

## Deviance and Social Control



# The Sociology of Deviance

- Going beyond studying the individual to emphasize the context under which the deviant behavior occurs.

# DEVIANT BEHAVIOR

- Deviant behavior refers to actions that transgress commonly held norms.
- What is regarded as deviant can shift from **time** to time and **place** to place; “normal” behavior in one cultural setting may be labeled “deviant” in another.

# Review: Types of Norms

## ■ Folkways (weakly enforced)

- the patterns of conventional behavior in a society, norms that apply to everyday matters.
- Gentle social pressure and imitation. Breaking or questioning a folkway does not cause severe punishment, but may cause the person to be laughed at, frowned upon, or scolded. Some examples of folkways in western culture include respecting the privacy of strangers and eating food with the proper utensil.

## ■ Mores (strongly enforced)

- norms of morality. Breaking mores, like attending church in the nude, will offend most people of a culture.

## ■ Taboos (forbidden)

- the most extreme form of mores as they forbid a society's most outrageous practices, such as incest and murder.

# Durkheim on Deviance

- Deviance is present in all societies.
- Deviance is normal so long as it is not excessive.
- Deviance will be present even in a “community of saints.”
  - Little faults and flaws will be magnified to the same scandalousness as serious offenses, and thus will become known as crimes.

# Durkheim: The Functions of Deviance

- Help make the norms of society clearer to the majority population
- Unite the non-deviant members of society (social capital)
- Promote social change

# Differential Association Theory

## Sutherland, 1947

- Criminal behavior is learned.
- Learned in interaction with other persons in a process of communication.
- Communication in intimate groups, such as with peers.
- Learning involves techniques for committing crime and learning definitions of the legal code as favorable or unfavorable.
- A person becomes delinquent because of an excess of associations favorable to violation of law over those unfavorable to violation of law. This is Differential Association.

# STRUCTURAL STRAIN THEORY

## (Merton, 1957)


- The legitimate means of achieving wealth do not always lead to this goal and not everyone has access to these legitimate means, such as higher education, anyway.
- In this situation, there is great pressure to try to get ahead by any means, legitimate or illegitimate.
- *According to Merton, then, deviance is a by-product of economic inequalities. To address the issue of crime we would need to first address the overarching issues of poverty and economic inequality.*



# Merton's Typology of Responses to Structural Strain 1957

Merton believed that people respond to structural strain and that their responses involve some combination of acceptance and rejection of valued goals and means.

Mode of Adaptation	Goals	Means
Conformity	+	+
Innovation	+	-
Ritualism	-	+
Retreatism	-	-
Rebellion	+/-	+/-

 Acceptance/achievement of valued goals or means

 Rejection/failure to achieve valued goals or means

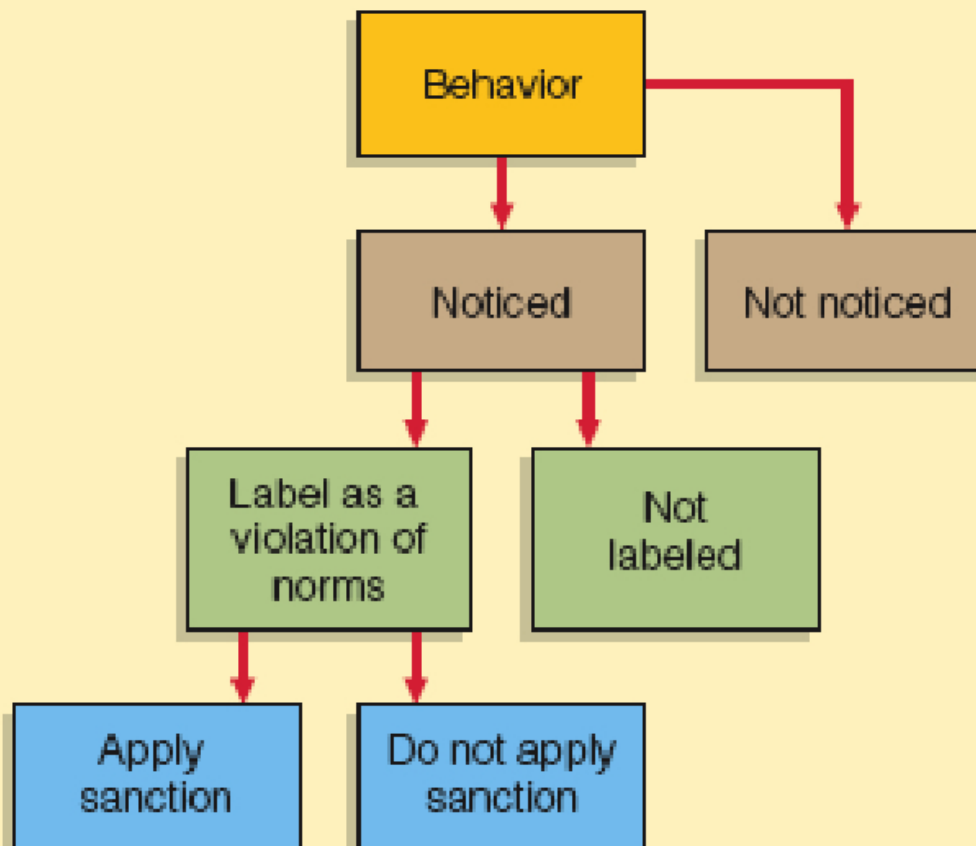
# Labeling Theory – Becker 1963

- Interested in how some behaviors come to be defined as deviant and why certain groups, but not others, are labeled as deviant.
- Assumes that no act is intrinsically criminal (or normal).
- Assumes that labeling someone as deviant will reinforce their deviant behavior.
- Power, rule makers and rule breakers

# Labeling Theory -- Becker 1963

## Major Assumptions

1. Rules are socially constructed.
2. Rules are enforced uniformly or consistently.
3. Deviants are those whose behavior people have noticed, *and* labeled as such, and applied sanctions.



# Primary/Secondary Deviation

- **Edwin Lemert (1972)**

- Primary – the initial (or first) act of transgression
- Secondary – when the individual comes to accept the label and sees him/herself as deviant.

- **Harold Garfinkel (1956)**

- Degradation Ceremonies – old identity destroyed and replaced with new, denounced one. Example would be a court trial in which one is convicted and sentenced to prison.

# Retrospective Interpretation (Garfinkel, 1956)

- The significance of past events, is continually being re-evaluated based on the newly uncovered details of the current situation.
- The “facts” are re-constructed to fit the new conclusion.
- What he is now is what, “after all, he was all along.”  
(Garfinkel, 1956)

# Stigma

- A concept created by Erving Goffman (dramaturgical analysis, total institutions, resocialization, impression management)
- a severe social disapproval of personal characteristics or beliefs that are perceived to be against cultural norms.
- Literally, a mark or brand that makes someone discredited, or discreditable.
- Criminal record, physical disability, obesity, sexual orientation, race or ethnicity, etc.

# Anomie

- A concept created by Durkheim (suicide and social factors, social facts, functionalism, etc.)
- It describes the breakdown of social norms and values. Old norms are breaking down but new norms have not yet arisen to replace them.
- Anomie in common parlance is thought to mean something like “at loose ends.”

# Social Control

- Socialization almost always brings about conformity, and conformity is voluntary.
- When conformity cannot be achieved voluntarily, other mechanisms of social control may be used to enforce norms and expectations.