CHAPTER 8: DEVIANCE AND SOCIAL CONTROL

Sociology by the Numbers  Anomie Theory, Control Theory, and Understanding Crime

Annotation: The works of Merton, Hirschi, and Durkheim as they relate to norms, social control, and social integration are tested here. Specifically, the level of educational achievement and attachment to social groups are examined as variables in determining the incidence of criminal behavior one commits.

Learning Objective: To develop hypotheses from the concepts presented in these theories by Merton, Hirschi, and Durkheim and to introduce students to the correlation between variables.

Faculty Note: Translating general sociological theories into testable hypotheses is an important skill for students to learn. The exercise below gives students practice in developing this skill in relation to the theories presented and an appreciation for the value of converting data into graphs.

Activity: Have students read the description, in Sociology by the Numbers, of Merton’s, Hirschi’s, and Durkheim’s ideas about the relationship between the level of education people achieve and their degree of social attachment to their likelihood of engaging in criminal behavior. Then have them construct their own table that identifies two variables associated with a behavior common to college students. For example, the relationship between the number of hours spent partying per week and a student’s grade point average, the number of hours a student spends engaged in partying per week and their consumption of alcohol, and so on. Have the students operationalize the definitions they use in this exercise, construct a table to identify the data, and then graph the data. Finally, have them describe the relationship between the two variables.

Additional Resources: The brief research report "Crime in Florida's Counties" [http://www.floridataxwatch.org/crimeb.html] contains a regression analysis showing the relative importance of eight demographic variables. This analysis could be used to show students a more advanced procedure for evaluating the importance of group characteristics in relation to crime rates.

Test Question: (Essay) Explain why, according to Emile Durkheim's theory, people who rent, rather than own their own homes, might be more likely to be deviant.

Answers might include: People who rent are more mobile and do not establish the same enduring, close relationships with their neighbors. Renters are therefore freer of the social ties that restrain the more residentially stable, better socially connected homeowners from violating social norms.

Interactive Map  Violent Crime by State, United States

Annotation: This website shows a map of the U.S. on which states are color-coded to indicate the rate of violent crime (average, higher than average, or lower than average). By clicking on a state, students bring up a window showing the violent crime rate in that state. Two questions are posed regarding which states are safer and why some states are safer than others.

Learning Objective: To understand better the complex relationship between crime and the social response to crime.

Faculty Note: Imprisonment is the preferred response to violent crime in the U.S., yet the success of imprisonment in deterring prospective offenders is unclear. The exercise below engages students in the debate over the utility of imprisonment.

Activity: Ask students to create a data table in which they list the 50 U.S. states in order of their rates of violent crime (taken from the Interactive Map "Violent Crime in the United States.”) Then have them go to the Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin, “Prisoners in 1998” [http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/p98.pdf]. Have students add to
their data table the imprisonment rate of each state, taken from Table #5 of the BJS bulletin. Ask them to examine their data table to determine whether there is an apparent relationship between violent crime and imprisonment rates. Ask them to discuss (or write a short paper about) the relationship between violent crime and imprisonment, including a consideration of which variable is cause (the independent variable) and which is effect (the dependent variable).


### Sociology on the Internet

**Content Select Activity**

**Gun Violence and Gun Control**

**Gun Control**

**Annotation:** Gun ownership for any reason, including collecting, hunting, and self-protection, is considered by many to be “deviant.” On one side of the argument, various groups are demanding the curtailment, and even complete elimination of gun ownership by private citizens. On the other side of the argument, there is a very large and very vocal group of citizens that consider gun ownership one of their most sacred Constitutional rights. This exercise describes the differences in both camps, their methods, and goals. To maximize the results of this exercise, students are also directed to [Content Select Activity](#).

The U.S. has much higher rates of violent crime than other countries where the level of civilian gun ownership is lower. The correlation between gun ownership and violence may not be causal, however. There are a number of web links students can access that will provide additional information and points of view on this highly debated topic. These web links can be identified through the use of search engines. These web links will provide organizations with firm positions on gun control and to direct them to sites that offer more information on gun violence.

**Learning Objective:** To specify the empirical assumptions and values underlying both sides in the gun-control debate.

**Faculty Note:** The *Companion Website* does not provide links directly to this topic. Students must access various links of their choice by using a search engine. The exercise below provides students the opportunity to analyze the heated debate over gun control in the U.S. It also extends the analysis of reactions to deviance by adding crime prevention strategies as a proactive response to lethal violence. In the *Content Select Activity*, students are to check the following database boxes to maximize the results of their search for articles on gun control: General Interest, Criminal Justice, Psychology, Political Science, and Sociology. This will yield a total of 242 articles for the students to peruse.

**Activity:** After browsing several websites and articles have students write a brief paper analyzing what they perceive to be the central issues in the gun ownership debate including why it is such an emotional and powerful topic for each side. Remind them to describe the empirical assumptions and values underlying the policy positions of these two organizations in relation to gun control legislation. Two sites the students will want to visit for this assignment include that of Handgun Control Inc. at [http://www.bradycampaign.org](http://www.bradycampaign.org) and that of the National Rifle Association at [http://www.nrahq.org](http://www.nrahq.org).

Web Link  American Correctional Association

Annotation: The ACA homepage offers links to information about the history of the organization, current programs, and publications.

Learning Objective: To increase awareness of the changes in punishment practices that will be possible through expected changes in technology.

Faculty Note: The exercise below extends the consideration of imprisonment as a response to crime. It focuses on the effect of changes in technology on the future of punishment and social control.

Activity: Have students browse the homepage of the American Correctional Association and choose other websites using a search engine that address the corrections practice, past, present, and future. Ask students to discuss the impact that technologies might have on the ways in which offenders are punished and managed within correctional programs in the foreseeable future. Have them analyze the impact of these technologies on their potential for advancing the four purposes of punishment described in the text.

Additional Resources: "Corrections.com" [http://www.corrections.com/technetwork/index.html] contains much information about technological advances in corrections, as well as links to discussion groups analyzing these advances.

Sociology and the Internet  How Does U.S. Society Fight Hate Crimes?

Annotation: This website discusses efforts to pass hate-crime legislation and asks students questions about hate crimes, perpetrators of hate crimes, and society’s efforts to deal with hate crimes.

Learning Objective: To understand the complex issues related to using the law as an instrument of social control against hate crimes.

Faculty Note: The application of the criminal law to hate speech raises important questions in democratic society. The First Amendment right of free speech restricts government’s intervention into the expressive behavior of citizens. The exercise below immerses students in this complex legal issue, and urges them to think critically about the use of law as an instrument of social control.

Activity: Have students read Sociology and the Internet, "How Does U.S. Society Fight Hate Crimes?” Then have them click on the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) website at [http://www.adl.org] and browse the ADL website. Next have students click on “Internet” in the left-hand column, and “Responding to Extremist Speech: 10 Frequently Asked Questions.” Ask students to read these questions and the answers linked to them. Then have students explain why using the law to control hate speech is so difficult. Also address how and why the government is restrained from controlling hate speech in the United States.

Additional Resources: Have students use a search engine of their choice and type in “Hate Speech and the Internet,” “Internet Hate Groups,” “Internet Resources on Hate Speech,” and other topics. Also, refer to the Content Select Activities for the Companion Website. Using that site’s search engine, type in “hate crime,” which will reveal 11 articles, and then “hate speech,” which will reveal three more.

Video Activity II (Premium Resources CD Rom)  The Bleeding Fetish

Annotation: Several young adults who cut themselves talk about this behavior, and the characteristics of people who are more likely to engage in this behavior are reported. Students are asked three questions about this behavior and deviance more generally.
Learning Objective: To develop appreciation for the stresses on young people who try especially hard to conform to conventional standards of achievement, and the forms of deviant behavior that such people may choose as a strategy for relieving those stresses.

Faculty Note: The "deviant" is stereotypically a low-achieving person, but the sociological concept of deviance includes violation of norms in both extremes from the mean. Some young people feel so pressured to achieve high goals that they have difficulty managing the pressure in healthy ways. The exercise below invites students to develop a more sympathetic understanding of the pressures experienced by high achievers, and the sometimes destructive behaviors that they use to deal with the pressures. This video clip is a part of the Premium Resources CD Rom provided to instructors upon request.

Activity: Ask students to view Video Activity II, "The Bleeding Fetish." Ask them if they know anyone like the people in the video—someone who feels so pressured to do well in school, in competitive athletics, or in a job that they engage in self-destructive behavior. (Caution: Be sure to conduct this discussion anonymously, and urge students to avoid revealing the identity of the people they are describing). Ask students to describe the very high performance norms that these people have accepted for themselves. Ask them whether they can suggest strategies for moving such people away from norms that are nearly impossible to meet to more realistic standards as a strategy to extinguish the destructive behavior. Ask students to connect this analysis to Robert Merton's Strain Theory.

Additional Resources: Eating disorders are another, probably more common, destructive adjustment to psychological stress among young people. See the website of Eating Disorders Awareness and Prevention, Inc. [http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org] for authoritative information on these behaviors.

The Video Professor The Green Mile

Annotation: This 1999 movie stars Tom Hanks as a corrections officer in charge of death row and Michael Clarke Duncan as a condemned prisoner. Both have special talents and special needs. The movie offers a stirring and somewhat realistic account of the relationships that can develop between guards and prisoners. It also addresses the trauma men experience on death row, both the condemned and those who must provide their custody and control.

Learning Objective: To illustrate how deviant behavior can be a part of an occupation approved by society and the effect these occupations can have on individuals who accept the duties of the position.

Faculty Note: Although lethal injection is the most popular method of execution used in states that have capital punishment, some states still use the electric chair. The mechanics of the process of death by electrocution are not much different today than they were in the 30’s when the plot of this film is set. The Green Mile is available for rental in movie houses and may be available in the university library or public library.

Activity: Ask students to examine how working on death row affected the officers. Can the behavior of the boisterous and favor-seeking officer depicted in the film be attributed to Sutherland’s Theory of Differential Association? How does this film illustrate the sociological imagination? Students can address these questions as part of a short writing assignment or in a class discussion.

Additional Resources: Direct students to “Angel on Death Row” at [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/angel] and “Pro Death Penalty” at [http://www.prodeathpenalty.com] for additional information. They can also surf the Web for additional sites by typing in “death penalty” in the key word box of any search engine.

Test Question: Does the use of lethal injection make capital punishment more acceptable to the public than electrocution or hanging? Why or why not?

Suggested answers may include: Yes, lethal injection is more acceptable because it doesn’t deform the body and is less traumatic to the witnesses. No, capital punishment is morally wrong by any means. The state does not have the right to take a life.