5.3 Labelling Theory and Crime: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Where a question refers to Item C, use both the Item and your own knowledge of labelling theory in your answer.

1 Edwin Lemert's concept of deviance that results from the label applied to an earlier act is called...

- [ ] A) primary deviance
- [ ] B) secondary deviance
- [ ] C) boundary maintenance
- [ ] D) strain

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

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2 Evaluate the labelling theory explanation of crime and deviance. In your answer you should refer to sociologists' views and consider strengths and weaknesses of the theory.

(Total for Question 2 is 12 marks)

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3 State one way schools or workplaces might unintentionally reinforce a deviant label.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

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4 Sociologists use the term 'labelling' to describe a particular process.

(Total for Question 4 is 2 marks)

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5 Howard Becker's 1963 book Outsiders set out an interactionist theory of deviance.

(a) Explain what Becker meant by describing deviance as a 'social construction'. **(2)**

(b) Explain what Becker meant by a 'moral entrepreneur'. **(2)**

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

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6 State what sociologists mean by a 'master status' in the context of labelling theory, giving an example.

(Total for Question 6 is 2 marks)

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7 State one criticism often made of labelling theory.

(Total for Question 7 is 2 marks)

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Mark scheme · 5.3 Labelling Theory and Crime: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

B (secondary deviance) **B1**

Answer: B

Question 2

Level 4 A detailed, well-balanced evaluation that accurately explains the labelling theory explanation of crime, supported by accurate reference to named sociologists. Strengths and weaknesses are analysed in depth, and a reasoned, supported judgement is reached. Sociological terminology is used accurately and consistently throughout. **10-12**

Level 3 A clear evaluation of labelling theory, with some accurate reference to sociologists. Some analysis of strengths/weaknesses. An attempt at a conclusion, which may be only partly supported. **7-9**

Level 2 Some relevant explanation of labelling theory, with limited development or accuracy. Little clear evaluation of its strengths or weaknesses. **4-6**

Level 1 One or two isolated, undeveloped points about labels or reactions to deviance, with little or no sociological terminology or accurate detail. **1-3**

Level 0 No relevant content. **0**

Indicative content:

- Becker's argument that deviance is socially constructed: no act is inherently deviant, it becomes deviant when a social group or rule-makers (moral entrepreneurs) label and react to it that way.
- Lemert's distinction between primary deviance (a minor act with little effect on self-image) and secondary deviance (deviance produced by the reaction to primary deviance, once a label is applied).
- The concepts of master status and the self-fulfilling prophecy: once a deviant label becomes the main way others see a person, this can shape treatment and opportunities in ways that make further deviance more likely.
- Strength: labelling theory usefully highlights how the reaction of the criminal justice system and wider society can itself worsen or amplify deviant behaviour, rather than crime being caused only by the individual.
- Strength continued: it draws attention to the fact that not everyone who breaks a rule is treated, or labelled, the same way, raising questions about who gets labelled and why.
- Weakness: critics argue it is too deterministic, assuming a label will always lead to secondary deviance, when many people who are labelled do not go on to reoffend.
- Weakness continued: it does not fully explain why the original, primary act of deviance happened in the first place, and relies heavily on small-scale, qualitative studies, which limits how far its findings can be generalised.
- A balanced conclusion should weigh labelling theory's insight into how societal reaction can shape a deviant career against its limited attention to the original causes of rule-breaking and the fact that not every labelled person follows the pattern it describes.

Question 3

identifies a genuine mechanism, e.g. treating a pupil or employee with continued suspicion because of a past incident **B1**

brief development, e.g. this can reduce trust and opportunities regardless of the person's current behaviour **B1**

Answer: A school or workplace might keep treating someone with suspicion because of a past incident, reducing their trust and opportunities regardless of how they are currently behaving, reinforcing the original label.

Question 4

attaching a definition such as 'criminal' or 'deviant' to a person or an act, often based on a reaction from others rather than the act itself (oe) **B1**

development, e.g. once applied, a label can affect how a person is treated by others **B1**

Answer: Attaching a definition such as 'criminal' or 'deviant' to a person or act, based on a reaction from others; once applied, a label can affect how the person is treated.

Question 5

(a) identifies that no act is inherently deviant in itself **B1**

(a) development, e.g. it becomes deviant because social groups or rule-makers define and react to it that way **B1**

(a) Answer: No act is inherently deviant in itself; it becomes deviant because social groups or rule-makers define and react to it that way.

(b) identifies a moral entrepreneur as a person or group who campaigns to have a new rule or law created, and enforced **B1**

(b) development, e.g. often to address behaviour they personally see as wrong or threatening **B1**

(b) Answer: A moral entrepreneur is a person or group who campaigns to have a new rule or law created and enforced, often to address behaviour they see as wrong or threatening.

Question 6

the label that comes to dominate how a person is seen by others, overriding their other qualities (oe) **B1**

a correct example, e.g. someone becomes known mainly as 'a criminal' rather than as, for example, a good friend or employee **B1**

Answer: The label that comes to dominate how a person is seen by others, overriding their other qualities; for example, someone might become known mainly as 'a criminal' rather than as a good friend or employee.

Question 7

identifies a recognised criticism, e.g. it can be too deterministic, assuming being labelled will always lead to further deviance, when many labelled people do not reoffend **B1**

brief development **B1**

Answer: Critics argue labelling theory can be too deterministic, assuming being labelled will always lead to further deviance, when in reality many labelled people do not reoffend.

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