselves according to how others see them.

#### Lemert's Secondary Deviance:

- Secondary Deviance is rule-breaking acts that follow from, and react to, the imposition of a deviant label.
- People labeled as deviant engage in behavior that fits their new self image.

#### Labeling and the Chicago School

- Howard Becker (1963) believed everyone is capable of nonconformist behavior, and that everyone fails to conform sometimes.
- Deviant subcultures are products of social **labeling** and **exclusion**.
- Deviance is rarely practiced solo; it is a **social accomplishment**.

## Critical Theories

- Conflict and change are basic features of social life.
- Conflict is unavoidable because society is composed of groups differing in power, status, and influence.
- Different groups inevitably try to seize control

#### Collins (1975):

- 'The basic insight [of conflict theory] is that human beings are sociable but conflict-prone animals.'
- The battle for people's minds is critical, since people are easier to control if they **believe inequality is unavoidable or deserved**.
- Powerful members of society make and enforce laws that **legitimate their own advantage**

#### Karl Marx on Conflict theory

- conflict arises from hierarchical relations.
- **Dominant** class makes laws to help control workers.

- **Subordinate** classes develop strategies and practices of resistance.
- Dominant **ideology** is used to justify class inequalities.

Max Weber

- Groups set up boundaries to promote social cohesion, called **social closure**
- The capture of another groups resources is called **usurpation**
- Status groups (ethnic, religious, linguistic, ...) have "horizontal relations of difference and distrust"

Sellin: Theory of Culture Conflict

- immigrants caught between the Old World and New World conduct norms.
- Cultural diversity in modern industrial society is a factor in the production of criminality.
- Conflict greatest if (at least) one group's conduct norms have been institutionalized.
- Law embodies the conduct norms of the dominant cultural or ethnic group.

Austin Turk: Criminal Criminology

- Struggles are rooted in unequal distribution of resources, especially authority

Quinney: Criminology

- 6 factors dictate how values and behavior patterns are "enshrined" in law and held up as a "standard" for behavior
- Crime and law is about politics and power
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## Feminist Approaches

- Idea that men were in power, women were oppressed, and this lead to conflict
- Rejects the idea that women are meant to be mothers/not in the workplace, accessories of men
- Stresses that women's experience and perspective is diverse

Radical Feminism:

- patriarchy is the main and universal cause of women's oppression.
- women must organize separately from men to protect their own interests and foster a distinct women's culture.

Feminism works under a unique set of assumptions

- All personal life has a political dimension
- Both public and private spheres of life are gendered
- Women's social experiences differ from mens
- Patriarchy structures the way society works
- Womens and mens views of reality differ

### Feminism as Politics:

- Calls attention to the androcentric (male-dominated) history of sociological thinking.
- Attempts to change the circumstance within which men and women lead their lives.

### Feminist Approaches

- Feminist research pays greatest attention to gendered influences on social life—the gendering of experiences.
- Feminist research is interested in victimization and the experiences of other victimized groups.
- The Problem of Truth-Finding: Tends to be suspicious theories promoted by people in power, treating them as social constructs.

## Postmodern Approaches:

- There is no objective truth: deviance is a **construct**
- Believe reality is **fragmentary**, made of conflicting accounts;
- interested in unmasking the ideologies that protect the dominant social order

### Postmodernism and Science

- The job of applied science is to establish norms that, through surveillance and control, turn abnormality into normality.
- Postmodernists ask: Is there any such thing as normality? What makes normality so good? Is deviance normal or abnormal?

### Michelle Foucault (1975)

- declared all of modern society to be a **prison**.
- Cited Bentham's Panopticon (prison in which guards could constantly watch prisoners without being seen)
- Saw modern society as dominated by technologies of power.

## Rational Choice Theory

- Individuals maximize their own **welfare** even at the expense of the social order.
- Both individuals and organizations **balance** potential benefits and costs of every activity, even if it is criminal.
- Not necessarily a consensus in society, but only of individuals chasing their own goals as effectively as they can.

## Social Policy Implications

The structural functionalist approach

- Policies aimed to control/eliminate things that are disruptive or undermine social cohesion

#### The symbolic interactionist approach

- labeling will perpetuate deviance leads (recidivism)
- interactionists advocate against labeling people who are already disadvantaged/whose identities are fragile.

#### The critical approach

- Focussed on eliminating inequalities of power.
- concerned with helping both perpetrators and their targets—each of whom is viewed in his or her own way.