Deviance or Desire?

During the summer of 2011, riots ripped through England's major cities - Birmingham, London, Leeds and Liverpool, for a four day period which gave rise to some of the worst violence and acts of criminality seen on Britain's streets for decades. (Watt, 2011). The riots have caused politicians, civil servants, policy makers and political commentators to debate profusely over the cause of the riots and other issues such as who is to blame? And how could it be allowed to happen within a civilised Britain? (Shaugnessy, 2011).

During the aftermath of the riots blame was predominantly heaped on the budget cuts and social reforms which were set out in the post election budget when the conservative government returned to power. Political commentators suggested that welfare reforms were contributing to a greater divide between social classes and inequalities within society were growing at its greatest ever rate (Shaugnessy, 2011). During the aftermath of the riots blame was predominantly heaped on the budget cuts and social reforms which were set out in the post election budget when the conservative government returned to power. Political commentators suggested that welfare reforms were contributing to a greater divide between social classes and inequalities within society were growing at its greatest ever rate (Shaugnessy, 2011).

I intend to investigate the reasons behind the London riots from a psycho-sociological perspective with particular reference to the effects of consumerism. My rationale for this study stems from a personal belief that we as designers played role in contributing to the anarchy of August 2011. Furthermore, I believe that it is important for future designers to understand just what they are entering into and to help them realise that their own morals should be considered when accepting commissions. For example, it could be deemed immoral to accept work from a male magazine containing provocative images of ladies if you feel strongly about feminist issues. To help convey that they do have an impact and that maybe, just maybe we could have a good impact on this decaying society that we live in.

I do of course understand that there are many esteemed socialists who have made their mark on history that would disagree with me as they have their own theories that they have spent years upon years developing and rationalising. Therefore, in this paper I will start by taking a look at some of their theories and how using different perspectives can provide different answers to explain the riots. It would not be possible for me to mention all the social theories that have been established over the years, nor would it have been possible for me to read enough books to understand the depths of those theories. Because of this I have chosen to analyse the riots from perhaps the two most commonly used theories – Marxist and Functionalist Theory. It is important to emphasise that I am in no way saying that their work is floored or that they are wrong. I just believe that there are many more factors which influence people to deviate from accepted forms of behaviour than there once was. I intend to use elements of these two theories to develop a clearer picture of what kick started the UK riots in the summer of 2011.

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Above Image cited in London riots: Sony distribution centre on fire in Enfield the Dailymirror (2011)
Left Image cited in Police Ranks Swell to Stem Riot, Londonriots.org.uk (2011)
How do you teach your kids right from wrong?

Durkheim discusses the value of normality

Haralambos and Holborn (2007) state that the definition of deviance is to stray from an accepted path and that many sociological definitions of deviance simply elaborate on this idea. Therefore, from this perspective a deviant is generally defined by those acts that do not conform to the norms and expectations of a particular social group. Many social theorists delve into and try to explain the reasons for deviance in society. Perhaps the most commonly used sociological perspective was coined by Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons in the late nineteenth century is known as functionalism. Durkheim describes society as an organism such as the human body and suggests that if biologists wanted to know how the body worked they would begin by analysing the separate parts such as the brain, the heart and the liver. However if they simply analysed the separate parts they would be unable to explain how life was maintained (Haralambos and Holborn, 2007).

Durkheim likens this analogy to society, suggesting that to understand any part of society, the varying parts or groups must be seen in relation to society as a whole (ibid). Thus when analysing a part of society from a functionalist perspective you must examine its contribution to the whole of society and not just its immediate social groups.

Furthermore, functionalism works on the premise that society will conform to an accepted set of norms and values. Norms are guides to action, which tell you, for example, how to behave when sitting in a lecture theatre at a university or when in a cinema. Values are generally overall beliefs about what is right or wrong in society. For example in England values such as honesty, privacy, ambition and individual achievement are important (Haralambos and Holborn, 2007). This perspective places an emphasis on social cohesion and suggests that when the consensus of the agreed norms and values are broken deviance will occur (ibid).

Durkheim’s theory of functionalism suggests that deviance is generated by society itself for its own wellbeing and that deviance is in fact functional (Durkheim 1938). 2007).

Advocates of functionalism agree that for society to operate functionally crime is an inevitable aspect of society and agree that methods of social control are necessary to maintain social order (Jamrozik and Nocella 1999). Furthermore, functionalists suggest that it is only when rates of deviance are exceptionally high or low that society becomes dysfunctional (Haralambos and Holborn, 2007). By using this theory to analyse the root cause of the London riots of 2011 it would be perfectly acceptable to assume that they were caused by the breakdown and malfunction of a particular element of society. One example could be that parents have failed to instil accepted morals and norms into their children and have consequently produced members of society who do not conform to the accepted beliefs of society who do not believe or understand that burning, looting and rioting are not appropriate ways to behave, children that have grown up in broken homes where arguing and inconsideration is everyday life. Another example could be a change in the way schools are run. When a child does something unacceptable at secondary school it is suspended, and if parents are not strict then this could mean extra leisure time. It could be argued that this is offering a reward for misbehaving rather than a punishment.

Therefore, if we were to analyse the London riots from a functionalist perspective we would not point the blame at anti social behavior or consumerism but on the breakdown of our society as a whole. A functionalist perspective would assume that it is the inability of parents to educate their children correctly in socially accepted ways of behaviour that is responsible for the deviance in London.

The parents ain’t to blame!

Durkheim wrong suggest Nutfield

A charitable trust called the Nutfield Foundation produced a report which was concerned with improvements in society suggested that parents today actually take a more active role in their children’s lives than parents did twenty years ago. The report revealed that young people were spending more time with their parents than they were 20 years ago. One of the main findings of the report suggested that parents are also more likely to monitor their children’s whereabouts.

Furthermore, the Nutfield Foundation report argued that there is no evidence to suggest that problematic behavior in teenagers is more likely to be caused by peer pressure and youth culture. Gardner (2009) summaries his findings in the following quote:-

“It seems that many aspects of parenting may have improved but parents can’t do it all on their own,” said Professor Gardner. Following up with “We now have to consider whether external influences, such as peer pressure or wider cultural influences are playing a part, given the rising number of young people with problem behavior in the UK today.”

Who is Emile Durkheim?

Born in April 1858, many consider Durkheim to be the father of sociology. Durkheim is generally associated with his work on functionalist theories of sociology. The core of his theory stemmed from a belief that people are the product of their social environment and that people’s behavior is influenced by significant others or role models. During his life Durkheim published many books as well as giving a large number of lectures on various areas of sociology such as religion, suicide and deviance. As a teenager Durkheim’s ambition was to attend an esteemed college in Paris. He realized that to achieve his dream he would have to work very hard to try and fulfill his ambition to gain entry into the prestigious ‘Ecole Normale Superieure’. In 1879, Durkheim achieved his dream and gained entry, joining other well known sociologists, philosophers and political leaders at the prestigious institute.

In 1881 Durkheim graduated and became a teacher of philosophy. 5 years later he was commissioned ‘Chargé des Cours de Pédagogie et de Sciences Sociales’ meaning that he was put in charge of the social sciences at the university. Whilst working at the university Durkheim was able to dedicate a large amount of time to writing and studying and soon became interested in a particular theory of human behavior. A decade later he published the first of many books entitled ‘The Division of Labor in Society’ in which he discussed the influence that social norms have on individuals within a society. Ultimately Durkheim was accredited with pioneering the functionalist perspective of sociology. Perhaps the easiest way to explain functionalism is by drawing on a comparison of the human body. If we want to know how the human body works it would be best to analyze the individual parts of the body such as the heart, lungs or bones. Durkheim proposed that to know how society works you must you a similar method and analyze the separate parts or institutions such as the family the church or the workplace.

On November 15, 1917 Emile Durkheim sadly died at the age of 59, however his name will live on in history as the father of sociology (Lukes, S 1992).
Who is Karl Marx?

Karl Marx was born on the 5th of May 1818 in a small rural settlement called Trier in West Germany. During his time spent at Bonn and Berlin university he was introduced to the ideas of Hegel and Feuerbach who would in turn influence Marx political ideology. In 1841, he graduated from Jena University with a doctorate in philosophy and became editor of a liberal newspaper in Cologne. After a few years Marx and his wife Jenny moved to Paris. It was there he became a revolutionary communist and befriended his lifelong collaborator, Friedrich Engels (Whern, 2001). Marx was exiled from France and subsequently took up residence in Brussels, where he began to philosophise with Engels about ideas and theories on social systems and left wing ideologies. In 1848 they co-authored the classic text ‘The Communist Manifesto’ which suggested that all the past conflicts in society had been based on class struggles and that the Bourgeoisie would always maintain the power in a capitalist society (BBC, 2012).

Marxism

Historically there has always been a sense of inequality between different groups of society. Contemporary examples of inequality in society include racial tensions and issues related to sexuality. Sociologists have used a variety of social theory’s to understand these differences however the most commonly used sociological theory is conflict theory. Conflict theory is predominantly based on the writings of German philosopher Karl Marx and is concerned with power relationships between different social groups (Haralambos and Holborn, 2007). Marx describes society, not as a product of consensus about shared values but as a continuing struggle between social classes (Clinnard and Meir, 2008). Marx focuses most of his work on the power relations between the labour force (Proletariat) and the ruling class (Bourgeoisie) in a capitalist society. Marx suggests that only labour produces wealth and that wealth in a capitalist society is produced by the labour of the workers only (Haralambos and Holborn, 2007). Because of this disparity, Marx suggests that the only way people can become wealthy whilst in a capitalist society is by exploiting others which will in turn create conflict and ultimately a feeling of repression amongst the work force.

Capitalism has created a financial hierarchy where wealth is seen as measure of success, where material possessions are the key to climbing to the top of this hierarchy. This is a bitter truth that means that the youth of today strive not to be well educated, caring individuals but to be wealthy regardless of how they get there (Shaugnessy, 2011). Ultimately the youth of today regard success by how many pairs of trainers they own or by having more electric gadgets than their peers. According to Marxist theory a society where we judge one another on the contents of our wallet and wardrobe and not on the characteristics of our personality will only result in conflict (Clinnard and Meter, 2008).

When relating this perspective to the London riots of 2011 it is possible to suggest that from a Marxist perspective a capitalist society fuelled by consumerism does in fact encourage anti-social behavior. In a society where people view material possessions more than social values it is perfectly acceptable to assume that some inequality will be evident which is largely fuelled by jealousy. Marx suggests that when a group of people acquire an identity which resembles a ruling class ideology the people who are not in that group will eventually revolt against those people. In the case of the London riots we could assume that the rioters were revolting against the rich capitalists who own a large percentage of material possessions such as expensive clothes and electronic g...
Bernaise Sauce
Poisons Thousands

Despite the prolonged period of finger pointing and indictment that has followed in the aftermath of the London riots of August 2011, designers have managed to avoid any blame but could however, I believe, potentially be responsible for the root cause of the 2011 riots. The riots of 2011 differed to any previous riots seen in the UK as they were generally focused around obtaining free goods as opposed to highlighting social grievances and exposing social injustices. The main targets for the rioters included highly successful sportswear chains such as Footlocker and JD sports which are regarded as desirable retailers of fashionable street wear to the under 25s. Other targets included electronic retailers such as PC World, Game, Dixons and mobile phone outlets such as Carphone Warehouse and the 02 stores. Various journalists and academics have suggested that the choice of stores but by the riots was no coincidence and was merely a product of an “out of control consumerist ethos” (Hawkes, 2011). Hawkes (2011) and Grover (2011) both suggest that in 2002 a report on London and the rest of the UK reflected a deeply flawed economic and social ethos that anyone can have anything they like without working for it. Grover (2011) continues by suggesting that the pressure placed on children by advertising and companies brand identity is making adolescents put lives and their freedom at risk to obtain their products.

All in the mind?
One method of explaining this inherent desire to obtain desirable goods could be rooted within a psychological theory known as psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is ultimately concerned with the relationship between conscious and the unconscious mind. This notion of the unconscious mind is a place deep within the human psyche where Freud believed that he had discovered hidden primitive sexual and aggressive forces (Nevid, 2008). Freud suggested that if these forces were not controlled then they could cause chaos and destruction and could prompt deviance (Century of the self, 2002). Freud also suggests that there are a variety of reasons behind why and how people are motivated to behave (cited in Nevid, 2008). Freud suggested that these reasons are the result of either a need or desire to achieve a goal, or an ideal. Furthermore, Freud believed that human beings were motivated not only through conscious process but by what he defined as unconscious desires (Hall, 1978). Freud proposed that the mind was made up of three components – the conscious, preconscious and unconscious. The conscious involves thoughts of which you are aware. An example of this could be that when you decide to drive to work you make a conscious decision to get in your car and drive as opposed to walking. The preconscious involves thoughts of which you are not immediately aware however could be shifted to your conscious mind fairly quickly. Perhaps an easier example to comprehend would be that the pre conscious mind is your ‘ordinary memory’. Furthermore, the most relevant part of the mind in terms of this study is the unconscious mind. The unconscious mind is a collection of, thoughts, urges, and memories that lay outside of our conscious awareness. Most of the content of the unconscious mind includes feelings such as pain, anxiety, or conflict. According to Freud, the unconscious continues to influence our behavior and experience, even though we are unaware of these underlying influences (Cherry, 2004).

But what has Freud got to do with advertising?
Freud’s Nephew, Edward Bernays was employed by the American government to project manage propaganda campaigns. Bernays was heavily involved with the public information committee and was influential in promoting the idea that America’s war efforts were primarily aimed at “bringing democracy to all of
Angels really did fall

Angels really did fall in Londons Victoria Station recently as advertising giants BBH launched ‘Angels will Fall’ a television, ambient and interactive advertising campaign to advertise Lynx. Two short television commercials were launched, they pictured a nostalgic European town and as the residents were going about their business suddenly stunning winged angels fell from the sky each in search for the man who has captivated them, drawing them down to earth by using Lynx Excite. Following this as London’s Victoria train station filled with tired commuters many stood fascinated to watch as people stepped inside the special Lynx Excite box, and again the angels appeared next to them in search of the one who had captivated them. This campaign was also supported by a Facebook game where Kelly Brook, starring as the head angel hunted for that one man who combined the captivating lure of Lynx with his dashing looks to bring this all important head angel to earth.

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Europe (Nevin, 2008). Whilst on business abroad Bernays decided to send his uncle, Sigmund Freud, some Havana cigars. In return, Freud sent him a copy of his latest book entitled ‘General introduction to Psychoanalysis’ (1920). The concepts discussed in this text, intrigued Bernays. In this text Freud introduces a concept which discussed hidden irrational forces. Bernays wondered if it would be possible to generate some money by incorporating this concept into his propaganda campaigns – effectively manipulating the unconscious minds of his target groups (century of the self 2002). Whilst working with Freud’s theory, Bernays began to believe that the process concerned with decision making was not just made the conscious mind. Thus, Bernays started to look at ways in which he could appeal to people’s unconscious needs. This set him apart from everybody in his field as his approach was revolutionary; it was different to the way everyone thought. In this era advertisers, companies and politicians believed that if you just bombarded people with information then they would want to buy their product or ideology (Century of the self, 2002). Furthermore, Bernays started to become aware of other theory’s related to how the subconscious mind works.

Gustave Le Bon’s (1960) theory of the crowd mind was of a particular interest to Bernays and he began to combine his findings with his uncle’s work. Le Bon (1960) was concerned with how people’s behavior changed when in large crowds and suggested that the only reasonable explanation for changing their behavior was that they were transformed because membership in a crowd into uncritical actors (CBSM, 2002). Furthermore, Bernays became aware of Wilfred Trotters ‘Brosius’ mind in Peace and War” (Cited in Nimmo and Nelson, 97) which is an analysis of group psychology and the ability of large numbers of people to be swayed by innate tendency. These influences helped Bernays to develop a strategy on how to control the mind and soon after helped to create one of the first advertising campaigns that was perceived to have manipulated people’s perception. Consequently, Bernays had become a pioneer of modern advertising (Tye 2002). In the

documentary ‘The Century of the Self’ (2002) he was described as the ‘originator of modern public relations.’ Subsequently, Bernays was labelled by Larry Tye as ‘The Father of Spin’. Perhaps because of Bernays influence from Freud he had become well known and highly regarded amongst many psychologists.

Not as independent as they thought.

In the early 1920’s the owner of the American tobacco company, George Hill began to realise that there was a whole market that was not being accessed and that if he could somehow make it acceptable for women to smoke in public his sales would increase dramatically. In the 1920s smoking was a well established habit for men as the fumer was still considered unacceptable for a woman to be seen smoking in public. Around this time women had begun to gain equality in various aspects of life such as the right to vote August of 1920 and had begun to accept in the work place but smoking was still somewhat taboo. Women could only smoke in their own homes, and in New York in 1922 a lady was even arrested for smoking in public (Museum of Public Relations, 2000). Therefore, with the advice of his close colleagues, he hired Bernays to help rid this image. Consequeintly, Bernays suggested that Hill should pay a psychoanalyst to begin working on a new marketing campaign with him. Unfortunately, Freud was in Vienna, therefore he got in contact with Dr. A Bril, a renowned psychoanalyst in America (Bernays 2002). Bernays wanted to know what cigarettes meant to women. Bril concluded that cigarettes are a symbol of the penis and of male sexual power (Century of the Self, 2002). Bril told Bernays that if he could link the idea of smoking with changing male power then it may be possible to get women to start smoking, as they would have their own penis (Century of the self, 2002). This suggested that women’s subconscious desires were to be equal to men. He set up his experiment for the Easter parade He persuaded Rich debutante to hide cigarettes under their clothes and on his signal to get them out, light them dramatically and continue to march. At the same time Bernays contacted the

media and tipped the of that some debutantes would be protesting with ‘Torches of Freedom’ (Tye, 2002) Cleverly, Bernays had intended this launched as a national stir and subsequently stories appeared in newspapers throughout the country. Bernays knew that news as opposed to advertising was the best medium to carry his message to an unsuspecting public and in turn created a desire to be worry free to smoke. Smoking mad women feel equal, it was a symbol of defiance (Tye, 2002) Bernays realised that you could make people behave irrationally if you link products to emotions and desires and that irrelevant objects could become a symbol of how you want to be seen by others, instead of telling consumers to need a product, he set out them to feel better if they had that product. (Century of the Self 2002)

Modern day examples of this are prevalent throughout advertising today. Most of the advertising campaigns launched by Lynx attempt to manipulate male emotions into buying these line of deodorants. This is most obvious in their recent campaigns incorporating this concept into the subconscious desire of men to be irresistible to all, even angels. Another recent example is Dove’s ‘Campaign For Real Beauty’ in which dove use models of all shapes and sizes instead of regular size 8 models. This campaign focuses on women’s frustration of the falsity of airbrushing and their desire for acceptance as whatever shape and size they might be. After reviewing Bernays and his theory of subconscious desire, I conclude this article by suggesting that if Bernays’ input into the world of PR has potentially discovered the way in which advertisers target their audience today. I believe that if it is true that the behaviour of advertisement can be aimed at your unconscious mind then it is entirely possible that Bernay’s theories are largely applicable for creating consumerism as we know it our humanity.
Who were they? London 2011 riots

The rioters of August 2011 consisted of people from all backgrounds, ages, ethnicities and financial standings. This is backed up by various published reports from news channels and the Ministry of Justice (Guardian, 2011). An observation made by many political commentators was that these people were looting top of the range products despite the fact that the majority of rioters were already sporting desirable sportswear and designer clothing. This raises some interesting issues regarding the motives for these crimes. Firstly, did these people commit these crimes for financial gains? The evidence would suggest that the majority of the looters only obtained a relatively small amount of products therefore it is unlikely they did it for financial gain. Obviously it would be naive to presume that organised crime rackets did not become involved with the looting however in general the majority of looting was carried out by individuals. Secondly, did the rioters seize the opportunity to reject established values and norms and express pent up frustration at the state? If we were to analyse the cause of the riots from a Marxist perspective, it would be reasonable to assume this to be true, however I believe that an alternative motive was too blame.

What did they take?

It is noticeable that shops that sold mobile phones were some of the top targets. Two of the companies to suffer the greatest amount of theft were sporting giants JD Sports and Apple. Perhaps the most targeted product of the London riots was the Apple iPhone. Hundred of iPhones were stolen and subsequently they all had to be barred on every network to render them worthless. (Bell, 2011) It is important to ask why hundreds of Apple iPhones were stolen during the London riots and what makes them so desirable. What makes the apple brand so loveable and so desirable that people will queue for hours outside the shop when a new product is made available, just so that they can be one of the first to own it?

An Apple A Day?!

In 1976 Steve Jobs formed Apple with Steve Wozniak. The name Apple was thought up by Jobs after spending some time on an apple farm in the summer holidays. To begin with, Wozniak didn’t like the idea of calling the company Apple however agreed that if they had not thought of a name by 5 o’clock the following evening then Apple would be the name. Subsequently at 5 o’clock the following evening Apple was born. (Apple History 2012) The name grew in popularity and began to be known as a technical company, with a human element, making it approachable and friendly. 25 years later in 2001 Apple stepped outside the realm of the home computer and launched the iPod, the product that would be the beginning of Apple as we know it today. Although not the first MP3 player on the market it was the first to really stand out from the crowd. Its features were that it was small, sleek and user friendly which in turn made it desirable to consumers. The new iPod became the digital music player to set the standard for the industry. Soon after its release Apple launched it’s well known ad campaign depicting colourful silhouetted figures dancing to music with distinctive white headphones. Again Apple had focused on giving the brand a human side. Apple avoided technical jargon about how the product worked in their advertising campaign and instead focused on how it made you feel. Apple knew that people didn’t just want to carry their music with them but they wanted to listen to music that reflected who they are (Walter Isaacson, 2011).

Attention to what their customers want is what has built Apple into the multi million pound company that it is today. Apple has a variety of intuitive ways of making sure they listen to and know what their customers want. Apple regularly hosts consumer focus groups where people can meet and discuss for hours on end about Apple’s latest products. This is what makes Apple such a desirable brand. The consumers want a product that they can be proud of, one that’s easy to use and elegant thus making the iPhone and various other Apple products must have items (Cult Branding Company, 2012). So just as Bernays did, apple are promoted their product in terms of how it would make Consumers feel
Given the array of people involved in the London riots can we really blame any specific group such as the parents or social issues such as poverty or ethnicity? My suggestion would be no, we can’t. So what is the one theory that can apply to everyone, regardless of race, financial status or criminal history? I suggest that Bernays theory of desire has helped to explain why people became involved in the riots. It is important to recognise that advertising creates this desire and that it access’ a desire that people are not necessarily aware of.

This is the reason I chose this topic for my dissertation. Desire is a very powerful emotion and if advertising campaigns can access the unconscious desire and use it to make us buy a product then we as a society should learn to use our desires to create a need to be kind and helpful, reliable and grateful. Something that a lot of people, in built...