

Here is where the labelling theory became introduced. This was a completely new approach to the explanation of crime and deviance initiated by interactionism. Interactionists were more concerned with agencies of social control; how they label certain behaviour as deviant and the effects of these labels. Interactionists dispute the functionalist assumption that there was an agreement throughout society as to what behaviour is criminal or deviant. They aimed to find out why certain behaviour was labelled as criminal or deviant in some contexts but not in others. Howard Becker was one of the initiators of the labelling theory, he stated that "Social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infractions constitute deviance, and by applying these rules to particular people and labelling them as outsiders." By this Becker means that society create the rules which when broken form deviance. Therefore the generating of rules is the cause for crime and deviance. He says that deviance is not a distinctive form of behaviour but behaviour which breaks these certain outlined rules. Becker presents well the idea that in some contexts certain behaviour is seen as deviant whereas in others it is not. For this he uses the example of injecting heroine, "The act of injecting heroine into a vein is not inherently deviant. If a nurse gives a patient drugs under a doctor's orders, it is perfectly proper. It is when it is done in a way that is not publicly defined as proper that it becomes deviant." The act is only made deviant in a situation when society views it as inappropriate; the act itself is not illegal.

Edwin M. Lemert emphasises, like Becker, the significance of society and its reaction to deviant behaviour. He believes that there are two separate types of deviance, Primary and Secondary. Primary deviation consists of deviant acts being carried out before the individual is publicly labelled as a delinquent. Secondary deviation is when a person commits a deviant act as a response to society's reaction to and labelling of them. He believes that society's reaction can be named as the major cause of deviance, claiming that agents of social control are to blame for deviance rather than the deviant. Emphasising this point of secondary deviation is Lemert's study 'Stuttering among the North Pacific Coastal Indians'. The North Pacific coastal Indians live a ceremonial life of singing, dancing and speechmaking. Even from a young age children are involved in the ceremonies and their parents stress the importance of a flawless performance. There is a particularly high sensitivity to any speech defect, and if one becomes apparent during their speech shame is brought upon the child and their parents. Stuttering is not very common amongst North American Indians many tribes don't even have a word for it in their language though it does sometimes occur. Lemert believes however that stuttering is in fact caused by societal reaction, by this he means that the child and parents anxiety over a possible speech impediment actually causes them. If a child is convinced that he may be a 'stutterer' he could in fact live up to this label.

Lemert also carried out a study focusing on labelling and paranoia. The mental condition paranoia is when an individual imagines that they are being 'persecuted by a well-organised conspiracy'. Lemert states that when paranoia is suspected the alleged sufferer will be observed secretly with doctors and psychiatric appointments being made behind their back, hence they become the subject of such a well-organised conspiracy. If they had not actually before believed that they were being watched they now may well sense that they are, as in deed is the case. They will begin to complain about feeling like this; this will lead those that have labelled them as paranoid to conclude that their suspicions have been confirmed. The fact that the labelled 'paranoid' is right to feel as though they are being conspired against is forgotten. The labellers are therefore, effectively causing the individual who they have labelled as paranoid, even if this person had nothing wrong with their mental health to begin with, to become paranoid. The confirmation of the paranoia