

The Deviance Process by Erdwin H. Phuhl  
Chapter 5- Creating Deviance  
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Individuals gain a deviant identity in two ways. One is through achieved status which a result of his or her behavior. For example, someone who physically injures another person and the person ends up dying. The attacker will be identified as the “killer.” The second way people gain a deviant status is through ascribed status. The “defiant” has no control over this method of status. Deviance from the ascribed status is negative meanings to personal traits that are not purposely created by the “defiant” person. Such traits set those individuals aside from some of society. They happened to be different in one way or another. For example, most people are right handed while a very small percentage of people are left handed.

Stereotypes play a big role in categorizing individuals into deviant and non-deviant. Stereotypes are “collectively shared ideas about the nature of people who are classified as the same based on their participation in deviance. The media tends to portray villains as non-white or Italians. In the neighborhood where I live, the media tends to portray gang members as either African American or Hispanics. There are several consequences that stereotypes generate. One is that the stereotype is seen as a fact. The problem with this consequence is that everyone in the stereotype group is viewed as such when the stereotype may not be true every individual in those groups. There is a great saying that says, “If it walks like a duck, and it whacks like a duck, it is a duck.” However, that is not 100 percent accurate.

The second issue with stereotypes is that it focuses the attention to specific neighborhoods or certain characteristics that it blinds from looking in places or people where

crime is not expected. For example, street cops may be more prone to look for crime in “ghetto” neighborhoods and avoid seeing crimes in Beverly Hills.

Stereotypes expect people to behave in a deviant manner and this causes limitations to the good and unexpected qualities to be displayed. This would be like judging a book by its cover. The context is not known because judgment has already been placed based on the outside appearance. This will also cause a barrier and rejections toward those who are seen as deviant. Since little to no contact or experience is available from those as deviant and non-deviant one refers back to stereotypes to know how to deal with such interaction.

Stereotypes may place a label on people but there are several ways labels are resistant. One way is to make reasonable excuses to get away from being labeled as defiant. For example, if a young child in the streets late at night and when questioned by people what he or she is doing out so late, the response might be that he or she was in a certain enrichment meeting that ended late. Another example would be excuses people give to avoid getting a speeding ticket. Reasons I have heard is that they were in a hurry to get to a restroom because they had stomach issues. Another method of resisting to being label is by placing the blame on the accuser condemning the condemners or claim that the victim was asking for it.

Labeling will also depend on the social distance. If people are not socially close in relationship, the easier it will be to place a label. If people have connections or relationships than the labeling process will be more difficult to execute. For example, a mother will not admit that her son is a troublemaker.

People who in groups that are stereotyped have to work harder to prove to society that they do not fall within such labels. One who appears to dress like a gang member but has not

association with such group will have to prove and demonstrate qualities of the contrary of such groups.