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# CRIME AGAINST THE SAME PERSON AND PLACE: DETECTION OPPORTUNITY AND OFFENDER TARGETING

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***Abstract:** This chapter reports an attempt to use cleared crime data to show that prolific offenders do repeat crimes against the same target. It was found that crime by the same person accounts for the bulk of detected crime against the same victim. This is dramatically true when the unit of analysis is the street. Offenders known to commit crimes against the same target are found to be more prolific. The tentative nature of these results is stressed. Their implications for prevention, should they be confirmed, are substantial.*

*Jack and the Beanstalk<sup>2</sup>* is among the best known of nursery stories. It is a very immoral tale, whose message seems to be that crime *does* pay. Jack, son in a lone-parent household, sold his mother's cow for a handful of beans. While the deal reflects the going rate for cows in a U.K. plagued by Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, it did not do so in the age inhabited by Jack and his mother. The claim of the cow's purchaser that the beans were magic did not impress Jack's mother, who threw them from the house. They grew quickly,

and Jack climbed the resulting beanstalk. In the land at its top, he persuaded a kind woman (wife to a giant) to let him into the castle. She fed him soup. He repaid her hospitality by stealing the giant's hen, which laid golden eggs. Later, he returned to the scene of his crime to steal the giant's bags of gold coins. He returned yet again to steal the giant's talking harp. Despite the giant's well-justified cry of "Stop, thief," Jack got safely home and chopped down the beanstalk, causing the pursuing giant to fall to his death. "So that was the end of the giant. Jack and his mother were never poor again, and they both lived happily ever after."

Let us review Jack's actions. While his first visit to the giant's castle was simply theft in a dwelling, his second and third could certainly be charged as burglary by deception. His action in causing the giant's death would be charged as murder. An able defence lawyer would probably get it reduced to manslaughter, or (if DNA tests on the giant showed he was not of the species *homo sapiens*) causing an animal unnecessary suffering. Jack thus committed one theft, two burglaries and one murder against the giant. The giant and his wife were repeat victims. The perpetrator of crimes against them was one person, the repeat offender, a.k.a. Jack.

We know that a minority of perpetrators commit a majority of crimes (Blumstein et al., 1986). We know that a minority of victims suffer a majority of crimes (Farrell, 1995). We do not know the relationship between these two facts, although it promises to be of central criminological importance.

## OFFENDER ACCOUNTS

Roughly one in three domestic burglars, and somewhat fewer bank and building society robbers,<sup>3</sup> admit to having returned to the same house or business to offend again (Gill and Matthews, 1994; Winkel, 1991). Bennett (1995), interviewing domestic burglars, sought reasons why those who returned did so. They cited low risks, high rewards and ease of access — the same factors given to explain burglaries generally. Most of Bennett's burglars had gone back. Almost half said this resulted from other offenders telling them about a home they had previously burgled.

Farrell et al. (1995) speculate about returning burglars as follows:

A burglar walking down a street where he has never burgled before sees two kinds of house [sic] — the presumed suitable and the presumed unsuitable (by dint of alarm, occupancy, barking dog, and so on). He burgles one of the houses he pre-

sumes to be suitable, and is successful. Next time he walks down the street, he sees three kinds of house [sic] — the presumed unsuitable, the presumed suitable, and the known suitable. It would involve least effort to burgle the house known to be suitable [p.391].

Ericsson (1995) interviewed 21 convicted multiple burglars at a category C prison in eastern England.

76% said they had gone back to a number of houses after a varying period of time to burgle them between two and five times. The reasons given for returning to burgle a house were because the house was associated with low risk..., they were familiar with the features of the house...the target was easily accessible...or to steal more goods in general...The reasons for going back for goods were [to obtain] things they had left behind... replaced goods...and unhidden cash [p.23].

Ash ton et al. (1998) asked 186 people with a burglary conviction whether they had ever committed repeat crimes against the same target. Eighty-six acknowledged some repetition. Fifty-seven of them acknowledged repeated burglary of the same target. Seventy of the eighty-six repeaters were interviewed. Their reasons for repetition were clear and rational. A few of the reasons, as expressed in interview notes, will be quoted.

The house would be targeted again "a few weeks later" when the stuff had been replaced, and because the first time had been easy...

It was a chance to get things which you had seen the first time and now had a buyer for.

Once you have been into a place it is easier to burgle because you are then familiar with the layout, and you can get out much quicker.

Keys to the door were usually hanging 'round, either on a shelf or the top of furniture near to the door in empty houses. So they used the keys to unlock the doors to get out, and for the next time they broke in.

Grudges also drive repeat victimisation, as illustrated by the following excerpts.

X burgled his father's business three nights in a row. X had left home because he could not put up with the rules his father set...X also burgled his parents' home. He bore a grudge against his parents...X said he had burgled his parents' home four times.

The reasoning, both economic and emotional, was the same for crime other than burglary.

X had stolen the stereo from the same car more than once. He would return to the same street, and if he spotted the same car parked on the street he would take the stereo again if it had been replaced...You get more money for brand new things.

X's girlfriend got her father and brothers to threaten X when X had broken down the door of his ex-girlfriend's house. X said they came round and he hit them with a cricket bat. Other times he ended up fighting one of her brothers...He said he had punched his ex-girlfriend's father when the father had threatened him after trying to get access to see his son.

In a study of armed robbers, Gill and Pease (1998) found similar reasoning from the 19% of armed robbers who said they returned, as evidenced below:

It was so easy I went back ten days later.

If you get a good result, you go back a second time.

(I did) a factory and shop twice. It is easy. It's about 25 minutes before the alarm goes off, and the shop didn't have one. They didn't learn.

It was easy. I knew the woman and she helped me, so I did it twice.

### **ARE MOST REPEATS THE WORK OF THE SAME OFFENDERS?**

Offender accounts clearly show that at least some repeat victimisation occurs because the first offence against a target educates an offender in ways that *boost* the risk of repeat victimisation, by making it easier, more attractive or more profitable to the same perpetrator.

Jack knew that the giant's wife was a soft touch in allowing him access to the castle, and that the giant had more riches to steal. Offender accounts also show that some repeats occur by proxy, with information being shared, at least between burglars. If Jack had not wished to return, one of his friends might have done so — perhaps even his mother (who was already guilty of handling stolen goods).

One point of potentially great importance concerns whether those offenders who repeatedly victimise the same person or place differ in ways that may advance the crime control process. If those who repeat crimes are more serious or chronic offenders than those who do not, an elegant approach to offender targeting becomes possible. The central problem of offender targeting as currently practised is that it selects the offenders deemed to be the most prolific on the basis of imperfect data and hunch. Insofar as those targeted are not the most prolific, the process is inefficient. Insofar as the process harasses the currently innocent, it is questionable on civil liberty and privacy grounds. If prolific offenders could be targeted through attention to the kinds of act they are distinctively likely to carry out, this would remove the civil liberty problem entirely, and the efficiency point partially. In an imperfect world, the choice lies between:

- (1) monitoring the movement of both Beanstalk Jack and his reformed contemporary with a criminal record, Grapevine Pete, or
- (2) prioritising the detection of the repeat thefts (which leads to Jack but leaves Pete unharrassed).

The American Civil Liberties Union (and the authors) would prefer the second approach. In short, if the tendency to repeat crime against the same target marks the chronic offender, the detection of such offences provides the nearest thing one is likely to get to an acceptable "magic bullet" in focusing on the prolific offender. This does not imply that prolific offenders always return. Clearly they do so in only a minority of cases. Nonetheless, a consistent policy of targeting repeats will in due course lead to the detection of the prolific offender.

Such data as exist suggest that repeat perpetrators are more criminal, by a variety of measures (see Ashton et al., 1998; Gill and Pease, 1998). For example, Gill and Pease showed that repeat robbers of the same bank branch more often used firearms, adopted disguises, injured people, and had more prison in their past, and that their most recent detected offence yielded a longer sentence.

## BACKGROUND TO THE PRESENT STUDY

Offenders themselves will not know the proportion of repeats attributable to the same person. They will not know, for example, about offences against the homes and businesses they had burgled that were carried out by others. Assessing the proportion of repeat victimisation attributable to the same offenders is a difficult process, and is necessarily indirect. One approach, taken by Matthews and Pease in their contribution to this volume, shows the similarity of attributes of robbers in attacks on the same bank. A second, equally indirect source, is provided by victim accounts.

The British Crime Survey (BCS) captures details of crimes against individuals and their homes. A representative sample of people in England and Wales is questioned about all the crimes they suffered during the period covered by the survey (just over one year). The present study makes use of a distinctive feature of the BCS. Namely, where a respondent suffers more than one crime of a particular type, he or she is asked to classify them according to their similarity. The precise eliciting question is, "Were any of these very similar incidents, where *the some thing* was done under *the same circumstances* and probably by *the same people*?" Where the answer to that question is yes, the crimes suffered are classified as a series. Where the answer is no, crimes of the same type against the same person or household are classified as repeated single events. If victims are correct in their judgement, the proportion of all repeated crime that forms part of a series gives an idea of the proportion committed by the same offenders. The relevant numbers for the 1992 BCS, analysed by Chenery et al. (1996), are set out as Table 1.

It is clear from Table 1 that, for all offence types, half or more than half of all repetitions form part of a series. This suggests that most repeated victimisation by the same crime type involves a set of similar circumstances and characteristics, and "probably" the same offender. Series events form a non-trivial proportion of *all* events captured by the BCS for each crime type. The proportion of all offences that form series is highest for those offences where the victim is in the best position to know who the offender is, namely, assault and threats. Crudely averaging the Series/Repeats' percentages in Table 1 suggests that some 75% of all repeats are judged by their victims to "probably" be the work of the same perpetrator(s). As was the case for most British repeat victims, the giant was confident that his thefts formed a series and that one bean-climber did them all.

**Table 1: Series Crime as a Proportion of Repeated Crime and All Crime: British Crime Survey 1992**

<b>Crime</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Series/ Repeats</b>	<b>Series/ Total</b>
Vehicle Theft	402	57	11
Theft from Vehicle	1582	70	30
Damage to Vehicle	2138	74	37
Bicycle Theft	395	54	16
Burglary	598	76	21
Break-in with Damage	66	50	20
Attempt Burglary	667	79	34
Theft from Dwelling	121	75	25
Theft from Outside Dwelling	1244	84	44
Damage to Outside Dwelling	1086	94	58
Theft from Person	504	77	20
Attempt Theft from Person	238	84	35
Other Theft	1308	71	29
Damage to Personal Property	446	81	43
Assault	1923	74	53
Threats	2749	89	74

**Notes:**

1. Equivalent analysis using victim form data yields a similar picture. The pattern is similar across weighting alternatives.
2. Modified from Chenery et al. (1996).

An approach to assessing linkages between offender and victim comes from the analysis of official crime and criminal records. While such an approach has major shortcomings of its own, it will be the starting point for crime prevention and offender targeting undertaken by the police, and thus has the merit of practical relevance. The study may be seen as an exploration of the use of such data, for consideration alongside other data sources. It may also be seen as an attempt to test the limits of imaginative use of official data.

## THE STUDY

The purpose of the research described below was fivefold:

- (1) To determine the extent of repeat victimisation in the crime records of prolific burglary offenders.
- (2) To establish whether repeat victimisation against the same target was typically cleared to the same perpetrator.
- (3) To estimate the proportion of crime against a single target that is the work of an individual perpetrator, and his or her associates.
- (4) To explore the use of repeat victimisation concepts when the unit of analysis is the street rather than the dwelling or business.
- (5) To explore links in the extent of crime cleared to a particular offender and the degree of repetition against the same target in that offender's record.

### **Source of Information**

Information about offences and offenders was obtained through the West Yorkshire Police Criminal Information System (CIS). Since its introduction area by area beginning in 1989, all recordable crimes for which the National Identification Bureau requires fingerprints have been entered. These include crimes in which there is no obvious victim or the victim's identity is impossible to establish. Such crimes were excluded from the analyses reported below. The CIS includes not only details of crime location, time, victim and date, but also of people dealt with in relation to the crime. The system allows broad or narrow specification of the link. "Dealt with" may incorporate or exclude individuals who were convicted or cautioned for the offence, those asking for it to be taken into consideration in sentencing, and crimes admitted by those already serving custodial sentences and hence written off. It may also include those arrested but against whom proceedings are not taken. In the work described below, only those for whom a crime is cleared by conviction, caution, or admission (whether taken into consideration at sentence or admitted later) are included.

The procedure whereby crimes may be "written off after their admission by those serving custodial sentences fell into disrepute because of its abuse in manipulating crime clearance rates. The resurrection of the practice stems from a wish to establish offence and offender patterns rather than a wish to manipulate clearance rates, and is now attended by safeguards against abuse. In West Yorkshire, crimes can no longer be written off without the prison visit having first been authorised by a senior detective. Crucially, any offence ad-



mitted must be in the form of a written statement that is taken under formal caution from the person admitting the offence, who must be aware that proceedings could be instituted against him or her for the offence in question.

As individuals are entered in the CIS for the first time they are allocated a unique reference number, the "nominal" number. Such numbers are allocated sequentially and do not reflect age, address, sex or ethnicity. The reference takes the form of the letter N, followed by the next number in sequence. Thus, if the last nominal allocated was N1357, the next person processed who was previously unknown to the system would be allocated the number N1358. This reference number identifies the individual in his or her subsequent dealings with the West Yorkshire Police. The data used here are limited to West Yorkshire, i.e., offences committed outside West Yorkshire in which people with a West Yorkshire nominal are implicated are not in the data. The reason for detailing the nominal number is that it may be used as a rough proxy for length of possible criminal involvement of the person identified.

There is ample ground for argument about the adequacy of the data. Principally, with crime clearance rates around 20%, allocation of the responsibility for the remaining 80% across identified and as yet unidentified offenders is impossible. The possibility exists of the same person appearing under two separate nominals. The certainty exists of many crimes remaining unreported by their victims. Nonetheless, it is with known crimes and offenders to which any practical use of the offence-offender nexus will be put, and the data are thus entirely defensible for an exploratory study of the kind reported below.

### **Bogus Officials**

The first group of offenders to be considered was selected by the Major Crime Unit of the West Yorkshire Police as being the most prolific group of offenders committing burglary by deception, when posing as officials. This group was selected because of the urgent need for the West Yorkshire Police to gain a better insight into the offending patterns of this type of malefactor. Eleven people were selected as the most prolific offenders of this type. In fact, this perception was not reflected in the records of convictions or clearances. While some of the group had many convictions, others had very few. Indeed, one had no record of having been dealt with since the introduction of the CIS in 1989, and therefore did not feature in the analysis. Two more

had single offences on record, leaving eight for whom it was possible to look at repetition.

This variation in the rates of detected offending of those identified by the Major Crime Unit illustrates the point about one of the potential problems of conventional offender targeting, namely, that those identified are of varying criminality. A supplementary problem may be that there are some highly active offenders who remain unknown or little-known to CIS.

Burglary by deception is not a crime that one would associate with repetition. It involves one-to-one contact between perpetrator and victim, which should militate against repeats. Do burglars who specialise in this crime type ever return? The answer is that of the eight burglars in the group, six had an official record that showed that they returned at least once. The data are summarised as Table 2. The columns indicate offender identifying letter, the number of different addresses offended against, and the number of repetitions. Thus, offender A committed crime against 173 separate locations, four of which he returned to once. Offender F visited 24 addresses more than once, and committed two crimes in sixteen of them and three in four of them.

Another way of expressing the extent to which repetition is by the same perpetrator is by comparing the number of repetitions in the data with the number of those attributable to the same offender. Thus there were 37 events in the data set wherein offences were repeated by the same person against the same target (i.e., 37 "returns," with one return per address visited twice, two returns for addresses visited three times, and so on). In addition, there were two addresses victimised twice, with the two offences committed by different perpetrators within the group.

If we used the street rather than the address as the unit of analysis, what would the degree of repetition be? How much of the repetition would be specific to particular offenders? Table 3 summarises the data.

It is very clear that the most prolific offenders are also those who repeat crimes on the same street. Offender A commits 32 crimes on streets where he has offended before, and Offender F 41. Put another way, there were 126 occasions where a street was victimised by one or more of this group on more than one occasion. In 119 cases, the same offender was involved. This does not necessarily mean that individual offenders are responsible for almost all the burglaries on a particular street. It does, however, mean that these identified offenders very often repeat their crimes in the same street, and the most

prolific offenders do so most. Thus, this finding has immediate relevance for detection strategy.

**Table 2: Repetition of Offences by Those Identified as Specialising in Burglary by Deception**

<b>Offender ID</b>	<b>Different addresses targeted</b>	<b>Number of repeats</b>
A	173	4
B	119	1
C	54	2
D	4	0
E	20	4
F	161	24
G	28	4
H	5	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>564</b>	<b>39</b>

**Table 3: Repeats with Street as the Unit of Analysis**

<b>Offender ID</b>	<b>Different streets targeted</b>	<b>Number of repeats</b>
A	145	32
B	96	23
C	48	8
D	4	0
E	18	5
F	144	41
G	18	9
H	4	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>477</b>	<b>119</b>

As a test of the notion of repetition by proxy, CIS data were examined on known associates of offenders. Associates are recorded as

such if they have been jointly dealt with for a crime, and not merely on the basis of their friendship or suspicion of joint criminal activity. In the total number of crimes known to have been committed by the original 10 and their six known associates (a total of over 850 crimes), there was only one case where more than one crime had been committed against the same target independently by one of the 10 offenders and an associate.

The data have established that offenders who are identified as prolific do sometimes return to the same address, and often to the same street, to offend. This is so despite the fact that the specialism that led to their inclusion in our sample was one which made repetition difficult.<sup>4</sup> As noted above, this does not address the point concerning the proportion of offences against the same household that are attributable to the same offender(s). The CIS was thus further interrogated to establish the total number of household burglary victimisations at each of the addresses attacked on more than one occasion by the study group between January 1989 and April 1995. To this point, it was important to be conservative about the level of repetition. Therefore, links where the offender was charged but not yet recorded as having been convicted were excluded. For the present purpose, however, it seems more appropriate to discard conservative assumptions in order to get closer to a real level of responsibility. Looking at all household burglaries attacked on more than one occasion by one of the study sample identifies 64 crimes committed against 21 homes. Sixteen of the crimes do not allow attribution of responsibility. Of the remaining crimes, 47 (98%) were attributable to offenders in the study sample. Even if none of the undetected crimes was committed by a member of the study group, this leaves 73% of *all* repeated household burglaries in the sample as being attributable to these offenders.

Looking at the street level, with one exception, in all cases where more than one offence on a street were cleared, they were cleared to a single offender. Excluding repeats against precisely the same location, and excluding cases where it would not have been possible to establish the relative street position (as, for example, where houses had names rather than numbers), there were 42 pairwise comparisons possible, of which 41 showed the same offender to have been involved. This is not an artefact of cases where, say, three victimisations of one house on a street were followed by one victimisation of another. This was counted as one, (house with house), not three (each victimisation at one house with the second house). Thus victimisation of the same street, insofar as it is captured in this sample,

is the work of a single prolific offender rather than a number of prolific offenders.

As a footnote to this analysis, it is interesting how closely victimised places clustered on a street. Table 4 shows the difference between house numbers in the same street. It will be seen that half of the pairs of victimised houses had numbers within 10 of each other. Without knowing the distribution of street lengths it is not possible to establish how unlikely this is. Speculatively, it does seem that victimised houses within a street are located surprisingly near to each other.

**Table 4: Distance between Victimised House Numbers, Same Street (n = 42)**

<b>Difference between numbers</b>	<b>%</b>
Up to 10	50
11-20	24
21-30	5
31-40	5
41-50	7
51+	10

There are no statistically reliable differences between offenders in their tendency to choose houses with close numbers. It seems that the close proximity of victimised houses is a general characteristic of this group of offenders rather than specific to a few of them. The clustering of victimised houses near a previously victimised house is a notion worth taking further. The effort required to establish the lengths of each victimised road and thus make a rigorous study of whether propinquity to a victimised house itself makes for risk is beyond the scope of this work, but is of practical importance. How far around a victim should protection extend in order to be worthwhile? As a general statement (and without referring to risk), if houses with numbers within 10 of the victimised house had been protected promptly, up to one-half of the predation by these prolific offenders was, in principle, preventable. This may in practice be unrealistic, if the crimes occurred on the same day. More generally, this approach does illustrate the point that repeat victimisation research, as Pease

(1998) stresses, does not have to use an address or a person as its unit of analysis. The preferred unit of analysis should be that which maximises crime preventive effect per unit of effort. The street as a unit of analysis may, in the case of repeat offending by those who specialise in burglary by deception, be preferable to the individual address.

We must not oversell these data. This group of households is one defined by repeat victimisation by those in the study sample, and will probably not generalise to repeat burglary in total. The group of offenders is not representative. Questions remain about the research process. We chose to move on to a different group, having learned from this first exercise.<sup>5</sup>

To rehearse, while the analysis of the prolific burglars by deception was interesting in its own right, it does not form a basis for generalisation. The second study, therefore, involved an analysis of crimes committed during a three-month period in one area of West Yorkshire, namely, the town of Huddersfield and its environs, constituting the Huddersfield division of the West Yorkshire police. The period from May to July 1993 was chosen so that the cases of those committed to the crown court would have had their cases finalised. It will be recalled that some of the crimes in the bogus official data were excluded because cases had not been finalised, and the present sample was used to avoid this problem.

Having extracted all the crimes reported during the stated period, all individuals who had come to police notice in connection with one or more of these crimes were identified. They were then sorted by the "nominal" identifier, and the first and last 30 of these numbers chosen for further analysis. The first 30 are therefore those processed for an offence in the index period whose first recorded offence in the West Yorkshire area was furthest distant in time. The last 30 are those whose recorded offending career in West Yorkshire began most recently. These groups reduced to 27 and 21, since coming to police notice was not translated into conviction or caution, and, in one case, because all the convictions were shared between two co-offenders, only one of whom was retained in the sample to avoid overcounting of events.

For each of the latter group, the first recorded offence was the 1993 crime that led them to be included in the sample. The two groups can be thought of as differing roughly in terms of the length of their criminal careers. While the difference is not wholly straightforward (for example, the "high nominal group" may have had their offences cleared before 1989), it is adequate for our purposes. The ob-

jective of the enterprise was to establish relationships between the duration of a criminal career and the proportion of repeat offences within it. From this point, the group that had early recorded crime and that was still active in 1993 is referred to as the "long-career" group; the group with the latest recorded crime comprises the "short-career" group.

Table 5 provides details about the long-career group. Offenders are sorted in terms of their total number of offences that were cleared. The next column reports the number of occasions on which two or more crimes were multiples in the definition used here. Thus, offender A had 153 offences cleared, including 43 "multiples" i.e., repeats against the same target including the first event. The full records of the 30 selected offenders, were extracted from the CIS. The records were examined for multiple victimisations, i.e., all offences against the same address or individual victim, of which one or more was formally attributed to an offender in the group between 1989 and the date of collecting the data. If a person was assaulted or robbed more than once, or assaulted once and robbed once each, this is classified as a multiple. In regard to offences that are defined by their location (burglary, criminal damage to a dwelling, and the like), repetition was defined in terms of location unless the individual victim could be unequivocally identified. Repeated crime against a vehicle or vehicles kept by the same person were defined as repeats.

This approach meant that repeat crimes where one offence was defined in terms of its location (because a named complainant could not be identified), and another in terms of its personal victim, did not amount to multiple victimisation. Where the complainant was identifiable in a location-defined event, it was possible to infer multiple victimisation. Thus, a person who was assaulted and whose home was burgled would not be identified as a repeat victim if the burglary did not allow him or her to be identified by name, but would be a repeat victim if that were possible.

Table 5 shows that there is a relationship between the number of offences for which a perpetrator is known to be responsible, and the proportion of these that are repeats against the same target. This means that repeat offending against the same target is indeed a characteristic of prolific offenders among those with criminal careers extending over a considerable period.

The total number of recorded offences in the short-career group was 88. Only four of those in this group were known to be responsible for multiples, of which there were 16. These were five pairs, one six-time repeat. This is consistent with the general proposition that

prolific offenders are distinctively those who commit repeated offences. The possibility of using the detection of repetitions as a means of offender targeting remains viable on the basis of these data. The direction that such targeting might take will be described at greater length in the discussion section that follows.

**Table 5: Proportion of Multiples: Long Career Group**

<b>Offender</b>	<b>Recorded offences (R)</b>	<b>Multiples (M)</b>	<b>M/R * 100</b>
A	133	45	34
B	69	6	9
C	65	0	0
D	53	2	4
E	37	15	41
F	28	8	29
G	23	7	31
H	20	12	60
I	20	2	10
J	19	2	11
K	18	3	17
L	16	0	0
M	12	0	0
N	11	0	0
O	11	0	0
P	11	0	0
Q	10	2	20
R	7	0	0
S	7	0	0
T	6	0	0
U	6	0	0
V	5	0	0
W	3	0	0
X	3	0	0
Y	1	0	0
Z	1	0	0
AA	1	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>17</b>



Combining the two groups, we can (OLS) regress the number of multiples against the number of crimes recorded as committed, to show the nature of the link. It turns out that the coefficient is +.251 ( $t=7.46$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $R^2 = .64$ ), suggesting that as the number of crimes in a criminal career progresses, the number of repeats advances at one quarter the rate, i.e., that aggregated across the sample every fourth offence committed, will be a multiple. This finding is clearly tentative and will vary across offenders and possibly across career trajectories. However, the link is worth testing further in the way set out.

The next point concerns the proportion of all detected repeat victimisations that are attributable to the same perpetrator. Taking the group of 48 as a whole, there were 45 separate locations/complainants that had been repeatedly victimised by these offenders. A key question concerns the proportion of *all* detected victimisation experienced at these locations that are known to be attributable to these offenders. Table 6 gives details. It shows that 76% of all cleared repeats are cleared to the same offender in each case. While the bulk of cleared crime suggests that the same offender is responsible for repeats, this depends upon who committed the uncleared crime. One of the recommendations made in the discussion section is that a study be mounted in which extra effort is made to clear repeats, to see if the 76% figure for detected repeats can be shown to apply generally.

Table 6 could be misleading if substantial numbers of offences against the same targets were traced to offenders outside the study sample. A check on 50 locations selected randomly shows that 91% of detected offences were attributable to offenders in the sample. Therefore, Table 6 does not seriously overestimate the degree to which multiple offences are attributable to the same offender.

It is acknowledged that the sample sizes in the analyses reported to this point are too small for comfort. To compensate, a further 84 offenders were chosen at random from the group known to have offended in the three-month period identified above. Their records were added to those of the original 30, yielding a sample of 124. The full history of victimisation of the locations victimised at least once by these offenders was determined. Of the 428 offences committed against the 47 resulting locations, 254 remained undetected. Considering the remaining 174 that can be allocated, 139 (80%) were attributable to the offenders in the sample. Further analysis of this larger group will be reported in a later paper.

**Table 6: Proportion of Multiple Victimization  
Attributable to the Same Perpetrators**

<b>Victim Location</b>	<b>Detected to Group (A)</b>	<b>Detected to Other (B)</b>	<b>Undetected</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>A/A+B (%)</b>
A	2	2	13	17	50
B	2	1	12	15	67
C	10	1	3	14	91
D	5	6	3	14	46
E	2	1	9	12	67
F	3	0	9	12	100
G	5	1	5	11	83
H	2	2	4	8	50
I	5	1	2	8	83
J	3	0	2	5	100
K	3	0	1	4	100
L	3	0	1	4	100
M	2	1	1	4	67
N	2	1	0	3	67
O	2	1	0	3	67
P	2	0	0	2	100
Q	2	0	0	2	100
R	1	0	1	2	100
S	2	0	0	2	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>77</b>

## DISCUSSION

The attempt to use cleared crime data has been adequate to show that prolific offenders do repeat crimes against the same target, that they do so fairly dramatically when the unit of analysis is the street, and that crime by the same person accounts for the bulk of detected crime against the same victim. Additional work is to be undertaken by the first author that makes further use of cleared crime data.

Two points should be made about the data:

- (1) It chimes with the other data at hand, indicating that repeat offending is a characteristic of those well-established in a criminal career.
- (2) Data of this kind can never unequivocally demonstrate the points at issue.

We believe that the data are now substantial enough to justify effort being put to a crucial test, and plans are being framed for an offender targeting approach based on repeat victimisation. What would constitute a crucial test? The problem with the data presented here, useful as we believe them to be, is that they suffer from the criticism that cleared crime is not representative of all crime. This point can be addressed by taking a sample of cases and applying extensive detection resources to their solution. Half of these should be crimes that are the first to have been suffered by a person or location. Half should be of places or people, that are matched with the first group but that have also suffered previous crime. The prediction is that those found responsible for the second crime will have distinctive criminal histories. They will be longer and more serious, and the offences will be more frequent. Such a finding would not be susceptible to the criticism of the non-generalisability of cleared crime. Sensitive questioning about the previous crimes at the same location (defined as home, business or street) could yield data about the proportion of uncleared crime attributable to the person who committed the repeated crime. Tests for veracity, such as inventing prior offences to ensure that these were not admitted to, would add confidence to the results of such a study.

If the results turn out as we expect, what would be the practical steps to be taken? First, the emphasis in repeated crime should be on detection aids rather than prevention measures, e.g., covert closed-circuit television and silent alarms (see Griffiths et al., 1998). Second, repeat crime should be prioritised for detection, on the basis that such detection would yield more prolific offenders to the criminal justice process.

Are there any theoretical reasons why repeat offenders against the same target should be more criminal than others? Perhaps the speculation can begin by returning to the story of *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Parents know that the excitement that children experience in the storytelling is the risk-taking of Jack, the danger he faces being reinforced by the giant's refrain "Fe fi fo fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman. Be he alive or be he dead, I'll grind his bones to make my bread." It feels risky to return to the giant's castle. It must feel risky to return to a bank or house, in case prudent changes have

been made that make the venture more dangerous — unless one cannot anticipate that a crime victim might make such changes. A tendency towards risk-taking, "venturesomeness" is one correlate of criminality (see, for example, West and Farrington, 1973). After his first visit to the giant, Jack "longed for adventure." Lack of empathy is another correlate (Gough, 1948), that may work to facilitate repetition without concern for the chronic victim, along with a lack of imagination — negating the possibility that the prudent victim may make changes to prevent recurrence. Nowhere in the story is any sympathy expressed for the giant or his wife, whose generosity to Jack in the way of soup and hospitality led to her widowhood and poverty.

There may be recourse to the characteristics of prolific offenders in understanding repetition, to the point of invoking the Freudian concept of repetition compulsion. Such notions may be particularly relevant to hate crime, including domestic violence. For acquisitive crime, it may be more helpful to think in terms of rationality. Those confirmed in a criminal career and wishing to be successful in it have made a standing decision to commit acquisitive crime. This means that, as for other entrepreneurial careers, experience will be constantly mined to yield further opportunities. When committing a burglary, for example, one will remain alert to the possibility of further profit. One will be conscious of items of unknown worth whose value can be checked with associates later. One will be conscious of the market value of new items replaced by insurance, and when that replacement may happen. One will be conscious of occupancy patterns and the likelihood of their consistency over time. In short, an offence is a learning experience for the career offender. What is learnt may be put to general use, but its most specific use lies in the repetition of the crime. This way of thinking is obviously equally relevant to fraud and embezzlement as to burglary and theft. If a sequel to *Jack and the Beanstalk* were ever written, it would probably depict Jack as a versatile fraudster, having learned some of his skills in the giant's home and having no compunction about using what he learned.



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## NOTES

1. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the West Yorkshire Police.
2. The version of the story used here is published by Anon (1993). It is rich in criminological implications. Paul Ekblom and Ken Pease illustrate presentations to police officers with the singing harp as an example of a technological crime prevention device that alerts people to crime against itself. Yet it did not do the giant much good without someone to respond to its cries.
3. A building society is similar to a bank but more specialized: it accepts investments at interest, and lends to persons building or buying houses. Building societies are mutual associations, run on a commercial basis but owned by their members, whether investors or borrowers. In recent years, distinctions between banks and building societies have become blurred.
4. It should be stressed that the data scrutinised here are for all offences committed by this group. While the bulk of them were burglaries, we did not have the data to identify them as burglaries by deception. This is inferred from their inclusion in the group, and by the consistently advanced age of the victims, which is a characteristic of this offence type.
5. Neither should we undersell the exercise. We have established a level of repeat predation by the group, such that the detection of repeats would have led to the detection of those responsible for some 98% of all offences in the group, and to all of the six most prolific offenders in the group.