

Review

The sociology and social science of 'evil': Is the conception of pedophilia 'evil'?

Aliraza Javaid

University of York, United Kingdom.

Received 1 September, 2014; Accepted 2 February, 2015

This paper approaches 'evil' from sociological and social science perspectives, using them to increase our insight into the concept of 'evil' since they have long neglected direct analyses of 'evil'. For example, sociology has focused on questions of the good, treating its other as an absence or a residual category. Durkheim suggested to avoid using common sense categorisations, without exploring their social construction as social fact. Therefore, because 'evil' is a common sense conception, a rather vague and multi-form one, we can see why sociologists have ignored the concept; we have abandoned that territory within sociology. To fill this gap in the literature and make a contribution to knowledge, this paper will explore sociological and social science perspectives to the study of 'evil'. Bringing these perspectives together from disparate disciplines is not only original, but also enlightening, permitting deeper insights into the conception of 'evil'. This paper also attempts to address how 'evil' relates to pedophilia, using it as a case study to explore how it is perceived as 'evil' with the help of sociological and social science theoretical frameworks. It is argued that 'evil' is socially constructed and differs in meaning within different cultures. The paper contributes to knowledge by opening up a dialogue regarding the sociology of 'evil'.

Key words: 'Evil', social construction, culture, pedophilia, sociology of 'evil'.

INTRODUCTION

What do we mean when we use the term 'evil'? What is the nature of 'evil'? What form does it take? Why do people commit 'evil' acts? Is it just a word with no real meaning or use in helping one to understand extreme human behavior? These questions and more have fascinated humankind for centuries yet still today we are struggling to find acceptable answers. Although the increasing rationalisation and secularisation of society, 'evil' is still an unfamiliar term; this unfamiliarity is not helped by the fact that there remains a considerable lack of sociological and social science research on 'evil'. This

paper aims to fill this gap, with specific reference to the sociology of 'evil', through the exploration of dissimilar understandings and meanings that the conception of 'evil' has within sociological and social science research, alongside the general role 'evil' plays in sociology. Moreover, this paper critically examines the roles and meanings of 'evil' in the work of other authors; this will help to conceptualise and understand contemporary forms of 'evil' by bringing these perspectives together from disparate disciplines, which is not only original, but also enlightening, permitting deeper insights into the

E-mail: ali_2p9@hotmail.co.uk

Author(s) agree that this article remain permanently open access under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

conception of 'evil'. This paper also attempts to address how 'evil' relates to pedophilia, which refers to an adult or older adolescent who experiences a primary or exclusive sexual attraction to prepubescent children, generally age eleven years or younger, using it as a case study to explore how it is perceived as 'evil' with the help of sociological and social science theoretical frameworks.

Why worry about 'evil', though? What use is it to us in understanding human behavior? It is argued that the conception of 'evil' is more than a dismissive classification that fails to explain why people act in particular ways. The conception of 'evil' is useful in describing and defining significant acts of human harm that are beyond wrong or bad (Haybron, 2002), which requires research in order to understand the notion of 'evil'. Although there may be some parallels between the conception of 'evil' with the concept of taboo (taboo meaning that the majority considers a strong social form of behavior as 'deviant'), the conception of 'evil' arguably has connotations that may differ from the term 'taboo'. For example, the term 'evil' raises images of demons, witches, and devils for some people; and for others, murderers, terrorists, rapists, and violent men, while prostitution, violence, sexual violence, alcohol, and poverty may invoke images of 'social evils'. There is the argument that, by applying the label 'evil' to people, one is ignoring situational influences and personal motivations. This makes it easier to overlook conduct that one finds unexplainable and reprehensible. We need to think critically and attempt to explore the rational motivations, which may only appear to be subjectively rational to the offender that facilitates people to perpetrate 'evil' acts. In doing so, it is taken on a critical discussion of 'evil', considering the various causes and explanations of 'evil', with the use of sociological and social science perspectives. These perspectives have been chosen because they enable an analysis to be conducted by examining society and the offender collectively.

More specifically, this paper will explore the nature of 'evil'; the explanations of it; the consequences of 'evil'; how it is represented; and the role of 'evil' in societies. In doing so, the paper will examine the connection between sociology and 'evil' and will critically examine what role psychology, culture, politics, religion, media, and history all play in the discourse of 'evil'. Thus, one will be able to understand whether these factors are a suitable grouping or an enmesh of factors that are seen to misrepresent the depiction of 'evil'. Religion, in particular, will be critically explored because the conception of 'evil' is the issue of reconciling the existence of the 'evil' in the world with the existence of an omnipotent (all-powerful), omniscient (all-knowing), and perfectly good God. The issue of 'evil' is the argument that the prevalence of it cannot be reconciled with a good God, and so challenges the existence of such a good God. It is argued that a greater understanding of the concept of 'evil' will provide a better

sociological and behavioral framework to understand and explain why people commit 'evil' acts. It is the author's argument that there is still a considerable knowledge gap regarding the sociology of 'evil', which provides the basis for this paper, resulting in the lack of clarity of the definition of 'evil'.

What is 'Evil'?

It [evil] is a notion ... that stands out in our modern moral lexicon by virtue of its potent, frequently dangerous, emotional charge. It hints at dark forces, at the obscure, unfathomable depths of human motivation. It seems to stand contrary to our widespread optimism that the behaviour of our fellow human beings can be accounted for in social and psychological terms, and so made amenable to improvement. If we understand the factors that condition people to do wrong ... then presumably we'll be able to alter them ... Against these assumptions the idea of evil hints at some refractory element within us, some perversity lying beyond our control. It suggests the unwelcome conclusion that there may be sources of human behaviour, and so features of human society, which are resistant to betterment, to an enlightened effort to improve the cultural and material conditions of individuals and communities (Dews, 2004: 11).

Many theorists, such as Morton (2004), argue that 'evil' is problematic to conceptualise and understand. However, in the bible, 'evil' symbolises as both moral and physical, but Morton believes that it is not tangible and it is difficult for society to understand. Morton states that we label acts or people 'evil' when they are so bad that we cannot conceptualise them within our everyday mundane moral and explanatory contexts. He, therefore, recommends that we should examine continuities as well as differences after stating that there is no actual obligation to attempt to comprehend a 'different' perspective. People, almost universally, may define the act of paedophilia as 'evil' because of the nature of the victim: the innocent, not-as-yet-sexual child, who cannot defend themselves against the inappropriate advances by an older person (Jenny et al., 1994). It is neither the aim nor is it possible for this paper to provide a definition of 'evil' that would allow each and every act of evil to be adequately determined. This is because there are a number of problematic areas when talking about evil, such as the role of bystanders, the various causes of evil, and what exactly can be seen to constitute an evil act. For this paper, however, the above quote will be used as a working definition of 'evil'. It could be argued that, while most people acknowledge the notion of evil, few people are able to clearly define what is meant by the use of the term. Therefore, it is important to set out the historical and religious context to see where the conception of 'evil' originated from.

Religion and Sociology

Comte (1855), whose particular intention was to have sociology replace religion, was influential in the field of sociology. The dispute that flourished between sociology and religious ideology caused immense anger and fury, much to the scorn of sociology. This was because, as Perkins (1987) argues, sociology has the potential to undermine people's faith. However, what is evident to have been overlooked from the critics' attention of sociology is the historical expression of God redirecting the course of events. Joseph had no scruples regarding this, reemphasising to his fellow Christians that what they considered 'evil' against them, "God meant it for good ... to save much people alive" (Genesis 50:20).

Sociology developed as a scientific discipline in the nineteenth century. It was argued that the discipline was value-free and an objective science that engaged itself with factual (is) questions, rather than normative (should) questions (Pickering and Rosati, 2008). Although sociology was evident in Plato's and Aristotle's work much earlier than the nineteenth century, the sociological perspective was more noticeable in the midst of the Industrial Revolution and French Revolution (Charon, 1999). Since Plato, the concept of 'evil' synchronised a range of problems: natural disasters, accidents, and sicknesses that have been understood as metaphysical disasters; and cruelty, murder and human failures, such as pedophilia, that have all been conceptualised as belonging to the same 'moral' phenomenon. This lack of conceptual clarity led to several efforts to conceptualise 'evil' in religious, naturalistic, and psychological terms, but these have failed to bring us closer to the concept of 'evil'—for example, when understanding pedophilia and whether or not such a concept has any relevance for philosophy. Arguably, the French Revolution created worry and anxiety. Inspired by equality, fraternity, and liberty, the French Revolution depicted itself on the ideology of the enlightenment thinkers, who attempted to challenge traditional authority, primarily priests (Zeitlin, 2001).

There is an argument that societal order was consequential from people's rational minds, instead of institutions' collective will; advocates of the Enlightenment argued that the foundation of the ranking religious order controlled societies (ibid.). Power remained with the person for these thinkers, not the collective institutions, so they would argue 'evil' could be understood within the rational actor. As the person was able to understand social reality via the autonomous and rational powers of the mind, the Enlightenment supporters argued that social institutions that did not concur with the rational ideology ought to be refuted, favoring free will (Charon, 1999; Zeitlin, 2001). Moreover, the Enlightenment era facilitated doubt and disbelief of the authorities and provoked military assaults on such authorities. As a result, the disturbances exacerbated and

led to the capture of the Pope, which severely challenged the belief and serenity of those who had placed their faith in the *status quo*. This brought about adverse reaction from the French Catholic philosophers, who defended the position of the collectivist ideology, challenging the rational and free will argument (Zeitlin, 2001).

The Catholic Church and Irish Police were concealing years of 'evil' sexual abuse of children by the clergy who were taking care of the children. A report states that the Church policy from 1975–2004 was to maintain the assets and reputation of the church at all costs. The Catholic Church just moved the priest to another community when abuse was reported. The priests who sexually abused the children had the protection and security from the Catholic Church and were merely shifted from community to community. The report outlines that this was not atypical way of managing the issue. There was negligence regarding the safeguard of the children. Four Archbishops, three of which are deceased, were 'named and shamed' for the sexual abuse of the children (Thomas, 2009).

Indeed, this continual sexual violence of the children, annually, was hidden from societies' view by the assistance from senior Irish Police and the senior ranks of the Catholic Church collaborating collectively. Ireland's police force for treating the clergy as higher than the law was criticised by the report that examined a representative sample of complaints made by 320 children against 46 priests; 320 was the sample from over 2000 actual complaints. By concealing the clergy's abusive behavior, the Church, Archbishops and Police had condemned several other children to fall victim to what the report calls 'the church is evil' (Thomas, 2009). Comte (1855) argues that human society will fall into three phases that symbolise the characteristic way people understand reality. Comte argues that humans had progressed through the theological stage, the metaphysical stage, and were headed for the final stage of positive science, wherein he argues that priests would rule and control societies.

However, it could be argued that Comte's argument to social phenomena is quite mentalistic. He also demonstrates that societies' issues are consequential of how people see the world. Relatedly, when the 'correct' viewpoint and the linked method were reached, humans would have come of age and the answers and explanations for societies' issues would be unraveled, even though it was in Comte's own viewpoint of the world and the linked method of investigation involved in that viewpoint. Comte's belief in positivist ideology, that is, the theoretical paradigm that denotes that reality is 'out there' and is comprehensible only via empirically verifiable methods, associates Comte to ontological naturalism. However, ontological naturalism (that is, empirical science suggests what reality is) not only disregards the extra-empirical as a source of reality, but also denies the reliability of the believer's argument of a God. Positivism

puts forward a logical platform that enables Christian believers to perpetuate a defense of their faith in God (Comte, 1855; Leavitt, 1990; Dews, 2004), yet this positivistic view is challenged by the social construction perspective.

Arguably, what is more contentious than sociology's acceptance of ontological naturalism is meta-physical relativism. Metaphysical relativism perpetuates the idea that every reality, such as truth reality, differs in real meaning. This notion is frequently fused with cultural relativism that demonstrates the relative nature of perceived reality. In the metaphysical relativist position, reality is socially constructed, not transcendent within nature; therefore, 'evil' is socially and politically constructed, according to this view. It can be argued, then, that pedophilia is a social construction and it is the crime that is socially constructed as 'evil'. This theoretical paradigm complements well with the postmodernists' perspective of manifold realities and their arguments against the claims of universal truth. In contrast, the Bible is the construction of certain individuals within specific times and places. Furthermore, the notion of a static God, eternal and transcendent is, thereby, challenged by relativism. In the Biblical context, it could be argued that the devil is seen as evil that would force people to do 'wrong'. The relativism theoretical paradigm is a useful theoretical idea for Christians in due limits (Leavitt, 1990; Rorty, 2001; Dews, 2004; Zizek, 2006). It could be argued that cultural dissimilarities perhaps ought to be elucidated within the evolution of social theories. Burr (2003) argues that perceptions of morality (evil or good) should be based on how people actually behave, not how they should behave. Burr further expresses that 'normality' itself is culturally relative and all cultures are equally worthy of respect. Therefore, it could be argued that we need to divorce from judgments and try to understand these different cultures where 'evil' may exist.

However, a criticism of relativism is that there could be a main collection of moral values that are frequent to all societies. Burr (2003) argues that cultural relativism is self-defensive, so, if we cannot judge others, then they cannot judge us. It has been argued, moreover, that cultural relativism promotes ethnocentrism, meaning that one believes that their cultural or ethnic identity is superior than another (Burr, 2003). However, arguably, pedophilia cannot be comprehended outside of the cultural context in which it occurs, so theories about 'evil' "must refer to the cultural values of those who engage in it" (Beirne, 1983: 372-373). Further, it has been suggested that the significance that people apply to their 'evil' deeds ought to be respected in social theories because 'evil' is not conceptualised analogously across different cultures, so no accurate comparison is possible (ibid.).

Simultaneously, Beirne and Nelken (1997) argue that one can only comprehend another culture through the prisms of one's own culturally determined system of values; therefore, one cannot be objective. For Pickering

and Rosati (2008), evil is fundamentally a metaphysical or theological conception that is every so often linked to sin. Similarly, Bennett (1980) recommends that social theories should be sensitive to cultural diversity, as Western theories of crime are 'ethnocentric' theories; they do not explain evil in other cultures. This is a challenge to ethnocentric Eurocentric criminology. Beirne and Nelken (1997) argue that the ideology of relativism challenges the 'universality' of social theories and meta-narratives. They further their argument by establishing that the definitions of 'evil' are culturally relative, so what is considered 'evil' by some can indeed be seen as 'good' by others. Is it perhaps arguable that pedophilia is acceptable as 'good' in certain cultures but seen as 'evil' in others. It has been argued that 'evil' is not necessarily the absence of good (they are not opposites); they are both contestable concepts (Beirne and Nelken, 1997). This suggests that 'evil' relates to morals but morals can be flawed. Moral values may differ from culture to culture, so it is argued that conceptions of morality ought to be based on how people actually behave, not on an ideal standard of how people should behave (ibid.). The fact that an individual has committed an 'evil' act, such as pedophilia, may not automatically make that person 'evil' because 'evil' acts may be committed by 'good' people. Therefore, no one is inherently 'evil', arguably only actions are (Agamben, 2005). Labeling someone as 'evil' may make it easy for societies to justify his or her condemnation, rejection and punishment of that person (ibid.).

Having discussed relativism and religion both being contradictory to one another, how does this explain pedophilia as being 'evil'? Zizek (2001) believes that 'evil' acts go through three stages of what brings people to carry out such acts, which go against their perceived propensities and/or interests:

1. Authoritarian
2. Totalitarian
3. Liberal.

It could be argued that religious fundamentalism and extremism is equated with 'evil' acts. That said, Zizek (2001: 126) quotes that "...'totalitarianism' imposes on the subject his or her own good, even if it is against his or her will ...". What if the devil orders the perpetrator to commit a paedophilic activity? Maybe surveillance from the devil, as well as from society, is closely examining the perpetrator. If the perpetrator was merely 'following orders', 'doing his job' and that it would have been impossible not to comply with the devil when he is penetrating into the offender's mental thoughts, then there may be implications for understanding 'evil' and the possibility of justice (Zizek, 2001; Dews, 2004; see Zimbardo, 2005 about cognitive impairment).

Social Psychology of 'Evil'

Psychology is the study of the mind. It seeks internal determinants of anti-social actions and locates 'evil'

within individual predispositions, such as genetic 'bad seeds', pathological risk factors, personality traits, and other organismic variable. Morton (2004) argues that it is the psychology behind 'evil' acts that must be very different from ours. According to Morton, if the motives for 'evil' acts are so different from our daily moral and less moral motives, they must be 'evil' people who commit these heinous crimes. Similarly, Dews (2004: 100-1) quotes:

Evil arises when the subject turns inward, isolates herself, exalts her own power of choice, failing to acknowledge the prior claim of the shared human world in which her very existence is grounded ... it is only to the extent that human beings choose to linger in this opposition that they become evil ...

Hegel (1970) believes that 'evil' is essential and somewhat useful—prohibited yet inevitable. He then further illustrates that humanity is intrinsically 'evil' by its nature and it is 'evil' just because it is a natural thing. He argues that sin is a condition in which a person enables their subjectivity to maintain being postponed, as if it could rest at a neutral point between 'good' and 'evil'. Hegel believes that 'evil' equals secession from the ethical life in which one's subjectivity is grounded. Hegel implies that it is the coexistence in human beings of natural drives and proclivities and a (potentially) rational will that give good reason for the notion of inherent evil. However, Hegel is criticised for denaturing, appeasing and is even apologetic for evil (Zizek, 2001; Dews, 2004). Furthermore, Dews (2004: 97) quotes:

Why do human beings choose the opposite of autonomy, rational self-determination, allowing themselves to be pulled along by their non-rational desires? From the empirical standpoint, the answer may appear to be obvious. The moral law bears down on me, demanding that I set aside such desires, no matter how crucial to my sense of self their satisfaction appears to be. It is the very stringency of morality, then, that makes evil appear an unavoidable option ... provided we grasp the complicity between good and evil generated by the moral view of the world itself ... the choice of evil occurs as a reaction to the 'abstraction' that characterizes the moral 'ought' ... for moral consciousness, the good appears as the non-objective, non universal, the unutterable, and over which the agent is conscious that he in his individuality has the decision.

To understand this further, arguably, religion mirrors the way in which individuals comprehend themselves and their life at a given point in space and time. Religion is the form in which societies express their own ethical framework in an unselfconscious, objectified form, using mythical and symbolic elements that Hegel (1970) conceptualises as 'vorstellung'. Dews (2004) suggests

that, to explore the changing notions of morality and moral responsibility, one has to examine the history of religion as people's biography and self-comprehension constitute their identity; moral responsibility will itself develop as the religious understanding of it alters. If we take the example of suicide bombers to evidence the powerful force that religion can have on a person's psychology, we can see that often they are young men who are intelligent students hoping for a better life (Merari, 2002). The men proclaim to be 'living martyrs' for Islam and, further, for loving and serving Allah. They, in addition, believe that they will earn a position alongside Allah and their family and extended families will be sent to heaven due to their martyrdom, a large sum of money is given to their family as a reward for their sacrifice, so the men believe that they are doing something morally 'good'. Hegel (1970) believes that, when 'good' is allocated to the individual mind after having constructed what 'good' actually is, 'good' is primarily an abstract objective and simultaneously coincides with 'evil'.

However, Dews (2004) criticises Hegel's theory for his myopically progressivist theory of history and for his continual critique of subjectivism. Dews believes that Hegel considers the kind of social arrangements that would reduce its magnetism. Does Hegel merely shift the problem of the motivation for 'evil'? Zizek (2006) suggests that Hegel ought to contemplate the micro and macro levels in which 'evil' is situated and should not use religion to justify 'evil' acts. Todorov (2009) establishes that human nature has not changed; instead, what have altered are technological capability and the inability of our moral imagination to maintain pace. In other words, there is a progressive breakdown of society, i.e., as easy to do 'good' as it is to do 'evil'. The author further argues that it is a flaw to see criminals as different from us, that they are somehow 'inhuman.' The dissimilarity between victims and criminals does not lie in, it has been argued, the biological nature of people (Todorov, 2009). From this, it could be inferred that pedophiles do not have a specific DNA that induces them to sexually abuse children. To punish 'evil', Morton (2004) conveys the idea that we need to understand the comprehension of evil and so culpability can be well matched. This is the idea that, if we try to grasp 'evil' actions, we may not dislike the perpetrators' psychology.

Psychodynamic theory seeks the source of individual violence and anti-social deeds or 'evil' actions within the psyches of 'disturbed' people, usually tracing it back to early roots in unresolved infantile conflicts. Inadequate socialisation, then, perhaps leads one to commit paedophilia. Like genetic views of pathology, psychological approaches aim to link actions that societies deem 'evil' to the mind or personality, such as defective genes, 'bad seeds,' or pre-morbid personality structures. However, different types of people, who give no hint of 'evil' impulses, may be able to commit the same violent crime. Psychodynamic theory also neglects situational and social

factors that may facilitate 'evil' conduct. It has been argued that, by situating 'evil' in certain groups of people or individuals, it always has the 'social virtue' of taking society 'off the hook' as being culpable (Zimbardo, 2004). Zimbardo (2004) illustrates that we are not born with tendencies toward 'good' or 'evil' but with mental templates to do either. He suggests that humans are vulnerable to situational forces rather than biological factors that determine our behavior. Waller (2002) recommends that we need to concentrate on identifying the mechanisms among the causal factors that influence people to commit 'evil' acts.

Likewise, Bandura's (2003) theory of moral disengagement outlines circumstances wherein any person could be induced to behave in an 'evil' way, including people who frequently conform to morality that is of a high level. The theory argues that there is potential to disengage morally from damaging behaviors through utilising a collection of cognitive mechanisms that change: a) one's view of the guilty behavior (for example, employing moral justifications, using euphemistic labeling for one's behavior, or making palliative comparisons); b) one's awareness of the harmful outcomes of that behavior (for example, reducing, disregarding, or misinterpreting the outcomes); c) one's awareness of accountability for the connection between guilty behavior and their harmful outcomes (for instance, shifting or scattering responsibility); and d) one's perception of the victim (for instance, placing blame onto or dehumanising the victims) (Bandura, 2003). Bandura et al. (1975) would argue that, in order to fathom 'evil', one needs to consider cognitive controls that often guide conduct within personally acceptable and socially desirable ways. Through the process of labeling one as 'evil', perhaps from an authority figure or the media, it can influence societies' perceptions toward a pedophile. The assertion herein is theoretical. Biological theorists argue that Bandura and colleagues ignore people's biological state and reject the differences between people's genetics, brain and learning differences. Biological theorists would argue that 'evil' behavior is partially inherited (Jeffery, 1990).

However, Miller (2004) claims that the above psychological theories are predominately seen and approved globally, but a situational perspective gets ignored frequently. Miller uses this situational perspective to understand 'evil', in that he argues that situations exert more power over human behavior than has been, on the whole, acknowledged by the majority of psychologists or recognised by societies. Zimbardo (2004) supports the situational paradigm, as he believes it is useful to understand, treat and prevent 'evil' conduct. Both Miller and Zimbardo argue that regular, 'good' men could be influenced into carrying out 'evil' acts by switching off or on one or another social situational variable. Arguably, this situational perspective gives information to move the focus away from notions of blaming the victim whereby the child victim was 'asking for it' and so they are seen to

be culpable for their victimisation. Instead, a situational theoretical paradigm may elucidate causal networks that can be altered and provide more thoughtful efforts to explore the causes of the 'evil' act. It may also give us an awareness of "risk alerts", which may enable one to modify or avoid potential vulnerable situations. However, empirical research has been mixed as to the validity of Miller's and Zimbardo's situational theoretical paradigm.

The political right states that pedophilia is consequential from 'normal' sexual attraction, despite the lack of evidence for this assumption; however, several psychologists continue to support this view. In addition, psychologists and the political left believe that a large amount of victims of childhood sexual abuse is male. The weakness, however, is not in the measurement of sex ratios of victims but in the failure to identify that homosexual pedophilia and homosexual teleiophilia (teleiophilia is a primary sexual attraction to grown adults, a minor or adult's sexual attraction to mature adults) are separate and that humans do not shift between them. Among lay people, arguably, there is also a common failure to understand heterosexual pedophilia as separate from heterosexual teleiophilia—homosexuality in pedophilia to the rate of homosexuality in teleiophilia implicitly assumes an etiological link. It is common knowledge that homosexuality is seen as 'evil' in some cultures, such as Islam, which can be seen to be embedded within the chief ideological means of communication. For example, Islamic law (*Shari'ah*), the verbal teachings of the Prophet Mohammed (*Ahadith*), and the Islamic holy scripture (the *Koran*). From such ideological channels of communication, it can be inferred that they not only outlaw and condemn homosexuality, but also portray it as 'evil'. This is exemplified in recent research (Jaspal, in press), for example, where it is discussed that people who seek to distance themselves from gay Muslim men is because they believe that Satan is attempting to divert the gay Muslim men from good towards 'evil' as it is 'a test.' Pickering and Rosati (2008) argue that empirical studies relating to suffering and evil may include religious or political issues, which may induce blame of others for one's own suffering of evil, so this may mean blaming nations or individuals, such as Muslims, Hitler, and so on. This may, it could be argued, result in the author 'taking sides' of who is to blame for the 'evil' conduct. However, Pickering and Rosati (2008) assert that a researcher does not want their professional objectivity or 'neutrality' tarnished or questioned by researching a social issue, where he or she may feel driven to take sides.

In a similar vein, the political left, rather than use data considering biological bases of male homosexuality, consistently silences itself with regard to the etiology of homosexuality perhaps due to the fear of homosexuality being re-labeled as a mental illness, which arguably cannot be seen as 'evil'. If pedophiles are not in complete control of their urges and these urges are the result of a

mental illness or brain malfunction (an organic disorder), do we alter our attitudes toward them? Criminal defense lawyers have already recognised this malfunction and propose that we socially construct pedophilia differently (Freund et al., 1984; Jenny et al., 1994; Wegesin, 1998).

Sociology of 'Evil'

Durkheim (1964) argues that social facts are group-induced and group-maintained phenomena that create motives for committing 'evil' acts. In the evolution of his sociological theoretical paradigm pertaining to the social facts that guide 'evil' acts, Durkheim (1964) challenged psychological and biological theories. The former suggests that 'evil' acts are carried out because of psychological factors, for example, the characteristics of the mind, whilst the latter implies that biological factors, for example, hormonal levels and genetic predispositions, are the primary cause of 'evil' conduct, which could explain how paedophilia is construed as 'evil'. Durkheim highlights the ways wherein individuals connect to the world that surrounds them (create, deconstruct, or maintain that world). He stipulates that the way wherein individuals carry out their responsibilities with regard to their personal relationships and jobs are established within the created practices of their society and social expectations. For example, the way a person connects to their sister, father or husband is, he argues, predominantly influenced by the norms of the society wherein that person situates. However, what if such norms and values are different to those 'legitimate' norms and values? For Durkheim, the solution to comprehending 'evil' conduct is by studying social facts. The Durkheimian approach identifies that there is a socially constructed reality of social facts that gives the sustenance of, and momentum for human interaction and action (Durkheim, 1964). Durkheim (1964) defines social facts as "ways of acting, thinking, and feeling, external to the individual, and endowed with a power of coercion, by reason of which they control him" (p. 3). Rosati (2008) argues that the problem of evil can be understood as foundational to Durkheim's argument because it is a constitutive dimension of social life.

Mills (1959) adopted and expanded Durkheim's theoretical paradigm of social facts. Mills suggests that a social study will help to understand 'evil' actions as a function of the intersection of biography (the personal and more immediate circumstances of people's lives) and history (broad structural features in societies). It is these biographical and historical aspects, he argues, that include the multilayered circumstances of the lives of people, therefore, allows one to understand 'evil' deeds. However, a weakness of Durkheim's and Mills' focus on the social context is that it is socially deterministic.

Determinism neglects people's rational minds and free will and situates 'evil' behaviour within forces other than human's free will. The sociological theoretical paradigm is

not a solo, invariant, monumental, perspective of the world. In actuality, three wide-ranging perspectives shape the sociological field: symbolic interactionism, conflict perspective, and structural functionalism.

The conflict and structural perspectives strongly correlate with Comte's (1855) positivistic argument. These two perspectives convey a mechanistic, passive vision of people or 'evil' people in this case. The two perspectives imply that social order is consequential of the expected response from social actors to the empirical conditions of their surroundings. Structural functionalism argues that individuals maintain the norms and values of their society that restrain their behaviour, or they are forced by the powers to, according to the conflict theorists, carry out actions in ways that are conforming to the norms of their society (Charon, 1999).

Therefore, it could be argued that 'evil' individuals are either trained to be conforming or are coerced to be. Whilst such views concur with orthodox understanding, they are in discord, ultimately, with the Bible's perception of 'evil' conduct. It can be suggested that individuals are manipulable creatures and powerless of creating acts that escape environmental surveillance and control. This, arguably, depicts 'evil' men as being similar to creatures whose actions are expected, in other words, explained by other issues that exclude the explanation of free will (Macionis, 1999). Whilst it may be difficult to refute indications of the influence of external restraints (either internalised as values and norms or executed as coercion) on 'evil' conduct, it is the extent of determinism suggested by positivism that is in conflict with the Christian view. Determinism eradicates the person's responsibility for carrying out the 'evil' act. Being culpable for wrongdoing may, consequently, be situated somewhere else. This deterministic ideology suggests that the responsibility for 'evil' behaviour or paedophilia in this case ought to be placed onto something or someone so that the perpetrator is not to blame. Of course, this disregards people's autonomy, implying that the devil is to be culpable for the 'evil' conduct. Thereby, the structural and conflict perspectives do not consider people's creative capacity or free will. Paedophiles are, therefore, positioned as uncontrollable and non-responsible for committing the crime, challenging free will and rationality (Sire, 1990; Schwalbe, 1998).

Hobbes (1651) argues that a social contract is empirical and not metaphysical. The social contract serves legitimate individuals' self-interest collectively and, thus, effectively and herein lays its stability. Arguably, paedophiles have no sense of social contract, which could be characterised as a dysfunctional social contract, so its content not only fails, but also corrupts or distorts a social and civic order in a modern state, as paedophiles are isolated individuals. Hobbes would argue that paedophiles are driven by the desire to fulfill their wants and needs, i.e., their sexual urges. In his work, Hobbes was not timid; many critics were in opposition to his arguments. Hobbes's focus on the secular rather than the theological

was certainly challenged by his critics (Skinner, 1996).

Mead's (1956) theoretical framework is useful to the sociology of 'evil' because it does two things collectively; it takes the role of the other as someone who suffers and as someone who, at the same time, takes the role of what Mead (1956) refers to as the 'generalized other.' This theory argues that the capacity of human beings to take not only their own role as victims, but also the perspective of 'the generalized other' towards violence or 'evil' acts. If the perpetrator was a victim of pedophilia, for example, then they see themselves as leading into that activity as a form of retribution. However, some critics (Macionis, 1999) argue that some parts of Mead's theory are dense, muddled, and somewhat ambiguous. If Mead's theory is applicable, then it is important for the media to convey knowledge to potential pedophiles, emphasising that treatment is available so they do not commit revenge.

The murder of 8-year-old Sarah Payne in 2000 induced policy makers and politicians to change legislation, and so 'Megan's Law' formulated to inform parents of pedophiles in their communities. Cohen (1972) illustrates the notion of 'folk devils' and 'moral panic', which can be applied to the conception of pedophilia in that the media 'name and shame' pedophiles in communities. Therefore, it could be argued that pedophiles may never achieve protection; in many cases, it may make them 'invisible' by having secret identities and re-locating them elsewhere. Greer (2009) and Cohen (2014) both argue that the media controls and influences people's opinions, conveying a distorted view of the actual reality. It has also been argued that the media is interested in 'evil' acts because of news values and 'newsworthiness', which in turn attracts the public and increases sales of newspapers (Jewkes, 2011). However, the media can misrepresent certain issues and, in turn, exacerbate the reaction towards such issues (ibid.). Left Realists state that crime or fear of crime cannot simply be dismissed as groundless media-induced hysteria. Political Left argues that media images of 'evil' increase public fears and anxieties (Matthews and Young, 1992). Similarly, it could be suggested that models of pedophiles are produced by propaganda, fashioned by the governments of most nations against those judged to be the dangerous 'them,' 'outsiders,' or 'enemies.' These visual images in societies and the media may induce a societal paranoia that is centered on the pedophile, who would be seen as someone who would do harm to young children, creating a 'moral panic' (Keen, 1986). It may be suggested that, in order to control 'evil' behavior, family members and the mass media should provide positive role models for children and for the general public, so as to prevent anyone from becoming pedophiles.

Conclusion

This paper was guided by three aims. The first being,

what was meant by the conception of 'evil'; in particular, how do we define or decide if an act is 'evil'? The paper showed that 'evil' is problematic to define and that it is socially and culturally constructed. The second aim was to explore why and how do ordinary people perpetrate acts of 'evil'? Various perspectives were adopted, but this paper argues that the vast majority of evil acts are committed depending on the perpetrator's culture, as the offender will have their own norms and values. The third aim concerned a case study of a crime type, that is, pedophilia. This paper looked at pedophilia as a crime focus but would it be so terrible to comprehend the physiology of the pedophile and to make a correction in our view of the punishment required? After all, it is our altering perceptions of this activity that result in the classification of illegality. It would seem evident and appropriate from Waller's (2002) study that by discovering that the defendant suffers from an organic brain injury may help us put in place the appropriate sentence and provide access to the appropriate treatment to prevent re-offending, and help us to understand if pedophilia is actually 'evil'. Wilkins' (1964) theory of deviancy amplification applies in the 21st century because we are still witnessing pedophiles creating their own norms and values after society has outlawed them, and they are still, arguably, isolated from the mundane functions of society. Therefore, it could be argued that this ever-increasing cycle of stigmatisation of 'evil' is still being applied and seemingly staining them forever. Despite the theory of deviancy amplification being empirically flawed, other theories are still inadequate in explaining 'evil' and pedophilia (Silverman and Wilson, 2002).

This paper has attempted to understand the sociology of 'evil' by critically examining the notion, and using the 'evil' act of pedophilia as a case study, and then analyzing and explaining why it occurs by applying the conception of 'evil'. This analysis has allowed the identification of the causal factors of 'evil' acts. Having identified these, it gives some ability to classify and identify situations in which 'evil' actions may be more prone to occur and, thus, allow remedial action to be taken prior to 'evil' acts taking place. However, even in answering the three aims of the subject of this paper, other questions have been raised that have been outside the scope of this paper. Questions, such as how can the reoccurrence of pedophilia be prevented? What actions should be allowed in order to stop pedophilia from happening? Attempting to answer these questions will not eradicate 'evil' for good, but it will give a deeper understanding of the notion of 'evil' and how best to deal with it. There will always be acts committed by ordinary humans against other humans that seem inhumane in the extreme. These are the acts that societies need to classify as 'evil'. Without this classification, it would seem that true horror of what mankind is capable of could not be fully comprehended.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

REFERENCES

- Agamben G (2005). *State of Exception*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bandura A, Underwood B, Fromson ME (1975). 'Disinhibition of aggression through diffusion of responsibility and dehumanization of victims.' *J. Personality Soc. Psychol.* 9:253-269.
- Bandura A (2003). 'The role of selective moral disengagement in terrorism and counterterrorism.' In Moghaddam, F. M., and Marsella, A. J. (Eds.) *Understanding terrorism*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. pp. 121–150.
- Beirne P (1983). 'Cultural relativism and comparative criminology'. *Contemporary Crisis*, 7(4):371–391.
- Beirne P, Nelken D (1997). *Issues in Comparative Criminology*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Bennett RR (1980) 'Constructing cross-cultural theories in criminology.' *Criminology*, 18(2):252–268.
- Burr V (2003). *Social Constructionism*. Second Edition. New York: Routledge.
- Charon JM (1999). *The Meaning of Sociology*. (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Cohen S (1972). *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*. London: MacGibbon and Kee.
- Cohen C (2014). *Male rape is a feminist issue: Feminism, governmentality, and male rape*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Comte A (1855). *The Positive Philosophy*. New York: Calvin Blanchard.
- Dews P (2004). *The Idea of Evil*. London: Routledge.
- Durkheim E (1964). *The Rules of Sociological Method*. New York: Free Press.
- Freund K, Heasman G, Racansky IG, Glancy G (1984). 'Pedophilia and heterosexuality vs. homosexuality'. *J. Sex Marital Therapy*, 10(3):193-200.
- Genesis 50:20. Retrieve at <http://biblebrowser.com/genesis/50-20.htm>. (Accessed on 01 July 2014).
- Greer C (2009). *Crime and Media: A Reader*. London: Routledge.
- Haybron DM (2002). 'Moral Monsters and Saints'. *The Monist*, 85(2):260–284.
- Hegel GWF (1970). *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*. U.S.: Oxford University Press.
- Hobbes T (1651). *Leviathan*. U.S.: Pacific Publishing Studio.
- Jaspal R (in press). 'Homosexuality and Islam.' In Wong, A., Wickramasinghe, M., and Hoogland, R. C. (eds.). *Encyclopaedia of Gender and Sexuality Studies*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Jeffery CR (1990). *Criminology: An Interdisciplinary Approach*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Jenny C, Roesler TA, Poyer KL (1994). 'Are children at risk for sexual abuse by homosexuals?' *Pediatrics*, 94(1):41-44.
- Jewkes Y (2011). *Media and Crime: Key Approaches to Criminology*. London: Sage.
- Keen S (1986). *Faces of the enemy: Reflections on the hostile imagination*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Leavitt GC (1990). 'Relativism and cross-cultural criminology: a critical analysis.' *Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 27(1):5-27.
- Macionis JJ (1999) *Sociology*. (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Matthews R, Young J (ed.) (1992). *Issues in Realist Criminology*. London: Sage.
- Mead GH (1956). *On Social Psychology: Selected Papers*. U.S.: University of Chicago Press.
- Merari A (2002). *Suicide terrorism*. Paper presented at the First Conference of the National Center for Disaster Psychology and Terrorism, Palo Alto, CA. October.
- Miller A (2004). *The social psychology of good and evil: Understanding our capacity for kindness and cruelty*. New York: Guilford.
- Mills CW (1959). *The Sociological Imagination*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Morton A (2004). *On Evil (Thinking In Action)*. London: Routledge.
- Perkins R (1987). *Looking Both Ways*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Pickering WSF., Rosati M (2008). 'Suffering, Evil and Durkheimian Sociology: Filling a Gap.' In: Pickering, W. S. F. and Rosati, M. *Suffering and Evil: The Durkheimian Legacy*. (Ed.). New York: Berghahn Books Press.
- Rorty A (2001). *The Many Faces of Evil: A Historical Perspective*. London: Routledge.
- Rosati M (2008). 'Suffering and Evil in the Elementary Forms'. In: Pickering, W. S. F. and Rosati, M. *Suffering and Evil: The Durkheimian Legacy*. (Ed.). New York: Berghahn Books Press.
- Schwalbe M (1998). *The sociologically examined life: Pieces of the conversation*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company.
- Silverman D, Wilson D (2002). *Innocence Betrayed: Paedophilia, The Media and Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Sire JW (1990). *Discipleship of the Mind: learning to love God in the ways we think*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Skinner Q (1996). *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes's*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thomas GG (2009). *The Church is Evil*. Retrieve at http://ezinearticles.com/?expert=Gareth_G_Thomas. Accessed on 4th April 2014.
- Todorov T (2009). 'Memory as remedy for evil'. *J. Int. Crim. Justice*, 7(3):447-462.
- Waller J (2002). *Becoming evil: How ordinary people commit genocide and mass killing*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wegesin DJ (1998). 'A neuropsychologic profile of homosexual and heterosexual men and women.' *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 27(1):91–108.
- Wilkins L (1964). *Social Deviance*. London: Tavistock.
- Zeitlin IM (2001). *Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory*. (7th ed.). NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Zimbardo PG (2004). 'A Situationist Perspective on the Psychology of Evil: Understanding How Good People Are Transformed into Perpetrators'. In Miller, A. G. (eds.) *The Social Psychology of Good and Evil*. New York: The Guildford Press.
- Zimbardo PG (2005). 'Mind control in Orwell's 1984: Fictional concepts become operational realities in Jim Jones' jungle experiment.' In M. Nussbaum, J. Goldsmith, & A. Gleason (Eds.): *Orwell and Our Future*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Zizek S (2001). *On Belief*. London: Routledge.
- Zizek S (2006). *The Universal Exception*. London: Centurion.