

# The left realist perspective on crime



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This assignment is about how realism define crime, it causes and how these crimes could be prevented. There are numerous crime theories, example labelling theory, life course theory, anomie theory an so forth. All of the above mentioned theories have different views in the definition of crime, it causes and prevention. This essay will talk about realism theory in particular on how they do define crime. its causes and prevention. There are two types of realism theories and these are left and right realism but for the purpose of this assignment left realism will be the key area that will be discussed on how property crime like shoplifting its causes and how it could be prevented.

Left realism sees crime as a real problem for ordinary people and explains it through analysis, social and economic relationships, and how some groups become marginalised. In one regard, the left realists do share some degree of agreement with the radical theorists in that it is common ground that crime is a reaction to an unjust society (Lea and Young, 1984: 45).

Emergence as a means of explaining its main principles in respect of how the left realists see the causes of crime and its prevention methods. It will also identify its criminological perspectives with which it conflicts with other theories like right realism and the theory of anomie. One of the basic dogmas of the left realism is that criminals offences other than white collar crimes are serious problems and they demand to be explained and tackled. Left realist counter a number of arguments which criminologist have gone on to suggest that such offences are grievous. Jock Young(1993) argued that there has been a substantial and significance increase in street crimes since World War Two.

In one regard, the left realists do share some degree of agreement with the radical theorists in that it is common ground that crime is a reaction to an unjust society (Lea and Young, 1984: 45). However, on that point is also disagreement in that, unlike radical criminologists, left realists do not imagine that the criminal should not be blamed for responding by engaging in offending behavior. Offense is one form of egoistic response to loss. Its roots are injustice, but its growth often perpetrates injustice (Lea and Young, 1984: 72). Lea and young believed that deprivation will only contribute to crime where it is known as relative deprivation. A group experiences relative deprivation when it feels deprived in comparison to other similar groups or when its prospects are not touched. It is not the fact of being deprived as such, only the touch of privation which is significant. Lea and Young (1984) point to a group army of young unemployed for whom a collective violence and the temporary ascendancy over their territory through riots is a substitute for organized crimes. Lea and Young suggested that culture and subjective meanings also have to be critically analyzed.

Relative deprivation may be defined as the experience of being deprived of something to which one believes oneself to be entitled (Walker and Smith 2001). According to Runciman (1966) he argued that the poor became aware of the scale of difference between them and the rich through political revolutions. Lea and Young asserted that not just unemployment or poverty lead to the cause of crime, it is when the feelings of resentment of the people what they could actually earn compared to their expectations which leads them to perpetrate a felonious crime. While single causes of crime are rejected, they argue that much is brought about by relative deprivation. This

does not mean deprivation in itself produces crime as there is no clear evidence to substantiate this argument and such argument neglects white collar crime (Lea and Young 1993). Left realists believe that most group in a society have different expectations which are connected to what they feel they deserve. They may compare their situations with other members in the society whom they would expect to equal. If these expectations are not met, they may feel deprived not absolutely but relatively. Unemployed youth in society may feel relatively deprived when they compare themselves with employed youth in the same society and this may lead them to frustration because they might feel for them being unemployed is not their fault and this can lead them in engaging them to commit property crimes such as shoplifting.

The second facet of causes of crimes in left realistic perspective is marginalisation. Lea and Young argued that marginalisation means the process by which certain groups find themselves on the edge of society. Black and white working class youth sometimes feel alienated by the police force, educational institutions, low- wages and unemployment. Young people, example those in black community do face some level of marginalisation through prejudice and harassment example military police (stop and search) and they asserted that this may be the "straw that breaks the camel back". Economic marginalisation that have been created by upper class in the society are transferred in criminal acts like committing property crime example shoplifting.

The third problem of the left realist identified as a cause to crimes such as property crime is the problem of subculture. Lea and young argued that

subculture of blacks is distinctly different from their parents who largely accepted their marginalised position in society. Black people in a society example those in subculture has got aspirations and high expectations in life that is they always try to use status symbols like acquiring flashy cars , buying expensive clothings and the use of costly mobile phones and other expensive gadgets. Because black youth is so closely enmeshed in values of consumption style, and wealth, this is precisely why they engage in committing crime because of blocked opportunities. Lea and Young see subcultures as the collective solutions to groups problem. So, if a group of people share a sense of relative deprivation, they develop lifestyles which allow them to cope with this problem. Nevertheless, a particular subculture is not an automatic, inevitable response to a solution; Human creativity will allow a mixture of resolutions to be developed.

These are the three main causes the left realist identified as causes of crimes. The left realists did not only focus on the offender as compared to some other theories. They did go beyond the scope of the offender and showed concerns for the victim patterns and formal and informal as well. They did so by explaining the square of crime which are the Offender, Victim, State and lastly the internal controls. Lea and Young argued that there must be interrelationship between these four elements before crime could be understood.

Above all, these causes left realism adopted some approaches as a prevention methods to curb the growing of crime. Left realist believe that for crimes to be prevented , there must be a considerable attention by focusing on practical measures . In *Losing the Fight Against Crime*(1986), Jock Young, <https://assignbuster.com/the-left-realist-perspective-on-crime/>

Richard Kinsey and John Lea suggested the ways policing could be changed. Lea, Young and Kinsey contended that the key to police success lies in improving relationships with the community so that stream of data which the police rely increases. To accomplish this, they suggested minimal policing should be adopted. Even though, he indicated that the public should establish priorities for the police. Young also identified some sectors which he believes are under-policed and over-policed. Young thought the state and the police force spend too much of their time and energy in tackling certain types of crimes and not enough to others. This type of approach to policing warp the stats as to the genuineness nature of crime.

Young and Lea also suggested that for offenses to be foreclosed, there must be some prioritization of social justice programs of crime prevention. When groups in a society feel that the law treats everyone in the same society, irrespective of ethnic origin, gender, race, etc. they forget the presence of marginalisation and as such for them (lower-class) thinking that they have been prejudiced will be out of context. This will not create any social misconduct in the society henceforth prevent committing of criminal offenses.

Another prevention methods the left realists adopted was the idea of prison sentences should be longer than usual which will create a solution rising crime rates. They also believed that for crimes to be prevented, the powers of the police force should be increased (Formal social Control). They did also suggested that there should be more informal social controls such as quality housing, improvement of social services, good job prospects, quality community areas like play areas; which all these create a sense of

belongings. The left realists also suggested that there should be pre-emptive deterrence (situational and social target hardening) should be adopted in order to control or prevent crimes. To prevent crimes from left realists perspective involves intervention of each part of the crime at the level of factors which give putative offender (such as structural unemployment), the formal organisation (such as lack of public mobilisation), the victim (such as inadequate target hardening) and the formal systems (such as ineffective policing) (Young, 1986: 41).

Above all, Feminist criminological theorists have been critical of left realism in its tackling both of female criminal behaviour and its failure to explain the crimes that are traditionally viewed as targeting women, such as rape. Precisely, as it could be criticised for neglecting to offer an adequate account of different types of criminal behaviour. Left realism was accused of an overly one-dimensional focus on youth, male, working-class criminal behaviour to the detriment of offenders from other socio-demographic backgrounds. Female criminality is largely unaddressed and moreover, exposes a central weakness in one of the key principles of left realism. Evenly, it is difficult to see how left realism can explain sexual crimes against women unless it comes within the same class of violent offences that are the result of frustration following a failure to achieve legitimate success. This appears an extremely tenuous argument for such complex crimes and in any case, left realists have tended not to engage with the issue of rape to any degree thus the explanation remains speculative (Heidensohn, 1985).

To conclude, the left realists see the causes of crime example property crime (shoplifting) are relative deprivation, marginalisation, and subculture

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which all these constitute the causes of crime. They also suggested some approaches which must be practised in order to prevent crimes from happening. They suggested formal social control measures thus the police should be given more powers to carry out their duties effectively and efficiently and also suggested longer prison sentences to avert crimes from rising. Lastly they suggested informal social control measures like good job prospects, quality housing and quality community areas like playing grounds for belongingness.