



Shadow Control By Joseph LaMantia and Stephen Pfohl

IMAGES OF DEVIANCE AND SOCIAL CONTROL: *An Introduction*

We equate sanity with a sense of justice, with humaneness, with prudence, with the capacity to love and understand other people. We rely on the sane people of the world to preserve it from barbarism, madness, destruction. And now it begins to dawn on us that it is precisely the sane ones who are the most dangerous.

It is the sane ones, the well-adapted ones, who can without qualms and without nausea aim the missiles and press the buttons that will initiate the great festival of destruction that they, the sane ones, have prepared. . . . No one suspects the sane, and the sane ones will have perfectly good reasons, logical, well-adjusted reasons for firing the shot. They will be obeying sane orders that have come sanely down the chain of command. And because of their sanity they will have no qualms at all. . . . The ones who coolly estimate how many millions of victims can be considered expendable in a nuclear war, I presume they do all right with the Rorschach ink blots too. On the other hand, you will probably find that the pacifists and the ban-the-bomb people are, quite seriously, just as we read in Time, a little crazy.

Thomas Merton¹

The scene is a crowded church during the American Civil War. "It was a time of great and exalting excitement. The country was up in arms, the war was on, in every breast burned the holy fire of patriotism." So says Mark Twain in his short and searing parable—*The War Prayer*.² Amidst the clamor of beating drums, marching bands, and toy pistols popping, Twain describes an emotional church service. A passionate minister stirs the gallant hearts of eager volunteers; bronzed returning heroes; and their families, friends, and neighbors. The inspired congregation await their minister's every word.

And with one impulse the house rose, with glowing eyes and beating hearts, and poured out that tremendous invocation—

God the all-terrible!
Thou who ordainest,
Thunder thy clarion
and lightning thy sword!

Then came the “long” prayer. None could remember the like of it for passionate pleading and moving and beautiful language. The burden of its supplication was that an ever-merciful and benignant Father of us all would watch over our noble young soldiers and aid, comfort, and encourage them in their patriotic work; bless them, shield them in the day of battle and the hour of peril, bear them in His mighty hand, make them strong and confident, invincible in the bloody onset; help them to crush the foe, grant to them and to their flag and country imperishable honor and glory.

Wars come and go. Words vary. Nonetheless, the essential message of this sermon remains alarmingly the same: “God is on our side.” Before continuing with Twain’s story, I ask you to consider a more contemporary version of this age-old narrative—the 1991 Gulf War between Iraq and the United States-led coalition of “New World Order” forces demanding an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. Claiming it to be its moral imperative to repel an act of international aggression, the United States pictured Iraqi President Saddam Hussein as a Hitler-like character bent on world domination. Iraq in turn cited contradictions in the U.S. position (its long-term support for Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, for example) as evidence of both U.S. hypocrisy and what Iraq alleged to be the true motives for the attack on Iraq—namely, “American” efforts to police the price of oil. Each side in this conflict represented the other as evil, treacherous, and power-mongering. Each side claimed to be righteous and blessed by God. This is typical of societies engaged in war.

Returning to Twain’s story, what is untypical about this thoughtful tale is what happens next. It is not only untypical, but “deviant.” After the minister completes his moving prayer, an “unnaturally pale,” aged stranger enters the church. He is adorned with long hair and dressed in a full-length robe. The stranger motions the startled minister aside and informs the shocked parishioners that he is a messenger from Almighty God. He tells the congregation that God has heard their prayer and will grant it, but only after they consider the full import of their request. In rephrasing the original sermon the mysterious messenger reveals a more troubling side to the congregation’s prayer. When they ask blessing for themselves they are, at the same time, praying for the merciless destruction of other humans (their enemies). In direct and graphic language the old man portrays the unspoken implications of their request, as follows:

help us to tear their soldiers to bloody shreds with our shells;
 help us to cover their smiling fields with the pale forms of their patriotic dead;
 help us to draw the thunder of the guns with shrieks of their wounded,
 writhing in pain;
 help us to lay waste their humble homes with a hurricane of fire;
 help us to wring the hearts of their unoffending widows to unavailing grief;
 help us to turn them out roofless with their little children to wander
 unbefriended the wastes of their desolated land.

The strange old man continues—talking about blighting their lives, bringing tears, and staining the snow with blood. He completes his war prayer with a statement about the humble and contrite hearts of those who ask God's blessings. The congregation pauses in silence. He asks if they still desire what they have prayed for. "Ye have prayed it; if ye still desire it, speak! The messenger of the Most High waits." We are now at the final page of Twain's book. The congregation's response is simple and abrupt. As suggested previously, the old stranger was clearly a social deviant. In Twain's words: "It was believed afterward that the man was a lunatic, because there was no sense in what he said."

The stranger in *The War Prayer* directly threatens the normal, healthy, patriotic, and blood-lusting beliefs of the embattled congregation. Yet it is with ease that they contain and control this threat. They do not have to take seriously the chilling implications of his sermon. Their religious and patriotic senses are protected from his disturbing assault. Why? The reason is as simple as their response. They believe that he is a lunatic. They believe that he is a deviant. By classifying the old man as a deviant they need not listen to him. The congregation's beliefs are protected, even strengthened. The lunatic's beliefs are safely controlled. *The War Prayer* is thus a story of how some people imagine other people to be "deviant" and thereby protect or isolate themselves from those whom they fear and from that which challenges the way in which "normal" social life is organized. It is a story of how people convince themselves of what is normal by condemning those who disagree. It is a story of both deviance and social control. So is the book you are reading.

CONTROLLING NORMAL AND DEVIANT SOCIAL LIFE

The story of deviance and social control is a battle story. It is a story of the battle to control the ways people think, feel, and behave. It is a story of winners and losers and of the strategies people use in struggles with one another. Winners in the battle to control "deviant acts" are crowned with a halo of goodness, acceptability, normality. Losers are viewed as living outside the boundaries of social life as it ought to be, outside the "common sense" of society itself. They may be seen by others as evil, sleazy, dirty, dangerous, sick, immoral, crazy, or just plain deviant. They may even come to see themselves in such negative imagery, to see themselves as *deviants*.

Deviants are only one part of the story of deviance and social control. Deviants never exist except in relation to those who attempt to control them. Deviants exist only in opposition to those whom they threaten and those who have enough power to control against such threats. The outcome of the battle of deviance and social control is this. Winners obtain the privilege of organizing social life as they see fit. Losers are trapped within the vision of others. They are labeled deviant and subjected to an array of current social control practices. Depending upon the controlling wisdom at a particular moment in

history, deviants may be executed, brutally beaten, fined, shamed, incarcerated, drugged, hospitalized, or even treated to heavy doses of tender loving care. But first and foremost they are prohibited from passing as normal women or men. They are branded with the image of being deviant.

When we think of losers in the battle to control acceptable images of social life, it may seem natural to think of juvenile gang members, serial killers, illegal drug users, homosexuals, and burglars. Indeed, common sense may tell us that such people are simply deviant. But where does this common sense come from? How do we come to know that certain actions or certain people are deviant, while others are "normal"? Do people categorized as deviants really behave in a more dangerous fashion than others? Some people think so. Is this true?

Think of the so-called deviants mentioned above. Are their actions truly more harmful than the actions of people not labeled as deviants? In many cases the answer is no. Consider the juvenile gang. In recent years the organized drug dealing and violent activities of gangs have terrorized people living in poverty-stricken and racially segregated urban neighborhoods. Gang-related deviance has also been the focal point for sensational media stories and for social control policies ranging from selective "stop-and-search" police tactics to the building of new prisons and (in Los Angeles) even the criminalization of alleged gang members' parents.

But what about the people most responsible for the oppressive inner-city conditions that lie at the root of many gang-related activities? What about the "gangs" of bankers whose illegal redlining of mortgage loans blocks the investment of money in inner-city neighborhoods? What about the "gangs" of corporate executives whose greed for short-term profits has led to the "offshoring" of industrial jobs to "underdeveloped" countries where labor is cheap and more easily exploitable? Aren't the actions of such respectable people as costly as, if less visible than, the activities of most inner-city gangs? Yet, there is an important difference: unlike gangs of elite deviants, inner-city youths have little or no real access to dominant institutions in which contemporary power is concentrated.

A related question may be posed concerning serial killers. The violence of serial killers haunts our nightly news broadcasts. Indeed, the seemingly random character of serial killings—although they are most commonly directed against women and children—instills a deep and alarming sense of dread within society as a whole. Nevertheless, the sporadic violence of serial murderers, no matter how fearful, is incomparable in terms of both scope and number to the much less publicized "serial killings" perpetrated by United States-supported *death squads* in countries such as El Salvador and Guatemala. The targets of such death squads are typically people who dare to speak out in the name of social justice. From 1980 to 1991, for instance, approximately 75,000 Salvadoran civilians were secretly killed or made to "disappear" by paramilitary executioners. Why is it that such systematic murders are rarely acknowledged as true serial killings? Why, moreover, do such cold-blooded killings provoke so little U.S. public outrage in comparison to the attention

given to the isolated violence of individual murderers, such as Ted Bundy or Jeffrey Dahmer? Is it because the people who authorize them are respectable persons, sometimes even publicly elected officials? Is it because, though we feel vulnerable to other serial killers, we ourselves—at least those of us who are white, male, North American, and economically privileged to live at a distance from the violence that historically envelops the daily lives of others—feel protected from death squads?

Similar questions might be raised about drug users. When we speak of the abuse of drugs, why do we often think only of the “controlled substances” that some people use as a means of achieving psychic escape, altered consciousness, and/or bodily pleasure? True, we as individuals and as a society may pay a heavy price for the abuse of such drugs as cocaine and heroin. But what about other—legal—substances that many of us are “on” much of the time? Some of these drugs are even more dangerous than their illicit counterparts. In addition to alcohol, tobacco, chemical food additives, and meat from animals that have been fed antibiotics and hormones, our society openly promotes the use of prescription and over-the-counter drugs for everything from losing weight, curing acne, and overcoming anxiety to building strong bodies, fighting depression, and alleviating allergies caused by industrial pollution. Certainly many of these substances have their salutary effects and may help us adjust to the world in which we live. However, even legal substances can be abused; they too can be dangerous. The effects can be direct, jeopardizing an individual’s health or fostering addiction, or they can be indirect and more insidious. For example, consider the role drugs play in creating and sustaining our excessively image-conscious, age-conscious environment and in promoting our tendency to avoid dealing with personal conflicts and everyday problems in a thoughtful and responsible manner. Also—not to belabor the issue—just think of what we are doing to our planet, to our future, with our use of pesticides, fertilizers, and other industrial products and by-products. To raise such concerns is not to claim that legal drugs are more dangerous than illegal drugs, but simply to suggest that what is officially labeled illegal or deviant often has more to do with what society economically values than with whether the thing is physically harmful *per se*.

Further consider the actions of sexist heterosexuals. Such persons may routinely mix various forms of sexual harassment with manipulative patriarchal power and an intolerance of alternative forms of sexual intimacy. Despite the harm these heterosexist individuals cause, they are far less likely to be labeled deviant than are gay, lesbian, or bisexual lovers who caress one another with affection. The same goes for corporate criminals, such as the executives recently implicated in the savings and loan scandal. The stealthy acts of such white-collar criminals have cost the U.S. public as much as \$500 billion. Yet the elite deviance of the upper echelon of rule breakers is commonly less feared than are the street crimes of ordinary burglars and robbers.

From the preceding examples it should be evident that many forms of labeled deviance are not more costly to society than the behaviors of people who are less likely to be labeled deviant. Why? The answer proposed in this

book is that labeled deviants are viewed as such because they threaten the control of people who have enough power to shape the way society imagines the boundary between good and bad, normal and pathological, acceptable and deviant. This is the crux of the effort to understand the battle between deviance and social control. Deviance is always the flip side of the coin used to maintain social control.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The book you are reading tells the story of one important aspect of the battle between deviance and social control. It is a story about the telling of other stories. It is a historical and sociological story about the invention and use of various theoretical perspectives on deviance. Such perspectives guide the ways we both think about and act toward deviance. Throughout history, priests, philosophers, politicians, police, therapists, activists, social scientists, and others have produced a variety of perspectives on these matters. This book will examine the dominant theoretical imagery, research strategies, and practical control policies associated with nine perspectives which have, at various points in time, captured the theoretical imagination of western society.

All theoretical stories of deviance are told from historically specific stand-points. They embody the perspectives of particular authors within contradictory and often politically charged social contexts. The words you are reading are no exception. In an examination of the social contexts in which theories about deviance are produced and consumed, two issues become particularly relevant: the disciplinary character of various perspectives and the relationship between each theoretical framework and social power.

Disciplinary Images of Deviance: Toward an Interdisciplinary Perspective

There are today numerous specialists in the study and control of deviance, professionals who provide expert opinions regarding the causes, consequences, and cures of nonconformity. Not all such specialists view deviance in the same way. Indeed, specialists often divide their vision along disciplinary lines. Psychiatrists, sociologist, psychologists, criminologists, medical researchers, and other specialists frequently present divergent and even contradictory images of deviance. In this sense, images of deviance are commonly organized according to the selective vision of the disciplines in which specialists are trained. The images of deviance which someone is trained to see in the police academy vary greatly from those learned in medical school, in the psychology lab, the historical archive, the anthropological field study, the seminary, or the sociology classroom. Each of these sites of training may literally discipline the perceptions, moral judgments, and controlling outlooks of people who study deviance. This point is well illustrated in the following poem:

The Sociology Room

by Theresa Burns

In the sociology room the children learn
that even dreams are colored by your perspective.

I toss and turn all night.

The overspecialized division of theoretical images between competing disciplines is unfortunate. Some of the most fertile insights about deviance are those born in the cracks between disciplinary perspectives. There we are forced to confront such things as the rich and complex relationships between material and spiritual forces; between the economy and culture; between life today and life yesterday; between the body, the mind, and the social environment; or between society as we know it and society as it is organized in other places and times. Because of these things I have tried in this book to draw upon the diverse viewpoints of numerous disciplines. This is true in terms of the topics selected for study and the materials used to examine these topics. The topics, nine distinct theoretical images of deviance and social control, span the concerns of several disciplines: theology, law, medicine, psychology, anthropology, social work, special education, psychiatry, and sociology.

The materials used to examine these diverse theoretical images are also drawn from numerous disciplines. I have been trained as a sociologist, but in reading this book you will learn that I place great value on insights gathered from other, related fields of study. Throughout, I have attempted to combine the vision of sociology with that of history. Other perspectives are used as well, those listed above and some that are considered more as "arts" than "sciences." In referring to materials from poetry, films, music, novels, paintings, I mean to do more than provide cute "arty" examples. By pointing to parallels between the images of deviance produced by scientific experts and those portrayed by various sorts of artists, I mean to suggest that both types of imagery arise out of a pool of common experience—the experience of people in history attempting to make sense of the long human struggle for control over ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving.

Power-Related Images of Deviance: A Deconstructive Viewpoint on Theory

In addition to interdisciplinary concerns, this text is guided by the deconstructive viewpoint of a *power-reflexive* perspective. This is a critical approach to deviance, rooted in the recognition that every act of naming, theorizing, or translating lived experience into language is, by its very nature, also an act of exclusion, displacement, or sacrifice. In other words, when you or I relate a theoretical story about an experience, certain aspects of that experience are singled out while others are marginalized, silenced, or made unthinkable.

The ability to discriminate between different interpretations of the same event is part of the constructive power of any theoretical practice. Theories inevitably frame what we perceive in certain ways but not others. What

makes a power-reflexive perspective deconstructive is its attempt to situate its own claims to knowledge as themselves contingent upon their theorists' personal and historical relations to power. This is to act upon the recognition that all theoretical constructions, including power-reflexive theoretical constructions, are never divorced from the complex and contradictory scenes of power in which they are materialized in certain ways but not others. In this way, a power-reflexive viewpoint attempts to work with, rather than suppress, the awareness that the observer (or theorist) always plays an active role in the selective framing of meaningful knowledge.

Using a power-reflexive approach involves inquiring not only about the dynamics of deviance and its control but also about how theorists' own social positioning may influence the kinds of questions they ask and the range of answers they imagine as possible. Does it make a difference that most influential theories of deviance have been constructed by economically advantaged, selectively educated, and heterosexually oriented white men working in prestigious university settings or well-funded research institutes? If theories about nonconformity were constructed by people whom society labels as deviants rather than by others who fear and attempt to control deviants, how different might the resulting conceptual understandings be?

Theoretical perspectives on deviance are never neutral scientific matters. They are always political as well as scientific concerns, connected to the historical organization of both power and knowledge. Who gains and who loses as certain perspectives take on the accent of truth? To ask this question is to begin theorizing, not only about deviance, but also about how various theories of nonconformity contribute to or challenge existing relations of power. When deviance is opposed by individuals in power, it is because deviance threatens the way things are. Sometimes this threat is economic. It affects the social organization of material resources. At other times deviance may threaten the dominant organization of sexual, spiritual, racially marked, or culturally specific resources. At all times it is political. By this I mean that deviance affects the ways that power is socially organized and used.

The recognition that all theories of deviance are also political theories means that certain segments of society are likely to prefer some theoretical perspectives over others. Thus, it is no surprise that scholars who believe in the desirability of a particular political order may view deviance very differently from the way people who think the same order is unjust view it. Indeed, individuals who fit comfortably into an existing political system typically seek to explain deviance so as to more efficiently control deviant people. Such scholars may be well rewarded for their work. They may receive lucrative research grants and prestigious chairs in elite universities. Others, who are less comfortable with the way things are, may find their theoretical viewpoints less profitable. Persons who conceptualize deviance as a symptom of social inequality may encounter difficulty in obtaining adequate research funds, publication outlets, and classrooms to teach in.

How do you view our society? How do your professors and fellow students view the current political order? Such power-reflexive questions are

discussed at length in Chapter 11. They are raised here only to preview some of the issues presented throughout the book. At first glance, such concerns may seem ridiculously complex. Yet, upon further reflection, I believe they suggest the simplest of sociological truths: how you and I construct ideas about deviance is at all times contingent upon the scenes of power in which we find ourselves in history. In our society such scenes are typically hierarchical. They are dramatized by social inequality. They support the power of men over/against women, whites over/against nonwhites, and people who have greater economic resources over/against people who are impoverished.

It is within such contradictory social scenes that we come to *partially* theorize problems posed by deviance and its control. I am here using the term *partial* in a dual sense. On one hand, I mean to suggest that all forms of knowledge are forever incomplete and that even the most truthful theories will be haunted by the shadows of what they leave out. This in no way implies abandonment of an ongoing search for scholarly objectivity. The materials presented in this book are intended to aid our search for objectivity. They do so, not by pretending that we can become fully detached from political commitments, but by systematically exploring the ways that our inevitable political attachments filter how we perceive deviance. Thus, in searching for objectivity we must also consider the ways that objective standards are themselves partially shaped by the changing historical contexts in which they are produced.

Our investigations are *partial* in a second sense as well. They are partial because, as suggested above, they cannot escape being political. By directing attention to some things but not others, all theories politically empower (if only temporarily) certain viewpoints over others. To work with, rather than deny, the *partiality of theory* is a challenge for all students of deviance and social control. To accept this challenge means that we must be vigilant about the ways in which our own social positions both shape and are shaped by what we study. This demands a willingness to continually revise our theoretical viewpoints in accordance with what we learn and unlearn. Otherwise the end point of our scholarly journey will be no different from its beginning. How will you respond to such a power-reflexive challenge? It is my hope that you will develop both a historically informed perspective on some of the most powerful ways of conceiving deviance and a reflexive (if partial) theoretical viewpoint of your own.

Uneasy Questions: Substantive and Personal Concerns

There is little escape from the questions raised in the preceding pages. Whether we are dealing with a strange-acting roommate, an unfaithful lover, a frightening mugger, or a politician promising to support the death sentence, we are confronted daily with questions of deviance and the often harsh realities of social control. Nor are such questions easy. In fact, they are quite uneasy. They are uneasy in two senses. They are uneasy because questions about what causes deviance and its control are difficult to answer. In subse-

quent chapters we will examine a range of proposed answers. Some place the burden of deviance on the free choice of nonconformists. Others view deviance as biologically or psychologically determined. Another views it as something which is learned. Still another sees deviance as primarily a problem of overly repressive social control. Which, if any, of these views are correct? By what standards is correctness measured? The task before us is an uneasy one. It requires that we dig deeply into the social, political, and economic landscapes out of which images of deviance are born and upon which they implant their vision of social control.

What are the major perspectives that humans have used to make sense of deviance and to make sensible certain programs of social control? Where do these perspectives come from? Like acts of deviance and strategies of social control, theoretical images are produced at certain moments of history. Put into practice, they create history as well. What are their consequences? How well have they stood the tests of time, experience, and systematic research? How exactly have they been translated into social control policy and practice? What are their social, political, or economic implications? What should we think of them? Are they sound or unproven, helpful or useless, good or bad? These are central substantive questions which will occupy us during our journey through this book. They are not easy questions to answer. They require that we combine questions of theory with questions of research and practice.

Questions about deviance and social control are uneasy at a second level as well—the level of our own personal choices, feelings, and political commitments. At this level, questions about deviance and social control challenge us to go beneath our surface thoughts and feelings, to become reflective and critical about things we have come to take for granted as acceptable and things we oppose or are even repulsed by. How is it that we have come to accept or reject certain ways of thinking, feeling, and acting? How have we been influenced or shaped by the processes which promote social control and/or deviance? What are the consequences for others and for ourselves of living within the confines of our present social, economic, and political realities?

How do we benefit or lose by accepting or deviating from the dominant realities of our time? How are the lives of others directly or indirectly influenced by the way we presently endorse normality and oppose deviance? Could we do better? Should we seek to alter the images of deviance produced in the context of present social, political, and economic arrangements? Would we be deviants if we did? This is the second set of uneasy questions that confront us. These questions will not and should not make us feel comfortable. They ask us not only about who we are but about whom we could become as well.

The uneasy nature of our questions about deviance and social control is quite real. It is not an uncommon experience for the serious student of such matters to experience an initial sense of dizziness, a sense of lost innocence about the “natural” character of things that were previously taken for granted

as being simply deviant. If you are unwilling to risk having this discomforting experience, stop reading now. If, on the other hand, you are willing to examine critically the simultaneous formation of deviant and normal realities, including the ways that your own personal realities have been shaped by the ever-present processes of social control, the end experience can be quite exhilarating.

Our worlds can become wider and deeper. This expansion will lead behind and below the ordinary surface of everyday social life by taking a hard look both at deviants—who they are and what they do—and at control processes—who or what gets controlled, how, and why. This expansion can provide us with the freedom of greater personal and social movement. Some of the old, “seemingly natural” binds, bonds, taboos, and rules may loosen up. This new awareness may permit us greater space within which to celebrate the dance that is human life. It may also present us with new senses of human responsibility for our actions and the actions of our fellow deviants and controllers alike. Now that I have said all this, it may be useful to provide a brief overview of the form and content of the present book. I will begin with some additional thoughts on the meaning of theoretical perspectives and their relationship to the study and control of deviance.

Conceiving and Controlling Deviance

Any “theory” of deviance is much more than a set of abstract notions about its causes, nature, and consequences. . . . An image of deviance determines one’s action in concrete instances. It underlies the individual’s pronouncements and it even determines what he considers deviant.

J.L. Simmons³

I walk into the darkened room. It is late and I am weary. I click on the light. From the shadows leans a coiled shape. A snake poised to strike! I jump back, grabbing for something to ward off the attack. My eyes blink. I look again. My frozen posture yields to a sigh of relief. I laugh. A snake? The coiled object is simply my garden hose. How could I have forgotten that I left it there? Its sight sent me into such a state of alarm. Only now do I recognize the tension that had gripped my whole body, the hammer that I had reflexively clenched in my fist. Why had I perceived the hose as a snake? Perhaps it was the mood I was in, the movie I just saw, or my apprehension about tomorrow. Whatever it was, once I defined the object as a snake, as a danger, I instantaneously mobilized my defenses against it.

The term *theoretical perspective* may sound rather abstract and boorishly academic. It is, however, no more abstract than the snake in the preceding narrative. Theoretical perspectives are ways of naming, ways of conceptually ordering our senses of the world. They are tools with which we decide what we experience, why something is the way that it is, and how we might act or react. Having defined the shape as a snake, I direct my action toward it in a

particularly defensive manner. Why? Because coiled snakes are dangerous to one's health. The coiled shape was, from my perspective, a real danger that demanded defense. Cast into another perspective, its meaning and my actions toward it change. This was the case when I redefined it as a hose. The shape didn't change. What changed was my perspective on it. That change made all the difference.

Theoretical perspectives provide us with an image of what something is and how we might best act toward it. They name something as this type of thing and not that. They provide us with the sense of being in a world of relatively fixed forms and content. Theoretical perspectives transform a mass of raw sensory data into understanding, explanations, and recipes for appropriate action. Without them we would be lost in space and time. Everything would be undefined, in flux, without order, chaotic. Without theoretical perspectives we would have no control over what we experience. Such chaos is the stuff of nightmares. In a nightmare, terrifying changes of perspective are beyond our control. Our kind mother becomes a vampire, our pet dog a hideous monster, our room a darkened void in space. Without the guidance of theoretical perspectives we are lost, unable to define, explain, or know how to act toward the objects of our experience.

The link between theoretical perspectives and the sense of having control over a world of ordered experience is important. To have a theoretical perspective on something, to name it in a certain fashion, is the first step in gaining control over it. To cast something into a theoretical perspective is to control it by restricting it to being a certain type of thing. By its being named a snake, the coiled object was trapped in the theoretical imagery in which I conceived it. For the moment it could be nothing else. It was caught in a web of names: frozen in a perspective. In the words of philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, to cast something into a theoretical perspective is "to catch living things in the trap of phrases." Describing this naming process as one of "persistent illusion," Sartre suggested that by combining words ingeniously, "the object would get tangled up in the signs. I would have hold of it."⁴

Sartre may have correctly described the illusionary quality of theoretical perspectives. They are nonetheless powerful illusions. They exert control over that which they name. This, biblical scholars inform us, is the reason that the God of the Old Testament never revealed his name to his followers. He was known only as the unnameable Yahweh or "he who is." He refused to be cornered into a name by the followers who professed to be his servants.

Deviants have been less fortunate. Throughout history they have been the subject of numerous namings, numerous theoretical perspectives. Each provided explanatory images regarding why people deviate and images of control, images suggesting strategies for restoring conventionality. Some of these theoretical perspectives have been simple, relatively unreflected upon, and, for the most part, taken for granted. They may be called *commonsense theoretical perspectives*.

There are today a variety of competing commonsense perspectives on deviance. As J. L. Simmons points out, one may alternatively consider the deviant as sick, as a boat rocker, as immoral, as statistically rare, as a hero, or as just another human being. Each perspective sheds light on some aspects of deviance while casting a shadow on others. Moreover, most people think and act on the basis of different perspectives in different concrete situations. According to Simmons, "a person will usually have different attitudes toward different kinds of deviants; he sees the drug addict as sick, the promiscuous woman as depraved, the rowdy neighborhood youth as a disturber of the peace, his spiritualist friend as curiously different, the hobo he passes as semiheroic, and his adulterous brother as understandably human and male."⁵

While recognizing the importance of commonsense theoretical perspectives, the present book is concerned with another type of theoretical imagery—the *formal theoretical perspective*. Formal theoretical perspectives are generally more elaborate, more explicitly stated, and subject to a continuous process of refinement and validation. It is upon formal theoretical perspectives that society erects its public policies for dealing with deviance. While this is true, one should not exaggerate the distinction between common sense and formal theories. These two ways of theorizing are at all times interrelated. Formal theories grow out of and feed back upon theories grounded in the "common sense" of a particular period in history. The various spiritual, social, political, and economic forces affecting common sense influence and are influenced by the formal theories of a given age. As a result, in examining formal theories we must remain attentive to the various ways that such perspectives are grounded in the material and spiritual realities of everyday social existence.

Formal Theories of Deviance in the West

We all have opinions. Where do they come from? Each day seems like a natural fact and how we think changes how we act.

Jon King and Andrew Gill⁶

Any one human act can be conceptualized in terms of literally hundreds of formal theoretical perspectives. Each names the act in a particular way, directing attention to certain of its aspects while selectively ignoring others. Consider the police officer blowing a whistle. This act could be conceptualized in terms of physical principles explaining the generation of whistle sound waves, biological principles of human breath exhalation, psychological principles associated with a need to assert authority, anthropological principles suggesting the cultural meaning of whistle blowing among advanced primates in North America, sociological principles related to the norms gov-

erning police-citizen encounters, etc. This list could go on and on. The same can be said of perspectives on deviance and social control.

Throughout the remainder of this book we shall take an in-depth look at what I believe to be nine of western society's more important theoretical perspectives on deviance and control. Each offers a distinctive theoretical image of what deviance is, how it can best be studied, and how it should be controlled. Why nine perspectives? There is nothing magical about the number. This is simply how I have categorized, or lumped together, the major strands of thought, study, and action directed regarding deviance and social control. Had I arranged these matters somewhat differently, perhaps we would be talking about four, twelve, or twenty perspectives. Several of the nine perspectives contain a variety of subthemes or subperspectives. Each is considered in somewhat chronological fashion. The first, the supernatural or demonic perspective, is certainly the oldest way of making sense out of nonconformity. The last, a synthesis of several critical viewpoints, is perhaps the most controversial of perspectives today. Yet there is considerable overlap. They are ordered in terms of the general time periods in which each emerged as influential or dominant. Each, however, is still alive and important in today's world.

Why consider only western images of deviance? The choice is purely pragmatic. I am writing primarily for an audience of American and western European students. As such I am writing about the perspectives that have been used to conceive and control deviance in the times and places that are closest to home. To include perspectives originating in the historical lives of Asian, African, and other nonwestern peoples would require a volume much larger than this one. If, by chance, this book should encourage some reader to explore comparative or cross-cultural theoretical developments, I trust that we would all be richer for the experience. On the other hand, there are good practical reasons why nonwestern readers might be interested in this story of western perspectives on deviance. In the hearts and minds of western colonizers, imperialists, and missionaries, these perspectives have frequently been used to control the behaviors of indigenous peoples the globe over.

HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED

The next ten chapters explore competing images of the deviant and how she or he might be controlled. Each image is attached to a constellation of theoretical research and practical human concerns. Of what do these images consist? Where do they come from? To whom do they appeal? How do they get translated into research? How are they related to practical social control policy? How useful are they in terms of research, policy, and the promotion of a just human order? These are the central questions raised in each of the following chapters.

The nine perspectives on deviance and control cover a wide range of thought and action. Each is considered with three general objectives in mind:

(1) describing the basic theoretical imagery, research strategies, and social control policies associated with the perspective; (2) locating the perspective within a general sociohistorical framework, and (3) developing a sense of critical evaluative thinking regarding the perspective's strengths and weaknesses.

Basic Theoretical Imagery, Research Strategies, and Control Policies An in-depth description of these issues is the primary objective of this book. Remember that the way we look at deviance shapes our reaction to it. This is true in terms of both public policy and personal response. Deviance is not one thing. It is as many things as there are ways of looking at it. The same is true for methodological strategies for identifying and studying deviance. The same is true for social control.

As suggested previously, how we conceive of deviance influences and is influenced by our methods of research and our ideas about appropriate strategies of social control. Each of the perspectives discussed in this book is aligned with a particular methodology for identifying and studying deviance. Each is also associated with a unique vision of social control. A detailed description of the theory, methods, and control policies related to the particular perspective is the first objective of each of the following chapters.

Sociohistorical Context Different perspectives have dominated different periods in history. What factors contribute to the popularity or predominance of one perspective over another? How is it that each perspective remains influential today? Perspectives do not live or die on their scientific merits alone. Some fit better into particular historical constellations of political, economic, cultural, and social forces. Others are rejected precisely because they do not. To adequately understand the development and acceptance of a given perspective we must locate its emergence and use within a particular social-historical landscape. Why does it blossom in the soils of one landscape and languish in another? This is a second objective of the following chapters—to provide a historical framework in which to view theoretical images of deviance and the research and control strategies with which they are connected.

Development of the "Conceptual Tools" of Critical Assessment Competing perspectives on deviance may be valued highly by the people who advocate them. This does not mean that each is equally valuable as a tool for research, an instrument of public policy, or a contributor to a just human order. Each has its strengths and weaknesses, its theoretical, methodological, and practical advantages and disadvantages.

Which is best? I cannot answer this for you. Some perspectives you will like. Others you will not. The important thing is to develop an informed critical sense of your own. I will try to assist you by evaluating what I believe to be the merits and drawbacks of each perspective. My own preferences will

undoubtedly shine through. I have attempted to ground these preferences in sound logic and an assessment of all the available evidence. It is my hope that you will do the same.

I will not tell you what to think about this approach to deviance. There are too many people telling you that already. Day in and day out we are bombarded with their opinions. The television, radio, newspaper, classroom, dormitory, and workplace are full of messages about why people should act in a certain fashion and what happens to the deviants who don't. Campaigning politicians, concerned parents, teachers, landlords, bosses, and lovers all hit us with similar messages. They tell us who and what is considered deviant, and why deviance is to be controlled in some specific way.

How are we to think, feel, and act about such matters? As mentioned previously, there is no easy answer to this question. Yet, think, feel, and act we must. We must make decisions about deviance and its control. If we don't, others will make them for us. The third objective of the following chapters involves learning a critical approach to such decision making. As you adopt this approach, the task of evaluating various perspectives will become yours as well as mine. We may agree. We may not. If you believe my analysis is correct, it will be because you have thoughtfully arrived at the same conclusion. If you disagree, your dissent will be similarly grounded. As author and reader we will enter into a dialogue that is informed, responsible, and articulate.

With these things in mind, let us begin our journey into competing images of deviance and control. Our consideration of each perspective is divided into five sections: (1) basic theoretical image, (2) dominant strategies for identifying and/or studying deviance, (3) related strategies of social control, (4) the perspective today, and (5) an assessment of the adequacy of the perspective. We will start with the "demonic perspective." This perspective envisions deviance as sin and social control as a matter of religious duty.

NOTES

- 1 Thomas Merton, "A Devout Meditation in Memory of Adolph Eichmann," as excerpted in Edward Rice, *The Man in the Sycamore Tree: The Good Times and Hard Life of Thomas Merton*, Doubleday, Garden City, N.Y., 1970, p. 89.
- 2 All the excerpts from Twain's parable are taken from Mark Twain, *The War Prayer*, Harper & Row, New York, 1970.
- 3 J. L. Simmons, *Deviants*, Glendessary, Berkeley, Calif., 1969, pp. 12-13.
- 4 Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Words*, Braziller, New York, 1964, p. 184.
- 5 Simmons, *Deviants*, p. 24.
- 6 Jon King and Andrew Gill, lyrics from "Why Theory?" Gang of Four album, *Solid Gold*, 1981.