**Brief Summary**

**Explanations of Criminal Deviance**

Deviance is defined as any departure from behaviors that are typical, acceptable, or expected as identified by norms and laws. Generally, only the deviance most unacceptable to society is prohibited by the criminal law and acted upon by criminal justice agencies. Policies created to prevent and reduce deviance are closely based on what a society believes causes deviance.

**Explanations of Criminal Deviance**

Criminology is the scientific study of crime trends, the nature of crime, and explanations for why persons commit crimes. Explanations of the cause of crime is often related to the cultural beliefs of the time. Historical trends that focused on to demons, skull traits, atavism, and body types have given way to more scientific approaches.  Explanations grounded in biological perspectives and rational choice remain compelling as ways of explaining why persons might commit crime. As society changes, so do our explanations, but we are far from a universal conclusion about what leads individuals to deviance or crime.

**Psychological Theories on Crime and Criminality**

Psychological theories focus on explanations for deviant behavior at the individual level, such as internal thought processes or personality traits. While early theorists like Freud focused on the subconscious, later theorists proposed that we may learn deviance from the actions of others. Personality theories and loss of contact with reality (psychosis) are also offered as explanations of criminal behavior. Psychological explanations of deviance often call for policies of individual treatment and rehabilitation rather than larger societal changes.

**Socio-Cultural Theories of Crime and Criminality**

Socio-cultural theories attempt to more fully understand how external societal influences may contribute to deviance. The Chicago School studied how environments and the organization of cities can influence criminal development. Strain and subculture theorists concentrate on the acceptance and achievement of goals in society. Social control theory analyzes our bonds to society that may allow or prevent deviant behavior. Labeling theory tests whether people labeled as deviant will then act deviant. Conflict criminologists hold that crime is a result of oppression along lines of power, gender, and equality. Each of these theories may provide us with a foundation that aids in the development of crime prevention and crime control policies.

**The Study of Criminology in Criminal Justice.**

The causes of crime are closely linked to what we do about it as a society. If we can figure out why criminal deviance occurs, then perhaps we can stop it. While no one theory can explain all crime, new integrated theories have emerged to offer a more comprehensive explanation of criminally deviant behavior. As we have learned, with new theories, new policies will inevitably follow.