

## **SOCIOLOGY I**

**2025: THIRD TERM**

## **SOCIOLOGY OF DEVIANCE**



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## **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to the module on the sociology of deviance. This module follows on from the course in the first term in which we considered the relationship between the individual and society and why people conform to society's dominant values more than other values. It is assumed that students are familiar with the form and with the logic of sociological explanation. You are, therefore, encouraged to make use of the relevant information from the first semester that introduced you to key sociological concepts.

This module offers an introduction to the central themes in the sociology of deviance. One of the goals is to shed light on the processes involved in the social construction of deviance in contemporary society. Deviance is a much broader category than crime. Whilst the latter forms part of the study of deviance, deviance does not necessarily imply or constitute crime. Crime denotes a violation of a society's formally enacted laws.

Like many contested terms, it is fair to conclude that the notion of 'deviant acts' is applied indiscriminately to a whole variety of behaviours, values, beliefs, physical attributes, etc. which meet with general disapproval, anger, ridicule or condemnation for deviating from what is regarded as 'normal' or 'acceptable' behaviour. Implicit here is the notion that the behaviour is disturbing, derogatory, devalued, immoral, dehumanising, inappropriate, threatening, frowned upon, evil, sinful, forbidden, unusual, strange, extraordinary, and unacceptable. Deviants are often described as 'the other', as outcasts, who do not fit in society. These categories imply the use of judgement, labelling, stereotypes, censure, and restrictions. In this way, a distinction is clearly drawn between conformists and non-conformists. Many people fall victim in the process. It is common that the very same deviant acts with negative connotations are praised and condemned by certain groups at various points in time. Again, this highlights a lack of consensus as well as selectivity and fluidity in the definitions of the subject matter.

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

This module requires you to read the prescribed readings. A general learning outcome is to demonstrate that you have read widely, understood, and synthesised the information.

### **At the end of the module, you should:**

- Have a critical understanding of the phenomenon of deviance from a sociological perspective.
- Understand the various attempts to conceptualise, define and theorise deviance.
- Have developed an independent critical capacity to evaluate these different perspectives.
- Appreciate various forms of social control of deviant behaviour.
- Understand the nature and extent of violence, crime, and social control in South Africa.

## MODULE STRUCTURE

### SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF DEVIANCE

What is deviance? Deviance is multi-dimensional and difficult to define. There is no one uniform understanding of what deviance is. Definitions of deviance vary depending on the social, economic, historical, geographical, and political context. Historically, societies have developed rules that regulate the behaviour of their members to ensure conformity with prevailing norms. These norms do not always reflect a consensus in society about acceptable forms of behaviour. A common understanding of deviance is that it is a product of normative expectations. Deviance presupposes 'normal' or 'accepted' behaviour, and the recognition and the sanctioning of conduct that does not conform to this norm. There are at least five definitions of deviance which we will examine: norm violation, reactive construction, violation of rights, the statistical definition, and the absolutist definition. In addition, there are three perspectives of defining deviance, namely, absolutism, social constructionism, and the social-power perspective.

#### Prescribed Readings

- Adler, P. & Adler, P. (2009). *Constructions of deviance: Social power, context and interaction* (sixth edition). Belmont, California: Thomson/Wadsworth. [General Introduction & Part IV]
- Bryant, C.D. (ed). (2001). *Encyclopaedia of criminology and deviant behaviour*. Philadelphia, PA: Brunner-Routledge. [pp. 88-92]
- Clinard, M.B. & Meier, R.F. (2001). *Sociology of deviant behaviour* (eleventh edition). Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt College Publishers. [Chapter 1]
- Franzese, R.J. (2009). *The sociology of deviance: Differences, tradition and stigma*. Springfield, Ill: Charles C. Thomas. [Chapters 1]
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall. [Chapter 1]
- Henry, S. (2009). *Social deviance*. Cambridge: Polity. [Chapter 1]
- Thio, A. (1998). *Deviant behaviour* (fifth edition). New York: Addison Wesley Longman. [Chapter 1]

#### Recommended Readings

- Haralambos, M. & Holborn, M. (2008). *Sociology: Themes and perspectives* (seventh edition). London: HarperCollins. [Chapter 6]
- Thomson, D. (2004). *Crime and deviance*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa. [Chapter 1]

## SECTION TWO: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF DEVIANCE

In this section, we develop an understanding of deviance as a social construct. We will examine the phenomenon of moral panic in the social construction of deviance. Moral panic is referred to as collective behaviour, which involves triggering acute public anxiety through the exaggerated and distorted claims about a particular phenomenon, individual or social group(s) who are socially constructed as ‘folk devils’ (deviants) by powerful social forces, the ‘moral entrepreneurs’ (Cohen, 1972; Victor, 1998; Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994). This involves a process of social typing in which the folk devils are demonised and dehumanised as the other and as threats to the existing social order.

### Prescribed Readings

Adler, P. & Adler, P. (2009). *Constructions of deviance: Social power, context and interaction* (sixth edition). Belmont, Calif.: Thomson/Wadsworth. [General Introduction & Part IV]

Cohen, S. (1972). *Folk devils and moral panics: The creation of the mods and rockers*. London: MacGibbon and Kee.

Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall. [Chapter 1]

Goode, E. & Ben-Yehuda, N. (1994). Moral panics: Culture, politics and social construction. *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 20, pp.149-171. Available: [https://www.jstor.org/stable/2083363?searchText=goode%20ben-yehuda%20moral%20panics&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3Dgoode%2Bben-yehuda%2Bmoral%2Bpanics%26so%3Drel&ab\\_segments=0%2Fbasic\\_search\\_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3Af83045a05f960a200ec7062e539bb489](https://www.jstor.org/stable/2083363?searchText=goode%20ben-yehuda%20moral%20panics&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3Dgoode%2Bben-yehuda%2Bmoral%2Bpanics%26so%3Drel&ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3Af83045a05f960a200ec7062e539bb489)

Victor, J. S. (1998). Moral panics and the social construction of deviant behaviour: A theory and application to the case of ritual child abuse. *Sociological Perspectives*, Vol. 41(3), pp. 541-565.

## SECTION THREE: THEORIES OF DEVIANCE – CLASSICAL AND MODERN

This section will introduce students to various theoretical perspectives that have been developed to describe and analyse deviant behaviour. Each of these theories represents an attempt to explain deviance, its nature, why it occurs and under what circumstances. We will then evaluate the validity of each theoretical perspective and assess whether any one is adequate in explaining deviant behaviour. We will examine social disorganisation theory, feminist criminology, conflict theories of deviance and labelling theory.

### Prescribed Readings

Adler, P. & Adler, P. (2009). *Constructions of deviance: Social power, context and interaction* (sixth edition). Belmont, California: Thomson/Wadsworth. [Chapters 3, 5 & Chapter 15]

- Clinard, M.B. & Meier, R.F. (2001). *Sociology of deviant behaviour* (eleventh edition). Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt College Publishers. [Chapters 5 & 6]
- Cullen, F.T. & Agnew, R. (2011). *Criminological theory: Past to present* (fourth edition). New York: Oxford University Press. [pp. 89-95]
- Franzese, R.J. (2009). *The sociology of deviance: Differences, tradition and stigma*. Springfield, Ill: Charles C. Thomas. [Chapters 7 & 8]
- Haralambos, M. & Holborn, M. (2008). *Sociology: Themes and perspectives* (seventh edition). London: HarperCollins. [Chapter 6]
- Islam, M.J., Banarjee, S. & Khatun, N. (2014). Theories of female criminality: A criminological analysis. *International Journal of Criminology and Sociological Theory*, Vol. 7 (1), pp. 1-8.
- Kubrin, C.E. (2003). New directions in social disorganisation theory. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, Vol. 40 (4), pp. 374-397. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315716987\\_Social\\_Disorganization\\_Theory's\\_Greatest\\_Challenge](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315716987_Social_Disorganization_Theory's_Greatest_Challenge)
- Liska, A.E. (1981). *Perspectives on deviance*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall. [Chapters 5, 7 & 8]
- Thio, A. (1998). *Deviant behaviour* (fifth edition). New York: Addison Wesley Longman. [Chapter 3]

### **Recommended Readings**

- Cote, C. (ed.) (2002). *Criminological theories: Bridging the past to the future*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications. [Chapters 6, 7 & 24]
- Douglas, J.D. & Waksler, F.C. (1982). *The sociology of deviance: An introduction*. Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown and Co. [pp. 18-25]
- Ternell, N. & Meier, R. (2001). *Readings in deviant behaviour: Classic and contemporary*. Fort Worth, Texas: Harcourt College Publishers. [pp. 91-106, 107-118, 141-145, 191-206, 209-220]
- Traub, S.H. & Little, C.B. (eds.) (1980). *Theories of deviance*. Itasca, Ill. F.E. Peacock Publishers. [pp. 41-67, 158-171, 241-253]

<h2><b>SECTION FOUR: VIOLENCE, CRIME AND SOCIAL CONTROL IN SOUTH AFRICA</b></h2>
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Deviance has implications for social control. One of the core objectives of this module is to explore critically the relationship between deviance and social control with specific reference to South Africa. The latter needs to be understood from a broad perspective which includes

both formal and informal means of social control. We will examine contemporary issues facing South Africa: violence and crime, police and policing. These issues are historical and topical. Of concern here is police brutality including but not limited to unwarranted and excessive use of force with disastrous consequences for the general public. We will examine how violence has been conceptualised as a useful starting point.

### **Prescribed Readings**

Bruce, D. & Neild, R. (2005). *The police that we want: A handbook for oversight of police in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Centre for the Study of Violence in South Africa.

Bruce, D. (2020). *How to reduce police brutality in South Africa*. Southern Africa Report No. 40. Johannesburg: Institute for Security Studies. Available at: <https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/sar-40.pdf>

Hamber, B. (1999). Have no doubt it is fear in the land: An exploration of the continuing cycles of violence in South Africa'. *Zeitschrift fur Politische Psychologie*, Vol. 7 (1/2), pp. 113-128. Available at: [10.1080/16826108.2000.9632364](https://doi.org/10.1080/16826108.2000.9632364)

Masuku, T. (2005). *Strengthening democratic policing in South Africa: Enhancing and coordinating the internal and external accountability systems of the South African Police Service*. Johannesburg: Centre for the Study of Violence in South Africa.

### **Recommended Readings**

Martin, J. (2012). Vigilantism and state crime in South Africa. *State Crime Journal*, Vol. 1 (2), pp. 217-234. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41937908>

Minnaar, A. (2001). *The new vigilantism in post-April 1994 South Africa: Crime prevention or an expression of lawlessness*. Johannesburg: Institute for Human Rights and Justice Studies.

Rebello, S., Copelyn, J., Moloto, B. & Makhathini, S. (2021). Disaster-appropriate policing in South Africa: Protests and state violence in the covid-19 era. Johannesburg: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation. Available at: <https://www.csvr.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/COVID-state-of-violence-1.pdf>

Thomas, K. (2012). *The power of naming: 'Senseless violence' and violent law in post-apartheid South Africa*. Cape Town: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation and Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape. Available: [https://www.safterspaces.org.za/uploads/files/k\\_thomas\\_the\\_power\\_of\\_naming\\_senseless\\_violence\\_and\\_violent\\_law\\_in\\_post\\_apartheid\\_sa.pdf](https://www.safterspaces.org.za/uploads/files/k_thomas_the_power_of_naming_senseless_violence_and_violent_law_in_post_apartheid_sa.pdf)

## READINGS AND MODULE REQUIREMENTS

It is important to read the module outline to familiarise yourself with the core themes that will be covered and to understand the general message and direction of this module. You are encouraged to read widely and critically on the subject using the prescribed texts in order to develop an all-important comparative perspective. Throughout the module relevant references will be added to the RUconnected page and you will be directed to relevant readings (including page numbers and chapters) for each of the topics. The prescribed texts are on the *short loan* section of Rhodes Library.

**Videos and documentaries** will be screened on selected topics.

There will be three *tutorials* in this module. You need to read the prescribed readings in advance. Tutorials are *compulsory* and form part of the DP requirements. There are no tutorial written submissions but writing exercises during the tutorial period. The additional formative tasks are merely to assist you with reading for this module.

You are welcome to *consult* me in my office on Tuesdays (14:00-15:30) if you have any questions or want to discuss any aspect of the module. Contact details are on the front cover of this module outline. *I am not available for consultations an hour before lectures*. Special arrangements should be done in advance if you are unable to communicate with me during the consultation times.

As a department, we are committed to reflecting on our teaching practices and module content to strengthen our courses. Towards the end of the term, you will be asked to participate in a module evaluation process. Please take this seriously and evaluate the module honestly and comprehensively. Your input will be highly appreciated and make a real contribution to enhancing teaching and learning in the department.

Please consult the *Sociology Handbook* for an outline of the University's policy on plagiarism, guidelines on the formatting and writing of assignments, the departmental rules regarding citations and referencing, and the criteria for assessing written work. A copy of the Assignment Cover Sheet, which must accompany all assignments submitted to the Department, is also available in the Handbook. Rhodes University's *Common Faculty Policy on Plagiarism* has also been uploaded on this module's page on RUConnected.

## ASSESSMENT

There will be two forms of assessment for this module:

1. In-term assessment: 30%
  - a) Test: 10%  
Date: 24 July, 13:15-14:30.  
Venue: Barratt II
  - b) Test: 90%  
Date: 7 August, 13:15 – 14:30.  
Venue: Barratt II
2. An examination in November: 70%

## TUTORIALS

### TUTORIAL ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF DEVIANCE (10/7-11/7)

What is deviance? What are the various definitions of deviance? Which definition do you support and why?

#### Prescribed Readings

Bryant, C.D. (ed). (2001). *Encyclopedia of criminology and deviant behavior*. Philadelphia, PA: Brunner-Routledge. [ pp. 88-92]

Clinard, M.B. and Meier, R.F. (2001). *Sociology of deviant behavior* (eleventh edition). Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt College Publishers. [Chapter 1]

Franzese, R.J. (2009). *The sociology of deviance: Differences, tradition and stigma*. Springfield, Ill: Charles C. Thomas. [Chapter 1]

Thio, A. (1998). *Deviant behaviour* (fifth edition). New York: Addison Wesley Longman. [Chapter 1]

### TUTORIAL TWO: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF DEVIANCE (17/7-18/7)

Tutorial One is relevant here. You are expected to be familiar with the debates (including key concepts) on the social construction of deviance.

Read the case study by Anderson (2009) *The police and the black male*. Available at: [http://selfteachingresources.pbworks.com/f/The+Police+and+the+Black+Male+\(Anderson\).pdf](http://selfteachingresources.pbworks.com/f/The+Police+and+the+Black+Male+(Anderson).pdf)

#### Prescribed Readings

Adler, P. & Adler, P. (2009). *Constructions of deviance: Social power, context and interaction* (sixth edition). Belmont, California: Thomson/Wadsworth. [General Introduction & Part IV]

Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall. [Chapter 1]

### **TUTORIAL THREE: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF DEVIANCE WITH A FOCUS ON MORAL PANIC (31/7-1/8)**

Nothing is deviant unless it is *defined* as such or nothing in-and-of itself is deviant (Franzese, 2009: 8).

- What does the process of the social construction of deviance entail? Identify and explain the various elements. You are expected to be familiar with the debates (including key concepts) on the social construction of deviance.
- How does the process of the social construction of deviance relate to moral panic?

#### **Prescribed Readings**

Adler, P. & Adler, P. (2009). *Constructions of deviance: Social power, context and interaction* (sixth edition). Belmont, California: Thomson/Wadsworth. [General Introduction; pp. 149-156]

Thio, A. (1998). *Deviant behaviour* (fifth edition). New York: Addison Wesley Longman. [Chapter 1]

### **ADDITIONAL FORMATIVE TASKS – NO WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS**

#### **THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF DEVIANCE: MORAL PANIC**

Nothing is deviant unless it is *defined* as such or nothing in-and-of itself is deviant (Franzese, 2009: 8). Critically discuss this statement with specific reference to Reinerman's (2009) *The social construction of drug scares*. You are expected to be familiar with the debates (including key concepts) on the social construction of deviance and the notion of moral panic.

#### **Prescribed Readings**

Goode, E. & Ben-Yehuda, N. (1994). Moral panics: Culture, politics and social construction. *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 20, pp.149-171.

Reinerman, C. (2009). The social construction of drug scares. In: P. Adler & P. Adler (eds.) *Constructions of deviance: Social power, context and interaction*, pp. 155-165. Belmont, California: Thomson/Wadsworth.

Victor, J. S. (1998). Moral panics and the social construction of deviant behaviour: A theory and application to the case of ritual child abuse. *Sociological Perspectives*, Vol. 41 (3), pp. 541-565.

## SOCIAL DISORGANISATION THEORY

While this table is limited to social disorganisation theory, it is a general guideline for understanding other theories covered in the module. Complete the table.

<b>What is the main argument of SD theory?</b>	
<b>Identify and discuss the supporting themes of the primary thesis</b>	
<b>Historical context</b>	
<b>Original key theorists and their contribution</b>	
<b>What are the key concepts? Define them</b>	
<b>How is SD theory revised? Identify the key theorists and their contribution</b>	
<b>Identify and explain the criticisms that have been levelled against SD Theory</b>	
<b>Is SD theory relevant to South Africa or other countries on the continent? Why? Provide at least three reasons</b>	

## **Prescribed Readings**

Kubrin, C.E. (2003). New directions in social disorganisation theory. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, Vol. 40 (4), pp. 374-397. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/255699203\\_New\\_Directions\\_in\\_Social\\_Disorganization\\_Theory](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/255699203_New_Directions_in_Social_Disorganization_Theory)

Cullen, F.T. & Agnew, R. (2011). *Criminological theory: Past to present* (fourth edition). New York: Oxford University Press. [pp. 89-95].