

Ch. 7 Deviance

What is...

- Deviance: Recognized violation of cultural norms
 - Norms guide almost all human activities
 - Most familiar examples are negative instances of rule breaking
 - Especially righteous people also might be called deviant
 - Different or unexpected to describe deviance from a sociological perspective
 - Some categories of people are defined as deviant regardless of action or choice
- Crime: violation of an established rule

Social Control

- Informal social control: Parents; Teachers; Peers
- Formal social control
 - Criminal justice system:
 - A formal response by police, courts, and prison officials to alleged violations of the law

Explanations for deviance

- Biological context:
 - Genetic and environmental factors, especially abuse early in life: predictors of adult crime/violence
- Evaluation
 - Theory offers a limited explanation of crime
 - Biological traits in combination with environmental factors explain some serious crime
 - No insight into how some kinds of behaviors come to be defined as deviant
- Biological context
 - Personality factors
 - Deviance is viewed as unsuccessful "socialization"
 - Focus on abnormality in individual personality
 - Reckless and Dinitz: Containment Theory
 - Evaluation
 - Capacity for self-control and ability to withstand frustration do seem to be skills that promote conformity
 - Limited value in explaining deviance

The Functions of Deviance: Structural-Functional Theories

- Durkheim's basic insight
 - Deviance affirms cultural values and norms
 - There can be no good without evil and no justice without crime
 - Responding to deviance clarifies moral boundaries
 - A boundary between right and wrong
 - Responding to deviance brings people together
 - People typically react to serious deviance with shared outrage
 - Deviance encourages social change
 - Deviant people push a society's moral boundaries

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Deviant Subcultures

- Miller
 - Delinquent subcultures
 - Trouble, toughness, smartness, need for excitement, belief in fate, desire for freedom
- Anderson
 - In poor urban neighborhoods, most people conform to conventional values
- Cloward and Ohlin: Extended Merton's theory
- Cohen: Delinquency is most common among lower-class youths because they have the least opportunity for conventional success

The Power of Society

- Does everyone, regardless of race, run the same risk of being sent to prison if they engage in illegal drug use?

- White people are more likely to do drugs, but Black people are more likely to go to jail

Labeling Theory

- Main contribution of symbolic interaction analysis is labeling theory
- Deviance and conformity result not from what people do but how others respond to those actions
- Primary deviance: Norm violations that most people take part in with little harm to self-concept
- Secondary deviance: When people "make something" of another's deviant behavior
- Stigma
 - Powerful negative label that greatly changes a person's self-concept and social identity

Labeling Deviance

- Retrospective labeling
 - Re-interpreting someone's past in light of present deviance
- Projective labeling
 - Predicts future deviant behavior
- Medicalization of deviance
 - Transform moral and legal deviance into a medical condition
 - How people respond
 - Personal competence of the deviant person