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CHAPTER TWO
EXPLAINING DEVIANT BEHAVIOR

True-False Questions

1) Positivism in the social sciences is the application of the scientific method to the study of human behavior. (T)

2) Empiricism is a fundamental assumption of positivism. (T)

3) The guiding principle of positivism is, "intuition is the best guide to what is scientifically true." (F)

4) Positivism is centrally concerned with scientifically determining what's moral and immoral. (F)

4) A central assumption of positivist criminologists is *determinism*—that criminal behavior has a cause, and criminologists can determine what its causes are. (T)

5) Most scientists believe in intelligent design. (F)

6) Routine activity theory assumes, but does not attempt to explain, what is different about the motivated offender that makes him or her violate the norms. (T)

7) The social disorganization school argues that the cause of criminal, deviant, and delinquent behavior is that entire neighborhoods fail to monitor and sanction wrongdoing among their residents. (T)

8) Social disorganization is the "macro" version of routine activity theory, which is a "micro" theory. (T)

9) Social disorganization theory has been entirely discredited and falsified. (F)

10) The causal or positivistic theories examined in this chapter focus mainly on the question, "Why are certain forms of behavior regarded as deviant?" (F)

11) Anomie theory is based on the idea that the social structure itself exerts pressure on persons in the society to engage in non-conforming, unconventional, or deviant behavior. (T)

12) Anomie or strain theory argues that deviant behavior is most common among members of the middle class. (F)

13) By the 1990s, anomie theory had become completely discredited in American sociology. (F)

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14) The differential association theory of crime is primarily an explanation based on learning. (T)

15) Differential association argues that the mass media represent the most powerful mechanisms of learning to engage in deviant, criminal, and delinquent behavior. (F).

16) Both social control and self-control theory are based on the assumption that deviance is inherently attractive, that we do not have to learn to violate norms or laws, that it is conformity to the norms—*not* deviance and crime—that requires an explanation. (T)

17) The architects of self-control theory, Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi, argue that their explanation of crime complements or is compatible with all of the other sociological theories of criminal behavior. (F)

18) Social disorganization theory argues that deviance varies systematically by urban ecological location. (T)

19) According to Gottfredson and Hirschi, who are principal proponents of the self-control theory of deviance, delinquency, and crime, their explanation does *not* apply to white collar crime. (F)

20) Anomie theory attempts to explain the motives for non-normative behavior; in contrast, routine activity theory assumes that non-normative behavior is inherently attractive and appealing. (T)

Multiple Choice Questions

1) Positivistic theories of deviance are centrally concerned with an answer to the question:
- **(a) Why are some rule violators punished while conformists remain unpunished?**
- **(b) Why are rules that condemn certain behaviors or beliefs enforced?**
- **(c) Why do rules against certain behaviors or beliefs exist in the first place?**
- **(d) How do people who are stigmatized and punished *experience* that stigmatization and punishment?**
- ***(e) Why do some people engage in deviance?**

2) Positivism's central mission is:
- **(a) developing empathy toward human actors.**
- ***(b) devising scientific explanations for why things happen in the material world.**
- **(c) bringing about the socialist revolution.**
- **(d) understanding how people experience things.**
- **(e) none of the above**

3) Demonic possession—being possessed by the devil or other evil spirits--is:
- **(a) is an example of the free will or rational calculus school of criminology.**

***(b) the most ancient explanation for wrongdoing.**
(c) an acceptable sociological theory of deviance and crime.
(d) an example of a positivistic or scientific explanation for deviance.
(e) none of the above

4) "Crime takes place as a consequence of the conjunction of a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian." This statement best exemplifies which of the following theories or perspectives?
***(a) routine activities theory**
(b) social control theory
(c) social disorganization theory
(d) anomie/strain theory
(e) differential association theory

5) A sociologist expressing which of the following theories would have been most likely to have written this quote: "Poor, dense, mixed-use neighborhoods have high transience rates. . . . Transience weakens . . . both formal and informal social control, which increases the likelihood of deviant behavior."
(a) anomie/strain theory
***(b) social disorganization theory**
(c) differential association theory
(d) routine activities theory
(e) social control theory

6) Robert K. Merton adapted Emile Durkheim's theory of anomie to devise his own anomie explanation of deviance. There are major differences between the two theories. Which of the following is one of them? In:
***(a) Merton's theory, deviance is caused by norms that are too strong; in Durkheim's theory, deviance is caused by norms that are too weak.**
(c) Durkheim's theory, deviance is caused by norms that are too strong; in Merton's theory, deviance is caused by norms that are too weak.
(c) both Durkheim's and Merton's theories, deviance is caused by norms that are too strong; the difference lies elsewhere.
(d) both Durkheim's and Merton's theories, deviance is caused by norms that are too weak; the difference lies elsewhere.
(e) none of the above

7) What is the central explanatory factor of anomie theory?
(a) inadequate parenting
(b) absence of bonds to conventional society
(c) deviant socialization
***(d) a disjunction between the culture, which stresses success motivation, and society's social and economic structure**
(e) none of the above

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8) A sociologist expressing which of the following theories would have been most likely to have written this quote: "It is only when a system of cultural values extols [praises, encourages] . . . certain common success goals for the population at large while the social structure rigorously restricts or completely closes access to approved modes of reaching these goals for a considerable part of that same population, that deviant behavior ensues on a large scale."

(a) differential association theory
(b) social control theory
***(c) anomie/strain theory**
(d) routine activities theory
(e) social disorganization theory

9) Emile Durkheim and Robert K. Merton had very different definitions of anomie and argued that anomie had very different consequences for the society. In Merton's conceptualization, deviance results from:

(a) psychopathology.
(b) improper parental socialization.
(c) a state of normlessness.
***(d) a too-strong hold of the norms on the members of the society.**
(e) disorganized neighborhoods

10) Which of Merton's "adaptations" is exemplified by becoming a drug addict?

(a) ritualism
(b) innovation
(c) rebellion
***(d) retreatism**
(e) conformity

11) Which of the following theories is most likely to take the entire society as the unit of analysis subject to the deviance-causing agent?

***(a) anomie theory**
(b) social control theory
(c) self-control theory
(d) social disorganization theory
(e) routine activities theory

12) What is the central explanatory factor of community disorganization?

(a) inadequate parenting
(b) deviant socialization
(c) a disjunction between the culture, which stresses success motivation, and society's social and economic structure
(d) absence of bonds to conventional society
***(e) zones of transition**

13) A sociologist expressing which of the following theories would have written this quote: "Criminal behavior is learned in interaction with other persons in a process of communication."

***(a) differential association theory**
(b) social disorganization theory
(c) social control theory
(d) routine activities theory
(e) anomie/strain theory

14) What is the central explanatory factor of social control theory?

(a) deviant socialization
***(b) absence of bonds to conventional society**
(c) a disjunction between the culture, which stresses success motivation, and society's social and economic structure
(d) inadequate parenting
(e) none of the above

15) A sociologist advocating which of the following theories would have written this quote: "Delinquent acts result when an individual's bonds to society are weak or broken."

(a) differential association theory
(b) social disorganization theory
(c) routine activities theory
(d) anomie/strain theory
***(e) social control theory**

16) What is the central explanatory factor of self-control theory?

***(a) inadequate parenting**
(b) deviant socialization
(c) absence of bonds to conventional society
(d) a disjunction between the culture, which stresses success motivation, and society's social and economic structure
(e) none of the above

17) Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi, who devised "self-control" theory, argue that the theory does *not* apply to:

(a) drug use
(b) delinquency
(c) street crime
(d) white collar or corporate crime
***(e) they state that their theory applies to all of the above**

18) Which of the following perspectives bills itself as "a general theory of crime"?

(a) Emile Durkheim's anomie theory
(b) Robert K. Merton's anomie theory
***(c) Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi's self-control theory**
(d) Edwin Sutherland's theory of differential association

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(e) Travis Hirschi's social control theory

19) Which of the following theories argues that persons do not have to be stressed into committing deviance, nor does anyone have to learn to engage in deviant behavior?
(a) anomie theory
(b) differential association theory
(c) social disorganization theory
***(d) social control theory**
(e) none of the above

20) Gottfredson and Hirschi state that their theory demolishes all other explanations of deviance and crime, except for two. One is routine activities theory; the other is:
***(a) social disorganization theory.**
(b) differential association theory.
(c) anomie theory.
(d) subculture theory.
(e) none of the above; all of the above, say Gottfredson and Hirschi, are falsified by their theory

<u>Essay Questions</u>

1) In many ways, the "self-control" theory of Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi ("a general theory of crime") contradicts the social control theory advocated by the selfsame Travis Hirschi two decades earlier. In what ways are the two theories contradictory? In what ways are they similar or based on the same principles?

2) How is Robert K. Merton's anomie theory of deviance different from Emile Durkheim's, on which it is based?

3) Why was social disorganization theory abandoned in the 1940s? Why did it make a comeback after the late 1980s?

4) In what ways are the positivistic theories of deviance, crime, and delinquency inadequate or incomplete, according to the constructionist approaches? In what ways, do its advocates argue, is the constructionist approach more adequate or complete? In what ways are the positivist approaches stronger than the constructionist approaches?

5) Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi, authors of "self-control" theory, argue that all other perspectives are wrong, or inconsistent with the facts of crime--except for two. Why do they believe that their theory annihilates the others? And what are the two that, they admit, are consistent with theirs, and how can these two theories be reconciled with their own approach?

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Chapter 2 Explaining Deviant Behavior

Introduction

As we saw in Chapter 1, *positivism* takes the *social construction of deviance*—and *deviant behavior in general*—for granted and asks about its *causality*, how and why some people engage in it. As we see in this chapter, positivism is the application of the scientific model to explain the occurrence and incidence of forms of social behavior. In making this assumption, its practitioners assume that there is no sharp break between the *natural sciences* and the *social sciences*. It rests on the assumption of *objectivism*, which means that its practitioners address deviance as a form of behavior with an identifiable outline, a form, shape, size, texture—a reality all its own, a particular form of behavior that *lends itself to* a particular explanation. (The same applies to crime and to mental illness.) If it doesn't have *a coherent, pre-given reality*, independent of its social construction, its occurrence as a specific behavioral entity can't be explained because it's not a unified *form of behavior*. Positivism also rests on the assumption of *determinism*, that is, that the universe, including social behavior, is tied together in a *cause-and-effect* fashion, that things do not happen randomly and without pattern or cause, that things happen for a reason, that people *do* things as a result of identifiable motives or that certain mechanisms act on them in specific ways, in a more-or-less *naturalistic fashion*. In other words, that the sociologist can, with sufficient evidence, answer the *"Why do they do it?"* question. This question is answered by four main theories: *social disorganization*, which is a *neighborhood-level explanation*; *anomie theory*, a *society-level explanation*; *learning theory*, a *micro person-to-person explanation*; and *social control* and *self-control theory*, which are explanations based on *parental socialization*.

It's important to stress that not all sociological approaches or *"theories" of deviance* attempt to explain the *etiology* or *causality* of deviant behavior or beliefs. Most social phenomena do not happen randomly or by accident, of course, but the likelihood is that behaviors and beliefs widely regarded as deviant are enacted and held for a variety of reasons, and most change over time. Intelligent and well-informed observers, researchers, and scholars have been thinking about the "Why do they do it?" question for a very long time; it is interesting that no definitive and universally satisfying answer

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has emerged from this effort. Why not? A class discussion on this issue is likely to prove productive—first, to conceptualize what it is that students consider "deviant," second, why *do* they do it?" and third, why haven't social thinkers settled the issue?

Criminology tends to be more *positivistic* than the sociology of deviance. In general, much more, and more detailed, data are collected on crime than on what most of us regard as deviance. At the same time, for nearly all crimes, *crime is a form of deviance*. We'll be looking at data on crime in Chapters 5 and 6, but the instructor should acquaint him/herself with the many *sources of criminal behavior*, as well as those on deviance that isn't criminal. *The Uniform Crime Reports* (*UCR*) contain very detailed information on a range of crimes, mainly, although though not exclusively, *Index Crimes*—or the seven crimes that the *FBI* considers paradigmatic street crimes, or those that measure or indicate criminality in general. The Index Crimes include the *crimes of violence* (*murder*, *rape*, *robbery*, and *aggravated assault*) and *property crimes* (*motor vehicle theft*, *larceny-theft*, and *burglary*). These crimes vary by geographical location, by gender, race, urban versus rural residence, and so on, but the UCR does not tabulate data on the offender, because, at the time of the report, the offender's status is not typically known. The UCR is readily available on the Internet; the best way of accessing it is to type in "*Bureau of Justice Statistics*" and proceed from there.

However, as every criminologist and sociologist of crime knows, not all crimes that entail a victim are reported to the police—far from it. But criminal reporting is becoming more complete over time. *White collar crime* is *rarely* reported to the police, in part because people who are victims of it are rarely aware of it. *Rape* is a crime that also frequently goes unreported to the police, because the victim often feels ashamed of being a victim of it, or feels that she, somehow, has been complicit in being victimized. (Men can also be raped, although this is far less frequent than for women.) The Bureau of Justice Statistics also sponsors ongoing surveys on victimization that rely on victims reporting offenses asked about, not to the police, but to an interviewer in this survey. Google NCVS—*National Crime Victimization Survey*—and you'll get very detailed results of numerous victimization surveys. NCVS largely gets around the problem of non-reporting to the police. Some of these publications report details on the victim's

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perception of who the offender is. The data on the location of crimes is particularly detailed, and, in Chapters 5 and 6, we'll take a look at the result of *CompStat*, a methodology for gathering crime statistics and *mapping crime* ("*hot spots*") and an organization strategy tool for determining where police resources should be deployed. It is based on the philosophy that citizens need to be protected from *criminal predation*. In addition, the U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ) publishes the *Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin* regularly; it's an extremely valuable source on crime and the *social and official constructions of crime*. It contains issues devoted to *criminal victimization*, the *social and emotional impact of crime*, *arrests in the United States*, the *correctional population*, *prisoners for each year*, *homicide trends*, *intimate partner violence*, and so on. Google "U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics" and you'll call up a menu with options that lead you to hundreds, perhaps thousands, of useful documents.

A Few Websites

Leah Williams, *ehow.com*, "Five Main Theories of Deviant Behavior"

about education, "Sociological Explanations of Deviant Behavior"

uiowa.edu, "Sociological Theories of Deviance"

edu.LearnSoc.org, "Deviance Theories"

University of Minnesota:
www.d.umn,edu/~bmork/2306/Theories/BAMClassificationofdeviantttheories.htm

ww2.valdosta.edu/~klowney/devtheorie.htm, "Sociological Theories To Explain Deviance

Boundless.com, "Sociological Theories of Deviance"

Explanations of Deviant Behavior

Virtually all textbooks on deviance include a chapter on *theories or explanations of deviant behavior*. The theories discussed often include a standard set of explanations—*free will*, *rational choice*, or *routine activity theory*; *social disorganization* or the *"Chicago" school*; *anomie* or *strain theory*; *differential association* and *learning theory*; and *social control* and *self-control theories*. These are standard deviance fare. Sociologists of deviance have adopted very few *new* theories or explanations of deviance in general in the past quarter-century or more. What has changed is that some of the

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more recent analyses have begun introducing the idea that certain influences can and do *deter* crime, most notably neighborhood *effectiveness*. The instructor can look all of them up in deviance texts, criminology texts, and on the Internet. With all of them, there are the classic readings, as well as more recent additions, emendations, critiques, commentaries, appraisals, ripostes, replies, rebuttals, what have you. And all of these theories have attracted numerous volumes adopting one or another stance toward them. Think about the extent to which certain "theories" of deviance are not *positivistic explanations of deviant behavior* and whether a real *causal or positivistic theory* can truly take *constructionism* and *phenomenology* into account. A few relevant readings (some are texts, most are not) include:

Patricia A. Adler and Peter Adler (eds.), *Constructions of Deviance: Social Power, Contexts, and Interaction* (Thompson/Wadsworth, multiple editions): a constructionist approach.

Ronald Akers, *Deviant Behavior* (3/e, Wadsworth, 1985): social learning theory.

Robert Bursik, Jr., and Harold Grasmick, *Neighborhoods and Crime: The Dimensions of Effective Community Control* (Lexington Books, 1993): an updated version of social disorganization theory.

Ronald Clarke and Marcus Felson (eds.), *Routine Activities and Rational Choice* (Transaction, 1993).

Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin, *Delinquency and Opportunity* (Free Press, 1960): a presentation of the anomie model as it pertains to delinquency.

Albert K. Cohen, *Delinquent Boys: The Subculture of the Gang* (Free Press, 1955): *anomie* plus *cultural theory*.

Nanette J. Davis, *Sociological Constructions of Deviance: Perspectives and Issues in the Field* (2/e, William C. Brown, 1980): the author examines *theories of deviance* as attempts at "puzzle solving" and offers some "beginnings" toward *a theory of social control*. Unfortunately, this book did not progress beyond its second edition, which was published a third of a century ago.

Daniel Dotter, *Creating Deviance: An Interactionist Approach* (Altamira Press, 2004): most *interactionist theories* are not etiological.

Jack D. Douglas and Francis C. Waksler, *The Sociology of Deviance: An Introduction* (Little, Brown, 1982): why do some deviance texts catch on and go into multiple editions

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while others do not? As they pertain to a theoretical approach, are the more *eclectic approaches* of Clinard's and Thio's texts what instructors want? Was the more *phenomenological approach* of Douglas and Waksler too difficult for most undergrads to grasp? Does the same hold for the textbooks that were oriented to the *"critical" approaches to deviance*, such as Nanette Davis and Clarice Stasz, *Social Control of Deviance: A Critical Perspective* (McGraw-Hill, 1990)? It's something to consider.

David Downes and Paul Rock, *Understanding Deviance* (6/e, Oxford University Press, 2011): a description and assessment of all the basic theories, including *symbolic interactionism*, *phenomenology*, *radical theory*, and *feminist theory*.

Kai T. Erikson, *Wayward Puritans: A Study of the Sociology of Deviance* (Wiley, 1966): a *functionalist explanation of social control* among the Massachusetts Puritans, though it does adopt *a constructionist or "labeling" approach* in Chapter 1.

Erich Goode (ed.), *Out of Control* (Stanford University Press, 2008): an anthology of chapters contributed by authors who comment on the viability of *self-control theory*.

Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi, *A General Theory of Crime* (Stanford University Press, 1990): *self-control theory*.

Travis Hirschi, *Causes of Delinquency* (University of California Press, 1969): *control theory*.

Travis Hirschi and Michael Gottfredson (eds.), *The Generality of Deviance* (Transaction, 1994): chapters on *self-control* and *control theory*.

Ruth Kornhauser, *Social Sources of Delinquency: An Appraisal of Analytic Models* (University of Chicago Press, 1978): an assessment of various *theories of delinquency and deviance*.

Charles H. McCaghy, Timothy A. Capron, J.D. Jameson, and Sandra Harley Carey, *Deviant Behavior: Crime, Conflict, and Interest Groups* (9/e, Taylor & Francis, 2015): deviance mainly from the "*interest group theory*" approach.

Steven F. Messner and Richard Rosenfeld, *Crime and the American Dream* (2/e, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1997): a brief introduction to anomie theory.

Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess, *The City* (University of Chicago Press, 1925, 1984): a statement of *social disorganization theory*.

Earl Rubington and Martin S. Weinberg, *Deviance: The Interactionist Perspective* (10/e, Routledge, 2007).

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Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay, *Juvenile Delinquency in Urban Areas* (University of Chicago Press, 1942): the classic *social disorganization* statement.
Edwin Sutherland, *Principles of Criminology* (3/e, Lippencott, 1939): a textbook espousing *differential association theory*.
Stuart Traub and Craig Little (eds.), *Theories of Deviance* (5/e, Peacock, 1999): different theoretical approaches.
Robert W. Winslow, *Society in Transition: A Social Approach to Deviance* (Free Press, 1970): a deviance text from the *anomie perspective*—it didn't work.

25 Great Courses
In "Explaining Social Deviance," a unit in *The 25 Great Courses*, Professor Paul Wolpe discusses why "some people commit crimes," or "use the wrong fork," or how a society determines "when a crime has been committed, which fork to use, and who should speak when." In short, how we have "tried to explain deviance and create categories of deviants" (http://thegreatcourses.com/explaining-social-deviance.html). The 10 lectures include chapters on "the first step," the *demonological explanation*, *deviance as pathology* ("I'm OK, You Are Twisted"), *deviance disorganization* ("Deviance in the Urban Landscape"), *functionalism and anomie* ("Why Can't We All Just Get Along?"), *learning theory* ("You Have to Be Carefully Taught"), *control theory* ("Spare the Rod, Spare the Child"), *labeling theory* ("Is Deviance in the Eye of the Beholder?"), *conflict and constructionism* ("Every Step You Take, I'll Be Watching You"), and *Case Studies*, this one specifically on sex and science.

Conform or Rebel?
The New Charter University teaches a course entitled "Sociology: Understanding and Changing to Social World," of which Unit 4 is entitled "Conform or Rebel? Adapting to an Unequal Playing Field," and Chapter 7 is entitled "Explaining Deviance"; its publisher is Flat World Knowledge. The Learning Objective of this chapter is to guide the student toward being able to "state the major arguments and assumptions of the various *sociological explanations of deviance*."

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Debate Panel

A potentially interesting class could be devoted to a debate between and among three, four, or five students, each of whom adopts one of the theories of deviance and prepares for a debate; then all assemble during a regularly scheduled class and each, facing the rest of the class, presents a brief talk on the viability of his or her theory, then debate the issue and, finally, take questions from the members of the class. Or, in pairs, one by one, the designated two-person teams could debate the viability of one theory—pro and con—and do this for all or some of the theories in, say, 15-minute segments of a single class, or half-hour segments of two classes. Does a winner emerge from the debate/s?

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