

## PSYCHOLOGY OF CRIME – II

### *Unit IV*

#### PREVENTION OF CRIME AND DELINQUENCY

#### RECIDIVISM

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#### CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIME CONTROL - CRIME PREVENTION METHODS

Criminologists, commissions, and research bodies such as the World Health Organization, United Nations, the United States National Research Council, the UK Audit Commission have analyzed their and others' research on what lowers rates of interpersonal crime.

They agree that governments must go beyond law enforcement and criminal justice to tackle the risk factors that cause crime because it is more cost effective and leads to greater - social benefits than the standard ways of responding to crime. Multiple opinion polls also confirm public support for investment in prevention. Waller uses these materials in *Less Law, More Order* to propose specific measures to reduce crime as well as a crime bill.

The World Health Organization Guide (2004) complements the World Report on Violence and Health (2002) and the 2003 World Health Assembly Resolution 56-24 for governments to implement nine recommendations, which were:

1. Create, implement and monitor a national action plan for violence prevention.
2. Enhance capacity for collecting data on violence.
3. Define priorities for, and support research on, the causes, consequences, costs and prevention of violence.
4. Promote primary prevention responses.
5. Strengthen responses for victims of violence.

6. Integrate violence prevention into social and educational policies, and thereby promote gender and social equality.
7. Increase collaboration and exchange of information on violence prevention.
8. Promote and monitor adherence to international treaties, laws and other mechanisms to protect human rights.
9. Seek practical, internationally agreed responses to the global drugs and global arms trade.

The commissions agree on the role of municipalities, because they are best able to organize the strategies to tackle the risk factors that cause crime. The European Forum for Urban Safety and the United States Conference of Mayors have stressed that municipalities must target the programs to meet the needs of youth at risk and women who are vulnerable to violence.

To succeed, they need to establish a coalition of key agencies such as schools, job creation, social services, housing and law enforcement around a diagnosis.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE CRIME PREVENTION**

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Several factors must come together for a crime to occur:

1. an individual or group must have the desire or motivation to participate in a banned or prohibited behavior;
2. at least some of the participants must have the skills and tools needed to commit the crime; and,
3. an opportunity must be acted upon.

Primary prevention addresses individual and family-level factors correlated with later criminal participation. Individual level factors such as attachment to school and involvement in pro-social activities decrease the probability of criminal involvement.

Family-level factors such as consistent parenting skills similarly reduce individual level risk. Risk factors are additive in nature. The greater the number of risk factors present the greater the risk of criminal involvement. In addition there are initiatives which seek to alter rates of crime at the community or aggregate level.

For example, Larry Sherman from the University of Maryland in Policing Domestic Violence (1993) demonstrated that changing the policy of police response to domestic violence calls altered the probability of subsequent violence. Policing hot spots, areas of

known criminal activity, decreases the number of criminal events reported to the police in those areas. Other initiatives include community policing efforts to capture known criminals. Organizations such as America's Most Wanted and Crime Stoppers help catch these criminals.

Secondary prevention uses intervention techniques that are directed at youth who are at high risk to commit crime, and especially focus on youth who drop out of school or get involved in gangs. It targets social programs and law enforcement at neighborhoods where crime rates are high. Much of the crime that is happening in neighbourhoods with high crime rates is related to social and physical problems. The use of secondary crime prevention in cities such as Birmingham and Bogotá has achieved large reductions in crime and violence. Programs, such as, general social services, educational institutions and the police, are focused on youth who are at risk and have been shown to significantly reduce crime.

Tertiary prevention is used after a crime has occurred in order to prevent successive incidents. Such measures can be seen in the implementation of new security policies following acts of terrorism such as the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Situational crime prevention uses techniques focusing on reducing on the opportunity to commit a crime. Some of techniques include increasing the difficulty of crime, increasing the risk of crime, and reducing the rewards of crime.<sup>[2]</sup>

## **SITUATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION**

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Situational crime prevention (SCP) is a relatively new concept that employs a preventive approach by focusing on methods to reduce the opportunities for crime. It was first outlined in a 1976 report released by the British Home Office. SCP focuses on the criminal setting and is different from most criminology as it begins with an examination of the circumstances that allow particular types of crime. By gaining an understanding of these circumstances, mechanisms are then introduced to change the relevant environments with the aim of reducing the opportunities for particular crimes. Thus, SCP focuses on crime prevention rather than the punishment or detection of criminals and its intention is to make criminal activities less appealing to offenders.

### **SCP focuses on opportunity-reducing processes that:**

- Are aimed at particular forms of crime;

- Entail the management, creation or manipulation of the immediate environment in as organised and permanent a manner as possible; and
- Result in crime being more difficult and risky or less rewarding and justifiable.

The theory behind SCP concentrates on the creation of safety mechanisms that assist in protecting people by making criminals feel they may be unable to commit crimes or would be in a situation where they may be caught or detected, which will result in them being unwilling to commit crimes where such mechanisms are in place. The logic behind this is based on the concept of rational choice - that every criminal will assess the situation of a potential crime, weigh up how much they may gain, balance it against how much they may lose and the probability of failing, and then act accordingly.

One example of SCP in practice is automated traffic enforcement. Automated traffic enforcement systems (ATES) use automated cameras on the roads to catch drivers who are speeding and those who run red lights. Such systems enjoy use all over the world. These systems have been installed and are advertised as an attempt to keep illegal driving incidences down. As a potential criminal, someone who is about to speed or run a red light knows that their risk of getting caught is nearly 100% with these systems. This completely disincentivizes the person from speeding or running red lights in areas in which they know ATES are set up. Though not conclusive, evidence shows that these type of systems work. In a Philadelphia study, some of the city's most dangerous intersections had a reduction of 96% in red light violations after the installation and advertisement of an ATES system.

### **Applying SCP to information systems**

Situational crime prevention (SCP) in general attempts to move away from the "dispositional" theories of crime commission i.e. the influence of psychosocial factors or genetic makeup of the criminal, and to focus on those environmental and situational factors that can potentially influence criminal conduct. Hence rather than focus on the criminal, SCP focuses on the circumstances that lend themselves to crime commission. Understanding these circumstances leads to the introduction of measures that alter the environmental factors with the aim of reducing opportunities for criminal behavior.

Other aspects of SCP include:

1. targeting specific forms of crime e.g. cybercrime
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2. aiming to increase the effort and decrease potential risks of crime
  3. reducing provocative phenomena
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### **Safeguarding**

Another aspect of SCP that is more applicable to the cyber environment is the principle of safeguarding. The introduction of these safeguards is designed to influence the potential offender's view of the risks and benefits of committing the crime. A criminal act is usually performed if the offender decides that there is little or no risk attached to the act. One of the goals of SCP is to implement safeguards to the point where the potential offender views the act unfavourably. For example, if a driver approaches a traffic junction where there are speed cameras, he or she evaluates that there is a nearly 100% chance of being caught trying to run a red light, and hence slows down. The use of crime "scripts" has been touted as a method of administering safeguards.<sup>[4]</sup> Scripts were originally developed in the field of cognitive science and focus on the behavioural processes involved in rational goal-oriented behaviour. Hence scripts have been proposed as tool for examining criminal behaviour. In particular the use of what is termed a "universal script" has been advanced for correctly identifying all the stages in the commission process of a crime.

### **Application to cybercrimes**

It has been suggested that cybercriminals be assessed in terms of their criminal attributes, which include skills, knowledge, resources, access and motives (SKRAM).<sup>[7]</sup> Cybercriminals usually have a high degree of these attributes and this is why SCP may prove more useful than traditional approaches to crime. Clarke proposed a table of twenty-five techniques of situational crime prevention, but the five general headings are:

1. Increasing the effort to commit the crime
2. Increasing the risks of committing the crime
3. Reducing the rewards of committing the crime
4. Reducing any provocation for committing the crime
5. Removing any excuses for committing the crime

**These techniques can be specifically adapted to cybercrime as follows:**

### **Increasing the effort**

Reinforcing targets and restricting access- the use of firewalls, encryption, card/password access to ID databases and banning hacker websites and magazines.

### **Increasing the risk**

Reinforcing authentication procedures- background checks for employees with database access, tracking keystrokes of computer users, use of photo and thumb print for ID documents/credit cards, requiring additional ID for online purchases, use of cameras at ATMs and at point of sale.

### **Reducing the rewards**

Removing targets and disrupting cyberplaces – monitoring Internet sites and incoming spam, harsh penalties for hacking, rapid notification of stolen or lost credit bankcards, avoiding ID numbers on all official documents.

### **Reducing provocation and excuses**

Avoiding disputes and temptations – maintaining positive employee-management relations and increasing awareness of responsible use policy.

Many of these techniques do not require a considerable investment in hi-tech IT skills and knowledge. Rather, it is the effective utilization and training of existing personnel that is key.

It has been suggested that the theory behind situational crime prevention may also be useful in improving information systems (IS) security by decreasing the rewards criminals may expect from a crime. SCP theory aims to affect the motivation of criminals by means of environmental and situational changes and is based on three elements:

- Increasing the perceived difficulty of crime;
- Increasing the risks; and
- Reducing the rewards.

IS professionals and others who wish to fight computer crime could use the same techniques and consequently reduce the frequency of computer crime that targets the information assets of businesses and organisations. Designing out crime from the environment is a crucial element of SCP and the most efficient way of using computers to fight crime is to predict criminal behaviour, which as a result, makes it difficult for such

behaviour to be performed. SCP also has an advantage over other IS measures because it does not focus on crime from the criminal's viewpoint. Many businesses/organisations are heavily dependent on information and communications technology (ICT) and information is a hugely valuable asset due to the accessible data that it provides, which means IS has become increasingly important. While storing information in computers enables easy access and sharing by users, computer crime is a considerable threat to such information, whether committed by an external hacker or by an 'insider' (a trusted member of a business or organisation). After viruses, illicit access to and theft of, information form the highest percentage of all financial losses associated with computer crime and security incidents. Businesses need to protect themselves against such illegal or unethical activities, which may be committed via electronic or other methods and IS security technologies are vital in order to protect against amendment, unauthorised disclosure and/or misuse of information.<sup>[12]</sup> Computer intrusion fraud is a huge business with hackers being able to find passwords, read and alter files and read email, but such crime could almost be eliminated if hackers could be prevented from accessing a computer system or identified quickly enough.

Despite many years of computer security research, huge amounts of money being spent on secure operations and an increase in training requirements, there are frequent reports of computer penetrations and data thefts at some of the most heavily protected computer systems in the world. Criminal activities in cyberspace are increasing with computers being used for numerous illegal activities, including email surveillance, credit card fraud and software piracy. As the popularity and growth of the Internet continues to increase, many web applications and services are being set up, which are widely used by businesses for their business transactions.

In the case of computer crime, even cautious companies or businesses that aim to create effective and comprehensive security measures may unintentionally produce an environment, which helps provide opportunities because they are using inappropriate controls. Consequently, if the precautions are not providing an adequate level of security, the IS will be at risk.

### **Application to sexual abuse**

Smallbone et al.'s Integrated Theory of Child Sexual Abuse posits that it can be useful to study child sexual abuse as a situationally specific incident, and that on any

particular occasion, a variety of different factors can influence whether that incident is likely to occur. One set of factors is situational factors, which form the immediate backdrop to the setting in which the abuse takes place. Situational factors, it is argued, can influence not just whether a person abuses a child, but whether the idea of abusing occurs to them in the first place. The particular opportunities and dynamics of a situation are said to present cues, stressors, temptations and perceived provocations, which trigger motivation. The consideration of situational factors leads to the argument that some offenders may be considered as 'situational', marking them out from other types. The 'situational offender' is someone who is not primarily attracted to children. Instead, he is stimulated to offend by specific behavioural cues or stressors, often while performing care-giving duties. The authors of the theory argue that modifying the situations experienced by children, through situational crime prevention strategies, could lower the likelihood of abuse, irrespective of the disposition of people who are likely to come into contact with children. The authors concede that there has been little testing of situational interventions, which means there is little evidence to demonstrate their effectiveness.

An evaluation of a programme which worked with mothers in London to reduce situational risk of child sexual abuse in the home illustrated some of the challenges that mothers faced in identifying and reducing situational risk:

1. Increasing understanding about abuse, how and where it happens.
2. Accepting the possibility of abuse at home and in the family.
3. Accurately assessing the risks posed to one's own children.
4. Lowering known risks by negotiating with family members.

### **Situational crime prevention and fraud**

In computer systems that have been developed to design out crime from the environment, one of the tactics used is risk assessment, where business transactions, clients and situations are monitored for any features that indicate a risk of criminal activity. Credit card fraud has been one of the most complex crimes worldwide in recent times and despite numerous prevention initiatives, it is clear that more needs to be done if the problem is to be solved. Fraud management comprises a whole range of activities, including early warning systems, signs and patterns of different types of fraud, profiles of users and their activities, security of computers and avoiding customer dissatisfaction. There are a number of issues that make the development of fraud management systems an extremely difficult and



challenging task, including the huge volume of data involved; the requirement for fast and accurate fraud detection without inconveniencing business operations; the ongoing development of new fraud to evade existing techniques; and the risk of false alarms.

Generally, fraud detection techniques fall into two categories: statistical techniques and artificial intelligence techniques.

**Important statistical data analysis techniques to detect fraud include:**

- Grouping and classification to determine patterns and associations among sets of data.
- Matching algorithms to identify irregularities in the transactions of users compared to previous proof
- Data pre-processing techniques for validation, correction of errors and estimating incorrect or missing data.

**Important AI techniques for fraud management are:**

- Data mining – to categorise and group data and automatically identify associations and rules that may be indicative of remarkable patterns, including those connected to fraud.
- Specialist systems to programme expertise for fraud detection in the shape of rules.
- Pattern recognition to identify groups or patterns of behaviour either automatically or to match certain inputs.
- Machine learning techniques to automatically detect the characteristics of fraud
- Neural networks that can learn suspicious patterns and later identify them.

## **RECIDIVISM**

### **PSYCHOLOGY OF RECIDIVISM**

Recidivism is the act of a person repeating an undesirable behavior after they have either experienced negative consequences of that behavior, or have been treated or trained to extinguish that behavior. The term is most frequently used in conjunction with substance abuse and criminal behavior. For example, scientific literature may refer to the recidivism of sexual offenders, meaning the frequency with which they are detected or apprehended committing additional sexual crimes after being released from prison for similar crimes. (If to

be counted as recidivism the re-offending requires voluntary disclosure or arrest and conviction, the real recidivism rate may differ substantially from reported rates.) As another example, alcoholic recidivism might refer to the proportion of people who, after successful treatment, report having, or are determined to have, returned to the abuse of alcohol.

Recidivism refers broadly to reoffending, and common measurements of recidivism include rearrest, reconviction, reincarceration, or a supervision violation (for individuals on probation or parole). Recidivism rates measure the frequency with which individuals reengage with the criminal justice system. There are multiple ways to measure recidivism and each measure relies on a somewhat different definition of reinvolvement, thus providing a different picture of the problem at hand. No matter what recidivism measure (or combination of measures) a jurisdiction employs, it is important to collect and analyze these data routinely and consistently to examine system functioning, effectiveness, costs, and trends. Recidivism also represents a critical area of interest for criminal justice stakeholders, elected officials, prospective funders, and the general public.

## **MEASURE OF RECIDIVISM**

Why measure recidivism? Recidivism measures can provide local criminal justice systems with the information needed to examine their crime problems and the performance of solutions they choose to implement. Reoffending has relevance for public safety as well as resource and cost implications related to incarceration and other criminal justice costs. <sup>1</sup> Both matter, but you might look at different data points depending on which you wanted to focus on. For example, from a public safety perspective, the most important consideration is the type or severity of the offense. From a resource implication perspective, the amount of court time consumed and the average length of time in custody for recidivists would matter more. Recidivism rates can indicate which subsets of the criminal justice population interact with the criminal justice system the most, and detailed recidivism data can provide jurisdictions with a better understanding of the timing of recidivism and the types of offenses committed among populations of interest. Tracking recidivism rates of program participants can serve as a valuable indicator of program performance when compared to recidivism rates for like groups (i.e., is program participation associated with lower recidivism); they can also be used to examine the influence of criminal justice policies (i.e., is enhanced supervision associated with lower recidivism rates). It is important to remember that jurisdictions should be cautious in using recidivism rates as a sole measure of program success, as programs may target or

attract individuals with a high likelihood of reoffense (as measured through risk to reoffend screeners) or certain needs (as measured through a needs assessment). If jurisdictions want to compare the target population's outcomes to the general population, data—such as risk scores—should be used to ensure the comparison groups are valid (e.g., comparing high-risk target population clients to high-risk individuals in the general population). Programs also have goals beyond recidivism reduction, such as GED attainment or computer skills development, successes that may contribute to recidivism reduction but are not captured directly by the simple evaluation of recidivism rates.

### **What are the benefits and limitations of different measures of recidivism?**

Recidivism may be measured at each point in the criminal justice system, including arrest, booking, conviction, and incarceration. Table 1 addresses some of the benefits and limitations of each measurement. Ultimately, the use of multiple measures will provide the most comprehensive perspective on local recidivism patterns. Regardless of the definition(s) selected, it is critical to use consistent measures of recidivism over time in order to draw meaningful comparisons. Recidivism rates differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, often depending on how they are calculated. Thus, local criminal justice stakeholders should proceed with caution when comparing their local recidivism rate to those of other jurisdictions.

### **Recidivism Measures**

Measure : Rearrest

Key Features : • Captures most broad view of interactions with criminal justice system

- Available relatively quickly

Limitations: • Requires reliable linkage to police data within jurisdiction

- Arrests that occur outside of jurisdiction are not captured (unless access to statewide database is available)
- Charges may be dropped or changed, or individual acquitted

Measure : Rebooking

Key Features : • Measureable when jail system is only data source

- Available quickly
- Includes pretrial, sentence, and revocation bookings

Limitations:

- Charges sometimes dropped or individual acquitted
- Excludes arrests that do not result in jail booking
- Excludes offenses committed in other jurisdictions.

Measure: Reconviction

Key Features:

- Measures only charges that result in conviction, thus eliminating cases in which charges were dropped or the individual was acquitted

- Captures convictions that may not result in custody time

Limitations:

- Requires reliable linkage to court data systems
- Conviction data has the longest lag because you have to wait for adjudication to conclude, which makes it more challenging to use for management decisions
- Does not capture resources consumed presentence

### **What time frames should be used to measure recidivism?**

Typically, researchers consider recidivism in six-month, one-year, and three-year time frames (Lyman and LoBuglio 2007). This time period begins after an individual is released from jail (not at admission or booking). Many jurisdictions find it useful to calculate an annual recidivism rate (i.e., the number of people who are released and reoffend in a given year) so that they can draw local year-to-year comparisons.

### **What are common data sources for measuring recidivism?**

The location of source data is dependent on the measure chosen to track recidivism. While some data can be collected through county-level agencies, more robust data measurement can be accomplished through linkage with surrounding county, state, and even national data systems. While it can be possible to obtain access to another jurisdiction's data, it can also be more difficult to search using common identifiers and ensure that the extracted data pertain to the appropriate individuals.

A local criminal justice data hub or warehouse that collects and integrates data across local justice agencies helps streamline ongoing analysis. However, developing a data hub is a long-term, resource-intensive investment. Alternatively, a lead collection entity (whether a university or research organization with strong data capacity) can serve as a virtual data hub and regularly collect criminal justice data for ongoing analysis.

## **DATA SOURCES**

MEASURE: Rearrest

REQUIRED DATA SOURCE: Local law enforcement

ADDITIONAL DATA SOURCES: City, county, and state-level police data, FBI National Crime Information Center (NCIC) data

MEASURE: Rebooking

REQUIRED DATA SOURCE: Local jail data

ADDITIONAL DATA SOURCES: City and surrounding county jail data

MEASURE: Reconviction

REQUIRED DATA SOURCE: Local court data

ADDITIONAL DATA SOURCES: City, surrounding county, and state-level court data

## **What are additional ways to better understand recidivism?**

While rearrest, rebooking, reconviction, and reincarceration rates provide a basic set of data to measure recidivism, researchers and practitioners alike recognize the need for additional measures to better understand elements of recidivism, such as the nature of new offenses and when they occur.

Identifying an appropriate comparison group is necessary in order to interpret recidivism rates for program participants. Care should be taken to ensure that the comparison group is comparable to the treatment group in key respects, particularly risk to recidivate, criminal history, and demographic characteristics. Much as a hospital that serves patients who tend to be sicker will find it difficult to match the health outcomes of a hospital that sees

healthier patients, recidivism outcomes for high-risk offenders in programs cannot be directly compared to outcomes for low-risk offenders.

Particularly for high-risk offenders, changes in the type of offense, offense severity, time to rearrest, and length of stay following reincarceration can all signify real progress. Programs that target high-risk offenders may not see a significant drop in the aggregate number of program participants who reoffend, but important progress may still occur. For example, program participants may remain arrest free for a longer period of time following release, and return less frequently or for less serious charges that require shorter lengths of stay. Since high-risk offenders commit a disproportionate amount of all crime, even a small reduction in recidivism for high-risk offenders could lead to a significant crime reduction.

### **Additional Recidivism Measures - Pre-release v. Post-release**

- Offense type (violations v. new crime, property/drug/person/traffic)
- Offense severity (felony v. misdemeanor)
- Length of stay
- Time to rearrest
- Frequency of reoffense

### **METHODS TO MITIGATE RECIDIVISM**

Research has shown that certain practices and policies can reduce recidivism, including: Using risk and need assessments to inform case management. Research shows that correctional programs with the greatest impact on recidivism sort individuals based on their risk of reoffending. Risk and need assessment tools examine both static (historical and/or demographic) and dynamic (changeable) criminogenic needs (also known as criminogenic risk factors) that research has shown to be associated with criminal behavior and make someone more likely to reoffend. The assessment produces a risk score that allows programs to sort individuals based on risk levels in a consistent and reliable manner, tailor interventions, and prioritize resources for those who are at higher risk of reoffending.

Establishing programs that have been shown to reduce recidivism and ensuring they are implemented with fidelity. While specific approaches may vary across states, programs should be based on the best available science and research. Interventions that address

criminogenic needs and take into account an individual's responsivity factors—such as motivation for change, learning styles, and mental health needs—are more likely to impact recidivism than those that do not. Programs should also establish desired outcomes and ensure means for measuring progress, such as regular quality assessments and evaluations. Studies show that implementing evidence-based programs and practices can reduce reoffense rates by 10 to 20 percent.

Implementing community supervision policies and practices that promote successful reentry. Improved community supervision to provide greater support and access to services is critical to efforts to reduce recidivism. Supervision conditions and programs should be informed by an individual's risk and needs, focusing resources on those who are assessed to be at higher risk. Parole and probation officers should also have a range of options for swift and certain sanctions and incentives that are proportionate to the event and appropriate for the individual under supervision. The Council of State Governments Justice Center outlined these practices in *The National Summit on Justice Reinvestment and Public Safety: Addressing Recidivism, Crime, and Corrections Spending*, a report summarizing the innovative strategies discussed over the course of a summit of state leaders, federal officials, practitioners, and researchers in 2010. In 2012, the Council of State Governments Justice Center and the National Reentry Resource Center released a series of user-friendly checklists specifically designed to help executive and legislative policymakers, state corrections administrators, and state reentry coordinators implement these proven strategies in their states.