

▯ **BURGLARY: CRIMINAL CHOICE AND EXPERIENCE**

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▯ **3/12/12: Rational Choice Criminology: The Reemerging Classical School**

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▯ **Rational theory explains behavior in terms of the costs and benefits associated with it.**

- Behavior that seems beneficial will be carried out.
- Rational thought requires cool, calculating assessment.
- **Phenomenology, however, focuses more on intuition rather than thought.**

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▯ The Rational Choice Theory is **problematic**.

- It is hard to model behavior as a kind of rational choice.
- We might even prove that the Rational Choice Theory doesn't work.

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▯ There are two models of The Rational Choice Theory:

1. Narrow Model of Rationality:

- o The individual assesses the costs and benefits of a situation.
- o People act on the basis of **expected utility**.
- o "What is the 'expected' outcome?"
- o **Problems:**

- 1. The actor never has complete knowledge for decision-making.**

- You never know what *all* the risks are.
- The individual never really knows what *all* the factors are.

2. The human brain is a “limited information processor.”

- Even if it were possible to know all the factors, we act in terms of a simplified reality.
- In order to make a rational choice, you have to consider *everything* and your brain can't.
- The brain employs the **availability heuristic**.
 - The probability that we assess is based on what we remember.
 - Lotteries publicize only the person who won so we focus on and only remember them.
 - We do not remember all those who lost.
 - We base our decision to buy a lottery ticket on the success of that one winner.
- The **Compensatory Strategy** theorizes that an individual looks at a situation and allows the benefits and the advantages to compensate for all the risks.
 - Most decision-making is based on a noncompensatory strategy.
- The **Noncompensatory Strategy** states that only certain aspects of a situation are considered.
 - Individuals ignore everything else.
 - Expert criminals employ the Noncompensatory Strategy.

3. Actors do not always maximize.

- **Satisfice** is a term coined by Herbert Simon that is a portmanteau of “satisfy” and “suffice”.
- A burglar might rob a local convenience store as opposed to a bank because it's closer.

4. Losses are weighted more than gains.

- A person will exert more effort to avoid a cost than to attain a gain.

5. Whether something is a loss or gain depends on the actor's point of reference.

- People do not feel withholdings as a loss while they *do* feel that taxes are a loss.
- At the end of the day, Person A and Person B both lose \$30K.
- Person A has \$7K withheld and is taxed \$21K.
- Person B has \$21K withheld and is taxed \$7K.
- Person A is more likely to cheat on his taxes.

2. Wide Model of Rational Choice:

- Not only are the tangible material gains but also the *intangible aspects* are taken into account in the explanation of a person's behavior.
- This model is based on the **actual utility** of a crime.
 - Delinquency has actual utility in the present moment.
 - Delinquency can bereave
- Rationality is very often **bounded**.
 - There are certain influences which really limit what an individual will consider in a particular situation.
 - **Ex. Gun Murders:**
 - The gun has a **triggering effect** in that it can just trigger its use just because something is there.
 - The **instrumentality effect** states that the presence of a gun can make all the difference between a simple assault and a murder.
 - The **intent effect** is when a person will use whatever they have to commit a crime.
 - The Swiss have a lot of guns but only use it for civil service.
 - Only 1 of 15 murders by the Aborigines are carried out with firearms because they only use guns for hunting.

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□ **3/14/12: Phenomenological Criminology: The Criminal Experience**