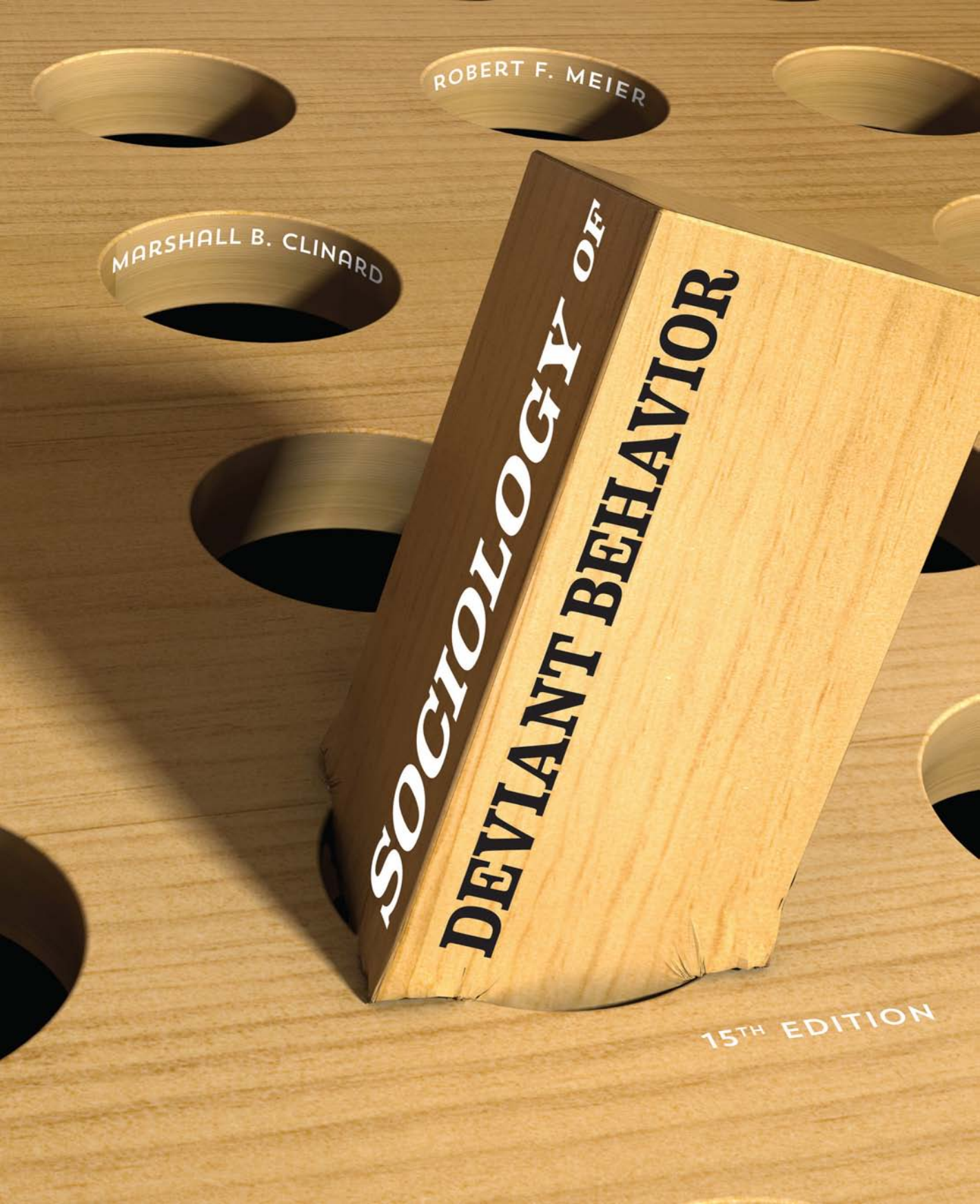
ROBERT F. MEIER
MARSHALL B. CLINARD
SOCIOLOGY OF
DEVIANT BEHAVIOR
15TH EDITION

FIFTEENTH EDITION

SOCIOLOGY OF DEVIANT BEHAVIOR

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To my children, from whom I have learned a great deal
Marsha
Stephen
Lawrence
Marshall B. Clinard

To Peter—You were with us only the briefest time, but you made a huge impact on our hearts. Thank you, little man, for teaching me a new way to love.
Robert F. Meier

BRIEF CONTENTS

CONTENTS

PREFACE

LOOK AT THE COVER OF THIS BOOK. Which is deviant, the round hole or the square peg? The best answer to that question may be "it depends." To the round hole, the square peg may be deviant. To the square peg, the round hole may be deviant. But maybe neither is deviant, they are just different. And, sometimes, what at first looks clear and distinct is, on further examination, ambiguous. Here, we seek the clarity of deviance; but we also recognize its ambiguity.

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

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

The world moves fast. Facts that were once weeks, months, and even years away from our knowledge and understanding are coming to us more quickly. Now, information transmitted virtually instantly via the Internet and social media inform our instant understanding and judgment about people, events, and behavior. And, deviance is no exception. The social acceptance of gay marriage and the use of marijuana have both been swift in recent months and years. Gauging public opinion to estimate normative shifts requires keeping more of an eye on media than scholarly journals, if only because some shifts occur quickly.

As with previous editions, this 15th edition is a complete revision that incorporates the most recent theoretical developments in the field and the latest research findings. Reviewers of previous editions have suggested changes. In this edition, we have placed more emphasis on some forms of deviance and issues of social control that are of great contemporary concern—for example, drugs and violence, both personal and family. Chapter Seven, "White-Collar and Corporate Crime," reflects events in the last few years, involving corporate scandals and accounting frauds, as well as the development of faulty products. In some chapters, such as those dealing with disabilities, homosexuality and lesbianism, and mental disorders, we have chosen to emphasize the consequences of stigmatization on behavior that is not voluntarily deviant. In other words, this edition concentrates not only on the nature of deviance, but also on the reactions toward and consequences of deviant behavior and conditions.

We have augmented the material throughout with first-person accounts to illustrate some of the sociological concepts and theories discussed. We have attempted to devote attention to "newer" forms of deviance, such as eating disorders. That material is now found in Chapter Fourteen, "Mental Disorders," although it was placed there with some ambivalence. In addition, there is more attention throughout on the impact of technology on both deviant behavior and its control. Every chapter has been updated; some have been enlarged.

The book is divided into six parts. Part One, "Introduction to Deviance," serves as an introduction to issues in deviance. Chapter One, "The Nature and Meaning of Deviance," deals with the nature and definition of deviance. It introduces the sociological concepts necessary to understand the processes, as well as the theories of deviance that follow. Chapter Two, "Deviant Events and Social Control," describes the nature of deviant events and social control. It explores the close link between processes of deviance and its control, and it provides a conceptual background to the discussions of social control in the substantive chapters that follow.

Part Two, "Explaining Deviance," deals with explanations of deviant behavior. Chapter Three, "Becoming Deviant," introduces students to the individual and group processes that shape deviant behavior and deviant careers. A number of select perspectives on individual deviance are also introduced. Chapter Four, "Major Theories of Deviance," deals with sociological perspectives and theories of deviance. It examines and contrasts major sociological approaches to deviance: anomie, conflict, control, labeling, and learning perspectives. A short case study introduces the core idea of each theory.

We then shift to an in-depth examination of various forms of deviant behavior. Part Three, "Deviance and Crime," explores the theme of crime as deviance. Chapters Five, "Crimes of Interpersonal Violence," and Six, "Nonviolent Crime," identify the processes involved in crimes of interpersonal violence and nonviolent crimes,

respectively. Chapter Seven, "White-Collar and Corporate Crime," deals with white-collar and corporate criminality, as well as professional deviance involving professionals such as physicians, priests, and people in the world of business. The importance of this type of deviance has played a role in the recession in the United States, as well as around the world.

Part Four, "Types of Deviance," covers other forms of deviance. Chapter Eight, "Drug Use and Addiction," deals with drug use, while Chapter Nine, "Drunkenness and Alcoholism," is devoted to alcohol, the most widely used drug. Chapter Ten, "Suicide," focuses on suicide, and Chapter Eleven, "Heterosexual Deviance," concentrates on forms of heterosexual deviance.

Part Five, "Studies in Stigma," explores the ways in which societal reaction in the form of stigma shapes the nature of conduct. Chapter Twelve, "Gays, Lesbians, and Homophobia," covers homosexuality, lesbianism, and homophobia from a sociological point of view, and Chapter Thirteen, "Physical Disabilities," deals with physical disabilities. People who fall into each of these categories have been subject to social stigma, although in different ways. Chapter Fourteen, "Mental Disorders," deals with a sociological examination of mental disorders and the stigma suffered by persons suffering from these disorders. These three chapters are examples of conditions often regarded sociologically as deviant, with profound social and personal implications for the self-concept of the individual.

Part Six, "Looking Ahead," briefly examines some understudied forms of deviance. Chapter Fifteen, "Recent Forms of Deviance," discusses some minor and emerging forms of deviance. This chapter brings us back to issues discussed in Chapters One and Two—the changing nature of norms and deviance over time.

This edition emphasizes that deviance is an inescapable feature of modern, complex societies because such societies are characterized by a system of ranked social differentiation (stratification) that is generally associated with many types of social deviance. We also wish to affirm in this edition the obvious relationship between deviance and social order and the need for a sociological understanding of all aspects of society in order to comprehend the nature and complexity of social deviance.

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

By way of thanks, I (Meier) want to acknowledge specifically Jenny, Chrissy, and Mike: Thank you all so much for being absolutely great. I'm so proud of you all. There are no words I know to describe Katherine's importance in my life. How did I luck out having a friend like you? And, Aarion, thank you so much as well for your very special friendship. Lauren Merrill has been a special and wonderful person in my life and I miss her immensely. I also give my thanks to Janice Rech, who is not only an important friend, but also a source of inspiration. There are others who deserve mention, either as mentors—such as Gil Geis, Jim Short, and Marshall Clinard—or as significant sources of support—such as Jerry Deichert and Melanie Kiper. I also appreciate conversations with Tanya Hanson and Leon Brooks. Thank you all.

We wish specifically to thank the following reviewers, who provided valuable suggestions for this edition of the book:

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Finally, I want to mention the obvious. Marshall Clinard (1911–2010) was a major intellect in this field. His contributions to the sociology of deviance and to criminology were enormous. He wrote on a number of topics, including rural crime, crime in countries that had low crime rates, and corporate crime. Indeed, much of his latter career was devoted to studying the crimes of upper-status people either individually (white-collar crime) or in organizations (corporate crime), and in this sense he was following his mentor, Edwin H. Sutherland. His autobiographical journey can be found in Marshall B. Clinard, "How I Became a Criminologist," *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, 31, 133–142.

An instructor's manual with test questions and Microsoft PowerPoint slides for this text is available and may be obtained through a local Cengage Learning representative. Suggestions are always welcome. Please feel free to contact the author by mail or, if you prefer, by e-mail at rmeier@unomaha.edu.

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

PART ONE

Introduction to Deviance

CHAPTER ONE

The Nature and Meaning of Deviance

- **What Is Deviance?**
- **Deviance and Society**
- **Summary**

A SOCIOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING of deviance goes beyond asking questions like, "Why did he commit that crime?" or "Why did she become an alcoholic?" or "Why are they engaging in sexual behavior I disapprove of?" or "Why is this person doing something I dislike?" In this chapter, we will start to ask these sociological questions; and in subsequent chapters, we will try to point to some answers for those questions.

Laughing out loud might not be considered deviant for a group of partygoers at a comedy club, but it would be at a funeral. What is deviant for one person or group may not be for another, and what is deviant in one situation may not be in another. While this may sound like the concept of deviance is confusing, there is actually a general meaning on which there is substantial agreement. In this chapter and the next two, we introduce the idea of deviance and identify important elements of its social context. Deviance does not take place in a social vacuum since the concept of deviance is uniquely sociological. It takes place more in some places than in others, more at some times than at others, and more in some situations than in others. This is the basic theoretical problem in the sociology of deviance: Can we account for these times, places, and groups?

Let's begin with some short examples. On January 15, 2014, the U.S. Air Force announced that 34 officers responsible for maintaining and launching nuclear missiles at a base in South Dakota has been suspended for cheating on monthly proficiency examinations (Cooper, 2014). While not, strictly speaking, illegal, such conduct clearly violates military expectations, particularly with those with such an awesome responsibility. In a related scandal, 11 officers, including 2 with nuclear missile responsibilities, were being investigated on suspicion of an illegal drug scandal.

Consider another situation. Buying and selling human organs in the United States, as well as just about everywhere, are both illegal. The low number of organ transplant donors in the United States causes those who are in need of an organ transplant to wait for a suitable donor—sometimes for years—and sometimes such patients die waiting. This lifesaving operation is often unavailable or delayed, and as

a result, many more wealthy patients may investigate other sources, such as the black market.

While many people think that the practice of organ selling does not occur in the United States, a sting operation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in 2009 found that organ trafficking does sometimes happen here. Levi Izhak Rosenbaum, a Brooklyn, New York, rabbi, was arrested on July 23, 2009, for buying and selling kidneys (Halbfinger, 2009). He would pay $10,000 apiece for the kidneys of vulnerable people in Israel and sell them to desperate patients in the United States for as much as $160,000.

Some may believe that the donors are saving lives. But critics, such as Nancy Scheper-Hughes, the head of Organs Watch, an international organization that monitors the sale of human organs, say, "We don't want to turn the poor people of the world into bags of spare parts that I or you, a person who has more resources or money, can simply prey upon. It's morally unacceptable to do that."

What do you think? Is selling human organs deviant? Before we can judge whether this is the case, we have to understand the meaning of the term *deviant*.

Let's consider another short example. Marsha Lindall is an attractive woman in her late thirties. She has a very successful professional career and recently moved to a new city because of a promotion. In the course of meeting new colleagues and friends, Marsha has increasingly had the sense that she is an outsider in some way. It has become clear to her in conversations that some of the new people she is meeting regard her "family" situation as unusual. Although Marsha was married and subsequently divorced, she has not had children. Some of the people she has been meeting seem to think that this is deviant. And Marsha is beginning to feel excluded from social occasions where there are couples and children. She is beginning to think that she is deviant in some sense (see Park, 2006). Is she?

Take another example. Mindy Kaling has a successful television series, *The Mindy Project*. She is also an accomplished movie actress. By virtually any measure of success, she has done very well for herself. But she says:

> I always get asked "Where do you get your confidence?" I think people are well meaning, but it's pretty insulting. Because what is means to me is "You, Mindy Kaling, have all the trappings of a very marginalized person. You're not skinny, you're not white, you're a woman. Why on earth would you feel like you're worth anything? (Malcom, 2013: 11)

Is Mindy Kaling deviant? Well, she does share some characteristics of marginalized people, but then we need to ask if being marginal is deviant. Who decides?

Deviance takes many forms, but agreement remains elusive about which specific behaviors and conditions constitute deviance. This ambiguity becomes especially evident when some people praise the same behavior that others condemn. If the concept were not confusing enough already, many discussions of deviance evoke strong political and moral attitudes, prompting some groups to call on the law to support their views of certain acts (e.g., homosexuality, abortion). Even everyday behavior can have this moral tone. The centuries-long debate on whether mothers should breast- or formula-feed infants contains moral dimensions. A study of first-time mothers in England concluded that whether they intend to breast- or formula-feed, women face considerable challenges from those who disagree with them, as the mothers seek to establish that they are not only good mothers, but also good partners and

good women (Murphy, 1999). Not even the time-honored institution of motherhood is immune from allegations of deviance.

To understand deviance, one must first understand this contradiction: No consensus reliably identifies behavior, people, or conditions that are deviant, although most people would say that they know deviance when they see it. Many lists would include mental disorder, suicide, crime, homosexuality, and alcoholism. Yet disagreement casts shadows over even this basic list of "generally accepted" forms of deviance. Some, for example, deny that homosexuality is deviant in any way. One person may see drinking as a problem behavior, but another may disagree. Many segments of the population dispute the harm of certain crimes, such as prostitution and the use of marijuana or cocaine (Meier and Geis, 2006). Attitudes toward deviance may resemble St. Augustine's comment about time: One knows pretty much what it is—until one is asked to define it.

The sociological concept of deviance was unknown before the 1950s. Topics that would now likely be considered deviant were considered only in social problems courses or in courses titled "Social Disorganization" or "Social Pathology." But the study of social problems was usually a study of existing states, such as war, poverty, and community instability.

The idea of deviance may have been first developed by Edwin Lemert (1951) in his break with the social disorganization and social pathology perspectives. Lemert, for the most part, concentrated on behavior that departed from what was expected, but he included the conditions of blindness and speech defects as examples of deviation.

The very first edition of this book also used the term *deviance* as the study not of conditions, but of behavior—deviant behavior (Clinard, 1957). Still, this edition included various conditions, such as war, with which to illustrate the notion of deviance.

The notion of deviant behavior was bolstered by the idea that deviance was ironic. *Irony* refers to something that happens that shouldn't happen. Most people consider some thoughts, behavior, and even personal attributes to be deviant, even though different people may disapprove more than others about the degree of deviance and what kinds of reactions are appropriate.

Sociologists who are interested in deviance are interested in what makes the behavior deviant, the nature of the deviant act, how one comes to commit deviant acts, and the consequences of committing deviant acts. Because there are many different norms to be violated, there are many different kinds or examples of deviance (Figure 1.1).

In some instances, deviants may believe that their behavior constitutes an act of "justified deviance." This is deviance that is justified from the standpoint of the individual who is acting, even though others may not think it is justified. International terrorists, for example, believe that what they do, including the bombing of mass transportation systems such as trains and airplanes, and other acts of mass murder, are justified by their political or religious views. In July 2006, eight bombs, timed to go off within minutes of one another, ripped through seven trains taking commuters home in Mumbai, India. It appeared to be the work of a Kashmiri militant group. If that is true, this group undoubtedly would justify the attack by pointing to the conflict between Kashmir and India over disputed land. Nearly 200 were killed and over 700 were wounded in this attack. Who determines whether some behavior is deviant, the actor or the audience of the act?

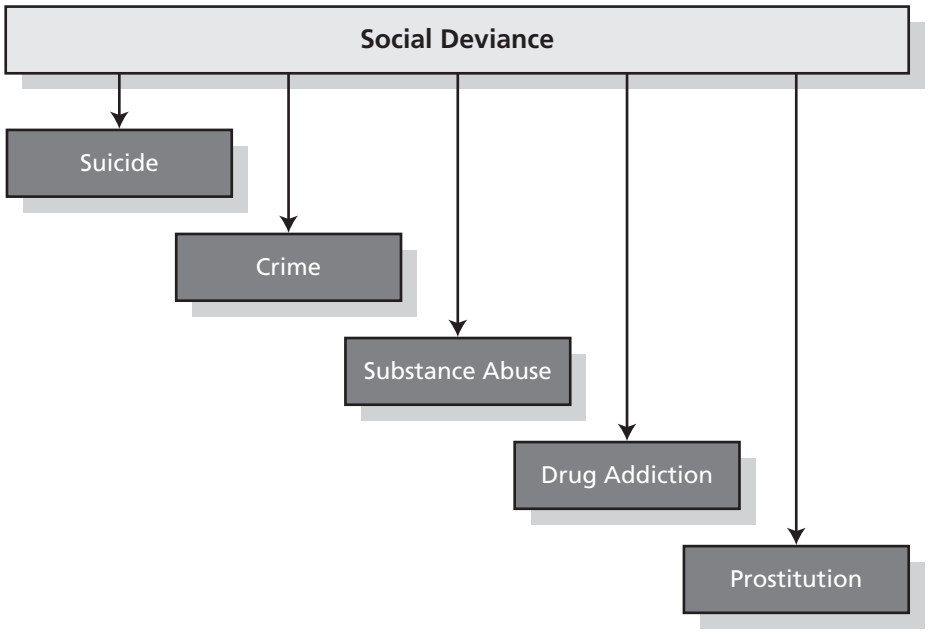

FIGURE 1.1 Examples of Deviance

Disagreement about whether specific acts are deviant need not prevent full discussion of the important dimensions of deviance: what it is, how to define it, what causes it, and what social groups can and should do to reduce it. This book examines a number of forms of deviance, including some mentioned in the earlier lists. Not everyone agrees that each form fits the definition of *deviant,* and the discussion will spark disagreement about the extent to which some acts represent deviance. We feel, however, that many readers will regard them thus.

Clearly, different people would compose different lists of deviant people and acts—sometimes drastically different lists; yet no one should dismiss deviance as an idiosyncratic judgment because many observers agree that a wide range of acts and people fit within that category. Also, these evaluations represent *group* opinions, not just individual ones. Some social acts and actors do, in fact, share a quality called *deviance*. Observers share some degree of understanding about the deviant nature of *some* acts and conditions. A formal definition identifies the common characteristics among these individual judgments.

WHAT IS DEVIANCE?

Some sociologists conceive of deviance as a collection of conditions, persons, or acts that society disvalues (Sagarin, 1975: 9), finds offensive (Higgins and Butler, 1982: 3), or condemns (Weitzer, 2002: 2). These definitions avoid the critical question of how or why people classify acts or individuals as offensive to them and, hence, on what basis they disvalue those examples. Such a conception also fails to recognize the possibility that deviance might include highly valued differences and that society can encounter

"positive" as well as "negative" deviance (Heckert and Heckert, 2002), as in the cases of the genius (see Dodge, 1985, and Sagarin, 1985) and the exceptional child (Zeitlin, Ghassemi, and Mansour, 1990).

But examples give insufficiently precise definitions of deviance. Only an explicit definition can fully identify a range of examples that might be considered deviant, in either a positive or a negative sense (Jensen, 2001).

Normative and Reactivist Definitions

A **reactivist or relativist definition** of deviance holds that there are no universal or unchanging entities that define deviance for all times and in all places. Rather, "social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction creates deviance" (Becker, 1973: 9). Deviance is in the eye of the beholder, not in any particular action on the part of the person who may be labeled as a deviant (see also Higgins and Mackinem, 2008).

A **normative definition** describes deviance as a violation of a **norm**, a standard about "what human beings should or should not think, say, or do under given circumstances" (Blake and Davis, 1964: 456; see also Birenbaum and Sagarin, 1976, and Gibbs, 1981). Violations of norms often draw reactions or **sanctions** from their social audiences. These sanctions constitute the pressures that most people feel to conform to social norms.

Norms are not what is "common." Sometimes we speak of something being the norm for our group, meaning what most group members do. For example, most adults (and many young adults) have cell phones. In 1998, 36 percent of U.S. households had a cell phone, compared to 96 percent that had a land line (Engber, 2014). But compare those figures to 2011, where 89 percent of households had a cell phone, compared to 71 percent of households that had a land line. Is having a cell phone a norm? No, because having a cell phone is common, but it is not what one *ought* to do. This suggests that the meaning of *norm* is better found in expectations of behavior, not actual behavior.

Two common conceptions characterize norms as evaluations of conduct and as expectations or predictions of conduct (Meier, 1981). The conception based on evaluation recognizes that some conduct (behavior or beliefs) ought or ought not to occur, either in specific situations (e.g., no smoking in public elevators) or at any time or place (e.g., no armed robbery, ever). The conception of norms as expectations or predictions highlights regularities of behavior based on habit or traditional customs. People expect a child to act a certain way in church and in another way on the playground.

Norms are not necessarily clear-cut rules. Norms are social entities; they are shared group evaluations or guidelines. Rules come from some authority, which formulates them individually and imposes them on others (such as the laws of a monarch or despot). Rules and norms do share many characteristics, however, including the property of directing behavior; both are necessary components of social order (Bryant, 1990: 5–13). For example, in November 2002, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) sanctioned the University of Michigan's basketball program because a booster paid a total of $616,000 to several players during the 1990s. The resulting punishment banned the team from postseason play in 2003 and forfeited victories from six seasons, including the 1992 and 1993 Final Fours

(*Omaha World-Herald*, November 9, 2002, p. C1). The basketball players violated a rule, but is the rule a norm? Many would say that it is not right for college players to accept money for playing; that violates the nature of amateurism.

One virtue of the normative conception comes from its answer to a question that stumps the reactivist conception: On what basis do people react to behavior? In other words, if deviance results only through the reactions of others, how do people know to react to or label a given instance of behavior? Norms supply the only obvious answer to this question. For this reason, the reactivist and normative conceptions may complement one another; norms provide the basis for reacting to deviance, but social reactions express norms and identify deviance.

People are considered deviant because of their behavior or conditions. People risk being labeled deviant by others when they express unaccepted religious beliefs (such as devil-worshiping), violate norms pertaining to dress or appearance, or engage in proscribed sexual acts. Certain conditions also frequently lead people to label others as deviant, including physical handicaps and violations of appearance norms (e.g., obesity). People whose identities as deviant result from their beliefs or behavior fall into the category of achieved deviant status, while certain conditions may confer ascribed deviant status (Adler and Adler, 2011).

In this book, we adopt a normative definition of deviance. Deviance constitutes departures from norms that draw social disapproval such that the variations elicit (or are likely to elicit if detected) negative sanctions. This definition incorporates both social disapproval of actions and social reactions to the disapproved actions (see also Atkinson, 2014). Perhaps the key element in this conception is the idea of a norm. Norms do not simply operate in society. They are created, maintained, and promoted, sometimes in competition against one another. Society creates norms in much the same sense that the idea of deviance itself results from social construction and negotiation (Pfuhl and Henry, 1993).

Alternative Definitions

One of the most common definitions, often heard in everyday conversation, identifies deviance as a variation or departure from an average. This **statistical definition** emphasizes behavior that differs from the average experience; it cites rare or infrequent phenomena. This definition assumes that what most people do determines the correct way to act.

It faces immediate difficulties, however, if it classes any minority as inherently deviant. A statistical definition applies the label *deviants* to those who have never stolen anything or violated the law, never used marijuana, never tasted alcoholic beverages, and never had premarital sexual relations (Rushing, 1975: 3–4). Statistical regularities of behavior do not reveal the *meaning* of deviance. Rather, the definition must connote some difference or departure from a standard of behavior—what "should" or "should not" be rather than "what is."

Another alternative definition of deviance relies on values. *Values* represent long-term, desired states—such as health, justice, and social equality. A society's values represent a general orientation for behavior without prescribing specific behavior. Values are important parts of an absolutist definition of deviance.

Some observers regard social rules as "absolute, clear and obvious to all members of society in all situations" (Scott and Douglas, 1972: 4; see also Hawkins and

Tiedeman, 1975: 20–41). This **absolutist conception** of deviance assumes that everyone agrees on obvious, basic rules of a society, leading to general agreement that deviance results from the violation of previously defined standards for acceptable behavior. This position takes the definition for granted, as though everyone always agrees that certain violations of rules represent abnormal acts and others do not. It presumes that everyone knows how to act according to universally held values; violations of these values constitute deviance.

History and current practices in some societies today show situations characterized by almost universal acceptance of some set of guiding values, perhaps those of the Catholic Church or the Koran. Among other societies, the teachings of the Buddha, the Bible, or other religious leaders or sacred documents have laid out invariable prescriptions for behavior. Western societies have often found general, universal standards in middle-class moral values or in the personal biases of some writers whose rural, traditional, and religious backgrounds have led them to view many forms of behavior related to urban life and industrial society as morally destructive (Ranulf, 1964). Still another version of the absolutist definition asserts that conceptions of what is deviant stem ultimately from the preferences and interests of elite segments of society (Schwendinger and Schwendinger, 1977).

The absolutist conception of deviance, however, ignores many facets of social life:

> The absolutist asserts that, regardless of time and social context, certain culture-free standards, such as how fully persons develop their innate potential or how closely they approach the fulfillment of the highest human values, enable one to detect deviance. Thus suicide or alcoholism destroys or inhibits the possibility of the actor's developing his full human potential and is therefore always deviant.... The absolutist believes that he knows what behavior *is*, what people *should be*, and what constitutes full and appropriate development. (Lofland, 1969: 23–24)

A final alternative definition is called the *reactivist conception*. The reactivist conception defines deviance as behavior or conditions labeled as deviant by others. As one reactivist puts it: "The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label" (Becker, 1973: 9). The reactivist definition thus identifies acts as deviant *only* according to social reactions to those acts, determined through labels applied by society or agents of social control. Once behavior receives the label *deviant*, an easy extension applies the label to the actor as well. The reactivist conception of deviance has gained a strong influence, and reasons for its

In Brief: Shorthand Definitions of Deviance

Statistical definition: Common conditions determine what is normal or nondeviant; anything in the statistical minority represents deviance.

Absolutist definition: Deviance results from a value judgment based on absolute standards. Certain actions and conditions qualify as deviant because they have always defined deviance (through tradition or custom).

Reactivist definition: Deviance is whatever a social audience reacts against (or labels) as deviant. Something that elicits no reaction escapes identification as deviant.

Normative definition: The label *deviant* depends on a group's notion of actions and conditions that should and should not occur. This situational conception can change in different situations.

popularity are easily identifiable. The reactivist conception attempts to concentrate on the truly social identity of deviance—the interaction between the deviant and society (really its representatives, in the form of social control agents, such as the police)—and the consequences of that social relationship. Reactivists reject the notion that deviance results from some innate quality of an act; rather, they claim that this judgment depends exclusively on the reactions of the act's social audience.

Critics of the reactivist definition acknowledge the importance of the interactions between deviants and social control agents, but they assert that those interactions do not *define* the term. To grasp the illogical foundation of this view, imagine a man committing burglary and escaping detection; because he evades detection, he experiences no reaction by society and thus escapes classification as a deviant. Furthermore, even those acts that elicit social reactions do so for some reason. That is, something about the acts must prompt others to react against them in the first place. That quality (such as the innate wrongfulness of the acts or their violation of agreed-upon standard of behaviors) is what really determines deviance.

Now, remember the case of Marsha, at the beginning of the chapter? According to which of the above definitions is she a deviant? Statistically, more adults are now refraining from having children than in some earlier times, and divorce is now regrettably common. No absolute standards proclaim that adults should have children. But Marsha is feeling uncomfortable around others, and if she is excluded from social occasions because of her single, childless condition, a reactivist definition would be appropriate. But why would others label her deviant? One answer is that the norms of their groups suggest that couples and parents have statuses that are valued. Marsha may be feeling deviant because her friends who have partners and children think that is the way things *should be*.

Norms, and hence deviance, relate both to small groups and to certain structural features of society. The larger meaning of deviance emerges in the context of social differentiation and stratification. It also grows out of the properties and nature of norms, social groups who subscribe to those norms, and the influence of those norms on behavior. The chapter now turns to an examination of these concepts—differentiation, norm, sanction, and social control.

DEVIANCE AND SOCIETY

Sennett (2012) believes that one of the biggest challenges facing society today is living with people who are not like us. Think of all the ways that people differ—religiously, racially, economically, and ethnically. And these areas describe only a few of the dimensions on which people are different. At the simplest level, deviance refers to something different from something else. Deviants are people not like us. *They* behave differently, or so many people think. But deviance extends beyond simple, everyday observations of differences among people and their behavior. Some differences in styles of dress, for example, do not amount to deviance. Persons who wear a common style of clothing may still favor different colors without becoming deviant.

Beyond the idea of differences, deviance implies something evaluated negatively or *disvalued*. Someone's clothing may look different without qualifying as deviant. It may earn that label only if its difference seems in bad taste, such as when colors clash violently or when the clothing is not suitable to the occasion; wearing a bathing suit to

a funeral amounts to deviance. Some people would never wear red and orange or black and blue in the same outfit. They would consider these combinations deviant in the context of fashion.

Not all people see problems in colors that clash. Young people who dress in punk-rock or hip-hop fashions may value highly clashing colors and unusual styles in clothing and hair. Others may extend or violate some groups' appearance norms by "going too far," as some older people might regard the current fad of body piercing and tattooing among some young people.

Exceptions like these suggest that *deviance is a relative notion* (Curra 2011). It depends upon some audience's definition of something as deviant. These three ideas—differentness, judgment, and relative standards—each have important implications for a sociological understanding of deviance. These ideas support an understanding of the meaning of individual deviant conduct, as well as the connection of that conduct to the larger social community.

Norms

Because the definition of *deviance* refers to norms, a fuller explanation must identify the importance of norms to everyday life. Social norms—expectations of conduct in particular situations—regulate human social relations and behavior. Norms vary according to how widely people accept them, how society enforces them, how society transmits them, and how much conformity people require. Some social norms may require considerable force to ensure compliance; others may require little or none. Some norms remain fairly stable in the standards they set; others define more transitory expectations (Gibbs, 1965).

Individuals in a group rarely recognize the often-arbitrary origins of the social norms in their group since they have encountered these priorities in the ongoing process of living. Group members learn and transmit norms from generation to generation. In this way, individuals incorporate into their own lives the language, ideas, and beliefs of the groups to which they belong. Human beings thus see the world not through their eyes alone (for then each would see the same thing); rather, they regard the world through the lenses of their cultural and other group experiences.

Even moral judgments generally do not reflect the positions of an individual alone but reflect those of the group or groups to which the individual belongs. Probably no one has stated the significance of group influence through norms more cogently, and even poetically, than Faris (1937) did many years ago:

> For we live in a world of "cultural relativity" and the whole furniture of earth and choir of heaven are to be described and discussed as they are conceived by men. Caviar is not a delicacy to the general [population]. Cows are not food to the Hindu. Mohammed is not the prophet of God to me. To an atheist, God is not God at all. (pp. 150–151)

Norms make crucial contributions to the process of maintaining order. Some regard them as cultural ideals, while others describe them as expressions of what society expects in certain situations. For example, one may examine sexual behavior as the result of cultural ideals or of specific expectations for certain situations, such as a married couple on their honeymoon. One can infer ideal cultural norms from observations of what people say, sanction, or react against. *Proscriptive norms* tell people what they should not do; *prescriptive norms* tell them what they ought to do. Norms not

only set social or group standards for conduct but also define categories through which people interpret experiences. They establish the basis for interpreting both actions ("He should not have laughed during the funeral") and events ("Funerals are certainly sad").

The social norms and behaviors vary substantially among social classes in the United States, revealing many differences in groups' attitudes and values. The norms of plumbers differ from those of doctors and professors; construction workers display attitudes markedly different from those of college students. Child-rearing patterns differ from one social class to another, and they also vary with the intensity of the parents' religious beliefs more than with differences in specific religious affiliations (Alwin, 1986). Lower-class parents, for example, tend to discipline children by physical punishment more often than middle-class parents, although the difference is not as large as some expect (Erlanger, 1974). Members of the lower classes commit the most crimes of violence, such as murder, aggravated assault, and forcible rape; a lower-class "subculture of violence," to be discussed in Chapter 7, may offer a partial explanation. Some norms affect acceptance of others, and these interrelations, in turn, influence the socialization process.

Norms play integral roles in the organization principles of all societies, from small tribal groups to modern industrial societies. In complex modern societies, group norms may differ radically or only slightly; some norms differ only in emphasis between groups. As a result, someone who belongs to a number of groups, each with its own norms or levels of emphasis, may experience personal conflict.

People often feel pressured to act in different ways according to the roles that they are performing at the time. A *social role* is a collection of norms that together convey expectations about appropriate conduct for persons in a particular position. Thus, different sets of norms govern the behaviors of husbands and bachelors, the role of a shopper differs from that of a salesclerk, and so on. The norms and social roles that a person acquires from the family group do not always agree with the norms and social roles of the play group, age or peer group, work group, or political group. Individuals may value membership in certain groups more highly than membership in others, and as a result, they may tend to conform more closely to the norms of the most important groups. Although the family group supplies important guidance, it is only one of several groups that influence a person's behavior, whether deviant or nondeviant. Many other important sources promote norms in modern societies: social classes, occupation groups, neighborhoods, schools, churches, and friends.

Among relatively homogeneous peoples, such as primitive or folk societies, most members perceive common sets of norms and values in similar ways, although differences do emerge (Edgerton, 1976). Members of such societies thus share many common objectives and meanings, as opposed to more modern, complex societies, where social group affiliations reflect race, occupation, ethnic background, religion, political party, residence, and many other attributes. Social class and age or peer group memberships determine particularly important aspects of this differentiation.

Most people are aware of the norms in their everyday lives once their attention is directed toward them. Norms define acts, actors, and conditions as either acceptable or unacceptable examples of deviance. Norms can and do change through the actions of individuals and groups promoting their norms over others, but the continuing influence of norms underlies the meaning and explanation of deviance.

Differentiation and Deviance

People differ from one another in a number of ways, including age, sex, race, educational attainment, and occupational status. *Differentiation* is the sociological term that refers to such variations. At the most general level, *deviance* also refers to differentness. The concept of deviance would have no meaning in an undifferentiated society. However, since no group of people could ever share all of the same characteristics, deviance can occur in every society, to the extent that some differences will be more highly valued than others. Some sociologists believe that societies can tolerate only limited deviance and that deviance remains relatively constant over time within a society. Emile Durkheim (1982) described deviance as "normal" as long ago as 1895 and asserted that no society could rid itself of deviance. Durkheim argued that by defining what is deviant, societies also define what is not, thereby helping to create shared standards. Some sociologists do not doubt that deviance maintains a constant level, but they assert that the amount of deviance in a society adjusts both upward (Erikson, 1965) and downward according to social conditions. Expansion of standards for deviance in times of scarcity may help to foster social cohesion (Erikson, 1965), while some conditions lose the stigma of deviance when this need subsides (Moynihan, 1993). As a result, while the overall levels are the same, the acts and conditions defined as deviant can change over time. Durkheim observes that deviance could be found even in a society of saints, where small differences among them would be morally magnified. Some saints, in other words, would still be literally holier than others.

The conditions that promote social differentiation in society also promote deviance (Meier, 1989). Conditions that increase differentiation also likely boost the degree and range of social stratification by increasing the number of criteria for comparing people. Those comparisons often result in invidious distinctions, or ranks, that identify some characteristics as more highly valued than others. Expansion of the criteria for stratifying individuals also stretches the range of conditions that society disvalues or ranks below others (see also Cohen, 1974).

As people differ from one another in more ways, the degree of stratification—or at least the likelihood of stratification—increases. Modern, industrial societies differentiate people in extremely complex ways. In addition to characteristics such as age, sex, and race, members of modern societies display greater diversity in behavior, dress, attitudes, and interaction patterns than those of more traditional, homogeneous societies. Within modern societies, differences between urban and rural areas enhance differentiation as well. Sometimes, some people say *deviance* when they mean *diversity*, or behavior that results from social differentiation. A diverse society introduces a number of dimensions for defining deviance judgments: age, sex, ethnicity, heritage, religion, and the like. But the increasingly multicultural nature of a society like that of the United States need not threaten people; however, convincing people of this represents an important challenge (Sennett, 2012).

Beyond this trend toward diversity, an increase in stratification clearly seems to raise the chances that some of these rankings will reflect disvalued characteristics. Not only will some individuals fall to lower ranks as a result, but they also may feel disvalued. To the extent that society values education, it disvalues undereducation; to the extent that it values an occupation with high prestige (like Supreme Court justice), it disvalues one with little or no prestige (like ditchdigger). Judgments about "better" or "worse" begin the process of making judgments about deviance.

These kinds of elements link deviance to stratification within a society. Status rankings from top to bottom span roughly the same range as negative classifications that make up a structure of deviance. A society with a relatively high level of differentiation generally exhibits a large number of status ranks; a society with relatively little differentiation usually features a small number of status ranks. Similarly, a highly stratified society should define a larger number of negative status ranks than does a less stratified society. In other words, expanding stratification increases the number of criteria on which to make judgments of deviance. A relatively simpler society should define both a simple structure of social stratification and a simple or narrow structure of deviant status categories.

Age, sex, status, occupation, income, race, and education differentiate individuals, among many other criteria. A comprehensive definition of deviance would clearly indicate which kinds of differentiation amount to deviance and which only determine differences, without any moral connotations. Some sociologists, however, have recommended an alternative: leaving deviance undefined and proceeding with research on "matters dealing with deviance." Lemert, for example, has suggested that "the study of deviance can best proceed by identifying bodies of data through primitive, ontological recognition rather than by formal definition" (Lemert 1982: 238).

Judgments of deviance do not refer to static or constant standards, though. Deviance takes constantly changing forms and elicits varying degrees of disapproval. To understand which conduct or conditions stimulate disapproval, one must first understand social power. *Power* can be defined as the ability to make choices by virtue of control over political, economic, or social resources. People who have money, education, and social influence generally wield more power than those who lack those resources. Powerful people, by virtue of their influence, often define standards for deviance, and they often find more deviance among others with less power than they have themselves. Public opinion often treats white-collar and corporate crime as less serious than "ordinary" street crime, even though offenses by these powerful criminals may cause more serious injuries and worse financial losses than street crime.

Lawyers, doctors, and other professionals who commit crimes often escape the *criminal* label altogether. Reasons for this disparity include the classification of these crimes outside the rubric of criminal law and the habit of most people to think that powerful persons are not evil or depraved violators, roles that are often reserved for lower-class people. White-collar crimes generally draw sanctions defined by administrative law, such as license suspension, or by civil action, such as mandatory restitution. Therefore, many people regard crimes committed with a pen, such as embezzlement, as less serious than those committed with a gun, such as robbery, even though both are of a similar nature (taking money from another person, in this example).

One important dimension of differentiation is income mobility. While there are those who claim that the chances of moving up—or down—the income ladder in the United States has changed, at least one study of the issue indicates that this is not the case (Chetty et al., 2014). These chances appear to be stagnant at best and have been for the last 20 years. It is true, however, that the mobility rate in the United States is lower than in Canada and much of Western Europe, where the chances of escaping poverty are higher.

In spite of any changes in social mobility, many observers have noted that income inequality is a growing problem, particularly in developed countries. Modern capitalist

societies, like the United States, have experienced more inequality because profits (return on capital) have grown faster than the rate of economic growth (which would benefit everyone). The importance of this inequality is that it generates dissatisfaction that could undermine democratic values (Piketty, 2014). However, by definition, economic inequality has both beneficiaries as well as detractors, and people with wealth are understandably reluctant to give up that power.

One example of the use of power to maintain privilege is the exemption from minimum wage laws of "tipped workers." In many places, waitstaff are paid as little at $2.13 an hour, when federal and state minimum wage laws provide for higher wages. The force behind this exemption is the National Restaurant Association, which has lobbied extensively and successfully for lower wages for waitstaff (Jayaraman, 2013: Chapter 4). While the National Restaurant Association represents no more than 30 percent of all restaurants nationwide, it does represent the large restaurant chains (e.g., Olive Garden and Appleby's), which benefit from paying lower wages. Implicit in this exemption is the requirement that management make up the difference between the $2.13-per-hour rate and that state's minimum wage, but there is no guarantee that this is done.

The importance of social power can also be expressed in more specific terms of social differentiation. Deviance requires relative judgments not because no trait or act is deviant everywhere and for all time, but because the processes of social differentiation and change alter social opinions. Significant changes in public opinion of both gay marriage and marijuana use have occurred over a relatively short period of time. This fact raises the key question of why some acts and actors receive sanctions as deviant while others do not. Sociologists frequently answer this question by referring to power. Powerful groups expand the range of stratified social phenomena through a process of definition and influence (Chambliss, 1976). A generic term for this process, *norm promotion*, indicates an ability to successfully promote particular norms to the exclusion of other, competing norms. Regardless of the process for defining specific acts as deviant, however, social judgments of disvaluement represent a core component of the concept of deviance. This fact presumably explains why some sociologists use the phrase *moral differentiation* to refer to deviance (Lemert, 1982). Deviance judgments are moral judgments.

Subcultures

Norms emerge from groups, and different groups are likely to have different norms. People encounter varying expectations for behavior depending on the group to which they belong. Acts labeled deviant in one group may be perfectly acceptable behaviors in another. Sociologists often refer to such differences as *subcultural differences.*

Sometimes members of a social group share a set of values and meanings not shared by the society of which they are a part. This separation creates a *subculture.* A subculture is a culture within a culture—a collection of norms, values, and beliefs with content distinguishable from those of the dominant culture. This definition implies that members of the subculture participate in and share the larger culture of which the subculture is a part. At the same time, it implies that the subculture observes some norms and meanings peculiar to its members. A subculture need not act in opposition to the larger culture; if it does, the term *counterculture* supplies a more appropriate meaning (Yinger, 1982).

An example of a counterculture is the world of outlaw motorcycle gangs, whose members refer to themselves as *1 percenters* (Barker, 2007), a phrase made popular when used by the then-president of the American Motorcycle Association to indicate that motorcycle gangs represent only a small minority of all motorcyclists. When the American Motorcyclist Association condemned the activities of outlaw bikers, it claimed that these cyclists were only 1 percent of the organized motorcycling population. The Hells Angels and other such groups, such as the Bandidos, Pagans, and Outlaws, adopted the term as a symbol of distinction (Thompson, 1966: 13, 18). These bikers live hedonistic lives and often reinforce their image of themselves as social outcasts by engaging in outrageous behavior for the benefit of onlookers. The subculture values mobility, mechanical ability, skill at fighting, adeptness at riding very large Harley-Davidson motorcycles, and ability to manipulate or "con" others (Watson, 1982). Crime is often a part of these cyclists' lives, at least for their street life spans, claimed to last only about five years (Quinn, 1987). After that time, the effects of run-ins with the law, brawls, or crashes take their toll, and the members move out of the gangs, usually into working-class occupations.

Biker women may lead even more bleak lives. Most often drawn from backgrounds of economic and social deprivation, biker gangs exploit women physically and economically (Hopper and Moore, 1990). Women often participate in various initiation rituals and contribute to the finances of the gang through drug sales or prostitution. For some of the biker women, the gang—as debilitating as it might appear to outsiders—provides a comforting measure of structure and predictability in an otherwise capricious life.

There is substantial competition among the larger biker gangs for criminal monopoly over a particular area (Quinn, 2001: 391). The competition takes a violent form, such as that in Scandinavia, where the Bandidos have been seriously challenging the Hells Angels' monopoly. The hostilities often involve military ordnance and automatic weapons.

A variety of subcultures and countercultures characterize modern industrial societies. Some of these subcultures gain the status of deviants. Cohen suggests that subcultures arise in highly differentiated, complex societies when a number of persons encounter similar problems living within the prevailing culture. In his view, subcultures represent collective solutions to shared problems posed by the dominant culture (Cohen, 1955: 14). For example, the delinquent subculture represents a response by lower-class boys to the frustration of trying to meet middle-class expectations of them in school. The delinquent subculture provides an alternative status system in which the boys feel better equipped to compete than in the school environment. Lewis (1961) adopts a similar view in his description of a subculture of poverty.

Criminologists have described the same process to explain the origins of subcultures within institutions for deviants, such as prisons (Johnson, 2002). In prison, subcultures represent social alternatives to the prison world. Composed of opposing norms and values, these subcultures may be affiliated with prison gangs that provide support and protection for its inmate members. Prison subcultures differ not only from the larger prison culture, but also from one another. Racial and ethnic conflict among inmates now commonly erupts in many maximum-security prisons because the elements of these subcultures conflict with one another.

Issue: Are Tattoos Deviant?

The answer to this question depends on who one asks. The perceived effect of the tattoo appears to matter to some people, and the age of the respondent matters. Here is what a sample of Americans said in 2012.

Percentage of Americans ages 30–39 with a tattoo in 2012	38
Percentage of Americans over 65 with a tattoo in 2012	5
Percentage of Americans who said that having a tattoo made them feel sexier	30
Percentage of Americans who said that it made them feel more rebellious	25
Percentage of Americans who say that more people getting tattoos is a change for the worse	40
Percentage of Americans over 65 who say this	64
Percentage of Americans 18–29 who say this	22

Source: Brooks, Dan. 2014. "The Existential Anguish of the Tattoo." *New York Times Magazine*, February 16: 44, 46.

Slum areas in large cities are more than overcrowded, congested collections of rundown physical facilities. Sociologically, a slum represents a subculture with its own set of norms and values, which include poor sanitation and health practices, low interest in formal education, and characteristic attitudes of apathy and isolation from conventional institutions. Inner-city areas also breed subcultural norms conducive to violence, theft, delinquency, vandalism, selling and using illegal drugs, and the presence of street addicts. A "slum way of life" emerges from a combination of cultural attitudes toward economic conditions and responses to wider social and economic opportunities. This subculture frequently characterizes high-rise housing projects in major cities (Wilson, 1987).

Subcultures show clear connections to many forms of deviance. The chapters that follow will describe subcultural influences and contexts that affect drug use, homosexuality, skid-row drinking, delinquency and crime, and even suicide. Even chronic psychiatric patients discharged from institutions develop their own subcultures. Deinstitutionalization has resulted in large numbers of chronically mentally disordered people living on the streets in large cities. Subcultures help to solve the problems that these people face in meeting the demands of modern urban society by providing social support for members, enhancing self-esteem by suggesting rationales for their conditions, and offering practical suggestions for independent survival. Former mental-hospital patients may engage in a broad range of deviant activities, including selling their legally obtained medications, shoplifting, and even prostitution. The subculture's norms set limits on these activities, however, at the same time that it justifies deviance. As one patient phrased it:

> We're not doing anything that's really wrong. We don't murder or rob or things like that. We only take a few groceries once in a while from the A&P store. And we only do that when it's absolutely necessary. Other people who have lots of money do it all the time, and they take things much bigger than we do. We do it for medical reasons—our health, but they just do it for greed. (Herman, 1987: 252)

A few generalizations help to summarize the importance of group norms in modern, complex societies:

1. Groups *within* a society may exhibit differences in the norms of accepted behavior that are almost as pronounced as the differences between cultures.
2. Any logical explanation of the actions common in certain deviant subgroups must trace the development of the behavior through a process similar to that through which any member of any cultural group learns to act; for example, the process by which Eskimos learn through their culture to act, think, and interpret the world like Eskimos may provide a model for a similar process in a deviant subgroup.
3. A discussion of the norms of any given family probably focuses on those of the social class, occupational group, or some specific subcultural group to which the family belongs.

The Relativity of Deviance

A definition of deviance that refers to norms does not identify any particular type of conduct as deviant. This definition also allows for constant changes in standards for and forms of deviance along with the degree of disapproval that each one elicits. In this sense, deviance cites not a unique type of behavior, but rather, common behaviors that happen to offend some group. Because norms imply relative judgments (limited to groups, places, and times), deviance is also a relative phenomenon.

This fact results in an almost endless variety of acts and characteristics qualifying as deviant depending on conditions and circumstances. Debates over prostitution, gambling, nudism, cheating, medical quackery, and marijuana use arise from conflicts between norms about such acts. Just as some people consider some acts as deviant, various kinds of people also become so classified. Social types perceived by some as deviants include reckless drivers, pacifists, racists, "hippie" radicals, "square" conservatives, the very rich, the very poor, old people, drinkers, nondrinkers, and motorcycle gang members. Some liberals, for example, criticize conservatives, considering them deviant, and some conservatives return that criticism.

The identity of deviance as a violation of a norm does not indicate who creates and enforces the norm. Questions about what deviance is and who fits in that category require answers that specify which groups define certain behaviors as deviant. Such questions ask whose norms are violated by deviants. In this sense, observers view deviance from the perspective of the social audience of the act. Take, for example, the designation of promiscuity. Suppose that a particular unmarried woman maintains an active and varied sex life. While some people may condemn her as "promiscuous," others may view her and her behavior as "liberated." Note that these highly divergent designations do not stem from differences in the sexual behavior itself. On the contrary, the behavior has been the same; it is only the evaluation of it that has varied (Schur, 1984: 5). Those who regard the woman's behavior as promiscuous might not permit her to reenter conventional social sexual roles, even after a long period of conforming behavior.

Sociologists often maintain that no act includes anything inherently deviant; deviance requires a judgment that refers to some norm. In effect, the norms create deviance by creating social differentiation and attaching a moral quality to the act that designates it as something that one ought to do or to avoid. This position does not imply complete absence of widespread agreement on the wrongfulness of certain acts, such as deliberately

Issue: The Example of Nudism

Nudity, like all voluntary behavior, is governed by norms. These norms vary relative to groups, times, and social situations, so nudity sometimes qualifies as deviant, and sometimes it does not. Many people regard nudity outside one's bathroom or bedroom as deviant, but nudists deny such a conception.

Whispering Pines, a nudist resort in North Carolina, establishes a number of conditions that might seem conducive to sexuality. Like other nudist camps, it is located in a relatively private setting, and members visit voluntarily, presumably bringing with them rather liberal attitudes about public nakedness. Perhaps above all, unclothed people seem to encounter plenty of opportunity to engage in sex. This assumption reflects many people's strong association of nudity with sex. Celebrity advice-giver Joyce Brothers (1974: C1) cautioned parents that children exposed to nudity will develop terrible guilt and frustrations that will lead to an obvious end—incest.

No evidence supports this assertion, and in fact, nudists construct rigid distinctions between nudism and sexuality (Story, 1993). Like most nudist resorts, Whispering Pines establishes a number of norms that restrict sexual behavior. For example, a club atmosphere legitimizes attendance at the resort. Members pay fees of $250 per year, plus $32.50 for annual dues, to the American Association for Nude Recreation. Members then pay per-day site rental charges. Whispering Pines allows the assembled members to include no more than 10 percent single men and 10 percent single women at one time, thus restricting the proportion of sexually unattached persons in the group. Children, recognized as incompletely socialized to sexuality, must be supervised at all times in the camp. Someone who behaves rudely (perhaps using binoculars or cameras) may have his or her name and picture placed on a list maintained by the American Association for Nude Recreation, thus barring visits to nudist resorts around the country. First-timers, called *cottontails*, must learn these norms.

In addition to these restrictions, sex in public is explicitly forbidden. Perhaps because of all these norms, the owners of Whispering Pines indicate that open sexuality just doesn't happen. Visitors to Whispering Pines observe expectations of nonsexual conduct. As one owner put it, "There are no bathing beauties. People are just people. Women are always worrying about fat knees, legs, that sort of thing. You come out here a while, you wouldn't worry about stuff like that. They accept themselves as what they are" (Hill, 1990).

Patrons of nudist camps carefully dissociate nudity from sexuality. They consider nudity as a natural condition, not a "dirty" or deviant one. Such a conception would require considerably more effort to maintain if nudist resorts condoned or encouraged more profuse sexuality.

But visitors to Whispering Pines face charges of deviance not only from critics of public nudity. In fact, another class of nudists finds deviance in the restrictions imposed there and at similar facilities. These *naturists* promote acceptance of nudity in public places such as beaches, not just in nudist camps. They view nudity as a natural condition in virtually all social situations, disdaining visitors to nudist resorts for their willingness to display their nudity only in these limited situations. Jeannette, a naturist nudist, says:

> We went to a camp where we were the first naturists to visit. The first thing we did was to introduce ourselves by telling everyone our first and last names. They jumped all over us because we gave out our last names. They told us that we should never tell anyone our last name at a nudist camp because we would be giving someone the opportunity to do terrible things with the information that could hurt our reputations. It is pretty obvious to us that they didn't believe that nudity is all right. (Cox, 1989: 123)

Members of the general public may regard patrons of nudist resorts as deviants who violate a commonly held norm that restricts nudity to "private" places or relationships. Naturists also criticize those at nudist resorts for deviance because they defy the norms of true nudists, who do not fear associating sex with nudity. One naturist reports that people he met at a nudist camp didn't even talk about sex: "I find them to be nauseatingly sterile" (Cox, 1989: 123).

Who is deviant? The nudists in the resort, who dissociate nudity from sex; the naturists who feel comfortable with that association; or non-nudists? Any answer requires a relative judgment.

killing a person, physically assaulting an old person, or engaging in sexual intercourse with a child, but it does suggest that moral judgments differ because norms differ.

Consider norms governing appropriate styles of clothing. Clearly, beachwear is different today in the United States compared to what was considered appropriate 100 years ago. Clothing norms are even more marked when considering cultural differences. In 2009, a woman was convicted of violating Sudan's decency laws (Gettleman and Arafat, 2009). The woman was arrested and taken to court because she wore pants in public. At trial, she was found guilty and could have been confined and fined, and she could have received 40 lashes from a plastic whip that could have left permanent scars. Instead, her punishment was a fine equivalent to $200. She was spared the lashing. The woman was quoted as saying: "I am Muslim. I understand Muslim law. But I ask: What passage in the Koran says women can't wear pants?" (Gettleman and Arafat, 2009: A10).

Deviance is a relative concept. While norms state relative positions, some receive more attention in society than others, and these differences often depend on the power of certain groups to enforce their norms over members and other people. Criteria for deviance may depend on the relative power of groups to enforce and impose their norms on others (Table 1.1). Social power, then, strongly affects an understanding of why deviance is relative. For example, strong negative attitudes toward suicide, prostitution, homosexuality, and drunkenness, among other acts, have stemmed mainly from the actions of certain conservative church groups (see Greenberg, 1988) and from conservative middle-class norms generally. Opposition to marijuana use, nudity, and distribution of pornographic materials originates with other "moral entrepreneurs," who attempt to impose their norms on others (Becker, 1973: 147–163). Some criminologists maintain that actions identified as crimes and the severity of the penalties are specified by segments of society with the power to shape criminal policy (Quinney, 1981). Thus, a burglar who nets $200 from her crime may serve a long prison term, while a corporate executive whose actions defraud consumers of millions may suffer only probation, a small fine, or an order to perform some public service for the community.

TABLE 1.1 The Relativity of Deviance

Activity	Probably Not Deviant For	Probably Deviant For
Drinking beer	Fraternity members celebrating a football victory	Baptist deacons celebrating a successful church fund-raising campaign
Asking someone of the opposite sex out on a date	Unmarried people	Married people
Setting one's own bedtime	Parents	Young children
Sexual intercourse	Married people	Catholic priests
Selling drugs	Pharmacists	Illicit drug dealers
Not acting "normal"	People who just won the state lottery	Older people who have no reason to act differently

Creating Deviance

Deviance is often a socially created condition. Society defines an act as deviant through a political process that exerts power within some symbolic and moral context (Ben-Yahuda, 1990). When groups perceive threats to their interests from certain acts or conditions, they may attempt to promote those interests by persuading others of the legitimacy of their priorities.

In this way, successful social promotion creates and maintains attention for some social issues. Such processes create criteria for a number of forms of deviance, including homosexuality, drunk driving, and use of certain drugs. Trebach (1987), for example, relates public attitudes about cocaine to social events, including the deaths of two well-known athletes in 1986, specific television specials about crack and other drugs, and calls by political leaders for a "war on drugs" that would include drug testing and harsher legal penalties. Orcutt and Turner (1993) report on a resulting media "feeding frenzy" in 1986 characterized by attempts to document a serious cocaine problem in the United States. Media outlets used graphic depictions to portray modest yearly changes as huge jumps in drug abuse. In fact, the problem was as much a fictional creation as a real issue.

Missing Children

Groups create categories of deviance when they persuade others to acknowledge the legitimacy of their norms. A group determined to promote its norms begins by publicizing a problem with which other groups can relate. The problem of missing children illustrates how one group can enlarge its concerns to interest other groups as well. A number of concerns have historically focused on children in the United States, including delinquency, poor school performance, and neglect. In recent times, the list has lengthened to include child prostitution, child pornography, negative effects of rock music, Halloween sadism, incest, molestation, involvement with religious cults, and drugs.

The most recent concern highlights missing children, most of whom people incorrectly label as victims of kidnappers (Best, 1990). Fueled by this fear among parents, individual parents of missing children have generated a social movement based on their own experiences, supported by national groups formed to help locate missing children, such as Child Find. Activists have promoted this problem by raising the issue with legislators through lobbying and with the public through television programs and movie adaptations of actual cases. Public-service announcements on television and images of missing children on billboards and television provide graphic evidence of this movement.

To promote this issue, activists have cited horrific examples, expanded the definition of the problem, and issued unrealistically large estimates of its scope. While the movement's messages imply that strangers have kidnapped the missing children that it claims to represent, the actual number of such crimes is small—about 100 or so a year. Unfortunately, even a small number is too large, and this sentiment reinforces public attention to missing children. In 2002, a rash of kidnappings occurred, starting with Danielle van Dam in February and continuing through the summer. In all, 10 youngsters were taken in high-profile cases that year, and in some instances, they were killed (Leinwand, 2002). Examples like this one mask the fact that relatives (usually

Issue: How Can Health Care Be Deviant?

Many people regard the system of medicine used in the United States as broken. Certainly, the medical care in the United States may be the most expensive in the world. For example, one of the most common parts of emergency medicine is an intravenous (IV) bag of sterile saltwater, called a *saline solution*. IVs are used to restore bodily fluids or as a vehicle by which to administer medication. The average cost to manufacture a plastic bottle of saline and tubing ranges from 44 cents to $1 (Bernstein, 2013). Taking into account transportation, packaging, and storage, the cost to the patient will be higher. But no one expected the cost to be as inflated as it was for 100 patients who experienced an outbreak of food poisoning in upstate New York. Some of the patients' bills would charge 100 to 200 times the manufacturer's cost of making the bottles. And this does not even count separate charges billed to patients which combined the bottles with "IV therapy" and "IV administration," both of which could inflate the cost of the procedure to 1,000 times the manufacturer's cost of the bottles. To make matters even more suspicious, some of the food poisoning patients were charged different amounts for the same saline solution and "administration."

Of course, patient fees arise not only from medicine but also from physician bills, and such bills have been increasing. The incomes from medical specialists in particular have gone up substantially. The incomes of gastroenterologists, dermatologists, and oncologists have increased 50 percent or more since 1995 (even taking into account inflation), compared to a 10 percent increase for primary care physicians (Rosenthal, 2014). The average annual income for an orthopedic surgeon who specializes in hip and joint replacement, for example, is now about $920,555 compared to an average annual salary of a pediatrician, which is estimated to be $166,754.

Source: Bernstein, Nina. 2013. "The 10,000 Percent Solution: Huge Markups on IV Bags Show How Secrecy Helps Keep Health Prices High." *The New York Times*, August 27: 1–2; and Rosenthal, Elizabeth. 2014. "Patients' Costs Skyrocket: Specialists' Incomes Soar." *The New York Times*, January 19: A1, A18–19.

estranged spouses) bear responsibility for most so-called kidnappings, and only relatively few children are taken annually even under these circumstances. Most missing children turn out to be runaways.

Satanic Cults

Some believe satanic cults worship malevolent beings throughout the United States. Books, articles, and talk-show episodes on satanism tend to confirm this belief by highlighting claims that unknown groups increasingly engage in animal slaughter, nocturnal rituals, and even human sacrifices.

Are satanic practices really spreading? One cannot say for certain, although some groups certainly display concern for the occult, witchcraft, and satanism. However, Victor reports that one claim of ritualistic killing of animals in New Hampshire was "later determined to be only road kills cleaned up by state road workers and deposited in the woods (Victor, 1990: 288)." Hicks (1990) observes that a comprehensive investigation of cult-mutilation claims concluded that the "mutilations" resulted from natural actions of scavengers and predators. A police officer who investigates crimes linked to satanism says:

> I most [often] investigate "occult" crimes that turn out to be false reports. For example, one woman reported a satanic burglary. As it turned out, the symbolism was poorly done, and I got her to admit she made it up. We also had a middle-age woman do this to get

> front-page coverage. Her motive was to get support for a teen center in town. I think the greatest danger now is over interpreting "occult" crime. Kids have no idea of the religious significance behind their symbolism. They could not tell you when Walpurgisnacht is, but will happily wear a pentagram because [rock singer] Ozzy [Osborne] does. (p. 77)

Rumor is the principal means of propagating such threats to create moral panic. Many people doubt rumors that they hear about satanic cults, but some people do believe these stories. Others may justify spreading such rumors with a "better-safe-than-sorry" claim. Rumors spread more easily when authority figures, such as teachers, parents, and ministers, repeat them. Repetition of satanic rumors may encourage people to believe them because "where there's smoke, there's fire." In this way, even implausible rumors can gain acceptance (Victor, 1993).

Without denying the existence of satanic groups, widespread problems with satanism can originate in socially created phenomena (see also Forsyth and Oliver, 1990). Overemphasis on the activities of a few groups can suggest that larger numbers of these deviants pose a significant threat. Such a view might promote the goals of people and groups who use the idea of the devil to scare others into agreeing with their views.

Determining Norms and the Content of Deviance

Sociologists face a difficult problem determining how strongly various groups within a society oppose certain norms (Sagarin, 1975: 222). They can gauge support for and opposition to some norms more easily than others. Criminal law embodies a set of legal norms that all can see; on the other hand, ambiguous norms regulate sexual behavior, and such norms often change with groups and situations over time.

Normative changes may display predictable patterns. Some observers have argued that some forms of behavior follow a cycle, or sequence of stages, moving from disapproval to greater tolerance (see Winnick, 1990). A behavior that elicits widespread social disapproval may gain legitimacy after some group campaigns for a change in public attitudes. The group may promote its goal by claiming that current sanctions victimize many people. Publication of a major research study (such as a public opinion poll) may also amplify calls for change. Over time, others may come to share the newer norm, in the process changing the social criteria for deviance. This life cycle of deviance may explain changes in public views of cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption, and use of heroin and cocaine, for example.

Changing norms seriously complicate attempts to evaluate standards for deviance. Acceptability of cigarette smoking, for example, has risen and fallen a number of times in the United States since the 1800s (Troyer and Markle, 1983). In the 1870s, many groups and individuals strongly condemned the practice, in part because it was most common among urban immigrants of low social status who were also characterized as heavy drinkers. At that time, smoking by women was considered particularly deviant because of an association with prostitution. In spite of these norms, cigarette smoking increased in the United States, and attitudes began to change following World War I. By the end of World War II, people generally considered smoking acceptable, even socially desirable behavior.

Attitudes began to change again in the 1960s as medical evidence linked tobacco smoking with a number of serious physical illnesses. Things began to change at this time. On January 11, 1964, the then–Surgeon General of the United States,

Dr. Luther Terry, announced in a press conference that smoking was linked to cancer and probably to heart disease as well (Fox, 2014). At the time, about 50 percent of Americans smoked (including Terry himself). This announcement set off a long period of conflict between regulators and the tobacco industry. The announcement would also set off various defensive attitudes among smokers. One smoker said in 1965, "By the time I get lung cancer, they'll know how to cure it" (Brody, 2014A: D5).

In the 1970s, laws were developed concerning cigarette advertising on television and radio. And while tobacco manufacturers can advertise their products, they must label the packages as to the deadly consequences of using the products. By the 1990s, smoking bans restricted the practice in public places because many nonsmokers object to smoke and because medical evidence shows heath hazards from inhaling second-hand smoke. Indeed, citizen groups have campaigned for even stronger measures, and several cities enacted ordinances during the 1980s prohibiting smoking in places such as elevators, public meeting rooms, and certain areas in restaurants.

Cigarette smoking has again become deviant through changes in norms regulating the behavior. Antismoking attitudes define a norm that advocates have successfully promoted in recent years. Virtually all states now restrict smoking in public buildings, and many states have imposed specific statutes regulating smoking in other public areas. Most of this legislation has flowed from the idea that smoking, regardless of its effects on smokers, adversely affects others (Goodin, 1989). Clearly, the norms on smoking have changed (Mansnerus, 1988; Fox, 2014).

As of 2012, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that about 19 percent of all Americans are current smokers (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012), while fewer than 2 percent of physicians smoke (Brody, 2014B). But while overall smoking rates have declined, there is a striking relationship between smoking and social class. The biggest declines in smoking are among the more well-to-do, while smoking rates among the poor have declined much less (Tavernise and Gebeloff, 2014).

Nearly half of all current smokers will die from doing so. Indeed, smoking kills more people annually (about 443,000) than alcohol, car accidents, AIDS, suicide, homicide, and illegal drug use combined. At this rate, tobacco is expected to be the cause of death of 1 billion people in this century—10 times the toll that it took in the 20th century (Mackay, Eriksen, and Shafey, 2006).

Normative change results sometimes from very complex reasons (as in attitudes toward cigarette smoking) and sometimes from more identifiable reasons (as in the prohibition of alcohol for several years early in the 20th century). Links between cigarette smoking and health hazards and an increasing social emphasis on self-control and physical fitness have helped to change many people's evaluations of the behavior.

Even organizations have reconsidered smoking, perhaps to their economic peril. In 2014, CVS, the country's largest drugstore chain, announced that it would stop selling tobacco products in its more than 7,600 stores nationwide to better fit an image of being a health care provider rather than just another retail establishment. The company, which had overall sales of $123 billion in 2012, estimated that its decision would reduce total sales by $2 billion (Strom, 2014).

An even more important link connects smoking to the notion of an individual's right to avoid it. On the other hand, Prohibition originated in a 1920 campaign by some groups to create legislation outlawing the production, sale, and consumption of

alcoholic beverages. Alcohol offended their sense of morality, and they convinced others to share that evaluation (Gusfield, 1963). Still, relatively clear norms do not compel everyone to regard cigarette smoking or consumption of alcohol (or even marijuana) as deviant. In fact, there are serious disputes about how deviant each of these activities is, and positions vary depending on who makes the judgment.

Social Deviance and Social Problems

It is necessary at this point to make two final observations about the nature of deviance. Deviance related to social behavior may differ from deviance related to social problems, even though the two kinds of deviance overlap. Not all social problems represent instances of deviance. For example, many people regard unemployment, population control, and lack of adequate medical care for poor people as social problems; these examples hardly fit the pattern of deviant behavior. The same could be said about other conditions, such as aging and homelessness (see Manis, 1976, and Spector and Kitsuse, 1979).

Consequently, sociologists study forms of deviance that arouse contemporary interest, debate, and concern. In the past, discussions of deviance might have covered different types of behavior. Within the last 300 years (or even less), such topics might have included blasphemy, witchcraft, and heresy because large numbers of people then regarded these activities as serious forms of deviance often punishable by death. More recently, strong social condemnation of premarital sexual relations would have branded such activity as deviance. In the future, some forms of behavior regarded today as deviant may well lose that identity as new norms arise and new issues replace old ones.

Obviously, space limitations preclude a book such as this from analyzing all forms of social behavior that might possibly represent deviance. Any author must select certain topics to cover. Forms of behavior designated in these pages as deviance reflect the criteria stated earlier, including certain types of crimes (personal and family violence, crimes against property, crimes against the political state, and those committed in connection with an occupation, such as white-collar and corporate crime), illegal drug use, deviant alcohol use and problem drinking, prostitution, homosexuality, mental disorders, and suicide. We also discuss severe physical disabilities, such as those experienced by crippled, obese, mentally retarded, and blind people, because these members of society often experience social reactions similar to those targeted at deviants.

Deviance: A "Charged" Word

Since sociologists determine deviance relative to groups and their norms, they may judge all manner of acts, thoughts, and conditions as deviant at some times and by the norms of some groups. Some readers will disagree with certain content in this book that discusses acts that spark disagreement about moral qualities. We recognize that there is considerable consensus about the deviant nature of some of these acts and conditions, such as murder and alcoholism. But we also admit less agreement about others, such as homosexual behavior, use of marijuana, and certain types of heterosexual acts. For example, not everyone agrees that homosexuality constitutes deviance, and those who do may not agree about how deviant it is. Those personal judgments exceed the scope of this book, and perhaps the scope of sociology as a whole. We wish to emphasize that we intend not to make moral judgments but merely to report social reactions.

Even when people share some measure of agreement that something is deviant, they may still strongly disagree about appropriate methods of social control. In the course of our discussions, we will identify divergent ideas and methods of social control with respect to each form of deviance.

SUMMARY

The notion of deviance generally refers to some difference from a social standard in behavior, conditions, and people. Sociologists can define the word *deviance* in statistical, absolutist, reactivist, or normative terms, although the reactivist and normative conceptions may differ less than some believe. For the purposes of this book, *deviance* means deviations from norms that meet with social disapproval and elicit, or would likely elicit if detected, negative sanctions. The amount and kind of deviance in a society is related to the degree of social differentiation in that society.

People judge deviance relative to the norms of a group or society. Just as norms change, so too do criteria for deviance. Observers sometimes encounter difficulty identifying norms before anyone violates them. Further, because not everyone subscribes to a given norm, some may disagree about what constitutes deviance. Deviant acts represent necessary but not sufficient conditions for becoming a deviant. A person does not become a deviant simply by committing deviant acts; if that were true, society would be composed entirely of deviants. Deviance is linked to a society's stratification system. Greater differentiation in society boosts the potential for deviance. Some norms represent properties of groups determined in complex ways. Others represent properties of political units; these legal norms offer opportunities to see the processes by which norms emerge and change.

Deviants are members of society who come to adopt roles identified with deviance. Just as people learn conventional norms and social roles, they also learn deviant roles and patterns of behavior. A complicated relationship links a choice to adopt a deviant role and the commission of deviant acts. A full understanding of a deviant act requires knowledge of the process of committing deviant acts and the role and actions of victims.

Despite some overlap between the notions of deviance and social problems, they are not the same thing. The concept of deviance spans an enormous range of actions and conditions, and this book cannot address every instance of deviance. Therefore, we limit our discussions to instances of deviance about which we recognize strong consensus or which have sparked strong normative dispute. Even within these widely accepted forms of deviance, people disagree about their deviant characteristics. Some, for example, regard homosexuality as unmistakably deviant, while others class it as a biologically natural, if statistically rare, phenomenon.

KEY TERMS

Absolutist conception (p. 9)
Normative definition (p. 7)
Reactivist or relativist definition (p. 7)
Statistical definition (p. 8)
Norm (p. 7)
Sanctions (p. 7)

CHAPTER TWO

Deviant Events and Social Control

- **Deviant Events**
- **Social Control**
- **Law as an Example of Formal Control**
- **The Irony of Social Control**
- **Summary**

IMAGINE A TEACHER who has sex more than once with a 13-year-old student.

Now imagine a teacher in Corona, California, who was arrested in June 2013 for having sex with five male students (Shaivone, 2014). The teacher, a 31-year-old woman, pled not guilty and, as of this writing, will shortly be put on trial, where she will face a lengthy time behind bars if convicted of the charges: seven counts of oral copulation of a minor, six counts of statutory rape, and three counts of distributing pornographic material to a child (sexting).

This case is hardly unique. A Google search of "female teachers arrested" yields literally hundreds of cases of female teachers taking sexual advantage of underage students. The teachers, most of whom were in their twenties and thirties at the time of their crimes, lived in both urban and rural areas throughout the United States. Those whose cases were tried in the criminal justice system received either probation or short jail terms.

The notion of deviance is connected closely to that of social control. Often, deviant behaviors represent such undesirable acts that people want to "do something" about them. What they do often results in sanctions or other overt reactions to the behavior or condition. For the purposes of this book, these reactions can be collectively called **social control**. The nature and strength of the reactions vary with the deviant conduct.

In the case mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, for example, what if the sexes of the parties were reversed so it was male teacher, female student? Would that produce a different type of reaction and punishment? Contrast the case of the female teacher having sex with five male students with a similar situation in Nebraska, where a male teacher had been accused of touching a 14-year-old girl student's buttocks and trying to kiss her (*Omaha World-Herald*, March 30, 2006, p. 4B). The teacher was convicted of sexual assault, and he accepted a plea bargain that sent him to prison for 1 year.

What makes these events both similar and unique? This chapter explores the relationship between deviance and social control by examining the characteristics of

deviant events and processes of social control intended to eliminate those acts or reduce their frequency.

DEVIANT EVENTS

Deviant events take many forms, but all such events violate some norm. Potentially, therefore, people could commit as many deviant events as they can find norms to violate. Some of these acts involve physical behavior, as in crime, while others may involve verbal behavior, such as children inappropriately scolding their parents.

The term *event* refers not only to a behavior, but also to the context in which the behavior occurs (Meier, Kennedy, and Sacco, 2001). That context may involve a deviant, a victim, the circumstances that brought them together, and, depending on the act, a history between the deviant and victim. The understanding of deviant events begins with antecedents or history and encompasses the immediate situation in which the event takes place and its aftermath or consequences (Sacco and Kennedy, 1996). An offender causes an act of simple assault, for example, but the victim and the interaction between the offender and victim also frequently constitute "causes."

Clearly, the word *cause* means something different than *blame*, and analysis of deviance focused on events should consider all of the elements that came together to produce the deviant act. The offender and victim may have continued a dispute over a period of time, or a short argument may have preceded the assault. The assault may have followed an interaction in which one of the parties challenged the honor of the other or said something that the other considered disrespectful (Oliver, 1994). Event analysis requires attention to these and all contributing factors to the deviant act.

Focusing attention on the **deviant act** itself necessarily neglects the context in which it takes place. For example, some women bare their breasts at Mardi Gras in exchange for beads and other trinkets. They do so not simply because they are exhibitionists who take advantage of many opportunities to take off their clothing (Forsyth, 1992). Rather, this temporary exhibitionism depends heavily on situational variables such as alcohol, a party atmosphere, the desire to engage in momentary risk taking, and a physical setting dissociated from sexual activity. Studies have described similar motivations for women who become strippers (Skipper and McCaghy, 1970) and topless dancers (Thompson and Harred, 2002). Many people enter these occupations not because they are exhibitionists, but because specific financial and social circumstances permit the women to undress in public. In this sense, an instance of exhibitionism may be physically isolated in time and space, but the social context defines and shapes the deviant act.

Deviant Roles

Everyone performs a number of social roles in everyday life. At different times, people may act as students, sons or daughters, consumers, and friends, and at other times, they may act as deviants. No one is deviant all the time; the role of deviant, like all roles, only sometimes emerges in the acts that people perform. Some people play roles as deviants more than others, but even those who make their livings from deviance do not commit deviant acts all the time. This description clearly fits people who engage in deviant acts only occasionally, such as a person who has too much to drink on New Year's Eve; but even people who are strongly committed to deviant roles perform

those roles only sometimes. Organized criminals, for example, act as spouses, parents, shoppers, sports fans, and the like in addition to their criminal behavior.

Most deviant acts do not just happen. Such an act is the culmination of a process or series of stages that develops over a period of time—that is, it has a history. In other words, most deviant acts occur in particular social contexts (Bryant, 1990: 23). Some deviant acts, such as instances of domestic violence, often begin without specific intentions to commit the acts; the acts follow development of interactions with others. "Each action of each party is in some measure dependent upon the previous action of the other party. The outcome of such an interaction process is a joint product of both" (Lofland, 1969: 146).

One can interpret behavior more easily after identifying the roles that the participants are performing. Male patrons of a pornography store, for example, fulfill a number of roles when not in the store (laborer, father, insurance executive, etc.), but another set of roles when in the store. Tewksbury (1996) divided such patrons into five types based on their roles in the store: (1) porno watchers (who were interested only in the pornography that the store sold), (2) masturbators (who sought sexual gratification through masturbating), (3) sex seekers (who sought other men for homosexual encounters), (4) sex doers (those sought by sex seekers), and (5) naïve (curious visitors who did not interact with others in the store).

Deviant Places

A deviant act may begin with an interpretation of a situation as an opportunity to commit the act. If a teenager sees a set of keys left in a car, for example, he or she may interpret the situation as an opportunity to steal the car. Another teenager might pay no attention to the same situation (Karmen, 1981). A drug addict may view the presence of drugs in a pharmacy or a doctor's office as a possible supply and burglarize the premises. A difficult or stressful situation may elicit one kind of perception in a person contemplating suicide and a completely different perception in someone else. However it occurs, an analyst must evaluate the act in its social context as the outcome of a particular social process that includes a physical dimension.

Subsequent chapters of this book will show that deviant acts are not random events; they occur more in some places, at some times, and among some groups than in others. The expression *deviant place* describes a physical location that is typically connected to deviant acts. Conventional crime is more frequent in cities than in small towns, and in some neighborhoods more than others within cities. In the 1920s, two researchers at the University of Chicago, Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay, found a relationship between delinquency and certain areas of that city. Stark (1987) has theorized a relationship between deviant acts and certain types of communities with high population densities and crowded housing conditions. Substantial poverty in these communities, along with extensive physical deterioration, can affect the social morale and outlook of residents. In these neighborhoods, people tend to spend a lot of time outside, where they encounter strong temptations and opportunities to deviate. These neighborhoods also feature low parental supervision because the children spend much time out of their homes, decreasing opportunities for oversight. All of these conditions may contribute to deviant acts. A number of ways are available to design buildings and neighborhoods to reduce crime (Felson, 2002: Chapter 9).

Deviant places are locations likely to host deviant conduct. Neighborhoods often become places where deviance is likely to occur as they decay into disorder (Kelling and Coles, 1996). Small instances of disorder, such as graffiti, panhandling, and gatherings of street people, can lead to larger instances, and even more serious crime. A broken window in an abandoned building supports the perception that no one cares about or owns the building. Similar developments often follow such an initial instance of disorder. These may, in turn, lead to the perception of absence of supervision on the street where the building sits. Eventually, those who are not bothered by the unsupervised atmosphere—or who actually like it—may take over the street.

The Deviant Act over Time

Analysts cannot effectively study deviant acts in isolation from their social contexts, including temporal relations between separate acts. Deviants may learn to commit these acts over long periods of time through a process of realizing pleasure and adventure from committing successive acts. The adult robber, for example, may have begun his or her career in adolescence with minor youth gang delinquencies and other risk-taking activities (Blumstein et al., 1986). A member of the gay community may have engaged in homosexual activities only sporadically as a youngster, acquiring a homosexual identity only through later participation in the gay social environment (Troiden, 1989).

Risk-taking behavior like drug experimentation or low-stakes gambling may seem both financially and socially rewarding for some people. A study of gamblers has suggested that a lower-class, regular gambler may begin this career by pursuing a reputation for "seeking action." The person gambles because the activity offers excitement and confirms a self-image of a lively, interesting person (Lesieur, 1977). Someone who gambles regularly, in other words, acts consistently with the social role of a gambler. As their gambling activities increase, some participants appear to fall into continuing spirals of gambling involvement. As debts mount, the compulsive gambler increasingly views gambling as the only way out of a predicament. After using up other, legitimate options (such as cutting expenses, loans from family, friends, or financial institutions), this person relies on gambling to provide financial relief. Some gamblers interviewed by Rosecrance (1990) indicated that they had stayed away from betting on horse races for periods up to three years but eventually returned to the "action." What began as socially condoned activities thus became a way of life for these individuals. In this way, a penny-ante poker game may eventually escalate into contacts with established gamblers, high-stakes games, and a long list of creditors.

Many deviant acts form part of long chronicles. An apparently simple act of criminal assault, for example, may in fact result from a number of events and interactions. Oliver (1994) describes the importance of social context in understanding the assaultive behavior of urban men. While precipitating conditions, such as an argument between two men, may seem to dominate the situation, the argument clearly takes place in a particular context. One party may have insulted the other or provoked him to a fight. More frequently, one of the parties may have challenged the manliness of the other or insulted his wife, girlfriend, or family. Assaults do not just happen; they are part of a sequence of action, reaction, and interpretation.

The history of deviant acts suggests the possibility of transitory events; that is, some deviant acts occur at some times more than others. Some deviant acts, for

Issue: Parade Strippers

In certain parts of New Orleans during Mardi Gras, some women participate by exposing their breasts in exchange for beads and trinkets thrown from floats in parades. Unlike mooning and streaking, fads that occurred in certain parts of the country, this activity has grown in popularity to the point where parade strippers (women who do this) are colloquially labeled as *beadwhores*.

Parade strippers often attribute their participation to either dares from friends or the effects of alcohol. They gain some satisfaction from the experience, although like most people at nude beaches, they do not participate for sexual satisfaction. Receiving beads and the excitement of the moment apparently provide sufficient inducements for the strippers. Most parade strippers deny exposing themselves publicly in other situations or at other times. By limiting their participation to Mardi Gras in public areas with friends present, the strippers control the circumstances and ensure that they will be safe while doing the activity. Because Mardi Gras often involves the suspension of many norms and conventions, parade strippers experience less condemnation than those who perform other displays of public nudity. As a result, parade strippers engage in a mild form of public exhibitionism that seems to offend no one and for which the strippers suffer no disapproval.

Source: Forsyth, Craig J. 1992. "Parade Strippers: Being Naked in Public." *Deviant Behavior* 13: 391–403.

example, are tied into particular situations. Nudity at Mardi Gras, as mentioned earlier, occurs under circumstances that are artificial to the lives of the participants. The party atmosphere, the effects of alcohol, and common expectations that some women will remove their tops—all these conditions contribute to a feeling of a moral holiday. Those women who bare their breasts seldom appear publicly nude apart from Mardi Gras, and the time and place of the celebration provides a strong facilitating context for this form of deviance (Forsyth, 1992).

Deviant Acts and Victims

The nature of a deviant act depends not only on the past experiences of the actor but also on the responses of others in the immediate situation. The individual considers these responses in formulating a definition of the situation. The reactions of the social audience help to organize and shape the deviant act.

Unanticipated consequences often arise from events that are not expected in the early stages of the deviant act. Cases of criminal homicide often result from such surprises. For example, an offender may start out to burglarize a house and end up killing the resident. A number of murders occur in connection with other crimes, such as when a drug transaction goes sour and someone is killed. In crimes of violence, such as homicide and assault, perpetrators and victims frequently know one another (Reiss and Roth, 1993), as in family violence. Research has identified a number of factors usually associated with family violence, including low socioeconomic status, social stress, social isolation, and low self-concept (Gosselin, 2003). In addition, a family assault frequently reflects a cycle of violence in which perpetrators often report past family violence by their parents. One cannot understand family violence, in this very real sense, outside the context of the victims of this offense, since these victims frequently commit such violence later in life.

Not all deviant acts target victims, however, at least not in the form of specific people or items of property. People with mental disorders, for example, generally do not inflict harm on victims, although their disorders may severely disrupt marital and family relationships. Similarly, homosexuality, drug addiction, prostitution, and alcoholism are not acts directed toward harming other people, although they too may significantly affect others associated with the deviant (Meier and Geis, 2006). Similarly, many deviants commit their acts outside the presence of any audience. Addicts often take drugs without anyone else present, and even some forms of crime can take place without audiences, such as burglary.

Deviant events gain their significance because they draw attention to conditions that define *deviance* rather than the *deviants* who commit the acts. Deviants are only one part of this social equation. Sociologists must broaden their perspective to examine the nature of the social events associated with deviance (see also Miethe and Meier, 1994 and Sacco and Kennedy, 1996). The social context of deviance includes social forces that bring deviants together with potential victims, as well as the times and places of those interactions. But that context also includes efforts designed to reduce deviance, a process that sociologists refer to as *social control.*

SOCIAL CONTROL

Many scholars regard the problem of social order as perhaps the fundamental question for all social sciences (Rule, 1988: 224). Why do people conform to rules and norms, even when obedience contradicts their own interests? Why do some people violate laws and others violate deeply held social understandings about appropriate conduct? Most sociologists respond to such questions by talking about social control.

All social groups have means of dealing with behavior that violates social norms. These methods, taken together, are called *social control* (Meier, 1982). A definition might narrow the broad notion of control to a statement such as "overt behavior by a human in the belief that (1) the behavior increases or decreases the probability of some subsequent condition and (2) the increase or decrease is desirable" (Gibbs, 1989: 23). Social control implies deliberate attempts to change behavior. Social control measures serve the social purpose of ensuring, or at least attempting to ensure, conformity to norms. In some situations, people conform to norms because they know of no alternative. In other situations, they conform to gain some inducement to do so. These inducements may represent informal social control mechanisms, such as ridicule, or actions of formal agencies such as the church or government. Like a deviant event that it seeks to limit, social control is a process.

Processes of Social Control

Sociologists can distinguish between two basic processes of social control. (1) **Internalization of group norms** encourages conformity through socialization, so that people know what society expects and want to conform to that expectation (Scott, 1971). (2) Social reaction influences conformity through **external pressures** in the form of *sanctions from others* in the event of anticipated or actual nonconformity to norms. These possibilities do not define mutually exclusive processes; they can and do occur together.

Internalization Processes

Internalization of group norms achieves social control when people learn and accept the norms of their group. This process is a result of the overall socialization process that motivates members to conform to group expectations regardless of other external pressures. Society need not exert conscious effort to secure compliance with such norms, for they define the spontaneous and unconscious ways of acting that characterize the bulk of any culture's customs.

People generally learn mechanisms of social control, such as customs, traditions, beliefs, attitudes, and values, through prolonged interactions with others. Most wives do not murder their husbands, a fact due not entirely (or even mostly) to the severe legal penalties for criminal homicide; and most North American drivers stay on the right side of the road not entirely because they worry that other drivers will regard their driving as deviant. Likewise, not everyone who drinks alcoholic beverages avoids becoming drunk simply because they fear that neighbors will gossip. Rather, most people conform to most norms most of the time because, first, they have learned the content of those norms and, second, they have accepted the norms as their own and take those standards for granted in choosing their behavior.

A great deal of conformity to norms results from socialization, where people are convinced that they *should* conform, regardless and independent of anticipated reactions from others. In this sense, socialization deserves the label *self-control* because this conformity often results from the socialization process. Social control consists, in a sense, of processes that teach the person to avoid processes of deviance. Social control processes teach how *not* to engage, rather than how *to* engage, in a behavior (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990).

Sanctioning Processes

Sanctions are social reactions to behavior. Sociologists sometimes classify them according to their content. Social controls through external pressures include both negative and positive sanctions. **A negative sanction** is a punishment meant to discourage deviant conduct. **A positive sanction** is a reward meant to encourage conduct that conforms to a norm. Sociologists also classify sanctions according to their sources—that is, who supplies the reactions. **Informal sanctions**, such as gossip and ostracism, are unofficial actions of groups or individuals, while **formal sanctions**, such as criminal penalties, are official group expressions meant to convey collective sentiments. So, just as there are different kinds of deviance, so too are there different kinds of sanctions.

Formal and informal sanctions do not act independently of one another (Williams and Hawkins, 1986). Formal sanctions can reinforce informal sanctions, and vice versa (Table 2.1). One study found, for example, that a sample of 800 teenage boys expressed more concern for what their families would think of them than about formal penalties associated with arrest by the police (Willcock and Stokes, 1968). Yet, the fear of formal penalties, such as arrest and incarceration, exerted important influence, too. This finding suggests that a combination of both informal and formal sanctions powerfully influences behavior.

Informal Social Controls

Informal social sanctions come from reactions to behavior by people who personally know one another. Informal sanctions act to enforce informal norms, often in small groups.