



# SOCIAL NORMS (1): NORMS AND DEVIANCE

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Introduction to sociology – session 2  
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# Outline

- Introduction to social norms :
  - Definition
  - A non-normative perspective on norms
  - Social norms ≠ legal norms
  - From deviance to socialization : drawing lessons from E.Durkheim and E.Goffman
- Social norms (1): Norms and deviance
  - What is deviance?
    - Defining deviance
    - Sociological questions about deviance
    - What deviance tells us about society
  - Sociological theories about deviance
    - Deviance as a « social fact » : Durkheim and Merton
    - Deviance as a process : Becker and Goffman

# What are social norms?

« Principles or models of behavior specific to a given social group or society. Social norms are in keeping with what is commonly accepted and legitimized by the value system specific to each society or social group »

- ALPE, Y., LAMBERT, J.-R., BEITONE, A., DOLLO, C., et PARAYRE, S. (2007). *Lexique de sociologie*, Paris: Dalloz, p.204.

ABSENCE OF JUDGMENT : A sociologist's perspective on norms is non-normative

Social norms ≠ legal norms

Norms/Deviance/Sanction

Social norms and socialization

## What are social norms?

The power of social norms: back to Durkheim's « social facts » - 2 main characteristics:

- Exteriority
- Constraint/coercive power

## The power of social norms: back to Durkheim's « social facts »

- Exteriority :

“When I perform my duties as a brother, a husband or a citizen and carry out the commitments I have entered into, I fulfil obligations which are defined in law and custom and which are external to myself and my actions. **Even when they conform to my own sentiments and when I feel their reality within me, that reality does not cease to be objective, for it is not I who have prescribed these duties;** I have received them through education. [...] Similarly the believer has discovered from birth, ready fashioned, the beliefs and practices of his religious life; **if they existed before he did, it follows that they exist outside him.** The system of signs that I employ to express my thoughts, the monetary system I use to pay my debts, the credit instruments I utilise in my commercial relationships, the practices I follow in my profession, etc., all function independently of the use I make of them. Considering in turn each member of society, the foregoing remarks can be repeated for each single one of them. Thus there are **ways of acting, thinking and feeling** which possess the remarkable property of **existing outside the consciousness of the individual**”.

E.Durkheim (1895), *The rules of sociological method*, p.50-51.

## The power of social norms: back to Durkheim's « social facts »

- Constraint :

“Not only are these types of behavior and thinking external to the individual, but they are endowed with a compelling and coercive power by virtue of which, whether he wishes it or not, they impose themselves upon him. **Undoubtedly when I conform to them of my own free will, this coercion is not felt or felt hardly at all, since it is unnecessary. None the less it is intrinsically a characteristic of these facts; the proof of this is that it asserts itself as soon as I try to resist.** If I attempt to violate the rules of law they react against me so as to forestall my action, if there is still time. [...] If purely moral rules are at stake, the public conscience restricts any act which infringes them by the surveillance it exercises over the conduct of citizens and by the special punishments it has at its disposal. In other cases the constraint is less violent; nevertheless, it does not cease to exist. If I do not conform to ordinary conventions, if in my mode of dress I pay no heed to what is customary in my country and in my social class, the laughter I provoke, the social distance at which I am kept, produce, even though in a more mitigated form, the same results as any real penalty.../...

E.Durkheim (1895), *The rules of sociological method*, p.51.

## The power of social norms: back to Durkheim's « social facts »

- Constraint :

.../... In other cases, although it may be indirect, constraint is no less effective. I am not forced to speak French with my compatriots, nor to use the legal currency, but it is impossible for me to do otherwise. If I tried to escape the necessity, my attempt would fail miserably. As an industrialist nothing prevents me from working with the processes and methods of the previous century, but if I do I will most certainly ruin myself. Even when in fact I can struggle free from these rules and successfully break them, it is never without being forced to fight against them. Even if in the end they are overcome, they make their constraining power sufficiently felt in the resistance that they afford. There is no innovator, even a fortunate one, whose ventures do not encounter opposition of this kind”.

E.Durkheim (1895), *The rules of sociological method*, p.51-52.

## The power of social norms: back to Durkheim's « social facts »

- Exploring the consequences of the 2 main characteristics of the Durkheimian « social fact » for the sociology of norms and deviance : exteriority and constraint
  - **Exteriority** → how are social norms interiorized/incorporated by individuals?
  - **Constraint**
    - A constraint revealed by the social consequences of deviance → what deviance tells us about social norms
    - How does one become deviant?
    - How does the constraint exert itself on the deviant?



## Social norms, from E.Durkheim to E.Goffman

« It can be assumed that a necessary condition for social life is the sharing of a single set of normative expectations by all participants, the norms being sustained in part because of being **incorporated**. When a **rule is broken** restorative measures will occur; the damaging is terminated and the damage repaired, whether by control agencies or by the culprit himself ».

(E.Goffman, *Stigma*, p.128)

# Drawing lessons from E.Durkheim and E.Goffman on social norms: course outline

## Social norms

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graph TD; A[Social norms] --> B[Social norms (1): Norms/deviance/punishment]; A --> C[Social norms (2): The incorporation and implementation of norms];
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### Social norms (1):

Norms/deviance/punishment

- What is deviance?
- How does one become deviant?
- What does deviance tell us about society?

### Social norms (2):

The incorporation and implementation of norms

- Culture, sub-cultures and socialization
- Who defines and implements social norms?
- How are they incorporated?

# Defining deviance

- Deviance = non compliance or non conformance to a social norm
- Deviant behavior/deviant characteristics (stigma)
- A diversity of scales and degrees
- The definition of behaviors or characteristics as deviant always depends on context
- Examples:
  - Crimes of interpersonal violence (assault, domestic violence, rape)
  - Nonviolent crime (theft, vandalism, organized crime)
  - White-collar and corporate crime
  - Drug use and addiction
  - Drunkenness and alcoholism
  - Suicide
  - Heterosexual deviance (extramarital sex, prostitution, pornography)
  - Homosexuality
  - Physical disabilities
  - Mental disorders
  - Laughing out loud at a funeral
  - Spilling a glass of wine on a white tablecloth at a formal dinner

(Ogien, 1995; Clinard & Meier, 2011)

# Defining deviance

Deviance as a « normal » social phenomenon

- **E.Durkheim** : “Crime is not only observed in most societies of a particular species, but in all societies of all types. There is not one in which criminality does not exist, although it changes in form and the actions which are termed criminal are not everywhere the same. Yet everywhere and always there have been men who have conducted themselves in such a way as to bring down punishment upon their heads. [...] Thus there is no phenomenon which represents more incontrovertibly all the symptoms of normality, since it appears to be closely bound up with the conditions of all collective life” (*The rules of sociological method*, p.98)
- **E.Goffman** : From « uncommon deviations from the ordinary » to « ordinary deviations from the common » (*Stigma*, p.127)

# Sociological questions about deviance

- What is deviance? What makes a behavior/characteristic deviant?
- What does deviance and reactions to deviance tell us about social norms and society?
- What are the causes of deviant behavior?
- What are the consequences of deviance?
- How is deviance dealt with by society?
- Who is in charge of punishing deviance? (moral entrepreneurs)
- How does one become deviant? (deviant careers)
- How do deviant people perceive their deviance?

# What deviance tells us about society

Social norms as revealed by deviance:

“Undoubtedly when I conform to them of my own free will, this coercion is not felt or felt hardly at all, since it is unnecessary. None the less it is intrinsically a characteristic of these facts; the proof of this is that it asserts itself as soon as I try to resist”.

E.Durkheim (1895), *The rules of sociological method*, p.51.

« [...] it would seem that exotic differentness is most useful merely as a means of making one aware of identity assumptions ordinarily so fully satisfied as to escape one's awareness »

E.Goffman, *Stigma*, p.126-127

# What deviance tells us about society

- Deviance as a « social fact » :
  - From suicide to a theory of social order (integration and regulation): Durkheim and Merton
- Deviance as process :
  - From marijuana to a theory of social control; from stigma to stigmatization : the interactionist perspective (Becker, Goffman)

# Emile Durkheim (1858-1917)

A leading role in the institutionalization of sociology in France:

- University chairs in social science and sociology
- Founded the first French sociological journal : *L'Année sociologique* (1898)
- Major books that present and illustrate his conception of sociology as a science of social facts:

1893 *The division of labor in society*

1895 *The rules of sociological method*

1897 *On Suicide*

1912 *The elementary forms of religious life*

→ A Durkheimian tradition (or « school ») in French sociology



## Durkheim, *On Suicide*, 1897

- Suicide as a social fact : the role of statistics
  - The suicide rate as a way to distinguish suicide as a social fact from individual suicide stories
  - Variations in suicide rates according to several social characteristics and facts:
    - Variation in time and accross countries
    - Religion
    - Age
    - Sex
    - Marital and family status
    - Living in urban/rural areas, the size of cities
- From suicide to a theory of social order (integration and regulation)



# Durkheim on suicide

- **Integration** (as opposed to egoism) refers to the way « a social group attracts the individual, appropriates them so to say; this process implies frequent interactions between members of the group, the existence of uniform passions within the group and the pursuit of common goals »
- **Regulation** (as opposed to anomy) is the process that aims at « regulating and harmonizing individual behaviors. This process relies on the existence of a social hierarchy, of passions that are socially adapted for each one according to their position in this hierarchy, and finally it implies that this hierarchy be considered just and legitimate by the individuals that are part of the group »
- The contrary of regulation is **anomy**, when society loses its moral authority over individuals, and individual goals diverge from those prescribed by society.

# Durkheim's typology of suicide

	Integration	Regulation
Excess of	Altruistic suicide (ex. Soldier)	Fatalistic suicide (ex. Slave)
Lack of	Egoistic suicide (ex. Single person)	Anomic suicide (ex. city dwellers)

# Robert K. Merton (1910-2003)

- American sociologist, influenced by Talcott Parsons
- Functionalism
  - The elements of a society form a whole; insistence on the stability and consistence of the social order
  - Each element has a function and is necessary to the functioning of the whole
- Merton promotes a moderate functionalism
- Key concepts : middle-range theory, unintended consequences, self-fulfilling prophecy, reference group and role model
- Sociology of science



## Robert K.Merton (1938) on social structure and anomie

Goal of the analysis: "determining the nonbiological conditions which induce deviations from prescribed patterns of conduct"

→ "certain phases of social structure generate the circumstances in which infringement of social codes constitutes a "normal" response"

- "culture goals" : "culturally defined goals, purposes and interests" → "aspirational references"
- "institutional norms"/"institutionalized means" : The "acceptable modes of achieving these goals"

(Merton, "Social structure and anomie", ASR, 1938, p.672-673)

# Robert K.Merton (1938) on social structure and anomie

5 “modes of adaptation”

	Culture goals	Institutionalized means
I.Conformity	+	+
II.Innovation	+	-
III. Ritualism	-	+
IV. Retreatism	-	-
V. Rebellion	+/-	+/-

+ acceptance

- Elimination

+/- rejection and substitution of new goals and standards

(Merton, “Social structure and anomie”, ASR, 1938, p.676)

# Howard Becker (1928- )

- The Chicago tradition in American sociology
  - First generation : R.Park, H. Blumer, E. Burgess, N. Anderson, G.H. Mead...
  - Second generation (50s-60s) : E. Hughes, H. Becker, E. Goffman, A. Strauss...

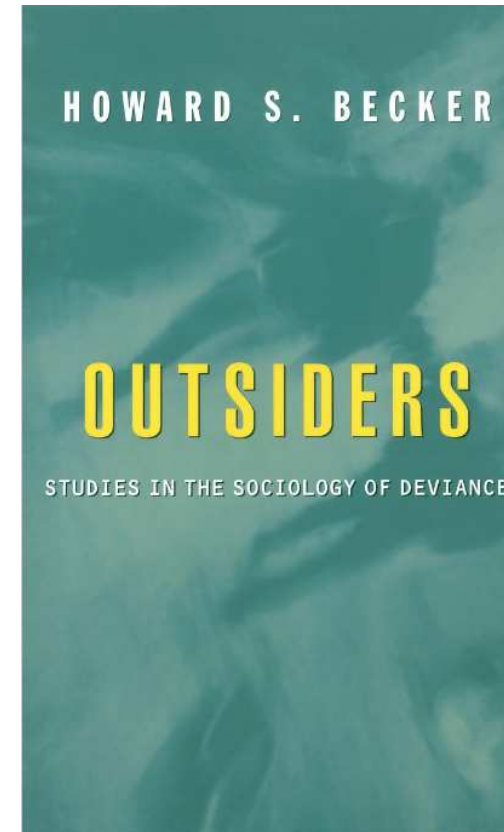


- Howard Becker
  - Examples of fieldwork : the subculture of jazz musicians, the deviant careers of marijuana users
  - Sociology of deviance → labeling theory
  - Sociology of art → « art worlds »

# Deviance as process: H.Becker

« Social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labelling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act the 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 successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label ».

Becker, H. S. (2008 [1963]). *Outsiders. Studies in the sociology of deviance*. New York, Free Press p.9





# Deviance as process: H.Becker

	Obedient behavior	Rule-breaking behavior
Perceived as deviant	Falsely accused	Pure deviant
Not perceived as deviant	Conforming	Secret deviant

- The role of « moral entrepreneurs » in the implementation of social norms and the sanction of deviant behavior

- Deviant careers

Becker, H. S. (2008 [1963]). *Outsiders. Studies in the sociology of deviance*. New York, Free Press

# E. Goffman (1922-1982)

- Chicago school
- Symbolic interactionism :
  - A microsociological perspective : focus on face-to-face interactions
  - The symbolic dimension of social life : framing processes
- Dramaturgy and social action as performance
- Total institutions



1959: *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*

1961: *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*

1963: *Behavior in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings*

1963: *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Prentice-Hall

1967: *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*

1971: *Relations in Public: Microstudies of the Public Order*

1974: *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*

1979: *Gender Advertisements*

# Deviance as process: E. Goffman

- Stigma and social interaction
  - Social interactions are ruled by normative expectations the people in contact have toward one another; we assign each person we meet with a « virtual social identity »
  - Stigma = a negatively perceived discrepancy between this virtual social identity and the person's « actual social identity »  
« an undesired differentness from what we had anticipated »
- From stigma to stigmatization: the reactions of « the normals »
- From stigmatization to stigma management

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## PPT illustrations

Robert K. Merton : « Robert K. Merton », Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert\\_K.\\_Merton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_K._Merton)

Howard Becker : Howard Becker's photo gallery, [http://home.earthlink.net/~hsbecker/photos\\_63rd.html](http://home.earthlink.net/~hsbecker/photos_63rd.html)

Erving Goffman : « Erving Goffman », Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erving\\_Goffman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erving_Goffman)