

I'm not a bot































Deviance is a sociological concept referring to behaviors that break social norms and laws. Examples of deviance include theft, vandalism, lying, breaking social taboos, and disobeying the law. Studying deviance allows us to understand the boundaries differentiating acceptable, criminal, and deviant behaviors. Understanding deviance is also important for the study of other relevant sociological concepts, such as social control which is used to prevent deviance. Deviance is a concept used to describe divergences from a society's norms, values, rules, and expectations. Here is one clear scholarly definition: "Deviant behavior refers to conduct that departs significantly from the norms set for people in their social societies" (Merton, 1966, p. 805). Each culture and society has norms and expectations about how people from certain social groups and statuses should behave. Therefore, behaviors deviating from culturally appropriate patterns lead to deviance. Similarly, deviants are individuals who violate the social agreements over norms and values (Herman, 1995). The relation between crime and deviance is important to understand. While crime refers to divergence from formal rules and laws, deviance also includes deviating from informal norms and values (Deflem, 2015). Therefore, many criminal acts such as theft and fraud are also deviant behaviors. However, all deviant behaviors are not necessarily illegal or criminal acts. For example, lateness at work, or rudeness are not crimes but they are considered deviant behaviors. Verbal Abuse: Being verbally abusive through cursing, insulting, or other types of verbal aggression is a deviance breaking informal rules around communication. Depending on the context, such as insulting someone in a public platform, verbal abuse can also be considered a crime. Self-harm: Self-harming behaviors range from purposefully injuring oneself to ending one's life through suicide. Since the social norms expect individuals to avoid pain and injury, self-harm is considered deviant behavior. Stealing and theft: Obtaining one's property, information or services illegally and without their consent is referred to as stealing. All forms of stealing, including theft, robbery, and identity theft, break both social norms and laws. Therefore, stealing and theft are both deviant behaviors and criminal acts. Lateness: In Western societies, it is socially expected that individuals will arrive at their appointments, work or classes on time. While occasional delays are often tolerated, being constantly late to work without any valid excuse is a deviant behavior. Public Nudity: Despite varying clothing styles across different cultures, social norms and rules assert that individuals are supposed to be clothed in the public spheres. Therefore, public nudity is a deviant behavior and often punishable as a criminal offense. Paraphilia: Paraphilia is a concept consisting of all sexual deviances such as voyeurism, sadism or masochism. While some sexual paraphilias only break informal social norms, some others, such as those including minors or nonconsenting adults, are crimes. Gangs: Gangs refer to groups of people with a leadership structure that try to control neighborhoods or communities through violence. Violence committed by gangs are both deviant and criminal. In Canada, 20% of homicides in 2020 were related to gang violence and organized crime (Government of Canada, 2021). Vandalism: Damaging public or private properties intentionally are commonly referred to as vandalism. It is both a deviance and criminal act due to the social norms and rules around property ownership and protection. Favoritism: Favoritism refers to deliberately favoring an individual in a workplace, school, or political organization. Although it is not always considered a criminal act, favoritism is a deviant behavior since it threatens the social values and consensus around equal and fair treatment. Breaking taboos: All societies have taboos, which are unspoken rules that refer to things that people find immodest. A simple example is the taboo of talking about religion or politics at the dinner table. Hunger strikes: Many imprisoned people who are completely disempowered will engage in hunger strikes to get attention. This will force the authorities to take action so the person in their care doesn't die. Nepotism: Nepotism refers to the act of employing someone not on merit but because they are a family member. It is frowned upon in most societies. Rudeness: The simple act of being rude is seen as deviance, particularly in settings like schools, where you may be reprimanded by your teacher. Refusing a gift: Refusing a gift is a taboo that comes across as offensive and therefore is seen as deviant - i.e. breaking social norms. Lying: Lying is a deviant behavior that we are taught not to do as children, and yet is a behavior that people do on a weekly or even daily basis. Littering: Littering is considered deviant because society has agreed that it is harmful to the environment, and this is something society increasingly cares about. Disrespect: Disrespecting your parents or teachers is clearly seen as deviant in schools. But when you're in the workplace, disrespect for coworkers or your boss may end up seeing you fired. Similarly, disrespecting a judge might be ruled as contempt of court. Protesting: Protesting is necessarily deviant because it involves taking a stance against power structures in society in order to effect change. In many western democracies, it is tolerated as freedom of speech. Tax avoidance: Avoiding your taxes through legal means is therefore seen as an act of deviance. Skipping school: Truancy is a serious deviant behavior for school children which can lead you to getting detention, suspension, or expulsion from school. Laughing at others' misfortune: This is a taboo in most cultures as it is seen as rude and offensive to the people who have suffered the misfortune. Discrimination: While historically, discriminatory actions have been within the bounds of social norms, societies increasingly see this as an unacceptable deviance from new societal expectations. Having dangerous ideas: Dangerous ideas during the reformation - such as belief in individual liberty or non-religious philosophy - could land you in prison, but today are lauded as massive milestones in human development. Talking out of turn: Talking out of turn at school or in a workplace meeting is considered offensive because it undermines social order. Speeding in your car: Driving faster than the law allows is one of the main ways regular people come in contact with police forces, who offer small infringement fines. Cheating on exams: Cheating on an exam undermines the concept of meritocracy and therefore is seen as unacceptable. Go Deeper: Types of Deviance Primary deviance is a term used within the labeling theory of deviance. It is behavior that is seen as unacceptable by society. However, unlike secondary deviance, the person who has engaged in deviant behavior has not yet been labeled as a deviant by society. For example, a child who lies to their parent once in a while isn't likely to be typecast by their parent as a liar. Here, the deviance is primary because it's not applies as a label: "you are a liar". Rather, it's: "you lied". Secondary deviance represents the internalization of a belief that you are a deviant. At this stage, a person has accepted their deviant label as a central identity feature (aka a master status). This commonly happens in schools when a child internalizes the idea that they're a 'bad' student. According to labeling theory, this student who starts to believe that they are the bad student will lean into the identity and start engaging in deviant behaviors because it is what is expected of them. Formal deviance refers to deviant behavior that is encoded in laws. If you engage in formal deviance, you are breaking either the rules of an institution or the laws of a sovereign region. For example, a person who engages in formal deviance in a school setting might have broken the class rules and, therefore, be subject to a sanction such as detention or extra homework. Similarly, in adulthood, driving too fast will lead to a speeding ticket, while more serious infractions may see you in front of a court or even in prison. Informal deviance refers to breaking social norms without breaking codified laws or rules. It occurs when you engage in taboos, behave in culturally insensitive ways, or do something that infringes on other types of norms. It can be as simple as choosing not to go to college despite the expectations of your parents and grandparents. Or, it could be being rude to a waiter or speaking out of turn at school. All of these acts of deviance will not land you in formal trouble, but may end up making you an outcast in your community. Subcultural deviance refers to deviant behavior that people within a subcultural group do not believe to be deviant. This comes about because subcultures have different norms and beliefs to the norms of the mainstream or dominant culture. An example of subcultural deviance is tattooing your face. Within hipster subcultural circles, it is seen as cool and a form of self-expression. Within dominant culture, it can be seen as an affront and you're looked upon with suspicion. Situational deviance refers to a deviant behavior that is only deviant within a specific situation or context. For example, swearing is often only deviant in certain situations. If you swear around a fireplace with your high school friends, no one will bat an eyelid. But swearing at dinner with your girlfriend's family will likely lead to some pearl-clutching! To avoid situational deviance, you will need situational awareness and cultural competence to know what is and is not appropriate in various different situations. See our main article: Cultural Deviance Theory. The labelling theory of deviance argues that deviance can be a result of the labeling of people as deviants. Take, for example, a child in a classroom who misbehaves. His teacher has two options: to label the behavior as deviant ("Johnny, we don't do that and I know you're better than that") or label the child as deviant ("Johnny, you're a naughty little boy"). According to labelling theory, the act of telling Johnny that he's naughty means that Johnny internalizes a self-belief that he is deviant. When this becomes a part of his identity, he plays up his deviance to act the part. This, in turn, leads the boy down a path of misbehaving, breaking the rules, fighting against authority, and eventually becoming a law-breaking adult. The conflict theory of deviance argues that people engage in deviant behavior due to social systems that oppress them. If systems of power such as capitalism oppress a social group, then that group has an increased likelihood that they will engage in deviant behaviors because they: want to demonstrate their discontent with the current power structure want to undermine the current power structure don't respect the people who oppress them get no benefit from the current system so they have no affection toward it are impoverished and need to engage in deviant behavior to meet their needs Etc. As an example of conflict theory, we see rebel groups in some countries forming to take up arms against their government if the government is too oppressive. Similarly, many people will join violent protests if they are not content with the government. In sociology, functionalism sees society as creating norms and rules of behavior to ensure there is a safe and functioning social system. To them, they see deviance as a safety valve where people will engage in minor deviant behaviors to let off steam so they won't engage in worse behaviors in the future. Deviant behavior might also be a positive thing if it causes society to re-evaluate its norms, such as when people engage in nonviolent protest that causes changes in laws. Generally, structural functionalism embraces law, order, and strong social hierarchies, and deviance is expected but can be controlled through the setting of clear and unambiguous norms. See more functionalism examples Being absent from work, school, or other obligations regularly without a valid excuse is referred to as absenteeism. In the context of work, absenteeism is categorized as deviant employee behavior (Everton et al., 2007). Absenteeism is considered harmful to work and educational organizations. It is often seen as a sign of a lack of consistency and responsibility of the absentee, which does not match with the social expectations. Despite being seen as an implication of poor work ethics, employee absenteeism is often a result of perceived unupportiveness and unfairness of organizational managers (Everton et al., 2007). Favoritism occurs when an authority figure deliberately favors an individual in a workplace, school, or other organization. For example, overly tolerating lateness and absenteeism of an employee without any valid excuses would be a case of favoritism towards that employee (Anasiz & Püsküllüoğlu, 2018). Favoritism in workplaces and schools is considered a political deviance as it leads individuals to be treated unfairly (Anasiz & Püsküllüoğlu, 2018). Therefore, it conflicts with the social values and widespread expectations around organizational justice. Divergences from a society's norms, values, rules and regulations are referred to as deviance. Deviant behavior is an act that is in conflict with social expectations about an individual's status. Deviant people are those who commit deviant acts and behaviors. Deviant behaviors include relatively common acts such as favoritism, absenteeism, or lateness to more serious acts such as vandalism, gang violence, or theft. While a majority of criminal acts are also considered deviant behavior, these two concepts do not always overlap. For example, behaviors such as lateness or absenteeism are merely deviant acts and not crime. Anasiz, B. T., & Püsküllüoğlu, E. I. (2018). Phenomenological Analysis of Teachers' Organizational Deviance Experiences in a Rural Primary School in Turkey. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 6(1), 70-79. Deflem, M. (2015). Deviance and social control. In E. Goode (Ed.). *The handbook of deviance* (pp. 30-44). New York: John Wiley & Sons. Dickson-Gomez, J., Pacella, M. R., Broadus, M. R., Quinn, K., Galletly, C., & Rivas, J. (2017). Convention versus deviance: moral agency in adolescent gang members' decision making. *Substance use & misuse*, 52(5), 562-573. Everton, W. J., Jolton, J. A., & Mastrangelo, P. M. (2007). Be nice and fair or else: understanding reasons for employees' deviant behaviors. *Journal of management Development*, 26(2), 117-131. Government of Canada. (2021, December 2). Summit on Gun and Gang Violence. *Public Safety Canada / Sécurité publique Canada*. Retrieved November 6, 2022, from Herman, N. J. (1995). Deviance: A symbolic interactionist approach. Rowman & Littlefield. Klonsky, E. D., Oltmanns, T. F., & Turkheimer, E. (2003). Deliberate self-harm in a nonclinical population: Prevalence and psychological correlates. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 160(8), 1501-1508. Merton, R. K., & Nisbet, R. A. (Eds.). (1966). *Contemporary social problems*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. NHTSA. (2017, October). 2016 Data: Impaired Driving. <https://www.nhtsa.gov/roadside>. Retrieved November 7, 2022, from Deviance in sociology refers to actions or behaviors that violate widely-accepted cultural norms within a society. Since deviance is defined relative to sociocultural standards, what is considered deviant differs across societies and time periods, and is largely determined by those in power. Sociologists study how and why certain behaviors are defined and reacted to as deviant, as well as how labeling of deviance impacts individuals and groups. Deviant behavior is any behavior that does not conform to societal norms. There are many different types of deviant behavior, including impoliteness, violence, and substance abuse. These behaviors may or may not be criminal. While some forms of deviant behavior may be considered harmful or dangerous, others may simply be seen as odd or unusual. In some cases, it can be seen as a positive thing. For example, many cultures encourage their members to challenge the status quo and push boundaries in order to create change. Durkheim suggested that modern industrial societies were consequently characterized by moral confusion or 'anomie'. This means that some members of society were more likely to challenge and reject shared values and norms of behavior and this 'normlessness' often resulted in crime. Deviant behaviors are also defined by other theorists, such as when people engage in nature that causes change in the environment. For example, a teenager who shops every time they enter a department store for the excitement is considered a deviant behavior because they are not conforming to the norms of the retail industry. It includes those behaviors that attract negative responses and social controls. It also involves crimes committed in society. What is considered acceptable or rude varies depending on the culture you are in. For example, eating with your left hand in Arab nations is considered rude. Some behaviors are acceptable for certain age groups and some activities are illegal for some age groups. For example, some people who engage in deviant behavior do so in order to challenge existing social norms and bring about change. Additionally, deviance can also be a way for people to express themselves and their individuality. Examples Any behavior that breaks the law or goes against societal norms can be considered deviant. One example of deviant behavior is drug use. Using illegal drugs is considered deviant behavior in most social groups. Committing acts of violence, such as assault or murder, is also considered deviant behavior. Other examples of deviant behavior include but are not limited to: theft, vandalism, graffiti, public intoxication, loitering, and littering. Truancy can be considered to be a form of deviance. Truancy is a behavior where a student regularly avoids school without the knowledge of their parents or teachers. Because deviance is socially constructed (not naturally occurring but created by the society in which it is found), there are no actions which in themselves are inherently abnormal or universally condemned by all societies at all times. Deviance is a situational and contextual concept. For example, while stealing is considered deviant in some indigenous cultures where 'stealing' is seen as a way to redistribute resources. Similarly, while arranged marriages are common in many cultures, they would be considered deviant in Western cultures where individuals have the freedom to choose their own partners. Some behaviors are acceptable for certain age groups and some activities are illegal for some age groups. Ultimately, what is considered deviant behavior varies from culture to culture, and even from one social group to another. While deviance in culture has negative connotations, deviance in culture is not necessarily bad. Types of Deviant Behavior Formal deviant behavior is defined as behavior that violates formally enacted laws. This type of deviant behavior is often criminal in nature, and can result in punishments such as fines, imprisonment, or even death. Examples of formal deviant behavior include but are not limited to: murder, robbery, assault, rape, and child molestation (Griffiths et al., 2012). Informal Deviant Behavior Informal deviant behavior is defined as behavior that violates informal social norms. This type of deviant behavior is often seen as more minor than formal deviance, and typically does not result in legal punishment. Instead, people who engage in informal deviant behavior may be ridiculed or ostracized by their peers. Examples of informal deviant behavior include but are not limited to: littering, jaywalking, public intoxication, and loitering (Griffiths et al., 2012). Although informal deviant behavior is often seen as less serious than its formal counterpart, it can have serious consequences. Showing up late to work, for example, is an act of informal deviance that can result in dismissal from one's job. Subcultural Deviant Behavior Subcultural deviant behavior is defined as behavior that violates the norms of a particular subculture. A subculture is a social group within a larger culture that has its own distinct values, beliefs, and behaviors. Examples of subcultural deviant behavior include but are not limited to: gang violence, drug use, and prostitution. While subcultural deviant behavior is often seen as criminal or harmful, it can also be a way for people to express their identity and solidarity with others in their group. For example, many gangs use violence as a way to establish their power and protect their members, as well as to create a shared sense of identity as "strong" and ready to take action (Copes & Williams, 2007). Serial Deviant Behavior Serial deviant behavior is defined as a pattern of repeated deviant behavior. For example, someone who repeatedly commits the same type of crime, such as shoplifting, is considered a serial deviant behavior. Those who habitually show informal deviant behavior can also be considered to exhibit serial deviant behavior. For instance, someone who belches loudly and stands unnecessarily close to others may develop an image characterized by this unacceptable behavior, resulting in social punishment (Chercurt, 2014). Situational Deviance Situational deviance is defined as behavior that is considered deviant in a particular situation but not in others. For example, public nudity is considered deviant in most public places, but is expected on nude beaches. Similarly, using profanity is only considered deviant when it occurs in settings where cursing is not allowed or frowned upon, such as at work or school (Chercurt, 2014). Even within these settings, the attitudes of those around the person committing the deviant act influence how deviant the behavior is considered to be. While some forms of situational deviance may be seen as harmless or even humorous, others can have serious consequences. For example, while being inebriated in many situations may be interpreted as entertaining or humorous by others, driving under the influence of alcohol can result in accidents, injuries, and even death. The social strain typology is a theory of deviance that was developed by sociologist Robert K. Merton. The theory suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests that there are four types of deviant behavior: subcultural, serial, situational, and cultural. Merton's theory is based on the idea that there is a tension between goals and means in society. Goals are the things that people want to achieve, such as wealth or success. Means are the ways in which people go about achieving these goals, such as working hard or getting an education. When people cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means, they may turn to deviant behavior in order to get what they want. For example, someone who wants to be wealthy but cannot achieve this through the means available to them may turn to crime. Merton's theory also suggests

lack of empirical evidence, but it remains an influential perspective in sociology. Frequently Asked Questions What are some of the main causes of deviant behavior? Some of the main causes of deviant behavior are explained by functionalism, conflict theory, and labeling theory. Sociologists have found that deviant behavior is often a result of social inequality. For example, people who are poor or members of minority groups may turn to crime as a way to get the resources they need to survive. Additionally, people who are labeled as deviant by society may be more likely to engage in deviant behavior due to discrimination and social exclusion. What is the difference between deviant and criminal behavior? Deviance is behavior that violates social norms and arouses negative social reactions. Crime is behavior that is considered so serious that it violates formal laws prohibiting such behavior. Not all deviant behavior is criminal. For example, social norms around clothing styles for hairstyles may vary from place to place. So, someone who wears unconventional clothes or has an unconventional haircut may be considered deviant in one community but not in another. Similarly, people who break minor laws, such as jaywalking or littering, may be considered deviant but not criminal. Similarly, not all criminal behavior is deviant. For example, breaking a law against selling alcohol on a Sunday does not involve committing an act of deviance in a society where selling and consuming alcohol is acceptable. Is deviant behavior a form of non-conformity? Deviance is a concept that describes non-conformity to social norms, values and civic expectations. Hence, it is a form of non-conformity. Nonetheless, not all non-conformity is deviant. Social norms vary from place to place, so what is considered deviant in one society may not be considered deviant in another. Additionally, social norms change over time, so something that was once considered deviant may become acceptable (and vice versa). For example, tattoos and piercings were once considered deviant but are now widely accepted. Nonetheless, in a place where they remain uncommon, they may be non-conformist. Bartos, O. J., & Wehr, P. (2002). Using conflict theory . Cambridge University Press. Becker, H. S. (2018). Labeling theory reconsidered 1. In *Deviance and social control* (pp. 41-66). Routledge, Chercourt, M. (2014). *Encyclopedia of Social Deviance*. Reference & User Services Quarterly, 54 (2), 83. Cohen, A. K. (1955). *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang*. New York: Free Press. Cohen, A. K. (2016) *Kriminelle Subkulturen*. In: Klimke, D. & Legnaro, A. (Hrsg.) *Kriminologische Grundlagentexte*. Springer VS: Wiesbaden, S. 269-280 . Cohen, A. K. (1957) *Kriminelle Subkulturen*. In: Heintz, P. & König, R. (Hrsg.) *Soziologie der Jugendkriminalität. Studien zur Sozialwissenschaft*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, S. 103-117. Cohen, Albert K. and Short, J. (1968). Research in Delinquent Subcultures. In: *Journal of Social Issues*, S.20-37. Copes, H., & Williams, J. P. (2007). Techniques of affirmation: Deviant behavior, moral commitment, and subcultural identity. *Deviant behavior*, 28 (3), 247-272. Durkheim, E. (1951). *Sociologie et philosophie* . Griffiths, H., Keirns, N., Strayer, E., Sadler, T., Cody-Rydzewski, S., Scaramuzzo, G., ... & Jones, F. (2012). *Deviance and Control*. Introduction to Sociology 2 e. Lemert, E. (1951). Primary and secondary deviation. *Crime. Critical concepts in sociology*, 3, 603-607. Lemert, E. M. (1967). Human deviance, social problems, and social control. Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall. Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1967). *The communist manifesto*. 1848. Trans. Samuel Moore. London: Penguin, 15. Merton, R.K. (1938). Social structure and anomie. *American Sociological Review* 3, 672-682. Merton, R.K. (1949). Social structure and anomie: revisions and extensions. In: Anshen, R.N. (Ed.), *The Family: Its Functions and Destiny*. Harper, New York, pp. 226-257. Merton, R.K. (1957). Social structure and anomie. In: Merton, R.K. (Ed.), *Social Theory and Social Structure*. The Free Press, New York, pp. 185-214. Merton, R.K. (1957). Continuities in the theory of social structure and anomie. In: Merton, R.K. (Ed.), *Social Theory and Social Structure*. The Free Press, New York, pp. 215-248. Parsons, T. (1985). Talcott Parsons on institutions and social evolution: selected writings. University of Chicago Press. Pfuhl, E. H., & Henry, S. (1986). *The deviance process*. Transaction Publishers. Wellford, C. (1975). Labeling theory and criminology: An assessment. *Social Problems*, 22 (3), 332-345. Saul McLeod, PhD BSc (Hons) Psychology, MRes, PhD, University of Manchester Editor-in-Chief for Simply Psychology Saul McLeod, PhD., is a qualified psychology teacher with over 18 years of experience in further and higher education. He has been published in peer-reviewed journals, including the *Journal of Clinical Psychology*. Charlotte Nickerson Research Assistant at Harvard University Undergraduate at Harvard University Charlotte Nickerson is a graduate of Harvard University obsessed with the intersection of mental health, productivity, and design.