Year 2 Sociology

**Paper 3: Crime and Deviance with Theory & Methods**



Crime and Deviance

Booklet 2: Labelling & the Social Construction of crime.

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Specification Content:

What you need to know for **Crime and Deviance**  in your Paper 3 exam.

* crime, deviance, social order and social control
* the social distribution of crime and deviance by ethnicity, gender and social class, including recent patterns and trends in crime
* globalisation and crime in contemporary society; the media and crime; green crime; human rights and state crimes
* crime control, surveillance, prevention and punishment, victims, and the role of the criminal justice system and other agencies.

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| **Questions may be based specifically on the following areas:** | Do I have completed Notes? | Have I made revision Notes? | Have I memorised this info? | Have I practised exam style questions? |
| **Social construction of crime.** | Becker – ideas about deviance being in the eye of the behonder. |  |  |  |  |
| Cicourel – topic vs resource and the social construction of crime statistics |  |  |  |  |
| **Effects of labelling** | Lemert – primary and secondary deviance. |  |  |  |  |
| Cohen – looking at how society reacts to crime and the deviance amplification spiral.  |  |  |  |  |
| Braithwaite |  |  |  |  |
| **Mental illness and the sociology of deviance.** | Douglas – meaning of suicide. |  |  |  |  |
| Atkinson – coroners’ commonsense knowledge |  |  |  |  |
| Lemert’s study of paranoia |  |  |  |  |
| **Evaluation of the labelling theory.**  |  |  |  |  |  |

Exam Structure:

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| **These topics will appear in paper 3 of the A’Level.** 2 hour written exam 80 marks in total (50 for this bit)* 33.3% of A-level

Crime and Deviance: short answer and extended writing, 50 marks (4 marks, 6 marks, 10 marks, 30 marks) |

Revision from last year - what can you remember about labelling?

Use these words – Halo Effect, Self-Fulfilling prophecy, master status Becker, Gillborn and Youdell, Mac an Ghaill, Ball's (1981) *Beachside Comprehensive*, Keddie, Lacey's (1970), Fuller (1980)

**What does a criminal look like?**

1. Social construction of crime

This topic is all about the causes of criminal behaviour and who decides what a crime is and who gets punished. Why are some people and actions seen as ‘deviant’ and what are the effects of being labelled as a criminal.

These sociologists don’t accept official statistics and see society as a process. Can you explain what this might mean?

They believe that crime is an interaction between suspects and the police. These sociologists are called ‘interactionists’.

Why are certain acts labelled as a crime?

These sociologists believe that no act is inherently ‘criminal’ on its own. It only comes to be so when others label it as such.

When is it OK to be naked in front of another person? When is this a crime?

Becker – book is called ‘Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance’

‘social groups create deviance by creating the rules whose infraction (breaking) constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labelling them as outsiders. From this point of view deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits but rather a consequence of the application by others of the rules and sanctions to an ‘offender’. The deviant is one to whom the label has successfully been applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour the people so label.’

Can you explain this quote in your own words?

Becker illustrates this with the example of a brawl containing young people. In a low-income neighbourhood it may be defined by police as deviancy, in a wealthy neighbourhood they may say it is evidence of youth in high spirits. Acts are the same but are given different meaning by the audience.

Those who commit the crime may see it in one way but those who observe it may define it in abother.

Deviance is not a quality in itself but an interaction between the person who commits an act and those who may respond to it. No act is criminal in itself but only comes to be so when others label it as such.

Becker talks about ‘moral entrepreneurs’. These are people who lead a crusade to change the law. Explain what 2 effects this labelling has.

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1969 Platt supports this by looking at ‘juvenile delinquency’

Explain how Becker uses the example of marijuana users to explain this theory.

Cicourel: the negotiation of justice

Officers’ decisions to arrest are influenced by their stereotypes about offenders, these are known as ‘typifications’. They are led to concentrate on certain ‘types’. In working class areas people fit police typifications more closely so police patrol those areas and more arrests.

This bias is also reinforced by other agents of social control.

Justice therefore is not ‘fixed’ it is negotiable.

When a middle-class youth is arrested he is less likely to be charged because he does not fit the idea of a typical delinquent. Parents can also negotiate on his behalf and he is likely to just be warned / counselled and released.

Topic vs Resource

Cicourel argues that crime statistics to not give us an accurate picture of the patterns of crime so should not be used as a ‘resource’ – these statistics cannot be taken as ‘facts’ when studying crime. Instead we should look at the statistics and make them a ‘topic’ for sociologists to investigate.

Social construction of crime statistics

Interactionists see official crime statistics as socially constructed. At each stage of the prosecution process agents of social control make decisions whether to proceed to the next stage. The outcome depends on the label they attach. So statistics only tell us about activities of police and prosecutors. Statistics are really just counts of decisions made at each stage.

We should think about

**The dark figure of crime**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Alternative statistics**

Stages in the social construction of crime.

1. Effects of labelling

What happens when peoples’ actions are labelled as a crime?

**Becker**

Then looks at the impact of labelling. A label is not neutral, it contains an evaluation of the person which is known as a **master status**, this means it colours all the other statuses possessed by an individual.

Labels like criminal, mentally ill, sexually deviant override other labels what kind of things might these be?

How might others then respond to these labels?

This then impacts on an individual’s ‘self-concept’ as these are usually formed by responses of others. The begin to see themselves as this label which may become a self-fulfilling prophecy as they become controlled by their identity.

Lemert – primary and secondary deviance.

What does primary deviance refer to?

**What is a ‘Master status’?**

**How does Master Status lead to ‘Secondary Deviance’?**

**Words you must include** societal reaction, self-concept, self-fulfilling prophecy, deviant career.

Explain how Young uses the example of marijuana users to support Lemert and the idea of secondary deviance

Explain what is meant by ‘deviance amplification spiral’

Cohen – looking at how society reacts to crime and the deviance amplification spiral.

Cohen’s work is called ‘**Folk Devils and Moral Panics’** looks at society’s reaction to the ‘mods and rockers’ disturbances which involved groups of youths at English seaside resorts.



Press exaggeration and distorted reporting began moral panic, meaning the public became concerned and called for a ‘crackdown’

Expain how this caused a spiral of amplification of this deviance

Explain how Lemert and Cohen’s are opposite to functionalist theories of deviance.

Labelling and criminal justice policy

Increases to control of young offenders have the opposite effect from what they are aiming from according to research. Why may this be?

Why might labelling theory be important in influencing policies?

If we consider making soft drugs legal, this would reduce how many people were charged with these crimes and may reduce these people going on to ‘secondary deviance’. We can also learn that we should avoid publicly ‘naming and shaming’ offenders as this leads to them being seen as evil outsiders which may push them to further deviance.

John Braithwaite

Braithwaite is unlike the sociologists above because he does not only see negative effects of labelling. He claims there are 2 types of shaming

1. Disintegrative shaming
2. Reintegrative shaming

Reintegrative shaming does not paint the criminal as evil but it makes them aware of the bad effects of their actions upon others and encourages others to forgive them.

Explain why this may be effective.

Mental illness and the sociology of deviance.

Read the pages in the textbook relating to mental illness and the sociology of deviance and note any similarities between this and the work we have done above on labelling and the interactionist understanding of crime.

**Evaluation of the labelling theory.**

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| Strengths | Weaknesses |