

# Explaining Deviance: Social Interactionism

# Interactionist Perspective

Interaction among individuals influences deviance

Interactionists have proposed three major explanations for deviance

- Control Theory
- Cultural Transmission Theory
- Labeling Theory

# Control Theory

- Control theory explains deviance as a natural occurrence
- Control theorists are interested in why people conform rather than the causes of deviance

# Control Theory

- Social ties among individuals determine conformity
- Individuals who are integrated are likely to conform



# Control Theory

- Those who have weak ties to the community are likely to commit deviant acts



# Control Theory

- Communities in which most members have strong social bonds will have lower rates of deviance because community members are able to exert stronger social control over those who deviate



# Control Theory

People develop bonds to their community in 4 ways – Travis Hirschi

- 1.They form attachments with others who accept the norms of society  
Parents, teachers, friends
- 2.They have a strong belief in society's moral codes
- 3.They show commitment to traditional societal values and goals  
Getting a good education, job
- 4.They are fully involved in nondeviant activities leaving no time for deviant behavior

# Control Theory

- Criminologist Travis Hirschi suggests that conformity is the result of strong self-control.
- Children may develop more self-control if their parents punish them for deviant acts and reward them for conformity





# Cultural Transmission Theory

- Cultural Transmission Theory explains deviance as a behavior learned through interaction with others
- However, in interactions among individuals engaging in deviance, the norms and values being transmitted are deviant behaviors



# Cultural Transmission Theory

- The concept of differential association is essential to cultural transmission theory
- **Differential association** refers to the frequency and closeness of associations a person has with deviant and nondeviant individuals
- If the majority of a person's interactions are with deviant individuals, the person is more likely to be socialized into patterns of deviant behavior
- Learning of deviant behavior occurs in **primary groups**

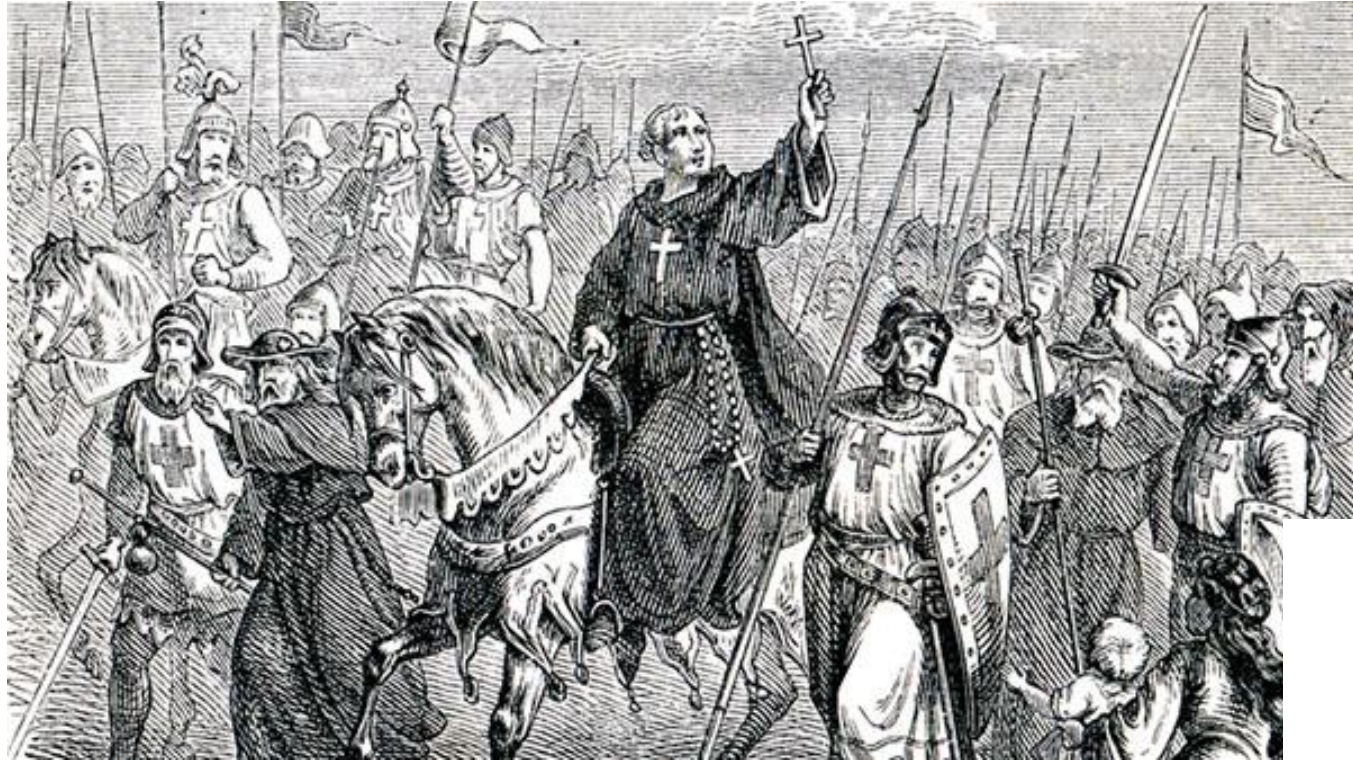
# Cultural Transmission Theory

- Cultural Transmission Theory views all individuals as conformists
  - The deviant individual conforms to norms that are not accepted by the larger community
  - The nondeviant conforms to socially accepted norms.



# Cultural Transmission Theory

- Some people show strong commitment to society's norms yet still engage in deviance
- Through techniques of neutralization, people suspend their moral beliefs
- These techniques are learned through social interaction
  - Denying responsibility, denying injury, denying the victim, condemning the authorities, and appealing to higher loyalties



# Labeling Theory

- Labeling theory focuses on how individuals come to be identified as deviant
- All people commit deviant acts, yet not everyone is labeled as deviant
- Two types of deviance
  - Primary and Secondary Deviance

# Labeling Theory

## Primary Deviance

- The occasional violation of norms
- Individuals who commit acts of deviance do not see themselves as deviant and neither does society



# Labeling Theory

## Secondary Deviance

- Deviance as a lifestyle
- Individual being labeled as deviant and believing in the label themselves





# Labeling Theory

- Once someone is labeled as deviant, people judge their actions based on that label
- The deviant label often restricts an individual's options and forces them into a deviant lifestyle

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H\\_bmFJRcseg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_bmFJRcseg)