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Edward Zamble and Vernon L. Quinsey  
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# The Criminal Recidivism Process

This book describes a large-scale retrospective study of the psychological antecedents of criminal recidivism. Previous work has shown that a variety of measures can predict recidivism but does little to elucidate what actually happens when an experienced offender reoffends after release from prison. In contrast, this study proceeds from the perspective that criminal actions are the result of ongoing psychological processes, and that they can be understood better in this context. Interviews and tests on over 300 men newly returned to prison looked at their problems, emotions, thoughts, and behavior prior to reoffending. The results show a broad range of differences between the recidivists and a comparison group of exoffenders surviving in the community. Moreover, the antecedents for recidivism differed according to the type of new offense, indicating how experiential and environmental details may direct the course of recidivism. The results have substantial implications for release supervision, rehabilitation programs, and the prediction of recidivism, as well as for our theoretical understanding of predatory crime.

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## Preface

WE BELIEVE THAT the results of this research should be of interest to a variety of correctional practitioners and administrators, as well as to other researchers or specialized students. Therefore, in writing (and rewriting) this volume we have tried very hard to keep it at a level that should be understandable to an intelligent reader, regardless of background. It has proven to be a difficult task. If we omit or oversimplify too much, we may violate the standards of rigorous evidence and lose the confidence of our academic peers. If we complicate things too much with understatements and caveats, we will convince other readers that they are caught in an unrewarding reprocessed graduate thesis (and our theses were done long ago).

We have not succeeded everywhere as well as we would have liked, but we have tried. We vowed to avoid footnotes in the text and managed to break the habit after only one relapse. The single exception, on the first page, kept us comfortable in getting past the initial stages and should do the same for other academics. We have also minimized the listing of inferential statistics, to the point where the average undergraduate ought to be able to work his or her way through them. Some multivariate analyses are included, but they are offset into discrete sections which the less statistically sophisticated reader can skip with a clear conscience; these sections do strengthen our case overall, but they give very much the same message as those with simpler statistics.



We hope that the result is both intellectually and scientifically rigorous and as readable as possible under the circumstances. If we lapse into obscurity, it is our own recidivism, educed by old habits and environmental pressure.

If this work is of value, it is so because our own efforts have been much aided and augmented by various agencies and individuals. We would like to thank Bill Frid, Becky Hooey, and Maria Hooey, who did most of the actual data collection. We are also grateful to Frank Porporino, formerly Director of Research in the Correctional Service of Canada, who gave us the wherewithal to begin the research, and to Dave Robinson and Larry Motiuk of the research branch, who helped in the conduct of the work. The bulk of the funding for this project was provided by a grant from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

We would also like to thank the many individuals in the federal correctional service who actively helped us in making arrangements and in gathering data. Without them we might never have been able to collect enough data to make the study viable. Finally, of course, we would like to thank the men who gave us their time and stories; without them, there would *be* no study.

E. Z. V. L. Q.

Kingston, Ontario