

RECLAIMING DEVIANCE AS A UNIQUE COURSE FROM CRIMINOLOGY*

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THE FIELD OF SOCIOLOGY INVOLVES COURSES on deviance in general and, more specifically, on criminology. Although deviant behavior can be defined in a variety of ways, deviance usually involves some type of norm violation, which may or may not be a criminal act. Deviant behavior could include violating expectations for behavior (e.g., joining a white supremacy group, drinking alcohol to excess) or violating expectations of "ideal states of being" (e.g., obesity, physical disabilities). Although many of these behaviors violate social expectations, they do not break the law. Thus the study of deviant behavior encompasses a wide range of norm-violating behaviors that are not necessarily criminal, whereas criminology focuses more narrowly on the subset of norm violations that are sanctioned by criminal law. Because courses on deviance often address behaviors that are considered criminal acts, we have noticed a frequent overlap between the two types of courses. We acknowledge that this overlap is unavoidable but we believe that deviance courses often overemphasize criminal acts while deemphasizing noncriminal norm violations.

On the basis of our experiences, we suspect that this situation is especially problematic in departments which offer courses in both criminology and deviance. Thus undergraduate students may be exposed to redundant material in what should be two separate courses. All of us have received complaints on evaluations about this very issue. Through better course organization, the two courses can be kept separate and students can be exposed to a wider range of material.

In this paper we address the overlap between deviance and criminology and provide suggestions for differentiating the two courses. In an effort to illustrate this overlap, we compared the topics covered in deviance and criminology textbooks because we believed that they represent accurately what is covered in many classrooms. We also reviewed the journal *Deviant Behavior*, because we believed that instructors teaching in this area would be likely to use it for supplemental information.

METHODOLOGY

To gain a general idea of the topics addressed in the classroom, we reviewed the contents of eight current textbooks intended for deviance courses. We also compared the deviance texts with eight current criminology texts in order to assess similarities and differences in the topics addressed. Although the wording for chapter headings varied (e.g., "substance abuse" versus "alcohol or drug abuse"), in most cases they were sufficient to categorize the topic in question. Broad chapter headings, however, required us to review the chapter to identify the specific types of deviance addressed; for example, were sexual crimes such as rape covered in a chapter titled "Sexual Deviance"?

We reviewed the topics in *Deviant Behavior* to gain an understanding of the areas covered by the leading journal in the field. Each article appearing between 1979, when the journal first appeared, and 1994 (N=298) was classified by topic. We classified most of the articles on the basis of title. If the title was not sufficiently specific, we read the abstract or the article itself. Many of the articles examined more than one type of deviant behavior simultaneously (e.g.,

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drug and alcohol use), discussed the relationship between two or more types of deviant behavior (e.g., pornography as a cause of rape and sexual assault), or addressed a key concept in relation to a form of deviant behavior (e.g., labeling and mental illness). Thus 26 percent of the articles belonged to more than one category. For example, we counted an article examining the use of drugs by prostitutes as an article about drug use and an article about prostitution.

TOPICS COVERED BY TEXTS ON DEVIANCE

Table 1 displays the topics covered by eight deviance textbooks (Adler and Adler 1994; Clinard and Meier 1995; Curra 1994; Goode 1994; Little 1995; McCaghy and Capron 1994; Thio 1994; Ward, Carter, and Perrin 1994). In the table we also show how many of eight current criminology textbooks cover the same topics (Adler, Mueller, and Laufer 1995; Barlow 1993; Beirne and Messerschmidt 1995; Reid 1994; Shelly 1995; Siegal 1992; Sykes and Cullen 1992; Voight, et al. 1994). Of the 21 topics covered by the textbooks on deviance, 11 are generally illegal behaviors including rape, white-collar crime, drug abuse, prostitution, domestic abuse, murder, property crime, suicide, organized crime, government deviance, and incest. The other topics are alcohol abuse, homosexuality, mental disorders, pornography, physical disabilities, religious deviance, and miscellaneous sexual deviance including swinging, voyeurism, extramarital sex, and fetishism. These 10 topics either represent violations of legal norms or are illegal only in some cases or jurisdictions. For example, pornography (with exceptions such as child pornography) is legal in most parts of the United States. Some states also have antihomosexuality statutes on the books. Finally, some behaviors, such as alcohol abuse, are not themselves illegal, but they may lead to illegal activities such as drunk driving.

Although approximately half of the topics covered by the eight deviance texts are criminal acts and half are primarily violations of legal norms, the illegal behaviors are

Table 1. Topics Covered in Deviance and Criminology Textbooks

Topic	Deviance (N=8) Number of Deviance Texts	Criminology (N=8) Number of Criminology Texts
Alcohol Abuse	8	1
Homosexuality	8	3
Mental Disorders	8	0
Rape	8	8
White-Collar/ Corporate Crime	8	7
Drug Abuse	7	7
Prostitution	7	7
Family Violence	6	6
Murder	6	8
Property Crime	6	8
Suicide	6	0
Pornography	4	6
Misc. Sexual Deviance ^a	5	0
Organized Crime	3	8
Government Deviance	2	1
Incest	1	1
Physical Disabilities	1	0
Religious Deviance/Cults	1	0

^a Includes extramarital sex, fetishism, piercing, swinging, and voyeurism.

covered more frequently. Of the 11 topics covered by six or more of the texts, 72 percent represent criminal behaviors. In fact, a review of the eight current criminology textbooks shows that deviance and criminology texts tend to cover the same areas. Eleven topics appeared in six or more (at least two-thirds) of the deviance textbooks. By comparison, seven of those 11 topics appeared in six or more (at least two-thirds) of the criminology texts. Furthermore, 12 of the 18 topics that appeared in deviance textbooks also appeared in at least one criminology text. These figures confirm the significant overlap between the two types of texts.

The deviance textbooks tend to include a core set of behaviors, most of which are criminal (rape, white-collar crime, drug abuse, prostitution, domestic abuse, murder, property crime, and suicide), and three

norm-violating behaviors that have received extensive attention in sociological journals (alcohol abuse, homosexuality, and mental disorders). Occasionally somewhat more exotic norm-violating behaviors, such as religious deviance or swinging, are included in additional chapters.

TOPICS COVERED IN *DEViant* BEHAVIOR

Table 2 lists the 10 topics most commonly addressed in articles published in *Deviant Behavior*; altogether we identified 82 topics. The results show that articles on delinquency and/or some "typical" crime (e.g., theft, vandalism, robbery, assault), as well as drug abuse or dealing, appear more often than other topics. The next four most frequently appearing topics are alcohol abuse, corrections/social control, deviance theory, and articles employing the concept of stigma. The next most frequent categories are crime (other) and crime (atypical). "Crime (Other)" includes articles relating to crime on a more abstract level, such as fear of crime and perceptions and conceptions of crime; "Crime (Atypical)" includes illegal behaviors not commonly addressed in the sociological literature, such as poaching. The final two topics are definitions of deviance and white-collar crime or corporate deviance.

Four of these 10 leading categories are directly related to crime: delinquency/crime (typical), crime (atypical), crime (other), and white-collar crime/corporate deviance. A fifth category (corrections/social control) pertains mainly to the social response to crime; a sixth category (drug abuse) represents a particular form of crime. Thus only four of the 10 most frequent topics pertain to deviance rather than to some type of crime.

This review covers only the 10 leading topics and says nothing of the 72 additional topics, many of which overlap with topics in the deviance and criminology textbooks. These include mental illness (10 articles), homosexuality (9), suicide (8), rape (8), and prostitution (7). The journal, however, also addresses noncriminal norm violations such

Table 2. Ten Leading Topics Covered in *Deviant Behavior* (1979–1994)

Topic	Number of Articles
Delinquency/Crime (Typical)	27
Drug Abuse	27
Alcohol Abuse	21
Corrections/Social Control	18
Deviance Theory	16
Stigma	15
Crime (Other)	14
Crime (Atypical)	12
Definitions and Norms of Deviance	11
White-Collar Crime/Corporate Deviance	11

as eating disorders (3), physical disabilities (3), homelessness (2), topless dancing (2), and UFOs (1). Therefore, even though *Deviant Behavior* seems to emphasize criminal deviance, it also offers a large body of research on noncriminal norm violations and on interesting atypical criminal behavior (e.g., poaching).

RECOMMENDATIONS

We believe that the emphasis on criminal deviance in deviance textbooks creates too much overlap between what should be separate courses in deviance and criminology. One possible explanation for this overlap is that during the early 1970s the field of deviance drew strong criticism, as in Liazos's (1972) classic article "The Poverty of the Sociology of Deviance." This criticism continues to the present day and was discussed recently by Sumner (1994), who declared that the field of deviance died around 1975. We speculate that the current expansion of the field of criminology, during the decline in the field of deviance, has also contributed to the overlap. Authors of deviance textbooks, we believe, have chosen to address "real" issues rather than fringe areas of behavior. According to Sumner, "it has become more manageable or politically realistic to focus on crime prevention, police accountability and victims....No one celebrates deviance anymore, and the term has declined in usage, especially in Europe" (1994:311).

To deal with this we suggest that the instructor in deviance avoid relying strictly on a deviance textbook. Although we acknowledge that some overlap is unavoidable and that criminal behavior should be included in a definition of deviance, our review of the topics covered in *Deviant Behavior* shows that there are alternatives to the topics typically covered in classes on deviance. The deviance instructor can select journal articles, or find useful information in edited volumes or readers devoted to deviant behavior (e.g. Thio and Calhoun 1995). The instructor must be creative so that students do not receive the same information in two different classes. There exists a considerable body of literature on non-criminal norm violations and atypical criminal behaviors that many deviance texts do not address. Because the major forms of criminal deviance are generally covered in criminology courses, the deviance instructor can use his or her course to examine these noncriminal norm-violating behaviors or atypical crimes.

When separate courses in criminology and deviance exist, theory is one of the major areas of overlap. Therefore departments may wish to use deviance and criminology courses to examine the difference between conceptions of deviance. In deviance courses, for example, the instructor may find it useful to emphasize the importance of norms and the context of those norms; therefore, the class will focus more heavily on subjectivist theories such as labeling. Some theoretical perspectives may be useful in explaining both criminal and non-criminal norm-violating behaviors; for example, radical and feminist perspectives may be employed to explain why certain behaviors are labeled as deviant or specifically as criminal. We strongly suggest, however, that in deviance courses the instructor avoid extensive discussion of theories designed to explain juvenile delinquency or criminal behavior, such as social bonding theory, status deprivation theory, or Miller's theory of lower-class culture conflict. This is not to suggest that certain theoretical perspectives be ignored in deviance classes; rather, different perspectives can be emphasized.

Throughout this article we have discussed how the overlap between criminology and deviance courses can be handled by focusing on noncriminal norm violations in deviant behavior courses. A course in deviance may include topics such as the following:

Sexual deviance: swingers, homosexuality, sadomasochism, fetishes, pornography, autoerotic behavior, infidelity, female impersonators, transsexuals, bisexuals, topless dancers;

Religious deviance: Scientology, cults, Satanism, Wicca, the occult, New Age, atheists;

Suicide;

Electronic deviance: hackers, cybersex;

Supernatural experiences: near-death experiences, ghost sightings, UFO contacts/abductees, Big Foot sightings, psychic hotlines;

Conditions: mental illness, obesity, physical disabilities, AIDS, epilepsy, retardation, eating disorders;

Modern primitives: tattooing, body piercing;

Nudists/naturalists;

Homelessness/begging;

Graffiti subculture: artists, huffers, tagging;

Popular culture/media portrayals of deviance: newspaper, TV;

Music subcultures: punk, skinheads, metalheads;

Beliefs: racial supremacy, prejudices;

Bikers;

Addiction: prescription/over-the-counter drugs, gambling, alcoholism, shopping.

Courses in deviant behavior can also include concepts such as the following:

Conducting research in deviance;

Stigma/labeling;

Subcultures and countercultures;

Informal versus formal methods of social control;

Entering and exiting deviant careers;

Moral crusades;

Construction of deviance;

Deviance as a positive concept: extremely high IQ levels;

Different ways of defining deviance: statistical, normative;

Deviant identity: identity transformation, coping with deviant identity, deviant role performance;

Students' involvement and experiences with deviance.

We believe that instructors can fire their students' imaginations by following our suggestions and guidelines. A wide variety of information exists pertaining to noncriminal norm-violating behavior, which can be included in classes on deviant behavior. By not relying strictly on textbooks, the instructor can reduce overlap between courses, and students can be exposed to a number of different topics. Deviance remains an exciting field that offers unique insights into the fringes of human behavior.

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