

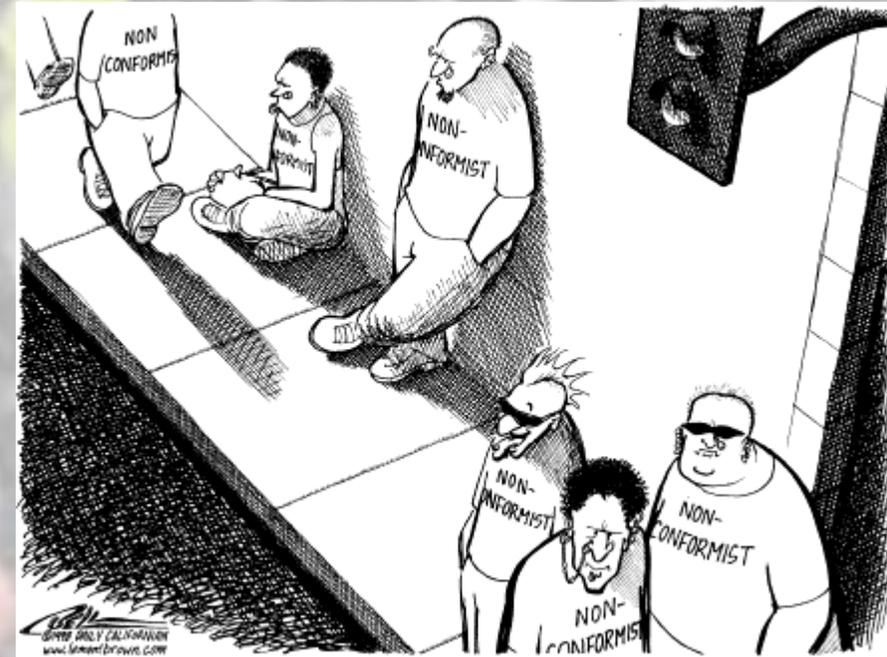
A large, dense crowd of people is shown from an overhead perspective. The image is mostly grayscale, but several individuals are highlighted with bright, solid colors: red, blue, yellow, green, purple, orange, and pink. These highlighted figures are scattered throughout the crowd, representing a small but distinct group within the larger population.

Deviance

A Sociological Perspective

Defining Deviance

- A behavior, trait, belief, or other characteristic that violates a norm and causes a negative reaction.
 - Deviance is relative to cultures
 - What is considered “deviance” in one culture may not be considered such in another culture
- If a particular behavior is considered deviant, it means that it violates the values and norms or a particular group, not that it is inherently wrong.



Studying Deviance

- Sociologists have often focused on the most obvious forms of deviance (criminals, the mentally handicapped, and sexual deviants, etc...) because of deeply rooted social bias in favor of the norms of the powerful
 - Difficult because the idea of Deviance is relative
 - Deviance is relative to sociologist studying behavior
 - Will be different for each sociologist

Approaches to Deviance

- Labeling theory - Claims that deviance is a consequence of external judgments, or labels, which both modify the individual's self-concept and change the way others respond to the labeled person
 - Ex. An individual constantly being referred to by a derogatory term with negative connotations will have a lower sense of self worth
- Self-Fulfilling Prophecy – A prediction that directly or indirectly causes itself to become true, by the very terms of the **prophecy** itself, due to positive feedback between belief and behavior
 - Ex. An individual is told their whole life they will not amount to much, then there is little surprise when it comes true since they learn to believe it since it seems to be what is expected of them

Understanding Stigmas

- A **stigma** is a term for any physical or social attribute that devalues a person or group's identity, and which may exclude those who are devalued from normal social interaction
 - Ex. "Teen Mother" often has negative connotations to it regardless to the situation
- A stigma is similar to a stereotype and should be avoided



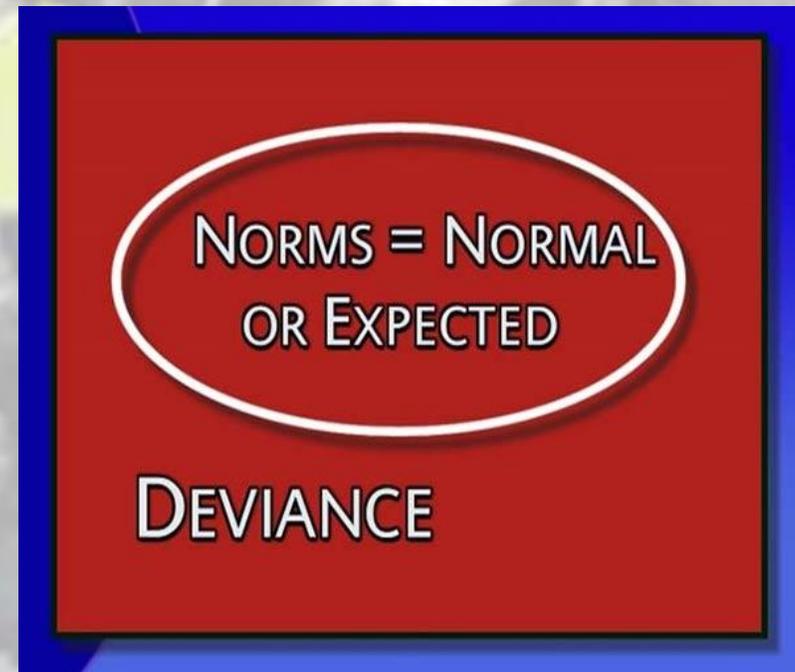
Types of Stigmas

- **Physical** - Including physical or mental impairments
 - Ex. "Addict"
- **Moral** - Signs of flawed character
 - Ex. "Smoker"
- **Tribal** - Membership in a discredited or oppressed group
 - Ex. "Goth"



Theories of Deviance: Functionalist Theory

- Argue that deviance serves a positive social function by clarifying moral boundaries and promoting social cohesion
 - Helps a society understand “correct” and incorrect “behavior” to establish societal norms



Theories of Deviance: Conflict Theory

- Believe that a society's inequalities are reproduced in its definitions of deviance, so that the less powerful are more likely to be criminalized
 - Label unacceptable behaviors as wrong to serve as a basis for limiting rights or power for certain groups
 - Helps a certain group maintain power



Theories of Deviance: Symbolic Interactionist

- Focus on how interpersonal relations and everyday interactions shape definitions of deviance and influence those who engage in deviant behavior
 - Looks at connection between people who interact with people who engage in deviant behavior and then engage in similar behavior
 - **Differential association theory** states that we learn to be deviant through our associations with deviant peers



Specialized Deviance: Positive Deviance

- Refers to actions considered deviant within a given context, but which are later reinterpreted as appropriate or even heroic
 - Ex. Civil Rights Protesters



Specialized Deviance: The Black Sheep

- Black Sheep phenomenon is the individual that is not like the others within a group
- Often the “black sheep” is considered to be a disgrace by the other members of the group
 - Ex. An individual in a group that is the only one to not get accepted into a prestigious university
- Negative stigmas can lead to further deviant behavior



Specialized Deviance: Middle Child Syndrome

- The feeling of exclusion by **middle children** (those with one younger and one older sibling). This effect occurs because the first **child** is more prone to receive privileges and responsibilities (by virtue of being the oldest), while the youngest in the family is generally considered the baby
 - Connects to study of birth order and deviance

