

CHAPTER TWO

EXPLAINING DEVIANT BEHAVIOR

True-False Questions

- 1) Positivism in the social sciences is the application of the scientific method to the study of human behavior. (T)
- 2) Empiricism is a fundamental assumption of positivism. (T)
- 3) The guiding principle of positivism is, “intuition is the best guide to what is scientifically true.” (F)
- 4) Positivism is centrally concerned with scientifically determining what’s moral and immoral. (F)
- 4) A central assumption of positivist criminologists is *determinism*—that criminal behavior has a cause, and criminologists can determine what its causes are. (T)
- 5) Most scientists believe in intelligent design. (F)
- 6) Routine activity theory assumes, but does not attempt to explain, what is different about the motivated offender that makes him or her violate the norms. (T)
- 7) The social disorganization school argues that the cause of criminal, deviant, and delinquent behavior is that entire neighborhoods fail to monitor and sanction wrongdoing among their residents. (T)
- 8) Social disorganization is the “macro” version of routine activity theory, which is a “micro” theory. (T)
- 9) Social disorganization theory has been entirely discredited and falsified. (F)
- 10) The causal or positivistic theories examined in this chapter focus mainly on the question, “Why are certain forms of behavior regarded as deviant?” (F)
- 11) Anomie theory is based on the idea that the social structure itself exerts pressure on persons in the society to engage in non-conforming, unconventional, or deviant behavior. (T)
- 12) Anomie or strain theory argues that deviant behavior is most common among members of the middle class. (F)
- 13) By the 1990s, anomie theory had become completely discredited in American sociology. (F)

14) The differential association theory of crime is primarily an explanation based on learning. (T)

15) Differential association argues that the mass media represent the most powerful mechanisms of learning to engage in deviant, criminal, and delinquent behavior. (F).

16) Both social control and self-control theory are based on the assumption that deviance is inherently attractive, that we do not have to learn to violate norms or laws, that it is conformity to the norms—not deviance and crime—that requires an explanation. (T)

17) The architects of self-control theory, Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi, argue that their explanation of crime complements or is compatible with all of the other sociological theories of criminal behavior. (F)

18) Social disorganization theory argues that deviance varies systematically by urban ecological location. (T)

19) According to Gottfredson and Hirschi, who are principal proponents of the self-control theory of deviance, delinquency, and crime, their explanation does *not* apply to white collar crime. (F)

20) Anomie theory attempts to explain the motives for non-normative behavior; in contrast, routine activity theory assumes that non-normative behavior is inherently attractive and appealing. (T)

Multiple Choice Questions

1) Positivistic theories of deviance are centrally concerned with an answer to the question:

- (a) Why are some rule violators punished while conformists remain unpunished?
- (b) Why are rules that condemn certain behaviors or beliefs enforced?
- (c) Why do rules against certain behaviors or beliefs exist in the first place?
- (d) How do people who are stigmatized and punished *experience* that stigmatization and punishment?

*(e) Why do some people engage in deviance?

2) Positivism's central mission is:

- (a) developing empathy toward human actors.
- *(b) devising scientific explanations for why things happen in the material world.
- (c) bringing about the socialist revolution.
- (d) understanding how people experience things.
- (e) none of the above

3) Demonic possession—being possessed by the devil or other evil spirits--is:

- (a) is an example of the free will or rational calculus school of criminology.

- * (b) the most ancient explanation for wrongdoing.**
- (c) an acceptable sociological theory of deviance and crime.**
- (d) an example of a positivistic or scientific explanation for deviance.**
- (e) none of the above**

4) “Crime takes place as a consequence of the conjunction of a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian.” This statement best exemplifies which of the following theories or perspectives?

- * (a) routine activities theory**
- (b) social control theory**
- (c) social disorganization theory**
- (d) anomie/strain theory**
- (e) differential association theory**

5) A sociologist expressing which of the following theories would have been most likely to have written this quote: “Poor, dense, mixed-use neighborhoods have high transience rates. . . . Transience weakens . . . both formal and informal social control, which increases the likelihood of deviant behavior.”

- (a) anomie/strain theory**
- * (b) social disorganization theory**
- (c) differential association theory**
- (d) routine activities theory**
- (e) social control theory**

6) Robert K. Merton adapted Emile Durkheim’s theory of anomie to devise his own anomie explanation of deviance. There are major differences between the two theories. Which of the following is one of them? In:

- * (a) Merton’s theory, deviance is caused by norms that are too strong; in Durkheim’s theory, deviance is caused by norms that are too weak.**
- (c) Durkheim’s theory, deviance is caused by norms that are too strong; in Merton’s theory, deviance is caused by norms that are too weak.**
- (c) both Durkheim’s and Merton’s theories, deviance is caused by norms that are too strong; the difference lies elsewhere.**
- (d) both Durkheim’s and Merton’s theories, deviance is caused by norms that are too weak; the difference lies elsewhere.**
- (e) none of the above**

7) What is the central explanatory factor of anomie theory?

- (a) inadequate parenting**
- (b) absence of bonds to conventional society**
- (c) deviant socialization**
- * (d) a disjunction between the culture, which stresses success motivation, and society’s social and economic structure**
- (e) none of the above**

8) A sociologist expressing which of the following theories would have been most likely to have written this quote: “It is only when a system of cultural values extols [praises, encourages] . . . certain common success goals for the population at large while the social structure rigorously restricts or completely closes access to approved modes of reaching these goals for a considerable part of that same population, that deviant behavior ensues on a large scale.”

- (a) differential association theory
- (b) social control theory
- * (c) anomie/strain theory
- (d) routine activities theory
- (e) social disorganization theory

9) Emile Durkheim and Robert K. Merton had very different definitions of anomie and argued that anomie had very different consequences for the society. In Merton’s conceptualization, deviance results from:

- (a) psychopathology.
- (b) improper parental socialization.
- (c) a state of normlessness.
- * (d) a too-strong hold of the norms on the members of the society.
- (e) disorganized neighborhoods

10) Which of Merton’s “adaptations” is exemplified by becoming a drug addict?

- (a) ritualism
- (b) innovation
- (c) rebellion
- * (d) retreatism
- (e) conformity

11) Which of the following theories is most likely to take the entire society as the unit of analysis subject to the deviance-causing agent?

- * (a) anomie theory
- (b) social control theory
- (c) self-control theory
- (d) social disorganization theory
- (e) routine activities theory

12) What is the central explanatory factor of community disorganization?

- (a) inadequate parenting
- (b) deviant socialization
- (c) a disjunction between the culture, which stresses success motivation, and society’s social and economic structure
- (d) absence of bonds to conventional society
- * (e) zones of transition

13) A sociologist expressing which of the following theories would have written this quote: “Criminal behavior is learned in interaction with other persons in a process of communication.”

- * (a) differential association theory**
- (b) social disorganization theory**
- (c) social control theory**
- (d) routine activities theory**
- (e) anomie/strain theory**

14) What is the central explanatory factor of social control theory?

- (a) deviant socialization**
- * (b) absence of bonds to conventional society**
- (c) a disjunction between the culture, which stresses success motivation, and society’s social and economic structure**
- (d) inadequate parenting**
- (e) none of the above**

15) A sociologist advocating which of the following theories would have written this quote: “Delinquent acts result when an individual’s bonds to society are weak or broken.”

- (a) differential association theory**
- (b) social disorganization theory**
- (c) routine activities theory**
- (d) anomie/strain theory**
- * (e) social control theory**

16) What is the central explanatory factor of self-control theory?

- * (a) inadequate parenting**
- (b) deviant socialization**
- (c) absence of bonds to conventional society**
- (d) a disjunction between the culture, which stresses success motivation, and society’s social and economic structure**
- (e) none of the above**

17) Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi, who devised “self-control” theory, argue that the theory does *not* apply to:

- (a) drug use**
- (b) delinquency**
- (c) street crime**
- (d) white collar or corporate crime**
- * (e) they state that their theory applies to all of the above**

18) Which of the following perspectives bills itself as “a general theory of crime”?

- (a) Emile Durkheim’s anomie theory**
- (b) Robert K. Merton’s anomie theory**
- * (c) Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi’s self-control theory**
- (d) Edwin Sutherland’s theory of differential association**

(e) Travis Hirschi's social control theory

19) Which of the following theories argues that persons do not have to be stressed into committing deviance, nor does anyone have to learn to engage in deviant behavior?

- (a) anomie theory
- (b) differential association theory
- (c) social disorganization theory
- * (d) social control theory
- (e) none of the above

20) Gottfredson and Hirschi state that their theory demolishes all other explanations of deviance and crime, except for two. One is routine activities theory; the other is:

- * (a) social disorganization theory.
- (b) differential association theory.
- (c) anomie theory.
- (d) subculture theory.
- (e) none of the above; all of the above, say Gottfredson and Hirschi, are falsified by their theory

Essay Questions

1) In many ways, the "self-control" theory of Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi ("a general theory of crime") contradicts the social control theory advocated by the selfsame Travis Hirschi two decades earlier. In what ways are the two theories contradictory? In what ways are they similar or based on the same principles?

2) How is Robert K. Merton's anomie theory of deviance different from Emile Durkheim's, on which it is based?

3) Why was social disorganization theory abandoned in the 1940s? Why did it make a comeback after the late 1980s?

4) In what ways are the positivistic theories of deviance, crime, and delinquency inadequate or incomplete, according to the constructionist approaches? In what ways, do its advocates argue, is the constructionist approach more adequate or complete? In what ways are the positivist approaches stronger than the constructionist approaches?

5) Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi, authors of "self-control" theory, argue that all other perspectives are wrong, or inconsistent with the facts of crime--except for two. Why do they believe that their theory annihilates the others? And what are the two that, they admit, are consistent with theirs, and how can these two theories be reconciled with their own approach?