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The Handbook of Deviance

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Introduction

Erich Goode

Sociologists have not achieved widespread consensus about what they mean by "deviance," and to my mind this is a good thing. The diversity of sociological conceptions of deviance reflects real-world diversity; it would be misleading to proclaim consensus in the field's subject matter where social tumult prevails. But, the naïve critic objects, don't atomic physicists largely agree on their subject matter? The fact is that deviance is substantially different from atomic physics. It seems almost redundant to point out that some sociologists have carved out particular slices of social reality and designated *those* slices *as* deviance, and so we investigate their whys, wherefores, and whatsits – as if all of this constituted an essentialistic reality with a clear-cut, pregiven lineaments. Not all sociologists even agree on what the slices are, let alone what they are made up of. What we call "deviance" supposedly delineates how certain behaviors, beliefs, and conditions are judged or regarded by the populace at large and by agents of social control; hence, disagreement must inevitably be the coin of the realm since the public, and even rule enforcers, formal and informal, disagree about what wrongdoing is. The processes that bring this socially constructed phenomenon – *deviance* – into existence are themselves worth investigating, and many sociologists have undertaken this mission, as I spell out in Chapter 1. Researchers of deviance regard the very process of "carving" deviance out of the cosmos as consistutive of what sociologists do; how do sociologists come to carve it one way and not another? Is there any method to their madness? Crimes are socially and legally constructed, this is true, but certain kinds of characteristics *do* correlate with engaging in crime, however socially and legally constructed – especially certain *kinds* of crime. There is in other words, a "common core" to crime, at least what criminologists call "index crimes" and what many others call "street crime."

But is this also true of deviance? Almost certainly not. True, all societies set rules or norms disallowing certain behaviors, and attempt to control acts deemed in violation of those norms; all societies, that is, exercise social control (Mathieu Deflem, Chapter 2: Deviance and Social Control). All societies harbor some members, "moral entrepreneurs" (Becker, 1963 , pp. 147–163), who attempt to control, ban, or reduce the occurrence of said wrongful behavior, including what many of us consider "nasty habits" or *vices* – smoking, prostitution, pornography, gambling, and the like. How and with what success? In Chapter 3, "Regulating Vice," Jim Leitzel explains. The sociology of deviance is a field of study that is fragmented into not only a diversity of phenomena, but a diversity of perspectives, whose practitioners and theorists disagree about the *deviance* of practically everything. Everywhere and throughout history, wrongdoing is socially constructed. Likewise, everywhere, laypeople construct theories explaining *why* some of us stray from the norms and laws. Everywhere, youths go astray – according to the lights of the dominant social norms – but only in some places, at certain times, has youth crime been conceptualized out of the universe of wrongdoing and designated as a particular *type* of offense: juvenile delinquency (Timothy Brezina and Robert Agnew, Chapter 18: Juvenile Delinquency: Its Nature, Causes, and Control). Everywhere some members of society commit offenses against the religious establishment, but only at certain times and places have these offenses been regarded as serious by the majority and by the authorities. Everywhere, some members of society commit offenses against sexual rules, but what *specific* acts generate what *sorts* of punishment varies from one society to another (Martin Weinberg and Colin Williams, Chapter 21: Sociology and Sexual Deviance). What *is* widely regarded as a sexual offense – and when and where? Murder is condemned and punished at all times in all places, but the taking of human life is tolerated and even encouraged at certain times and places, and murder, while universally condemned, is *by definition* a deviant, criminal killing. The neutral term "killing" is not intrinsically deviant, and during wartime, against the enemy military, combatants are commanded to do it. Perhaps only treason stands as a universal taboo, and the reason should be obvious: no society can be expected to forge a suicide pact with its constituent members as well as any stranger who happens along. Everything may be socially constructed, but not everything is "up for grabs." Some rules are a lot likelier than others to be enforced. And the violation of some rules is considered wrong in one collectivity but not another. Indeed, the violation of a rule may be wrong in one social social circle and praiseworthy in another. And almost everything changes. Even entire phenomena enter and leave the universe of meaningful categories, not to mention the universe of deviance – and when they leave, cease to be studied by sociologists as a form of deviance.

Half a century ago, sociologist J.L. Simmons (1965) asked a sample of respondents the question "What is deviant?" The most common response he received at that time was "homosexuals." More contemporaneously, Henry Minton (2002) argued that homosexuality is "departing from deviance." Even more recently still, in Chapter 10 in this volume, Jeffery Dennis (What is Homosexuality Doing in Deviance?) argues that homosexuality is not deviant at all and should be excised from the field, except as a historical relic. In 1977, the Gallup organization asked a sample of Americans, "Do you think homosexual relations should or should not be legal?" Four in ten respondents (43%) answered that they should be legal. In 2013, two-thirds of the respondents (66%) said that homosexual relations should be legal. What message should we take away from such findings? Over time, we see a huge leap up the ladder of respectability and conventionality for homosexual relations – that much is true. But still, today, a third of the respondents *don't* believe sex between same-sex partners should be legal. So there is both a positive and a negative message in the polls. Still, perhaps the most astounding change in attitudes toward homosexuality has been the acceptance of gay marriage – from 27% to 55%, again according to Gallup polls. *More than half the American public believes that gays should have full legal rights when it comes to marriage*. And at the time of writing, 19 states of the US have legalized gay marriage, eight by court decision, eight by state legislation, and three by popular vote. Yes, times change, norms change – but at the same time, matters are not *entirely* different from one era to another. As Joseph Schneider says in this volume (Chapter 8: The Medicalization of Deviance: From Badness to Sickness), while the earlier psychiatric research claimed that homosexuals are sick or pathological, even today, stigma and discrimination against them has not disappeared; in other words, homosexuality has not entirely shed its deviant status. The other side of the coin is that the remaining 31 states legally *ban* same-sex marriage, though some of these permit civil unions. And consider the fact that while, as Jeffery Dennis says in this volume, numerous jurisdictions have decriminalized homosexual relations and legalized gay marriage, according to the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), homosexuality is still illegal in over 80 countries around the world. Hence, asking whether homosexuality is deviant or not is a bit of a trick question since the answer depends on what we *mean* by "deviant." It is in some societies, locales, communities, and jurisdictions, and among some social circles and collectivities, but not in others. And in mainstream America, homosexuality is no longer deviant in the classical sense. Here's my speculation on the matter: The Supreme Court will eventually overturn legal bans on gay marriage, and it will be legal in all states of the US; here, homosexual relations will be considered socially wrongful or deviant among a shrinking, marginal, politically powerless, and religiously reactionary minority. Currently in American society the status of homosexuality is in a *transitional* phase – still deviant in very conservative, traditional, reactionary, strongly heteronormative circles, though less so over time, and normatively more or less conventional, an alternate form of sexual expression, in most others.

In any case, Jeffery Dennis' question "What Is Homosexuality Doing in Deviance?" is not that difficult to answer: The status of homosexuality is instructive to the student and researcher of deviance in numerous ways. As David Greenberg, author of *The Social Construction of Homosexuality* (1988), widely considered something of a classic, said to me (private communication):

> I think homosexuality is a good topic for inclusion in a deviance course to provide a focal point for a critical issue in the sociology of deviance, namely temporal change in definitions of deviance, and cross-cultural differences in definitions of deviance. (Tobacco, alcohol, and other recreational drug use, masturbation, premarital and extra-marital sex, abortion and religious heresy make additional good examples.) It is an appropriate topic for deviance. It is an appropriate focus for a discussion of social movements formed by members of stigmatized groups. What explains why some groups are able to mobilize on their own behalf and not others, and at some times and not others? What determines the strategies such groups choose? Where subjected to punitive and preventive measures, or to stigma, what forms of social organization do those who wish to participate in homosexual activity create?

As Martin Weinberg and Colin Williams say in Chapter 10, the heteronormative paradigm that has prevailed in the US since its inception is undergoing a radical transformation, and one of the ways it is changing is the virtual collapse of homosexuality as a form of deviance. In the past men were arrested, imprisoned, and even executed, for "sodomy," a code word for homosexual behavior; today, in the Western world, it is neither a crime nor the aberrant or wrongful act it once was. And yet – and this is a big "yet" – examining homosexuality *as* deviance is instructive in that it may be paradigmatic as regards how and why an activity or status *loses* its deviant status. In contrast, why have some behaviors (adultery, pederasty) remained deviant? Why have certain conventional behaviors (smoking, drunk driving) become more *unacceptable* and *non-normative, even sanctionable*? And why is homosexuality not entirely free of stigma *everywhere*, among *all* social collectivities? Fundamentalist and evangelical Christians still condemn it.

Conservatives complain that the “deviants” of the past are being “repackaged” as the “victims” of the present day (Hendershott, 2002 , p. 97). The religious right excoriates the excesses of flamboyant and militant gays and claims to welcome moderate and mainstream homosexuals into their ranks – but is this exercise simply a way of denouncing homosexuality *per se* rather than singling out those who are more extreme?

Moreover, not only is deviance a continuum – from “high consensus” deviance (rape, murder, robbery) to “low consensus” deviance (stealing a newspaper, smoking marijuana, getting drunk at a party) – and not only does censure vary from one social circle to another, but *homosexuality itself* is a continuum with respect to degrees of deviance. In the past generation, the abbreviation LGBT (sometimes rendered LGBTQ) has come into being; it gained acceptance so quickly that, in many circles, hardly anyone has to explain what it means. It refers to the variant sexuality or homosexuality cluster: **L**esbian, **G**ay, **B**isexual, **T**ranssexual (plus “**Q**ueer,” though the “Q” sometimes means “**Q**uestioning”). The term refers to persons who are non-heteronormative or “non-cisgendered” (disagreement between one’s biology and genetics and one’s sex role), and reflects humanity’s capacity for gender and sexual diversity. Political activists frequently use LGBT to rally all these factions in the fight for political equality. But not all gays conceptualize intersex persons as belonging to the homosexual continuum, and some lesbian separatists do not want to be lumped in the same category as men. In any case, *with respect to their deviant status*, not all homosexuals are treated equally. Each category of the sexual diversity spectrum is reacted to differently by sexually conventional audiences, and *within each category,* degree of conventionality varies in individual cases. Nonetheless, to the extent that lesbians and gay men depart from the stereotypical sexual role of femininity and masculinity, she or he will tend to attract negative reactions from *some* heteronormatively conventional audiences. Hence it is misleading to refer to homosexuality as completely non-deviant.

At the end of the day, what remains? What should be included within the macrocosm of our subject of study? Deviance is behavior, beliefs, or characteristics that are disvalued by relevant social collectivities. As a result, persons who engage in, believe, or possess them often develop their own norms, values, subcultures, and lifestyles, in part as a result of reactions to that disvaluation. In Chapter 4, Craig Forsyth (Deviant Subcultures and Lifestyles) describes and analyzes subcultures and lifestyles of four deviant collectivities – cockfighting enterprises, two forms of sex work (female prostitution and stripping), and homosexuality; Forsyth agrees with Minton that, of the four, homosexuality is exiting most from deviance, while for the other three, far less so.

Sociologists of deviance disagree as to whether and to what extent *positive deviance* exists (Ben-Yehuda, 1990 ; Goode, 1991 ; Heckert, 1989 ; Sagarin, 1985). In Chapter 5, "Positive Deviance," Druann Maria Heckert and Daniel Alex Heckert build a case for its existence and conceptual viability and vitability. Yes, there is such a phenomenon as being "too good" to be regarded as *truly* good, according to those persons who don't quite measure up. Are Albert Schweitzer, Martin Luther King, Jr., Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Jesus, George Washington, and Mohandas Gandhi deviants? Well, they are *positive* deviants. Overconformity. Making the mid-level achievers look bad. The straight-A student. The worker who shows up at the office every day, every day, exactly on time. The worker who does his or her job just a bit too well to make merely competent workers feel they have to step up their game. Of course, that's a form of deviance. But is it *positive* deviance? The Heckerts argue that it is. Yes, unconventional innovations that catch on and are later recognized as useful and come to represent the norm are deviant at one time and normative later on. A case of positive deviance? Behavior that violates norms in one locale or social circle may be accepted elsewhere – again, is it positive deviance? Parties and persons that are "off the charts" – heroes, extremely beautiful women, female weightlifters and bodybuilders? Talented musicians. Star athletes. Movie stars. Statistically unusual, yes – but deviant? Again, the Heckerts argue that they fit the conceptual model. What about criminal and deviant actors who are reviled, feared, and imprisoned at one time, and lionized or mythologized decades later? Bandits and brigands, bank robbers, thieves and cat burglars. Frank and Jesse James, Billy the Kid, John Dillinger, Butch Cassidy, Bonnie and Clyde. Yes, they, too, as our explicators interpret the matter, exemplify the positive deviant. What about the *ex*-deviant—the wrongdoer who goes straight and advertises the error of his ways? He, too, is a positive deviant. Are all these behaviors and characters examples of positive deviance? The Heckerts make an insistent case that they are. Deviance researchers who base their definition strictly on negative reactions regard all these cases as a mixed bag and see conceptual confusion rather than consistency or theoretical utility.

Not all current putative wrongdoing was always considered wrong. In many societies, social circles, collectivities, times and places, certain actions, beliefs, and characteristcs *come to be regarded* as wrongful. How does this process take place? What does the process of deviantization look like? In Chapter 6, "The Process of Deviantization," Daniel Dotter explains. Definitions of deviance change; what was immoral may come to be regarded as acceptable, and vice versa. This process works for both formal and informal social control; that is, what were once crimes, states have decriminalized – witness abortion, gambling, homosexual relations, and recently marijuana possession and sale (John Dombrink, Chapter 9: Decriminalization). Until 1967, in some states, interracial marriage was against the law; then it became legal. In Chapter 7, "Changing Definitions of Deviance," John Curra lays the foundation of what deviance is all about, then surveys the process of defining deviance "up" and "down" over time, again detailing the huge decline in the deviant status of homosexuality. Over time, certain conditions that once were regarded as manifestations of "badness" and immorality came to be seen as signs of mental disorder: hyperkinesis; schizophrenia; autism; Tourette's syndrome. In other words, what was originally regarded as deviant behavior became *medicalized*. And ways of conceptualizing and treating mental aberrations brought them under entirely different regimens of control – from the hangman's noose and the prison cell to the psychiatrist's couch, the licensed and certified professional's office. Sexually immoral actions may come to be seen as treatable conditions. And some once-supposed mental disorders escaped from deviance altogether, and may be regarded as both morally neutral, optional, and free of all mental pathology – again, to highlight our deviance-shedding star of the show, witness the deletion of homosexuality from the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* in 1973. And drugs replaced the talking cure, further legitimating the professionalization of addressing troublesome behavior. These issues are addressed by Joseph Schneider in Chapter 8 (The Medicalization of Deviance: From Badness to Sickness), and Peter Conrad and Julia Bandini, in Chapter 24 (Mental Illness as a Form of Deviance: Historical Notes and Contemporary Directions).

Deviance is made up of one or more designated spheres of behavior or belief systems or conditions, as well as a topic or subject to be investigated. How do sociologists study deviance? Perhaps the most informative way of cutting the methodological pie is to divide research techniques into quantitative (Jeff Ackerman, Chapter 11: Quantitative Methods in the Study of Deviance) and qualitative (Richard Tewksbury, Chapter 12: Studying Deviance: Qualitative Methods). Can we theorize about deviance? Sociological explanations of deviance are largely confined to behavior (as opposed to beliefs and/or conditions); all of the classic sociological theories of deviance confine themselves, understandably, to types of action. Robert Meier, in Chapter 13 "Explanatory Paradigms in the Study of Deviance," elaborates these theoretical models.

At the same time, some researchers have found the critical, Marxist, or radical approach to the study of deviance and crime fruitful, as Walter DeKeseredy explains (Chapter 14: Critical Criminology), while still others find insight in the symbolic interactionist perspective, as Addrain Conyers and Thomas Calhoun elucidate in Chapter 15, "The Interactionist Approach to Deviance." Do theories pivot on fundamental and basic social characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, and gender? Power is distributed in such a way that the definitions of right and wrong held and administered by superordinates exerts vastly more sway over subordinates than the other way around. Does this apply to a relatively low-deviance sector of the population – girls and women? Or do females attract deviant labels that apply to them specifically? Is being female itself a form of deviance, as some have argued (Schur, 1984)? In Chapter 16, "Gender and Deviance," Meredith Worthen and Danielle Dirks offer their insight on the matter. In another social sphere, the deviant is dramatized in the pages of newspapers and broadcast news (David Altheide, Chapter 17: Deviance and the Mass Media). Likewise, the drama of deviance in the media is worth knowing about.

Deviance plays out at both the micro- and the macro-level. With the society and social collectivities as backdrops and background, individuals enact behavior, hold beliefs, or possess traits that are likely to attract censure, social isolation, or punishment; here we have the delinquent (Timothy Brezina and Robert Agnew, Chapter 18: Juvenile Delinquency: Its Nature, Causes, and Control), the drug abuser (Scott Akins and Clayton Mosher, Chapter 20: Drug Use as Deviance), the alcohol abuser (Paul Roman, Chapter 19: Alcohol Use as Deviance), the sexual deviant (Martin Weinberg and Colin Williams, Chapter 21: Sociology and Sexual Deviance), the person who holds unconventional beliefs (Robin Perrin, Chapter 22: Cognitive Deviance: Unconventional Beliefs), and the person who, according to some or most audiences, possesses one or more "Abominations of the Body": that is, some form of physical deviance (Goode, Chapter 23).

At the macro- or meso-level, however, actors form part of larger structures that function as an entity, *as if they were* an individual, a person; indeed, in such institutions, individuals act *on behalf of* the larger entity. An economy is incapable of providing sufficient jobs for the workforce as a whole, and the poor, the poverty-stricken, the unemployed are stigmatized as a consequence (David Harvey, Chapter 25: Poverty and Disrepute). Corporations dump pollution into the atmosphere, the water supply, the ground, and the rest of us suffer as a consequence (Avi Brisman, Chapter 26: Environmental Harm as Deviance and Crime). Managers within corporations make decisions about cutting corners, bending and breaking laws, violating statutes that the rest of us may not even understand – and may or may not be brought into court as a collective by the authorities for their actions (Melanie Bryant, Chapter 27: Organizational Deviance: Where Have We Been, and Where Are We Going?). First World nations attempt to stem the tide of massive immigration to their shores from poor, Third World nations, and officials in the former find themselves seeking out and deporting – in a word, *stigmatizing* – persons who have fled poverty or persecution they are unable to deal with in their home country (Dean Wilson, Chapter 28: Marginalizing Migrants: Stigma, Racism, and Vulnerability). Political deviance is perpetrated by persons in power, by claimants to power, by agents who seek to effect political change, and those who advocate politically subversive causes, those who act both on behalf of the state and in opposition to the state: in any case, persons who represent entities substantially larger than themselves, as Pat Lauderdale explains, in Chapter 29 (Political Deviance). Finally, we have the terrorist and organized efforts to combat terrorism (Austin T. Turk, Chapter 30: Terrorism and Counterterrorism), perhaps the ultimate actors who engage in behavioral entities substantially larger than themselves. Any discussion of terrorism and counterterrorism underscores the inherently political nature of any investigation of deviance. Who decides what's wrong? Who has the power to designate one objectively harmful action as deviant, the enactors of which deserve the harshest possible punishment, as opposed to an equally harmful action taken in retaliation for the first, which we must regard in positive terms – necessary under the circumstances? And what audiences do we look to for one judgment or the other? What the sociologist regards as deviant is not written in stone, not a hegemonic text that every reader interprets in the same way, but a fleeting, protean, adaptable, and yet in many contexts durable set of actions whose understanding of it is variable according to the audiences who view it. When these variable meanings are set into motion as responses to specific actions, they are often powerful in their impact – and hence very real – but their reality depends on interpretations which may seem will o' the wisp to the outsider observer. Some critics of the field complain that deviance analysts tend to focus on the individual as the unit of analysis, but this section on institutional deviance demonstrates that large-scale, macro or meso institutions can and do define wrongness and punish putative miscreants, and their actions can affect larger units as well. In fact, we can regard entire nations as deviant: rogue states, pariah nations, countries that other countries boycott, isolate, freeze out of diplomatic and even trading relations because their leaders have engaged in actions (human rights abuses, the sponsorship of terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destructions) of which others disapprove. North Korea and Sudan are extreme examples of rogue nations. Some observers have even labeled the US as a "rogue state" (Blum, 2005; Isquith, 2011) because of its tendency to bully smaller, weaker societies in the pursuit of its interests, whatever the consequences.

The social world is in ceaseless flux, constantly changing. Deviance changes, conditions for committing deviance change, theories and explanations of deviance change, topics float in and out of deviance curricula, and as Nachman Ben-Yehuda points out (Chapter 31: Deviance and Social Change), deviance can transform society at large. In conclusion, to repeat the question originally raised by Joel Best (2006 , p. 543) – as much a challenge as a reproach for a field of study that has weathered something of a barrage of skepticism and criticism in recent decades – I ask, "What's in Store for the Concept of Deviance?" (Chapter 32). Everyone who contributed a chapter to this volume attempts an answer to this formidable question. What indeed? Each chapter in this *Handbook* stands more or less on its own ground; I have not attempted to reconcile the authors' diverse positions with one another, nor, for the most part – with a very few exceptions – criticize any assertions by authors with which I disagree. I've given every chapter enough room to breathe. After all, my position as editor of this volume is entirely befitting its unconventional subject matter.

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friends, critics, and even their antagonists, for their encouragement, assistance, entanglements, disapproval, excoriation – what have you – as well as the publishers of the articles, books, and chapters from which they have borrowed, adapted, or reprinted whatever material appears in the volume. In doing so, we have attempted to follow “fair use” guidelines; to the extent that we have inadvertently strayed outside the lines in this respect, we would like to stress that the *Handbook of Deviance* make scholarly use of these materials. These authors willed this volume into existence, and all of us hope that it will prove to be useful to everyone who consults it.

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Part I
Deviance
The Conceptual Foundations

1
The Sociology of Deviance
An Introduction

Erich Goode

Virtually all societies everywhere and throughout recorded time have established and promulgated rules or *norms* – including codified laws – that demarcate the good from the bad: the true from the false, desirable from undesirable, acceptable from unacceptable, legal from illegal, licit from illicit, legitimate from illegitimate, and behavior, beliefs, and characteristics that are valued from those that are disvalued. Likewise, all societies have spelled out sanctions, punishments – appropriate reactions that audiences and agents of social control should invoke or apply against violators of those rules. And all societies invoke such sanctions against miscreants variably according to the nature of the violation – its degree of seriousness and whether it is the breach of formal or informal norms, whether it becomes widely known, what the circumstances of the violation are, and who the violators are – for instance, their age, social rank, and their degree of intimacy with relevant audiences. At the same time, remarkably, the sanctioning of putative wrongdoers is both erratic and patterned: deviants often, though not always, bring forth censure, condemnation, and punishment, and the reasons why they do – or don't – is sociologically problematic and often revealing. And all complex, contemporary societies are arranged in such a way that collectivities within them vary considerably as to what is considered wrongful, making the investigation of deviance very complicated indeed.

Who are these audiences that do, or would – or could – condemn or censure normative violations? They include lawmakers and enforcers and functionaries of the criminal justice system, officials, politicians, the general public, parents and other relatives, friends, lovers, and other intimates, professionals (such as teachers, physicians, and psychiatrists), religious figures, members of the media – just about any collectivity whose members interact, whether directly or indirectly, with anyone who might violate the law or a social norm. In other words, deviance comes into being as a result of *moral enterprise*. That is, first, a rule is *defined* as deviant, and second, a particular audience *reacts to* a given violation *as* a case of deviance (Becker, 1963, pp. 147–163). Some rules are ancient and nearly universal, but from a constructionist or interactionist perspective, to be deviant a violation must be reacted to – whether directly or indirectly – by a given audience. Note that not all audiences, and not all members of any given audience, necessarily agree on what is deviant or wrong; what is considered wrongful is debated, contested, reevaluated, and argued about. At the same time, *some* norms are so strongly held that the likelihood is extremely high that one or more members of these collectivities will react to such a violation in a negative, censorious, rebukeful way; other norms are very nearly matters of indifference, or are held by such a small number of members of a given society, or collectivities within a given society, that negative reactions to their violation are extremely unlikely, or are likely to be weak. Clearly, *deviance is a matter of degree*.

Sociologists define “deviant” behavior or “deviance” as *acts, beliefs, and characteristics that violate major social norms and attract, or are likely to attract, condemnation, stigma, social isolation, censure, and/or punishment by relevant audiences* (Clinard, 1957, p. vii; Clinard & Meier, 2011; Goode, 2015, Chapter 1). "Deviance" is behavior, beliefs, and characteristics, and are *disvalued* or stigmatized, and a "deviant" is a disvalued person, someone who is, and who members of a particular society or social circle are told *should* be, isolated, rejected, avoided, stigmatized, and censured, or otherwise treated in a negative fashion (Sagarin, 1975). Again, what is considered deviant varies from one audience, social circle, or collectivity to another, one setting, circumstance, and situation to another, and according to protagonist and antagonist. It *almost* goes without saying that what is considered deviant varies by society and historical time period. And, to repeat, what is considered deviant is a matter of degree; the key here is the *likelihood* of attracting censure, and the quantum of censure ranges from mild to extreme, from a negative remark to social isolation, rejection, hostility, condemnation, and denunciation – and, at its most extreme end point, execution by the state or, at one time, a lynch mob. Extreme deviance is the end point along a continuum. At its mildest, one could say, the deviance is us; at its most extreme, the deviant is widely considered society's worst enemy. More to the point, deviance is defined by a diversity of collectivities, each one of which regards wrongness somewhat differently, only some of which wield the hegemony or dominance to define what is bad or wrong for the society as a whole. Perhaps most importantly: the more seriously deviant an act or a belief – and in all likelihood, a physical condition – is, the rarer it is.

Sociologically, minority or variant interpretations and practices of right and wrong are as consequential and revealing to the sociologist as majority or dominant ones; hence, as students of deviance, we have to pay close attention to *whether*, *to what extent*, and *how* hegemony is achieved, how other interpretations *fail* to become dominant, and the ways in which the entrenched morality, cosmology, ideology, religion, or ways of doing things are challenged. Especially in a large, complex society, collectivities of people who do not share the dominant view are common, and they mingle, accommodate to, jostle and clash with, and often subvert, majority perspectives and ways of behaving and believing. Deviance is a concept with one foot in the attempt to understand and explain the institutionalization of conventionality – and consequently, deviantization as well – and one foot in the processes of tolerance versus anathemization, assimilation versus subversion, centrality versus marginalization, separate-but-equal versus separate-and-despised treatment, “let a thousand flowers bloom” versus “crush the dissidents.” How do minority ways of life or subcultures become *deviant*? Or, alternatively, how does a statistical minority of the population come to dominate, rule, and exert influence over the culturally marginal but numerically large majority? When do once-deviant views and practices become *un*objectionable, tolerated – embraced as coequal among members of the dominant sector of the society? How do disparate practices that are viewed as “less than” by the majority become acceptable options, behavioral peers in a conglomerate society? When and where do these things happen, and under what circumstances does it not happen at all? These are some of the central issues that the sociology of deviance addresses, and how these factors and forces play themselves out in and among specific groups, categories, social circles, and collectivities is a matter to be investigated, not assumed beforehand. Many behaviors, beliefs, and even physical conditions that the majority or dominant sectors of society consider deviant or unconventional are interpreted *positively* among certain circles or groups, and this tension sets in motion social dynamics that add up to intriguing developments that sociologists would like to understand better.

One of the most remarkable shifts in the history of thinking about putative wrongdoing was the movement *away* from regarding it as an intrinsic or essentialistic evil, and/or a harmful, damaging, pathological action, *to* seeing it as the violation of a constructed social norm or law. At the same time, the Hobbesian equation stands athwart all theoretical considerations of deviance: societies could not long endure if they failed to punish, and hence discourage, truly harmful behavior, such as rape, robbery, and murder. *Some* actions and beliefs are toxic to the society at large; they tear at the social order, the common weal. Any society accepting them as normative would be equivalent to signing a suicide pact. And yet, harm and deviance are not isometrically related; in some societies at certain times, many harmful actions and beliefs have been normative and conventional – consider anti-Semitism and racism. Likewise, many deviant actions and beliefs, such as tattooing, belief in aliens, and multiple sexual variants, are not harmful, and some – certain types of altruism, scientific innovation, and participation in certain progressive social movements – are actually beneficial. Societies disvalue and censure a substantial number of actions that neither directly harm anyone nor threaten the society with chaos and disintegration.

Not only is what’s deviant socially constructed, but even the constituent behaviors and beliefs that make up the generic category of “deviance” are themselves socially constructed. What is *considered* rape, robbery, and murder varies both societally and historically. Most norms are intended to make a statement about what is deemed – by some, many, or most members of a society – to be right, good, and proper. Presumably, these norms fit hand-in-glove with a network of beliefs and practices that underpin a way of life; many members of the society imagine that, if tolerated, particular deviant practices will subvert the society as a whole, causing a general collapse much like a pile of pick-up-sticks when one stick is removed. These norms embody certain generic principles of moral correctness separate and independent from what they do for the society's physical survival; it is putative *morality* and *decency* that deviance presumably challenges, not necessarily the physical lives of the people themselves. There is implicit in norms and their enforcement a version of moral correctness, an ethos – a whole way of life that is an *end in itself*. We are expected to do and believe certain things because they are *right,* because *that's the way things should be done*. A substantial number of norms anathemize actions and beliefs because many members of the society feel that they represent threats to a way of life, a social and cultural order, a sense of moral and ethical propriety. By punishing parties they consider deviants, collective representatives protect a "moral canopy" (Berger, 1967), an invisible but very palpable interpretation of rectitude. Likewise, societies positively or negatively value certain appearances, traits, and conditions; consequently, the ugly, the disabled, and the sick become "involuntary deviants" (Sagarin, 1975, p. 201). No one wants to possess these characteristics, and the physical presence of those who do is thought to contaminate the whole and the healthy. Though such categories of humanity are no longer as reviled or vilified as they once were, even today they are often shunned, avoided, pitied, and socially isolated. But everywhere, members of such categories remind "normals" (Goffman, 1963a, p. 5) – persons who do not embody the relevant stigmatizing trait – of the corrosive vulnerability of their own flesh.

Practically all of us learn an enormous number of unwritten, informal, commonsensical rules that govern everyday life. By a certain age, most of us take the routine observance of these rules for granted, and anyone's violation of them is highly likely to attract criticism or censure from others. These rules govern social interaction: what we are permitted and not permitted to do with, and in the presence of, others. The list is long, detailed, and the acceptability and unacceptability of the behavior that is spelled out is implicitly agreed-upon. In public, under most circumstances, we are told, don’t pick your nose; don’t put your hand on your crotch; don’t expose private portions of your anatomy; if someone is speaking to you, try to pay attention and make eye contact; don’t stand uncomfortably close to others; speak clearly enough for them to hear what you are saying; don’t talk to yourself; bathe frequently enough that your body doesn’t become offensive to others; do not stare at strangers; do not become unacceptably quarrelsome or argumentative; respect the rights of others to enter and exit from social interactions in an appropriate manner; and so on and so forth (Goffman, 1963b). It is virtually impossible to spell out all the rules that violate everyday norms, but by adolescence, most members of the society observe them and sanction persons who do not, and regard the behavior that these norms sanction as non-normative, even deviant. Of course, such rules vary in seriousness, and the acceptance and observance of some of them vary from one society to another and one situational context to another. Between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, numerous American municipalities enacted “ugly laws” – ordinances that prohibited poor and disabled people who were considered “unsightly” from appearing in public (Schweik, 2009); these statutes remind us of the instability of judgments of deviance and the vulnerability of persons with undesirable characteristics, as well as the altruism of parties who struggled to abolish such harsh, unjust laws. Such laws and norms – and, if put into effect, such judgments – remind us of the time-and-place particularity of social and legal reactions to behavior, beliefs, and conditions.

The Scope of the Sociology of Deviance

Most works on deviance discuss *only* behavior. To the extent that beliefs are expressed, they can be thought of as a form of behavior (no one is supposed to *say* certain things, so speaking is a kind of act); to the extent that they are not spoken, they represent *potential* behavior. But as we have just seen, involuntarily-acquired traits and physical characteristics are also likely to attract negative reactions such as derision and censure. Some sociologists believe that because such traits are not motivated – not the "fault" of the individual – they are not a form of deviance at all (Polsky, 1998, pp. 202–203). In contrast, most other sociologists point out the strong parallels between the condemnation and punishment of behavioral deviance and the "grading system" that assigns stigma to persons with certain bodily and ethnic characteristics, not to mention mental conditions, and hence, these observers argue, all of these should be considered forms of deviance (Goffman, 1963a; Sagarin, 1975). However, none of the traditional sociological explanations or "theories" of deviant behavior apply to physical characteristics (Sagarin, 1975, p. 203), nor do they apply to race, ethnicity, and religion – additional potential sources of stigma and disparagement, which Goffman calls "tribal stigma," stigma that are transmitted through "lineages" (Goffman, 1963a, p. 4; Goode, 2015, pp. 304–332). By including beliefs and physical characteristics, sociologists have hugely expanded the scope of deviance. It designates who – or what – is disvalued or disparaged by designated audiences.

Social control is made up of the efforts that members of collectivities make to ensure conformity to group and societal norms. These efforts include both positive and negative sanctions: rewards for approved behavior, and punishments for behavior that is disapproved of. *Formal* social control is made up mainly of the criminal justice system, that is, the law, the police, the courts, jails and prisons, and parole and probation – the state's apparatus of defining, reacting to, and punishing crime. *Informal* social control includes all the interpersonal pressures and sanctions that individuals apply to people who violate social norms. In the cases of bodily abominations and tribal stigmata, mainstream society is not trying to "control" the possession of the traits that are disvalued, but the reactions of "normals" *to* the persons who possess them. The violation and prosecution of criminal law are what make a given action a crime; crimes call for *formal* sanctions – arrest, prosecution, imprisonment. Most criminologists are interested in the creation of the criminal law, its violations, its execution, characteristics, and the motivations of the actors who violate the law, as well as reactions to the enactment of the behavior that is defined as illegal. However, as we saw, in the contemporary era most forms of deviance are not crimes, though they do put their enactors, believers, and possessors in an inferior social position. Clearly, therefore, deviance encompasses a much broader territory than crime. Crime is a subset or type of deviance, but most deviance is not criminal. In the case of undesired physical characteristics, social control entails conventional society's efforts to ensure that the disabled "know their place."

The Two Sociologies of Deviance: An Introduction

Some members of *all* societies – and this varies from one society to another and from one social category to another – violate the rules by engaging in behavior, holding beliefs, or possessing traits that are considered unacceptable to specific social circles or collectivities. Members of the society, or members of relevant “audiences,” express their disapproval of unacceptable actions by reacting to violators in a negative fashion – reporting, arresting, prosecuting, slapping, ignoring, snubbing, ridiculing, insulting, taunting, gossiping about, humiliating, frowning at, denouncing, reprimanding, condemning, anathemizing, criticizing, stigmatizing, showing contempt or scorn toward, the actor, believer, or possessor.

The sociology of deviance is made up of two distinct but interlocking enterprises – *explanatory* or positivistic theories, and interactionist or *constructionist* theories. The explanatory theories represent scientifically-grounded efforts to understand and account for *why* some people, under certain circumstances, engage in behavior many others consider deviant, or why deviance is more likely to take place under certain societal arrangements than others. “Explaining” deviance in a cause-and-effect fashion entails attempting to answer the “why do they do it?” question, and in order to answer this question, the social scientist makes an assumption of commonalities in the phenomena “deviance” and “crime.” Note that explanatory theories are specifically directed at *acts* that an audience considers deviant, rarely beliefs, and never physical conditions or traits. All explanatory theorists know that crime and deviance are socially constructed, but they argue that acts that are referred to *as* deviance and crime share enough in common in material or real-world terms for social scientists to be able to account for or explain them. If “deviance” is different from non-deviance, there must be something *different* about the persons who engage in it in comparison with those who do not – at least there must be something different about the social and societal conditions that foster such forms of behavior versus those conditions that tend to inhibit it.