'EVERY WORK OF ART IS AN UNCOMMITTED CRIME':
The Application of Sociological Theories of Deviance to Modern Art.

By Carol Norman[1]

ABSTRACT

Modern art begins with Manet (1832-1883) and the Impressionists and continues until the present day (Julius 2002). Like crime, it often breaks societal rules, however, modern art is not typically against the law and for this reason it is 'uncommitted crime' (Adorno 1951). Deviance is the violation of societal rules, which may be consensual or imposed by a powerful group (Box 1981). Modern art breaks societal rules and so is deviant; for example Serrano's (1987) 'Piss Christ' (Picture 1) mocks the Catholic Church and traps spectators into blasphemy. However, despite evidence of deviance in modern art, sociological theories of deviance concentrate on crime, delinquency and mental illness.
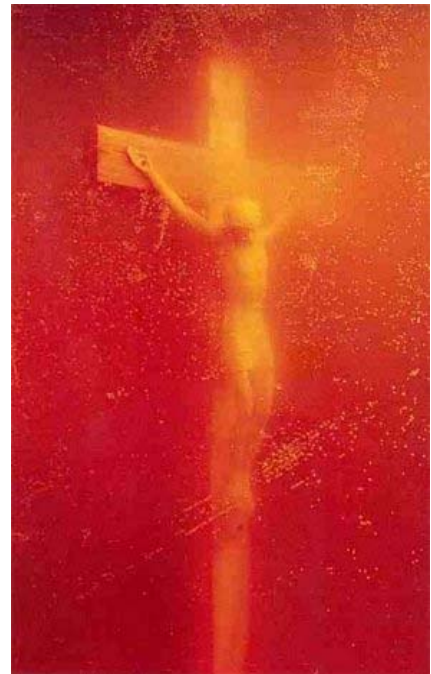
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[1]Carol Norman is a student of sociology PhD student at Goldsmiths College in London, UK.

'Every work of art is an uncommitted crime'[2]: the application of sociological theories of deviance to modern art.

1.0. Introduction

Modern art begins with Manet (1832-1883) and the Impressionists and continues until the present day (Julius 2002). Like crime, it often breaks societal rules, however, modern art is not typically against the law and for this reason it is 'uncommitted crime' (Adorno 1951). Deviance is the violation of societal rules, which may be consensual or imposed by a powerful group (Box 1981). Modern art breaks societal rules and so is deviant; for example Serrano's (1987) 'Piss Christ' (Picture 1) mocks the Catholic Church and traps spectators into blasphemy. However, despite evidence of deviance in modern art, sociological theories of deviance concentrate on crime, delinquency and mental illness.

This paper asserts that sociological theories of deviance are applicable to modern art. First, a brief historiography of sociological theories of deviance is forwarded. Three movements in modern art are then outlined: 'Impressionism and Post-Impressionism', 'Surrealism and Dada', and 'Contemporary art'. Three sociological theories of deviance - functionalism, subcultural theory and labelling theory (including mental illness and moral panics) are then applied to the three movements in modern art. It is concluded that sociological theories of deviance are applicable to modern art. Finally, it is suggested that for sociological theories of deviance to be fully comprehensive they must examine areas of deviance not traditionally investigated, such as modern art, and must also unite structure and meaning more fully.

Picture 1

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[2] Adorno (1951)

2.0. A brief historiography of sociological theories of deviance

This section briefly discusses sociological theories of deviance in preparation for the application of three of them - functionalism, subcultural theory and labelling theory - to modern art. During the nineteenth century, theories of deviance posited a biological or a psychological cause of deviance (Box 1981). However, no consistent difference between deviants and others emerged, so sociologists began to investigate social factors (Box 1981). Durkheim (1895) adopted the positivist approach (the application of science to sociology) and investigated society from a functionalist point of view, which asserts that societies are systems with interrelated parts (Rex 1970). He argued that crime is an act that offends collective sentiments but that it is normal in a healthy society; if collective sentiments are so strong that there is no crime, there is no societal change either.

Therefore, Durkheim (1895) challenged the dichotomy between criminality as bad and conformity as good. Merton (1938) continued the functionalist tradition by arguing that pressures from the social structure lead to both deviant and conformist behaviour and so deviant behaviour is as normal as conformist behaviour. Deviant adaptations result when society is anomic (Durkheim 1897) and the culturally prescribed goal of money success is adhered to but the legitimate methods of regulating how this is achieved have broken down. However, despite the ability of functionalism to explain deviance, Wrong (1961) argues that it presents an over-socialised view of individuals as passively accepting the goals and pressures exerted by their culture. Berlin (1967) asserts that value pluralism characterises society so a consensus view such as functionalism cannot hold.

The Chicago school (Downes & Rock 2003) drew on functionalism but broke from the positivistic approach and used participant observation to study social processes. It analysed Chicago into a number of areas or zones. The zone implicated in crime and delinquency is the zone of transition, which is characterised by a high population turnover and a lack of stable institutions. In this way, it is anomic: social relations in this zone are very basic and characterised by mistrust. The ethnographic methods of the Chicago school led to the emergence of subcultural theories. One subcultural theorist is Cohen (1955), who argues that delinquent boys develop subcultural solutions to their failure within the wider culture. Matza (1964) suggests that this over-predicts delinquency. Delinquents are not deeply committed to subcultural values but drift between subculture and main culture.

Labelling theory is used to examine subcultures but shifts attention away from the rule-breaking act to the societal reaction to rule breaking (Taylor, Walton & Young 1973). It concentrates on the micro-social world of meanings and argues that whether an act is deviant depends on how people react to it (Becker 1963). Lemert (1969) argues that primary deviance, the original reasons for violating norms, is not important. However: 'when a person begins to employ his deviant behaviour…as a means of defence, attack, or adjustment to the…problems created by the consequent societal reaction to him, his deviation is secondary' (Lemert 1969 p.604). Secondary deviation has consequences for the individual's self-concept and further behaviour. In this way, labelling theory analyses the career of becoming deviant, emphasising the non-deterministic nature of this process.

Taylor, Walton & Young (1973) criticise labelling theory for not examining the origin of labels that are applied and so ignoring power relations in society. Theories concerning moral panics and mental illness have drawn on labelling theory, but include an analysis of the power to create and apply labels. Cohen (1972) forwarded the term 'moral panic' to identify the reactions of the media, public and agents of social control to the Mods and Rockers seaside disturbances. He argued that the press, operating within commercial restraints, define and over-report events and demonise certain groups as folk-devils (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 1994). The press thus impose their definition of the situation onto the public (Hall 1974). This process might lead to deviancy amplification, where by stereotyped groups become deviant due to a self-fulfilling prophecy (Young 1971).

Labelling theory is also applicable to mental illness. Szasz (1967) argues that mental illness is a myth imposed by the medical model. The medical establishment is powerful and it imposes its definitions of correct behaviour on powerless individuals. In this way, theories of deviance are applicable to crime, delinquency and mental illness. Functionalism explains the normality of crime and the Chicago school explains why crime is found in some areas and not others. Subcultural theories examine the evolution of delinquency in groups and the labelling approach analyses the consequences that societal reaction has for the individual. Modern art, like crime, delinquency and mental illness breaks societal rules. However, sociological theories of deviance have ignored it. Modern art will be outlined in the next section in preparation for the application of sociological theories of deviance to it.

3.0. A sketch of the modern art period

The modern period in art begins with Manet in the 1860s and continues today (Julius 2002). Visual artists of the modern period routinely break boundaries, as Jasper Johns' blurring of frontiers on 'Map' (1962) (Picture 2) literally shows by blending territorial borders. The character Lily Briscoe in 'To the Lighthouse' (1927) represents this freedom with concomitant danger: 'every line placed on the canvas committed her to innumerable
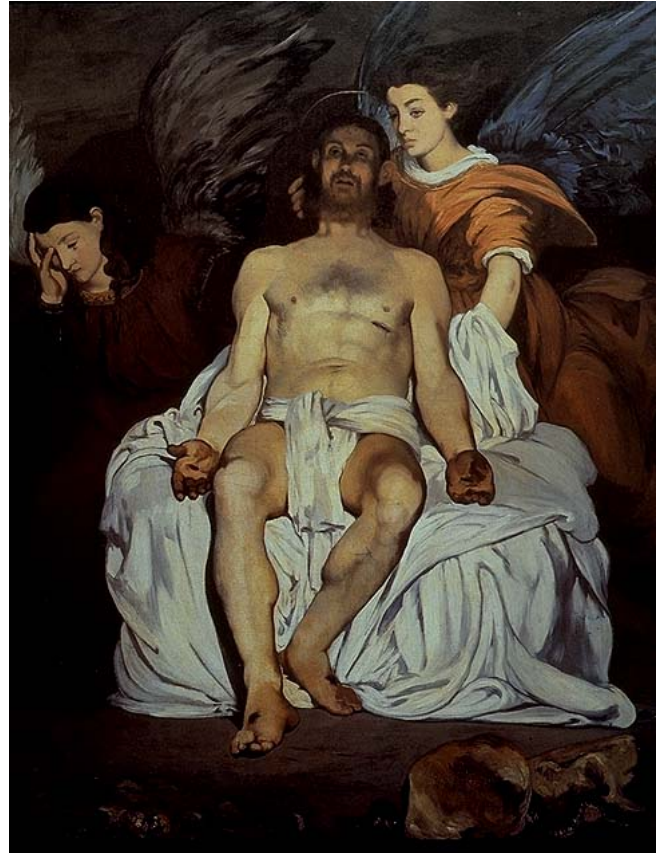

Picture 2

risks. ...Still the risk must be run; the mark made'. Challenging accepted beliefs leads to discovery but also attracts moral outrage. For example, J.S.G. Boggs had court proceedings brought against him for drawing obvious replicas of bank notes (Picture 3) and offering them in exchange for goods. In this way, modern art often breaks societal rules and so is deviant.

Picture 3

Three movements in modern art are particularly associated with rule breaking. Chronologically, the first is Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. The modern period and Impressionism began with Manet (1832-1883). At this time, cultural certainties were collapsing. Manet's work reflected this and transgressed the traditional assumptions of the art canon in a number of ways (Gombrich 1972). He mixed secular and religious themes: 'The Dead Christ and the Angels' (1864) (Picture 4) shows the angels depicted as human models. In addition, he refuted the idealised conception of the female nude and painted nudes with individual character: compare 'Olympia' (1863) (Picture 5) with the more traditional and fantasy-like 'The Birth of Venus' by Botticelli (1485) (Picture 6).

The Impressionists formed a close group of acquaintances who evolved their own exhibitions following the scandalous exhibition, the 'Salon des Refuses', held in Paris in 1863 (Dunlop 1972). Here, Manet displayed 'Le Dejeuner sur l'herbe' (1863) (Picture 7), which depicted a contradiction between the modern subject and traditional composition (Tucker 1998). Not only were artworks thought of as shocking, artists were labelled as mad. The Post-Impressionist Van

Picture 4

Gogh (1853-1890) was said to suffer from mental illness due to his innovative technique of smearing paint onto the canvas to create a three-dimensional effect (Shlomo 2003), for example, 'Wheatfield with Crows' (1890) (Picture 8).
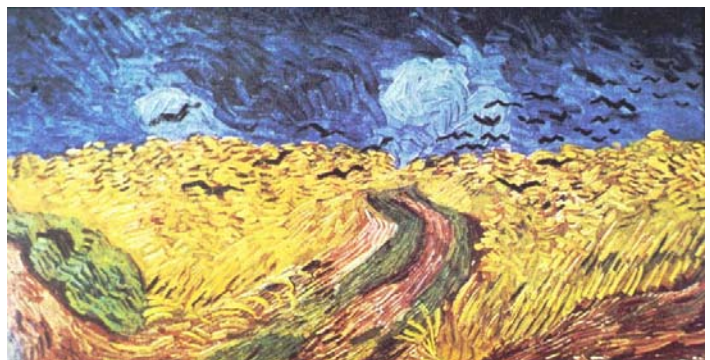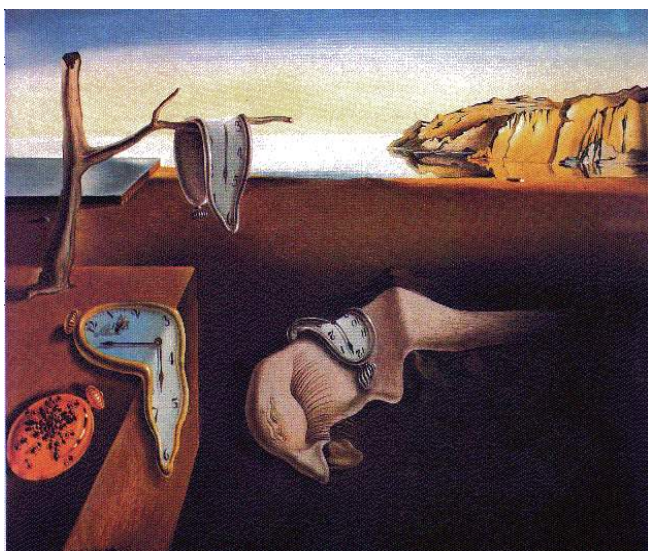

Picture 5

Picture 6

The second movement of modern art associated with rule breaking is Surrealism and Dada. These movements (treated together in this paper) arose at a time of unrest in Europe due to the First and Second World Wars. Surrealism and Dada aimed to divert attention away from the real and make the imaginary rise from the ordinary (Lefebvre 1991), such as 'The Persistence of Memory' by Dali (1931) (Picture 9). They juxtaposed objects not usually found together, for example, Oppenheim's 'Object: Dejeuner en fourrure' (1936) (Picture 10), a fur-lined teacup. The Surrealists and Dadaists formed a 'cliquey' group (Dunlop 1972). Their exhibitions were intended to bemuse and outrage, for example, 'The International Surrealist Exhibition' in Paris in 1938 (Dunlop 1972).

Picture 7

Picture 8

Picture 9

Picture 10

The third movement of modern art that breaks rules is Contemporary art, which refers to recent art by artists who are still alive. Contemporary art developed in a period of rapid technological change and shifting roles, for example, gender roles. Serrano's 'Piss Christ' (1987) (Picture 1) is an example of Contemporary art. It mixes the sacred and profane and mocks the Catholic Church (Julius 2002). Another example is Hirst's 'Mother and Child Divided' (1993) (Picture 11). This relates to the religious images of mother and infant, but in a way that disturbs convention. Contemporary art in Britain is most commonly associated with the group known as 'Young British Artists', who include Hirst (Rosenthal 1997). These artists attended Goldsmith's University and exhibited at the 'Sensation' exhibition, which provoked disquiet from the media.

Therefore, modern art is deviant in a number of ways. However, despite this, theories of deviance concentrate almost exclusively on crime, delinquency and mental illness. The following sections of this paper will redress the balance and apply sociological theories of deviance to modern art. This paper will expand upon three sociological theories of deviance previously discussed: functionalism; subcultural theory; and labelling theory (taken to include moral panics and mental illness). It then applies these theories of deviance apply to the three modern art movements outlined: Impressionism and Post-Impressionism; Surrealism and Dada; and Contemporary art. The conclusion that follows is that sociological theories of deviance apply to modern art in a similar way as they apply to crime, delinquency and mental illness and that this needs recognition in future research.

Picture 11

4.0. Application of functionalism to modern art

From a functionalist perspective, Durkheim (1895) suggested that deviant responses develop in societies characterised by anomie. Durkheim, writing in France at the end of the nineteenth century, argued that anomie results from rapid economic growth unaccompanied by a growth in moral regulation. In societies characterised by this, aspirations outpace socially constructed limits and fix on the unattainable. This leads to deviance, such as suicide (Durkheim 1897). A literary example of a contemporary anomic society is the society of 'Cocaine Nights' (Ballard 1997), where a lack of moral regulation led to the acceptance of criminal activity. Duvignaud (1972) connects art to societal change and anomie. He writes that one of the functions of art is to oppose the traditional culture and depict the modern culture, thus easing times of rapid social transformation.

Impressionism and Post-Impressionism arose in France contemporaneously with Durkheim. This time period was characterised by rapid social upheaval and technological change. Manet made art that represented this time (Tucker 1998). This meant choosing modern subjects and depicting them in ways that highlighted the complexity of the age. In 'Le Dejeuner sur L'herbe' (1863) (Picture 7), Manet parodied artistic and pictorial traditions dominant since the Renaissance. The picture held nothing as fixed or sacred. Tucker (1998) asserts that these problems posed by the picture reflect the turmoil of French society at the time, such as industrial growth and population shifts, which created excitement and unease. In this way, anomie applies to deviant art in the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist period.

Durkheim (1895) argued that lack of moral regulation leads to infinite aspirations and suicide. For Merton (1938), infinite aspirations lead to moral deregulation and crime. Merton (1938) suggested that at the time he was writing, America was an anomic society, shown by an over-emphasis on the goal of money success and a disregard for the legitimate acquisition of this goal. He argued there are four deviant adaptations to anomic society. One of these is rebellion, which applies to individuals and groups that seek to change the prevailing social structure. They reject the money-success goal of society and the means of achieving it and replace it with new goals and means. This applies to modern art: Walker (1999) asserts that a desire to change society leads artists to produce work that shocks.

Surrealism and Dada arose at a time of political unrest across Europe due to the First and Second World Wars. Conceived as a revolution, they embraced and celebrated law breaking and desired societal change. For example, Max Ernst's 'The Virgin Spanking the Christ Child before Three Witnesses: Andre Breton, Paul Eluard and the Painter' (1926) (Picture 12) depicts the three wise men as surrealists and shows Christ as merely an ordinary naughty child. This transgresses establishment art, religious orthodoxy and moral sentiments. In this way, Surrealism and Dada reject mainstream goals and routes to success, substituting their own agenda of artistic values. This tessellates with Merton's rebellion response to anomic society (the rejection of socially legitimate goals and means and their replacement with new ones) and suggests that his theory of deviance can apply to modern art.

Therefore, deviance functions as part of the social system and helps to maintain it. Durkheim (1895) argues that crime is useful for society and this is applicable to art. The Durkheimian purpose of crime, as for art, is to sensitise the collective sentiments of society and bolster societal norms and values. In this way, whilst a certain amount of 'shock' art is healthy, there is too much deviant art when society is anomic, as the periods of social upheaval previously discussed highlight. A paucity of deviant art suggests the collective sentiments of society are too strong, stifling change. Therefore, art is cathartic. It allows values to be scrutinised and safely challenged in the imagination, without having to experiment in reality (Duvignaud 1972). Art functions to safely deal with society's fears and repressed emotions, allowing an adaptive level of change in society so that it does not become stifled.

A number of pieces of art from the Contemporary period highlight the relationship between art and the collective sentiments of society. One example is 'The Physical

Picture 12

Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living' (Hirst 1991) (Picture 13); the title alludes to what is typically avoided and allows the safe examination of a taboo subject. Piss Christ (Serrano 1987) caused outrage on release. George Bush called it 'filth' and campaigns against it developed. Nevertheless, this was functional because Piss Christ acted to reinforce the collective sentiments of society and cement the boundaries of what is acceptable. Therefore, Contemporary art serves the collective sentiments of society.

Functionalists Dentler & Erikson (1959) argue that deviance, like conformity, is a requirement of group formation because they both establish group boundaries. Deviant behaviour functions to maintain equilibrium because by violating norms it emphasises them. Efforts made to accommodate deviants serve to unite the group and groups retain deviants until their behaviour threatens group solidarity. Applied to modern art this suggests that deviant modern art defines societal boundaries and society typically accommodates it; for example, the Hirst (1991) piece in Picture 13 was accepted.

Picture 13

However, if the artwork is so deviant and challenges beliefs in a way that threatens

social solidarity then society rejects it, as was the case with Piss Christ (Picture 1) in America. From a functionalist viewpoint, modern art is didactic. It unites society in the societal struggle to accept it or reject it and define what is permissible.

Therefore, functionalist theories of deviance offer a model to explain modern art in the same way as they explain crime and delinquency: it occurs in anomic societies and is functional for the maintenance of the optimum level of collective sentiments. However, writers have challenged the functionalist value-consensus view of society (for example, Berlin 1969). It seems unlikely that in a modern, plural society each individual subscribes to the same set of values that art then transgresses in a standardised way. For example, Rachel Whiteread's 'House' (1993) (Picture 14) cut across the usual dichotomies between the art world and the public and the working class and the middle class (Walker 1999). The next section of this paper examines subcultural theories of deviance, which assert that society is normally characterised by different sets of values and deviance is explicable in terms of these.

Picture 14

5.0. Application of subcultural theory to modern art

A subculture is a system of values and behaviour within a group that differs from that of the wider culture (Abercrombie 2000). Subcultural theories of crime and delinquency explain the deviance of individuals in terms of their association within a subculture that prescribes deviant values. These theories attempt to respond to the criticism of functionalism that it posits a value-consensus when value-pluralism characterises society. For example, Hebdidge (1979) asserts that youth culture signified a breakdown of consensus in post-war Britain. Cohen (1955) argues that society is characterised by value pluralism. He suggests that by accepting subcultural values individuals gain a solution to the problem of the values that they hold conflicting. In this way, deviance is explicable by individuals subscribing to deviant subcultural values.

Gombrich (1972) asserts that in the modern period, artists began to see themselves as set apart from other people. Modern artists formed subcultural groups that were characterised as deviant in terms of the mainstream culture. The Impressionists and Post-Impressionists, Surrealists and Dadaists and Contemporary artists have all been involved in tight groups or subcultures. Despite this, subcultural theories of deviance have concentrated on criminal and delinquent subcultures. This section applies subcultural theory to modern art. The artist Walter Sickert (1860-1942) said of shocking art: 'these things are done in gangs, not by individuals' (Shone 1997 p.12). Therefore, it seems that subcultural theories of deviance that apply to crime and delinquency could also be applicable to modern art.

Subcultures are a common response made by artists rejected from the mainstream academy. The Impressionists and Post-Impressionists visited the Café Guerbois as a group (Dunlop 1972). They all disliked authority and the centralised running of exhibitions. They staged an autonomous exhibition in 1874, arranged through meetings at the Café. Likewise, many of the Surrealists and Dadaists were poor and bohemian, which created a group identity amongst them (Dunlop 1972). Breton (1896-1966) produced two Surrealist Manifestos (1924 and 1929 in Mundy 2001), which provided the subculture with written codes. In addition, Contemporary art is associated with the subculture of 'Young British Artists' (Rosenthal 1997). These artists attended Goldsmith's University and work together for promotion and self-publicity. They associate because of their radical character (Collings 1997).

In this way, subcultural theories of deviance apply to modern art. Cohen (1955) argues that delinquent boys who fail in school use elements that are implicit in the wider culture, such as hedonism, to serve them in their subculture. In a similar way, Matza (1964) asserts that the subterranean values of the subculture are tacitly contained within the wider culture. However, unlike Cohen (1955), he argues that the delinquents do not wholly adhere to any one set of values but drift between the two cultures and so commit intermittent deviance. These theories are applicable to the subcultures of modern art. Becker (1982) argues that, like boys who fail at school, artists who fail to become accepted by the establishment form deviant subcultures. They use the traditional practices learnt from the establishment in these subcultures and so amplify and make explicit values implicit in the wider culture, such as innovation, and use them to serve their ends.

However, following Matza (1964), the artist does not wholly adhere to the subterranean values of the subculture and this allows drift between the artistic subculture and the wider culture. Becker (1982) argues that despite violating some of the traditional practices they learn, artists adhere to most of them: for example, Manet ignored a number of fine art conventions but he still produced something recognisable as a painting. The artist subverts some of the values of the wider culture but not usually to the extent that the establishment completely excludes her work. This allows her to drift between the subculture of deviant art and the wider culture of the art establishment. For example, Becker (1982) argues that the canonical art world often incorporates the work of deviant artists. Therefore, the subcultural theories of Cohen (1955) and Matza (1964) apply to modern art.

Cloward & Ohlin (1969) argue that Cohen's (1955) analysis of the boys' response to school failure is too simple. They suggest that a number of responses to failure exist. If an individual perceives their failure to achieve mainstream success as due to inadequate institutions then a collective, subcultural response develops. If they perceive it as caused by personal characteristics then they remain solitary. In addition, contrary to Matza (1964), they assert that the individual does not accept the values of the wider society in his subcultural activities but adheres to subcultural values. The individual no longer feels guilty violating the norms of wider society because he subscribes to a different set of values. In this way, if an individual perceives their failure to be due to poor institutions a subcultural response is likely to develop, in which the individual will adhere fully to subcultural values.

The work of Cloward & Ohlin (1969) applies to artists as well as to delinquents. Artists who account for their lack of mainstream success in terms of a rigid and traditional art establishment may group together and innovate. The Impressionists and Post-Impressionists did this; for example, when the major exhibition halls in France did not accept their work they united to put on their own shows (Dunlop 1972). However, if the artist perceives their lack of mainstream success to result from personal characteristics they are likely to remain solitary. Becker (1982) writes that this is the case for many undiscovered artists, whose work vanishes when they die without the art establishment ever accepting it. In addition, in line with Cloward & Ohlin (1969), the artist fully adheres to the values of the artistic subculture and if they transgress them the group may disown him. For example, the Surrealists stopped associating with Dali when he became focused on commercial gain, which was contrary to their aims (Julius 2002).

Therefore, subcultural theories of crime and delinquency are applicable to modern art. Cohen (1955) explains how artists who fail in the traditional art establishment form subcultures that tacitly contain the values of the wider culture. Matza (1964) highlights how drift is possible between subculture and culture. Cloward & Ohlin (1969) highlight that a subcultural response to mainstream failure only occurs if inadequate institutions are blamed. They also account for the importance for artists of fully adhering to the codes of their subculture. In this way, subcultural theories of deviance explain modern art. However, subcultural theories have been criticised as not examining the meanings that individuals and the wider society give to acts of deviance (Downes & Rock 2003). The next section applies labelling theory to

modern art, which concentrates on the societal reaction to a deviant act rather than on the act itself.

6.0. Application of labelling theory to subcultures in modern art

The sociological theories of deviance discussed so far examine the qualities of the deviant act itself: if an act breaks societal rules then it is considered deviant. Symbolic interactionism or labelling theory, argues that it is not the actual act that matters in definitions of deviance, but the meanings attributed to the act and the responses it generates. To this end, labelling theory examines the meanings and social reactions to deviance as opposed to the deviant act itself (Downes & Rock 2003). It argues that labelling produces or amplifies deviance by distorting the self-image of the individual or group defined as deviant and producing secondary deviance: a deviance that pervades the individual's self-concept (Abercrombie et al 2000). However, labelling theory argues that deviance is not determined and individuals may conform to societal norms at any time. This section applies labelling theory to the emergence of deviant subcultures.

Becker (1963) adopts a labelling perspective and forwards a sequential model of the deviant career. He argues that being publicly labelled as participating in a deviant subculture is the most important step to a deviant status becoming the master status. Once the individual has been labelled, she becomes closer to the deviant group and learns more sophisticated techniques of deviance and modes of rationalising being deviant. The last step to a deviant career is joining an official deviant group. Becker (1963) applies this theory to marihuana smoking. The novice smoker is initially interested in trying the drug. They gain access to a drug-smoking group, who teach them the techniques of smoking and the individual comes to identify more closely with them. This identification is compounded by the public labelling of the individual as deviant and culminates in the individual joining an official drug-smoking group.

Becker (1963) also conducted a participant observation of dance musicians. Musicians feel that they are very different from other individuals, or 'squares' and admire eccentricity, for example, great jazz musicians were renowned for their characters. The 1999 Woody Allen film 'Sweet and Lowdown', about the amazing, but fictional, jazz musician Emmett Ray examines this. In this way, musicians have their own norms and values. They are hostile to 'squares' because they feel that they must sacrifice their artistic integrity to populist desires. This creates further isolation for the musicians and an increased rejection of mainstream culture, thereby amplifying the deviance of the musical subculture. Becker's (1963) model is applicable to artists.

The deviant artistic career follows the path of other deviant careers. Individuals initially experiment with an art subculture. When a deviant label attaches to them, they find it more difficult to gain mainstream commissions for their work. This leads them to identify more closely with the subculture, learning sophisticated techniques and eventually becoming an official member by, for example, exhibiting as a Surrealist (Becker 1982). Becker (1982) asserts that groups of artists discordant with the art establishment develop their own techniques and values over time. As with the dance musicians, individuals involved in maverick artistic groups may experience tension between their subculture and the wider culture, for example, if a compromise between artistic integrity and commercial viability is necessary. This may lead the maverick artists to identify even more closely with each other and amplify their

deviance. By way of example, Mundy (2001) suggests that the Surrealists arranged exhibitions for other Surrealists rather than for the public, who they thought did not appreciate them. This drew the group closer together and amplified their difference.

Therefore, the labelling approach applies to artistic subcultures as it does to other subcultures. An individual may be initially curious about a subculture but on public labelling as a member, their self-identity can change. This might lead to secondary deviation and amplification as they further identify with the subculture and become increasingly isolated from mainstream values, adopting a deviant identity. However, Becker (1963) stresses that an individual need not necessarily follow this process and can return to conformity at any stage. This section argued that the labelling approach to subcultures applies to modern art. Mental illness is also investigated using the labelling perspective, suggesting that mental illness is not a disease entity but a label (Scheff 1984). This attempts to integrate labelling theory with the concept of power in terms of how a label is created. The next section of this paper applies results from these studies to modern art.

6.1. Application of labelling theory to mental illness in modern art

Cochrane (1973) argues that, conceived as an illness, mental problems are cured to produce conformist behaviour rather than allowing unusual behaviour and innovation. This applies to the innovative behaviour of artists labelled as 'mad'. Scheff (1984) suggests that psychiatric symptoms are residual deviance. He argues that societies have terms that classify various types of rule breaking; for example, in this society crime and sexual perversion are deviant. However, these terms do not exhaust all deviant behaviour, which bind together as a residual category of mental illness. Scheff (1984) discusses four sources of residual deviance, one of which is 'volitional acts of innovation or defiance'.

Scheff (1984) provides two examples from art history to illustrate volitional acts of innovation or defiance. He asserts that people acted with shock at the Impressionist paintings; they thought they were so strange as to suggest madness (Pictures 4,5 and 7). He also discusses the 'madness' of Dada as a deliberate attempt to violate and reject societal norms and values and produce disturbing objects (Picture 10). Scheff (1984) argues that residual rule breaking is common and intermittent among the normal population. However, residual rule breaking becomes a master status if societal reaction labels it as a mental illness. For example, Goffman (1967) writes that individuals often adopt a self-concept of themselves as deviant for the first time in a jail or a mental hospital when they come together with people from whom they previously differed and others label them as deviant due to their circumstances.

Shlomo (2003) argues that society tolerates volitional acts of innovation to a point but beyond this level society labels innovators as mad, which tessellates with functionalism discussed previously. Shlomo (2003) asserts that most deviant artists are not part of the formal art establishment, which uses its power to label them mad. Shlomo (2003) argues that once society labels the artist as mad she will find it difficult to communicate with her contemporaries and become increasingly deviant. This is secondary deviance (Lemert 1969) and deviancy amplification (Becker 1963).

In this way, society labels extreme innovation as mental illness, which may cause the individual to embark on a deviant career.

Shlomo (2003) applies labelling theory to the Post-Impressionist Van Gogh (Picture 8). He argues that Van Gogh's whole family suffered some form of mental illness, which affected his self-concept and made him view mental illness as his fate. By labelling Van Gogh as mentally ill, the intention was not to cure him but to hide him. Van Gogh was not mad; his ideas threatened the dominant order. Social stigma against Van Gogh eventually led to his suicide, at which point he no longer presented a danger to the powerful groups of society. In this way, sociological theories of mental illness are useful for analysing artistic innovation. By labelling deviant artists as mad, their effect on the dominant norms of society is neutralised, thereby maintaining the status quo and protecting the powerful groups. Labelling theory will now be applied to moral panics in modern art.

6.2. Application of labelling theory to moral panics in modern art

The term 'moral panic' refers to the reactions of the public, the media and the agents of social control to situations construed as threatening (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 1994). Although the theory of moral panic is typically applied to crime and delinquency, there have been a number of moral panics concerning modern art. A moral panic associated with Impressionism is the First Impressionist Exhibition held in 1874. The group of Impressionists who met in the Café Guerbois (Dunlop 1972) staged this exhibition autonomously. Nochlin (1966) quotes Louis Leroy (1812-1885), a critic for 'Le Charivari'. He reviewed the First Impressionist exhibition, employing a number of devices that CCCS (1976) suggest the media use for creating moral panics. For example, he uses emotive language in describing the exhibition as 'hair-raising' and 'dangerous'.

Goode & Ben-Yehuda (1994) discuss the elements that led to the Mods and Rockers seaside disturbances becoming a moral panic. The press exaggerate occurrences and stereotype individuals at the expense of reporting actual events because this is more newsworthy. The public respond to the exaggerations reported and view them as a basis to worry about law and order and so on. The police become sensitised to certain trouble, for example beach riots, and are therefore more likely than usual to intervene in this behaviour. Politicians talk about increased sentences and so on for this behaviour.

In addition, action groups set up to campaign against the perceived trouble. In this way, society labels Mods, Rockers, and other potentially threatening groups as 'folk devils': negative images representing trouble. All later reference to these groups is in terms of this stereotype. Therefore, events need not be threatening for a moral panic to occur; society need only perceive and label them as such. Although Goode & Ben-Yehuda (1994) apply these elements to the crime and delinquency of the Mods and Rockers seaside meetings, they also apply to modern art. The press exaggerate, distort and over-report modern art, for example, over-reporting the shock of the art. The public then identify with the need for moral decency.

This sensitises law enforcement to the possibility of trouble, for example, Harvey's 'Myra' (1995) (Picture 15), a portrait of Myra Hindley made from children's palm prints, was constantly guarded following one attack on it (Wavell 1997). Politicians call for action to be taken, such as George Bush's negative response to Serrano's 'Piss Christ' (1987) (Picture 1). Action groups form, which was the case following 'Piss Christ' (Picture 1) (Julius 2002). Finally, 'folk devils' are created and the paintings held as negative, representing evil and demonised. The attention may serve to create a self-fulfilling prophecy as artists strive to shock even more either because they internalise the need to shock as part of their self-concept (Young 1971) or to achieve a heightened profile in the media (Julius 2002).

This is in line with Cohen (1972), who asserts that the representations of 'folk devils' leads to a self-fulfilling

Picture 15

prophecy, for example, the gap between the Mods and Rockers became increasingly polarised following media reports. Cohen (1972) provides a model of this deviancy amplification through moral panics. He argues that an initial problem caused by the social or cultural structure, for example, mainstream failure for working class adolescents, leads to an initial solution, such as a deviant subculture. This leads to a societal reaction based on misperception and the deployment of social control, which creates and reinforces stereotypes. This results in increased deviance and the confirmation of stereotypes result. This model does not only apply to the Mods and Rockers but is also applicable to modern art.

An initial problem such as an anomic society leads to a solution to this, for example a group of innovative artists develops to respond to the rapid changes. The social reaction to these artists is misperception and moral outrage, which leads to increased social control. This social control increases deviance as artists internalise the media image and enhance the shock, thereby confirming the stereotype of modern art as deviant. This has consequences for the self-concept of artists, who may come to view themselves as deviant. In this way, the necessity in modern society for the media to mediate between individuals and events leads to moral panics about art in the same way as it does with crime, and serves to amplify deviance (Walker 1999). Therefore, theories of moral panics apply to modern art in a similar way as they apply to crime, delinquency and mental illness.

Hall (1974) asserts that the media do not completely define the situation but they shape reality, especially in unfamiliar or threatening situations. He argues that the media employ a minority/majority paradigm, where the favoured group is the

'normal' majority. In 1910, Roger Fry (1866-1934) held an exhibition called 'Manet and the Post-Impressionists' in London. Newspapers and art critics were shocked and constantly made critical remarks. Fry, a Post-Impressionist himself, said: 'I found among the cultured who had hitherto been my most eager listeners the most inveterate and exasperated enemies of the new movement' (1910 in Dunlop 1972 p.120). In this way, it seems that the negative opinions reported by the press had affected Fry's former supporters. This suggests that, following Hall (1974), the media act to shape public reality, setting up their view as that of the 'normal' majority, and the artist as deviant minority.

However, Walker (1999) asserts that contemporary media campaigns against art often fail, merely serving to raise public awareness of the work. McRobbie (1995) follows a similar argument about political moral panics. Their force has diminished because they have become a standard way of reporting events. Individuals are more knowledgeable of the media and its manipulative devices. In addition, 'folk devils' produce their own communications using new technology as a way of fighting back against the media. In this way, moral panics do not operate so strongly to define situations as they used to, which applies to crime, delinquency, politics and modern art. Therefore, although moral panic theory typically concentrates on crime and delinquency, as for other sociological theories of deviance it is applicable to modern art. Having shown that functionalism, subcultural theory and labelling theory apply to modern art, the next section of this paper concludes concerning the implications of this.

7.0. Conclusion

This paper argued that sociological theories that concentrate on crime, delinquency and mental illness are applicable to modern art. Following a brief historiography of sociological theories of deviance, three of these theories were applied to three areas of modern art. Functionalism, subcultural theory and labelling theory, including discussion of mental illness and moral panics, were applied to Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, Surrealism and Dada and Contemporary art. In conclusion it is argued that sociological theories of deviance explain the functions of art, the subcultures of artists and the societal reaction to artists and their work. Therefore, despite concentrating on crime, delinquency and mental illness, sociological theories of deviance apply to modern art and this needs recognition in future research.

The sociological theories of deviance discussed have addressed either structure, such as the anomie theories of Durkheim (1895) and Merton (1938), or meanings, such as work by Becker (1963) and Lemert (1969). In order to fully address deviance sociologically, the levels of structure and meaning must be united. Akers (1967) argues that both structure and process are important and must integrate in a final analysis. He asserts that where as structural explanations examine differences between groups, such as class, gender and power, theories that concentrate on process and meaning examine differences within groups, such as life histories. Structural theories posit a reason for the first cause of deviance and consider which groups have the power in society to define the rules. However, meaning theories capture the nature of the deviant career and the importance of self-concept to the individual.

Taylor, Walton & Young (1973) assert that both structural and labelling theories are one-sided. They argue that it is necessary to examine the application of a label, as labelling theory does, but that it is also necessary to examine who is labelled and why, for which structural explanations are required. In this way, they suggest that a fully inclusive theory of deviance must examine both structure and meaning. Therefore, the sociology of deviance is narrow in two ways. First, it tends to concentrate on crime, delinquency and mental illness without examining deviance in other fields, such as modern art. Second, theorists tend to adopt either a structure or a meaning approach to explaining deviance, which alone do not fully account for deviance. In this way, research into the sociology of deviance needs to progress in two ways: it must unite structure and meaning and extend to topics such as modern art.

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