

Theoretical  
perspectives of hells  
angle sociology  
essay



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Deviance has always been a captivating topic for theory scholars. This is because it is viewed as pervasion in society, violates cultural as well as social norms. Early sociologists made attempts to explain why and how deviance occurred. There are diverse Explanations of deviant behavior. This paper examines theoretical perspectives found in the “ Hell Angels” book that span religious, medical and social concerns by taking an in depth look at demonic, classical and pathological theories.

### Demonic Perspectives

This is the earliest theory of criminology. It has its grounding on Religious teachings. One of religion’s major functions is to explain the existence of suffering, death and evil. This aspect is known as theodicy and encompasses dualism, divine providence and karma. Dualism: This state that good and evil are in a constant struggle to take control of the universe with the evil side destined to loss the fight to God eventually. Karma: This traced its origins from eastern religions, in particular Buddhism and Hinduism. It is closely tied to the reincarnation belief. A person’s present behavior is explained by the possession of positive or negative karma that has been accumulated from their past incarnations. Therefore evil people are said to have inherited all the negative traits from their past incarnations. The doctrine of karma are however not deterministic and do not absolve a person from their actions nor does it invalidate a persons free will. The religion encourages a person who has inherited negative karma to struggle against it and live noble life. Divine providence: We are predestined to be born evil or good. All communities have criminals as sinners and saints are destined to live together. This is all part of Gods plan, that was established before the creation of man. Some <https://assignbuster.com/theoretical-perspectives-of-hells-angle-sociology-essay/>

have described this as Calvinism, with God being, all knowing, all powerful and inscrutable (Flood, 2007, p. 87).

The demonic perspective takes the form of two models which are; Temptation model and the possession model. Both of these are contained in the bible which contains both the deterministic and the free will views of human nature. All humans are tainted by the legacy of the first sin by Adam and eve. However, in Christianity and Judaism, people have a free will to do evil. These two religions therefore seek to explain criminal behavior through the temptation and possession models (Flood, 2007, p. 87).

Temptation model: The devil tempts people while the good force offers strength and rewards those that resist the devil's temptation. Therefore, only naturally weak people give in to temptation. This implies that those that sin are inferior to the conformists and had willpower. The deterrent to perform evil is the threat of eternal damnation (Levinson, 2002, p. 17).

Possession: this is the deterministic view of demonic theory and as such is seen as the root of later positivist theories. A person is no longer in control of their actions once possessed by an evil spirit. The devil therefore takes over the person will controlling their mind and body resulting in behavior that is evil. One solution for this is through exorcism, to cast out the evil spirit.

Some possession models have the free will component which states that only those who are not vigilant and those who turn to the dark side can be possessed. However others do not and even the righteous can get possessed although their actions during this state are forgivable (Levinson, 2002, p. 17).

Sociality provided the basis for rejection of the demonic perspective with its basis on Religious explanations for deviant behavior had dominated America's history. The demonic perspectives were rejected during and after the enlightenment. It provides natural explanations to human ways with suffering and evil arising from worldly rather than unworldly forces (Anderson et. al., 2007, p. 466).

### Classical Theory

This theory emerged in the eighteenth century to provide a more comprehensive approach as opposed to the highly arbitrary and unscientific demonic perspective. This perspective is described as normative, essentialist and yet non-determinist. It attempted to provide a fair and rational system of identifying and punishing deviancy in the society. Philosophical concepts of free will and social contracts were used to determine what was deviant or not. The state would protect its citizens from injustices and they in turn would exercise their free will and judgment to not commit crime. The human rights principles as stated in the US constitution are based on the classical perspective's administrative justice concepts. Personal choice has become a focus for people and researchers wishing to address the issue of why people engage in criminal or deviant behavior (Barak, 2007, p. 10).

Classical theorists developed an analysis of human behavior on which concepts of rational choices are based. This theory focused on the following central points; humans are viewed as rational actors: Rationality involves calculations of the end and means to that end. People therefore choose deviant as well as conforming behaviors and this is dependent on their

calculations rationally. The central element of calculation involves an analysis of benefits (pleasure or pain), the choice is usually towards maximization of pleasure, the government uses the law which is the embodiment of social contracts to maintain order and the common good. The nature of punishment in terms of its swiftness, severity and certainty are key indicators of the law's ability to control the behavior of humans in the society (Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1994, p. 21).

The classical perspective was a social and political response to changing economic, social, religious and demographic conditions in the world and in particular Europe. However, it dominated deviance thinking for only a short period. Positivist research on the external (social, psychological, and biological) factors that cause deviance focused attention on the factors that force themselves to form obstacles and pose constraints on the individual rationality in choice making. Following the increased rates of crime in 1970's and 1980's that were facilitated by the failure of the rehabilitative technologies, much focus has shifted to scrutinize the process of decision making. This led to the development of the rational choice theory (Goode, 2008, p. 9).

### Pathological perspective

This perspective was prominent in the nineteenth Century following a history of classical and demonic perspectives. It was based on the idea that pathology- some predisposition, abnormality or trigger was responsible for making a person a criminal. This is the reason some scientist named it the "born to be bad" theory. It is deterministic and essentialist. It was based on

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the idea that criminals were a form of through back in the stages of human evolution. This resulted in the categorization of criminal into; criminal-oids, born criminals, insane criminals. It also leads to research being done on female offenders (Anderson and Taylor, 2005, p. 168).

The basis of this perspective is the 16th century positivist philosophy (concepts that science can explain human life). The shift from classical to positivist criminology was initiated by several factors. One is the emergence of scientific reasoning away from the highly religious era prior thereof due to developed scientific methods. Consequently, empirical researches to predict whether or not an individual would engage in criminal behavior were developed (Alarco'n et. al., 1998, p. 177).

This perspective of the born criminal had questionable reasons for being popular. It gave the ruling class a convenient excuse to ignore social problems. It also refuted the notion that crime was a part of society which should be accepted as arising from social conditions.

Deviance as a result of pathology can be traced back to ancient Greece where the humeral theory suggested that deviance behavior was as a result of imbalanced human fluids. Another root is the study of phrenology (criminality was determined by brain shape and size). Still others believed that arterial diseases of the brain caused mental disorders and deviance (Alarco'n et. al., 1998, p. 177).

In this view criminals were biologically inferior, products of an early stage of evolution and could be distinguished from non criminals because of their degenerative physical faults. Pathological humans were thought to display <https://assignbuster.com/theoretical-perspectives-of-hells-angle-sociology-essay/>

rudimentary mental and physical attributes similar to those of early man. These attributes were thought to stem out of the lack of some ancestral evolution. Criminals were therefore not humans but a sub species of man (Anderson & Taylor, 2005, p. 169).

In the pathological perspective, lunatic criminals included those that were not born criminals but became so at a point of their life when an alteration of their brain upset their morality causing them to be unable to discriminate between wrong and right. This category included, those afflicted with melancholia, general paralysis, pellagra and dementia, alcoholism, epilepsy, hysteria, as well as imbeciles and idiots (Rainwater, 1974, p. 242).

Criminaloid, who were responsible for almost a third of all deviant behavior, did not possess skeletal structures similar to born criminal. However they showed physical characteristics similar to the later. They were however thought to commit minor offences and later on in their life at that thus there major difference from born criminal. This criminal group succumbed to their criminal elements after struggling for a better part of their lives. They were also known to be reluctant to commit deviant behavior and also confess (Rainwater, 1974, p. 242).

The most concerning group was the born criminals, who although formed only a third of the deviant offenders, committed atrocious crimes. They were thought to be related to epileptics and imbeciles because they exhibited similar mental and physical characteristics. Other characteristics of born criminals included differences in sensory functions, lack of moral sense, keener eyesight, a higher threshold to pain and excellent sense of smell as

well as greater left side body strength which set them apart from their counterparts. They lacked a moral sense in that they had no remorse and were never repentant, while further being cynics, treacherous, impulsive, vain, vindictive, idle and cruel. A major tell-tale sign was the use of special criminal slang and tattooing as a visual expression (Anderson and Taylor, 2005, p. 169).