

**DEVIANCE AND CRIME IN
COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

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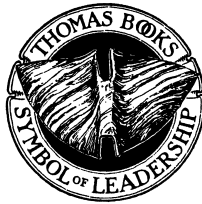
What Goes on in the Halls of Ivy

By

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and

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*To Donald Clemmer, past Director of the District of Columbia
Department of Corrections (JBR)*

and

*Charles Lowery, former Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences,
Mississippi State University*

PREFACE

In 2007, a Virginia Tech student killed a number of students and a professor before using the gun to destroy his own life. Less than a year later, a similar event occurred at the Northern Illinois University. In 2007–2008, women students were murdered at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Auburn University, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, in separate incidents. These college massacres followed the 9/11 disaster; the killing of high school students in Columbine, Colorado; the Oklahoma City bombing; mass slayings in a McDonald's restaurant; and other everyday murders throughout the United States. The alarming and most surprising point of the college murders was that the campus murders occurred on what the general public had heretofore considered to be an academic safe zone, where privileged students were protected from violence and the everyday hazards of off-campus life.

The authors of this book were less aghast at university crime, perhaps because they have observed crime, deviant behavior, and misbehavior in universities from the 1940s to the twenty-first century. Most of their observations were of a lesser and less violent nature; nevertheless, they found that less severe deviant behaviors sometimes resulted in later problems of significance.

The first author entered college as a freshman in 1963. Three years later, then a graduate assistant, he began learning about deviant behavior. For example, some of his graduate colleagues read required materials in the library and subsequently “hid” them (intentionally misplaced them somewhere else in the library) so that the other graduate students could not fulfill their assignments. Although this behavior of colleagues was hardly felonious, the long journey observing deviant behavior in academia had begun. When he applied for tenure years later, he found that some of his colleagues, whom he had trust-

ed, had made negative comments about his work in tenure committee meetings where his fate was to be decided. These faculty members (“friends”) had voted for him in the department, and subsequently they espoused negative views in the college committee meetings. He was also concerned because he had uncovered those comments from what were supposed to have been *confidential* meetings. All of these actions prodded him to continue his journey, studying deviance in academia.

As the years passed, he encountered more and more deviant behavior on the campuses where he taught. In the late 1970s, he met with the second author, Julian Roebuck, his coauthor of a book entitled *The Southern Redneck: A Phenomenological Class Study*. Roebuck had also been interested in academic deviance since the 1940s. Roebuck had noted similar deviant behavior while at Duke University and later at the University of Maryland – though much attenuated in nature from those he had encountered as a professor in the 1960s and 70s.

The two discussed the subject for hours and exchanged ideas and experiences with colleagues. They agreed to write a book on the subject. Much later in 2004, the two authors and Komanduri Murty, of Clark Atlanta University, discussed the project further. The three even worked on the first chapter together, although the present two authors ultimately decided to go a different direction with the book than the potential third author had envisioned.

While organizing their observations and experiences on deviant behavior and crime in academia as reports over the years, the authors began incorporating primary and secondary printed material. The authors’ content analyzed the newspaper, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, searching for instances of deviant behavior, and their focus became more intense. They found that three or four articles per issue included reports of deviance in higher education. Advertisements for books on higher education led to additional source material. Some of the books focused on deviance in college sports, outlining not only violations of sports’ behaviors but also interpersonal and professional deviance and crime. Other’s books were about misconduct on a variety of issues, including sorority and fraternity hazing and binge drinking, financial misconduct of administrators and researchers, cheating among students, plagiarism (among faculty and students), bullying, mobbing, and sexual aberrations. Many of these deviant behaviors led to crimes, including rape and manslaughter. The negative behaviors

were engaged in by students, faculty, administrators, and even board members and other outside agencies.

The result was a *Reader's Digest* perspective on what goes on in college. But none of them painted the big picture as the authors saw academia. Many of the books were written by those whom they call "apologists" of higher education. The apologists are individuals who write for the public-at-large and for college administrators about how there may be some problems in higher education, periodically referring to the problems as "crises." The apologists have insisted, though, that the problems can easily be resolved by merely creating a new mission statement, motivating an action plan, inventing a score card, or playing some other bureaucratic games.

Previous research has included scholarly survey research, most often written *by* professors *for* professors. While these works provide numbers and some generalizations, they do not present a living, descriptive, and complete analysis of deviance and crime in higher education. In brief, the authors' method for engaging in this book consists of personal experiences, stories that professors, staff, journalists, and students told the authors about themselves and one another (Brown & McMillan, 1991), blended with news accounts in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and other sources.

The social psychological frame of reference taken by the authors is similar to that previously utilized by the former Director of the District of Columbia Department of Corrections, Donald Clemmer (1958), in *The Prison Community*; Erving Goffman (1971), in *Relations in Public*; and Norman K. Denzin's triangulation methods.

In this book, specific universities, departments, and individuals are mentioned only in cases where they were mentioned in news reports, newspapers, and the *Chronicle*. The mention of any proper name or university in this study is limited to those previously cited in other publications. No one should assume, therefore, that a particular instance is one in which he or she was personally engaged (unless noted). Nor should one assume that any mentioned, particular instance occurred with any of the authors' colleagues at any institution with which they have been associated (unless so noted). None of the events or instances mentioned, though, is fiction. The reader should remember that not all faculty members engage in the behaviors noted in this book. Most do not. That is why it is about *deviance* from the typical, not the norm.

Finally, we have used applied communication research to uncover not only the problems but also to search for potential solutions as well (Hickson, 1973). That is, not only are the problems uncovered, but also potential solutions are offered. Many in academia will find fault in some of the authors' points and suggestions. They are solely the authors', and where there are problems accepting such changes, they are derived from two sources. First, contrary to the views of some pundits, academia is perhaps the most conservative institution in American society. Second, egos and money often drive decisions that should be based on learning and altruism. The impact of money on higher education has been aptly stated by the former President of Harvard University. Derek Bok (2003) has written: "Commercialism can undermine collegiality and trust within the academic communities by creating divisions and tensions that did not previously exist" (p. 113).

Academia has long been referred to as the "halls of ivy." This book suggests that the ivy tradition is complemented by halls of deviant ivy, the poison ivy of our institutions. We have found that universities have been microcosms of society. They shouldn't be. The actors in the academy are the best and the brightest. They should also live by higher standards.

We wish to express our appreciation to several people. In the early stages, Marietta Morrison, who typed the entire *Redneck* book, assisted us in typing this manuscript. We also received considerable typing assistance from Cynthia Peacock and Elizabeth Roebuck. Justin R. Johnston and Cynthia C. Peacock also provided able assistance in proofreading copy several times. Any errors, though, are ours.

Mark L. Hickson, III
Julian B. Roebuck

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

“It’s a beautiful autumn afternoon. Seventy degrees here for the game.” Those are the beginning words of one the cohosts as “Game Day” for college football begins in any one of fifty or so campuses. “More than two thousand fans are here in the reserved section for tailgating festivities. Both teams have perfect 3-0 records. The predicted outcome varies from poll to poll. What do you think, Frank?”

So goes the “perfect” Saturday afternoon on the “perfect” college campus.

But the perfect college campus is not so perfect.

Fraternity and sorority students drink too much. Some other students are in the process of being killed or maligned by their “brothers” or “sisters” who encourage their ridiculous deviant behavior (Nuwer, 2004; Nuwer, 1999). Others will cut classes, cheat, steal, plagiarize, rape, assault, disrupt the classroom, and commit suicide. The college campus is a montage of the idyllic and the deviant.

If you read about college in books, you find a continuum of behaviors from the ideal, stereotypical college boy and coed engaging in “normal” conduct to the deviant.

We have been on a college campus, in some capacity, since we were freshmen. In the freshman year for one of us, a fellow freshman jumped from an upper floor of the dormitory onto a trash collection box and killed himself. The striking event alerted the onlooker that college is too much like reality. In many ways, as discussed in this book, universities are microcosms of American society. But the point is that they shouldn’t be, because academia is a more exalted enterprise than the mundane, everyday world. It must be if we are to edu-

cate our youth. Since starting college, we have wondered how much of the “outer world” is aware of what goes on within the campuses of ivy and poison ivy.

THE MOVE TOWARD DEVIANCE

College campuses have undergone significant changes since World War II that some scholars have related to campus deviance. A social transformation in higher education has occurred because of the GI Bill in 1944, an affirmative action recruitment of minority students and faculty, and merit or need-based financial aid – all of which have made college and university attendance accessible to millions of people from diverse backgrounds for the first time. Many of these students never could have attended a college or university otherwise.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, fewer than two percent of the population between the ages of 18 and 24 attended college. By the end of World War II, that figure had risen to more than two million. Recent statistics show that the United States leads the world with 79 million (27 percent) of America’s citizens being college graduates (Rosovsky, 1990; Vedder, 2004). Some educators claim that this diversity of the student population has made the campus a microcosm of the country rather than an exclusive, self-contained, peaceful place for the offspring of the elite (Delbanco, 2005) and that this diversity has caused an increase in deviancy in form and magnitude. The student populace now includes many who do not share the values, norms, and communication styles of the past. They are, therefore, less amenable to the behavioral controls of the traditional classroom or the campus. All of this combined with the current permissive stance of faculty and administrators leads to a further increase in campus deviancy.

College classroom incivilities (as deviancy) among students gained the attention of researchers in the 1990s and gradually extended to the faculty. Thus, those reporting on such behaviors usually confined their studies to students and faculty, and the context was limited to the classroom. With the exception of a few studies, they relied on secondary and/or perceptual data. Braxton and Bayer (1999) based their seminal study, *Faculty Misconduct in College Teaching*, solely on faculty perceptions of levels of appropriate and inappropriate teaching behavior. They suggested the need to expand the research to include other cam-

pus groups (students, administrators) and the need to focus on experience based or normative expectations, rather than on merely perceptions. Specifically, Braxton and Bayer suggest that future researchers ask members of these additional academic groups for their self reports of deviancy pertaining to their personal involvement, as well as their personal knowledge of others' involvement in deviancy. Finally, they recommend the inclusion of both formal and informal sanctions. Our study incorporates all of these suggestions.

Other scholars maintain that traditional liberal arts colleges' paternalism, moral education for citizenship, and social controls have been attenuated (or discarded) in favor of students' autonomy, a "bill of rights," and wider freedom in general. In brief, students wish to retain autonomy while at the same time insisting that academic institutions they attend assume a moral responsibility for protecting them from any consequences of this autonomy. Currently, college and university academic freedom (demanded by and given to students) provides a wide range of choices in the selection of courses. This permits them to obtain at least the minimal grade point average for graduation, while avoiding many of the more difficult and worthwhile courses (Kirp, 2005). Students demand not only the courses they want and the teachers they want, but they also claim the right to live their own lives on campus with intellectual, social, and sexual freedom, which they claim as their inalienable rights (Delbanco, 2005). Some writers claim that the liberal arts tradition (based on a shared general education, a teaching mission, the development of sound moral character, and preparation for citizenship) has given way to the need for the production and transmission of practical and professional knowledge. This is certainly the case for the curricula in multipurpose and multicultural institutions. Much of the teaching mission has been reduced and is often relegated to second place behind the research mission. Undergraduates are taught mostly by part-time, adjunct faculty, non-tenure-track full-time faculty, and graduate teaching assistants (Delbanco, 2005).

In addition to the thesis that campus deviancy is closely associated with the increased diversity and autonomy of the student body, there are other noted causes of increased campus deviancy. Traditional controls have been lost by the colleges themselves, and a greater focus has been placed on the commercialism of the institution.