

# Deviance and control in a feature film `boyz n the hood`

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



Deviance is a variation from the norm. Everything from picking boogers in public to murdering somebody is considering an act of deviance. There are many theories of deviation and the film *Boyz in the Hood* and it provides a good base for understanding and providing real life examples concerning deviant behavior. The major issues apparent in the film are concerning the control and labeling theory which gives insight into the characters lives. *Boyz N the Hood* provides many examples of the deviance and control theories.

Deviance in statistics is the variations in what the outcomes are supposed to be. In sociology a deviant is a person who isn't what he should normally be. Any variation from social, cultural or religious norms can be deviation. " In a recent book about deviance, Douglas (1984) has identified rape, homosexuality and terrorism as major categories of deviance today, and his choice of these highlights a recurrent concern among sociologists to link an analysis of deviance with that of particular forms of sexual and violent behavior.

Indeed, a quick glance through the contents of any book dealing with deviance is likely to reveal an interest in making sense of forms of sexual behavior as diverse as prostitution, child abuse, homosexuality, transexualism and extra-marital sexual activity. Similarly with respect to violence, interest has been shown in gang violence, rape, juvenile delinquency, football hooliganism and acts of terrorism. To this list of concerns, however, should be added studies looking at less spectacular forms of deviances such as alcohol dependence, childlessness, stuttering, and solvent use" (Aggleton 1-2)

Many of these deviations are portrayed in the movie. The most significant ones relate to crime, murder, sex, and alcohol and drug abuse. A lot less spectacular forms of deviation are also apparent in the movie. One example of this is when Ricky urinates in one of the alleys right before his death. By studying this film closely a lot of deviant behaviors can be pointed at easily. " John Singleton's 1991 film *Boyz n the Hood* in the context on American sub cultural deviance theories... presents aspects of many of the major theories of deviance (labeling, strain, social control, and differential association).

(Leblanc, 1998, p. 64) The major characters Tre, Tre's father, Ricky and Doughboy represent different forms of deviance and control. Tre's father is a controller because he continuously tells everyone around him to start thinking. Tre is different than the other people in the neighborhood because his father has raised him differently. The dad tries to instill good values in his son so he can succeed and not conform to the deviant norms of his surroundings. Tre's dad is also active in social control. In one scene after the SAT exam Tre's dad takes Tre and Ricky out to see something.

He brings them to a billboard in the neighborhood and asks the two boys what they understand from it. While he explains to them what gentrification a small crowd starts to surround his sermon like speech. He says, " They want us to kill ourselves... the best way you can destroy a people you take their ability to reproduce themselves. " This reflects the opening lines of the movie and the death toll concerning African Americans. " One of out of every twenty-one Black males will be murdered in their lifetime...most will die at the hands of another Black male.

" The dad wants the people in the neighborhood to stop killing each other because " you're doing exactly what they want you to do, you have to think... about your future. " This reflects the control theory and how the dad manages to keep a strong relationship with his son. The control theory states that the closer people are to each other and the stronger their bonds they will be less likely to deviate. Continuously throughout the movie the dad talks to his son about everything and tries to teach him along the way. Another example in the movie is when the dad gives him advice about not having children at a young age.

He says that any guy can have a child but raising one makes him a man. Also after the SAT exam the dad tells the boys how the exam is biased and math is the only section that is universally unbiased in the exam. The father son relationship is not there when it comes to Tre's friends. Ricky and Doughboy are half brothers and their father is never around. Doughboy is the deviant in the family whereas Ricky tries to stay away from trouble. The control theory states that people who have stronger bonds are less likely to deviate compared to people who have weaker bonds.

The boys' behavior and their future can be observed and analyzed by both the control theory and the labeling theory. When their lives are analyzed according to the labeling theory it is easy to see why the two brothers act in a specific way. " The labeling theory states that if people are called something or told who they are often enough shall begin to act in that manner. " (Leblanc, 1998, p. 64) For example, if a child is labeled a bully in school even if he has done the act once and continues to be called a bully it is

quite likely that he will try to or conform to the label that has been given to him.

On the other hand if a person is told that they can excel over and over again they will most like live up to those expectations. In the movie this contrast is observed between Ricky and Doughboy. Their mother continuously puts Doughboy down and praises Ricky. " You ain't shit, you don't do shit, and you ain't never going to amount to shit," is one of the remarks passed by the mother to Doughboy. When we observe the first half of the movie which depicts the boyschildhoodit is apparent that Doughboy was not always a deviant. When the boys in the hood, pun intended, take away Ricky's football Doughboy is appalled.

The child simply wants his brother to have his ball back. He stands up for his brother and he gets beaten up. Because of hispersonalitytype he gets into trouble. Eventually his mother starts putting him down because he is continuously getting into trouble. " The labeling theory suggests that this would explain why he was in jail most of his life, deals drugs, kills people, and is eventually murdered in the end of the movie. This theory also suggests that the encouragement of his mother led Ricky to become a football star and receive ascholarshipto USC. " (Leblanc, 1998, p. 64)

In the end of the movie, Ricky dies when other guys from the neighborhood shoot him and Doughboy dies two weeks after avenging his brother's death. The assumption can be made that Doughboy was murdered by the people connected to his brother's murderers. When he is young he gets into trouble and starts going down a slippery slope because he defends his brother and when he gets old he dies trying to avenge his brother's death. When the <https://assignbuster.com/deviance-control-in-a-feature-film-boyz-n-the-hood/>

lives of Ricky and Doughboy are observed according to the control theory we can have an even better understanding of why Ricky is the polar opposite of his brother.

The control theory talks about the affect of strong bonds between people. Ever since Ricky is little he has had a stronger bond with the people around him. Although both the boys' fathers' are never present Ricky has a football that his father gave to him. When they grow up Ricky has a stronger bond with his mom and his mom favors him more. Ricky also has a girlfriend who lives in his house and a son. Ricky has reasons to not deviate. Although his premarital sexual relationship and having a child before marriage is a type of deviation he does not conform to the deviations that his brother does.

At the end of the movie when Ricky is dead and Doughboy is talking to Tre he says that he has no one, no brother and no mom. He says that his mom never loved him and it was all about Tre. Doughboy and his weak bonds with the people around him led him to deviate more often. Both the labeling theory and the control theory help us understand the lives of the brothers and how they behaved. Tre's father is one of the controllers in the movie and his portrayal of a Black man who thinks is presented respectfully. He continuously teaches his son to think and stay away from deviant behavior.

After Ricky's death he explains to Tre that he should not go out to seek revenge because that is exactly what the system is designed to do. He tells his son that if he wants to shoot a man he should shoot his dad first and that it is too stupid to loose Tre over a stupid battle. His message to Tre and everyone else has always been to stop killing each other and pursue a life that is better. With his guidance Tre is one of the characters that is alive at <https://assignbuster.com/deviance-control-in-a-feature-film-boyz-n-the-hood/>

the end of the movie and goes to college. Although Ricky gets accepted and has a scholarship he dies before he can even embark upon the opportunity.

The other controller is Tre's mother. Ever since he was young he has taught him to stick to his word and that there would be consequences if he wouldn't. He ends up living with his father because he has gotten into a fight at school and his acts have been a breach of contract with his mom. When we compare Tre's and Doughboy's childhood they were both involved in confrontations and physical fights as young children. The only thing different was that Tre had a set of parents who were controllers and instilled strong bonds with each other. The police officer is also a controller in the movie except he presented cynically.

He believes that everyone in the neighborhood is a deviant and should die. When he comes to Tre's house after a break in he tells them that the burglar should have been shot and that he shouldn't have gotten away. He is extremely cynical and does not believe in the betterment of the people in the neighborhood. When Tre is older he is pulled over by the same police officer although he hasn't broken the law. The officer pulls him over out of spite and just to see if he has been drinking, possesses any drugs or weapons. There are many acts of neutralization present in the movie when the deviants try to justify their behavior.

At the sermon in front of the billboard that Tre's dad gives about people killing themselves over stupid things and conforming to the system a few guys listening in try to defend their actions. They say that if someone "messes with them" or causes any trouble they are not going to tolerate anything and take action. They say that they will not tolerate any sort of

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misconduct or even an attitude problem and resort to killing if they need to. This is later reflected in the movie when Ricky gets murdered over an argument. At a party he gets shoved in the arm so he starts yelling at the other guys.

Those guys are scared away initially by Doughboys gun but then they come back to kill Ricky. This shows that whatever Tre's dad says has a lot of truth to it and that when a deviant deviates he doesn't see it as a deviation. He sees it as an act of neutralization. He is simply standing up for himself and defending him self. He is simply justifying his cause. The quality of a deviant is that he fights back each time. Every little thing such as the role of an eye or an argument is reason enough to kill someone. Sometimes people deviate intentionally because they want to prove people wrong.

Sometimes people deviate because they are living up to their labels. Sometimes people deviate because they don't know any better. Tre's insistence on having sex with his Catholic girlfriend can be considered deviant behavior because he is going against what his parents have told him. His girlfriend gets angry with him but he does not resort to further deviations. Doughboy gets labeled a deviant from an early age but he never fights back to clear the misconception. He continuously involves himself in activities that live upto his reputation.

This film seeks to normalize society. The message at the end of the movie is to stop and to create peace. The movie shows a real life depiction of what happens in the hood and how it hurts everyone living in it. It sheds light on how their behavior is affecting them negatively. They show all aspects of particular societal trends in order to create awareness among the people.

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The movie asks questions about traditional ways of controlling a form of deviance when it highlights the role of the police officer and the kids who try to fight deviance.

The police officer just wants to kill everybody and is an extreme cynic and Ricky believes that the only way to stop another deviant is by acting the same way with him. The police officer hopes that the guy who broke in the house should have been dead and that everyone on the street is a gangster. All throughout the movie deviant behavior can be clearly spotted. The only way to normalize deviant behavior is to understand why it happens and how it happens. Young kids like Ricky all over the world end up committing crimes because of the weak bonds they have.

They end up deviating from societal norms because they have been labeled a specific way. They already have a reputation and they feel that they cannot get away from it. They accept what society has labeled them and give into the norms of deviation. Kids who have stronger bonds with family and society on the other hand can easily breakaway from any childhood delinquencies they were a part of like Tre. People should understand that the labeling theory is not always negative and that it can be used to boost people's morale and have positive outcomes.

This happened for Ricky because of the continuous support from his mom but in the end he did not live to see any of it. This is why the control theory should be implanted along with the labeling theory in a positive way. When people realize the roots of the problem only then will they be able to fix it. The movie is a message to all the people of America to realize what happens

in the certain neighborhoods and how to eradicate the problem. The message is to stop killing each other and to promote peace.

## References

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