

CHAPTER TWO

Positivist Theories

Multiple Choice Questions

1. The theories of positivist sociologists attempt to explain the _____ of deviance.
 - a) negative features
 - b) symbolism
 - c) causes
 - d) meanings

Answer: C; Page Reference: 18–19; Bloom's Category: Understanding

2. Joe is a sociologist who is undertaking a study of drug use. He is interested in how broken families and poor neighborhoods lead to more problems of drug addiction. Joe is following a _____ theory of deviant behavior.
 - a) positivist
 - b) constructionist
 - c) scientific
 - d) historical

Answer: A; Page Reference: 18; Bloom's Category: Application

3. Which of the following is NOT a primarily positivist theory of deviance?
 - a) differential association
 - b) anomie-strain theory
 - c) control theory
 - d) phenomenological theory

Answer: D; Page Reference: 18–30; Bloom's Category: Analysis

4. The essence of several types of anomie-strain theory is that the experience of
 - a) personal, psychological strain leads to deviant behavior.
 - b) socially induced strain pressures individuals to commit deviant acts.
 - c) significant social and political conflict leads to deviant acts.
 - d) cultural change leads to social strain and outbreaks of deviant behavior.

Answer: B; Page Reference: 18–19; Bloom's Category: Understanding

5. According to Robert Merton's goal-means gap theory, the psychoanalytic approach to deviant behavior is wrong because that theory incorrectly assumes that
 - a) society discourages the individual from engaging in deviant behavior.
 - b) society encourages the individual to engage in deviant behavior.
 - c) society has no impact on human biological impulses.
 - d) individuals freely choose to partake in deviant behavior.

Answer: A; Page Reference: 18–19; Bloom's Category: Understanding

6. Merton's version of anomie-strain theory is based on the premise that
- a) the breakdown of social norms, or anomie, inhibits deviance.
 - b) society encourages the individual to engage in deviance.
 - c) deviant behavior is the expression of the individual's primitive psychological desires.
 - d) society cannot restrain the individual from using power to prevent deviance.

Answer: B; Page Reference: 18–19; Bloom's Category: Understanding

7. According to Merton, the only cultural value of importance in American society is
- a) family relationships.
 - b) hard work.
 - c) material success.
 - d) religious faith.

Answer: C; Page Reference: 19; Bloom's Category: Analysis

8. According to Merton's anomie-strain theory, which of the following statements is true?
- a) All Americans have about the same chance of reaching high success goals.
 - b) Both the cultural goals of success and the legitimate means of achieving high success goals are freely available to all Americans.
 - c) Relatively few Americans believe that success is an important part of life.
 - d) The legitimate means of achieving high success goals are not freely available to all classes of people.

Answer: D; Page Reference: 18–20; Bloom's Category: Analysis

9. According to Merton, when persons hold high success aspirations and are not given the opportunity to realize them, they might
- a) resort to illegitimate means of achieving their aspirations.
 - b) reset their goals to an even higher level.
 - c) feel irrepressible psychological pressures and become violent.
 - d) become more religious.

Answer: A; Page Reference: 19; Bloom's Category: Understanding

10. All of Jane's friends have jewelry and new clothes, but she has no money to buy them. She therefore resorts to shoplifting to get what she wants. According to Merton's theory, her behavior is an example of
- a) conformity.
 - b) innovation.
 - c) ritualism.
 - d) retreatism.

Answer: B; Page Reference: 18; Bloom's Category: Application

11. Peter, disillusioned with the way things are going, decides to live in a hippie commune away from the rest of society. According to Merton's theory, his behavior is an example of
- a) conformity.

- b) innovation.
- c) ritualism.
- d) retreatism.

Answer: D; Page Reference: 19–20; Bloom's Category: Application

12. Joe, a steel worker in Cleveland, Ohio, has no aspirations of being rich and successful. Nevertheless, he works hard and takes pride in his job. According to Merton's theory, this is an example of
- a) conformity.
 - b) innovation.
 - c) ritualism.
 - d) retreatism.

Answer: C; Page Reference: 19–20; Bloom's Category: Application

13. Albert Cohen's theory is similar to Merton's approach, but Cohen replaced the word "success" with the word "_____."
- a) wealth
 - b) innovation
 - c) anomie
 - d) status

Answer: D; Page Reference: 21; Bloom's Category: Remembering

14. Cohen's theory utilizes which group to illustrate status frustration?
- a) upper-class boys.
 - b) middle-class boys.
 - c) lower-class boys.
 - d) lower-class girls.

Answer: C; Page Reference: 20; Bloom's Category: Understanding

15. According to Cohen's theory, the place in American society where lower-class boys experience the greatest status frustration is
- a) home.
 - b) school.
 - c) neighborhood.
 - d) the job.

Answer: B; Page Reference: 20; Bloom's Category: Understanding

16. According to Albert Cohen, when lower-class boys experience status frustration, they set up their own competitive system in the form of
- a) violent gangs.
 - b) religious groups.
 - c) delinquent subcultures.
 - d) boys clubs.

Answer: C; Page Reference: 21; Bloom's Category: Understanding

17. Cohen's theory of status frustration most closely resembles Merton's goal-means gap because they both
- a) use similar styles of research.
 - b) argue that deviant actions are the product of individual choice.
 - c) assert that lower-class people are more likely to engage in deviant actions.
 - d) assume that social class has little to do with deviant behavior.

Answer: C; Page Reference: 20–21; Bloom's Category: Understanding

18. Cloward and Ohlin attempt to extend Merton's central idea that the lower classes are denied legitimate opportunity by introducing the concept of
- a) status frustration.
 - b) the means-goal gap.
 - c) differential illegitimate opportunity.
 - d) differential legitimate opportunity.

Answer: C; Page Reference: 21–22; Bloom's Category: Understanding

19. According to Cloward and Ohlin, lower-class boys experience different opportunities in the form of three subcultures, which are
- a) criminal, conflict, and rebellious.
 - b) criminal, retreatist, and innovative.
 - c) conflict, rebellious, and innovative.
 - d) criminal, conflict, and retreatist.

Answer: D; Page Reference: 22; Bloom's Category: Remembering

20. Cloward and Ohlin used the concept of differential illegitimate opportunity to mean that some members of the lower class have
- a) a greater chance to become middle class through use of illegitimate and legitimate opportunities.
 - b) more opportunities to pursue legitimate and conforming activities.
 - c) more positivist cultural values than others.
 - d) fewer opportunities to pursue illegitimate opportunities.

Answer: D; Page Reference: 22; Bloom's Category: Understanding

21. Recent developments in anomie-strain theory have located new sources of strain that might push individuals toward deviance. Which of the following is NOT one of those newly identified strains?
- a) American culture's "anything goes" mentality in the pursuit of success
 - b) removal of positively valued stimuli such as the death of a friend
 - c) the discrepancy between success aspirations and the opportunities for realizing those aspirations
 - d) presentation of negative stimuli, such as the experience of child abuse or criminal victimization

Answer: C; Page Reference: 23; Bloom's Category: Analysis

22. Many sociologists have criticized Merton's version of anomie-strain theory for assuming that lower-class people

- a) are entirely dishonest.
- b) have the same level of success aspirations as other social classes.
- c) have higher levels of success aspirations than others.
- d) are poor because they have deviant values.

Answer: B; Page Reference: 23–24; Bloom's Category: Understanding

- 23.** One contribution that anomie-strain theory has made to the body of sociological research on deviance is that
- a) society, not the individual, causes much deviance.
 - b) the individual, not society, causes much deviance.
 - c) sociology can actually discover very little about deviant behavior.
 - d) almost all deviant behavior is committed by the lower classes.

Answer: A; Page Reference: 23–24; Bloom's Category: Understanding

- 24.** According to Sutherland's differential association theory, a person may become deviant or delinquent when there is a(n)
- a) economic strain produced by a lack of economic opportunity.
 - b) political movement that calls for attacks on social inequality.
 - c) excess of deviant contacts favorable to violation of the law.
 - d) absence of deviant contacts calling for obeying the law.

Answer: C; Page Reference: 24–25; Bloom's Category: Understanding

- 25.** Which of the following concepts constitutes the core of Sutherland's differential association theory?
- a) numerous associations with criminals
 - b) an excess of criminal over anticriminal contacts
 - c) a strong criminal personality
 - d) an excess of criminal over anticriminal personality traits

Answer: B; Page Reference: 24–25; Bloom's Category: Understanding

- 26.** Hank is a sociologist investigating the causes of crime. He is interested in how some areas of the city have traditions of crime that persist over generations, and how individuals easily move into groups following those traditions. What theory of deviance is guiding Hank's research?
- a) labeling theory
 - b) control theory
 - c) differential association theory
 - d) strain theory

Answer: C; Page Reference: 24–25; Bloom's Category: Application

- 27.** Daniel Glaser felt that Sutherland's theory was too _____ and proposed that a process of identification with criminals also had to take place.
- a) liberal
 - b) mechanistic
 - c) voluntary
 - d) sociological

Answer: B; Page Reference: 25; Bloom's Category: Understanding

28. According to Glaser, before a person pursues criminal behavior, he or she must first _____ real or imaginary persons whose criminal behavior seems acceptable.
- a) strongly reject
 - b) rebel against
 - c) identify with
 - d) fall deeply in love with

Answer: C; Page Reference: 25; Bloom's Category: Understanding

29. Burgess and Akers argued that before one becomes criminal, a process of _____ must occur where he or she is rewarded for continuing deviant behavior.
- a) differential reinforcement
 - b) differential revulsion
 - c) differential learning
 - d) differential rejection

Answer: A; Page Reference: 25–26; Bloom's Category: Remembering

30. Burgess and Akers find Sutherland's differential association theory inadequate because Sutherland
- a) ignored the individual's choice-making ability.
 - b) placed too much emphasis on the rewards, not the consequences, of deviant behavior.
 - c) could not empirically test his theory.
 - d) did not specify what is involved in the process of learning to become a criminal.

Answer: D; Page Reference: 25–26; Bloom's Category: Remembering

31. Which of the following statements is an accurate criticism of Burgess-Akers's social learning theory?
- a) It fails to explain why a person fails to continue to commit deviant acts.
 - b) It cannot explain why a person initially commits a deviant act.
 - c) It explains only why a person initially commits a deviant rather than a conforming act.
 - d) It fails to explain why a person continues to commit deviant acts.

Answer: B; Page Reference: 25–26; Bloom's Category: Analysis

32. According to control theories of deviance, the central question is
- a) what causes deviance.
 - b) what causes conformity.
 - c) what causes criminality.
 - d) what is the definition of deviance.

Answer: B; Page Reference: 27; Bloom's Category: Analysis

33. Most control theorists seem to
- a) imply that too much social control will force criminals to commit more crimes.

- b) accept the Freudian assumption that our inborn animal impulses, if unchecked, will turn into deviant behavior.
- c) accept the notion that one has to learn some skill and ideology in order to commit deviance.
- d) assume that social control often indirectly or unexpectedly causes deviant behavior.

Answer: B; Page Reference: 27; Bloom's Category: Understanding

34. Which of the following is NOT a kind of social control that can prevent deviance?

- a) bonds to society
- b) reintegrative shaming
- c) differential association
- d) legal punishment

Answer: C; Page Reference: 27-28; Bloom's Category: Analysis

35. According to Hirschi's theory of social control, if elements of bonding to society are weak, the individual might

- a) have strong self-control.
- b) have a good self-concept.
- c) develop a strong goal orientation.
- d) slide into deviance.

Answer: D; Page Reference: 27; Bloom's Category: Understanding

36. According to Hirschi, which of the following is NOT a way for individuals to bond themselves to society?

- a) a commitment to conformity
- b) an experience of a gap between goals and means
- c) a belief in moral validity of the rules
- d) involvement in conventional activities

Answer: B; Page Reference: 27; Bloom's Category: Understanding

37. An expression of disapproval designed to invoke remorse in the wrongdoer is called

- a) labeling.
- b) denouncing.
- c) bonding.
- d) shaming.

Answer: D; Page Reference: 29; Bloom's Category: Analysis

38. If a society makes a deviant feel guilty while showing understanding and forgiveness, it practices _____ shaming.

- a) bureaucratic
- b) disintegrative
- c) reintegrative
- d) degrading

Answer: C; Page Reference: 29; Bloom's Category: Remembering

39. According to the deterrence doctrine, all of the following would help reduce the rate of crime, EXCEPT for making punishment
- a) more certain.
 - b) more swift.
 - c) more general.
 - d) more severe.

Answer: C; Page Reference: 29–30; Bloom's Category: Analysis

40. The deterrence doctrine assumes that human beings, when anticipating deviant behavior, are
- a) basically rational.
 - b) basically irrational.
 - c) nasty and evil.
 - d) motivated to fight crime.

Answer: A; Page Reference: 29; Bloom's Category: Understanding

41. According to critics, reintegrative shaming may work only with
- a) hardened criminals.
 - b) embarrassed criminals.
 - c) first-time offenders.
 - d) sexual offenders.

Answer: C; Page Reference: 30; Bloom's Category: Understanding

42. Sociologists criticizing control theory point out that control can become a possible cause of deviance. They therefore conclude that most versions of this theory are too
- a) underdeveloped.
 - b) oriented to adult deviance.
 - c) simplistic.
 - d) focused on society's unattainable goals.

Answer: C; Page Reference: 30–31; Bloom's Category: Understanding

43. _____ study the underlying causes of deviance through social and environmental factors.
- a) Positivists
 - b) Constructionists
 - c) Marxists
 - d) Historians

Answer: A; Page Reference: 18–30; Bloom's Category: Analysis

44. Under Merton's Anomie-Strain Theory, the breakdown of social norms is a result of _____.
- a) Lack of legitimate opportunities to succeed
 - b) Lack of societal expectations of ambition
 - c) Lack of societally approved goals
 - d) An overwhelming amount of social norms to follow

Answer: A; Page Reference: 18; Bloom's Category: Understanding

45. Merton's theory was inspired by the sociologist _____, the first to use the term "anomie" as a sociological concept.
- a) Karl Marx
 - b) Robert Merton
 - c) Emile Durkheim
 - d) Sigmund Freud

Answer: C; Page Reference: 18; Bloom's Category: Understanding

46. Merton's Anomie-Strain Theory observes that failure to move up and achieve success is the fault of _____ in American culture.
- a) the community
 - b) the educational system
 - c) the family unit
 - d) the individual

Answer: D; Page Reference: 19; Bloom's Category: Understanding

47. Which of the following is NOT an example of Merton's legitimate means to achieving success?
- a) Insider trading
 - b) Networking
 - c) An education
 - d) A good job

Answer: A; Page Reference: 19; Bloom's Category: Application

48. What factor combinations are said by Robert Agnew to contribute to frustration, fear, and anger?
- a) Removal of positively valued stimuli and presentation of negative stimuli
 - b) Removal of negatively valued stimuli and presentation of positive stimuli
 - c) Removal of both positive and negatively valued stimuli
 - d) Presentation of both positive and negatively valued stimuli

Answer: A; Page Reference: 23; Bloom's Category: Application

49. _____ holds that if an individual associates with people who hold deviant ideas more than with those who embrace conventional ideas, the individual is likely to become deviant.
- a) Control theory
 - b) Differential Association
 - c) Anomie-Strain
 - d) All Positivist theories

Answer: B; Page Reference: 24; Bloom's Category: Analysis

50. Which of the following is the best example of Burgess and Akers's Differential Reinforcement theory?
- a) Ann is fined for shoplifting one day. To get back at the store, she starts to shoplift more and more expensive items.

- b) Having been fired from a job for drinking during his shift, Derek begins to drink more heavily during the week.
- c) Having been rewarded with good grades for studying hard in the past, Trae continues to study hard today.
- d) Having been given poor grades for not studying enough in the past, Pam loses motivation to study entirely.

Answer: C; Page Reference: 25; Bloom's Category: Application

True/False Questions

1. In general, positivist theories focus on the meanings of deviance, while constructionist theories point to the causes of deviance.

True

False

Answer: False; Page Reference: 6–8; Bloom's Category: Understanding

2. According to Merton, the access to the institutionalized means of achieving high success goals is not equally distributed in American society.

True

False

Answer: True; Page Reference: 18; Bloom's Category: Understanding

3. One of Merton's great contributions to the study of deviance was to locate the cause of deviance in the individual, not society.

True

False

Answer: False; Page Reference: 18–19; Bloom's Category: Understanding

4. Merton's theory indicates that individual acts of deviance have a social origin.

True

False

Answer: True; Page Reference: 19; Bloom's Category: Understanding

5. Merton's theory assumes the premise that lower-income people have a higher propensity to commit deviant acts compared to higher-income people.

True

False

Answer: True; Page Reference: 19; Bloom's Category: Understanding

6. Merton's ritualists and retreatists have one thing in common, which is the absence of high success goals in their lives.

True

False

Answer: True; Page Reference: 20; Bloom's Category: Understanding

7. According to Cohen, the major frustration lower-class people experience is with their lack of status, not material success.

True
False

Answer: True; Page Reference: 19; Bloom's Category: Understanding

8. By introducing their concept of differential illegitimate opportunity, Cloward and Ohlin totally reject Merton's version of anomie-strain theory.

True
False

Answer: False; Page Reference: 22; Bloom's Category: Understanding

9. Cloward and Ohlin called members of the retreatist subculture "double failures" because they fail to gain success in other deviant subcultures and the larger society.

True
False

Answer: True; Page Reference: 22; Bloom's Category: Understanding

10. There is no reliable evidence to support anomie-strain theory's claim that people of the lower classes are more likely than those of other classes to engage in deviant behavior.

True
False

Answer: False; Page Reference: 23; Bloom's Category: Understanding

11. Sutherland developed his theory of differential association in order to explain criminality as an individual, but not a group phenomenon.

True
False

Answer: False; Page Reference: 24; Bloom's Category: Understanding

12. One essential part of differential association theory is the assertion that the process of learning to become a criminal is the same as the process of learning to become a normal person.

True
False

Answer: True; Page Reference: 25; Bloom's Category: Understanding

13. Glaser tried to extend Sutherland's theory by arguing that the individual must first identify with criminals before being influenced by them.

True
False

Answer: True; Page Reference: 25; Bloom's Category: Understanding

14. Burgess and Akers argued that differential association can occur without reinforcement or social learning.

True
False

Answer: False; Page Reference: 25–26; Bloom's Category: Understanding

15. One criticism of differential association theory is that it is hard to define precisely what differential association is in real-life situations.

True

False

Answer: True; Page Reference: 26; Bloom's Category: Understanding

16. The concept of differential reinforcement is best at explaining why a person continues to commit a deviant act, not why he or she does so in the first place.

True

False

Answer: True; Page Reference: 26–27; Bloom's Category: Understanding

17. Like Merton and Sutherland, control theorists seek the cause of deviance directly by asking, "What causes deviance?"

True

False

Answer: False; Page Reference: 27; Bloom's Category: Understanding

18. Attachment to conventional people and institutions and commitment to conformity are two ways individuals bond to conventional society.

True

False

Answer: True; Page Reference: 27; Bloom's Category: Understanding

19. According to the deterrence doctrine, certainty and swiftness of punishment are two ways crime can be reduced.

True

False

Answer: True; Page Reference: 29; Bloom's Category: Understanding

20. Reintegrative shaming is another form of negative stigmatizing.

True

False

Answer: False; Page Reference: 29; Bloom's Category: Understanding

21. Research has shown that strong social controls can almost totally prevent deviant behavior from occurring.

True

False

Answer: False; Page Reference: 30; Bloom's Category: Understanding

22. Social control can actually cause deviant behavior as well as prevent it.

True

False

Answer: True; Page Reference: 30; Bloom's Category: Understanding

23. In Merton's view, modern, industrialized U.S. society heavily emphasizes the cultural value of community.

True

False

Answer: False; Page Reference: 19; Bloom's Category: Understanding

24. According to Messner and Rosenfeld, lack of opportunity is the primary and overwhelming factor that contributes to people resorting to illegal means of achieving success.

True

False

Answer: False; Page Reference: 23; Bloom's Category: Understanding

25. Sutherland's Social Learning Theory purports that deviant behavior is learned via cultural values of success.

True

False

Answer: False; Page Reference: 24; Bloom's Category: Understanding

Fill-In Questions

1. If persons lower their aspirations or abandon high success goals but continue to work hard, they are involved in what Merton called _____.

Answer: ritualism; Page Reference: 20; Bloom's Category: Understanding

2. The kind of deviant subculture Ohlin and Cloward studied that provides the best illegitimate opportunity for achieving success goals is the _____ subculture.

Answer: criminal; Page Reference: 21; Bloom's Category: Understanding

3. The theory of _____ association says that if a person associates with criminal patterns more than with anticriminal patterns, that person is likely to become criminal.

Answer: differential; Page Reference: 24; Bloom's Category: Understanding

4. According to control theory, the absence of _____ causes deviance.

Answer: social controls; Page Reference: 27; Bloom's Category: Understanding

5. If a wrongdoer is punished in such a way as to be stigmatized, rejected, or ostracized, the individual experiences _____ shaming.

Answer: disintegrative; Page Reference: 29; Bloom's Category: Understanding

Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast strain and control theories. What does each say about the causes of deviance? Which one seems more sensible?

Page Reference: 18–31; Bloom’s Category: Analysis, Understanding

2. According to Merton, how might an individual deal with the strain created by a failure to achieve the cultural goal of success through legitimate means? What are some ways one can adapt to this strain?

Page Reference: 18–20; Bloom’s Category: Understanding, Application

3. Using Merton’s theory, explain the hippie counter-culture movement of the 1960s.

Page Reference: 19–20; Bloom’s Category: Application, Understanding

4. How does social learning theory explain deviant behavior? What social forces does this theory locate that would pressure someone toward deviance?

Page Reference: 24–27; Bloom’s Category: Understanding, Analysis

5. Discuss the essential premise of control theory that we are all deviant by nature. Do we have animalistic impulses that need control? Why or why not?

Page Reference: 27; Bloom’s Category: Understanding, Application

6. Evaluate the overall contribution of positivist theories of deviance. What ideas seem to make sense? Why?

Page Reference: 18–31; Bloom’s Category: Understanding, Application

7. What are the strengths and weaknesses in the positivist theory in explaining deviance?

Page Reference: 19; Bloom’s Category: Understanding, Application

8. Using Merton’s model, what are the preconditions for rebellion?

Page Reference: 18–20; Bloom’s Category: Understanding, Application

9. Explain Cohen’s five typologies of response to the goal-means gap and illustrate each with an example.

Page Reference: 20; Bloom’s Category: Understanding, Application