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Travis Hirschi’s Social Control/Social Bonds Theory

The theory of Social Control/ Social bonds by Travis Hirschi suggests that any criminal behavior is fundamentally based on development of criminal motivation. He proposes that every individual has a pleasure-seeking urge that forces him to commit a crime. Hirschi suggested that there are four kinds of bonds that are behind this temptation. The first bond discussed is ‘Attachment’, which is associated with affection one has for others. If one has a healthy relation with a parent, guardian or mentor, that person will adopt good habits and develop prosocial behavior. On the other hand, if a role model figure is absent and social circle is involved in delinquent activities, it is likely that the person will fall astray. The second type is ‘Commitment’ which means that if one cares about what people close to him think or feel about his wrong acts, he will abandon the path of crime. Next social bond is ‘involvement’ which is correlated with activities one is involved in. It is based on the ancient idea ‘Satan finds work for *idle hands* to do’ which means that those who have nothing good to do will be attracted towards evils deeds. It is evident through research that in the U.S., crime rates are higher where higher number of jobless people reside (Raphael and Winter‐Ebmer). The last kind of bond is ‘belief’. It includes people who believe in moral values and respect others’ rights and do not cause harm to the society (Hirschi).

The story of a serial killer can be related to this theory. The serial killer as a young boy, used to get beaten by his alcoholic abusive father daily. The kid in rage killed the father, but when police arrived, the mother took the blame. She was sent to serve in prison. Meanwhile, he killed his foster parents’ dog because it did not protest the killer’s abuse. Later, he started kidnapping young depressed people specially those who did not get enough attention from parents or mentors. The serial killer did not have a healthy relation with parents and developed a feeling of hatred as described by first bond of theory. The killer lacks ‘commitment’ which is shown by the fact that the only person close to him, his mother, already knows he committed his father’s murder. This makes him reckless and ‘involved’ in delinquent activities. After he is sentenced to death, he requests Human Rights Commission to send him to Hospital for better medical treatment. He lacked ‘belief’ in human rights as he did not regret anything at all.

**Works Cited**

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Raphael, Steven, and Rudolf Winter‐Ebmer. “Identifying the Effect of Unemployment on Crime.” *The Journal of Law and Economics*, vol. 44, no. 1, Apr. 2001, pp. 259–83. *journals.uchicago.edu (Atypon)*, doi:10.1086/320275.