


Subject: CRIMINOLOGY

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Paper : CRIME PREVENTION

Module : Theories of Crime Prevention



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DESCRIPTION OF MODULE

Items	Description of Module
Subject Name	Criminology
Paper Name	Crime Prevention
Module Name/Title	Theories of Crime Prevention
Module Id	3
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ To understand the different approaches to crime prevention➤ To understand the theories of crime prevention under each approach➤ To critically examine the practical implications of the theories
Key words	Environmental Design, Situation crime prevention, CPTED, Social approach, Punishment



1. Introduction

Different approaches to crime prevention exist based on interventions, type of activities delivered and the theory behind them. An understanding of the different approaches available and their underlying rationale and theory is also crucial to developing effective crime prevention programs and projects (Homel & Homel, 2009; Eck, Chainey, Cameron, & Leitner, 2005). The three basic approaches to crime prevention are (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2015; Canadian Council on Social Development; www.criminalbehaviour.com) environmental, social and criminal justice approaches. The environmental approach aims to reduce opportunities for crime by modifying the physical environment (Crawford, 1998). The social approach focuses on community practices which can help prevent crime (ECOSOC, 2002). The criminal justice approach seeks to prevent crime through the police, courts and corrections.

Most of the theories on crime prevention seem to follow the environmental approach.

2. Crime Prevention Theories based on Environmental approach

2.1. CPTED: Crime Prevention through Environmental Design

Proposed by C. Ray Jeffery this theory aims at identifying conditions of the physical and social environment that provide opportunities for or precipitate criminal acts and the alteration of those conditions so that no crimes occur. The theory proposes that crime can be facilitated or inhibited by features of the physical environment (Jeffery, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, 1971).

Drawbacks of CPTED

1. Does not deal with underlying causes of crime. Criminal motivation is still high despite decreased crime targets.
2. Crime is not stopped only dispersed. Crime reduced in one place, increases in another.



(Casteel & Corinne, 2000)

2.2. Defensible Space Theory

This theory was created by an Architect, named Oscar Newman whose goal was to create safer public housing. Newman proposed that a residential environment must be designed in order to allow and even encourage residents themselves to supervise and be seen by outsiders as responsible for their neighborhoods. It attempts to reduce both crime and fear of crime in a specific area by:

1. Reducing opportunity for crime and
2. Fostering positive social interaction among residents.

Defensible space design attempts to strengthen two kinds of social behavior within a residential area. One is the personal sense of ownership over an area called territoriality and two is placing potential crime targets in places where they can be watched easily called natural surveillance. According to Newman areas low in defensible space are theoretically more vulnerable to crime because feelings of community spirit and ownership are not generated by residents and they are less likely to be able to recognize outsiders as potential criminals. In small areas defensible space increases the effectiveness of informal social control which makes crime less likely.

Drawbacks of Defensible Space Theory

1. Does not deal with underlying causes of crime. Criminal motivation is still high despite decreased crime targets.
2. Crime is not stopped only dispersed. Crime reduced in one place, increases in another.
3. Most solutions are of architectural rather than police orientation

(Steventon, 1996)

2.3. Situational Crime Prevention

This concept is attributed to a book written by Ronald Clarke in 1992. The practical implications under this concept are similar to those of CPTED and Defensible Space. Situational crime prevention is aimed at eliminating



opportunities for crime. It includes opportunity-reducing measures that are directed at highly specific forms of crime. Tactics include the management, design or manipulation of the immediate environment in a systematic and permanent way as possible so as to increase the effort and risks of crime and reduce the rewards associated with crime (Clarke, 1997)

Situational crime prevention is heavily used by crime prevention units in other countries such as Holland, Great Britain, and Sweden. The situational crime prevention model originated from lessons learned from research on correctional treatments by the British government's Home Office Research Unit. Research demonstrated the potential for designing out crime and other actions by manipulating situational factors in the immediate environment. This research along with the development of Problem Oriented Policing led to the development of Situational Crime Prevention. The different methods of situational crime prevention include increasing the effort needed to commit a crime, increasing the risks of committing a crime, reducing the rewards of committing crime, inducing guilt or shame for committing crime.

Criticisms of Situational Crime Prevention

1. Ignores Causes of Crime: Deals only with conditions and target hardening, ignoring the motivations of offenders. It may lead to more serious crime by ignoring motivations and making targets more difficult.
2. Protects Businesses not Citizens: Deals only with preventing crime and doesn't deal with factors that lead to crime. It has been criticized as letting government off the hook.
3. Displacement of Crime: Not as severe as would be thought, but it does occur to some degree.

(Weisburd, 1997)

2.4. Routine Activities Theory

Originally created by Cohen and Felson, the theory proposes that for crime to occur there must be the intersection of three things:

1. Motivated Offenders.
2. Suitable Target.



3. Absence of a capable guardian.

Structural changes in the routine activities of society can influence crime rates by affecting the convergence in space of these three elements. According to this theory routine activities may be any number of activities, including work, leisure, and social interaction. These activities can occur at home or away from home. When these routine activities are performed within or near the home, lower risks of crime are expected because they enhance guardianship capabilities. That is, since higher levels of guardianship increase the likelihood that offenders will be seen, the risk for criminal victimization is reduced. Routine activities attempted to explain higher crime rates after World War II by stating that more people were in the workplace leaving more homes unattended for long periods of time. Of the three main factors, most of the emphasis is placed on suitable targets, with capable guardians getting some focus and motivated offenders almost none (Cohen & M, 1979).

Suitable Targets

A suitable target is the criminal's choice of a victim or target and is influenced by four related actors:

1. Value or desirability of target: How much value is associated with the particular target
2. Inertia of the target: The weight or ease of movement of the target. Small items such as TV's have more inertia than couches.
3. Visibility of the target: Is the target easily visible by potential offenders.
4. Access to and escape from the target: Those areas where access to and from are easiest are more likely to be victimized.

It is the combination of these four factors that makes victimization likely. The flow of people through a community is also important to understanding its potential for criminal victimization. Some communities by nature of their rhythm are more attractive to motivated offenders. A given location may range from crowded to deserted depending upon the time, day of week, or



month. Thus, to understand the likelihood of victimization within a community it is necessary to consider the location, time of the day and day of the week. Neighborhoods with a greater than usual number of access streets are more attractive to criminals because they appear more open and vulnerable and offer more potential escape routes. Criminals generally commit crime in areas which are in their normal routine travel areas, where they feel comfortable. They commute to these areas usually because of: Perception of lax security, attractiveness of area as potential target, abundance of goods or police practices in "home turf".

Capable Guardians

While most of the focus of crime prevention is on suitable targets, crime can also be decreased through increasing the presence of capable guardians. Increased aggressive police patrolling, increased surveillance of area by residents and target hardening are methods of increasing capable guardianship

Routine Activities Research has revealed that -

1. Those areas where a higher percentage of residents are home during the day have lower property crime rates.
2. Corner homes, usually near traffic lights or stop signs, are the ones most likely to be burglarized.
3. Secluded homes, such as those at the end of a cul-de-sac or surrounded by wooded areas make more suitable targets.
4. Criminals are more likely to drift towards a city center than move outwards to commit a crime.
5. Communities that organize themselves restrict traffic, change street patterns and limit neighborhood entrances and exits will reduce property crime levels.

2.5. Crime Pattern Theory:



Created by Brantingham and Brantingham, this theory is influenced by several different theories, including Routine Activities, Rational Choice and environmental principles relating to crime.

It proposes that criminal acts are most likely to occur in areas where the awareness space of an offender intersects with perceived suitable targets. Most criminals do not choose their crime sites randomly, but rather their criminal site choices are spatially structured (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1993). The Crime Pattern Theory views -

- A criminal event as the end point in a decision process or sequence of decision steps
- The decision process or sequence of decision steps is rational.
- The decisions themselves are neither random nor unpredictable.
- The decision process begins with an offender who is ready for crime (who has sufficient motivation and knowledge to commit the crime);
- Criminal motivations and states of readiness come from diverse sources;
- Whether the offender's state of readiness leads to crime is a function of environmental factors, such as available opportunities;
- The number and sequence of decision points in the process that leads to a criminal event vary with the type and quantity of crime such that the decision process is crime-specific;
- The level of crime readiness in any offender varies over time and place given his or her background and site-specific features;
- Neither motivated offenders nor opportunities for crime are uniformly distributed in space and time;
- Opportunities for crime are developed by routine activities of daily life (e.g., commuting patterns during the week and leisure activities on weekends);
- How suitable a target is, is a function of the characteristics of the target and the characteristics of the target's surroundings;



- The target identification process (e.g., what makes a good or bad target) is a multi-staged process contained within a general environment;
- Individuals develop images about what surrounds them, which make up "templates," or "an aggregate image" which help establish an array of cues, cue sequences, and cue clusters that identify what should be considered a 'good' target in specific cities and situations“
- These templates vary by specific crimes, offenders, and the general context for the crime, such that what makes a good target for one type of crime and offender, may not for another; and finally
- Crime is complex, but still “contains discernible patterns both for crimes and for criminals at both detailed and general levels of analysis. “

Thus, the proponents of this theory see that "Crimes are patterned; decisions to commit crimes are patterned; and the process of committing a crime is patterned." Some important Crime Pattern Theory concepts are -

- Nodes: Main geographic points in a person's life. *Example:* Home, Work, School, Girlfriends Home
- Paths: The main arteries of travel between Nodes. Essentially how people travel between their main nodes, the main travel routes. It is assumed that people are very ritualistic in their travels
- Edges: The boundaries of areas where people engage in their activities. *Example:* Neighborhood or city boundaries

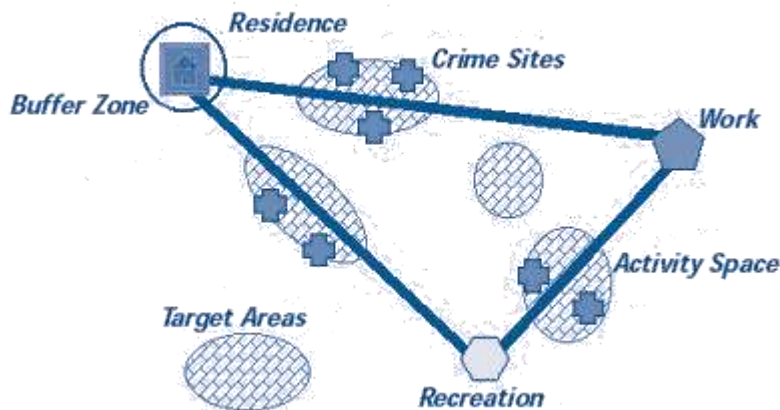


Figure: Brantingham Crime Pattern Theory (Source: Rossmo, Kim (2000), *Geographic Profiling*, Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press)

Central aspect in the logic of Crime Pattern Theory is that of ‘Awareness Space’ which means locations and areas that a person is aware of and possesses at least a minimum level of knowledge about. A person’s awareness space forms part of their mental map and is constructed primarily, but not exclusively, from the spatial experiences of the individual. An awareness space is composed of various activity sites and the connecting network of travel and commuting routes. Well-known locations (landmarks, tourist sites, important buildings) may also become part of a person’s awareness space without being places they travel to. Under this theory targets are selected on the following basis -

1. Targets are selected within an offender’s awareness space. It is assumed that criminals are somewhat lazy, sticking close to known places and routes.
2. Possible targets are assessed against the criteria of suitability (profit to be gained) and risk (likelihood of getting caught).
3. Targets are also scanned for certain cues (visibility, ease of mobility, etc...)
4. Offender makes a rational choice to choose a specific target for victimization.



Crime Pattern Theory attempts to achieve Crime Prevention through the following concepts-

- Awareness Space: Connectivity/Permeability of streets greatly impacts awareness space of offenders.
- Balanced connectivity: Neighborhoods should not be overly permeable, not should they completely restrict movement.
- Suitability of Target: Design should work to make targets (homes, etc.) as unsuitable as possible.
- Good natural surveillance
- Effective lighting systems
- Physical Protection
- Well maintained landscapes

2.6. Broken windows Theory

Conceptualized by James Q. Wilson and George Kelling the Broken Windows theory surmises that neighborhood disorder, in the form of minor crimes, is an indicator of low neighborhood social control. Offenders interpret signs of disorder as a signal that the neighborhood is a place where crime can be committed with impunity. Subsequently the fear of crime increases among residents. Thus begins a vicious cycle as conscientious residents move away, crime increases, disorder increases leading to abandoned buildings, poorly maintained vacant lots, litter on streets, graffiti on walls, poorly lit streets, building, parking areas and groups of people loitering/ arguing/ fighting. According to this theory poor design is primary and reinforcing factor for crime. Further research of this theory has shown an association between Neighborhood disorder and crime with some impact on policing. Findings have indicated that disorder increased levels of fear of crime, street crime, neighborhood decline, feelings of hopelessness among residents and Broken Windows policing (arrests for minor violations). Research has shown that designing out opportunities in addition to disorder issues has best crime reduction impact (Wilson & Kelling, 1982)



2.7. Pockets of Crime

Developed by Peter K.B. St. Jean this theory postulates that while the highest crime rates in a city may be concentrated within one general area of a city, the majority of blocks within that area have a low incidence of crime. Crime is concentrated within certain “pockets of crime” where opportunities for crime are best. These pockets of crime are largely a function of uneven development caused by planning, zoning, and patterns of development. Presence of neighborhood disorder or lack of Collective Efficacy alone is not sufficient for crime hot spots. High crime areas are a result of disorder/collective efficacy and opportunities of specific location. Criminals habitually commit crimes in locations that offer spatial advantages such as neighborhood spaces that are unevenly zoned, used and developed (Jean, 2007).

This theory implies that for prevention of crime –

- Context is vitally important. Understand where crime is occurring and why it is happening there and not elsewhere.
- While crime is a result of numerous factors, all of which need to be dealt with, Opportunities are the biggest single factor.
- Disorder levels will help determine general areas of crime.
- Opportunities will determine locations of high crime.
- Design matters with regards to reducing opportunities
- Site Design: How buildings and roads are designed.
- Zoning
- Building Design

3. Crime Prevention Theories based on Social approach

3.1. Social Disorganization Theory

Social disorganization refers to the inability of a community to realize the common values of its members and maintain effective social controls. As Kornhauser describes, “Social disorganization exists in the first instance when the structure and culture of a community are incapable of implementing and



expressing the values of its own residents.” (Kornhauser, 1978) According to the theory, a common value among neighborhood residents is the desire for a crime-free community. In essence, then, socially disorganized neighborhoods are ineffective in combating crime. Social control theory proposes that exploiting the process of socialization and social learning builds self-control and reduces the inclination to indulge in behavior recognized as antisocial. It derives from functionalist theories of crime and was developed by Ivan Nye ((Nye, 1958)), who proposed that there were four types of control:

- 3.1.1. Direct: by which punishment is threatened or applied for wrongful behavior, and compliance is rewarded by parents, family, and authority figures.
- 3.1.2. Internal: by which a youth refrains from delinquency through the conscience or superego.
- 3.1.3. Indirect: by identification with those who influence behavior, say because his or her delinquent act might cause pain and disappointment to parents and others with whom he or she has close relationships.
- 3.1.4. Control through needs satisfaction, i.e. if all an individual's needs are met, there is no point in criminal activity

Social Control Theory proposes that people's relationships, commitments, values, norms, and beliefs encourage them not to break the law. Thus, if moral codes are internalized and individuals are tied into, and have a stake in their wider community, they will voluntarily limit their propensity to commit deviant acts. The theory seeks to understand the ways in which it is possible to reduce the likelihood of criminality developing in individuals. It does not consider motivational issues, simply stating that human beings may choose to engage in a wide range of activities, unless the range is limited by the processes of socialization and social learning. This derives from a Hobbesian view of human nature as represented in Leviathan, that is, that all choices are constrained by implicit social contracts, agreements and arrangements among people. Thus,



morality is created in the construction of social order, assigning costs and consequences to certain choices and defining some as evil, immoral and/or illegal(Kingsley & Ogaga, 2012).

4. Crime Prevention Theories based on Criminal Justice approach

Under the criminal justice approach crime prevention is essentially achieved through the criminal justice system. Under this system a punishment is a consequence of an offense. Punishments are imposed on the wrong doers with the object to deter them to repeat the same wrong doing and reform them into law-abiding citizens. The kind of punishment to be imposed on the criminal depends or is influenced by the kind of society one lives in. The aim of the different theories of punishments is to transform the law-breakers into law-abiders.

4.1. Theories of Punishment –

The Different Theories of Punishment Are as follows –

4.1.1. Deterrent Theory: The term “Deter” means to abstain from doing an act. The main purpose of this theory is to deter (prevent) the criminals from doing the crime or repeating the same crime in future. Under this theory, severe punishments are inflicted upon the offender so that he abstains from committing a crime in future and it would also be a lesson to the other members of the society, as to what can be the consequences of committing a crime. This theory has proved effective, even though it has certain defects.

4.1.2. Retributive Theory: This theory of punishment is based on the principle- “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth”. Retribution means to give in turn. The object of this theory is to make the criminal realize the suffering of the pain by subjecting him to the same kind of pain as he had inflicted on the victim. This theory aims at taking a revenge rather than social welfare and transformation. It has not



been supported by the Criminologists, Penologists and Sociologists as they feel that this theory is brutal and barbaric.

4.1.3. Preventive Theory: This theory too aims to prevent the crime rather than avenging it. As per this theory, the idea is to keep the offender away from the society. This criminal under this theory is punished with death, life imprisonment etc. This theory has been criticized by some jurists.

4.1.4. Reformatory Theory: This theory is the most humane of all the theories which aims to reform the legal offenders by individual treatment. The idea behind this theory is that no one is a born Criminal and criminals are also humans. Under this theory, it is believed that if the criminals are trained and educated, they can be transformed into law abiding citizens. This theory has been proved to be successful and accepted by many jurists.

4.1.5. Expiatory Theory: Under this theory, it is believed that if the offender expiates or repents and realizes his mistake, he must be forgiven.

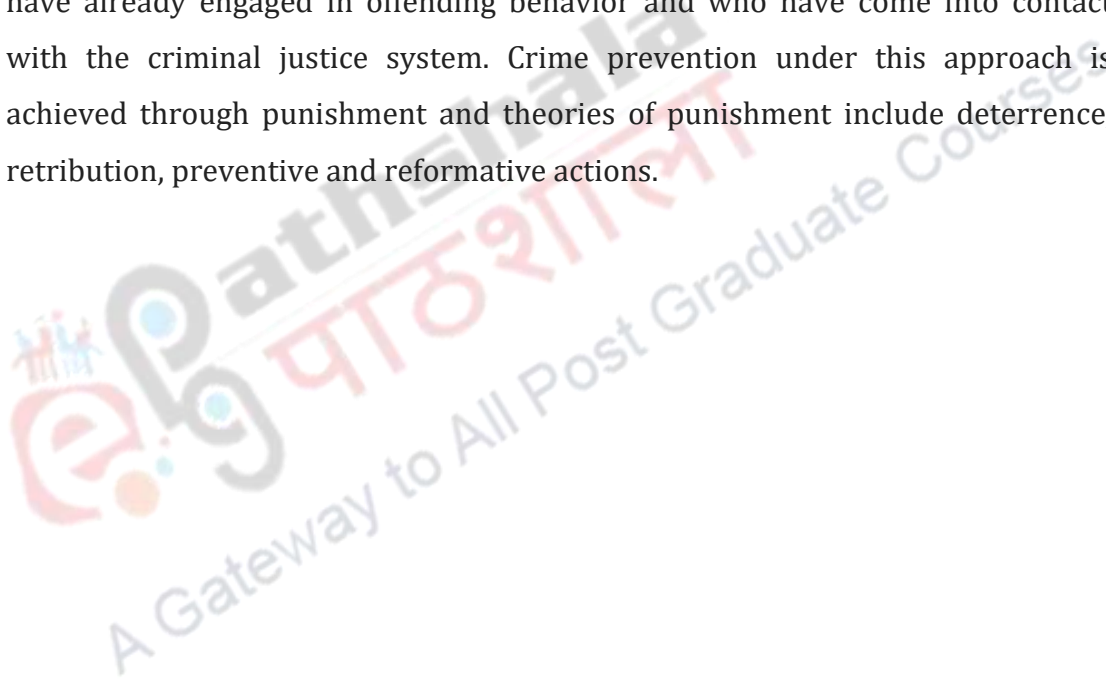
(Law News and Network ,
2014)

5. Conclusion

Based on practical implications, interventions, delivered activities there are three approaches to crime prevention: the environmental approach, social approach and criminal justice approach. The environmental approach aims to modify the physical environment to reduce the opportunities for crime to occur. A large part of literature on crime prevention rests in this area of research. Different environmental theories of crime prevention include CPTED, Defensible



Space, Situational Crime Prevention, Routine Activities, Crime Pattern and Broken Windows. Each theory touches upon the interrelation between the external environment and the cause and occurrence of crime. The social approach focuses on the underlying social and economic causes of crime in the community and on limiting the supply of motivated offenders, and includes developmental prevention and community development models. Under this approach Social Control Theory proposes that people's relationships, commitments, values, norms, and beliefs encourage them not to break the law. The criminal justice approach refers to various programs delivered by police, the courts and corrections that aim to prevent recidivism among those people who have already engaged in offending behavior and who have come into contact with the criminal justice system. Crime prevention under this approach is achieved through punishment and theories of punishment include deterrence, retribution, preventive and reformative actions.





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