SOCIAL DEVIANCY

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What is Deviance?

- Any behavior, belief, or condition that violates significant social norms in the society or group in which it occurs
- Interestingly – one who is considered "deviant" by one category of people may be seen as "conformist" in another group
- We are all technically deviant at some point or another in our lives.

Defining Deviance

- ***Deviance*** is a behavior, trait, belief, or other characteristic that violates a norm and causes a negative reaction.
- Defining something as deviant requires us to examine the group norms and how the group reacts to the behavior.

Deviance

- **<u>Range of Tolerance</u>**
  - A scope of behaviors considered acceptable and defined as conformity
  - ***Examples***
    - Honesty and politeness
      - Bad haircut
    - What is "*speeding*" in 70mph? Deserve a ticket?
      - 71? Probably not
      - 75? Maybe
      - 80? Good chance
      - 100? FOR SURE!

Types of Deviance

- **<u>Overconformity</u>→ "*positive deviance*"**
  - Involves behavior that overconforms to social expectations
    - Leads to imbalance and perfectionism
    - Can be AS harmful as negative deviance
  - ***Examples***
    - Anorexia
    - Body Builder
    - "Perfect" Students
      - Knows answer to EVERY question
      - 100% A+ on all tests and papers
      - Perfect attendance

- **<u>Underconformity</u>→** "*negative deviance*"
  - Involves behavior that under-conforms to social expectations people either reject, misinterp or are unaware of the norms
  - ***Examples:***
    - Obesity
    - Unmotivated Students
      - Lack of participation
      - Sleep in class
      - Unexcused absences
      - Fail tests and papers

Deviance depends on…

- **Time**
  - Fashion and grooming change with time, like the Founding Fathers Fashion
- **Place**

  - Where behavior occurs determines whether it is appropriate or deviant
    - Cheering/booing at Football game vs. in class
- **Situation**

  - Takes precedence over place in determining appropriateness of actions
    - Laughing in class vs. laughing in class during a moment of silence
- **Culture**
  - Most influential in defining deviance
    - Men greeting each other
      - US: Hand shake
      - Japan: Bow
      - Europe: Kiss on cheek

Symbolic Interactionist Approach to Deviance

- **<u>Primary Deviance</u>**
  - Deviance involving occasional breaking of norms that are NOT a part of a person's lifestyle or self-concept
    - *Example*: Honor roll student comes home past curfew one night

- **<u>Secondary Deviance</u>**
  - Deviance in which an individual's life and identity are organized around breaking society's norms
    - *Example*: The "robbers" in Ocean's 11 had a criminal history because they had broken the law on multiple occasions.

Structural Functionalist Approach to Deviance

- **Strain Theories**: Deviance is more likely to occur when a gap exists between cultural goals and the ability to achieve these goals by legitimate means

- ***Innovation***: Individual accepts goal of success but uses illegal means to achieve it
  - Ex: Drug Dealers

- ***Ritualism***: Individual rejects goal of success but continues to "go through the motions" without believing in the process
  - Ex. Teacher who doesn't care about engaging students, but still comes to work

- ***Retreatism***: Individual rejects both legitimate means and approved goals (Given up on life)
  - Ex. Bag lady

- ***Rebellion***: Individual rejects both success and the approved means for achieving it; substitutes their own goal and means to achieve it
  - Ex. Militia Member

Who/what is defined as deviant?

- Both acts and individuals (and even entire groups) can be defined as deviant: “Condemn the sin, love the sinner,” “aliens”, “misfits”. etc.
- Low status persons (e.g. ethnic minorities, poor people) are more likely to be perceived as deviant, their *good* behavior “explained away”
- Higher status persons (e.g. priests, doctors) are less likely to be defined as deviant, their *bad* behavior “explained away”

Causes of deviant behaviour

NGBs may feel less able to punish due to power of commercial interests or fear of being taken to court by performer who they punish

Deviant behaviour may be becoming less socially unacceptable and cause less negative comment than in the past

Individuals may value winning above the loss of respect or punishment that may occur

Rewards of winning so great that a large number of individuals may be prepared to cross the line. (May be particularly true of positive deviance)

Individual lacks moral restraint to keep to code of conduct

Recidivism Percent by Most Serious Crime After 5 years (2005 to 2010).

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Strain Theories

INSTITUTIONALIZED MEANS

CULTURAL GOALS	ACCEPT	REJECT
ACCEPT	CONFORMITY	INNOVATION
REJECT	RITUALISM	RETREATISM
		REBELLION

THROUGH NEW MEANS

SEEKING NEW GOALS

Social Learning Theories

- all behavior (including deviance) is learned through social interaction
  - *Differential Association*: individuals learn deviance in proportion to the number of deviant acts they are exposed to
    - Primary relationships with parents, siblings, and close friends have the greatest impact on our behavior.
      - "birds of a feather flock together"

  - *Differential Reinforcement*: depending on whom an individual associates with, norm-violating behavior may be either positively rewarded or negatively sanctioned
    - Ex. How friends react when they find out you shoplifted will help determine whether you will repeat the action

Control Theory

- Compliance with social norms requires strong bonds between individuals and society
- *Social Bond Theory*
  - Some people do not commit deviance because they have developed a strong social bond, consisting of an attachment to parents, school, church, etc.
    - Stronger the social bond, less likely to be involved in deviant activities
    - Weaker the social bond, easier it is for an individual to break violate social norms

All crime is deviance…but all deviance is NOT a crime.

- **<u>Crime</u>**: any act that violates a criminal law
  - <u>Violent offenses</u>: crimes against people
    - Ex. Homicide, aggravated assault, forcible rape, robbery

  - <u>Nonviolent offenses</u>: crimes against property
    - Ex. Burglary, larcenry-theft, auto theft, and arson

  - <u>White Collar Crime-</u> crime committed by high- status people in their occupations. This crime costs the U.S. 18 times the cost of street crime. These criminals get treated more leniently than other criminals.
    - Ex. Embezzlement, fraud, insider trading, copyright violations, tax evasion, and antitrust law violations

  - <u>Public Order "Victimless" Crimes</u>
    - Ex. Prostitution, illegal gambling, illegal drug use

References

- Ahuja, Ram, Female Offenders in India, Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1969.
- Becker, Howard S., Social Problems: A Modern Approach, John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1966
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- Ahuja, Ram, Social Problem, Rawat Publication, New Delhi, 2018.

Suggested Readings

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