Three Lenses, One Choice

Use sociological theories to examine a rule-breaking decision.

S.10.3 "Explore explanations of deviance such as the Strain Theory, the Differential Association Theory, and the Control Theory."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB In Mara's story, underline one different case detail that could support each theory. Label the details S for strain, D for differential association, and C for control.

The Changed Volunteer Log

1. At Eastview High, students can apply for a paid summer museum internship. Applicants must document thirty hours of volunteer work. Mara wants the job because it would help her save for college. She works after school to help her family, and the museum's weekend volunteer shifts filled before she could sign up. Two days before the deadline, Mara changes her online volunteer log from twelve hours to thirty. Her application passes the first review. When staff check the sign-in sheets, they find the change. Recording hours never worked breaks the internship rules, even if an applicant has reasons for wanting the job.

2. During lunch, a classmate named Eli tells Mara that several students have padded their logs without being caught. Eli shows her where to edit the hours and says the staff rarely compare logs with sign-in sheets. Mara had not known that the log could be changed. In sociology, strain theory examines pressure created when people seek a valued goal but face barriers to reaching it through approved means. Differential association theory examines how interaction with others can teach attitudes and methods that favor rule breaking. Neither theory says that every person facing a barrier or hearing a suggestion will break a rule.

3. Mara used to meet weekly with her museum adviser, Ms. Chen, who asked about her progress and reminded her that honest records mattered. Ms. Chen went on leave a month before applications were due, and no one took over their meetings. Mara still cared about school, but she worried that admitting fewer hours would ruin her chances. Control theory focuses on how strong social bonds, commitments, and supervision can discourage rule breaking. A weaker connection may remove one reason to follow a rule, but it does not force anyone to break it. These theories offer different lenses on the same choice.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could strain theory explain Mara's decision? Identify her goal and one barrier to reaching it by following the rules.

2. How could differential association theory explain Mara's decision? Use two details from her talk with Eli.

3. Which change in Mara's situation could control theory focus on, and why?

4. How do strain theory and differential association theory focus on different parts of Mara's decision? Give one case detail for each.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a new situation in which someone breaks a rule. In 4 to 6 sentences, explain how strain, differential association, and control theory could each shed light on the decision, using a different detail for each theory.

Three Lenses, One Choice

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

In Mara's story, underline one different case detail that could support each theory. Label the details S for strain, D for differential association, and C for control. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could strain theory explain Mara's decision? Identify her goal and one barrier to reaching it by following the rules.	**Mara wants the paid internship, but her after-school job and the lack of available weekend shifts make it difficult to earn the required volunteer hours.**
2	How could differential association theory explain Mara's decision? Use two details from her talk with Eli.	**Eli says other students have padded their logs without being caught and shows Mara how to edit hers. His words and demonstration could teach her both an attitude and a method that favor breaking the rule.**
3	Which change in Mara's situation could control theory focus on, and why?	**Ms. Chen goes on leave, ending the weekly meetings where she discussed Mara's progress and honest records. Losing that regular connection and supervision could weaken a reason to follow the rule.**
4	How do strain theory and differential association theory focus on different parts of Mara's decision? Give one case detail for each.	**Strain theory focuses on Mara's difficulty getting enough volunteer hours for an internship she wants. Differential association theory focuses on Eli telling her others changed their logs and showing her how to do it.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Jonah enters a community gym after closing, even though the rules forbid it. Strain theory could focus on his goal of practicing for a team tryout and the fact that he cannot afford another place to train. Differential association theory could focus on a teammate who showed him an unlocked side door and said that entering late was harmless. Control theory could focus on the recent departure of a coach who often talked with Jonah about respecting the gym's rules. Each theory highlights a different part of his decision.

Accept other relevant case details when students connect them accurately to a theory. Explanations should treat the theories as possible explanations, not claims that a circumstance forced Mara to change the log.