Seventh Edition

Deviant Behavior

A Text-Reader in the Sociology of Deviance

Edward J. Clarke

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For Crickett

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Preface

Some anthologies dealing with the subject of deviance emphasize the ways in which society responds to deviant behavior. Others, by examining why certain individuals violate the social norm, focus on the motivational element. A few trace the evolution of deviant categories. *Deviant Behavior* has been designed to integrate and balance these concerns in a single volume—to explore, through carefully selected readings, the ramifications of deviance for the individual (the *actor*) and for society.

Part I considers the ways society conceptualizes deviance and produces deviant acts and actors. Deviance is most often thought of as under conformity to normative standards for behavior, but exceeding those standards may also result in a negative social response. Of particular interest is the role that specific individuals—especially those holding social or political power or who serve as social control agents—play in the labeling of actors and acts as deviant. It will become clear to the reader that no individual and no behavior is inherently deviant; it is society's perception of an act as deviant and the subsequent social response to the actor that affixes the label. In other words, deviance—whether referencing under conformity or over conformity—is in the eye of the beholder.

Why does socially prohibited behavior occur—and persist—despite society's efforts to eliminate or discourage it? How can we make sense of deviance? Sociologists approach these questions from a number of different theoretical perspectives. Part II presents readings by major theorists representing the most important of these perspectives. The introductions for each section furnish students with the theoretical framework upon which to build an understanding and an appreciation of these key thinkers. This section contains several empirical pieces that underscore the important relationship that must exist between theory and deviance research. The articles also illustrate how researchers go about their work.

Part III examines how deviance may shape the life experience of individuals within the private domain. For example, families provide an intimate context in which deviance may be transmitted intergenerationally or within sibling structures. Selections depict how an actor may employ a range of strategies to conceal potentially discrediting information about

them in an attempt to avoid stigmatization and the many negative consequences of stigma. Failed attempts to manage deviance within the private domain can result in some type of institutional control and processing.

Part IV explores the workings of several such people-processing and people-changing facilities—ranging from the schools to the police—to examine how such agencies handle clients and how clients, in turn, may adapt their behavior and their view of self and personal identities to their surroundings. The selections address important questions regarding the role of formal organizations in the production of deviant careers and identities: How do organizational process and protocols shape the likelihood that particular actors and acts will be identified as deviant? How do interpersonal relationships within social-control agencies influence the rate and range of sanctioning? How are the lives of people changed as a result of being formally identified as deviant?

For certain types of deviance, institutional controls are far less significant than the traditions and norms of deviant subculture and enterprises. Part V examines the way in which such structures shape the career of the bookie, the drug dealer, members of deviant corporate structures, children lacking self control, and others. Important to this discussion is the process of negotiating identities within the context of deviance.

Part VI analyzes the processes by which deviant categories, actors, and organizations can be altered or transformed. The first selection offers contemporary accounts of how selected deviant conceptions and categories have undergone significant changes. Clearly, if the underlying content of the prevailing images changes, so, too, must the picture of deviance change. Thus activities that may have been seen as deviant at one time may now be perceived as acceptable or even normal by various audiences. The last two readings describe various personal and institutional barriers that confront those who desire to move from a deviant to a nondeviant status—in particular, society's reluctance to accept as "normal" anyone who has borne the stigma of deviance. The final selection outlines specific ways in which deviant organizations, decision makers, and structures could be controlled, sanctioned, or even rehabilitated. It focuses on the police.

Overall, then, this book explores the creation and maintenance of deviant categories; the motivations behind deviant behavior; the identification as deviant of individuals and of particular segments of society, by formal and informal means; the effects of institutionalization upon the deviant; and the efforts of deviants to eradicate the label society has placed upon them. Attention is also given to the ways in which deviant categories and structures can be altered.

I would like to thank many people for their help in preparing the seventh edition of this book, particularly my editor, Sarah Berger, and project editor, Dana Kusowitz. Decisions about adding and deleting material

from edition to edition are always made with apprehension. It is difficult to presume to make the right choices for both the people you hope will give your book a fresh examination and the people who have been loyal and contented users of previous editions. Suggestions from the following individuals helped make my deliberations considerably easier: Steven Cades, Washington College; Elizabeth Callaghan, Ithaca College; Ryan D. Schroeder, University of Louisville; Jeffery T. Ulmer, Pennsylvania State University; and Georgie Ann Weatherby; Gonzaga University.

I extend a special thanks to Delos Kelly for initiating and sustaining *Deviant Behavior* over many editions. I hope his retirement is as satisfying as his academic career. He has mentored well.

Edward J. Clarke

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General Introduction

We all carry in our minds images of deviance and the deviant. To some, deviants are murderers and rapists. Others would include in the list prostitutes, child molesters, wife beaters, and homosexuals. With regard to the motivations behind deviant behavior, some of us would place the blame on the family, while others would emphasize genetic or social factors, especially poverty.

Creating Deviance

Regardless of what kinds of behavior we consider deviant or what factors we believe cause deviance, we must recognize that deviance *and* the deviant emerge out of a continuous process of interaction among people. For deviance to become a public fact, however, several conditions need to be satisfied: (1) some deviant category (e.g., mores and laws) must exist; (2) a person must be viewed as violating the category; and (3) someone must attempt to enforce this violation of the category. If the individuals demanding enforcement are successful in their efforts to label the violator, the social deviant has been created.

The Creation of Deviant Categories

As far as deviant categories are concerned, relatively little attention has been focused on their evolution. Formal and informal codes of conduct are generally accepted as "givens," and investigators concentrate on the examination of *why* the categories are violated and *how* they are enforced. An approach of this kind is inadequate, however, particularly in view of the fact that new categories are continually evolving and old ones are being modified. Obviously,

as the definitions or categories of deviance change, the picture of deviance must also be altered. The changing content of the laws governing cocaine provides an example. If there are no penalties for possessing and using cocaine, one cannot be formally charged and processed for doing so.

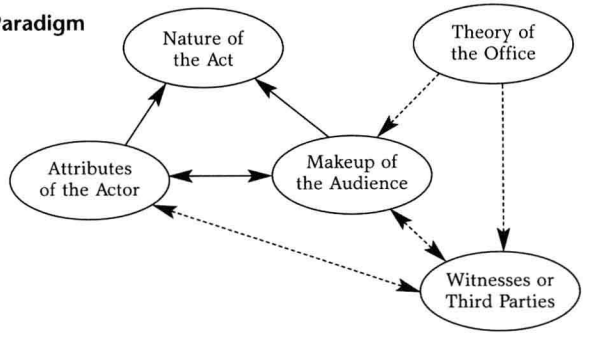
In studying deviance, then, a central question needs to be raised: How (and why) do *acts* become defined as deviant?[1] Providing answers to this question requires an examination of how deviance is defined, how the definitions are maintained, and how violators of the definitions are processed and treated. This entails a historical and ongoing analysis of those legislative and political processes that affect the evolution, modification, and enforcement of deviant categories. Central focus must be placed on those who possess the power and resources not only to define deviance but also to apply a label of deviance to a violator and to make the label stick. These processes are highlighted in Part I and will be evident in the discussion of the "radical-conflict theory" in Part II.

Reactions to Violators of Deviant Categories

In terms of the *actor,* an equally important question can be asked: How (and why) do violators of various types of deviant categories (mores, laws, and regulations) become labeled as deviant? Answering this question requires an examination of the interaction occurring between an *actor* and an *audience.* A simple paradigm (Figure 1) can illustrate how the deviant is reacted to and thus socially created. This paradigm can be applied to most of the selections in this volume.

The Interactional Paradigm A young man (the social *actor*) is seen selling or snorting cocaine (the *act,* a violation of a deviant category) by a police officer (a social *audience,* an enforcer of the deviant category) and is arrested. The youth's deviation thus becomes a matter of public record, and a deviant career is initiated—a career that may be solidified and perpetuated by legal and institutional processing. Another officer, however, might ignore the offense. In the first case, then, the violator is initially labeled as a "deviant," whereas in the second he is not. Figure 1 indicates that audience response not only is critical, but depends on several factors. The example also helps to underscore the fact that there is nothing inherently deviant about any act or actor—their meanings are derived from the interpretations *others* place on them. Hence the notion is put forth that "deviance lies in the eyes of the beholder." This example can be extended by considering the fourth element of the paradigm: *third parties,* or witnesses. Specifically, a young man may be observed selling or snorting cocaine by a peer, and the peer may choose to ignore the offense. Another peer, however, may not only consider the act illegal or deviant but may decide to do something about it. The peer lacks the power to arrest; he can, however, bring in third parties in an effort to create a shared attitude toward the cocaine user—namely, that he is a "criminal" or

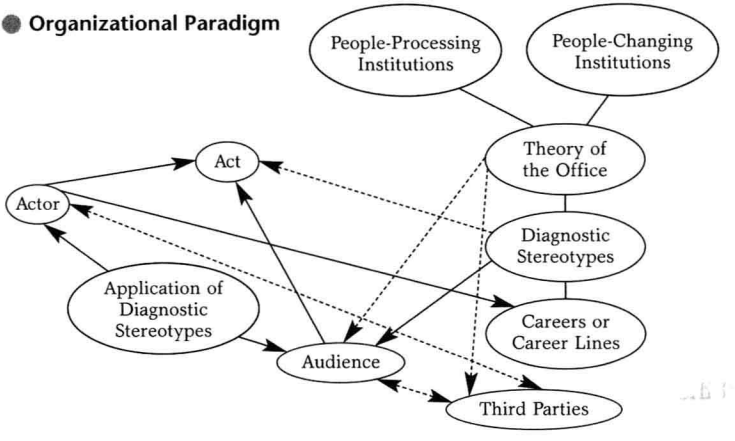
Figure 1 ● Interactional Paradigm



"deviant." The peer may turn to other peers, and they may decide to call the police and have the user arrested. If this happens, the person's "deviance" becomes a public fact.

Thus, the label "deviant" is a status conferred on a person by an observer or observers. Although an understanding of this process requires an examination of the way the four basic elements of the paradigm interact with one another, such an examination is not sufficient. An awareness of the *theory of the office* that a particular agent or audience operates out of is also necessary, especially if the occupant of the office is an agent of social control. The preceding example, as well as the "organizational paradigm" highlighted in Figure 2, can be used to illustrate this requirement. This paradigm represents a refinement of the "interactional paradigm" described in Figure 1. Here we are focusing on the audience, particularly in terms of how an institution expects certain outcomes on the part of its agents. This paradigm will be generally applied throughout this volume.

Figure 2 ● Organizational Paradigm



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