

Foreword

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Is the leader of loose-knit bands of hit-and-run killers of British soldiers a terrorist? Or, is he a revolutionary hero or freedom fighter? What is your view of George Washington? And, what is your assessment of Nat Turner who executed Virginia slave owners and their families in 1830? Is the Jewish “terrorist” in Palestine in 2003 significantly different from the Palestinian “terrorist” in Israel in 2003?

How do we go about answering such questions? What conditions lead to someone being defined as a terrorist versus a freedom fighter? Surely time and place are relevant, but they are not sufficient paths to the answers.

I am impressed by the relatively recent outpouring of articles and books attempting to address such issues since *A Political Analysis of Deviance* was first published more than two decades ago. *The State of Terror* by Annamarie Oliverio and her framework for studying both terrorism and deviance, for example, was selected by Ron Farrell for his book series on deviance and social control. Having done research on social control for more than thirty years, he quickly saw the importance of her connection between the two subject areas. Following the political examination of deviance, Oliverio (1998: 5) suggests that:

The task then becomes not to expose or define who the terrorist of the week is, whether it is the Unabomber threatening national security or the CIA conducting covert actions, but to examine the political processes and practices that maintain, create, and change the definitions of certain action as terrorist. Accordingly, we may be better able to understand the status of terrorism as either an act of deviance, social control, politics, and coercion or understand it in a particular time and place as a social problem.

We know that the intent of an individual or group and the consequences of action are important in understanding such processes and practices. The study of terrorists or terrorism can be one way of using the sociology of deviance to understand social benefit or harm. And, how is the boundary between benefit and harm, or good and bad, constructed, maintained or changed?

In the 1970s, I was one of many graduate students who were struck by the idea of examining the moral boundary between deviant and normal action and how we might study the issue of boundary shifts. Slowly but surely, *Wayward Puritans* (1966) by Kai Erikson was finally making a huge impact in the sociology of deviance. Unfortunately, but as was common at that time, some critics of Erikson's work claimed that he was employing Durkheim's idea of crises in social solidarity and deviance to ignore politics and power. Yet, I found his book focused on a variety of central issues in politics, power, and who and what might account for the boundary shift between "good" and "bad." His analysis of specific cases of intolerance by the Puritans, when they encountered diversity and reacted to it as deviance, was significant—especially in light of the Puritans' desire to move away from the pomp and circumstance of what was no longer considered merry old England. He also suggested the conditions under which the boundary might shift by asking us to focus upon "a realignment of power within the group, for example, or the appearance of new adversaries outside it" (1966: 68).

With some help from my friends, we suggested that this idea could be specified, in part by examining the actions of moral entrepreneurs, social movements, organizations, and the state. We used these categories to investigate their possible roles in shifting the moral boundary between normal and deviant. Obviously, this approach is only one way of proceeding to study the possible factors involved in shifting the boundaries. Other people might use more specific factors, such as the mass media, or more general ones, such as globalization. The crucial role of globalization has become even more relevant (Kellner, 2002). The impact of global organizations such as the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, the World Health Organization, the United Nations, and the International Monetary Fund—as well as multinational firms and capital—increasingly are relevant to the study of deviance and moral boundaries. Changes in capital concentration and production modes, at varying levels of abstraction, are central to understanding alterations in other forms of power (Inverarity, Lauderdale, and Feld, 1983). The shifting view and practice of slavery, imperialism, and democracy obviously are relevant. Democracy or the

“tyranny of the multitudes,” for example, has been viewed as terrorism by those who wanted to preserve the ruling monarchy and who promoted the idea of misery as a blessing for the masses. The aristocracy, however, was presented as ordained by God. In the eighteenth century, scholars such as Rousseau and Voltaire were treated “not only as treasonous but also mentally disturbed” (Oliverio, 1998: 31). Today, such ideas and scholars are presented in a dramatically different fashion. Explanations for changes in this type of fashion run deep—for example, this change in fashion is not chic. Now, as then, we turn to careful research to differentiate among action that often shifts from being defined as radical chic to being defined as radical. Using one form of sociological-speak, we have to include an examination of the social processes that are conducive or restrictive to such alterations (Thio, 2000; Toggia, Lauderdale, and Zegeye, 2000).

This reprinting of *A Political Analysis of Deviance* serves as a reminder of such an approach’s possible relevance to the sociology of deviance. The chapters can serve as models to measure or estimate the progress of studies in the area (see, for example, McAdam and Su, 2002; Sacco, 2003). Certainly, most scholars are struck by the continued pressure to publish research (especially for undergraduate students) on nuts, sluts, and perverts. Liazos’s urgent call, framed in critical ways by the work of C. Wright Mills and Alvin Gouldner, was for us to move away from such titillating views. They might be called the tourist gaze now, since the responses have been muted or defensive. Additionally, despite Goode’s (2002: 7) admonition that the concept of “deviant” is not pejorative nor disparaging, many students and teachers seem unable to maintain this perspective. The academic “freak of the week” presentations continue in sociology and are amplified by “abnormal” psychology courses. Deviance is rarely discussed as a positive action, despite the fact that many ostensible “deviant” actions are done for a higher moral good or now are seen as having positive consequences.

A number of years ago, Colin Sumner (1994) wrote what he thought was the obituary on the sociology of deviance. He was often critical of the “Puritan” nature of much of other writings. The field has not had to be resuscitated, however, as it was and is alive, if not well (Sumner, 2002). The study of deviance, as deviation from a particular mean, for example, is rarely pursued. What labels are applied to people who deviate three standard deviations from the mean? Under what conditions is deviation seen as creative versus destructive? Under what conditions is deviation defined as leadership rather than being stigmatized (Baehr, 2002)?

We also can investigate the celebration for diversity within most universities, yet examine the factors that often lead to a facade rather than a celebration. What, for example, determines whether someone or something is seen as diverse versus deviant? Or, from a historical perspective, what made an American Indian be seen as good or bad? Vine Deloria, Jr. emphasizes that American Indians were stereotyped; that is, "They were either a villainous warlike group that lurked in the darkness thirsting for the blood of innocent settlers or the calm, dignified elder sitting on the mesa dispensing his wisdom in poetic aphorisms" (1994: 25).

At a more specific level, it may prove useful to consider alternative methods for extending or revising the study of deviance: (a) chapter two investigates political deviance in courtroom settings by examining recent antiwar court cases; (b) chapter three on social movements, protest and the media analyzes other cracks in the hegemonic facade of state control, especially the unprecedented global peace protests of 2003; (c) chapter four on the politics of occupational control, includes the control or expansion of "violence" at various levels of organization, for example, from childhood athletics to the political economy of professional sports; (d) chapter five examines the erroneously termed race riots; in particular, the role of state agents; and (e) chapter six suggests ways of improving our analyses of the political deviance creation; including, for example, Durkheim's call for abolishing inheritance to level the ground or move closer to the ideal that all persons *are* created equal.

The sociology of deviance also can be viewed as the study of stratification and social mobility, rather than only the shift of moral boundaries resulting in amplifying or creating deviance (see Gould, 2002 on status hierarchies). "Deviants" often struggle to overcome their positions at the bottom of a status hierarchy; others attempt to shift the balance of power (Cummins, 1994). In his research on moral boundaries, Ben-Yehuda (1985) reveals some of the processes by which people attempt to legitimate their own views and actions of themselves or others while trying to neutralize negative views. Moreover, as Collins suggested long ago, we might consider that "the next step clearly must be to abolish the field of deviance entirely, to link its materials with what is known of general explanations of stratification and politics" (1975: 17).

Of course, the overall approach may seem daunting. At the very least, we have to examine issues of: intent and consequence, shifting moral boundaries via differences in time and space and factors such as: moral entrepreneurs, social movements, organizations, the state,

and globalization. On the other hand, we must continue to study so we can understand the construction of good and bad and us and the enemy—The enemy? We live in a world, on a globe that can be destroyed at any moment. The generations to follow us deserve our care.

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