

Chapter 2
Topic 2 Labelling theory
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Activity: Discussion
The negotiation of justice

Learning objectives

At the end of this activity you should be able to:

- Identify key features of typifications as outlined by Cicourel.
- Apply your understanding to a case study.
- Evaluate the usefulness of Cicourel's work in understanding the social construction of crime statistics.

1. Read the text on page 80 on *Cicourel – the negotiation of justice*.
2. Split into groups of three.
3. In your group, consider the following scenarios:

Scenario 1

A young man is walking home late one night through the city streets, singing loudly and weaving about in the road. He hears a noise behind him and picks up a brick to defend himself. Thinking there is someone about to jump out on him from a shop doorway, he throws the brick and it smashes a shop window, setting off the alarm. The police arrive and the young man is taken to the police station. When he gets there, he explains that earlier that day he had received confirmation of his place at Cambridge University. He had been out with his friends to celebrate. He has no previous police record. When asked for his parents' names, address and phone number, he tells the officer that his father is a local doctor. The police call his father, who arrives looking rather embarrassed. His father apologises to the police, offers to pay for the damage and they have a little joke together about young men and how 'boys will be boys'. The young man is sent home with a warning and the suggestion that he won't feel well in the morning.

Now let's run the scenario again, but with some slight changes:

Scenario 2

A young man is walking home late one night through the city streets, singing loudly and weaving about in the road. He hears a noise behind him and picks up a brick to defend himself. Thinking there is someone about to jump out on him from a shop doorway, he throws the brick and it smashes a shop window, setting off the alarm. The police arrive and the young man is taken to the police station. When he gets there, he explains that earlier that day he had received his benefit payment. He had been out with his friends to celebrate. He has no previous police record. When asked for his parents' names, address and phone number, the police recognise the address as a notorious area with a high level of crime. The police put him in the cells for the night. In the morning, they advise him that he will be charged with criminal damage.

4. In your group, discuss and answer the following questions:
 - a. How do the two scenarios illustrate Cicourel's ideas about typifications and the negotiation of justice?
 - b. What would be the effect on crime statistics if the police regularly behaved in this way?
 - c. What do the scenarios and their outcomes tell us about the social construction of crime statistics?
5. As a whole class, discuss your answers to questions 4a to 4c. Did you all agree?
6. In your groups of three, write a summary of Cicourel's ideas in 100-150 words. Include all of the following terms: typifications, statistics as a topic, self-fulfilling prophecy, juvenile delinquents, statistics as a resource, class differences, validity, social construction, stereotyping, control agencies, negotiation.