

LABELS AND ITS EFFECTS ON DEVIANCE

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*Correlation between
Internalization and
Deviance*

Abstract

In society, labeling can play an important role in how people interact with one another every day. This research focuses on the relationship between internalization and deviance, two important concepts in Labeling Theory. The main question is, does the internalization of a label play a role, whether it be positive or negative, in the amount of, or even, type of, deviance an individual participates in throughout their life. The data set used for this research was found in a scholarly peer-review source that has collected data from two groups: incarcerated juveniles, and inner-city high school students. The main focus of the study was youth violence in California, Illinois, Louisiana, and New Jersey. This information is important because it affects how people see themselves, and others in the context of society. The information found could not only help us to gain a better understanding in how effective these labels are in determining the level of deviance people could potentially participate in because of the label, and how positive labels could counteract high levels of deviance. It is hypothesized that negative labels can lay the foundation for deviance an individual participates in.

Introduction

This paper examines how Labeling Theory addresses internalization and deviance in the context of the “Firearms, Violence, and Youth in California, Illinois, Louisiana, and New Jersey” study. It is hypothesized that the greater level of internalization of a negative label that one has, will directly affect the level of deviance an individual will participate in. This research will use deductive reasoning using secondary data analysis on a survey that was used for studying youth violence of incarcerated juveniles and inner-city high school students in the states of California, Illinois, Louisiana and New Jersey. This research will use the answers from these surveys to evaluate the relationship between internalization and deviance.

Theoretic Framework

Labeling Theory is generally geared toward an individuals' identities within society, focusing on the labels society has placed on them—usually because they do not fit into the typical norm. Labeling is a process of giving an individual a title they have not chosen for themselves. This title carries with it preconceived ideas, traits, and characteristics "about" the individual. Labeling could have either negative or positive consequences; but typically labeling theory is associated with negative consequences, and usually revolves around deviance. Labels can start at birth and can last for an entire lifetime.

As soon as a baby is labeled as boy or girl expectations are put into place. These expectations will determine what color clothes it will wear, the type of toys that it will play with, and what type of behavior is considered acceptable. From there, preconceived ideas are drawn on an infant because of their "race," parents' socioeconomic status, place of birth, and their overall physical health and appearance, which will later determines the types of resources they will have access. This process of labeling can have an "effect on a person's social identity" that they will carry with them for a lifetime" (Inderbitzen 331).

This idea of a title affecting an individual's attitudes, beliefs, and actions carries a significant weight. It's difficult to break a label, especially if it is tied to the color of someone's skin, sex, or age. "The person becomes the thing he is described as being [or stigmatized as]" (Inderbitzen 337). Once they have received this "identity" they have to make a "rationalization of their position [in society] (Inderbitzen 340). From there they have to learn to live with the label, even if the label was not earned or even close to the truth.

Another theory that can be linked to, and is typically paired with Labeling Theory is Shaming Theory. Shaming "has the intention or effect of invoking remorse in the person", who is behaving outside of what is considered to be socially acceptable (Akers 161). Once someone receives a label of a generalized category "the range of major role choices becomes narrowed" (Inderbitzen 334). These labeled traits become an expectation, or in some cases, a lack of expectation for the individual to follow. These labels can create barriers. Both of these theories create "unintentional" social control that society inflects on individuals who fit outside the norm.

Looking at the different concepts associated with labeling theory, the independent variable, within this paper, is internalization. It is the core root of this theory, and without it the process of labeling would have no effect on people. Internalization it's self is taking in an idea and making it apart of the individual's very well-being, attitude, belief, and actions. It can become the very center of a person's character. With labeling, an individual's "own self-concepts are reflections of others' conception of [them]" (Akers152). It's a way society molds people to fit into a category. It could also be linked with the self-fulfilling prophecy. Looking at Gove's idea of creating a criminal "the process of making the criminal is a process of tagging, defining, identifying, segregating, describing, emphasizing, making conscious, and self-conscious; it becomes a way of stimulating, suggesting, emphasizing, and evoking the very traits that are complained of" (Inderbitzen 337). Once someone receives that label they are expected to fulfill it and not deviate from it.

Once an individual is labeled as deviant they will then participate in deviant behavior, which leads to the dependent variable: deviance. There are many different definitions on what is deviant. According to Becker, deviance could be “acts that break social rules...anything that varies too widely from average”, and can mean “the presence of a disease”, but ultimately it is behavior outside of what is considered normal by society (Inderbitzen 3-4). For this research project the data will focus on the negative deviant behavior. Negative deviant behavior seems to be the most commonly researched form of deviance. This negative type of deviance could deal with extreme forms such as drug dealing, prostitution, arms dealing, and terrorism, or it can deal with less extreme cases such as bullying, bad grades, and petty theft. It has a wide range that it can reach and be measured by.

This paper will look at the levels of deviance associated with the amount of internalization of the negative stereotypical labels that are placed on people. The negative stereotype could involve their race, socioeconomic status, and sex/gender. It is incredibly important to see how something that is preconceived, without any logical backing, can play a hand in how much deviant behavior an individual will participate in.

Literature Review

A large percentage of the journal articles within the paper will support the idea of there being a correlation between internalization and self-perception, and deviance. A majority of the research done in these areas allows for a better understanding of crime and the demographic of people who participate in what society considers deviant. The independent, internalization, and preceding control, age, are related in the way that shows that with time and experiences people develop a strong sense of a self identity through the process of self internalization. Therefore negative self-perceptions could lead to an increase in negative behavior. In turn creating positive self-images could serve as a counter to deviance actions in typically highly deviant populations. All though most research done does reflect these correlations, there is research that has been produced that counter these ideas.

The main affect of the link between internalization and deviance is supported by several articles such as, *Teacher Disapproval, Delinquent Peers, and Self-Reported Delinquency: a Longitudinal Test of Labeling Theory; Official Labeling, Criminal Embeddedness, and Subsequent Delinquency: a Longitudinal Test of Labeling Theory; Introductory Comments on the Socialization of Adults*. All of these articles show the correlations between internalization and deviance. A lot of them look at the correlation, or positive relationship, between the two in adolescent populations.

Contrary to this, the article *Every Cloud Has a Silver Lining: Positive Effects of Deviant Coworkers* argues for a reverse correlation. Instead of showing deviance as dependent, I shows

deviance as an independent variable. However, there could be other research out to counter the whole correlation itself.

There are many preceding controls when it comes to any relationship having to do with deviance. For everyone there is one thing that is constantly changing, and that is age. This is because age affects everyone similarly. When looking at the positive relationship between age and internalization, there were several journal articles found. A few of these include: *Social Status as a Predictor of Race and Gender Stereotypes in Late Childhood and Early Adolescence*; *Young children's racial awareness and affect and their perceptions about mothers' racial affect in a multiracial context*; *Self-Verification Strivings in Children Holding Negative Self-Views: The Mitigating Effects of a Preceding Success Experience*. Although most of these looked at race, they also incorporated age as a factor. Most of the articles found that when children had negative self-views that they typically had negative feedback. With age, children were more readily able to identify negative stereotypes. At the time this paper was written, an article to contradict this idea could not be found, and it is acknowledged that there is a possibility for some to be in circulation.

As for the relationship between age and deviance, it tends to be negative ~~relationship~~. This means that as age goes up, deviance goes down. In the articles *Deterrence Theory Approach to Socioeconomic/Demographic Correlates of Crime*; and *Crime and Deviance in the Life Course* reinforces this relationship. Age, as well as other factors such as responsibility, typically deters older populations from violating laws and norms. With age, comes a range of social phenomena that completely affects this relationship.

On the other hand, looking at the research done in *Longitudinal Relations Among Negative Affect, Substance Use, and Peer Deviance During the Transition From Middle to Late Adolescence*, made it seem like time and experience with continual deviance created a positive relationship with age which could contradict the other articles. This is why it is important to highlight that the above articles acknowledge that deviance does peak in young adulthood, but that deviance does decrease over time with age. In away this article contradicts the negative relationship that it both reinforces and presents.

The relationship between Income and internalization, or self-perception, has a positive trajectory. Some articles that had research to back up this relationship include *The Influence of Ethnicity and Adverse Life Experiences During Adolescence on Young Adult Socioeconomic Attainment: The Moderating Role of Education*; and *Moving Ahead: Evaluation of a Work-Skills Training Program for Homeless Adults*. It was found that the influences of the adolescents environment had an effect on their socioeconomically attainment. It was also found that improvements in adults' self-esteem and self-efficacy improved their life skills, employment, housing status, general health status all of these could be a measurement of the positive correlation between income and internalization.

The article *The Family Antecedents and the Subsequent Outcomes of Early Puberty* shows that income is not the only variable to affect this relationship. The research done for this article shows the effects low income can have on children, and causes them to mature faster than those who have parents with higher incomes. At the same time, it reinforces the fact of increased deviance by pointing out that due to this increase in maturity, this individuals will

participate in the deviant behavior they internalized with maturity as they get older, which causes it to circle back to age or even contradict the other articles.

This leads to a positive relationship between income and deviance. Some articles that support this relationship include *Relations Between Youth Antisocial and Prosocial Activities; Socioeconomic Predictors of Intimate Partner Violence Among White, Black, and Hispanic Couples in the United States*. This article looked at how income and family status plays a role in a child's social capability and deviant behavior. Where as the other article looks at domestic violence, and found that the annual household income was the best indicator of violence displaced on to a partner. Whereas *The Meaning Of Work: Conceptualizing the Deterrent Effect of Employment on Crime Among Young Adults* found that it was the quality of employment, not the young adults income that influenced there deviant behavior.

Results

The results were very interesting. Table 1 shows three indices: internalization, deviance, and preexisting conditions. Internalization is measured by one's individual self-identification as a gang member, when responding to the survey. The deviance index incorporated one's involvement in drug dealing, robbery for drugs, being expelled, and their opinions on weapons being brought to campus. The alpha produced for this was 0.401. The control index incorporated is age, their opinion on whether their family has enough money, and their perception on if they live in a good place. The standard deviation in all of the tables tended to remain consistent, when looked at individual; but varies between indices.

Looking at table 2, the difference of the means test, compared individuals with below average levels of the independent concept to those with above average levels. Of those in the lower independent concept category their average dependent concept score was -.1001, compared to .2589 for those in the higher category. This difference is significant, showing that individuals with higher levels of independent concept have higher levels of dependent concept.

Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6 show the impact of internalization and deviance. For the most part, Table 3 follows a similar pattern. The lower the individual's internalization, measured by their identification as a gang member, the lower their affiliation with deviance was. Conversely, the higher their internalization, the higher they ranked within the deviance index. Table 5 also shows these same results. Table 4 similarly shows the lower the internalization, the lower the deviance rate. However, it also shows that when controlling for age, the lower the internalization the higher the deviance rate. Table 6 overwhelmingly showed the same results.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Independent concept	N	mean	min	max	SD	Skew
Gang member	772	0.22	0	1	0.45	1.349
Dependent concept; Deviance						
Involvement in drug dealing	772	0.1503	0	1	0.35756	1.961
Rob for drugs	772	0.04	0	3	0.262	7.814
Reason expelled	772	0.3161	0	4	0.72466	3.457
Weapon no big deal	772	1.67	1	4	0.882	1.147
Dependent index						
0.401	772	0.622	0.069	1.59	1.521	0.263
Controls						
Age	772	16.09	14	20	1.261	0.273
Enough cash	772	2.94	1	4	0.903	-0.612
Good life	772	2.54	1	4	0.967	-1.3

Table 2: T-Test for the relationship between Internalization and deviance

	N	Average	SD	t
Low IC Score	604	-.1001	.49547	.02016
High IC Score	168	.2589	.72505	.05594
		* p < 0.05	** p < 0.01	*** p < 0.001

Table 3: Impact of Internalization and Deviance

		Independent			
		Low		High	
Dependent	Low	283	86%	46	14%
	Middle	141	79.7%	36	20.3%
	High	180	67.7%	86	32.3%
	Total		78.2%		21.8%

Table 4: Impact of Internalization and Deviance in Age Category 1

		Independent			
		Low		High	
Dependent	Low	175	85.4%	30	14.6%
	Middle	89	76.1%	28	23.9%

High	111	65.3%	59	34.7%
Total		76.2%		23.8%

Table 5: Impact of Internalization and Deviance in Age Category 2

		Independent			
		Low		High	
Dependent	Low	98	86.7%	15	13.3%
	Middle	51	87.9%	7	12.1%
	High	65	71.4%	26	28.6%
	Total		81.7%		18.3%

Table 6: Impact of Internalization and Deviance in Age Category 3

		Independent			
		Low		High	
Dependent	Low	10	90.9%	1	9.1%
	Middle	1	50%	1	50%
	High	4	80%	1	20%
	Total		83.3%		16.7%

Methods and Ethics

The data used for this research was collected by investigators from Tulane University, Department of Sociology; and disrupted by the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data. Its main focus was to study youth violence in the states of California, Illinois, Louisiana and New Jersey. The data was collected on two groups: incarcerated juveniles and inner-city high school students. Questions on "sociodemographic characteristics, school experiences, gun ownership, gun use for several types of firearms, gun acquisition patterns, gun-carrying habits, use of other weapons, gang membership and gang activities, self-reported criminal histories, victimization patterns, drug use, alcohol use, and attitudes concerning guns, crime, and violence" were collected on 772 youths (Firearms, Violence, and Youth in California, Illinois, Louisiana, and New Jersey). Inmates were given five dollars for participation, and both groups were given the option of taking the survey in Spanish, in order to have a maximum number of responses. To make an analysis more feasible, a list wise deletion will be used to address any missing data within the survey. The information gained will be used to analysis both the degree of internalization of negative labels, and its impact on the level of deviance participated in.

Internalization was measured by the individual's self-identification as a gang member: they either identified themselves as a member, or they didn't. Deviance was measured by their involvement in drug dealing, robbery for drugs, their reasons for getting expelled and their views on bringing a weapon to school. The controls used are age, monetary resources, and if they considered themselves to live a "good life."

Conclusion

This paper analyzed the relationships between internalization, and deviance terms of Labeling Theory. It was hypothesized that the more an individual internalizes negative labels, the more likely it will have an affect on the level of deviance an individual will potentially participate in. This research used deductive reasoning while using secondary data analysis on a survey that was conducted for studying youth violence of incarcerated juveniles and inner-city high school students in the states of California, Illinois, Louisiana and New Jersey. This research effectively used the answers from this survey to evaluate the relationship between internalization and deviance.

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