

## Homework 01: Model Building and Model Selection/Fitting

### Deviant aggressive behavior

Understanding socially deviant aggressive behavior would help inform the development of appropriate social policies to reduce them. In the prompt, four theories tried to explain what plays a role in the development of deviant aggressive behaviors.

The first theory suggests that deviant aggressive behavior is learned from experience which entails various kinds of reinforcements. If the first theory is right and assuming that learning is the only pathway to developing deviant aggressive behavior, then punishment would presumably reduce while reward would increase the occurrence of deviant aggressive behavior. According to this theory, the social policy would focus on legislating strong laws against those behaviors and increasing punitive measures. Therefore, if someone broke the law by demonstrating any deviant aggressive behavior, he or she will be put into prison, getting a fine, or losing a job. These consequences will serve as “punishments” that would theoretically reduce the occurrence of deviant aggressive behaviors. On the other hand, if a person no longer demonstrates deviant aggressive behaviors, he or she will be released from prison or getting a new job. These consequences will serve as “rewards” that reduce the occurrence of deviant aggressive behaviors as well. In reality, the criminal justice policy in the United States has been adopting this “getting tough” approach to offenders (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). However, the increasingly tough laws only lead to increased incarceration rate and they failed to reduce criminal recidivism (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). It is possible, then, that learning through punishment and reward may not be the only explanation for complex human behaviors including deviant aggressive behavior.

Theory two suggests that if a person is frustrated in his or her personal life, he or she would take it out on personal authority figures by displaying socially deviant behaviors. If this theory were right, social policies should focus on helping individuals who have been experiencing difficulties in their life and displaying tendencies to hurt other people to prevent the deviant aggressive behaviors from happening. Appropriate social policies may include requiring insurance companies to cover individual therapies, having schools and companies to create more positions for psychologists, developing programs to identify and support individuals who have more stressors in life, and so on. Those social policies would make counseling services more accessible to each individual. People would benefit from those services by developing coping skills to deal with stress instead of taking it out on authority figures. If people’s emotional wellness gets improved and feels less frustrated with one’s personal life, according to the theory, the chance of showing deviant aggressive behaviors would decrease.

The third theory suggests that oppressed individuals are more likely to demonstrate deviant aggressive behaviors as they rarely benefit from conforming to systematically discriminated social rules. If this theory is right, social policies may focus on reforming the

system that discriminates against certain groups. For example, there is a large racial disparity in the workforce and justice system ([https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/88366/ban\\_the\\_box\\_and\\_racial\\_discrimination.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/88366/ban_the_box_and_racial_discrimination.pdf)). Appropriate policy may include increasing funding on developing programs to support students who are people of color, appropriate more funds to public schools that locate in neighborhoods with low SES population, lower taxes for companies that hire employees of which more than 20% are people of color, and develop career services within correctional facilities and so on. In general, the purpose of these policies is to leverage the playground for different groups by making working and educational resources more available to oppressed groups. The examples above are focused on making the system more equal to people of color, but in reality, people may be discriminated due to gender, sexual orientation, cultural background, disability and so on. Social policies may work on making the system more equal to any individual regardless of his or her group membership. According to this theory, if people can benefit from the system, they may be more conforming to social rules and demonstrate less deviant aggressive behaviors.

The fourth theory suggests that individuals display deviant aggressive behavior as a result of socialization within a deviant subculture. One social phenomenon closely associated with this theory is gang violence. If this theory is right, social policies may focus on developing community intervention programs to prevent the formation of a deviant subculture. Appropriate social policies may include appropriate “more federal resources to impoverished areas” (Hagedorn, 1991, p535), support programs or agencies that are “physically located in underclass neighborhoods” (Hagedorn, 1991, p536), fully evaluate programs to see if they have a positive impact on the neighborhood (Hagedorn, 1991, p536), “fund family preservation programs” (Hagedorn, 1991, p537), and fund public schools and create more job opportunities in underclass neighborhoods and so on. These social policies will help people in the neighborhood have more access to resources and hopefully, they will engage more with the community and less with deviant subcultures.

#Metoo movement is a movement against sexual harassment and sexual assault following the sexual abuse allegations against Harvey Weinstein ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Me\\_Too\\_movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Me_Too_movement)). The sexual abusers including Harvey Weinstein that were exposed during this movement have demonstrated deviant aggressive behaviors towards other males or females. According to the theory I, it is likely that some sexual abusers learned those behaviors from taking advantage of other women or men but never got reported. On the other hand, those deviant behaviors were associated with tremendous “psychological rewards” including feeling good about oneself, feeling superior, and even sexual pleasure. In the absence of punishment for behaving that way, they gradually learned such aggressive behaviors towards other males or females.

In the #metoo movement, exposed sexual abusers are predominantly white males with power in their respective field and victims were predominantly females. A major theme in those stories is that those powerful men were protected by the system and they can abuse their power without check. It is not very convincing to assume that those powerful men were frustrated with

their own life and take it out on women. In addition, most victims of sexual assault or sexual harassment were not authority figures. Therefore, theory II is not very convincing in explaining this “experiment”.

Similarly, it is not convincing to say that those sexual abusers were systematically discriminated and they don't want to conform to social rules. Again, they are powerful white male at the top of their field. Theory III is not a good rationale for those deviant behaviors either.

Theory IV is also not compelling to explain the deviant behavior of sexual abusers. People who were exposed during #metoo movement do not necessarily know each other, nor do they associate with any subculture. In fact, they tend to display deviant aggressive behaviors in private and try to hide them from the public by threatening victims.

## Reference

A. Andrews, Don & Bonta, James. (2010). Rehabilitating Criminal Justice Policy and Practice. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*. 16. 39-55. 10.1037/a0018362.

Hagedorn, J. (1991). Gangs, Neighborhoods, and Public Policy. *Social Problems*, 38(4), 529-542. doi:10.2307/800569

[https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/88366/ban\\_the\\_box\\_and\\_racial\\_discrimination.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/88366/ban_the_box_and_racial_discrimination.pdf)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Me\\_Too\\_movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Me_Too_movement)

## Waiting until the last minute

An observation entails that people often do things at the last minute. This observation might be true under certain circumstance. Personally, I sometimes do things at the last minute and there can be many reasons behind it. Sometimes I am busy with other things, sometimes I don't like a particular task and simply will not do it until the last minute, and sometimes I have a very challenging task and I don't know how to deal with it and therefore have to wait until the last minute. When other people do things at the last minute, they might have similar reasons to mine. Taking the students turning in a paper as an example, students usually take several courses each quarter and it is difficult to finish every homework in a timely manner and there is often one less important paper left to finish at the last minute before the deadline. It is also possible that some students perceive writing a paper as an aversive experience which stimulates a lot of anxiety and so they tend to procrastinate it until the last minute. Similarly, some professors might be busy with many things such as administrative responsibilities, editing papers, attending a conference and so on. And grading papers might be less important to them compared to other things. Therefore, they might grade students' papers at the last minute after they finished other things. Some professors might simply don't like grading papers and just thinking about it elicits a

lot of anxiety. Those anxiety prevent professors from starting to grade papers and leave it to the last minute.

As discussed in the above, one behavior can be explained by multiple reasons. Here, we choose two particular reasons and then generalize them to two general and abstract models.

**Model 1:** In real life, people often bear multiple responsibilities and their lives can be very busy. It is difficult to complete every task in time. Some people often start with more important tasks and leave one or few less important task(s) to do at last. However, when there are too many things need to be done within a certain amount of time, there is often not so much time left for those less important tasks. Consequently, one might observe that people often do things at the last minute.

**Model 2:** There are many things need to be done, but it is not very likely that individuals will like every task that they have in hand. People might anticipate doing certain tasks as an aversive experience which brings them a lot of anxiety. That anxiety might prevent people from getting started with these tasks. To compensate for their anxiety, people might choose to do other things first that make them happy. As time goes by, the anxiety level that people experience is getting higher and higher. Eventually, people's anxiety level is too high to get distracted. They may realize that it might be too late if they don't start. Still, when they actually start to do things, there is not so much time left. Consequently, one might observe that people often do things at the last minute.

Suppose that model 1 is correct and it is the only explanation for people doing things at the last minute. It is predicted that if individuals only have one task that needs to be done, they would be able to start working on it immediately and finish it in a timely manner. This prediction is based on the assumption that there is a limited time for that task, but the allocated time is still more than enough for the individual to finish it. On the contrary, given the same limited amount of time, the more tasks that an individual have at his or her hands, the higher likelihood that he or she will leave at least one task to do at the last few minutes. Again, this prediction is based on the premise that individuals are given the same limited time for those tasks.

Suppose that model 2 is correct and it is the only explanation for procrastination behaviors. It is predicted that if people like the tasks that they are about to do, and these tasks won't elicit any anxiety, then people would start to do those tasks immediately. This prediction is made based on the premise that people are given limited times for these tasks but the limited time is still enough for them to complete all the tasks. Also, those limited time is enough for them to finish all the tasks if they don't wait until the last minute. On the other hand, it is predicted that the more the people don't like their tasks and feel anxious when anticipate doing them, the more likely that they would procrastinate. When they finally start to do things, there may not be much time left again. Consequently, one might observe that people often do things at the last minute.