

introduction

interactionalists reject the idea that criminals are bad or good or the heroes of a working class revolution. They focus on the circumstances of committing crime and the effects on their future. Other alternative theories such as functionalists critique the views of interactionalists. A key thinker who supports the interactionalists view is Howard Becker.

conclusion

Interactionalists focus intensely on labelling and how stereotypes or social reactions can affect crime and deviance. Functionalists such as Cohen may critique this view and interactionalists such as Cicourel are in favour of this view.

No such thing as a deviant act

-Becker suggests that there is no such thing as a deviant act.

-An act only becomes deviant when perceived as such.

-If young people are defined as delinquent and convicted, then they are more likely to become deviant. This is called a self-fulfilling prophecy.

-Whether or not these labels are applied depends on societal reaction.

-He argues police have preconceived ideas of what constitutes as 'trouble.' For example the stereotypes of black males being muggers. Thus, explaining how deviance is asserted by labelling and the views of others. However, Becker over-romanticises accounts of deviance, which in their concern for the 'underdog' can distort the reality of crime.

Becker also coins the idea of a deviant career.

-This process involves people accepting a negative or stigmatised social status. This means people who have been labelled as deviant continue to act deviantly.

-This is known as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Box identifies four reasons as to why ex-cons or inmates continue to remain as offenders, rather than change their way of life, atrophy of social skills, social discrimination, job rejection and police surveillance.

-Therefore, accepting labels placed by others leads to more crime. However, Triplett claims that the harsh punishments of offenders are linked to increased offending rates in the UK.

Matza introduces this idea of drift theory.

-this is where he believes many people drift in and out of crime.

Matza introduces this idea of drift theory. (cont)

-Many deviants have the same norms and values as others and often recognise that their behaviour is problematic. He states that everyone has two sets of values; conventional values and roles where they are much the same as everyone else, and subterranean values of greed and aggression which we normally keep well in check, but everyone will give in to now and again.

-This can be seen through techniques of neutralisation, as young people are more likely to go into subterranean values inappropriately and often justify their actions using these techniques.

-Thus, explaining many people go in and out of crime and how people are not confined to one set of norms and values. However, some believe that this is too deterministic and focuses too much on the on social backgrounds.

Becker's idea of master status.

-He argued that when a label of lawbreaker has been placed on a person, this label becomes seen as a defining characteristic. If others are aware of this, then everything that the deviant person does will be seen as being a result of that master status.

-Rosenhan found evidence of this in his experiment involving asking sane people to become voluntary patients in a mental hospital. He discovered that even normal behaviours like chatting or reading were interpreted by staff as evidence of madness. If a deviant master status becomes part of a person's self-identity, then that person like themselves and form a subculture.

-Therefore, explaining how Becker views master status and labelling define people as deviants. However, Becker over-simplifies the process of labelling, and particularly they minimise the role of the deviant in the defining process.



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Page 2 of 2.

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Lemert idea of primary&secondary deviancy.

-Primary deviancy is when an individual has committed an act of deviancy but has not been publicly labelled as a crime.

-Secondary deviancy occurs once an offender is discovered and publicly exposed and the label of 'deviance' is attached. This follows the public identification of a person as deviant, and the individual's response to this negative societal reaction.

-Triplett argues that recent studies have shown the attempt to control and punish young offenders are making the situation worse.

Therefore, Lemert explains how the publication of labelling leads to increased crime and deviancy amplification. However, there is a disregard for the origins of deviant behaviour. Hence it is claimed, too much emphasis is placed on the impact of social reaction.

Cicourel states that justice not fixed negotiable

-This means that it is not the characteristics of people that make them deviant, it is the conviction and labelling of law enforcement that make them criminals.

-During his research of police and social workers in California 1970, Cicourel discovered that many police officers 'typifications' or assumptions led them to concentrate on certain 'types' of people, mainly the working class. This resulted in law enforcement showing a class bias.

-In turn, this leads to police patrolling working class areas more intensively, resulting in more arrests and confirming their stereotypes of what is a deviant, for example ethnic minorities and poor educational backgrounds.

-Therefore, the treatment of police reinforces class bias and give into stereotypes of the working class causing more deviancy. However, Cohen believes that the characteristics of individuals lead them to deviancy, and it is not the result of police interactions with young people.



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Page 3 of 2.

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