

gin, these variables are systematically related to variables such as commitment to school and involvement in delinquent behavior, and therefore, as a group, these structural variables set the stage on which the reciprocal effects develop across the life cycle.

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### Discussion Questions

1. Give three examples of reciprocal causal effects from Thornberry's model.

What does Thornberry mean by an "amplifying causal structure" or a "spiral of increasing delinquency"?

2. Describe how Thornberry's model changes from early to late adolescence (what variables decrease or increase in importance, what new variables enter the model).
3. Why are some adolescents able to desist from delinquency in early adulthood while others continue to engage in crime?
4. Why does Thornberry state that lower class children "have the highest probability of moving forward on a trajectory of increasing delinquency"? \*

Title (2001). Control Balance theory

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Suppose you ask a question in this class and your teacher says, "That is the stupidest question any student has ever asked; how did you get into college anyway?" How do you imagine it would make you feel, and what do you think you would do about it? If you are like most people, you would probably feel humiliated, become conscious of your inability to control what happens, and you would want to show the teacher and the other students that you are not the lowly nincompoop implied by the teacher's remark. But what could you do?

### An Illustrative Overview

There are several things you might do if you were humiliated by a professor. For one thing, you might make up your mind to study really hard, to "ace" the next test, to

succeed in life, and later, after having succeeded, contact that teacher and recall the putdown. Such a response could be called "conformity." However, you might not be able to do those things, and if you did, it would take years; the other students who witnessed the debasement probably would not learn about your triumph; and before too long the pain of the moment would fade, causing you to lose that motivation to succeed in life.

A quicker, more satisfying reaction would be to slug the professor. We'll call this reaction "predation." An assault is not hard to do, and it would overcome your humiliation while giving you a feeling of control. The problem, of course, is that slugging the professor would probably cause you a lot more trouble than it is worth. The teacher may slug you back, the police may arrest you, the university may expel you, and your future plans to go to law school may be jeopardized; in any case you probably wouldn't get credit for the course. So, you probably won't take that kind of drastic action.

You might also start to denigrate the teacher to your friends, give her a poor mark on the student evaluations at the end of the term (even though in other respects this is an excellent teacher), be sullen and uncooperative during the rest of the semester, show contempt when she tries to make a joke in class, or possibly even make loud, disruptive noises. Such actions constitute a form of deviance (usually noncriminal) called "defiance." This, too, is easy to accomplish, and though it will be less gratifying than having slugged the teacher, it will at least help restore your sense of dignity and give you a measure of control over your own destiny. But there is also a potential cost associated with this conduct—you are not likely to do well in the class and the poor grade may affect your future. This cost, however, is much less than that associated with punching the teacher.

Still another possibility is simply to capitulate. In this maneuver, you decide that nothing you can do will help overcome your sense of degradation. You imagine that anything you might do will be met with a response by the teacher that produces even

scale actions with almost no regard for the consequences they have for others is called "plunder."

A final, almost unheard of reaction to your humiliation at the hands of the teacher might be to adopt a completely decadent lifestyle. In doing so, you would ignore all social rules and live a life of complete selfishness that shows utter disregard for the social system that produced your debasement. If you did this, you would lose all sense of direction in your life; you would pursue any and all impulses, including any whimsical pleasures, desires, and cruelties; and your actions would be completely without awareness or concern for others. Of course, you could resort to such decadence only if you were unbelievably wealthy or powerful so that you did not have to worry about sustenance or about what others might think or do about your behavior.

### The Causal Process

Although there are many ways to deal with a teacher's humiliating response to a question, not all of the possibilities are equally likely. What influences what you are actually likely to do? According to control balance theory, the most important thing is the extent to which a possible response promises to overcome your sense of humiliation, weighed against the potential costly consequences of committing that act or acts. The greater the value of the act for extending your sense of control (thereby countering feelings of degradation) relative to the potential consequences of your action (magnitude and potentiality of counter-controlling responses), the greater the chances that you will do it. This balancing of the control you might gain from deviant behavior against the control that will likely be directed back at you is called "control balancing." According to the theory, how the calculation turns out largely determines what you will do when you are provoked.

The control balancing process is similar for all people in all provocative situations, but it does not always unfold in the same way. For one thing, some people start with a

lot more relative control than do other people. Those people with a lot of control can contemplate doing more serious things without worrying so much about what will happen in return. For example, if you are from a wealthy and influential family, your response to the hypothetical insulting teacher is probably going to be different from that of a student from a low-income family. That is because the potential counter controls that a wealthy student's deviant actions might elicit are less potent than those for a student with less initial control. In addition, no matter what a person's chances of stimulating counter control, that person may do no deviance because he is inhibited by moral considerations. Perhaps such a student has been taught from an early age to respect teachers and, as a result, has internalized the belief that it would be wrong to misbehave in a classroom. Conditions, such as morally based respect for teachers, that intervene into the control balancing process, are called "contingencies."

Control balance theory, therefore, postulates that there is a fundamental underlying process that leads to deviant behavior and that people's concerns about control are central to it. The process begins with some situational provocation, usually one that stimulates feelings of humiliation, that calls up an individual's awareness of his or her relative control potentiality. The theory contends that the likely outcome depends on how the provoked individual's ability to exercise control compares to the control that is likely to be exercised back if he or she commits various acts of deviance. However, because this underlying process of balancing is affected by a number of other things, criminal or deviant behavior results when a peculiar set of conditions converge.

### Key Conditions

The most important condition is the person's *control ratio*, or

the extent to which an individual can potentially exercise control over circumstances impinging on him, relative to the potential control that can be exercised

by external entities and conditions against the individual.

Other conditions must also come together for deviance to occur: (1) a predisposition toward being motivated for deviance, (2) situational provocation that reminds a person of a control imbalance, (3) the transposition of predisposition into actual motivation for deviance, (4) opportunity for deviant response, and (5) the absence or relative weakness of constraint, so that the mental process of "control balancing" will result in a perceived gain in control. Altogether, then, there are six important conditions involved in deviant behavior. Each is considered separately, and then we will see how they fit together.

### Control Ratio

Everybody has a global, general control ratio that roughly reflects their typical ability to exercise control relative to being the object of control. This global control ratio reflects all of one's statuses, roles, personal and physical characteristics, organizational contacts, and interpersonal relationships. All people also have numerous *situational control ratios* that represent their ability in specific circumstances to exercise control relative to being controlled.

A person's general control ratio suggests his or her average probability of being able to control rather than being controlled. Situational control ratios, however, focus on concrete contexts, such as at home, in a work situation, on a date, at school, or on the athletic field. An individual's control ratio, then, is not fixed; it varies from place to place, from time to time, and from situation to situation. Yet in general, and in any given context, one's control ratio conceivably can be estimated empirically.

Control ratios depend on individual characteristics as well as social or organizational variables. For example, almost all students exercise less control than that to which they are subject; they have a general control deficit—a ratio less than one. Because most students are relatively young, they have little control over adults, even though adults can exercise much control

over them; because students are subordinates in classes and other university contexts, they have little control over professors and administrators, although professors and administrators have a lot of control over them; because most students do not have occupations or careers, they have relatively few economic resources that might enable them to control commodities and services, even though economic circumstances exercise a great deal of control over them; and in interpersonal relationships, students may or may not have a favorable balance of control, depending on many things.

Despite the fact that most students have general control deficits, some specific students may have control surpluses in their group of residential friends (because of being highly respected), and they might have large surpluses of control in dating relationships (because somebody is in love with them or because they are exceptionally attractive and pleasant). Moreover, students who generally have control deficits may on occasion see those ratios boosted or lowered. Thus, a solitary student confronting a large number of professors may have a large control deficit, but if numerous students confront one professor, because of the shared collective control inherent in large numbers, each student's control ratio may be enhanced. Similarly, although students may generally have control deficits, the magnitude of those deficits may vary from course to course. In one class, a student may impress the professor with her intelligence or diligence, thereby gaining control from the professor's willingness to assume that student has some degree of mastery of the material. In another class, the student may have less control because the professor has low tolerance for any student mistakes.

Deviance grows from a process involving several sequential steps. Control ratios are important for all of those steps. You'll see later why that is true, and I will outline how the control ratio's influence is played out, but for now you should remember five things about control ratios: (1) control ratio is the key concept and variable in control balance theory, (2) some control ratios may

consist of equal parts of control to be exercised and to be suffered; that is, they may be about equal to one, (3) control ratios may be unbalanced, reflecting either a deficit (a ratio less than one) or a surplus (a ratio greater than one), (4) control ratios are not entirely fixed because they may change as individuals change locales and social statuses or assume new roles; nevertheless, they can be characterized as more or less stable, and (5) individuals differ with respect to their control ratios.

### Control Ratios and Predisposition

Desire for autonomy is one thing that affects predisposition for deviant motivation, but predisposition also depends on unbalanced control ratios. The greater the imbalance in the control that one can exercise relative to that to which he is subject, the greater will be the likelihood of that person's predisposition toward becoming motivated for deviance. Because everybody desires autonomy, unbalanced control ratios are latent sore spots that can, under certain conditions, flare into motivation for deviance. This is not to say that those with balanced control ratios are never motivated for deviance. Those with unbalanced control ratios are simply more likely to become motivated, and so their degree of predisposition is greater.

Think back to the student humiliated by the teacher. That student, as all people presumably do, generally desires autonomy. She wants to escape control from others and from environmental constraints; in other words, the student wants to be a master of her own fate. In addition, she probably has a control imbalance—most likely a deficit, although some students, because of family or personal circumstances, may have a surplus. The professor's remarks would not matter to the student if that student did not desire autonomy, and it probably would not matter as much if the professor were dealing with somebody of equal control, say another professor of similar rank and stature. A putdown between equals has less force because it implies almost certain tit for tat, and it does not humiliate like an insult from a person of either lesser or greater control potential.

### Goal Blockage

As noted in the paragraphs above, predisposition to become motivated for deviance depends on a desire for autonomy and on a control imbalance. In addition, predisposi-

### Autonomy Seeking

A necessary element in all deviant behavior, because it fuels the balancing process, is an underlying urge for autonomy. Such a desire is probably instilled in us as infants. It is expressed as an urge to escape control exercised against us and to extend our control over other people and circumstances. Because infants must depend for all their needs on others and on circumstances over which they have no control, they come to resent it. That resentment causes them to want to escape dependency. In addition, because caregivers are the first important people in everybody's lives, infants identify with caregivers; that is, they want to be like them. Because caregivers are controllers, identification with them produces a desire to extend control over others. Hence, everybody has a latent desire to escape the con-

are to steal automobiles, they cannot do it unless there are automobiles to be stolen, and they cannot do it if the automobiles within their purview are impossible to steal. All deviant behavior requires opportunity, and according to control balance theory, when motivation is strong and there is opportunity, some form of deviance is highly likely. When an individual becomes acutely aware of his or her control imbalance, grasps the idea that deviance will help, and in addition is situated so that opportunity to commit one or another of those potentially helpful deviances exists, then we can expect that individual to commit some form of deviance.

### Seriousness and Control Balancing

Because opportunity for a variety of deviant acts is usually omnipresent, motivated people have a high probability of doing some deviance. However, they will not commit just any specific kind of deviance that one might imagine; instead, they will commit one of a set that is reasonable for them, given their control ratio, degree of motivation, and quality of opportunity. If we could measure all, or most, forms of deviance that a motivated person might potentially commit (that is, for which there are opportunities) we would expect them to commit some of those acts but not others (how they choose among the possibilities will be discussed shortly). Even though the specific acts likely to be committed are contingent on several simultaneously operating variables, the theory predicts that some form of deviance will be committed (as opposed to conforming behavior) when a person has become motivated. For any particular specific deviant act, say vandalism, the theory does not predict that a motivated person will commit it, even with good opportunity to do so. The reason has to do with the control balancing process, which hinges on possible countercontrolling responses.

A potential deviant—a person with motivation and opportunity—contemplates committing forms of deviance that hold the promise of producing the greatest effect—that is, those kinds that most quickly and effectively lead to short-term change in con-

the case with our example of the professor denigrating the student's intellect. At other times, however, provocation of some specific individuals stems from ordinary, routine events that ordinarily would not provoke most people or generate emotions of debasement. For instance, students routinely take examinations in college classes. Because it is an expected, everyday occurrence, taking an exam usually does not provoke acute awareness of a control imbalance. Occasionally, however, an individual student, say an older person who has returned to school or a teacher who has decided to obtain an advanced degree, will find examinations humiliating. Such people often think that being tested is beneath their dignity. To them, mere announcement of an exam may activate awareness of a control imbalance and evoke a feeling of debasement.

### Convergence to Generate Motivation

Predisposed people—those for whom a desire for autonomy has converged with a control imbalance and some goal blockage—can sometimes become motivated to commit deviant acts. They do so when situations remind them of a control imbalance in a humiliating way. Motivation can be said to exist when deviant behavior comes to be perceived as a means to alter a control imbalance, thereby permitting the person to overcome debasement or humiliation. Motivation to commit deviance, therefore, is a variable. It may not occur at all, it may develop moderately, or it may be intense.

### Opportunity

Although motivation depends somewhat on predisposition and is an essential element of deviant conduct, motivation does not always lead to deviant behavior; whether it does or not depends on other variables.

One of them is simple opportunity. Opportunity means that circumstances are such that a potential deviant act is possible. No matter how strongly motivated people

tells an individual what to do, especially in a commanding, harsh tone, (2) a person is jilted by a boyfriend or girlfriend, (3) bills arrive on top of other bills that have piled up, (4) an individual's authority is questioned, or some rights a person thought she had are questioned, (5) an individual is stopped while waiting in line, (6) a person is admonished by the police, (7) someone is denied admission to a club, (8) an individual is hungry but is denied food because he has no money, or (9) a student gets a sharp or hostile reaction from a professor (as happened to our hypothetical student at the beginning of this essay).

All such situations, and many more, remind people of what their control imbalances are. For most students, these kinds of events would remind them that they have deficits of control. A few students, however, would be reminded that they have control surpluses; being reminded of a control surplus usually occurs when a person realizes that superior control is not at that moment producing the advantages that the person would normally expect. Situational provocations, then, alert the predisposed person to a control imbalance that otherwise she would have been only vaguely aware of, and situational provocations stimulate the alerted individual to search for some mechanism that might help change the imbalance. When a person wants to try to change a control imbalance quickly, deviant behavior often comes to mind.

### Debasement

Acute awareness of a control imbalance, however, is usually not enough to motivate deviance. There must also be some negative emotion generated by the situation—a feeling of being debased, humiliated, or denigrated that intensifies the thought that deviance is a possible response to the provocations. Negative emotions produced by situational provocations are inside the person, but they grow out of external circumstances. How potential provocations are interpreted depends partly on individual characteristics. Sometimes provocation is unusual and directly humiliating in a way that would debase just about anybody; such

tions are linked to blockages of human goals. If a person were, without restraint or barrier, accomplishing all of his or her goals, including the goal of exercising control, then the issue of deviance would almost never arise. If all of the goals of the student in our example were being accomplished, she would probably not be a classroom student in the first place, would not be asking questions of the professor, and would not be in a position to become humiliated and then contemplate a response.

### Convergence to Produce Predisposition

Thus, the degree of predisposition for deviant motivation depends on how three things come together; the three things consist of a constant and two variables. The constant is the desire for autonomy that everybody has. The variables are (1) the extent to which the person's impulses (or goals) are blocked and (2) an imbalance of control. When these three things converge for an individual, that person is then in a state of readiness to experience motivation for deviant behavior.

### Motivation

#### Provocation

Although many people are predisposed, they only occasionally actually become motivated for deviant behavior. Motivation occurs when a person becomes acutely aware of his control imbalance and realizes that deviant behavior can change that imbalance, either by overcoming a deficit or by extending a surplus. The conditions that transform predisposition into actual motivation exist in situations that a person may encounter. Those conditions consist of provocations and things that cause people who experience them to feel debased or humiliated. Sometimes predisposed people encounter situations that vividly remind them of their control imbalance. Such situational provocations may include, but are not limited to, the following: (1) somebody

trol. However, those deviances with the greatest potential payoff are also the ones that will most likely bring forth counter-controlling responses. The degree to which a given deviant act is likely to provoke counter control reflects the "seriousness" of the act. Any person with an urge to do something about his or her control ratio will, therefore, contemplate the most serious form of deviance for which there is an opportunity. However, because the most serious forms of deviance activate the strongest counter control, resorting to that serious act may not be a realistic means of altering a particular person's control imbalance. In fact, for some people, the potential counter control that would be activated by serious acts of deviance would actually cause them to end up with less relative control than that with which they started.

Because of this, a motivated individual will tend to avoid those acts of deviance that appear too costly, given his or her control ratio (and various risk factors). For example, those with high control surpluses can contemplate, and are likely to commit, serious deviant acts that have great value for extending their control surpluses. But those with high control deficits are likely to avoid serious deviant acts, even though such acts would be especially useful for altering their control ratios. So, although motivated persons will do some kind of deviance, the exact kind they are likely to do depends on the seriousness of the potential acts possible in the specific context as well as on their specific control ratios.

The motivated person with a substantial control deficit will abandon the idea of very serious deviant acts as a way of altering the control imbalance. Instead of a very serious deviant response, such as slugging somebody, the individual with a moderate control deficit will slide down the scale of seriousness in search of a less serious deviant act, such as vandalizing an automobile. By contrast, a person with a large surplus of control can realistically contemplate very serious deviant acts (but of a different order called "autonomous deviance") to extend her control after having become motivated. These more serious acts might include buy-

ing and shutting down the school in our example of the humiliated student. However, a person with a small surplus of control can only contemplate a less serious autonomous act, such as hiring someone to find dirt on the professor.

### Constraint

The control balancing process by which individuals decide what forms of deviance to use in altering a control imbalance involves an additional, very important variable called "constraint." Constraint is present to a greater or lesser extent in situations where deviance might be possible. It refers to the likelihood or perceived likelihood that potential control will actually be exercised. Constraint is made up of three components: (1) the familiar control imbalance, which influences practically all of the variables in the causal process specified by control balance theory; (2) situational risk, or the specific chances of discovery and activation of potential counter-controlling responses (which are affected by things like lighting, presence of observers, physical evidence, and chance); and (3) seriousness, which rests on the emotional feelings of victims and others as well as on the perceived harm implied by particular acts of deviance (remember that seriousness is the amount of potential counter control for a given deviance in a particular situation). Together these variables represent the costs associated with specific acts of deviance; it is those costs that motivated individuals must take into account in seeking a solution to their "control problem."

## Control Balancing

The import of constraint will become clearer if you think about the hypothetical student with whom we began our discussion. That student is predisposed toward deviant motivation by virtue of an unbalanced control ratio, a blockage of her goals (to get the question answered, to make an impression on the professor or other students, or whatever), and her basic desire for autonomy that everybody shares. The stu-

social affiliations with members of the audience that might witness the acts.

In short, the deviance-generating process is complicated and highly conditional—that is, it depends on a number of variables. Those variables are identified in the theory, and how they come into play is spelled out. Therefore, despite the complexity, one can use the theory to explain what occurs and to predict what probably will occur, provided there are good indicators of the relevant variables.

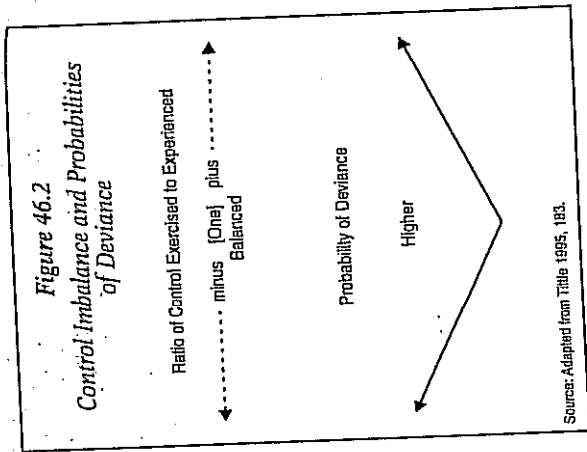
So far you have been told what the main variables in the theory are, but the role of "contingencies" has not yet been explicated. Before considering contingent variables, you need to contemplate a diagram of the causal process. Figure 46.1 uses arrows to illustrate the interconnection of various influences in the unfolding of deviance. To trace the process as it has been described above, start in the upper left-hand corner. Note that the first juncture in the process is indicated by a bracketed 1. That nexus, where a blockage of basic human impulses, a desire for autonomy, and a control imbalance come together is the "predisposition" we discussed before.

In examining the diagram, note that some of the arrows are darker and wider than others; this signifies importance or strength of influence. Consider the first nexus where the arrow for a control imbalance is slightly larger and darker than the other arrows. A control imbalance is highlighted because it is the most important of the three influences on predisposition. Observe also that the diagram includes some dotted arrows. They are used to acknowledge that some connections among the variables are possible, even though they are not specifically accounted for within the explanatory scheme of the theory. For instance, blockage of basic human impulses sometimes leads directly to deviance. This might occur when a very hungry person impulsively steals food—not because of the need to alter a control imbalance but simply to avoid starvation. Similarly, opportunity is sometimes so great that deviance results even in the absence of motivation. Finally, be cognizant of the arrows that go back-

Exactly what she will do depends partly on constraint. The student will want to do serious forms of deviance because serious deviance will most dramatically alter her control imbalance and overcome the denigration. But the more serious the acts, the greater the potential counter control that might be activated; hence, some students can contemplate doing more serious things in response to their humiliation than can other students. In addition, risk factors, which are greater for some students than for others and for some deviant acts than for other deviant acts, have to be taken into account. Therefore, the acts that a given person can realistically contemplate depend on the individual's control ratio, the seriousness of the act, and situational variables like risk (chances of actually being found out). Moreover, the likelihood of a person committing the most serious forms of deviance depends partly on the strength of motivation, which in turn is linked to the nature of the provocation and the degree of debasement experienced by the person. Finally, how a person actually acts—even when motivation is strong, opportunity is present, and constraint is small—is influenced by various contingencies, such as moral feelings, personal self-control, and

control imbalances to generate various probabilities of actual behavior. In the figure, the arrows extending outward from the middle Balanced zone signify continua of increasing control imbalance—a deficit to the left and a surplus to the right. There are also two slanted arrows representing increasing degrees of seriousness, but note that seriousness is not a single continuum from one side of the figure to the other. Instead, there are two different continua, one for seriousness of "repressive" deviance—that associated with control deficits—and another for seriousness of "autonomous" deviance—that associated with control surpluses. The two general categories of deviance, repressive and autonomous, are regarded as qualitatively different (Titte 1997).

Figure 46.3 shows that on the deficit side, the seriousness of likely deviance decreases as the extent of a control deficit increases.

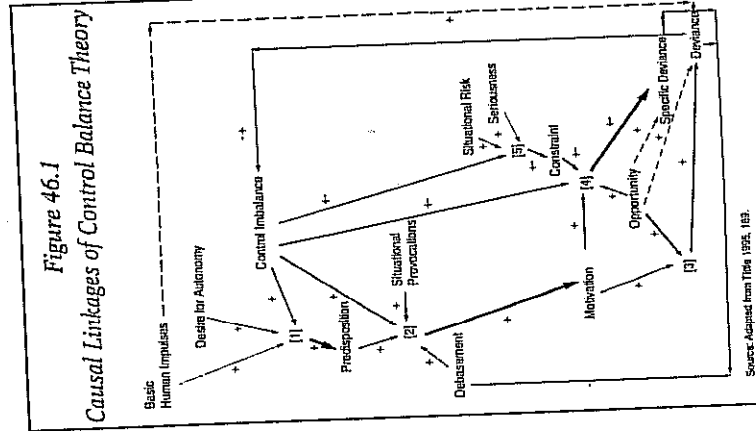


You can grasp the import of the theory more fully by considering Figures 46.2 and 46.3. Figure 46.2 depicts the idea that, taking into account the various causal linkages of the theory, as well as the contingencies that we will discuss later, the average overall probability of some form of deviance depends on the magnitude of a control imbalance, conceived as either a deficit or a surplus. Notice that in the middle of the first row of the figure is the word *Balanced*, while to the left is a *minus* and to the right is a *plus*. Below that is the *Probability of Deviance*. In the middle, where control ratios are more or less balanced (the person exercises as much control as that to which he is subject), we expect low levels of deviance, indicated by the center point of the arrowed V. As a control imbalance increases in the surplus direction (*plus*, indicating more control exercised than is experienced) or in the deficit direction (*minus*, indicating less control exercised than is experienced), the probability of some unspecified kind of deviance increases (note that this probability refers to some among all possible types of deviance, not a given, particular form of deviance).

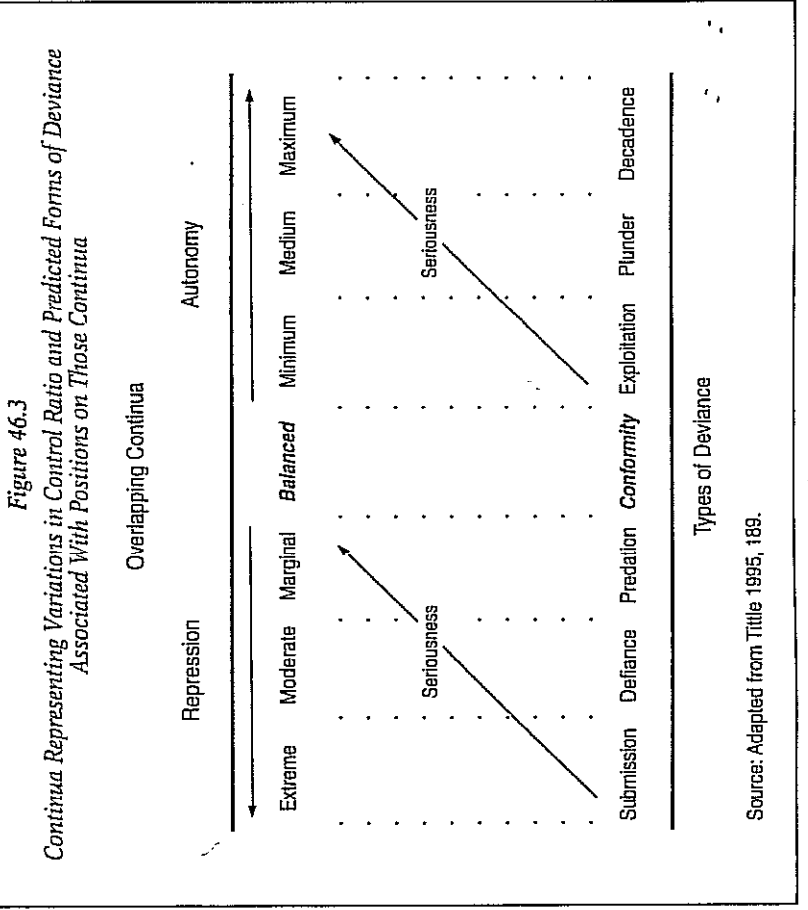
Figure 46.3 shows how the seriousness of essential deviant behaviors interacts with

ward to some of the variables. This signifies that deviance has a reverse effect on some of the variables. According to the theory, deviance reduces the feelings of debasement that gave rise to deviant motivation in the first place, and it may increase or reduce the control imbalance at the heart of the sequence of influences leading to deviant behavior. These effects are shown by the reverse arrows.

While Figure 46.1 depicts the flow of influences ultimately leading to deviant outcomes, it does not convey the cognitive and emotional processes underlying the interconnection of the variables. For instance, the emotional feeling that an individual experiences when he is humiliated or debased must be imagined; it cannot be pictured. Similarly, the underlying control balancing process—weighing gain from deviance against cost from constraint—that goes on in nexus [4] must be understood from the earlier qualitative account because it cannot be diagrammed.



Thus, the most serious forms of repressive deviance are most likely to be committed by those with the smallest control deficits. Those with the greatest deficits are likely to do the least serious deviance because that is the only kind of deviance they can realistically contemplate doing. Individuals with small control deficits, on the other hand, can imagine getting away with more serious deviant acts; they probably will not face overwhelming possibilities of counter control. On the opposite, autonomous side of the diagram, the most serious deviance is likely to be committed by those with the greatest control surplus—again because they can anticipate extending their control with the least chance of counter control. And those with relatively small control surpluses can imagine getting away with only the least serious forms of autonomous deviance.



## Explaining Specific Types of Deviance

The argument that increasingly serious forms of deviance, either of the repressive or the autonomous types, are most likely for those with smaller deficits or larger surpluses of control will be more salient if you imagine that the continua of seriousness are subdivided into categories, each encompassing approximately one-third of each continuum. These subdivided categories can then be identified with types of deviance that are likely to be committed by individuals with the specified degree of control imbalance.

To meaningfully subdivide the continua, however, one must assume that the various kinds of deviance supposedly falling in the zones of the continua are, in fact, characterized by the degrees of seriousness implied by the zone wherein they lie. Presently there are no data concerning the seriousness (as defined in the theory) of all potential acts of deviance relative to each other. Identification of specific types of deviance likely to occur in the various zones of seriousness is, therefore, somewhat problematic. Earlier, when I suggested that students experiencing humiliation at the hand of a teacher might resort to one or another form of deviance, I was speculating that predation is more serious than defiance and that exploitation is less serious than plunder. I really do not know that, so it is actually more accurate to say that those students would most likely resort to the most serious forms of deviance possible, given their control ratios and other conditions. Nevertheless, because it is interesting to speculate, those types of deviance that I assume are most likely to be committed by individuals with the associated control ratios are shown at the bottom of the diagram.

## Things Explained

### Conformity

In the middle of Figure 46.3, corresponding to the balanced zone of control ratios, is

conformity, which in the theory is taken to mean behavior consistent with social norms that is undertaken with full awareness of possible alternative, nonacceptable behavior. When people can exercise about as much control as that to which they are subject (when their control ratios are about one), they are less likely to experience the conditions leading up to deviant motivation, and even when they do become motivated for deviance, they are less likely to do it because of the more or less equal possibility of countercontrolling responses. Counterposed to conformity are the various forms of deviance. They will be described in seesaw fashion, moving out from the center of the diagram from one side to the other.

## The Least Serious Autonomous Deviance

On the surplus side of the balanced zone, in the first third of the autonomous continuum, are assumed to be acts of exploitation in which individuals or groups use third parties as intermediaries or use structural or organizational arrangements to coerce, manipulate, or extract property from individuals or groups to benefit the exploiter without regard for the desires or welfare of the exploited. Exploitation includes activities like corporate price fixing, profiteering from manufacturing processes that endanger workers, influence peddling by political figures, contract killings, employment of religious injunctions to solicit financial contributions for the personal use of evangelists, and, of course, the various exploitative acts committed against the professor by one of our hypothetical insulted students—which, you will recall, includes (1) having a parent threaten to cease donating money to the university unless the professor is fired, and (2) hiring a private detective to gather dirt for revenge.

Though such acts are probably generally regarded as quite serious, they are probably among the least serious forms of autonomous deviance. According to the theory, such acts will be most characteristic of

those with the lowest control surpluses. Remember that those with minimum control surpluses are most liable for these acts because, even though such individuals might desire to do more serious things in order to extend their control when provoked, they must take into account the potential counter control that their actions would stimulate. These exploitative acts, of course, are not generally possible at all for people with control deficits.

## The Most Serious Repressive Deviance

On the opposite side of the balanced zone, in the first third of the repressive continuum out from the center, we are likely to see acts of predation. They involve direct physical violence, manipulation, or property extraction by an individual or group for the benefit of the predator, who acts without regard for the desires or the welfare of the individual or group that is the object of predation. Predation includes theft, rape, homicide, robbery, assault, fraud, price gouging by entrepreneurs, coercive pimping, sexual harassment, and even acts like parental use of guilt to elicit child attention. Recall that in the case of the humiliated student, slugging the professor would qualify as predation. Predatory acts are assumed to be the most serious forms of repressive deviance, and they are most likely to be undertaken by people with relatively small deficits of control—because, given that their control deficits are not great, they can anticipate being able to manage the counter control that is likely to result.

## Moderately Serious Autonomous Deviance

The second approximate third of the autonomous continuum encompasses acts that are assumed to be more serious than exploitation; they are characterized as "plunder." Plunderous behavior is that in which individuals or organizations selfishly pursue their own ends with little awareness or regard for much else, particularly how

their behaviors might affect others. The acts included in this category are things like autocratic behaviors of medieval kings and nobles who destroyed peasant fields while hunting foxes, oppressive taxation of poverty-stricken peoples to provide wealth to corrupt rulers, massive pollution by grant oil companies with accompanying price increases to recover costs of cleanup, attempted genocide directed against racial or ethnic groups by powerful segments of the population, unrealistic taxes or work requirements imposed by occupying armies or slave holders, or the arrogant destruction of forests and animals by early explorers. In the hypothetical case of a provoked student, described at the beginning of this essay, recall that plunder implies things like buying and shutting down the university. Clearly only those with a considerable control surplus can afford to do such things.

## Moderately Serious Repressive Deviance

In contrast, the second third of the repressive continuum is assumed to include acts in which the individual perpetrator expresses contempt for, or hostility toward, a norm, a set of norms, or toward the individual, group, or organization with which that norm is associated. Such acts are called "defiance," and they include youthful violation of curfews, vandalism, mocking denigrations of company officials by striking workers, sullenness by a marital partner, exaggerated obedience by employees, political protests, and in the case of the angered student, denigration of the teacher to other students and being loud and disruptive or sullen in class. Those with substantial, but not overwhelming, control deficits are likely to commit defiance, although they would prefer to do more serious things. The reason they do not actually commit the more serious acts is because they cannot realistically expect to handle the consequences that more serious deviance would imply for them.

## The Most Serious Autonomous Deviance

Extremely serious autonomous deviance, that in the last third of the continuum

out from the middle, is assumed to consist of *random, impulsive acts guided by no consistent or rational life organization, reflecting the perpetrators' momentary whims*. This zone might include excessive or unusual forms of sexual expression, such as group sex with children, cruel debauchery, humiliation of people for entertainment, and nonsensical pleasure-seeking or destruction, as in sadistic torture. Only those with very large control surpluses can be decadent and imagine getting away with it.

### The Least Serious Repressive Deviance

Those with the greatest control deficits are likely to lose all sense of personal autonomy, as well as the ability to visualize alternatives to obedience. Consequently, they basically give up and become submissive. They adopt passive, unthinking, slavish patterns of obedience to the expectations, commands, or anticipated desires of others. Such behaviors might include eating slop on command, helping repress others to please power holders, allowing oneself to be physically abused, humiliated, or sexually degraded, or as in the case of our student exemplar, conforming to routinized patterns of the class without contemplating or questioning whether there is an alternative. Because the surrender of all efforts toward personal autonomy is probably regarded as unacceptable in many modern societies, including the United States, it is a form of deviance within those societies, albeit perhaps the least serious form. Remember, however, that this cannot be known for sure until survey data are collected to ascertain whether, and to what degree, submissive behavior is regarded as unacceptable.

Submission is especially interesting, partly because it has a different rationale than do the other forms of deviance described previously (Braithwaite 1997). In all of the other types of deviance, an individual or a group uses deviance in an active way. In those cases, deviance serves a purpose and, in that sense, can be said to be instrumental or functional. Submission, however, is passive; it represents almost complete capitulation to superior control

control deficit: are not invariably slated for defiance. As you learned earlier, a given person must be provoked and debased, have opportunity for various kinds of defiance, and not face too much constraint, which is at least partly determined by characteristics of the situation. But even then, neither defiance nor any other kind of deviance may occur. That is because a number of other variables impinge on the control balancing process to affect how fully it unfolds.

Conditions that may intervene into the control balancing process are called "contingencies." There are a lot of them, which, for convenience, can be classified as either personal, organizational, or situational in character. Among the personal contingencies are perceptual accuracy, moral feelings, habits, personality, ability to commit the deviance at issue, desire to do things that compete with deviance as alternatives, and previous deviance. Depending on these variables, a particular individual in a given set of circumstances will manage the events, feelings, and thoughts identified in control balance theory somewhat differently. For instance, whether a situation is provocative—that is, whether it brings to mind in an acute way a person's control imbalance—and whether it implies debasement depends partly on perceptual characteristics of the individual. What one person finds routine, such as being asked to wait in a line, another finds provoking. And what some experience as debasing simply rolls off the backs of others. Using our student example, some individuals to whom a professor responds caustically will not take umbrage. They might perceive it as a learning moment, and rather than being demeaned or humiliated, they may perceive that they have done themselves proud by being bold enough to ask a question in the first place. Furthermore, such perceptual differences enter into interpretation of opportunity and assessment of constraint.

In similar ways, the other personal contingencies noted above, such as moral commitments, affect how the control balancing process unfolds and the extent to which it produces the outcomes specified earlier. But there are other contingencies besides

characteristics of individuals. Various kinds of organizational arrangements that exist in specific situations in which deviance might be a possibility, as well as those in which the individual is generally enmeshed, are relevant. Subcultural affiliations represent one of the most important organizational contingencies, at least for young people.

Imagine that the hypothetical student we have been using as an example is well integrated into a student subculture that shares and promotes the idea that respect for students on the campus must be enhanced, and that a number of her subcultural peers are also in the class. Such a person will be more easily provoked and more thoroughly humiliated than someone with a similar control ratio who is not part of such a subculture. Moreover, in contemplating potential counter control that might be stimulated by a deviant act, a subculturally involved student will feel more capable of resisting than would a student with a similar general control ratio who is not enmeshed within a supportive peer network. Finally, the student's response to the professor's putdown may be emboldened by a desire to enhance her stature among the other members of the subculture. In that case, potential counter control from authorities is less relevant than potential control from peers. As result of all of this, the control balancing process will manifest itself somewhat differently, and with less force, for a subcultural participant than for a student who is not in such a subculture.

Finally, there are some situational contingencies that come into play. Although opportunity, risk, and provocation are part of the fundamental control balancing process, they also vary situationally in ways that may affect the "normal" control balancing process. Some opportunities are better than others, the chances of misbehaviors being discovered vary enormously from one context to the other, and the degree of provocation implicit in given situations is not equal. Where opportunity is maximum, risk is highest, and provocation is most intense, the control balancing process will transpire with greatest efficiency. But when either op-



school duties). So, if one looks only at available data about defiance and confines comparisons to those few offenses that have been studied, one is likely to draw erroneous conclusions about the theory (Tittle 1999).

Not only is the compatibility of the theory with known variations in deviance somewhat uncertain, but at this point there are too few direct tests to judge the empirical adequacy of the theory (at this writing only Piquero and Hickman 1999). If one takes account of the various stages in the theoretical process leading to control balancing and ultimately to deviance, and also makes allowance for the various contingencies that may intrude, the theory yields hundreds of hypotheses that can be tested. Some of those hypotheses are especially provocative because they predict outcomes that are not obvious from conventional thinking. For instance, conventional thinking suggests that the most oppressed people will be the ones most likely to turn to acts like theft, assault, and homicide. But control balance theory suggests that predation will be more likely among those with relatively small control deficits than among those with great control deficits. The theory also suggests that the relationship between its causal variables and different outcomes is not linear—a prediction that is unusual in conventional thinking, which assumes linearity in most causal effects.

The most important, and the most general, hypotheses to be derived from the theory are as follows: (1) the greater a control imbalance, in either direction from a central point of balance, the greater the total probability of deviance, and (2) the type of deviance most likely to occur depends on the control ratio of the person and the seriousness of the acts—with control deficits being associated negatively with seriousness of the likely act and control surpluses being associated positively with seriousness of the potential act. Given these rich empirical possibilities, there may soon be a body of direct evidence bearing on the theory. . . .

facts," given that the "facts" themselves are often problematic and the existing data do not correspond with the concepts set forth in the theory. Applying the theory to explain familiar variations in demographic distributions of deviance requires assumptions about the average overall control ratios of those occupying specific single statuses. Because there are currently no data suitably reflecting control ratios among those in single statuses, much less the general control ratios for people who occupy multiple statuses, such assumptions may be inaccurate. In addition, assumptions about control ratios based on single statuses, even if they were correct and were good estimators of general control ratios, ignore the individual distinctions in control ratios that characterize different people with similar demographic statuses. That is why it is a mistake, for example, to use femaleness as a proxy measure of a control deficit (see Jensen 1999; Jensen and Westphal 1998).

Furthermore, the theory's domain is far wider than the range of deviances covered in extant data sources; as a result, focusing only on specific, currently measured offenses is likely to underestimate the theory's power. For example, the theory suggests that, in general, people with modest control deficits are likely to engage in some form of defiance. Because more females than males are probably a little more likely to have modest control deficits (this is an assumption, since actual measures of control ratios by sex have not been undertaken), one would expect them to engage a bit more frequently in defiance. To check this out, one would need to have measures of most forms of defiance that females and males respectively might have an opportunity to commit—in order to see if, overall, females commit more kinds of defiance more frequently than males. But current measures of defiance are extremely limited. They most often concern things like vandalism, drug use, and mental illness, and they rarely include those kinds of defiance that are most likely available to females (such as sullessness, crying, withholding sexual favors, or refusal to perform certain household or

process (in this instance, control balancing) into which various inputs (largely incorporated in other theories already in the arena) can flow; and (3) articulate how various components of the theory interlink in causal sequences to produce specific outcomes. In addition, the particular mode of theoretical integration that led to control balance implies that a theory must contain statements about how contingencies that are not part of the theory itself affect the operation of the causal processes in the theory.

## Hypotheses and Evidence

As you have seen, control balance attempts to do all of the things that a theory should ideally do. Its internal structure, therefore, appears to be an advancement, yet theories must do more than exhibit good technical structure. Above all, they must explain the phenomena within their domains, which in the case of control balance mainly includes behaviors that the majority of a given group regards as unacceptable or that typically evokes a collective response of a negative type (called deviance). "Explaining" means that a theory must answer questions of "why" and "how" for a critical audience of scientists. Scientists insist that theories produce intellectual satisfaction—satisfy their curiosities about why and how—and they want them to be consistent with empirical reality. Finding out if a theory works empirically involves two things: (1) logically assessing the adequacy with which the theory handles known facts, and (2) ascertaining how well it holds up in empirical tests of specific hypotheses derived from the theory.

This theory seems to account for variations between sexes, ages, races, places of residence, those more or less bonded socially, and socioeconomic categories in certain criminal, delinquent, and deviant activities that have been measured (see Tittle 1995, chapter 9). Space limitations preclude a discussion here showing how that is so, but it is important to note the difficulty of assessing whether the theory "fits the

portunity or risk or provocation is less than maximum, one can expect outcomes to be affected. How they are affected can be spelled out, and from such theorizing, one can derive more precise hypotheses than would be possible by focusing exclusively on the central causal process of the theory.

One strength of control balance theory is its explicit recognition of contingencies of various kinds. The theory attempts to specify the direction and, in some cases, the likely magnitude of their effects on the causal processes at work (see Tittle 1995, chapter 8). The theory, then, provides explanation and prediction of deviance and of submission, even when submission is not deviant, by reference to a central causal process. In that balancing process, individuals weigh the possible gain in control that would be obtained from deviant behavior against potential counter control that the deviance is likely to stimulate. Control balancing is embedded within networks of converging conditions, and the fullness with which the theoretical process unfolds is affected by particular specified contingencies that may influence any or all of the variables and conditions in the theoretical chain of causes.

## Background of the Theory

Control balance is a relatively new theory (Tittle 1995). It was developed as an exemplar to illustrate a particular method of theory building—called "theoretical integration"—involving the merging of parts of preexisting theories. It grew out of a conviction that all extant theories are in one way or another too narrow, too exclusively focused on one or another causal element, too imprecise, or that they lack the ability to spell out a full causal process. The method that led to its development specifies that theories should do the following: (1) focus on abstract rather than concrete commonalities of different behaviors (in this case, seeing disparate acts as having an underlying purpose of advancing one's relative control); (2) be focused around a central causal

## Conclusion

Control balance theory portrays deviant behavior as emerging from situations where an individual becomes aware of, and is made to feel humiliated by, a control imbalance. To overcome the imbalance and the feelings it generates, the individual resorts to deviant behavior. However, the type of deviance that results represents a compromise between the potential gain in control implied by the deviant behavior and the potential counter-controlling consequences of the contemplated act. Exactly how this process plays out is influenced by numerous contingencies.

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## Discussion Questions

1. What is a person's "control ratio"? Describe someone with a large control deficit and someone with a large control surplus.
2. What is the control balancing process?

3. Title states that the outcome of the control balancing process is affected by several things. In particular, he states that several conditions must converge if deviance or crime is to result. What are these conditions? Why is the person's "control ratio" the most important of these conditions?
4. List and give examples of the major types of deviance described by Tittle. What determines the type of deviance individuals engage in?
5. Tittle's integrated theory draws on several individual theories discussed in this text, including strain, control, learning, and deterrence/rational choice theories. Discuss how these theories are represented in Tittle's theory.
6. Certain types of deviance, especially defiance and predation, are especially high among young people. How would Tittle's theory explain this?
7. Drawing on Tittle's theory, what policies would you recommend for the control of deviance (see Tittle, 2001: 331-333)? ♦

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# Social Support and Crime

Francis T. Cullen

This selection by Cullen illustrates a rather different approach to theoretical integration. Unlike Elliott et al. and Thornberry, Cullen does not select concepts from different theories and then describe the relationships between them. Rather, he points to a common theme that is implicitly or explicitly treated in several theories, ranging from the early theories of the Chicago school (see Part II) to the recent theoretical work of feminist and peacemaking criminologists. The theme is that social support is implicated in crime. Cullen draws on these different theories in an effort to elaborate on that theme. In doing so, he presents 13 propositions regarding social support. Among other things, he argues that social support has a direct effect on crime; that it influences other variables which affect crime, like the level of social control; that it conditions the impact of certain variables on crime (e.g., strain is more likely to lead to crime when social support is low); and that it plays a critical role in the prevention of crime and the rehabilitation of offenders. Cullen applies the concept of social support to both micro-level and macro-level questions (e.g., why the United States has such a high crime rate), and also uses it to shed light on developmental issues (e.g., the distance from crime in early adulthood).

The concept of social support represents an important addition to criminology. Even though numerous theories make implicit or explicit reference to social support, Cullen is the first to draw explicit attention to the central role this concept may play in crime. In doing so, he introduces a new variable into mainstream criminology. Summary is related

to, but distinct from, concepts such as social control and social disorganization. Second, the concept of social support moves us toward a rather different approach to reducing crime. Current policies focus largely on the control of crime, often through very punitive policies. Cullen's theory of social support, however, suggests a more humanitarian approach (Cullen et al., 1999).

Cullen's theory is compatible with much data on crime (as described in his article; see also Cullen and Wright, 1997). Preliminary empirical tests also provide some evidence in favor of the theory. In one study based on a sample of 1,775 adolescents and their parents interviewed for the National Survey of Families and Households, Wright (1995) found that structural factors, such as poverty and broken homes, increase delinquency mainly by diminishing the amount of support that parents are able to supply their children. In another study based on the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, Wright and Cullen (2001) reported that social support reduces delinquent involvement both directly and in combination with parental control (that is, when parents both support and control their children).

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