



# Sociology ■ of Deviant Behavior ■

SIXTH EDITION

Marshall B. Clinard • Robert F. Meier

00039.75  
NEW PRICE ▲  
USED PRICE ▼  
\$29.85

# **Sociology of Deviant Behavior**

SIXTH EDITION

**Marshall B. Clinard**

*University of Wisconsin-Madison*

**Robert F. Meier**

*Washington State University*

**HOLT, RINEHART AND WINSTON**

*New York Chicago San Francisco Philadelphia*

*Montreal Toronto London Sydney*

*Tokyo Mexico City Rio de Janeiro Madrid*

---

Publisher: *Robert Woodbury*  
Acquisitions Editor: *Earl McPeck*  
Project Editors: *Herb Kirk and Biodun Iginla*  
Production Manager: *Annette Mayeski*  
Design Supervisor: *Robert Kopelman*  
Text Design: *William Gray*  
Cover Design: *Graphos Studio, Inc.*

### **Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data**

Clinard, Marshall Barron, 1911-  
Sociology of deviant behavior.

Includes indexes.

1. Deviant behavior. 2. Criminal psychology.

I. Meier, Robert F. (Robert Frank), 1944-

II. Title.

HM291.C58 1985 302.5'42 84-19321

**ISBN-0-03-063586-1**

Copyright © 1985 by CBS College Publishing  
Copyright © 1957 by Marshall B. Clinard  
Copyright © 1963, 1968, 1974, 1979 by Holt, Rinehart and Winston  
Address correspondence to:  
383 Madison Avenue  
New York, N.Y. 10017  
All rights reserved  
Printed in the United States of America  
Published simultaneously in Canada  
6 7 8 0 1 6 9 8 7 6 5 4 3

CBS COLLEGE PUBLISHING  
Holt, Rinehart and Winston  
The Dryden Press  
Saunders College Publishing

To my children, from whom I have learned a great deal:

Marsha  
Stephen  
Lawrence

—*Marshall B. Clinard*

To my parents, who made my learning possible:

Frank  
Eileen

—*Robert F. Meier*



# Preface

---

The first edition of this book appeared over twenty-five years ago, in 1957. It represented a shift from the former conceptual frame of reference of social disorganization and social problems to a more sociological orientation built around the concept of deviance from social norms. That first edition moved away from the often eclectic, nonsociological perspective of social problems and provided a coherent sociological alternative. Earl Rubington and Martin S. Weinberg have noted that "Soon after this book appeared, social problems courses began to be redefined. Numerous courses, once called either Social Problems or Social Disorganization were renamed Sociology of Deviant Behavior" (*The Study of Social Problems: Five Perspectives*, 2nd ed. [New York: Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 148]).

The excellent reception subsequent editions have found reflects the fact that each revision has been substantial, demonstrating that a science such as sociology continues to grow and change. As a result, each revision has incorporated new concepts, new research, and new literature. Areas of deviance have been added, others have been dropped to maintain a more contemporary orientation.

This text is written for undergraduate students of deviance. It provides both a conceptual and a theoretical overview, and an analysis of a number of specific forms of deviance. The emphasis throughout is on the sociological understanding of the meaning, the process, and the control of deviant behavior. The underlying theme of the book—that deviant behavior is "normal," learned behavior—provides the core idea, although a number of other theories and ideas are discussed.

As in the past, this new edition is a complete revision. In addition to pertinent recent deviance literature and a general reorganization of the material, the book has been shortened without, we think, losing either the scope or much detail of previous editions. We have eliminated two chapters altogether and combined six chapters into three. We decided, reluctantly, to eliminate the chapters in earlier editions on urbanization and on the criminal justice system even though some of the material in these chapters has been incorporated into remaining chapters. The chapters on the concept of deviance and processes of becoming deviant have been combined into a single introductory chapter on these topics; the chapters on criminal behav-

## **X Preface**

ior and types of criminal behavior have been combined into a single chapter on crime; the chapters on heterosexual and homosexual deviance have been combined into one chapter on sexual deviance. The result, we believe, has been to make *Sociology of Deviant Behavior*, sixth edition, a more streamlined, readable book that is adaptable to many different classroom purposes.

Each chapter has been critically evaluated and, in many cases, reorganized to reduce redundancy. Whenever possible or feasible, lengthy quotations have been shortened or often paraphrased, producing not only a more readable text but also one less confusing to the student. Most chapters contain illustrative material from personal documents and case materials. Selected readings appear at the end of each chapter. We have also attempted to recognize both male and female in general references instead of using only the convention of a masculine pronoun.

We have attempted to ensure that the theoretical orientation discussed in Chapters 1 and 3 is incorporated into the later chapters where various forms of deviance are discussed. In keeping with earlier editions, most chapters contain both discussion and evaluation of various social control measures to deal with various forms of deviance. These sections combine both theory and social action in the context of current controversies in dealing with deviants. We have thus attempted to weave a theoretical thread not only throughout the substantive discussions of different forms of deviance but also in those sections concerned with societal reaction to those forms of deviance.

This edition, like previous editions, emphasizes that almost no behavior can be regarded as universally deviant in our modern, highly differentiated, urbanized society. When such unanimity does appear to occur, as in the legal systems of the political state, this may reflect not unanimous accord in a society but the result of the political, social, and economic power of various interest groups that try to impose their views of what constitutes deviance on others who do not view the behavior from the same perspective. This edition also emphasizes that deviance is a feature of modern, complex societies because such societies are characterized precisely by the degree of ranked social differentiation, which is the basis for social deviance.

The preceding editions have acknowledged those persons who have been helpful in the development of this book throughout the years. The organization of the sixth edition owes a great debt to Dretha Phillips, who made many suggestions for better order of the material within chapters. The preparation of the manuscript was facilitated immensely with the help of the staff of the Social Research Center at Washington State University: John Tarnai, Rita Koontz, and Kelly Schadler. We want to acknowledge the editorial assistance and advice of Marie Schappert and Barbara Heinssen. We would also like to thank our reviewers, Cameron Ervin, Hartnell College; Charles McCaghy, Bowling Green State University; Larry Rosen, Temple University; and Margaret Zahn, Temple University.

M. B. C.  
R. F. M.

# Contents

---

---

Preface ix

## **PART ONE / DEVIANCE 1**

- 1 The Concept and Processes of Deviance 3
- 2 Individualistic Theories of Deviance 36
- 3 Sociological Theories of Deviance 61

## **PART TWO / DEVIANT BEHAVIOR 95**

- 4 The Nature of Crime and Types of Criminals 97
- 5 Drunkenness and Alcoholism 137
- 6 Drug Use and Addiction 168
- 7 Sexual Deviance 203
- 8 Mental Disorders 237
- 9 Suicide 267
- 10 Physical Disabilities 294

## **PART THREE / SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS 317**

- 11 The Social Nature of Deviance 319

Name Index 385

Subject Index 387

**part one**

**Deviance**





# chapter 1

## The concept and processes of deviance

Deviance is similar to what St. Augustine said about time: We know pretty much what it is until someone asks us. Most of us know deviance when we see it—mental disorder, suicide, crime, prostitution, and alcoholism would be on many people's lists. Beyond this, however, sociologists are not in agreement on what is and what is not deviance. Fred Davis, writing in 1961, included blacks and women as deviant.<sup>1\*</sup> Albert Cohen says his book is about "knavery, skulduggery, cheating, unfairness, crime, sneakiness, betrayal, graft, corruption, wickedness, and sin."<sup>2</sup> Alvin Gouldner said in 1968 that the empirical literature on deviance had been limited largely to "the world of the hip, night people, drifters, grifters, and skidders: the 'cool world.'"<sup>3</sup> Howard Becker limited his influential study on deviance to jazz musicians and marijuana users.<sup>4</sup> A British collection of papers on deviance dealt with drug users, thieves, hooligans, suicides, homosexuals and their blackmailers, and industrial saboteurs.<sup>5</sup> Lemert illustrated his theoretical position with reference to, among others, the blind and stutterers.<sup>6</sup> Dinitz,

\*Superscript numbers direct you to source and documentation notes at the back of the book, which begin on page 334. These notes are important and useful; they appear together following the text. They include full information for location of material or points being cited, for fuller exploration; indications of supporting or conflicting views; and sometimes guides to wider treatment of important topics. You will find them helpful both in regular study and in following particular subjects of interest.

## 4 Deviance

Dynes, and Clarke find these types of people deviant: midgets, dwarfs, giants, sinners, apostates, heretics, bums, tramps, hippies, and Bohemians.<sup>7</sup> George Becker found "genius" deviant.<sup>8</sup> James Henslin used four types of deviants to illustrate research problems in the field: cabbies, suicides, drug users, and abortioneers.<sup>9</sup>

It is difficult to imagine what unites such lists of "deviants," particularly when one such deviation (cabbie) is a perfectly legitimate occupation. Yet many agree that these acts and people do in fact share something called "deviance." Some sociologists conceive of deviance as those conditions, persons, or acts that are either disvalued by society<sup>10</sup> or simply offensive.<sup>11</sup> Such a conception, however, does not tell us the basis on which some people find an act or individual offensive and hence disvalue the person. Nor does such a conception recognize the distinct possibility that deviance may be highly valued, that there can be "positive" as well as "negative" deviance, as in the example of the genius. Only a more explicit definition of deviance can identify examples for us.

Some sociologists have recommended an alternate strategy: leaving deviance undefined and proceeding with research on "matters dealing with deviance." Lemert, for example, has suggested that "... the study of deviance can best proceed by identifying bodies of data through primitive, ontological recognition rather than by formal definition."<sup>12</sup> Lemert thinks that research can and should be conducted on processes of differentiation, how individuals come to be differentiated from one another, and what moral significance is attached to these people and their conduct. Yet, a definition of deviance might enable investigators to identify what kinds of "differentiation" would be valuable or interesting to study. After all, there are all kinds of bases of differentiation—age, sex, status, occupational achievement, race, and occupational prestige are only some of them. A definition of deviance would make clear which kinds of differentiation would be regarded as deviant and which as just "different," without any moral connotations attached to the conduct.

### DEFINING DEVIANCE

It is clear that some people regard as deviant certain behavior and individuals that others might not regard as such. Deviance can be defined in four ways, and for this reason lists of examples of kinds of deviance differ. The four ways of defining deviance are the statistical, the absolutist or violation of values, the reactivist, and the normative.

#### Statistical

One of the most common definitions of deviance is variations or departures from the "average." In this conception, deviance is behavior that is not aver-



age; it is behavior that is rare or infrequent. This approach assumes that whatever most people do is "correct."

This definition faces immediate difficulties; it can lead to some confusing conclusions if, for example, the minority is always defined as deviant. With a statistical definition of deviance, those adults who have never stolen anything or never violated the law, those who have never used marijuana, those who never drink alcoholic beverages at night or coffee in the morning, and those who have never had premarital sex relations might be considered deviant.<sup>13</sup> The meaning of deviance is not to be found in the statistical regularities of behavior but in the fact that deviance connotes some difference or departure from a standard of behavior, or what "should" or "should not" be rather than "what is."

### Absolutist or violation of values

Until the 1950s most sociologists, psychiatrists, and psychologists had comparatively little difficulty with the concept of deviance because they considered it an absolute. Deviance was taken for granted, as though everyone agreed that certain violations of rules were abnormal and others were not. Among sociologists, for example, violations of criminal law, regardless of how the acts had become crimes or the degree of support the laws enjoyed, were considered deviations simply because the law said they were. At the same time, certain other legal and ethical violations by businessmen, corporations, and professionals were not often considered within the scope of deviance. In other words, the definition of deviance reflected the values of the society as those values have been determined by sociologists and other social scientists.

For the most part, sociologists generally view social rules as "absolute, clear and obvious to all members of society in all situations."<sup>14</sup> This absolutist, or arbitrary, conception of deviance assumes that the basic rules of a society are obvious and its members are in general agreement on what constitutes deviance, because the standards for acceptable behavior are laid out in advance. Everyone is presumed to know how to act according to universally held values; violations of these values constitute deviance. The sources of these universal standards have usually been identified as the moral values of the middle class and the personal biases of some writers—who, coming from rural, traditional, and religious backgrounds, have viewed many forms of behavior related to urban life and industrial society as destructive of what they thought was moral.<sup>15</sup> Still another version of this definition asserts that conceptions of what is deviant stem ultimately from elite preferences and interests.<sup>16</sup>

The absolutist definition of deviance is still supported, particularly by psychiatrists and those psychologists who regard deviance as a form of sickness. Crime, mental disorder, suicide, alcoholism, drug addiction, and so on become absolutes much as diseases such as cancer, and they are universal



## 6 Deviance

expressions of individual maladjustment regardless of differences in cultural and subcultural norms. The absolutist conception of deviance ignores too many facets of social life:

The absolutist asserts that, regardless of time and social context, certain culture-free standards, such as how fully persons develop their innate potential or how closely they approach the fulfillment of the highest human values, enable one to detect deviance. Thus suicide or alcoholism destroys or inhibits the possibility of the actor's developing his full human potential and is therefore always deviant. . . . The absolutist believes that he knows what really is, what people should be, and what constitutes full and appropriate development.<sup>17</sup>

### Reactivist

Another definition of deviance is the reactivist conception, which defines deviance as behavior that is labeled deviant by others. As one reactivist puts it: "The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label."<sup>18</sup> Thus, in the reactivist definition, acts can be identified as deviant only with reference to the reaction to those acts through the labeling of a person as deviant by society or by its agents of social control.

The reactivist conception of deviance has been very influential during the past two decades or so, and the reasons for its popularity are easy to discern. The reactivist conception attempts to concentrate on what is truly social about deviance—the interaction between the deviant and society (really, the agents or representatives of society in the form of social control agents)—and the consequences of that social relationship. Reactivists thus reject the notion that what is considered deviant depends on some innate quality of the act; rather, they claim that what is and what is not deviant depends exclusively on the reactions of the social audience to the act.

Critics of the reactivist definition of deviance have pointed out that while the interaction between deviant and social-control agents is an important process, it does not *define* deviance. The illogical nature of this view can be illustrated by a case in which a man engaged in an act of burglary is not discovered; because he is not discovered, he is not reacted to and thus not regarded as deviant. Furthermore, even those acts that do elicit a social reaction do so on some basis. That is, there must be something about the act that prompts others to react against it in the first place, and that quality (such as the "innate" wrongfulness of the act, or violation by the act of some agreed-upon standard of behavior) is what really defines deviance.

### Normative

A normative definition of deviance claims that deviance is a violation of a norm. A norm can be thought of as "any standard . . . that states what

human beings should or should not think, say, or do under given circumstances.<sup>19</sup> This implies, first, that behavior may differ from the norm and, second, that it will differ from the norm unless some force, a *sanction*, is used to bring about conformity. Norms are basic to the definition and study of deviance because the potentiality for deviance exists in every norm.<sup>20</sup>

There are two common conceptions of norm: norm as an *evaluation of conduct* and norm as *expected* (or predictable) conduct.<sup>21</sup> The former conception recognizes that some conduct (behavior or beliefs) "ought" or "ought not" to occur, either in specific situations (no smoking in public elevators) or at any time or place (no armed robbery, ever). The latter conception points to regularities of behavior that may be based on habit or tradition (customs). Norms are not necessarily rules. Norms are social properties because norms are shared; rules can be formulated individually and imposed on others (like the laws of a monarch or despot).

In this book we adopt a normative definition of deviance. *Deviance constitutes only those deviations from norms in a disapproved direction such that the deviation elicits, or is likely to elicit if detected, a negative sanction.\** This definition makes the notion of deviance relative to the properties and nature of norms, social groups who subscribe to those norms, and the degree to which those norms are influential over behavior. It is to these issues that we now turn.

## SOCIAL NORMS, SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION, AND THE RELATIVITY OF DEVIANCE

Human social relations and behavior are regulated through social norms. Norms are characteristics of groups (in fact, groups can be defined almost exclusively in terms of their norms) and are thus distinctly social attributes.

### Norms

Norms can be classified according to their degree of acceptance, the mode of any norm's enforcement, the way a norm is transmitted, and the amount of conformity required by the norm. Some social norms may require considerable force to ensure compliance, others little or none. Some norms are

\*This definition differs slightly from that in previous editions, where we attempted to take into account the degree of tolerance for deviance that exists in different social groups. It appears, however, that the idea of tolerance is more a property of norms than something independent from norms. Thus our definition merely takes as deviant violations from norms in a negative direction. We realize that we are deliberately neglecting a potentially important and understudied area: such departures from norms in a positive direction as acts of bravery or heroism, which may be things that persons "ought" to do but are sufficiently valued as to be held as "above and beyond the call of duty." Instances of positive deviance elicit positive reactions or sanctions.



## 8 Deviance

fairly stable in nature; others are more localized.<sup>22</sup> Rarely are individuals in a group consciously aware of the often arbitrary nature of the social norms in their group since they have been introduced to them in the ongoing process of living. Norms are learned and transmitted in groups from generation to generation. In this way, individuals have incorporated into their own life organization the language, the ideas, and the beliefs of the groups to which they belong. Human beings thus see the world not with their eyes alone, for if they saw only with their eyes, each would see the same thing; rather, they see the world through their cultural and other group experiences. Even moral judgments are generally not those of an individual but of the group or groups to which that individual belongs. The significance of the group nature of norms and of understanding the world through norms has probably never been stated more cogently, or poetically, than by Ellsworth Faris many years ago: "For we live in a world of 'cultural relativity' and the whole furniture of earth and choir of heaven are to be described and discussed as they are conceived by men. Caviar is not a delicacy to the general [population]. Cows are not food to the Hindu. Mohammed is not the prophet of God to me. To an atheist, God is not God at all."<sup>23</sup>

Norms are crucial in the maintenance of order. They may be regarded as cultural ideals, or in terms of what we expect in certain situations. For example, sexual behavior may be examined as cultural ideals or in terms of actual practices. Ideal cultural norms can be inferred from what people say or by observing what they sanction or react against. *Proscriptive norms* tell people what they "ought not" do; *prescriptive norms* tell them what they "ought" to do.

Not only are norms social or group standards for conduct, but they also provide categories through which we interpret our experiences. Norms provide us with a means by which to interpret actions ("He should not have laughed at the funeral") and events ("Funerals are certainly sad").

Since norms are properties of groups, it should not be surprising that different groups have different norms. One is expected to behave differently according to the group to which one belongs. What is deviant in a specific group may be perfectly acceptable behavior in another. Sociologists often refer to such differences as subcultural differences.

### Social differentiation

Norms are an integral part of the organization of all societies, from small tribal groups to modern industrial societies. In complex modern societies, group norms may differ radically from one another; in other cases, the norms simply differ in emphasis. As a result, people who belong to a number of groups, each of which either has different norms or emphasizes them differently, may experience personal conflict. We are often expected to act in different ways according to what role we are performing at the time. A

**social role** is merely a collection of norms conveying expectations about appropriate conduct for people in a particular position. Thus, the norms governing the behavior of husbands are often different from those governing the behavior of bachelors; the role of consumer is different from that of sales clerk; and so on. The norms and roles a person acquires from the family group do not necessarily always agree with the norms and social roles of the play group, age or peer group, work group, or political group. Certain groups may become more important to an individual's life organization than others, and he or she may as a result tend to conform more closely to the norms of the groups with which the individual feels more closely identified. Although the family group is important, it is only one of several groups related to a person's behavior, whether deviant or nondeviant. Many other sources of norms in modern societies are important: social class, occupation, neighborhood, school, church, and immediate friends.

Among more homogeneous people, such as primitive or folk societies, most norms and values are perceived in a like fashion by group members, although certainly not entirely.<sup>24</sup> Members of such societies thus come to share many common objectives and meanings, in contrast to more modern, complex societies in which social groups arise out of race, occupation, ethnic background, religion, political party affiliation, residence, and many more. Particularly important in the development of this differentiation are social class and age or peer groups.

## Subcultures

Sometimes social groups develop and share a set of values and meanings not shared by the society of which they are a part. When this occurs, we speak of a **subculture**—a “culture within a culture.” More specifically, a subculture is a collection of norms, values, and beliefs whose content is distinguishable from that of the dominant culture. This implies that the people who subscribe to their subculture participate in and share the “larger” culture of which the subculture is a part. At the same time, it implies that the subculture has some norms and meanings peculiar to itself. A subculture does not necessarily oppose the larger culture; if it does, the term **counterculture** is applicable.<sup>25</sup> Groups such as a criminal youth gang are referred to as countercultures.

A variety of subcultures and countercultures characterize modern industrial societies. Cohen has suggested that subcultures arise in highly differentiated societies when a number of individuals have similar problems with the prevailing culture; that is, subcultures represent collective solutions to shared problems posed by the dominant culture.<sup>26</sup> This is the same process some criminologists have described as the origin of subcultures within institutions for deviants, such as prisons.<sup>27</sup> If the subculture arises as the solution to some problem (by providing an alternative for the acquisition of status



## 10 Deviance

for gang boys, or lessening the pains of imprisonment for inmates), the content of the norms within the subculture should prescribe ideals different from those found in the dominant culture.

The social norms and behavior of social classes in the United States vary greatly with respect to many attitudes and values. The norms of longshoremen differ from those of doctors and professors; construction workers display attitudes markedly different from those of college students. Child-rearing patterns have been shown to differ from one social class to another. Lower-class parents, for example, tend to use physical punishment more often as a disciplinary measure than do middle-class parents, although not as much as some expect.<sup>28</sup> Most crimes of violence such as murder, aggravated assault, and forcible rape are committed by lower-class individuals, and the existence of a lower-class "subculture of violence," discussed in Chapter 4, may offer a partial explanation.

To summarize the importance of group norms in modern complex societies, these generalizations will be useful. (1) In modern societies there may be almost as pronounced differences among the groups within the society with respect to the norms of accepted behavior as there are differences between large cultures themselves. (2) Any logical explanation of how members of certain deviant subgroups act as they do must trace the development of the behavior in the same way that any member of any cultural group learns to act, for example, how Koreans learn through their culture to be Koreans—how to act, think, and interpret the world as a Korean. (3) Finally, remember that even when the norms of any given family are discussed, probably the discussion is actually of the social class, occupational group, or some specific subcultural group to which the family happens to belong.

### The relativity of deviance

The fact that deviance is a violation of a norm does not identify whose norm it is. Because norms are relative (to groups, to places, to times), deviance is relative. This is why an almost endless variety of acts and characteristics is considered deviant, depending on the conditions and circumstances. These include, for example, physical impairments such as being crippled, blind, or mentally retarded; violations of rules of etiquette; lying; nudism; cheating; window-peeping; exhibitionism; using marijuana and cocaine; illegitimacy; nonsupport of minor children; violations of safety laws; hijacking; health-care quackery; and violations of certain amateur and professional sports rules. Social types perceived by some as deviants include reckless drivers, pacifists, racists, "hippies," radicals, "squares," and conservatives, the very rich and the very poor, old people, drinkers and nondrinkers, and motorcycle-gang members. Deviance may be imputed to more respectable higher-status people as well and may include such violations of laws and