

Sociology of deviance midterm essay sample

[Sociology](#)



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1) What do sociologists mean when they describe deviance as being relative? Provide an example of a deviant behavior and identify how it is relative. Deviance is behavior that a considerable number of people in a society view as reprehensible and beyond the limits of tolerance. In most cases it is both negatively valued and provokes hostile reactions. Deviance does not exist independently of norms. Without norms, and without the application of norms in interpreting behavior, there is no deviance. Society bases their views on what is considered appropriate by the majority of people within that society or culture. So in rural Utah seeing two men hold hands and displaying affection towards each other may seem unnatural and extremely out of the ordinary, the same couple could be living in San Francisco and their behavior may go unnoticed because they are among people of like mind where homosexuality is accepted. This explains how deviant behavior is relative to the population who deem what is socially appropriate. Or we could consider WWII and how being Jewish was considered deviant. The Nazi's tried to exterminate an entire race due to their beliefs. This behavior was seen as deviant by the rest of the world and spawned WWII.

2) What are deviant places, and how are they associated with deviant acts? Deviant places are places that sustain deviant acts and behaviors even when the population has changed. This happens when (1) density; (2) poverty; (3) mixed use; (4) transience; and (5) dilapidation are present in the same place. These issues create an environment in which people feel unsafe. Also with poverty comes the stress and anxiety of knowing where the next meal

comes from. This leads to crime, such as theft and more aggressive behavior due to living in a stressful environment.

3) Sociologists detail the importance of contextual and social patterns for deviant acts such as abuse, murder, and rape. Choose from abuse, murder, and rape, and then detail an important social pattern or variation. Within the Strain Theory, the amount of pressure and stress placed on a group in different situations can exacerbate negative/deviant behavior. In the event of someone's death there are different ways to look at it. Certain areas of high crime have a higher rate of murders than others. The Southernness hypothesis is the study of climate, culture, and gun ownership (which there is a lot of in the south.) The link between guns, alcohol and violent crimes and how they contribute to a higher homicide rate show the link between all of these factors. The belief is that the cultural acceptance of violence as a means to assert your views, the high instances of alcohol abuse, and the warmer climate all play a role in homicidal tendencies. My belief is that the commonality is the acceptance of gun ownership and the strong belief in an eye for an eye.

4) Compare and contrast two different types of suicide, providing an example of each. An altruistic suicide is a highly integrated individual. This is an attempt to save others such as jumping on a grenade to save your battalion or becoming a suicide bomber because you believe your acts will help the people in your country as well as catapult you into heaven for making such a sacrifice. It is the belief that the act itself will save the lives and souls of others. It is done for the greater good. A Fatalistic suicide – is done by a person who is highly regulated. This person feels oppressed, or <https://assignbuster.com/sociology-of-deviance-midterm-essay-sample/>

suffocated by the structure and thumb they live under. I would liken it to the high school shooters that needed to take out the students who made them feel invisible first, then they killed themselves. It was a desire to break free from the chains, or imaginary status lines they lived under,

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What are the fundamental differences between the biological, psychological, and sociological theories of deviance? Choose a sociological theory from your readings and provide a summary of its important ideas and concepts. Then choose a deviant act and utilize the theory to explain why people engage in such behaviors.

When thinking of deviance the first thought that comes to mind is someone who would be considered abusive, incapable of following directions or rules, or completely aggressive in nature and is unable to live among society for fear of what he/she may do to themselves or others. Fortunately there are other views and ideas of what deviance means, and it is different in every society. The word deviance even means different things if it is defined under a different perspective such as sociological, biological, or psychological. For sociologist deviant behavior is the behavior that fails to conform to the rules or norms of the group in question. (Durkheim, 1960) So if we are to determine whether an act is deviant or not, it is relative to the group who is enforcing the rule. This view is based on society as a whole and how they choose to govern themselves. Under the biological view of deviance, the belief is that deviant behavior is something that you are born with, not something you acquire.

It is not necessarily genetically inherent, but it does allow for a susceptibility of deviance. “ Melnick believed that certain individuals inherit an autonomous nervous system that is slow to be aroused or react to stimuli. Such individuals are then slow to learn control of aggressive or antisocial behavior.”(Melnick, 1977) Now when delving into the psychological definition of deviance it goes deeper into each individuals psyche. The psychoanalytic theory of deviance defined by Freud is based on his belief that we are comprised of three parts; The Id, the ego, and the super ego. Each of the different aspects of the human psyche helps formulate our personalities as well as our internal motivation. The Id is comprised of all the irrational drives, instincts and desires that bubble under the surface. It is the epitome of our rawest form. The id is based in desires, wants, and pleasure seeking. This part of our personality is the most deviant because it is pure lust. Lust for power, for status, for physical pleasure and more.

What Freud is saying with the Id is that all of us have a propensity for deviance, but socialization helps us control those impulses and push the id into the unconscious. Because we are able to control that we are able to function appropriately in society. For other people socialization did not happen at the proper time and they are not under the control of either the ego or the super ego. This is when the Id regains control and self-control goes by the wayside. But my belief is more of a behaviorist approach. As a behavior intervention specialist it is my job to identify deviant behavior and assist in modifying the behavior to suit the classroom. The behaviorist approach based on Bandura’s work is that “ people will adjust and modify their behavior based on the rewards and punishments their actions

elicit.”(Bandura, 1969) “ If we do something that leads to a favorable outcome than we are more likely to repeat that action. If our behavior leads to unfavorable consequences then we are less likely to repeat that behavior”.

The behaviorist approach is a common thread in most groups and is utilized to keep order in most societies. If you do well, support your government, abide by the laws, and take care of your community you are less likely to end up in jail than someone who is breaking into homes and robbing banks. Society, family, and peers look down upon negative behaviors; whereas approving nods, smiles, and verbal praise from the people around you reinforces the positive behaviors. You choose to do the right thing because it feels good. For example, when there is a student that is acting out(i. e. laying on the floor, climbing on tables, screaming under the desks) in the classroom, this would be considered deviant behavior in a classroom setting. When this happens they are removed from the class, immediately. They are not permitted to participate in classroom activities until they have maintained control of their behavior. The desired outcome is the child prefers to be in the classroom and chooses to follow the rules and directions rather than constant removal.

The action taken is quick, consistent, and unwavering. These rules put in place by the teacher are upheld to the letter. There are absolutely no exceptions, but if this child receives extra attention from peers, or gets laughs and smiles from the teacher, the behavior will continue. Even if it has been deemed as bad behavior, if they have enough people giving in, and giving them what they want the behavior will most definitely be repeated.

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The classmates make light of it, teachers feel guilty for sending the child out, and every time they are sent to the office they get to color pictures, and get a snack. This is how deviant behavior elicits a positive response. "The Strain Theory by Robert K Merton was the belief that American society pushes individuals towards deviance by over-emphasizing the importance of monetary success while failing to emphasize the importance of using legitimate means to achieve the success. Those individuals who occupy favorable positions in social class structure have many legitimate means at their disposal to achieve success.

However, those who occupy unfavorable positions lack such means. Thus the goal of financial success combined with unequal access to important environmental resources creates deviance." (Merton, 1938, 1968) This theory, in my opinion explains the issues with the trickle down theory of economics, and why it doesn't work. When people with wealth and power rule over the working class it creates dissention. The rich get richer, the poor get poorer, and people panic. When decisions are made out of fear, deviant behavior becomes commonplace. It is basically explaining why people who are born into money keep money, and people who never have money have an even harder time getting it. It then turns into extremes and on each end whether it is excess, or poverty deviant behavior runs rampant. Rich people work hard to keep their wealth and maintain their status, and poor people work hard to stay alive.

This view would be an easy way to explain why white collar crimes happen. If the belief is such that losing your wealth is the worst thing that could happen to you, then you are willing to do what ever it takes to maintain that status.

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The strain theory exemplifies the stress factors that go into maintaining your status. I believe each theory of deviance has merit. Sociologically in some instances it is the environment in which you are raised that fosters bad choices and deviant behavior. Biologically there is a propensity for deviant behavior in children who have been born to parents that have abused drugs or alcohol during pregnancy. This is an undeniable factor that can be associated with ADHD, depression, and antisocial behavior. And finally the psychological explanation of deviance that attributes deviance to the internal driving force or the id, and the behaviorist approach to associating with deviance with positive or negative consequences. In every way there are many different explanations, but ultimately it is society they decides what is right and wrong and what they are willing to accept.

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