

SOCI 101
INTRODUCTION TO
SOCIOLOGY

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G. Deviance

1. Deviance is:
The recognized violation of cultural norms.
 We deviate in both **negative and positive** ways.

- "Different, unexpected, or non-conforming" are words often used to describe sociological deviance.

2. Social Sanctions are rewards and punishments for deviant behavior.
 Both **formal** and **informal** sanctions exist as a method to **control deviance**.

Examples: Negative: a *warning* (informal) or an *arrest* (formal);
 Positive: a *"pat on the back"* (informal) or a *raise* (formal)





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Deviance: Three Sociological Theories

3a. Functionalism and the Control of Deviance

i. Deviance is part of the social structure and is necessary for society to **function** properly. Yet, it must be **controlled** lest it get out of hand. Deviance and Conformity are two sides of the same coin. High crime rates signal too *little* social control; low crime rates signal too *much* social control.

ii. Why is it necessary? What are the functions of deviance?
 Deviance and crime are necessary to **reinforce norms** of society. Deviance *clarifies moral boundaries*, and provides for a *reflection in the media* (particularly the news) on social behavior in order to *affirm* the society's values.

iii. What institutions form the structure of social control?
 The American Criminal Justice System:
 ① **Legislation** ② **Enforcement** ③ **Judiciary** ④ **Corrections**

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3.a. Structural explanation of deviance:

iv. Strain Theory (Robert Merton)

- Deviant behavior is defined by the culture within our social institutions.

Negative deviance involves behaviors that result in institutional dysfunction and social disorder (e.g. terrorism, murder, theft, etc.)
Positive deviance involves behaviors that result in improvement of institutional function, like new inventions or human rights protests.)

- Cultural goals and expectations (being normal) and the Institutional means to get there sometimes *differ*.

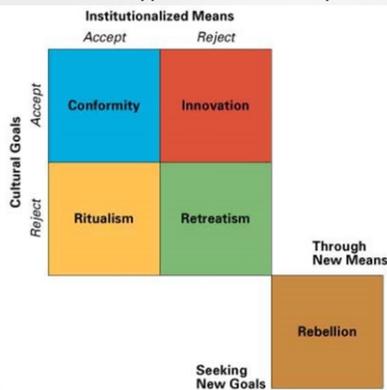
In other words, who we are expected to be and how we get there are not always available to all people in a society.

- People deviate from the norm as a result of *strained expectations* ("the system" has failed them, so they must work outside of the norm) .

Examples: crime (dealing drugs or prostitution to make money); student protest against unfair policies/actions, working incredibly hard (above and beyond) on one's own to earn the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence.

- The Result:
Innovation, Ritualism, Retreatism, or Rebellion

Robert Merton's Types of Deviance by "Strain"



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3.a. Structural explanation of deviance:

iv. Strain Theory (Robert Merton)

Conformity involves accepting cultural goals and the means to achieve them.



Deviance as a result of strain can take the forms or:

- Innovation:** acceptance of goals but rejection of legitimate means.
 Example: a member of the Mafia values wealth but employs alternative means of attaining his wealth.
- Ritualism:** rejection of goals but routinized acceptance of means.
 Example: never going any further to pursue career advancement; the cashier at McDonald's who has been there 10 years
- Retreatism:** rejection of both goals and means.
 Example: the UNAbomber, Ted Kascynski; became a hermit, rejected all of modern, industrial, society (and blew up 26 people).
- Rebellion:** rejection of both goals means, but actively attempts to replace both elements of the society with different goals and means.
 Example: the Civil Rights leaders (King) and their rejection of the normality and conformity of blatantly accepted racism.

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3b. Social Conflict Theory and the Power of Deviance

Power defines the difference between the normal and the deviant. It's not a game of "good guys" and "bad guys"; it's a game of power.

- i. Deviant people are generally **thought of as the relatively powerless** — the poor, the homeless, immigrants, etc.
Crimes committed by those people are punished severely. Crime committed by people in power are less well recognized. (for example,
- ii. **Karl Marx** first recognized that norms, and especially **laws, reflect the interests of the rich and powerful. Who creates the goals of a society?**
(cf. Marxist criminology (Wikipedia))

The powerful involved in crime are **not subject to the same penalties as individuals.**

Corporations are a good example of this. see The Corporation (2004). Lack of punishment creates further distrust of the system due to its problems.

CLASS WARFARE

Experience declares that man is the only animal which devours his own kind, for I can apply no milder term to the general prey of the rich on the poor.



Thomas Jefferson

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3c. Symbolic Interaction and the Meaning of Deviance:

Labeling Theory: deviance and conformity result from how others **respond to norm violations (interpretation is key)**

- i. **Primary deviance:** Not serious; does **not** lead to labeling
Regular episodes of norm violation that most people take part in (with little harm done to self-concept). ex: speeding or jaywalking.
- ii. **Secondary deviance:** serious & recognized/labeled
When others recognize deviant behavior, social sanctions are applied in the form of powerful symbolic LABELS, which may aid in the development of a new deviant identity. This can in turn push the person into repeated norm violations ("recidivism") — they become the label (take on the role of the deviant)

"Stigma" is a powerful form of labeling:

A negative label that **changes a person's social identity and self-concept** often through the act of **shaming**.



G. Deviance – Crime

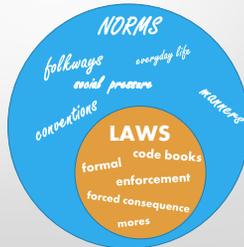
4. CRIME is a violation of a subset of norms: LAW

All laws are norms, but not all norms are laws.

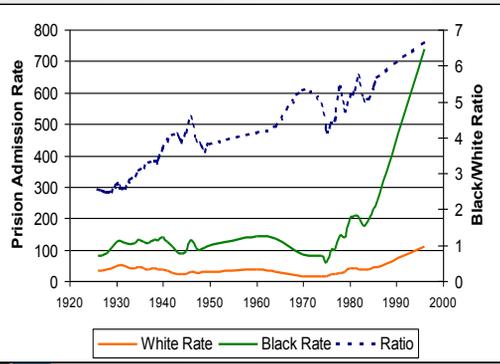
Reasons for Sanctioning Criminal Deviance:

(On the rationality of the sanctions of punishment and prison see Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison)

- a. **Retribution**
Moral vengeance inflicted
- b. **Deterrence**
Discourage future deviance
- c. **Rehabilitation**
Reform offenders while in prison
→ "Recidivist" = a repeat offender
- d. **Societal protection**
Temporary removal of offender through incarceration
Permanent removal by death

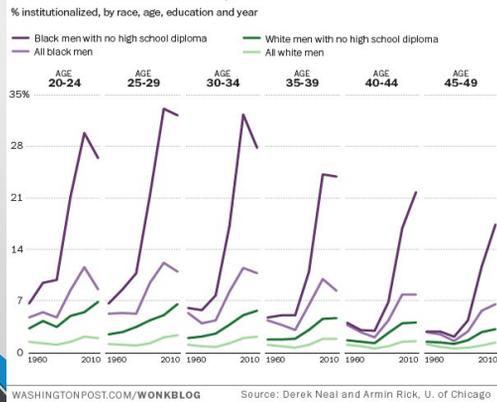


US Prison Admissions by Race – Effect of the Drug War

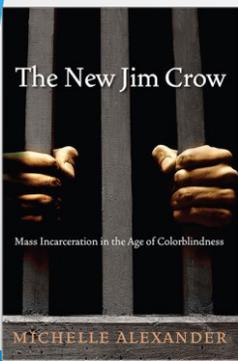


From: www.ssc.wisc.edu/~oliver/RACIAL/Reports/MadisonOverview.ppt

Incarceration rates skyrocket in recent decades



WASHINGTONPOST.COM/WONKBLOG Source: Derek Neal and Armin Rick, U. of Chicago



RACE and the WoD: Michelle Alexander exposes the harmful effect War on Drugs in her book, *The New Jim Crow* (2013). “the rebirth of a caste-like system in the United States, one that has resulted in millions of African Americans locked behind bars and then relegated to a permanent second-class status—denied the very rights supposedly won in the Civil Rights Movement.”
