

# Publicized criminal acts research paper

[Law](#), [Criminal Justice](#)



There are numerous expressions of crime in the United States. However, throughout the jurisprudence a categorization of felonies and misdemeanors is general. Under this categorization, the former is usually reserved for serious crimes while the latter often refers to petty crimes. According to the Uniform Crime Reports, there is a prevalence of some felonies across the US most notably drug abuse violations, property crimes, driving while intoxicated, larceny and assaults.

Many theories have been advanced in the area of criminology in an attempt to understand the compelling factors of criminality and its existence. But one grain seems to be common through the theories. That is whether criminal conduct is the fault of an individual or the society that he finds himself in. These two perspectives are officially referred to as the individual responsibility perspective and the social problems perspective, respectively. In his book, Frank Schmalleger explains that causation of crime involves an array of factors, which include the shaping of personality during childhood, poor parenting, peer influence, poverty, and possibly biological and genetic influences on individual choices. The causative theories of crime have been pooled into schools of thought with Cesare Beccaria (1738-1794), and Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) being the founding scholars of criminology. The arguments of these two are often discussed under the classical school which spawned a heritage to the modern day study of criminology.

As an offshoot of the classical school of thought, one of the theories that dominated criminology in the 1970s and 1980s was the Rational Choice Theory. This rests upon the belief that criminals make conscious choices when they commit crime. It predicts that individuals will commit crime when

the benefit to them outweighs fidelity to the law. Take for instance the recent case of Ariel Castro, a Cleveland man who was convicted of kidnapping three women, holding for a decade while repeatedly assaulting the sexually in a two-story house located about two miles from downtown. Upon a plea agreement, he was sentenced for life imprisonment on 27 July 2013. It was hard to believe that the accused had managed to detain the three women in a densely populated neighborhood in Cleveland, 2207 Seymour Avenue. The social problem perspective is defined by Schmallegger as the result of social problems such as poverty, discrimination, inequality, and inefficient socialization practices. These external factors have been considered as factors that could drive one into crime in the absence of individual choice. One of the leading studies among those conducted empirically in modern criminology emerged from the Chicago School of Sociology. Using meticulously collected data, the Chicago School sought to investigate the correlation of the social environment to the high rates of crime in Chicago at the turn of the 20th century.

The Differential Association Theory advanced by Sutherland E. considers one's social group and environment as the fundamental explanation of crime. As an explanation to this theory, consider the case of De'Marquise Kareem Elkins, 17 who alongside another 14 year old, was found guilty of the murder of 13 month old baby and the wounding the mother in a failed robbery attempt along Brunswick, Georgia on 20 March 2013. He was sentenced to life imprisonment on 12 September 2013.

The Strain and Anomie Theory as advanced by Robert Morton suggests that individuals who engage in criminal activity do so as an attempt to realize the

American dream. To demonstrate this theory's core elements let consider the case James Morrison who pleaded guilty to several hold ups in western Kentucky. He pleaded to having robbed in Poole, Kentucky in 2010 as well as others in Henderson in 2011. On his plea, he was sentenced to serve 5 years in prison and ordered to repay the money he had pleaded guilty to stealing. According to court documents, James Morris had made away with an estimated \$65, 000. This is a possible example of a person who pursues crime because the benefits will outweigh fidelity to law.

## **References**

Herminda, J. (2010). *Criminal Law*. Toronto: Kluwer Law International.

Hickert, A., Becker, H., & Moleni, C. (2011). The Impact of Juvenile Drug Courts on Drug Use and Criminal Behaviour. *Journal of Juvenile Justice*, 1(1), 60-77.

Keller, P. (2009). Key Ideas: Hirschi's Social Bond/ Social Control. *Key Ideas in Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 4(2). Retrieved from [http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/36812\\_5.pdf](http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/36812_5.pdf)

Schmallegger, F. (2008). *Criminology Today: An Integrative Introduction*. New York: Pearson/Prentice Hall.