**Defining Deviance**

* ***Deviance*** is a behavior, trait, belief, or other characteristic that violates a norm and causes a negative reaction. The definition of deviance varies widely across cultures, time, and situations. It must be serious or unusual to create a negative sanction or punishment.
* Since the definition is determined by cultural, historical, and situational norms, sociologists look at the following: how are norms and rules created and how do certain norms and rules become especially important. Who is subject to the rules and how is rule breaking identified. What types of sanctions are dispensed to society's violators? How de people who break the rules see themselves and how do others see them? How have sociologists attempted to explain rule making, rule breaking and response to rule breaking.

**Deviance Across Cultures**

* It is important to remember that when sociologists use the term *deviant,* they are making a social judgment, never a moral one. If a particular behavior is considered deviant, it means that it violates the values and norms or a particular group, not that it is inherently wrong.
* Much of the literature on deviance focuses on crime, and how different cultures define very different behaviors as criminal or not and the vast differences seen in how crimes are punished.
* Imprisonment is something relatively new as a punishment for criminals. Some other forms include meidung or shunning as practiced by the Amish. Regardless of if they are family members or not they are not associated with. This is only temporary and the person is expected to publicly apologize and make amends. They are then welcomed back into the community.
* Others will have total banishment from the community. This was a fate worse than death for Native Americans.
* The form of punishment has also changed over time. In colonial times in the U.S., corporal punishment was used - flogging, ears cropped, noses slit, fingers and hands cut off or branded. They were created to not only cause pain, but also to mark the offender.
* Branding was used to identify slaves as property during the mid 1800s. However, it is coming back as a voluntary mark of pride. One group that tends to do this more often are African American fraternities. Many famous athletes such as Michael Jordan and Emmitt Smith have ones. It is an extension of tattoos, Mohawks, and body piercing for other youth subcultures and is one way of showing rebellion.
* Body modifications are often very accepted in other areas of the world. Plates in lower lips, elongated necks, even breast augmentation - accepted here, but not in Brazil.
* Body modifications in the U.S. have always been around. Some are much more subtle than others. In the upper classes, women wore corsets or spanks and Botox today. Things as simple as a perm or hair straightening to a simple haircut.

**Theories of Deviance**

* ***Functionalists*** argue that deviance serves a social function by clarifying moral boundaries and promoting social cohesion. Think of the Terri Shiavo case. Her husband wanted her feeding tubes to be removed, her parents did not. Due to the media attention, people were faced with the how much a moral decision affects them. ***Conflict theorists*** believe that a society's inequalities are reproduced in its definitions of deviance, so that less powerful group is more likely to be deemed deviant and criminalized. Rules are applied unequally and that punishments for rule violations are unequally distributed - those at the top are subject to different rules and sanctions than those nearer the bottom and the behaviors of less powerful groups and individuals are more likely to be criminalize than the behaviors of the powerful. Several different sociologists have looked at how different groups are targeted by different laws - vagrancy laws go after the homeless, unemployed, and racial minorities. Undesirables might be swept from an area before a sporting event or where their might be a lot of press. Homosexuals have been the targets of antisodomy laws. Teenagers are targets of curfews. ***Merton's structural strain theory***. This is a bridge between functionalist and conflict theories of deviance. It argues that the tension or strain between socially approved goals and an individual's ability to meet those goals through socially approved means leads to deviance as individuals reject either the goals (achieving success), the means (hard work, education), or both. So the rewards for conformity are only for those who can pursue approved goals through approved means. Any other way is considered deviant. For example – innovators might seek financial gain through drug dealing (like goal, but not method). Ritualists go through the motions, but never succeed and retreatests go against the culture’s goals and means entirely and live outside conventional norms altogether – like hermits. You also have rebels who reject the cultural definitions of success and the normative means of achieving it and advocate radical alternatives to the existing social order.
* ***Symbolic Interactionist***theories of deviance focus on how interactions shape definitions and meaning of deviance and influence those who engage in deviant behavio***r. Differential association theory*** states that we learn to be deviant through our associations with deviant peers – don’t hang out with bad kids. This seems to make sense, but in reality just because you hang out with kids that are deviant doesn’t mean you are going to be and many that are deviant never hang out with rule breakers. If the deviance is a result of a mental illness, this learning theory does not apply.***Labeling theory*** claims that deviance is a consequence of external judgments, or labels, which both modify the individual's self-concept and change the way others respond to the labeled person. For example – a person who kills a man who is hurting a child might be called a hero, but a person who kills a man while robbing him is called a murderer. This was tested by David Rosenhan and explained in “On Being Sane in Insane Places” They were psychiatrists who were admitted to a psychiatric hospital. Other than changing their names all questions were answered truthfully except one question – they heard voices. They figured they would be found out, but the opposite was true. They set about acting as normal as possible, but the staff would not see it and release them; however, other patients quickly realized they were sane. They were actually released with schizophrenia in remission. This is also related to the looking glass theory – the labels can be internalized. They can change from primary deviation – the thing that gets them labeled originally to secondary deviation – a deviant identity or career. An example of this is Kirstie Alley. She gained a lot of weight and was labeled a fat actress. She then had a show based on her weight. This negative was then turned into a positive – known as tertiary deviation when she got a job as a sponsor for Jenny Craig. Labeling theory is also related to the idea of the***self-fulfilling prophecy***, which is an assumption, usually defined by a label that causes it to come true. This is based off the Thomas Theorem. For example in Streetwise, Elijah Anderson describes how the police and community perceive black male inner city teenagers as a criminal element. More of them are arrested than any other group. As a result, they often feel they have to defend their innocence in situations that other teens can negotiate with little or no difficulty.

**Stigma and Deviant Identity**

* A***stigma***is Erving Goffman's term for any physical or social attribute that devalues a person or group's identity, and which may exclude those who are devalued from normal social interaction. Once you have been labeled as a deviant you have a “spoiled identity”
* There are three main types of stigma: physical (physical or mental impairments), moral (signs of a flawed character), and tribal (membership in a discredited or oppressed group)
* A stigmatized identity does not necessarily last forever – for example, being African American in a racist community is a stigma, but if you live in an all African American community, it is no longer a problem
* At the Macro level – society does not treat the stigmatized very well. At the micro level you may also find that your friends don’t fully understand your depression related problems.
* One strategy analyzed by Goffman that stigmatized individuals use to negotiate everyday interaction is called ***passing***, or concealing the stigmatizing information. . Think of light skinned African Americans who tried to pass themselves off as white so they could have those privileges. Others have what Goffman called an ***in-group orientation***, where stigmatized individuals follow an orientation away from mainstream society and toward new standards that value their group identity. They don't think their identity should be deviant. An example would be NAAFTA - National Association to advance fat acceptance. Groups like this help people who are stigmatized feel greater self esteem and unite against prejudice and discrimination.
* Finally, others choose ***deviance avowal***, a process by which an individual self-identifies as deviant and initiates his or her own labeling process. This helps them avoid the pressures of having to adopt certain conventional norms or "neutralization of commitment." - An alcoholic might avoid family gatherings saying that is what causes them to drink. They like being considered a deviant - for example bikes, rock musicians, or eco warriors. They are often referred to as outsiders by Howard Becker. Sometimes they pass among "normals" or other times their deviant label becomes their master status. When the person's deviance does this, it is thought to reveal his underlying nature.

**Studying Deviance**

* Sociologists have often focused on the most obvious forms of deviance criminals, those suffering from mental illness, and sexual deviants because of deeply rooted social bias in favor of the norms of the powerful. It was known as the "nuts and sluts" approach because we focus on those groups of poor and powerless, while judging them with the values of the powerful. David Matza urged social scientists to set aside their preconceived notions in order to understand deviants on their own terms. For those studying it, they must appreciate the diversity and complexity of a social world. We need to seek insight without judgment.

**The Foreground of Deviance: The Emotional Attraction of Doing Bad Deeds**

* Most sociological perspectives of deviance focus on aspects of a person's background that would predispose her to act in deviant ways. In contrast, Jack Katz argues that researchers can better understand crime and deviance by considering how criminals experience their acts of deviance. He regards this as the foreground of deviance - the in the moment experience of committing the crime.
* One key finding that arose from this approach was that many people who commit deviant acts do so because of the positive feeling or "rush" that committing such an act entails. Look at shoplifting. Most are not the underprivileged, but just the opposite - Winona Ryder shoplifting. Muggers and robbers tend to get more out of the act of the crime, than what they steal. Often times, they feel they are superior and that their victims deserve it because they are less aware than they are.
* ***Cyber bullying*** is a new form of deviance in which people are abused through the use of technology (such as mass texts or social networking sites). This type of bullying can be especially detrimental because its abusive message can reach an almost limitless number of people in a very short time. Unlike regular bullying that happens in school, this can occur at anytime and even in your own home. One of the most common is the spreading of rumors. Traditional bullying relies on word of mouth, but this is just a click of a mouse to share it. Normally the cyber bully knows the victim in real life, but there are some internet bullies or trolls that have no connection with their victim. For example, Megan Meier committed suicide after she was cyber bullied. A blog was soon created called Megan had it coming and contained posts from a variety of people that said they knew Megan. It was later found out that it was created by a 32 year old computer programmer who had never met her.

**Crime and Punishment**

* ***Crime*** is the violation of a norm that has been codified into law. Often times the risk of punishment might deter people from violating the norm. ***Violent crime***s a crime in which violence is either the objective or the means to an end, including murder, rape, aggravated assault, and robbery. ***Property crime*** is crime that does not involve violence, including burglary, larceny theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. ***White-collar crime*** is crime committed by a high status individual in the course of her or his occupation. They have found that more murders happen during the summer months and generally are committed by someone they knew then a stranger. At the same time, sociologists warn against drawing causal conclusions from such relationships, and rather focus on how outside influences may lead to these patterns of criminal behavior.
* Using statistics provided by the ***Uniform Crime Report***, (a report created by the FBI to track the top eight offenses) sociologists have found that people from poorer neighborhoods, males, youth, and minorities are among the most likely to be arrested. This isn't necessarily because there is higher criminal behavior rather that the police concentrate their efforts in urban areas because they assume they are more prone to crime and thus make more arrests there. Some sociologists say that the same things that cause an area to become economically and socially disadvantages also encourage criminal activity. - Lack of jobs, lack of after school child care, and lack of good schools can lead to both.
* The younger the population, the more likely its members are to commit crimes. Property crime is usually completed by 16 year olds and violent crimes at 18. 13 to 18 years olds make up roughly 6% of the population, but 25% of the arrests. On the other hand, people over 65 make up 12% of the population, but less than 1% of the arrests. This is referred to as desistance - age out of crime over the life course. You have to be careful with this because the police are more likely to arrest younger people than older people.
* Gender - men are more likely to commit crime.
* There is an ongoing debate about the role of punishment in the ***criminal justice system***, a collection of social institutions (legislatures, police, courts, and prisons) that create and enforce laws. ***Deterrence*** is an approach to punishment that relies on the threat of harsh penalties to discourage people from committing crimes. ***Retribution***is an approach to punishment that emphasizes retaliation or revenge for the crime as the appropriate goal. ***Incapacitation*** is an approach to punishment that seeks to protect society from criminals by imprisoning or executing them. Finally, ***rehabilitation*** is an approach to punishment that attempts to re***form crimi***nals as part of their penalty.

**"Positive" Deviance?**

* ***Positive deviance*** refers to actions considered deviant within a given context that are later reinterpreted as appropriate or even heroic.