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SOCIOLOGY OF DEVIANT BEHAVIOR

Eleventh Edition

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Sociology of Deviant Behavior

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Sociology of Deviant Behavior presents a theoretical overview of the nature and meaning of deviance, examining in detail a number of forms of behavior commonly regarded as deviant. Throughout the book, sociological concepts and processes underlie the presentation. We have attempted to identify and explain the leading theories and sociological orientations of deviant behavior: anomie, control, labeling, conflict, and learning. We have also attempted to be sensitive to other perspectives where they apply, both in sociology (such as the rational choice perspective) and in other disciplines, such as biology. The theoretical frame of reference throughout the book is socialization, or learning, theory with a normative perspective. The reader will see that we find the meaning of deviant behavior in the context of the acquisition of all behavior. The central theme of the book is that understanding deviant behavior is no different from understanding any other behavior; deviant behavior is human behavior, understandable within a general context of socialization and role playing. This frame of reference furnishes theoretical continuity throughout the book, although we have taken care to include other viewpoints as well. Where possible, we have also attempted to illustrate sociological ideas from the deviant's own perspective through case histories or personal accounts.

It is not easy to define deviant behavior. Often any consensus that has appeared to exist has been the result of political, social, and economic powers of groups that have succeeded in imposing on others their views of what constitutes deviance. Here, we examine the merits of four definitions of deviance: statistical, absolutist, reactivist, and normative. We have adopted the *normative* definition as best fitting the complex society in which we live and the increasingly complex global community, which is characterized by a high degree of differentiation and, as a result, a high degree of deviance.

As with previous editions, this eleventh edition is a complete revision that incorporates the most recent theoretical developments in the field and the latest research findings. Reviewers of previous editions have suggested changes. In the eleventh edition, we have placed more emphasis on some forms of deviance and issues of social control that are of great contemporary concern—for example, drugs and violence, both personal and family. There is a new chapter on white-collar and corporate crime. And certain chapters have been reorganized in a new part, "Studies in Stigma." Here, we concentrate not only on the nature of deviance but on the reactions toward and consequences of deviant behavior and conditions.

We have augmented the material throughout with first-person accounts to illustrate some of the sociological concepts and theories discussed. We have attempted to devote attention to "newer" forms of deviance, including eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia. There is more attention throughout on the impact of technology on both deviant behavior and its control. Every chapter has been updated; some, such as the material on heterosexual deviance, has been enlarged.

Chapter 1 deals with the nature and definition of deviance. It introduces the sociological concepts necessary to understand the processes as well as the theories of deviance that follow. Chapter 2 concerns the nature of deviant events and social control. It explores the close link between processes of deviance and its control, and it provides a conceptual background to the discussions of social control in the substantive chapters that follow. Chapter 3 presents a discussion of general sources or contexts of deviance. We have concentrated on a few of the many sources of deviance, with particular attention to the importance of the social context of deviant acts and to current disputes about the role of the media in generating deviance.

Chapter 4 introduces the student to the individual and group processes that shape deviant behavior and deviant careers. A number of select perspectives on individual deviance are also introduced. The next chapters deal with sociological perspectives and theories of deviance. Chapter 5 examines and contrasts two major sociological theories of deviance: anomie and conflict perspective. Chapter 6 examines three other theories: control, labeling, and learning. New to this edition

is the use of a short case study to introduce the nature of each theory.

We then shift to an in-depth examination of various forms of deviant behavior. Chapters 7 and 8 identify the processes involved in crimes of interpersonal violence and nonviolent crimes. Chapter 9 is the new chapter on white-collar and corporate criminality. Chapter 10 deals with drug use, while Chapter 11 is devoted to alcohol, the drug most widely used. Chapter 12 focuses on forms of sexual deviance, and Chapter 13 on suicide. Chapter 14 analyzes physical disabilities and eating disorders, and Chapter 15 covers homosexuality and homophobia from a sociological point of view. We conclude in Chapter 16 with a sociological examination of mental disorders and the stigma suffered by persons suffering from these disorders. These last three chapters are examples of conditions often regarded sociologically as deviant, with profound social and personal implications for the self-concept of the individual.

This book first appeared in 1957. It pioneered a major shift from the then characteristic approach to deviance, termed *social disorganization* or *social problems*, to a more basically sociological orientation built around the concept of normative deviance and deviant behavior. Subsequently, the conceptual framework of *deviant behavior* has received wide acceptance and use in sociology. In this eleventh edition, we continue the tradition begun more than 45 years ago of attempting to understand deviance in its social context. This edition also emphasizes that deviance is an inescapable feature of modern, complex societies because such societies are characterized by a system of ranked social differentiation (stratification) that is generally associated with many types of social deviance. We also wish to affirm in this edition the obvious relationship between deviance and social order and the need for a sociological understanding of all aspects of society in order to comprehend the nature and complexity of social deviance.

Over the years, numerous sociologists and friends have contributed the basic data for this book through their theoretical writings and research on deviance. The references in the book acknowledge most, but not all, of them. At various times, other sociologists have critiqued various editions, including the present

one, and they have thus contributed valuable ideas and suggestions. We are grateful to all of them. We also wish to acknowledge especially the assistance of June Turner, Geri Murphy, Kris Piessig, Angela Patton, Tim Himberger, and Steve Culver, whose various technical skills help make this edition possible.

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An instructor's manual for this text is available and may be obtained through a local Harcourt representative or by writing to the Sociology Editor, Harcourt College Publishers, 301 Commerce Street, Suite 3700, Fort Worth, Texas 76102. Suggestions are always welcome. Please feel free to contact either of the authors by mail or, if you prefer, by e-mail at rmeier@unomaha.edu.

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