**Chapter Exercises**

**Chapter 6: Deviance and Social Control**

1. Over the course of several days, browse the print or online editions of a major U.S. newspaper (be sure to check each section of the paper, not just the front page). Identify and record the various types of criminal deviance reported in the news. Are certain types of criminal deviance represented more than others? Which ones? Overall, did it seem like criminal deviance was a major or minor part of news coverage?

2. Marijuana use represents a type of contested deviant behavior. Some people feel that using marijuana is no more deviant than smoking cigarettes, while others feel it should be criminalized. The debate surrounding marijuana exemplifies how what is considered deviant can change over time and also how deviance varies based on the context. Pair up with another student and create two lists, one with reasons why marijuana use should not be considered deviant and another listing reasons why marijuana should remain a largely criminalized form of deviance. How many of the points you listed relate to ethical, moral or religious convictions? What about economic or social concerns? Given the opportunity, which side of the debate would you choose to argue and on what basis?

3. Over the course of two days maintain a diary of every act or behavior in which you engage that could be considered deviant or criminally deviant by anyone else. Also record any other aspects of yourself—for instance, medical conditions—that people might consider deviant if they knew about them. Review your list of “personal deviance.” Are you surprised by how often or rarely the label of “deviant” could be applied to you? To what extent does your recorded deviance conflict with your perception of yourself as a nondeviant (or deviant) person?

4. Form small groups of 3–4 people. Your instructor will assign to your group one of the following forms of deviance. Within your group, you must reach a consensus in order to construct an argument for why the deviant act you have been assigned *should not* be considered deviant. Prepare to argue your group’s perspective before the class:

-prostitution;

-downloading music from a free site instead of paying for it;

-cheating and plagiarism;

-hard drug use (cocaine, crack, heroin, methamphetamine);

-marijuana use;

-drinking alcohol under age 21;

-taking items from your workplace for use at home.

Which of the types of deviance listed were easiest to argue should not be considered deviant? Which were the most challenging?

5. Since 1970, gun ownership in the United States has declined by over 50%. At the same time, the violent crime rate and the homicide rate have declined by over 50%. Design a research project that could test the hypothesis that the decline in gun ownership is a cause of the decline in violence and homicide rates.

6. Deviance is based on social judgments of how well a person’s attitudes, behaviors, or conditions follow cultural norms or social laws. The rise of social media such as Twitter, Facebook, and blogs gives people greater opportunity to publicly reveal their attitudes, behaviors, and conditions on a large, sometimes impersonal, scale. Comment boards on these forms of social media give people the opportunity to support or condemn the posted attitude, behavior, or condition. Examine a week of social media postings and comments from your own and others social media sites. What patterns do you see in the comments about deviance? Are some actions considered more or less deviance? Do all types of people see deviance in the same way? How do the posters respond to accusations that they are being deviant? Do you think social media encourages or inhibits deviance?

7. The media helps shape perceptions of the causes of deviance. Watch several episodes of a television show about the workings of criminal investigation such as *Law and Order*, *CSI*, or *NCIS*. How is the crime presented in the show? What theory of deviance (strain, opportunity cost, control, etc.) is used to explain why the deviance occurred? Can you use the other theories to explain why the deviance occurred? Are there patterns to the types of theoretical explanations these shows use?