

# Relationship between deviance and social control



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Outline and critically discuss the way in which your studies have developed your understanding of the inner relationship between deviance and social control.

In this essay I will be discussing the relationship between deviance and social control. The notion of deviance and social control have many aspects however my understanding of these terms is that they try to group, control and define certain types of behaviour. Deviance is a behaviour that violates standards or expectations of society (tim new burn). It often involves violating group norms. The concept of deviance is very complex because norms vary considerably across groups, times, and places. This essay will be discussing how certain types of people have deviant labels attach to them as a result of social control. The key topics I will be demonstrating are race, faith and terrorism. I will be arguing how the people who have power, attach labels to those groups and how those labels affect them. I will be explaining my initial understanding and views of these topics, going on to explain how they may have been changed, challenged or reinforced after attending lectures and using the sources available to me to expand my knowledge. Also, I will be using evidence from sources I have read to support these views and considering how these contribute to the inter-relationship between 'deviance' and social control.

Human are social beings and have been living in societies for decades. Every society has its own culture made up of norms and values. People that go against these norms and values are considered deviant. Howard S. Becker explains that deviance is " not the act itself, but the reactions to the act, that makes something deviant (tim new burn). He further explains that in some

cases, the individual does not need to do anything to be labelled as deviant. The deviant person may be falsely accused or discredited because of a birth defect, race, or disease. There are two types of deviance, informal and formal. Informal deviance is where a person violates informal social norms, which are laws that have not been codified into law. An example could be a person picking their nose in public. Whereas formal deviance is where a person violates the state of laws. Examples include murder, theft, assault and rape.

Social control is an important part of societal stability. Social control refers to the many ways our behaviour, thoughts and appearances are controlled by the people around us, mainly by the people of power. They are organized methods for teaching and enforcing conformity. There are two different types of social control, informal and formal social control. Informal social control is where our behaviour is exercised by a society without stating any rules or laws. It is expressed through norms and customs. For example, our friends and family are an example of informal social control. Formal social control is defined by the legal sanctions and enforced by institutions such as the police and the courts. It is carried out as a last option at some places when the desired behaviour is not possible through informal social control.

Recently there has been numerous talks in the media about terrorism. Before attending the lectures my initial understanding of the term terrorism was that, it is a person or a group of people who attacks or murders other people for the purpose of their religious beliefs. However, after attending the lectures I have learnt, terrorism is one of many 'essentially contested concepts' (Gallie, 1994). Terrorism has many meanings to it as (Jackson et

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al, 2011) argues, it is impossible to find any agreement over the meaning of the term terrorism. Undoubtedly to many, terrorism is to use or threaten to use violence against civilians to achieve a political or ideological goal. When we hear the term terrorism, the first event that comes into people's mind is the horrific 9/11 attack. It is a controversial subject for most but what makes a terrorist commit these deviant acts is a subject many sociologists try to understand for many years. However, through attending the lectures I have learnt, social control creates an important part in constructing terrorism. Social control theory proposes that our behaviour is controlled by the people around us, such as our family and friends. Social control can have a big effect as to why terrorist commits these crimes. We all have influences from people telling us what is good and what is bad thus consequently affecting how we perceive of deviant and non-deviant behaviour. An example could be a terrorist from Iraq. Chances are that this man is a Muslim and his religion and culture are being threatened by western people. In his mind a terrorist attack seems probable because he is being threatened as well as his way of life, religion and family, etc. So acts that seem deviant to us and our conscious may not seem deviant to other people in other cultures who have different standards for life and their community. Social control is a deliberate attempt to change human behaviours (Cliff Roberson 2015). Some people conform to social rules because they have no other alternatives (Cliff Roberson 2015).

Media is a prime example between terrorism and deviance. The media is a one-way outlet that reaches millions of people (O'Brien and Yar 2008). When switching on the news, most likely you will see the media labelling Muslims

as terrorists. The labelling theory plays an important part in constructing terrorism. The theory assumes that once individuals have been labelled as deviants, they often face new problems that stem from the reactions of self and others to negative stereotypes (stigma) that are attached to the deviant label. These problems in turn can increase the likelihood of deviant and criminal behaviour (Bernburg, 2009). Western media has created a negative image of Muslims worldwide (Aswad, 2013). Thus, promoting large amount of racism that includes media stereotypes, hate crimes and dehumanizing ideology (El-Aswad, 2013). From a British Muslim myself, I always thought the labelling of terrorism would always be attached to people like myself as when switching on the news you would always hear the word Islam and terrorism linked together. However, Islam does not promote terrorism, it promotes peace and because the people who have power such as the media labels Muslims as terrorists, as a result unfortunately you see racism and hate crime accumulate.

Race is one way we identify ourselves and each other in societies. Before attending the lectures my knowledge of the meaning of race was our skin colour and our language. However, after attending the lectures I have learnt that our racial identity depends on a number of factors, including our family history, language, cultural practices, and physical appearance.

Sociologists argue that our race is socially constructed. While there is no biological basis for race, we have learned to attach racial meanings to various physical and social attributes. Race has varied throughout time and across location. For example, in the early twentieth century, US law did not consider Italians, Irish, and other light skinned groups "white" (Haenfler,

2014). Ethnicity is another way with which we may identify ourselves. Like race, ethnicity has to do with family history, language, cultural practices, and physical appearance. However, ethnicity is used to describe more specific subsets within race. Whereas race may refer to being white or black, ethnicity may refer to nationality, religion, cultural background, or a combination of those. As meanings are made in a subculture (through environment, ideals, rules, clothing, norms, objects of significance), it becomes easier to label what is considered deviant, loosely defined as breaking a social norm or law, or as a failure to obey group rules. Stigma is constituted through labelling a particular group as deviant, typically done by people in power for example the government officials, lawmakers and the media. Using deviance to create stigma is known as social control, an important aspect in analysing the relationship between subcultures, race, and deviance (Becker 1966).

Racism is an extreme form of prejudice that assumes superiority of one group over others. Racism is expressed in the negative actions of individuals and institutions and is promoted in the ideology of popular culture or social norms (sociology. com, 2016). The strain theory could be an example in relation to racism. Established by American sociologist Robert K. Merton, strain theory refers to the discrepancies between culturally defined goals and the institutionalized means available in order to achieve those goals (boundless. com, 2016). Merton used “ anomie” to refer to the strain people experience when they are blocked in their attempts to achieve those goals. He identified four types of deviant responses to anomie; conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion (boundless. com, 2016).

Merton suggests that strain is formed from an imbalance of social structure and culture. This strain is produced by this imbalance, which can lead to deviant copying. For example, the superior society tend to disharmonize from other cultural goals. As a result, they systematically produce assumptions that place stigma on those from another culture. As I am an Asian British myself, growing up was really hard for me as there was always this label attached to me because of my colour. I strongly believe that no race holds more superiority than another. Racism should not be existent in society, especially for countries such as UK who label themselves as 'multicultural' (the guardian, 2018). Racism is a deviant act that occurs due to differences in cultural goals and functional race and ethic relations resulting in assimilation. Merton's strain theory proposes that racism occurs due to the dissension between the superior culture and the minority. However, there is no excuse or reasons for deviant acts of racism and the resolution to this is equality for all races.

Religion plays an important role in society. Religion is a collection of cultural systems, belief system and worldviews that relate to humanity to spiritual or moral values. There are many different types of religions however, Islam and Christianity are the two most highly populated religion around the world (Thoughtco. com 2019). Religion is a form of social control. It has predetermined rules and morals that one must follow. Religion is normally inherited into a family morally, where a family's culture ties in with their religion and their lives. However, that may not always be the case as some people may convert to different types of religions. Sociologist Emile Durkheim believed that religion functioned as a social force. According to

him greater levels of religious commitment leads to reduced negative behaviours. However, how does religion reduce criminal or deviant behaviours. The answer lies in the understandings drawn from social capital theory (Coleman, 1988) and social control theory (Hirschi, 1969). Many researchers contend that religious involvement may create social networks and emotional support that will limit criminal behaviour. Religious individuals tend to be bonded to religious institutions that provide informal social control over their behaviours. The behaviour of individuals with higher levels of religiosity is thought to be guided by the sanctions resulting from religion. According to this logic, religiosity may operate as a shield against negative behaviours such as crime and deviance by creating and reinforcing social networks and social bonds. For example, a research conducted by Shona Robinson-Edwards and Craig Pinkney, where they interviewed and studied Ibrahim who is a 38-year-old Black male and a former gang member (Robinson-Edwards and Pinkney, 2018). The research explores the experiences of Ibrahim, an ex-offender who has embraced Islam and confesses Islam to be the influential element to his desistance process from crime (Robinson-Edwards and Pinkney, 2018). From my perspective I think religion shapes the person you become as it teaches you what is right from wrong, whether they are values or norms as they give you a basic understanding of how to be a good person. For example, the religion I follow is Islam. As a result of my religion I refrain from deviant and criminal behaviour because I believe that I will be punished in the afterlife if I committed these acts. However, some people may argue that religion could be a bad thing for a person's social life, as if they follow a guide line their entire life, then they are not able to express their true selves. For example, if

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someone was a homosexual, they would have to limit this idea if they follow Islam or Christianity.

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