

Matza 1964

The study of juvenile delinquency provides empirical support for Durkheim's basic argument when he suggests young people have little commitment to deviant (or subterranean) values that threaten the moral consensus.

Matza found that, when caught, people employ techniques of neutralisation in an attempt to explain or justify their deviance.

They deny for example:

- personal responsibility ("I was drunk...")
- injury ("no-one was hurt")
- victimisation ("they hit me first")

By seeking to justify/explain their deviance people are showing a commitment to the conventional moral values underpinning legal norms; if they don't recognise those values there would be little point trying to justify their guilt.

Key Terms

Moral consensus
neutralisation

Cloward and Ohlin 1960



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Page 1 of 1.

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