Against the Law: Power and Inequality

Deviance and Punishment
Conformity & Deviance

- **Ashe Experiments**
  - What does this experiment tell us?
  - Why do we conform?
  - Why might we conform to the expectations and labels of people around us?
What Is Social Deviance?

- **Social deviance** is any transgression of socially established norms.
  - Minor transgressions of these norms can be described as **informal deviance**.
  - **Formal deviance** or **crime** involves the violation of laws.

What are some examples of social deviance? Informal? Formal?

Why might people engage in deviance?
Theories of Deviance

- Emile Durkheim’s theory of suicide proposed that suicide (as the ultimate act of deviance) is a product of social forces, depending on a person’s level of integration into the social world.

- Robert Merton’s strain theory argues that deviance occurs when a society does not give all its members equal ability to achieve socially acceptable goals.
Theories of Deviance

- **Labeling Theory**
  - People unconsciously notice how others see or label them, and over time they internalize these labels and come to accept them as “truth.”

Which of these theories do you find most convincing? Why?
Informal Deviance

Deviant Bodies

- Some people are considered deviant based on ascribed characteristic
  - Racism
  - Homophobia
  - Sexism/Misogyny
  - Classism

Subcultures

- Some people are born into or choose to join groups that are considered deviant
  - Mysticism
  - Star Trek Fans
  - Goths
  - ?????

Formal Deviance

- Occurs when formal or official social rules are broken.
  - Rule Breaking occurs when an individual or group breaks the formal rules of an organization, such as a company, team or club.
  - Crime is formal deviance that occurs when an individual or group breaks a law of a nation or other governmental body.
An Overview of Crime in the US

- Violent crime rates have been generally static over time.

An Overview of Crime in the US

- **Street crime** — refers to crime committed in public and is often associated with violence, gangs, and poverty.

- **White-collar crime** — committed by a professional against a corporation, agency, or other business.

- **Corporate crime** — type of white-collar crime committed by the officers or executives of a company.
An Overview of Crime in the US

Why do you think the cost of white collar crime is much higher than street crime?

Which group do you think is more likely to be incarcerated?

An Overview of Crime in the US

- **Racism** – 32% of African American men will be incarcerated, in comparison to 17% of Hispanic men and 5.9% of Whites.
- Over **half** of all crime in the US is committed by offenders who are categorized by their victims as “White” but approximately 70% of those incarcerated are “non-White”

Deterrence theory is a philosophy of criminal justice based on the notion that crime results from a rational calculation of its costs and benefits.

According to this theory, stiffer penalties, increased prison terms, and stricter parole guidelines should thus help reduce crime.

What are some limitations of this theory? How well do you think it works?
Consequences of Current Method

- The United States has 5% of the world's population and 23.6% of the world's prison population.
- Violent crime rates have declined since the mid 1990’s when they reached an all time high. However, the US is still a global leader in incarceration rates.

Are high incarceration rates a problem in the US? Why or why not?

Recidivism occurs when a person who has been involved in the criminal justice system reverts back to criminal behavior.

One common idea is that we are in more danger from crime today than in the past. Based on what you have learned, is that true?

What suggestions do you have for dealing with crime in the US?

How can understanding the role of deviance in society help us deal with this social problem?