Lecture Notes

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

## Learning Objectives

1. Describe who is deviant and why.
2. Compare key ideas in the differential association, labeling, rational choice, structural functional, and conflict perspectives of deviance.
3. Provide possible explanations for why the crime rate has fallen in recent years.
4. Give examples of crimes committed at the national and global level today.
5. Which theoretical perspective would be most useful in explaining the function of prisons in U.S. society today?

## Chapter Overview

The chapter on deviance opens by explaining the socially constructed nature of deviant behavior, then addressing related common misconceptions about deviance. Then, theories of deviance including social control, rational choice, differential association, labeling theory, structural-functionalism, conflict theory, and feminist theory are explained. Types and amount of crime across all three levels of analysis are addressed. Finally, the criminal justice system is discussed.

## Lecture Outline

I. Introduction

A. Most people conform to norms most of the time

B. Most people occasionally violate norms, but whether that violator is seen as deviant depends upon the importance and severity of the violation

C. *Deviance* – the violation of social norms

D. *Stigma* – the disapproval attached to disobeying the expected norms

E. We are all deviant in some times and some places

II. What is Deviance?

A. Deviance is a violation of societal norms, but those norms are always changing

i. In some situations, deviance and crime are overlooked or seen as understandable

ii. The same acts can be considered very deviant in one society and tolerated in another

B. *Crime* – the forms of deviance in which formal penalties are imposed by the society

C. Deviance is *socially constructed* – members of groups and societies define what is deviant

D. Some acts are deviant at one time and place and not at others

E. Deviance can be problematic or functional for society

F. Structural functional viewpoint – deviance serves vital functions for society

i. Sets examples of unacceptable behavior

ii. Provides guidelines for behavior that is necessary to maintain social order

iii. Bonds people together through their common rejection of deviant behavior

iv. Provides jobs for those who deal with deviants

v. Can signal problems in a society that need to be addressed (stimulate positive change)

vi. Opens societies to new and creative paths of thinking

G. Crime: Deviance that Violates the Law

i. When the criminal justice system gets involved and formal penalties are imposed by society, we refer to deviance as crime – deviance that violates criminal law

ii. When members of society are in general agreement about the seriousness of deviant acts, these are referred to as consensus crimes

1. Predatory crimes (premeditated murder, forcible rape, and kidnapping for ransom) are consensus crimes

iii. Crimes are often thought to be the most threatening forms of deviance, but it is important to recognize that they are still just one type of deviant behavior

III. What Causes Deviant Behavior? Theoretical Perspectives

A. Sociologists reject biological and psychological behaviors in favor of studying deviance scientifically in terms of the interactions, social structure, and social processes that lead to deviant behavior

B. Sociologists consider social-class differences, cultural and subcultural norms, and power structures that influence conformity or deviance

C. Micro-Level Explanations of Deviance: Rational Choice and Interaction Theories

i. *Rational Choice theory* – focuses on the cost-benefit analysis of one’s choices about deviance or conformity.

1. Punishment, or imposing high “costs” for criminal behavior to dissuade criminals from choosing that path: fines, imprisonment, and death.

ii. *Symbolic Interaction Theories –* focuses on how people define reality and how they are influenced by society in constructing who they are and what is acceptable behavior in society.

iii. *Differential association (or Reinforcement) theory* – some people learn to conform and others learn to deviate depending upon the family, peers, and others with whom they associate

1. A symbolic interaction approach because the emphasis is on how association with others shapes your definition of what is normal and acceptable

a. Group membership reinforces criminal behavior with the decision to become deviant dependant up four main criteria. Duration—time spent with the group

b. Intensity—of the interaction

c. Priority—if the group in one’s network

d. Frequency—how often one interacts with the group

2. Youth from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to be violent because they have learned in their social settings to use violence to solve problems

a. Note: the norms that these children are breaking are defined by those in power (the upper-class)

b. We now know that all strata of society commit deviant acts, but the kinds of deviance they commit vary by social class

iv. *Labeling theory* – Behavior is not intrinsically deviant; it is deviant because it as labeled as such. Members of society create deviance by defining something as deviant and react to the deviance by imposing penalties. It is this reaction that defines behavior of an individual as deviant more than the act itself. Labels are symbols that affect an individual self-concept and the way other see the individual.

1. Two stages in becoming deviant

a. *Primary deviance* – a violation of a norm which may be an isolated act. It does not usually lead to being labeled deviant, unless the label is so strong it cannot be escaped, such as being labeled “gay.”

b. *Secondary deviance* – the individual continues to violate a norm and begins to take on a deviant identity

2. The process of labeling deviants happens at every level of analysis and can lead to reinforcing the deviant behavior by:

a. Increasing alienation

b. Forcing increased interaction with deviant peers

c. Motivating juvenile delinquents to positively value and identify with the deviant status

3. The deviance becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy – a belief or prediction that becomes a reality

a. The individuals come to see themselves as deviant because of the way they are treated by others (stigmatized)

b. Cooley—looking glass self, we tend to define ourselves by others’ attitudes toward us and our interaction with others.

4. Some groups and individuals are labeled as deviant based on their lack of power and status in society, with those who have less power being more likely to be labeled deviants

a. For example, The Saints and the Roughnecks – the social status of the boys determined why they were deviant and how they were treated for similar behaviors; this led to self-fulfilling prophecies

5. Labeling theory is primarily micro-level theory, but macro-level social forces also shape whether one is labeled or can avoid the label

a. When members of the dominant society feel that their power is threatened, they may react by creating an impossible situation for the minority

b. The minority’s violation of the rules is then treated as deviant

c. Conflict theorists use labeling to explain how inequality is maintained by the poor labeled to maintain dominant group’s privileged position

d. Writing less than positive things on the Internet about a government can lead to being treated as a criminal in some countries

D. Meso- and Macro-Level Explanations of Deviance: Structural-Functional and Conflict Theories

i. Meso-level analysis is focused on ethnic subcultures and national organizations and institutions within a nation, while macro-level theory focuses more on societies and global social systems

ii. *Structural-functionalist theories* – deviance results from anomie and stain, and can be beneficial for society

iii. *Social Control Theory* – focuses on why most people conform most of the time.

1. People are bonded to society in four ways. These bonds encourage us to adhere to norms

a. Attachment to other people who respect the values and rules of society

b. Commitment to conventional activities they do not want to jeopardize

c. Involvement in activities that keep them so busy that they do not have time for deviant behavior

d. Belief in the social rules of their culture (accepted because of childhood socialization)

e. If these things are weakened, we are more likely to be deviant

2. Two factors shape our tendency to conform

a. *Internal controls* – those voices within us which tell us when a behavior is acceptable or unacceptable, right or wrong

b. *External controls* – society's formal or informal controls against deviant behavior

3. Human beings seek to maximize pleasure and minimize pain; deciding whether to be deviant depends upon the calculation of the pleasure/pain ratio

a. A shift in this ratio may result in a change of the sanctions provided for certain behaviors

i. *Positive sanctions* – rewards for societally approved behaviors

ii. *Negative sanctions* – punishments for breaking societal norms

b. If people use rational choice, we can deter deviance by increasing the costs or changing the awareness of costs already in place, or changing perception of the cost/benefit balance

iii. *Anomie and Social Disorganization* – the breakdown of the norms guiding behavior that leads to social disorganization

1. Caused by a lack of shared, achievable goals and a lack of socially approved means to achieve goals

2. Durkheim first described anomie as arising when societies are disorganized, such as rapidly urbanizing, going through sudden prosperity or depression, rapid technological change, or when a government is overthrown

a. Affects urban areas first, in particular inner-city transitional zones.

i. Have always had high delinquency because of constant transitions

ii. High in/out-migration explains lack of stability, because peer group norms become influential, and models of nondeviant behaviors are scarce

iv. *Strain theory* – most people in society share similar values and goals, but those with fewer resources are less able to achieve those goals. They experience frustration and anger, and may use deviant methods to achieve those goals

1. *Strain* – an experience created by the difference between agreed upon societal definitions of success (*goals*) and the *means* available to achieve those goals that can lead to deviance

2. Merton outlines five ways to adapt to the strain

i. *Conformity* – embracing the society's definition of success and adhering to the established and approved means of achieving success

ii. *Innovation* – use of illicit means to reach approved goals

iii. *Ritualism* – strict adherence to the culturally‑prescribed rules, even though individuals give up on the goals they hoped to achieve

iv. *Retreatism* – giving up on both the goals and the means

v. *Rebellion* – rejecting the socially approved ideas of “success” and the means of attaining that success, but replaces those with alternative definitions of success and alternative strategies for attaining the new goals

3. Deviant behavior results from retreatism, rebellion, and innovation. The reasons why lies in the social conditions that provide success, not in a person’s individual biological or psychological makeup.

v. *Conflict theory* – assumes conflict is inevitable. Deviance is a result of social inequality (in terms of social class, race, religion, etc.) or the struggle between groups for power

a. Elites want to maintain their control, so they pass laws and define what is deviant

b. Minority groups and subcultures challenge these norms, which threatens societal consensus

c. The greater the difference between the dominant group in society and other groups, the more possibility of conflict

d. Because conflict between groups is inevitable, to reduce deviance we must change the structure of society. Capitalist systems could be to blame for the unjust administration of law and unequal distribution of resources.

i. Ruling class uses the legal system to further the capitalist enterprise through the definition of deviance, the application of laws to protect its interests, and the repression of any conflict or protest

e. Proof that subordinate class/race members are apprehended more often and punished more harshly for the same offenses is proof that the dominant class gets to define what is deviant and is more often excused for their own behaviors (i.e., Blacks are almost four times as likely to whites to be arrested for marijuana possession)

f. Deviance is lower in societies where there is less inequality, but it does not disappear altogether

vi. *Feminist theory* – macro-level causes of abuses suffered by women are rooted in the patriarchal, capitalist system.

a. These causes include:

i. Women are faced with a division of labor governed by their sex

1. Women’s work is undervalued, and men often exploit women for their unpaid work and sexuality in order to continue the current social order

ii. The separation between public (work) and private (home) spheres of social activity create we/they thinking between men and women

iii. The socialization of children into gender-specific adult roles has implications for how males and females perceive and relate to each other

1. Children are taught that the differences between men and women are “normal” and “natural”

2. Cultural attitudes toward crime against women (like rape) differ based on the status of women in that society

3. Women are less often in a position to commit crimes, and when they do they are often to procure money

IV. Crime and Individuals: Micro-Level Analysis

A. Crimes – deviance that if caught involves severe formal penalties imposed by the government.

i. Reinforce conformity through criminal justice system.

ii. crimes that affect the individual or primary group seem most threatening to us and receive the most attention in the press and from politicians

B. How much crime is there?

i. Two categories of crime, according to the FBI

1. Type I – murder, rape, robbery, etc.

2. Type II – fraud, simple assault, vandalism, etc.

ii. *Rate of crime* – the number of crimes committed (usually reported as per 100,000 people)

1. The rate of violent crime has been dropping since the mid-1990s

2. Black men six times as likely to be homicide victims as white men

iii. Ways of measuring crime

1. *Uniform Crime Reports* – submitted voluntarily by police departments, but flawed because many crimes are not reported, and many criminals are not arrested or prosecuted. Police can make errors filling out reports.

2. *Self-reported surveys* – asking individuals which crimes they have committed

3. *Victimization surveys* – surveys that ask people how much crime they have personally experienced

4. How crime is measured affects what and how much crime is reported

5. Triangulation of data leads to the most accurate results

C. Types of crime

i. *Predatory or street crime* – crimes against individuals or property. The type that concerns us the most criminologists do not think that these are the most important or most dangerous crimes

ii. *Victimless or public order crimes* – acts committed by or between consenting adults

1. Most participants do not consider themselves to be victims, but the offense is mostly an affront to someone else’s morals

2. These illegal acts may be tolerated as long as they do not become highly visible

3. Victimless crimes involving drugs result in a variety of policies

iii. *Hate crimes* – criminal offenses committed against a person, property, or group which are motivated by the offender's bias against a religious, ethnic/national origin, or sexual orientation group

1. Most of these crimes occur spontaneously

2. Often brutal and vicious because the perpetrators rage against the individual as a representative of the group they despise

3. The targets are individuals who have certain traits or are a part of a certain community

4. Hate crimes are under-reported, with many victims believing that the police cannot help them

V. Crime and Organizations: Meso-Level Analysis

A. As societies modernize, a rise in anomie leads to more crime

B. As societies modernize, they also become more dependent upon formal social control

C. Crimes Involving Organizations and Institutions

i. *Institutional crime –* health care fraud (i.e., Medicaid and Medicare), credit card fraud, identity theft

ii. *Organized crime* – ongoing criminal enterprises that have the ultimate purpose of personal economic gain through illegitimate means

1. A particular problem when societies experience anomie

2. Marginalized ethnic groups may use organized crime as a way of getting ahead

3. Types

a. Sale of illegal goods and drugs

b. Infiltrating legitimate businesses through threats and intimidation

c. Racketeering (the extortion of funds in exchange for “protection”)

4. Organized crime brings in more than 1% of the gross national product in the United States ($50–90 billion per year)

a. Money laundering is estimated to be 2 to 5% of the worlds GDP

5. Transnational organized crime takes place across national boundaries and is becoming an increasing problem

a. Major crime clans: 1) Hong Kong-based triads, 2) South American cocaine cartels, 3) Italian mafia, 4) Japanese Yakuza, 5) Russian Mafiya, 6) West African crime groups

iii. *Occupational or white-collar crime* – A violation of the law committed by an individual or group in the course of a legitimate, respected occupation or financial activity

1. Less visible than violent crimes because it is frequently committed by those who are in power

2. Less publicized because it has no clear obvious physical injury to the individual involved

3. The cost of white collar crime is far greater than violent predatory crimes

4. Types of occupational crimes

a. Crimes against the company – more likely when employees feel little loyalty to the organization, the organization is large and impersonal, they feel resentful toward the company, the theft is seen as a “fringe benefit”, and the employees see theft as a challenge

b. Crimes against employees – like neglect of worker safety

c. Wage theft-underpaying or not paying workers

i. Differential association theory – profits are expected by investors and coworkers

ii. Rational choice – the benefits seem to outweigh the costs at the time

iii. Strain theory – corporations must make the greatest short-term profits in order to achieve their goals

d. Crimes against customers

e. Crimes against the public

VI. National and Global Crime: Macro-Level Analysis

A. *Terrorism* refers to “the planned use of random, unlawful (or illegal) violence or threat of violence against civilians to create (or raise) fear and intimidate citizens in order to advance the terrorist group’s political or ideological goals”

i. *International terrorism,* terrorism practiced in a foreign country, and terrorism can be seen to be a world-wide problem

ii. Terrorist groups can be religious, state-sponsored, left- or right-wing, or nationalist

B. Cross-National Comparisons of Crime – different societal values can lead to different levels of crime

i. For example, Japanese values of not bringing shame to the family and less focus on material possessions and consumption as markers of success lead to less crime

ii. Japan and the United States deal with deviant behavior and crimes in different ways

iii. When the economy is poor in a country, crime rises

C. *Global crimes* – crimes that involve transnational conglomerates, smuggling of illegal goods and humans, or that violate international laws, treaties, or agreements

i. *World systems perspective* – the cause of deviance lies in the global economy, inequalities between countries, and competition between countries for resources and wealth

1. As a result of capitalism, inequality has risen between core and periphery nations, which results in inequality

2. Core nations take advantage of periphery nations, leading the periphery nations to use unconventional means to reach their goals

ii. The internet has lead to an increase in global crime

1. It provides a wide audience for fraudsters

2. It gives a space to an “underground web” of illegal businesses

3. It supports crime by connecting people to illegal operations

4. It’s very difficult to police since law enforcement is unsure of whose jurisdiction it is

5. Most big corporations have been the victims of hacking and cybertheft from China and other nations

VII. Controlling Crime: Social Policy Considerations

A. Dealing with Crime: The Criminal Justice Process

i. Structural-functionalists – the justice system is important for maintaining order in society

ii. Conflict theorists – the criminal justice system presents the threat of crime as a threat from poor people and minorities; it creates fear of victimization in members of society

1. It is in the interests of the powerful for us to think that crime is primarily the work of the poor, since it deflects discontent and hostility from the powerful

2. There will always be crime because the powerful will ensure that something is labeled as deviant

iii. Prisons and Jails

1. *Privatization of prisons –* when prisons are owned and operated by private companies with prison bed as a commodity

a. Those for privatization argue that the states save on labor costs

i. Because there is competition the living conditions and rehabilitation is arguably improved

b. Those against privatization argue that people should not be imprisoned for a profit.

i. Costs per prisoner often rise after the initial contract with the state

ii. Some states must incarcerate a certain number of people due to the contracts with the private prisons

2. Total institution – an institution that completely controls the prisoners’ lives and regulates all of their activities

a. Inmates lives are changed through:

i. *Degradation* – acts that mark the inmate as deviant

ii. *Mortification* – acts that break down the individual’s original self as the inmate experiences resocialization

3. Minorities and the poor are disproportionately represented in jails and prisons

4. Rates of incarceration have decreased recently (after a substantial rise for a decade) in the United States for several reasons:

a. more inmates on parole due to overcrowding

b. fewer incarcerations for minor offenses

c. Still the “war on drugs” keeps the prison population high compared with any other Global North country

i. Accounts for the highest number of imprisonments

iv. The Functions and Effectiveness of Prisons

1. Functions include:

i. Revenge or retributions

ii. Removing dangerous individuals from society

iii. *Deterrence* – preventing an individual from future deviance and deterring others from becoming deviant

1. A common argument used for capital punishment (the death penalty) despite research demonstrating that murder rates are lower in states without the death penalty and inmates reporting that the majority of crimes are not planned

2. The death penalty disproportionately is given to minorities and the poor and when a white person is the victim

3. Over 125 people on death row have been found innocent because of DNA testing and further evidence

iv. *Recidivism* – despite prison supposedly rehabilitating offenders, the likelihood that someone who is arrested, convicted, and imprisoned will later be a repeat offender is 75%

1. Prisoners are exposed to more criminal and antisocial behavior making rehabilitation and deterrence goals difficult to maintain

2. 5% of prison inmates are sexually assaulted

3. 12% of youth in juvenile detention facilities are assaulted

v. Prisons and Profits

i. Prisons can be a source of jobs for the communities in which they are located

ii. More prisons are now operated by for-profit companies

iii. There are advocates and opponents of prison privatization

vi. The Death Penalty

1. The most controversial method of control is for the state to put the person to death

2. The most common argument for using the death penalty, or capital punishment, is to deter people from crime, not only by the person killed, but by others who are deterred because they know this is a possibility

3. Although most developed countries do not use the death penalty, the United States still does

4. Capital punishment is most common in Asia, the Middle East, and parts of Africa

5. U.S. states with the death penalty assume that those contemplating crimes will be deterred by severe penalties; however, studies on the deterrent effects of capital punishment do not support the first assumption

6. There is evidence that the death penalty is race and class biased; a disproportionate number of minority and lower class individuals are put to death in the United States

7. Maryland became the 18th state in 2013 to abolish the death penalty

8. The death penalty is more likely to be imposed if a white person has been murdered than if African-Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and Asian Americans are killed

vii. Alternatives Forms of Social Control

a. Building *social capital* – social networks, shared norms, values, and understanding that facilitate cooperation within or among groups and access to important resources

b. Increasing an offender’s education or job training reduces the risk of recidivism and of going to prison in the first place

c. More severe punishments for crime are not always effective

d. *Shock probation* – releasing a first time offender early in the hope that the shock of prison life would deter them

e. Community service requirements

f. Day treatment and half-way houses

g. *Restitution* – The offender renders money or service to the victim or community under supervised parole to compensate the victim (does seem to reduce the likelihood of a repeated offense and is less costly than prison)

h. *Privatization of prison* – an attempt to turn prisons into more business-like, cost effective institutions

i. Sociologists and criminologists are skeptical because the primary goals seems to be making a profit, not rehabilitating offenders

VIII. What Have We Learned

A. Deviance as defined by society, communities, and even religion or subcultural groups has many possible explanations, and there are multiple interpretations about how it should be handled

B. Deviance and crime are issues for any society

C. The criminal justice system tends to be a conservative force in society because of its focus on ensuring social conformity

D. Good policy must be based on accurate information and careful analysis of the information