

# Admitted Deviant

By Carmen Blanchette



Carmen Blanchette is a girl who was adopted at 7 years old and was, at one point in her life, determined to figure out who she *really* was. Her biological parents never embedded that important information into her. She set out on a long journey to figure out where she fit in society and what she would later be labeled as - a deviant? Is she socially introverted or extraverted? Does she follow through with the social norms of her time? In her autobiography, she will explain who she is today and what past events affected her life.



*I* have spent most of my life trying to search for my place in society, find out who *I* am, and find out what I am to others - but I had been looking in the *wrong* places. I was looking for other's opinions, using "The Looking-Glass Self" coined by Sociologist Charles Horton Cooley. Time after time I was deciding to be someone that everyone is *not*. By this point, I was choosing to be a deviant.

When I say “deviant,” the first thing that comes to your mind is probably something along the lines of being a criminal. That is not what I mean by that, though. The Labeling Theory coined by Sociologist Howard Becker helps describe what being a “deviant” means: “It (the Labeling Theory) begins with the assumption that no act is intrinsically criminal. Instead, definitions of criminality are established by those in power through the formulation of laws and the interpretation of those laws by police, courts, and correctional institutions. Deviance is therefore not a set of characteristics of individuals or groups, but rather it is a process of interaction between deviants and non-deviants and the context in which criminality is defined.” (Crossman, Ashley)

In regard to “The Labeling Theory,” I have been “labeled” many things that I really am *not*. For example, I have been labeled an “anti-gay” person, of which, by definition, I am *not*. By definition, “anti-gay” people hate gay people, and I do not hate anyone. I have been labeled things that actually do fit me, such as a “devout Christian.” I will not give up my beliefs for anyone; in fact, I want to die a martyr. I also have been labeled an “encourager” or someone who enjoys encouraging people and happen to be good at doing so. That label fits me because when someone is “down,” so to speak, a lot of the time I end up making that person feel better.

I would not necessarily call any of my actions “taboo.” Mostly everything I do daily I could discuss with other people openly. I have not done anything unbearably wicked and I do not plan on doing so. I plan to stick to the social norms that I accept and discard the ones I do not accept.

Yes, I accept *some* social norms and I discard others. I accept the social norms of not going around and committing murder, or doing drugs that haven’t been prescribed by my doctor. I discard following through with social norms, such as some of the outfits that women wear these days –

shirts that show off parts that shouldn't be seen, etc. I also discard getting mad over every little thing that people do. I find myself to be a very forgiving person and I try not to hold grudges. I believe in fresh starts.

I have the same values that any human being should have, but then again, not every human being is brought up the same way as I was. I have been brought up in a Christian home with virtuous Christian parents who have high expectations for me as a person. I am being raised to be a woman who respects herself and others as well as treats others in the way I too want to be treated. I do as I am told for the most part because being rebellious was never what I was about. "Values are general standards and may be regarded as higher order norms." (Johnson, H.M.)

My parents are democratic in their parenting style and that made me an independent thinker and decision maker. I have the tendency to think fast in different situations, such as when someone gets hurt or really needs a glass of water when he/she is borderline dehydrated. I can make decisions for myself and think for myself because my decisions are well thought out in order for it to be the "right" decision. Not all of my decisions are the best, but that is where the "learn from your mistakes" phrase comes in. By making poor decisions in the past, I have come to "beat myself up" and blame everything bad that happens (even to other people) on myself. I have not been brought up to beat myself up - this is a personal thing between me, myself, and I. I have to try not to "beat myself up," figuratively speaking of course, because I am a very forgiving person, just not to myself. My past mistakes, as well as my biological dad blaming everything on me until I was 5, has caused me to devalue myself and condemn myself for everything that I did wrong and still do wrong.

My parents have other children, now my siblings, and I have one brother-in-law who is “black.” Because I was adopted at 7, I had no idea what “racism” is, especially growing up knowing my “black” brother-in-law; and I never had a problem with his skin color. Seeing as I did not have a problem with his skin color when I first met him, I grew to feel the same about all people of different races. My logic was and still is, “What is the point of not liking someone because of their skin color? What difference does skin color make to anybody?” And to this day, I continue to make friends with people who are of different ethnicities, races, and nationalities.

I have never been out of the country, so I have not experienced or seen firsthand the cultures and social norms of other countries. I have done a lot of research about other countries because I want to go to another country - specifically Haiti for a Mission Trip - and when I do, I imagine that I will notice right away the difference in the United States’ society and other countries societies. Either way, the United States has a lot of diversity as far as cultures are concerned because there are many different people here: from Christians to Atheists to Muslims to non-religious people. Christians are pretty virtuous, if they are being true Christians whereas to an Atheist, *how* they live their lives does not really matter - it’s about their successes in life, where their lives will end, and if they enjoyed their lives on earth. Muslims can be very strict on their rules, such as women wearing a burka, but on the other hand, non-religious people, people who do not identify with any religion, have almost no rules as to how they live their lives.

Because I was homeschooled from second-grade until my ninth-grade year, I really had not grasped what different cultures were like - I was surrounded by like-minded people - my family. When I started going to Florida SouthWestern Collegiate High School, I had no idea what to expect - I mean, it is a *Collegiate* High School, and plus, I had never been to a *regular* high school/middle school. This was a new adventure for me. I was in the middle of what Sociologist Robert K. Merton calls "Anticipatory Socialization." This is what we know as waiting for a big event in the future (usually the near future) with anticipation and trying to figure out what to expect of the experience and what the norms are in that place. I would later on de-socialize because of not knowing whether or not I could be myself at this school and re-socialize into who I am today. Oxford describes "de-socializing" as "The process by which an individual experiences role loss and an accompanying loss of associated power or prestige (for example, following retirement from a sport). The individual may experience a loss of social identity resulting in an identity crisis, loss of peer status, loss of self-image and self-esteem, and have difficulty finding a substitute activity or another peer group." Oxford describes "re-socializing" as "A process of socialization in which individuals take up new social identities and make a sharp break with a prior socialization."

Who am I now? I am now a deviant to the world, someone who de-socialized because of not knowing who I really am and not accepting myself. I am a re-socialized devout Christian, “encourager,” and innocent person who really just wanted to figure out in past years who I really am; I wanted to be accepted by everyone. But, if I were to please everyone, I would have to conform to so many different norms - even cultures I passionately disagree with. I have finally found myself and come to accept who I am. I am Carmen Briana Blanchette, and this is who I am - if someone does not like me, it is *their* problem not *mine*, because I am not changing myself for anybody anymore. I am so done conforming to society because I am a deviant.

## Individual Resources

Ashley Crossman (Sociological Explanation of Deviant Behavior)

Charles Horton Cooley (“Looking-Glass Self”; Greene, Shepard 116)

(“De-socialization”; Greene, Shepard 128)

(“Deviant”; Greene, Shepard 205)

H.M. Johnson (The Meaning and Functions of Social Values)

Robert K. Merton (“Anticipatory Socialization”; Greene, Shepard 129)

(Oxford Reference)