Group Project & Presentation

CRIM 320
George Mason University

Fall 2017

What's The Point?

The group project requires you to work together to apply the concepts you have learned about crime problems at places, the theories and research on why they happen, and what we can do about them to a real-life situation. The goal is for you to experience how the class concepts can be applied in real life by criminal justice practitioners like the police to make decisions about how to prevent crime.

We will be collaborating with the WMATA (DC Metro Transit Police) for this project. They have asked us to help them figure out how they can address crime problems in several hot spots in Sector 27 of the police department, which covers Metro stations and bus routes in Southeast Washington DC. Sector 27 experiences about one-third of all the crime that happens in the department, even though it only accounts for about 150 square miles of about 1,800 in total across the whole service area. The six metro stations on the Green Line in this area account for about half of the crime in the sector. The police department needs your help to figure out how environmental features contribute to these problems and how they can be addressed!

The group project meets the following CRIM 320 course objectives:

- Demonstrate how place is relevant to crime and crime prevention
- Synthesize knowledge about place-based theories and strategies to evaluate topical issues and recommend appropriate solutions

What Do We Need To Do?

You have been assigned to a group of 5 students and will receive a package of real crime data and statistics from one of the Metro stations (3 groups will work on one of 3 different Metro stations). Your group will follow a defined problem-solving process to identify a specific crime problem in the station or an area around the station (including bus routes), apply theories you have learned in class to consider why that crime problem happens and which specific risk factors at the station are driving the problem, and then develop place-based strategies to reduce

or prevent the crime problem. You will develop a logic model (see Logic Model on page 3) and then present your work to the instructor, class, and representatives from Metro Transit Police at the end of the semester.

You will also write a short briefing paper (approximately 3 pages) describing your problem-solving process and outcomes. Each individual student will turn in one of these papers at the end of the semester. Specific instructions for the paper will follow in a separate document.

Your group will follow this five-step process to build your logic model:[1]

1. What's the problem? Use the crime statistics and other information (e.g. information from the WMATA website, visits to the station—PLEASE LET ME KNOW IN ADVANCE IF YOU PLAN TO VISIT THE STATION) to identify and state a crime problem. You should be specific; for example, "75% of the crimes at Anacostia Station are pickpocket thefts committed by juveniles" rather than just "There is lots of pickpocketing." If you can, see if the data tell you anything about what is being stolen.

You might notice multiple "problems" when you look at the data. I **strongly recommend** that you choose just one or two to focus on. You will not have time to talk about multiple problems, theories, and solutions.

2. Why is this a problem? (local risk factors) Use the theories of crime at place you have learned in class to think about how we can explain the problem in a general sense. For example, what does theory tell us about the problem of pickpocketing by juveniles? You could draw from routine activities and crime pattern theory to think about why targets are vulnerable at this station, or use collective efficacy and social disorganization theories to think about why kids in this area don't have anything better to do. Once you have a sense of what theories apply, think about why it is happening at this specific station. Is it something about the design of the station? Poor place management? Easy for kids to walk around unsupervised or hide? Be creative!

Again, you might find that multiple theories explain your problem(s), so make sure you focus only on what you can present in 15-20 minutes.

3. What can we do about it? (strategy/solution) Use information from your classes on prevention of crime at place to come up with an effective strategy to deal with your risk factors and reduce the problem. This could involve situational crime prevention measures, policing, criminal justice responses, or community-based responses that build collective efficacy (remember, the station is a kind of community, and it's based within a community or neighborhood!).

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[1]This process is adapted from the Strategic Prevention Framework, a problem-solving process used in the field of community-based drug prevention. We have adapted it specifically for place-based crime prevention as part of a Bureau of Justice Assistance-funded research project in Seattle (Grant # 2012-AJ-BX-0006). It's a similar idea to the SARA model of problem-oriented policing we'll learn about in this class.

4. Why do we think it will work? (mechanism of effectiveness) Here you link your proposed solution to your risk factors and local conditions. For example, if you are proposing a situational crime prevention response, the "25 Techniques" will help you figure out why your solution will work (for example, does it remove temptation, increase effort, etc.?). Think about whether your solution works by increasing guardianship or place management, building collective efficacy, providing positive activities for youth, and so on.

5. What is our expected outcome? If you were to measure the effect of your strategy at the station, what results would you expect to see? This will likely be obvious as it should relate back to your original problem. So in my example, you would hopefully expect to see a reduction in pickpocketing by juveniles. But other strategies might have a wider effect, such as reducing crime in general or increasing feelings of safety or passengers' trust in the police. In your presentation you should also briefly mention any potential unintended consequences like displacement, cost of redesigning the station, or negative effects on the community (but no need to put this in the logic model, which is just supposed to show the intended benefits).

Logic Model
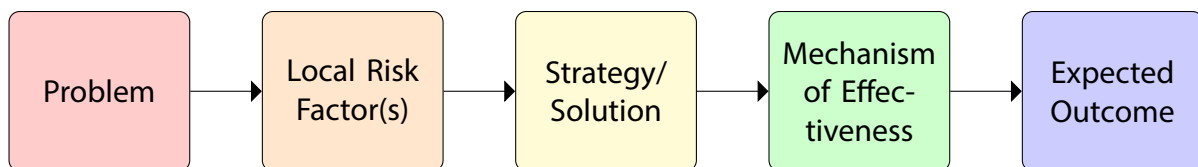
A note on logic models: your model should be "logically consistent," which means that your "local risk factors" should match your problem, your "strategy/solution" should be directly relevant to the problem and risk factors, and your outcome should relate back to the problem (i.e., if you are trying to reduce juvenile pickpocketing, your outcome should be reduced juvenile pickpocketing not just reduced crime). See page 7 for a sample logic model. The sample is color coded like the one above so you can easily identify the problem, risk factors, etc.

Grading and Expectations

The group project and final paper are worth up to **240 points** toward your final grade. Points will be assigned as follows:

Group Contract (20 points). During class on September 21, you will be assigned to your group and will work with your team members to develop a group contract. The template for this contract is available on page 8. Please fill out your responses to each question and turn in one copy with each group member's signature. Each group member who signs the contract will receive 20 points toward the assignment.

Project Outline and Logic Model (25 points). Your project outline should include your draft logic model, a description of the structure of your presentation (e.g. headings for each slide—your content does not have to be complete at this stage), and a brief description of each student's contribution to the work so far. This should be typed up in Word or PowerPoint and submitted to Blackboard by November 3 (there will be opportunities to work on this together in class). I will provide feedback within a week so that you can make adjustments to your final presentation. Each student in the group will receive 25 points when a completed outline is turned in; however, points may be deducted from individuals if their contribution is not clear.

Participation (50 points). Group members will rate their own contribution to the project as well as their teammates' contributions using the participation grading sheet on page 10. Each group member can receive up to 50 points for participating in the project. This sheet must be returned to Dr. Gill during the class in which your group presents. It's very important that each group member contributes to the best of his or her ability to avoid losing points! The final paper score is weighted according to your participation points, and you may lose points elsewhere if you don't contribute to the project.

PowerPoint (25 points). Each group member will receive 25 points when the final PowerPoint slides are turned in. These are due no later than the day before your presentation. Points may be deducted from individuals if their contribution to the PowerPoint is not clear.

Presentation (50 points). Points for the presentation itself will be assigned by Dr. Gill according to the rubric on page 11. Each group member will receive up to 50 points for the presentation; however, points may be deducted if a group member does not contribute to the project. All group members are expected to attend the presentation, even if they do not speak. Points may be deducted for non-attendance.

Peer Evaluation (20 points). In addition to the instructor's rating, other students in the class will have an opportunity to evaluate the presentations. Students will fill out the form on page 12. All students are expected to attend the two final presentation classes and fill out a peer evaluation form; those who do will receive 5 points per class in place of the 5-minute paper.

Final Paper (50 points). Instructions and grading rubric for the final paper will be provided in a separate document later in the semester. Each student must work independently on this paper. Points for the final paper will be weighted according to your participation points. For example, if you got the highest possible points for the paper (50 points or 100%) but you only got 40 out of 50 points (80%) for participation, your final score on the paper will be reduced to 40 points. This is to ensure that students who didn't contribute to the group don't benefit from writing a good paper—it's all supposed to be part of the group project. So make sure you participate fully, let me know ASAP if there are problems in the group, and complete the group participation grading sheet as accurately and honestly as possible!

Key Deadlines

September 21	Group contract due to Dr. Gill during class.
November 3	Project outline (draft logic model) due on Blackboard by end of day.
November 30	Presentations by Groups 1-4. All students are expected to attend and turn in a peer rating form for each presentation. Group participation evaluations from members of Groups 1-4 due at end of class.
December 7	Presentations by Groups 5-9. All students are expected to attend and turn in a peer rating form for each presentation. Group participation evaluations from members of Groups 5-9 due at end of class.
December 14	Final paper due at noon (see separate instructions).

Project Resources

The following resources will be made available to you on Blackboard (in the Group Project folder under Assignments) over the next few weeks to help with your problem solving:

- These instructions
- A list of group and place assignments
- Data and statistics from the police department
- A guide to understanding your data packet

Additional tools and notes:

- Microsoft Word and PowerPoint have templates for creating logic models.
- Google Maps and Google Earth can help you visualize your location
- Please ask me if you need additional information or data and I'll let you know if I can provide it.
- You may visit your assigned location, but **you must let me know a week in advance** if you plan to go. The stations are public places, but the Police Department has asked for a heads up so their officers know that students will be there looking around the station. Keep in mind that the stations are in higher crime neighborhoods and take appropriate precautions (e.g. travel in groups, avoid displaying valuables, do not go at night).
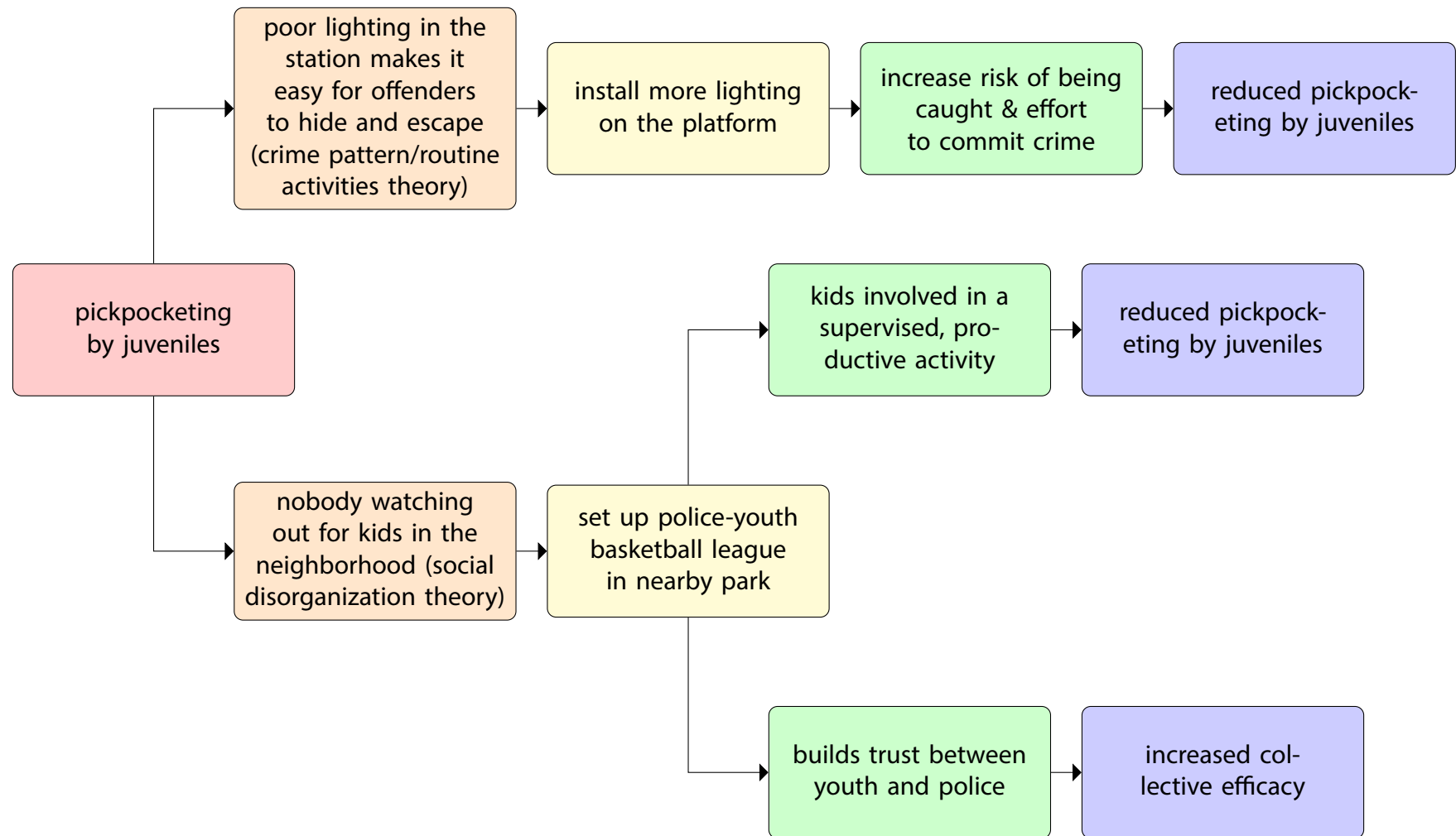
Project Requirements and Guidelines

- Presentations should follow the structure of your logic model, so explain the problem and local risk factors using data and information from your packet and then talk about your solution, why it will be effective, expected outcomes and potential limitations.

- Presentations must be professional. Use PowerPoint slides to guide the audience, but don't be too flashy (pictures are OK but avoid fancy animations/sounds/dancing bears). Remember, you will be presenting to real police professionals who want to use your findings. Even though you should mention potential challenges/limitations, end your presentation on a positive/hopeful note.
- Presentations should not exceed 20 minutes so that we have time to hear from all groups and take questions from the police department. I may cut groups off if they go too long. Allow time to practice your presentation with your group in advance to get the timing right.
- Given the limited time it may be easier to have only one or two students speak during the presentation—transitioning between speakers takes up valuable time. If you want to have multiple presenters, **practice, practice, practice** to ensure you can do it in 20 minutes, but you will not be penalized if only one or two group members speak. You should take this into account when you evaluate your group members' contributions—those speaking should not be expected to do all the prep work; those not speaking don't get to slack off!
- After each presentation I will allow 5 minutes for class questions and 5 minutes for the next group to set up.
- **THIS IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT:** Do NOT under any circumstances share the data from this project with anyone outside the class. This is real police data and although there is nothing in it that could identify a particular person, it is not all publicly available and the police department is trusting you with it. Data privacy and confidentiality are protected by federal law and I take them very seriously. If you feel you need more information to prepare your logic model please contact me with questions.
- Avoid plagiarism. For this assignment, I will consider it plagiarism if you use the ideas of another group, either by working together or using others' ideas against their wishes. If you are looking at the same station as another group you may discuss your data, schedule trips to the station together, etc, but you must come up with your own ideas and solutions.
- Feel free to contact me any time in the usual ways if you have questions or concerns.

See the following pages for the sample logic model, group contract template, and grading rubrics for participation, presentations, and peer evaluation.

Sample Logic Model

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                    ┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐
                    │ poor lighting   │     │                 │     │ increase risk   │     │                 │
                    │ in the station  │     │ install more    │     │ of being caught │     │ reduced         │
                    │ makes it easy   │ ──▶ │ lighting on     │ ──▶ │ & effort to     │ ──▶ │ pickpocketing   │
                    │ for offenders   │     │ the platform    │     │ commit crime    │     │ by juveniles    │
                    │ to hide and     │     │                 │     │                 │     │                 │
                    │ escape (crime   │     └─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘
                    │ pattern/routine │
                    │ activities      │
                    │ theory)         │
                    └─────────────────┘
 ┌──────────────┐
 │ pickpocketing│
 │ by juveniles │
 └──────────────┘
                    ┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐
                    │ nobody watching │     │ set up          │     │ kids involved   │     │ reduced         │
                    │ out for kids in │     │ police-youth    │     │ in a            │     │ pickpocketing   │
                    │ the neighborhood│ ──▶ │ basketball      │ ──▶ │ supervised,     │ ──▶ │ by juveniles    │
                    │ (social         │     │ league in       │     │ productive      │     │                 │
                    │ disorganization │     │ nearby park     │     │ activity        │     │                 │
                    │ theory)         │     │                 │     │                 │     │                 │
                    └─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘

                                                                    ┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐
                                                                    │ builds trust    │     │ increased       │
                                                                    │ between youth   │ ──▶ │ collective      │
                                                                    │ and police      │     │ efficacy        │
                                                                    └─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘
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CRIM 320 Group Contract

Instructions: Discuss the following questions in your groups and fill out your responses below. Each group member must sign the completed document and turn it in to Dr. Gill in class on September 21. The purpose of the contract is to help you agree as a group who will do what, prevent conflict by making expectations clear, and give me an idea of how the project is progressing.

1. How will you work to create a positive group experience?

2. How will you work to avoid the problems you've experienced with group projects in the past?

3. What goals do you have as a team?

4. How does each team member plan to share the work and contribute to the assignment? Please list each team member and what contribution they will make to the project. Consider that some people have different schedules and may need to contribute in different ways.

5. What rules do you want to create for how the team will operate?

6. How will the team communicate? For example, how often will you meet outside of class and where? How will you coordinate your schedules? How will you use technology to help when you cannot meet at the same time?

7. How will you deal with conflicts and problems? What are your group's expectations about the consequences of not participating in the group process?

8. How will you determine if and when to consult the professor if the group is having problems?

9. What other points do you want to include to ensure the group goes smoothly?

Signatures

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

Group Participation Grading Sheet

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Your name: _____ Your group number: _____

Please rate *YOURSELF AND YOUR TEAM MEMBERS* in the columns below using the following scale:

0 = NEVER, 1 = RARELY, 2 = OCCASIONALLY, 3 = OFTEN, 4 = USUALLY, 5 = ALWAYS.

Write each person's name at the top of the column. Please be as honest and accurate as possible.

	Group member names *(fill in)*				
Attended group meetings regularly or did make-up tasks if could not attend					
Showed up to meetings on time and prepared					
Was responsive to emails and other group communications					
Contributed to gathering information, writing presentation, and/or presenting					
Completed assigned work on time and acceptably					
Balanced needs of the group with needs/schedules of individual members					
Took initiative to get and keep group organized					
Showed respect to all group members					
Involved all group members in decision making					
Listened actively, acknowledged and built on the work of other group members					
Total (max 50 points)					

In addition, on the back of this sheet please write a separate paragraph about yourself and each group member that explains your reasons for the ratings above (refer to your group contract). Use the criteria above and provide specific information, positive and negative, that will provide evidence for and support your ratings.

Group Presentation Instructor Evaluation

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Rating scale:
  1 = **STRONGLY DISAGREE**   4 = **AGREE**
  2 = **DISAGREE**   5 = **STRONGLY AGREE**
  3 = **NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE**

	Group Number				
The problem was clearly explained					
All parts of the logic model were included and discussed					
The theories and solutions presented were accurate and relevant					
The group was well prepared for the presentation					
The presenter(s) maintained eye contact with the audience					
The presenter(s) used words and examples that the audience could understand					
The presenter spoke clearly and at a reasonable speed					
The standard of the presentation and presenter(s) were professional					
The presentation was organized and flowed well					
The presentation was creative and interesting					
Total (max 50 points)					

Comments (note group number):

Group Presentation Peer Evaluation

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Your name: _____ Date: _____

Use the following scale to rate each group's presentation: **0 = STRONGLY DISAGREE, 0.5 = DIS-AGREE, 1 = NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE, 1.5 = AGREE, 2 = STRONGLY AGREE**. Write the group number at the top of the column. Please listen attentively to each presentation and be as honest and accurate as possible. **Do NOT rate your own group.**

	Group Number (*fill in*)				
The problem was clearly explained					
All parts of the logic model were included and discussed					
The theories and solutions presented were accurate and relevant					
The group was well prepared for the presentation					
The presenter(s) maintained eye contact with the audience					
The presenter(s) used words and examples that the audience could understand					
The presenter spoke clearly and at a reasonable speed					
The standard of the presentation and presenter(s) were professional					
The presentation was organized and flowed well					
The presentation was creative and interesting					
Total (max 20 points)					

Comments (note group number):