

# Environment and crime

[Environment](#), [Ecology](#)



The term "environment" is roughly associated with the immediate surrounding such as the aquatic environment which is the surrounding area or region proximal to aquatic flora and fauna. Oftentimes, the concept of an environment is the agglomeration of both living and nonliving entities with respect to a certain subject surrounded by the immediate surroundings.

For instance, a student's environment can be that of a learning institution such as a university whereby the 'academic' environment is composed of other students, teachers, books and libraries, classrooms and many others.

It can be observed that one's environment is a direct correlate to one's activities. If this is indeed the case, it would seem quite plausible to assume that, in terms of an individual's criminal activity, the neighborhood environment is a leading correlate of crime.

Granted that this is true, why is it that a large majority of those who live in even the most crime ridden and impoverished areas refrain from committing crime? To answer this question, a few things must be taken into consideration.

First, logic tells us that an individual wanting to commit the crime of robbery for the purpose of stealing the most valuables will most likely rob, say, a wealthy businessman rather than a beggar. In a larger scale, it is logical to presume that a criminal residing in an impoverished and crime ridden locality will least likely rob the residents of the area primarily because there is little reward for a highly punishable act.

That is, a criminal will be attracted to steal from individuals with a higher or with the most resources. Hence, one cannot easily identify criminal activity by individuals in the most impoverished and crime ridden areas.

Yet the non-identification of criminal activity in an environment does not lead to the presumption that there is none. In order to have a compelling reason to further believe that a large majority of people living in the most 'criminalized' areas refrain from committing crime, another factor must be considered.

This leads us to the second logical presumption—the tendency to attribute certain activities to certain individuals.

Criminal activities are easily identified with criminals in the sense that when an armed robbery occurred in a certain city bank, the immediate suspect will be the criminals who are known to rob banks or who have previous records of armed bank robbery.

In this sense, the most crime ridden locality will be included in the list of the 'hideouts' of potential suspects apparently after each criminal activity is identified to have transpired somewhere else. Hence, there becomes the tendency to attribute certain activities to certain individuals.

With this in mind, individuals living in the most crime ridden are prone to be prime candidates for suspects in criminal activities. Their response may be twofold: either they will live up to their 'label' since they are already 'branded' or they will seek to refrain from committing crime.

The first option is indeed probable, yet one factor hinders it from turning into reality: their incapacity to overpower the law due to their impoverished

state. Given the fact that these individuals live in a state where there are scarce resources to sustain themselves, there is little reason to believe that these impoverished individuals have the capability to overpower law enforcers through, say, stealing from a well-guarded urban mall.

With sanctions imposable on criminals, risking one's impoverished life for a momentary sustenance which has a miniscule chance from succeeding is simply not an option. Hence, a large majority of individuals living in the most crime ridden and impoverished areas refrain from committing crime especially from within their financially challenged locality for the reason that the gains are doubly scarce and that the risks have negligible worth.

#### Reference

Samaha, J. (2007). *Criminal Law* (9th ed.). Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company.