

Hello Learners, myself, Mrs Samira Naik,

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I will be taking up a subtopic from chapter No one (1). The name of the

chapter is Introduction and the sub topic that I'm going to deal

with is 1.3 Theories of

Deviance. I'm going to deal with the Labelling Theory.

I will be covering up the main idea of the theory, the

importance of the social audience, on what labeling

depends upon, the concept of deviance, groups likely to be

labelled deviant, effects on the individual who is labelled and

the criticisms. At the end of the class, the students will be

able to explain the main idea of the labelling theory on crime,

the students will be able to explain the concept of deviance,

the students will be able to

explain, the criticisms of the labelling theory, the students

will be able to list groups likely to be labelled deviant,

and students will be able to list the effects of labelling.

As this theory is a sociological theory on a crime and

deviance, first let us know what is deviance and what is crime.

Deviance refers to any action or behavior that violates the norms

of society. Crime is an act of violation, punishable by law.

For example, the practice of dowry system is considered as

a crime, as there is Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961. To

give some more examples of crime, rape, murder, theft,

child marriage, child labor and many other.

A person who commits a crime is known as a criminal or an

offender. Coming to the labelling theory, the labelling theory is

propounded by Howard Becker in the year 1963.

This theory doesn't deal with the question why a person

becomes a criminal, but it deals with why society labels some

individuals as deviant.

For example, not all alcoholics are referred to as alcoholic.

Alcoholic is a person who gets addicted to consuming alcohol.

Hence, it is the

Social audience that is more important. The act of the

individual person is not important, according to the

labelling theory, the reaction of the society in terms of rules

and sanctions are very important.

Deviance is a consequence of the application by others of rules

and sanctions to an offender. What are sanctions? sanctions refers to

punishments and rewards. Offender is a person who

commits the crime.

Hence, according to this theory, deviant or criminal is one, to whom the label is successfully given by the society. Coming to the experiment, the experiment is performed in United States of America, where in Eight sane, that is normal people get admitted for mental illness.

All give the same account of their life situation, but out of eight only one was labelled schizophrenic. schizophrenic is a mental illness, so once assumed insane, that is mad, the hospital staff who interacted with the person, assumed the person as insane, that is a mad person.

In a similar way, in society

also, in the case of criminals, some people are labelled or branded as criminals and deviants by society. For example, if a lower class boy steals a car, he is given the brand or label of a thief. If the same act is committed by upper Class Boy, he is not given the label of a deviant or a criminal, but he's given the brand as a mischievous pleasure Seeker.

According to Becker, whether labeling occurs depends upon three conditions, that time when the act is committed, Who commits the act and who is the victim? Victim is the

sufferer. So here it depends upon, whether the person belongs to the upper class or lower class and the third condition is, the consequences of the act.

Hence, whether the act is deviant or not, depends upon the nature of the act and what people do about it. Whether people label the criminal as a criminal or not. Say, for example, sometimes people are innocent, but still they are given the label of a criminal or deviant. In that case, the society views the person as a criminal whereas on the other side, if the guilty is not given the label of a criminal or deviant, the society does not view the person as a criminal or a deviant, so the reaction of the society is very important. What people do about is very important. Coming to the concept of deviance, according to Becker, Deviance is not a quality that lies in the behavior itself, but in the interaction between person who commits an act and those who respond to it. Hence the reaction of the society, the social audience is very important.

If the society is successful in giving the label to a person as a criminal or deviant, he will be considered, he will be viewed as a criminal by society.

Now, according to Howard Becker, there are certain groups which are more likely to be labelled as deviant. Now the first group is, groups that do not have political power. So as these groups do not have political power, they cannot enforce to implement the laws. So this is one group that can be labelled deviant. The second group is, group which are seen to threaten persons in power, and the third group, which have low social status.

As we already discussed, an example of theft.

There are certain effects on the individual who is being labeled as a deviant or a criminal. So what happens to the person once labelled a deviant or criminal?

So if there is an official response, that is, if there is a reaction, towards the criminal or deviant by the victim, he might continue to have delinquent acts or conduct. One might continue committing more and more crimes at the same time, it might become very difficult for him or her to re-enter the conventional world, that is the normal world.

And third, on the other side, if there is no official response, If there is no reaction by the victim towards the criminal or the deviant, he might continue committing the acts without helping himself/herself to change his or her behavior.

This theory is being criticized. The Criticizers are saying this theory has a good logic, but it doesn't explain the cause of crime. It totally avoids the question of causation.

To conclude, labelling theory deals with the question why society labels some individual as deviant or

Criminal.

Reaction of the society is very important and not the act of the individual. According to this theory, deviant is one or criminal is one, to whom label is successfully given by the social audience. The person labelled deviant, may further indulge in deviant acts and find difficult to re- enter the conventional world.

These are some of the meanings of the words.

I have referred to a book by the name Criminology, author Ram Ahuja.

Thank you.