**SOC 3290 Deviance**

 **Overheads Lecture 3: An Overview of Social Theory**

 **(1) Components of Social Theory**:

**Explanatory Framework:**

 Identifies mechanisms behind norm violation/ deviance designations

 (a) Differences between sociology/other perspectives:

 -biology/psychology have individual focus/assume objective norms

 -sociology has micro /meso /macro focus/questions designations

(b) Structure vs. process:

 - some theories view structure as determinative

 - others focus on how one becomes deviant/develop deviant

 Identities

* recent trend toward integrated approaches combining both

 (c) Sociological assumptions:

 - human nature (inherently good vs. evil)

 - social order vs. conflict (is order consensual or imposed?)

 - individual & society (passivity & determinism vs. human

 agency)

**Empirical Assessment:**

 -Explanations must be supported by evidence (observable/measurable)

 -Quantitative vs. qualitative data

 -Without evidence, logical explanations = ideology

**Social Policy:**

 -Theories suggest social policies to deal with deviance

 -Approaches vary depending on definition of deviance as norm

 violation vs. social definition (e.g. punishment vs. legislative change)

 - Many impediments stand in way of policy implementation

 **(2) A Critical Approach to Deviance Theory:**

\* Each theoretical perspective on deviance exhibits:

 - Dominant theoretical imagery (“explanation”)

 - Research strategies

 - Suggested control policies

\* Each represents historically specific standpoints related to:

 - Academic disciplines

 - Social Power

 **Disciplinary Images:**

\* Many specialists view deviance differently (e.g. sociologists vs. psychiatrists, biologists)

\* Yet most insights generated in interdisciplinary work

 **Social Power:**

\* Discussion of theory guided by power-reflexive perspective:

 (1) any approach highlights some things/ backgrounds others

 (2) related to theorists’ social positioning in social hierarchy

\* We must question:

 - our own views of socio-political order

 - those of our colleagues/professors

\* We may only partially theorize problems:

 - objectivity (as detachment) is impossible

 - recognize that “objective standards” are historically situated

 - be aware of how our own attachments filter perceptions

 - recognize political nature of investigations unavoidable

 - remain open to revision

  **Substantive and Personal Concerns:**

\* Questions about deviance/social control are difficult:

(A) - multiple views of Causation/appropriate policies (which correct?)

 - how is correctness measured?

 - how related to social-political-economic context?

(B) - re: personal choices, feelings, and political commitments

 - need to delve beneath surface, become critical

 - ask tough questions

 - will this upset us, or awaken understanding/responsibility?

 **Conceiving and Controlling Deviance:**

\* Conceptions/theoretical perspectives determine actions:

 -define what something is (and is not)

 -provide explanations

 - suggest appropriate actions

 -provide sense of control

 -we would be lost without

\* Deviants have been historically subject to many images:

 -explaining deviation

 -suggesting control policies

\* Commonsense vs. formal theoretical perspectives:

 -former: simple/unreflective/vary by situation

 -latter: elaborate/explicit/refined by study across situations

 -interrelated in particular historical contexts

 **Formal Theories of Deviance in the West:**

\*Deviance/social control can be conceptualized in multiple ways

\* We will consider Western society’s most important perspectives

\* Each: - offers a distinct theoretical image of deviance

 - suggests how it may best be studied

 - suggests how it may best be controlled

\* We will deal with these historically and chronologically

\* For each theory, we will:

(1) Describe basic imagery, research strategies, and control policies

 (2) Situate it in its socio-historical framework

 (3) Outline its strengths and weaknesses

\* Ultimately, these are important matters requiring your critical thought

\* In the next class, we will begin with the demonic perspective.