

Deviant Behaviour and Social Control

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Abstract

Deviance is defined as non-conformity to the accepted mores of the society. It entails estrangement from the group or society as a whole. The person who shows deviant behavior follow unusual paths to achieve success or he altogether changes the goals which do not conform to the common value system of the society. Deviant behaviors in society refer to behaviors that violate social norms and expectations. Deviance can be something as small as dressing in gothic clothing, or something as serious as burning someone's house down. Each society has formal laws and rules, and informal social norms in place that aim to deter people from committing deviant acts. Deviant acts are classified into two categories, namely formal and informal. Formal deviance relates to criminal acts as dictated by the law, while informal deviance is dictated by social norms. Formal deviant acts such as robbery, rape and murder are punishable by the law. A person caught engaging in such acts is prosecuted in court and may go to jail, pay a fine or serve a community service sentence.

Keywords: Deviance, Formal Deviance, Informal Deviance, etc.

Introduction

Using civil remedies to control criminal or antisocial behavior has a long history; what is new is the vast expansion of the kinds of responses to deviance and the admixture of civil and criminal sanctions. Civil remedies — for example, compensation, restitution and apology — can be incorporated directly into the criminal justice process by replacing imprisonment and other criminal penalties. Second, many matters previously dealt with by the criminal justice system are now referred or delegated to or dealt with in such alternative tribunals as youth courts and local courts where there is greater scope for mediation and negotiation, the process is less adversarial, and there is more opportunity for participation by victims and less involvement of legal personnel. Social control is contingent upon norm-breaking behavior. It reacts to and seeks to eradicate or contain deviance, and is something positive and ameliorative that facilitates social life. In the 1960s labeling theorists pointed out the lack of consensus on criminal laws and the relativity of deviance, and in the 1970s more critical theorists focused on the oppressive elements of social control. While sanctions might be functional to the continuation of social life at a macro level, or to reestablish social order, the individuals subject to social control experience sanctions as oppressive and often discriminatory. Rather than reflecting a general consensus, social control — especially the criminal justice system — actually reinforces the interests of dominant segments of society, and is used to control those whose interests and activities are defined as contrary to the former. A primary concern among researchers has been to distinguish formal

from informal social control, and to identify different kinds of sanctions and the social conditions in which different forms of social control prevail. Formal social control refers to broad institutional expressions of collective or accepted definitions of appropriate behavior, while informal control refers to interpersonal influence or evaluations of conduct related to group membership (Radcliffe-Browne, 1952; Roach Anleu, 1995). Informal social control predominates where little individualism or privacy exists, strong primary relationships prevail and the community or extended family retains primary authority. It is embedded in social relations; emerges in social situations; and is unplanned, unconscious, automatic and personal (Nader and Metzger, 1963; Schwartz, 1954).

Review of Literature

Durkheim (1938, 1973) is interested in the ways in which types of law reflect and indicate the prevailing social solidarity. He describes differences between repressive and restitutive law, with the former more prevalent in small-scale, structurally simple societies with a strong collective consciousness and the latter predominant in societies that are larger and more heterogeneous, with a more abstract collective consciousness that allows for greater individual variation. Criminal acts offend the collective consciousness and are dealt with by repressive sanctions that aim to punish an offender with some proportionality between the crime and the punishment. Durkheim states that "penal law prescribes only sanctions and says nothing about the obligations to which they relate" (Lukes and Scull, 1983). In contrast, restitutive law is concerned with obligations, rights and duties between individuals; the sanctions — in the form of damages, orders to perform specific tasks or requirements to cease or desist from some activities — are not expiatory but aim to restore the status quo. Contract law, torts and administrative law are all concerned with the regulation of personal status and the associated obligations between particular sectors of society rather than between the individual and society. By definition transgressions of restitutive law do not deeply offend the common consciousness (Lukes and Scull, 1983). Much contemporary interest in social control arises from Foucault's (1979, 1981, 1991) key concerns with discipline, power, knowledge, punishment and regulation. Current broad understandings of control are not restricted to examining criminal deviance or punishment as the exclusive domain of the state and its legal institutions. In *Discipline and Punish* (1979), Foucault establishes his perspective on punishment as a set of power/knowledge techniques located in a field of political forces, as well as mechanisms for administering the bodies of individuals and through them the body politic. Foucault (1979) views punishment as a set of disciplinary mechanisms, with discipline being a type of power that may be taken over by such specialized institutions as penitentiaries or other authorities that use it to reinforce or reorganize their internal mechanisms of power. Debate continues about the extent to which, or even whether, non-penal punishments are alternatives to or an extension of state control, albeit in a diluted form (Cohen, 1985).

Cohen (1979) argues that expansions of community-based forms of punishment blur the boundaries between inside/outside, guilty/innocent, freedom/captivity, punishment/treatment and

imprisoned/released (Cohen, 1979). Diversion of most people from the formal justice system expands the amount of official intervention and increases the total number of people coming into contact with the criminal justice system, including those who have not been convicted of criminal offenses, for example, the offender's family and friends. Rather than limiting social control and preserving individual liberty and autonomy, the growth of community corrections widens the net, disperses social control, extends and diffuses juridical functions, and blurs the boundaries between the community and imprisonment (Foucault, 1979).

Objectives

To find out the causes of deviance, need for deviance as a reinforcer of social control and the role of social control in controlling deviant behavior.

Methodology

An exploratory and descriptive research design shall be followed to find out the causes of deviance, need for deviance as a reinforcer of social control and the role of social control in controlling deviant behavior. The data will be collected with the help of secondary data collection techniques. Secondary data will be used in this research and is collected through published and unpublished sources which include books, journals, articles, reports and other sources like the internet, magazines, research publications and so on.

Effectiveness of Social Control

Governments attempt to unify and centralize various forms of regulation in their quest to manage populations. This entails incorporating nongovernmental (including market and voluntary sectors), as well as governmental resources and institutions in the quest for crime control. Informal social controls that are facilitated by legal sanctions create a coercive context where social costs are made more salient. But informal controls that rely on contextualized social processes involve more than the interactions between victims, offenders and the interventions of legal institutions. Social control involves the normative processes and ethics of social interaction that regulate everyday social life, as well as the mobilization of community that occurs in response to problem behaviors. Thus, informal social controls are effective in several ways: inhibition of problem behaviors, facilitation of conformity, and restraint of social deviance once it appears. Informal social controls are facilitated and perhaps made more salient by the reciprocity between legal and social controls

Conclusion

The effectiveness of social controls requires that an offender perceive that his social ties and accomplishments will be jeopardized by his actions. These social costs can vary with the person's "stakes in conformity": persons with community ties including marriage and employment are more likely to perceive higher social costs should their illegal behavior be disclosed. This means that social ties are weakened or are more difficult to establish in neighborhoods with low marriage rates and high unemployment. Each of these social costs reflects the social structure of the neighborhood context where offenders live or work. Commitment costs include the possible loss of employment chances, educational opportunities, and integration in other social contexts

such as a place of worship or a peer group. These informal controls are likely to be effective under fairly specific social conditions. The perceived (social) costs of violence depends on the salience of these costs to the individual, and the salience depends in part on the individual's liability to (or "stake" in) the community. If the costs are minimal, however, the effects of informal controls or formal sanctions will be weak. Thus, the material costs of sanctions and the social censure attached to them will directly influence the effectiveness of social controls. These material factors and the social networks in which offenders are embedded will reflect the social structure and social cohesion of their immediate social contexts.

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