

“
... professional
ex- status not only
results in new
career
opportunities and
a new positive
'identity' but
provides new
opportunities for
deviance as
well.”

THE PROFESSIONAL EX- REVISITED

Cessation or Continuation
of a Deviant Career?

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An ongoing question is whether participation in deviance is fluid or stable. In a 1991 article, Brown introduced the concept of the "professional ex-," an individual who uses former deviant status as a springboard into a counseling career. The professional ex- thus exits a deviant career, transforming it into a legitimate status. In the current article, the authors present a different perspective, grounded in self-control theory. The 1990s substance abuse treatment industry scandals in Texas provide the framework. A case study of one agency, in-depth interviews with fifteen professional ex-s employed by the agency, official records, and newspaper accounts of the scandals are used to explore the issues of stability and generality. Findings suggest that at least some professional ex-s continue to engage in other forms of deviance, providing support to Gottfredson and Hirschi's claim that the propensity to engage in deviance is both general and stable.

The process of exiting a deviant career has been the focus of a number of studies (cf. Meisenhelder 1977; Anspach 1979; Luckenbill and Best 1981). Brown (1991) used this perspective in his study of *professional ex-s*, "persons who have exited their deviant careers by replacing them with occupations in professional counseling" (p. 219). The individual is thus transformed, abandoning a deviant lifestyle for a more conventional one that is grounded in the former deviant status. The former prisoner, eating disorder victim, addict, or alcoholic deliberately embraces the deviant status to qualify as a counselor for others similarly afflicted. Indeed, the abandoned deviant lifestyle ultimately provides both legitimacy and income. The individual now shares his or her personal recovery process, seen as almost sacred, having undergone "a transforming therapeutic resocialization" (Brown 1991, 223). In the current study, we focus on one type of professional ex-: the former substance abuser who becomes a substance abuse counselor.

The current study offers an alternate view of the professional ex-. It suggests that becoming a professional ex- may not always signify "salvation" (Brown 1991, 228). Instead, at times it may provide a facade of legitimacy, behind which deviant behavior continues. The distinction between a deviant role and a deviant career is relevant to this approach.

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While Brown's (1991) description is linked to a particular type of deviance, we suggest that the professional ex- may continue to engage in deviant behavior, having merely exited one type of deviant *role*. The alcohol and drug treatment industry scandals that occurred in Texas during the mid-1990s are presented in support of our contention.

PROPENSITY TOWARD DEVIANCE: FLUIDITY VERSUS STABILITY

Sociological approaches suggest two widely divergent views of deviant careers. On one hand, we find those who explore the processes of entering and abandoning deviant careers and lifestyles. In this approach, deviance is seen as fluid, with individuals moving into and out of deviant careers. The professional ex-'s transformation to legitimacy exemplifies this approach.

However, other experts suggest that the propensity to engage in deviance is virtually immutable. If this is the case, one might expect the professional ex- to continue to engage in deviant behaviors. This perspective is exemplified in Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) general theory of crime, also known as self-control theory. A brief examination of these opposing perspectives may help clarify the issue.

DEVIANT CAREERS: SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONIST THEORY AND FLUIDITY

Symbolic interactionist theory supports the idea of fluidity, suggesting that individuals move into and out of deviant careers. This perspective focuses on ways in which identity is continuously renegotiated through interaction with the social environment (Cooley 1902; Mead 1934; Goffman 1959; Blumer 1969). "Here the self is constructed through adjustment. The issue is for the actor to fit his/her self into the dominant character of the situation or structure: adjusting to an obdurate reality" (Fine 1993, 78). From this viewpoint, the self is constantly in flux, and identity is continuously emerging. This ties in well with the concept of exiting a deviant career. Fine (1993) suggested that, in a different situation, the individual will adjust his or her self-concept to fit the new reality. Thus, a former alcoholic who has become a profes-

sional ex- develops a new definition of self to fit the new situation. He or she could then be expected to discard characteristics that no longer apply.

Abandonment of a deviant career may occur due to either internal forces or external ones. For example, Braithwaite (1989) argued that “shame” can be a constructive force, coercing the deviant back into compliance with group norms. Others suggested that deviants are pushed or pulled into conventionality. Adler (1992) applied this approach to drug dealers. Significantly, she noted that the movement away from deviance and toward conformity was characterized by inconsistency. Cessation of drug dealing was often followed by lapses back into the behavior. Over time, the periods between lapses became longer, ultimately resulting in transition into a new nondeviant lifestyle. Still others suggest that the deviant may go through a process of withdrawal in preparation for return to the larger society, as in the case of prisoners (Irwin 1970; Schmid and Jones 1991) and female street criminals (Sommers, Baskin, and Fagan 1994).

According to this approach, the deviant individual may go to great lengths to avoid detection or to control the information others obtain about them (Goffman 1963; Herman 1993). Alternately, he or she may attempt to redefine the behavior or condition as nondeviant (Horowitz and Liebowitz 1968; Meisenhelder 1977; Anspach 1979; Stall and Biernacki 1986). Still others may extend the old deviant role into a new “conventional” one (Brown 1991; Rice, 1992; see also Ebaugh 1988). Indeed, the individual may even rely on former experiences to develop an entirely new field of endeavor, as in the case of the emergence of codependency treatment professionals (Rice 1992).

DEVIANT CAREERS: SELF-CONTROL THEORY AND STABILITY

The current study proposes a different approach to the idea of the deviant career, within the framework of Gottfredson and Hirschi’s (1990) self-control theory. Self-control theory provides a unique perspective on the professional ex-. First, in contrast to the notion of deviance as fluid, Gottfredson and Hirschi not only emphasized the *stability* of deviance over the life course, they critiqued the use of the term *career* to refer to crime and deviance over time. Second, the specific case studied here provides a nice example of Gottfredson and Hirschi’s

discussion of white-collar crime and offenders. Before applying their theory to the issue of the professional ex-, however, a discussion of their distinction between crime and self-control is necessary, along with the importance of stability and versatility.

In 1983, Hirschi and Gottfredson suggested that age has a direct effect on crime—one that is invariant across time, culture, sex, race, and various criminal acts. In a follow-up piece (Hirschi and Gottfredson 1986), they introduced the distinction between crime and criminality as a way of solving some of the problems introduced by their age-crime argument. Here, they noted that the *tendency* to engage in crime remains stable, even though criminal *behavior* follows the age-crime curve. This distinction between crime (behavior) and criminality (tendency) is important in understanding the questions of stability versus fluidity, especially with regard to the professional ex-.

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) defined *criminality* as the stable differences across individuals in the propensity to commit criminal acts: “Criminality may be defined as the tendency of the actor to seek short-term, immediate pleasure without regard for long-term consequences” (Hirschi and Gottfredson 1986, 58). Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) later defined criminality by *self-control*, the differential tendency of people to avoid criminal acts regardless of the circumstances in which they find themselves. They began their discussion of the concept of self-control by describing six elements of criminal acts and the corresponding characteristics of those engaging in such acts. According to the authors, crime and analogous behaviors provide immediate gratification of desires; easy or simple gratification of desires; excitement, thrill, and risk; few or meager long-term benefits; little skill or planning; and pain or discomfort for the victims (p. 89). Correspondingly, those lacking in self-control will “tend to be impulsive, insensitive, physical (as opposed to mental), risk-taking, shortsighted, and nonverbal, and they will tend therefore to engage in criminal and analogous acts” (p. 90). Furthermore, they suggested that deviance, criminality, and recklessness are parts of a single larger category that is characterized by a focus on the attainment of immediate pleasure coupled with lack of concern about future harmful consequences. The low self-control individual is thus one who is likely to choose, when the opportunity is presented, immediate gratification, despite the potential of long-term negative consequences.

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) asserted that their concept of self-control is unique because it explicitly addresses stability as well as versatility. The former suggests that the tendency to engage in criminal or deviant acts emerges early in life and persists over time (Caspi, Bem, and Elder 1989; Sampson and Laub 1993; White et al. 1990; Wright et al. 1999). Versatility suggests that low self-control manifests itself in a variety of criminal and analogous acts (Britt 1994; LeBlanc and Girard 1997). When discussing versatility, Gottfredson and Hirschi asserted, "In our view, the common element in crime, deviant behavior, sin and accidents is so overriding that the tendency to treat them as distinct phenomena subject to distinct causes is one of the major intellectual errors of positive thought" (p. 10).

Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) theory of self-control provided a clear distinction between criminality and crime, suggesting that those with low self-control will be more likely to engage in crime and behavior analogous to crime. The theory has been empirically tested by a variety of researchers, and the overall results have been favorable (Pratt and Cullen 2000). It has not, however, been used to explore the phenomenon of the professional ex-.

When using the concept of self-control to further our understanding of the professional ex-, one of the first critiques that Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) applied to the fluidity argument is the use of the word *career* in reference to crime. They said,

What is the meaning of the idea of a career? Whether applied to dentistry, college teaching, or crime, the concept of a career implies several things. It suggests a beginning, as in "When did you become a teacher?" and end, as in "When did you quit teaching?" Given a beginning and an end, the career concept also implies variable duration or length, as in "How long did you (or how much longer do you plan to) teach?" (p. 266)

Central to the career paradigm are the assumptions that offenders should engage in more serious or specialized crime as they age and that the concepts of "onset, duration, and desistance might lead to a better understanding of the crime problem" (p. 266). Gottfredson and Hirschi pointed out that offenders do not specialize and do not engage in more serious crime over time, and those who are deviant at one age are more likely to be deviant at another age. They concluded,

If offenders do not specialize in particular types of crime, if they do not become progressively more criminal or more skilled in crime as the years pass, and if they do not make enough money from crime to live, then how do we account for the continued interest in career criminals? (p. 267)

Thus, low self-control is not a career choice. Instead, it is a propensity toward crime and analogous behaviors that is established early, persists over time, and manifests itself in a variety of behaviors. It does not necessarily involve an embracement of the role of deviant or a transformed self-image—it is simply an “individual characteristic relevant to the commission of criminal acts” (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990, 88).

From the perspective of self-control theory, then, we would expect the professional ex- (someone who has exhibited low self-control behavior in the past) to continue to participate in deviant behaviors. This is not because of limited choices or poor self-concept, as suggested by the labeling approach (Lemert 1951; Becker 1963; Erikson 1966; Schur 1971). Instead, he or she is attracted to behaviors that result in immediate gratification given the right opportunity. Cessation of drinking or drug use, as in the case of the “recovering” substance abuse counselor, may be the result of “natural sanctions” rather than improved self-control, “governed more by its physiological effects than by its social consequences” (Hirschi and Gottfredson 1994, 4). However, compared to others of the same age, low-self-control individuals remain more likely to engage in a variety of criminal, analogous, or reckless behaviors. The professional ex- who has stopped using alcohol or drugs should thus still be likely to engage in other behaviors that provide short-term gratification.

Although Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) asserted that low self-control is a major predictor of criminal behavior, they also recognized that it is the intersection of low self-control with criminal opportunity that produces crime. Routine activity theory (Cohen and Felson 1979) reminds us that crime occurs when a victim, an offender, and opportunity come together in the legitimate and illegitimate routines of daily life. Working as a counselor in a drug treatment center provides the professional ex- with ample opportunities for a variety of deviant behaviors.

THE PROFESSIONAL EX- AS A WHITE-COLLAR OFFENDER

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) have always maintained theirs to be a general theory of crime and deviance—explaining all types of crimes, including white-collar crimes and white-collar offenders. They said,

In fact, we would suggest that any theory of crime making claim to generality would apply without difficulty to the crimes of the rich and powerful, crimes *committed in the course of an occupation*, and crimes in which a position of power, influence, or trust is used for the purpose of individual or organizational gain. (p. 183, emphasis added)

Contrary to the assumptions held by both academics and laypeople, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) challenged the image of white-collar crimes as complicated, well-planned acts and the image of white-collar offenders as intelligent people of high status and influence. The problem with most research, they contended, is that it compares high-status white-collar offenders to low-status “street” offenders—ignoring high-status, white-collar, *nonoffenders*, as well as low-status white-collar offenders. They reminded us that white-collar crime is relatively rare and that “when opportunity is taken into account, demographic differences in white-collar crime are the same as demographic differences in ordinary crime” (p. 196). In other words, when opportunity is taken into account, embezzlement is more often committed by those of lower status (i.e., the young, nonwhites) than those of higher status.

Overall, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) reminded us that because occupations generally require traits like dependability, punctuality, and self-control, people with jobs will tend to be less criminal overall than people without jobs. They argued that if the typical street offender were given the opportunity to commit white-collar crime, he would certainly take it, even without extended exposure to a crime-producing “business culture” (p. 198). By hiring the professional ex- (a person with a history of deviance), treatment programs are essentially providing us with an experimental test of Gottfredson and Hirschi’s assertions.

One reason white-collar offending is relatively rare is because the opportunity to engage in such behavior depends on an occupation, and generally employers try to avoid hiring employees with deviant histories. The professional ex-, however, is hired *because* of his or her de-

viant history. From the perspective of self-control theory, the fact that professional ex-s engaged in enough occupational deviance to cause the treatment industry scandals in Texas is certainly not surprising.

THE PROFESSIONAL EX-: IMPLICATIONS OF THE TWO APPROACHES

To explore the utility of low self-control as an explanation of continued deviance among professional ex-s, the current study focuses on individuals involved in the field of alcohol and drug abuse treatment. Events that occurred in the state of Texas during the early 1990s will be offered as evidence. In particular, we present a case study of an agency that was embroiled in the funding scandals.

Brown (1991) has presented an image of the professional ex- making a transition from deviant to conforming behavior, using past deviance as the foundation for the new legitimacy. In contrast, we argue that the role of professional ex- may also represent a continuation of deviant behaviors. This approach is important in extending our knowledge of career deviance, as research has concentrated on the "exit" from a particular type of deviance (cf. Irwin 1970; Shover 1983; Adler 1992). Scant attention has been paid to whether the individual is engaging in other types of deviance. A distinction between deviant *career* and deviant *role* is germane to the argument. If the concepts of the generality and stability of deviance are accurate, cessation of a particular form of deviance would not necessarily indicate cessation of all forms of deviant behavior. Instead, it may only indicate cessation of one deviant behavior in favor of another.

One final issue must be addressed: the conceptualization of deviance. Perhaps no other issue is more controversial in the field of sociology, with conceptualizations of deviance ranging from moral or absolute stances to social constructionist approaches. However, the debates about what acts should be considered deviant fall outside of the scope of this work, and we use a definition of deviance that is in keeping with the theoretical basis of the study. Following Hirschi and Gottfredson (1994), deviance is conceptualized as "acts of self-interest" that "provide immediate benefit at the risk of long-term cost to actors who find opportunities for such acts appealing" (p. 10). In other words, for the purposes of the analyses that follow, an act is deviant if the goal is short-term pleasure or gain, the act has a high potential for negative

consequences, and the actor engages in it despite the consequences. Thus, financially lucrative crime, smoking, illicit sex, and gambling all meet the criteria of the definition.

METHOD

The analyses center on a case study of one nonprofit substance abuse treatment agency (hereafter referred to as ARC). This organization became the focus of a scandal that occurred in Texas during the early 1990s. A large nonprofit organization, ARC administered substance abuse treatment programs for medically indigent individuals. The programs operated by ARC included a detoxification program, two outpatient programs for adults, inpatient treatment for adults, inpatient treatment for adolescents, a halfway house for recovering individuals, a halfway house for criminal justice referrals, a program for offenders under the supervision of the federal criminal justice system, and a long-term residential facility for adults. At times, ARC also operated an adolescent outpatient program, a female adolescent program, a women's program, and a satellite program in a neighboring county.

During the 1990s, Texas was rocked by a series of scandals in the alcohol and drug abuse treatment field. Eventually, criminal proceedings against a number of individuals resulted, as well as the investigation and restructuring of the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (TCADA). TCADA funded and supervised substance abuse treatment throughout the state. The case study of one organization is imbedded in the larger context of the investigations that began with this agency.

The case study method is suitable for two reasons. First, it provides a richness of detail not as readily available through survey data (Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg 1991; Geis 1991; Orum, Feagin, and Sjoberg 1991). Although limited in generalizability, the data derived in a case study can provide insights into human interaction not accessible through questionnaires (Sjoberg et al. 1991, 32). Equally important, case studies may bring into question a current theory by uncovering new information. "Although they cannot establish a generalization, they can invalidate one and suggest new research directions" (Reinharz 1992, 69). In the current study, this is our primary objective. Our focus is to suggest that cessation of a deviant career may not be an accurate description.

Instead, we offer an alternative view—that individuals may cease one type of deviance due to natural sanctions but continue to engage in other forms.

The data came from four sources: newspaper accounts, official records of investigations conducted by TCADA, direct observation, and in-depth interviews. By using this variety of sources, a detailed picture emerges.

First, we obtained copies of all currently available articles documenting the treatment scandals from the archives of the primary newspaper in the city where ARC was located. In addition, we obtained articles on investigations in two other Texas cities. Attempts to locate articles in the archives of three other cities were unsuccessful. A total of thirty-two newspaper articles from March 1994 through June 1997 were examined.

We also obtained reports of official investigations of ARC from TCADA. These were used to substantiate the veracity and accuracy of the newspaper accounts (see Wolcott 1990, 27). The official documents included the original complaint, the summary report of the complaint, summaries of findings, the agreed administrative order between TCADA and ARC, and correspondence between TCADA and ARC related to the investigations.

The third source of data was direct observation. Like Brown (1991), one of the authors worked in the field of substance abuse treatment. Furthermore, from 1989 through late 1991, she directed a program for ARC. These personal observations allowed insider's access to events as well as familiarity with the agency and the individuals involved (Reinharz 1992; Lofland and Lofland 1995). In late 1989, she began keeping a journal of questionable events that occurred in the day-to-day operation of the agency. The journal was kept due to concerns about possible illegalities and self-protection. Other journal entries followed conversations with the two top administrators of the organization as well as with employees. Copies of invoices for questionable purchases and internal memorandums were also kept. These records became a postfacto source of data, as the original purpose was not research.

The final source of data consisted of relevant observations by other "insiders." During 1995, the same author conducted in-depth interviews with fifteen treatment professionals employed by the agency. Participants were obtained using a modified snowball sampling strategy, beginning with five former employees and coworkers. All

participants were counselors or supervisors who had worked for ARC during the early 1990s, and all but one claimed professional ex- status. Interviews were semistructured. Participants were asked open-ended questions about illegal behavior or deviant behavior they had observed as well as about behaviors in which they had personally participated. The interviews were conducted under strict assurances of anonymity. Thus, to protect these participants, audiotapes were destroyed, and pseudonyms were used. Eight interviews were taped; in the others, extensive notes were taken. Behaviors were deemed deviant if they met the criteria used by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) as acts of self-interest engaged in without consideration of the potentially negative consequences. (See the Appendix for summary descriptions of the interview participants.)

FINDINGS

PROFESSIONAL EX-S IN THE DRUG TREATMENT INDUSTRY

In the state of Texas, all substance abuse counselors must be licensed by TCADA, which also acts as a watchdog over counselor behaviors. In addition, TCADA licenses all substance abuse treatment programs in the state and is a major funding source. In mid-1999, there were 5,271 licensed chemical dependency counselors in Texas. There is, however, no way to determine the percentage claiming professional ex- status since alcoholism is covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act. This makes it illegal to inquire whether an applicant is an alcoholic. It is noteworthy, however, that TCADA requires two years of abstinence from alcohol and drugs prior to licensure, suggesting that the agency has reason to believe that many applicants have substance abuse histories (Hernandez 1999).

Personal experience suggested that the majority of those working in the substance abuse treatment field were former substance abusers. For example, during the two years that one of the authors ran a program for ARC, twenty-seven direct service employees self-identified as professional ex-s. Only one employee during that period (a cook) did not claim to be in recovery from substance abuse. This pattern was consistent throughout ARC. Indeed, many employees were former clients, as

was the case with ten of the fifteen interview participants. At the time of hiring, the author was the only program director out of nine that was not a former client. Furthermore, the executive director, the director, and the chairman of the board also claimed professional ex- status.

ARC AND THE TEXAS TREATMENT SCANDAL

On March 29, 1994, the general public in the state of Texas became aware of scandal brewing in the substance abuse treatment industry. The *American-Statesman* headline asserted, "Center's Audit Uncovers Gifts, Lavish Bonuses" (Elliott 1994d). The story, based on an audit resulting from an anonymous tip (TCADA 1993, 1994d), detailed allegations of financial impropriety, including excessive bonuses, expensive gifts, and overbilling. ARC was a private nonprofit agency funded by state and federal grants. In less than three years, top officials were alleged to have paid themselves and other employees bonuses totaling more than three hundred thousand dollars. In addition, government funds were allegedly used to buy rare books, sapphire cufflinks, and expensive cigars for the two administrators (Elliott 1994d).

Within days, additional allegations were made. Mileage reimbursement to one administrator totaled more than twenty thousand dollars in a two-year period. At state reimbursement rates, this was equivalent to about sixty-seven thousand miles of travel (or two and a half times around the equator). In addition, state funds were used to pay air travel for family members, lease payments on a personal luxury vehicle, expensive meals, and personal interest-free loans (The allegations keep piling up 1994). It was also reported that the chairman of the board of directors received payment for services. This was in direct violation of the contract with the TCADA. Other board members had received fees for services rendered, also in violation of the contract (White and Elliott 1994). Within days, further information was disclosed. During the time the administrators were receiving excessively high bonuses (one received more than three times his annual salary in bonuses in less than three years), counselors providing direct services were significantly underpaid, resulting in high employee turnover (Elliott 1994e). At the same time, official state data indicated that more than half of the intended clients of the center were unable to obtain services (Copelin 1994).

These revelations were even more startling in light of further allegations. One of the administrators, with the knowledge and consent of the another, was accused of setting up a dummy corporation that received an additional \$187,500 in payments during 1993. Furthermore, the chairman of the board of directors knew about these additional payments but did not inform other board members (Copelin 1994).

The above scenarios would only hint at the existence of deviant behavior if no further action had occurred. However, actions taken by ARC and the criminal justice system indicated that many of the allegations had merit (Elliott 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1994f, 1995a; White 1994a, 1994b). First, ARC agreed to refund more than \$1 million to the funding agency (TCADA 1994a; Elizondo 1996). Furthermore, current board members were not to be reappointed or employed by the agency in the future (Elliott 1994a, 1995a; TCADA 1994a).

Allegations against the top administrators were substantiated. For example, the TCADA investigation provided detailed information about the use of ARC funds to purchase rare books, with receipts altered to hide the nature of the purchases (TCADA 1994b, 1994c, 1994e, 1996a, 1996b; Austin Rehabilitation Center 1996). Review of petty cash records indicated frequent withdrawals with little or no documentation, large bonuses, and conflicts of interest (TCADA 1996a, 1996b). Two years after the scandal broke, one of the administrators pled guilty to charges of conspiracy to commit money laundering, whereas the other plead guilty to making false statements (Herrera 1996b). In 1997, the former was sentenced to five years in federal prison and fined two hundred thousand dollars. In late 1996, the latter was placed on probation and fined five thousand dollars (Herrera 1997).

These events were not isolated. Indeed, the events divulged to the public were similar to those observed by one of the authors. The first observation of self-serving deviant behavior occurred only three weeks after employment began. This event was the catalyst that prompted careful documentation. A call from ARC administrative offices indicated that several new televisions had been donated to the program. A staff member was sent to pick these up and deliver them to the treatment site. Hours later, some very used televisions arrived. The staff member relayed the following story:

I don't know what's happenin'—it was too—you know—I had to—[the chairman] told me to put the TVs in the van and follow him. We went out

to his house and he said it would be just a minute. This kid came out and carried them inside. [The chairman] told me to help and then to take these old TVs and put them on the van.

The used televisions were delivered to the program, while the new ones remained at the chairman's home. When approached about the televisions, one of the executives later charged with misappropriation of funds advised the author to ignore what had happened: "Just forget about it—we've got lots of money to spend. Go down to [a local appliance store] and buy four televisions. Do any of your staff need a TV?"

The next concern involved the costs of furnishings for the program, which were purchased from a store whose top executive was also a member of the ARC board. The prices reflected in the invoices appeared excessive, particularly in light of the fact that ARC was mandated to provide services to an indigent population. Apparently, TCADA eventually agreed. Subsequent purchases of \$153,195 from the same store were disallowed because they were "considered unnecessary and no prior TCADA approval [was] obtained" (TCADA 1996b, 4).

Another incident involved the potential of a TCADA commissioner's earning a very large fee. ARC was considering expansion of one program and began looking for suitable properties. One property under consideration was selling for almost 1 million dollars, and the realtor trying to arrange the sale was a TCADA commissioner. Essentially, if the sale had transpired, the TCADA commissioner would have received a substantial fee, paid out of the funds that he was involved in providing to the agency. Shortly after this incident, the paycheck of the author began including five hundred dollars per month as a bonus. When the executives were approached about this, she was told that this was a way to get around pay limitations. Furthermore, one of them expressed belief that employees should get extra perks since the company had no retirement plan. It was at this point that the author resigned.

Six interview participants worked as program directors for ARC, five of whom self-identified as professional ex-s. Several reported similar experiences. For example, Val relayed an interesting experience. She received instructions to purchase a grandfather clock from a business operated by one of the board members. The invoice for the clock was for more than nine thousand dollars. In addition, gold-plated faucets were installed in her center. She said, "What was going on? A

\$10,000 clock? For these kids? Please—give *me* that money and I'll make sure my staff have a good Christmas." She was told by one of the executives to not worry about "things that don't concern you." She also expressed concern about inadequate nutrition for the clients, claiming that her budget did not allow the purchase of much meat or fresh produce. Instead, the clients were fed government commodities. She became concerned about the integrity of the agency and quit shortly thereafter.

That facility was then taken over by Diane, the only interview participant not claiming to be a professional ex-. Initially, she had faith in the two top executives, and after six months, she moved to a larger program as director. It was at the latter facility that she began having concerns. She discovered falsification in the billing procedures and resigned. "Something just smelled bad. At first, I thought it was just a mistake. [The director] got angry and told me the billing was just fine and to quit tilting at windmills."

Similarly, Andrea claimed that she was instructed to falsify dates on client discharges, allowing ARC to bill the state for clients that had already left. She also relayed a story that provides additional insight into the behavior of professional ex-s. One of her roommates, Joe, was ARC's accountant as well as coordinator of the aftercare program. Joe was asked to resign after the discovery that he had embezzled almost twenty thousand dollars to cover gambling debts. No criminal charges were filed, Joe received severance pay, and he claimed he was not required to repay the stolen funds. At first, Andrea thought it was compassionate, but in light of later issues, she decided it was a cover-up: "I mean, \$20,000? And no consequences? I thought, man, I should be an accountant. You know—I mean, I could do a lot with \$20,000. But then, I started thinking, '[The director] never does anything without a motive,' you know." Joe's case is interesting for two reasons. First, he was a professional ex-, and the embezzlement and gambling were indicative of both versatility and stability of deviance. In addition, the lack of consequences for his behavior suggests that he may have been aware of questionable financial transactions and able to use his knowledge as leverage.

Not all of the program directors described agency wrongdoing. Lizette staunchly supported the agency and its executives, and she argued that the investigation was a "witch hunt" designed to discredit

the two executives. She commented that the two executives “deserved” more pay and that the bonuses and dummy corporation allowed them to receive fair pay. “People don’t know how hard he works—he’s always up there on the weekend. He hasn’t had a vacation in years. So, this is—I mean it’s only fair.” However, it is noteworthy that Lizette herself benefited substantially from her employment at the agency. She was one of the “others” who had received bonuses equal to almost double her salary during 1993. After the scandals broke, Lizette left the agency. According to Paula, who took over Lizette’s duties, the paperwork was in disarray at the time that she left, and client charts were discovered hidden: “You wouldn’t believe the mess—there were charts that hadn’t had entries in months. We found them in drawers, in closets—it was fucking unbelievable.”

Lizette moved to another agency, where she supervised Belinda, another participant. Belinda reported that Lizette appeared to be misappropriating funds. She had documented numerous instances of checks drawn for cash with no documentation. She eventually reported her observations to TCADA, and Lizette resigned. Currently, Lizette is awaiting sentencing for a number of offenses including forgery and forged prescriptions. “Mmm-hmm. She learned from the best—sitting there nodding out like a junkie. She just come around to get money, her and that no-good [another professional ex-]. They be flying high.”

While the above events are disturbing, alone they provide little evidence of widespread ongoing deviance by professional ex-s. However, they led to widespread investigations throughout Texas. By late 1994, allegations against treatment centers across the state were emerging (Herrera 1996a; Robbins 1996e, 1996d, 1996a). There were reports of expenditures for large bonuses, personal gifts, a professional weight trainer for the executive director, weekend resort trips, mariachi bands, and acrylic fingernails (Ann Richards joins 1995; Herman 1995; Herrera 1996a).

The scandal added to earlier concerns about TCADA’s management (Elliott 1994b, 1995b, 1995c; TCADA: A chronology 1995; Phenix 1995; Oberwetter 1996). In 1995, a state senate committee was appointed to investigate TCADA, followed by the Texas Rangers. Ultimately, TCADA was placed under conservatorship (TCADA: A chronology 1995; Ann Richards joins 1995; Elliott 1995a; Robbins 1996c, 1996b, 1996e; Burton 1997).

SELF-REPORTED DEVIANCE

The interviews also provided evidence of ongoing deviance by the participants, both white-collar and non-white-collar. Lizette was not the only participant engaging in deviant behaviors. Andrea described a scam to obtain money from local restaurants. She would eat at a local restaurant, then she would return claiming a waitress had spilled a beverage on her suede coat. She would present a receipt from a dry-cleaning establishment and demand reimbursement. Andrea obtained reimbursement from seven restaurants in a two-week period. She also reported violation of counselor ethics by engaging in sexual liaisons with two clients during the time she was employed by the agency, including an adolescent:

It was terrible—how low can I go, you know what I mean? I mean, I'm sleeping with [the client] and then going to family group and telling his mother how to have a better relationship with him. I mean, that's fucked up.

Lizette also reported a sexual liaison with a client. And, at Val's facility, a female counselor was discovered partially clothed and in bed with an adolescent female client. Lisa became an unwed mother after becoming a professional ex-. It is noteworthy that in all but the last example, these behaviors could have resulted in loss of jobs and/or counseling licenses, as well as arrest and prosecution (TCADA 1998a, 1998b, 1999).

Other activities met the self-control definition of deviance. Theft was commonplace. For example, one morning the lock and the seals on the freezer at the facility run by one of the authors were discovered broken. Interviews with several staff provided no insight, but eventually the clients admitted that one of the staff had used a knife to pry the freezer open to get ice cream. This behavior was not unusual. The general consensus seemed to be that staff members were underpaid and that taking home food and supplies was a way to supplement their income. Furthermore, staff members were aware of questionable activities by those at higher levels in the organization, and they argued that if the "bigshots" could steal, so could they, that it was expected and justified. Greg, the staff member who pried open the freezer, said that he did not believe that his actions were wrong since "everyone" stole from the program.

Lester agreed, stating that the level of theft by “frontline” employees was “minor in comparison” to that of the “biggies.”

A few participants admitted using their professional ex- status to operate as drug dealers. Mark, who worked in a halfway house for parolees, stated that his job provided a low-profile way to sell drugs. Essentially, his argument was that many of the clients had no intention of remaining drug free anyway, so it was not wrong to sell them drugs: “Somebody was gonna make some cash—might as well be me. I never sold to anybody who wasn’t already using, so I don’t feel guilty. Why should I? They don’t pay me enough to do that!” Likewise, Frank argued that he only sold marijuana to clients, not the more “dangerous” drugs such as heroin or crack. Thus, he capitalized on his status as a professional ex-, but he did not consider it to be in conflict with his role in helping addicts to recover from drug use.

Finally, two participants reported engaging in aggressive behavior. Kevin was arrested while at work for threatening his estranged wife with a gun. He was also charged with assault due to a domestic violence episode, whereas Lloyd physically attacked a coworker who called him a “tight-ass.”

DISCUSSION

This study calls into question the assumption that individuals exit a deviant career when they cease a particular form of deviant behavior (Brown 1991). Indeed, our examination of the professional ex- calls into question the concept of deviant “careers” in general. It appears that the professional ex- may abandon substance abuse because of natural sanctions such as health issues or legal sanctions. By conceptualizing deviance as general rather than specific (substance abuse, for example), a more detailed picture of deviance among professional ex-s emerges.

We have attempted to present a different perspective. Our data clearly suggest that cessation of substance abuse may be only part of the story. Brown (1991) argued that the professional ex- was a member of “a redemptive community” that “provides a reference group whose moral and social standards are internalized” (p. 228). However, many of our participants continued to engage in a wide variety of deviant behaviors, lending support to self-control theory in several ways.

First, the behaviors are indicative of versatility, including fraud, gambling, drug dealing, theft, illicit sex, and assaults. Furthermore, many of the behaviors identified at ARC meet the criteria of “acts of force or fraud undertaken in pursuit of self-interest.” Clearly, there is a link between the propensity to commit crime and to engage in analogous behaviors (i.e., substance abuse).

Second, our findings indicate that deviance has an element of stability. Individuals who appear to transition out of a deviant career may instead continue to engage in deviance. Participants other than Diane, who was not a professional ex-, claimed to be abstinent from alcohol and drugs. However, the agency executives as well as the majority of interview participants reported ongoing deviance. Consistent with Gottfredson and Hirschi’s (1990) predictions, low-self-control individuals, when presented with opportunities for deviance, are likely to take them. Rather than providing a chance at redemption, the new occupations held by professional ex-s provided ample opportunity for a variety of criminal acts. And, considering the seemingly cavalier way deviance was viewed by the agency, the costs of such behavior (at least in the short term) seemed minimal.

Third, these findings call into question interactionist explanations of deviance such as labeling theory (Lemert, 1951; Becker 1963; Goffman 1963; Erikson 1966; Schur 1971; Thoits 1985). This approach assumes that the detection of and reaction to deviant behavior result in stigma, which in turn contributes to the development of a deviant identity and blocked opportunities. However, professional ex- status not only results in new career opportunities and a new positive “identity” but provides new opportunities for deviance as well. Indeed, our findings support Gottfredson and Hirschi’s (1990) assertion that white-collar crime differs little from other forms of crime—all it requires is the intersection of a low-self-control individual with the right set of circumstances.

The two top executives at ARC used their status as professional ex-s to commit fraud. Indeed, their professional ex- statuses created the opportunity for fraud and embezzlement. Given the opportunity through positions of authority, these administrators did exactly what self-control theory would predict (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990, 183). The white-collar crime of other ARC employees and the widespread reported fraud throughout the Texas treatment industry suggest that these men were not unique.

While our findings suggest support for self-control theory, they are not, of course, generalizable. First, we do not have a random sample of professional ex-s. Therefore, it is impossible to conclude that professional ex-s as a whole are likely to continue in other forms of deviance on cessation of substance abuse. More important, we have no comparison group. Thus, we cannot say with any confidence that the professional ex-s in our study differ from individuals in similar careers. This suggests the need for further research. Ideally, we need a comparison group similar to professional ex-s in terms of licensing requirements. Nurses would be a potentially good choice. First, like professional ex-s, nursing jobs range from hands-on direct care providers all the way up to program administrators. In addition, at some levels of both nursing and substance abuse counseling, a college education is not required.

Because of their established history of low self-control, we would predict that compared to those in occupations with similar licensing criteria, professional ex-s should be more deviant. Overall, the professional ex-s we describe in this study fit the image of the low-self-control offender described by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), as well as their description of the typical white-collar offender: "The central elements of our theory of criminality are, however, easily identifiable among white-collar criminals. They too are people with low self-control, people inclined to follow momentary impulse without consideration of the long-term costs of such behavior" (p. 191). In contrast to those who critique the general theory as being unable to explain white-collar crime (Reed and Yeager 1996), our findings concerning the behaviors of the professional ex- suggest just the opposite.

APPENDIX

Interview Participants^a

Diane	Director of two programs for ARC during 1994 and 1995, not a former substance abuser, white female, midthirties.
Andrea	Director of three programs for ARC from 1984 to 1993, professional ex-, white female, early forties.
Lizette	Director of two programs for ARC from 1985 to 1996, professional ex-, white female, midforties.
Belinda	Counselor for ARC from 1990 until 1992, professional ex-, black female, early thirties.
Lloyd	Counselor for ARC from 1988 until 1995, professional ex-, white male, late forties.

Paula	Counselor for ARC, later director of a program, 1993 to 1996 and 1998 to present, professional ex-, white female, early fifties.
Lisa	Counselor for ARC, 1988 to present, professional ex-, white female, early forties.
Lester	Counselor for ARC, 1990 to 1992, professional ex-, white male, late twenties.
Greg	Counselor for ARC 1990 to 1992, program director 1992 to 1993, professional ex-, white male, midforties.
Mark	Counselor for ARC 1993, professional ex-, white male, early thirties.
Vince	Counselor for ARC, 1989 to 1995, professional ex-, black male, late twenties.
Frank	Counselor for ARC, 1989 to present, professional ex-, black male, early thirties.
Pam	Counselor for ARC, 1989 to 1994, professional ex-, white female, early thirties.
Val	Counselor for ARC, 1989 to 1990, program director 1990, professional ex-, white female, midtwenties.
Kevin	Counselor for ARC, 1989 to 1992, professional ex-, white male, early forties.

a. Information concerning these individuals is deliberately sketchy to avoid possible identification.

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