

Deviance and the correctional system

Law, Criminal Justice



Deviance is any form of behavior that violates the norms of a society. Behavior that is considered deviant is usually condemned and often punished. Crime is a more dangerous and extreme form of deviance. The term can be defined as a deviant type of behavior that is prohibited by law and is punishable by the government. Many laws divide crimes into categories depending on the seriousness of the offense, the age of the offender, the punishment that can be administered and the actual court. According to sociologists there are multiple explanations for crime and sociologists have created different theories. Also, there are many types of activities that are considered crime and the criminal justice system has the responsibility to keep all citizens of a country safe and secure. To explain deviance, many scientists have contributed to theories and ideas. There are biological, psychological, and sociological explanations. The sociological theorists have different perspectives. According to functionalists, deviance is a common part of human society and it has both positive and negative consequences for social stability. Sociologists with a conflict perspective view deviance as the result of competition and social inequality. It is an idea that people that are deviant with a power break norms in an effort to keep that power. Deviant people without power act to obtain some form of power or to compensate for feelings of powerlessness and self-esteem. Another way of looking at it is the interactionist perspective. Interactionists focus on everyday interactions among people and how they influence people to commit deviant acts. In my opinion, this theory seems to be the one that sounds correct to me and I agree with the interactionist ideas. When deviance takes the form of lawbreaking, it is criminal behavior. The FBU

tabulates data for seven main crimes which are murder, rape, robbery, assault, burglary, larceny theft and motor vehicle theft. There are other types of crimes that are dealt with by the criminal system such as crimes against property, organized crime, white-collar crime and victimless crime and they are very distinct and different. Burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft and arson are about ten times more common than crimes of violence. These are crimes against property; they involve no violence and no force or threat against individuals. Organized crimes are networks of criminal groups that are large-scale and professional. They control illegal businesses like drug trafficking and prostitution and look to invest their illegally earned profits in businesses that are easy to keep fraudulent accounts. White-collar crime refers to a crime committed by a person of high social status in the course of his or her professional life. Business owners, corporate officers, managers and politicians often have access to large sums of money that do not belong to them. Lastly, there is victimless crime. These activities are outlawed, but the only victims are the participants. Some examples are gambling, public drunkenness, prostitution and drug possession and sale. Along with crimes comes the criminal justice system. It performs its function in four steps, apprehending suspected offenders, determining their innocence or guilt, deciding their punishment and keeping the guilty separated from other citizens. The three major elements of the criminal justice system are the police, courts, and the correctional system. The police officers have control over who is arrested for committing a crime and they have to make a lot of choices. Once the police make an arrest, the courts take responsibility for determining guilt or innocence and assigning some

type of punishment. If the person is found guilty, the courts assign a punishment called correction. The punishment can be a fine, but if a more serious crime was committed, it can also mean imprisonment for the offender. Corrections serve four major functions for society: retribution, deterrence, rehabilitation and social protection. Retribution is punishing a person for the victim and society to "get even". Deterrence means that corrections are meant to discourage offenders from committing crimes again and provide a warning to others to not pursue this type of life. Rehabilitation refers to the idea that criminals should be reformed so that they may return to society as law-abiding citizens but efforts at rehabilitation in prisons are not very successful. A major function of corrections is served and that is the fact that criminals cannot commit additional crimes which brings social protection to others. Deviance and crime happens every single day in America and countries all over the world. There are different types of crime and different punishments. Scientists have theories and ideas to explain why people commit crimes and disturb society but it is really all opinion-based. Some people believe that the United States could reduce crime if we got tougher on the punishing and sentencing of criminals and I agree that maybe this method could work. If punishments were stricter, people would think twice before committing a crime because they would not want a life sentence or even worse, the death penalty. In my opinion, this would cause the crime rate to go down.