A STRUGGLE FOR DEFINITION: EXPLANATORY MODELS OF SATANISM IN SOCIOLOGY

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Abstract

Many terms used both in sociology and lay discourse have nonscientific origins. Therefore, it is important to clarify the meanings of these concepts to understand the heuristic capacities that they have for scientific research. The notion of satanism emerged in evangelical manuscripts, and it has since appeared repeatedly in political and juridical discussions. Moreover, there are conflicting opinions about the suitability of this notion for sociological study. In this paper, I use critical concept analysis and a critical perspective on religion to examine sociological discourse on satanism. I argue that to enhance sociology—and religious studies in general—among contemporary views of satanism, the naturalist model is the most promising, but it is not the only one that should be used to explain this notion.

Keywords

satanism, explanatory models, critical concept analysis, sociological discourse, naturalism

“Satanism” has long been used in various secular and nonsecular contexts. It first emerged in evangelist manuscripts (Frankfurter 2001), and it has appeared multiple times in political and juridical discourses throughout history. Politicians and legal actors use this word every day, and they include it in official governmental reports. However, there is considerable ambiguity in how the concept of satanism is applied in the social sciences and related fields.

One well-known example of the struggle to define the concept is satanic moral panic (Lewis 2016: 210). This phenomenon occurred in the USA and Europe in the 20th century. During that period, many political and scientific actors believed in the existence of a huge secret network of violent satanic cults that performed sacrifices and rituals with children. Various groups debated the meaning of satanism. The mass media promoted that idea to increase ratings; feminists used the narrative against satanism to show the exploitive nature of patriarchy; evangelists fought against the decline in the number of Christian adepts, and psychotherapists, detectives, and anti-cultists tried to influence the professionalization of their occupations. Sociologists also served as experts and engaged in discussions (Bromley 1991). Considering the nonscientific origin and the wide usage of this concept by the nonscholarly public, it remains unclear whether this term is suitable as a theoretical notion in scientific discourse.

Taub and Nelson (1993) state that sociology, in comparison with crime reporting in the media, mostly portrays satanism positively and creates the image of a “satanic establishment.” Other researchers argue that “satanic studies” exist (Holt 2012). Furthermore, Petersen (2014) identifies three modes of discourse in scientific studies of satanism (“de-demonization, sanitization, and heterogenization”), and he argues about the constant boundary-work that occurs within “satanic studies”. Other authors are skeptical about the analytical capacities of “satanism.”

Granholm (2012), for instance, argues that “satanism” is an oppressive and marginalizing notion, and he suggests using other terms such as “Postsatanism” and “Left-hand path.”

Looking at this debate, questions arise about the state of current sociological studies of “satanism:” how do they portray it? Do they construct boundaries within and with lay discourse? How are the different discourses related to each other, and is there any potential to develop new analytical accounts? Therefore, in this article, I deconstruct the use of satanism in sociological discourse to shed light on the controversial status of the term “satanism.” Knowledge of the debates about satanism in sociological discourse is crucial for developing new theoretical accounts of satanism. Second, this paper provides the reasons that the concept is adopted and applied in empirical studies. Third, this paper shows the capacities and limits of different models of satanism, and it suggests ideas to improve the explanatory power of their accounts. Overall, I hope to contribute to current scholarship on satanism by clarifying how “satanism” is used in sociology. This examination is also important for religious studies, because I provide a method for critical concept analysis that could, with some alterations, be used in other investigations¹. Also, as satanism is a concept used by many religious students as other than a sociological term, the critical deconstruction in this paper could pave the way to reconsider how this concept is applied in other subfields of religious studies. At the end of this manuscript, I introduce my position on the place of this term in contemporary sociology of religion. Nevertheless, I think that my argument is not the final point in the discussion of the place of satanism in contemporary religious studies.

There have been many attempts to systematize the diverse academic scholarship on satanism. Holt (2012), for instance, wrote a dissertation focused on “religious” satanism.

¹ It is important to notice that, although my analysis is inspired by the CRR, I do not fully follow the ideas of this perspective. Rather, my analysis is driven by that theoretical perspective.

Although his work provides one picture of the scholarship on satanism, it does not include an overview of “rationalist” and “reactive” satanism studies (I borrow these terms from Petersen (2009)), which belong to nonreligious types of satanic discourse. The same critique applies to Taub and Nelson (1993). Even though they investigated sociological scholarship, they viewed it as a homogeneous field characterized by a mostly positive framing of satanism. Petersen (2014) studied discourse in satanic scholarship, and he noted different types of satanism, but there was no close examination of the field of sociology. White (2017) analyzed three major books on satanism and provided several observations; however, other publications were not examined. Introvigne (2016), Dyrendal et al. (2015), Van Luijk (2016), Faxneld (2017), and Granholm (2012) proposed classifications of satanism scholarship. They were a preliminary step toward proposing their own definitions of satanism, but they were not specifically intended as an analysis of the sociological discourse on satanism. Ritzer et al. 2001: 114 called this “the metatheoretical analysis metatheorizing as a prelude to theory development.” This article, in contrast, explores studies on all three types of satanism (rationalist, reactive and esoteric), surveys them from the 1980s until 2018, and specifically explores sociological accounts of satanism. It is necessary to investigate the three types of satanic discourses because they are interrelated. For instance, a person can like metal music and practice religious satanism. Therefore, excluding that type of discourse could create an incomplete picture of the sociological discourse on satanism. I studied sociological discourse separately from discourses relating to other social sciences because of the difference in the ontological, epistemological, and methodological principles that form their foundations.

To answer the research questions and reveal the current state of sociological studies of satanism, I use the perspective of the critical research on religion (CRR). CRR is a modern

approach in religious studies that treats religion as an empty signifier (Berenskoetter 2017). In this paper, I also see satanism as a notion that is socially constructed in different social and historical contexts. In particular, the discourse on satanism by sociologists is investigated using critical concept analysis (Berenskoetter 2017). I combine the optics of several researchers (Fitzgerald and Goldstein, King, Boyarin) who use different CRR perspectives.

Fitzgerald argued that the word “religion” is used too broadly so his critical study of religion involves deconstructing the “religious-secular” binary (Goldstein et al. 2016). He distinguishes between critical religion and CRR (Fitzgerald 2015). Critical religion for Fitzgerald is the genealogical study of religion and concepts that are connected to it. Looking at religion, he claims it has two “faces:” one that is peaceful and not connected with power and the second one—the barbarous one—that was constructed in the 17th century. The opposition between Christians and Barbarians emerged when being Christian became required for citizenship.

Goldstein et al. (2016) assert that the role of critical religion studies is to understand the structural mechanisms that reinforce power relations in society. They look not only at how religion is formed through power relations but also at how religion strengthens power relations. The goal of such an examination should not lie in acting either against or in favor of religion. I contend that it is beneficial to connect CRR with other critical research perspectives, such as the feminist tradition, because questioning religion leads to challenging intersecting concepts such as gender, race, ethnicity, and mental health (Lynch 2017; Robinson 2019). Bearing in mind Asprem’s (2016) critique of CRR in deconstructing and not proposing fruitful alternatives, I tried not only to deconstruct but also to suggest new ways to work with the concept.

This article is structured as follows: First, I describe the method that was used to analyze sociological discourse on satanism. Then I present the results of my deconstruction in detail. At the end, I offer conclusions.

1 Concept Analysis of Sociological Discourse on Satanism: Methodological Aspects

My deconstruction involves a sequence of several steps (Table 1). First, the theories are divided according to the models on which they are explicitly or implicitly based. Then, the terms “theoretical conception” and “representatives” are added from the same meta-theoretical scheme. After that, characteristics such as “country of origin” are incorporated to consider the cultural factor of theory construction, and “basic terms” are used to illustrate the terminological apparatus of each theory. Next, an additional dimension is included—“macromicro.” These categories do not mean the same thing as in Ritzer’s (1975) classification of the metatheoretical accounts, where the theory is classified as macro or micro. Rather, I follow the position of Berger et al. (2018: 1284) that theories cannot be characterized as “macro” or “micro;” rather, such terms can be applied only to their interpretations. This means that the binary opposition of “micro-macro” does not apply to all objects of sociological investigation, and adaptation is needed for each of them. Therefore, Ritzer’s concept of “methods and means of data collection” was added to my scheme. This dimension of classification shows the method typically employed by sociologists, whose research belongs to a certain model. To enrich this concept, Abbot’s (2004: 53-60) typology of explanatory programs is used. The last part of my analysis is to construct a map of the relations between the theories. For that purpose, I use the approach of Berger et al. (2018: 1607-1718) to allocate connections between theories. Those scholars outlined five types of relations that could exist between theories: “elaboration,” “integration,” “competition,” “variants,” and “proliferation.”

After I present the methodological principles of my approach, I present the results of my deconstruction.

2 Explanatory Models of Satanism in Sociology

2.1 Interpretative Models of Satanism

This model has several distinguishing traits (Devyatko 1996: 52). Its proponents do not believe that the social sciences and natural sciences can use the same methods of investigation. They argue that social sciences deal with people who tend to imbue their actions with meaning, unlike the objects of the natural sciences. Therefore, the explanatory mechanisms of the social sciences should not be copied from the natural sciences. Finally, some argue that, to examine the conscious behavior of people, the Verstehen approach should be used. This means that both scientific and semantic definitions should be considered. A semantic definition, according to Kaplan, makes something understandable to other people without necessarily relying on logical principles. A scientific definition is based on strict logical rules that should help the explainer formulate the pattern or law that describes the facts.

In the interpretative approach, satanism is represented in the theories of moral panic, social problem construction, dark tourism, and authority in satanic communities. I classified these theories as interpretative because, in all of them, satanism is understood as a social construct. Studies of this type have mostly been conducted in the USA, Great Britain, and Scandinavian countries. Satanism in interpretative sociology is explored both as a macro- and as a micro-phenomenon. In the following sections, I show the origins of each theory and the ideas that underlie them.

2.1.1 Macrointerpretative Sociological Models of Satanism

The term “moral panic” was proposed by Stanley Cohen, although not in connection with satanism and satanic studies. The co-occurrence of the terms “satanism” and “moral panic” started with US scholars, who tried to explain the gossip about satanic ritual abuse in sects in the USA and Europe (Cree et al. 2015). Fundamentalists, psychiatrists, cultural feminists, self-help groups, neoconservatives, and police workers were involved in spreading moral panic. Their actions resulted in many juridical cases against people who were accused of engaging in satanic activities.

During the satanic panic of the 1980s, a contemporary legend on satanism was disseminated. It was based on religious propaganda of the Middle Ages (Victor 1998), which claimed that there is a secret sect of devil worshippers that has its own traditions and ritual practices (Lewis 2016). The rhetorical function of the legend of satanic worship was supported by many colorful examples of the actions that were taken by the members of satanic communities. For example, it was said that the satanic communities were involved in necrophily, abused women and children, and sacrificed babies to Satan (DeYoung 1996). Satanic panic has also been interrelated with other moral panics directed at gay people (Falkof 2018), aliens (Paley 1997), the mafia (Albini 1993), and terrorists (Dillinger 2004).

Based on the central assumption of moral panic theory, it could be argued that reference to Satanic ritual abuse (SRA) was instrumental for the theory of moral panic. This means that satanism was only an illustration of moral panic theory and not its foundation. This is the same role that satanism—as a concept—played in the theories of social problem construction. These theories matured in parallel; thus, the theories of moral panic can also be called theories of social problem construction.

Constructivists, unlike traditionalists, demonstrated the persistent character of satanic practices. For them, the main explanation for satanism was the complex of problems that are present in society (Forsyth & Olivier 1990). For instance, Furedi (2013) suggested that belief in Satan was a form of conspiracy thinking that emerged as a response to the crisis of causality. Although this explanation uses functionalist logic, I call it constructivist because belief in Satan and the idea of Satan himself are produced (constructed) by people.

Theories of social problem construction are still used, as can be confirmed by publications that use their terminology. One example is a dissertation by Kamp(2018), who studied satanism in Zambia. He starts with three hypotheses: evolution, popularity, and mental illness, and he concludes that belief in satanism in Zambia reflected the difficulties that young Zambian Christians faced: the transition to the nuclear family and hierarchical order of society, spiritual insecurity, and doubts about property rights.

It could be inferred that theories of moral panic and social problem construction both use the notion of satanism for illustrative purposes. Next, I discuss the role of this concept in the microinterpretative models used to explain satanism.

2.1.2 Microinterpretative Sociological Models of Satanism

Theories of authority in organizations and dark tourism are microinterpretative models of satanism. The theory of authority in satanic groups is connected with the move from viewing satanists as the products of human fantasies to recognizing philosophical and religious groups that identify themselves as satanic. The scholars who work in this domain use the Weberian theory of authority to explain leadership and management in satanic temples. Researchers have performed participant observations in satanic groups and analyzed their textual materials.

Alfred (1976) was probably the first to write on satanism, using theories of authority. He conducted his research in the Church of Satan, and he concluded that the charismatic authority of Lavey was based on magic and the natural and social sciences. This was typical for new religious movements, especially Scientology. (A. S. Lavey was the founder of the Church of Satan in the USA.). Since Alfred's work, authority in satanic organizations has been studied by Lewis (2002) and Davies (2016).

The theory of authority exploits satanism differently than the macrointerpretations. Scholars who ascribe to it adapt the theory of authority based on empirical evidence and do not treat satanism only as an example. Dark tourism theories are theories of authority connected with attitudes towards satanism and occultism as "normal" phenomena. Light (2017) argued that institutionalized studies of dark tourism started in 1996. This term was coined by Foley and Lennon (Stone and Sharpley, 2008: 576) to refer to the "presentation and consumption of real and commodified death and disaster sites" by visitors (Foley and Lennon, 1996: 198). Sometimes, tourists who visit black metal festivals and the places that are known to be connected with dark magic and satanism are called satanists. However, many reasons might underlie the increasing interest in dark tourism. For instance, Podoshen et al. (2018) conducted a phenomenological analysis of the perceptions formed at black metal festivals, especially at festivals where visitors were forced to feel disgusted and see blood, violence, and different symbols of death. They found that visitors to black metal festivals consider them rituals where they could confront death and overcome their fears connected with it.

Microtheoretical interpretations of satanism, in contrast with macrotheories under the same model of satanism, function as an impulse toward the formulation of new theory. Next, I

describe the methodological apparatus that is used by the representatives of the interpretative model. I begin with the macro-level theories and finish with the micro-level theories.

2.1.3 Methods Used in Interpretative Models of Satanism

Theories of moral panic are very distinct from the other theories that belong to the interpretative model because they use diverse methodological approaches. They include qualitative analyses of judicial cases, analysis of argumentation structure in official documents, and analysis of secondary data and the products of mass culture. To a large extent, this is connected with the use of such theories in public discussions about satanism. Most likely, the diversity of methods and use of data helps to make this point of view more convincing. In addition, scholars who use the theory of moral panic tend to choose comparative research designs. For example, DeYoung (1997) analyzed the characteristics of juridical cases connected with satanism in America (DeYoung 1997). This type of data examination can show the scale of the phenomenon and identify factors that engender moral panic.

The theories of authority and dark tourism mostly use qualitative methods, such as participant observation at festivals and in organizations, semi-structured interviews, and analysis of secondary data. When these theories were being formed, satanic communities and tourist attractions related to death did not look alike and were not very numerous. Thus, it could be claimed that soft methods were preferred over other methods because researchers were working with small, local, and unique contexts that were not always comparable.

To generalize the investigation of interpretative theories on satanism, I comment on the place of satanism in this model and present the limitations of the interpretative model.

First, reference to satanic ritual abuse is instrumental in the theory of moral panic. This means that satanism was only an illustration of moral panic theory, not its foundation. The theory of authority exploits satanism differently from the macrointerpretations since the latter adapt the theory of authority based on empirical evidence and do not treat satanism only as an example. It should be noted that this model mostly forms reactive and esoteric satanic images, but it does not problematize rationalist satanism.

Second, an analysis of their limitations shows that macrointerpretations of the interpretative model could be widely applied, but they should be accompanied by a cautious exploration of the expert field of claim-making, knowledge of the juridical discourse, and the bases of claims that exist in different countries. A researcher cannot access court documents in all countries, so the analysis of microinteractions in the juridical process could be limited.

Bearing in mind that satanic moral panic can coexist with the other panics, it is necessary to understand those other social fears (Falkof 2015). The users of this model should consider that the religious context of a country has its own specificities because alternative(s) to satanism could emerge, which could be based on the dominating religious context of the country. The applicability of the theories of satanic authority probably depends on the structure of the satanic group. For example, they might not help analyze decentralized groups. Theories of dark tourism are also context-specific. In particular, they are highly connected with attitudes towards death and dying in a particular country.

Third, regarding the power structures that emerge, if the interpretative explanation of satanism is used, it could be argued that satanism is, as claimed by Petersen, “dedemonized.” This means that satanism is not represented as a barbarous and criminal activity that is dysfunctional or should be punished. In that model, what is satanic and what is not is defined by

laypeople, not by sociologists. Nevertheless, the model gives voice to nonexpert knowledge. This also diminishes the capacity of sociologists to intervene in explanations of cases that have traits that are analogous to the belief in satanism but not named as such by the people. Next, I analyze the structuralist model of satanism.

2.2 Structuralist Models of Satanism

Structuralism, in comparison with interpretivism, is not based on the juxtaposition of the natural and social sciences (Devyatko 1996: 35). The representatives of this model seek hidden meanings in people's actions because they suppose that there is a latent orderliness in such things as linguistic behavior, kinship relations, rule-following, and involvement in rituals. The assumed drivers of human behavior are not of a physical or neurophysiological nature; they are structural and cannot be individualized. I classify as structuralist approaches to satanism the explanatory theories of subculture, neotribe, scene, and ideology because they all see satanism as a system of thought, which either has a strict and distinguishable group of adepts or does not have any supporters. If the group of adepts exists, satanism is conceptualized in the microtheoretical sense. My review begins with such theories and concludes with the macrostructuralist ones.

2.2.1 Microstructuralist Sociological Models of Satanism

Subculture theories, neotribe theories, scene theories, cultural practice theories, and theories of satanism as a social movement belong to the microstructuralist model of satanism. Although alternatives to subculture have been proposed, this concept is still exploited in contemporary studies. Lowney (2016), for instance, used subcultural theory to describe how satanism appeared in the school at Victory Village as a way to oppose the dominant youth culture. The concept of "scene" aimed to replace subcultural, countercultural, and neo-tribal approaches. Researchers

used this concept in relation to satanism in four contexts: “satanic scene” (Dyrendal 2008), “black scene” (Jerrentrup 2000), “gothic scene” (Jerrentrup 2000), and “black metal scene” (Introvigne 2018).

Sometimes, satanism is understood as involvement in satanic practices that are ascribed to satanic culture. In connection with such practices, authors propose different classifications of satanists. These studies have practical significance since they often suggest medical and police taxonomies of satanists. Segerberg (1997), for example, describes satanism in Finland and outlines four types of satanists: intergenerational cults, organized satanic churches, solitude satanists, and experimental satanists. Based on these classifications, methods for evaluating personal involvement in satanism were proposed (Dampousse & Crouch 1992).

Understandings of satanism as a social movement should be demarcated from the subcultural perspective because satanism is defined as a group of organizations that are localized in the online and offline spheres. From the social movement perspective, satanism is not necessarily connected with protests against other groups or institutes. For example, Lewis (2002), while working with the definition of satanism as a discursive field, added relations between organizations that adopt satanic ideology.

From this brief description of the microstructuralist accounts of satanism, it can be deduced that satanism is used here to illustrate approaches that constitute a larger investigation.

2.2.2 Macrostructuralist Sociological Models of Satanism

Macrointerpretations of structuralist theories focus on the dynamics of scene practices and ideology. I describe this model with the former.

Different from static explanations of scenes, dynamic models have been proposed to explain the reproduction of metal music. The theories of scene practice dynamics assume that

there are differences between the cultural, demographical, and geographical features of the scenes and that these differences can be objectified. These theories are enriching semiotic approaches to the analysis of songs that are created on scenes (Wallach & Levine 2012: 130). In general, these studies have a quantitative character. For example, Mayer and Timberlake (2014) calculated the percentage of metallic groups in the country. In the theories of scene practices, dynamic satanism is reactive and is based on the formulations of these theories. In the theories of ideology, on the other hand, satanism is considered an illustration. Below, I outline seven conceptualizations of satanism as an ideology, and for some, I provide critical ideas that may be used to counter them.

1. Dyrendal and Petersen argued that satanism should be studied as a discursive field (stratified context), which has self-religion, is antinomic, uses words connected with Satan, and has a formulated ideological genealogy usually related to Satan (Petersen 2009). (Self-spirituality is the discourse that was typical of the New Age movement and carries the idea that the “(unenlightened) mass of society are victims of any number of negative habits and beliefs” (Heelas 1999).)
2. Similar to Dyrendal’s and Petersen’s descriptions are Lap’s (2012) descriptions. Lap viewed satanism as self-religion.
3. Faxneld (2017) gave satanism both wide and narrow definitions. The narrow definition considers it a system with Satan as its leader. The wide definition, in contrast, states that satanism is a discursive strategy. Using satanism in black metal has become a very popular subject among scholars. However, they differ from each other because of their countries of origin and approaches to discourse analysis.

4. Satanism as magic was defined by Marcello Truzzi (Petersen 2005). He placed groups of satanists on the black-white magic continuum.
5. Introvigne (2016) suggested that satanism is a personality cult, where a person is worshipped through ritual practices by an organized group identified with Satan or Lucifer which has minimal hierarchy and organization.
6. Van Lujk (2016) understood satanism as intentional Satan worship based on religious motives. He contradicted Introvigne's definition of satanism because he considers it too strict. Van Lujk preferred to exclude formal organizations from the definition (Van Lujk 2016), and he distinguished between attributed satanists and identified satanists.
7. Granholm (2012), in contrast to the other six approaches, proposed that satanism be deleted from academic discourse. Instead, he suggested such notions as "Postsatanism" and "Left-Hand path." He saw these notions as more suitable for scientific discourse because they helped to combine an etic and emic understanding of satanism in scholarly discourse (Petersen 2016: 87). Among these approaches, I mentioned Granholm because his conceptualization was based on a skeptical analysis of the adequacy of such a term for social scientific investigations. As a result, his proposed terminology also frames satanism as an ideology.

2.2.3 Methods Used in Structuralist Models of Satanism

Structuralism differs greatly from interpretivism in terms of cross-country comparisons. In the structuralist articles, one may find comparisons of 150 to 200 countries. Indeed, the structuralist model uses quantitative methods of analysis such as regression. However, the use of quantitative methods is typical only for the small group of theories that exist in structuralism (theories of

scene dynamics). Other approaches are not prone to use quantitative methods, as they mostly work with textual data and employ ethnography. Although the structural model of satanism is quite heterogeneous, some conclusions can be drawn from it.

First, this model, like the interpretative model, treats “satanism” in a dual way. Some authors wanted to use satanism to exemplify their theories, while other theories were based on empirical analyses of satanism. This model accounts for all three types of satanic discourses.

Second, it should be said that this model, apart from helping to discover local organizational and textual forms of satanism, diminishes the agency of those forms. Underestimating the intentionality of individual actors is possible because of the overestimation of the role of written sources, language, and symbols. It is possible that the interpretative approach, as an addition to the structuralist, could reduce the latter’s drawbacks.

Third, the structuralist approach sees satanism mostly as a neutral phenomenon. Only cultural practice theory, being close to criminalistics, creates negative connotations. However, the power of naming something as satanic in this model is mostly given to sociologists. Although this ability to control strengthens sociological authority, it could limit critical reasoning. The last model of satanism that I distinguished is the functionalist model, which I analyze next.

2.3 Functionalist Models of Satanism

Functionalist models in sociology are concerned with interpreting the goals of actions (Devyatko 1996: 37-38). Those goals are not always known by the people who take certain actions. Usually, functionalist explanations are connected with the survival of societies, cultures, or social institutions. However, the explanations can also be microsocial and apply to processes on the individual level. This is true, for instance, for psychoanalytical explanations that are based on people’s unconscious motives.

Functionalism explanations of satanism in sociology are scarce. I delineate two types: exorcism as a means to control social life and the use of satanic discourse in historical and cultural contexts. These theories were developed to explain the reasons for the appearance of satanic topics in social discussions. In these discussions, constructivism is closer to functionalism because satanism and exorcism are analyzed separately as inventions of the social system and as natural and necessary for it. Functionalist models work, mostly, in the US context. Therefore, they should show the universal character of the functions of satanism and exorcism, and these works also tend to make between-country comparisons.

Two of the most noticeable models of satanism in the functionalist approach were proposed by Introvigne and Petersen. Introvigne (2016) examined satanism before its modern form of existence, while Petersen (2005) addressed contemporary satanism. While looking at the social history of satanism, Introvigne noticed a significant change in attitudes toward satanism. Pro-satanic attitudes always alternated with anti-satanic attitudes. Introvigne applied this model to different historical periods: proto-satanism, anti-modern satanism, and contemporary satanism. Petersen discussed only the development of contemporary satanism. He identified three stages. The first stage was the formation of the Church of Satan. The second stage was connected with the appearance of the Temple of Set. The third stage was characterized by the rise of satanic activity in the Internet sphere. It is claimed that the Internet helped satanists popularize their ideology and sustain long-distance communication.

Exorcism, as a way to protect life from the devil, was extensively studied by Giordan and Possamai (2018). I mention investigations of exorcism in connection with research on satanism because the scholars who study this topic stated that people who believed in possession attributed this to satanists. Therefore, those scholars claimed that those involved in exorcism believed in

Satan's existence and satanism, and they defined satanism as the service of Satan. Studies of exorcism in this area of scholarship can be categorized under functionalism because defending oneself against Satan means that the person believes in Satan. In the past, exorcism could serve as a moral compass. This means that it helped a person understand the difference between right and wrong. Some argued that exorcism is not actual, but because of mass culture, faith in exorcism has increased. De Corto has tried to explain these changes in the popularity of exorcism. He claimed that exorcism was more likely to emerge when there is a struggle between different religious groups and science, and science is not the winning side.

Exorcism also played a role in the training of Catholic priests (Sluhovsky 2002).

Exorcism illustrated the difference in power between legal specialists and exorcists. Howe and Ferber (2005) showed how the Australian government used the case of murder by exorcism to enforce their expert power in the definition of exorcism.

2.3.1 Methods Used in Functionalist Models of Satanism

The methodology used in functionalism is mostly sociohistorical. Those studies analyze the reception of satanism or the profession of the exorcist, and the authors prefer to analyze archival data and the results of other studies to explain the functions of satanism and exorcism.

Before discussing the lack of a naturalist model of satanism in sociology, some conclusions should be presented on the functionalist model of satanism in sociological discourse.

First, from a functionalist perspective, satanism is usually the origin of a certain conception or formulation. All three discourses on satanism—reactive, esoteric, and rationalist—are represented in the functionalist logic, and their appearance on the societal level is explained by diverse macroprocesses such as maintaining equilibrium in the social system.

Second, the ultimate benefit of the functionalist approach is its basis in the historical context. However, the periods outlined by the authors tend to show the “average” situation in the world, and they depend on the peculiarities of the country on which they were constructed, such as the configuration of the court system or the political system.

Third, satanism is depicted as a neutral phenomenon in the functionalist account. The ability to name something satanic belongs both to the sociologist and to the object of investigation. Therefore, in terms of power structures, this model is quietly balanced, probably because of the historical comparisons and periodizations that are made. However, as has already been seen in this historical examination, an orientation may be based on one particular case, which can lead to an intentional or unintentional judgment of other cases based on the one that is used as a sample.

2.4 Naturalist Models of Satanism

A critical conceptual analysis, distinct from investigations of the existing modes of knowledge production on a certain topic, is supposed to seek knowledge that does not yet exist. This means that if there are supposed to be four models of a certain thing and one model is missing, we should think about the reasons for the omission and try to reconstruct the missing model. Among the outlined models for satanism in sociology, there are no naturalistic explanations. However, a close examination of psychological approaches to studying satanism could help to create an image of the naturalist account of satanism. The naturalist model in the social sciences is not very different from the methods of the natural sciences in its treatment of the methods, nature, and goals of the object of study (Devyatko 1996: 9).

In theological psychology and psychotherapy, there is a concept called the “satanic syndrome.” This approach can be considered the closest to naturalism. The satanic syndrome

includes symptoms such as taking part in satanic rituals, engaging in communication with dead people, studying scholarship on black magic, membership in the occult community, and reading books and journals devoted to occultism and esoterism. One psychologist-theologist, Šram (2017), claimed that people with high values on scales of psychopathy and depression are more prone to the satanic syndrome. Šram tested his hypotheses on a Croatian sample and found correlations among psychopathy, depression, and satanic syndrome in both genders and different ethnic groups.

Psychoanalytical and psychodynamic approaches in psychology are closer to structural-functional explanations of satanism because satanism is viewed as a dysfunction of the family and different agents of socialization.

In psychoanalysis, satanism is associated with obsessions with demons (Ivey 1993). It is recommended that psychiatric work with victims of satanism focus on the analysis of memories of their relations with their fathers in childhood (Corbett 2018). It is supposed that the father was not successful in his role as a parent because this child chose another father—Satan. Some psychologists have refuted the connection between behaviorism and satanism (Barrett 2012).

Philosophy and psychoanalysis are sometimes combined to analyze representations of satanism in mass culture². For example, Hicks (2017), using the Delesian conception of masochism, examined relations between the mother and child in the movie “Rosemary’s Baby.” Satanism has also been studied as a set of religious ideas connected with different stigmatized behaviors, such as self-harm (Csordas & Jenkins 2018).

In psychological discourse on satanism, this concept is mostly seen as reactive. People who are associated with it are represented as needing professional help. Based on this view of

² By researching the satanists appearance of Satan and satanists in mass media, the scholars say that they study satanism as the producers of the show and the characters name the product presented in the media as satanism.

satanism, an analogical sociological account could be constructed. However, with such benefits as understanding the social predispositions to being named satanic or a Satanist, such a sociological approach risks discounting the influence of social forces on the person or group that is named satanic.

In the last part of this article, I present the connections between the distinct sociological models of satanism.

3 Relations Between Sociological Models

From the figures on the relations between models (Figs. 1-5), some conclusions on the structure of these relations can be drawn.

3.1 Diversity

There are different ways to form relations between the examined theories. Some theories can enter all types of relations with the other theories, while others have a limited quantity of relations. The more various the relations, the less possibility the theory could be integrated with the others.

Only two types of relations use exorcism as a mode of social life control: elaboration and integration. This means that there are heuristic capacities that exist for this theory, and a competing theory, variant, or subtheory could emerge. However, the abilities in terms of theory formation are very limited for scene practice dynamics, ideology, and satanic discourse reception in historical and cultural contexts. These theories have already established relations with the others. Nevertheless, intersections between the models should not be ignored.

There is a tendency to build certain forms of relations within the theories of the same model. Our figures demonstrate that tendency: competitive and prolific relations are often constructed with theories that are not included in the same model. Based on this observation, it

could be argued that—both for the theories with the most relation-type diversity and for those with less—there is the potential to expand the explanations through further proliferation and competition. For instance, we could think of the proliferation of exorcism as a way of social life control and dark tourism theory. In that case, the will of the person to visit a certain showplace is functional for the person’s moral socialization.

4 Conclusion and Discussion

In sociology and the other social sciences, many concepts have nonscientific origins. Satanism is one term that emerged in Catholic writings and entered sociology through the constant social usage of the term. Including this notion in sociology has provoked different reactions from scholars about the appropriateness of this term for sociological inquiries. Some academics have argued that this notion reproduces the oppressive circumstances in which the term emerged. Others have claimed that sociological discourse frames satanism as a normal phenomenon and demarcates itself from lay discourse of the topic. Furthermore, temporal models have been suggested to show that attitudes toward the concept of satanism in the social sciences have not always been the same.

The critical concept analysis of the sociological scholarship on satanism in this article identified multiple models of satanism, even from a static perspective. Three dominant models were identified: interpretative, structuralist, and functionalist. This corresponds with the idea of the heterogenization of the current discourse on the scientific study of satanism suggested by Petersen (2014). Recent research in all three discourses on satanism is investigated, and there are studies that belong to the different models, not just the dominant one. The lack of a naturalist explanation of satanism in sociology also was explored. I presented examples from an adjacent discipline (psychology) to show that this perspective on satanism also is possible.

Furthermore, it cannot be said that satanism is framed positively in most sociological discourse, as Taub and Nelson (1993) claimed. In all the models, satanism is shown as both barbarous and peaceful. It was clear that the “negative” image of satanism appeared in interpretivism when satanism was used in the implementation of social policy. Thus, Fitzgerald was right when he argued that religion goes hand in hand with politics. This explanation of satanism provided a place for actors in legal, religious, political, and social movements to establish power, and medicine and psychology, along with psychiatry, became involved in the discursive battles. In addition, a negative frame for satanism could be developed in the naturalist model of satanism if it existed. In structuralism and functionalism, satanism is discussed both positively and neutrally, except for the theory of cultural practices, which are tightly connected with criminological needs.

It could be argued that in sociology, satanism is not completely demarcated from its lay conceptualizations. In the interpretative model, the meanings that agents create around satanism are considered by sociologists, especially in the theories of moral panic and social problem construction. Taub and Nelson’s (1993) continuum of discourse in such a situation should have more axes and should not juxtapose “establishment” satanism with “underground” satanism.

There are several conceptualizations of satanism that form relations with each other and create possibilities for new approaches to study satanism. As for my own view of present efforts to explain satanism, I agree with scholars like McKinnon (2002) who identify the multiplicity of meanings attributed to fundamental concepts in religious studies that we should dispense altogether with satanism as a scientific notion. Instead, we could try to explore the naturalistic model to explain satanism that was underdeveloped in sociology, however not without certain sacrifices. On the one hand, a naturalistic explanation of satanism could avoid the negative and

positive framings of satanism, as this concept is value-laden from the beginning. Moreover, naturalistic approaches to defining concepts usually presuppose rather strict ways to operationalize and measure. So, any blurred concept of satanism is likely to be avoided. On the other hand, such models do not consider lay people's assumptions on satanism, so they reify, linguistically instrumentalize, and essentialize the concept³. Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that when we make something more calculable and measurable, we also make it easier to control and sanction that phenomenon from outside the academy by different social actors and responsible actions. Finally, a naturalistic model of satanism should not presuppose the rejection of the other models. It is wiser to exploit the naturalist explanation in a pragmatic manner (Blum, 2011) as a complementary one to the others.

Limitations

This analysis was limited because only papers in English were examined, and I analyzed only papers that were published from 1918 to 2018. There are several ways in which future research could improve on this study. First, propositions for the functionalist approach to satanism could be developed. Second, sociological discourse on satanism could be compared with the discourse from other disciplines and with lay discourse, as done by Taub and Nelson (1993). Third, a comparison of the sociological discourse on satanism in different countries could be conducted to consider the cultural specifics of sociological scholarship in those countries.

³ See Bevir and Kedar (2008) about problems in concepts formation in the naturalist model.

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Tables

Table 1. Models of explanations of satanism in sociology.

Model explanation	of Level	Major conceptions	theoretical	Methodological practices			Representatives
				Methods collection	of data	Methods of data analysis positioning	
Interpretative	Macro	Moral panic		Ethnography, record-based history	surveys, analysis,	Direct interpretation	Falkof, DeYoung, Frankfurter
		Social construction	problem	Ethnography, record-based history	surveys, analysis,	Direct interpretation	Forsyth and Olivier, Furedi, Taub and Nelson
	Micro	Dark tourism		Ethnography, surveys	Direct interpretation		Podoshen
		Authority in communities	satanic	Ethnography, record-based history	surveys, analysis,	Direct interpretation	Alfred, Lewis, Davies
Structuralist	Micro	Subcultures		Ethnography, Record-based analysis	surveys, analysis	Direct interpretation	Lowney, Ringvee

Model	of Level	Major	theoretical	Methodological practices			Representatives
explanation		conceptions		Methods of data collection	Methods of data analysis	Methods of question positioning	
		Neotribe		Record-based analysis	Direct interpretation	Small-n analysis	Smoczynski
		Scene		Ethnography, record-based analysis, history	surveys, Direct interpretation	Case-study	Jerrenturp, Dyrendal, Introvigne
		Cultural practices		Ethnography, record-based analysis, history	Direct interpretation	Large-n analysis	Sergerberg and non-sociological approaches
		Social movement		Ethnography, record-based analysis, history	surveys, Direct interpretation, quantitative analysis	Case-study, small-n analysis, large-n analysis	Lewis, Davies, Noblitt and Perskin
	Macro	Scene practices dynamic		Ethnography, record-based analysis	surveys, Direct interpretation, quantitative analysis, formal modeling	Case-study, small-n analysis, large-n analysis	Wallach, Makkonen, Levine,
		Ideology		Ethnography, record-based analysis, history	Direct interpretation	Case-study, small-n analysis	Dyrendal, Granholm, Faxneld

Model explanation	of Level	Major conceptions	theoretical	Methodological practices			Representatives
				Methods collection	of data	Methods of data analysis	
						Methods of question positioning	
Functionalist	Macro	Satanic	discourse	Record-based analysis, Direct interpretation			Case-study, small-n Introvigne, Petersen
		reception in historical and history					analysis
		cultural contexts					
		Exorcism as a way of controlling social life		Record-based analysis, Direct interpretation history			Case-study, small-n Giordan, Possamai, Howe

Figures

Fig. 1. Prolific relations between theoretical explanations of satanism⁴.

⁴ The nodes are theoretical explanations of satanism, and the links symbolize prolific relations between these theories. Two nodes are linked if their theoretical conceptions of satanism are in prolific relations with each other. In this figure, such conceptions as scenes, neotribes, social movements, and exorcism are not in prolific relations with any of the others. However, two conceptions could be called leaders in terms of the number of prolific relations in which they are involved. Authority in satanic communities and ideologies have three such relations each. The figure is constructed on the basis of a theoretical matrix. In the future, this network of relations might be analyzed using methods of social network analysis (SNA). This means that the measures of centralities could be calculated and structural coefficients that characterize this network. However, in this paper I have not included such calculations to not burden the text.

Fig. 2. Variant relations between theoretical explanations of satanism⁵.

⁵ The nodes are theoretical explanations of satanism, and the links symbolize the variant relations between these theories. Two nodes are linked if their theoretical conceptions of satanism are in variant relations with each other. In this figure, subcultures, moral panic, exorcism, authority in satanic communities, and social problem construction are not in variant relations with any of the others. However, three conceptions could be called leaders in terms of the number of variant relations in which they are involved. Scenes, ideologies, and discourse reception have three connections each with other conceptions. The figure is constructed on the basis of a theoretical matrix. In the future, this network of relations might be analyzed using methods of social network analysis (SNA). This means that the measures of centralities could be calculated and structural coefficients that characterize this network. However, in this paper I have not included such calculations to not burden the text.

Fig. 3. Competitive relations between theoretical explanations of satanism⁶.

⁶ The nodes are theoretical explanations of satanism, and the links symbolize the competitive relations between these theories. Two nodes are linked if their theoretical conceptions of satanism are in competitive relations with each other. In this figure, all the conceptions are in some competitive relations with the others. However, two conceptions could be called leaders in terms of the number of competitive relations in which they are involved. Moral panic and exorcism have eight such relations each. The figure is constructed on the basis of a theoretical matrix. In the future, this network of relations might be analyzed using methods of social network analysis (SNA). This means that the measures of centralities could be calculated and structural coefficients that characterize this network. However, in this paper I have not included such calculations to not burden the text.

Fig. 4. Integrative relations between theoretical explanations of satanism⁷.

⁷ The nodes are theoretical explanations of satanism, and the links symbolize the integrative relations between these theories. Two nodes are linked if their theoretical conceptions of satanism are in integrative relations with each other. In this figure, all the conceptions are in some integrative relations with the others. However, there is one conception that could be called a leader in terms of the number of integrative relations in which it is involved. Authority in satanic communities is connected with five other theories. The figure is constructed on the basis of a theoretical matrix. In the future, this network of relations might be analyzed using methods of social network analysis (SNA). This means that the measures of centralities could be calculated and structural coefficients that characterize this network. However, in this paper I have not included such calculations to not burden the text.

Fig. 5. Development relations between theoretical explanations of satanism⁸.

⁸ The nodes are theoretical explanations of satanism, and the links symbolize the development relations between these theories. Two nodes are linked if their theoretical conceptions of satanism are in developmental relations with each other. In this figure, dark tourism, authority in satanic communities, and cultural practices are not in development relations with any of the others. However, there are also three conceptions that could be called leaders in terms of the number of developmental relations in which they are involved. Social movements, subcultures and neotribes have four connection each with other conceptions. The figure is constructed on the basis of a theoretical matrix. In the future, this network of relations might be analyzed using methods of social network analysis (SNA). This means that the measures of centralities could be calculated and structural coefficients that characterize this network. However, in this paper I have not included such calculations to not burden the text.