

'Typical' Criminals: A Schutzian Influenced Theoretical Framework Exploring Type and Stereotype Formation

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Abstract : The way the human mind interprets and comprehends the world it occupies has long been a topic of discussion amongst philosophers and phenomenologists. This paper will focus predominantly on the ideologies espoused by the phenomenologist Alfred Schutz and will investigate how we attribute meaning to an event through the process of typification, and the production and usage of 'types' and 'stereotypes.' This paper will then discuss how subjective ideologies innate within us result in unique and subjective decision outcomes, based on a phenomenologically influenced theoretical framework which will illustrate how we form 'types' in order to 'typecast' and form judgements of everything and everyone we experience. The framework used will be founded in theory espoused by Alfred Schutz, and will review the different types of knowledge we rely on innately to inform our judgements, the relevance we attribute to the information which we acquire, and how we consciously and unconsciously apply this framework to everyday situations. An assessment will then be made of the potential impact that these subjective meaning structures can present when dispensing justice in criminal courts. This paper will investigate how these subjective meaning structures can influence our consciousness on both a conscious and unconscious level, and how this could potentially result in bias judicial outcomes due to negative 'types' or 'stereotypes.' This paper will ultimately illustrate that we unconsciously and unreflexively use pre-formed types and stereotypes to inform our judgements and give meaning to what we have just experienced.

Keywords : Alfred Schutz, criminal courts, decision making, judicial decision making, phenomenology, Schutzian stereotypes, types, typification

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