CHAPTER 6

Deviance

Would it surprise you to learn that both George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were cannabis farmers? They called it "hemp" and used the fibrous stalks to make fabric, rope, and paper, including the paper on which Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence. There is no evidence that the Founding Fathers used their crop to get high: the fact that they harvested hemp for its stalks may have meant that its flowers (in which the intoxicating resin THC is located) may not have had a chance to bloom.

Over time, hemp as an industrial crop began to have more and more competition—from other agricultural products, such as cotton and timber, and from other chemical and industrial

processes that had the backing of powerful industries and individuals. In the 1920s and 1930s, William Randolph Hearst, along with others in hemp-competitive industries, exerted pressure on government officials to make hemp's intoxicating by-product, marijuana, illegal. A propaganda campaign against marijuana was led by Hearst's media outlets, promoting it as a dangerous threat to America's youth, public health, and national security. A film called *Reefer Madness* was shown in schools as an anti-marijuana propaganda piece, using images of insanity, rape, and murder to paint a picture of pot as a catastrophic scourge on society. Marijuana was associated with criminals, reprobates, jazz musicians, and (gasp!) ethnic minorities and was presented to schoolchildren as the cause of immediate social and moral chaos. By 1937, every state had outlawed the use of marijuana as an intoxicant, and cannabis farming had been effectively eliminated by the passage of the prohibitively high Marijuana Tax Act.

Fast forward to the present, in which the current surge in environmentalism is part of the change in views about *Cannabis sativa*: restoring legal hemp farming nationwide would allow the production of tree-free paper and other fiber and textile products, which would please many people who are worried about the depletion of environmental resources. After an election-year sweep, three more states (California, Nevada, and Massachussetts) legalized the recreational use of marijuana. Once these and other new laws take effect, a majority of U.S. states will have legalized marijuana in some form or another. This is good news for patients whose conditions may be helped by medical marijuana use, for recreational users who think pot should be treated like alcohol in the eyes of the law, and for business-people eager to capitalize on new opportunities for profit. Many hope that other states will legalize marijuana as well, and that the "dominoes" will continue to fall.

How is it possible that there could be such different reactions to the users of this plant? Changing values lead to changing laws and changing practices in everyday life. Along with cultural values, definitions of deviance change over time, and we can sometimes observe them as they swing back and forth, from one extreme to the other, over the course of history. What was once mainstream becomes defined as deviant; what is now seen as deviant may soon become normal and acceptable. Shouldn't we be able to agree on whether marijuana production and use are deviant? As we shall see, nothing is inherently deviant—rather, it is the cultural, historical, and situational context that makes it so.

HOW TO READ THIS CHAPTER

Have you ever driven faster than the posted speed limit? Have you ever gotten caught picking your nose in public? Did you have your first taste of beer, wine, or hard liquor before you reached the legal drinking age? Did you pierce something (your lip, eyebrow, or belly button) that your grandmother wouldn't have wanted you to pierce? If you work in an office, did you ever take home a pen, pencil, or packet of Post-it notes?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you are the embodiment of what we seek to understand in this chapter: You are deviant. Remember this as you read the chapter.

Defining Deviance

Deviance is a behavior, trait, or belief that departs from a norm and generates a negative reaction in a particular group. The norms and the group reactions are necessary for a behavior or characteristic to be defined as deviant (Goode 1997). The importance of norms becomes clear when we remember that what is deviant in one culture might be normal in another (see Chapter 3); even within the same culture, what was deviant a century ago—like marijuana use—might be perfectly acceptable now (and vice versa). The importance of group reactions is clear when we look at the varied reactions that norm violations generate: Some violations are seen as only mildly deviant (like chewing with your mouth open), while others are so strongly taboo that they are almost unthinkable (like cannibalism).

Deviant behavior must be sufficiently serious or unusual to spark a negative sanction or punishment. For example, if you were having dinner with friends and used the wrong fork for your salad, you would be violating a minor norm but your friends probably wouldn't react in a negative fashion; they might not even notice. On the other hand, if you ate an entire steak dinner—meat, mashed potatoes, and salad—with your hands, your friends probably *would* react. They might criticize your behavior strongly ("That's totally disgusting!") and even refuse to eat with you again. This latter example, then, would be considered deviant behavior among your group of friends—and among most groups in American society.

Because definitions of deviance are constructed from cultural, historical, and situational norms, sociologists are interested in a number of topics under the rubric of deviance. First, how are norms and rules created, and how do certain norms and rules become especially important? Second, who is subject to the rules, and how is rule breaking identified? Third, what types of sanctions (punishments or rewards) are dispensed to society's violators? Fourth, how do people who break the rules see themselves, and how do others see them? And finally, how have sociologists attempted to explain rule making, rule breaking, and responses to rule breaking?

Challenging Norms As a pregnant transgender man, Trystan Reese faced criticism for challenging society's norms about gender and parenting and was labeled deviant by some.

Deviance across Cultures

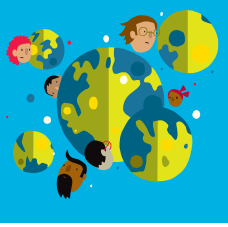
It is important to remember that when sociologists use the term "deviant," they are making a social judgment, never a moral one. If a particular behavior is considered deviant, this means that it violates the values and norms of a *particular* group, not that it is inherently wrong or that other groups will make the same judgment.

Much of the literature on deviance focuses on crime, but not only do different cultures define strikingly different behaviors as criminal, they also differ in how those crimes are punished. Most serious crime in the United States today is punished by imprisonment. This method of punishment was rare until the nineteenth century, however, as maintaining a prison requires considerable resources. Buildings must be constructed and maintained, guards and other staff must be paid, and prisoners must be fed and clothed. For groups without these resources, incarceration is not a possibility, even assuming it would be a desirable option. Instead, there is a whole host of other techniques of punishment.

DEVIANCE a behavior, trait, belief, or other characteristic that violates a norm and causes a negative reaction

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Body Modification



Branding has long since died out as a method of punishment, but in a perfect illustration of the mutability of deviance, it has made something of a comeback as a form of body decoration (Parker 1998). What used to be an involuntary mark of shame has been reclaimed as a voluntary mark of pride. Small branding irons of stainless steel are heated with a blowtorch until white hot and are held on the skin for a second or two. Some who undergo the procedure burn incense to cover the smell of their own flesh burning. Many African American fraternities have a long tradition of branding, usually in the shape of one of the fraternity's Greek letters. The practice has received a public boost as several popular athletes have prominently displayed their fraternity brands. Basketball legend Michael Jordan sports such a brand, as does the NFL's Malcolm Jenkins. Branding is spreading to other subcultures, where it is just another extension of tattoos, Mohawks, and body piercings as an outward manifestation of youthful rebellion or an expression of personal aesthetic or group identification.

When it comes to body modification, what Americans might label deviant might be identified as desirable or normal in other cultures and vice versa. Among the Suri of southwestern Ethiopia, progressively larger plates are inserted into the lower lip so that it gradually becomes enlarged. The Padaung women of Burma stretch their necks with brass rings. Young girls begin by encircling their necks with just a few rings, then add more as they grow; by the time of maturity, their necks are considerably elongated. Breast augmentation surgery is commonplace in the United States, while butt augmentation is popular in Brazil.

Body modification does not always need to be dramatic. In reality, there is a great number of subtle methods of body modification practiced by most Americans that may not seem so obvious if we concentrate on eyebrow rings and neck tattoos. First of all, there have always been body modifications for the middle and upper classes. Corsets, worn by women through the ages until the early twentieth century, are an obvious example. Stomachs were flattened with "stays," long strips of some rigid material like whalebone. A tightly laced corset could achieve a dramatically narrow waistline but often at a serious cost to the wearer's health. Women sometimes even had ribs removed in order to accommodate them. The hair salon is another great unacknowledged center for body modification. If you get a perm, you are breaking the disulfide bonds in your hair and reshaping them to straighten them or make them curly. Even a simple haircut is a type of body modification—luckily, for those of us who have gotten bad haircuts, they're temporary!

Some body modifications seem so "normal" that we practice them as routines without considering how they may seem deviant elsewhere. Other cultures may view Americans' obsession with hair removal—shaving, tweezing, and waxing—as bizarre. As you can see, whether it's wearing a corset, branding yourself, or shaving your legs, the boundaries between beauty and deviance are fluid across time and place.

For example, the Amish, a religious community whose members do without modern devices like electricity, cars, and telephones, practice *meidung*, which means shunning those who violate the strict norms of the group (Kephart 2000). A biblical rule instructs them "not to associate with any one who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber—not even to eat with such a one" (1 Corinthians 5:11). In other words, the Amish believe they should not associate with rule breakers even when they come from within their own family. No one does business with, eats with, or even talks to the guilty party. The shunning is temporary, however: After a short period, the violator is expected to publicly apologize and make amends and is then welcomed back into the community.

A much more permanent method of punishment is total banishment from the community. For many Native American people, the social group was so important that banishment was considered a fate worse than death (Champagne 1994). It was one of a variety of practices used to maintain social control (along with shaming songs, contests, and challenges of strength) and something of a rarity because it completely severed ties between the group and the individual. Banishment has a long history of use in all parts of the world, from British prisoners being "transported" to Australia to Russian dissidents being exiled to Siberia, and has been one of the most cost-effective methods of punishment ever discovered.

Just as methods of punishment vary between societies and groups, they also change over time. In Colonial America, for example, corporal punishment was the rule for the majority of crimes (Walker 1997). These days, the phrase "corporal punishment" may conjure up images of elementary school teachers spanking students, probably because spanking was the last vestige of what was once a vast repertoire of techniques. Thieves, pickpockets, and others who would today be considered petty criminals were flogged, had their ears cropped, had their noses slit, had their fingers or hands cut off, or were branded. These punishments were designed not only to deliver pain but also to mark the offender. As such, the particular punishment was often designed to fit the crime. A pickpocket might have a hand cut off; a forger might have an "F" branded on his forehead. Brands were also used to mark African American slaves as property during the 1800s.

Theories of Deviance

In this section, we will learn how three sociological paradigms discussed in Chapter 1—functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism—can be applied to deviance. We will also learn about other related theories that have been developed specifically to explain particular aspects of deviance.

Functionalism

As you may recall, adherents of functionalism argue that each element of social structure helps maintain the stability of society. What, then, is the function of deviance for society? Émile Durkheim came up with a couple of functions. First, deviance can help a society clarify its moral boundaries. We are reminded about our shared notions of what is right when we have to address wrongdoings of various sorts. In 2005, Terri Schiavo, a hospital patient in St. Petersburg, Florida, received national attention when a legal battle was fought over her life. Schiavo had been in a persistent vegetative state since 1990 and kept alive through a gastric feeding tube. Her husband, Michael, petitioned the courts in 1998 to end life support; he thought it was the right thing to do and was what Terri would have wanted. Her parents, Mary and Robert Schindler, took legal action against Michael's decision—they thought it was wrong. While most people might have had a vague idea of how they felt about artificially prolonging life, the Schiavo case forced them to think concretely about how such choices affect actual people. After a seven-year process, the courts sided with Michael Schiavo, and on March 18, 2005, his wife's feeding tube was removed. She died thirteen days later.

SOCIAL CONTROL THEORY
a theory of crime, proposed by Travis Hirschi, that posits that strong social bonds increase conformity and decrease deviance

Another function of deviance is to promote social cohesion (one of functionalism's valued ideals); people can be brought together as a community in the face of crime or other violations. For example, while the country was divided over the decision in the Schiavo case, an opinion poll by ABC News on March 21, 2005, reported that 70 percent of Americans believed that Michael Schiavo had the authority to make decisions on behalf of his wife and that the case should not have been a federal matter. In the same poll, 63 percent maintained that the federal government was involved solely for political advantage. Whatever they believed about prolonging life, the majority of Americans thus agreed that the choice was best made by family and not the government.

Social cohesion is central to other theories of deviance as well. Travis Hirschi's **social control theory** hypothesizes that the stronger one's social bonds—to family and religious, civic, and other groups—the less likely one is to commit crime. Such bonds tend to increase one's investment in the community and also increase one's commitment to that community's shared values and norms. With both internal and external forces regulating behavior, Hirchi argues that social bonds promote conformity (Hirschi 1969).

STRUCTURAL STRAIN THEORY Sociologist Robert Merton (1938/1976) provides a bridge between functionalist and conflict theories of deviance. Like Durkheim,

Merton acknowledges that some deviance is inevitable in society. But like conflict theorists, he argues that an individual's position in the social structure will affect his experience of deviance and conformity. Social inequality can create situations in which people experience tension (or strain) between the goals society says they should be working toward (like financial success) and the means they have available to meet those goals (not everyone is able to work hard at a legitimate job).

Our society's intense emphasis on financial success and materialism—through the mythology of the "American Dream"—can be stressful for those whose chances of realizing that dream are limited (Messner and Rosenfeld 2012). The rewards of conformity are available only to those who can pursue approved goals through approved means. Any other combination of means and goals is deviant in one way or another (see Figure 6.1). **Innovators**, for example, might seek financial success via unconventional means (such as drug dealing or embezzlement). **Ritualists** go through the conventional motions while abandoning all hope of success, and **retreatists** (like dropouts or hermits) renounce the culture's goals and means entirely and live outside conventional norms altogether. At the far end of the continuum, **rebels** reject the cultural definitions of success and the normative means of achieving it and advocate radical alternatives to the existing social order.

INNOVATORS individuals who accept society's approved goals but not society's approved means to achieve them

RITUALISTS individuals who have given up hope of achieving society's approved goals but still operate according to society's approved means

RETREATISTS individuals who renounce society's approved goals and means entirely and live outside conventional norms altogether

REBELS individuals who reject society's approved goals and means and instead create and work toward their own (sometimes revolutionary) goals using new means

SOCIAL CONTROL the formal and informal mechanisms used to elicit conformity to values and norms and thus promote social cohesion

For example, consider the characters in the film *The Dark Knight*, an action movie that documents Batman's clean-up of Gotham City. The goal is to combat the corruption that has overcome Gotham through multiple lucrative criminal mobs. In the movie, conformity is represented by District Attorney Harvey Dent, who is attempting to fight crime through the approved means of the law. Dent, along with Police Lieutenant James Gordon and Assistant D.A. Rachel Dawes, enact a tough campaign to convict all mob bosses through the testimony of their accountant. Batman is an innovator who fights crime using cunning, high-tech weaponry, and unconventional means that ignore the legal process. As always, traditional bureaucrats like Police Commissioner Loeb and the Gotham mayor are ritualists who operate within the parameters that they have been given with little hope of quelling the crime wave. Corrupt Officer Ramirez is a retreatist who

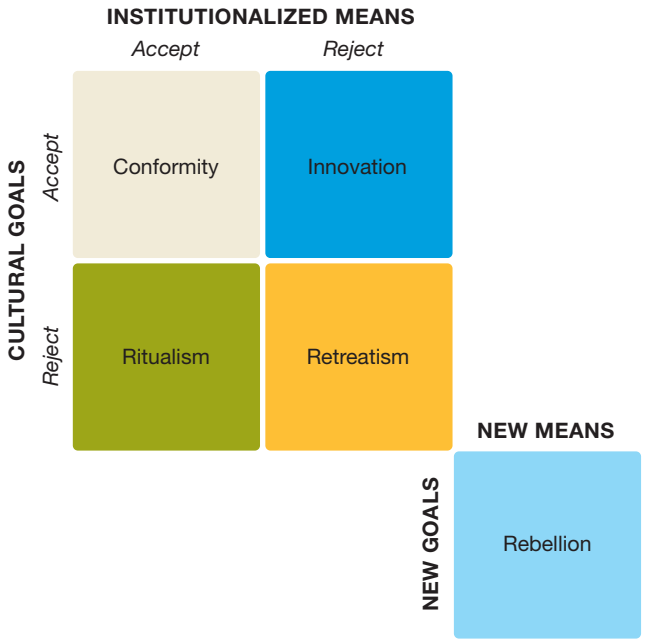


Figure 6.1 Merton's Typology of Deviance

Different orientations toward society's goals and differential access to the means to achieve those goals combine to create different categories of deviance.

actually helps out the mob rather than attempt to fight it. Finally, the Joker, whose portrayal by Heath Ledger won him a posthumous Academy Award, embodies the true spirit of the rebel. Rather than attempting to fight crime, the Joker causes mayhem for both law enforcers and the mob bosses with the ultimate goal of bringing about the downfall of all of Gotham. While the mob bosses stand to gain financially from their crime sprees, the Joker's sadistic goal is to see the entire city descend into chaos and anarchy.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theorists, who study inequalities of wealth and power, note that inequalities are present in our definitions of deviance as well. In other words, conflict theorists believe that rules are applied unequally and that punishments for rule violators 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 criminalized than the behaviors of the powerful. American criminologist Richard Quinney theorized that capitalism—and the exploitation and oppression of the working class—make deviant and even criminal behavior nearly inescapable for workers. The ruling class can make laws that target the poor. When the poor act out against repression, they become targets for law enforcement, while the rich and powerful remain free to do what they like.

Norms, rules, and laws are used to regulate the behavior of individuals and groups. This process, known as

Rebel with a Cause In *The Dark Knight*, Batman is an innovator who fights crime unconventionally, Harvey Dent is a ritualist who conforms to established parameters, and the Joker is a rebel intent on bringing about the downfall of Gotham.

social control, can be either informal, as in the exercise of control through customs, norms, and expectations, or formal, as in the exercise of control through laws or other official regulations. Both formal social control and informal social control can be exercised unequally in a hierarchical society, and this is what conflict theory is concerned with when it comes to the topic of deviance.

As recently as 2003, more than a dozen U.S. states still imposed heterosexuality on their citizens through anti-sodomy laws, which prohibited any sexual acts that did not lead to procreation. While in theory anti-sodomy laws could include acts like masturbation and heterosexual oral sex, in practice these laws were generally imposed against same-sex partners. Before a Supreme Court ruling invalidated all state anti-sodomy laws in *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003), sexual acts done in the privacy of your own home could be penalized with fines and jail time in states such as Florida, Idaho, and Michigan. From a conflict theorist perspective, anti-sodomy laws were a way for the heterosexual majority to exercise control over same-sex minorities.

As another example, the Great Recession of 2008 was in large part caused by banks engaging in risky and often predatory mortgage lending. Millions of ordinary people lost not only their homes but also their jobs and life savings during the ensuing economic crisis, and both the national economy and global economy were on the verge of collapse. But the banks and corporations were bailed out with taxpayer money, and only a single Wall Street executive was ever prosecuted in relation to the crash (Lewis 2011). This unhappy episode in American history is just one illustration of the way that wealth and privilege protect the powerful from being defined as deviant or being punished for their violations.

The recent and ongoing controversy over voter identification laws reveals how even policies that some would argue are neutral really do affect some groups differently than others. At the time of the 2016 presidential election, twelve states had a photo identification requirement for voters, meaning that voters must show a photo ID in order to cast a vote. While supporters of such laws argue that they help stem voter fraud, opponents say that voter fraud is almost nonexistent. They argue that voter ID requirements are really meant to keep various groups—ethnic and racial minorities, immigrants, the elderly, and the poor, all of whom tend to vote Democrat—away from the voting booth. These groups don't always have IDs and may have trouble getting them, especially if there is a fee involved. Unfortunately, there is a good deal of evidence to support the conflict theorists' argument that rules are applied unequally in our hierarchical society.

DIFFERENTIAL ASSOCIATION THEORY Edwin Sutherland's hypothesis that we learn to be deviant through our associations with deviant peers

Symbolic Interactionism

While conflict theorists and functionalists focus on inequalities and the social functions of deviance, interactionists consider the way that interpersonal relationships and everyday interactions shape definitions of deviance.

DIFFERENTIAL ASSOCIATION THEORY One such approach is Edwin Sutherland's **differential association theory** (Sutherland 1939; Sutherland et al. 1992), which asserts that we learn to be deviant through our interactions

IN RELATIONSHIPS

Cyberbullying, Trolls, and Online Deviance

With the advent of the Internet came new ways of interacting with one another . . . and new ways of being deviant. Or maybe they're just old ways of being deviant in a new relational context. Because bullies and trolls go way, way back.

Although parents and schools have always worried about bullying, their concerns have multiplied since children and teenagers started using the Internet. The phenomenon of **cyberbullying**—the use of electronic and social media to tease, threaten, or humiliate someone—catapulted to the forefront of national consciousness after the suicide of thirteen-year-old Megan Meier in October 2006. Megan had received an online message from a boy named Josh, who said he lived nearby but that his family didn't have a phone. During the next several weeks, they sent messages back and forth and seemed to have become close very quickly. Then, without warning, Josh started taunting and abusing her. Megan was devastated and hung herself in her closet. Several weeks later, the Meiers learned that "Josh" was not a real person and that the online account had been created by neighborhood mom Lori Drew, in order to get back at Megan for snubbing her daughter.

CYBERBULLYING the use of electronic media (web pages, social networking sites, e-mail, Twitter, cell phones) to tease, harass, threaten, or humiliate someone

Unfortunately, Megan's is not an isolated case. More recently, eleven-year-old Tyler Benz killed himself after receiving a series of texts claiming that his thirteen-year-old girlfriend had committed suicide. The texts turned out to be from the girlfriend herself. No one explained that the texts were a prank, and Benz took them so seriously that he hung himself in his bedroom closet. The girl is facing charges (Phillips 2017).

A 2016 survey found that about a third of all young people have been victims of cyberbullying at some point in their lives (Patchin and Hinduja 2016). According to the U.S. Department of Education, 20 percent of students between the ages of twelve and eighteen reported being bullied during the 2014–2015 school year; 12 percent of those students reported being bullied online or by text (National Center for Education Statistics 2016). So while cyberbullying is still less common than its off-line equivalent, in several ways it's more frightening. Like every phenomenon created by the Information Revolution, cyberbullying (sometimes called "electronic aggression") is faster and connects more people than off-line activity. Traditional bullying usually happens at school, while cyberbullying can happen anytime and in the privacy of your own home. Likewise, the effects are longer lasting. One of the most common forms of cyberbullying is spreading rumors about someone. Traditional bullying relied on word of mouth or the proverbial graffiti on the bathroom wall to do this. But word of mouth is limited, and only so many people can read nasty comments scrawled on the stall in the bathroom before the janitor washes it off. Online, there is almost no limit to how many people might see a nasty comment, even if it is later taken down.

with others who break the rules. This is the theory of deviance that your parents subscribed to when you were a teenager: Don't hang out with the bad kids! Simple peer pressure by those you associate with can lead to deviant behavior. For instance, an athlete who uses steroids to help build strength might also influence his teammates to start "doping" even though this practice is banned in most sports. Have you ever been influenced by others to do something deviant that you would have never tried on your own?

LABELING THEORY Howard Becker's idea that deviance is a consequence of external judgments, or labels, that modify the individual's self-concept and change the way others respond to the labeled person

This theory of deviance seems at first glance to be pretty sensible—interacting often with those who break the rules would seem to socialize an individual into their rule-breaking culture. But, as it turns out, not all who hang out with deviants become deviant themselves, and plenty of people who engage in deviant acts have never consorted with other rule breakers. Also, in cases where deviance is not the result of a willful act (mental illness, for example), a learning theory such as this one is not a useful explanation. While differential association theory seeks to explain "why they do it," it cannot fully explain every case of deviant behavior—nor can any theory of deviance.

LABELING THEORY Howard Becker's **labeling theory** (1963) proposes that deviance is not inherent in any act, belief, or condition; instead, it is determined by the social context. A man who kills an intruder who is attacking his child may be labeled a hero, while a man who kills a cashier in the process

So far, most research has focused on cyberbullying that is perpetrated by someone who knows the victim in real life, but there have always been Internet bullies (or "trolls") who seek to abuse people they've never met or have only encountered online. For example, after Megan Meier's suicide, a blog was created by someone with no connection to her case, called "Megan Had It Coming," that contained posts from a cast of characters who purported to know Megan, all expressing a distinct lack of remorse. The blogger, a thirty-two-year-old computer programmer from Seattle, had a history of humiliating others online and expressed pride in his achievements. Indeed, "trolls" seem to enjoy their abusive activities and often continue under different usernames even after they have been blocked by service providers or website administrators. Trolls make a game of harrassing, bullying, and stalking others online: Threats of violence are common, as is "doxxing," or the practice of publishing private, humiliating information (photos, financial data, etc.) online for all to see (Stein 2016).

As more and more of people's lives play out online, cyberbullying will only become more common. Will we treat it the way we treat other related forms of deviance? In "real" life, abuses like slander, harassment, and stalking can be prosecuted as crimes. But it is harder to apply such penalties to Internet trolls and cyberbullies, given the questions about identity and jurisdiction that arise in online settings. Perhaps the only way to respond to this type of deviance is to troll the trolls?

Cyberbullying Tina Meier holds two pictures of her daughter Megan, who committed suicide after receiving cruel online messages.

of robbing a store may be labeled a villain. Even though the act of homicide is the same, the way the person who did it is treated differs greatly depending on the label.

Labeling theory recognizes that labels will vary depending on the culture, time period, and situation. David Rosenhan's study "On Being Sane in Insane Places" (1973) provides a striking demonstration of the power of labeling and the importance of context. Rosenhan and seven other researchers gained admission to psychiatric hospitals as patients. Other than falsifying their names and occupations, the eight subjects gave honest answers to all but one of the questions in the entrance examination. They all complained of hearing voices, a symptom often linked to schizophrenia. Nevertheless, the subjects felt certain that once they were hospitalized, they would be quickly exposed as "pseudo-patients," not really mentally ill.

In fact, the opposite turned out to be true. Once admitted, the pseudo-patients turned immediately to the task of getting themselves discharged—and failed miserably. Although they behaved as normally and pleasantly as possible, doctors and nurses continued to treat them as mentally ill patients in need of treatment. No amount of explanation on the part of the pseudo-patients could convince the hospital staff of their sanity (though, in an interesting twist, it was usually obvious to the other patients). When they were finally discharged (after one to seven weeks!), it was not because the staff had finally seen through the deception; they were all released with their schizophrenia "in remission." As Rosenhan concluded, "Once labeled schizophrenic, the pseudo-patient was stuck with that label" (1973, p. 253). The effects of this "sticky" deviant label on actual patients can follow them through their lives, even after they leave the hospital.

Labeling Theory Deviant labels such as "teen mom" vary based on culture, time period, and context.

Labeling theory is also concerned with how individuals think of themselves once a deviant label has been applied. Recall Cooley's concept of the "looking-glass self": how we perceive ourselves depends in part on how others see us, so if others react to us as deviant, we are likely to internalize that label (even if we object to it). Applying deviant labels can also lead to further deviance, as a person moves from **primary deviance** (the thing that gets her labeled in the first place) to **secondary deviance** (a deviant identity or career) (Lemert 1951).

PRIMARY DEVIANCE in labeling theory, the initial act or attitude that causes one to be labeled deviant

SECONDARY DEVIANCE in labeling theory, the subsequent deviant identity or career that develops as a result of being labeled deviant

TERTIARY DEVIANCE redefining the stigma associated with a deviant label as a positive phenomenon

SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY an inaccurate statement or belief that, by altering the situation, becomes accurate; a prediction that causes itself to come true

STEREOTYPE THREAT a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy in which the fear of performing poorly—and confirming stereotypes about their social groups—causes students to perform poorly

If you've watched NBC's *The Biggest Loser*, you've seen examples of both types of deviance. On the show, overweight and obese contestants sign up for an intensive weight-loss boot camp, and viewers follow the ups and downs of their progress over the course of each season. Their excess body weight, which is seen as deviant in contemporary U.S. culture, is an example of primary deviance, and contestants' recognition that they are "fatties" who need to slim down is an example of secondary deviance.

Although deviant labels are sticky and hard to shake, it is sometimes possible for an individual to turn what could have been a negative identity into a positive one. John Kitsuse (1980) calls this **tertiary deviance**, which occurs when the person labeled deviant rejects the notion of deviance entirely and attempts to redefine her "deviant" attributes or behavior as normal. Some members of *The Biggest Loser* cast demonstrated this level of deviance as well. Many contestants gain the weight back after leaving the show, their bodies fighting to return to their original weights; for some, this leads them to a newfound acceptance of their body shape and size (Huddleston 2016; Kolata 2016). This argument—"sure, I'm fat, but there shouldn't be anything wrong with that"—is an attempt to recast that identity as acceptable difference rather than deviance.

Some of the most exciting, but also disturbing, research on labeling theory has focused on **self-fulfilling prophecy**, a term coined by Robert Merton in his 1948 article of the same name. Merton's concept was derived from the so-called Thomas theorem, formulated by sociologist W. I. Thomas in 1928, which held that "if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences." From this theorem, Merton developed his notion of the self-fulfilling prophecy, which is basically a prediction that causes itself to come true merely by being stated. He offered the example of a bank in the Depression-era 1930s that collapsed through "a rumor of insolvency," when enough investors became convinced that the bank was out of money (1948, p. 194).

Merton argued that the self-fulfilling prophecy can be used to explain some racial and ethnic issues in the United States, and subsequent research has borne him out. For example, Elijah Anderson's classic *Streetwise* (1990) details how the police and community perceive black male inner-city teenagers as a criminal element, with the result that they are more likely to be arrested than other teenagers, and citizens are also more likely to report black males for crimes. This cloud of suspicion that surrounds black urban teens requires them to defend their innocence in situations that other teens can negotiate with little or no difficulty. Young black males are also more likely to be incarcerated, which only feeds the public image of criminality. The racial discrimination and profiling by police and the community thus lead to a negative cycle that is difficult to break.

Stereotypes are often part of self-fulfilling prophecies. Claude Steele's research (1997) on **stereotype threat** shows that when students worry that their own poor academic performance could unintentionally confirm a negative stereotype of their social group, they actually perform poorly, thus confirming that stereotype. Stereotype threat has been measured in high-achieving African American students as well as highly ranked female math students (Spencer, Steele, and Quinn 1999). Stereotypes and self-fulfilling prophecies are not always negative. Jennifer Lee and Min Zhou (2014) found that Asian American students can actually benefit from both. In the case of **stereotype promise**,

Asian American students are more likely to be placed in Advanced Placement (AP) classes, receive high grades, and be treated well by teachers because others assume that they are high achievers. In both cases, the stereotypes become real as people (teachers, students, others) act based on them—even in cases where students are trying to avoid this very problem.

Labels alone are not 100 percent deterministic, and prophecies are not always self-fulfilling. But in our society, deviant labels can override other aspects of individual identity and exert a powerful influence on self-image, treatment by others, and even social and institutional policies.

STEREOTYPE PROMISE a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy in which positive stereotypes, such as the "model minority" label applied to Asian Americans, lead to positive performance outcomes

STIGMA Erving Goffman's term for any physical or social attribute that devalues a person or group's identity and that may exclude those who are devalued from normal social interaction

The Stigma of Deviance

In ancient Greece, criminals and slaves were branded with hot irons, making a mark called a **stigma**, from the Greek word for tattoo. The stigma was meant to serve as an outward indication that there was something shameful about the bearer, and to this day we continue to use the term to signify some disgrace or failing. Although we no longer live in a society where we are forced to wear our rule violations branded onto our bodies, stigmatized identities still carry serious social consequences.

Stigma, a central concept in the sociology of deviance, was analyzed and elaborated by Erving Goffman (1962) in his book of the same name. Once an individual has been labeled as deviant, he is stigmatized and acquires what Goffman calls a "spoiled identity." There are three main types of stigma: physical (including physical or mental impairments), moral (signs of a flawed character), and tribal (membership in a discredited or oppressed group). Almost any departure from the norm can have a stigmatizing effect, including a physical disability, a past battle with

Table 6.1 Theory in Everyday Life

Perspective	Approach to Deviance	Case Study: Plagiarism
Structural Functionalism	Deviance clarifies moral boundaries and promotes social cohesion.	Punishing those who plagiarize separates those who should be in college from those who aren't responsible enough.
Control Theory	Strong social bonds increase conformity and decrease deviance.	Requiring incoming college students to sign an honor code on the first day of orientation pledging that they will not cheat while they are a member of their college community.
Structural Strain Theory	An individual's position in society determines whether she has the means to achieve her goals or must otherwise turn to deviance.	A student's attitude about plagiarizing depends on whether she has the means to write the paper.
Conflict Theory	Definitions and rules of deviance are applied unequally based on power.	Students with fewer resources are punished harshly and have fewer options afterward; students with more money or connections can either transfer to another school or rely on their parents for help.
Symbolic Interactionism	The definition of deviance is relative and depends on the culture, time period, and situation.	Plagiarism may be labeled as deviant in the United States but not in Russia or India.
Differential Association Theory	Deviance is learned through interactions with others who break the rules.	Students learn to cheat because they hang out with other students who plagiarize.
Labeling Theory	Deviance is determined by the reactions of others; applying deviant labels to an individual may lead her to further deviance.	A student who is caught plagiarizing may come to believe she is unable to write without cheating.

PASSING presenting yourself as a member of a different group than the stigmatized group to which you belong

IN-GROUP ORIENTATION among stigmatized individuals, the rejection of prevailing judgments or prejudice and the development of new standards that value their group identity

alcohol or mental illness, time served in jail, or sexual transgressions. Goffman recognizes that what may once have been a stigmatized identity may change over time or may vary according to culture or social context. Being black or Jewish is a stigma only if one lives in a racist or anti-Semitic society. In a community entirely populated by African Americans, it is white people who may be stigmatized; an all-Jewish enclave may see non-Jews as outside the norm. Goffman is careful to note that not all stigmatized identities are just or deserved—only that they are specific to the norms and prejudices of a particular group, time period, or context.

Managing Deviant Identities

Goffman was particularly interested in the effects of stigmatization on individual identity and interactions with others. At the macro level, society does not treat the stigmatized very well; if you suffer from serious depression, for example, you may find that your health insurance does not cover your treatment. At the micro level, you may also find that your friends don't fully understand your depression-related problems. In fact, you may find yourself working to keep others from finding out that you are depressed or receiving treatment for depression precisely in order to avoid such situations. Having a stigmatized identity—of any sort—makes navigating the social world difficult.

United Against Prejudice Through events like the Million Pound March, groups like the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance embrace an in-group orientation and reject the standards that mark them as deviant.

PASSING How can stigmatized individuals negotiate the perils of everyday interaction? One strategy analyzed by Goffman is called **passing**, or concealing stigmatizing information. The allusion to racial passing is entirely intended—Goffman meant to call to mind the experiences of light-skinned African Americans who, for more than 300 years and particularly in the decades before the civil rights movement of the 1960s, sought access to the privileges of whiteness (and relief from discrimination) by concealing their racial heritage and passing as white. The case of racial passing is instructive in developing an understanding of all types of passing—such as the passing engaged in by employees who dress to conceal their tattoos when at work, or people with illnesses like diabetes or depression or disabilities such as hearing impairments who try to keep their conditions a secret.

IN-GROUP ORIENTATION Not everyone can pass, though, because not all stigma is concealable. While it may be possible to conceal your status as an ex-convict or survivor of rape, it is more difficult to conceal extreme shortness or obesity. And while some people cannot pass, others refuse to do so as a matter of principle. These people don't believe that their identities should be seen as deviant, and they certainly don't believe that they should have to change or conceal those identities just to make "normals" feel more comfortable. They have what Goffman calls an **in-group orientation**—they reject the standards that mark them as deviant and may even actively propose new standards in which their special identities are well within the normal range. For example, such groups as PFLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), NAD (National Association of the Deaf), and NAAFA (National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance) have allowed members of stigmatized groups to feel greater self-esteem and to unite in fighting against prejudice and discrimination. Activism might also take a more individual form of merely being "out," open, and unapologetic about one's identity. This in itself can be difficult and exhausting (as passing is); however, those with an in-group orientation see it as a powerful way to address society's changing definitions of deviance.

DEVIANCE AVOWAL AND VOLUNTARY OUTSIDERS

Under most circumstances, people reject the deviant label and what it seems to imply about their personal identity. However, there are some who *choose* to be called a deviant. Those who belong to a particular subculture, for example—whether outlaw biker, rock musician, or eco-warrior—may celebrate their membership in a deviant group. Howard

ON THE JOB

Is "Cash Register Honesty" Good Enough?

While we might like to think that most employees wouldn't take money from the cash register or merchandise from the showroom floor, walk away with a laptop computer, drive away with the company car, or filter sales receipts to their own bank account, employee theft is still a major problem. According to a 2010 survey by the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (2012), the typical business is estimated to lose about 5 percent of its annual revenues to employee fraud. This translates to a median loss of $140,000 per year per organization. Others estimate that employee theft is involved in up to one-third of all U.S. corporate bankruptcies (Russakoff and Goodman 2011). The U.S. Chamber of Commerce reports that 75 percent of all employees steal once, and that half of those individuals will steal repeatedly (Jones 2012). Michael Cunningham (Cunningham and Jones 2010), a professor of psychology at the University of Louisville and a consultant to the security industry, warns that only one in every three potential employees will be completely trustworthy. Of the other two, one may be tempted to steal given the opportunity, while the other will be more or less constantly looking for a chance to get away with taking company property.

Although we may consider ourselves the trustworthy ones, we may not recognize that our own behavior could still be contributing to the tens of billions of dollars lost each year. How? Well, have you ever taken home paper clips, Post-it notes, a pen, or a pad of paper from the office? Made personal copies on the office copier? Used your work computer to surf the web, download music or movies, play video games, or send an e-mail to a friend? Eaten or drunk company products? How about taking a little more time than you're supposed to on your lunch break or leaving work a little early?

It's called "pilfering," and it happens on the job tens of thousands of times a day. And it all adds up. Most companies consider these kinds of losses as just another factor in the cost of doing business. But how is it that so many people think nothing of these small infractions in spite of prevailing social norms that discourage stealing and while otherwise being upstanding or even exemplary employees?

You could say that these people are practicing "cash register honesty." That is, they draw the line at actually stealing money (or its equivalent) out of the till but don't hesitate to make off with other odds and ends that might have a less easily calculable value. Employees may be deterred by informal social control or by more formal surveillance measures such as videotaping, keystroke logging, or other kinds of scanning and searching practiced by employers. But even when they do get away with taking home a pen or snacking on the merchandise, they might be appalled at the suggestion that they are deviant, especially since everyone else seems to take something now and then.

Becker (1963) referred to such individuals as **outsiders**, people living in one way or another outside mainstream society. They may pass among "normals," continuing to work and participate in everyday life. Or their deviant identity may have become a master status, thus preventing them from interacting along conventional lines; when this happens, a person's deviance may be thought to reveal his underlying nature. For instance, members of the punk subculture, easily identified by their distinctive look, are generally assumed to be loud troublemakers, whatever their individual personality traits may be.

Some potential deviants may actually initiate the labeling process against themselves or provoke others to do so, a condition Ralph Turner (1972) calls **deviance avowal**. Turner suggests that it may be useful to conceive of deviance as a role rather than as an isolated behavior that violates a single norm. And in some cases, it may be beneficial for an individual to identify with the deviant role. In the Alcoholics Anonymous program, for example, the first step in recovery is for a member to admit that she is an alcoholic. Since total abstinence from drinking is the goal, only those who believe they have a drinking problem and who willingly accept the label of alcoholic can take the suggested steps toward recovery.

OUTSIDERS according to Howard Becker, those labeled deviant and subsequently segregated from "normal" society

DEVIANCE AVOWAL process by which an individual self-identifies as deviant and initiates her own labeling process

Deviance avowal can also help a person avoid the pressures of having to adopt certain conventional norms, or what Turner calls the "neutralization of commitment." For instance, a recovering alcoholic might resist taking a typical nine-to-five job, claiming that the stress of corporate work had always made him drink before. Another recovering alcoholic who refuses to attend family gatherings might offer

as an excuse that she can't be around family because they drink at every occasion. In such ways, people become voluntary outsiders, finding it preferable to be a deviant in spite of the prevailing norms of mainstream society.

DATA WORKSHOP
Analyzing Everyday Life

AA's Pioneer Women

Alcoholics Anonymous offers an interesting case where members choose to embrace a deviant identity as a positive aspect of themselves, one that is critical to their success in the program. Research by Melvin Pollner and Jill Stein (1996, 2001) has focused on the role of narrative storytelling as a key feature of reconstructing the alcoholic's sense of self and turning a stigmatized identity into a valued asset in the process of recovery. The basic text of the twelve-step program is laid out in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* (1939/2001), often referred to by members as the "Big Book." Its first 164 pages have remained virtually the same since it was first published in 1939; it is now in its fourth edition. The book also includes dozens of personal stories written by AA members themselves. These chapters always begin with the "Pioneers of AA," but in each subsequent edition some new (and more modern) stories have been added, while others have been dropped. That such a large part of the Big Book is devoted to the personal stories of members shows their importance. They are intended to help newcomers to the program identify with and relate to the lives of other recovering alcoholics and to follow their examples.

In this Data Workshop, you will examine the story of "Marty M."—one of AA's pioneers and one of the first women to join the program, way back in 1939, when the book was just being written. Her story is the fourth that appears (but not until the second and subsequent editions) and is called "Women Suffer Too." The title refers to a widely held notion at the time that only men could be alcoholics. The idea of a woman alcoholic was almost unthinkable. Marty M. defied the conventions of her day in many ways. She was a divorcee, entrepreneur, world traveler, and later, philanthropist. But first and foremost, she was a sober drunk. Marty M.'s story follows the classic narrative structure of all AA stories: what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. It is told from the perspective of a sober alcoholic looking back on her life and understanding that through the process of deviance avowal (by accepting her alcoholism) she was able to transform a negative past into a positive life.

For this Data Workshop you will be examining an existing source and doing a content analysis of the story "Women Suffer Too." Refer to Chapter 2 for a review of this research method. The text of the story can be found in the Big Book (pages 222–229) and accessed online at various websites, including http://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/en_bigbook_personalstories_partI.pdf.

Read the story in its entirety, keeping in mind how the study of life histories or oral histories can reveal important features of societal norms and everyday life. Remember that Marty M. lived in a particular time period and social context. Pay close attention to how the story describes both deviant behavior and the process of deviance avowal, and consider the following questions:

* Identify the instances of deviance described in the author's story. Why were these behaviors considered deviant?
* In what ways was she in denial about her condition early on? How did she actively try to disavow the deviant label?
* At what point did she begin the process of deviance avowal? How did admitting that she was an alcoholic affect her self-concept?
* In what ways did deviance avowal allow her to see her past in a different light? How did her deviant identity finally become a positive part of her life?
* How have our perceptions about alcoholics and alcoholism changed since the pioneer days of AA?

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop:

PREP-PAIR-SHARE Prepare some written notes based on your answers to the questions that you can refer to during in-class discussions. Share your reactions and conclusions with other students in small groups. Listen for any differences in each other's insights.

DO-IT-YOURSELF Write a three- to four-page essay answering the questions. Include your own reactions to the story. Make sure to refer to specific passages from the story that help to support your analysis.

Studying Deviance

When studying deviance, sociologists have often focused on the most obvious forms of deviant behavior—crime, mental illness, and sexual deviance. This "nuts and sluts" approach (Liazos 1972) usually focuses on the deviance of the poor and powerless, while accepting the values and norms of the powerful in an unacknowledged way. Social scientists tended to apply definitions of deviance uncritically in their research and failed to question the ways in which the definitions themselves may have perpetuated inequalities and untruths.

David Matza (1969), a sociologist at the University of California, Berkeley, set out to remedy this situation. He urged social scientists to set aside their preconceived notions in order to understand deviant phenomena on their own terms—a perspective he called "naturalism." Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor, for example, spent three years with a dozen drag queens in order to gain perspective for their research in *Drag Queens at the 801 Cabaret* (2003)—at one point, they even performed onstage (see Part II's introduction to read more). Matza's fundamental admonition to those studying deviance is that they must appreciate the diversity and complexity of a particular social world—the world of street gangs, drug addicts, strippers, fight clubs, outlaw bikers, homeless people, or the severely disfigured. If such a world is approached as a simple social pathology that needs correcting, the researcher will never fully understand it. A sociological perspective requires that we seek insight without applying judgment—a difficult task indeed.

The Emotional Attraction of Deviance

Most sociological perspectives on deviance focus on aspects of a person's background that would influence him to act in deviant ways. This is the case with both functionalist and conflict perspectives. For example, many sociological studies of crime make the case that youth with limited access to education may be more likely to turn to dealing drugs or theft. Labeling theory also suggests that a person's social location is a crucial determinant: It shapes how others see the person, as well as his or her own self-view, and these perceptions can lead a person from primary to secondary deviance and into a deviant career. One of the main problems with such theories, however, is that they can't explain why some people with backgrounds that should incline them to deviance never actually violate any rules, while others with no defining background factors do become deviant.

Approaches that focus exclusively on background factors neglect one very important element: the deviant's own in-the-moment experience of committing a deviant act, what sociologist Jack Katz refers to as the "foreground" of deviance. In *The Seductions of Crime* (1988), Katz looks at how emotionally seductive crime can be, how shoplifting or even committing murder might produce a particular kind of rush that becomes the very reason for carrying out the act. For example, what shoplifters often seek is not the DVD or perfume itself as much as the "sneaky thrill" of stealing it. Initially drawn to stealing by the thought of just how easy it might be, the shoplifter tests her ability to be secretly deviant—in public—while appearing to be perfectly normal. This perspective explains why the vast majority of shoplifters are not from underprivileged backgrounds but are people who could easily afford the stolen items. How else might we explain why a wealthy and famous actress such as Lindsay Lohan would try to steal a necklace from a jewelry store?

Similarly, muggers' and robbers' actions reveal that they get more satisfaction from their crimes than from the things they steal. They are excited by the sense of superiority they gain by setting up and playing tricks on their victims. In fact, they can come to feel morally superior, thinking that their victims deserve their fate because they are less observant and savvy. Even murderous rages can be seen as seductive ways to overcome an overwhelming sense of humiliation. A victim of adultery, for example, may kill instead of simply ending the relationship because murder, or "righteous slaughter," feels like the most appropriate response. In a real-life example from 2014, twenty-two-year-old gunman Elliott Rodger killed seven people (including himself) and wounded thirteen in Isla Vista, California. He left behind a video manifesto explaining that he was angry after being romantically rejected by women. In effect, he was seduced by the possibility of becoming a powerful avenger rather than remaining a wounded and impotent victim.

Katz's foreground model of deviance deepens our appreciation for the complexity of deviant behavior and reminds us that social actors are not mere products of their environment but are active participants in creating meaningful experiences for themselves, even if harmful to others.

The Study of Crime

Crime is a particular type of deviance: It is the violation of a norm that has been codified into law, for which you could be arrested and imprisoned. Official state-backed sanctions, such as laws, exert more power over the individual than do nonlegal norms. For example, if you risked arrest for gossiping about your roommate, you might think twice about doing it. "Might," however, is the key word here, for the risk of arrest and jail time does not always deter people from breaking laws. In fact, ordinary people break laws every day without really thinking about it (speeding, underage drinking, stealing those pens and pencils from the office). As we saw

CRIME a violation of a norm that has been codified into law

CRIMINOLOGY the systematic scientific study of crime, criminals, and criminal justice

UNIFORM CRIME REPORT (UCR) an official measure of crime in the United States, produced by the FBI's official tabulation of every crime reported by more than 18,000 law enforcement agencies

VIOLENT CRIME crimes in which violence is either the objective or the means to an end, including murder, rape, aggravated assault, and robbery

PROPERTY CRIME crimes that do not involve violence, including burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson

CYBERCRIME crimes committed via the Internet, including identity theft, embezzlement, fraud, sexual predation, and financial scams

earlier, being bad can feel good, and even murder can feel righteous at the time (Katz 1988).

These are among the many reasons that sociologists study crime—in fact, there's a word for the study of crime, criminals, and the criminal justice system: **criminology**. Criminologists ask and attempt to answer questions like the following: Who makes the laws? Who breaks them? Who benefits from defining and enforcing them? How do individuals begin committing crime, and how do they desist? What are the intentions and outcomes of law enforcement institutions? Using systematic data and social scientific theory, the work of criminologists contributes to our understanding of this type of deviance in our society.

In the United States, crime is officially measured by the **Uniform Crime Report (UCR)**, the FBI's tabulation of every crime reported by more than 18,000 law enforcement agencies around the country. In particular, the UCR is used to track the "crime index," or the eight offenses considered especially reprehensible in our society (see Figure 6.2). Murder, rape, aggravated assault, and robbery are categorized as **violent crime**. Burglary (theft inside the home), larceny (of personal property), motor vehicle theft, and arson are considered **property crime**. Even though the UCR has been shown to be a flawed system (participation by agencies is voluntary, and the FBI rarely audits it for accuracy), it is useful in helping to track trends in overall crime as well as particular patterns; it also records the number of arrests made compared with the number of crimes committed, which is the most traditional measure of police effectiveness.

Through the UCR, criminologists are able to make comparisons in crime rates using such variables as year and region. One notable finding is that rates of violent crime declined significantly in the last decade of the twentieth century. The year 1991 saw the highest homicide rates in U.S. history, at 9.8 per 100,000 persons or 24,700 murders. Between 1991 and 2000, there was a dramatic drop in homicide rates, and the number continued to decline to 4.4 murders per 100,000 persons, or 14,164 murders, in 2014 (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2016a). Violent crime, though, increased nearly 4 percent from 2014 to 2015; the number of murders jumped up 11 percent. Other findings from the UCR include the observation that murder rates peak in the months of July and August. Perhaps related to summer heat and humidity, murder rates are also higher in the southern states. Financial hardship may influence murder rates, as southern states also have the lowest median family incomes. Other patterns identifiable in UCR data: murder is committed most frequently by a friend or relative of the victim and seldom by a stranger; robbery occurs most frequently in urban areas among youth.

Other trends are visible in the UCR as well. Property crimes occur more frequently than violent crimes. The most common crime is larceny, with burglary and motor vehicle theft trailing far behind. Although there has also been a decline in rates of property crime in the last decade, it is not as extreme as the drop in violent crime. And with the arrival of the Information Age, the category of **cybercrime** has emerged, covering a wide variety of illegal violations committed via the Internet.

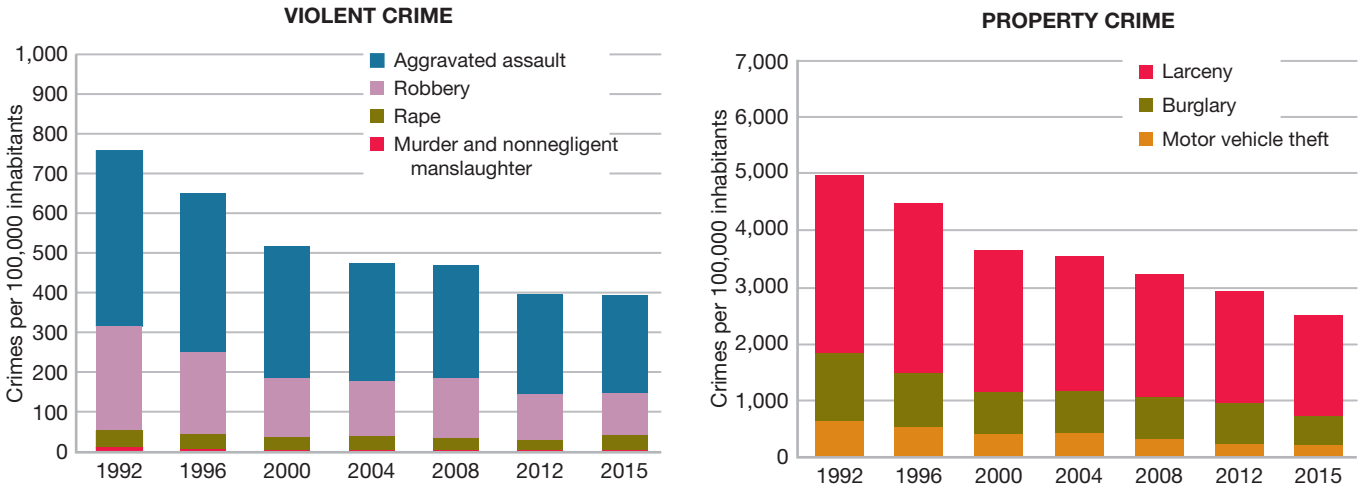


Figure 6.2 **Crime in the United States, 1992–2015**

SOURCE: Federal Bureau of Investigation 2016a.

Crime and Demographics

When criminologists look at quantitative crime data, which provide information on who is more likely to commit or be a victim of crime, they may learn more about the cause of crime. We should, however, question the assumptions and biases of the data. For example, Robert Merton's theory of the self-fulfilling prophecy prompts us to ask, if society has a tendency to cast certain categories of people as criminal types, will this assumption ensure that they will indeed be labeled and treated like criminals? This has certainly seemed to be true in cases like the high-profile 2014 killing of unarmed black teenager Michael Brown by Ferguson, Missouri, police officer Darren Wilson. And, as David Matza warned, will our preconceived notions about a category of people influence our interpretations of numerical data? In this section, we look at the relationship between crime and demographics such as class, age, gender, and race and examine alternate explanations for what may seem like clear numerical fact.

CLASS Statistics consistently tell us that crime rates are higher in poor urban areas than in wealthier suburbs, but these higher crime rates may not actually be the result of increased criminal behavior. Rather, police tend to concentrate their efforts in urban areas, which they assume are more prone to crime, and thus make more arrests there. It appears that social class is more directly related to how citizens are officially treated by the police, courts, and prisons than to which individuals are likely to commit crime. And even if we do accept these statistics as an accurate representation of crime rates, such theorists as Robert Sampson and William Julius Wilson (2005) argue that the same factors that cause an area to become economically and socially disadvantaged also encourage criminal activity. Lack of jobs, lack of after-school child care, and lack of good schools, for example, are all factors that can lead to economic strain and criminal activity.

On the other end of the social class spectrum, **white collar crime** has been defined by sociologist Edwin Sutherland as "a crime committed by a person of respectability and high social status in the course of his occupation." White collar crime can include fraud, embezzlement, or insider trading. Most white collar criminals come from a relatively privileged background (Shover and Wright 2001), and it is no coincidence that white collar crime is policed and punished less strenuously than street crime.

WHITE COLLAR CRIME crime committed by a high-status individual in the course of his occupation

AGE The younger the population, the more likely its members are to commit crimes. Criminologists have shown that this relationship between age and crime has remained stable since 1935, with the peak age for arrests being nineteen. In the United States, fifteen- to nineteen-year-olds make up 6.5 percent of the population yet account for 13 percent of criminal arrests. In addition, there is a specific set of laws, courts, and correctional facilities for juveniles. Some acts are only crimes when they are committed by people under eighteen—curfew violations, for example. Juvenile courts usually involve bench trials (no jury), and some sentences (such as moving the offender into a foster home) are only applied in juvenile cases.

The Who, What, Where, and When of Crime The HBO series *The Wire* was set in Baltimore and focused on topics such as drug dealing, government corruption, and failed school systems. How would a criminologist explain this scene?

On the other end of the spectrum, people sixty-five and older make up about 15 percent of the population and account for only 1 percent of arrests (U.S. Census Bureau 2017d; Federal Bureau of Investigation 2016a). We call this trend *aging out of crime*. Here, too, however, we must be careful about what we read into official statistics. Since our stereotypical image of a criminal is youthful, it may be that the public and police are more likely to accuse and arrest young people and less likely to target seniors. In addition, youth may commit more visible crimes (like robbery or assault), while older people may commit crimes that are more difficult to detect, like embezzlement or fraud.

GENDER Males are more likely than females to commit crime. In fact, males accounted for 89 percent of arrests for murder and 73 percent of all arrests in 2015 (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2016a). Earlier researchers hypothesized that the gender difference in crime rates was based on physical, emotional, and psychological differences between men and women. The logic was that women were too weak, passive, or unintelligent to commit crime. This argument has been replaced by a focus on the social and economic roles of women. Starting in the 1970s, criminologists found that lower crime rates among women could be explained by their lower status in the power hierarchy. Conflict theorists such as James Messerschmidt (1993) argued that once women start gaining power in the labor market through education and income, crime rates among women will rise to more closely match those among men. This hypothesis has been largely supported by recent trends. Between 2006 and 2015, the number of males arrested decreased by more than a quarter (26 percent), while the number of females arrested decreased by only 12 percent (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2016a). So while at first glance it may seem logical to argue that women's crime rates are lower because of genetics, on closer examination, we see that social structure plays an important role.

Gender Gap in Crime *Orange Is the New Black* follows the lives of female inmates at the fictional Litchfield Penitentiary. Women currently make up about 7 percent of the prison population.

RACE The relationship between race and crime is a controversial one. According to the UCR, African Americans make up 13 percent of the U.S. population but account for 27 percent of all arrests (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2016a). Once again, sociologists caution against making a link between biology and criminal activity. Instead, they maintain that the relationship can be explained by Merton's self-fulfilling prophecy and by class variables. For example, we could hypothesize that African Americans are exposed to higher rates of crime because more of them live in lower-class neighborhoods—and that here, it is class that matters more than race.

Race shapes life experiences even after criminal offenders have paid their debt to society: Legal scholar Michelle Alexander makes the argument that once African Americans (and in particular, African American men) come into contact with the criminal justice system, they are permanently stigmatized and stripped of their civil rights. As she explains in *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindess,* "They are legally denied the ability to obtain employment, housing, and public benefits—much as African Americans were once forced into a segregated, second-class citizenship in the Jim Crow era" (2011, p. 4).

HATE CRIMES When criminals deliberately target victims because of their demographic characteristics (race, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or disability status) it's classified as a hate crime. Hate crime charges are usually added to other criminal charges, such as assault, arson, or vandalism, when it is suspected that the original crime was motivated by bias. Such crimes are investigated and prosecuted at both the local and federal levels. National hate crime statistics are collected by the FBI, although not all local jurisdictions participate in the counts. Given this information, we should recognize the likelihood that official statistics underreport hate crimes. In 2015, the FBI reported 5,850 hate crimes, of which close to 60 percent were racially motivated; close to 20 percent targeted victims because of sexual orientation (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2016c).

CRIME AND INTERSECTIONALITY Finally, it is important to recognize that none of these variables—class, age, gender, race—affect crime rates in isolation; they work together to shape the experiences of individuals as well as the larger

society. Nikki Jones's (2012) ethnographic study of inner-city African American girls in Philadelphia shows how all of these variables contribute to young women's experiences with violence in their everyday lives. For example, the girls in Jones's study find themselves caught in a bind as they attempt to navigate community standards of both respectability and practicality. In order to be perceived as "respectable," they must adhere to expectations, be "good girls," and avoid violence, while also meeting feminine and race-based appearance norms (such as slender bodies and light complexions). On the other hand, the practical realities of life in what are often risky neighborhoods mean these girls must be ready at any time to look and act tough and be willing to fight to defend themselves and others in direct violation of the "good girl" expectations. Thus, their race, class, gender, and age put them in a situation where they must navigate the competing demands of respectability and toughness, balancing their good girl image while always being prepared for the realities of crime and violence.

DATA WORKSHOP
Analyzing Media and Pop Culture

Norm Breaking on Television

It's clear that deviance is a fascinating subject not only for sociologists but for millions of television viewers as well. That's why we've seen a proliferation of shows in recent years that feature people breaking almost every kind of social norm imaginable, from folkways to taboos. We might expect to see deviance covered in a talk show or newsmagazine program, but it's a staple of many other genres. We see it in reality TV shows like *Teen Mom*, which focuses on how high schoolers deal with pregnancy and parenthood, and *Mafia Wives*, which portrays women whose husbands may be criminals with mob connections. But it's not just reality TV shows that feature deviance. Dramas such as *Riverdale, House of Cards, American Horror Story*, or *Billions*, comedies such as *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* or *Mom*, hybrids such as *Transparent* or *Orange Is the New Black*, and even animated shows such as *The Simpsons* or *Family Guy* all deal with various elements of the pathological or dysfunctional. And there are many more such shows that we could add to the list.

On-Air Deviance TV shows such as *13 Reasons Why* and *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* turn norm breaking into must-see TV.

Why is there so much deviance on television? Are these shows merely entertainment, or is something more going on here? When we watch them, do we feel morally superior or get some kind of vicarious thrill? Does exposure to so much deviance help reinforce our social norms or serve to erode them?

For this Data Workshop you will be using existing sources and doing a content analysis of an episode from a particular TV show. Return to Chapter 2 for a review of this research method. Choose a contemporary TV show that is available for multiple viewings, either by recording it or accessing it online or on DVD. As you watch the episode, take some notes about the content and try to document all the ways in which deviant behavior is portrayed on the show. Then consider the following questions:

* Who is the intended audience for this program? Why did you choose it?
* What kind of deviance is featured? Give specific examples of situations, scenes, dialogue, or characters, and explain why they are examples of deviance.

* What kinds of deviance are missing from media portrayals?
* Is the deviance celebrated or condemned?
* How does it make you feel to watch the program?
* What effect do you think the show has on other viewers?
* Do you think the program supports or challenges prevailing social norms?

There are two options for completing this Data Workshop:

PREP-PAIR-SHARE Watch your chosen episode and bring some written notes to class that you can refer to in small-group discussions. Compare and contrast the analyses of the different programs in your group. What are the similarities and differences among programs?

DO-IT-YOURSELF View your chosen TV program, taking some informal notes about the episode. Write a three- to four-page essay answering the questions and reflecting on your own experience conducting this content analysis. What do you think these shows tell us about contemporary American society and our attitudes toward deviance? Attach your notes to the paper, and include a citation for the episode you viewed.

DETERRENCE an approach to punishment that relies on the threat of harsh penalties to discourage people from committing crimes

RETRIBUTION an approach to punishment that emphasizes retaliation or revenge for the crime as the appropriate goal

INCAPACITATION an approach to punishment that seeks to protect society from criminals by imprisoning or executing them

REHABILITATION an approach to punishment that attempts to reform criminals as part of their penalty

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM a collection of social institutions, such as legislatures, police, courts, and prisons, that creates and enforces laws

The Criminal Justice System

The question of **deterrence** is part of an ongoing debate about our criminal laws. Theorists who maintain that offenders carefully calculate the cost and benefits of each crime argue that punishment has a deterrent effect—that if the punishment seems too severe, people won't commit the crime. That's the logic behind California's controversial "three strikes" law: The punishment for three felonies is an automatic life sentence. While deterrence theory seems practical enough, it is important to note that in matters of sociology, seldom is there such a direct and causal link between two factors—in this case, the cost of punishment versus the benefit of the crime.

Other justifications for punishment include **retribution**—the notion that society has the right to "get even"—and **incapacitation**, the notion that criminals should be confined or even executed to protect society from further injury. Some argue, though, that society should focus not on punishment but on **rehabilitation**: The prison system should try to reform the criminal so that once released, he will not return to a life of crime. Each approach to punishment invokes different ideas about who the criminal is and what his relationship is to the larger society: Is he someone who can plan ahead and curb his illegal behavior so as not to face a possible negative outcome? Is she someone who can work toward personal transformation? Is he someone who must be punished quid pro quo? Or should she just be removed from society permanently?

In the United States, the local, state, and federal government bureaucracies responsible for making laws together with the police, courts, and prison systems make up the **criminal justice system**—a system that, like any other social institution, reflects the society in which it operates. This means that while the American criminal justice system provides important benefits, such as social control and even employment for its workers, it also replicates some of the inequalities of power in our society. The research of Victor Rios, whom we introduced in the Part I opener, focuses on this issue. Rios, a professor of sociology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, went from gang member to PhD partly because a teacher intervened and put him in touch with a mentoring program at a local university. Otherwise, Rios believes, he would have become another victim of the "youth control complex," his term for the way a variety of institutions, including law enforcement, the judicial system, and public schools, work together to "criminalize, stigmatize, and punish" working-class youth. Rios believes that the educational system has embraced a self-defeating strategy by adopting the attitudes and tactics of law enforcement, even as law enforcement and the judicial system have turned to more draconian measures. Increasingly, our society attempts to control gang violence and drug use with brute force, but this sort of indiscriminate policing often creates the very crime it is designed to eliminate as "enhanced policing, surveillance, and punitive treatment of youth of color" help to create a "school-to-prison pipeline" (Rios 2009, p. 151).

In another example of the dysfunctions of the criminal justice system, in 2003 seventeen inmates on Illinois's death row were found to be innocent of the crimes for which they had been sentenced to die. Some cases involved errors made by overworked or underqualified defense attorneys. Further, more than two-thirds of the inmates were African American, many of them convicted by all-white juries (Ryan 2003). As a result, then-governor George Ryan

IN THE FUTURE

American vs. Scandinavian Prisons

Because of the way we think about punishment in the United States, American prisons are usually imposing, windowless buildings, walled off with high fences, barbed wire, and armed guards. They are infamously overcrowded and often violent, and prisoners are in need of medical, mental health, and rehabilitative care of which they receive little. American prisons are placed either in the middle of nowhere (rural and less inhabited areas) or in the middle of impoverished and depopulated urban areas (so as to remain largely invisible to those who live in more privileged circumstances). Visiting a prison is something we only consider doing if we have an incarcerated relative to see or we want to rack up some volunteer hours. We certainly wouldn't consider touring prisons as vacation spots, nor would we want to stay long at any vacation spot that was itself too near a prison. We react to prisons and prisoners with fear and revulsion and institutionalize those emotions in the way we situate, construct, operate, and populate our penitentiaries.

This is not always the case in other parts of the world. In Scandinavia (Sweden, Denmark, and Norway) and neighboring Nordic countries like Finland and Iceland in particular, many of the penal complexes are what criminologists call "open" prisons. Organized more like boarding schools than detention centers, open prisons operate on a model very different than that used in the United States. Instead of focusing on retribution and incapacitation, Scandinavia's open prisons provide prisoners with an opportunity to rehabilitate themselves and re-enter society as reformed, contributing members.

For example, Helsinki's Suomenlinna Island prison is not walled off from the surrounding town, which is located in a scenic archipelago that caters to tourists, arts patrons, and picnickers. Prisoners live in dormitory-like accommodations and hold jobs in the town's maintenance and tourism departments, doing upkeep on the facilities for wages that run from $6 to $10 per hour. They wear their own clothes, cook their own meals, and have televisions and sound systems in their rooms. They can visit with their families in Helsinki, and they have supportive rather than adversarial relationships with the guards.

Places like Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Norway are, of course, smaller than the United States and somewhat more demographically homogeneous. However, Scandinavian prison populations are *proportionally* much smaller than U.S. prison populations (U.S. rates are ten times those of Scandinavian countries) and much more representative of the larger society in terms of racial and ethnic diversity. And after serving their debt to society, Scandinavian ex-cons are far less likely to re-offend: They have a recidivism rate that is less than half that of U.S. prisoners.

Open Prisons Norway's Halden Prison uses education, job training, and therapy to help rehabilitate inmates. The Norwegian Correctional Service makes all inmates a "reintegration guarantee," helping them find homes and jobs once they are released.

How do they do it?

Pundits will, of course, argue about which Scandinavian strategy is the key to such successful prisoner rehabilitation. But throughout the Nordic countries, criminal justice policy is governed by research rather than politics. Legislators do not make decisions about how to house, treat, or control prison populations; instead, social scientists do. Criminological research on what does and doesn't work forms the basis for decision making, and professionals in the criminal justice field are the ones who make those decisions. This is in stark contrast to the United States, in which "tough on crime" politics, fear-mongering media, and private corporate interests have created an overcrowded, violent, expensive, and ineffective prison system. If we were to approach criminal offenders with compassion rather than fear, would the results be different? Is this something we are willing to try?

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT the death penalty

POSITIVE DEVIANCE actions considered deviant within a given context but are later reinterpreted as appropriate or even heroic

became convinced that **capital punishment** was unfairly and even wrongly applied in some cases, and he suspended the death penalty altogether (it was officially abolished in Illinois in 2011). When inequities and errors such as these exist in the criminal justice system, we must question the true meaning of the word "justice" in our society.

THE PRISON-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX One trend in corrections in the United States is the switch from government-run prison systems to privately run penitentiaries. Once prisons are privately contracted, they become for-profit businesses that push for increased state subsidies while adopting cost-saving measures such as requiring unpaid labor from inmates and reducing spending on education, health care, and food for inmates. When prisons become businesses, they become more focused on their bottom line and pleasing shareholders than rehabilitating their prisoners. Critics of private prisons question the benefit of this trend, especially given the rapid increase in incarceration rates (Figure 6.3) that has overlapped directly with the increase in prison privatization over the last twenty years.

Reconsidering Deviance?

Because definitions of deviance are historically, culturally, and situationally specific, they are often in flux and can be contested in a variety of ways. If you think about it, most of our interpersonal arguments, legislative battles, and movements for social change are about the question of what is deviant. Remember the case of marijuana use and cultivation from the opening pages of this chapter? It's a perfect example of how the question of how to define deviance is one that we will constantly wrestle with as a society.

Even in Durkheim's hypothetical "society of saints" (1895), deviance is unavoidable. But are there instances in which a rule violation is actually a principled act that should generate a positive rather than negative reaction? Sociologists use the term **positive deviance** to describe situations in which norms are broken in the name of the good. Next we provide two examples of positive deviance: In both cases, individuals broke laws and were initially seen as criminals. In hindsight, they are now considered heroes.

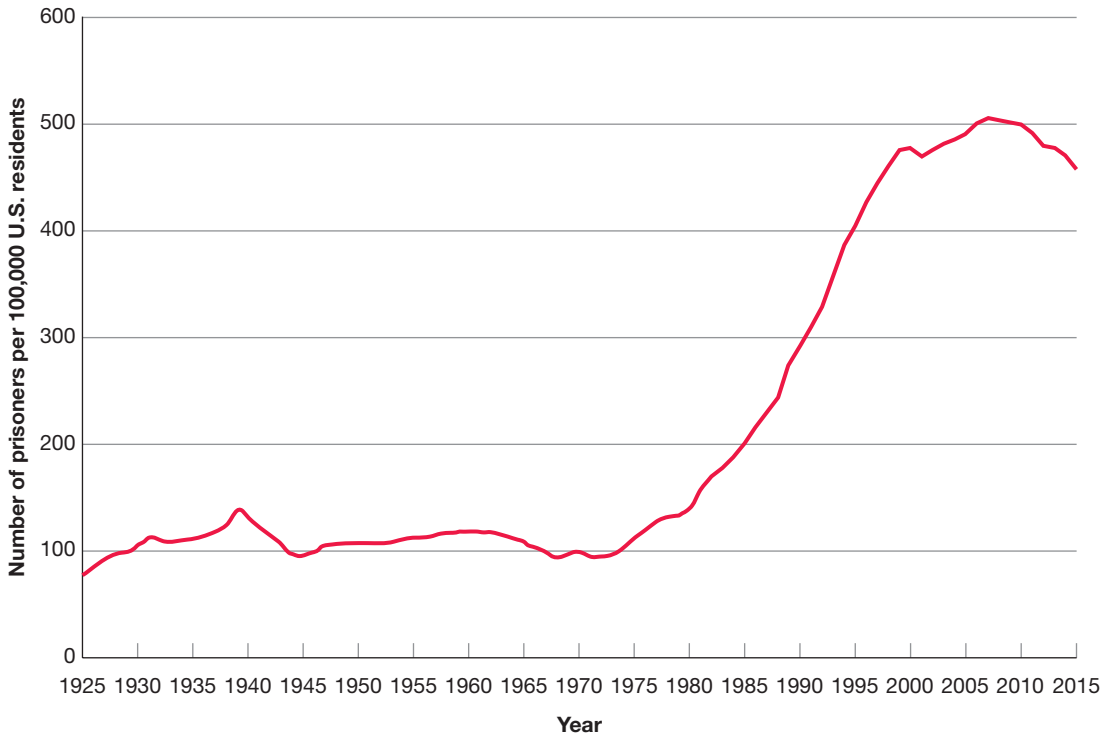


Figure 6.3 Incarceration Rate,* 1925–2015

*Incarceration rate is the number of prisoners under state or federal jurisdiction sentenced to more than one year per 100,000 U.S residents.

SOURCES: U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics 1982, Prisoners Series 1983–2015.

The first example is the simple act of civil disobedience performed by Rosa Parks on December 1, 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, an act often considered pivotal in launching the civil rights movement. In those days, a Montgomery city ordinance required buses to be segregated: Whites sat in front and blacks in the back. Rosa Parks defied the law by refusing to give up her front seat to a white man and move to the back. Her arrest galvanized the black community and triggered a bus boycott and subsequent protests that eventually ended segregation in the South.

It is worth recognizing that Parks was not an accidental symbol; she was an experienced activist. In her one small, courageous act of defiance, she served as a catalyst that eventually helped to advance the fight against racial discrimination all across America. More than forty years after the day she took her seat on the bus, Parks was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1996. When she died in 2005, it was front-page news. Her funeral was attended by luminaries of all types and races: mayors, members of Congress, presidents, CEOs, clergy, celebrities, and as many others as could fit into the packed church and spill outside its doors.

The second example is the story of three soldiers who put a stop to a massacre during the Vietnam War. On March 16, 1968, the men of Charlie Company, a U.S. battalion under the command of Lieutenant William Calley, stormed into the village of My Lai in South Vietnam on a "search and destroy" mission and opened fire on its civilian inhabitants. The boys and men of the village had gone to tend the fields, leaving only unarmed women, children, and the elderly. Hundreds were killed on that terrible day, in direct violation of military law. Although the soldiers should have ceased fire when they saw that the enemy (members of the Viet Cong) was not present, they obeyed the commands of their leaders and continued ravaging the village. Calley was later convicted in a court martial; his men, claiming that they were only "following orders," were not held responsible.

The massacre would have continued unchecked had it not been for three other American soldiers—Hugh Thompson, Lawrence Colburn, and Glenn Andreotta—who flew their helicopter into the middle of the carnage at My Lai, against the orders of their superiors, and called for backup help to airlift dozens of survivors to safety. They then turned their guns on their fellow Americans, threatening to shoot if they tried to harm any more villagers. For years, the army tried to cover up the three men's heroism in order to keep the whole ugly truth of My Lai a secret. But finally, in 1998, the men were recognized for their bravery and heroism with medals and citations—for having had the courage and skill to perform a perilous rescue and the moral conviction necessary to defy authority.

Can you think of a time when someone in your community exhibited positive deviance?

CLOSING COMMENTS

The sociological study of crime and deviance raises complicated issues of morality and ethics. When we study sensitive topics like rape and alcoholism or vulnerable populations like juvenile delinquents and the mentally ill, we have a responsibility as scholars to recognize the effects our attention may have on the people we study. As David Matza noted, we must try to eschew moral judgments in our work, no matter how difficult that may be. And as our professional code of ethics demonstrates, we must protect the people we study from any negative outcomes. Groups lodged under the rubric of deviance can be disempowered by this label, and policy decisions made on the basis of social science research may further injure an already marginalized group. On the other hand, a sociological perspective on deviance and crime provides for the possibility that groups previously labeled and marginalized may someday receive assistance and legitimacy from the larger society as well. The sociological perspective is a powerful tool.

Everything You Need to Know about Deviance

> "Deviance is a behavior, trait, or belief that departs from the norm and generates a negative reaction in a particular group."

THEORIES OF DEVIANCE

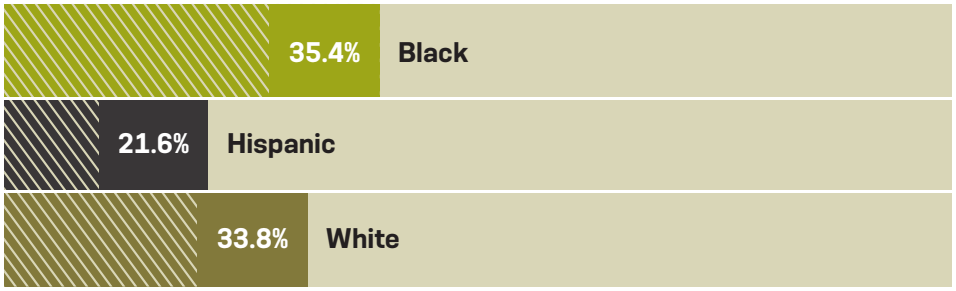
* **Functionalism:** Deviance reminds us of our shared notions of wrong and right and promotes social cohesion.
* **Structural strain:** Social inequality creates tension between society's goals and the means an individual has to achieve those goals.
* **Conflict:** Both society's rules and the punishments for breaking those rules are applied unequally.
* **Differential association:** We learn to be deviant through interactions with people who break rules.
* **Labeling:** Deviance is determined by the social context.

REVIEW

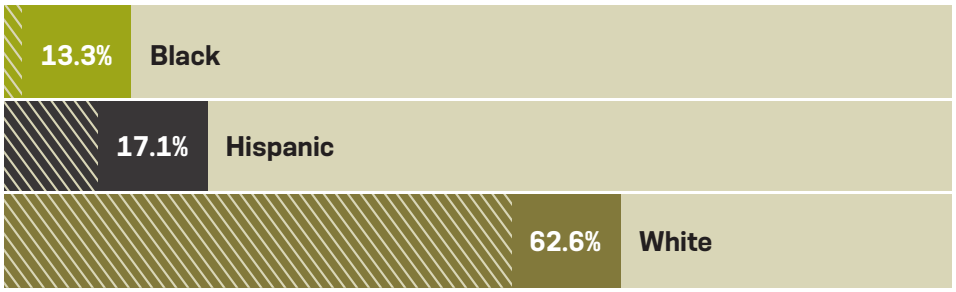
1. There are many ways to be mildly deviant without breaking any laws. How do we sanction minor deviant acts?
2. Have you ever known someone to reject the "deviant" label and turn his or her negative identity into a positive one? What was the deviant identity? What term describes this sort of deviance? Do you know anyone who has embraced a stigmatized role through deviance avowal? How might these strategies be useful to individuals?
3. The United States has the dubious distinction of leading every other nation in both the largest total number and largest percentage of incarcerated citizens. Why do you think America has more prisoners than any other country?

Who Goes to Prison in the United States?

Prison Population (by Race and Hispanic Origin), 2015

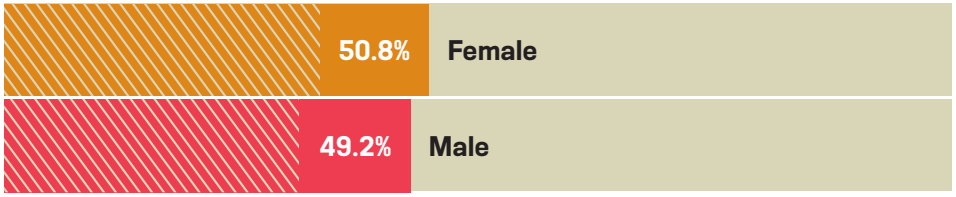


Total U.S. Population (by Race and Hispanic Origin), 2015



Prison Population (by Gender), 2015

Total U.S. Population (by Gender), 2015



SOURCES: U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics 2017, "Prisoners in 2015"; U.S. Census Bureau 2017, "National Population by Characteristics Tables: 2010–2016"

EXPLORE

Policing, Solidarity, and Conflict

Many news stories have noted that violent crime rates have risen in certain cities. Some are blaming the so-called Ferguson effect. Visit the *Everyday Sociology* blog to learn more about how the different theoretical perspectives can help us better understand the relationship between communities and their police departments.

http://wwnPag.es/trw606