Positivist Theories of Deviance: Adult Baby and Furries

Most people in the world tend to live a life that is viewed as acceptable by society. However, there are some who live their lives deviantly for whatever reason it may be. After watching the two videos, we meet two very different type of people who live their lives much differently than following the status quo. In the first video clip, "Taboo: Adult Baby" we meet a man named Stanley Thorton who spends more than half of his life pretending to be a baby. In the second clip "Furries" we meet individuals who truly believe they are "part human, part animal" (Furries). Their behavior can be explained by using the Anomie-strain theory, including Merton: goal- means theory, and the learning theory.

Taking a deeper look into Stanley's life, we learn that he experienced an abusive childhood resulting in being diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder. For Stanley, he feels as if he completely missed out on his entire childhood and seems to not have memory of his younger past. The anomie-strain theory states that society pressures "people to be ambitious but failing to provide them with legitimate opportunities to succeed" (Thio, 17). The failed opportunity in this case is the absence of a loving and nurturing childhood for Stanley. this absence causes a strain on the individual which causes deviant acts to be committed.

In regards to the goal-means gap Merton believes that society actually "encourages an individual to engage in deviant acts" (Thio,17). Since Stanely missed out on experiencing a healthy childhood, he is seen as deviant now since he is an adult fulfilling his childhood needs by roleplaying all things on how an infant would behave. This includes being fed, playing with legos, and even wearing diapers, and sleeping in his crib. Stanley uses this lifestyle as a form of therapy away from the emotional damage he endured as a child.

Stanley expresses the learning theory by participating in deviant behavior with others. He has a woman who plays a mother like figure to Stanley who reads to him, prepares and feeds him his meals, and overall treats him as a baby. Stanley being associated with others who seek this type of lifestyle can apply to Glaser's theory on differential identification. This theory provides a "Mechanistic image of an individual being mechanically pushed into deviant involvement by an association with deviants" (Thio,24). In other words, Stanley's behavior involves others who help contribute to his roleplaying- fantasy world. This type of deviance is considered to be "informal" meaning that his behavior is harmless and legal, however it is considered deviant with societies view on how adults are supposed to act.