

The Effect of Deviance On Solidarity

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This paper submitted in partial fulfillment of  
The requirements for  
Sociology 315  
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Department of Sociology

Fall 2013

Word Count: 5744.

## **Abstract**

This research project seeks to explain the relationship between deviance and solidarity among individuals, as put forth in structural functionalism, and more importantly anomie. Using the work of Emile Durkheim as a theoretical framework, this essay takes the concepts of deviance and solidarity and explains the relationship with solidarity depending on deviance. Generally in society a person will participate in deviance or crime for a number of different reasons such as wealth or maybe just to make a point. After committing this act a person will feel a sense of normlessness or a distance from the community around them. Durkheim has termed this sense of normlessness as anomie or a break of social bonds between an individual and the community. So in order for a person to regain that connection to the people around him, he must find a person or group of people that have either felt this way before or in some cases, actively participate in this form of deviance. This connection is solidarity, and it comes from a person or a group of people that create unity based on shared interests or objectives. Learning the connection between deviance and solidarity is important because it shows what in our society needs to change. Deviance is broken down by most people into what they feel is “right” and “wrong”, and these feelings come from what society teaches them is the norm. So, people start engaging in these “wrong” behaviors, they will seek others who have done it, creating solidarity. Therefore, as a deviant act becomes more accepted in society, more people will engage in this act. As this solidarity grows society will need to evaluate if said deviant act is in fact a deviant act. Deviance is one of society’s ways in making people reassess their values and possibly change them. Using the General Social Survey 2010 Cross-Section and Panel Combined from the Data Archive on the Association of Religion Data Archives or the ARDA, this essay will prove the connection between deviance and solidarity.

## **The Effect of Deviance On Solidarity**

### **Introduction**

In society today, people commit deviant acts once this is done they will feel a sense of guilt or solitude. Once this feeling comes about they will seek out someone who they can share their experience or who will understand how they are feeling. This is called solidarity. Durkheim explains this aspect in his theory of functionalism with his term anomie, where he said that certain groups and people will be outside of the social norms and standards. Generally these groups are held together by the deviance that they commit especially in youth. The concept of age is important in determining the amount of crime they commit. Looking at the 2010 General Social Survey it can be proven that by committing deviant acts a person will then move to find solidarity in others who have also committed these acts.

### Theoretical Framework

Deviance is described as something that is not accepted or is frowned upon in social standards or norms. Solidarity is unity or agreement between individuals with a common interest. What some do not realize is that one concept can actually lead to the other. Deviance can come in many forms both positive and negative, either way after doing or experiencing something that society would deem unusual or deviant a person will have a feeling of being outside social standards or norms. When we share these experiences with other people, there will be a feeling of unity or connection that can in some cases lead two people or groups of people together. Deviance in social integration is a key factor in society and especially at changing society and its norms. This therefore makes deviance a function of society. Emile Durkheim who is credited with the theory of functionalism, talks about both of these concepts in his work on suicide and the division of labor.

Deviance is a very broad term, it can relate to criminal activity which is what most people would relate it too, or it can relate to things that are just outside of society's general norms or traditions. An example of this is in our society we generally greet people with a hand shake where in other societies people are greeted with a kiss. In some circumstances in our society that would be seen as a deviant act. Looking at crime however, most people would see crime as being wrong in most societies, and in many cases it is. However, one can see that "Durkheim's classic study, *Suicide*, demonstrates his view that larger social forces exist which can account for a phenomenon that on the surface appears to be strictly a case of individual action. (Farganis 2011:52)" Durkheim takes an act of suicide and relates it not to the individual that commits it, but rather to what society has done with that individual. So, something as bad as suicide which our society has made illegal is now being blamed on the society itself. By doing this, and taking

the blame from the individual and placing it on the restrictions that society places on individuals, crime itself has become normal in society. This idea “Durkheim derived from this argument: the idea that crime is normal rather than pathological. He argued that since crime is found in every society, it must be normal and provide a useful function. Crime, he claimed, helps societies define and delineate their collective conscience: ‘Imagine a community of saints in an exemplary and perfect monastery. In it crime as such will be unknown, but faults that appear venial to the ordinary person will arouse the same scandal as does normal crime in ordinary consciences. If therefore that community has the power to judge and punish, it will term such acts criminal and deal with them as such.’ (Ritzer 2011:90)” Durkheim has taken what society views as an individual’s fault for committing crime and turned it back on the society. Now society is at fault for criminal behavior, but that crime is defined by laws that those in power put in place.

It is up to those who are in power to set the rules that society lives by, and because deviance is a function of society deviance influences those in power. So not only is deviance a construction of society, it is also a function of society. Durkheim is known for his functionalism theory, because “Durkheim saw society as an elaborate organism in which each separate part performs its specific task in the functioning of the whole. This is analogous to the human body, in which each separate organ performs a bodily function in order to enable a person to survive. (Farganis 2011:52)” As a function of society, deviance’s primary function is to stem change within a society. When people commit deviant acts, they are really going against the restrictions that those in power have placed. When a large enough group shares in this deviance, that it is what leads to change. In the Revolutionary War the American Patriots were seen as deviant in the worst form to the British.

This idea of bringing people together or social integration is what Durkheim called solidarity. Solidarity is that feeling of unity among a group who has similar interests or goals. In his work, “the thesis of *The Division Of Labor* is that modern society is not held together by the similarities between people who do basically similar things. Instead, it is the division of labor itself that pulls people together by forcing them to be dependent on each other. It may seem that the division of labor is an economic necessity that corrodes the feeling of solidarity, but Durkheim argued that “the economic services that it can render are insignificant compared with the moral effect that it produces and its true function is to create between two or more people a feeling of solidarity.(Ritzer 2011:85)” This economic dependency on each other was a society that Durkheim termed as Organic Solidarity characterized by differences between people by the fact that all have different tasks and responsibilities. In contrast, a society characterized by mechanical solidarity is unified because all people are generalists. The bond among people is that they are all engaged in similar activities and have similar responsibilities. An example of mechanical solidarity would be a shoe maker who made the whole shoe himself, and organic solidarity would be a company who made the sole of the shoe, another who made the laces, and then a third that put it all together.

Going back to Durkheim’s study of suicide, there are relationships between solidarity and suicide. In egoistic suicide Durkheim found that a lack of social integration produced distinctive social current, and these currents caused differences in suicide rates. Therefore the more integrated a person was in their society, in particular integration in religion; the less likely they were to committing suicide. Durkheim also looked at anomic suicide. For this, “Social Integration and social change are key factors in deviant behavior. As a society undergoes rapid change, norms will be unclear and a state of anomie will result. Anomie is a state of

normlessness where society fails to effectively regulate the expectations or behaviors of its members. (Interbitzen 2013:147)” this sense of normlessness in anomie is what would lead to anomic suicide. This form of suicide can even be observed today. As talked about deviance leads to changes in society. Therefore “modern society, with its rapid changes, has often failed to provide a stable set of norms for individuals to absorb and live by; on the contrary, it has tended to destroy such systems of belief. As a result many people are afflicted by debilitating sense of purposelessness and normlessness in their lives, a social condition to which Durkheim gave the now famous term anomie and which he considered to be one of the leading causes of suicide and unhappiness in his time. (Farganis 2011:53)”

Deviance can be seen in both mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity societies. The difference is in the punishments. This is because “Durkheim argued that a society with mechanical solidarity is characterized by repressive law. Because people are very similar in this type of society, and because they tend to believe very strongly in a common morality, any offense against their shared value system is likely to be of significance to most individuals. (Ritzer 2011:89)” Therefore punishments will be severe, because the offence offends the moral system, and therefore offends everyone. This is “In contrast, a society with organic solidarity is characterized by restitutive law, which requires offenders to make restitution for their crimes. In such societies, offenses are more likely to be seen as committed against a particular individual or segment of society than against the moral system itself.(Ritzer 2011:89)” Therefore because an organic solidarity society has a weak morality, people will react emotionally instead of physically.

The social integration of those who are deviant is huge in society, and we see it everywhere. Foreign exchange students who have positive deviance in that they come from

different societies and different norms all have solidarity when they all move into the International Living Center with others who grew up in different societies. On the other side of things when a felon is released from prison, there is a good chance that they will live in transition center with other felons. Deviance creates solidarity in every aspect of our society. As Durkheim has proven, it is from society that deviance is created, and it works to help change and mold our society to an ever changing people that lives in that society.

### **Literature Review**

When getting to know someone the first thing that a person will do is to try to find a connection between themselves and other person. Society does this in every aspect of meeting new people from business meetings to men flirting with women. The first thing done is to start asking the other person about themselves to try to find something both parties share creating a sense of solidarity. Once a connection is made, both parties will go into this and talk about their experiences in this area. The same thing is done when someone commits deviance, this person will feel a sense of anomie or normlessness. This feeling will then grow inside of this person until they feel the urge to let it out. This can be referred to as guilt or sometimes depending on the deviance, pride. The deviant person will then go to others maybe he already has someone who will understand him or maybe he will search someone or a group to share this with. It is a norm in our society to seek out connections with other people who have a shared interest. This solidarity can either deter one from more deviance, or if the person or group is supportive of said deviance they could encourage deviance. Previous literature suggests that deviance will bring about solidarity. This literature review will address the topic of how deviance creates deviant subcultures in our society.

Today's society is one where people want to know what is happening around them. This is especially evident in small towns, "we have only to notice what happens, particularly in a small town, when some moral scandal has just been committed. They stop each other on the street, they visit each other, they seek to come together to talk of the event and to wax indignant in common.(Scott, 1976)" Even when people do not commit deviant acts they have a sense about them that wants to seek out others to tell and talk about what has happened, creating solidarity. This is especially true for younger generations with the social communication technology that they have. In High School students are trying to text, Facebook, or however else they communicate information or gossip. One thing that needs to be looked at however is the other solidarity in individuals. Going back to the younger generation, they have social solidarity in many places including school. Having said that, in schools if this social solidarity is with people who commit acts of deviance a student could find themselves being pulled into deviant acts because of solidarity. This is can be called imitation, and

Durkheim's theory implies that imitation becomes a more powerful social force when the forces of social solidarity become weaker. This proposition has micro- and macro-level implications. First, adolescents who have weak ties to social institutions or experience anomie should be more vulnerable to imitation processes. The level of personal social integration and anomie should moderate or contextualize the effect that associating with delinquent peers has on self-reported delinquency. (Thorlindsson, 2004)

This brings up the fact that the more that an individual is integrated into groups that hold to society's norms the less likely they are to commit deviant acts. The opposite is true where the more regulated an individual is the more likely to feel out of place and enact deviance.

Deviance not only creates deviant subcultures but deviance thrives there as well. Some people have done work on this which "indicates that interpersonal social integration produces conformity by providing the individual with sentiments for the social norms and valued goals.

Social regulation may also mediate the influence of group-level social integration on conformity and deviance. (Thorlindssona, 2004)” This just goes to prove that social bonds are a strong factor in keeping someone in and from deviance. It just depends whether or not that those who someone is bonded to do or do not accept society’s norms.

Within society people seek belonging, the feeling that they are part of something more, something greater. Were people seek this is the problem, and generally it can be traced back to a person’s childhood. This is because “Adolescents seek comfort from those who welcome them and who reinforce their sense of belonging. Unfortunately, some youths may turn to deviant subcultures, such as gangs and cults, in order to satisfy their need for approval, belonging, and self-worth. (Clark, 1992)” Generally a child will commit deviance in order to gather attention, and when that does not work, they will turn to these deviant subcultures for the attention that they seek. Also, children join deviant groups for the feeling that they are more than just a child.

Looking at social bonds and solidarity there are some that are more powerful than others. One that was already brought up was school for adolescents. This is because “research on delinquency has clearly demonstrated that commitment is a key variable in constraining deviance. In particular, commitment to school or school related activities has been found to be inversely related to delinquent behavior. (Krohn, 1983)” School breed deviance by bringing those who share experiences with the same deviant acts together. Other authors would also agree that in some cases solidarity actually denies deviance. An example of this is family, and how close one is to their family. This is because “density derives from the quantity and the intensity of the relationships that attaches family members to each other and to common goals, and strengthens the collective sentiments. Moreover, the density of the family society depends upon the unity and the active participation of individual members in family life. (Thorlindssona,

2004)” This shows that solidarity in some cases can have a negative effect on deviance. Again, it can also breed deviance because if the bonds to one’s family are weak, deviance can be a form of rebellion to one’s family.

There is one thing that is common among those who commit deviant acts and that is generally they are younger or have a past of crime dating back to when they were young. One’s adolescence or when they started to commit deviant acts can be a determining factor in what, when, and how much deviance they will commit. Some refer to this as the age crime curve, where a child will start their deviance and commit most of their crime when they are younger, and commit less crime as they get older. It is because “adolescents with low levels of social integration and high levels of anomie and school anomie are more likely to associate with delinquent peers. (Thorlindsson, 2004)” This deviance can be the result of a child looking for adult privileges and adult responsibilities, and can start out small and get bigger. Krohn brings this up by saying that

these behaviors occur because adolescents who are not committed to school or other loci of conventional adolescent activity are also likely to be denied access to the ordinary range of adult responsibilities. Some compensation accrues, however, from activities that are characteristically adult privileges but, for an adolescent, carry no adult responsibilities. Hence, smoking may be an intermediate stage between the weakening of the social bond and more serious forms of deviant behavior. (Krohn, 1983)

Krohn brings up this idea that children do deviant acts to be like adults. To be like adults however, one needs to learn what it means to be an adult.

Children learn about adult privileges by watching adults. What people do not realize is that they are always being watched by children. This is referred to as the

social learning theory proposes that behavior is acquired both through direct behavioral conditioning, differential reinforcement, and through imitation or

modeling of others' behavior. People learn, in interaction (or identification) with significant groups in their lives, normative attitudes toward certain behavior (as good or bad, right or wrong), here termed definitions. The more individuals define the behavior positively or as justified ('neutralizing' definitions), the more likely they will engage in it. The process where by one interacts with others and is exposed to positive or negative norms is labeled differential association. (Akers, 1989)

This could be where a child's phrase "but daddy did it" could have originated. Research on drinking has shown that there is another way that adolescents learn to be deviant. This is through "social reinforcement is very important in both adolescent and elderly drinking, and we should not make too much of the difference. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that among adolescents use of alcohol is somewhat more socially conditioned and tied to peer contexts and reactions than among the elderly, for whom drinking appears to be sustained more by the effects of the alcohol itself. (Akers, 1989)" So deviance is learned by watching adults, a fundamental part of a childhood, and through peers, another fundamental part of a childhood. Once one gets older the extent that one does the both of these are taken away.

There are those that believe that one's age is not a good preceding variable to deviance. They try to prove this through social bonds. When one is younger they are bonded at school, home, through friends, through work, and through other groups. This is different from those who are older who are bonded through work and a family if they have it. When someone is younger they will have many more social bonds that will keep them from feeling a sense of normlessness that will drive someone to deviance. In Krohn's research he talks about how it is education and not work, parents, or friends that decreased smoking the most. Because "not only has the school setting been shown to be empirically related to deviant behavior but also school is the most accessible institution for efforts directed at establishing, maintaining, or reestablishing the social

bond. (Krohn, 1983)” Therefore social bonds and solidarity can have a negative impact on how age is applied to deviance. Age also leads to solidarity in many different ways.

Age and solidarity can go hand in hand. One perfect example of this is gangs. Gangs can be defined as groups that commit or have the intent to commit deviant acts together. As adolescents youth look for this kind of connection when connection at school or in the family is gone. By joining a gang if anything should happen to this adolescent he knows that he has a family that will both take care of him. Again the feeling of comfort and belonging come into a child through a gang. So when something happens, “such an action is understood to be an act committed against all members of the group to which the victim belongs, it leads to an immediate sense of collective agreement, accompanied by a heightened sense of identification with the group and a readiness to invest time, resources and energy in collective activities. (Scott, 1976)” Activities that will constantly lead an individual into trouble, but within the gang that action is thought to be helping out the group.

Solidarity isn't just joining a group there is something else that has a plays a key role in this and that is the duration a person is integrated in a group. Because gangs have a negative connotation the younger generation decided to create something else to feel a sense of belonging called cliques. Krohn looks at one clique in particular for his example, and that is smoking. In today's society “smoking among adolescents has been seen as an attempt to be more socially accepted among one's peers, and there is some evidence that those who experience weak ties to friends or suffer from low social status among their peers are more likely to begin smoking than are more secure individuals. (Krohn, 1983)” By smoking they share a connection with everyone else who smokes, this creates a sense of belonging with in the clique.

Sometimes, a person who commits deviance doesn't do it because of their age but rather their inability to reach the goals that society has placed before them. Society has goals for everyone, which are learned as children grow up. If a person cannot reach these goals they will divert to forms of crime to obtain these goals. This can happen when someone is young at school to when they are old at a job. So when "adolescents experiencing anomie, that is, rule ambiguity and feelings of normlessness and meaningless, should be more likely to engage in delinquency. Societal norms, rules, and goals have less control over their behavior. Similarly, adolescents who experience school failure or school work as meaningless should be likely to drift into delinquency. Low levels of integration should undermine the authority of rules and norms. (Thorlindssona, 2004)" Therefore the inability to access social goals drives a person to deviance and not just when they are young. This in fact can rule out age as a factor. Then there is "the theory, however, describes a process by which the bond that ties adolescents to conventional society is weakened, releasing them from customary social obligations and thus allowing deviance to occur. (Krohn, 1983)" So, in this, after not being able to access social goals a person feels distant from those who have expectations of them. So by breaking of bonds such as leaving home, or getting a divorce one does not access those goals but removes them from being expected of them, and, again this usually happens in one's adolescence.

Looking at deviance as our independent factor, solidarity as our dependent factor, and age as our preceding variable, we can easily tell that one's age, in particular youth, bring about deviance, which in turn creates solidarity among individuals. When a group is put into a room, they will talk and identify those who they can relate to through shared experiences, even if they are not deviant experiences. As seen above, this is especially so in the younger generation when deviance creates deviant subgroups.

## Methods and Ethics

So, a younger generation who commits deviance also creates deviant subcultures. There are many ways to study this such as interviewing those deviant subcultures, or possibly interviewing people who have the capacity to join them. Another way is to actually join the group, but the problem with both of these are that they would have to be cleared by the Institutional Review Board to ensure that the way one researches this is both ethical and moral. This Methods section will look at how I am collecting my data, and what questions I will be using from the 2010 General Social Survey.

This essay will be using the 2010 General Social Survey Cross-Section and panel Combined for all of the Methods. This means that “The 2010 GSS consists of a new cross-section of 2,044, the first re-interview wave of the 2,023 2008 panel cases with 1,581 completed cases, and the second and final re-interview of the 2006 panel with 1,276 completed cases. Altogether, the 2010 GSS had 4,901 cases.(GSS, ARDA)” Each Interview was approximately 90 minutes, and the Codebook that I am retrieving this data from is The Association of Religion Data Archives.

To measure each of the concepts there are questions that I will be pulling from the GSS and applying to the Concept. For each of these questions, I tried to get one’s that measured validity, accuracy, and reliability for the concept. For Deviance, these are the questions that I found. “Next, did any of the following criminal or legal events occur to you since (current month), 2009? Arrested.” For this, 1.4% said yes, 56% said no, and 42% said that this question was inapplicable. The next question was “Have you ever had sex with someone other than your husband or wife while you were married?” For this question, 62% said that it was inapplicable,

4.6% said yes, 22% said no, and 10% said that they have never been married. Next, “Have you ever, even once, used 'crack' cocaine in chunk or rock form?” 62% said that it was inapplicable, 2.3% said yes, and 35% said no. This question was followed up with “Have you ever, even once, taken any drugs by injection with a needle (like heroin, cocaine, amphetamines, or steroids)? Do not include anything you took under a doctor's orders.” The answer for this question was again 62% said that it was inapplicable, 1.3% said yes, and 36% said no. Looking at these results, especially the drug related ones, we see a pattern of 62% that said that it was inapplicable. This means that they are saying that they have never done drugs. The reason that they would not go in the “no” category is that some people have taken drugs but answer no to that question because they have not taken that drug. These questions give us an insight into the deviance in this survey.

Solidarity and in particular deviant subcultures can be measured by the following questions. First, “Last week were you working full-time, part-time, going to school, keeping house, or what?” With this question we see that 45% were working full time, 10% were working part time, and 3.5% were in school. This is important to see because it will help determine what kind of deviant subcultures will be seen in this survey. Looking at those in school a question was asked, “Now we would like to know something about the groups or organizations to which individuals belong. Here is a list of various organizations. Could you tell me whether or not you are a member of each type? J. School fraternities or sororities.” Of this 74% said inapplicable, 1.1% said yes, and 24% said no. This question we see the deviant subculture that is Greek life at a college and what percentage of the population are in it.

The preceding variable is age and how it applies to deviance and solidarity. The first question is the obvious question “Respondent’s age.” The answers to this question were interesting, 25% said that it was inapplicable; the age started at 12, the biggest group with 332

people answering was that they were 21, and the age limit ended with 55. The next question is “compared to your parents when they were the age you are now, do you think your own standard of living now is much better, somewhat better, about the same, somewhat worse, or much worse than theirs was?? For this question the answers could be: Inapplicable, much better, somewhat better, about the same, somewhat worse, much worse, and don’t know. Of those that answered the largest group of 19% said much better, and fewer answered that it was worse. The last question is almost the same asking, “When your children are at the age you are now, do you think their standard of living will be much better, somewhat better, about the same, somewhat worse, or much worse than yours is now?” The responses were the same with the majority of the people answering that it would be better. These two questions help, because as seen the more and better ties to the family the less likely a child is to participate in deviant subcultures.

This kind of research is ethical because of it is cross sectional research where one looks at one group of people at one point in time, and the fact that it is secondary meaning that this essay is pulling from an existing survey. Also, within the GSS the people conducting the interviews asked the people modular questions to both increase response rates and to avoid asking questions that are sensitive to the subject.

If a subject did not answer a question, the interviewer just pushed on with the interview. In my own research I would be trying to account for missing data by using list wise deletion. This is to say that any case which is missing data or in other words they did not answer the question, would be eliminated from analysis. The problem that can occur with this is that it makes the assumption that people who did not answer are basically the same as people who did. It does ensure that every one who did answer the question answered all of the questions. I cannot do this with the GSS because it does not allow me to take a certain individual from the case.

Where the GSS is nice is that before asking a series of questions about a topic they first asked whether or not that topic applies to the subject. By doing this we run the risk that if it is an emotional or self-incriminating question, they will lie about it. At the same time, however, it also moves right to questions that do apply to the individual.

### **Conclusion**

After viewing the effect of deviance on deviant subcultures through a theoretical framework, a literature review, and through the GSS, it can be concluded that there is a positive correlation between the two concepts of deviance and solidarity. Through the theoretical framework, Durkheim has proven, it is from society that deviance is created, and it works to help change and mold our society to an ever changing people that lives in that society. The literature review showed that a person's youth brings about deviance in their life which in turn brings solidarity in deviant subcultures. Then last the methods and ethics section showed how to conduct social research on this topic. People in today's society seek out relationships in order to feel wanted. As the youth in our society enact deviance, the relationships they seek are generally with those who support deviant behavior.

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