**SOC 3120 Social Psychology**

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**Overheads Lecture 20:**

**Deviance and the Social Order III: The Causes of Deviance**

\* The S.I. perspective, with its emphasis on social definitions, complicates the problem of the “causes” of deviance

\* While not denying that there are other causes for deviance, S.I. avoids identifying any simple set of these.

\* S.I. emphasizes that the same processes found in everyday conduct are also found in deviant conduct (e.g. defining situation, role taking/making, goal directed behavior, self as process/object).

\* Athens’ study of violent criminals:

- contradicts view of unconscious motivations/ uncontrollable emotion

- offenders commit acts only *after* interpretation, assessment and choice

- violent vs. non-violent self-image impacted degree of violence used

- highlights difficulty grasping the causality of deviance (e.g. as diverse as novel, unexpected, and mistaken definitions of situation).

\* Katz’s work:

- To understand crime, we must learn to see it as offenders do

- emphasizes seductive aspects of crime (e.g. thrill seeking, excitement,

and rewards)

- crimes involve joint actions/ implications for self-image (e.g. personal competence/ meeting challenges)

\* The view that deviance has:

(1) multiple causes, and

(2) may be attractive to some

is at least as plausible as current approaches focusing on structural factors.

\* The social construction of deviance as a category is what accounts for the apparent uniformity of deviance, not its underlying causes

\* Putting people and their acts into categories - and treating them as real -isn’t just a phenomenon related to deviance, but to all human conduct.

\* The categories we use and the assumptions that lie behind them exert a powerful influence on what we see and how we explain it

**Deviance and Identity:**

\* The application of social categories of deviance also affect the lives of people so labeled:

- attribute negative essence to the person

- negatively impact situated, social and personal identities

- become targets for social control

- establishes/potentially controls individuals’ identity

\* “Master Status” (Hughes)

- various roles made in everyday life

- social and personal identities constructed out of situated ones made

- deviant identification cuts across other roles/ restricts role-making

- potentially undermines social/personal identities

\* Deviant identities attached to people by:

- formal agents of social control

- the mass media

- informal labeling in small/informal groups/ networks

\* The discovery of deviance gives a person a new identity in others’ eyes:

- imputation of negative essence vs. being “otherwise normal”

- person’s prior behavior reinterpreted retrospectively

\* Is deviant identity inevitable after labeling? Consider:

- Lemert’s distinction between primary and secondary deviance.

- Primary deviance has multiple causes/ little impact on self

- Secondary deviance involves behavior/roles undertaken as a means of defense, attack or adaptation to negative social reactions to former

- Pressure to identify with others so labeled/exclusion from mainstream

- Labelee pushed out of conventional situations/ associations and

pulled toward deviant ones

- Advantages that others in same boat/can be accepted by them/have a basis to maintain self-esteem/ construct a personal identity

- Pressures to learn to think, feel, and act in fairly standardized ways implied by the label (altercasting)

- Process not inevitable: some people have inner resources, previously established personal and social identities, and support from others

- Ability to engage in successful aligning actions important

- Thus, some able to resist some or all implications of labeling/new identity others attempt to attach

\* Any labeling, however, will raise doubts where none existed before

\* Impact of labeling may depend on person’s position in social structure (Jensen):

- the more integrated, the bigger impact

- the more peripheral, the less effect

\* Self-labeling also important in some situations (e.g. homosexuality)

\* Conclusion:

- Others’ responses may contribute to the elaboration of deviant conduct and thereby become one of its causes

- We should neither over or underestimate this aspect

- Labeling contributes to deviance, but it is not its only cause