Key Definitions

- Phenomenology: primacy of experience
- Ethnomethodology: the way "rules" affect the way we behave, common sense
- Symbolic interactionism: analyses the way 'reality' is negotiated, the way meaning is escribed to particular behaviours through interaction with others. Social constructionist view of society

George Herbert Mead

- Interested in socialization and the development of individual identity
  - Baby grows and assumes an identity as an adult
- Two parts to the self: "me" (social self-presented to the outside world) and the "I" (the unsocialised individual interaction within the individual)
  - Interaction between "me" and "I" internally
- "generalised other "represents the consolidation of our experiences of reaction to our behaviour
  - The way we develop a shortcut for our experience, the way we learn manners/what's expected of us, how to navigate the world
  - Learn from experience, consolidate experience
  - Orientate our behaviour and come to understand who we are through the interaction between the "me" and "I" and the "me" and the generalised other
  - Use short cuts and cues to understand what's going on
- Individual development results from interaction between the "I" the "me" and the "generalised other"

Mead's importance

- The development of identity is a complex process involving "reflexivity" seeing ourselves as others see us
- "Generalised other" illustrates the way we use symbols and shortcuts in order to understand "reality"
  - The way we negotiate reality
- Illustrates how people are not simply determined by the view others have of them
  - Children are not just a copy of their parents
- Developed by Herbert Blumer (1969) into three key statements of symbolic interactionism:
  - We know things by their meanings
  - Meanings are created through social interaction
  - Meanings change through social interactionism

Symbolic Interactionism

- Self as an enigma, a paradox
- Critical point is reached when behaviour is challenged by others
- People form their identity from experience, and prediction of experience
- Language is central - used to rationalise our action to ourselves - and to others

- o Language is the way we communicate meaning, emotions are consolidated through language
- o Language is central to meaning making, action of naming/linguistic description is central to constructing identity
- Invest meaning and interpretation in interaction/relationship

Explaining our (deviant) behaviour

- Techniques of neutralization (Sykes and Matza)
- Denial of responsibility
  - o It wasn't my fault
- Denial of injury
  - o It wasn't a big deal
- Denial of the victim
  - o E.g. the state wastes my money, these people are scum they don't need sympathy
- Condemnation of the condemners
  - o They had it coming
- Appeal to higher loyalties
  - o My friends needed me - what could I do?

- Both an internal and external conversation

Labelling Theory

- Offshoot of symbolic interactionism emphasizing audience response to 'deviance' and its impact
  - o How the way an audience response dictates what's considered deviant/harmful
  - o The impact of that labelling process

- Emphasizes the way a negative response to behaviour can stigmatize
  - o Argues that the emphasis should not be on the behaviour itself but rather the response

- Howard Becker (1963) "Outsiders"
  - o "Deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an 'offender'. The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label"
  - o "Whether an act is deviant, then, depends on how other people react to it"

- All of us are "deviant" some of the time, however only some become labelled as deviant
  - o Process of categorization and classification
  - o Same behaviour different outcome

- The audience is critical to "classification"
  - o Normal or deviant, criminal or acceptable

- Edwin Lemert - Primary and Secondary Deviance
    - Primary deviance is the initial act that we all engage in at some point in time, secondary deviance is the persona that people take on over time after being labelled - individual employs the label as a means of defence or attack, adjust their behaviour to confirm their identity

- Emphasis on the process
    - Societal reaction over time through a process that ends up the same behaviour being classified differently and leading to different outcomes

- Looking from the perspective of the marginalised, acting on behalf of those who are marginalised

- Describing the detail of interactions is important in order to understand how it might be different

Labelling and Stigma

- Labelled as an outsider (Becker) if not conforming to social expectation (Goffman 1959)
    - E.g. heteronormativity and "proper process" as asylum seeker
    - Relates to agency and structure
        - Meaning attached to certain actions as normal and abnormal has significant ongoing consequences
        - People are placed into positions as 'illegitimate"
- Effects of stigmatising (Becker, 1963; Goffman 1968)
    - Self-fulfilling prophecy: individuals or groups labelled deviant through social set of norms can construct self-image from social relations
- Respond to negative perceptions and social restrictions
    - Self-esteem can be undermined
- Social reactions as labelling processes associated with creating; "moral panics" (Cohen)
- Attention particular acts or groups are given both exaggerated and distorted; i.e., idea of "ethnic gangs'", "asylum seekers"; "queers"

Examples of the process

- Examples illustrate the way rules are and responses are malleable
- The original intent may not be to label
    - Environmental inspectors
    - Young people outside a bar
- Relative power of each party important - those with less power more often labelled deviant
    - Patterns that are consolidated
    - Over time those with less power and influence are more likely to be labelled as deviant than those with more power and influence
- Many paths to a final destination of being labelled as either acceptable or deviant
    - Problem of over simplification
    - Important to understand the complexity of the labelling process