

Socialization and the Normalization of Deviance: A

Partial Test of Social Learning Theory

Ronald Akers created our current understanding of social learning theory by drawing inspiration from Bandura's social learning theory and differential association theory.¹ This updated version of social learning theory states that "human behavior is modeled through observation of human social interactions, either directly from observing those who are a close intimate contact or indirectly through the media."² It is expanded upon by the assertion that behavior is encouraged through observing a behavior rewarded either for the participant, for another person, or discouraged by seeing a behavior punished or seeing someone punished for it.³ This theory is well documented in multiple studies and is generally supported; however, it has been suggested that more studies be conducted that look at and test other aspects of the theory as it tends to be overlooked by researchers.⁴ This study will explore how imitation of a variety of social groups, or more specifically how socialization leads to the normalization of deviance in three different types of socialization and deviance.

Previous Research

Akers, Krohn, Lanza-Kaduce, and Radosevich looked at the social learning theory of deviant behavior by observing adolescent drinking and drug behavior.⁵ Akers, et al. chose to study adolescent drinking and drug behaviors for two main reasons, the first being that this subsect of the population fell under the major theories of deviance at the time of the study and the second being that other data suggested that people learn this particular deviant behavior through socialization, which can normalize and make views more tolerant toward drinking and doing drugs.⁶ Males and females in seventh through twelfth grade were surveyed.⁷ This study had four independent variables imitation, differential association, definitions, and differential

reinforcements.⁸ The dependent variable was the frequency of use of either alcohol and/or marijuana as measured on both a frequency-of-use scale and a Quantity Frequency Scale; however, both resulted in similar numbers so the researchers defaulted to the frequency-of-use scale.⁹ Participants were also asked to check a list of potential problems that may have resulted from the use of one of those substances and then the two variables are compared.¹⁰ The results showed strong support for socio-environmental factors contributing to a rise in adolescent alcohol and marijuana use.¹¹ This supports that drug deviance can be acquired through socialization due to its normalizing effect.

Durkin, Clark, and Wolfe (2005) tested the Social Learning Theory of Deviance by looking at binge drinking in college students. Undergraduate students (n=1,459) were surveyed who were enrolled in social sciences classes, however, the classes were general education courses and thus were likely to reflect the school's population.¹² The dependent variable was binge drinking, which was measured by how often participants had consumed five or more drinks in one sitting; the results were then categorized based on a classification scheme made by Wechsler, Davenport, Dowdall, Moeykens, and Castillo (1994).¹³ The independent variables were Greek organization affiliation, gender, race, differential peer association, peer norm qualities, friend's reaction, effects of drinking, neutralizations, specific definition, and general definition.¹⁴ The results showed that differential peer association was the strongest predictor of binge drinking, followed by the specific definition of the behavior and then neutralization.¹⁵ After considering social learning variables, the significant effect of gender and Greek affiliation disappeared and the effect of race was drastically reduced.¹⁶ This showed that socialization was the leading cause of the adoption of deviant binge drinking behavior, further supporting Social Learning Theory of drug deviance.

Estrada, Richards, Gee, & Baskin-Sommers looked at the influence of Social Learning Theory under the context of exposure to violence and increased likelihood of engaging in violent crimes.¹⁷ This research was designed to further expand on past research which showed that Social Learning Theory and exposure to violence led to an increased risk of susceptibility to committing violent crimes.¹⁸ Participants were asked if they committed violent crimes in the past, and were asked to complete two auditory basic learning tasks, one measuring non-associative learning (habituation) and another measuring associative learning acquisition (classical conditioning).¹⁹ The results showed individuals with more exposure to violence had a decrease in the likelihood of physiological habituation; however, it was unrelated to associative learning acquisitions.²⁰ It was also shown that more exposure to violence and non-habituation was a high predictor for violent crimes, which suggests that more exposure to violence and variations in capacity for non-associative learning may confer a risk for violent behavior.²¹ This seemed to indicate that violent criminal behaviors were linked to exposure and socialization with violence and violent crime.

Perry and Bussey looked at how gender roles were learned through the family, specifically by modeling ourselves off of our parents of the same sex.²² Two separate experiments were performed the first experiment confirmed that imitation was present, and the second extended the validity of the formation.²³ These results suggest that a child's imitation of an adult is strongly influenced by how much the child believes that the adult is displaying behavior appropriate for their gender.²⁴ This shows an example of our environment, and our family can shape our norms, and thus influence the likelihood of us becoming deviant.

These studies showed specific evidence of social learning theory leading to the acquisition of deviant traits in three deviant categories, social, criminal, and drug. Akers, Krohn,

Lanza-Kaduce, and Radosevich (1979); and Durkin, Clark, and Wolfe (2005) tested the acquisition of learned drug behaviors in the college years which supports social learning theory, this serves as evidence that socialization can lead to the normalization of deviant drug behaviors. Estrada et al.'s (2020) study showed how violence could be learned under the context of social learning theory and thus lead to a rise of violent crimes through socializing and exposure to violence; so, it supports that criminal deviance can be learned through socialization. Perry and Bussey's (1979) study showed how gendered behaviors can be learned and adopted through the context of social learning theory, which serves as an example of how socialization can lead to deviance in deviation from accepted societal gender norms.

Purpose of Current Study

This study focused on how socialization with deviants contributes to the learning of deviant behavior through imitation, and thus serves as a partial test of Aker's Social Learning Theory. The primary focus of this study was on the interaction between three main social groups, those being family, community, or friends, and their contribution to the learning of three main deviant categories, drug, criminal and social deviancy. The primary hypothesis is socialization with a deviant in the majority of cases will lead to the acquisition of deviant behaviors and traits, which will support Social Learning Theory. The secondary hypothesis is all three social groups will have an impact on learned deviance, but the group with the largest impact will be friends. Previous research has shown that peer pressure plays a large role in the normalization of behaviors including deviant behaviors, especially among peers and friends.²⁵ This is in part caused by everyone's inert desire to fit in which can exert pressure on us to conform and thus accept deviant behaviors as normal and acceptable. However, parents also play a large role in this socialization as parents can influence who we associate with and at earlier life stages help us

to define what is normal, which can be a protective factor against the negative impacts of Social Learning Theory.²⁶ This led to the third hypothesis, which was high comorbidity would exist between family and friends, and the acceptance of a deviant behavior as normal.

Methodology

Instrumentation

A survey was created on Qualtrics, the online survey platform that allows for participants to remain anonymous by not requiring the collection of any identifiable information, through a setting called “anonymize responses,” which applied these settings for this survey. Prior to the survey being administered, the researcher read a prepared dialogue that went over the informed consent form, the security of the survey’s anonymity, discussed how to take the survey, and discussed the survey in a way that would avoid bias but still allow participants to have a general understanding of the purpose of this experiment. Participants were then given the option to sign the informed consent sheet and take the survey on their personal devices or complete a hard copy of the survey; in either case not filling out the informed consent form would opt them out of taking the survey. The survey was divided into three main sections, the first section verified that the participant consented to the survey, the second part gathered demographic data about the participants, and the third part was the questionnaire that served as a partial test of Akers Social Learning Theory. The questions were in a semi-random order, where the type of deviant categories was not in order but the question that asked if the participant engaged in a deviant behavior, was always followed by which group if any also participated in that deviant behavior. Three types of deviance were surveyed which included drug, criminal, and social deviance, respondents were then asked to identify if family, friends, community, or none of these groups

participated in one of the three deviant types. The settings allowed for multiple social groups to be chosen but only yes or no for the deviant behavior.

Method

Participation in this survey was completely voluntary. A convenience sample was generated when an email was sent out to all North Carolina Wesleyan College, a small liberal arts college in the Southern United States faculty teaching general education courses asking if the survey could be administered in their classes. Utilizing this type of sampling actually benefits the research as it allowed students of all majors to be represented as the classes were required for all majors to graduate. This removed any bias that would be caused due to academic majors, and better reflect the student body. The survey was administered to 105 students, however, ten students were removed from the survey as they were international students and deviance is cultural and is defined differently by laws and norms. Thus, data from 95 students was analyzed. Since North Carolina Wesleyan College had 731 non-international students at the time of the survey being conducted, which accounts for about 13 percent of the student body and likely represents the school's traditional non-international population; thus, the results would likely be similar at other schools in the Southern United States. The survey was divided into four main sections. The first section gathered demographic information and was followed by three questions which gauged whether the participants engaged in a deviant behavior that fell into one of the three subcategories of criminal, social, or drug deviance. When a participant indicated that they engaged or did not engage in one or multiple of the deviance types we looked at which social groups if any also participated in the type of deviance. The questions that contained drug and criminal activities were easy to design as it was based on laws and societal norms such as it being deviant to binge drink alcohol, smoke marijuana, or steal from a store; while the social

deviance questions were based on violation of social norms such as cheating on a test or in relationships, and other obvious social norm violations. All three types of questions ranged in the severity of the deviant violation allowing for this test to be fair and a more general look at the impact of socialization on learned deviance. The question order was randomized to avoid question order bias.

To interpret the data, the responses were coded to a numeric value. For the questions which asked whether participants engaged in deviant behaviors or not “Yes” responses were coded to one and “No” responses were coded to two. For the follow-up questions which asked what groups, if any, engaged in the deviant behaviors, “Family” was coded to one, “Community Member” was coded to two, “Friends/Peers” was coded to three, and “None of these groups” was coded to four. The data was then sorted into the respective deviant categories of drug, criminal, and social deviance and then imported into three separate Microsoft Excel sheets. These three Excel sheets were then individually exported into IBM’s SPSS Statistics Software which was used to create a cross-tabulations table as well as to perform a Chi-square Analysis, a Crammer’s V Analysis, as well as perform a Wilks’ Lambda to further verify the results. The cross-tabulations table was then looked over to gauge the impact that a variety of social groups or multiple groups had on the adoption of a deviant behavior.

Results

Using a significant level of .01 the data was analyzed for all three deviance types to gauge the impact that socialization has on the learning and adoption of a deviant behavior. The chi-square test was used to gauge the significance of the relationship, but some groups had fewer than five responses in a section, so a test needed to be done to verify the results. Crammer’s V was also used as it is similar to a correlation coefficient and gauges the strength of a relationship.

To further confirm that a significant relationship existed between socialization and deviance, Lambda was used as it was able to test for significance without any potential bias from the groups that had fewer than five responses as well as its ability to predict the likelihood of socialization leading to deviance. Cross-tabulation was used to reveal the percentages and frequency of question responses for the survey and three deviance types, which matters as long as the results suggest a significant relationship.

Drug Deviance

The relationship between engaging in drug deviancy and socializing with a drug deviant was found to be significant by a Pearson Chi-Square analysis as indicated by $X^2 (8, N = 95) = 249.478, p < .001$. However, since this deviance group had fewer than five responses in some cells, it was ideal to use Lambda and Cramer's V to ensure this significant relationship was correct. The Lambda value was 0.636 which means that socialization is an indicator of deviance about 64 percent of the time. It also indicates a strong relationship as the value is over 0.5 which is the standard value to determine a strong relationship for a lambda value, and the approximate significance was determined to be $< .001$. This falls in line with the P-value and confirms that the relationship is present and significant for drug deviance. Additionally, the Cramer's V value was 0.725, and that indicates a strong relationship, which further serves as a check for this significant relationship.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	248.349 ^a	7	<.001
Likelihood Ratio	293.063	7	<.001
N of Valid Cases	473		

Table 1: This table shows the Pearson Chi-Square data for drug deviance.

	Value	Asymptotic Standard Error a	Approximate T ^b	Approximate Significance
Have you ever done drugs? Dependent	.635	.034	12.996	<.001

Table 2: This table shows the Lambda analysis, as our data had the independent variable as socialization, and our dependent variable as engaging in drug deviance we use the lambda value which aligned with this interpretation.

After the significance of the data was confirmed a cross-tabulation table was created in SPSS which allowed us to accurately look at the drug deviance data and more easily interpret the results. During this analysis it was found that if a participant engaged in a drug deviant behavior then 7.9 percent had only their family engage in drug use, 0.4 percent had family and community members who did drugs, 34.7 percent had family, community members, and friends who did drugs, 20.8 percent had family and friends who used drugs, 0 percent had just community members who used drugs, 17 percent had community members and friends who also did drugs, 18.1 percent had just friends do drugs, and 1.1 percent had none of the groups engage in drug use. This shows that while crossover between groups was the lead factor in socialization which contributed to drug deviance the most, the social group which had the largest impact was friends. It was present in the top 4 socialization groups, accounting for 90.6 percent of the socialization present in learned drug deviance, followed by family with 63.8 percent presence in the socialization factor, then community members which was present in 52.1 percent of socialization leading to learned deviance and lastly followed by no socialization at 1.1 percent. However, in the drug deviance category, it was also found that if a participant did not engage in a drug deviant behavior then, 9.6 percent had only their family engage in drug use, 4.3 percent had family and community members who did drugs, 6.7 percent had family, community members, and friends who did drugs, 4.8 percent had family and friends who used drugs, 5.3 percent had

just community members who used drugs, 3.4 percent had community members and friends who also did drugs, 10.1 percent had just friends do drugs, and 55.8 percent had none of the groups engage in drug use. The leading groups which did not lead to learned deviance were as follows: 55.8 percent was that there was no socialization with a drug deviant, followed by family which accounted for 25.4 percent, and friends and community members tied at 25 percent each.

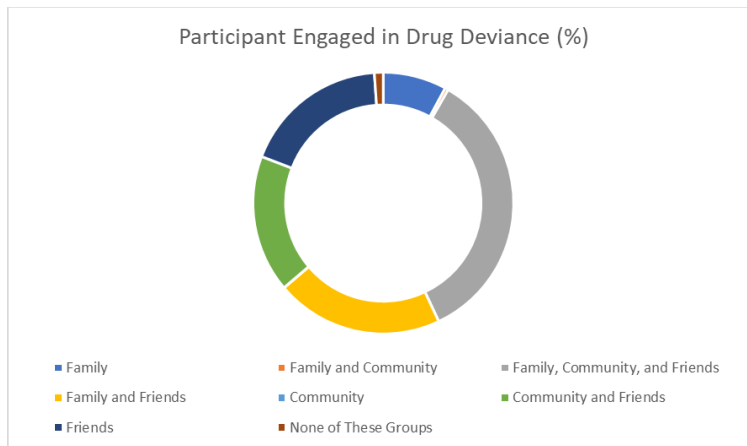


Figure 1: This shows the percentage of participants who engaged in drug deviance and the type of socialization present.

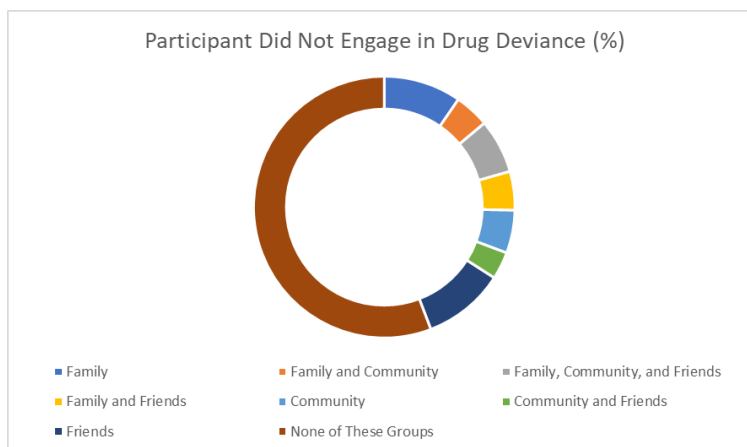


Figure 2: This shows the percentage of participants who did not engage in drug deviance and the type of socialization present.

Social Deviance

The relationship between engaging in social deviancy and socializing with a social deviant was found to be significant by a Pearson Chi-Square analysis as indicated by $\chi^2 (7, N = 95) = 269.171, p < .001$. However, since this deviance group had fewer than five responses in a cell, it was ideal to use Lambda and Cramer's V to ensure this significant relationship was correct. The Lambda value was 0.537, which means that socialization is an indicator of deviance about 54 percent of the time. It also indicates a strong relationship as the value is over 0.5, and the approximate significance was determined to be $< .001$. This falls in line with the P-value and confirms that the relationship is present and significant for social deviancy. Additionally, the Cramer's V value was 0.687, and that indicates a strong relationship, which further serves as a check for this significant relationship.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	269.171 ^a	7	<.001
Likelihood Ratio	281.897	7	<.001
N of Valid Cases	570		

Table 3: This table shows the Pearson Chi-Square data for social deviance.

			Value	Asymptotic Standard Error ^a	Approximate T ^b	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Lambda	Symmetric	.294	.027	9.364	<.001
		Social Deviant: Yes or no Dependent	.537	.041	9.540	<.001
		Which group if any did the deviant act Dependent	.191	.022	8.306	<.001

Table 4: This table shows the Lambda analysis, as our data had the independent variable as socialization, and our dependent variable as engaging in social deviance we use the lambda value which aligned with this interpretation.

After the significance of the data was confirmed a cross-tabulation table was created in SPSS which allowed us to accurately look at the drug deviance data and more easily interpret the results. During this analysis, it was found that if a participant engaged in socially deviant behavior, then about 0.8 percent had only their family engaged in social deviance, 0 percent had family and community members who engaged in social deviance, 35.6 percent had family, community members, and friends who engaged in social deviance, 11.2 percent had family and friends who engaged in social deviance, 0.3 percent had only community members who engaged in social deviance, 24.2 percent had community members and friends who also engaged in social deviance, 26.5 percent had just friends engage in social deviance, and about 1.5 percent had none of the groups engage in social deviance. This shows that while crossover between groups was the lead factor in socialization which contributed to social deviance the most, the social group which had the largest impact was friends as it was present in the top 4 socialization groups accounting for 97.5 percent of the socialization present in learned social deviance, followed by community members with 60.1 percent presence in the socialization factor, then family which was present in 47.6 percent and lastly followed by no socialization at 1.5 percent. However, in the social deviance category, it was also found that if a participant did not engage in a socially deviant behavior then, 2.8 percent had just their family engaged in social deviance, 1.1 percent had family and community members who engaged in social deviance, 6.8 percent had family, community members, and friends who engaged in social deviance, 6.8 percent had family and friends who engaged in social deviance, 3.4 percent had only community members who engaged in social deviance, 3.4 percent had community members and friends who also engaged in social deviance, 23.7 percent had only friends who engaged in social deviance, and 52 percent had none of the groups engage in social deviance. The leading groups which did not lead to learned social

deviance were as follows: 52 percent was that there was no socialization with a social deviant, followed by friends which accounted for 40.7 percent, then family for 17.5 percent, and lastly community in 13.6 percent.

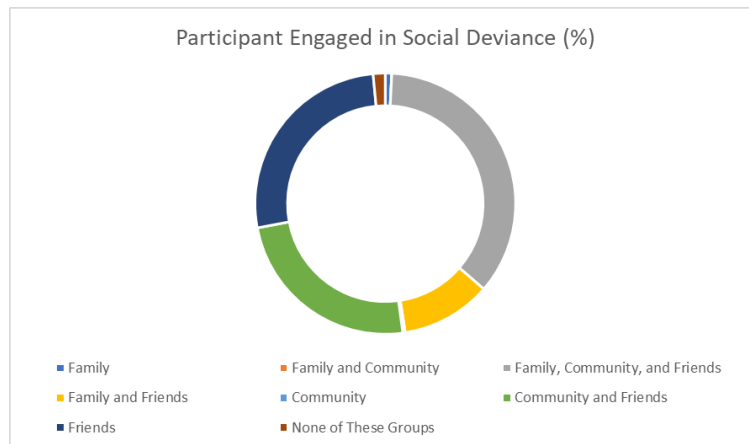


Figure 3: This shows the percentage of participants who engaged in social deviance and the type of socialization present.

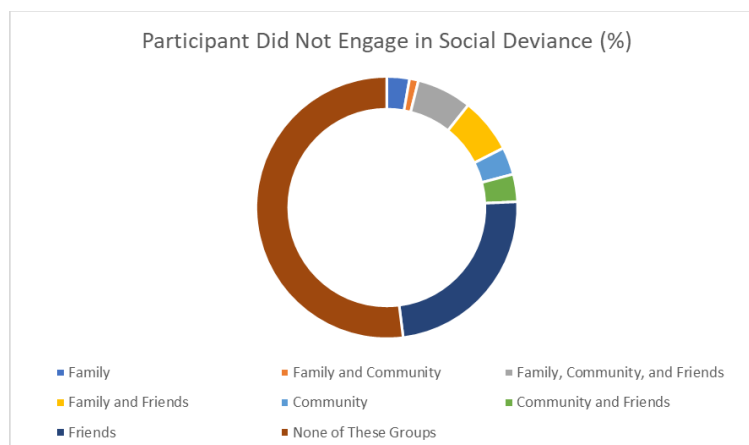


Figure 4: This shows the percentage of participants who did not engage in social deviance and the type of socialization present.

Criminal Deviance

The relationship between engaging in criminal deviancy and socializing with a criminal deviant was found to be significant by a Pearson Chi-Square analysis as indicated by $X^2 (7, N =$

95) = 309.916, $p < .001$. However, since this deviance group had fewer than five responses in a cell, it was ideal to use Lambda and Cramer's V to ensure this significant relationship was correct. The Lambda value was 0.740, which means that socialization is an indicator of deviance about 74 percent of the time. It also indicates a strong relationship as the value is over 0.5 which is the standard value to determine a strong relationship for a lambda value, and the approximate significance was determined to be $< .001$. This falls in line with the P-value and confirms that the relationship is present and significant for social deviancy. Additionally, the Cramer's V value was 0.808, and that indicates a strong relationship, which further serves as a check for this significant relationship.

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	309.916 ^a	7	$< .001$
Likelihood Ratio	371.997	7	$< .001$
N of Valid Cases	475		

Table 5: This table shows the Pearson Chi-Square data for criminal deviance.

			Value	Asymptotic Standard Error ^a	Approximate T ^b	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Lambda	Symmetric	.499	.024	23.237	$< .001$
		Criminal Deviant: Yes or no Dependent	.740	.032	13.822	$< .001$
		Which group if any did the deviant act Dependent	.364	.026	12.680	$< .001$

Table 6: This table shows the Lambda analysis, as our data had the independent variable as socialization, and our dependent variable as engaging in criminal deviance we use the lambda value which aligned with this interpretation.

After the significance of the data was confirmed a cross-tabulation table was created in SPSS which allowed us to accurately look at the drug deviance data and more easily interpret the results. During this analysis, it was found that if a participant engaged in a criminally deviant

behavior then, about 2.1 percent had only their family engage in criminal activities, 0.4 percent had family and community members who did criminal activities, 44.5 percent had family, community members, and friends who engaged in criminal activities, 18.4 percent had family and friends who engaged in criminal activities, 0 percent had just community members who engaged in criminal activities, 11.7 percent had community members and friends who also engaged in criminal activities, 22.3 percent had only friends who engaged in criminal deviance, and about 0.6 percent had none of the groups engage in criminal activities. This shows that while crossover between groups was the lead factor in socialization which contributed to criminal deviance, the most the social group which had the largest impact was friends as it was present in the top 4 socialization groups, accounting for 96.9 percent of the socialization present in learned drug deviance, followed by family with 65.4 percent presence in the socialization factor, followed by community members which was present in 56.6 percent of socialization leading to learned deviance and lastly followed by no socialization at 0.6 percent. However, in the criminal deviance category, it was also found that if a participant did not engage in a criminally deviant behavior then 2.6 percent had only their family engaged in criminal activities, 2.6 percent had family and community members who engaged in criminal activities, 3.1 percent had family, community members, and friends who engaged in criminal activities, 6.3 percent had family and friends who engaged in criminal activities, 4.2 percent had only community members who engaged in criminal activities, 2.1 percent had community members and friends who also engaged in criminal activities, 10.4 percent had only friends who engaged in criminal activities, and 68.8 percent had none of the groups engage in criminal activity. The leading groups which did not lead to learned criminal deviance were as follows: 68.8 percent of the socialization not leading to criminal deviance was that there was no socialization with a criminal deviant,

followed by friends which accounted for 21.9 percent, 14.6 percent in family, and 12 percent in community members.

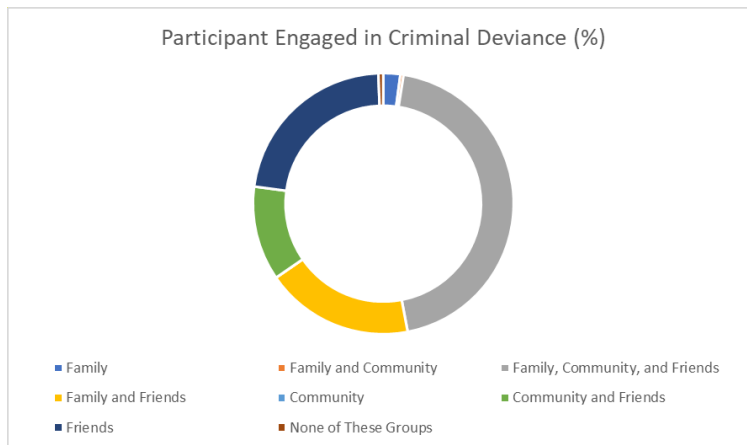


Figure 5: This shows the percentage of participants who engaged in a criminally deviant behavior and the type of socialization present.

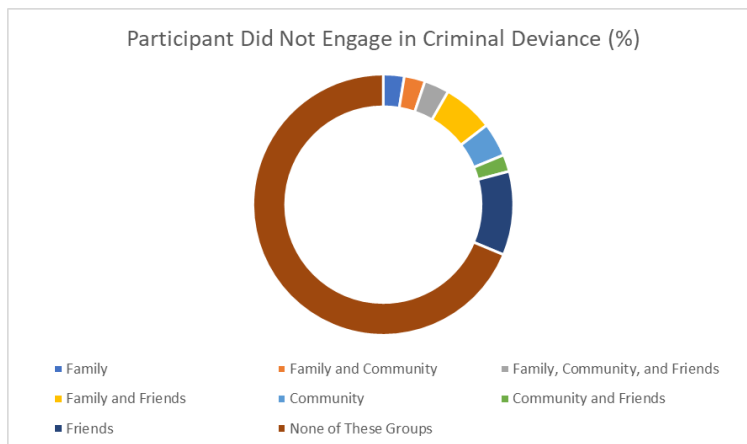


Figure 6: This shows the percentage of participants who did not engage in a criminally deviant behavior and the type of socialization present.

Conclusion

Overall, the confidence level in all three groups was determined to be 99.9 percent accurate which means that the data is extremely unlikely to have occurred by chance and provides significant support that socialization leads to the normalization of a deviant behavior as

indicated by the significance of the relationship. This allowed for the acceptance of all three hypotheses. The primary hypothesis was that socialization with a deviant in the majority of cases will lead to the acquisition of deviant behaviors and traits, which will support Social Learning Theory, and this was proven true in our P-Value which showed a very strong relationship between associating with a deviant and engaging in a deviant behavior. The secondary hypothesis was all three social groups will have an impact on learned deviance. It was also predicted that the group with the largest impact would be friends. This hypothesis was accepted as friends were the largest individual social group that related to deviance, as well as being the social group in the most crossover groups which led to the acquisition of a deviant behavior. The third hypothesis was that high comorbidity would exist between family and friends and the acceptance of a deviant behavior as normal. The crossover effect was strong in all three deviant types and in all three types friends and family together accounted for a large majority of learned deviance. However, some studies have shown that families can be a mediating factor as they can influence who their child socialized with, so, a follow-up study should be conducted to explore this phenomenon to see if it is a protective factor.

Additionally, the slight discrepancy between engaging in a deviant behavior and associating with deviants and not engaging in a deviant behavior while socializing with deviants is present in all three deviance types. However, there are a few explanations that may explain this phenomenon. The first is that once you adjust for the crossover effect of more than one socialization factor, such as friends and family, the differences almost disappear and are far less apparent, which could suggest that these socialization factors work together to normalize a behavior—an explanation that is supported when we look at all three socialization factors being present and the strong disparity that exists between engaging in the behavior and not engaging in

the behavior. This explanation has been partially supported by other researchers such as Telzer (2018) who noted that family and friends can lead to the normalization of a behavior especially when the two align. Another explanation is that with survey research there is always a risk of lying, which may be motivated by them wanting to conform to their ideal self and not their true self, a theory rooted in identity theory, and further explained in “Lies, Damned Lies, and Survey Self-Reports? Identity as a Cause of Measurement Bias” by Brenner and DeLamater. The chance of participants lying about not engaging in deviant behavior was likely increased as well due to school classroom setting, the presence of a teacher in the classroom, and a perceived fear of being caught, even though the survey ensured anonymity or a feeling of shame for breaking the societal norms. Another explanation is that individual differences such as personality type work as a proactive protection against peer pressure lowering the susceptibility to adopt these deviant behaviors. Two explanations which relate to other aspects of Social Learning Theory that were not measured by this survey are that a negative association was formed about the deviant behavior due to seeing some form of punishment happen to the individual or social factor that engaged in the deviant behavior such as a friend being arrested or potentially other positive role models in media or in a different social group working as a counter to the influence of a separate social group, as you may favor imitating the behaviors you see more likely to benefit you.

Discussion

Despite being very well established and credible, research into Social Learning Theory tends to focus on specific tests of the theory on specific things such as adolescent drinking behavior, and often these tests do not look at the type of social group that is impacting the learning of the behavior. This experiment added to the research as it tested the three main types of deviance and provided a look at the impact each social group had as well as their crossover

influence. Aside from providing more research that supports that criminal, social, and drug deviance is significantly related to socialization and social learning theory, it also can provide evidence that counters the claim that Social Learning Theory only accounts for minor youth misbehavior as the questions in each category ranged in legality and severity and the results remained consistent in the impact of socialization on learned deviance. A fact made more apparent was that criminal deviance was shown to be the deviance type with the strongest predictor ranking out of the three deviant types tested. Additionally, by seeing which groups tend to have the most influence on the learning of deviant behaviors we can better understand how to identify people at high risk and help promote positive socialization for them.

The results showed that friends have a large impact on drug deviance which aligned with previous research that showed people in the age range of 18 to 25 were more susceptible to influence and thus were more likely to engage in drug deviance.²⁷ This may mean that those research studies could apply to other forms of deviance as well, meaning that the higher susceptibility to influence from others and peer pressure can also lead to the adoption of criminal and social deviance. The research also showed that in addition to peers and friends, it was common for multiple social groups to also be present with one another, in the causing of a deviant behavior which shows that the issues and complexities of Social Learning Theory apply to multiple groups and not just one exerting their influence on the normalizing of deviant behaviors. This suggests that our socio-environment is a large contributor in becoming a deviant or adopting deviant traits and behaviors.

It is vital to understand these mechanisms of Social Learning Theory that relate to social groups and their impact on deviance as they can be used to help predict high-risk groups as well as try to develop programs to promote positive socialization. An example of a program that could

be used to promote positive socialization that would be supported by this research is after-school programs and athletics, which are supported by some studies.²⁸ There is a potential for these programs to have adverse effects as if deviants are in the program than it could promote negative socialization and thus the adoption of deviant traits; so, it is essential for positive role models to be in leadership positions such as coach, advisor, or team leader to promote positive behavior and help deviants adopt “normal” traits and attitudes and remove the deviant if necessary. Out of the two activities listed, after school programs seem to be the less controversial solution as a meta-analysis titled “Sports Participation and Juvenile Delinquency: A Meta-Analytic Review” by Spruit et al. shows that the reduction in delinquency effect of sports participation is not consistent and is somewhat controversial as the competitive nature may cause people to act immorally.²⁹ Spruit et al. also found that in team sports, especially when within a school setting, the likelihood of reducing delinquency increased due to the school environment, rules, and the positive socialization from the coach; it may also be aided by the required drug testing and the higher GPA restrictions many school districts use to allow someone to participate in sports.³⁰ These higher standards may also create a culture among athletes which looks unfavorably toward deviant behaviors. Overall, any program which encourages positive socialization and discourages deviant behaviors would be able to help reduce the acquisition of deviant drug, social, and criminal behaviors, and thus they should be promoted more by schools and society as they would proactively prevent crime. The advantages of these programs are extensive as they can help reduce crime rates and thus help take some of the stress and pressures off the prison system as well as reduce the amount of drug use, which would, in turn, reduce the number of lives lost to overdose. Both a reduction in crime rates and drug use would lower the burden on taxpayers, the

criminal justice, and the medical system. It would also help society as a whole by reducing these oftentimes harmful violations of social norms.

Future Research

Future research should be conducted to do four main things. The first should be to test for the effect that socialization has on promoting positive behaviors and the three social groups which impact those positive behaviors and traits. A second experiment should investigate how individual differences in personality type may influence the susceptibility we have to learn deviance via socialization. A third experiment should investigate how positive and negative experiences with our social groups can influence the likelihood of engaging in the deviant behavior ourselves, with the theory being a negative interaction will decrease the likelihood of engaging in the negative behavior. A fourth experiment should look at how afterschool programs and sports participation, may relate to the three social groups and three deviant types as either a preventative means of avoiding learned deviance or a facilitator to learning a deviant behavior. These four future research experiments can expand on the knowledge gained from this experiment and further expand the knowledge of how deviance is learned or prevented and how that relates to Social Learning Theory and thus support the suggested proactive prevention factors.

ENDNOTES

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