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THEORIES OF DEVIANT BEHAVIOR: I CLASSICAL THEORIES

INTRODUCTION

In 2017, 13-year-old Danielle Bregoli, of Boynton Beach, Florida, became a social media hit following an attention-getting appearance on the Dr. Phil Show. Bregoli, also known as the “Cash Me Ousside,” or “How Bow Dah?” girl, went from obscurity to fame because of the brazen attitude and “street language” that she exhibited on TV. Months after her media appearance, Bregoli appeared in front of a Florida juvenile court judge who placed her on 5 years of supervised probation for charges that included multiple counts of grand theft, marijuana possession, and filing a false police report. Between Bregoli’s interview with Dr. Phil and her court appearance, social media followers had been given a front-row seat to her unruly behavior—much of it caught on video. In one instance, Bregoli threatened to beat up the paparazzi who followed her during a visit to Los Angeles. A few days later, she punched a Spirit airlines passenger during a disagreement about use of an overhead luggage bin before her plane could take off at Los Angeles’ International Airport. Bregoli and her mother were both removed from the flight and banned from the airline for life. Since she became a pop culture star, Bregoli has given a number of interviews, with almost all of them punctuated with profanity, and many of them nearly unintelligible to most listeners because of her “street talk.” Bregoli, it seems, is chaffing under the restrictions placed on her by her mother, who, she says, wants to keep her from having fun. In an Internet video that went viral, Bregoli and her mother could be seen involved in a violent brawl, in which her mother repeatedly slapped and hit her. It’s not clear how the video got on the Internet, but some suspect that it might have been a publicity stunt. Bregoli’s parents are divorced, and her father, a deputy with the Palm Beach County Sheriff’s Department in Florida, has sued for custody, saying that he would restrict his daughter’s access to the Internet.

This chapter is about the causes of deviant behavior. What do you think is the cause of Bregoli’s “bad” behavior? If you were her parent, what would you do about it?

EVIDENCE-BASED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS

Attempts to understand deviant behavior using explanations derived from empirical studies are relatively recent phenomena. For most of recorded history, outside forces were thought to cause aberrant human social behavior. Prior to modern times, demonic possession was frequently offered as a reason for strange behavior (Huff, 1978). Commonly shared beliefs held that the devil controlled or strongly influenced the actions of deviant persons, causing them to commit acts

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

- 2.1 Describe the contributions of evidence-based methods to modern understandings of deviant behavior
- 2.2 Examine the nature of scientific theory
- 2.3 List the criteria for evaluating a theory
- 2.4 Summarize the conceptual beginnings and early development of the Classical School
- 2.5 Describe the conceptual beginnings and contemporary perspective of the societal reaction or labeling perspective
- 2.6 Summarize the conceptual beginnings and contemporary perspective of control theory
- 2.7 Explain the viewpoint taken by new theoretical approaches to the understanding of deviance, including theories of human development

of violence, theft, and wanton destruction of property. Denial of sacred precepts and the failure to participate in religious ceremonies and observe their practices were also thought to result from demonic influences. Social control of deviant behavior depended on rooting the devil out of the possessed person. Too often that meant execution. By the middle of the 18th century, there were 350 crimes punishable by death in England (Radzinowicz, 1948).

The Age of Enlightenment, alternately known as the Age of Reason, swept Europe during the 17th and 18th centuries. Causes for the occurrence of phenomena in the world, whether physical or social, were being sought in the natural order, in the realm of empirical reality. Metaphysical and spiritual forces were questioned as the primary and exclusive causes of physical events and human behaviors. Answers to the questions of *why* and *how* things happened, it was argued, can be found within the phenomena themselves. The causes of physical events—the weather, the potential of the earth to produce edible vegetation, and the workings of the human body—were sought in the interplay of observable physical forces. Likewise, the causes of social behavior were sought in the makeup of human beings and in the social milieu in which they live (The Enlightenment, n.d.).

Positivism, or the scientific approach to the study of physical and social events, replaced superstition during the Enlightenment and led to a rethinking about the causes of human social behavior and the structure of social life. Faith in the potential of reason and science marked the Enlightenment period and replaced nonempirical faith in supernatural influences. Theories that explained and predicted events in the physical world, such as Newton's theory of gravity and Galileo's observation that the Earth revolves around the Sun, marked important scientific breakthroughs in the 17th and 18th centuries, and contributed to abandonment of a superstitious world view. The **scientific method**—highlighted by observation, hypothesis development, data collection and analysis, and hypothesis testing—drove the quest for understanding. Scientific theories soon replaced prior sources of “knowledge”—including tradition, belief systems, and political and sacred authority. The Age of the Enlightenment was marked by a widespread rejection of State and Church as the repositories of knowledge. Scientific explanations eventually came to supplant all other forms of understanding, and they formed the basis for explaining both the physical and the social world (The Enlightenment, n.d.).

In the social sciences, the scientific method culminated in what is today referred to as **evidence-based behavior analysis** (Smith, 2013). The term refers to the use of rigorous social scientific techniques to develop knowledge about causes of behavior (also called *knowledge-based behavior analysis*). The research conducted by today's evidence-based researchers results in a body of scientific evidence applicable to the problems and realities of today's world.

This chapter provides an overview of theoretical formulations that are intended to explain and predict individual forms of deviant behavior. Three theoretical perspectives will be discussed: the **Classical School**, the **societal reaction or labeling perspective**, and **social control theory**. Developments within each theoretical area are traced from their conceptual beginnings and early development, through to more recent advances.

WHAT IS A THEORY?

Fundamental assumptions of science are that phenomena in the world are knowable through our senses and that they are causally related to one another (Goode & Hatt, 1952). To the extent that physical events or behaviors recur in a patterned way, they are viewed as causally related. A central objective of science is to discover the causal relationships among phenomena and, as a result, predict the probability of the occurrence of a given phenomenon by knowing the nature of its relationship to other phenomena. The tides, for example, are predictable with reasonable accuracy by knowing the variations in the gravitational forces of the Earth, the Sun, and the Moon (“Ocean Tides,” n.d.).

It is essential to understand what a scientific theory is and how best to assess it. Simply put, a **scientific theory** is a set of interrelated and interdependent propositions designed to predict a given phenomenon. A *proposition* is a statement of the relationship between at least two variables,

or phenomena, in the empirical world that are subject to change. For example, age is a variable because it increases over time, and a test score is a variable because it may vary among individuals, or it may change for the same individual at different times. Fully developed theories are rarely found in the social sciences. Rather, conceptualizations or descriptions of the possible relationships among social variables are more common. The eminent social theorist Robert K. Merton (1957, p. 9) observes:

A large part of what is now called sociological theory consists of general orientations toward data, suggesting types of variables that need somehow to be taken into account, rather than clear, verifiable statements of relationships between specific variables.

The theoretical formulations considered in this chapter fall into the category of what Merton (1957, p. 5) calls “theories of the middle range” or conceptualizations of social phenomena. To Merton (1957, pp. 5–6), theories of the middle range are positioned somewhere between “minor working hypotheses” and a “master conceptual scheme,” which accounts for a “very large number of empirically observed uniformities of social behavior.”

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING A THEORY

Sociological theorist Ronald Akers (1994, pp. 6–12) sets forth criteria essential for the evaluation of a scientific theory in general and theories of crime and deviance in particular. These criteria are logical consistency, scope, and parsimony, testability, empirical validity, and usefulness and policy implications. *Logical consistency* refers to the clarity of the concepts or variables that are used to form the propositions. A theory must also be constructed by logical and consistent ordering propositions. Internal inconsistency of propositions and definition of theoretical concepts are essential elements of a scientific theory.

Scope refers to “range of phenomena” accounted for by the theory. Theories of deviance or crime, for example, that are limited to one form of behavior, say shoplifting, are far less useful than a more encompassing theory of criminal behavior. Related to the scope of a theory is *parsimony*—the ideal in science to discover the simplest theoretical explanation for the broadest set of occurrences. Einstein’s theory of relativity $E = MC^2$ is an example of a parsimonious theoretical formulation. Einstein discovered that energy and mass are equivalent and that energy is a function of mass times the velocity of light squared.

The *testability* of a theory is crucial to its usefulness to scientists around the world. Unless a theory lends itself to empirical scrutiny, evidence cannot be gathered to assess the validity of its propositions. A theory must be able to be falsified before it can be accepted even provisionally. A theory may not be testable because the concepts or variables included in the propositions are so ill-defined that they cannot be empirically measured. Or, the propositions are not logically ordered. While it is not necessary to measure each concept in a theory, it is critical that the concepts are linked with the measurable concepts in a logical and consistent way.

The *empirical validity* of a theory is the most fundamental assessment criterion. Unless there is scientifically credible evidence that supports a theory, wholly or in part, it may well be abandoned for more promising theoretical formulations. The strength of the evidence in support of a theory and the consistency in the findings of support are key indicators of empirical validity. It is important to understand that causal relationships stated in scientific theories are cast in probabilistic terms. That is, the hypothesis that the greater the X, the greater the Y means that as X increases, the more likely Y is to follow, not that X will always follow from Y.

The *usefulness* and *policy implications* are also important criteria in evaluating a theoretical formulation. Empirically valid theories of criminal and deviant behavior are invaluable in designing and implementing prevention and intervention programs and policies. Key questions that legislators, law enforcers, and public policy makers continually ask are, What works, and for whom? Rather than approaching the control and prevention of criminal and deviant behavior in a haphazard way, public officials want to know the wisest expenditure of tax dollars. Sound theoretical formulations guide the formation of effective public policy, assist the deviant members of society, and reduce continued victimization (Akers, 1994, pp. 6–12).

THE CLASSICAL SCHOOL

Two social philosophers, **Cesare Beccaria** (1738–1794), an Italian lawyer and social theorist, and **Jeremy Bentham** (1748–1832), an English social philosopher, are largely responsible for the development of the Classical School of thought during the 18th century. Cesare Beccaria, a shy Italian social philosopher, wrote a groundbreaking work—*On Crime and Punishment*—setting out the principles that underlie human social behavior. To Beccaria, individuals commonly hold three basic characteristics: *free will*, *rationality*, and *manipulability*. Beccaria viewed humans as rational beings who possess free will. Their decision to act or refrain from acting involves a conscious, voluntary, and deliberate process. Manipulability refers to the rational pursuit of self-interest. Underlying the decision to act is the principle of hedonism. The **hedonistic principle** holds that persons are motivated to maximize their pleasure and minimize their pain. When deciding to act a certain way, say to commit a deviant act, a person weighs the amount of anticipated pleasure from the action against the amount of pain that may result from committing the act. Simply put, if the pain that attends an act of deviance exceeds the pleasure derived from it, then its commission is less likely (Beccaria, 1963). Jeremy Bentham also pursued a utilitarian approach to deterrence of crime and deviance. Bentham argues that a **hedonistic calculus** could be devised, which assigns a specific penalty to each criminal act. The penalty would outweigh the pleasure from the criminal act, and thereby act as a deterrent to the commission of the crime. An example of hedonistic calculus would be placing a sign at the entrance of a convenience store—“Mandatory 7 Years Imprisonment for Robbery.” Bentham would calculate that a 7-year prison sentence would outweigh the pleasure gained from robbing that particular kind of store (Bentham, 1948). Both Beccaria and Bentham were opposed to the death penalty as a nonutilitarian form of punishment. Inflicting a sufficient amount of pain on the offender, they argued, may effectively deter criminal and deviant behaviors. Given their ability to freely decide to act (free will) and their innate sense of reason, potential offenders would rationally decide to forgo acts of deviance.

Recent Advances in Classical Thought: Neoclassical Thought

In the later part of the 20th century, sociologists adapted the principles of human behavior outlined in the 18th century by Beccaria and Bentham to a newer perspective that came to be known as neoclassicism. One neoclassical thinker, **Jack Gibbs**, set forth the **deterrence doctrine** in the mid-1970s based on the idea of hedonism. Gibbs (1989) translates hedonism into terms consistent with a cost–benefit analysis. The potential costs (or pain) involved in committing a deviant or criminal act must be less than the anticipated benefits (or pleasure) before an individual will decide to engage in the behavior. Humans are viewed as rational decision-making individuals who continually assess the relative cost and benefits before deciding to act. In short, a rational

decision-making process precedes willful engagement in crime and deviance.

A logical derivative of the deterrence doctrine is British criminologists **Derek B. Cornish** and **Ronald V. Clarke’s** (1986 and 1987) development of **Rational Choice Theory** and their development of Situational Choice Theory. Both theoretical perspectives focus on an individual’s conscious, rational decision making. Again, the costs of acting are weighed against the benefits, and a decision is made. Situational choice theory, however, involves an assessment of the environment in which the criminal or deviant acts are to be played out. The structural features of the situation—lighting, surveillance equipment, police patrol, and citizen watch organizations—influence the probability of deviant behavior. To Cornish and Clarke,

► Photo 2.1

Road sign prohibiting littering. How effective do you think road signs like this are in curbing bad behavior?



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target hardening, or making physical spaces more defensible and less attractive to perpetrators, deters deviant behaviors. Of course, this may simply lead to **crime displacement**, changing the location of criminal and deviant behavior to a more conducive environment (Cornish & Clarke, 1987, pp. 933–947).

A related conceptualization is **Lawrence Cohen** and **Marcus Felson's** (1979) **Routine Activities Theory**. Routine activities refer to an individual's lifestyle that influences the likelihood of becoming a victim of criminal activity. Walking alone late at night, being publicly intoxicated, and displaying large amounts of cash to strangers certainly increase one's vulnerability to crime. Cohen and Felson (1979, p. 590) argue that crime is most likely when three conditions are present: a suitable target, a motivated offender, and the lack of a capable guardian. A suitable target may be a vulnerable person on the street, an isolated convenience store in a rural area, or residence in a high-crime neighborhood. Motivated offenders may be present in a variety of settings but only choose to strike when a suitable target is present, and a capable guardian is absent. It is the convergence of these three conditions that increases the probability of criminal victimization.

Sociologist **Jack Katz** (1988) provides an insightful analysis of the **seduction of crime**—the exhilaration that accompanies the commission of a criminal or deviant act. Katz observes that most sociologists focus on the sociocultural conditions and social processes that are associated with crime and deviance. The sociological precipitants of crime and deviance are considerably removed from the actual commission of the deviant act. To Katz, the central question is, Why are people who are not inclined to commit a crime one moment determined to do so the next? The answer, Katz argues, lies in the sensual experiences that result from involvement in criminal or deviant behavior. Crime itself is seductive. The very act of committing a crime results in an intensely pleasurable emotional experience. A rush of adrenalin, a sense of euphoria, or a sensual feeling may wash over the offender. In short, the sensual dynamics inherent in criminal and deviant activity motive its participants and serve to perpetuate their involvement.

SOCIETAL REACTION/LABELING PERSPECTIVE

The **Symbolic Interaction Theory** in sociology provides the foundation for the societal reaction or labeling perspective. **Charles Horton Cooley** (1902) and **George Herbert Mead** (1934) are largely responsible for the inception of the symbolic interaction perspective within sociology. It was their observation that interpersonal interaction is primarily symbolic. Individuals attach meanings to the gestures, verbal communications, and behaviors of others. One's sense of self is also a product of symbolic social interaction. In Cooley's concept of a *looking-glass self*, he notes that the qualities that we assign to ourselves are those that we think others assign to us. We are, in a sense, a reflection of what we think others think of us. Our sense of self then is a social construction—the result of an interactional process through which the self acquires meaning and self-definition.

George Herbert Mead provides an understanding of the process by which a child develops a unique sense of self. To Mead, humans communicate by means of gestures and symbols. A child begins to give meaning to the gestures and symbolic communications—usually words and pictures—used by others to converse with him or her. In time, a child attributes to him- or herself certain characteristics and value to others. Messages of love or disgust, acceptance or rejection, joy or burden may be transmitted to a child. Mead terms this process as *taking the role of the other*, or the ability to view one's self from the perspective of another person. The process of defining and redefining one's self is a lifelong process. Yet the effects of negative labeling in early life may well have long-term adverse effects.

The societal reaction perspective was advanced in the 1950s and 1960s by the work of **Edwin Lemert** (1967) and **Howard Becker** (1963). Lemert provides an analysis of the process of becoming a deviant. He contends that the process involves two stages of development: *primary deviance* and *secondary deviance*. Primary deviance typically refers to minor norm violations—petty theft,

Juvenile Court and Tagging

The early work of **Frank Tannenbaum** (1938) underscores the importance of labeling in perpetuation and escalation of deviant behavior. In 1938, Frank Tannenbaum, a professor of history, recognized that delinquency is a result of a process of “tagging” or labeling, first the offensive acts of a juvenile, and second the juvenile himself or herself. The process begins with the community as a whole defining the troublesome behaviors as criminal or as delinquent offenses. The perpetrators are then seen as violating the law

and subject to being processed by the justice system. Tannenbaum viewed the process of arresting, adjudicating, and imposing a sentence by the court as the **dramatization of evil**. Once an individual is “tagged” or labeled as a delinquent, he or she tends to be ostracized by the community. The process of being isolated from conventional society leads to association with others who have also been labeled as delinquent. As a consequence, the likelihood of continued involvement in delinquent activities is markedly increased.

use of graffiti, public drunkenness—that may well not evoke an official response by the criminal justice system. The offender usually does not define himself or herself as a criminal or deviant, but simply a prankster. However, if an act of primary deviance does result in a public response, and an official action is taken—for example, an arrest for shoplifting—then the label of criminal is applied. The process of being arrested, booked, fingerprinted, and adjudicated in court serves to publicly label the offender. Secondary deviance then occurs when the individual’s primary deviance becomes publicly known, and the person is adjudicated a delinquent or criminal. In response to this negative label, the primary deviant may engage in further deviance “as a means of defense, attack, or adjustment to the overt and covert problems created by the consequent societal reaction to him” (Lemert, 1967, p. 237). In the secondary deviance stage, offending becomes more frequent and typically more serious. The deviant defines himself or herself as “bad”—a rejected person who will retaliate against the society that wronged him or her.

In a similar vein, Howard Becker points out that deviance is essentially a social creation. He writes: “social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infractions constitute deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders” [emphasis in original] (Becker, 1963, p. 9). Becker contends that behavior is essentially neutral; in itself, it is neither good nor bad. Others must define a person’s behavior before it can take on a social value, a judgment of right or wrong, moral or immoral, harmful or benign. Simply put, the process of creating a deviant involves three stages. First, an act must be defined as a deviant act. Second, the actor must be defined as a deviant person. The third stage, however, is critical in the process of becoming a deviant. In the third stage of the process, the actor must accept the label of deviant and define himself or herself as a deviant. Becker (1963, p. 9) observes: “The deviant is one to whom that label has been successfully applied.”

Sociologist **Howard Kaplan** (1980) has elaborated on the labeling/societal reaction perspective. Central to Kaplan’s formulation is the assumption that behavior is motivated by the desire to achieve and maintain a sense of self-esteem. A person’s self-esteem typically derives from his or her ability to recognize highly valued personal characteristics in himself or herself, accept positive evaluations from others, and the ability to avert negative responses from others. However, when a person’s self-esteem is undermined, self-derogation—or negative attitudes toward one’s self—may ensue.

To Kaplan, **self-derogation**—the process by which a person comes to accept the largely negative judgments of others—is the key concept in the etiology of deviant behavior. An individual who is unable to establish a positive

► **Photo 2.2**

Young girls gossiping about another. Are there norms for expressing “meanness”? Would those norms be different if the “meanness” was expressed on social media?



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sense of himself or herself is less motivated to conform to the norms of conventional society. They may well seek alternate means to gain a sense of self-esteem. They may be attracted to deviant groups or lifestyles that provide opportunities for developing unconventional, yet in the view of their fellow deviants, self-enhancing attitudes.

Australian social theorist **John Braithwaite** (1989) adds another dimension to the labeling/societal reaction perspective. His highly innovative theory of **reintegrative shaming** challenges many of the current assumptions about crime deterrence and the rehabilitation of offenders. Reintegrative shaming occurs when the community conveys its disapproval of a deviant person's behavior but maintains respect for the individual. The intention of reintegrative shaming is to send the message to the offender that deviant behavior will not be tolerated; nevertheless, the community values the offender as a person and wants him or her to be reintegrated into conventional society. Braithwaite draws the distinction between reintegrative shaming and stigmatization. **Stigmatization** involves "disintegrative shaming"—the person is labeled as criminal or deviant, as well as his or her behavior (Braithwaite, 1989, p. 101). Ostracized by the community, stigmatized persons are more likely to engage in further criminal or deviant activities. They may seek out deviant subcultures for support and personal recognition, further alienating them from the larger society.

A critical element in reintegrative shaming theory is the deliberate attempt to reassimilate the deviant into the community. By distinguishing between the inherent worth of a person and his or her misdeeds, the reintegrative shaming approach to crime deterrence and offender rehabilitation offers an alternative to the retributive response to deviant behavior.

SOCIAL CONTROL THEORY

Emile Durkheim's (1951) views on social integration and its effect on deviant behavior provide the backdrop for the development of social control theory. **Social integration** refers to the extent to which individuals accept common cultural values and societal norms to structure their behavior. **Travis Hirschi** (1969) conceptualized integration as a set of **social bonds** between individuals and conventional society. Rather than trying to discover why individuals engage in deviance, Hirschi posed this question: Why don't people commit delinquent acts?

Hirschi identifies four social bonds: *attachment*, *commitment*, *involvement*, and *belief*. Attachment refers to the intensity and variety of interests a person has in common with others in the community. Commitment is reflected in the amount of energy a person expends on community-oriented activities. Involvement is indicated by the person's expenditure of time on projects of common interest. Belief means the acceptance of a common system of values and moral precepts. Hirschi concludes that the stronger the bonds between individuals and conventional social life, the less likely they are to engage in deviant behavior.

In more recent years, **Michael Gottfredson** and Travis Hirschi (1990) have offered a reformulation of control theory. Their **General Theory of Crime** focuses on **self-control** rather than on bonds to conventional social life. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) contend that most crimes are not well planned but are committed to satisfy an immediate need or desire. Low self-control is summarized by Tittle and Paternoster (1993, p. 482) as an

- Orientation toward the present rather than the future (or short-sightedness)
- Attraction to physical rather than mental activities
- Insensitivity to the suffering of others (self-centeredness)
- Intolerance for frustration
- Inclination toward risk-taking and opportunism

Individuals who lack self-control and who are unable to resist the urge for immediate gratification are most prone to involvement in criminal and deviant behaviors. Criminal activity provides a person who has low self-control with several immediate benefits. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990, pp. 89–90) note that

- Criminal acts provide *easy or simple* gratification of desires.
- Criminal acts are *exciting, risky, or thrilling*.
- Crimes require *little skill or planning*.
- Crimes often result in *pain or discomfort for the victim*.

THE GENERAL THEORY OF CRIME ACROSS THE GLOBE

Numerous studies have provided support for Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) General Theory of Crime. However, little is known about its applicability in non-Western cultures. Cesar Rebellon, Murray Straus, and Rose Medeiros conducted a 32-nation assessment of the generalizability of the General Theory of Crime, including "all humanly habitable continents"—"across Western and non-Western settings." North and South America, Western and Eastern Europe, the Middle and Far East, Russia, China, Taiwan, and Australia were among other nations that participated in this groundbreaking study. The findings show that university undergraduate students across the globe who report high levels of self-control are less likely to be involved either in violent or property crime. Parental neglect was also found to significantly influence the level of self-control. Across the 32 nations studied, the more parents

neglected their undergraduate students, the lower their self-control, and the more their involvement in criminal activity increased. The researchers concluded that "the concept of self-control has substantial meaning not only in Western societies but in societies whose cultures differ markedly from those in the West."

However, an additional finding not predicted by the General Theory of Crime, but consistent with Edwin Sutherland's Differential Association Theory, merits consideration. The researchers note: "our results consistently support the notion that individuals who associate with criminal friends are significantly more prone to both violent and property crime when holding self-control constant." In sum then, both the General Theory of Crime and Differential Association Theory consistently explain criminal behavior among undergraduate students in nations across the globe.

Adapted from: Rebellon, C. J., Straus, M. A., & Medeiros, R. (2008). Self-control in global perspective: An empirical assessment of Gottfredson and Hirschi's general theory within and across 32 national settings. *European Journal of Criminology*, 5(3), 331–362.

Sociologist **Charles Tittle** (1995) set forth a control–balance formulation to explain deviant behavior. *Control–balance* refers to the relative amount of control a person has over others in a given situation. The key concept in control–balance theory is the person's control ratio. **Control ratio** refers to the amount of influence individuals have over forces that may control their behavior versus their ability to control those forces. Tittle assumes that individuals strive to maintain a sense of autonomy, a sense of self-determination. No one wants to be told what to do, as well as when and how to do it. Control imbalance often provokes feelings of humiliation, anger, and emotional distress. To correct this control imbalance and to resolve the negative emotions that accompany it, a person may resort to various forms of deviant behavior. Tittle (1995) identifies five conditions that underlie the occurrence of deviant behavior:

- A predisposition toward being motivated for deviance
- A situational provocation that reminds a person of a control imbalance
- The transformation of predisposition into actual motivation for deviance
- The opportunity for deviant response
- The absence or relative weakness of constraint, so that the mental processes of "control balancing" will result in a perceived gain in control

In sum, persons who are motivated to engage in deviant acts need to establish a sense of autonomy, perceive an unbalanced control ratio, and experience a blockage in goal attainment. The immediate situation may trigger recognition of a control imbalance. If suitable opportunities for retaliatory acts are present and constraints against their commission are absent, then an individual may well respond in an antisocial way.

NEW THEORETICAL APPROACHES

The recognition that involvement in deviant behavior varies over time has led to the emergence of life-course perspectives. **Robert Sampson** and **John Laub** (1993) take a **developmental approach** to the understanding of the persistence and desistence of criminal activity across the lifespan. Their age-graded theory of informal social control proposes that changes in social bonds between an individual and conventional society across the life course account for variations in criminal and deviant behaviors. Two concepts are particularly important to their developmental formulation: trajectories and transitions. *Trajectories* refer to “pathways or lines of development throughout life. These long-term patterns of behavior may include work life, marriage, parenthood, or even criminal behavior” (Sampson & Laub, 1993, p. 100). *Transitions*, however, are “short-term events embedded in trajectories which may include starting a new job, getting married, having a child, or being sentenced to prison” (Sampson & Laub, 1993, p. 100). A related concept is a *turning point*—an abrupt event that redirects the course of a life trajectory.

A life-course trajectory that involves persistent involvement in criminal and deviant activities may be interrupted by transitions that change the nature of the social bonds between the offender and the larger society. Transitions tend to occur at particular ages across the life span. Marriage, stable employment, and becoming a parent tend to strengthen ties to the community. A turning point in the life of a chronic offender may be a graduation from high school, a significant job promotion, or a civic recognition for a heroic deed. To the extent that transitions and key turning points increase an individual’s social bonds, they tend to decrease the probability of continued deviant behavior. Sampson and Laub (1993, p. 100) conclude that “age-graded changes in social bonds explain changes in crime.”

As social bonds are strengthened so too is one’s social capital. *Social capital* refers to the positive relationships between a person and other members of the community and its governmental and social institutions. Being a responsible individual who acts in the best interest of those around him or her results in the accumulation of social capital. Sampson and Laub (1993) point out that as social capital increases, involvement in crime and deviance decreases.

Issues related to the persistence and desistence of offending are considered in a Philadelphia birth-cohort study conducted by **Marvin Wolfgang** and his colleagues (1972) and British criminologist **David Farrington’s** Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development (1986). In two birth cohort studies, Marvin Wolfgang and his colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania found that chronic juvenile offenders—those who commit five or more offenses—are developmentally different from single offenders and from nondelinquents. Compared to the nonchronic delinquents, the chronic offenders tend to have lower IQ scores, do less well in school, and are more likely to come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. In addition, chronic offenders tend to commit their first offense at a younger age. Wolfgang and his colleagues conclude that the earlier the age of onset, the greater the likelihood of chronic offending. A follow-up study showed that the seriousness of offending increased with age, but the actual number of crimes committed decreased over time (Wolfgang, Thornberry, & Figlio, 1987).

The findings of David Farrington’s developmental study of delinquents also show that anti-social behaviors—dishonesty and aggression—become evident as early as the age of 8 and, given a certain social context, may well persist into early adulthood. Young offenders from large families where discipline is particularly harsh and inconsistent, social and economic resources are meager, and siblings are also committing delinquent acts are more likely to be set on a trajectory of criminal involvement. Throughout their adolescent years and into adulthood, the persistent offenders tend to spend their time in all-male groups, drink excessively, use illicit drugs, and engage in aggressive and violent behaviors. In short, English delinquent youth are generally “less conforming and less socially restrained” (West & Farrington, 1977).

Farrington (1986) also identified three key transitions that changed the life trajectory of a young offender. These transitions are employment, marriage, and relocation. Steady employment with possibility of advancement provides an alternative to a relatively meaningless life on the street. Getting married to a person who is not involved in a deviant lifestyle is another important transition in the life of a delinquent. Moving to a low-crime area—the suburbs or a rural place—also tends to reduce the opportunities to continue a deviant career. These three transitions serve to restructure a person’s everyday life and interrupt a crime-prone trajectory. See Table 2.1 for a list of theorists discussed in this chapter, along with their representative works.

Table 2.1 Theoretical Explanations of Deviant Behavior: From Classical to Life Course Perspectives	
Theoretical Foundations	Representative Work
Classical School	
• Beccaria (1764)	<i>On Crimes and Punishment</i>
• Bentham (1789)	<i>An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation</i>
Societal Reaction/Labeling Perspective	
• Tannenbaum (1938)	<i>The Dramatization of Evil</i>
Control Theory	
• Hirschi (1969)	<i>The Causes of Delinquency</i>
Early Developments	
Societal Reaction	
• Lemert (1951)	<i>Primary and Secondary Deviance</i>
• Becker (1964)	<i>Outsiders</i>
Neoclassical School	
• Cohen and Felson (1979)	Routine Activity Theory
• Cornish and Clarke (1986)	<i>Situational Crime Prevention</i>
• Katz (1988)	<i>The Seduction of Crime</i>
Societal Reaction/Labeling	
• Kaplan (1980)	<i>Self-Attitudes and Deviant Behavior</i>
• Braithwaite (1989)	<i>Crime, Shame, and Reintegration</i>
Control Theory	
• Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990)	A General Theory of Crime
• Tittle (1995)	Control Balance
Life-Course Formulations	
• Wolfgang, Figlio, and Sellin (1972)	<i>Delinquency in a Birth Cohort</i>
• Wolfgang, Thornberry, and Figlio (1987)	<i>From Delinquency to Crime</i>
• Sampson and Laub (1993)	<i>Pathways and Turning Points Through Life</i>
• Farrington (1995)	<i>The Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development</i>

Social Media “Stars”

This book is about deviance, and one special focus is on deviance in the digital world. The story that opened this chapter described the 2017 appearance of 13-year-old Danielle Bregoli on the *Dr. Phil Show*, and the instant fame that came to her as a result of that appearance. Few could deny that Bregoli was different from most people—and even from most people her age. She spoke in a guttural street language that few could understand and that others found hard to believe was even real. As the opening story says, Bregoli’s rise to fame was accompanied by a bevy of paparazzi who followed her wherever she went and was supported by a number of social media postings to Snapchat and other services. Many of those postings showed her fighting, using abusive language, or otherwise engaging in unruly behavior. Yet, the more

“bad behavior” that she exhibited online, the larger her online following grew.

Bregoli’s story raises a number of questions, not the least of which is why do so many social media participants seem enthralled by the bad behavior of others—and why do they want to watch it? Is deviance some kind of drawing card in our society; is it a way to become famous (or infamous, which to some may mean the same thing)? Can we use the number of followers that a person has, or the number of retweets that their comments produce, to measure their success in the world of social media? And if so, how does that success translate into real life? Compose answers to these questions and submit them to your instructor if asked to do so.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Scientific inquiry into human social behavior began to emerge during the time of the Enlightenment and has undergone a slow, uneven, often tumultuous development. The methods of scientific investigation are continually being refined, as are theoretical formulations of a wide range of social and behavioral phenomena. Advances in sociological and social psychological theories of behavior have largely occurred during the 20th century.

- This chapter considers the
 - foundations of scientific inquiry into deviant behavior, including evidence-based behavioral analysis;
 - the essential elements of a viable scientific theory; and
 - early developments and recent theoretical advances designed to explain and predict deviant behavior.
- Sociological explanations of behavior discussed in this chapter include
 - Classical School of Crime and Deviance
 - Societal Reaction or Labeling Perspective
 - Social control theory
- Each theory is designed to explain and predict the participation of individuals in various forms of deviant behavior.
 - The Classical School of Crime and Deviance, rooted in the work of Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham, provides the foundation for
 - Rational Choice Theory
 - Routine Activities Formulation
 - Societal reaction or the labeling perspective derives from the early work of Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead. Among the most influential labeling theorists are
 - Frank Tannenbaum
 - Edwin Lemert
 - Howard Becker
 - Howard Kaplan
 - John Braithwaite
 - Emile Durkheim’s concept of social integration and its consequences gave rise to the development of Travis Hirschi’s Social Bonding Theory and his later formulation of Self-Control Theory with Michael Gottfredson.
 - The developmental, or life-course approach takes into account the emergence, persistence, and possible desistence of engagement in deviant activities across the lifespan.

KEY NAMES

Cesare Beccaria 22	Edwin Lemert 23	Marcus Felson 23	Charles Tittle 26
Jeremy Bentham 22	Howard Becker 23	Jack Katz 23	Robert Sampson 27
Jack Gibbs 22	Howard Kaplan 24	Charles Horton Cooley 23	John Laub 27
Ronald V. Clarke 22	John Braithwaite 25	George Herbert Mead 23	Marvin Wolfgang 27
Derek B. Cornish 22	Travis Hirschi 25	Frank Tannenbaum 24	David Farrington 27
Lawrence Cohen 23	Michael Gottfredson 25		

KEY CONCEPTS

Classical School 20	Hedonistic calculus 22	Self-derogation 24
Control ratio 26	Hedonistic principle 22	Social bonds 25
Crime displacement 23	Rational Choice Theory 22	Social integration 25
Deterrence doctrine 22	Reintegrative shaming 25	Societal reaction or labeling perspective 20
Developmental approach (life-course perspective) 27	Routine Activities Theory 23	Stigmatization 25
Dramatization of evil 24	Scientific method 20	Symbolic Interaction Theory 23
Evidence-based behavior analysis 20	Scientific theory 20	
General Theory of Crime 25	Seduction of crime 23	
	Self-control 25	

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. Devise an alternative to the scientific method for the explanation and prediction of deviant behavior. What are the advantages and disadvantage of your innovative method of investigating deviance?
2. What are the limitations of the scientific method of investigation? What kinds of questions are beyond the scope of the scientific method?
3. Are different theoretical formulations needed for different forms of deviant behavior? For example, can violent, property, and victimless deviant acts be explained by the same theoretical model?
4. Are different theoretical models needed to explain the onset of deviant behavior, and the persistence and desistence of that behavior? Which theoretical model(s) do you think best accounts for the onset, the persistence, and desistence of deviant behavior?
5. Explain how the use of social media facilitates the process of defining certain behaviors as deviant, and influences the reaction to persons who are engaged in those behaviors.
6. Discuss two forms of deviant behavior that are likely to be controlled by the use of social media, and two forms of deviant behavior that are resistant to social media regulation. What are social media strategies that are most effective in curbing deviant behavior?