Year 2 Sociology

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



Crime and Deviance

Booklet 2: Labelling & the Social Construction of crime.

Name ­­ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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 beholder. |  |  |  |  |
| 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.  |  |  |  |  |
| **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?

**Labelling in education, self-fulfilling prophecy, Becker etc (can use the words below for further revision from last year).**

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?**

 **For class discussion, include various stereotypes (young, male, working class, perhaps from certain ethnic groups, dodgy, hoodie etc.**

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?

**Official statistics only tell us who is arrested and charged, They do not tell us the true numbers of crimes committed as there are people not caught or caught and let off. These statistics actually tell us (according to interactionists) something about the relationship between society and criminals – who is likely to be labelled as a criminal and who is likely to be caught and charged by the criminal justice system. For a full picture we need to look at victim surveys and self-reported studies.**

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?

**In a relationship but only in private, not in the window. Maybe if you are a streaker at a football match then in is funny. It is a crime when it is flashing or if images are on the internet perhaps. So we have one act (being naked) which is criminal in some contexts but not in others.**

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? **Crime is created by society in terms of how it is defined. People decide who the ‘outsiders’ are. A crime is not a crime because it is a criminal act, it is a crime because it is labelled as such.**

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 another.

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.

1. Creation of a new group of outsiders who break the new rule.
2. Creation of expansion of the new social control agency to enforce the rule and impose labels on offenders.

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

**Becker looked at how social control agencies sometime manipulate the law to increase their own power. For example marijuana use in the US in the 1930s. This was made illegal. They claimed this was because it has bad effects on young people but in reality it made the Federal Bureau of Narcotics (the drugs department) much more powerful. This is an example that shows that laws are not always created because an act is harmful but because individuals and groups may define that act as unacceptable.**

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**. This is the difference between official statistics and the ‘real’ rate of crime. It is called the ‘dark figure’ because it is a mystery how much crime is committed but is undetected, unreported and unrecorded.

**Alternative statistics this is other way to find out about crime rates. For example ‘victim surveys’ this where individuals are asked if they have been victims of a crime or self-reported studies where people are asked what crimes they have committed.**

Stages in the social construction of crime.

Stage 1 – Suspect stopped by police

Stage 2 – arrested

Stage 3 – Charged

Stage 4 – Prosecuted

Stage 5 convicted

Stage 6 sentenced.

This is figure is important as certain groups are more likely to get further along the arrow than other groups.

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? Father, brother, sister, friend, mother, teacher, doctor etc.,

How might others then respond to these labels? Negatively and people cannot forget 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?

 This refers to deviant acts which have not been publicly labelled. It is pointless to seek causes of this deviance, it is unlikely to have a single cause and often this deviance is trivial like fare dodging. These acts are not part of a deviant way of life so can be rationalised for example a ‘moment of madness’.

**What is a ‘Master status’? This is a label someone gets when they can only be seen as this label. This becomes the controlling identity. In the eyes of the world this is all this person is (eg paedophile, thief etc)**

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

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

This creates a crisis for someone’s ‘self-concept’. They may solve this crisis by accepting the deviant label and see themselves as the world sees them. This may lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy in which the individual acts out the label. The further deviance which results from acting out this label called **secondary deviance**. Then further negative reactions come from society and this becomes a deviant career.

A good example is an ex-convict who tries to gain employment and can’t so eventually turned back to crime.

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

Hippy marijuana users. In Notting Hill 1970 drugs were initially peripheral (a small part) to hippie’s lifestyle (primary deviance). Once they started to be labelled by the police and there was more control they retreated into closed groups and developed a deviant subculture (different clothes etc). Drugs then became central to their identity and this all because a self-fulfilling prophecy and an act of secondary deviance.

**Lemert and Young show that it is not the act itself but the hostile reaction to the act that creates serious deviance.**

Explain what is meant by ‘deviance amplification spiral’ this is when deviance gets worse and worse as control increases. Also linked to the media.

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’

How does this cause a spiral of amplification of this deviance? labelling, media interest, media exaggeration, moral panic, folk devils, more policing, more control, individuals labelled and became marginalised so committed more crime.

How are Lemert and Cohen opposite to functionalist theories of deviance.?

Funtionalists claimed that deviance led to changes in law and different social controls and boundaries change. Lemert and Cohen believe the opposite that law and social control lead to 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 where not only the crime but the criminal is labelled as bad and the individual is excluded from society
2. Reintegrative shaming this is when the act is labelled but not the actor. Instead of saying ‘he is a bad person’ they say ‘he has done a bad thing’

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.

 Crime rates are lower in societies where reintegrative shaming is more common.

**Evaluation of the labelling theory.**

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| StrengthsShows us that the law is not fixed. We need to explain how it is constructed. This theory shows that the law is enforced in discriminatory ways. It reminds us that crime statistics are not always accurate and must be seen in the context of how society attempts to control deviance.  | WeaknessesToo deterministic, just because someone has a label does not mean they will commit a crime. Looks at negative effect of labelling but ignores the victims.Assumes offenders are passive victims of labelling and that without labelling crime would not exist. Why do people label in the first place? This theory does not look at the origin or labels. A Marxist would suggest we look more at the origin of labels, eg why are working class people more likely to be labelled? Downes and Rock (2003) note that we cannot predict whether someone who has been labelled with follow a deviant career, they are free to choose not to deviate further.  |

 **Eye on the exam…**

4 mark

Outline **two** reasons why deviant subcultures exist.

10 mark

Labelling theorists argue that an act is not inherently criminal; it only becomes so when it is labelled as such. They are interested in the ways that labelling affects the actions of those with the power to label acts as criminal, such as the police and courts. Being labelled can also have important effects on individuals to whom the label is attached, and labelling a group as criminal can even lead to higher rates of crime being recorded.

Applying material from Item A, analyse two effects if the labelling process on individuals and groups

30 mark

Read **the text** in the box below and answer the question that follows.

Labelling theory focuses on how and why some people and their behaviour come to be labelled as deviant or criminal. It also examines the effects that labelling has on those who are labelled. It uses concepts such as master status and deviance amplification to understand the processes by which crime and deviance are socially constructed.

However, critics argue that labelling theory fails to explain why some people commit deviant or criminal acts in the first place.

Applying material from **the text** above and your knowledge, evaluate the usefulness of labelling theory in understanding crime and deviance