

In today's society, dangerous driving is criminal and is also considered to be deviant. There are different levels of dangerous driving, all of which have different meaning to different people, some are considered part of the social norm and others are considered to be deviant. Speeding for example is considered to be a norm of society. Everyone speeds and this is not considered a problem which needs societies immediate attention, however there is a line which changes speeding from being a criminal offense to a deviant offense. The following analysis will provide a descriptive summary of the functionalist perspective, the social control theory and the power control theory.

These theories have been applied to a news story in which two young teens from Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Renee and Danielle Orichefsky, were killed in a dangerous driving accident. The driver was Ralph Parker, a twenty year old man from Halifax who lost control of his sports car as he attempted to make a turn on the corner where the girls were sitting. This article involves the day of Mr. Park's conviction, the reaction of the girls' parents and also the reaction of Mr. Park's mother.

The problem of dangerous driving as viewed from a theoretical standpoint can easily be identified with the social control theory. The control theory questions not what motivates individuals and society in general to indulge in societal deviant behaviour but rather examines what is within the structure of a society that causes individuals to conform to social laws. A social control theorist would argue that it is social pressures that prevent people from acting out in deviant manners; otherwise people would act upon inborn animal impulses. In this case, Mr. Park it seems felt the need to drive his sports car very fast and dangerously because it catered to his instinctive need for excitement. If Mr. Park had been thinking about the possible consequences of killing two young girls, he may have decided to slow down and be a little more careful. This is because murder is a deviant act in our society and committing murder would not be socially acceptable. Thus it can be concluded that that the structure and organization of society is very influential in determining the conduct of individuals in our society.

There are inner and outer controls related to the theory of social control. Inner controls are considered as norms which have been internalized through the socialization process. They are norms which are learned in the home at a young age, and which are very relevant to an individuals level of self control. The key players in inner controls would of course be the parents. In this article, Mr. Parker's mother is spoken of, but there is no mention of his father. Because there doesn't seem to be a father in this family, a social control theorist might say that this may have had an impact on how Mr. Parker feels about social and criminal laws.

Outer controls might have a strong impact on dangerous driving. That is both formal controls as the threat of conviction and informal controls, such as humiliation in front of friends, family and society as a whole. Society may discount him from being a valuable member of society because his actions are unforgivable by our society's standards. People are frowned upon for reckless driving, and they are shunned for murder, which is how people may interpret this horrible event. Both inner and outer controls are extremely efficient, in suppressing behaviour that is considered to be socially deviant and non-conformist. Thus, according to the social control theory, when the strength of inner and outer controls are powerful and pressuring, the levels of deviance will be lower. On the other hand, if an individual's controls are weak, and outside societal influences are lower, then the level of deviance will increase.

In relation to this article which considering dangerous driving, an individual's inner self control, that is their ability to restrain from acting in such a manner, is an important factor in determining what one's decision will be. The outer pressure from friends and family also has an influence. A social control theorist may read this article and consider this person as someone who did not conform with the ideals or society because his inner desires were too strong, or

because his inner and outer controls were too weak.

The theory of functionalism states that there is a use in society for deviance and crime. The functionalist approach considers four arguments as to why this may be true, the first of which is group solidarity. The theory behind the creation of group solidarity is that the fatal accident killing two young girls will likely scare people. This can bring the community closer together because everyone feels the loss when young people die needlessly. They will think of the hurt that the parents and the girls' must be feeling; this will create a sense of community. The community may also think that something happened to this young man to make him take such a risk in driving the way he did. The feeling that most people have in a city is fear. People don't speak to one another if they are strangers. The difference after an accident like this is that people will be a little more open to other people, at least they can speak of this accident and how it has affected them. Durkheim would be annoyed that this article does not include any mention of the community and the changes that may be coming about as a result of this accident.

The clarification of boundaries is the second argument that functionalists use to support the usefulness of deviance and crime. In our society, speeding is not deviant, however, there is a line that distinguishes what is harmful speeding and what is considered normal. Most drivers speed and they do not consider that to be a deviant offense, even though it is illegal. It has not always been deviant, but that has changed because there have been so many lives lost needlessly. Reckless driving is also criminal and deviant, but not to the extent in which dangerous driving is deviant. In this article, the driver is seen as a murderer.

This article does not really specify that any boundaries could be redefined because the actual events of that day are not clear. Mr. Parker's conviction is dangerous driving, but the definition of dangerous driving that stems from this article is killing two young people, trying to clarify boundaries in this case may be hard. People will still speed if they think that their speeding is not dangerous. They may also decide not to speed around the corner where these two young girls were killed. People can take this story and construct their own definition of dangerous driving and drive differently than that. It seems that it may not be possible or completely effective in clarifying boundaries in this case, but this article will most definitely make people think of their own personal boundary for driving speed and actions.

The social control theory rewards conformity. People can compare themselves to the deviant and feel good that they are not dangerous drivers and that they did not kill two people. The article states "The Crown said Mr. Parker was showing off and had ample opportunity to bring the car under control it hit the teenagers." People can compare themselves to this person by saying "I would not have done that", or "I would have been in control of the car". This allows people who don't drive recklessly to get some sort of validation for their caution when driving.

Innovation is the fourth argument for the function of crime and deviance. Changes may be made to solve the problem of dangerous driving. Accidents like this make people realize that there is a problem and they might have to take action to improve the situation. "Justice MacDonald said he would be open to consider, as part of Mr. Parker's sentence that he be required to explain his experience to other young people." One part of Mr. Parker's sentence is an example of this innovation. Mr. Parker is required to tell his story to young people so that they will realize the consequences that will face them if they decide to drive their cars recklessly. This is a move to prevent deaths from dangerous driving.

The power control theory considers four aspects of the making of a juvenile delinquent, they are: family class structure, Social reproduction of gender relations, risk taking and formal state of control. This theory is based on the belief that juvenile delinquency is fun. This person who has been convicted, Ralph Parker is not a juvenile, but his reckless behaviour might lead a power control theorist to believe that he was also reckless as a child.

Family class structure is not mentioned in this article, it is not apparent

whether Mr. Parker comes from a lower, middle or upper class family. To a power control theorist, this is a big problem because, a lot can be discovered about this person and their feelings toward authority if the back ground is known. Mr. Parker was driving a late model sports car which he had only owned for a couple of months. This makes the reader assume that he is wealthy and that implies that his family may also be wealthy. However this is not factual and makes analysis difficult.

It is possible that a power control theorist would assume this young person came from a wealthy back ground and this would imply that this man may have been deviant as a child. In his teen years, he might have also had a car and nice clothes, as well as the ability to talk his way around his parents and teachers because he had a wealthy background. If this was the case, he was also likely involved in many sports and other extra-curricular activities which would make him well known to his peers and teachers. He may never have been caught doing anything wrong because he appeared to be a well rounded behaved young man who no one would accuse of giving in to deviant behaviour.

Social reproduction of gender relations can be useful in analysing this article because this young man took on the role of the "real man" who drives fast and looks cool. This is a stereotype which we have seen for many years and has not and likely will not cease to exist. A man who drives slowly and with caution is portrayed as a wimp. A power control theorist would say that this young man was playing on the "natural " male instinct to drive in this manner and have some fun.

Risk taking, which is the another factor is very relevant to this case because Mr. Parker took a risk in driving dangerously. The irony in this case is that people who speed or drive recklessly do not see the danger of killing people as the big risk when they are offending. They are more concerned with the risk of being caught by the police for the crime that they are committing. Someone who is driving recklessly knows the consequences of having an accident, but they may not be important to that person at the time of their action which is deviant.

Formal state of control considers that opportunities to deviate are more restricted for females than males. The freedom to take risk is given to boys, this may have been the case in Mr. Parker's family, he (it is assumed) did not have a father figure and took direction from his mother. A power-control theorist would argue that women give more freedom to their sons.