

Chapter 6

Deviant Behavior

Deviant behaviors, like norms and values, are socially constructed and vary over time and from society to society. While a few acts, like incest and cannibalism, are considered taboos and viewed as deviant (and abhorrent) in almost every society, some behaviors are considered “normal” in some societies but deviant in others. For example, while 50 years ago in the United States it was common to see pregnant women smoking, today an expectant mother who smokes would be labeled deviant. Likewise, today, relieving oneself in public is an accepted practice among men in some societies but seen as a deviant act in others. Finally, while some acts of deviance can damage the fabric of society and threaten its stability, other acts of deviance, if done in opposition to unjust or harmful norms, can promote needed social change.

In “Reducing Hate and Prejudice on Campus: A Sociologist’s Contributions,” Jack Levin describes his work to reduce hate crimes, one of the forms of deviance that threaten the stability of a society. In particular, he provides an overview of his work to curb hate crimes on college campuses. He offers evidence that such acts of deviance happen all too frequently. In Levin’s words, while it is a good thing that campuses are becoming more diverse, “[I]t is not enough for the members of different racial or ethnic groups to have contact with one another. Everything depends on the quality of that contact.” Levin has worked tirelessly to develop and promote programs that foster “deliberately created, structured opportunities for members of society to interact optimally on a cooperative and intimate basis with people who are different.” These types of interactions encourage greater cross-ethnic/racial understanding and cooperation and create environments in which hate crimes are less likely to occur.

David S. Kirk's, "Using Evidence-Based Research to Inform Public Policy: Lessons from Hurricane Katrina," provides another powerful example of how sociological tools can guide social policies and programs. In this piece, Kirk relates how the devastation wrought on New Orleans, Louisiana, by Hurricane Katrina provided the makings of a natural experiment on the impact of residence on recidivism. His findings reveal that prisoners who did not return to their old neighborhoods upon release (because of the damage done to them by Hurricane Katrina) were much less likely to be back in prison one year after their release than those who did return to their old home environments. Kirk is now undertaking further research on this topic in order to "reveal to government stakeholders whether enacting large scale changes in the way criminal justice is practiced may . . . enhance public safety."

In "The Politics of Protest Policing," Alex S. Vitale discusses how certain police tactics against demonstrators can actually promote, rather than prevent, negative incidents during public protests. His work studying police responses to acts of deviance, public protests against the War in Iraq, and the 2004 Republican National Convention in New York City helps elucidate how different police tactics can promote *either* peaceful or violent protests. His work "generated extensive press coverage and is part of a now growing literature on how the police in the United States handle large demonstrations." Most importantly, it can now help law enforcement officials develop and use procedures that lower the likelihood of violence during protests.

In the last Sociologist in Action piece in this chapter, "From *Damaged Goods* to Empowered Patients," Adina Nack shares her story of how her own diagnosis with a cervical human papillomavirus (HPV) infection led her to recognize, firsthand, the stigma associated with women who have sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and the need to address this social issue. It also prompted her to take action by conducting a study of women with genital herpes or HPV that resulted in a number of articles and her book *Damaged Goods* (2008). Being willing to publicize her own HPV status has helped Nack enable others to see the connection between the personal troubles of women with STIs and the societal issues of sexism and the stigmatization of women. She states, "If 'knowledge is power,' then I hope that my research, writing projects, and applied collaborations empower not only STI patients but also increase the chances that those who struggle with stigmatizing illnesses can enjoy healthier and happier lives." Nack argues "that de-stigmatizing STIs, in all social venues, requires us to challenge traditional or sexist norms about sexual relationships and sexual health." In the process, she has given both hope and a voice to women with STIs.

REDUCING HATE AND PREJUDICE ON CAMPUS: A SOCIOLOGIST'S CONTRIBUTIONS

Jack Levin

Northeastern University, Boston, Massachusetts

Jack Levin, PhD, is the Brudnick Professor of Sociology and Criminology at Northeastern University in Boston, where he co-directs its Center on Violence and Conflict. He has authored or coauthored 30 books, including *The Violence of Hate: Confronting Racism, Anti-Semitism, and Other Forms of Bigotry* (3rd ed., 2010, with Jim Nolan). Levin recently received a major award from the American Sociological Association for his efforts to increase the public understanding of sociology. He has spoken to a wide variety of community, academic, and professional groups, including the White House Conference on Hate Crimes, the Department of Justice, the Department of Education, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (with a membership of 59 countries), the National Association of Hostage Negotiators, and the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

Our educational institutions are, for good reason, generally regarded as bastions of enlightenment and respect for diversity. Indeed, students on most campuses are exposed to a broad range of ideas, speakers, faculty members, and fellow students. They are encouraged to express dissenting points of view and to interact with diverse fellow students and faculty members. They might work or study in other countries, or do community service among diverse populations.

Yet our image of the college experience may also underestimate seriously the intergroup hostility and conflict that, on occasion, can come to define relationships on a campus. In a highly competitive environment, where students vie for grades, scholarships, jobs, organizational budgets, and popularity, they may regard one another not as allies but as opponents competing for scarce resources. In one recent survey of 10 campuses, it was determined that more than half of all students personally experienced or witnessed bias incidents—graffiti, verbal insults, physical threats, or physical assaults—targeting individuals because of their group identity (Campus Tolerance Foundation, 2009).

We shouldn't be shocked, then, when we read about hate crimes on a campus being directed against a student or a faculty member based on his or her race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, or disability status. Several examples of campus hate crimes and other acts of bias in just one recent academic year—2010—bring this point home. Swastikas were painted at the University of California, Davis, on the dormitory door of a Jewish student and on several campus buildings. The UC Davis campus center for lesbian and gay students was also vandalized (Rosenhall, 2010). A community college in Ohio “beef[ed] up security and provid[ed] alternative temporary living and sleeping arrangements for its black students after a note threatening to kill them on Feb. 2 appeared on a campus bathroom wall” (Sinclair, 2010). The editorial staff of the independent student paper of Notre Dame, *The Observer*, apologized after publishing a cartoon that implicitly condoned gay bashing (2010). We also know that, since the 9/11 attack on the United States, Jewish, Muslim, and Sikh students on college campuses around the country have been at greater risk for verbal and physical assaults (The Pluralism Project, 2005).

As a sociologist who researches these topics, I have been asked to speak on hate, hate violence, or hate crimes to students or faculty on numerous college campuses (and high schools) both in the United States and abroad. Hopefully, my presentations have inspired an initial reduction in hostility between groups, but there has to be more than a one-shot event to have any longer-term impact.

I always stress the incredible power of coalitions—temporary alliances of students who put aside their differences and come together to work toward the furtherance of their common goals. Special-interest groups on campus—the gay and lesbian alliance, Latino center, international student association, black student union, Vietnamese student alliance, and so on—are usually essential for providing underrepresented students with what they require in order to stay in school but cannot seem to get from the wider campus community. At the same time, however, there should also be curricular and extracurricular opportunities for diverse students to come together to cooperate in harmony and peace—this is the power of coalition building. At many colleges and universities, students from diverse backgrounds have organized rallies against violence, put on food and music festivals, and held speaker series that defend or celebrate *all* of their group memberships collectively.

I have urged schools to put interdependence into their curricular and extracurricular activities. It is not enough for the members of different racial or ethnic groups to have contact with one another. Everything depends on the quality of that contact. Most research into the impact of intergroup contact on prejudice has supported the notion that the good feeling that develops between cooperating friends from different groups actually generalizes in two ways. First, in many cases, it generalizes from the few immediate intimates to

the entire group to which the few intimates belong. Second, individuals who come through contact to reduce their prejudice toward the members of a particular ethnic group seem to be more willing to interact with the members of other ethnic groups generally. In other words, intergroup contact seems to reduce not only negative attitudes and feelings toward the cooperating group, but also the general phenomenon known as *ethnocentrism*, in which an individual believes in the superiority of his or her own ethnic group and holds a generalized hostility toward the members of other ethnic groups.

In the Brudnick Center on Violence and Conflict at Northeastern University, we have developed a number of projects and programs for the purpose of preventing or responding to the presence of hate violence on campus. More than a decade ago, my colleague Will Holton and I teamed up to teach an experimental sociology course (Social Conflict and Community Service) that took teams of undergraduate students out of the traditional classroom to provide service—under optimal circumstances for the reduction of stereotyped thinking—to the local community. Our primary objective was to broaden students' perspectives, to give them an opportunity to interact with people of different races, ethnicities, or religions and to do so in a spirit of cooperation, civility, and goodwill. My colleague and I took pains to provide our students with a positive experience in the community—one that would not inadvertently reinforce their stereotypes and preconceptions. For example, if a student did service in a school, he or she would work in an honors class as well as a lower-track classroom or resource room.

Every week, each student in the course, as a member of a team, performed five hours of community service, and the group met together as a class for two hours to discuss related issues. In addition, students wrote journals summarizing their community service experiences for the week and a more inclusive term paper at the end of the course. Our final class meeting consisted of oral team presentations in which students summarized their community experiences and reflected on how those experiences had changed their own feelings and thinking about diversity.

Because they have grown up shielded from those who are different, many of the students in our course were familiar with people from other racial and cultural groups only as the stereotypes they saw on television or in movies. Their participation in community service learning provided an opportunity to interact cooperatively in a positive context with a wide range of individuals from other groups. Some of our students learned a good deal from being part of a project team whose members were diverse. At the same time, they were made aware of the existence of poverty and homelessness, flaws in the criminal justice system, prejudice and discrimination, and their own mortality. An unexpected advantage of our course for many of the students was that it taught them that they are not at the center

of the universe. As one of our students concluded after spending 10 weeks working with Boston teenagers, "The greatest content of learning in this course was about myself. I was forced to explore my own prejudices and those of others like me." Social Conflict and Community Service has now become a permanent part of the curriculum and is taught annually in the Department of Sociology at Northeastern.

On almost every campus in the United States, it is possible to locate at least a few students who are willing to take responsibility for organizing rallies, demonstrations, festivals, or clubs in which diverse elements on campus are brought together in a spirit of cooperation. In their exceptional zeal, however, such students may feel alone and unappreciated.

At the Brudnick Center, I collaborated with Gordana Rabrenovic and with Steve Wessler's Center for the Prevention of Hate Violence to bring hundreds of such exceptional college students to Boston for the purpose of attending a National Student Symposium where they received awards for their efforts at combating hate and prejudice. Three hundred students representing more than 70 colleges and universities from more than 22 states plus the District of Columbia and the province of Quebec attended symposia in March 1999 and in April 2005. All had been nominated for their good work by the dean of students on their campuses. The symposia were funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice.

The agenda for each symposium included roundtable discussions, skill-building workshops, receptions, and an awards ceremony. Our objective was twofold: first, to recognize and reward college students who work to combat hate and, second, to let such students discover that they are not alone, that they have plenty of company and are appreciated by others.

Through my affiliation with the Brudnick Center, I continue to engage in programs and projects to reduce hate and prejudice. Students who are different (especially gay students) are frequently targeted for bullying in middle and high schools. In November 2009, I testified at the State House of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in favor of a bill requiring all schools in the state to institute effective procedures against bullying. During the same hearing, two mothers of youngsters who had been bullied into committing suicide poignantly urged the legislature to take action. In March 2010, the Massachusetts Senate finally passed a version of the anti-bullying bill and prepared it to be signed into law.

More recently, I was asked to participate in the Teenage Interfaith Diversity Education Conference, to be held over Memorial Day weekend 2010 on our campus in collaboration with the Brudnick Center, but organized and attended by high-school students themselves. My role was to give a keynote presentation in which I addressed the value of diverse students cooperating toward the fulfillment of their shared objectives.

Recognizing the power of intergroup contact to bring diverse segments of the population together in peace and harmony, we simply cannot afford to leave such occasions to chance. Piecemeal efforts to create optimal contact experiences will result in trivial improvements in the overall social climate. Instead, we need more deliberately created, structured opportunities for members of society to interact optimally on a cooperative and intimate basis with people who are different. Hopefully, my own role in the process will make a worthwhile contribution to the overall effort.

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USING EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH TO INFORM PUBLIC POLICY: LESSONS FROM HURRICANE KATRINA

David S. Kirk

University of Texas at Austin

David S. Kirk, PhD, is associate professor in the Department of Sociology and a faculty research associate of the Population Research Center at The University of Texas at Austin. His research on Hurricane Katrina and prisoner reentry was awarded the James F. Short Jr. Distinguished Article Award from the Crime, Law, and Deviance Section of the American Sociological Association. Kirk's recent research has appeared in *American Journal of Sociology*, *American Sociological Review*, and *Criminology*.

I have spent much of my professional career using the tools of sociology to examine the myriad consequences of criminal justice policies in the United States. The United States is one of the most punitive countries in the world, with an official incarceration rate that tops all countries reporting an official rate (Walmsley, 2009). One in every 100 adults in the United States is in prison or jail at this very moment, with more than 1.5 million individuals serving time in state and federal prisons and another 760,000 in local jails (Glaze, 2010; Pew Center on the States, 2008). The repercussions of mass incarceration become apparent when considering the fact that 730,000 prisoners are released each year from U.S. prisons (West, Sabol, & Greenman, 2010). Research suggests that up to half of releasees have been in prison before. In fact, by some estimates, two-thirds of returning prisoners are rearrested within three years of prison release, and more than half are reincarcerated (Langan & Levin, 2002). These staggering figures should not be separated from the social context in which prisoners return. Research reveals that ex-prisoners tend to be geographically concentrated in a relatively small number of neighborhoods within metropolitan areas, often returning to the very same neighborhoods where they got into trouble with the law in the past.

If criminal behavior is influenced by the types of neighborhoods we live in, then it would seem counterproductive to prisoner reintegration for ex-offenders to return to the same neighborhoods where they got into trouble with the law in the past. Upon exiting prison, ex-offenders who return to home neighborhoods often fall into the same habits and routines that got them into trouble in the first place. Too often, the only thing that has changed for many ex-prisoners is the ever-growing stigma of their criminal past. Thus, it is not surprising that large proportions of ex-prisoners end up back in prison within just three years.

These well known facts about crime and justice in the United States serve as the backdrop of my research on prisoner reentry, the process of leaving prison and returning to the community. I have attempted to use the tools of sociology—including a natural experiment, geographic information systems, a substantive knowledge of life-course criminology, and an awareness of the importance of social context—to examine the efficacy of alternative ways of reducing crime and recidivism (i.e., the relapse into some form of criminal behavior).

A typical experiment is a study in which an intervention is intentionally introduced in order to observe the effect of the intervention on an outcome (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). An example from medical research is giving a treatment group an experimental drug and a control group a placebo, and then observing differences in subsequent health across groups. A natural experiment is based on a naturally occurring (i.e., unintentional)

event that induces some kind of intervention. The tragedy of Hurricane Katrina, which devastated the gulf coasts of Louisiana and Mississippi in August 2005, afforded me a unique opportunity to examine what would happen if ex-prisoners did not return home to their old neighborhoods upon exiting prison as they typically do. Katrina provided a natural experiment for investigating the importance of residential change because it forced some people to move who otherwise would not have.

The idea for the study arose from exploring the devastation to New Orleans from Hurricane Katrina. I have extended family in New Orleans, many of whom evacuated to the Washington, DC, area where I was living at the time. My family returned to New Orleans around Thanksgiving of 2005, roughly three months after the hurricane struck. My first visit to New Orleans to see my family following Hurricane Katrina was in December 2005. During that visit and subsequent visits, out of both morbid curiosity and my interest in exploring social contexts, I would drive around the city. The devastation to entire neighborhoods was shocking. I could not even fathom the extent of disruption to the lives of tens of thousands of individuals.

While no demographic group was unaffected by Hurricane Katrina, it occurred to me while I drove around the streets of New Orleans that some of those neighborhoods hardest hit by property destruction were the very neighborhoods where ex-prisoners typically resided upon release from prison. My ability to make this insight was surely made possible by my training in urban sociology, and the understanding that social problems tend to tightly cluster in geographic space. Many individuals coming out of prison soon after Katrina would not be able to return to their old neighborhoods. Yet, moving is not necessarily a bad thing. A well-known argument from the literature on life-course criminology is that changes in behavior are often induced by “turning points” that provide a fresh start in an individual’s life. A turning point can be an opportunity or life experience that redirects a previous behavioral pattern, such as criminal offending. Typical examples of turning points include marriage, birth of a child, and enlistment in the military. It occurred to me while driving around New Orleans that residential change may also be a turning point in ex-offenders’ lives. Residential change may serve as a catalyst for sustained behavioral change by providing an opportunity for individuals to separate from the former contexts, situations, and criminal associates that facilitated their prior criminal behavior.

To investigate these ideas, I knew that I needed to collect data on the residential patterns of prisoners released from Louisiana prisons both before and after Hurricane Katrina (for comparative purposes) as well as data on recidivism among these individuals. In this kind of research,

data can be tough to come by. In my case, I was fortunate to connect with justice administrators who provided access to their data. They, too, were interested in understanding the repercussions of residential change on rates of criminal behavior.

One of the first steps in my research process was to use geographic information systems to map the street addresses where ex-prisoners resided immediately upon exiting prison. In comparing the maps for the pre-Katrina and post-Katrina time periods, both visually and statistically, I noticed that there had been a substantial shift in the patterns of residence following Hurricane Katrina. As I had hypothesized, prisoners exiting incarceration following Hurricane Katrina were much less likely to reside in the New Orleans' neighborhoods where they resided prior to incarceration.

With evidence on changing patterns of residence, I next used statistical analyses to assess the repercussions of residential change. I found that an estimated 26% of male offenders who returned to the same parish (parish is the equivalent of a county) where they resided prior to incarceration were reincarcerated within one year of release from prison (Kirk, 2009). By comparison, only 11% of male offenders who moved to a new parish faced reincarceration one year after leaving prison. Based on these results, I conclude that separating individuals from their former residential environment reduces their likelihood of recidivism. Moving allows an individual to separate from the peers and routine activities that contributed to his or her criminal behavior in the past.

While results from this natural experiment provide some initial evidence on the importance of residential change, in the interest of good science I have been engaged in several research projects over the past few years designed to validate these initial findings. My results have provided further support for my initial conclusions (Kirk, 2011, 2012).

Armed with mounting evidence about the dire consequences if ex-prisoners return home to former neighborhoods, I have recently spent time engaging in what the National Institute of Justice calls *translational criminology*. The idea is to translate evidence-based scientific discoveries into policy and practice. For this purpose, I have shared my discoveries with a variety of audiences, including the National Institute of Justice, the Prisoner Reentry Institute, the Stockholm Criminology Symposium, and the Austin/Travis County Reentry Roundtable. More informally, I have communicated my ideas and results through ad-hoc meetings to criminal justice practitioners and policy makers in several states.

One critical component of disseminating information about scientific discoveries is to communicate the implications of the research. For instance, in most states, prisoners released on parole are legally required to return to their county of last residence, thus contributing to a return to

old neighborhoods. Thus, parole policies, while designed to enhance public safety, may in fact undermine it. Given evidence that residential change fosters the path to behavioral change, one implication of my research that I have discussed with key stakeholders is that removing the institutional barriers to residential change may enhance public safety in aggregate by lowering recidivism. Additionally, providing incentives for individuals to move to new neighborhoods, such as public housing vouchers, may also benefit public safety.

The subject of crime is a politically charged issue that stokes much passion in the general public. Indeed, in a punitive country like the United States, it is not politically popular to be soft on crime or terrorism. In reality, despite good science demonstrating the efficacy of policy changes, modifications to existing social policies are not usually immediate. It is challenging to break the status quo. Nevertheless, I have been engaged in discussions with several state prison systems to implement demonstration projects with several hundred parolees to test whether allowing and incentivizing residential moves among ex-prisoners will reduce their likelihood of recidivism. These demonstration projects will show whether my findings from a unique natural experiment (i.e., Katrina) are applicable to a real-world policy environment. These demonstration projects will also reveal to government stakeholders whether enacting large scale changes in the way criminal justice is practiced may in fact enhance public safety. Thus, in my experience, redesigning public policies is part of a methodical process that involves good science, communication of results, and further testing in a real-world environment. The outcome of this process is fundamental to creating a just society.

I was drawn to the discipline of sociology out of curiosity and a sense of social justice. I was curious how the social world operates, and chose a profession in which I could answer for myself and others foundational questions, such as “What is the purpose of society?” but also more practical questions like, “Is there a better way to undertake parole in the United States?” To me, if we can understand the causes and consequences of social problems, then maybe we can do something about eliminating them. Sociology has provided me the tools necessary for discovering effective solutions to society’s problems.

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THE POLITICS OF PROTEST POLICING

Alex S. Vitale

Brooklyn College, Brooklyn, New York

Alex S. Vitale is associate professor of sociology at Brooklyn College. From 1990 to 1993, he was a staff analyst at the San Francisco Coalition on Homelessness before moving to New York City, where he received his PhD from the City University of New York Graduate Center. He authored *City of Disorder: How the Quality of Life Campaign Transformed New York Politics* (2009) and has published in *Urban Affairs*, *Current Sociology*, *Policing and Society*, *Mobilization*, and *Criminology and Public Policy*. He is regularly quoted as an expert on protest policing in the media including the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Atlantic Magazine*, *Salon*, *The Financial Times*, and NPR's *Talk of the Nation*. In 2010, he had a Fulbright scholarship to study police innovation in response to economic and political liberalization in Seoul, South Korea.

On February 15, 2003, millions of people around the world took part in the largest coordinated day of action on record to oppose a possible war in Iraq. Protests with close to or over one million people took place in London, Madrid, Rome, Berlin, and Paris. Hundreds of others occurred in cities in the United States and around the world, including New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and San Francisco.¹ The demonstration in New York had between 100,000 and 400,000 participants.² I was one of those participants, who got up early that morning and went with some friends to one of the staging areas where people gathered before marching in groups to the rally area on First Avenue along Manhattan's Upper East Side.

As with many demonstrators, I was concerned about how the police would handle such a large demonstration, especially since they had refused to grant permits for people to march, creating the possibility of confrontations as people attempted to get to the rally area. Unfortunately, that's exactly what happened. As people approached First Avenue, they were denied access and forced to walk many blocks north to enter the rally area from constantly changing entry points. As crowds grew larger, many people moved into the surrounding streets while trying to make their way north. This in turn prompted the police to blockade streets and sidewalks in an effort to disperse what they viewed as spontaneous unpermitted marches. The result was a series of confrontations with the police in which nonviolent demonstrators were attacked with police horses, pepper spray, and baton-wielding police officers. After it was all over, hundreds had been arrested, many were injured, and I and thousands of other people had been denied our right to demonstrate against the impending war in Iraq.

Most of my sociological research up to this point had been about urban politics and the role of the police in handling the homeless, "squeegee men (and women)," and other disorderly individuals and groups. I was interested in studying the rise of "broken windows" policing, which is based on the idea that the police need to put more effort into controlling disorderly behavior, such as aggressive panhandling, sleeping in parks, and drinking in public. By doing so, the hope is that it would create a sense that streets were safer and less inviting to more serious types of crime. According to this philosophy of policing, the police needed to take a strong zero-tolerance stand against even minor violations of the law in order to prevent more serious law-breaking from occurring.

¹Steffan Walgrave and Joris Verhulst, "Government Stance and Internal Diversity of Protest: A Comparative Study of Protest Against the War in Iraq in Eight Countries" (*Social Forces*, 87, 2009), 1355–1387.

²Chris Dunn et al., *Arresting Protest: A Special Report of the New York Civil Liberties Union* (New York Civil Liberties Union, 2003).

As I was watching the policing of the protest in front of me, it occurred to me that I was seeing the broken windows philosophy being applied to the policing of demonstrations. The police were taking extreme measures against essentially peaceful crowds because of very minor violations of the law. It seemed clear to me that the police were taking this zero-tolerance approach because they believed that the crowd might engage in more serious forms of illegal or disruptive behavior if they didn't aggressively control their movements and actions from the beginning.

When I got home, I decided to write up a short description of this insight. I explained a little bit about the broken windows theory of policing and then showed how it was being used to police the demonstration and how that had, in turn, led to the major confrontations that occurred that day. I then sent it around to friends, colleagues, and people I knew who had attended the demonstration. I also posted it on a couple of listservs and Web sites related to the demonstration. Within a few days, Donna Lieberman, the executive director of the New York office of the American Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU), called me. She said she had received several copies of my analysis by e-mail and had also been handed several printed-out copies from staff in her office. In addition, they had received dozens of e-mails, phone calls, and letters from their members complaining about how the police had treated them that day. As a result, she had decided that the NYCLU should write a report about what happened, and she invited me to work with them on it.

As we gathered information for the report, we solicited others to write about their experiences at the demonstration. In all, we reviewed 335 written accounts, along with press coverage and videotapes. In the end, we produced a report that detailed negotiations between the police and protest organizers before the event and what happened at the demonstration, and compared it to other protests around the world. We found that the police used high levels of force against nonviolent demonstrators, whose only violation of the law was that of walking in the street without a permit. We also discovered that in no other large city in the world had police responded to Iraq war protestors with aggressive and restrictive techniques like those of the New York Police Department (NYPD). We distributed thousands of copies of the report and received extensive press coverage. We also learned that the NYPD distributed copies of the report to many of its commanding officers.

Just before our report came out, New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg announced that the city would be hosting the 2004 Republican National Convention (RNC), which meant that the city could expect to see numerous large demonstrations and the possibility of a repeat of some of the problems we had documented. In response, the NYCLU asked me to join them in pursuing three strategies to try to prevent this.

First, the NYCLU undertook a lawsuit against the police in federal court, asking that some of the restrictive measures the NYPD used to

control demonstrators be declared unconstitutional. During the course of the federal lawsuit, I was asked to testify about the nature of some of the police tactics used and their effect on demonstrators. In the end, the court ruled that the police had to change the way they used barricades to pen in crowds and restrict access to legal demonstration areas.

Second, the NYCLU went to the city council to ask them to put pressure on the mayor and the NYPD to respect the rights of demonstrators. I prepared and delivered written testimony to city council committees about the problems I saw with how the police handled the February 15 demonstration, about the problems I anticipated might arise during the RNC, and about how to correct them. This overall effort generated additional media coverage and resulted in the passage of a resolution by the city council calling on the NYPD to respect the constitutional right of people to demonstrate at the RNC.

Finally, in the weeks leading up to the RNC, I worked with the NYCLU to begin training volunteers to systematically monitor the policing of all the demonstrations during the convention. This was the first large-scale project of this type. It combined the legal issues involved in the first amendment's protection of the right to assemble with sociological insights about the way the police and crowds operate. My role involved developing and implementing the training curriculum and supervising monitors in the field. In the end, I and the NYCLU staff trained over 150 people who were assigned to teams of two to four monitors to observe over 40 demonstrations across the city in a seven-day period.

During the RNC, over 1,800 people were arrested on a variety of minor charges. Some people were held for days in makeshift holding pens in a former bus depot without access to lawyers or a judge. We found that many of these people had been arrested "preemptively" by the police, meaning that they had not actually committed any illegal acts at the time of arrest. Instead, the police arrested them because they thought these people *might* be preparing to engage in illegal civil disobedience types of activity. Our documentation, along with that of others, resulted in many charges being immediately dismissed by the district attorney. In the end, over 90% of cases resulted in dropped charges or acquittals.

Fortunately, we did not see the police use the same levels of force against RNC demonstrators that we saw at the 2003 antiwar protest, and many of the demonstrations happened without incident. This suggested to me that there were two different approaches at work during the RNC. The first was a restrictive but mostly nonviolent command-and-control style, similar in many ways to what happened in 2003. Two differences from 2003, however, were that the size of crowds was not as large and more police were assigned, allowing them to micromanage demonstrations without having to fall back on the use of force. This change in approach may have been a result of the

findings in our 2003 report. The second approach was a much more repressive “Miami model,” which relied on preemptive arrests, long detentions, special weaponry, and surveillance of demonstrators. Our final report, entitled “Rights and Wrongs at the RNC,” highlighted these two different approaches and raised serious concerns about the decision to arrest so many people who had not committed a crime and the treatment they received while in custody.

This report generated extensive press coverage and is part of a now growing literature on how the police in the United States handle large demonstrations, a field that barely existed when I wrote my first analysis in February 2003. According to Donna Lieberman of the NYCLU, this process of collaboration “has shown that criminologists have something to teach lawyers about the first amendment” (personal communication, October 26, 2004). For me personally, it has opened up new intellectual opportunities and given me a greater appreciation of the potential for action research. Since writing these reports, I’ve been invited to join an international collaboration studying large protests in the United States and Europe, which will allow us to perform much more sophisticated cross-national comparisons of protest policing than I was able to in 2003. Overall, I’ve come to think of myself as more of a “public sociologist,” whose primary audience isn’t limited to students in the classroom or the readers of professional journals, but includes policy decision makers and even the general public. In the same way, I try to train my students to think not just as social scientists, but as members of an informed public who have a responsibility to use knowledge to create a better, more just society.

FROM DAMAGED GOODS TO EMPOWERED PATIENTS

Adina Nack

California Lutheran University, Thousand Oaks

Adina Nack, PhD, has been active in sexual health education and research since 1994. Author of the book *Damaged Goods? Women Living With Incurable Sexually Transmitted Diseases* (2008), Nack has won awards for her research, teaching, activism, and public policy work. Currently she is a professor of sociology at California Lutheran University where she also serves as director of the Center for Equality and Justice. Nack lives in Ventura County with her daughter and her husband, José Marichal, to whom she is indebted for his support in working to publicly destigmatize sexually transmitted infections. Visit her online at www.adinanack.com.

As a 20-year-old, being diagnosed with a cervical human papilloma-virus (HPV) infection did not, at first, seem like a positive “turning-point moment” (Strauss, 1959) in my life. I had no idea that my illness experiences would inspire me to pursue a sexual health education career and ultimately become the foundation for my first sociological study. Back then, I thought that this virus heralded the end of my sex life and maybe marked the end of my fertility. Perhaps most jarring was that this illness made it hard to see myself as a “good girl” . . . someone who could someday become a “good” wife and a “good” mother.

Shuffling out of the procedure room after receiving cryosurgery³ from my gynecologist, I felt like *damaged goods*—not just physically, but psychologically and socially. Like most Americans, I had been socialized to believe that women who contracted sexually transmitted infections (STIs) were sluts: dirty, promiscuous, irresponsible, stupid sluts. Depressed and considering a lifetime of celibacy, I continued my undergraduate education and found myself gravitating toward women’s studies and sociology courses.

Feminists often say, “The personal *is* political,”⁴ which pairs nicely with C. Wright Mills’ (1959) assertion that the *sociological imagination* allows us to view our “personal troubles” within social contexts to reframe them as “public issues.” Thanks to my supportive parents and their class privilege—as a family who could afford the best medical treatments—I could put my HPV concerns behind me before beginning graduate school, but my sociological concerns about sexual health policies and practices lingered.

As a PhD student, I volunteered as a sexual health peer educator and eventually directed my university’s sexual health education program. Presenting on STIs/HIV to audiences—from junior high students to college students—I met others who were STI-infected and not finding the emotional support they needed. After trying to start a support group (to which only one woman showed up), I realized there was something *sociological* going on: Support groups for other stigmatizing conditions were flourishing—from HIV-positive groups to 12-step programs for a variety of addictions. I conducted a survey and found that most female patients feared disclosing their STI diagnosis, even to other similarly infected women in a confidential setting.⁵

³The medical application of liquid nitrogen to freeze/kill HPV-infected cells.

⁴This statement is often traced back to Carol Hanisch’s essay, “The Personal Is Political,” originally published in the Redstockings collection *Feminist Revolution* (New York, NY: Random House, 1979), 204–205.

⁵See pp. 98–100 in my 2000 article, “Damaged Goods: Women Managing the Stigma of STDs” (*Deviant Behavior*, 21: 95–121); also pp. 17–19 and Appendix B in my book *Damaged Goods? Women Living With Incurable Sexually Transmitted Diseases* (Temple University, 2008) for more about how this survey informed my research design.

I've always liked the idea of being a public sociologist: translating research-based findings that have applied value to nonacademic audiences who can use the new knowledge. So, for my dissertation, I identified a real-world problem I thought could benefit from evidence-based and theory-driven research. To get to the social-psychological "heart of the matter," I utilized symbolic interactionism and feminist theories to analyze in-depth interview data. I drew on feminist scholarship about gender norms of sexual behaviors and used symbolic interactionism as a lens through which to focus on how individuals intersubjectively formed meanings about STIs during social interactions with medical practitioners and with significant others.

I interviewed adults with medical diagnoses of genital herpes and/or HPV (human papillomavirus) infections. Trained as an ethnographic researcher, I found that one-on-one, in-depth, semi-structured interviews allowed me to provide participants with confidentiality when sharing sensitive illness narratives. But I'm not sure that all of the methodological training in the world could have allowed me to connect with my participants—to gain their trust and create rapport—if my own HPV infection had not provided me with complete membership status in this setting.

I initially focused on writing up my findings to present at academic conferences, with the goal of publishing in academic journals. Most academic journals have relatively small audiences of readers, so I was grateful when my first and second articles were reprinted in undergraduate readers for courses like introduction to sociology, deviance, and sexuality. I began to receive e-mails from students who identified with my findings. For example, Anne,⁶ a senior at the University of Florida, e-mailed me the following:

I have just gone through the most emotional/traumatic three years of my life and the title of your article ["Damaged Goods: Women Managing the Stigma of STDs"] is exactly what I have gone through. . . . I am really thankful for the work that you are doing in this field.

She and others told me that they felt like I understood what they'd been going through and wanted to know more about my findings.

A six-stage process of "sexual-self transformation" emerged from my analysis. The first five stages represented a series of problems caused by myths, misinformation, harmful interactions (with medical professionals

⁶Pseudonyms are used throughout this piece to protect the confidentiality of those who have written to me.

and significant others), and treatments (that were not always effective, often painful, and sometimes quite expensive). The final destination, the sixth stage of *reintegration*, represented an elusive but important goal—a new sexual self that was healthier and happier as a result of balancing risk-awareness with desires for intimacy.

Feedback like Anne’s inspired me to write up the study as a book that would be accessible to the typical undergraduate student. With this goal, I saw my book⁷ as a form of advocacy. Those living with STIs have recommended it to each other on sexual health discussion forums (e.g., the American Social Health Association⁸) and have reviewed it on STI-specific Web sites. One HPV blogger wrote, “I was expecting *Damaged Goods* to be something ‘over my head,’” and then went on to say she had found the book to be “a new and enlightening reading, compelling.” Nonacademic readers got it—sociological research was helping them understand the social-psychological impacts of being diagnosed with medically incurable (though treatable), highly stigmatizing diseases.

By applying feminist theories, I could explain why female STI patients suffered more than their male counterparts. In my articles and book, I argue that destigmatizing STIs requires us to challenge traditional and sexist norms about sexual relationships and sexual health. College students have given me feedback that they understand my sociological explanations of STIs as “personal troubles” and were also inspired to think about STI stigma as a “public issue”:

I was amazed at how insightful and helpful this book is to not only someone living with HPV or HSV, but also to all of those people who they encounter and are possibly affected by it (significant others, doctors, parents, friends, etc.). . . . The stigma that goes along with this situation is wrong, hurtful, and unfair. Nack’s efforts to destigmatize this problem are impressive and encouraging and her words really have something for everyone to benefit from. The jokes need to stop. The ignorant comments need to stop. The stigma needs to stop.⁹

Sociological training helped me to see, name, and examine the dangers of mixing morality with medicine—these messages were starting to resonate among undergraduate and graduate students.

⁷Adina Nack, *Damaged Goods? Women Living With Incurable Sexually Transmitted Diseases* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2008).

⁸<http://www.ashastd.org/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=4&t=7017>

⁹http://www.amazon.com/review/RYSNFBWBUDT1U/ref=cm_cr_rdp_perm

In order to get the word out beyond college classrooms, I had to turn my research into sound bites that could be used by journalists. Translating findings for mainstream media was key to becoming a public sociologist. Writing for nonacademic blogs and participating in a magazine writers' workshop helped me to develop these skills, and I sought out opportunities to be featured as a sexual health expert—on TV and radio, and in newspapers and magazines that were reaching local, national, and international audiences. I'm a grassroots activist who believes in the power of interactions. I had to be willing and able to make my research—and my self—accessible to a range of nonacademic audiences.

I publicly disclosed my own STI status in the methods sections of my first academic article because it seemed methodologically important for readers to have a sense of my potential biases. And, for the book, I included my own STI autoethnography as an appendix. TV producers, radio hosts, and reporters were drawn to my research, in part because I was willing to talk openly and my sexual partner was (1) uninfected and (2) willing to talk about our sex life on TV.¹⁰ We've been willing to be "poster children" for HPV because we understand that personal narratives can entice viewers and readers into making sociological explorations of sensitive and controversial topics.

As a medical sociologist, I've worked to promote the individual-level and public health benefits of destigmatizing STIs. Research collaborations and service-learning projects with local organizations—like the HIV/AIDS Coalition of Ventura County, CA, and Planned Parenthood of Santa Barbara, Ventura, and San Luis Obispo Counties, Inc.—have given me opportunities to work with practitioners to improve sexual health care policies and practices and to advocate for comprehensive sex education.

Embracing a public sociology perspective motivated me to both produce and disseminate knowledge about sexual and reproductive health. I will keep working toward the goal of destigmatizing STIs because it represents not only the ideologically correct position but the position that we must embrace to improve individual-level and public health. If "knowledge is power," then I hope that my research, writing projects, and applied collaborations empower STI patients as well as increase the chances that those who struggle with stigmatizing illnesses can enjoy healthier and happier lives.

¹⁰First interviewed for a 1999 MTV episode of *Sex in the 90s* and more recently in a fall 2008 episode of the CBS daytime talk show *The Doctors*. Clip available on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=su7Hcdt3Irs>.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Jack Levin points out in his Sociologist in Action piece that "in one recent survey of 10 campuses, it was determined that more than half of all students personally experienced or witnessed bias incidents." Are you surprised by this finding? Why or why not?
2. What does Levin mean when he says, "It is not enough for the members of different racial or ethnic groups to have contact with one another. Everything depends on the quality of that contact"? Are there opportunities for high-quality interracial/ethnic contact on your campus? Why or why not? What can you do to help create more such opportunities?
3. How did David Kirk's sociological background enable him to recognize the makings of an excellent (though clearly angering) natural experiment while he was driving around New Orleans in December of 2005? Have you been in a circumstance where you think your sociological eye would have helped you to identify a natural experiment? If so, explain. If not, do you think you would have been able to use your sociological eye in the way that Kirk did when he made his observations?
4. According to Kirk, why is it "challenging to break the status quo," in terms of how our criminal justice system operates? If you were an elected official who had some influence over policies related to Kirk's work on recidivism, would you advocate for programs that would enable or encourage prisoners to move away from their home neighborhoods when they are released from prison? Why or why not? What might be the advantages and/or the disadvantages to your political career from your decision?
5. Have you ever participated in a protest against a norm you considered immoral? Why or why not? How do you think such protesters should be treated by law enforcement personnel? Why?
6. According to Vitale, how can the broken windows approach to dealing with protestors lead to major confrontations between protestors and police? Why is it to the benefit of both police and protestors to make Vitale's findings widely known and to make use of them?
7. When you were reading Adina Nack's piece, how did you react when you learned that she is living with an STI? What does this tell you, if anything, about your own socially constructed stigmas around STIs?
8. If you were living with an STI, would you have the courage that Adina Nack has had to be public about it and to speak out to educate others? Why or why not? What would be the danger of not speaking out?

9. How do Nack's and Kirk's pieces illustrate that it is difficult to "break the status quo"? What role do sociologists have in challenging social constructions and helping to create new understandings about stigmatized and under-represented groups? How have Nack and Kirk each done so?
10. How do Levin's and Vitale's pieces show how different forms of social interaction can help promote *or* alleviate violent deviant behavior? Before you read their essays, had you realized that people's behavior could be so dramatically influenced by their social environment? Why or why not?

RESOURCES

The following Web sites will help you to further explore the topics discussed in this chapter:

Crime and Social Deviance	http://www.sociosite.net/topics/right.php#CRIMI
Deviance Flash Cards	http://media.pfeiffer.edu/lridener/dss/crimev.html
Deviance Links	http://media.pfeiffer.edu/lridener/dss/crimev.html
Slideshare Deviance	http://www.slideshare.net/rcragun/deviance-2996170
Sociological Theories to Explain Deviance	http://ww2.valdosta.edu/~klowney/devtheories.htm

To find more resources on the topics covered in this chapter, please go to the Sociologists in Action Web site at www.sagepub.com/korgensia2e.
