Introduction to Deviance, Crime, and Social Control*

OpenStax College

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Figure 1: Police are one resource that societies use to combat behavior considered deviant to the point of criminality. (Photo courtesy of David.Monniaux/Wikimedia Commons)

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Philip Hudson entered Morehouse College at age 19 wearing men's jeans and long hair tied back in dreadlocks. "The first day I got to campus, I was a boy," Philip recalled a few years later. He said he was "trying to be this masculine boy, real cool and real quiet." By the end of his sophomore year, Philip had swapped his jeans for skirts and found himself the target of a strong backlash (King 2010). Morehouse College made national news for its response to the teen's lifestyle, establishing a schoolwide ban on the wearing of women's clothing by men (Chen 2010).

Morehouse College, an all-male college in Atlanta, Georgia, has a prestigious history. Established in 1867 as a place of higher learning for former slaves, Morehouse is the alma mater of great leaders such as "Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Howard Thurman, and celebrities such as Samuel L. Jackson and Spike Lee" (Mungin 2009). The sense of revolution is what brought Philip to Morehouse, a place where he hoped he could be himself.

After a difficult upbringing where his gendered-ness resulted in abuse and rape, he realized that he identified as a female and wanted to express that aspect of his person. He began taking female hormones to start his biological transition to the female sex. Although Philip initially halted his treatment once he began college, he soon found others like himself. At Morehouse, he met Diamond Poulin, a student who defined himself as a man who felt comfortable in women's clothes. Joined by a handful of others, Philip and Diamond donned skirts, high heels, and other traditionally female attire on campus in an attempt to be themselves. They were jeered at and ridiculed—even attacked.

Then came the school's shocking decision in late 2009. The new rules, titled the "Appropriate Attire Policy," banned cross-dressing anywhere on the campus grounds. Those who broke the rules were not allowed to attend class unless they changed their clothing, and multiple transgressions led to disciplinary action and suspension.

Diamond left Morehouse that fall, but returned once in the spring to visit his friends. He found himself escorted off campus by school security for violating the dress code. Philip remained at Morehouse for another year before leaving because of stress. He now plans to resume his studies at a larger university in Florida. What he's most looking forward to is walking around in public without being verbally attacked. "They'll stare," Philip says with resignation, "but I'm used to that" (King 2010).

1 References

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