

Level 3 Criminology

Step Up Work



Name_____

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Instructions

Read the following material and then complete the questions/tasks throughout the document. Bring this work with you to your first Criminology lesson.

What is Criminology?

Criminology is an interdisciplinary social science that combines content regarding crime from sociology, psychology, law and politics.

Newburn (2007) defines Criminology as:

- The study of crime
- The study of those who commit crime
- **The study of the criminal justice system and penal systems**

Crime or Deviance?

The concepts of crime and deviance are often used interchangeably, suggesting that people may regard them as the same thing. In criminology it is essential that we know and can discuss the distinct differences between the two terms.

Defining Crime

The term crime is not easy to define, in Criminology we explain the meaning of the word through various definitions, and you are required to know two of these:

The social definition - *Crime is any act so identified by groups in society*

The social definition of crime suggests that an act is only labelled as a crime if society decides that the act is criminal. This definition of crime focuses predominantly on the social reaction and the actual processes of criminalisation as oppose to the behaviour and the actor. This definition of crime is contingent and can change over time and between societies, for example views regarding sexual conduct in the UK have changed, in the past consensual sex between men was prohibited, this is now accepted and legal in the UK but is still labelled as criminal in other countries across the world. It is important to acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses of the social constructionist definition of crime, whilst ensuring that the definition of crime is always up to date and acknowledges the fluidity of society it can lead to a lack of consensus (no agreement).

The legal definition - *Crime is an act that is against the law*

In the UK the legal system defines a crime, any act that breaks the law will result in punishment. In law a crime must have two elements:

Actus reus = is the physical 'doing' part of the crime and committing a guilty act, this can be physically acting (causation) or failing to act (omissions).

Mens rea = is the intention for the crime.

For example, if Keith takes a knife and purposely stabs Alan in the chest multiple times and kills him, he has committed the actus reus (murder) and has the mens rea (intent to kill).

However, in instances of defence, such as self-defence, infancy, insanity etc. even if both parts of the law are present a person may not be found guilty.

Again, it is important to acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses of the legal definition of crime, it allows for crime to be easily understood and identified due to its fixed certainty, however it responds slowly to social developments (cyber-crime) and still differs across location for example jaywalking is illegal in Australia but not here in the UK.

So ... whether an action is criminal depends on:

- □ Time
- □ Place
- □ Situation
- □ Culture

Defining Deviance

Deviance is a term that should be used when describing an act or behaviour that is a violation of societal norms. Deviance is any behaviour that would receive a critical reaction or disapproval from a specific group or the society in which it is carried out. There are no written rules (or laws) regarding what is or is not deemed socially acceptable, meaning that like crime, the concept of deviance is complex and will vary depending upon the time, place situation and culture.

Norms, moral codes and values are what distinguish deviant behaviour in a society.

- **Norms** are social expectations in a society that guide behaviour and explain why people behave in the way that they do. In the UK it is the norm to eat with a knife and fork, however in India it is customary to eat using your hands.
- **Moral codes** define what is regarded as good behaviour. Breaking a moral code would be considered as serious in society and could even cross the boundary of committing a crime, such as burglary.
- **Values** are ideas or beliefs about general principles or goals within a society or culture, they are things that we deem to be important for example the value of 'honesty', 'respect', 'fairness' and equality.

Forms of Deviance

It tends to be assumed that "deviant behaviour" is somehow always behaviour that is generally frowned upon by people in a society or viewed as negatively, that is not necessarily always the case. We can categorise various basic forms of rule-breaking behaviour in terms of three basic ideas:

Admired Behaviour - An example of deviance that might be considered as "good" or "admirable" behaviour (whilst also breaking social norms) might be something like heroism - the saving of the life of another person whilst putting your own life in great danger.

Odd Behaviour - This form of deviance ranges from such things as outlandish modes of dress, through mildly eccentric forms of behaviour (the person who shares their house with 50 cats, for example). The behaviour is not criminal but somewhat differs to 'normal' behaviour.

Bad Behaviour - This category of deviant behaviour tends to be restricted to law-breaking or criminal behaviour that in some way is seen as being something more than odd or out of the ordinary, for example assault.

It is not uncommon for behaviour to overlap in the categories of deviance. Some behaviour may be deemed as both odd and bad for example exposing yourself in public. It is important to remember that these boundaries are blurred and that some acts may be deviant and not criminal, some acts are criminal but not necessarily deviant and some acts would be classified as both criminal and deviant.

Criminology: Tasks to complete

Answers may be completed on a computer and printed out or handwritten you must bring this material to your first criminology lesson in September.

Task 1: Howard Becker's study 'The Outsiders'

Read the extract below regarding Howard Becker's explanation of how we define crime and answer the questions at the bottom of the page.

There is no such thing as an inherently deviant act - in other words there is nothing which is deviant in itself in all situations and at all times, certain acts only become deviant in certain situations when others label them as deviant. Deviance is not a result of an act or an individual being 'uniquely different', deviance is a product of society's reaction to actions.

Sociologist Howard Becker (1963) says that - "Deviancy is not a quality of the act a person commits, but rather a consequences of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an 'offender'. Deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label."

Howard Becker illustrates how crime is the product of social interactions by using the example of a fight between young people. In a low-income neighbourhood, a fight is more likely to be defined by the police as evidence of delinquency, but in a wealthy area as evidence of high spirits. The acts are the same, but the meanings given to them by the audience (in this case the public and the police) differ. Those who have the power to make the label stick thus create deviants or criminals.

You could apply the same thinking to criminal behaviour more generally in Britain - According to a recent 2015 survey of 2000 people, the average person in Britain breaks the law 17 times per year, with 63% admitting speeding, 33% stealing and 25% taking illegal drugs - clearly the general public is tolerant of 'ordinary' deviance - but every now and then someone will get spotted doing 'ordinary' criminal activities and publicly shamed.

1. Which definition of crime does Becker most associate with and why?
2. In your own words, explain what is meant by the statement 'no act is inherently deviant'?
3. What percentage of people in the 2015 survey did not admit to speeding?
4. Outline one advantage of applying labelling theory to the explanation of crime.
5. Outline one disadvantage of applying labelling theory to the explanation of crime.

Task 2: Research Task

Examine one of the following types of crime.

- White collar crime
- Moral crime
- State crime
- Technological crime
- Hate crime
- Honour crime
- Domestic abuse

Find out:

- What this crime is
- Who are the offenders
- Who are the victims
- How prevalent is it? (How much does it happen?)
- How aware are the public of this type of crime?
- Find a real life case study
- Is this criminal, deviant or both? Why?

Task 3: Media research task

Using the internet and/or any other media publications, find an example article for at least three of the different types of crime listed above. Make sure that your three articles are brought with you to your first lesson.