Journal Article Questions

# Chapter 11: Labeling Theory and Conflict/Marxist/Radical Theories of Crime

Article 1: Kavish, D. R., Mullins, C. W., & Soto, D. A. (2016). Interactionist labeling: Formal and informal labeling’s effects on juvenile delinquency. Crime & Delinquency, 62(10), 1313–1336. Retrieved from

http://journals.sagepub.com/stoken/default+domain/P6m2QQmgn8ZFZXQDArfZ/full

This article critically reviews prior labeling theory research concerning juvenile delinquency and crime, and proposes a new study using a recent data set. The labeling perspective is outlined as it was originally presented, and the theoretical elaborations that have taken place since are highlighted. Distinctions are made between formally applied criminal justice labels and the informal labels that are applied by educational institutions, significant others, and parental figures. An interactionist labeling model is presented to explain levels of juvenile delinquency among a nationally representative sample of American adolescents: the first three waves of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health). Finally, negative binomial regression models are estimated to better explain the dynamic relationship between labels and delinquency. Consistent with labeling theory, formal labeling significantly increased future delinquency.

Questions that apply to this article:

1. How do the authors distinguish between *formal* and *informal* labels?

2. Which of the four hypotheses was rejected? Why?

3. What does this study contribute to the body of literature on labeling theory?

Article 2: Sims, B. (1997). Crime, punishment, and the American dream: Toward a Marxist integration. Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, 34(1), 5–24. Retrieved from

http://journals.sagepub.com/stoken/default+domain/ZAnQ6ERqRbQTn2vXy9Ru/full

In their book *Crime and the American Dream*, Messner and Rosenfeld suggest that the American economy sets up a society conducive to conflict and crime. The authors argue throughout their work that social, educational, and political institutions take a backseat to the economy. When building the theoretical foundation for their argument, Messner and Rosenfeld fail to adequately address the contribution of Marxist criminology to their “sociological paradigm.” In the present article, the author attempts to supply that missing link by suggesting that Marxist criminology can explain how social and economic inequalities are a naturally occurring event in the American system of capitalism. Having done so, she then examines how the theoretical foundation constructed in the first part of the article could be applied to address the manner in which punishment is meted out in American society.

Questions that apply to this article:

1. What did Messner and Rosenfeld say about the American economy?

2. What did Sims say Messner and Rosenfeld left out in their earlier work? What is that missing link?

3. How can the theory discussed by Sims be applied to punishment in America?

Article 3: Kort-Butler, L. A. (2012). Justice league? Depictions of justice in children’s superhero cartoons. Criminal Justice Review, 38(1), 50–69. Retrieved from

http://journals.sagepub.com/stoken/default+domain/ywIeMn8zekkkkuMxghhP/full

The literature argues that media depictions of criminal justice present messages that conform to and promote the dominant ideology about the crime problem and how to solve it. Research has focused on television news and adult programs, but little research has examined messages about justice present in children’s shows. To fill this gap, an ethnographic content analysis of children’s cartoons was conducted, using a sample of episodes from *Batman: The Animated Series, Spider-Man,* and *Justice League Unlimited*. Several themes emerged. First, the justice system is often depicted as ill equipped to handle serious crime. Second, story lines suggested that the justice system is relatively weak, plagued by corruption or ineffectiveness. Third, heroes are driven by their notions of justice, recognizing that only they can stop the worst criminals and are morally obligated to do so. Fourth, heroes are willing to use force to capture offenders, but they also use brain power. Finally, although heroes work largely outside the law, they are supportive of the efforts of honest justice system actors. In sum, these shows provide messages about justice that are consistent with and supportive of the dominant ideology that derides rehabilitation and emphasizes incapacitation. They are also congruent with messages, images, and frames presented in adult-oriented media. By drawing on moral elements and the problem frame, they act as cultural primers by which young people may interpret subsequent imagery of crime and justice. The consistency across genres contributes to the social reality of crime and control.

Questions that apply to this article:

1. What “gap” in the media depictions of criminal justice literature is this study attempting to fill?

2. What are the four themes identified by the author?

3. What is the overall conclusion drawn by the author from her research (as it relates to the social reality of crime control)?