

Crime and criminal behavior



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Crime and Poverty Few can deny that crime is the result of poverty. People who have little money are often desperate and will do anything to make money, often only to buy food. They feel that the laws exist to be followed by other people, not themselves, and they are willing to break them because it means their stomach will be filled. Alternatively, poverty also causes crime in that people who are poorer are less educated and more susceptible to mental illness, and thus more likely to break the law. These are both important considerations to take into account when thinking about this crime and poverty. The truth is that the poor have many disadvantages which they must struggle against. They are marginalized and left out in the cold. They have few opportunities. Their lack of education limits what they can do and their tattered clothing signals to all and sundry that they are poor. Many sociologists suggest that young people growing up in ghettos and in poor neighbourhoods have a rage against the world (Samenow, 3). The world or the “system” as they sometimes call it is set up against them, they believe. They owe it nothing and also seek to remake the world, often by tearing it down in the first place. They feel excluded from a world they do not understand (Paugam, 42) This is a serious problem and clearly supports the idea that poverty causes crime. This is also borne out by the idea that more poor people in cities and urban areas and these have higher crime rates (Horowitz, 54). There are many problems associated with poverty. Housing is usually of bad stock and as a result health problems can occur. Children who grow up in poverty have poorer health and less educational opportunities. People who are poor often are more likely to use drugs. As a result they may become addicted and be forced to break laws in order to make money to pay for their habits. This is a very negative thing but it is clearly a product of

cause and effect. If people do not have the money to pay for an education they tend to become trapped outside of the economic system. It is hard for them to find jobs to pay their bills. They enter into a vicious cycle of debt. They also feel controlled by a system that doesn't care for them (Cohen, 43). As a result of their unhappiness they may turn to drugs and alcohol further damaging their health and their judgement. Crime is a likely result in this circumstances. It is an unfortunate situation, but it is the state of the world. The poor have been with us throughout history and will continue to be with us for many years to come. The poor themselves are not criminals, but many of the factors that direct their lives are things can contribute to and encourage criminality. We must do more to ensure that we live in an equal society in order to avoid the ravages of both crime and poverty. Work consulted Cohen, Stanley (1985). *Visions of Social Control: Crime, Punishment, and Classification*. Polity Press. Horowitz, Irving. (1984). *Winners and losers: social and political polarities in America*. Durham: Duke University Press. Paugam, Serge. (1998). "Poverty and Social Exclusion: a sociological view." Pp. 41-62 in *The Future of European Welfare*, edited by Martin Rhodes and Yves Meny. Samenow, Stanton. (2004). *Inside the criminal mind*. Toronto: Random House of Canada.