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A Critique of the Labeling Approach: toward a Social Theory of Deviance

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A CRITIQUE OF THE LABELING APPROACH:
"TOWARD A SOCIAL THEORY OF DEVIANCE

A Thesis

Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Sociology
The College of William and Mary

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Robert Glen Mattson-Croninger

1976

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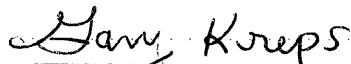
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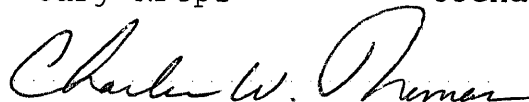
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ABSTRACT

This is an essay on the labeling literature, some reflections, some critical comments, some tentative ideas. The essay is an unfamiliar form for a sociological thesis. A reader demands to know one's hypothesis, or at least theoretical position where no empirical evidence is available. But labeling has been plagued by hypotheses and theoretical stances, so much so that some of its insights into deviance have been obscured. It needs a fresh interpretation, one that highlights the social issues it seeks to explain, and a fresh assessment in light of those issues. That is the goal of this essay.

What follows presents an inventory of labeling's ideas, a critical assessment of their conceptual and empirical usefulness and a methodological strategy for understanding the central issues described by labeling. In particular, the essay concentrates on labeling's assertion that social meanings and social reactions are important components of an understanding of deviance in modern societies. Although labeling's treatment of these components is found wanting, the components themselves are still seen as essential to sociological and criminological inquiry.

An ideal type framework is developed, using Weber as an authority. Four types are distinguished: respectable, involuntary, aberrant and dissident deviance. Each is suggested as having distinct social meanings; and each meaning is suggested as having a distinct influence on the likelihood that labeling or deterrence will result from official sanctioning. A brief application of this methodological strategy to juvenile delinquency suggests its heuristic validity.

A CRITIQUE OF THE LABELING APPROACH:
TOWARD A SOCIAL THEORY OF DEVIANCE

INTRODUCTION

This essay is about the labeling approach and its understanding of deviance in modern society. It is not, for a number of reasons, a particularly timely topic. For one thing, judging by the opinions recently expressed in journals and professional meetings, a considerable number of social scientists are ready to discard the approach as either hopelessly ambiguous or simply exhausted (see Gibbs, 1972; Manning, 1973; 1975). Moreover, recent assessments of the approach are directed toward uncovering its "latent conservative biases" (see Gouldner, 1968; Liazos, 1972; Davis, 1972; Schervish, 1973; Thio, 1973), an event in current sociology that usually sounds the death toll-- recall the criticisms of Parsons's system's theory. In brief, the popular validity that sustained labeling during the seven years following Becker's (1963) Outsiders has been replaced by an equally popular scepticism.

Of course, one can always go against the tide, support labeling against the current conventional wisdom. But even the approach's original theorists are raising damaging criticisms about labeling's empirical and conceptual status. In the second edition to a collection of originally formative essays on labeling, Lemert (1972: 16) describes the approach's

development in a single terse paragraph.

What began as some tentative and loosely linked ideas about deviance and societal reactions in my writings subsequently were replaced by the theoretical statements of Becker that social groups create deviance and that deviant behavior is that which is so labeled. This position got further elucidation in Erikson's functionalist derived position that the social audience is the critical factor in deviance study. In retrospect these must be regarded as conceptual extrusions largely responsible for the indiscriminating application of labeling theory to a diversity of research and writing on deviance. Unfortunately, the impression of crude sociological determinism left by the Becker and Erikson statements has been amplified by the tendency of many deviance studies to be preoccupied with the work of official agents of social control, accenting the arbitrariness of official action, stereotyped decision-making in bureaucratic contexts, bias in the administration of law, and the general preemptive nature of society's control over deviants.

Although Lemert urges the "proper" development of labeling, Manning (1973) suggests that this essay signifies the approach's inevitable atrophy, bringing to an end the conceptual period initiated by labeling theorists. Lemert (1974) himself justifies the argument, for several years later in a presidential address to the Society for the Study of Social Problems he urges theorists to abandon earlier claims and to go beyond Mead's interactionist framework.

Why then write about the labeling approach? For one thing, present criticism crudely reject the entire approach, and although labeling possesses a number of misleading claims, many of which will be presented in a later part of this essay, it also possesses some insightful and frequently neglected directions for deviancy studies. Unlike the normative perspective, in which research focuses on the personal and social characteristics of deviants, the labeling approach draws

attention to the interaction between those who commit deviant acts and those in a position to pass moral judgments upon those actors. Accordingly, research and theory-building over the past ten years has been directed toward a number of important questions about deviance and social reactions: When is a deviant act likely to be severely sanctioned? When is a deviant act likely to stimulate little or no reaction? Whose rules are enforced by legitimate social reactions? Under what conditions are these rules enforced? Who applies the deviant label to whom? What consequences does the application of a deviant label have for a person? These are significant questions that are neglected by normative theorists, and they are questions that are obscured by a hasty rejection of labeling's central focus.

Furthermore, an overly simplified rejection of labeling obscures the re-emphasis the approach places on classical concerns about the social meanings of deviance in modern society. Although normative theorists ostensibly note the modern context in which deviance occurs (there is always some mention of normative plurality), they do not direct research or theory toward understanding this context. Rather normative studies concentrate on the legitimate but narrow issue of what causes people to commit deviant acts; they do not attempt to understand the relationships between deviance, ascribed social meanings and the social order of modern society. It was, ironically, Durkheim who concerned himself and his writings with these relationships. In the Division of Labor (1964a),

Durkheim described the precariousness of solidarity in modern society, and he briefly elaborated the role deviance plays both in upsetting and reinforcing that solidarity. His later works, especially Suicide (1952) and Rules of Sociological Method (1964b), further explored some of the roles deviance plays in modern society, such as providing a focus for group identification or as heralding a new collective conscience. Like labeling theorists (see Erikson, 1966; Douglas, 1970a), Durkheim conceived of the study of deviance as the study of the affirmation and construction of moral meanings in everyday life. It is this concern with the broader social meanings of deviance, especially as they are designated by social reactions, that is lost by a total rejection of the approach.

Labeling also, at least potentially, converges with several current orientations in sociology and criminology. For one, the conflict approach, represented by such theorists as Sellin (1938), Vold (1958), Turk (1966) and Quinney (1970), describe modern society as involving moral disagreement. Sellin (1938: 29) makes this point in a passage that adumbrates labeling's description of the modern world.

The more complex a culture becomes, the more likely it is that a number of normative groups which affect a person will be large, and the greater the chance that the norms of these groups will fail to agree, no matter how much they overlap as a result of common acceptance.

Another complementary approach centers around the studies on "respectable" deviance. In an article on white-collar crime, Sutherland (1940) argues that rarely is deviant behavior committed by people of high status in the course of their

occupation recorded in police statistics. Although these deviants cost men and women considerably more than conventional criminals (Sutherland and Cressey, 1974; Pearce, 1973), they rarely face the same amount of social reaction that is directed toward lower status criminals. Both Sutherland and Sellin suggest, like the labeling theorists, that deviance in modern society is intricately associated with social definitions and the power of some to have their definitions strictly enforced. By emphasizing the importance of reactions in explaining deviant behavior, labeling suggests some social relationships that would more fully integrate the studies on conflict and respectable crime.

All of this, the research questions, the classical issues, the convergence with studies on conflict and respectable deviance, is not presented as evidence of labeling's extraordinary explanatory powers. As many have argued, the approach is excessively loose, conceptually inconsistent, difficult to empirically verify and prone toward vulgarization and politicalization. But confusion, as Emerson once said, need not be indication of defective intelligence: it may, at times, be simply an honest mind working on an inherently difficult and complex problem. Undoubtedly, some of labeling's difficulties indicate just this honest reflection on an inherently complex problem-- the social meanings of deviance in modern society. By concentrating simply on the approach's conceptual and empirical confusion, the critics obscure the complexity of the social issues it seeks to

understand. The task of criticism, therefore, is to assess labeling according to these issues, according to the conceptual problems it seeks to unravel, and where it is found wanting, suggest alternative strategies for research and theory. This is the task of this thesis.

There are, however, a number of issues and problems associated with labeling, and their conceptual complexity prevents a thorough assessment of the approach, at least within the scope of this paper. As a result, this paper will concentrate primarily on those aspects of labeling that seek to understand what is socially made of an act, what that definition suggests about social reactions and what consequences those reactions are likely to have for a deviant. The pages that follow will describe the basic ideas of labeling and assess its utility as an explanatory framework. From this assessment, especially as it applies to the social meanings of deviance, a different strategy for understanding deviance in modern society will be presented, one that will hardly solve all the problems revolving around the approach, but one that will make some of them more understandable.

CHAPTER I

INVENTORY OF IDEAS

Although the labeling perspective has dominated the literature for twelve years, there is an embarrassing amount of disagreement about exactly what is labeling's approach to deviant behavior. Critics seem more confused than anyone. Rock (1974), for instance, claims that labeling is too phenomenological, enmeshing it in reductionism, yet Douglas (1970a) laments labeling's lack of phenomenological focus. Similarly, Lemert (1974) calls for labeling theorists to go beyond Mead's interactionist perspective, while others (see Rogers and Buffalo, 1974; Schervish, 1973) criticize the literature for ignoring Mead's central insights. At times, the confusion results from the misguided efforts of critics and proponents alike to attribute labeling to some classical perspective-- so that the criticism might seem more coherent or the defense more convincing. At other times, however, the confusion reflects a real looseness in the approach itself (Taylor, Walton and Young, 1973), which leads to a pertinent question-- in what way can any set of assumptions and ideas assume to be the labeling approach to deviant behavior?

The word labeling hardly captures the subtle differences between such theorists as Becker (1963) and Lemert (1951; 1967),

Erikson (1966) and Matza (1969) or Kitsuse (1964) and Scheff (1966). Still, there is a sense in which a core, a trunk, can be identified amidst these subtle branches of labeling, and this, using Gibbs's (1966) term, is labeling's "conception" of deviant behavior. Whereas previous theories conceive of deviance as the infraction of some agreed-upon rule, portraying deviants as sharing some social or personal attribute by which the infraction can be explained, labeling conceives of deviance as the product of social interaction, logically separating the act and the judgments people make about them (Becker, 1971). The following passage by Becker (1963: 9), perhaps the most quoted description of labeling's position, points this out.

Deviance...is created by society. I do not mean this in the way it is ordinarily understood, in which causes of deviancies are located in the social situation of the deviant or in the "social factors" which prompt his action. I mean, rather, social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act a person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an "offender." The deviant is one to whom that label has been successfully applied; deviant behavior is behavior people so label.

Some people who act oddly are committed to mental hospitals, some are not; some people who break the laws are arrested and sent to prison, some are not; some people who drink too much are labeled "alcoholics," some are not-- the differences between those who are labeled deviant and those who are not depends on what others make of the act, what social judgments are made and what responses those judgments provoke from actor.

and audience alike. According to labeling theorists, deviance is not simply a violation of some agreed-upon rule; rather deviance is the outcome of processes of social definition and social reaction.

In other words, Becker argues that the labels people apply to behavior are logically independent of any act in itself. In one sense, such a statement is blatantly true. Since Durkheim, at least, sociologists and criminologists have recognized that designations such as "normal" and "abnormal," "conforming" and "deviant" are socially specific, specific to history, cultures and subcultures. Only the most unregenerate biological determinist or structural-functionalist would quibble with labeling's contention that deviance resides in social definitions and reactions, rather than in the acts or persons committing them (Akers, 1968). But Becker, as well as other labeling proponents, is making a bolder claim: the acts people commit and the labels people attach to them are separate, not simply in the abstract but in specific situations as well. In this sense, there are no neat categories of deviance or crime, only categories of people who have been isolated and distinguished from others by the social definitions and reactions applied to them (Kitsuse and Cicourel, 1963).

As Erikson (1966) argues, by defining deviance this way, the labeling approach highlights certain aspects of deviance that had been frequently taken for granted in earlier conceptions. For instance, Merton's (1975) theory of anomie, still a central framework for deviance research, is designed

to account for behavior that strays from community norms, regardless of whose standards those norms represent. Consequently, the banker who sifts through the day's loan requests making decisions according to race and the armed robber who takes from him the day's receipts are both deviants, since both in their own way violate the community's norms. But the banker, regardless of the effects of his actions, even if he is largely a cause of the robbery, faces different consequences for his actions than those faced by the armed robber. The banker seldom provokes the community's ire, while the armed robber sets in motion the community's entire social control mechanism. Although the labeling analysts sometimes express interest in "secret" deviants or self-typing, all agree that those rule-breakers who are singled out by the police, mental health personnel, the courts or other official audiences face adjustment problems concerning "spoiled identity" that hidden deviants do not. An aim of labeling's conception, then, is to focus attention on the consequences of being labeled an outsider, especially when the labeling is done by official control agents.

Preeminently, the labeling approach involves an interactional process in which relative social judgments are the primary determinant of deviance. This conception of deviance has led to several related yet distinguishable lines of questioning. The first, and the least elaborated by labeling theorists, asks questions about the social order. Whose rules are enforced? Whose reactions are likely to be

compelling? The second asks questions about the application of labels. Who is more likely to be labeled a deviant? What influence do official stereotypes and interests have on enforcement policy? Finally, the third line of questioning simply asks what are the consequences of being labeled a deviant? The following paragraphs present some of the answers labeling theorists have provided to these questions, answers that have become known as labeling's approach to deviant behavior.

Rules, Reactions and the Social Order

Whose reactions, whose social judgments are likely to be more compelling than others? When labeling theorists defined deviance according to actual social reactions, they pinpointed a theoretical problem, but not an answer. In other words, what is the conceptual difference between rules that are not enforced and reactions that are not forceful? Kitsuse (1964), for instance, found the reactions of college students to homosexuals to be "generally mild." Does a generally mild reaction constitute deviance? If not, how harsh must a reaction be before it can be described as deviance? Similarly, one of Becker's (1963: 11) observations leads to confusion. After his example of labeling, in which a young Trobriand Islander is "forced" to commit suicide by the public denunciation of another native, Becker concludes: "You can commit clan incest and suffer no more than gossip as long as no one makes a public accusation..." Why is gossip an insignificant reaction?

Whatever the merits of labeling's position, as Gibbs (1966) points out, it is not without difficulty, for it never says exactly what identifies an act as deviant.

Gibbs, of course, is right, but he is right for some not so obvious reasons. While labeling is in need of some conceptual housecleaning, the difficulty rests with the very idea of labeling or more specifically with the relationship between social reactions and labeling. In Kitsuse's (1964) study of student reactions toward homosexuals, negative responses, regardless of their intensity, identified homosexuality as deviant. What it did not do, however, is equally important: it did not effectively differentiate the homosexuals from the other students, the deviants from the nondeviants. This differentiation process is what Becker (1963: 9) referred to as successful labeling. A frequently quoted passage by the early criminologist Tannenbaum (1938: 19-20) describes it fairly well.

The process of making the criminal (of successful labeling) therefore, is a process of tagging, defining, identifying, segregating, describing, emphasizing, making conscious and self-conscious; it becomes a way of stimulating, suggesting, emphasizing, and evoking the very traits that are complained of...The person becomes the thing he is described as being.

A reaction to illicit behavior can be almost anything-- from the generally mild responses of the students in Kitsuse's study to the more dramatic denunciation of the young Trobriand Islander-- any of which define the behavior as deviant to someone. In this sense, it is odd that labeling proponents identify reaction as the crucial and forgotten element of

deviance. What is crucial, however, is the point at which social reactions become social labeling. And it is about this matter that labeling theorists are disturbingly silent.

In part, the difficulty rests with labeling's adherence to Mead's interactionist framework. Insofar as labeling takes a subjectivist stance, it must deal with each person in their own right, facing, interpreting and dealing with the reactions of others (see Blumer, 1969: 61-77). As Lemert (1951: 74-75) explains it:

The importance of the person's conscious symbolic reactions to his or her own behavior cannot be overstressed in explaining the shift from normal to abnormal behavior or from one type of pathological behavior to another, particularly where behavior variations become systematized or structured into pathological roles...the self-defining junctures are critical points of personality genesis and in the special case of the atypical person they mark a division between two different types of deviation.

The two types, of course, are primary and secondary deviance, a distinction that will be taken up later. For the moment, however, it is important to understand that this emphasis upon "conscious symbolic reactions" constructs an inescapable tautology for the labeling theorists. Any social reaction is potentially one that will effectively label a person and their behavior, since effectiveness depends upon the deviants own symbolic reaction. Effective labels and reactions, according to this scheme, are simply those that are effective. This accounts for the tendency of observational studies, such as Scott's (1969) analysis of the "blindness system" or Ray's (1964) portrayal of relapse among heroin addicts, to provide evidence of labeling by inferring the impact of social responses

through the deviant's own perceptions of stigma.

Nevertheless, labeling theorists, at least implicitly, suggest that official reactions-- that is, the reactions by police, judges and other formal control agents-- are likely to result in labeling. Such determinism is in some respects opposed to Mead's subjectivism, and it is hard not to admire the ingenuity with which labeling analysts appear to anchor it in a subjectivist framework. Building on some traditional ideas of symbolic interactionism (see Hughes, 1945; Garfinkel, 1956), labeling theorists describe public reactions as essentially "degradation ceremonies." In a criminal trial, a prototypical degradation ceremony, a person's personality is erased and replaced with a cultural label-- a "rapist" or a "thief." Schwartz and Skonlick (1964) document this effect in a quite limited yet frequently quoted study of legal stigma. After confronting twenty-five employers with four types of personnel folders, each containing a different degree of legal stigma (no record, acquitted, acquitted with a letter of reassurance from the judge and convicted as charged), Schwartz and Skolnick found the folders with the most stigma (convicted and acquitted without a letter) to fair poorly in the job market. One employer expressed interest in a convicted folder; three expressed interest in the acquitted without a letter folder. The other two folders were more marketable. Nine employers expressed interest in the folder with no record; six employers expressed interest in the acquitted with a letter folder. Using similar studies (see Simmons, 1969; Scheff,

1966), labeling proponents document the existence of similar public stereotypes, stereotypes that supposedly come into play once a person is officially reacted to as a deviant.

While labeling analysts are uncertain about some reactions, allowing a person's subjective response to be the final word on importance, public reactions are uniformly seen as overwhelming, regardless of the deviant's symbolic interpretation. Mead (1918: 590) himself, in a classic essay on the psychology of punitive justice, referred to legal stigmas as the modernization of taboos.

I refer to that accompanying stigma place upon the criminal. The revulsions against criminality reveal themselves in a sense of solidarity with the group, a sense of being a citizen which on the one hand excludes those who have transgressed the laws of the group and on the other inhibits tendencies to criminal acts in the citizen himself. It is this emotional reaction against conduct which excludes from society that gives to the moral taboos of the group such impressiveness.

It is this moral taboo that labeling refers to when it speaks of stereotypes, of the deviant's difficulty in "shaking off" public labels and of the compelling nature of being officially declared a deviant-- recall Becker's example of the young Trobriand Islander. Although labeling theorists never adequately explain why there should be so much agreement about the "disdainful" qualities of rule-breakers and so much disagreement about the rules themselves (see Becker, 1963: 15-18; Lemert, 1972: 26-61), they still assert that official reactions attribute a "master status" to a person's misconduct, a status that changes interaction patterns and effectively alters, in time, a violator's perceptions of himself. Official reactions,

then, are reactions that label.

This concern with official reactions has led some labeling analysts to explore the creation of formal rules-- that is, rules that are enforced by some official group of people. Again, labeling theorists, like many conflict analysts (see Turk, 1966; Quinney, 1970), argue that modern society is characterized by conflicts over values and expectations. What is right for one person often proves deviant for another. In addition to laws revolving around life, property and person, modern society generates a vast amount of "regulatory laws," laws dealing with health, public safety, welfare, business practises and transportation. In each of these cases, the moral meanings, particularly the moral obligation to obey, depends largely on a person's relationship to the group whose interests and values are represented by the rules (Lemert, 1972). The content of laws, and correspondingly the rules potentially enforceable by control agents, depends on the ability of certain groups to have their values and interests cast into legal forms. In this sense, labeling analysts rightfully stress that one of the most important determinants of a rule, of its content and who it potentially defines as deviant, is the absence of certain groups in the collective interaction that generates laws. To a degree, labeling theorists portray social conflict much as Dahrendorf (1959: 179-193) does, in which organized groups generate support for their values from less conscious groups. The main medium for this process, at least for labeling theorists, is

the mass media.

To illustrate, Becker (1963: 135-146), who has done some of the conceptual work in this area, describes what he calls moral enterprising as an endeavor to construct part of society's moral fabric. As an example, he interprets the passage of the Marijuana Tax Act in 1937 by the United States Congress. Principally through the efforts of the Bureau of Narcotics, then under the Treasury Department, public concern about the "dangerous" use of marijuana was generated by a public information campaign. Although the Treasury Department itself minimized the problem of marijuana in its 1931 yearly report, the Bureau generated enough support to have a draft of the bill presented before the House Ways and Means Committee in 1937. After some minor revisions to safeguard the legitimate interests of business, the bill was passed in both the House and Senate. Becker (1963: 145) sums up the bill's passage as follows: "Marijuana smokers, powerless, unorganized, and lacking legitimate grounds for attack, sent no representatives to the hearings and their point of view found no place in the record...The enterprise of the Bureau produced a new rule, whose subsequent enforcement would help create a new class of outsiders-- marijuana smokers."

Similar processes are described in Platt's (1969) explanation of delinquency laws, Gusfield's (1968) interpretation of the enactment of the Prohibition Amendment, and Duster's (1970) analysis of anti-drug legislations. What is important in these studies is that interests are described as sometimes

more symbolic than material in nature. As Gusfield argues, the Prohibition Amendment is a classic example, for it was largely a middle-class, rural, Protestant movement aimed at controlling the values of lower-class, urban, Catholic immigrants. In this light, the making of rules, especially in the instance of moral crusades, is a symbolic act, symbolizing the importance or superiority of a group's way of life. Both Duster and Platt make similar arguments. In this sense, labeling analysts perceive the legal definition of deviance, especially with regard to crimes without victims, as the efforts of middle- and upper-class Americans to formalize their values and control behavior they see as deviant. And, of course, from a labeling point of view, rule-making is an important example of how social control causes deviance.

In another sense, however, the significance of moral crusades rests not in their origins, but in their outcomes: in the legitimation of a police force. In other words, while it is up to rule-makers to create categories of deviance, it is up to another type of moral entrepreneur, rule-enforcers, to apply the laws and create a class of outsiders (Becker, 1963). Offenders must be discovered, apprehended and convicted, and this job falls to professional enforcers who have interests and values of their own. Accordingly, labeling theorists end up back at the source of labeling, at the application of rules by police, judges and other officials (for a critique of this circle see Gouldner, 1968; Thio, 1973). In the labeling approach, the way in which officials enforce

rules, the manner in which they recruit people as outsiders, largely determines who is and who is not deviant.

Enforcement and the Application of Labels

Schur (1971: 82-99) refers to the study of "deviance processing" organizations as central to the understanding of the ways in which social control shapes and even, in a sense, causes deviant behavior. From what has been said, he is quite right, at least insofar as labeling is concerned. Rules are not uniformly enforced. Some rules are enforced only when they result in certain consequences. The unmarried mother presents a clear example. While school officials are unlikely to approve of promiscuity, they seldom do anything until a girl becomes pregnant-- then she is expelled. Some rules are applied more to certain people than others. Again, while the unwed mother is often forced to leave school, the boy, who is also responsible, is seldom treated in the same fashion. Some rules, furthermore, are variously enforced over time. The occurrence of "drives" against certain kinds of deviance, like gambling or homosexuality, for instance, indicates this clearly. These things taken together suggest the differential manner in which rules are enforced. And the manner in which officials go about enforcing rules, apprehending people, processing deviants, "treating" them and so on, identifies those people who are to become known as outsiders.

For the most part, labeling's contentions are supported by the literature on complex organizations. Research in this

area has repeatedly documented the existence of informal rules which emerge within the formal structures of organizations. In one classic of the field, Gouldner's (1954) Patterns of Bureaucracy, the consequences of enforcing inactive formal rules, as well as the practicality of their enforcement, are described for a company that mined gypsum rock near one of the Great Lakes. According to Gouldner, the plant moved at an informal pace for many years. Many of the employees used plant materials, and for the most part it was a pleasant day's labor, despite complaints from company headquarters about low production and excessive waste. After the old manager died though, things changed; headquarters sent in a new manager with orders to tighten up. Before long miners were being fired for doing things that were previously considered legitimate. While the new manager successfully reinstated the formal rules with regard to surface operations, his efforts to bureaucratize the more dangerous mining operations failed. In the mines unpredictability was high and cooperation was crucial. Gouldner's study, like the better labeling research, demonstrates the importance of organizational form and social situations in determining what rules will be enforced and who will be labeled deviant.

This informal side of enforcement and its relation to social situations has been brought out in several studies conducted from a labeling orientation. Bittner (1967a), for instance, shows how the rules of policeman and peace officer are sometimes exchanged by patrolmen on Skid Row. According

to Bittner, patrolmen on Skid Row keep the peace by cultivating personal relationships with residents, holding little regard for culpability, and making decisions geared more toward solving situational problems than the formal rules. At least on Skid Row, rules are applied differentially in order to manage residential tension. Similarly, Sundow (1965) observes the importance of informal arrangements between the Public Defender's Office and the Prosecutor's Office. Often arrangements go beyond simple plea-bargaining, reflecting what the public defender and prosecutor consider to be a "normal" crime. In this sense, the categorization of an act determines what portions of the legal code a deviant will be charged with and thus the possibilities for plea-bargaining. In both of these cases, as with Gouldner's study, informal rules emerge between the demands of situational tensions and organizational interests.

Unfortunately, Bittner's and Sundow's studies are exceptions. Labeling research tends to underplay the importance of organizational interests and tensions in generating informal rules. Instead, research concentrates on documenting selectiveness in applying labels, principally through the influence of informal stereotypes. Deviants, Rubington and Weinberg (1968: 5) argue, are "persons who are typed socially in a very special sort of way. They are assigned to categories and each category carries with it a stock interpretive accounting of any persons contained under the rubric." Labeling focuses on the content of these stereotypes in order

to describe what kinds of people are more likely to be defined as deviant. An excellent example of this can be found in Piliavin's and Briar's (1964: 210) observations on police encounters with juveniles, in which they stress the "cues" officers use to distinguish delinquents from nondelinquents.

...both the decision made in the field-- whether or not to bring the boy in-- and the decision made at the station-- which disposition to invoke-- were based largely on the cues which emerged from the interaction between officer and the youth, cues from which the officer inferred the youth's character. These cues included the youth's group affiliations, age, race, grooming, dress, and demeanor. Older juveniles, members of known delinquent gangs, Negroes, youths with well-oiled hair, black jackets, and soiled denims or jeans (the presumed uniform of 'tough boys'), and boys who in their interactions with officers did not manifest what were considered to be appropriate signs of respect tended to receive the more severe dispositions.

The manner in which control agents sift through a person's ✓ behavior, screening out certain acts as unimportant, emphasizing still others as indicating a person's "real" self, largely determines the intensity of sanctions and the effectiveness of labeling.

The processing of juvenile delinquents is a major arena for this type of research. Ironically, juvenile courts, which were established in the early nineteen-hundreds to curb the stigmatization of troublesome children (Platt, 1969), are particularly vulnerable to labeling processes. Juveniles can come under the court's jurisdiction for a variety of misconducts, from "incorrigibility" to major criminal offenses, and once under the court's jurisdiction they are subjected to a number of "child savers," each using slightly different

informal standards to determine how best to deter any further delinquency. The discretion invested in many officials of the juvenile system, from the policeman to the judge to the probation official, makes stereotypic responses quite likely. Cicourel (1968), for example, argues that "appealing and attractive" delinquents "who want very much to be helped" are more likely to have their behavior interpreted clinically or socially than criminally. Outside of demeanor, the labeling orientation suggests that ethnicity, socioeconomic status, education, age, sex, type of offense and previous record all influence whether a delinquent will enter the juvenile system, and once in it, how he will be treated (see Thomas and Sieverdes, 1975; Thomas and Cage, 1975; Thornberry, 1973).

Not all labeling research on the application of labels, however, has been done on the juvenile system. Some people have concerned themselves with more subtle forms of stereotyping, especially those forms emerging from professional values or treatment standards. For the most part, this type of research is done on the mental health system or altruistic organizations for the handicapped, in which "experts" are required to define the degree of deviantness. Scott (1970; 1969), for instance, in researching the "blindness system," explains that the general definition of blindness is quite arbitrary, and that many people classified as blind actually have some measurable vision. Consequently, contact with an opthamalogist or welfare agent frequently determines whether a person is treated as someone having difficulty in seeing or

as a blind person with residual sight. Similarly, Scheff (1966) notes that psychiatric and judicial hearings on mental incompetency are largely perfunctory, since these officials consider it more dangerous to "judge a sick person well than to judge a well person sick." In one of Scheff's studies, although sixty-three percent of the patients did not meet legal requirements for involuntary status (they were neither severely impaired nor dangerous), virtually every hearing recommended commitment. In a final example, Rosehan (1973) conducted a study in which eight people gained entrance into different mental hospitals by imitating several psychotic symptoms during an admission interview. Immediately on entrance, they stopped simulating any abnormal symptoms. In all twelve cases the pseudo-patients had difficulty in establishing their sanity to the different hospitals' personnel. After an average hospitalization of nineteen days, each was released with the diagnosis "schizophrenia in remission." In all three examples, the expectations and standards of "experts," regardless of their good intentions, played a crucial part in determining who was deviant and who was not.

To their credit, labeling analysts focus attention on the processes by which deviants are differentiated from nondeviants. Although they underplay some important matters, such as organizational interests, stress and pressures, they highlight the workings of informal stereotypes, especially as they operate in the juvenile and other therapeutic systems.

Such stereotypes influence who is likely to be accused, apprehended and treated as deviant, and the likelihood of being identified as deviant determines the likelihood of being successfully labeled as an outsider.

Consequences of Labeling: Becoming a Deviant

It is one thing to commit a deviant act-- eg. acts of lying, stealing, homosexual intercourse, narcotics' use, drinking to excess, unfair competition. It is quite another thing to be charged and invested with a deviant character, ie. to be socially defined as a liar, a thief, a homosexual, a dope fiend, a drunk, a chiseler, a brown-noser, a hoodlum, a sneak, a scab and so on. It is to be assigned a role, a special type of category of persons. The label-- the name of the role-- does more than signify one who has committed such-and-such a deviant act. Each label evokes a characteristic imagery. It suggests someone who is normally or habitually given to certain kinds of deviance; who is literally a bundle of odious and sinister qualities. It activates sentiments and calls out responses in others: rejection, contempt, suspicion, withdrawal, fear, hatred.

This passage by Cohen (1966: 24) accurately portrays the crucial distinction between committing a deviant act and ✓ being invested with a deviant character, which is the basis of labeling analysis. The first involves the processes ✓ culminating in an act; the second involves the processes by which accused deviants are socially differentiated from others. In a series of important essays on the labeling position, Lemert (1967; 1972) proposes the significance of this distinction by pointing out the insufficiency of Merton's structural approach to deviance, in particular his theory of anomie. Deviance, Lemert argues, suggests two types of research questions: (1) how deviant behavior originates and (2) how deviant acts are effectively attached to persons, influencing further

deviance by that person. The first, and the focus of Merton's approach, arises from a variety of sources for a variety of reasons. No single theory, then, whether it proposes "strain," "differential opportunity" or some similar explanation, can possibly capture the act's etiological complexity. The second, however, at least for Lemert (1951: 75), is the more understandable and sociologically significant, for "deviations are not significant until they are organized subjectively and transformed into active social roles and become the social criteria for assigning status." Lemert, as well as other labeling analysts, suggest that consistent deviant behavior results from social labeling, from the processes culminating in commitment to a deviant role.

In this way, Lemert distinguishes between primary and secondary deviance. Primary deviance, the deviance that Merton focuses attention on, arises for a number of social, cultural, psychological and biological reasons, and at best it has only minimal effect on a person's self-concept. People become alcoholics for a variety of reasons, from the death of a loved one or business failure, from an intolerance to alcohol or even from participating in some cultural role that requires a great deal of drinking. Similar arguments are made by Scheff (1966) in his description of residual rule breaking and by Becker (1963: 26) in his statement that "most people experience deviant impulses frequently." Secondary deviance, however, is the organization of deviant behavior into a social role, which becomes a means of "defense,

attack or adaptation" (Lemert, 1967) to the problems created by the social reactions directed toward a person's primary deviance. What is explicitly important for Lemert (1967: 17) in this distinction is that it implies not only a shift in behavioral patterns but a shift in the "causes" of deviance as well: "the original causes of deviation recede and give way to the central importance of the disapproving, degradational and labeling reactions of society." In other words, while the origins of initial deviance are diverse, repeated deviance or secondary deviance is caused by a commitment to a miscreant role, which in turn is caused by official labels.

When taken to extremes, this assertion leads to inevitable problems for labeling analysts. While the contention implies labeling's explanatory superiority over Merton's structural focus, it also runs against an interactionist position. Becker (1960: 36) himself, in an earlier essay about components of commitment, argues that initial behavior as well as initial interests are important to consider.

Whenever we propose commitment as an explanation of consistency in behavior, we must have independent observations of the major components in such a proposition: (1) prior actions of the person staking some originally extraneous interest in his following a consistent line of activity; (2) a recognition by him of the involvement of this originally extraneous interest in his present activity; and (3) the resulting consistent line of activity.

Essentially, labeling proponents fall into the same trap that Cohen (1965) recognizes in structural approaches to deviance: they assume discontinuity. In other words, what difference is there between anomie theory-- deviance portrayed as an

abrupt change, as a leap from strain to abnormal behavior-- and the labeling approach, in which the original causes of deviance disappear, abruptly giving way to secondary deviance with the onslaught of social reactions? Some of the problem, of course, could be handled by labeling proponents if they conceptualized the importance of original motivations, interests and structure in their studies, yet, for the most part, they define away these aspects with the concept of primary deviance.

Despite this conceptual problem, labeling analysts rightfully argue the possibility that social reactions push people ✓ into deviant roles. A study by Jewell (1962) indicates that secondary deviance does occur, although not without some important influences prior to labeling. "Bill," as Jewell refers to his subject, was a Navajo Indian, who was hospitalized and diagnosed as schizophrenic without having the usual psychiatric workup. At the initial interview Bill was questioned in Spanish, since he was mistaken for a Mexican. Bill's failure to respond, however, was interpreted as evidence of pathology rather than as a language barrier. Consequently, he was diagnosed schizophrenic. Much of Bill's behavior, Jewell argues, was consistent with traditional Navajo responses to stressful situations. Even the grotesque posture Bill displayed, the waxy flexibility of catatonic schizophrenia, reflected the Navajo's traditional deference to the white man rather than any form of pathology. When interviewed by Jewell, Bill explained his posture as complying to what he thought was

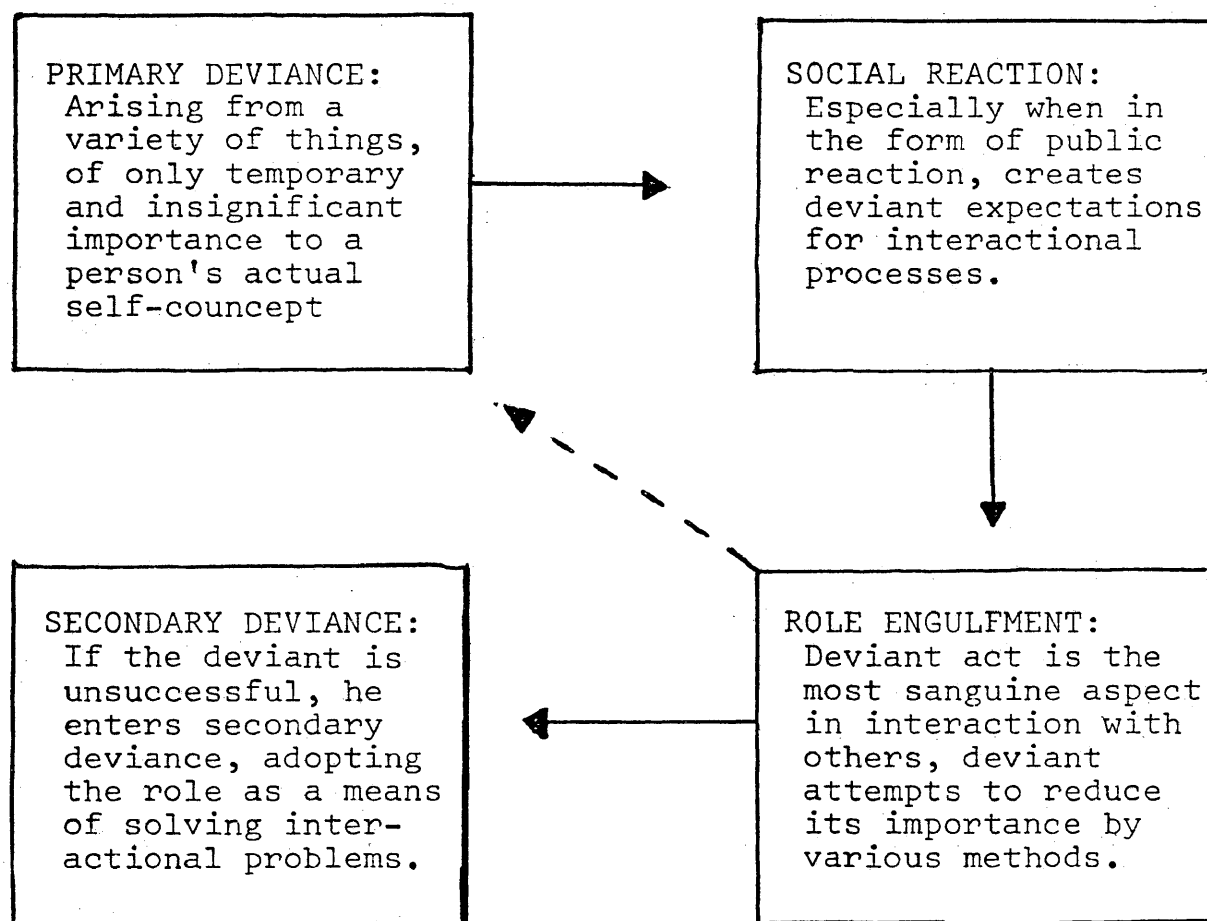
expected of him. In short, Jewell argues that Bill was confused by the hospital setting, that he retreated to the traditional Navajo passivity in the face of threats and that his responses won him a place in one of the hospital's back wards.

A more pure case of secondary deviance is presented by Lemert (1951; 1967; 1972) in his study of adult stuttering. Although there has been much research into the possible physiological and biological causes of stuttering, no satisfactory explanation has been found, which Lemert argues points to the possibility that stuttering is socially caused. Accordingly, Lemert argues that early reactions to children's speech, either by family or peers or even speech therapists, determine whether stuttering persists into later life. In the case of speech therapists, children are often required to talk in front of mirrors or in front of other children in order to demonstrate the abnormal movements of a stutterer's mouth. Despite the therapist's benign intentions, Lemert (1951: 159) argues, these efforts result in instilling "an unequivocal self-definition as one who is different from others." In time, Lemert concludes, the stutterer adopts more fully this self-definition in order to solve identity problems posed by interaction, thus entering into secondary deviance.

This process of becoming a deviant is represented and more fully elaborated by figure 1. People engage in primary deviance for a number of reasons. If no one reacts negatively

to the infractions, they would have little or no effect on people's perceptions of themselves. If one of these people, for one reason or another, is singled out, reacted to negatively, then he is faced with a new situation. If the reaction is intense, especially if it is the reaction of some

Figure 1: Becoming a Secondary Deviant



public official, the person is likely to become engulfed by stereotypic expectations. Keying on some of Becker's and Lemert's ideas, Schur (1971) describes role engulfment as the tendency for deviants to become "caught up" in deviant expectations, to find that the initial infraction has become

a highly salient aspect of how others interact with them. If the deviant can neutralize the reactions, either by seeking support from others or by rationalizing his own behavior, he returns to a primary category (the pathway represented by the dotted arrow). But if the deviant fails to neutralize the reactions of others, he becomes a secondary deviant, succumbing to the expectations of others in order to solve the problems presented by role engulfment.

How much labeling, how many reactions must occur before a primary deviant becomes a secondary deviant? When emphasizing the processual nature of their model, labeling analysts argue that secondary deviance seldom occurs over night. Rather the sequence of interaction involves several instances of deviance and social reactions. Lemert (1951: 77) describes it as follows:

The sequence of interaction leading to secondary deviance is roughly as follows: (1) primary deviation; (2) social penalties; (3) further primary deviation; (4) stronger penalties and rejection; (5) further deviations perhaps with hostilities and resentment beginning to focus upon those doing the penalizing; (6) crisis reached in the tolerance quotient, expressed in formal action by the community stigmatizing the deviant; (7) strengthening of the deviant conduct as a reaction to the stigmatizing and penalties; (8) ultimate acceptance of deviant social status and efforts at adjustment on the basis of the associated role.

Still, while labeling analysts portray a variety of social reactions leading up to secondary deviance, the crisis in tolerance, and the entrance of formal control agents is the crucial point in the labeling process. Once publicly labeled, secondary deviance is only a matter of time.

Taken together, the previous three sections provide an inventory of labeling. The ideas concerning how rules are made, how rules are enforced and how that enforcement leads some to define themselves as secondary deviants, are all components of labeling's most well-known claim: social control causes deviance. In the preface to his essays in Human Deviance, Social Problems, and Social Control, Lemert (1967; 1972) describes this assertion as "a large turn away from older sociology which tended to rest heavily upon the idea that deviance leads to social control." For Lemert, as well as other labeling analysts, previous theories of deviance fail to see the "forest for the trees;" they seek the causes of deviance in individual pathology, in environmental factors and in subcultural values rather than in the processes by which some people are socially differentiated from others. Although previous theorists, such as the criminologist Sutherland (1939: 1), noted the importance of the processes by which people make rules and the processes by which people react to infractions in understanding deviance, they were seldom incorporated into theory. Consequently, labeling, in that it describes the relationship between social control and deviant outcomes, brings the forest into perspective. But at what cost to the trees, at what cost to an understanding of deviant behavior is this accomplished?

CHAPTER II

A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

The usefulness of any criticism depends on two things: (1) agreement about what is being criticized and (2) agreement about the proper grounds for criticism. Judging from the literature, labeling's critics do not agree about either of these matters. Some theorists focus on particular parts of labeling, arguing that it is too phenomenological (Rock, 1974) or not phenomenological enough (Warren and Johnson, 1972). Others are dismayed by labeling's failure to address certain traditional questions, such as the origins of deviance (Taylor, Walton and Young, 1973), variations in rates of deviance across populations (Merton, 1971; Gibbs, 1966), or the relativeness of deviance to certain societies (Merton, 1971; Gibbs, 1966). Still others object to labeling's peculiar ideological undercurrents, seeing it as a scantily disguised welfare ethic (Gouldner, 1968; Liazos, 1972) as well as a jaundiced interpretation of social control (Bordua, 1967; Manning, 1975). Recently, Lemert (1974: 457) accurately described the confusion by characterizing the field as "...under attack from so many different quarters, both for what it is and for what it is not, that a sense of embattlement is inescapable. The diverse, perverse, and tangential nature of

the criticisms makes it difficult to tell friend from foe."

Undoubtedly, much of the confusion stems from different interpretations of labeling. As we have already seen, the approach is sufficiently loose at certain points to suggest a variety of readings. A number of contradictions, however, result from the assorted grounds on which criticism is based, from the differences in opinion about what a good theory or a good approach to deviance should accomplish. For instance, Gibbs (1966; 1972), perhaps the most prescient critic of labeling, consistently objects to the approach's failure to unambiguously distinguish between deviants and nondeviants. Schur (1971), on the other hand, suggests that this looseness is a theoretical strength of labeling rather than a weakness, for it accurately displays the fluidness of the social world. Neither individuals nor acts are immutably deviant, he argues, and any attempt to make such clear-cut conceptual distinctions is misguided. Gibbs's and Schur's differences are not analytic, for both agree that deviance is socially defined, varying across time and space; their differences are in how best to incorporate relativism in a conceptual scheme.

According to labeling theorists, deviance is better understood as a "sensitizing concept" rather than a definitional or operational term. Adopting Blumer's (1969: 140-152) distinction between the two, Schur (1971) argues that previous theories, in that they defined deviance in simplistic either-or terms, obscured the social aspects of a miscreant identity. Acts construed as deviant according to one set of standards may be

acceptable or even demanded by another set. Even when there is agreement on standards, a deviant act may constitute only a small segment of a person's behavior. Consequently, Schur (1971: 15) argues that deviance must always refer "to the set of standards from which (individuals) are said to deviate and must always be expressed in terms of degree, variation and circumstances, rather than in simplistic 'either-or' classifications." This relativeness is best portrayed by a loose, sensitizing conception of deviant behavior, in which social processes and the fluidness of the social order are emphasized.

This position accounts for much of labeling's popularity. The social and relative aspects of deviance that labeling underscores are consistent with several classical traditions, such as symbolic interactionism, conflict analysis and phenomenology (see Schur, 1969; 1971). Moreover, labeling also converges with several popular ideas about the origins of deviance. The implied irreversibility of labeling, of being a "jail bird" or an "ex-con," coincides with several cultural themes-- the good kid who made one mistake and was never allowed to live-it-down. More current images of the deviant are tapped, too. Interviews with topless barmaids or motorcycle gangs (see Douglas, 1970b) portray deviants as nonconformists who are misunderstood by society. All of this gives Schur's argument apparent validity. The popular images, the popular themes and the appearance of being anchored in several important sociological traditions suggest labeling's contribution as an explanatory framework, and the new

areas of interest, the new subjects for research, suggest its value as a heuristic tool.

Certainly, labeling has presented new areas for research, and to a large extent, it has directed sociology and criminology back to questions about the social origins of deviance. In this sense, Schur's characterization of deviance as a "sensitizing concept" is quite right. But there is an important difference between suggestiveness and explanation. The first often requires a certain looseness; the second always requires clarity and distinction, qualities labeling clearly lacks. In an early essay on the general aspects of deviancy theory, Lemert (1948: 27) himself notes the explanatory ambiguity of an interactionist approach.

Interaction is not a theory or explanation at all. It does little more than set down a condition of inquiry, telling us that dynamic analysis must supplement structural analysis, and is best understood as a necessary reaction to the metaphysical explanations of human behavior current among nineteenth century writers. A further reason for rejecting interaction as a theory per se is that it results in a directionless inquiry ending in a morass of dog-in-the-mangerish variables, none of which have priority or provide a formula for prediction.

While labeling does claim the significance of formal reactions as explanatory variables, it fails to clearly define exactly what such variables explain. To say it explains deviance, is to say in their own words that it explains a "sensitizing concept," which is to say very little.

The observations that follow are directed toward labeling's lack of conceptual clarity and empirical usefulness, its blurring of the trees for the sake of the forest. While labeling

theorists suggest the importance of social processes in producing deviant outcomes, they do not specify exactly what those processes are beyond the most general and rhetorical terms. Categories like "overdog" and "underdog" do not imply any understanding of interest groups or the ways in which diverse interests organize into powerful coalitions. Nor does stating that social control causes deviance explain how those outcomes occur. While ideas like labeling, process, social definitions and social interaction are highly suggestive, they are not developed by labeling analysts, at least not in any way that would benefit meaningful inquiry. Consequently, labeling's conceptual ambiguity is often reflected by the bewilderment of sociologists and criminologists to empirically understand its ideas.

The Conceptual Forest

In several articles, Gibbs (1966; 1972) points out the inherent tensions that exist in labeling between a normative and a reactional conception of deviance. When labeling theorists adhere strictly to a reactional conception, their statements are relative in the extreme. In other words, there can be no expectation of consistency in either the incidence of deviant behavior or in the negative reactions of others, since each situation with its unique circumstances determines whether or not an act is deviant. As Gibbs notes, this is a major shift from a traditional sociological and criminological interest in changing rates of deviance. By conceiving deviance

solely in terms of reactions, labeling analysts provide no insight into why different rates of deviance occur in different populations. Even if two populations have the same definition of deviance and react to deviance in the same manner with the same consistency, it is possible that one population may have a higher rate of deviancy than the other.

As a result, labeling theorists have not completely neglected a normative conception, implying it when a reactional definition seems too unconvincing. For instance, Lemert (1951; 1967), in his own distinction between primary and secondary deviance, implies some consensus about what is "potentially" deviant. Again, both Becker's (1963) suggestion of "secret deviance" and Lorber's (1967) description of self-typing denotes some agreement about what is likely to get a person into trouble. With regard to self-typing, if a person anticipates social reaction, defining himself as deviant when no actual reaction occurs, it implies some prior knowledge of what the community considers right and wrong. The very idea of "patterned" social reactions, whether it be in biases toward the lower-classes or in situations that demand responses, suggests normative agreement on the part of at least policemen, judges and other officials. Just as people tend to share some beliefs about what forms of behavior are appropriate, Gibbs and Clark (1965) argue, they share beliefs about what forms of reaction are necessitated by certain forms of misconduct.

In part, labeling's suggestion of normative agreement

results from its failure to explain why and how a label, whether it be official or not, identifies an act as deviant. If two boys steal some money from a grocery store and only one is caught, the one caught by the police obviously faces different consequences than the one who got away. Does that mean that the boy who was caught committed a deviant act and the boy who got away did not? A strict interpretation of labeling says yes-- but the grocery store owner, the boy who got away and even the boy who got caught are likely to think differently. As Gibbs (1966) has pointed out, if the labeling theorists are right, then the solution to crime is well within our reach-- close down the courts, close down the police stations, close down the mental hospitals. If there is no reaction, there is no deviance.

Schur (1971) is correct in arguing that critics have tended to overstate labeling's ambiguities with regard to its treatment of deviant acts and deviant persons. Labeling theorists do not deny the reality of deviance, as it is sometimes suggested. No one really argues that behavior such as rape, homicide, mental illness or robbery would disappear if it was not reacted to by someone. Schur (1971), furthermore, is correct when he argues that labeling theorists are fully aware that acts of deviance, for the most part, accompany social reactions in producing deviant outcomes. Labeling's focus on social reactions is meant to highlight what is socially made of an act; it does not mean that reactions are necessary conditions of deviance. But what Schur, as well as most label-

ing theorists, fails to understand is that by banishing the normative conception of deviance from their approach, they also banish any possibility of understanding the discrepancy between infractions and reactions, which rests at the heart of labeling's appeal. If each situation dictates deviance, each cluster of circumstances dictates the likelihood of reactions, there can be no understanding of why certain acts together are reacted to differently than others. This question remains unanswered by labeling. It lingers like a shadow in their writings, suggesting an explanatory analysis, but it is never permitted to enter as a focus in its own right. By conceiving deviance as entailing reactions, labeling theorists define away the discrepancy between reactions and infractions instead of explaining it.

Setting aside the discrepancy revolving around the deviant act, additional problems are encountered with regard to deviant identities or secondary deviance. Lemert (1967: 18), to recall, contends that "a distinction between primary and secondary deviation is deemed indispensable to a complete understanding of deviation in modern pluralistic society." The former involves behavior, which although deviant, carries little or no consequences for an individual's future behavior; the latter involves behavior that is organized into a deviant role, that an individual is committed to as a way of life. Furthermore, Lemert, like other labeling theorists, contends that the causes of secondary deviance are different from the causes of primary deviance. While the distinction between commitment to behavior

is possible, it is difficult to make clear causal distinctions between the two forms of deviance. Implicit in the approach is an attempt to explain secondary deviance or "hard-core" deviance as resulting from labeling (Taylor, Walton and Young, 1973). But it is not clear how the original causes of deviance give way to the coercive effects of social reactions.

Indeed it is possible to describe deviants who never come to the attention of social control agents and still persistently commit deviant acts. Becker (1963: 41) himself argues that "an unknown, but probably quite large number of people in the United States use marijuana." Obviously, all of these people have not been labeled "marijuana smokers" by officials, school administrators or the police; if they had, it is unlikely that the jails would have any room. Again, Reiss (1970), in a study on premarital sex, notes that few adolescents are ever caught engaging in sexual intercourse. (The Kinsey report recorded only six discoveries out of every one-hundred thousand reported acts of intercourse.) Yet a quite larger number, Reiss suggests, adopt deviant sexual careers. As Akers (1968: 463) pointedly argues, "the label does not create the behavior in the first place. People can and do commit deviant acts because of the particular contingencies and circumstances in their lives, quite apart from or in combination with the labels others apply to them." Commitment to deviance often exists outside of any contact with social control agencies.

Admittedly, labeling's emphasis on processes provides a

partial solution to distinguishing the causes of primary from secondary deviance. To the extent that "degrees of deviance" are identified, it might be argued that continued deviance after social reactions requires more commitment on the part of miscreants. Thus the marijuana smoker who gets caught is more committed to a deviant identity than someone who smokes marijuana but has never been labeled as such. Nevertheless, prior conditions, prior "degrees of deviance" would still be important factors in explaining the effects of social reactions. If the labeling approach was consistent about a processual explanation of misconduct, it would have to talk about "degrees" of primary and secondary deviance, which would render the original distinction useless.

Rather than forfeit the distinction, labeling theorists usually describe a more truncated version of the "process" by which people become career miscreants. For the most part, they emphasize the stigmatizing, compelling impact of official reactions, obscuring the influence of initial factors in causing secondary deviance. In this fashion, they locate the fate and very development of deviants in the reactions of social control agents (Bordua, 1967). This exaggeration leaves the impression that individuals are drifters one day and career deviants the next. Akers (1968: 46) accurately describes this truncated labeling process.

One sometimes gets the impression from reading this literature that people go about minding their own business, and then-- "wham"-- bad society comes along and slaps them with a stigmatized label. Forced into the role of deviant the individual has no choice but

to be deviant. This is an exaggeration of course, but such an image can be gained easily from an over-emphasis on the impact of labeling.

Such an impression also suggests an odd interpretation of modernity by Lemert and other labeling theorists. By portraying secondary deviance as resulting solely from labeling, they attribute to the reactions of social control agents the forces of primitive taboos.

The "penetrating," "debunking" quality of labeling that has won it so much popular acclaim, rests on this misleading causal distinction between secondary and primary deviance. Primary deviants are supposedly like anyone else, engaging in some deviance, but not to "excess." They cannot be blamed for their misbehavior, for as Lemert (1967: 51) argues, "while some fortunate individuals by insightful endowment or by virtue of the stabilized nature of their situations can foresee more distant social consequences of their actions and behave accordingly, not so most people." Secondary deviants, in that they are recruited from this blameless body of people, are thus the unfortunate ones, the unlucky ones who did not get away. For instance, one implication of Scheff's (1966) study is that people who are not "really" mentally ill get categorized as such because of the eccentricity of official procedures. While this may sometimes be the case, Scheff never provides a means of distinguishing between those who are "really" mentally ill and those who are not. Consequently, in many labeling studies it is hard to distinguish between what is "penetrating" and mere conceptualization.

As with deviant acts, there is some discrepancy between what labeling theorists argue and what they imply. At times they do portray deviance in a processual manner. In these instances, their own studies often disprove that secondary deviance results solely from labeling. For instance, in the Outsiders, Becker (1963) describes the events in which a person becomes a "marijuana smoker." Ironically, it is the lack of social reaction that Becker (1963: 70-71) finds as influencing a person's involvement in a deviant career.

(Were you making it much at first?) No, not too much. Like I said, I was a little afraid of it. But it was finally about 1948 that I really began to make it strong. (What were you afraid of?) Well, I was afraid that I would get too high and not be able to 'op', you dig, I mean I was afraid I would get too high, and pass out completely, or do stupid things. I didn't want to get too wiggged. (How did you ever get over that?) Well, it's just one of those things, man. One night I turned on and I just suddenly felt real great, you know, I was really swinging with it. From then on I have just been able to smoke as much as I want without getting into any trouble about it. I can always control it.

From the passage it is obvious the respondent was aware of the consequences of being too "wiggged." And from Becker's own implications the act is deviant, since he describes it as basically disapproved of and illegal. But it is not social reaction but the lack of it that influenced further deviance. Becker's respondent, when he found he could handle the drug in public places without being discovered, "really began to make it strong."

Undoubtedly, labeling theorists do not believe that there is no normative agreement in modern society or that public

labeling is the only cause of secondary deviance. For the most part, many of the critical arguments presented here have been based on exaggerations of the labeling position. But labeling theorists, insofar as they fail to consider normative agreement, fail to describe the influence of initial causes and fail to clearly explain the circumstances in which labeling leads to miscreant careers, invite these exaggerations. Although most of the difficulties could be worked out, it would be at the cost of the approach's causal distinctions and its popular acclaim as a "debunking" perspective. The processual model would have to be more clearly specified, in terms of what kind of reactions, by whom, to what kind of deviance, in what kind of situations, before labeling's claims about the impact of social reactions could be fully assessed. In short, the forest would have to be put in proper perspective to the trees.

The Empirical Forest

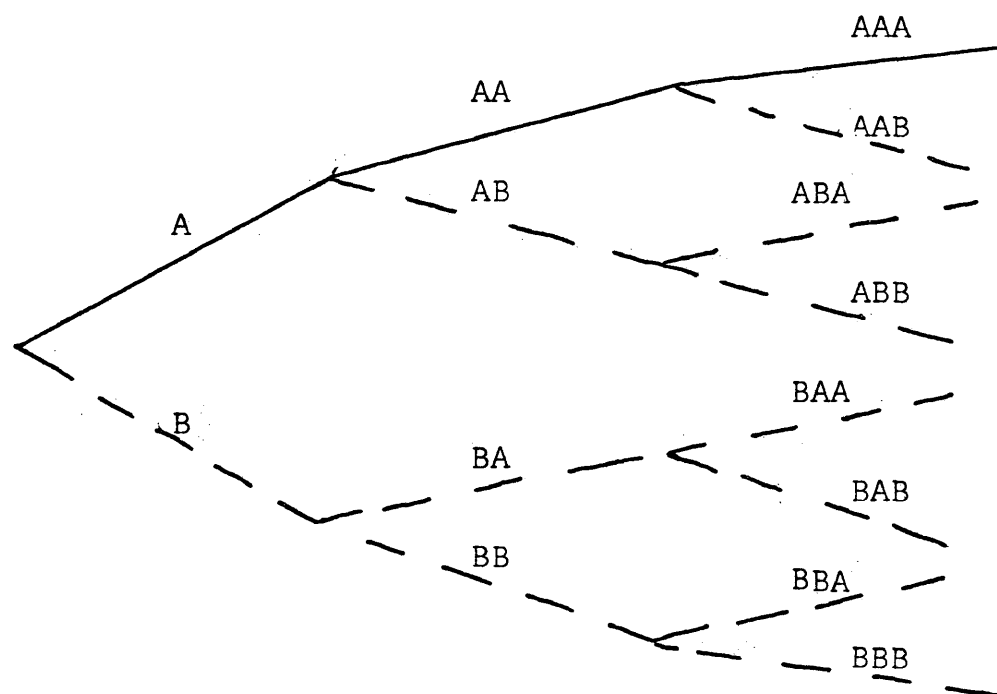
As expected, the general looseness and ambiguity of labeling has directly affected the quality and type of research that usually appears in the literature. The problems are clear. Schur (1971), for instance, describes labeling as concentrating on "degrees of deviantness" that result from someone's efforts to "do something about" illicit behavior. While labeling theorists are in some agreement that "doing something about" behavior means official reactions, how much reaction equals how many "degrees of deviantness?" Traffic

violations are something that most communities feel a need to do something about, yet is the reaction toward a speeder equal to the reaction toward a bank robber or an environmental infraction? Which is more deviant? While a rough continuum is conceivable, one with fairly large categories equating certain kinds and frequencies of reactions to specific degrees of deviance, labeling theorists have never developed one.

To a certain extent, the problem rests in different research expectations. While previous theories of deviance have been designed to accomodate quantitative techniques, labeling is directed more toward qualitative methods. Labeling analysis concentrates on matters that are difficult, if not impossible, to quantify: the development of a deviant identity, the elaboration of deviant careers and roles, the interactional process between deviants and nondeviants. Even with regard to the causes of individual deviance, the labeling approach emphasizes processual contingencies that are too elaborate for quantification. This point has been made by Cohen (1966: 43), who suggests that the interactional process leading to a deviant act is best portrayed as a "tree." (see figure 2) The completed pathway-- A, AA, AAA-- represented by a solid line is the course of action, according to Cohen, that leads to a deviant outcome. The other pathways, represented with broken lines, are the other courses that action could take. As Cohen argues, pathways are not predictable from initial states or acts alone; prediction is contingent on the situa-

tion following each move. Using an interactionist perspective, then, each pathway is an important possibility and each junction represents an important decision-making process.

Figure 2: Interaction Process and Deviant Outcomes



Within the labeling framework, the interactional process leading to a deviant identity is just as difficult to quantitatively verify. Reconsider point AAA as secondary deviance, a deviant role and not just a deviant act. Moreover, reconsider each junction of lines to be a point in time at which A or B is socially sanctioned, receiving an official social reaction. The pathway A--AA--AAA is the most pure example of an individual's movement into secondary deviance. Provid-

ing some referent of behavior and self-concept could be derived, a movement into secondary deviance could be quantitatively verified by measuring the effects of sanctioning. Now consider the other pathway, particularly the pathway B--BB--BBB. Using the same referents as before, or any other referents for that matter, B's movement cannot be said to disprove the labeling position, for there is no reason to believe that additional reactions, if the graph were extended, would not move B more in the direction of secondary deviance. Labeling provides no time limitations. As Tittle (1975) recently argues, according to the labeling framework, the presumed effects can be considered an extension of the labeling process itself. The lack of time boundaries, then, makes labeling difficult to prove and almost impossible to disprove, a respondent's death being the only real boundary.

Consequently, most of the evidence for labeling has been taken from qualitative research, yet there are some real problems in interpreting these studies. As a rule, the evidence is a barrage of quotes which supposedly document the effects of labeling. The following passage from Goffman's (1963: 16) Stigma is an example.

Whenever I fell, out swarmed the women in droves, clucking and fretting like a bunch of bereft mother hens. It was kind of them, and in retrospect, I appreciate their solicitude, but at the time I resented and was greatly embarrassed by their inference. For they assumed that no routine hazard of skating-- no stick or stone-- upset my flying wheels. It was a foregone conclusion that I fell because I was a poor helpless cripple. Not one of them shouted with outrage, "That dangerous wild bronco threw her!"-- which, God forgive, he did technically. It was like a horrible ghostly visitation of my roller-skating

days. All the good people lamenting in chorus, "That poor, poor girl fell off!"

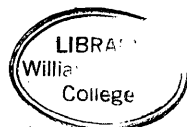
It is obvious that the girl dreads the condescending reactions ✓ of others to her handicap. There is no reason, however, to infer from the passage that such reactions have compelled her to accept a social role as a cripple. No changes in behavior are indicated by the passage. Indeed, the passage can only prove that cripples sometimes receive stereotyped reactions and that they do not like it.

Even when qualitative research does indicate behavioral changes, it is sometimes hard to tell whether the changes represent secondary deviance or not. For instance, Scott (1969), developing some of Goffman's ideas, describes five ways in which the blind manage stigmatization. The first, the "true believer," concurs both behaviorally and subjectively with the stereotypes presented by sighted people. Other blind persons, however, manage to insulate part of their self image from the assaults made by normals; these people conform behaviorally but define themselves subjectively as different from other blind persons. A third adaptation involves deliberately assuming a facade of compliance in order to ease interactional problems that are caused by stereotypes. Still others adopt the facade for profit. Blind beggars, who literally exact a price for their compliance, Scott places in this category. Finally, some blind persons actively resist the stereotypes. Which of these five adaptations, according to labeling, is secondary deviance? The first type clearly is, but the remaining four are not so easily described as examples of secondary

deviance. Of course, labeling theorists could argue, as Scott largely does, that the five adaptations are "degrees of career deviance." Still, Scott's descriptions portray some blind persons as having more control over their situations than originally described by Lemert.

Quantitative research also presents some interpretive problems. Recidivism, for example, is often assumed to be the most likely measure of secondary deviance, yet meaningful rates of reoccurring criminality are hard to obtain. As Tittle (1975) argues, rearrest is a poor indicator, since known delinquents and ex-convicts are more likely to be arrested independent of actual criminal behavior. Even if conviction rates are used, they may represent something entirely different from career deviance. These rates include parole violations of an uncriminal type, such as unmarried cohabitation or leaving a certain area without permission. Even when conviction indicates further deviance, it is questionable whether those rates represent secondary deviance. Does conviction for a gambling offense provide evidence of career deviance for someone initially convicted of armed robbery? Again, this is a problem of unspecified "degrees of deviance."

Aware of these problems, some researchers suggest measuring changes in subjective states as a test of labeling. "objective behavioral measures," Meade (1974: 88) argues, "either in the form of official records or self-report responses, lack the sensitivity required for valid testing of the labeling process." Unfortunately, there are problems in interpreting



subjective measures as well. In part, the problem is the same as that with qualitative studies using personal reflections: changes in behavior or in self-concept cannot be inferred simply from subjective moods. While it could be argued that permanent changes in subjective states would measure the impact of labeling, such an experiment would require time series data, which most quantitative studies fail to obtain. A study by Gibbs (1974) demonstrates clearly the need for time series data. While he found delinquents to have low feelings of self worth prior to court dispositions, their subjective mood was comparable with nondelinquents after the judge had made his decision. Accordingly, if studies do not obtain time series data, not even the failure of deviants to record feelings of stigma can be used as proof that labeling does not occur. While many researchers have documented a lack of stigmatization among mental patients and delinquents (see Foster, Dinitz and Reckless, 1972; O'Connor, 1970; Kirk, 1974; Freeman and Simmons, 1961), their findings can only be interpreted as inconclusive.

Perhaps the most interesting efforts to quantitatively measure labeling are the studies of deterrence. Recently, several theorists (see Thorsell and Klemke, 1972; Tittle, 1975) have noted the similarity between labeling and the much older deterrence perspective. Both are interested in how and why certain groups respond to particular behavior, and both are interested in the effects of those responses (Tittle, 1975). The major difference, of course, is the prediction of the

effects of sanctioning, the deterrence model suggesting that people are repelled from deviance by official reactions.

Chambliss (1966), for instance, found parking violations to decrease as punishment became more certain and severe. Similarly, in a study of shoplifting, Cameron (1964) found nonprofessional "snitches" to refrain from stealing after they were apprehended for the first time, being caught and compelled to admit they were "thieves" or "criminals" proved too discordant with their self images as housewives and good citizens. Other studies of deterrence, especially those controlling for certainty and severity of punishment, have documented similar findings (see Schwartz, 1969; Waldo and Chirico, 1972; Tittle and Rowe, 1974). While these studies do not disprove labeling, they do suggest that the effects of official reactions are more complex than labeling theorists usually imply.

Besides the effects of social reactions, some of labeling's other claims present empirical problems for research. In particular, the studies investigating the application of labels by official control agents, especially when taken together, are difficult to interpret. In two critiques of Scheff's (1966) study, Gove (1970a; 1970b) argues that behavioral factors, other than those implied by stereotypes, are crucial in determining who is admitted into mental hospitals. He lists several studies (see Mendal and Rapport, 1969; Bittner, 1967b) that report public officials process only those whose behavior has become too serious, too troublesome to the community. The evidence, according to Gove, is that the vast majority of

persons admitted to mental hospitals do have some "real disturbance." Studies in the area of juvenile delinquency have produced an equal amount of conflicting evidence. In their review of the literature, Thomas and Sieverdes (1975: 416) go so far as to say, "even a superficial review of the relevant literature leaves one with the rather uncomfortable feeling that the only consistent finding of prior research is that there are no consistencies in the determinants of the decision-making process." (see Goldman, 1969; Wilson, 1968; Terry, 1967; Pawlak, 1973; Arnold, 1971)

Several reasons for these inconsistencies have been suggested. Bordua (1967) argues that some discrepancy can be accounted for by different levels involved in processing deviants. The policeman on his beat, the intake officer making decisions and the judge in his courtroom all face different situations with different interests. Thomas and Cage (1975) suggest another explanation: inconsistencies result from the different ways researchers operationalize labeling's concepts. Since labeling theorists never specify the "degrees of reaction" they have in mind, different measures are quite likely. But this inconsistency makes it almost impossible to relate the findings of one study to another. In other words, are stereotypes in probation referrals equivalent to stereotypes in commitment decisions, or is selectiveness in the juveniles picked up by police the same as selectiveness in those that are adjudicated? Still another explanation is that differences in social control agencies greatly influences the manner in

which labels are applied. Gove (1970a; 1970b) suggests that some of Scheff's claims are likely to occur in older mental institutions. With regard to juvenile delinquency, Wilson (1968) argues that stereotypes are more likely in the arrests of traditional police departments than in professional ones.

Empirically, the labeling approach is somewhat of a nightmare. Whether using qualitative or quantitative techniques, the approach fails to specify what measures are appropriate or even what boundaries are proper on the time it takes for a "conversion." As Lemert (1951: 74) originally described it, movement into secondary deviance may be gradual or "self-definitions or self-realizations (may) be the result of sudden perceptions." While there have been some quantitative studies suggesting deviant outcomes from labeling (see Ageton and Elliot, 1974; Williams and Gold, 1972), the difficulty of operationalizing measures makes it hard to access their importance. Most of the suggestive studies have been qualitative, yet with few exceptions they have also been unsystematic, making their finding inconclusive. Davis (1972: 457-458) tersely describes this aspect of labeling research as suffering from a "methodological inhibition in which conceptual impoverishment is facilitated by an absorption with general imagery, with unsystematic, elusive, and suggestive empirical presentations, rather than definitive tests of an interaction framework." The same could be said of labeling's research into the application of labels. Qualitative research, such as Cicourel's (1968) or Piliavin's and Briar's (1964), suggest

the workings of official stereotypes, yet more systematic quantitative efforts reveal a much more complex picture, influenced by levels of organization and kinds of social reactions. In both instances, labeling fails to specify its key concepts enough to clear up the empirical confusion.

What can be said of labeling? Certainly it brought the forest, brought an emphasis on social processes, into its approach. But emphasizing what is socially made of an act or person and providing the framework for understanding these things are two different matters. The one involves rhetoric, the other conceptual depth. Labeling, for the most part, seems more rhetorical than lucid. Rather than develop some of the issues it raised about earlier theories, like the difference between normative and reactional conceptions of deviance, it defined the issue away. Rather than develop the circumstances under which people might become secondary deviants or attempt to explain why some people never become secondary deviants, labeling theorists defined the exceptions away. Labeling brought in the forest, but it obscured the trees. Undoubtedly, the idea of secondary deviance, the differential selection and application of labels to deviants, and the issues of normative and reactional discrepancy can all be clarified, developed and tested. But in order to do so some of labeling's more cherished claims will have to be forfeited, and a fresh look will have to be taken at the forest once again.

CHAPTER III

SOME NOTES ON DEVIANCE IN MODERN SOCIETIES

Pointing out labeling's conceptual confusion is not the same as pointing out its conceptual uselessness. While clarity is the prize of science, it is not the only goal. On occasion more can be learned from an obscure approach and the reasons for its obscurity than from the most precisely stated theories. Loose ends sometimes provide a means by which to unravel the most complicated ideas or a means by which to at least distinguish some of an idea's major strands. Labeling, with its focus on what is socially made of an act, provides such an occasion.

Despite some eighty years of research, sociologists and criminologists are still puzzled about what precisely is deviant behavior. Although theorists traditionally define deviance as a normative transgression, many rightfully argue that this conception deceptively implies a clear distinction between deviant acts and conforming ones. For instance, some years ago, Simmons (1969) conducted a study in which he asked 180 people to indicate what behavior they considered to be deviant. His respondents listed over one thousand examples of miscreant behavior, ranging from wearing a beard and "going straight" to homosexuality and murder. Simmon's research

clearly demonstrates that almost any act is deviant in the eyes of someone, but in whose eyes are sociologists to view deviant behavior?

Even if it is argued, as many sociologists do, that deviance is the transgression of major rules, of widespread cultural standards, a normative definition is still misleadingly straightforward. For one thing, many theorists question whether any broad cultural norms can be identified in modern societies, or whether they exist only within subcultures and smaller collectivities. Even with regard to codified norms or the law, people disagree significantly about when a law applies or whether it should be applied at all. Then too, some sociologists argue that norms are best visualized as flexible rules and elastic standards, applying to only certain situations, at certain times and to certain people. Even a moment's reflection suggests a great many examples that occur in modern societies. If the actions of people do not always match the community standards to which they give verbal allegiance, are all normative infractions to be considered deviant behavior?

In recent years, labeling theorists have unraveled some major strands of deviance. Their emphasis on the social definition of situations, on the manner in which people negotiate or fail to negotiate the moral meanings of their actions, highlights the flexibility of norms in modern communities. In this sense, labeling theorists (Erikson, 1966; Douglas, 1970a) have described the study of deviance as the analysis of the construc-

tion and reaffirmation of moral meanings in everyday life. As an aspect of moral negotiation in modern societies, labeling highlights the role social reactions, varying both in intensity and form, play in arbitrating definitions of deviance. By including less aberrant forms of deviance, such as the mentally ill, the handicapped and the blind, labeling analysts portray the different forms reactions take in modern communities, and concomitantly the different consequences reactions create in defining situations. But the final arbitrator of deviance for labeling is the official social control mechanism. In this sense, labeling theorists describe social control as the mechanism by which modern communities deal with moral ambiguity: it labels certain forms of behavior as unacceptable; it interprets the point at which "something must be done;" it provides a class of 'outsiders' as referents for less official decision-making. With these strands, labeling attempts to weave an inherently modern conception of deviant behavior.

Some of the reasons why labeling fails to elaborate these insights, fails to follow through with these strands, have already been shown. For the most part, the reasons presented in the previous section represent labeling's unique failures, unique conceptual and empirical problems. There is at least one other reason, however, and this it shares with many theories of deviance: it fails to distinguish social types of deviance. Although Schur (1971) and others describe deviance as a "sensitizing concept," encompassing "degrees" of social disapproval, they never suggest a manner in which these "degrees"

might be seen as types. Rather they leave the discomforting impression of building a "thermometer of deviance," by which each degree of deviance can be seen to correspond to a degree of reaction, and the social boiling point represents the entrance of official control agents. It is an odd impression for an approach that rejects a great deal of quantitative research because it presumably neglects to understand the subjective meanings attached to forms of deviant behavior.

While there are a great many types used in both sociology and criminology (see Clinard and Quinney, 1973), few are developed in a manner consistent with labeling's concern for the social meanings of deviant behavior. A majority of constructs are empirical typologies, developed by correlating different behavioral, legal and social variables in order to identify property space. Still other typologies are developed around the social contexts in which deviance occurs (Lindesmith and Dunham, 1941; Gibbons, 1965) or the behavioral systems in which crime occurs (Clinard and Quinney, 1973). A few attempts at conceptual grouping have been applied to inmate cultures (Irwin and Cressey, 1964; Schrag, 1966). Perhaps the typology most consistent with labeling's focus is one developed by Cavan (1962), in which principal consideration is given to public reaction and the criminal's reaction to the public. Cavan's analysis of interaction between criminals and the public produced seven types of deviant behavior, ranging from criminal contraculture to minor overconformity to ideological contraculture. Although Cavan's typology, as well as some of the

others, provide some insights into the different social dimensions of deviance, it is not developed to distinguish social meanings attached to deviant behavior.

In the pages that follow, four ideal types of deviance will be constructed. Keeping with labeling's focus, the types will be developed using kinds of reactions, consequences of reactions and the social meanings appropriate to each. A quick review of the literature suggests agreement about four distinct areas of research, each with distinct social definitions: (1) respectable, (2) involuntary, (3) aberrant and (4) dissident deviance. While there is general agreement that these areas can be distinguished, their conversion into ideal types and the manner in which they then should be used is likely to be more controversial. Some years ago, Weber (1949: 49-112) described ideal types as the conceptual strategy of the social sciences; today few sociologists consciously use the technique, considering it too impressionistic and empirically rootless (Sjoberg and Nett, 1968). Consequently, a brief explanation of Weber's contention and the current misunderstanding about ideal types is in order before turning to the development of the constructs.

The Logic of Ideal Types

Some current misunderstanding about ideal types stem from Weber's own presentation of the technique. In a series of important essays about methodology in the social sciences, Weber (1949: 93) makes several clear statements about what is

not an ideal type: they cannot be defined by "genus proximum" or "differentia specifica;" they are not hypotheses to be tested or categories under which concrete examples can be subsumed. In other words, ideal types are not averages or natural classifications of social variables, and thus they cannot be empirically verified. But when it comes to describing precisely what is an ideal type, Weber is considerably less clear, relying on metaphors to make his point.

An ideal type is formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytic construct. It cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality. It is a utopia.

Unfortunately, this passage provides little additional understanding of what is an ideal type, since metaphors are hard to pin down. Consequently, interpretations of Weber's presentation have tended to rest on his negative statements. But as any logician will argue, negative definitions provide innumerable opportunities for misinterpretation.

Not surprisingly, several misconceptions about ideal types are held by many sociologists and criminologists. For one, some theorists argue that Weber's constructs are unlikely to be useful, since they are both impressionistic and empirically rootless. After all, how does someone test a utopia? For Weber, of course, you do not, at least not in the sense of a hypothesis to be proven or disproven by empirical facts. But this does not mean that Weber saw ideal types as empirically

rootless or as unverifiable. Judging from Weber's own use of ideal types (see Bendix, 1962), it is possible to use these constructs to describe "adequate causal relations" (Weber, 1949: 80) of historical events, such as India's caste system or the development of American capitalism. In order to accomplish this, Weber argues, ideal types must be based on "meaningful" traits-- that is, they must capture the idea behind certain social acts; he referred to this aspect of ideal types as "general empirical rules" that reflect the way in which men and women are likely to behave in certain situations. Consequently, ideal types can be verified. To the extent that they capture ideas of practical significance, they will have logical significance for social scientists. In this sense, the validity of an ideal type rests not on its empirical replication, but on the extent to which it can guide investigations, suggest adequate causal relationships and lead to more precise understanding of the social world.

Still another misconception revolves around using ideal types as typologies (see Clinard and Quinney, 1973; Wood, 1969). In an essay on methodology, Wood (1969: 239) argues that ideal types must satisfy the requirements of any typology: "(1) Are the assumptions regarding the theoretical links between variables of the type capable of being tested empirically? (2) Does the classification of cases by the typology lead to more convincing demonstrations of their explanation?" A close reading of Weber, however, suggests that ideal types cannot be seen as typologies. For one, typologies are matrices

composed of several different dimensions of equal conceptual importance. By classifying cases into various cells of the matrix, relationships between the original dimensions can be discovered. Ideal types, however, are constructed by accenting a single dimension which in itself suggests an "objectively possible" causal relationship (Weber, 1949: 92). Furthermore, the function of an ideal type is not to provide a scheme for classification, but to provide an ideal construct with which to elaborate significant components of social phenomena. In other words, research faces the task of determining the extent to which these constructs reflect reality-- the extent, for instance, the economic organization of a city can be viewed as a "city-economy" or the domination of a state can be seen as "legal-rational." While both ideal types and typologies are essentially heuristic devices, the logical significance of ideal constructs rests in its ability to elaborate dissimilarities as well as similarities with social phenomena.

The previous paragraph provides the elements with which to make a positive description of ideal types. Ideal types, according to Weber, are neither empirically rootless nor typologies with which to classify social phenomena. Instead they are interpretive schemes based on patterns of behavior that suggest "subjectively meaningful" relations between different aspects of social phenomena. In this manner, ideal types are both heuristic tools and the basis for theoretical construction. On the one hand, they provide an ideal, a limiting construct to compare with and thus survey the significant

components of social relations; on the other hand, by focusing on values and motivations of practical significance, they suggest adequate causal relations between social phenomena. In this fashion, the final judge of any ideal type is its utility in understanding the social world.

To illustrate, Hempel (1963) argues that these aspects of ideal types can accurately be compared to theories of natural sciences, particularly those found in physics. In the natural sciences, Hempel explains, a unique event is accounted for by the prior or concomitant occurrence of several variables in an ideal situation. Galileo's law of gravity, for instance, argues that objects of equal density fall at equal velocities in a vacuum. By this relationship, Galileo suggests several variables important in understanding the effects of gravity. Similarly, with regard to charismatic domination, Weber outlines the variables pertinent to understanding authority based on the "extraordinary qualities of a leader" (see Bendix, 1962: 298-328). When taken together, these variables describe a cause of domination in an ideal situation. In this sense, Weber's explanation of charismatic leadership, like Galileo's law of gravity, provides a point of comparison with which to interpret reality. Accordingly, Weber uses this ideal type to explicate the manner in which Christ's personal charisma was institutionalized in the Catholic Church of the Holy Roman Empire. The value of ideal types, like the value of many laws in physics, rests in heuristic and interpretive potential.

Ideal types are particularly amenable to the issues characteristic of the labeling approach. Both share a focus on definitions of situations, on subjective meanings attached to behavior and both suggest causal relationships revolving around those meanings. Furthermore, ideal types are essentially heuristic devices to be used for conceptual elaboration. In a passage that could serve as an insight for labeling analysts, Weber (1949: 102) makes this quite clear.

In the interest of the concrete demonstration of an ideal type or of an ideal-typical developmental sequence, one seeks to make it clear by the use of concrete illustrative material drawn from empirical-historical reality. The danger in this procedure which in itself is entirely legitimate lies in the fact that historical knowledge appears as a servant of theory instead of the opposite role.

In other words, if labeling theorists had originally portrayed secondary deviance as an ideal construct, they would have compared it to various situations, highlighting the influences that prevent labeling in order to better understand the influences that reinforce deviant careers. Consequently, ideal constructs are a particularly useful device for clearing up some of the conceptual confusion surrounding labeling's treatment of the social meanings of deviance.

Four Ideal Types of Deviance

The following pages will present four ideal types of miscreant behavior: (1) respectable, (2) involuntary, (3) aberrant and (4) dissident deviance. From the previous statements on ideal types, the characteristics of these constructs can be quickly described. Keeping with Weber's design, the attributes,

values and behavior accented by each type will be based on "general empirical rules"-- that is, they will be drawn with an eye for establishing an adequate causal relation. Keeping with labeling's concerns, the subjective meanings attached to each form of deviance will be related to corresponding social reactions and consequences of sanctioning. For these ideal types, verification rests with their heuristic potential and theoretical suggestiveness, rather than with their exact correspondence to actual social phenomena.

Respectable deviance-- Although informed middle-Americans overwhelmingly see the problem of crime in terms of lower-class behavior, they are also quite aware of many other forms of deviance that appear in the newspapers everyday. Watergate, for instance, with its lengthy cast of characters and melodramatic moments, was probably the most publicly broadcasted American scandal since McCarthy and his "witch hunts" during the 1950s. But when it finally came to an end and Nixon resigned, it was not at all clear what Americans considered to be serious. Across the nation prominent newsmen gave public sighs of relief-- the crisis was over, the scandal put to rest, Americans would be saved from the "torments" of Impeachment. And sighs were given by less prominent Americans, too; not because the Presidency had been spared, but because they had been spared from the torments of week after week of televised Impeachment hearings. To a large extent, the seriousness of Nixon's crime was not that he had covered up a burglary, but

that he had covered it up so badly and caused so much trouble.

Mills referred to such events as news of higher immoralities, and he suggested that Americans were quite accustomed and hardly surprised by its announcement. But to a certain extent, this higher immorality is also a lower immorality. Research on embezzlement, employee pilfrage, traffic violations, shoplifting and similar forms of respectable crime suggest that these infractions are quite widespread, exceeding the more conventional forms of deviance in losses of property and life. In a study of traffic violations, for instance, Ross (1960-61) notes that 37,000 people died in auto accidents as compared to 3,850 cases of murder and non-negligent manslaughter in 1958. Similarly, Schur (1969) suggests that the total amount of losses resulting from embezzlement are probably twice as much as the total amount of losses accruing from burglaries, armed robberies, auto thefts and pickpocketing. Both higher and lower immoralities are quite widespread in America, costing people considerably more than conventional forms of crime. Why, then, does it raise so little alarm?

One reason is that these are forms of respectable deviance. In traditional societies, respectable deviance is clearly defined by sacred ceremonies, in which normally miscreant acts are encouraged and legitimized. In modern societies, the social boundaries of respectable deviance are considerably less clear; perhaps disasters are the most clearly legitimate grounds for deviance (Dynes, 1970). Nevertheless, respectable

deviance in modern communities is shaped and promoted by underlying values within American culture (Schur, 1969). For instance, business practises reflect two conflicting poles of values. On the one hand, transactions are supposedly governed by a code of ethics which emphasizes honesty, trust and public accountability; on the other hand, the smart business deal, the quick transaction and the 'con' are also values of the business world. For those who engage in illegal activity, there is a ready made list of justifications and values with which to define their behavior as respectable deviance.

Respectable deviance is misconduct by respectable people occurring in respectable situations or occupations. Such behavior only occassionally provokes strong social reactions, since in many ways it is supported by values that either directly encourage deviance or justify it as a common form of misconduct. This is particularly true with regard to amateur shoplifters who steal as if they were competing against store officials. Accordingly, in these instances, deviance is a positive attribute. He is a "strong" President; she is a clever operator; she is a smart businesswoman. In the eyes of the respectable deviant, and often in the eyes of those who react to him, he is not a criminal; while his actions may be technically against the law, his behavior is not immoral. It is probably for this reason that when respectable deviants are caught and confronted with criminal labels they often discontinue any further misconduct, the label being too incongruous with their personal image (Cameron, 1964).

Involuntary deviance-- Involuntary deviants are seen as not responsible for their behavior. All societies in some form or another recognize this type. In traditional communities, involuntary deviants are likely to be seen as possessed by a demon or some evil spirit. Whichever is the case, the social meaning is the same: "this person cannot be blamed for his behavior." In modern societies, the amount of involuntary deviance is likely to be greater than that characterizing more traditional communities. Yet, this increase results from the redefining of involuntary deviance rather than from an actual increase in its occurrence. Modern communities give rise to specialization, and along with this trend is a rise in deviance specialists.

In recent years, Kittrie (1973) notes, this trend has been particularly evident in America. While criminal law in traditional societies assesses blame, determines degrees of guilt and punishes miscreants accordingly, America has witnessed a subtle departure from these functions in its criminal system. A different legal model has steadily been developing which is described variously as "civil," "therapeutic" or "parens patrie." In this system, according to Kittrie, little or no emphasis is placed on an individual's guilt, rather importance is attached to a person's physical, mental or social shortcomings. When dealing with deviants, society is said to act in a parental role (parens patrie), seeking not to punish but to change, resocialize, treat or cure the miscreant through some appropriate therapy. The consequences for involuntary

deviants are subtly different from those of other miscreants. Under the criminal model, a deviant, say a prostitute, is punished; she is given a fine to pay, a sentence to serve or possibly both. Under the therapeutic model, however, the prostitute is not punished but treated, and the treatment, which may be complete confinement, is not terminated until an expert decides she has been "cured." While the differences may be subtle, they are certainly crucial.

Perhaps the most obvious example of involuntary deviance is mental illness, yet similarities can be found in several other forms of illicit behavior as well. Lorber (1967), for example, suggests that sick roles are convenient labels with which to manage personal problems. In the factory setting, in personal relations and in interactional situations disability is sometimes faked to provide a legitimate reason for escaping obligations. Similarly, in recent years alcoholism has been defined as a disease. Principally through the efforts of Alcoholics Anonymous, Trice and Roman (1970) argue, an "allergy concept" of alcoholism has been gained. According to this view, those who become alcoholics possess a physiological allergy to alcohol, and consequently their addiction is determined long before they ever take their first drink. As Trice and Roman (1970: 540) argue, "the significance of this concept is that it serves to diminish, both in the perceptions of A.A. members and their (family and friends), the alcoholic's responsibility for developing the behavioral disorder."

While the significance of involuntary deviance rests in a disavowal of responsibility and in the corresponding efforts by experts to return the miscreant to a "responsible" state, the consequences vary according to the instances. For example, members of Alcoholics Anonymous actively seek to diminish any interpretation of their behavior as mentally ill. The idea of an allergy is conspicuously medical, and the organization visibly attempts to associate itself with the medical profession (Trice and Roman, 1970). In the case of physical or medical disorders, a person is not blamed; in the case of mental disorders, a person is not trusted. Regardless of the form, however, involuntary miscreants are not blamed for their behavior, and to the extent that they are subjected to therapy, they are reliant on the discretion of those experts who define deviance.

Aberrant deviance-- When most Americans talk about the crime problem, they talk about aberrant deviance. In traditional societies, she is the woman perpetually in the stocks or the man being led slowly up the steps to the public gallows. In modern communities, she is the woman being picked up by the vice squad or the man serving a life sentence in a Federal Penitentiary. They are the murderers, the armed robbers, the rapists, the muggers. Their behavior is feared, and their faces are strikingly lower-class. For the most part, these are the people that middle- and upper-America pay lawyers, judges, policemen, prison guards and prison officials to manage, to protect them from.

As the term aberrant implies, these deviants are seen ✓
as morally inept, at least by conventional society. Their ✓
behavior is against the law, and unlike respectable deviance
it is viewed as wrong. Their deviation from the standards ✓
are seen as culpable and a reflection of their personal
character. When Mead and Durkheim spoke of behavior that
aroused public anger, provoked the taste for revenge and re-
awakened in the community a sense of moral solidarity, they
were describing aberrant deviance. Accordingly, this form ✓
can provoke intense reactions from communities, and, indeed,
popular lore and actual history are full of examples. Dur-
ing the Chicago democratic convention in 1968, the police en-
gaged in what many saw as respectable deviance when they
clubbed and beat demonstrators protesting American involvement
in Viet Nam. Undoubtedly there were a number of reasons for
the police's use of "unusual tactics," such as Daley's conven-
tion floor power tactics, it was in part a community reaction
to perceived aberrant deviance.

Aberrant behavior, like respectable deviance, is generally
seen as guided by personal interests. Unlike respectable
deviants, however, aberrant persons are not as fearful of a
criminal label. Irwin and Cressey (1964) suggest that prison
cultures are influenced by several more general deviant cul-
tures. Two of these, thief and convict cultures, actually con-
tain values regarding behavior during imprisonment. Thieves
or professional criminals, Irwin and Cressey argue, face a
reoccurring problem of imprisonment. Consequently, most are

aware of norms and patterns of behavior which apply to the prison situation, and information on how to manage the prison experience-- how to do time "standing on your head"-- with the least amount of suffering and in the minimum amount of time. Those who Irwin and Cressey describe as convicts also face a reoccurring adjustment to imprisonment. But for these "hard core" prisoners, the majority of which are lower-class, norms and patterns of behavior appropriate to the prison situation are recognizable in America's lower-class values. In both cases, the aberrant deviant is aware of the criminality of his behavior, and he is prepared to manage the sanctions applied to him because of it.

The aberrant deviant, like the respectable deviant, contains both an image of the offender and an image of the offense. Study after study, Clinard and Quinney (1973) argue, portray the aberrant offenses, aberrant victims and aberrant offenders as being part of the poorest and most deteriorated sections of the major cities. The aberrant pursues his behavior for personal interests, and frequently he is aware of norms that suggest the proper means of coping with imprisonment or official reactions. The consequences of reactions are varied, but at times when sanctions are harsh, they are likely to stir anxiety and anger from the aberrant themselves. While aberrants tend to be morally indifferent toward their behavior, neither condemning nor justifying it, they do perceive a sense of justice, a set of informal rules that govern the breaking and enforcing of laws. Since sanctions can vary

in intensity, a sense of injustice sometimes occurs, giving objection not so much to the rules but to the rule enforcers.

Dissident deviance-- Merton (1971) has referred to this form of behavior as nonconforming. In a brief section of his Contemporary Social Problems, Merton argues that there is considerable difference between the courageous highwaymen of seventeenth-century England and the equally courageous nonconformists, like Oliver Cromwell, of that same time. While such a distinction seems obvious, it is one made easy by historical detachment. In the instance of the Chicago riot, there were a great many judgments at the time that made the leaders of the march little more than criminals (or worse yet communists) heading up a sizable band of hoodlums and miscreants. These deviants, especially because they tend toward organized protest, can only be euphemistically called nonconformists. The term dissident is more appropriate.

Aberrant, involuntary and dissident deviance are very closely related forms of miscreant behavior; the distinction between each resting for the most part on whose view is being considered. Dissidents, in that they openly violate community norms, challenging the legitimacy of established values, are often seen by officials as aberrants. At other times, dissidents, especially if they deviate alone, are sometimes defined as involuntary miscreants. In both instances, the effect is the same: community definitions neutralize the appeal to "higher values" or an "ultimate morality." From Solzhenitsyn's portrayal of Soviet political control and the history of the

student movement in the sixties, both methods, aberrant and involuntary counterdefinitions, are viable, modern responses to dissident behavior.

Dissidence is usually not a private form of deviance. The dissident is not trying to make extra dollars by juggling the books; nor is he making a living by stealing from others. The dissident deviates for a new morality or for the restoration of an old social goal. Unlike the involuntary deviant, the dissident accepts responsibility for his actions; unlike the aberrant and respectable deviant, he disavows legitimacy of the social standards, seeking by his actions to either change the law or bring into focus a new standard. For these reasons, the dissident often seeks to be publicly caught, to be given a chance to publicly voice his opinion. Consequently, sanctioning by police, judges and others often leads to increased dissidence, increased attempts to make opinions and views known to those who will listen. The actions of the Viet Nam protestors, such as Abbie Hoffman, for example, were directed toward making actions more visible, particularly after their initial confrontation with authorities.

Dissidence is not easily carried out alone. The ability to make a dissident definition stick depends largely on the legitimacy of others. It is easier for the dissident to convince others that he acts not for personal gain if he does not act alone. In the same way, it is easier for the dissident to avoid an involuntary label if he does not act alone. The ability to organize, to present conflicting views in a group

setting, largely determines the dissident definition. Regardless of organization or group support, however, dissidents are likely to seek out public sanctioning, and increased sanctioning is likely to encourage increased dissidence.

A Brief Application: Juvenile Delinquency

Part of the utility of ideal types rests in their mutual exclusiveness on an analytic level, another part rests in their relationships in actual social phenomena. Weber, for instance, constructed his ideal types of domination in order to analytically accent three dimensions of authority: charisma, traditional and legal-rational. As precise ideal points of view, they demonstrate their value by organizing the diverse aspects of a dimension into logically consistent analytic units. But their most impressive demonstration of value rests in their application to social phenomena. Accordingly, Weber uses each type to reveal the tensions and modified relations inherent in the other forms of domination. In construction, each type represents a single logically possible causal relation; in application, each type provides a point of comparison with which to understand a number of social phenomena, casual relations and thus theoretically possible interpretations. In this sense, Weber rightfully insisted that ideal types be verified according to their heuristic potential rather than according to their exact replication by empirical facts.

Consequently, the four ideal types just presented must be applied in order to suggest their heuristic validity. As

the previous presentation shows, these types do overlap in reality and do suggest relationships between themselves. At one point, the connections between involuntary, aberrant and dissident deviance were outlined, along with some of the circumstances that affect the application of these social definitions. At another point, the relationships between respectable and aberrant deviance, particularly with regard to nonprofessional shoplifters, were touched upon. Additional applications are needed, however, before determining the heuristic potential of these types. In the following paragraphs, a brief application of the types to juvenile delinquency suggests some of this interpretive potential.

The American juvenile justice system reflects an involuntary model of deviance. The official role of court officials, probation officers and welfare agents is to "treat" the delinquent, preventing him from going on to become an aberrant deviant. While culpability and punishment do play a part in the juvenile justice system, they are, at least officially, subordinate to the role of "parens patrie." The Standard Juvenile Court Act, proposed by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency and designed to serve as a voluntary model for various states, exemplifies the therapeutic discretion invested in juvenile justice officials.

The court shall have exclusive original jurisdiction in proceedings: 1. Concerning any child who is alleged to have violated any federal, state or local law or municipal ordinance, regardless of where the violation occurred... 2. Concerning any child...(b) whose environment is

injurious to his own or others' welfare; or
(c) who is beyond the control of his parents or
custodian. (Kittrie, 1973: 117)

While the first clause seeks specificity, the second clause of the Act invests an almost limitless amount of discretion in the juvenile official. An adult must be charged with a criminal act if he is going to be held by the police; but a juvenile may be held because he lives in an "unsuitable" environment or is "beyond" the control of his parents, regardless of whether he is accused of committing any criminal act. As Kittrie (1973: 117) argues, this represents "...the perplexing possibility under the juvenile court system whereby a person can lose his liberty not for something he does but ✓ for something he is."

Delinquents, however, are unlikely to view the juvenile justice system in the same manner. Unlike with mental or physical health, there is no widespread interpretation of delinquency as involuntary, the logical connection being considerably more tenuous. Consequently, while juvenile officials operate according to the expectations of an involuntary system of treatment, delinquents, depending on their behavior and socioeconomic status, are likely to see their deviance as either respectable or aberrant. By most reports, almost every child engages in some form of delinquent activity during his legal status as a juvenile, and for those who are arrested, the differences in expectations suggest some interesting consequences for sanctioning.

Deterrence is one possible effect of sanctioning, especially with respectable delinquents. Like their adult counterparts, respectable delinquents are usually deterred from further deviancy by the application of an aberrant label. Clinard and Quinney (1973), for instance, note that many respectable delinquents, especially those arrested for property offenses or vandalism, express feelings of remorse or penitence. Apprehension, in other words, leads to the delinquent's reevaluation of the meaning of his deviance-- "we didn't think about being caught, we were thinking about having fun;" "It didn't seem like then it would amount to much;" "I didn't think it would cause so much trouble." In these instances, deterrence results from the act of being publicly confronted with a deviant label that is too discordant with a juvenile's self image. Aberrant delinquents, on the other hand, are not as likely to be deterred by sanctioning. Yet there is no reason to believe that they are never deterred from further deviance. Since aberrants engage in more "serious" acts of delinquency, they are likely to generate stern reactions. If these reactions prove "too much," the aberrant will desist from further deviance also.

Encouragement for further delinquency is another possible effect of sanctioning. At this point, the conflict in definitions between delinquents and officials suggests some interesting causal relations. Respectable delinquents, for instance, may be encouraged by the efforts of juvenile justice officials to minimize the impact of apprehension and neutralize the

application of criminal labels. But the respectable delinquent, not seeing himself as blameless, may interpret this discretion as ineptness on the part of juvenile officials. In other words, he may see himself as "conning the system," and thus he may be encouraged to commit further delinquency. Of the two types, aberrant delinquents are the most likely to be encouraged by the sanctioning originating from involuntary systems. If the sanction is too lenient, the aberrant is provided with a relatively "inexpensive" means of demonstrating his courage and toughness, or his cunning and savvy to his peers. Aberrant delinquents, however, are more likely to receive severe sanctions, and if the sanctions are especially severe, he is likely to sense or directly experience inequity in the system (Matza, 1964). In other words, the discretion invested in juvenile officials is likely to be interpreted by aberrants as unfair sanctioning, as being "singled out" for punishment or as being "made an example."

The relations suggested above are objectively possible. Their description, however, is only the first step in using these ideal types. Undoubtedly, the juvenile justice system operates within some combination of aberrant and involuntary models of deviance. An additional step, therefore, would consist of decomposing the system into those parts and situations where an aberrant or an involuntary model are usually applied. Just as the juvenile justice system is more complicated, so too are the attitudes and definitions that delinquents carry about themselves and their actions. What modifications are

likely if an upper-class boy is caught committing an aberrant act? Conversely, what modifications are likely if a lower-class boy is caught committing a respectable act? All of these things suggest additional steps needed to fully understand the utility of the types for the study of juvenile delinquency.

Nevertheless, some of the heuristic potential of these types has been demonstrated. In light of the ideal types, labeling's indiscriminate assertion that stigmatizing reactions cause deviance proves to be greatly oversimplified. With regard to respectable delinquents, it was suggested that sanctioning usually results in deterrence. And when it does not, when sanctioning leads to further delinquency, it is because of the neutralization, not the maximization, of stigmatizing labels. Even with regard to aberrant delinquents, labeling's claims are too simplistic. When further delinquency occurs, it is because of either a sensed injustice or an overly lenient sanction. While the first reason bares some resemblance to Lemert's idea of secondary deviance as a role for "attack," the second reason suggests something different from labeling's central tenets. If the application of the ideal types to the juvenile justice system is any measure of their heuristic validity, these types should prove helpful in clearing up some of labeling's conceptual confusion in other areas of deviance as well.

CONCLUSION

What can be said about the labeling approach? Certainly it focuses attention on the social aspects of deviance, on the importance of social definitions and reactions to a complete understanding of deviance in modern society. Accordingly, labeling's greatest contribution is that it surpasses the research interests of earlier practical pursuits-- such as predicting who will violate parole, who will become delinquent or who in general is more likely to commit deviant acts. In other words, labeling refreshingly redirects research and theory beyond the legitimate but narrow concern with the causes of deviant behavior. By focusing on the moral meanings implied in interaction, by deliberately directing studies toward understanding the significance of social definitions and reactions, labeling breaks the theoretical silence about social influences, a silence that has characterized the study of deviance for too long.

Under the labeling lens, Lemert (1972: 3-25) rightfully points out, the proper understanding of deviance is a critical understanding of the larger society and its relationship to the marginal groups that are singled out by social control as outsiders. In this sense, if the study of deviance is to be intellectually serious, it cannot be restricted to the study

of esoteric and exotic groups-- of topless barmaids and swinging suburbanites, of motorcycle gangs and delinquent street gangs. Rather the study of crime and deviance must concern itself with some of the broader social implications of miscreant behavior. In other words, labeling's concern with the social meanings of deviance, their differential application and their relationship to larger patterns of social order all suggest a refreshing return to some of the basic issues proposed by classical social theorists.

In the preceeding paragraph the phrase "proper understanding" is crucial. For in the final analysis, it is against this standard that labeling must be measured, and it is against this standard that labeling is found clearly wanting. Critical understanding, especially the kind espoused by labeling theorists, requires conceptual depth and precision-- a quality that the approach unfortunately lacks. Rather than develop the issues raised about earlier theories, like the distinction between deviant acts and deviant labels, labeling theorists defined the issues away. Rather than develop the causal interactions between initial and secondary deviance, labeling theorists defined away the exceptions. As the critics of the approach rightfully argue, labeling is excessively loose and prone to vulgarization; its central claims are often contradictory and almost impossible to empirically verify. Although the labeling approach locates a crucial target for research and theory, it fails to provide the means, the conceptual framework that would adequately aim explanatory efforts.

The last section of this paper presented a strategy for understanding some of these conceptual issues, especially those revolving around the influence of social meanings on deviant behavior. The four ideal types-- respectable, involuntary, aberrant and dissident deviance-- outline four distinct social meanings that are associated with deviance and suggest some interesting relationships. Some of these relationships were demonstrated with regard to dissident behavior and juvenile delinquency, but even a cursory reflection on the types suggests several other areas and possible relationships. In order to explain the social issues highlighted by the labeling approach, in order to at least better understand the complexity of those issues, an extensive amount of conceptual exploration and elaboration is needed. An ideal type approach, especially as it was outlined by Weber (1949), is quite amenable to these needs.

Nevertheless, there are some logical objections that might be raised about this approach to labeling's conceptual confusion. Ideal types are not a widely accepted methodological strategy. Even in Weber's own time, their use generated some pointed criticisms. In the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Weber (1958) formulated ideal types for both American protestantism and capitalism, and then used the former to explain the latter's occurrence. Several critics (see Tawney's foreward to the 1958 edition) strongly objected to Weber's "exaggerations" of ethical factors. Today, disapproval is all the more likely, since ideal types are not

directly amenable to empirical research. Weber, to recall, concerned himself with historical trends and their explanations, and considering his topics ideal types were very useful and efficient. On a lower level of abstraction, however, given the need to operationalize concepts, does not an ideal type approach fall victim to the same empirical rootlessness that characterizes labeling? Does not an ideal type simply replace one obtuse construct with yet another?

Perhaps. But perceptual bluntness in this instance would be caused more by the nature of sociology and criminology than by the strategy itself. A case, although a somewhat tendentious one, can be made for the assertion that labeling was originally intended as a heuristic and not an explanatory framework. This is especially true with regard to Lemert's (1951; 1967; 1972) writings. In this sense, the approach's conceptual confusion resulted from the nature of the discipline. Rather than explore the conceptual relations suggested by the approach, sociologists and criminologists pushed it into a neat, unambiguous scientific box-- if A (social reaction) ✓ than B (secondary deviance). In the years surrounding Becker's (1963) Outsiders, most theorists were interested in being associated with labeling's radical tone; in the years surrounding popular scepticism, most theorists are interested in being associated with labeling's "pungent and perceptive" critics. During both periods, few seemed interested in elaborating or salvaging its research targets. Of course, exploration and elaboration tend to demand more patience, more in

depth analysis than the current need to "publish or perish" might allow. This is to say that the approach, the use of ideal types, rests its utility on the sociological concern to penetrate some complex and difficult problems, and this reliance might well be its most wanting characteristic.

In a sense, all of this argues the importance of research into social definitions, into the subjective meanings attached to behavior. As Weber well understood, the practical types expressed by men and women, the values and goals to which they verbally aspire, often provide insightful points of comparison. This is, of course, the classical methodology, the one that guided the intellectual excitement of such diverse theorists as Marx, Durkheim, Tonnies and Weber in their comparison of desired social values with what actually exists. Such a methodology applied to sociology and criminology itself, might suggest a number of interesting relations, interesting disparities between what is desired and what actually occurs. It might suggest what makes a "good" theory of deviance or what makes a "bad" one; and, of course, it might suggest the utility of using ideal types, or any other heuristic framework for that matter, in sociological and criminological inquiry. But then that is another assessment.

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