

CHAPTER I

Introduction to Deviance

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

—Fremont Fair (2010)

The Fremont Arts Council (FAC) is a community-based celebration arts organization. We value volunteerism; community participation; artistic expression; and the sharing of arts skills. The Fremont Solstice Parade is the defining event of the FAC. We celebrate the longest day of the year through profound street theater, public spectacle, and a kaleidoscope of joyous human expressions. We welcome the participation of everyone regardless of who they are, or what they think or believe. However, the FAC reserves the right to control the content presented in the Fremont Solstice Parade.

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

- No written or printed words or logos
- No animals (except guide dogs and service animals)
- No motorized vehicles (except wheelchairs)
- No real weapons or fire

—Fremont Arts Council (2010)

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It is true that a parade with no logos, animals, or motorized vehicles is different from most parades that we experience in the United States. But one more thing sets the Fremont Solstice Parade apart from other parades—the public displays of nudity. Every year at the parade, a contingent of nude, body-painted bicyclists (both men and women) rides through the streets of Fremont as part of the parade. Rain or shine (and let's face it, in June in Seattle, there can be a lot of rain), a large group of naked adults cycles down the street as the crowds cheer and wave. The Fremont City Council estimates that more than 100,000 people visit the weekend fair, and pictures show that the streets are crowded with parade watchers, from the very young to elderly.

Contrast this event to the following story of a flasher in San Diego County. Between the summer of 2009 and the summer of 2010, there were numerous reports of an adult man flashing hikers and runners on Mission Trails near Lake Murphy in San Diego. An undercover operation was set in motion to catch this flasher, and on July 19, 2010, an adult man was apprehended while flashing an undercover officer who was posing as a jogger in the park. The man was held on \$50,000 bail while waiting for arraignment (KFMB-News 8, 2010).

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



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

Sources: Photodisc/ThinkStock; ©JMW Scout/iStockphoto.

◆ Introduction

You might expect that a book about deviance would start with a definition of what deviance is. But, like all things worth studying, a simple definition does not exist. For example, in the stories above, one public display of nudity was not only welcomed but celebrated by 6-year-olds and grandmothers alike, but another

display led to arrest and possible jail time. Why? This chapter and this book explore how it can be that the Fremont Summer Solstice Parade can be celebrated in the same summer that a flasher is arrested and held on \$50,000 bail until charged.

◆ Conceptions of Deviance

All deviance textbooks offer their “conceptions of deviance.” Rubington and Weinberg (2008) argue that there are generally two conceptions of deviance as either “objectively given” or “subjectively problematic.” Clinard and Meier (2010) also suggest two general conceptions of deviance, the reactionist or **relativist conception** and the **normative conception**. Thio (2009) argues that we can view deviance from a **positivist perspective** or a constructionist perspective.

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

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

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

This is a fruitful conceptualization, but it is also problematic. What about very serious violations of norms that are never known or reacted to? Some strict reactionists/relativists would argue that these acts (beliefs or attitudes) are not deviant. Most of us would agree that killing someone and making it look like he or she simply skipped the country is deviant; however, there may be no reaction.

Sidebar: Be Careful Who You Are Calling Deviant: Body Ritual Among the Nacirema

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

- The fundamental belief of the Nacirema people is that the human body is ugly and prone to "debility and disease."
- The people engage in rituals and ceremonies in a "ritual center" considered to be a shrine. Affluent members of society may have more than one shrine devoted to these rituals and ceremonies.
- Each shrine has near its center point a box or chest filled with magical potions. Many believe they cannot live without these magical potions and so collect to the point of hoarding them, afraid to let them go even when it is determined they may no longer hold their magic.
- The people have an "almost pathological horror and fascination with the mouth, the condition of which is believed to have a supernatural influence on all social relationships. Were it not for the rituals of the mouth, they believe that their teeth would fall out, their gums bleed, their jaws shrink, their friends desert them, and their lovers reject them" (p. 505).

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

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

Source: Miner, H. (1956).

A third conception of deviance that has not been advanced in many textbooks (for an exception, see DeKeseredy, Ellis, & Alvi, 2005) is a critical definition of deviance (Jensen, 2007). Those working from a **critical conception** of deviance argue that the normative understanding of deviance is established by those in power to maintain and enhance their power. It suggests that explorations of deviance have focused

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

Table 1.1 Conceptions of Deviance

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

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

HOW DO YOU DEFINE DEVIANCE?

As Justice Stewart of the Supreme Court once famously wrote about trying to define obscene materials, "I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description; and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it

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when I see it" (*Jacobellis v. Ohio*, 1964). Those who do not study deviance for a living probably find themselves in the same boat; it may be hard to write a definition, but how hard could it be to "know it when we see it"?

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

◆ The Sociological Imagination

Those of us who are sociologists can probably remember the first time we were introduced to the concept of the **sociological imagination**. Mills argues that the only way to truly understand the experiences of the individual is to first understand the societal, institutional, and historical conditions that individual is living under. In other words, Mills believes that no man, woman, or child is an island. Below is an excerpt from C. Wright Mills' (1959/2000) profound book, *The Sociological Imagination* (Oxford University Press):

Men do not usually define the troubles they endure in terms of historical change and institutional contradiction. The well-being they enjoy, they do not usually impute to the big ups and downs of the societies in which they live. Seldom aware of the intricate connection between the patterns of their own lives and the course of world history, ordinary men do not usually know what this connection means for the kinds of men they are becoming and for the kinds of history-making in which they might take part. They do not possess the quality of mind essential to grasp the interplay of man and society, of biography and history, of self and world. They cannot cope with their personal troubles in such ways as to control the structural transformations that usually lie behind them.

The sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals. It enables him to take into account how individuals, in the welter of their daily experience, often become falsely conscious of their social positions. With that welter, the framework of modern society is sought, and within that framework the psychologies of a variety of men and women are formulated. By such means the personal uneasiness of individuals is focused upon explicit troubles and the indifference of publics is transformed into involvement with public issues.

The first fruit of this imagination—and the first lesson of the social science that embodies it—is the idea that the individual can understand his own experience and gauge his own fate only by locating himself within his period, that he can know his own chances in life only by

becoming aware of those of all individuals in his circumstances. In many ways it is a terrible lesson; in many ways a magnificent one.

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

What we experience in various and specific milieux, I have noted, is often caused by structural changes. Accordingly, to understand the changes of many personal milieux we are required to look beyond them. And the number and variety of such structural changes increase as the institutions within connected with one another. To be aware of the idea of social structure and to use it with sensibility is to be capable of tracing such linkages among a great variety of milieu. To be able to do this is to possess the sociological imagination. (*The Sociological Imagination* by C. Wright Mills [2000] 527w pp. 3–11. By permission of Oxford University Press, USA.)

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

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

A salad is only as good as the salad bar it is created from. In other words, individuals making a salad can only make a salad from the ingredients supplied from the salad bar. If the restaurant is out of croutons that day or decided to put watermelon out instead of cantaloupe, the individual must build his or her salad within these constraints. Some individuals with a great sense



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

Source: Comstock/Thinkstock.

of personal power may request additional items from the back of the restaurant, but most individuals will choose to build a salad based on the items available to them on the salad bar. In other words, the individual choice is constrained by the larger social forces of delivery schedules, food inventory, and worker decision making. The sociological imagination is especially important to understand because it is the building block for our understanding of sociological theory.

DEVIANCE IN POPULAR CULTURE

Many types of deviance are portrayed and investigated in popular culture. Films and television shows, for example, illustrate a wide range of deviant behavior and social control. There are often several interpretations of what acts are deviant in each film—how do you know when an act or person is deviant? One way to develop your sociological imagination is to watch films and television shows from a critical perspective and to think about how different theories would explain the deviant behavior and the reactions portrayed. To get you started, we've listed a number of films and television shows that you might watch and explore for examples of cultural norms, different types of deviant behavior, and coping with stigma.

Films

Trekkies—a documentary following the stories of individuals who are superfans of *Star Trek*. Known as Trekkies, these individuals have incorporated *Star Trek* into their everyday lives. Some wear the uniforms or speak and teach the various languages from the show, one has considered surgery to alter the shape of his ears, and some have legally changed their names and incorporated *Star Trek* into their businesses and workplaces. The movie documents their fandom and experiences navigating these consuming obsessions while in mainstream society.

American Beauty—the story of a suburban family that, from the outside, appears to be “perfect.” However, the characters are leading far from perfect lives filled with depression, lies, drug dealing, homophobia, and self-loathing.

Crumb—a movie about the cartoonist Robert Crumb, who was a pioneer of the underground comix. This movie offers a dark portrait of an artist besieged with personal and family demons.

Usual Suspects—a story of five men who are brought in for questioning for a crime they did not commit. While being held on suspicion of that crime, they agree to work together on another crime. They soon realize they are being set up by someone they had wronged in the past.

Television

Reality television and the TLC channel, in particular, feature a number of programs offering an inside view of people perceived as deviant or different in some way and showing how they deal with stigma from various sources:

Sister Wives—a look inside the world of a polygamist marriage. This reality show introduces viewers to a man, his four wives, and his 16 children. His motto: “Love should be multiplied, not divided.”

My Strange Addiction—a reality show that highlights potentially deviant obsessions of individuals with addictions such as eating glass, plastic bags, household cleaners, or makeup; having dozens of surgeries in order to look like a living doll; and living as husband and wife with a synthetic doll.

Seinfeld—a situation comedy that is simply masterful at focusing on small behaviors or characteristics that break norms and are perceived as deviant. Episodes on the close-talker, the low-talker, and the high-talker, for example, all illustrate unwritten norms on interpersonal communication.

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

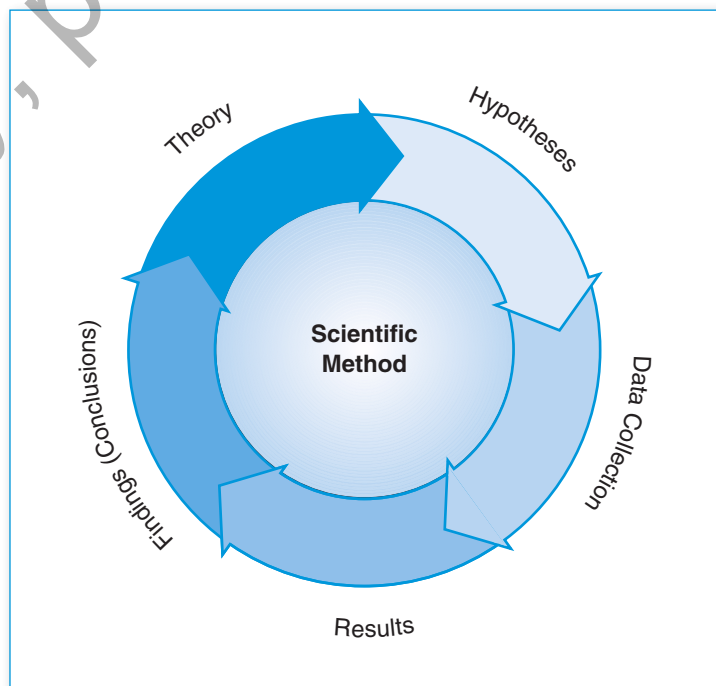
◆ The Importance of Theory

The three of us (the authors of this book) spent many hours discussing the importance of **theory** as we wrote this book. Why did we choose to write a textbook about deviance with theory as the central theme? Many of you may also be asking this question and worrying that a book about theory may suck the life right out of a discussion about deviance. Really, who wants to be thinking about theory when we could be talking about “nuts, sluts, and perverts” (Liazos, 1972)? But this is precisely why we must make theory central to any discussion of deviance—because theory helps us *systematically* think about deviance. If it weren't for theory, classes about deviance would be akin to watching MTV's *Jersey Shore* or Bravo's *Real Housewives of New Jersey* (why is New Jersey so popular for these shows?)—it may be entertaining, but we have no clearer understanding of the “real” people of New Jersey when we are done watching.

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

The **scientific method** is a systematic procedure that helps *safeguard*

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



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

RECENT STUDY IN DEVIANCE

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

By Alexander Liazos, 1972, in *Social Problems*, 20(1), 103–120.

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

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

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

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

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

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

In addition to being systematic and testable (through the scientific method), theory offers *solutions to the problems* we study. One of the hardest knocks against the study of deviance and crime has been the historically carnival sideshow nature (Liazos, 1972) of much of the study of deviance. By focusing on individuals and a certain caste of deviants (those without power) and using less than systematic methods, deviance researchers were just pointing at "nuts, sluts, and perverts" and not advancing their broader understanding of the interplay of power, social structure, and behavior.

Theory can focus our attention on this interplay and offer solutions beyond the individual and the deficit model, which is a model that focuses on the individual (or group) in question and blames the deviance on something broken, lacking, or deficient in him or her. Bendle (1999) also argued that the study of deviance was in a state of crisis because researchers were no longer studying relevant problems or offering useful solutions. One of Bendle's solutions is to push for new theories of deviant behavior.

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

◆ Explaining Deviance in the Streets and Deviance in the Suites

We have included a section in each chapter that discusses a “street” deviance and juxtaposes it against an “elite”/“suite” deviance. We have chosen to do this because in many instances street deviance is the focus of examinations (again, we gravitate to conversations of “nuts, sluts, and preverts” if we aren't systematic). We wanted to make sure for each street deviance we explored that we offered an exploration of an elite deviance, too. Depending on the chapter we have chosen to do this in one of two ways. Some chapters focus on a single deviance that, while engaged in by a variety of individuals, is interpreted differently depending on the characteristics of who is doing the engaging. For example, in Chapter 6 we focus on social learning theory and drug use and examine how class neighborhood characteristics impact drug use. In Chapter 8, we focus on labeling theory and how the class characteristics of individuals impact the likelihood that they will be labeled with a drinking problem. Both of these approaches show that a single behavior is impacted by class—either by affecting the likelihood of engaging in the behavior or the likelihood that the behavior will be perceived as deviant. Finally, in some of our chapters we choose to examine two separate forms of deviance, highlighting how a street deviance (one that often receives more attention, is perceived of as more detrimental, or is perceived as likely to be engaged in by the poor) compares to an elite/suite deviance (often an action or behavior that many cannot agree is deviant or that is engaged in by those who have substantial amounts of power). For example, in Chapter 10, we use critical theories to discuss how changing technologies have affected pornography (our example of street deviance) and illegal government surveillance (our example of suite deviance). In chapters such as this we want to highlight how a single theory may address behaviors that are often on very different ends of the power and class spectrum. In all of the chapters, we first offer a substantive discussion of the deviance before we analyze it from the perspective of the chapter.

◆ Ideas in Action

For the purposes of this book, we are expanding the discussion of public policy to include public and private programs, which is why we have titled this section in each chapter Ideas in Action. While a single, concrete definition of public policy is elusive, there is general agreement that public policy is

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

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

The term neoliberalism refers to a political, economic, and social ideology that argues that low government intervention, a privatization of services that in the past have predominately been the domain of government, an adherence to a free-market philosophy, and an emphasis on deregulation (Frericks, Maier, & de Graaf, 2009) is “the source and arbiter of human freedoms” (Mudge, 2008, p. 704). What may be one of the most important aspects of neoliberalism from the standpoint of those focused on social justice, then, is this link between the free markets and morality. While free markets have proven time and again to place the utmost emphasis on the profit motive (because this is what the free market is: an adherence to the notion of supply and demand)—this connection between free markets and “freedom” seems to intrinsically suggest that free markets, and, therefore, neoliberalism, have individual well-being as their focus.

However, individual well-being in the form of a guarantee that individuals will have access to the basic human needs of shelter, food, clothing, good health care, and safety from harm is not always produced by two of the most central components of neoliberalism—privatization and deregulation. In some ways, privatization and deregulation are opposite sides of the same coin. Privatization means the “opening up of the market” and the loosening of the rules (regulations) that are often the purview of the government. But privatization, at its core, is also the introduction of the profit motive into services that, at *their* core, are about protecting the human condition. A reliance on a neoliberal philosophy and free market economy means that we begin to evaluate everything through the lens of profit and cost benefit analyses. We abdicate the responsibility of the state to private companies and then feign surprise when those companies defer to the profit motive. . . . In addition to the increased preference for free markets and profits, privatization both reduces state responsibility for the care of its citizens and masks the lack of preparation of the government to care for its citizens that quickly develops. (Mitchell, 2001) (Bates & Swan, 2010, p. 442)

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

The second argument is that public programs may more likely focus on **suppression** (the social control of deviance), while private programs may more likely focus on rehabilitation and prevention.

In general, suppression policies are those that focus on the punishment and social control of behavior deemed deviant. **Rehabilitation programs** focus on groups or individuals who are deemed likely deviant and involve attempts to change this assumed deviant behavior. **Prevention programs** may be either focused on groups or individuals who are assumed to be more “at risk” for deviant behavior, or they may be focused on decreasing the likelihood of deviance in all groups equally. Many argue that there has been a buildup of suppression policies in the state and federal government at the expense of rehabilitation and prevention programs:

From the recently repealed Rockefeller drug laws through the expansion of the prison systems in Texas and Florida, onto the increasingly punitive response to poverty in the Clinton years, and the continuing disparity in sentencing laws, states and the federal government have chosen the Iron State over the Golden State. And whatever arguments there may be about the relative effectiveness of imprisonment in affecting crime rates (a topic of great controversy amongst scholars and analysts), one thing seems certain: a policy that exacerbates the brutalization of society is not one that will make us safer. Investing in prisons means investing in institutions that produce neither goods nor new opportunities (aside from the limited jobs available for prison employees and the one-time opportunities in construction); money spent on imprisonment is money taken from rebuilding our worn out infrastructure, our schools, our communities, and our economic future. Insofar as corrections remains at the heart of our social policy—rather than as a supplemental or marginal support as it was throughout most of United States history—it is the Iron State stealing from the future of the Golden State. (Meranze, 2009, n.p.)

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

The reaction to deviance has often been spurred by interests well beyond science:

The pen remains firmly in the hands of politicians and legislators, whose allegiance is less to the products of science—for example, how to deal with the AIDS pandemic, warnings about global warming, and the ineffectiveness of the Strategic Defense Initiative, or SDI (otherwise known as “Star Wars”)—than to the whims of voters and the personal agendas of their counselors and financial supporters. (Barlow & Decker, 2010, pp. xi–xii)

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

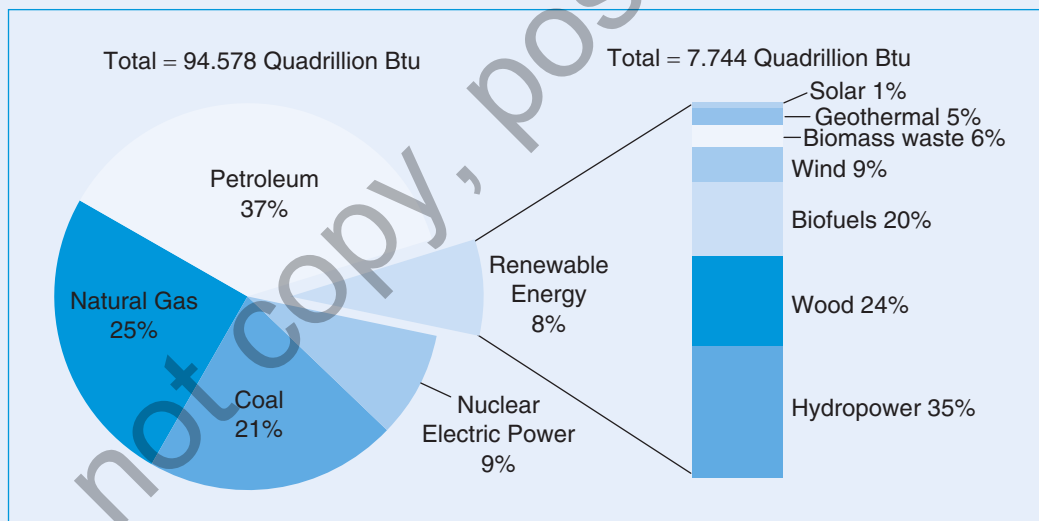
We offer a wide variety of public policies, or “ideas in action,” that were designed to address deviant behaviors. It will be your job to evaluate these programs and policies for their intents and subsequent success.

NOW YOU . . . USE YOUR SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

In his 1972 article, "The Poverty of the Sociology of Deviance: Nuts, Sluts, and Perverts," Liazos argues that the sociology of deviance focuses too much attention on individual idiosyncrasies and not enough attention on structural dynamics and the deviance of the powerful. The following graph is taken from a Web page from the U.S. Energy Information Administration (part of the Department of Energy) explaining the U.S. energy consumption for 2009. Following this chart is a section taken from the Environmental Protection Agency (also a federal agency) explaining the effects of fossil fuels on climate change.

Using your sociological imagination, how might you discuss the figures and text as an example of deviance? How might the relationship between the U.S. government, lobbyists, and oil companies affect the conversation around climate change? Pretend you are an oil executive: Which might be more deviant in your view, the breakdown of U.S. energy consumption or the research on climate change? Why? Now pretend that you are an oceanographer studying changes in the Gulf of Mexico or a zoologist studying polar bear migration: What might you define as deviant? Why? Would both groups define the same information as deviant? Do you consider either the breakdown of the U.S. consumption of energy or the discussion of climate change to be deviant? Why or why not?

Figure 1.2 U.S. Energy Consumption by Energy Source, 2009



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, *Annual Energy Review 2009*, Table 1.3, Primary Energy Consumption by Energy Source, 1949–2009 (August 2010).

Note: Sum of components may not equal 100% due to independent rounding.

(Continued)

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

Greenhouse gases are necessary to life as we know it, because they keep the planet’s surface warmer than it otherwise would be. But, as the concentrations of these gases continue to increase in the atmosphere, the Earth’s temperature is climbing above past levels. According to NOAA and NASA data, the Earth’s average surface temperature has increased by about 1.2°F to 1.4°F in the last 100 years. The eight warmest years on record (since 1850) have all occurred since 1998, with the warmest year being 2005. Most of the warming in recent decades is very likely the result of human activities. Other aspects of the climate are also changing, such as rainfall patterns, snow and ice cover, and sea level.

If greenhouse gases continue to increase, climate models predict that the average temperature at the Earth’s surface could increase from 3.2°F to 7.2°F above 1990 levels by the end of this century. Scientists are certain that human activities are changing the composition of the atmosphere, and that increasing the concentration of greenhouse gases will change the planet’s climate. But they are not sure by how much it will change, at what rate it will change, or what the exact effects will be. (Environmental Protection Agency, 2011)

◆ Conclusion: Organization of the Book

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

This book has been written with a heavy emphasis on theory. We think you will agree as you read the book that theory is an important organizational tool for understanding (1) why deviance occurs, (2) why some behavior may or may not be defined as deviant, and (3) why some individuals are more likely to be defined as deviant. It is important to note that you probably won’t have the same level of enthusiasm for every theory offered here. Some of you will really “get” anomie theory, while others might be drawn to labeling or feminist theory. Heck, we feel the same way. But what is important to