Scheff’s Being Mentally Ill: A Sociological Theory (3rd edition)

Scheff’s Three Problems
What are the conditions in a culture under which diverse kinds of rule-breaking become stable and uniform?
To what extent, in different phases of careers of mental patients, are symptoms of mental illness the result of conforming behaviour?
Is there a general set of contingencies that lead to the definition of deviant behaviour as a manifestation of mental illness?

Scheff’s Conceptual Tools
The social institution of insanity; residual rule-breaking; deviance; the social role of the mentally ill; bifurcation of societal reaction – normalization/labelling
Key conceptual tool: residual rule-breaking: the diverse kinds of rule-breaking for which our society provides no explicit label and that therefore sometimes lead to the labelling of the violator as mentally ill.

Scheff’s Nine Propositions
**Proposition 1**: Residual rule-breaking arises from fundamentally diverse sources (organic, psychological, external stress, volitional acts of innovation or defiance – often these are normalized and accepted rather than labelled).
**Proposition 2**: Relative to the rate of treated mental illness, the rate of unrecorded residual rule-breaking is extremely high.
**Proposition 3**: Most residual rule-breaking is normalized and is of transitory significance.
**Proposition 4**: Stereotyped imagery of mental disorder is learned in early childhood.
**Proposition 5**: The stereotypes of insanity are continually reaffirmed, inadvertently, in ordinary social interaction.
**Proposition 6**: Labelled deviants may be rewarded for playing the stereotyped deviant role.
**Proposition 7**: Labelled deviants are punished when they attempt the return to conventional roles.
**Proposition 8**: In the crisis occurring when a residual rule-breaker is publicly labelled, the deviant is highly suggestible and may accept the proffered role of the insane as the only alternative.
**Proposition 9**: Among residual rule-breakers, labelling is among the most important causes of careers of residual deviance.