

SOCI 2305 | Deviance | Spring 2026
Data Workshop Three: Analyzing Making and Unmaking Deviance
(15 points as part of the data workshop)

Part One – Making Deviance

As socially constructed, deviance is a matter of getting people to see reality that matches the definition or interpretation that some advocate. Once a definition is adopted, people's actions will orient to it and those designated deviance will become subject to others' control. But first and foremost, any designation of deviance will have come about because of the efforts of some people or groups to persuade or compel others to see reality as advocates wish.

This is all very abstract. But an advantage of viewing deviance this way is that we can observe the process in the actions and interactions of people.

This is a preliminary version of next week's data workshop. In that workshop, we'll examine how an existing deviance definition – homosexuality as a mental disorder – was successfully (albeit over the course of years) challenged and changed. The success resulted in redefining homosexuality as a normal expression of human sexuality. The challenge and change centered on getting the mental health profession to remove homosexuality from its catalog of mental disorders in the DSM. This would mean that homosexuality was no longer a kind of deviance (a problem), no longer signifying individuals as sick or ill, and no longer authorizing treatment – therapy, drugs, and particular practices that could “cure” patients.

In the current assignment, I've [excerpted](#) portions from the 2009 documentary, *Orgasm Inc.* The excerpt follows the efforts of pharmaceutical companies to develop drugs and devices that would solve the problem of female sexual dysfunction. Patriarchal society has always subjected women to deviance designations and being female in and of itself has been treated as a kind of deviance. Women's sexuality is just one manifestation of patriarchy's denigration of women. In the early 2000s, following the success of Viagra, commercial attention turned to making and marketing a similar drug for women. The problem has been, beyond stereotypes of women's sexuality, there is no biological illness or disorder for which drugs or devices would be a medically necessary solution.

Let's make the process visible. Following Joel Best, we'll start with claims, claimsmakers, and the claimsmaking process. Claims are arguments, efforts to persuade others that something is wrong, that there's a problem that needs to be solved. Claimsmakers are advocates, experts, or activists that seek to draw attention to their efforts to define a troubling condition – a problem. The claimsmaking process includes their efforts, recruiting others to contribute, media involvement, the public's reactions, and policymakers who have the power to affect the outcome – the solution.

Let's use the excerpt that I've created from *Orgasm Inc.* I've labeled it [Defining Female Sexual Dysfunction](#) - to focus our attention. Click on the link in the preceding sentence. It's available from my Vimeo account (**password is students2020**). Watch the video, respond to the questions, and type up/print out your responses for Monday's (March 2).

I've uploaded the [full documentary](#) if you're interested. It's not in any way graphic but the story it tells is no less disturbing.

Examining how to make deviance

1. What's the problem – what claims are people making about a problem, with what characteristics, causes, and solutions?
2. Who is making these claims and what are their aims and objectives in how the problem is defined and their preferred solution?
3. What is the solution being proposed to solve the problem?
4. What are the resources that those making claims bring to the process?
5. How has the media reported on those making the claims?
6. Who are those with authority to support and implement the solution?
7. What has been the public's response to the claims being made?
8. If an individual has little desire or arousal or interest in sexual activity and does not regard these as a problem, is it still a problem?