
UNIT 14 CRIME AND DELINQUENCY

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14.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit you should be able to :

- discuss the notions of crime and juvenile delinquency;
- comment on the “dark figures” in crime and delinquency;
- explain the innate and environmental aspects of crime and delinquency; and
- describe the impact of the familial and social environment on crime and delinquency.

14.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit (Unit 13) we have examined poverty and its social dynamics. In this unit we turn to crime and delinquency. We begin with notes on crime and interaction and go on to deal with juvenile delinquency and crime and delinquency. We examine in the next section crucial statistics of crime and delinquency in India. After this we turn to innate and environmental factors in crime. Among the environmental factors are mainly the family. Structural breaks within it include child care, poverty, arrest and conviction. Beyond this we go 'outside the family' and examine the family environment. This section includes analysis of slum neighbourhood, earning and schooling and impact of mass media. Finally we deal with the policy on crime and delinquency control.

14.2 CRIME AND INTERACTION

Whenever people get together to satisfy individual and group needs, they set limits and make rules to regulate behaviour. Wherever there have been rules and regulations, there have also been individuals who have not followed the permitted conduct.

Every society, in the process of growth, develops certain values and norms for expected behaviour. Some of these norms later get codified into laws. Their violations become punishable by the state.

The term 'crime' means a form of anti-social behaviour that violates public sentiment to such an extent that is forbidden by law. A crime is an act which the public regards as dangerous and condemns and punishes the perpetrator of such an act. Crime thus represents a specialised portion of the totality of undesirable behaviour.

There is a large field of unethical conduct which is not punishable by law. Such behaviour is left to the control of the public. The borderline between crime and unethical or immoral behaviour is little. Acts which in some countries are regarded as crimes, are viewed as only unethical in others. Only when such practices are considered dangerous enough to call for legislative action, they do qualify to be called crimes in any society. For example buying or selling liquor may be a crime in one state in India while it is not the same in other states. Excessive drinking, though considered unacceptable will not be a legal wrong, where drinking liquor is otherwise permitted. Failure to honour one's parents will be unethical but not a legal wrong i.e., crime.

14.2.1 Juvenile Delinquency

A crime is termed "juvenile delinquency" when committed by a young person under a certain age. The age of the juvenile delinquent is not consistently set around the world. In India, this age limit is set at **16 years for boys and 18 years for girls**. The other aspect in case of young persons is that there are certain behaviour which would not be considered criminal in nature if committed by adults, but they will be taken note of as crime if committed by youth. For example, a person below the age of 16 years who:

- i) is uncontrollable by his parents or guardians by reason of being wayward or by being habitually disobedient.
- ii) Habitually plays truant from school
- iii) Lives without ostensible means of subsistence
- iv) Habitually behaves in such a way as to endanger the morale or health of himself/herself.

All these types of juvenile delinquents can be dealt with by the police and courts.

14.2.2 Crime and Delinquency

Ever since society was organized and the codes of conduct were formulated, there have always been individuals who have violated these codes. Always, and everywhere, some juveniles and many adults have flouted the patterns of permitted behaviour. The increase in such behaviour has reached alarming proportions. These unlawful activities have become intolerable in many part of the world. In comparison, we in India may be considered somewhat fortunate. However, in absolute terms the loss of life, property, and the pain inflicted is reaching quite serious dimensions.

These days, on an average, **one** person is murdered every seventeen minutes. **Twenty seven** females are raped every day. A riot takes place every five minutes and **forty-seven** persons are kidnapped or abducted every day. A robbery or dacoity is committed every sixteen minutes and three hundred and fifty three houses are broken into and burgled every day. And one theft takes place every minute and a half. The value of property stolen annually is in the range of three hundred and thirty five crores of rupees of which only about 1/3 is recovered by the police.

When we consider Indian Penal Code offences (like murder, rape, kidnapping, abduction, riot, robbery, burglary, theft, cheating, etc.), little more than twenty three lakh persons were arrested by the police during 1989. Additionally, there were about forty lakh persons arrested for offences under the Local and Special Laws like Prohibition Act, Gambling Act, Excise Act, Indian Railways Act, Immoral Traffic Prevention Act, Narcotics Act, etc. Out of these total arrests of sixty three lakh persons, juveniles accounted for about thirty six thousand —24,777 boys and 11,615 girls.

14.3 DARK FIGURES IN CRIME AND DELINQUENCY

Given below are the statistics from official records (Crime in India) but actually how many persons violate the legal norms in a given society, nobody can say for sure. Many authorities believe that official crime and delinquency figures reveal nothing more than the activities of control his agents, hardly anything at all about the “real” extent of criminal behaviour. Nonetheless, howsoever imperfect these may be, crime known to the police remains the best available index since it represents crimes reported to the police by citizens, or crimes discovered by them.

Table 1: Crime in India at a Glance

Incidence of Total Crimes in (00,000)	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	1997	1998	1999	2000
Total	N.A.	N.A	38.6	39.3	50.5	64.1	61.8	49.1	51.6
IPC	6.5	6.3	9.5	13.9	16.8	17.2	17.8	17.6	17.7
SLL	NA	NA	29.1	25.4	33.7	46.9	44.0	31.5	33.9
Rate*									
Total	NA	NA	701.1	569.8	594.3	671.2	636.7	497.8	515.7
IPC	NA	16.2	26.8	61.0	12.6	7.9	9.4	8.9	9.3
SLL	NA	NA	142.8	97.7	22.1	4.4	6.0	5.6	5.6
Incidence of Juvenile Crimes in ('000)									
Total	NA	NA	169.6	158.7	34.7	12.3	15.4	14.5	14.9
IPC	NA	16.2	26.8	61.0	12.6	7.9	9.4	8.9	9.3
SLL	NA	NA	142.8	97.7	22.1	4.4	6.0	5.6	5.6
Rate*									
Total	NA	NA	30.8	23.2	4.1	1.3	1.6	1.5	1.4
IPC	NA	3.7	4.9	8.9	1.5	0.8	1.0	0.9	0.9
SLL	NA	NA	25.9	14.3	2.6	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.5
Decennial Crime Growth									
Total	NA	NA	NA	1.8	28.4	28.3	18.7	-8.7	5.5
IPC	NA	-3.1	50.8	46.3	21.1	22.2	23.5	15.3	10.4
SLL	NA	NA	NA	-12.7	32.4	30.7	16.9	-18.2	3.1
Police Strength (in '00,'000)(Actual)									
Total	NA	NA	7.07	8.98	11.53	12.80	13.1	13.2	13.0
Civil	NA	NA	5.34	6.92	9.04	9.90	10.2	10.3	10.3
Armed	NA	NA	1.73	2.06	2.49	2.90	2.9	2.9	2.7
Decennial Police Growth	NA	NA	—	27.0	28.4	20.8	23.3	17.7	15.1
Density of Police Personnel (Per 100 Sq. kms.)	NA	NA	—	27.3	35.1	40.4	41.5	41.8	41.0
Police Strength (Per 1,00,000 Population)	NA	NA	129	131	136	134	135	134	129

* -Incidence per lakh (1.00.000) of population

NA – Stands for Not Available.

Population figures for non-census years are based on mid year provided by RGI office.

Table 2: Crime Snapshots - 2000

- 17.2 lakhs IPC crimes; 34.0 lakhs SLL crimes reported during the year, 0.4 per cent increase in IPC crimes; 7.9 per cent increase in SLL (Special and Local Laws) crimes over 1999.
- 1.2% decrease in IPC crime rate, 6.2 per cent increase in SLL crime rate over last year.
- 3 IPC crimes, 6 SLL crimes reported on an average in 1 minute in the country.
- Among States, Rajasthan, Jammu & Kashmir and Assam were more violent compared to West Bengal, Punjab and Sikkim which reported low violent crime rate.
- NCT of Delhi reported highest crime rate (399.0) for all IPC crimes, 2.3 times the national crime rate of 176.7. The frequency of Violent Crimes in Delhi was comparatively lower (one case in 13 reported IPC crimes) compared to Tripura which reported 1 violent crime in 3 IPC crimes against National Average of 1:7.
- 6300 per cent increase in Importation of girls, 70.7 per cent in Counterfeiting, 24.5 per cent in Sexual Harassment cases.
- Punjab reported 1900 per cent increase in Sexual Harassment while Karnataka reported 746 per cent increase in Counterfeiting cases.
- Bangalore reported more than half (53.1) of Cheating cases among all cities.
- 79.0 per cent IPC cases were investigated and 78.4 per cent of them were charge sheeted. 18.3 per cent cases tried, 41.8 of them resulted in convictions.
- 30.7 per cent of trials completed within 1 to 3 years, 24.2 per cent completed between 3 to 5 years.
- Pondicherry reported the highest conviction rate for IPC crimes (91.9 per cent) as compared to national level rate 41.8
- 67.4 per cent Conviction in 'Sexual Harassment' cases followed by 48.1 per cent in 'Auto Theft' cases.
- 0.5 per cent share of Juvenile crimes to total IPC crimes increased by 4.3 per cent over 1999.
- Uttar Pradesh reported 20.7 per cent of Murder cases while 40 per cent of the victims of Murder by firearms belonged to Bihar state.
- On an average, 1.5 arrests per IPC case.
- 4.1 per cent increase in Crimes against Women. Highest crime incidence in Uttar Pradesh (14.0%); highest crime rate in Rajasthan (24.0) as compared to 14.1 at All-India.
- 960 per cent increase in cases of Buying of Girls for Prostitution, 49.2 per cent increase in Foeticide cases over 1999.
- 62.5 per cent of Importation of girls cases reported from Bihar State.
- In 87.4 per cent of Rape cases, Offenders were known to the victims; 30 per cent of these were neighbours.

- 19.3 per cent; Crime against Children; highest in Madhya Pradesh.
- 33.7 per cent of Child victims of Kidnapping and Abduction (upto 10 years age) belonged to N.C.T. of Delhi.
- 28.8 per cent; highest share in Crime against Scheduled Caste in Uttar Pradesh; 44.0 per cent, highest share highest in Crime against Scheduled Tribes in Madhya Pradesh.
- 1:7 national average ratio of Police Officers (ASI and above) to the subordinate Staff (Head Constables and Constables)
- Only 38.6 per cent of police force provided with the housing facility by the Government
- Only 5.9 per cent of lost/recovered motor vehicles co-ordinated.
- 11 per cent decline in Police fatalities; Accidents claim 56 per cent of them. Almost half (46.5%) of the deceased were young (18-35 years).
- 111 serving Police Officials committed suicide.

Source : National Crime Record Bureau 2001 Crimes in India. Ministry of Home Affairs Government of India.

14.3.1 Police Reports

While the crimes discovered by police will depend on its efficiency, there are many reasons why people may be reluctant to report to the police. Some of these are :

- i) the offence may be trivial
- ii) the police station may be far away
- iii) the low confidence people have in the various features of the legal system (police, prosecution, courts, etc.)
- iv) the fear of harassment from the criminal or his associates
- v) the offence may be of embarrassing nature to the victim (sex offences)
- vi) especially in juvenile cases, neighbours may adjust payment for property damage with the parents of the offending child; storekeepers may stop a young shoplifter as he leaves the store and relieve him of stolen articles; many more types of delinquencies may be ignored by the observers, even by the victims, as a part of the process of growing up.

The phenomenon of 'hidden crime and delinquency' becomes more complex when we examine the results of 'self-report' studies. Though no such efforts seem to have been made in our country, in the West, researchers interviewed in confidence 'normal' school and college students about their deviant activities. The results showed that their behaviour was not very significantly different from those proportion of training-school youth admitted, to committing many types of delinquencies. They committed them more frequently than the school and college boys and girls.

Socio-economic levels were no barriers to such behaviours, although the 'official cases' were disproportionately from the lower strata. This should be understandable since the socio-economic status of the family has an important bearing on whether the offending youth will be arrested, convicted and

institutionalised, or treated otherwise. This may also confirm the memories many of us have of our own adolescent activities. Informal inquiry among one's classmates, friends, or guests at get-togethers, ordinarily brings out plenty of information about the occurrences in 'good' families of stealing, shoplifting, assault on friends, robbing the garden or throwing stones at passing trains, etc. For this sort of conduct they could have been arrested had there been anyone concerned enough to report it.

14.3.2 Causative Factors in Crime

What causes juvenile delinquency or adult crime? There is no simple or straightforward answer available. Although criminal behaviour sometimes has its roots in juvenile delinquency, many juvenile delinquents do not become criminals as adults. Further, many criminals have no prior history of juvenile delinquency. However, the range of offences, motivations and associated causative factors are much the same in both delinquency and crime and it may be appropriate to discuss them together.

Activity 1

Collect clippings on crime from the newspapers and magazines for four weeks. What do these clipping suggest regarding the cause(s) of crime? Write a note of about two pages on this and compare it with other student in the Study Centre.

What impels some people—children, women and men to break social sanction or any law? Efforts have been made by a number of writers and researchers to understand the factors involved and they have discovered many : physical, emotional, psychological and environmental. According to a renowned authority it has not been possible to assign a single universal source nor even two or three. Crime flows out of a wide variety of sources and usually from a multiplicity of alternative and converging influences. In all, about 170 distinct conditions have been encountered, every one of them conducive to misconduct which may lead to juvenile delinquency or crime in a few years. In any given case, amid all accessory factors, some single circumstance (or a few of them) frequently stands out as the most prominent.

Box 14.01

Without contending that they will inevitably cause delinquency or crime, it is now accepted that certain conditions are more favourable to this causation than others. For example, physical deformity, mental imbalance, mental deficiency, emotional insecurity, a slum environmental stimulation to crime, etc., are obviously more favourable to anti-social behaviour than their opposites. It is also true that any or all of these unfavourable conditions will not inevitably drive a given person to commit a crime in all circumstances. It is true that all seemingly favourable circumstances are no insurance against a person committing a crime. Hidden factors that tip the scale either way can never be eliminated from specific situations by all the theories of causation in the world.

In this sort of perplexing situation then, what we can say, at best, is that the area of unknown regarding human behaviour is quite substantial though some personal factors and some common social and economic conditions go hand in hand with the committing of crime and delinquency. And the impact of

these factors, and their varying combinations, differ greatly from one individual to another. In some cases the factors responsible may be more personal than environmental, whereas in other cases the reverse may be true.

Check Your Progress 1

1) What is juvenile delinquency? Explain in about five lines.

.....

2) Explain the causative factors in crime. Use about five lines for your answer.

.....

14.4 INNATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Let us now discuss the innate characteristics and environmental factors in some detail. Personal pathology consisting of physical factors like poor health, chronic diseases, physical deformities may cause an inferiority complex and impel the individual to seek for short-cuts to compete in this competitive world. Mental factors like low intelligence, neurotic or psychotic disorders may lead to exploitation or compulsive actions or deviant sexual gratification. There is the possibility of prolonged emotional and social withdrawal, the frustration culminating in an outburst of violent behaviour.

The emotionally mature individual is one who has learned to control his emotions effectively, and who lives at peace with himself and in harmony with the standards of conduct which are acceptable to the group. Many authorities believe that delinquency and criminality are the result of serious emotional imbalance or conflicts in personalities of individuals. They are at odds with the values and mores of their groups and typically offend the sensibilities of those closest to them. Thus, from the psychological point of view, individual exhibits a distorted personality; his personal whims are largely responsible for his antisocial behaviour and he is alienated from those in his immediate social environment.

14.4.1 Reality Versus Fantasy

Stated somewhat differently, since few persons have a completely satisfactory set of experiences from birth onward, or find life entirely to their liking in adulthood, the great majority of normal human beings create for themselves a

realm of fantasy in which they realise aspirations denied to them in actual life. But in all these normal cases reality occupies the leading role in their life interests and activities. On the other hand, those with emotional disturbances are unable to face reality, resulting in mental conflicts. Their life experiences, childhood onwards, might have been such that they have created mental reaction patterns that make it very difficult for them to meet adult responsibilities. They may have suffered from insecurity, rejection, severe resentment, harsh living conditions, professional failures, and a large number of other unfortunate experiences. This may make it extremely difficult for them to face realities of life and they get into conflict with law.

Physical abnormalities as mentioned earlier and many personality problems of children and adults are developed by physical handicaps or other such abnormalities. Short stature, skin blemishes, oversized ears, obesity, to refer to a few, are likely to cause serious personality or emotional difficulties in social relationships among those afflicted. They are usually avoided in social contacts and find themselves at a disadvantage in marriage opportunities, in securing employment, and in numerous other ways. The pent-up resentment may become acute and compensatory behaviour develops, in such a manner that various forms of alienation result. A youth may compensate for his feeling of inferiority by becoming a daring robber; one may get very angry and hit back his actual or imaginary tormentors. But we must not forget, however, that quite a majority of persons thus afflicted make an adequate adjustment in their world. This is particularly true of those who have grown through childhood with a set of understanding parents and friends who have not rejected them.

14.4.2 Health and Disease

As regards poor health or chronic diseases, we do experience that persons who are ill (or fatigued, for that matter) often are irritable, unreasonable, and less controlled in their behaviour than usual. Feeble minded persons and probably more easily led to crime and delinquency because they have less ability to think critically and very often cannot make satisfactory decisions and govern their conduct accordingly. Any mental disease condition which alters the individual's judgement or capacity for self-restraint will affect his behaviour which may take absurd, dangerous, or antisocial directions. Sex murders, arson, compulsive thieving (kleptomania) are instances of crimes which involve a neurotic element.

14.5 ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS IN THE FAMILY

There can no doubt be personal factors in every delinquency or crime situation in which an individual disobeys a law. But there are also social, economic and community factors commonly termed as environmental factors, which are important in stimulating antisocial activity. We usually think of the environment as merely the more apparent factors in the life of an individual—his neighborhood, the house he lives in, his family life, his school or workplace, and the interactions he has with his friends. These are of course part of the environment. But as a scientific concept, environment must include every stimulus that impinges on the individual's structure from the moment of conception—the moment the new life begins. The environment is represented

by every possible interaction between the individual and every other individual with whom he comes in contact. His reading, the motion pictures (even posters!), the radio, television—all are a potent part of the environment.

14.5.1 The Family

We may discuss environmental factors in two parts—‘within the family’ and outside the family’. Of course, these two cannot be put into separate compartment since there is a constant interplay among their influences on each other, on the one hand, and on the physical, mental and emotional states of the individual, on the other.

Family is the first crucial group in the life of the child. No one can say at birth that a child will inevitable become a delinquent nor can it be said that it will inevitably remain a law-abiding individual. Family is the first agency to nurture a child’s social and personal growth. Within the family lie tremendous forces for producing or presenting antisocial behaviour. This is because it has almost exclusive contact with the child during the period of greatest dependency, which lasts several years. From a warm, loving, stable family, the child learns that people are friendly, worth knowing, and can be depended upon. When a family is cold, rejecting, or neglectful, the child learns distrust, hostility, or hatred of people.

‘Under-the-roof’ family situation and relationships can have many ‘interacting’ aspects. These are involved in the formation of a cumulative atmosphere, which may affect the behaviour of the child one way or the other. Take for example the broken home, which may have been caused by death, desertion, or divorce/separation. Mother and father are generally considered two wheels of a family cart which cannot move smoothly when either of them is removed or relations between them are damaged. There is a strong belief that broken family tends to rear children with sick personalities. Sick personalities have unusual difficulty conforming to social rules. A number of investigators have pointed towards the high incidence of structural breaks in the family backgrounds of delinquent youths.

14.5.2 Structural Breaks in Family

Structural break in the family, except in case of death, is always seen to be receded by daily parental quarrels. Much tension and disruption of peaceful living have quite a traumatic effect on the children. In some circumstances, the break in the family may, at times, improve the home atmosphere. Thus, the interpersonal conditions of family relationships are very important. In disharmonious families, children too often get ‘pushed’ from home because of these disturbances. They have to seek outside contacts for resolving feelings of insecurity and frustration, rather than being ‘pulled’ by outside attractions.

Through the years, perhaps, one of the most frequently heard causes of delinquency and crime is parental inadequacy, in their role of bringing up children. Socialisation is the process through which the child becomes aware of the basic values of his society and acquires the attitudes characteristic of it. Early family training influences strongly the inculcation of these values. The growing child must learn which action is permitted, which prohibited, and why. It must learn how to get along with others, children and adults. Depending upon the patterns of disciplining and guiding and also the role models at home,

the child will learn to handle the pressures and responsibilities of growing up inside and outside the home.

Mother nature, not doubt, has helped a lot by providing, in most instances, an affectionate bond between parents and the child. However affection alone is not enough to influence the conduct of children in a wholesome way. Affection has to be backed up by consistent control and appropriate disciplining efforts. When the parents are inconsistent in behaviour the child feels very insecure. This is because he or she never knows how his parents are going to react to what he does. He or She finds that they are at times angry, sometimes interested and other times disinterested, he or she is completely confused. His or Her problems are still more when each parent reacts in a completely contradictory manner, or when one condones, and the other punishes with undue harshness.

14.5.3 Child Care and Delinquency

Working mothers have often been blamed on the assumption that a young child needs the mother's constant attention to assure its proper emotional and physical development. This becomes very difficult when she is away for a substantial part of the day and returns with nervous and physical exhaustion. Additionally, in adolescent years when supervision becomes more essential, maternal employment reduces its effectively thereby unduly exposing them to unhealthy influences. However, the evidence available does not conclusively show significant relationship between delinquency and the mother being at work. What is important is not the employment of the mother but the lack of supervision. If the mother remains at home but does not keep track of her child he/she is far more likely to become delinquent than if she is away but has made arrangement for supervision by an acceptable substitute. Actually, a working mother's economic contribution can be an integrating and stabilising influence in the family. It may mean a desire for providing greater family security, continued education of children, a summer vacation, or any of a number of things thought to be of benefit to all members of the family.

14.5.4 Poverty in the Family

Poverty in the family has been another popular explanation advanced as a cause of unsocial conduct. It is true that in a great majority of apprehended children, the economic status of the family has always been found to be low. Our data also indicates that about two-thirds of them are from families which had monthly income of up to Rs.500/= and only 4 per cent belongs to families which had income of Rs.2000/= and above. But it is also true that the majority of the poor children do not become offenders. There are far more honest than dishonest poor people. Conditions of affluence are no sure guarantee against law violations by youth as well as by adults. Had that been so, the higher standard of living in the western world should have reduced their delinquency and crime rates. It has not only not reduced them but increased them!

Paradoxically, the trend towards increasing equality in the distribution of consumer goods generates expectations of further equality. And when expectations are raising faster than the standard of living, the greater availability of consumer goods makes for greater, dissatisfaction. In other words, many crimes may be traced to economic causes. However, it is not correct that most of those who committed the offence were driven to do it by hunger. It is the envy and ambition rather than hunger and cold that stimulate many petty crimes,

in the same way that greed urges on the big-time criminals. It is not the lack of clothing, but expensive clothing that tempts hundreds of girls to become call girls. Actually, it is not always the poverty but the contrast that is the disturbing element.

Check Your Progress 2

Fill in the blanks.

- 1) Amongst the important factors in delinquency and crime are the and the.....factors.
- 2) What are the environmental factors within the family? What effect do breaks within it have on crime and delinquency? Use 7 to 10 lines for your answer.

14.6 SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Under the above heading we will briefly consider three main factors :

- i) slums or neighbourhoods that are quite low on socio-economic scale;
- ii) preparation for honest earning through schooling, and
- iii) the components of mass-media like newspapers or magazines, radio, television, and films.

14.6.1 Slum Neighbourhoods

With many people flocking to towns and cities housing has become a problem. Slums have grown to accommodate those who were shelterless, unemployed, low salaried, etc. Crime rates are higher in these deprived sections because it is here that life is not disorganised. There are extra pressures to make a living. People in slums also want the same good things that they see others enjoying. They find that they cannot get them honestly, often because of lack of education or opportunity. This situation creates frustration and tensions, and some of them develop an indifference to law, and do not see the necessity of obeying it. Many times crime becomes an accepted way of life, an alternative to the honest work which seems unavailable or out of reach, although it may be reorganised as desirable and preferable. They are also exposed to undesirable models around, those crooks who make good money through illegal means and appear respected in the locality, nonetheless. Crime and delinquency thus become attractive, but one again we can only see an indirect relationship. Thousands of people living in substandard homes do manage somehow to remain away from unlawful activities.

14.6.2 Earning and Schooling

Besides equipping the child to learn the skills to later earn a living, education means development of personality. Through education the child is supposed to be introduced to ideals and higher types of men who can cater to refinement and broader mental outlook. Generally speaking, middle-class families place a high value on ambition, on getting ahead. Academic achievement and the acquisition of skills that have long-range economic pay-offs are highly appreciated. They socialise their children to struggle hard, exercise self-control and postpone gratifications, and to plan for the future. In the poor class family children are withdrawn from school because family needs the economic aid of the child. He or she may also be needed to take care of the siblings in the absence of the mother while on work. Dropping out may mean more leisure. More free time may mean diminishing adult supervision as well as increased scope for developing undesirable associates

14.6.3 Negative Impact of Mass Media

There is a growing concern these days that the mass media which undoubtedly inform, educate and entertain have also become a source of contamination. It is frequently alleged that newspapers, film magazines, and comics, radio television and movies have been exerting an unhealthy influence, particularly on children. Sensational reports of criminal activity in newspapers by detailing the modus operandi (i.e., types and techniques), can affect readers in two different and dangerous ways. It may affect some highly suggestible persons, among whom are many young people, to commit similar crimes. Or it may create an attitude of indifference to law and asorder through the constant repetition and exaggeration of the details of the crimes. Motion pictures dealing with rime quite often show that it is easy to lie without working legitimately. They show that crime is exiting, even though it may not pay in the long run.

They indicate that there are methods of erading the law, at least in the early parts of the film. Young girls find from many movies that love can be thrilling, that good clothes make the woman. There are many scenes which are titilating sexually. Television has grown in importance and is reaching more and more home. Not that T.V. is objected to wholesale—the prime culprits are those films and programmes loaded with vice. Such violence or vulgarity are allegedly said to induce viewers to raping, prostitution, robbery, assault or murder.

Activity 2

Watch two or three commercial movies on T.V. or in the theater. What distinguishes the criminal (villain) from the hero in the movie? Do both break the law? Then why are they separated so far as their social status and meting out of legal punishment is concerned?

Write two pages for your answer and compare these notes with other students in the Study Centre.

In a country like ours where literacy rate is quite low, the impact of radio on general attitude and approaches to behaviour can be much more potent than the published material. However, what is objected to in radio programmes are generally the crime dramas and advertising of films with violence themes, especially the sponsored programmes by producer/distributors.

Many authorities, believe that mass media has been made too much of a scapegoat for the deteriorating delinquency and crime problems. Occasionally a person states that he got the idea for a crime from a newspaper account of the activities of another criminal. But the publicity given to the modus operandi of the criminal may make the public more aware of the techniques of such activities because sooner or later police do catch the offender. About the radio, television and films it is contended that millions of people, both young and not so young, listen or view these programmes. It would be absurd to state that most of them are adversely affected. It will mostly depend on the type of person who is listening or viewing their output. Stable people, juveniles and adults, will be little affected since such influence is transient. The unstable and socially maladjusted may be somewhat affected. However, because of this unidentifiable segment of population harsh controls should not be placed on the mass media. Mass communication media have become quite important in the present times for providing information and education as well as entertainment. The freedom of expression is quite a sensitive subject for democracies.

14.6.4 Poverty and Low Income

The vast majority of those arrested and convicted belong to poor economic status. We must bear in mind that they have no one to come between them—the police and courts, when the law is broken. They lack resources and the police as well as other law enforcing authorities are more severe on them. In actual terms the administrative processes of law enforcement are seen to be quite favourable to person in economic comfort. If two persons on different economic levels, have committed the same offence, the one on the lower level is more likely to be arrested, and convicted.

It will have to be accepted that the economic factors are quite important. Poverty can engender antisocial activities in many indirect ways. Unsatisfactory human relations have been frequently seen to emanate from destitution and poverty. The feelings of inadequacy, and emotional insecurity play their part upon the inner life of potential offenders. Poverty does cause undernourishment and poor physical health which, in turn, may lead to a lowered mental resistance to temptation. Poverty-stricken families have very little choice in the selection of residential locality. Usually they live in chawls or **jhugi-jhopadies** where living conditions are congested, playgrounds are either few or altogether absent. Here the living space is too small to afford the comfort and privacy required for the development of self-respecting personalities.

Evidently, because of poverty and poor circumstances, the options of the children get severely limited. In families, generally larger than the average, with little living space and inadequate facilities, the children are driven to seek their recreations on the streets. The daily budgeting battle, often giving rise to frayed tempers between husband and wife, when there is very little money to provide for the minimum basic necessities of food, clothing, education, etc., impose extraordinary strains on the family. The parents in such situations can take little or no interest in their children, although they have affection for them. Further, because of lack of money, very often the reasonable demands of school going children are mocked at and education suffers.

However, as mentioned earlier, we cannot say that environment of poverty

makes every one delinquent or criminal since there are plenty of people who come from such surroundings and remain law-abiding. But poverty does different things to different people. For some its pressures can be among the important causes of antisocial behaviour.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Tick the right answer.
 - a) Slum neighbourhoods have a bad effect on crime rates making them rise higher.
 - b) Slum neighbourhoods have a good effect on crime rates making them go down.

- 2) What is the impact of mass media on crime? Use about five lines for your answer.

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14.7 POLICY ON CRIME AND DELINQUENCY CONTROL

Adult crime and juvenile delinquency are not present day phenomena : they have always existed and always will. What is possible is that their extent can be controlled. If one talks in terms of wider origins of criminal behaviour, one has to think of human nature which contains these impulses, and we require a set of restraining institutions, for internal as well as external controls. When the family, the school, the local community are not operating effectively or are disrupted, these impulses are likely to get a free play. Again, when the agencies or criminal justice system are inadequate or ineffective, some people get freed from moral sensibilities. More and better law enforcement, more and better prepared policemen and the application of men and scientific methods of crime detection are at least partial answers to the problems of crime and delinquency. If detections are almost certain, court proceedings swift and punishments appropriate, it is possible that many a person would avoid criminal behaviour. Also, there is abundant need to strike at poverty and its related ills to reduce that problem. Family relationships require strengthening and children should have wholesome and constructive outlets for play. They should be kept away from forming undesirable habits and companionships. Though it is not guaranteed, it can be said that the more opportunities for wholesome use of leisure in childhood, the less likelihood there is of indulgence in delinquency.

Concurrently, we will need to deal with those found guilty in a manner that they are helped to improve their conduct through counseling, education and furthering occupational skills so that they do not offend again. These intentions are being translated into action through the correctional institutions—children’s

institutions, brothels, and prisons—as well as through non-institutional processes of probation, parole/license, and aftercare. However, much more inputs of qualified men and adequate material resources are required if we have to achieve substantial gains in reforming and rehabilitating juvenile delinquents and adult criminals.

14.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed crime and delinquency. We started our discussion with crime and interaction, juvenile delinquency, crime and delinquency. We turned next to the dark figures in crime and delinquency. Beyond this we examined the environmental factors involved in crime and delinquency. These include the perception of the divide between reality and fantasy, and the facts of health and disease. The environmental factors discussed include family structure, breaks in family structures, childcare and delinquency and so on. We have also discussed the environment around the family, e.g. slum neighbourhoods and impact of mass media. Finally we turned to policy on crime and delinquency control.

14.9 KEY WORDS

Dark Figures	:	Figure or statistics which have not come to light.
Delinquency	:	A violation of norms and values often amounting to a crime.
Environmental	:	This could be within the family or outside it. The first is family environment of the family, e.g. slums.
Innate	:	That which is within a thing, or inherent to it, e.g. an innate talent for mathematics.
Slum	:	A very poor semi-permanent type of colony housing for very poor people.

14.10 FURTHER READINGS

Cavan, R.S. and T.N. Ferdinand, 1975. *Juvenile Delinquency*. J.B. Lippincott: Philadelphia.

Sarkar, C. 1987. *Juvenile Delinquency in India*, Daya Publishing House : Delhi.

14.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Juvenile delinquency is a crime which is committed by a young person under a certain age. This juvenile delinquent age is not the same all over the world. In India this age is set at 16 for boys and 18 for girls.
- 2) The causation of juvenile delinquency is not a simple or straightforward set of facts. However physical, emotional, psychological and environmental factors are very important causes for such crime.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) 'innate' and 'environmental'.
- 2) Family is the most influential group within which a person operates. When a family is friendly and warm it has a good influence. When it is cold rejecting and neglectful, the child begins to distrust and hate people. Structural breaks imply disharmony (quarrels) or imbalance (death of parents or one parent). Such parental inadequacy is a major reason for juvenile delinquency.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) a)
- 2) Mass media which has a very powerful informative role to perform, can also be a source of contamination. Sensational reporting, with details of the crime can affect suggestible young people to commit the crime. Movies can show that crime pays. Many crimes including rape and robbery have been influenced by mass media.