

Mental illness and crim behavior

[Health & Medicine](#), [Disease](#)



A study done in 1999 shows that out of the three million arrests made, we can see that no specific race, economic group, or gender group is the cause for such a high number of arrests. In the reading it seems as if criminal behavior is spoken about as a means to satisfy ones needs in order to make up for something that they lack. For example in the reading it explains how young adults are often frustrated with their lives regardless of race or economic status, they will find a way to take their frustrations and lash out.

This is to say that no matter how "normal" or "bizarre" the criminal's mind seems to be, the criminal still has comprehension and attention to detail of the crime they have been involved in and so they cannot be claimed as "mentally ill". Contrary to these findings, one might argue that even though crime is not necessarily a "race" or "economic" factor but it does play a role in one's life (environmental factors).

In general it is known that criminal behavior is both an individual and social problem. Some crimes are plotted and carried out while others seem more of a compulsive act. Either way, these crimes require "logic and self-control", as it says in the reading. (Page 26) This reading further suggests that no matter how out of the norm a criminal act may be, the offender has a complete understanding and awareness of the crime and their actions that go along with carrying out the crime.

This defeats the groundings of the insanity or the mentally ill but guilty defense. However, after looking back at the reading, one may question the statements made because they seem to be one sided in that they are not exploring the idea of a criminal who is mentally ill and just exploring the idea

that society is the cause of criminal acts. One statement that is made which stands out is when it is said that “ crime is not contagious like the chicken pox”.

While it stands true that just because one person in a community decides to partake in criminal behavior, it does not mean to say that others will soon begin to engage in similar behavior simply because they are close to that initial person. However, when it comes to people who are mentally ill the crimes they commit are a type of “ chicken pox” in that certain mental illnesses cause certain types of crimes so that it is sometimes detectable based on one’s behavior if they are going to commit a crime linked to their mental illness.

Also, if a criminal with a mental illness is put into the general population of a correctional facility, they may be influenced by others and their behavior to act in a way similar to those they had contact with. Although the environment of a person often determines their behavior, logic, and emotions their DNA or pre-disposed conditions also play a role. Referring back to the example given on page 27, a man who murdered his wife in the heat of an argument would not be considered for the insanity defense because of his “ temporary insanity” through a violent crime of passion.

To Samenow, this person was not “ seized by an alien” or had an “ uncontrollable impulse” and so this man was not out of character for committing this crime because according to Samenow he had voiced in the past that he had wished her dead or that the man often held vendettas against those who crossed him. Samenow then shows a case in which a man

with worse problems (his wife cheating on him), did not seek revenge in this way and chose to act rationally by petitioning for a divorce.

According to Samenow the first case exhibits a man not with a mental illness but with a social/personal problem whose environment forces him to choose to act in such a way. Although compelling it can be argued that this instead is an example of a man who is able to portray or mimic what the "norm" is and can appear to be functioning normally despite having there be a severe mental illness such as a personality disorder in which he engages in purposeful malicious behavior (pushing his wife, seeking revenge for those who harm him) and may actually be more harm to himself than others before murdering his wife.

This person may be highly charming, intelligent, and able to be very put together meanwhile internally he cannot cope with the environment around him and so he creates this persona of the person who others expect him to be. This is a person who suffers from a major mental illness and will not be able to emotionally understand their crimes or the logic/morality for why it is wrong. Although having a mental illness may for an individual to act in a certain way, it does not excuse their actions and they should have consequences just as any other person would.

However, a person with a mental illness should be held to a different level of responsibility since they already cannot cope with their lives which is why they acted in such a way to begin with. A criminal with a mental illness should be put into therapy to allow them to gain techniques to cope with life

and with situations which cause them to act out along with an incarceration sentence.