Introduction to Deviance

Public Nudity

Founded in 1972, the Fremont Fair is one of Seattle's most beloved neighborhood street festivals, featuring a weekend of eclectic activities that celebrate the quirky community of Fremont, the self-proclaimed "center of the universe." Held annually in mid-June to coincide with the Summer Solstice, the event draws more than 100,000 people to shop, eat, drink, mingle, groove, and enjoy all manners of creative expression. Artistic highlights include craft and art booths, street performers, local bands, wacky decorated art cars, the free-spirited Solstice Parade produced by the Fremont Arts Council, and many other oddities that personify Fremont's official motto "Delibertus Quirkus"—Freedom to be Peculiar.

—Fremont Fair (2010; see also Fremont Fair, 2018b)

The Fremont Arts Council (FAC) is a community-based celebration arts organization. We value volunteerism; community participation; artistic expression; and the sharing of arts skills. We welcome the participation of everyone regardless of who they are, or what they think or believe.

The rules of the Fremont Solstice Parade, which make this event distinct from other types of parades, are:

- No written or printed words or logos

- No animals (except service animals)

- No motorized vehicles (except wheelchairs)

- No real weapons or fire

—Fremont Arts Council (2018)

It is true that a parade with no logos, animals, or motorized vehicles is different from most parades that we experience in the United States. But one more thing sets the

Fremont Solstice Parade apart from other parades: the public displays of nudity. Every year at the parade, a contingent of nude, body-painted bicyclists (both men and women) ride through the streets of Fremont as part of the parade. Rain or shine (and let's face it, there can be a lot of rain in Seattle in June), a large group of naked adults cycle down the street as the crowds cheer and wave. The Fremont City Council estimates that more than 100,000 people visit the weekend fair, and pictures show that the streets are crowded with parade watchers, from the very young to the elderly.

The traditions of the "free-spirited event" are explained on the Fremont Fair webpage:

> **What is the etiquette with body paint?** We won't deny it, the Fremont Fair and Fremont Solstice Parade are partially famous for body-painted bicyclists and revelers. If you are one of the body painted participants please note: The Fremont restaurants and bars greatly appreciate if you can carry a towel with you to place on the chair/booth you dine and drink in. If you don't, they are left scrubbing for weeks to come, which is a mess and can permanently damage decor. They love to have you in their establishments, but please be respectful of their furnishings. Also, remember that many families with small children attend the fair. Please be considerate of children's eye level. Plus, if you are not on a bike you should cover it up.

> **Is the Fremont Fair appropriate for children?** The Fremont Fair welcomes family members of all ages! In fact, there are special activities just for kids and families. However, Solstice-goers should be aware this is a very eclectic and free-spirited event. Some Solstice guests appear in full or partial body paint, and a variety of other colorful costumes (this is typically limited to Saturday's festivities.) (Fremont Fair, 2018a)

Contrast this event with the recent announcement that a serial flasher was sentenced in San Diego in the summer of 2019. The flasher who pleaded guilty to four misdemeanor charges of indecent exposure was sentenced to 180 days in jail and three years of probation and was required to waive his Fourth Amendment search and seizure rights. In addition, he is required to register as a sex offender and go to counseling (Horn, 2019).

While both of these events center on public displays of nudity, one is celebrated while the other is vilified. Why?

Photos 1.1 and 1.2   When is a public display of nudity considered deviant? When is it celebrated?

Introduction

You might expect that a book about deviance would start with a definition of deviance. But like all things worth studying, a simple definition does not exist. For example, in the stories above, one public display of nudity was not only welcomed but celebrated by 6-year-olds and grandmothers alike, but another display led to arrest and jail time. Why? This chapter and this book explore how it can be that the Fremont Solstice Parade was celebrated in the same summer that a flasher was arrested and sentenced to 180 days in jail.

Conceptions of Deviance

All deviance textbooks offer their "conceptions of deviance." Rubington and Weinberg (2008) argue that there are generally two conceptions of deviance: "objectively given" and "subjectively problematic." Clinard and Meier (2015) also suggest two general conceptions of deviance, the **normative conception** and the

reactionist or **relativist conception**. Whereas Thio, Taylor, and Schwartz (2012) argue that we can view deviance from a **positivist perspective** or a social constructionist perspective.

While none of these authors are using the same language, they are defining similar conceptions of deviance. The first conception—that of an "objectively given," normative, or positivist conception of deviance—assumes that there is a general set of norms of behavior, conduct, and conditions on which we can agree. **Norms** are rules of behavior that guide people's actions. Sumner (1906) broke norms down into three categories: folkways, mores, and laws. **Folkways** are everyday norms that do not generate much uproar if they are violated. Think of them as behaviors that might be considered rude if engaged in, like standing too close to someone while speaking or picking one's nose. **Mores** are "moral" norms that may generate more outrage if broken. In a capitalist society, homelessness and unemployment can elicit outrage if the person is considered unworthy of sympathy. Similarly, drinking too much or alcoholism may be seen as a lapse in moral judgment. Finally, the third type of norm is the **law**, considered the strongest norm because it is backed by official sanctions (or a formal response). In this conception, then, deviance becomes a violation of a rule understood by the majority of the group. This rule may be minor, in which case the deviant is seen as "weird but harmless," or the rule may be major, in which case the deviant is seen as "criminal." The obvious problem with this conceptualization goes back to the earlier examples of reactions to public nudity, where we see that violation of a most "serious" norm (law) can receive quite different reactions. This leads to the second conception.

The second conception of deviance—the "subjectively problematic," reactionist or relativist, **social constructionist conception**—assumes that the definition of deviance is constructed based on the interactions of those in society. According to this conception, behaviors or conditions are not inherently deviant; they become so when the definition of deviance is applied to them. The study of deviance is not about why certain individuals violate norms but, instead, about how those norms are constructed. Social constructionists believe that our understanding of the world is in constant negotiation between actors. Those who have a relativist conception of deviance define deviance as those behaviors that elicit a definition or label of deviance:

> Social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders. For this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an "offender." The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label. (Becker, 1973, p. 9)

This is a fruitful conceptualization, but it is also problematic. What about very serious violations of norms that are never known or reacted to? Some strict

4 Deviance and Social Control

Be Careful Who *You* Are Calling Deviant: Body Rituals Among the Nacirema

In 1956, Horace Miner published an article on the Nacirema, a poorly understood culture that he claimed engaged in body rituals and ceremonies that were unique, obsessive, and almost magical. He highlighted several of these beliefs and actions:

- The fundamental belief of the Nacirema people is that the human body is ugly and prone to "debility and disease."

- The people engage in rituals and ceremonies in a "ritual center" considered to be a shrine. Affluent members of society may have more than one shrine devoted to these rituals and ceremonies.

- Each shrine has, near its center point, a box or chest filled with magical potions. Many believe they cannot live without these magical potions and so collect to the point of hoarding them, afraid to let them go even when it is determined they may no longer hold their magic.

- The people have an "almost pathological horror and fascination with the mouth, the condition of which is believed to have

a supernatural influence on all social relationships. Were it not for the rituals of the mouth, they believe that their teeth would fall out, their gums bleed, their jaws shrink, their friends desert them, and their lovers reject them" (p. 504).

Miner never lets on that this fascinating culture that believes magic will transform its members' ugly, diseased bodies is actually American (Nacirema spelled backward) culture. But his point is made: Our understanding and interpretation of events and behaviors is often relative. If we step back from the everyday events in which we engage with little thought, our most accepted practices can be made to seem deviant.

Take a moment to examine an everyday activity that you engage in from the perspective of an outsider. What might watching television, going to a sporting event, babysitting, or surfing look like to those who have never experienced it? Can you write a description of this everyday event from an outsider's point of view?

Source: Miner (1956).

reactionists or relativists would argue that these acts (beliefs or attitudes) are not deviant. Most of us would agree that killing someone and making it look like he or she simply skipped the country is deviant. However, there may be no reaction.

A third conception of deviance that has not been advanced in many textbooks (for an exception, see DeKeseredy, Ellis, & Alvi, 2005) is a critical definition of deviance (DeKeseredy & Dragiewicz, 2012; Jensen, 2007). Those working from a **critical conception** of deviance argue that the normative understanding of deviance is established by those in power to maintain and enhance their power. It suggests that explorations of deviance have focused on a White, male, middle- to upper-class understanding of society that implies that people of color, women, and

the working poor are by definition deviant. Instead of focusing on individual types of deviance, this conception critiques the social system that exists and creates such norms in the first place. This, too, is a useful and powerful approach, but there are still some things that the vast majority of society agrees are so immoral, unethical, and deviant that they should be illegal and that the system can serve to protect our interests against.

Given that each of these conceptualizations is useful but problematic, we do not adhere to a single conception of deviance in this book because the theories of deviance do not adhere to a single conception. You will see that several of our theories assume a normative conception, whereas several assume a social constructionist or critical conception. As you explore each theory, think about what the conception of deviance and theoretical perspective mean for the questions we ask and answer about deviance (Table 1.1).

The Sociological Imagination

Those of us who are sociologists can probably remember the first time we were introduced to the concept of the **sociological imagination**. C. Wright Mills argues that the only way to truly understand the experiences of the individual is to first understand the societal, institutional, and historical conditions that

Table 1.1 Conceptions of Deviance

Conceptions of Deviance	Assumptions	Definition of Deviance	Example Research Question
Normative or positivist	There is a general set of norms of behavior, conduct, and conditions on which we can agree.	Deviance is a violation of a rule understood by the majority of the group.	"What leads an individual to engage in deviant behavior?"
Relativist or social constructionist	Nothing is inherently deviant; our understanding of the world is in constant negotiation between actors.	Deviance is any behavior that elicits a definition or label of deviance.	"What characteristics increase the likelihood that an individual or a behavior will be defined as deviant?"
Critical	The normative understanding of deviance is established by those in power to maintain and enhance their power.	Instead of focusing on individual types of deviance, this conception critiques the social system that exists and creates such norms in the first place.	"What is the experience of the homeless, and who is served by their treatment as deviant?"

How Do *You* Define Deviance?

As Justice Potter Stewart of the Supreme Court once famously wrote about trying to define obscene materials, "I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description; and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it when I see it" (*Jacobellis v. Ohio*, 1964). Those who do not study deviance for a living probably find themselves in the same boat; it may be hard to write a definition, but how hard could it be to "know it when we see it"?

Choose a busy place to sit and observe human behavior for one hour. Write down all the behaviors that you observe during that hour. Do you consider any of these behaviors to be deviant? Which conception of deviance are you using when you define each as deviant? Might there be some instances (e.g., places or times) when that behavior you consider to be nondeviant right now might become deviant? Finally, bring your list of behaviors to class. In pairs, share your list of behaviors and your definitions of deviant behaviors with your partner. Do you agree on your categorization? Why or why not?

individual is living under. In other words, Mills believes that no man, woman, or child is an island. Below is an excerpt from Mills's (1959/2000) profound book, *The Sociological Imagination*.

> Men do not usually define the troubles they endure in terms of historical change and institutional contradiction. The well-being they enjoy, they do not usually impute to the big ups and downs of the societies in which they live. Seldom aware of the intricate connection between the patterns of their own lives and the course of world history, ordinary men do not usually know what this connection means for the kinds of men they are becoming and for the kinds of history-making in which they might take part. They do not possess the quality of mind essential to grasp the interplay of man and society, of biography and history, of self and world. They cannot cope with their personal troubles in such ways as to control the structural transformations that usually lie behind them. . . .
>
> The sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals. It enables him to take into account how individuals, in the welter of their daily experience, often become falsely conscious of their social positions. With that welter, the framework of modern society is sought, and within that framework the psychologies of a variety of men and women are formulated. By such means the personal uneasiness of individuals is focused upon explicit troubles and the indifference of publics is transformed into involvement with public issues.

The first fruit of this imagination—and the first lesson of the social science that embodies it—is the idea that the individual can understand his own experience and gauge his own fate only by locating himself within his period, that he can know his own chances in life only by becoming aware of those of all individuals in his circumstances. In many ways it is a terrible lesson; in many ways a magnificent one. . . .

In these terms, consider unemployment. When, in a city of 100,000, only one man is unemployed, that is his personal trouble, and for its relief we properly look to the character of the man, his skills, and his immediate opportunities. But when in a nation of 50 million employees, 15 million men are unemployed, that is an issue, and we may not hope to find its solution within the range of opportunities open to any one individual. The very structure of opportunities has collapsed. Both the correct statement of the problem and the range of possible solutions require us to consider the economic and political institutions of the society, and not merely the personal situation and character of a scatter of individuals. . . .

What we experience in various and specific milieux, I have noted, is often caused by structural changes. Accordingly, to understand the changes of many personal milieux we are required to look beyond them. And the number and variety of such structural changes increase as the institutions within which we live become more embracing and more intricately connected with one another. To be aware of the idea of social structure and to use it with sensibility is to be capable of tracing such linkages among a great variety of milieux. To be able to do that is to possess the sociological imagination. (*The Sociological Imagination* by C. Wright Mills [2000] pp. 3–11. By permission of Oxford University Press, USA.)

One of our favorite examples of the sociological imagination in action is the "salad bar" example. In the United States, one of the persistent philosophies is that of individualism and personal responsibility. Under this philosophy, individuals are assumed to be solely responsible for their successes and failures. This philosophy relies heavily on the notion that individuals are rational actors who weigh the costs and benefits of their actions, can see the consequences of their behavior, and have perfect information. The salad bar example helps those who rely heavily on this conception of the individual to see the importance of social structure to individual behavior.

No one doubts that when you order a salad bar at a restaurant, you are responsible for building your own salad. Every person makes his or her own salad, and no two salads look exactly alike. Some make salads with lots of lettuce and vegetables, very little cheese, and fat-free dressing. Others create a salad that is piled high with cheese, croutons, and lots and lots of dressing. Those who are unhappy with their choices while making their salad have only themselves to blame, right? Not necessarily.

A salad is only as good as the salad bar it is created from. In other words, individuals making a salad can only make a salad from the ingredients supplied from the salad bar. If the restaurant is out of croutons that day or decided to put watermelon out instead of cantaloupe, the individual must build his or her salad within these constraints. Some individuals with a great sense of personal power or privilege may request additional items from the back of the restaurant, but most individuals will choose to build a salad based on the items available to them on the salad bar. In other words, the individual choice is constrained by the larger social forces of delivery schedules, food inventory, and worker decision-making. The sociological imagination is especially important to understand because it is the building block for our understanding of deviance and sociological theory.

Photo 1.3
The salad bar can represent the restriction on choices that individuals have. We can only make our salad with the ingredients offered to us on the salad bar.

The sociological imagination helps us understand the impact of social forces on both engaging in and reacting to deviance. One of the easiest reactions to or assumptions about people who engage in deviance is that they are "sick" or "mentally ill." This assumption is what we refer to as **pathologizing** individuals. It puts all the responsibility for their actions onto them without asking what impact the social forces and social structures around them might have. The sociological imagination reminds us that individuals exist in a larger social system, and they impact that larger social system just as it impacts them. One of the ways to systematically understand these impacts is to understand sociological theory.

The Importance of Theory and Its Relationship to Research

The three of us (the authors of this book) spent many hours discussing the importance of **theory** as we wrote this book. Why did we choose to write a textbook about deviance with theory as the central theme? Many of you may also be asking this question and worrying that a book about theory may suck the life right out of a discussion about deviance. Really, who wants to be thinking about theory when we could be talking about "nuts, sluts, and preverts" (Liazos, 1972)? But this is precisely why we must make theory central to any discussion of deviance—because theory helps us *systematically* think about deviance. If it weren't for theory, classes about deviance would be akin to watching MTV's *Jersey Shore* (*Family Vacation* edition) or Bravo's *The Real Housewives of New Jersey* (why is New Jersey so

Deviance in Popular Culture

Many types of deviance are portrayed and investigated in popular culture. Films and shows on television, the internet, and social media, for example, illustrate a wide range of deviant behavior and social control. There are often several interpretations of what acts are deviant. How do you know when an act or person is deviant? One way to develop your sociological imagination is to watch films or shows, listen to music, and engage with social media from a critical perspective and to think about how different theories would explain the deviant behavior and the reactions portrayed. Films, music, and social media offer examples of cultural norms, different types of deviant behavior, and coping with stigma.

Television—reality shows and the TLC network in particular—features a number of programs offering an inside view of people perceived as deviant or different in some way and how they deal with stigma from various sources.

The internet may be one of the best places to go to for examples of deviance and social control. It is all right at our fingertips all the time.

In each of the chapters that follow, we will suggest one or more features of pop culture for you to watch from the theoretical perspective outlined in the chapter. We think you'll soon agree: Deviance is all around us.

popular for these shows?)—it may be entertaining, but we have no clearer understanding of the "real" people of New Jersey when we are done watching.

Theory is what turns anecdotes about human behavior into a systematic understanding of societal behavior. It does this by playing an intricate part in research and the scientific method.

The **scientific method** is a systematic procedure that helps *safeguard against researcher bias* and the power of anecdotes by following several simple steps (Figure 1.1). First, a researcher starts with a research question. If the researcher is engaging in deductive research, this question comes from a theoretical perspective. This theory and the research question help the researcher create hypotheses (testable statements) about a phenomenon being studied. Once the researcher has created hypotheses, he or she collects data to test these hypotheses. We discuss data and data collection methods for deviance research in detail in Chapter 3. The researcher then analyzes these data, interprets the findings, and concludes whether or not his or her hypotheses have been supported. These findings then inform whether the theory the researcher used helps with our understanding of the world or should be revised to take into consideration information that does not support its current model. If a researcher is engaging in inductive research, he or she also starts with a research question, but in the beginning, the researcher's theory may be what we call "grounded theory." Using qualitative methods, such as participant observation or in-depth interviews, the researcher would collect data and analyze these data, looking for common themes throughout. These findings would be used to create a theory "from the ground up." In other words, while a deductive researcher would start with a theory that guides every step of the

Figure 1.1   The Scientific Method Allows Us to Systematically
Examine Social Phenomena Such as Deviance

Theory

Hypotheses

Scientific
Method

Data Collection

Findings (Conclusions)

Results
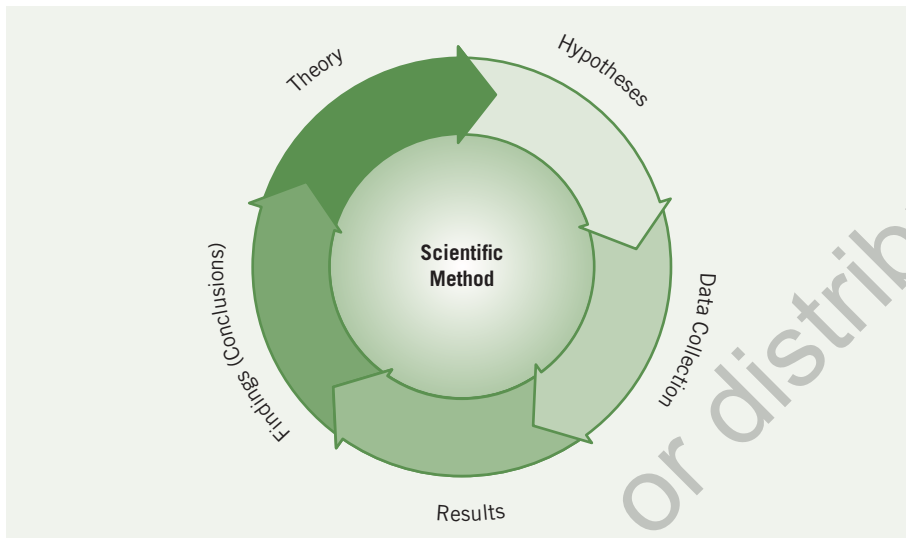
research, an inductive researcher might start with a broad theoretical perspective and a research question and, through the systematic collection of data and rigorous analyses, would hone that broad theoretical perspective into a more specific theory. This theory would then be tested again as the researcher continued on with his or her work, or others, finding this new theory to be useful and interesting, might opt to use it to inform both their deductive and inductive work.

If we go back to our example of reality shows about people from New Jersey, we may see the difference between an anecdote and a more theoretically grounded understanding of human behavior. After watching both *Jersey Shore* and *The Real Housewives of New Jersey*, we may conclude that people from New Jersey are loud, self-absorbed, and overly tan (all three of which might be considered deviant behaviors or characteristics). However, we have not systematically studied the people of New Jersey to arrive at our conclusion. Using inductive reasoning, based on our initial observation, we may start with a research question that states that because the people of New Jersey are loud, self-absorbed, and overly tan, we are interested in knowing about the emotional connections they have with friends and family. (We may suspect that self-absorbed people are more likely to have relationships with conflict.) However, as we continue along the scientific method, we systematically gather data from more than just the reality stars of these two shows. We interview teachers, police officers, retired lawyers, and college students. What we soon learn as we analyze these interviews is that the general public in New Jersey is really not all that tan, loud, or self-absorbed, and they speak openly and

warmly about strong connections to family and friends. This research leads us to reexamine our initial theory about the characteristics of people from New Jersey and offer a new theory based on systematic analysis. This new theory then informs subsequent research on the people of New Jersey. If we did not have theory and the scientific method, our understanding of deviance would be based on wild observations and anecdotes, which may be significantly misleading and unrepresentative of the social reality.

In addition to being systematic and testable (through the scientific method), theory offers *solutions to the problems* we study. One of the hardest knocks against

The Poverty of the Sociology of Deviance: Nuts, Sluts, and Preverts

Liazos (1972) argues that the study of deviance used to be the study of "nuts, sluts, and preverts," a sensationalistic ritual in finger-pointing and moralizing. The focus was on individuals and their "aberrant" behavior. This meant that the most harmful behaviors in society—the ones that affected us most thoroughly—were ignored and, in being ignored, normalized. Liazos referred to these forms of deviance as *covert institutional violence.*

According to Liazos, the poverty of the study of deviance was threefold: First, even when trying to point out how normal the "deviance" or "deviant" is, by pointing out the person or behavior, we are acknowledging the difference. If that difference really were invisible, how and why would we be studying it? This meant by even studying deviance, a moral choice had already been made—some differences were studied; some were not. Second, by extension, deviance research rarely studied elite deviance and structural deviance, instead focusing on "dramatic" forms of deviance, such as prostitution, juvenile delinquency, and homosexuality. Liazos argues that it is important to, instead, study covert institutional violence, which leads to such things as poverty and exploitation. Instead of studying tax

cheats, we should study unjust tax laws; instead of studying prostitution, we should study racism and sexism as deviance. Finally, Liazos argues that even those who profess to study the relationship between power and deviance do not really acknowledge the importance of power. These researchers still give those in positions of power a pass to engage in harmful behavior by not defining much elite deviance as deviance at all.

The implication of this is that those who study deviance have allowed the definition of deviance to be settled for them. And this definition benefits not only individuals in power but also a system that has routinely engaged in harmful acts. While Liazos wrote this important critique of the sociology of deviance in 1972, much of his analysis holds up to this day. In this book, we examine theories expressly capable of addressing this critique.

As you explore each of the theories offered to you in this book, remember Liazos's critique. Which theories are more likely to focus on "nuts, sluts, and preverts"? Which are more likely to focus on elite deviance and new conceptions of deviance?

Source: Compiled from Alexander Liazos, 1972, in *Social Problems*, 20(1), 103–120.

the study of deviance and crime has been the historically carnival sideshow nature (Liazos, 1972) of much of the study of deviance. By focusing on individuals and a certain caste of deviants (those without power) and using less-than-systematic methods, deviance researchers were just pointing at "nuts, sluts, and preverts" and not advancing their broader understanding of the interplay of power, social structure, and behavior. Theory can focus our attention on this interplay and offer solutions beyond the individual and the deficit model, which focuses on the individual (or group) in question and blames the deviance on something broken, lacking, or deficient in him or her. Bendle (1999) also argued that the study of deviance was in a state of crisis because researchers were no longer studying relevant problems or offering useful solutions. One of Bendle's solutions is to push for new theories of deviant behavior.

Theoretical solutions to the issue of deviance are especially important because many of our current responses to deviant behavior are erroneously based on an individualistic notion of human nature that does not take into account humans as social beings or the importance of social structure, social institutions, power, and broad societal changes for deviance and deviants.

Global Perspectives on Deviance

A recent issue of *USA Today* featured a short article on weird laws from around the world. Although all are truly "weird," some appear to actually have a rational reason for their existence while others do not. For example, in Rome, it is illegal to eat or drink near landmarks, and in Greece, it is illegal to wear stiletto heels. While both these laws appear to be rather random, when explored, they make perfect sense. The laws are designed to preserve the ancient landmarks found in both places. It is fairly obvious that eating and drinking in historic places could lead to sticky walls or ruined artifacts, but stiletto heels may be just as dangerous. It turns out that the pressure from a thin stiletto heel is roughly equal to the pressure of an elephant walking in the same spot. Thailand and Canada both have laws that dictate how people treat or use their currency. In Thailand, it is illegal to step on the nation's currency. All currency in Thailand carries a picture of the king, and because the king is so revered, it is a great offense to treat the currency and thus the king disrespectfully. In Canada, it is illegal to use more than 25 pennies in a single transaction. Why? We're not quite sure, except there appears to be a strong feeling that the penny is worthless—the government has phased out the coin. Not to be outdone, the United States has its fair share of weird laws, too. In Washington State, it is illegal to harass Bigfoot, Sasquatch, or any other undiscovered subspecies. In North Dakota, it is illegal to serve beer and pretzels at the same time at a bar or restaurant. And in Missouri, you can't ride in a car with an uncaged bear.

One of the most interesting ways to examine deviance is to look at it in a cross-cultural or global context. It is easy to see how our understanding of deviance transcends or is impacted by differing beliefs and experiences when we compare across borders.

First, there is no greater example of the relativist nature of deviance than examining the laws of a country or region. While it is unlikely anyone is getting into a car with an uncaged bear anytime soon, it is much more likely that beer and pretzels will be served at the same time, that stiletto heels will be worn, and that someone might mistreat the currency of a country. While some might engage in these acts knowing their behavior will be defined as deviant, it is our bet that a good number will have no clue that their actions are defined as deviant, at least by the laws in that country. Second, the responses to these forms of deviance are also relative. While it is true that the law says you cannot eat or drink near historic landmarks in Rome, it is rarely enforced, and while the authors have not had the pleasure of drinking a beer in North Dakota, we bet we could find at least one restaurant that would serve us a pretzel, too. None of us are willing to test the uncaged-bear law.

In a book devoted to theory and social control, it is important to see how those theories can explain not only deviance in the United States but also how we experience deviance around the world.

Deviance and Disparity

We have included a section in each chapter that discusses deviance and disparity. This might be a look at how in some situations behaviors are seen as deviant while in other situations they are not, or that some individuals may be considered deviant while other individuals are not. In other words, we pause to offer an example of how the impact of race, class, gender, sexuality, or geography may impact our understanding of deviance. Depending on the chapter, we have chosen to do this in one of two ways. Some chapters focus on a single deviance that, while engaged in by a variety of individuals, is interpreted differently depending on the characteristics of who is engaging in it; other chapters focus on how disparity might impact a perception of deviance or likelihood to engage in deviance. For example, in Chapter 4, we describe the Occupy Wall Street Movement and the impact that a changing economy has on individuals' experiences and expectations. In Chapter 6, we focus on how differential association theory and social learning theories may explain gender disparities in deviance. And in Chapter 9, we examine felon disenfranchisement and voter suppression, much of which is linked to issues of race and class. In all of our chapters, we want to highlight how disparity may impact deviance or deviance may impact disparity and how behaviors are often on very different sides of the power spectrum. In all of the chapters, we first offer a substantive discussion of the deviance before we analyze it from the perspective of the chapter.

Ideas in Action

For the purposes of this book, we are expanding the discussion of public policy to include public and private programs, which is why we have titled this section

in each chapter "Ideas in Action." While a single, concrete definition of public policy is elusive, there is general agreement that public policy is the sometimes unwritten actions taken by the city, state, or federal government. These actions may be as formal as a law or regulation or may be more informal in nature, such as an institutional custom. While public policy is often associated with government guidelines or actions, we also find it important to highlight the work of public and private programs, nonprofits, and nongovernmental organizations. For this reason, our "Ideas in Action" section may highlight a private program or entity or a public (state or federal) guideline, rule, or law that affects our understanding or control of deviance.

Some argue that tension exists between public policies and private programs created to address deviance, crime, and public well-being. These tensions are twofold. The first argument involves what some say is a movement of public well-being out of the public realm (the government) to a private and more likely profit-motivated industry (private programs). This shift is often referred to as neoliberalism.

> The term neoliberalism refers to a political, economic, and social ideology that argues that low government intervention, a privatization of services that in the past have predominately been the domain of government, an adherence to a free-market philosophy, and an emphasis on deregulation (Frericks, Maier, & de Graaf, 2009) is "the source and arbiter of human freedoms" (Mudge, 2008, p. 704). What may be one of the most important aspects of neoliberalism from the standpoint of those focused on social justice, then, is this link between the free markets and morality. While free markets have proven time and again to place the utmost emphasis on the profit motive (because this is what the free market is: an adherence to the notion of supply and demand)—this connection between free markets and "freedom" seems to intrinsically suggest that free markets, and, therefore, neoliberalism, have individual well-being as their focus.
>
> However, individual well-being in the form of a guarantee that individuals will have access to the basic human needs of shelter, food, clothing, good health care, and safety from harm is not always produced by two of the most central components of neoliberalism—privatization and deregulation. In some ways, privatization and deregulation are opposite sides of the same coin. Privatization means the "opening up of the market" and the loosening of the rules (regulations) that are often the purview of the government. But privatization, at its core, is also the introduction of the profit motive into services that, at *their* core, are about protecting the human condition. A reliance on a neoliberal philosophy and free market economy means that we begin to evaluate everything through the lens of profit and cost-benefit analyses. We abdicate the responsibility of the state to private companies and then feign surprise when those companies defer to the profit motive. . . . In addition to

the increased preference for free markets and profits, privatization both reduces state responsibility for the care of its citizens and masks the lack of preparation of the government to care for its citizens that quickly develops (Mitchell, 2001). (Bates & Swan, 2010, p. 442)

As you read and evaluate the policies and programs we have chosen, keep this argument in mind. Does it play out with the programs we discuss?

The second argument is that public programs may more likely focus on **suppression** (the social control of deviance), whereas private programs may more likely focus on rehabilitation and prevention. In general, suppression policies are those that focus on the punishment and social control of behavior deemed deviant. **Rehabilitation programs** focus on groups or individuals who are deemed likely deviant and involve attempts to change this assumed deviant behavior. **Prevention programs** may be focused on groups or individuals who are assumed to be more "at risk" for deviant behavior, or they may be focused on decreasing the likelihood of deviance in all groups equally. Many argue that there has been a buildup of suppression policies in the state and federal governments at the expense of rehabilitation and prevention programs. Meranze (2009) argues,

From the recently repealed Rockefeller drug laws through the expansion of the prison systems in Texas and Florida, onto the increasingly punitive response to poverty in the Clinton years, and the continuing disparity in sentencing laws, states and the federal government have chosen the Iron State over the Golden State. And whatever arguments there may be about the relative effectiveness of imprisonment in affecting crime rates (a topic of great controversy amongst scholars and analysts), one thing seems certain: a policy that exacerbates the brutalization of society is not one that will make us safer. Investing in prisons means investing in institutions that produce neither goods nor new opportunities (aside from the limited jobs available for prison employees and the one-time opportunities in construction); money spent on imprisonment is money taken from rebuilding our worn out infrastructure, our schools, our communities, and our economic future. Insofar as corrections remains at the heart of our social policy—rather than as a supplemental or marginal support as it was throughout most of United States history—it is the Iron State stealing from the future of the Golden State. (para. 6)

Finally, according to Barlow and Decker (2010), "Policy ought to be guided by science rather than by ideology" (p. xi). As we have already briefly discussed, a central part of the scientific method is theory. Therefore, a book whose primary focus is a theoretical examination of deviance and social control should have as one of its central themes an examination of public policy from the viewpoint of each of these theories.

The reaction to deviance has often been spurred by interests well beyond science. Barlow and Decker (2010) point out,

> The pen remains firmly in the hands of politicians and legislators, whose allegiance is less to the products of science—for example, how to deal with the AIDS pandemic, warnings about global warming, and the ineffectiveness of the Strategic Defense Initiative, or SDI (otherwise known as "Star Wars")—than to the whims of voters and the personal agendas of their counselors and financial supporters. (pp. xi–xii)

This means the reactions to deviance have often focused on the stigmatization and criminalization of a variety of behaviors and, in many instances, on the harsh punishment of those behaviors.

We offer a wide variety of public policies, or "ideas in action," that were designed to address deviant behaviors. It will be your job to evaluate these programs and policies for their intents and subsequent success.

Conclusion: Organization of the Book

We start your introduction to deviance by examining the diversity of deviance, how our definitions of deviance change over time, and how we research deviance. Then, we focus on theories of deviance, starting with the traditional, positivist theories of deviance and moving to social constructionist and critical theories of deviance. We also try to present the theories in a fairly chronological manner. While all these theories are still in use in the study of deviance, some have been around longer than others. Positivist theories have been around longer than social constructionist theories and, within positivist theories, anomie has been around longer than social disorganization. We think this offers you a general road map of how thinking and theories have developed about deviance. In each of these chapters, we present the classical versions of each theory and then the contemporary version and, along the way, we explore several types of deviance, including global deviance, that may be explained by each given theory. Then, in our final chapters, we examine our individual and societal responses to deviance.

This book has been written with a heavy emphasis on theory. In seven chapters, we explore nine theories. Anomie and strain theory, among the first of the truly sociological explanations of the causes of deviant behavior, seek to understand deviance by focusing on social structures and patterns that emerge as individuals and groups react to conditions they have little control over. Social disorganization theory was developed to explain patterns of deviance and crime across social locations, such as neighborhoods, schools, cities, states, and even countries. In Chapter 6, we focus on differential association and social

In his 1972 article, "The Poverty of the Sociology of Deviance: Nuts, Sluts, and Preverts," Alexander Liazos argues that the sociology of deviance focuses too much attention on individual idiosyncrasies and not enough attention on structural dynamics and the deviance of the powerful. One of the areas that we might examine for examples of individual, organizational, and global deviance is the consumption of energy and the impact on climate change. There is a scientific consensus that climate-warming trends over the past century are extremely likely due to human activities. The following are several examples of individual and national behavior in response to this growing concern:

- In 1997, 192 out of 195 countries signed the Kyoto Protocol, pledging to lower greenhouse gas emissions. The agreement required that developed countries commit to lowering their emissions while developing countries were asked to *try* to lower emissions. The United States was one of the three countries that did not sign.

- In the summer of 2015, Shell Oil pulled its drilling rig into Puget Sound on the way up to the remote waters of the Chukchi Sea, off the coast of Alaska. Environmental activists known as kayaktivists protested the deep-sea drilling and the use of the Port of Seattle as a way station for drilling materials by surrounding the drilling rig with kayaks, thus blocking the movement of the rig, and later by blocking a Shell icebreaker headed to Alaskan waters by dangling from the St. Johns Bridge over the Willamette River while more kayaktivists surrounded the large vessel below (Brait, 2015).

- On December 12, 2015, in Paris, 195 countries adopted the Paris Agreement. In contrast to the Kyoto Protocol, this pact required that all countries address greenhouse gas emissions in some way. Some of the elements, like target reductions in carbon emissions, are voluntary, whereas other elements, such as verifying emissions, are legally binding (Davenport, 2015).

- During 2016 and the first part of 2017, there were concerted protests over a proposed pipeline to ship Canadian oil through the United States (via North Dakota). The Dakota Access Pipeline protests (#NODAPL) were led by the Standing Rock Sioux, who were worried the pipeline would threaten ancestral burial grounds and access to clean water. The protests sparked international support and, in late 2016, the Obama administration denied the pipeline construction rights under the Missouri River. However, in early 2017, four days after being sworn in as president, Donald Trump reversed that decision, allowing the construction and expediting the environmental review.

- On June 1, 2017, the United States announced its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, making it the only country to not participate. Given the rules of the agreement, the United States cannot officially pull out of the agreement until November 2020.

- In 2018, 15-year-old Greta Thunberg started her public activism to bring awareness and change to the climate crisis. By sitting outside the Swedish parliament with a sign that read *Skolstrejk för klimatet* ("school strike for climate"), Greta quickly became a leader of a student movement to save the planet from irreversible damage from climate change. Greta has been diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and selective mutism. While some try to use these diagnoses to characterize Greta as different, she refers to her Asperger's syndrome as her superpower. Greta has sailed across the Atlantic Ocean to bring attention to reducing emissions. She has spoken in front of the United Nations, and *Time* magazine declared her Person of the Year for 2019. Greta has endured a lot of backlash from climate deniers and politicians who do not support climate action and activism. Greta addressed this criticism, saying, "It's quite hilarious when the only thing people can do is mock you, or talk about your appearance or personality, as it means they have no argument or nothing else to say" (Haynes, 2019). One of the factors of the newest climate movements and Greta Thunberg's activism and experiences with critics is the central role that social media plays. For example, President Trump focused his attention on Greta after she was named *Time* magazine's Person of the Year in December 2019, tweeting, "So ridiculous. Greta must work on her anger management problem, then go to a good old fashioned movie with a friend! Chill Greta, Chill!" In response, Thunberg changed her Twitter profile to "A teenager working on her anger management problem. Currently chilling and watching a good old fashioned movie with a friend."

Figure 1.2 depicts the projected world energy consumption rates to 2040.

Over the past 200 years, the burning of fossil fuels, such as coal and oil, and deforestation have caused the concentrations of heat-trapping "greenhouse gases" to increase significantly in our atmosphere. These gases prevent heat from escaping to space, somewhat like the glass panels of a greenhouse.

Greenhouse gases are necessary to life as we know it, because they keep the planet's surface warmer than it otherwise would be. But as the concentrations of these gases continue to increase in the atmosphere, the earth's temperature is climbing above past levels.
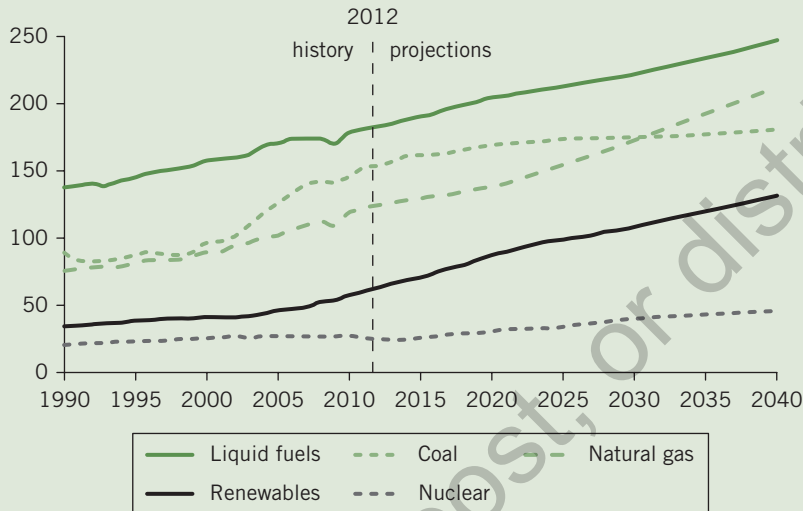
Figure 1.2 shows that renewable sources of energy will increase at a greater rate than any other source in the next several decades, but fossil fuels will still be the leading energy source even in 2040 if the projection is correct.

(Continued)

(Continued)

EIA projects 48% increase in world energy consumption by 2040

The U.S. Energy Information Administration's recently released *International Energy Outlook 20M* (1E02016) projects that world energy consumption will grow 48% between 2012 and 2040. Most of this growth will come from countries that are not in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), including countries where demand is driven by strong economic growth, particularly in Asia. Non-OECD Asia, including China and India, accounts for more than half of the world's total increase in energy consumption over the projection period.

Concerns about energy security, effects of fossil fuel emissions on the environment, and sustained, long-term high world oil prices support expanded use of nonfossil renewable energy sources and nuclear power.

Renewables and nuclear power are the world's fastest-growing energy sources over the projection period. Renewable energy increases by an average 2.6% per year through 2040; nuclear power increases by 2.3% per year.

Even though nonfossil fuels are expected to grow faster than fossil fuels (petroleum and other liquid fuels, natural gas, and coal), fossil fuels still account for more than three-quarters of world energy consumption through 2040. Natural gas, which has a lower carbon intensity than coal and petroleum, is the fastest-growing fossil fuel in the outlook, with global natural gas consumption increasing by 1.9% per year. Rising supplies of tight gas, shale gas, and coalbed methane contribute to the increasing consumption of natural gas.

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration. *International Energy Outlook 2016*. Retrieved April 21, 2018 from https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=.26212.

Using your sociological imagination, how might you discuss the figures and examples as indicators of deviance? How might the relationship between the U.S. government, lobbyists, and oil companies affect the conversation around climate change? Pretend you are an oil executive. Which might be more deviant in your view: the breakdown of U.S. energy consumption, the research on climate change, or the Paris Agreement? Why?

Now pretend that you are an oceanographer studying changes in the Gulf of Mexico, a zoologist studying polar bear migration, an activist hanging off a bridge, or a tribal elder in North Dakota. What might you define as deviant? Why? Would these groups define the same information as deviant? Do you consider either the breakdown of the world consumption of energy or the discussion of climate change to be deviant? Why or why not?

learning theory. These theories focus on the importance of learning in the development of deviance. Social control theory is our last traditional or normative theory. Control theorists assert that human beings are basically antisocial and assume that deviance is part of the natural order in society; individuals are motivated to deviate. Our first social constructionist theory is labeling theory. Labeling theorists examine the social meaning of deviant labels, how those labels are understood, and how they affect the individuals to whom they are applied. Our next theories are Marxist and conflict theory. These theories focus on the effect of power on the creation and maintenance of laws (and policies) that benefit one group over another. For a book on deviance, then, we might say that Marxist and conflict theorists are interested in why and how some groups are defined as deviant and how their behavior, now defined as deviant, gets translated into illegal behavior through the application of the law. Finally, our last theory chapter focuses on critical theories. Critical theories question the status quo, examining societal responses to deviance often from the perspective of those with less societal power. While there are quite a few critical theories, we have decided to share critical race theory, feminist theory, and peacemaking theory.

We think you will agree, as you read the book, that these theories are an important organizational tool for understanding (1) why deviance occurs, (2) why some behavior may or may not be defined as deviant, and (3) why some individuals are more likely to be defined as deviant. It is important to note that you probably won't have the same level of enthusiasm for every theory offered here. Some of you will really "get" anomie theory, whereas others might be drawn to labeling or feminist theory. Heck, we feel the same way. But what is important to remember is that *all* of these theories have been supported by research, and all help answer certain questions about deviance.

Along the way, we present examples of specific acts that may be considered deviant in both the research and pop culture. You will be introduced, at the beginning of each chapter, to a vignette that discusses a social phenomenon or behavior.

As you learn more about theory, you can decide for yourself how and why these acts and actors may be defined as deviant. One of our goals for you is to help you start to think sociologically and theoretically about our social world and the acts we do and do not call deviant.

Finally, this book is a text reader, which means that we include two primary sources (articles) that cover the theory or topic of that chapter. Our first reading for each chapter is a very accessible article from the quarterly publication *Contexts* that is designed to bring sociology to the public. Each of these articles is a jumping off point to discuss a behavior or event that has been or could be defined as deviant (or that may address deviance). Our second article in each chapter is a research article that illustrates how the theories you are studying are used to examine deviance. We were very intentional in our choice to include in every chapter very accessible articles written by top scholars for a sociology magazine and also peer-reviewed journal articles written to contribute to scholarship. This way, as students, you can see and compare efforts at public sociology as well as research to test and expand your ideas on deviance and social control.

EXERCISES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Choose a behavior, action, or group that you consider to be deviant. Explain why you consider your example to be deviant, and then explain which conception of deviance you are using when you make your determination.

2. Choose any film or television show. While watching the show, examine its treatment of "deviant" behavior. Is there a character that others treat as different or deviant? Why do others treat him or her this way? Is there a character that you would describe as deviant? Is he or she treated this way by others in the show? What conception of deviance are you using to determine the deviant behavior on the show?

3. Why is theory important to our understanding of deviance?

KEY TERMS

Critical conception 5
Folkways 4
Laws 4
Mores 4
Normative conception 3
Norms 4

Pathologizing 9
Positivist perspective 4
Prevention programs 16
Rehabilitation programs 16
Relativist conception 4
Scientific method 10

Social constructionist
   conception 4
Sociological imagination 6
Suppression 16
Theory 9

Reading 1.1

This article explores the continued movement to resist childhood vaccinations and the tension between personal freedom and community safety.

When the Personal Is Political—and Infectious

Jennifer A. Reich

There are about a hundred women and a few men, virtually all White and seemingly all between their late-20s and mid-40s, in this suburban hotel ballroom. In the back, a small group of women stands wearing babies on their chests. Others sit on the floor as their babies roll on blankets. Throughout the day I have listened to talks about macrobiotic diets and alternatives to medical treatment for children, I have browsed the expo hall of vendors selling organic foods and homemade lotions. At lunch, I sat next to women eating vegan, gluten-free, or raw-only meals as they traded health tips, recipes, and stories of organic cooking classes for their children. All of these parents expressed a desire to optimize their children's health and a willingness to work hard to do so.

Barbara Loe Fisher takes the podium as the highly anticipated final keynote speaker. Several women rise to their feet at her introduction. Although this organization explicitly supports "holistic parenting" and "green living" and does not officially oppose vaccines, they have identified points of intersection with the National Vaccine Information Center (NVIC), the largest American organization opposed to vaccine mandates and Fisher, its founder.

Fisher stands in silence as a slide show of smiling babies and occasional White teenage girls fades in and out behind the podium, accompanied by a recording of simple piano music. Interspersed are pictures of women with picket signs emblazoned with pictures of babies. "Dead from DPT" reads one. One Black baby's photo appears among the sea of White babies. A slide reads simply, "All these children died after vaccination." Then, "Protecting health and informed consent since 1982. – NVIC."

I've heard a version of Fisher's talk multiple times over my decade of research on parents who refuse some or all recommended childhood vaccines. She speaks about motherhood—how we love these children in ways we never thought we could and how many of their children had their lives disrupted by legally required vaccines. Fisher tells her signature story—how her now-adult son was harmed at the age of 2½ by the vaccine against diphtheria, pertussis, and tetanus (DPT), how she didn't know to question vaccines or the doctors who told her they were safe.

Fisher is passionate and clear: "It's your health, your family, your choice." She weaves motherhood and love for babies together with critiques of science, pharmaceuticals, and genetically modified foods. She returns to mothers' intuition and references the Brave New World in which we find ourselves. "There is no individual liberty more important than biological integrity," she emphatically states. "And there is no limit to what states can take away."

More than an hour later, she wraps up with a call to action. "As women, mothers, grandmothers. We need to take a stand for vaccine liberty so our children and grandchildren can make choices tomorrow. No forced vaccination. Not in America!"

Barbara Loe Fisher spearheaded the largest national campaign against vaccine mandates, first in 1982 as a group calling itself DPT—Dissatisfied

Parents Together—in a critique of the vaccine she believes harmed her son and later as NVIC. NVIC defines itself not as anti-vaccine, but as a group fighting for informed consent and parents' rights and against government overreach. This organization and several like it oppose efforts to increase vaccination, including expansion of mandates that children provide proof of immunization to register for school, limitations on parents' abilities to opt out of those requirements, increased funding for vaccines, and requirements that parents receive educational information in support of vaccines.

Over the last decade, I have studied how parents come to refuse some or all recommended vaccines for their children. I attended meetings of groups like the one described above, talked to parents, pediatricians, researchers, attorneys, and policy makers, and observed conversations about vaccines in communities, online, at children's hospitals and professional meetings, and among parents. Although I spoke with mothers and fathers, women are most likely to make healthcare decisions for their children, and thus, are most likely to make vaccine decisions. These mothers draw from a wide range of sources of information including popular news sources, peers, and media. The mothers in my study overwhelmingly define their efforts to gather information to feel informed as essential to making good decisions for their children. As one mother of two unvaccinated children advises, "Do as much reading and research [as you can] and then make an individual decision. I don't think that our experience is ever gonna be the same as somebody else's experience."

> "As women, mothers, grandmothers. We need to take a stand for vaccine liberty so our children and grandchildren can make choices tomorrow. No forced vaccination. Not in America!"
>
> Barbara Loe Fisher

© iStockphoto.com/Hailshadow

Making personal decisions as parents—free from coercion—is their stated priority. As individuals who express skepticism of expert recommendations, they comprise a collective effort to resist governmental efforts to increase vaccination usage. They work together against public health claims for vaccines by insisting vaccines should always be a personal choice, administered as parents feel is best for their own children. Yet, their insistence that vaccines should follow personal preference rather than community obligation may ignore the fact that infectious disease can only be kept at bay by collective participation in public health.

Privilege and Choice

There are no mandates to vaccinate children in the U.S. and no federal laws requiring vaccination. Rather, families who wish to enroll their children in schools or childcare settings must show evidence that their children have received specific vaccinations. These state laws, passed between the 1960s and 1980s, were intended to reduce risk of infection that results when children—required by law to receive an education—are in close quarters. By requiring vaccines, states also received federal funding to make vaccines accessible to everyone, at every income level. At the time, none of this was particularly controversial. Polls from this time period suggest that many Americans—as many as 25%—did not know their state had a compulsory vaccine law; most said they planned to have their children vaccinated anyway. Even so, laws seem to matter. States with stricter vaccine laws have higher rates of vaccination and fewer outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases than do states with more lenient laws or greater access to exemptions.

All 50 states now require evidence of vaccination for school attendance, with opt-out exceptions for children with medical conditions that make them poor candidates for vaccination. All but three states (Mississippi, West Virginia, and, as of 2016, California) allow parents who hold religious beliefs that would be violated by compulsory vaccination to exercise an exemption. The result of lobbying efforts by Christian Scientists, these exemptions are often broadly written. They are inclusive of other faiths and appear to be used by those without strong faith beliefs or religious membership, too. Today, 18 states also allow parents to opt out of vaccines for personal or philosophical beliefs. The use of these non-medical exemptions has become increasingly controversial; vaccine refusals are associated with increased disease outbreaks.

Non-medical exemptions are not used equally by all families. According to national data, parents who refuse vaccines by choice are most likely to be White, college-educated, and have a higher average income than most American families. This contrasts with families whose children are under-vaccinated because of limited or inconsistent access to healthcare providers or lack of economic resources. Those children are most likely to be Black, to have a younger mother who is single and does not have a college degree, and to live in a household near the poverty level. Increasingly, children in rural communities are also limited in their abilities to get vaccines because of supply and distribution challenges. Certainly, there are families of color and low income families who distrust vaccines or don't seek them out for ideological reasons, but public opinion polls show that low income families express greater support for legal mandates than do those families with more resources.

Although children in communities with low vaccine rates have as much as a 30-fold increased risk of contracting a vaccine-preventable disease, other risks may impact families differently. Unvaccinated children exposed to infection may face a state-enforced quarantine for up to three weeks, even if they never get sick, which families with less work flexibility may struggle to manage. Several proposals to increase insurance premiums for unvaccinated enrollees and state and federal rules that allow public assistance benefits to be reduced because of incomplete vaccination all highlight how low-income families have less freedom to make individual choices without serious repercussions. Some

low-income families who want vaccines struggle to get them, which also forecloses choice.

A Movement of Individualists

Parents who question the safety and necessity of vaccines and opt out of some or all vaccines for their children encourage others to do the same, insisting that parents, not doctors or researchers, are best able to decide what children need. Many also advocate against state laws that aim to strengthen vaccine access or requirements. Yet, these parents generally do not see themselves as part of a movement. Celebrity Jenny McCarthy, the longtime, best-known face of what is popularly called the anti-vaccine (or anti-vax) movement, insists, "I am not anti-vaccine. I'm in this gray zone of, I think everyone should be aware and educate yourself and ask questions." Like other parents, she imagines that the goal is simply increased individual consumer choice.

Movements that have made the personal political and the political personal—from movements for women's rights to those of students—have been effective in creating social change. Many health movements have placed personal experience, intuition, and situated ways of knowing at the center of healthcare decision-making. For example, women have fought against sterilization without consent, football players have argued for better research on concussions, and veterans have advocated for better treatments for post-traumatic stress. These and other health movements have made healthcare better. Patient concerns, experiences, and perspectives have guided research and treatment, and even changed clinical definitions.

Opponents of vaccine mandates see themselves in this tradition. Yet, the prevention of infectious disease raises new stakes for entire communities—not just the individuals making the decision. In these ways, the personal is not just political, it's infectious. This matters for several reasons. Not all families, for example, are similarly able to weather a serious illness: inflexible work and full-time care-giving roles, as well as health insurance access, can affect options for dealing with illness. And not all children have immune systems that can defend against a vaccine-preventable disease, or are even old enough to be vaccinated. For a small number, vaccines will be ineffective at inspiring an immune response. When most people in the community are vaccinated, these people are protected. However, in prioritizing each family's goals for their own children, rather than a sense of community responsibility for those who are most vulnerable, vaccine opponents risk rendering these significant differences invisible.

Vaccine Objections

So what are they worried about? Parents' concerns about vaccines are multi-faceted, but include worries about when and how vaccines are offered, the adequacy of safety testing and monitoring, or even whether recommended vaccines are necessary. Underscoring all these concerns is a larger distrust of the state, which fuels calls for resistance to public health laws.

Increasing vaccines, decreasing trust. Most American parents today hail from a 1980s and 1990s generation that received up to 16 injections of vaccines against 8 illnesses: measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, Hib, and polio. In contrast, today's kids receive up to 26 shots to immunize against 14 childhood illnesses. Most are given by primary care providers—most often pediatricians—in the first five years of life, with some offered in the first month after birth. This increase reflects both the licensing of new vaccines against common serious childhood illnesses and efforts to offer boosters to increase the probability a child will develop and maintain immunity against a particular disease. For many parents, the sheer number of injections raises concerns. Likening the view that vaccines can overwhelm the immune system to other challenges that could overwhelm the body, Leanne, a mother of four partially vaccinated children, explains, "You get somebody in the hospital with pneumonia and a leg infection and earache. You're trying to deal with all different kinds of things in the body system, and I felt the same way with the shot. They're trying to deal with all these different chemicals and just an overload on their system."

> Resisters' insistence that vaccines should reflect personal preference rather than community obligation may ignore the fact that infectious disease can only be kept at bay by collective participation in public health.

Physicians and scientists are quick to point out that, since the technology for manufacturing vaccines has improved, children actually receive fewer bacterial and viral proteins—about 150 today compared to about 3,000 from the schedule in the 1980s and 1990s. They also highlight how infants encounter trillions of bacteria in the birth canal alone, demonstrating the capacity of their immune systems. Yet, these scientific explanations are largely unconvincing to parents who feel there are just too many vaccines and that babies' bodies are too small to handle it. When a pediatrician insisted vaccines could be live-saving for an infant, Carolyn, a mother of three unvaccinated children, recalls insisting, "'I'm making a choice, and who are you? And why is it that I have to do this in this time with a little infant?' And I said no way." Many parents, like Carolyn, point to babies' size and vulnerability as a reason to reject vaccines.

Safety and distrust of regulation. Vaccines, like other products regulated and licensed by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), undergo testing to ensure safety, purity, and efficacy. Once a vaccine is licensed, an advisory group within the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) study its efficacy and safety and then make recommendations regarding when it should be offered to children. Professional organizations often endorse the CDC-recommended schedule, and states often codify these recommendations into school requirements. Margaret, the mother of two unvaccinated children, distrusts such coordination: "Well, basically the insurance companies and the drug companies are all working together. They're all—the state health department as well. You look at

their advisory board members, and you will see former drug reps and lobbyists. It's all very convenient for them." Another mother explains: "I guess I'm somewhat of a skeptic by nature. I'm very wary of government involvement . . . if it's FDA- approved. That means nothing to me." As parents describe their choice to resist vaccines, they often cite the collaboration and coordination between manufacturers, healthcare providers, and government agencies as suspicious.

Resistance and Parental Autonomy

Woven through the stories of individual choice is a core distrust of the state. Many parents, across the political spectrum, referenced the importance of freedom from government intervention or the ability to make choices without coercion. Molly, a mother of three unvaccinated children, feels strongly that parents should be educated about vaccines to make individual choices. She speaks to other parents about her concerns about vaccines, explaining that her goal is to "help inform them as to what their rights are and what their choices are, as opposed to just believing, 'The government says, so I have to do it.'"

For parents like Molly, the decision to refuse vaccines for their children is much like any other parenting decision: individual families should choose what works best for them. As she sees it, there may be risks to not vaccinating and risks to vaccinating, it is up to each family to decide. Molly elaborates, "It's like they need to make their own choices for their own family. People that have nudity in their house where they walk around nude around their kids all the time.

> States with stricter vaccine laws have higher rates of vaccination and fewer outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases than do states with more lenient laws or greater access to exemptions.

Other people are like, 'That's gross, that's child abuse.' They've gotta figure out what's right for their family."

As parents criticize the state for imposing on families, they identify how each family should be empowered to consider their own risks and benefits. Although the risks of infectious disease to the community are different than the risks of nudity or many other choices, both center on an insistence that parents should be autonomous to make choices, even ones that are value-laden.

Altruistic Opposition

Vaccine resisters rarely seek to eliminate all vaccine use. Rather, parents insist that by advocating for other parents they can create healthier communities. Some argue that state efforts to prioritize vaccination allows other public health issues to be ignored. Many told me about the importance of organic food, nutritional supplements, breastfeeding, and avoidance of toxins as important factors in promoting good health, and argued that these aren't supported by public policy. They see vaccines, a for-profit product, receiving state endorsement for seemingly capitalistic gains and other health challenges left without advocates.

Elizabeth, a mother of two unvaccinated children, referred to the "propaganda around healthcare in our country," as being driven by "potentially capitalistic hype," which she sees as prioritizes vaccines over other public health concerns: "I think the chickenpox vaccine is just a great example. How many kids have truly ever died of chickenpox? If you do the research it's something like 1.2 a year or something. It's like this miniscule number. Now, if that was your one child, I would understand that that's 100% devastating, but there are way more children that die of drug infections and poverty and, you know, so many other social issues that we're not fighting because the industries don't have the resources to pump into [it]. . . . Okay, we can convince everybody that their kid might be about to die from chickenpox, but really the likelihood of them dying from a car crash, you know—hunger, poverty, whatever it may be, are just—all of those things are so much more significant."

In light of the seemingly disproportionate attention vaccines receive over other public health threats, parents point to profit motives and government corruption as the most logical explanations. In this view, the state requires their resistance.

Vaccine Resistance for All?

A small and vocal opposition to vaccination has existed for as long as vaccines have been around. Since the first laws requiring smallpox vaccination in the 1800s, in fact, parents have argued that they—not the state—should have authority to decide what they and their children need and what they should consume.

These concerns are not going away. Surveys suggest that even among parents who support vaccination, more than 20% do not agree that following the recommended vaccine schedule is the safest course for their children. This limited faith in the official schedule and the experts who craft it suggests parents beyond this vocal movement in opposition to vaccines also feel distrustful. Decisions to refuse or delay vaccines will affect individual children who lack vaccines at the ages they most need them, but these choices carry risks to others. In these ways, individual choices don't stay with the individual. Movements to resist vaccines may harm those outside those networks as outbreaks become more common. Ironically, as infectious disease outbreaks rise, families will likely look to the CDC, state agencies, and for-profit pharmaceutical companies to help.

Source: Reich, J. A. (2018). When the personal is political—and infectious. *Contexts*, *17*, 34–39.

Reading 1.2

Hills puts forth a very persuasive argument for the relativity of deviance. In contrast to the absolutist who views deviance as something "inherently . . . self evidently, immoral, evil, and abnormal," the relativist looks toward the reaction to similar sorts of behaviors and asks what makes one behavior deviant and the other normal or even socially desirable.

The Mystification of Social Deviance

Stuart L. Hills

In Western societies there are two fundamental views of social deviance: the absolutist and the relativist. This paper examines the assumptions underlying the predominant, absolutist conception of deviant behavior and their consequences for control and treatment of deviants. It then contrasts these with the relativist position. In highlighting the differences between the absolutist and the relativist viewpoints, the author stresses (1) the significance of power in shaping public views of deviance, (2) the conception of diversity and dissent as pathological, (3) the role of moral indignation in social reactions to deviance, (4) the strategies of mystification used by dominant groups to bolster the ideological and moral monopoly of their views in the conventional social order, and (5) the cooptation of scientists, psychiatrists, and other social control agents in this mystification progress.

Who in contemporary America is more deviant: a 19-year-old Boy Scout or a student at an Ivy League university who smokes pot? A 29-year-old unmarried virgin or a militant women's liberationist?

A New York City legislator who tries to ban the film *Last Tango in Paris* as "evil, obscene, and pornographic" or a rural minister who condemns *The Grapes of Wrath*, assigned as reading in a high school English class, as "the work of the devil"? A Wall Street stockbroker who dabbles in the occult or a middle-class suburban housewife who worships a 15-year-old oriental guru? A Harlem janitor who plays the numbers game at the corner candy store or the Baptist who censures her atheist neighbors as sinful for their Saturday night poker games? A Mississippi man who swears he has boarded a spaceship filled with strange creatures from another planet or the members of a mystic cult in New Jersey who flee to a mountaintop to await the imminent end of the world? A General Electric vice-president who conspires with other corporate officials to fix prices or an executive who refuses to do so? A San Francisco college girl who enjoys oral-genital sex with her boyfriend or her roommate who contends that such behavior is disgusting and abnormal? A man who burglarizes a psychiatrist's office in the name of national security or a Catholic priest who spills blood over draft files to protest pilots' "roasting babies alive" by bombing Vietnamese villages?

Most readers would have difficulty in answering these questions with assurance. Nevertheless, many groups and individuals, including some scientists and psychiatrists, define deviance as departure from an absolute set of values. Only a minority of persons view deviance as man-made, shifting, and frequently ambiguous.

Absolutist and Relativist Views

In both the popular and scientific histories of social deviance, two basic ways of looking at the subject stand out: the *relativist* and the *absolutist.* Each of these views pervades the vast writings on social deviance, influencing the definition of deviance, research topics, assumptions as to the causes of deviance and characteristics of deviants, interpretation of research findings and current events, and policies of social control.[1]

The *absolutist* perspective is shared by the largest and most influential segments of the public.

According to this view, fundamental human behavior may be classified as *inherently* proper or, conversely, self-evidently immoral, evil, and abnormal. The absolutist believes that most persons agree on the basic goals that people should pursue; he believes in a fundamental harmony of values and a general social good that transcends the mundane interests of individuals and groups in society.

The *relativist* position, held in some manner by many contemporary sociologists, sharply challenges this view. Relativists view complex societies as dynamic, a mosaic of groups with different values and interests who sometimes agree and cooperate on some issues but frequently conflict and struggle to realize their own interests and ends. Deviance is seen as being in large measure a matter of human evaluation and differential power. Thus the nature of deviance will vary significantly among different groups and subcultures within a society as well as between societies. As J. L. Simmons observes, an astonishing variety of human actions and characteristics have been considered deviant:

> If we went back through history and assembled together all of the people who have been condemned by their contemporaries, the range [would include] the Plains Indian youth who was unable to see visions, the big-breasted Chinese girl, the early Christian skulking in the Roman catacombs, the Arab who liked alcohol instead of hashish, the Polynesian girl who didn't enjoy sex, and the medieval man who indulged himself by bathing frequently.[2]

For relativists, deviance is not inherently "unnatural" nor is it intrinsic to any particular act, belief, or human attribute. Instead, deviance is socially *created* by collective human judgments. Deviance, like beauty, lies largely in the eyes of the beholder and is relative to particular social standards and particular social settings. As Thomas Szasz points out, it is not by their behavior but by the traditional sexual double standard that men are labeled "virile" and women

"nymphomaniacs." If a person appears to be talking to God while kneeling at an altar, he is thought to be praying; however, if he insists that God has been talking to him, he is described as schizophrenic and we try to "cure" him of his "mental illness."[3] Similarly, the concrete act of injecting heroin into a vein is not inherently deviant. It is obviously acceptable for a doctor to inject a narcotic drug into a patient. Only when the drug is administered in a manner publicly forbidden does this action become deviant. The deviant nature of the act depends upon the way it is defined in the public mind. Thus, under one conception of deviance, a person may continue to live as an ordinary citizen; under another, he may be treated as a criminal.

Further, the degree of harm or danger of specific acts to the welfare of others is not, according to the relativist, necessarily a decisive factor in the application of a stigmatizing label or in the severity of punishment. Is the husband who violently rapes his resisting, estranged wife in their home less dangerous than the 26-year-old Kentucky mountaineer jailed in Chicago on statutory rape charges for having consensual sexual intercourse with a 16-year-old girl? In the former case, the police may refuse to take any action (the courts have a long-standing aversion to public interference in family disputes). In the latter, the man's justification that "she was willing" and that back home "if they're big enough they're old enough" is no legal defense. In another instance, the operators of a coal company whose evasion of the federal mine-safety laws was partly responsible for the deaths of 78 coal miners in an explosion were merely admonished by the federal mine inspectors to begin complying with the law. But a 21-year-old Massachusetts Institute of Technology senior was sentenced in a Boston courtroom to five years in prison for the sale of marijuana to his college friends. Former Vice-President Spiro Agnew, charged with extorting thousands of dollars in kickbacks from building contractors seeking preferential treatment, "copped a plea" and was convicted only of income tax evasion and given a three-year informal probation. George Jackson, black and 18 years old, was sentenced to prison for from one year to life for stealing $70 from a gas station. Szasz makes the point nicely:

> Policemen receive bribes; politicians receive campaign contributions. Marijuana and heroin are sold by pushers; cigarettes and alcohol are sold by businessmen. Mental patients who use the courts to regain their liberty are troublemakers; psychiatrists who use the courts to deprive patients of their liberty are therapists.[4]

Deviance, then, is simply human behavior, beliefs, or attributes that elicit social condemnation by others in particular social situations. Kai Erikson succinctly expresses this relativist view: "Deviance is not a property *inherent* in certain forms of behavior; it is a property *conferred upon* these forms by the audiences which directly or indirectly witness them."[5]

Deviance and Power

Not all views of deviance gain an equal public hearing or have an equal social impact on those persons considered deviant. Those groups dominating the key positions in our major institutions in the community and in society as a whole—the mass media, legislatures, government agencies, schools, corporations, military, crime control agencies, and so forth—are best situated to disseminate information and make far-reaching policy decisions. These "social audiences" have effectively legitimated their versions of morality and immorality in the community or larger society and are supported by the law in their conceptions of wrongdoing. Repressive measures are potentially applicable (though selectively administered) to all those individuals and groups whose activity or existence threatens the dominant, controlling views of deviance. To challenge openly certain social norms is to risk becoming an outsider, a deviant who is "in" but not "of" the community. For example, in many small communities the outspoken atheist becomes an outsider—a heretic. The drug user or the homosexual may view others with

disdain, but each risks arrest, imprisonment, public disgrace, and economic discrimination.

The sense of alienation and estrangement from the larger community that many deviants experience is caused not only by the threat of arrest and retribution from official agencies but more fundamentally by the day-to-day indignities—the insults, the stares, the frowns, the jokes, "the shushed conversations which engender the sense that you are a stranger in a strange land."[6] A young black man with a white girlfriend in a small midwestern town vividly describes this sense of isolation:

> When this white chick and I first started
> making it I felt like I'd been plunked
> down in the middle of Russia, like I was
> a spy. . . . After we were sleeping together
> I hated to show up for work even, and
> I finally quit. I had this feeling that
> everybody was looking. And there was no
> place for us to go.[7]

The Pathology of Diversity and Dissent

For the absolutist, deviant activity is not merely an alternative, perhaps valuable way of functioning in society. There is no provision for multiple conceptions of social reality, no allowance that some groups might legitimately find the conventional demands for conformity oppressive, unfulfilling, often dehumanizing. The possibility that alternative life styles might be personally meaningful is almost inconceivable. Instead, the refusal by some persons to embrace the Puritan work ethic or the nuclear family, to defer gratification until the "proper occasions," or to repress bisexual or "promiscuous" sexual feelings is automatically undesirable. For many citizens, such departures from conventional expectations may trigger strong feelings of anger. One sociologist tells of his conversation with a British woman about the attempt by some hippies to occupy a deserted building in downtown London. In response to his question of why she found this rather harmless activity so disgusting and upsetting, she replied in an angry tone: "It's shocking and shameful, wasting their lives like that. They should be taken and whipped with the rod."[8]

Clearly, in the view of the absolutist, deviancy is not something in which a healthy, well-adjusted person would engage but is, rather, a malfunction, comparable to malignant cells in an organism, to be eliminated, treated, or contained. The source of this pathological condition may be located in the individual's own make-up or in the social environment, and the condition itself may be described in genetic terms, as mental illness, maladjustment, undersocialization, social disorganization, and so on. Whatever the mode of explanation, the absolutist sees as valid only the conventional norms and values and customary ways of behavior. These become synonymous with *reality,* and forms of deviance are diseases in the body of society.

Deviancy is explained by the absolutist as a product of either *internal coercion*—enslavement to inner compulsions, a weak ego, a pathological or dependent personality, inadequate socialization, an unharnessed libido—or *external constraint,* the corruption of the innocent and immature by other disturbed persons (e.g., drug users seduced by the syndicate drug pusher). Free choice and preference thus become illusory freedoms. To depart from the norm is to exhibit some form of disturbance.

Thus, drug use may not be simply pleasurable activity but must necessarily reflect a deep-seated personality flaw. Indulgence in illegal mood-altering substances is prima facie evidence of an "abnormal" or "inadequate" personality, an "escape from reality," a "rebellion against authority," a "deep-seated dread of intimacy," a "defective superego," and so on. In 1970, Dr. Robert Baird testified at a government crime committee hearing:

> Anyone who smokes marijuana . . . already
> has a mental problem. They are taking it
> to escape reality, to get high. . . . I do not
> care what euphemism you want to employ,
> they are mentally ill.[9]

As Erich Goode points out, in order for the absolutist to discredit the deviant activity effectively, the alleged pleasures of the condemned act must be

seen as inauthentic or as dangerous and insidious. The state of euphoria experienced by some drug users becomes defined by one writer as "an artificial, exaggerated sense of pleasure and well-being." The contention that marijuana is fun is countered by the specter of a greased path to more evil kinds of pleasure.

> If . . . the main reason for smoking pot is pure fun, does it not follow that sniffing, then injecting, heroin might be the most fun of all? After experiencing the much-touted delights of marijuana, wouldn't a person, at the very least, be tempted to try the greater glories of the big H? It seems likely.[10]

In Russia, political liberals who openly criticize the ruling regime have been declared "mentally ill" and are incarcerated for their treasonous views. And the use of such pathological labels is not restricted to political dissent. Many government officials are concerned about the increasingly casual attitude toward pre-marital sex among Russian teenagers, who view it as a "physical necessity" rather than an expression of "true love." One Soviet scholar comments on the pathology of passionate sex outside the sanctified context of love and marriage:

> Any fashion in love with a light-hearted attitude toward sexual intercourse, female promiscuity or a male insolence, I consider pathological. A psychologically and physically healthy person would never let passion into this sacred sanctum of life."[11]

Moral Indignation

The vehemence with which citizens have deplored deviant values, such as the hippie values of sexual expressiveness and spontaneity, may thinly disguise their own unfulfilled desires and fantasies, their own nagging doubts about the adequacy of their lives. Deviant impulses such as these—in themselves and in others—must be vigorously suppressed. As Philip Slater observes, "The peculiarly exaggerated hostility

that hippies tend to arouse suggests that the life they strive for is highly seductive to middle-class Americans."[12] Thus, the basis for moral indignation is frequently the dual fascination and repulsion that often coexist in the minds of those who would fervently condemn moral transgressions from the dominant social norms.

As many observers have noted, significant segments of the conforming public are to some degree ambivalent about illicit and unconventional pleasures. Their feelings are bound up in a complex tangle of conflicting values, desires, fears, fantasies, and guilt. These ambivalent conformists who defer gratification, who at considerable psychic cost deny or inhibit impulses toward forbidden pleasures (such as escape, spontaneity, adventure, uninhibited sex, disdain for work, physical aggression, excitement, autonomy, etc.), thus often react with righteous hostility toward persons who appear to flout the officially sanctioned moral codes and rules. Deviants are frequently viewed as unjustly rewarded, irresponsible persons who have not earned their pleasures through productive, legitimate work and by compliance with social rules. Especially where the "victimless" deviant act (e.g., illicit sex, psychedelic drugs, gambling, pornography) does not appear to threaten directly the life, possessions, or immediate welfare of conventional citizens, the outpouring of moral indignation may be triggered by the suspicion that the wicked are undeservedly realizing the pleasures and rewards secretly desired by the virtuous. Richard Blum nicely describes this fascination-repulsion relationship in regard to illicit drugs:

> Pharmaceutical materials do not dispense themselves and the illicit drugs are rarely given away, let alone forced on people. Consequently, the menace lies within the person, for there would be no drug threat without a drug attraction. Psychoanalytic observations on alcoholics suggest the presence of simultaneous repulsion and attraction in compulsive ingestion. The amount of public interest in stories about druggies suggests the same drug attraction

and repulsion in ordinary citizens. "Fascination" is the better term since it implies witchcraft and enchantment. People are fascinated by drugs—because they are attracted to the states and conditions drugs are said to produce. That is another side to the fear of being disrupted; it is the desire for release, for escape, for magic, and for ecstatic joys. That is the derivation of the menace in drugs—their representation as keys to forbidden kingdoms inside ourselves. The dreadful in the drug is the *dreadful* in ourselves.[13]

Moreover, it is this very ambivalence that the mass media exploits, first titillating the public's sensibilities and then reassuring its prejudices and upholding the public morality by condemnation and symbolic punishment of the deviant. Television, movies, and the tabloids use these distant and misperceived deviant outsiders as a kind of lurid projection screen—as scapegoats through which the collective fears, frustrations, and forbidden impulses of the conforming public are vicariously expressed and perhaps to a degree partly neutralized. By portraying deviants as immoral persons invariably coming to a bad end, as "innocents" who have been corrupted by the wicked but who may be "saved," as "sick" persons in need of "treatment," or as persons whose actions are basically meaningless or contain their own built-in horrors (LSD leads to madness, illicit sex to venereal disease, homosexuality to neurosis), the mass media thus reinforce, legitimate, and partly create the images and myths of a basically consensual and just society.[14]

The Noble Lie

From the perspective of the dominant groups, socialization is considered successful in a society when its members come to accept the "noble lie" that the limited range of options available in the dominant culture are the only real, proper, and natural ways of acting, thinking, and feeling and that they constitute the full extent of human freedom. Part of this process involves instilling in neophyte members the belief that the traditional social rules and institutionalized social practices are inevitable and binding. To depart from these culturally approved moral paths is to court danger and disaster.

Such reality-constricting propaganda and social control tend to alienate a person from the many potential selves and life styles possible, from what he might become were he more aware of the arbitrariness and narrowness inherent in the conventional social rules and behavior roles and were he accorded a wider range of options.[15] During the last decade, hippie countercultures, gay and women's liberation movements, organizations such as the Committee for a Sane Drug Policy, and other activist groups have emerged to challenge the traditional and conventional social order, offering alternative ways to be human and liberated.

Enemy Deviants

Such challenges clearly pose an effective threat to the notions of the dominant group. These activists are neither repentant nor ill, and they defend their behavior as morally legitimate, openly contesting the dominance of the moral codes embodied in the criminal law or in the official political and economic policies of the society. The Black Panthers, the Chicago Seven, the American Indian Movement, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the South African novelist who depicted the tabooed black-white racial love affairs and provoked an official ban of his books, Allen Ginsberg—all are cast in the role of *enemy deviants* threatening the legitimacy of the dominant social order.

Whether it be an attempt by hippies to smoke marijuana openly by staging a "puff-in" at the Hall of Justice in San Francisco and demanding legalization of the drug, a raid on a Maryland draft board by militant priests and nuns who spill blood on selective service files, a parade of homosexuals down Fifth Avenue chanting "gay is good," or an open defiance of local "committees for decency" by theater owners showing films such as *Deep Throat,* a direct clash in moralities is precipitated. Challenges such as these expose the precarious nature of the absolutist conception of

social reality. Consequently, various strategies come into play to discredit these competing views. These strategies typically take on an aura of *mystification:* by obscuring the fact that both deviant and normal activities are basically arbitrary, the dominant group masks the underlying conflict of interests and mainsprings of power.

The Cooptation of Scientists

Increasingly in modern Western societies, scientists are contributing— sometimes unwittingly—to these ideological struggles. Interest groups use scientific research and data as moral armaments to bolster their contentions; in so doing they mystify human behavior by imputing an inexorability and inevitability to man-made social creations. In effect, scientists and their ostensibly impartial research are used to make establishment rules and their enforcement appear rational, humane, and just. All other views must be seen in error. Persons who challenge the conventional rules must be discredited as individual wrongdoers (as sick, pathological, or criminal), not accepted as willful, normal participants involved in legitimate political conflict and viable social movements.

As Goode reminds us, during an earlier period this "mystification process was religious in character: views in competition with the dominant one were heretical and displeasing to the gods—hence, Galileo's 'crime.'" Today, however, "nothing has greater discrediting power . . . than the demonstration that a given assertion has been 'scientifically disproven.'"[16] Scientists, Goode notes, have become our contemporary "pawnbrokers of reality" (and, I would add, psychiatrists our arbiters of normality), operating under a value-free cloak of objectivity that Western civilization assigns to this prestigious enterprise. Dominant interest groups thus mobilize psychologists, physicians, pharmacologists, criminologists, psychiatrists, and other highly regarded "experts" operating under the scientific banner to render unconventional behavior meaningless, harmful, and unnatural. If such authorities certify behavior as pathological or dangerous, the labels become potent rhetorical weapons of social control. These controls are effectively disguised in reasonable, humanitarian garb—restriction of certain kinds of behavior is morally desirable and scientifically correct, good for both the individual and the society.

In every complex society there are what Howard Becker calls "*hierarchies of credibility*," by which some prestigious and respectable persons have greater power than others to define what is true and false, what is proper and improper, what is normal and abnormal, what is safe and dangerous.[17] Such prestigious organizations as the American Medical Association, the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, the American Psychiatric Association, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the National Institute of Mental Health, and the American Bar Association and their bureaucratic officials help filter out scientific findings that do not conform to official prevailing views. In 1971, Dr. Wesley Hall, newly elected president of the AMA, was quoted in a widely publicized UPI news story as saying that an AMA study left "very little doubt" that marijuana would cause a significant reduction in a person's sex drive (observing that a 35-year-old man might have his sex drive reduced to that of a 70-year-old man). He also implied that certain scientific evidence demonstrated that this illicit drug caused birth defects. In an interview several weeks later, Dr. Hall said he had been misquoted but added that he didn't mind:

> I don't mind . . . if this can do some good in waking people up to the fact that, by jingo, whether we like to face it or not, our campuses are going to pot, both literally and figuratively. . . . If we don't wake up in this country to the fact that every college campus and high school has a problem with drug addiction, we're going down the drain not only with respect to morality, but . . . the type of system we're going to have.[18]

When confronted by the comment that such misleading statements might damage the credibility of the AMA, Dr. Hall answered, "I'm tired of these phrases about the credibility gap. *We're talking about the morality of the country . . . and respect for authority*

and decency."[19] Dr. Hall not only disapproves of marijuana but also exploits such drug use as a vehicle for expression of his own ideological views toward other kinds of activities and attitudes that he deplores. But in view of the AMA's prestige and power, such selective and distorted use of empirical evidence is not likely to impair its credibility significantly in future pronouncements on the dangers of illicit drug use.

Research and writing on deviance are replete with such value-laden language as "social maladjustment," "sexual promiscuity," "inadequate personality," "hedonism," "perversion," "escape from reality," "artificial euphoria," "abnormality," "social irresponsibility," and "underachievement"—terms and expressions which, used under the pretext of unbiased, scientific objectivity, serve to further mystify the nature of deviance. And such mystification is not without its powerful effects on the deviant himself. The responses of others to persons stigmatized as deviant may affect the deviant's world in such self-fulfilling ways as to substantiate the validity of popular and scientific views. Thus some deviants also may come unwittingly to embrace, internalize, and act out the stereotypical conceptions. Heroin addicts or persons diagnosed as mentally ill and incarcerated for therapeutic reasons may come to see themselves in the absolutist's terms—as dependent, inadequate, psychotic, asocial, or demoralized. Some homosexuals echo the imagery pervading their community and come to hate themselves as unworthy, dirty "queers." Some heavy drinkers may come to embrace the stigmatizing label of alcoholic, thereby excusing their own and others' failures. As Jock Young has argued, such mystifications may function to amputate a significant portion of a person's human potentiality, severely limiting his capacity to conceive of radically alternative social arrangements and forms of human consciousness—the ability to create, to choose his action rather than be propelled and imprisoned by current social structures and circumstances.[20] Perhaps herein lies the real tragedy of the mystification of deviance.

Notes

1. The use of the terms *relativist* and *absolutist* draws upon the fine discussion of these two perspectives in Jock Young, *The Drugtakers* (London: Paladin, 1971), ch. 3; and Erich Goode, *The Drug Phenomenon: Social Aspects of Drug Taking* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973), pp. 26–37.
2. J. L. Simmons, *Deviants* (Berkeley, Calif.: Glendessary, 1969), p. 4.
3. Thomas Szasz, *The Second Sin* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1973), pp. 101, 112–113.
4. *Id.,* p. 25.
5. Kai Erikson, "Notes on the Sociology of Deviance," in Howard S. Becker, ed., *The Other Side* (New York: Free Press, 1964), p. 11.
6. Simmons, *op. cit. supra* note 2, p. 73.
7. *Id.,* pp. 73–74.
8. Robert A. Scott, "A Proposed Framework for Analyzing Deviance as a Property of Social Order," in Robert A. Scott and Jack D. Douglas, eds., *Theoretical Perspectives on Deviance* (New York: Basic Books, 1972), p. 16.
9. Quoted in Goode, *op. cit. supra* note 1, p. 3.
10. Both quotations cited in Goode, *op. cit. supra* note 1, p. 34.
11. *New York Times,* Nov. 24, 1973, p. 8.
12. Philip Slater, *The Pursuit of Loneliness* (Boston: Beacon, 1970), p. 7.
13. Richard H. Blum and Associates, *Society and Drugs,* vol. 1 (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1969), p. 335.
14. Jock Young, "The Myth of the Drug Taker in the Mass Media," in Stanley Cohen and Jock Young, eds., *The Manufacture of News* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1973), pp. 314–22.
15. Erich Goode, *Drugs in American Society* (New York: Knopf, 1972), p. 232.
16. Erich Goode, *The Marijuana Smokers* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), pp. 52–53.
17. Howard S. Becker, "Whose Side Are We On?" *Social Problems,* Winter 1967, pp. 239–47.
18. Quoted in Goode, *op. cit. supra* note 15, p. 15.
19. *Id.,* p. 16.
20. Young, *op. cit. supra* note 1, p. 68.