

Example of critical thinking on functionalist theory

[Sociology](#), [Social Issues](#)



\n[[toc title="Table of Contents"](#)]\n

\n \t

1. [Conflict Theory](#) \n \t
2. [Control Theory](#) \n \t
3. [Interactionists Theory](#) \n \t
4. [Differential Association](#) \n \t
5. [Reference](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

In sociology, crime and deviance are studied when cultural norms, changes it goes through over time and the consequences that occur when they are broken are studied. With help of norms, individuals learn to exert self control from the activities that might destroy the peace of a society. Social norms differ in different parts of the world. It means that if for one society a certain social act is abhorred it might be considered normal in another society. Sociologists study the reasons behind these differences and how it effects the population living in those societies.

Deviance is the name given to the behavior that violates the social norms or their existence created by the masses. People around us expect us to behave in ways similar to their behaviors but if we do something unexpected or awkward then they label us as deviant. Hence, we can say that deviance does not just lies in the individual's behavior but in the reactions given by other people in a society.

Sociologists have explained through certain theories that why individuals violate the social norms and what the society does as a result. These theories that explain deviance and crime are functionalist theory, conflict

<https://assignbuster.com/example-of-critical-thinking-on-functionalist-theory/>

theory, control theory and interactionist theory.

In the video 'wrong-eyed Jesus' every prisoner committed crime but from different perspectives. While being in jail they realized that whatever they did was wrong and they regret doing it. Prisons give them the sense of guilt and remorse over their actions.

A society is made up of complex social functions and social structures. As suggested by the great sociologist, Émile Durkheim, deviance is important to make a society function normally. After a deviant act, do the people realize which one is an acceptable behavior and which is an unacceptable behavior. People are able to differentiate between right and wrong properly. The prisoners in the video give a lesson to us that because they valued their short term goals more than their long term goals they are suffering. They knew that " crime and deviance result from structural tensions and a lack of moral regulation within society." [page 3] " Deviance promotes boundary maintenance between ' good' and ' bad' behaviors in society. A criminal act can ultimately enhance group solidarity and clarify social norms." [page 4] These prisoners knew that they are committing crimes but they were so engrossed in the satisfaction that these crimes gave them that they forgot that they will ever get caught.

Conflict Theory

According to this theory, " individuals purposely engage in deviant behavior in response to the inequalities of the capitalist system." [page 7]In an industrialized society, two groups of people are most prominent; one is called the elite class and the other is the working class. The elite class is very

powerful but the working class is not powerful. In a society a lot of people are doing deviance but only those who cannot get support from expensive lawyers or other elite individuals are caught. Similar perspective is noticed in the conversations made by the prisoners. All the interviewees belong to the working class and they got caught and sentenced for a really long time in prison because no powerful persons back them up.

Control Theory

Control theory states that every person wants to commit deviance at several times in their lives but they exert control on themselves as they have close bonds with the society. However, when they find that the reward of committing a crime is greater than the risks of punishment in it so they commit the crime. In my opinion, Control theory is exactly what explains the stories of these prisoners. They committed crimes because it “ occurs as a result of an imbalance between impulses toward criminal activity and the social or physical controls that deter it.” [page 7] All of them were involved in activities like doing drugs, drinking alcohol, stealing, etc and they did so because the society pushed them in this way. They did not have strong bonds with the society around them that is why they had no self control.

Interactionists Theory

Interactionist theories are symbolic in nature. The sociologists supporting this theory state that deviance is not a characteristic that lays in the behavior of an individual but it lies in the interactions of a deviant and the society. For example, if a person is smoking marijuana he or she is not deviant but deviance is the name given to others reactions towards this

action. If that person had been smoking marijuana under a doctor's guidance then no body would have considered this act as deviance. In our society, " people become deviant because certain labels are attached to their behavior by political authorities and others." [page 8]These labels differ in different societies. Similarly, in the video the prisoners were doing what the people surrounding them did. They had stopped realized or never realized that they were committing a crime; however, they were caught while others were not.

Differential Association

This concept states that the act of deviance is highly influenced by social relationships. It means that individuals who commit crimes learn the deviance behavior from the ones surrounding them like their friends, colleagues or family because with them they spend most of their time. The supporter of this theory, Edwin H. Sutherland points out that " Differential association theory argues that we learn deviant behavior in precisely the same way we learn about conventional behavior." We are likely to commit a crime if we are often exposed to illegal activities by our peers. Similarly, in the video the prisoners stated the same thing that they were just doing something that was part of their routine. They were grown old with the same kind of people like them and that is why dealing with drugs, drinking, stealing, etc were not crimes for them.

Reference

SparkNotes. 2013. Website. 21 October 2013.