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# COMPROMISE THEORY: VALUES, DESIRES, AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
Master of Science

Jeremy Stone Briggs

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PITTSBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

Pittsburg, Kansas

April, 2006

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# COMPROMISE THEORY: VALUES, DESIRES, AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

An Abstract of the Thesis by  
Jeremy Stone Briggs

This thesis is an empirical analysis of a developing criminological theory. The purpose of the data analysis was to, in the theoretical framework of Compromise Theory, examine the connection between micro-level structural conditions (i.e. immediate situational conditions) and individuals' values, attitudes, and beliefs. Compromise Theory assumes that individuals are motivated primarily by their interests and desires and that belief systems and values are among the many long-term interests an individual holds. Compromise Theory proposes that in order to reach a decision of action, an individual will compromise their values and beliefs in varying degrees according to the circumstances and demands of different situational conditions.

As a test of this relationship, 110 students were surveyed at Pittsburg State University by participating in a detailed questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to collect information on students' values, beliefs, and attitudes. Students' responses were analyzed before and after extreme situational variables were introduced in Part III of the questionnaire. The results showed that there was a significant difference between the responses before and after certain situational conditions were introduced. These results suggest partial support for the assertions made by Compromise Theory regarding the influence of micro-level structural factors on the values and attitudes of the individual. While full support is inconclusive, however, future research is needed to conduct a more complete analysis of values and attitudes before and after specific situational variables are introduced.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a limited empirical analysis of a criminological theory still in development. The theory, Compromise Theory, makes assertions regarding the broad and complex relationship between human agency and social structure. This thesis, in the framework of Compromise Theory, focuses largely on the influence of immediate environmental conditions on the interests and desires of the individual. This theory argues that particular patterns of behavior can be predicted due to the influence of certain social structural characteristics on the interests and desires of the individual. Long and short-term interests and desires are assumed to be the most relevant characteristics of the individual which motivate behavior. These interests and desires, however, are not immune from external influences. Social structural characteristics ranging from macro to micro-level factors influence the interests and desires of the individual at varying degrees.

As an empirical test of this relationship, students in select courses from Pittsburg State University were surveyed through a detailed questionnaire designed to gather demographic information as well as information on their values, attitudes, and beliefs. These values, attitudes, and beliefs are assumed be subordinated under behavior motivating interests and desires of the individual. A section was included in the questionnaire where hypothetical scenarios were presented and students were then asked to answer questions based on the corresponding scenario. The goal of this section was to,

in the context of the theoretical framework presented in this thesis, observe what affect extreme environmental conditions might have on students' values, attitudes, and beliefs. Data analysis showed that extreme, environmental conditions (e.g. those described in Part III of the questionnaire) have a significant affect on the expressed attitudes and beliefs of the students surveyed.

It is important to note that the scope of the data collected in this research is very limited, and offers no final or conclusive theoretical or empirical analysis. The data analysis is designed solely to demonstrate simple relationships between social structure and human agency in the context of the theoretical framework, Compromise Theory, while suggesting implications for further research. The research conducted for this thesis observes the influence of micro-level environmental conditions on the interests and desires of the individual.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **THEORY**

#### **Compromise Theory**

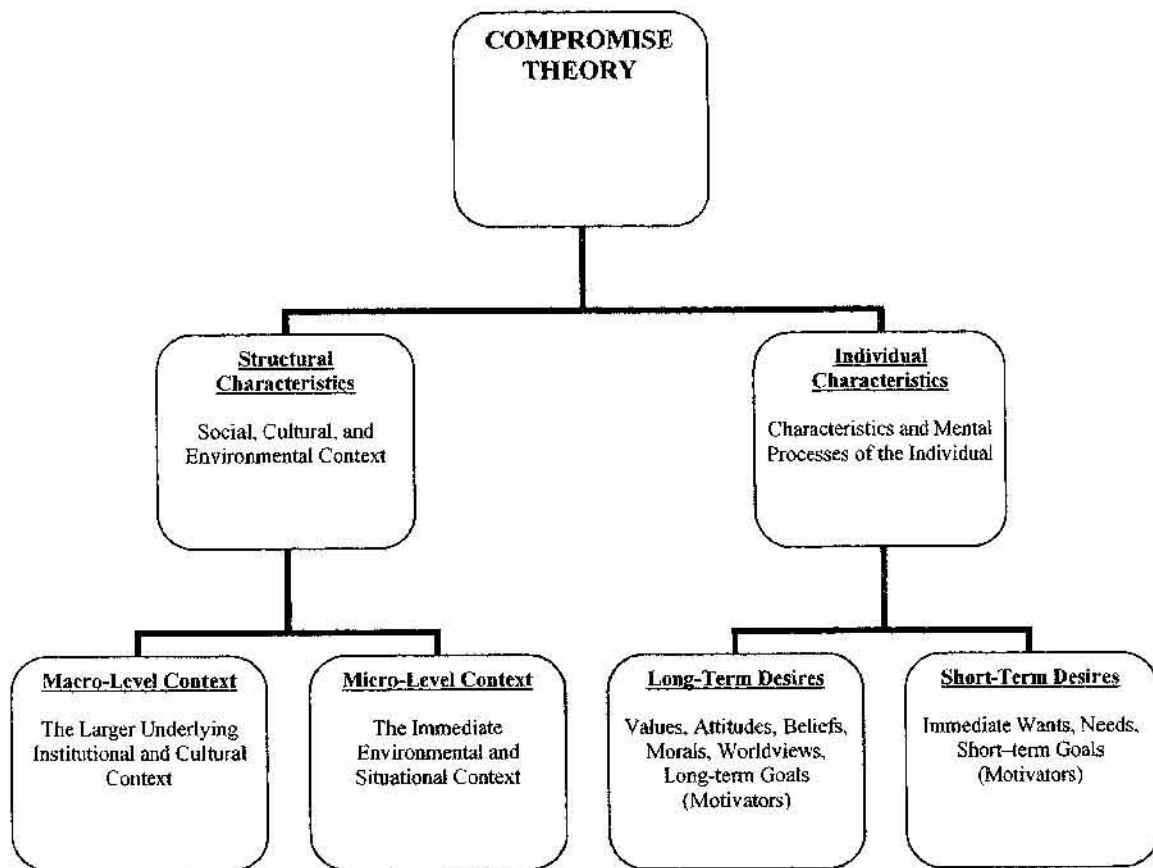
As mentioned above, the focus of this thesis is primarily the partial empirical test of a developing criminological theory, Compromise Theory. Compromise Theory uses a traditional, but expanded classical criminological approach to human nature and connects it to theoretical assertions made by positivist criminology. The classical approach views human nature as self-interested, and views behavior as the result of a pain versus pleasure calculus (Akers, 1997). This approach is commonly known today as the rational choice model and views criminals as rational calculators, making decisions of action based on a precise measurement of pain or pleasure to be gained from criminal activity (Akers and Sellers, 2004). Compromise Theory adopts a similar view of human nature but expands it to include long-term desires and interests as motivators for behavior. These long-term interests may include goals, values, beliefs, morals, worldviews, attitudes, etc. Compromise Theory also recognizes positivist (deterministic) explanations of influence on the individual such as internal biological or psychological processes, or external structural and cultural forces.

Compromise Theory assumes the classical view that human behavior is motivated primarily by desires and self-interests, but also recognizes the positivist view that there are internal and external forces of control over the individual. Compromise Theory attempts to integrate the two perspectives by arguing that humans are greatly motivated

by self-interest, but that these interests and desires are not independent of internal or external forces of control. In other words, external forces such as the social structure may help to shape and determine individual desires and interests. As will be argued through out this thesis, some environments, particularly immediate situational conditions, may have a tremendous impact on behavior.

The figure below is a conceptual model demonstrating the relationship between human agency and social structure as posited by Compromise Theory.

**Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Compromise Theory**



Compromise Theory assumes that interests and desires, as they are defined below, are pivotal motivators of behavior. That is, while behavior may be determined to some extent by relevant biological or psychological characteristics and processes, desires and interests are the most proximate characteristics of the individual which motivate behavior. According to Compromise Theory, short and long-term interests and desires interact with each other through a process of conflict and compromise, ultimately leading to a decision of action. These interests and desires, while the primary motivators of human behavior, are not without influence from external, structural forces. Structural forces interact with the characteristics of the individual at the macro and micro-level and help determine, to some extent, general interests and desires. Micro-level structural



forces (i.e., immediate environments and situations) especially, have an enormous impact on these interests and desires in a way that can lead to consistent patterns of behavior despite possible differences in the characteristics of the individuals within these environments. For example, while most may not believe or subscribe to the act of killing another human being, most probably would not hesitate to use lethal force on someone who is threatening their own life or the life of a loved one. The use of a gun in this type of act is more likely because a gun requires no special skill or physical ability. Empirical work by Cao et al. (2002) shows public opinions favoring defensive gun violence. In an instance such as the one described above, the situational context may have an overwhelmingly strong influence on not only the interests and desires of the individual, but also their decision of action. Compromise Theory suggests that while people may have relatively consistent and stable long-term interests, i.e. values, beliefs, morals, goals, etc., certain environmental conditions can have a significant influence on the application of these interests and desires. Being violently threatened or attacked is such an instance. Therefore, a person need not necessarily have deviant values and interests to use lethal force on another. The process by which individuals compromise their long-term desires and interests due to micro-level structural forces is a major theoretical assertion of Compromise Theory and the main focus of this thesis.

An individual's decision of action is assumed to be based on a process of conflict and compromise. Essentially, there are three types of conflict which lead to compromise as described below. These conflicts include: 1) An internal conflict between the long-term interests and desires of the individual, either based on the immediate needs and situational demands, or on the persistent competing desires immediately presented; 2) An

external conflict between the personal interests and desires of the individual and the social interests of a culture or society; 3) A situational conflict based on the extreme circumstances and demands of the immediate environmental context. The level and type of compromise in each type of conflict then is relevant to: 1) the situational demands of the surrounding environment; 2) the degree of the interests and desires of the individual; 3) and/or the interests of a culture or society. The focus of this research is the affect immediate situational conflicts pose on the interests and desires of the individual.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Social Structure:** The underlying structural context of a society, including institutional and cultural forces as well as immediate environmental conditions (Milovanovic, 1994).

**Macro-Level Forces:** The larger, institutional and cultural context and influence in a society.

**Micro-Level Forces:** The immediate, situational and environmental context.

**Human Agency:** The ability of an individual to freely choose and control their own decisions of action without external forces of control.

**Short-Term Desires:** These include immediate wants, needs, goals, and interests.

**Long-Term Interests:** These include relatively stable systems of beliefs, values, attitudes, morals, and long-term goals. Values are important, behavior-guiding principles. According to Golightly (1956), a value implies a code or standard which has some persistence through time, and which organizes a system of action.

Hierarchy of Interests and Desires: The system by which the short and long-term interests and desires of the individual are ordered by priority and in which competing interests may fluctuate due to changing situational conditions or over time through experience and/or knowledge. According to Beaglehole (1956), value-systems refer to an arrangement of one's values in order of priority or importance, but may shift due to various contextual factors. It becomes a hierarchy of behavior-guiding principles that an individual bases decisions and judgments on, whether consciously or simply by habit. This habit may create dispositions over time. Pierre Bourdieu (1977) described this process in his concept of habitus; by which, overtime, dispositions are established which lead to tendencies to act or respond to certain situations a certain way.

Compromise: The process by which individuals, in order to make a decision of action, shift priority in hierarchical systems of interests and desires in response to some type of conflict in competing interests. Cornelius Golightly (1956) discussed this phenomenon and suggested that any given act is a compromise between motivation, situational conditions, available means, and the means and goals as interpreted in value terms (p. 236).

Circumstantial Compromise: Compromise based on situational and environmental demands and influences.

Internal Conflict: Conflict based on competing personal interests and desires.

Cultural Conflict: Conflict based on competing interests between an individual and a cultural or institutional structure.

Situational Conflict: Conflict based on immediate, environmental demands and circumstances.

### **Principles of Compromise Theory**

To understand the theoretical rationale of Compromise Theory, the relationship between the short and long-term desires and interests of the individual must be examined in the context of the social environment.

Long-term interests, as defined before, include the values, beliefs, morals, goals, etc. of the individual. These interests, as proposed by Compromise Theory, are arranged in a tentative but relatively stable hierarchy of priority. Each desire and long-term interest of the individual may have varying degrees of worth at different times in their life, at different maturity levels, or in different situational contexts. While most long-term interests tend to be stable over time, shifts in the individual's hierarchy of interests may take place based on environmental circumstances or on internal conflict between competing interests and desires. When this conflict occurs, a compromise is made between these competing interests and desires in order to make a decision of action. For example, an individual may believe strongly that the death penalty is a just punishment. However, in the right context, under certain environmental conditions, such as a wrongful conviction of a capital crime, this same individual may believe that the death penalty is not a just punishment, compromising their former long-term interests to accommodate the immediate situational context.

Compromise is the internal process by which an individual makes a decision of action based on corresponding short and long-term interests and desires. There are two basic types of compromise that have been developed regarding this theory: circumstantial compromise, and attributive compromise. Circumstantial compromise describes those decisions of action that are rationalized, justified, or excused due to the extenuating, environmental conditions and circumstances persisting over varying periods of time. Circumstantial compromise, then, is the individual's response to the social structure, particularly micro-level structural conditions, when a situation causes conflict between competing interests within the individual.

Edwin H. Sutherland (1966) argued that deviants define their situations differently than non-deviants because of their increased association with intimate personal groups which share those same deviant definitions. An important assumption of compromise theory is that individuals cling to some system of long-term interests, whether they are socially accepted or they are culturally deviant. Each individual, however, may order their interests differently based on individualized experiences and differences in mental processes, personality, or other internal characteristics. Through one's environment, long-term interests may be learned and processed by the individual (Akers and Jensen, 2003, pp. 1-8). The individualized learning process of the individual may lead to greater or lesser compromise of those interests in the future.

Another theoretical assertion proposed by Compromise Theory is the phenomenon of "compromise rationalization." If short-term desires or needs present themselves in great enough frequency and intensity, perhaps through extenuating circumstances, and/or immediate environmental context, then compromise of one's long-term interests is more

probable. In order to satisfy the compelling desire or to adapt to the situation, the individual learns to rationalize their own decisions in order to achieve that desired end. When an individual's competing desires and interests cause an internal conflict, a compromise will be made between the two to reach a decision of action. The level of compromise is dependent upon both the degree of the short-term desire and the hierarchical position of one's long-term interests. Therefore, the level and type of compromise is relative the individual's hierarchy of long-term interests and the immediate desires in any given situation. The greater the compromise required by the activity, the less likely an individual will engage in that activity. For example, if one strongly believes that murder is an immoral action and recognizes that such an action is not in their best interests, then it is not likely that he or she will commit murder under normal conditions. However, the more extreme the circumstances, the more likely one might rationalize a shift of priority in their hierarchy of interests to meet the demands of the situation and the corresponding immediate needs and desires.

Compromise rationalization occurs before the decision of action is made, as it is a mechanism by which the individual convinces themselves of a decision of action to achieve a desired end. For example, a married individual may desire the affection of one other than their spouse, but they know that decision would go against many of their current long-term interests and it would probably be more damaging than rewarding. But, if this desire becomes increasingly present, perhaps through increased contact with the other individual, then a rationalization process may occur in order to justify or excuse a decision of action that would lead to infidelity. The individual may begin to rationalize by focusing on the weaknesses or the negative aspects of their current marriage, or their

mundane and unexciting relationship, thereby excusing or justifying a change and allowing the immediate gratification of a short-term desire by reasoning new desires and interests into the equation. The process of rationalization is focused all the time on achieving the desired end and continues until a decision of action is made. After this decision is made, the process may continue or not depending on the circumstances of the situation and the relevant short and long-term interests being invoked by the individual.

As stated before, desires and interests may be influenced by a number of social factors. Throughout this thesis, the powerful influence of micro-level structural forces on the individual is emphasized. It is beyond the scope of this thesis, however, to discover all degrees of influence different structural contexts may have on individual interests and desires. Further research is needed to examine these complex relationships. On the other hand, Compromise Theory does attempt to construct a model that could guide this type of research. Based on this model, it will be argued that perhaps the most pivotal influences on individual desires and interests are micro-level, immediate environmental contexts. This suggestion stems from the idea that different interests and desires take priority over others in different situations. Examples of different situations that may cause these hierarchical shifts might include: the battle field versus the living room; rural environments versus urban environments; the football field versus the class room; the board room versus the local bar. Different situations introduce different stimuli, even expectations, from the environment and subsequently have a different and significant effect on behavior. As a whole, the long-term interests of the individual probably do not permanently change greatly from situation to situation, but the arrangement of priority in an individual's hierarchy of desires and interests is what may fluctuate. If hierarchical

systems of interests are influenced to some degree by environment and social conditions, then certain environments will be more facilitative of certain types of behavior based the level of compromise required for the action to occur.

The following principles summarize the several theoretical assumptions regarding general human behavior posited by Compromise Theory:

1. People generally (i.e. under ordinary conditions) behave in ways which cause the least amount of compromise between their own short and long-term interests and desires.
2. An individual's interests and desires are often reflective of social and cultural interests because of the influence of macro-level structural forces.
3. When one's competing interests and desires conflict with each other, compromise occurs in order to reach a decision of action. Compromise is the mental process by which the individual makes a decision of action based on corresponding interests and desires, and contextual factors. Contextual factors include structural and environmental conditions as defined before. These conditions are broken down into macro and micro-level contexts which directly or indirectly influence an individual's interests and desires.
4. Compromise occurs in ways which allow the individual to rationalize their decision of action, thereby excusing or justifying their behavior.
5. The rationalization of compromise allows the individual to invoke desires and interests other than those in direct conflict in order to give more weight or priority to the goal of achieving a desired end.
6. The compromise between competing interests, and the behavior associated with it, is generally a rational decision as it is relative to the individual's ability to make a decision



of action based on their own short and long-term interests and desires. In other words, most behavior, even criminal, is a rational decision as it is relative to the individual's own values and desires at the time of the act which caused the conflict.

7. Over time, through the interactions and decisions made situation to situation, behavioral dispositions may become a part of an individual's personal characteristics. Some individuals may be more prone to compromise than others based on their individualized experiences and learned responses to similar conditions.
8. Some social conditions may promote more compromise than others based on the situational demands of different environments. Therefore, the more extreme (i.e. extraordinary) the conditions, the greater likelihood an individual will compromise their interests and desires.

### **Compromise and Crime**

The theory in its inception was built in the interest of explaining criminal behavior. If the theory's basic assumptions are accepted, then predictions of specific behavior, in particular, criminal behavior can be made. Compromise Theory presents concepts which may give a better understanding and therefore better predictive power over criminal behavior.

An important assumption of Compromise Theory is that people do not totally abandon personal, social, or cultural interests, values, or ideologies when making decisions, even when committing crime. Instead, specific desires and interests may shift in priority in a hierarchical system of interests in order to excuse and satisfy a desired end, or to react to the demands of an immediate environmental context. For example, due to extreme

situational demands, such as living in extreme poverty, one may compromise their values, beliefs, or morals, and steal to provide for themselves or their family. Granted, this may be an exaggerated example, but the point is that for one reason or another, individuals may rationalize shifts in hierarchical systems of interests in order to meet the demands of situational demands.

Compromise Theory focuses on elements of both social structure and human agency in relation to crime. The essential proposition of Compromise Theory regarding criminal behavior and social structure is that some social environments are more facilitative of crime than others, i.e., the social environment creates the structural conditions for crime to occur, despite characteristics of the individuals living in those conditions. Many theories in criminology take this sociological perspective, e.g. ecological theories, opportunity theories, deterrence theories, strain theories, and social control theories.

The essential proposition of Compromise Theory regarding criminal behavior and human agency is that some individuals are more prone to criminal behavior based on individual characteristics, despite particular environmental circumstances and situational influences. Many theories focus on variables in this area, including; self-control theory, learning theories, biological and psychological theories of crime.

Compromise Theory also recognizes, however, that depending on the level and type of interaction between individual agency and structure, certain conditions involving the characteristics of both social structure and the individual may lead to an increased likelihood of criminal behavior.

These concepts need not be contradictory. Rather, they simply indicate that multiple factors are involved criminal behavior, and in different instances different variables may

be the prime factor of causation. When breaking down many criminological theories to their essential propositions, it becomes apparent that the difference in many of these theoretical assertions is merely a difference in emphasis. For example, social control theory claims that criminal behavior is caused by an overall lack of socialization of the individual while social learning theory asserts that an individual learns to commit crime by observing the actions of others. Both theories look at similar variables when measuring and testing their propositions. For example, they both may look at parental styles, peer and family associations, school performance, mental processes, etc. (Akers and Jensen, 1997; Britt and Gottfredson, 2003). Although each theory may have different assumptions of human nature, this difference is ultimately inconsequential in the practical application of the theory because of the overlapping of ideas and the use of similar causal variables.

It is necessary to examine social structure and characteristics of the individual as causal variables because both are relevant to criminal behavior and reciprocal to some degree, though one or the other may not be the pivotal factor of causation in any given situation. In some instances the primary influence on crime may be the social conditions in which it occurs. In another instance crime may ultimately be the product of the characteristics and mental processes of the individual. In some instances, when certain social conditions interact with certain characteristics of the individual, crime may be more probable because of the unique interaction of the two. For example, some environments may create strong social interests which need not be compromised for crime to occur, even for a “normal” individual. These interests may include ideas and values such as, individualism, competition, materialism, group-loyalty, etc. In other

words, the context in which the criminal made their decision is all too important. On the other hand, the environment may create a strong atmosphere through social interests for law abiding behavior, i.e., where the socially accepted values, beliefs, morals, and goals are not associated with crime. However, it is still possible for an individual who is motivated primarily by self-interest, to compromise those interests to satisfy their own immediate desires and/or needs. Therefore, the characteristics and mental processes of the individual are important as causal variables as well. But, even if the primary cause of criminal behavior may seem to be the product of the characteristics of the individual, the social conditions are still relevant influences of behavior and must be taken into account. Social conditions and structural influence have varying degrees of impact on the development of the characteristics of the individual. In either case, it is a valuable effort to discover what characteristics of the individual and of social structure might be most facilitative of criminal behavior. The function of a criminological theory is to observe what specific variances of this relationship show the most propensities for criminal behavior.

In sum, compromise is generally rationalized by the individual in order to justify their own decisions of action. This, in effect, results in a shift in the hierarchical arrangement of interests and desires. Despite the consistency of long-term interests, if the means to achieve selfish desires becomes increasingly more available, then individuals will be increasingly more likely to compromise their values, beliefs, moral, etc. This may lead to an increased chance for criminal behavior because of the increased likelihood of compromised socially accepted interests. Also, different social environments may be more facilitative of criminal behavior because of extreme environmental conditions and

circumstances or through the promotion of values that need not be compromised for crime to occur. On the other hand, certain characteristics and mental processes of the individual may be significant contributors to criminal behavior because of the increased likelihood of competing interests and compromise.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Criminological theory traditionally has been interdisciplinary because of the complex nature of criminal behavior (Conklin, 1995). Because Compromise Theory incorporates elements of human agency and free will along with elements of social structure, theories examining each type of causation will be discussed. Therefore, theories from classical criminology as well as positivist criminology will be examined. The following theories will be discussed: deterrence and rational choice from the classical paradigm; and strain, differential association, and social learning from the positivist paradigm.

#### **The Classical Model**

A much debated topic in criminology is the concept of human choice and free will in a social environment (Sumner, 2004). Compromise Theory stresses the importance of human agency and characteristics of the individual that may account for criminal behavior within the context of the social environment. An important aspect of human agency is free will and rational choice. Classical criminology theorists thrived on the assumption that human beings are rational calculators, measuring precisely the amount of pleasure or pain to be gained from any chosen activity (Akers and Sellers, 2004). Primarily an 18<sup>th</sup> century utilitarian philosophy, these principles were applied to the criminal justice system mainly in the form of deterrence policies, with the goal of deterrence is to increase the costs of crime and reduce the benefits an individual may gain.

from criminal activity (Vold, Bernard, and Snipes, 2002). These ideologies are still present in our criminal justice system today in the form of “Get Tough on Crime” policies including “Three-Strikes and You’re Out,” the “War on Drugs,” and a “Lock’em Up” mentality (Walker, 2006). According to Samuel Walker (2006) the premise of these policies is basically non-sense with virtually no systematic, empirical support.

### **Deterrence, Rational Choice, and Opportunity**

After Beccaria, an Italian utilitarian philosopher, introduced the human choice model of free will in the late 1700’s in a time of enlightenment and revolution, many criminal justice systems began to adopt his theory (Vold et al, 2002). The idea of deterrence quickly manifested itself into official policies, as is the case with today’s criminal justice system.

An important assumption of the classical school is that beyond self-interest, there is no other motivation worth investigating regarding human behavior. In other words, there will always be motivated criminals in society because of the self-interested nature of humans. Self-interest is assumed to be a basic characteristic of human nature, and people base all their decisions on a rational choice of pleasure-seeking according to the classical model. Deterrence theory rests on the assumption that criminals are rational calculators. Therefore, if the benefits of crime out weigh the costs, crime will likely ensue. Criminal justice policies then, adopt laws that will create punishment that fit the crime (Akers and Sellers, 2004).

Typical deterrence policies are those which increase the likelihood (certainty) of being caught, and the severity of the punishment (Akers, 1997). There are two basic types of

deterrence: specific and general (Akers and Sellers, 2004, p. 19). Specific refers to criminals that have been punished and therefore refrain from any more criminal activity based on the certainty and severity of the punishment they personally received. General deterrence refers to the effect that laws and punishment of offenders has on the rest of the population by showing the costs of committing the crime, hopefully preventing future criminal activity (Akers and Sellers, 2004, p. 19). General deterrence makes examples out of a few cases with the hopes that it will strike a fear into the hearts of those that wish to commit crime. This ideology runs rampant in the U.S. justice system with cooperation from the media and celebrated cases, as well as the entertainment business in the form of dramatic TV shows and theatrical blockbusters (Walker, 2006).

There has been plenty of research looking at the effectiveness of severity and certainty of punishment. Certainty, according to a study conducted by Jack Gibbs (1968), was defined as the ratio between the number of admissions to state prisons and the number of those crimes known by the police in one year. Severity was defined as the mean number of months served by all persons convicted of a given crime during that year. Gibbs came to the conclusion that these two factors were associated with fewer homicides but the correlation may be weak because of many other factors (Vold et al, 2002).

Conflicting results have been found in several other studies. Some cases have showed severity of punishment to be attributed with an increase in crime rates of homicide (Vold et al, 2002). Others, such as Pogarsky and Piquero (2003), have even shown the effects of punishment to cause increased offending, actually contradicting the deterrence model.



A complex situation arises from a relatively simple assumption of deterrence. Despite the intuitive rationale and rhetorical satisfaction that harsher and swifter punishment will ultimately deter crime; the empirical data tends not to support that assumption.

Rational choice theory incorporates the basic assumptions of human nature from the classical model into contemporary criminological theory (Vold et al, 2002). The basic premise of rational choice theories is that motivated offenders weigh the costs and benefits of committing crime from situation to situation, thus changing situational factors to increase the difficulty or decrease the reward of crime are essential (Cornish and Clarke, 1986). Change the situational conditions in which crime systematically occurs to make the criminal action less rewarding or more difficult and crime should go down because of the classical model's assumption that offenders are rational calculators. This sounds simple enough, however, Cohen and Felson (1979), argue that contemporary society has produced increased opportunity, reward, and ease of criminal action. Therefore, an increase in crime rates cannot be attributed to an increase in willing offenders, but rather an increase in available opportunity and reward for criminal behavior (Vold et al, 2002).

The practicality and policy-applicability of deterrence and rational choice theories resulted in the increased popularity of these theories within the criminal justice system. The systematic, scientific evaluation of these theories and policies are somewhat inconclusive however. This does not mean that they are necessarily completely invaluable in the field of criminology. It simply demonstrates the lack of ability a single theory or type of theory has in explaining all types of crime.

### **The Positivist Model**

Somewhat opposed to the belief that humans are rational calculators, always operating under free will, is what is known as the positivist approach to crime. Under this approach, free will and rational decisions do not account for all crime. Other, external forces at work determine whether an individual will engage in crime or not. Early theories focused on biological and psychological factors, basic abnormalities of the individual, while most current theories focus on social causes or even an integration of the three (Vold et al, 2002, p 9).

### **Differential Association and Social Learning**

Learning theories focus on interactions with one's environment as the source of one's learned behavior (Bartol, 2002). Through learning principles such as classical and operant conditioning, an individual learns how to commit crime and whether it is something that they wish to do (Vold et al., 2002). A philosophical argument supporting the idea of learning through association can be traced as far back as Aristotle. Aristotle argued that all knowledge is learned through sensory experience and associations of ideas (Adler, 1991). For Aristotle there is essentially no inherent form of knowledge. Humans use associations through different senses and memory of experiences to form ideas.

Two basic learning principles through association include classical and operant conditioning. Classical conditioning introduces stimuli to trigger a response that would not otherwise be attributed to that specific stimulus (Bartol, 2002, p. 122). The classical example is the experiment of using a bell to cause a dog to salivate. A normal stimulus, meat, is given to cause a natural response, however when a bell was introduced along

with the meat, the stimulus of the bell was quickly associated with the meat and caused the dog to salivate (Vold et al, 2002).

Operant conditioning involves rewards and punishments to reinforce certain behavior (Skinner, 1953). While most experiments have been done on animals it is assumed that humans also react to rewards and punishments. The idea is that not only do people react to direct and personal operant consequences, but also to the expected results gained from observing the behavior and consequences of others.

With the theory of Differential Association, Edwin H. Sutherland claimed that criminal behavior is learned, and in particular it is learned through association with intimate personal groups (Vold et al, 2002). When the definitions of right and wrong and the norms of that person's intimate group commonly reflect law violation as ok, then that person is more likely to behave criminally. Sutherland claimed that is not the values or the needs themselves that cause behavior but the definitions that individuals attribute to the law (Sutherland and Cressey, 1966). If one has learned definitions through intimate personal groups that are favorable to violating the law, then that person is more likely to commit crime.

Primarily developed by Ronald Akers (1998), social learning theory has some important differences from Sutherland's differential association. While criminal behavior is learned to some extent by intimate social groups whose definitions favor law violation, it is also learned through individual experiences with the environment and through a more indirect principle of operant conditioning (Vold et al, 2002). Individual, non-social experiences may include activities such as isolated drug use. In this situation the individual observes the direct consequences or responses that come with drug use.

Individuals also learn from the experiences of others. When another person gets put in prison for stealing cars then an individual observer may recognize the consequences and choose not to steal cars. This idea is very similar to the theory of general deterrence.

There has been general support for social learning theory in several studies. Association with delinquent peers has shown a higher likelihood in juvenile delinquency (Akers and Sellers, 2004). However a temporal order presents itself from the data (Vold et al, 2002). The question is whether the deviance of the individual precedes the association with other deviants, or whether the association of deviant peers causes deviance or a great increase in deviance? The empirical results are not entirely clear.

### **Strain Theory**

Anomie, and strain, are based in the organization of society or lack thereof in explaining crime. Some researchers have focused on different aspects, however, regarding this organization. Shaw and McKay (1942; 1969), focused a great deal of their attention on certain areas of urban development as the driving variable behind crime. A thorough exploration of Shaw and McKay's studies as well as the theories and variations which spawned from them can be found in Akers and Sellers (2004), namely in sections discussing social disorganization. Merton (1938; 1957), however, focuses not on rapid social structural change and disorganization, but rather looks at the stable social structures that can create environments more probable of higher crime rates

Durkheim's analysis of anomie can be described as the inability of society to regulate human appetites, while Merton, in contrast to a natural appetite approach used by Durkheim, insists that all appetites are not natural but a product of cultural goals and

values (Akers and Sellers, 2004, pp. 159-166). According to Merton, some crime can be attributed to the “American Dream” which is a shining example of individuality, competition, ambition, and the quest for wealth, fame, and fortune (Vold, et al., 2002). Only, not everyone can achieve this “Dream.” Because of this, emphasis is on the legitimate aspirations and attempts to at least try to achieve the American Dream. Respect is given to those who follow these “middle-class” norms and values. Vold et al. (2002) gives the analogy of the principles in athletic sports. “Its not if you win or lose, but how you played the game.” Underlying this principle, however, is the undeniable recognition that winning is better. According to Merton, American culture probably puts more emphasis on “winning” and achieving status in society than simply participating in the “game” (Vold, et al., 2002). Because the legitimate means are less of a concern compared to achieving wealth, severe strain occurs. More strain, then, falls on the lower class because they possess the cultural value of achieving wealth, however, lack the legitimate means to do so. The contradiction between the promotion of the “American Dream” then the denial certain groups of people the means to achieve is how Merton describes anomie (Vold, et al., 2002).

According to Vold et al. (2002, pp. 135-141) there are five adaptations or responses people choose or go through when dealing with strain and anomie. These include: conformity, innovaton, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion. Conformity refers to those individuals who accept both cultural values and institutionalized means of achieving accepted goals. These individuals will follow legitimate means whether they achieve or not. Innovation refers to those that accept cultural goals of wealth but reject legitimate methods achieving this wealth. These individuals seek efficient and often illegal methods

of securing wealth such as gambling, drug dealing, or even white-collar crime such as fraud and misrepresentation of accounts. Ritualism is similar to conformity except that individuals recognize they will never achieve any great wealth yet follow accepted means so as not to get in trouble or create any waves in the social order. According to Vold et al. (2002), the fear of losing even minimum gains locks them into their adaptation (p.139). Retreatism refers to those who do not accept cultural goals or accept legitimate means of achievement. These individuals have essentially just given up. Finally, rebellion refers to those who not only reject cultural goals but go one step further by replacing those goals with new ones. Examples include those who desire major political and structural change or those who place their goals in spiritual and mental states of being (Vold et al., 2002).

Somewhat in contrast to Merton's focus on cultural goals of wealth, Cohen (1955) as well as Cloward and Ohlin (1960) have conducted studies on gang delinquency where crimes seem to serve no end of wealth or any purpose of all. These researchers explanations conclude that sub cultures exist outside the dominant one and different values may be accepted. The value of status, for example, would be more prevalent than the value of wealth in a gang subculture (Vold, et al., 2002).

### **Compromise Revisited**

The classical school focused on humans as rational beings; however, the abilities to be rational are often limited by human fallibility and a lack of foresight. It might be more accurate to say that humans are rationalizing beings. Therefore, rationality is a relative

concept, dependent on the individual's short and long-term interests and desires and the context in which decisions are made.

Punishment works to some extent to control behavior. However, it becomes ineffective with limited rationality, excessively rationalized behavior, or acts that cause little compromise within the individual's hierarchical system of interests and desires.

In terms of criminal behavior it is often safe to assume that there are always motivated offenders, but it is important to focus on the reasons why people are motivated. If people are motivated by changeable or controllable factors in the environment, then criminal behavior may be predicted and even preventable if these factors can be recognized. Compromise Theory examines environmental conditions and social contexts to determine which have the greatest influence over behavior. Because this theory is still in its infancy, much research beyond the scope of this thesis is needed to test its theoretical propositions and assertions.

Long-term interests such as values, morals, and beliefs are learned through interaction with the environment. Therefore, changes can be made which will affect behavior. Sutherland believed that offenders and non-offenders share the same values and needs and therefore these values are irrelevant (Vold et al., 2002). However, while fundamental interests (i.e., values, beliefs, goals, needs, etc.) may be similar in general terms, the effects of other "controlling" interests and desires involved in the specific criminal action may be different than that of a non-offender. Also, despite behavior by association; peer, family, and social norms may be temporarily abandoned by the individual based on individuality of desires and self interest or on the demands of the immediate situational

demands. However, the primary desires and interests in an individual's hierarchy do make certain behavior more or less probable as they tend to be fairly stable over time.



## CHAPTER IV

### METHODOLOGY

#### Data

The nature of the data and empirical analysis used in this research is only a partial test of Compromise Theory, designed simply to demonstrate basic relationships between the interests and desires of the individual and social structure at the micro-level. The linkage between this research and the theoretical framework presented here is that an individual's expressed values, attitudes, and beliefs are often compromised in order to react to certain environmental conditions and demands. Compromise Theory argues that while short and long-term interests and desires are the primary motivators of human behavior, these interests are influenced in varying degrees by structural conditions. In particular, this theory argues that micro-level conditions can be powerful forces over interests and desires, and that individuals may change or "*compromise*" these interests in order to adapt to immediate situations. Moreover, Compromise Theory argues the development of short and long-term interests may be affected by biological and psychological processes unique to the individual. Therefore, Compromise Theory not only recognizes the significant influence of structural conditions on interests and desires, but also the relevancy of biological and psychological characteristics and processes. The focus of this thesis is not the biological and psychological characteristics of the individual, though they are recognized as relevant to some degree, but the level of influence micro-level environmental context has on the interests and desires of the individual. A very limited

analysis was conducted to observe the affect extreme situational conditions might have on a person's long-term interests (i.e., values, attitudes, beliefs, etc.).

Data were collected through a questionnaire distributed to students in upper-level courses from two major academic departments at Pittsburg State University; the Business Department, and the Social Sciences Department. Students in upper-level courses from both departments were surveyed through a research questionnaire designed to collect data on values, attitudes, beliefs, and demographic information. Students were selected from upper-level courses in both departments based on voluntary participation and consent by the Professor administering the course. The total sample consisted of 110 questionnaires with 54 from the Social Science department and 56 from the Business department. A complete version of this questionnaire can be found in the appendix.

### Analysis

Part I of the questionnaire gathered data on the rank order of 6 values as they were defined in the questionnaire: National Security, Wealth, Liberty, Equality, Justice, and Pleasure. Part II surveyed attitudes and beliefs on specific topics of justice and Part IV collected demographic information. Part III is an especially important section of the questionnaire and included questions that involved decision making under extreme circumstances. Part III consisted of hypothetical scenarios that asked the student to answer three questions as if each corresponding scenario were true. The scenarios included extreme environmental conditions in an attempt to examine the effect these might have on patterns of responses compared to students' responses to former parts of the questionnaire concerning their values, attitudes, and beliefs. This section is especially

relevant in regard the assertions made by Compromise Theory. Compromise Theory suggests that despite the student's current values, attitudes, and beliefs towards specific issues, the student will respond to the extreme circumstance in a significantly different pattern. The following is a list of the three questions along with the three corresponding scenarios used in Part III of the questionnaire which focused on extreme situational contexts:

1. You are wrongly *convicted* of a capital crime, punishable by death.

Is the death penalty a just punishment?                      ☐ Yes                      ☐ No

2. You are living in extreme poverty and starving to death.

Would you steal to eat?    ☐ Yes                      ☐ No

3. An attacker threatens your life while breaking into your house at night.

Would you shoot them to save your own life?                      ☐ Yes                      ☐ No

Based on the theoretical assertions of Compromise Theory, the test hypothesis (Ha) predicts that patterns of responses for question #1 will be significantly different than patterns of responses to question #3 of Part II.

## CHAPTER V

### RESULTS

#### Demographics

The overall characteristics of the sample can be found in Table 1. The sample was extremely homogenous with 79.1% 18-25 years of age, 75.3% not married, 77.3% had no children, 94.6% were Juniors, Seniors, or Graduates, 70% were Lower-Middle to Middle socioeconomic class, and 84.7% were Caucasian, Non-Hispanic. The male to female ratio was fairly evenly distributed with 43.6% male and 56.4% female.

**Table1. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N=110)**

Variable	Category	Percentage of Sample
Age	18-25	79.1
	26-33	7.3
	33+	13.6
Sex	Male	43.6
	Female	56.4
Marital Status	Married	18.2
	Widowed	1
	Divorced	5.5
	Never Married	75.3
Children	Yes	22.7
	No	77.3
Student Status	Freshman	0
	Sophomore	3.6
	Junior	23.6
	Senior	68.3
	Graduate	2.7
	Other	1.8
Department	Social Science	43.6
	Business	50.9
	Other	5.5
Socioeconomic Class	Lower	10.9
	Lower-Middle	30.9
	Middle	39.1
	Upper-Middle	15.5
	Upper	3.6

Partisanship	Republican	31.8
	Independent	20.9
	Democrat	37.3
	Other	10
Race	African Am.	4.5
	Caucasian	84.7
	Native Am.	1.8
	Hispanic	2.7
	Asian P.I.	2.7
	Other	3.6
Religious	N/A	6.4
	Very Strong	13.6
	Strong	26.4
	Moderate	40.9
	Weak	12.7

### **Rank Order of Values**

Data were collected on students' values, attitudes, and beliefs in an attempt to observe any consistent patterns between their responses under "normal" conditions and their responses under the artificial environmental conditions set up in the scenarios in Part III of the questionnaire. Patterns emerged from this data set that suggests a significant influence of micro-level conditions on the expressed interests (i.e., values, attitudes, and beliefs) of the individual. Table 1 summarizes the frequency distributions of Part I of the questionnaire which asked the students to rank order six specific values with 1 being the highest rank and 6 the lowest.

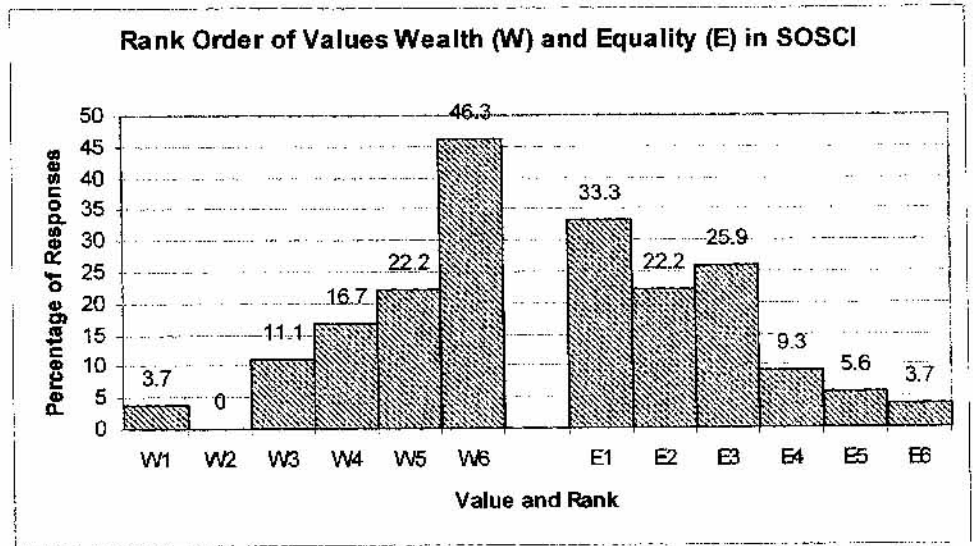
**Table 2. Rank Order of 6 Values (Measured in %)**

Value	Rank :	1	2	3	4	5	6
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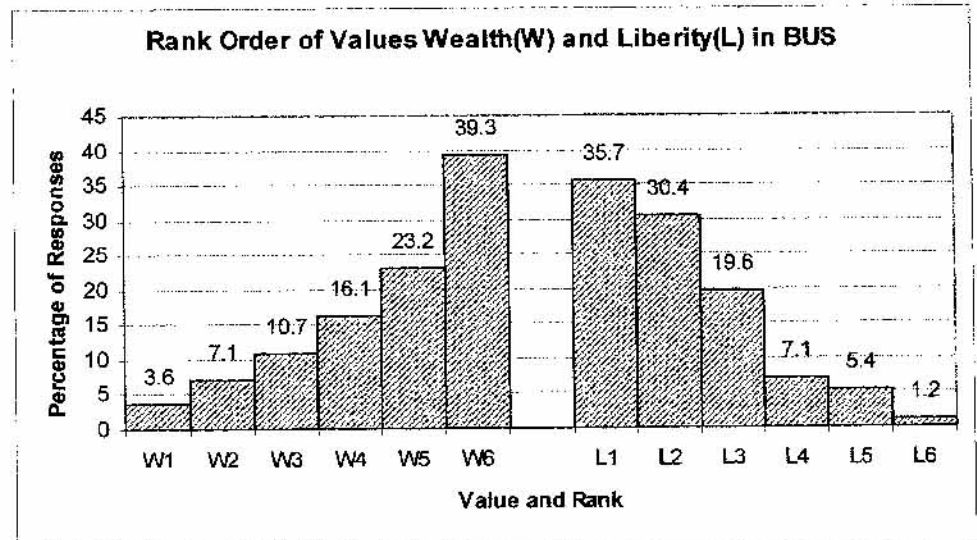
National Security	17.3	11.8	14.6	24.5	20.0	11.8
Wealth	3.6	3.6	10.9	16.5	22.7	42.7
Equality	21.8	21.8	24.6	15.5	9.0	7.3
Liberty	29.1	32.7	19.1	10.9	6.4	1.8
Justice	2.7	20.9	22.7	20.9	20.9	11.9
Pleasure	25.5	9.1	9.1	10.9	20.9	24.5

Wealth was ranked the lowest with 81.9% of students ranking it in their bottom three and only 18.1% ranking it in their top three. Liberty, on the other hand, was ranked the highest with 80.9% putting it in their top three and only 19.1% putting it in their bottom three. After Liberty the next highest ranked value was Equality with 68.2% ranking it in their top three, followed by Justice with 46.3% and finally National Security and Pleasure, both with 43.7% of the top three ranks. When looking at data on the ranking of values divided by academic department, a slightly different picture emerges. In the Social Sciences (SOSCI) the division between Wealth and Equality is the greatest (See Figure 2), while the Business (BUS) department shared basically the same patterns as the whole data set, ranking Liberty as their highest and Wealth as the lowest (See Figure 3).

**Figure 2. Values Wealth and Equality Ranked in the Social Sciences(SOSCI)**



**Figure 3. Values Wealth and Liberty Ranked in the Business (BUS) Department**



### **Attitudes**

Part II of the questionnaire was designed to gather information on students' attitudes and beliefs concerning specific topics such as crime and punishment, welfare, the death

penalty, national security and individual liberties, the legal system, equal opportunity, and government (monetary) handouts. Seven questions gauged the student's attitude on each topic. Responses were categorized as: *Strongly Disagree (SD)*, *Disagree (D)*, *Neutral (N)*, *Agree (A)*, and *Strongly Agree (SA)*. A complete list of the questions to PART II can be found in the appendix. Table 3 summarizes the distribution of responses for the whole sample.

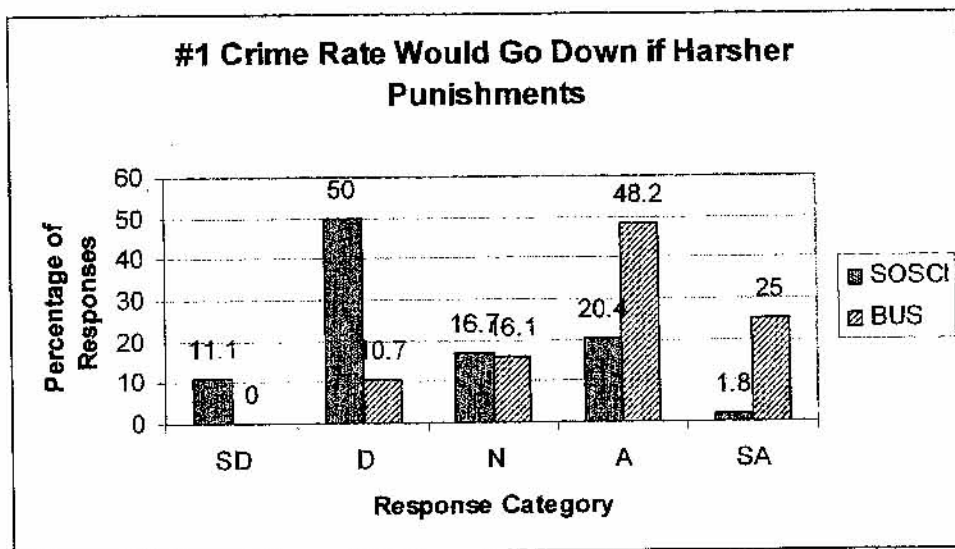
**Table 3. Distribution of Responses to PART II Assessing Attitudes and Beliefs  
Concerning Several Topics (Measured in %)**

Q#/Topic	Attitude:	SD	D	N	A	SA
1.Crime Rate		5.5	30	16.4	34.5	13.6
2.Welfare		17.3	26.4	20	30	6.3
3.Death Penalty		12.7	19.1	14.5	35.5	18.2
4.National Security		11.8	43.7	20.9	20	3.6
5.Legal System		9.1	29.1	27.3	32.7	1.8
6.EEO		16.4	33.6	13.7	23.6	12.7
7.Gov. Handouts		18.1	36.4	29.1	15.5	.9
N=110						

Many of the questions appear to be fairly divided between categories of "Agreement" and "Disagreement." When data are taken from each academic department (Social Science and Business) separately, a pattern of division between the two becomes clear. The following figures are a visual representation of this division for questions #1, 2, and 7 of Part II of the questionnaire.

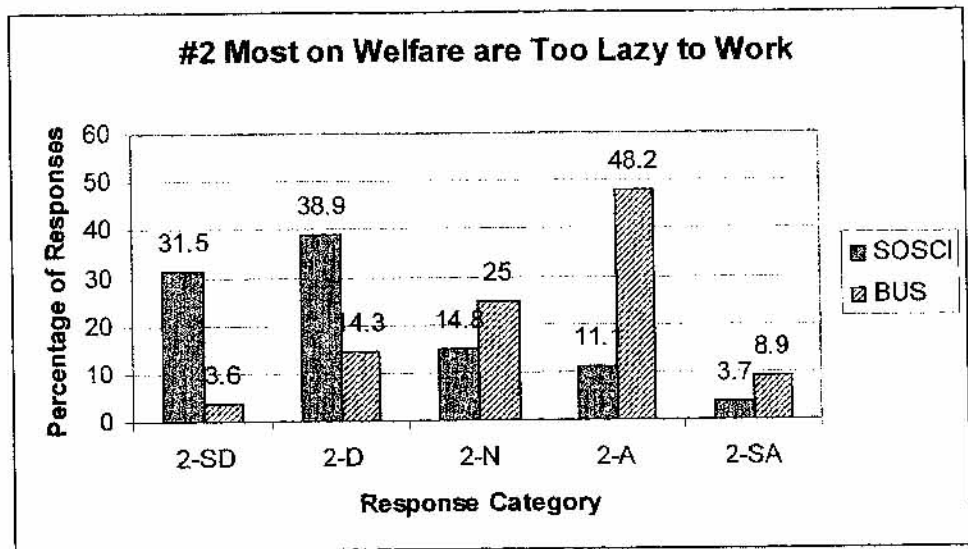


**Figure 4. Responses to Question 1 of Part II Separated by Department**



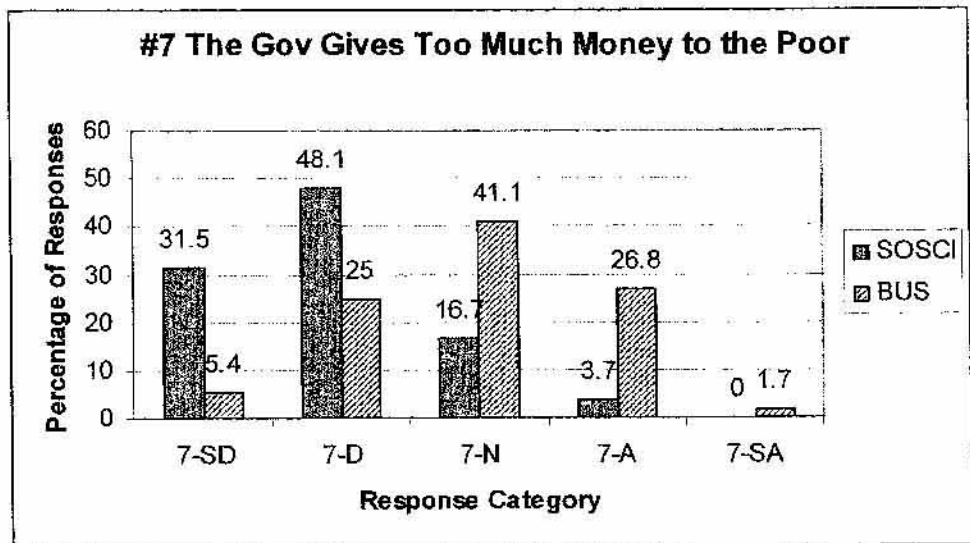
This figure demonstrates the clear divide between the departments on the issue of crime and punishment. 61.1% of students surveyed in the Social Sciences “Disagreed” or “Strongly Disagreed” against the notion that crime would go down if only criminals were punished more harshly. Polar opposites, 73.2% of students surveyed in the Business Department believe that crime would go down if criminals were punished more harshly. This is not the only divide between departments. In response to question #2 of Part II, 70.4% of students surveyed in the Social Sciences did not believe that “most people on welfare are too lazy to work,” while 73.2% of students in the Business department believed that they are too lazy to work.

**Figure 5. Distribution of Responses to Question #2 of Part II**



While not as clear a divide as questions #1 and #2, question #7 shows a noticeable difference in responses by department. In response to question #7 of Part II, “The government gives too much money to the poor,” 79.6% of students in the Social Sciences “Disagreed” or “Strongly Disagreed,” while the distribution in the Business department was evenly mixed with 41.1% responding as “Neutral.”

**Figure 6. Distribution of Responses to Question #7 of Part II**

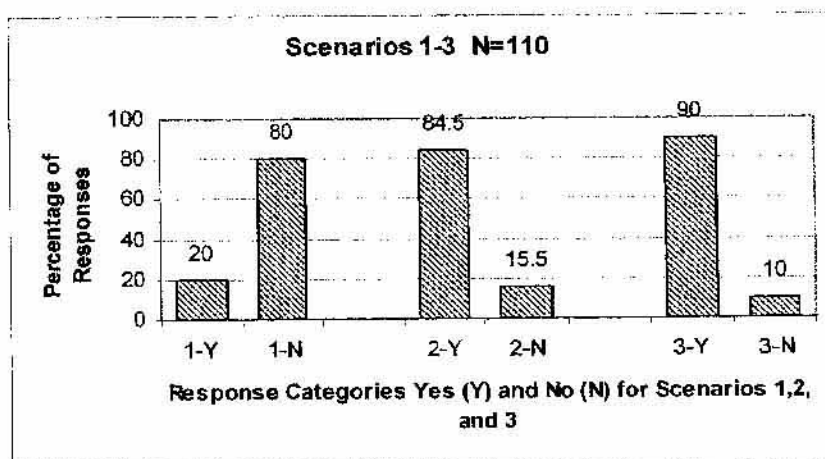


The differences between the departments are interesting to note for two reasons. First, demographic variables show a large amount of homogeneity in the sample. A large majority of respondents are Caucasian, 18-25 years of age, lower-middle to middle class, not married with no children. Because the respondents are so similar in terms of demographic variables, the question becomes, “what causes the differences in responses as far as attitudes toward crime and punishment, welfare, and government money for the poor?” Second, despite the differences in responses in Part II between Social Sciences and Business, there is virtually no difference in the response patterns of Part III.

### Scenarios

An overwhelming majority respond similarly to questions #1, #2, and #3 of the “scenario” section. See Figure 8.

**Figure 7. Responses to Questions 1-3 of Part III**



In response to question #1 of Part III, based on the corresponding scenario, 20% felt that the death penalty was a just punishment in that situation and 80% felt that it was not. In response to question #2, based on the second scenario, 84.5% said that they would steal to eat, while 15.5% said they would not. In response to question #3, based on the third and final scenario, 90% said they would shoot an attacker invading their home, and only 10% said they would not. When separating the sample by department, results are similar. See Table 4.

**Table 4. Distributions (%) to Questions 1-3 of Part III: The Effect of Extreme Situational Conditions on Individual Attitudes**

Scenario/Q#	SOSCI%	BUS%	TOTAL%
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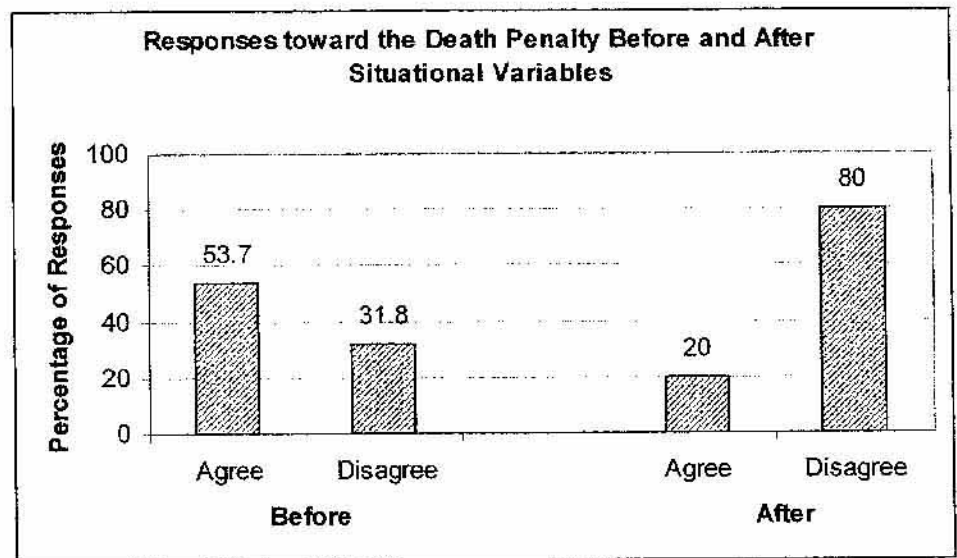
<hr/>			
1.The Death Penalty			
Yes	16.7	23.2	20
No	83.3	76.8	80
2.Stealing			
Yes	92.6	76.8	84.5
No	7.4	23.2	15.5
3.Self-Defense			
Yes	85.2	94.6	90
No	14.8	5.4	10
	N=55	N=56	N=110
<hr/>			

The impact of situational circumstances on the expressed attitudes can be observed in scenario #1 when compared to the previous distribution of responses to question #3 of Part II. While 53.7% “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” the death penalty was a just punishment, only 20% agreed with this statement after taking into account the situational circumstances of scenario #1. Conversely, while 31.8% “Disagreed” or “Strongly Disagreed” the death penalty was a just punishment in Part II, 80% disagreed with it in Part III. While not conclusive, this suggests a significant relationship between situational conditions and the attitudes and beliefs of those subject to the demands of the situation. Also, 14.5% of the “Neutral” responses are not accounted for in this comparison and it would be speculation to assume which category these responses would fit. However, even if it were assumed that all those who responded “Neutral” actually disagree with the death penalty, a difference of 33.7% would still exist in those who disagreed before the scenario and those that disagreed after.

**Table 5. The Death Penalty is a Just Punishment (Before and After Scenario #1)**

Attitude	Before Scenario	Scenario #1
Agree	53.7	20
Disagree	31.8	80
Total	85.5%	100%

**Figure 8. The Death Penalty is a Just Punishment (Before and After Scenario #1)**



From Table 5 and Figure 9 a clear pattern of change can be observed between responses before and after the situational variables were introduced in scenario #1. To see if these observed patterns are significantly different than expected patterns (i.e., observed patterns = responses to scenario #1; expected patterns = responses to Q#3 of PartII) a one-way test of chi-square (Yates Correction for Continuity) was conducted for responses before and after scenario #1 regarding the death penalty. To account for “Neutral” responses in Part II, the frequencies for this category were evenly distributed into both “Agree” and “Disagree” categories. The total percentage of “Neutral”

responses equaled 14.5%, or 16 responses. Therefore 8 responses were distributed to the “Agree” category as well as the “Disagree” category for the chi square analysis. As it is demonstrated in Table 6,  $\chi^2=75.61$  and  $p<.0001$ , which leads to the decision to reject the Null Hypothesis at a .05 significance level with 1 degrees of freedom. The means that there appears to be a significant difference between the observed patterns found in scenario #1 and the expected patterns found in question #3 of Part II.

**Table 6. One-Way Chi Square Analysis (Yates Correction for Continuity) for Observed Frequencies (Scenario #1) and Expected Frequencies (Q#3 of Part II) Regarding the Death Penalty**

	Agree	Disagree	Total
Observed	22	88	110
Expected	67	43	110
df=1 @ .05	CV $\chi^2=3.841$		OV $\chi^2=75.61$

NOTE:  $p<.0001$  for obtained  $\chi^2=75.61$  after Yates Correction for Continuity when “neutral” frequencies are evenly distributed into “agree” and “disagree” categories of Expected frequencies.

## CHAPTER VI

### DISCUSSION

Compromise Theory posits these main assumptions: (1) People generally (i.e. under ordinary conditions) act in ways that cause the least amount of compromise in their short and long-term interests and desires; (2) Individuals compromise their values, attitudes, and beliefs to adapt to demanding structural and environmental conditions surrounding them; (3) Compromise is highly rationalized by the individual, and results in the shifting of value-priority in one's value-system or hierarchy of interests to meet the demands of the immediate situation. To understand the individual's interests and desires, it must be recognized that these are influenced to a great degree by the context in which the individual lives, i.e. the structural forces surrounding an individual, and in particular the immediate situational circumstances surrounding any event.

In regard to the research conducted in this thesis, Compromise Theory suggests that micro-level structural factors, like the ones introduced in Part III of the questionnaire, will have a significant influence on the expressed attitudes and interests (i.e. the values and beliefs) of the individual. Despite the expressed values, attitudes, and beliefs of the individual, circumstances of an immediate situation will cause the individual to compromise these (albeit temporarily) to meet the demands of that specific situation. The data presented here suggests, although inconclusively, general support for the assertions made by Compromise Theory. Students participating in the questionnaire overwhelmingly and consistently responded to Part III in a manner that contradicted



many patterns of responses gathered from previous sections of the questionnaire. For instance, while a majority 53.7% agreed with the death penalty in Part II, 80% disagreed with it in scenario #1 of Part III. Also, while many felt criminals ought to be punished more harshly, almost 85% agreed that under the conditions presented in scenario #2 they would engage in criminal behavior. An even greater number, 90%, agreed they would use lethal force (through a firearm) if they were being attacked in their home. While this data is a limited test, it shows the very real power of immediate situational circumstances over the values, attitudes, and beliefs of the individual.

Interestingly, patterns in Part II were sharply divided according to academic department. And yet, the demographics showed a largely homogenous sample. The differences in Part II may be present for many reasons, although it is not necessarily the focus of this thesis. However, while an analysis of these patterns is not in the scope of this research, they are worth speculating on for the purpose of possible future research. Compromise Theory asserts that individual interests and desires are highly influenced structural factors. Micro-level factors were the focus of this thesis. However, Compromise Theory suggests that many different structural influences (besides the immediate environment) are also relevant in the development of the individual's interests and desires. Education as a reflection of macro-level social structure could have some level of influence on the desires and interests of the individual. According to Beard (1969), education is a tool necessary in our economic and institutional system rather than an organization for its own sake. One's education may be one of many structural influences and may have varying degrees of affect on the values, attitudes, and beliefs of the individual. Or, there may be more significant personal reasons that an individual

chooses a certain educational path, and subsequently, their interests and desires are reinforced by their affiliated academic department. Therefore the temporal order of an individual's interests and desires are important. This could be tested by surveying students' values, attitudes, and beliefs pre and post enrollment.

There are several other possibilities that could be a factor in these divisions of responses by department. One thing is clear, however, from the data presented in this research. Divisions between department virtually disappear when the situational variables found in scenarios #1, 2, and 3 are introduced. This suggests support for the assertions made by Compromise Theory, and that micro-level, immediate situational circumstances are perhaps the most powerful influence on the interests and desires of the individual.

## **CHAPTER VII**

### **CONCLUSION**

People adapt to environmental conditions and therefore compromise certain interests accordingly. Compromise Theory proposes that these adaptations and responses are most apparent in micro-level situations. Decisions will be strongly influenced by the immediate environmental circumstances surrounding a situation. The more extreme or demanding a situation is, the more powerful an influence it has on the individual. Shifts in desires and interests occur under extreme circumstances in order to adapt to the immediate demands. For example, the class room will exhibit much different expectations of behavior from the battlefield. The individual will adapt to these situations by shifting priority in a hierarchy of interests and desires to accommodate the immediate environment. The primary interests held in a class room may be knowledge, discipline, and a value for a learning environment. On the other hand, the primary values and interests invoked on the battlefield may be dominated by survival.

The data presented in this thesis suggests partial support for the assertions made by Compromise Theory. It was found that patterns of responses under the situational conditions presented in Part III of the questionnaire were significantly different than non-conditional patterns found in Part II. Compromise Theory argues that these differences can be attributed to the immediate situational variables presented in scenarios #1, 2, and 3. It suggests that individuals actually compromised their expressed values and attitudes due to extreme and demanding situations.

The data and analysis of this research represent only a partial test of Compromise Theory. Therefore, any support for the theoretical assertions presented here are limited. For instance, only one direct analysis was conducted for observing student attitudes and beliefs before and after situational variables were introduced in Part III of the questionnaire. Also, no causation is to be inferred from the chi-square analysis. Finally, the sample used was very homogenous. It would be interesting for future research to: 1) Include multiple analyses of attitudes before and after situational variable are introduced; 2) Identify concrete situational variables which directly relate to value-compromise; 3) Use a more heterogeneous sample; 4) Compare situational influences on samples of criminals (i.e. prisoners) to samples of non-criminals.

In conclusion, while empirical data do not conclusively support the assertions made by Compromise Theory, they do spark interest for more complete and thorough research on the influence of immediate situational conditions on the interests and desires of the individual. Also, Compromise Theory proposes many levels of influence on the individual. Future research should explore these connections and the varying degrees of influence different structural forces have on individuals' interests and desires.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **Notice of Confidentiality and Voluntary Participation**

This questionnaire is a portion of the empirical testing requirements of a Master's Thesis. It is designed solely to survey the values, attitudes, and demographic variables of upper-level students in the Social Sciences and the Business Department at Pittsburg State University. **Participation is totally voluntary and confidential.** If you choose to participate, please feel free to skip any question you wish or to end your participation at any time. **Do not put your name anywhere on the questionnaire.** When you are finished please lay your questionnaire face down and it will be picked up shortly and put in a closed folder. Again, participation is completely voluntary and individual participants will remain anonymous. Only the principle investigator and an assistant helping with statistical analysis will see the completed questionnaires.

Your participation is greatly appreciated!

# RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

## PART I.

**Instructions:** Please rank order the following list of values as they are defined, 1 through 6, according to their importance to you, with 1 being the most important and 6 being the least.

- \_\_\_\_\_ National Security (National safety from violence and attacks)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Wealth (Personal economic prosperity)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Equality (Equal treatment, opportunity, and brotherhood for all)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Liberty (Personal freedom to act and express how one wishes)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Justice (Securing the innocent and punishing the guilty in society)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pleasure (Personal joy and happiness)

## PART II.

**Instructions:** Please circle the response that best reflects your *current* beliefs.

1. Crime rates would go down if there were harsher punishments for criminals.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

2. Most people on welfare are too lazy to work.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

3. The death penalty is a just punishment.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

4. National security is more important than individual liberties.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

## RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

5. The current legal system in the U.S. is fair.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

6. Everyone has equal opportunity to succeed in this country.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

7. The government gives too much money to the poor.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

### PART III.

**Instructions:** Please **respond** to the following questions as best you can **as if each corresponding scenario were true.**

1. You are wrongly *convicted* of a capital crime, punishable by death.

Is the death penalty a just punishment?                      \_\_\_Yes                      \_\_\_No

2. You are living in extreme poverty and starving to death.

Would you steal to eat?    \_\_\_Yes                      \_\_\_No

3. An attacker threatens your life while breaking into your house at night.

Would you shoot them to save your own life?                      \_\_\_Yes                      \_\_\_No

# RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

## PART IV.

**Instructions:** Please respond to the following questions by filling in the appropriate information or by **circling the letter** of the item that best reflects your current situation.

1. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Are you male or female? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What is your current marital status?

A. Married

B. Widowed

C. Divorced/Separated

D. Never Married

E. Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you have any children?

A. Yes

B. No

5. What is your current status as a student?

A. Freshman

B. Sophomore

C. Junior

D. Senior

E. Graduate

F. Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

6. What is your current major area of study? \_\_\_\_\_

7. What is your socioeconomic status/class?

A. Lower

B. Lower-Middle

C. Middle

D. Upper-Middle

E. Upper

## RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

8. What is your political affiliation?

A. Republican

B. Independent

C. Democrat

D. Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

9. What is your race or ethnicity?

A. African American

B. Caucasian, Non-Hispanic

C. Native American

D. Hispanic

E. Asian, Pacific Islander

F. Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

10. How would you describe your religious convictions?

A. Non-Existent

B. Very Strong

C. Strong

D. Moderate

E. Weak

F. Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!**

