justified because they could point to cases they had known in which this did not occur. Moreover, each side ultimately admitted that the other had a point. The exercise served to bring home the fact that deviance is not a quality that is inherent in any condition but one that is conferred upon them by other people in a manner that is inconsistent. The important sociological problem is not to decide a priori which phenomena are deviant and which ones are not but rather to discover why this property is conferred upon a person when it is (Erikson has, of course, shed a good deal of light on this particular question as shall be seen."

There are at least two features of a deviant label that make it distinctive: one is that it carries an imputation of moral inferiority and culpability, and the other, that it is an essentializing label. The person to whom a deviant label has been applied is usually viewed as being morally inferior, and his condition, his behavior, or whatever basis is used for applying this label to him is interpreted as evidence of his moral culpability. The extent of moral depravity that is imputed to a deviant varies a great deal from case to case. As a rule, the criminal and the dissident are viewed as moral monsters of sorts whereas those who are physically disabled or mentally ill as a rule are not judged so harshly. Still, in both cases the implication of moral inferiority is obviously there, a fact that provides us with one criterion by which to distinguish deviance from other social properties.

Deviant labels are essenializing labels that carry certain implications about character that extend to all areas of personality. To call a person "mad" or "criminal" is to imply that he is different in kind from ordinary people and that there are no areas of his personality that are not affected by his "problem." This tendency to generalize about a person's entire character on the basis of a single quality, action, or physical characteristic applies as much to deviants toward whom we feel genuine compassion as it does to those for whom we may feel contempt. The statement that someone is crippled implies that he possesses an entire personality, which is complete with special abilities, feelings, needs, and ways of behaving. Evidence for this is found in the tendency we have to link information about an individual's disability with other statements about him (that is, "he is a blind writer") as though the fact of his condition alerts us to look for a special kind of personality. There are few social labels that involve so strong an essentializing tendency as does the property of social deviance."

It would be incorrect to say that deviance is the only social property to which the quality of moral inferiority attaches or that it is the only essentializing label found in our culture. What makes a deviant label distinctive from other properties is the intensity with which these elements adhere to it, and the special way in which they blend together. These elements provide us then with one criterion for identifying the phenomenon of deviance in our society. Another criterion involves the consequences that follow for persons to whom the property of deviance is conferred.

When a deviant label has been applied to a person, he is often demarcated off from the rest of the group and moved to its margins. As a rule, he is excluded from participating fully in group activities, and he may even be denied the kind of freedoms that are accorded to others as a matter of right. He is sometimes physically confined and denied the sorts of privileges that are routinely granted to people who are considered to be "in good standing." Thus, when a person has been labeled a deviant, he becomes a second-class citizen, who is in a symbolic sense "in" but not "of" the social community in which he resides.

The person who has been labeled deviant may also be perceived as dangerous in the sense that he is capable of doing harm to other people. There are, of course, some cases in which this fear is quite justified. Men who have committed murder or those who have lashed out violently at others do pose a very real threat to life and limb. However, most people who are labeled deviant are harmless, in the sense that they pose no physical threat to anyone; yet, there are many who continue to regard them as dangerous. We only need to reflect for a moment on the case of persons who are grotesquely disfigured, or lepers, to recognize the validity in this point. Sociologists have tended to ignore this fact about the property of deviance, terming it another one of the misconceptions that laymen have about the deviant. The fact remains that many laymen regard the deviant as a dangerous person very even when he is not likely to do them any direct physical harm. This reaction is one that must be taken into account in attempting to construct a sociological explanation for deviance.

Another reaction that commonly occurs when a deviant label is applied is that within the community a feeling arises that "something ought to be done about him." Perhaps the most important fact about this reaction in our society is that almost all of the steps that are taken are directed solely at the deviant. Punishment, therapy, rehabilitation, coercion, and the other common mechanisms of social control are things that are done to him, implying that the causes of deviance reside within the person to whom the label has been attached, and that the solutions to the problems that he presents can be achieved by doing something to him. This is a curious fact, particularly when we examine it against the background of social science research on deviance that so clearly points to the crucial role played by ordinary people in determining who is labeled a deviant and how the deviant behaves. This research suggests that none of the corrective measures that are taken can possibly succeed in the intended way unless they are directed at those who confer deviant labels as well as those to whom they are applied.

Another feature of the "something" that is done to the deviant in our society is that it often involves isolating and confining him in such a way that he becomes invisible to others in the community. This usually takes the form of some kind of physical confinement in an institution located outside of the community itself, or tucked away in an obscure corner somewhere within it.