Chapter Activities

# Chapter 6: Deviance and Social Control: Sickos, Weirdos, Freaks, and Folks Like Us

## We are ALL Deviants

**Objective:** To show students that everyone is deviant and expose them to the range of deviant behaviors that occurs just in their small corner of the world.

**Directions:** In the class before you teach Chapter 6, distribute an index card to each student. Instruct them not to put their names on the cards but to print the most deviant thing they have ever done on the card. Provide some examples that you feel are extreme so that they feel that their own behavior is more “normal” and therefore will be more likely to disclose. Ask them to place the cards anonymously in a large envelope. Before the deviance class, sort the cards by theme and present the themes (and perhaps some composite examples) to the class. Have the group discuss whether they are surprised by the findings and why.

## What is Deviant?

**Objective:** To illustrate that what we as a society considered as deviant behavior changes over time and often depends on the context.

**Directions:** Ask students to raise their hands if they have at least one tattoo. Estimate the percentage of the class that have their hands up. Then ask the students what they know about tattoos. Who historically had tattoos? (Soldiers, members of biker gangs) Discuss how this once deviant act is now mainstream. How did this occur? Are tattoos still deviant? Does it depend on where the tattoo is located? Who has the tattoo? (Surgeon compared to server, for example). Who decides what is deviant?

**Note:** This works best in a large classroom. In the author’s experience, over half of the classroom will raise their hand.

## Can We Explain Crime?

**Objective:** To familiarize the students with the various theories of deviance and encourage them to think critically about them.

**Directions:** In class, break the students into small groups and provide each group with a newspaper story describing a crime (try to include several different types of crime). Have the students identify the type of crime that occurred and attempt to explain it from each of the eight theoretical perspectives (social control, rational choice, differential association, labeling, anomie, strain, conflict, and feminist). Then, as a group, they should decide which one theory best explains the crime and why. Finally, reassemble as a whole class and have each group present a brief overview of their crime, which theory they think best explains the crime, and why they chose the explanation they did.

## How Do We Define Deviance?

**Objective:** To understand how we “rank” deviant behavior and that our rankings are not arbitrary.

**Directions:** Have students individually complete the following worksheet. Once they have finished, select 5–10 students and ask them to provide you with the five acts that they ranked as “most deviant” and the five acts they consider “least deviant.” Write their responses on the board. Then have the students identify patterns among the most- and least-deviant activities. What types of crime do the most deviant behaviors tend to be? What types of crime do the least-deviant behaviors tend to be? How is societal power related to how we define the most- and least-deviant activities? How does this activity relate to the social constructedness of deviance?

**On a scale from 1 (low seriousness) to 10 (high seriousness), indicate the seriousness of each offense listed below.**

\_\_\_ Slapping a spouse

\_\_\_ Selling cocaine

\_\_\_ Causing the death of an employee by not repairing machinery

\_\_\_ Stealing cigarettes from a gas station

\_\_\_ Holding suspected war criminals for 5 years without a trial

\_\_\_ Stealing lipstick or powder from a drug store

\_\_\_ Being drunk on a public sidewalk

\_\_\_ Beating up a stranger while sober

\_\_\_ Manufacturing and selling autos known to be defective

\_\_\_ Printing counterfeit $5 bills

\_\_\_ Theft of car for the purpose of resale

\_\_\_ False advertising of a headache remedy

\_\_\_ Burning a child with a cigarette

\_\_\_ Planned killing of a spouse

\_\_\_ Stealing pens from the office

\_\_\_ A public official accepting bribes in return for favors

\_\_\_ Planned killing of a person for a fee

\_\_\_ Manufacturing and selling drugs known to be harmful to users

\_\_\_ Forcible rape of a neighbor

\_\_\_ Fixing prices of a consumer product such as gasoline

\_\_\_ Knowingly selling defective cars as completely safe

\_\_\_ Armed holdup of a taxi driver

\_\_\_ Beating up a stranger while drunk

\_\_\_ Killing a pedestrian while exceeding the speed limit

\_\_\_ Underreporting income on income tax return

\_\_\_ Killing spouse’s lover after catching them together

\_\_\_ Knowingly using inaccurate scales in weighing meat for sale

\_\_\_ Employee embezzling company funds

\_\_\_ Armed robbery of a supermarket

\_\_\_ Overcharging on repairs to automobiles

\_\_\_ Causing the death of a tenant by neglecting to repair heat

\_\_\_ Killing an unarmed person who breaks into your home

\_\_\_ Downloading music without paying for it using a data-sharing program

\_\_\_ Seriously injuring someone in a barroom free-for-all

\_\_\_ Performing unnecessary surgery

## The Theories of Deviance Through Music

**Objective:** Students will be able to apply various theories of deviance to pop culture artifacts.

**Directions:** Bring a variety of songs (and song lyrics) to class that illustrate specific theories of deviance. After discussing each theory, play the associated song and ask students to apply the theory to the lyrics. Alternatively, students could be asked to bring songs to class that illustrate specific theories. Some examples include:

* Toby Keith—“Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue” (Durkheim’s functions of deviance)
* Cab Calloway—“Minnie the Moocher” (Merton’s strain theory)
* Steve Earle—“Copperhead Road” (Miller’s features of deviant subcultures)
* Billy Joel—“Only the Good Die Young” (labeling theory)
* Johnny Cash—“Ballad of Ira Hayes” (medicalization of deviance)
* John Prine—“Paradise” (corporate deviance)
* The Beatles—“Run for Your Life” (feminist theory)
* Dead Prez—“Police State” (conflict theory) \*\*WARNING: Explicit Lyrics

## Understanding the Impact of Labels

**Objective:** To better understand labeling theory and the impact of labels.

**Directions:** Pass out index cards to each student at the beginning of class and have them write a label that they have called at some point in their life. The label can be positive or negative. They should write one label per card. Alternatively, you can give them index cards at the end of a class session and tell students to bring them back filled out and have them deposit them in a manila envelope when they come into class.

Ask a student to write on the whiteboard or type on the computer as you read off each label. Record as many as necessary.

Ask students how these labels could potentially impact people. How do seeing these labels make them feel? Are the labels more positive or negative? Why do they think that is the case?

## Victimless Crimes

**Objective:** This activity will help students think about and analyze the concept of “victimless crimes.”

**Directions:** Have the students split into groups of four. Give each group a news article that pertains to a victimless crime (i.e., prostitution and pornography). Then have the students answer the following questions:

1. Summarize the main points of the article.
2. In your opinion, are there any victims in this story? Why or why not?

Share the results with the rest of the class and discuss why these crimes are considered “victimless.”

## Hate Crimes

**Objective:** This activity will help students understand the nature of hate crimes.

**Directions:** Show the students this clip titled “The Matthew Shepard Story”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WU03SBj9EUM. Then discuss current statistics regarding the prevalence of hate crimes and have the students think about how each sociological perspective would analyze hate crimes by having them break into small groups to discuss.