

Defining Deviance

Sociology

Why deviance is a relation to a rule rather than a property of an act.

Behaviour that a given group treats as breaking its norms. The category depends on the audience, the setting and the period, not on the act alone.

RELATIVE TO
group, place, time

WIDER THAN
crime

- The same act is deviant in one setting, not another.
- Deviance is broader than crime; crime is codified.
- Some deviance is admired, not punished.
- Norms range from folkways to mores to law.
- Who defines the norm is the sociological question.
- Becker: deviance is created by rule-making.

LOOK FOR IT

Shouting is normal at a match, deviant in a library, and a criminal offence in neither.

Educational reference on how sociology classifies behaviour. Nothing here is a statement of any jurisdiction's law.