

Classical school of criminology

Law, Criminology



Creating a telemarketing scheme targeting customers by providing false promises was the major issue in *United States vs. Woods*. The classical school originated in the late 1700's. Before this stage in thinking, it was believed that people who committed crimes were possessed by an evil entity or the devil (Cole, 52). The classical school of criminology views behaviors as stemming from free will, demands responsibility and accountability of all perpetrators, and stresses the need for punishments severe enough to deter offenders (Cole, 52).

The major aspect of the classical school of criminology is that an individual has the choice and rationality to commit or not commit a crime by weighing out the benefits and costs. The view of criminology also viewed the type of punishment fitting the crime rather than the person. The case of *United States vs. Woods* is a perfect example of someone weighing the costs and benefits of the crime, then committing the crime, in this case mail fraud and wire fraud. From 1995 until 1997, two individuals participated in a telemarketing scheme. The companies name Magtopia, Inc. MTI (Lippman, 514).

These two individuals had the company employees calling potential customers offering a chance to win a wonderful prize; such as diamond watches, a car, a cashier's check for \$2, 500 dollars, or a new television, if the potential customer would send money that represented in the value between three hundred and eight hundred dollars. When the potential customer seemed interested the " opener" would pass the call to the " closer" or as they would call a manager. The " closer" was in charge of making sure in convincing the potential customer in sending the check.

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In fact the check was for the purchase of magazines and the potential customer was never informed of this (Lippman, 515). The potential customer never received any such prize or in some cases neither prize nor magazines. When this case went to trial the defendants tried to appeal the ruling of the case by stating that the government was required to prove a specific false statement to prove it was a scheme. Under the holdings of the case the government showed that under the mail fraud statute the government does not require or does not need to prove any specific false statement (Lippman, 515).

One individual received 87 months and the second received 41 months of imprisonment. This shows that the two subjects involved in the scheme sought out the benefits of committing the crime versus the costs of committing the crime. The two individuals had the opportunity not to commit the crime but rationally choose to continue with the scheme and collecting over one million dollars from more than 1, 900 customers. This case can show the rational behavior that the classical school of criminology explains as well as show the fitting punishment to the crime and not the two women that committed the mail and wire fraud.