

# Good example of sociology mid-term exam essay

[Psychology](#), [Success](#)



## Question 1

Every society is characterized by both formal and informal rules, controls and restrictions that usually constrain people to that society's social norms. However, in spite of these social sanctions or controls, some individuals tend to deviate and engage in what is referred to as deviant behaviour.

Deviant behaviour normally comprises of behaviour that differs or fluctuates from the values and norms of wider society. Individuals are presumed to engage in deviant behaviour when they act or dress in ways that are contrary to the norms and values of their immediate society (Adler and Adler 2012). A group of individuals exhibiting deviant behaviour share common values and belief and can therefore create a distinct subculture. In many cases however, the society usually has some form of formal or informal punishments that is given to those who engage in deviant behaviour.

It should however be noted that deviance is a dynamic feature that varies from one setting to another. For instance, what may be considered deviant behaviour in one community may be taken as normal behaviour in another society ( Adler and Adler, 2012) However, the uniting feature in all societies about deviant behaviour is the fact that it is seen as having a negative feature to the entire society.

Deviant behaviour should not be confused with criminal behaviour. While deviant behaviour is usually a behaviour that differs or fluctuates from the values and norms of wider society, criminal behaviour on the other hand comprises behaviour that involves breaking the law, for instance, murder or theft. Therefore, while deviant behaviour is against social norms, criminal behaviour is exclusively against the law. Criminal behaviour also tends to

find definition in terms of country, state or township while deviant behaviour is usually defined in terms of time or situation.

Many deviant behaviour cases are legal but in some cases, the behaviour may result in criminal or illegal activity. There is consequently a lot of overlap between the two and one must pay keen attention to be able to distinguish between the two.

## **Question 2**

Robert Merton theory of Deviance is one of the most utilized theories when it comes to the understanding of social deviance. According to this theory, normally referred to as the Structural Functional Theory, when people are prevented by the conventional society from achieving some of the culturally approved goals via institutionalized means, they usually experience a strain that inadvertently leads to deviance (Adler and Adler, 2012). In this sense, deviance is viewed as an involuntary feature. The denial to the access of institutionalized means to goals achievement or success means that people are forced to turn to opportunity structures that are illegitimate. Robert's Merton's theory is therefore seen as a pull between opposing forces in the social structure and not as a decision of an individual. The meaning of this is that an individual is forced to engage in deviant behaviour due to a strain that has been created in him by limited opportunities or denial to access to institutionalized means of achieving success.

**Conformism- This is where both goals and means of achieving them are whole heartedly accepted.**

Innovation- cultural goals are accepted but illegitimate means are employed to achieve them, for instance property theft.

Ritualism- Adhering to institutional means but ignoring the cultural goals

Retreatism- This is the withdrawal or the complete opting out of the socially accepted, desirable or defined behaviour, for instance, drug addicts and alcoholics.

Rebellion- People in this category not only rejects both goals and means, they also make attempts to replace these goals and means with alternative ones.

### **Question 3**

The three major types of data sources for studying deviant behaviour are Field Research, Official Statistics and Survey Research (Adler and Adler, 2012).

Field Research- This normally involves researchers physically getting out into the actual environment and studying the human behaviour exactly as it exists in the world. The researcher fully interacts with his subjects, sometimes unknowingly to them and makes critical observations about their behavior. The researcher at the end sits down with his or her results and makes psychological deductions or conclusions. The major strength of this data source is that it enables the researcher to collect firsthand information that is unbiased or uncensored. However, this source has one major weakness and this is the risk of physical or emotional harm because the researcher who is out there researching on various deviants is usually exposed to various threats and uncertainties.

Official Statistics- In this method, details about various deviant behaviors and activities have been researched on previously and recorded. What the researcher simply does is to go through the already documented statistics

and comes out with information. There is no primary research and the researcher only draws information from already recorded data. This method has several strengths and one of these is that it is relatively cheap, that is, it does not incur costs, like travels costs. There are also very few physical risks involved. However, the major weakness of this method is that the data gained may be biased or inaccurate since the original researchers may have been erroneous in their research.

Survey Research- This type of research is almost similar to field research with the difference being that the researcher does not go the actual field or environment. He merely sends survey forms to various respondents who fill them and give them back. In other instances, the survey may involve deep and intensive interviews with the respondents. The major strength of this type of information source is that the researcher is able to get first hand information from the client. However, there is a weakness to this in that the respondent may chose to give only responses that are appealing to the interviewer or the researcher.

#### **Question 4**

Howard Becker, who is one of the pioneers of social deviance theories, defines moral entrepreneurs as persons who are in power and who engage in active campaigns to have certain forms of deviant behaviour to be outlawed. However, the term moral entrepreneur is not merely restricted to individuals. It may also refer to social organizations or groups. These individuals, groups or organizations assume the responsibility of persuading the wider society to enact rules and regulation that outlaw various types of deviance and that advocate for general society morality (Becker, 1963). The entrepreneurs may

actually act as the creators of rules by actively crusading for the enactment or passage of policies and laws against abhorrent behaviors or they may act as rule enforcers by implementing and administering them. Howard Becker further elaborates on the concept of moral entrepreneurs by referring to a case study of the dynamic United States marijuana laws. He cites the Federal Bureau of Narcotics as a moral entrepreneur and a rule creator that actively created rules and mobilized resources to set off an inexorable moral crusade against the use of marijuana in the United States. The bureau used a rhetoric that fully resonated with society's hegemonic moral standards; it saturated the media and the entire popular culture with horrific stories about the social and moral threats that are posed by individuals who violated these rules by taking marijuana. The bureau's efforts finally culminated in the passage of several anti marijuana laws in the United States (Becker, 1963). However, it should be noted that not all moral campaigns are successful. Some even fail to launch due to lack of funding or lack of support from relevant authorities and the society in general.

## **Question 5**

The Differential Social Power is a notion that is used to explain social deviance and suggests that the definition of deviance can find application to a lifestyle or a social status. For example, one prevalent notion in the society is that deviance or deviant behaviour exhibited by the upper class is relatively less harmful than the deviance exhibited by the poor or the working class (blue collar crime vs. white collar crime). This aspect may be explored better from the following angles:

Visibility- Deviance or deviant behaviour exhibited by the lower classes is

<https://assignbuster.com/good-example-of-sociology-mid-term-exam-essay/>

often out there in the street that is it is more evident. In spite of the heinous nature of these crimes, the crimes cannot have enormous effects on the participants, for instance they cannot bring about millions that are normally associated with white collar crimes. However, due to the fact that they are more visible and evident, larger sanctions are usually applied on them.

Demeanor- The working class people's attitude tends to be more combative in nature. This could be understood better by considering the aspect of "gangs" vs. "corporate executives". In this sense, the gangs are often viewed as acting against the wider society or being against it while on the other hand; corporate executives are viewed as supporting the society's status quo without regards, for example, to the amount of toxic waste that may dump to the environment. Therefore, gangs are treated or punished in a harsher manner.

Bias- This aspect involves the social groups who are viewed as being not in accordance with social norms (at least the basic ones) and are therefore viewed as more deviant.

## **References**

- Adler, P. A., & Adler, P. (2012). *Constructions of deviance: Social power, context, and interaction* (7th ed.). Australia: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.
- Becker, H. S. (1963). *Outsiders; studies in the sociology of deviance*. London: Free Press of Glencoe.