But, the excessive behavior and the deviance from the mainstream society are the most important aspects of a subculture (Gelder 2007: 3). According to Durkheim (1964 [1938]), deviance is defined as any type of act that is understood as violating or abusing a society or group’s cultural norms. These norms are important in a society, as they dictate what is considered to be acceptable or unacceptable behavior across all societies. Because the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club is posing a criminal threat on six continents, deviance plays an important role in defining them as a subculture.

Durkheim (1964 [1938]) argued that deviance serves four major functions within each larger society, as they are the society’s response to deviant behavior. But the first three of these can be also applied from the deviant groups’ perspective to see the effects it has on the subculture itself.

First, deviance affirms cultural values and norms (Durkheim 1964 [1938]). The Hells Angels deviant acts have helped build and establish certain values and norms within the club itself. Their deviant behavior created certain attitudes and behaviors that separated them from the larger, mainstream society. Second, deviance can define moral boundaries (Durkheim 1964 [1938]). The Hells Angels’ way of thinking and acting marks their moral boundaries, which assesses what it means to them to be a member of the group. Third, deviant behavior promotes social unity (Durkheim 1964 [1938]), in this case the club’s unity. As an example, the fight between Hunter S. Thompson and the Hells Angels club at the end of Thompson’s book on the club, depicted in his book (1967). He picked on one of the members of the club for beating his wife, so as a consequence he got beaten up not only by the club member, but also by all the other members present at the event.

Nevertheless, when talking about a subculture, we have to take into account the groups’ relation to a larger ‘more inclusive set’ called ‘the culture’ (Clarke 1974: 429). Even though Hells Angels perceive themselves as separate from ‘the culture’, they still have a social relation to it, as there are interactions between members of the Hells Angels and the larger society, for example family, police or members of other motorcycle clubs. Clarke (1974: 433) suggests that it is very important to consider the extent to which the membership of a subculture includes all aspects of a person’s life or only parts of it. The Hells Angels membership constitutes a major component of identity for every member of the club, and so it includes all aspects of a persons’ life. As mentioned before, when you are a member of Hells Angels ‘life isn’t only about you’ (Barger 2005: 21).

In conclusion, I have argued that their fight for freedom and the importance of respect and loyalty are essential in the creation of the cohesion that keeps the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club together. Gaining the right to be free and creating a dependable and honest group stand as two of the most important aims for the club. They are a brotherhood in which members are family (Barger 2005: 21), as their whole life revolves around the club and its principles. Their