

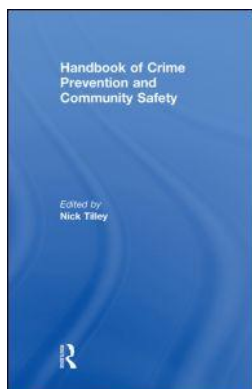
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Handbook of Crime Prevention and Community Safety

Nick Tilley

Seven misconceptions of situational crime prevention

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Part II

Approaches to Prevention

Nick Tilley

The chapters in Part II describe some major approaches to preventing or reducing crime. Each describes a different broad way of looking at crime and crime problems and what that has already meant, or might in the future come to mean, for effective prevention.

The first (Chapter 3) is by Ronald Clarke. Though now based in the USA, Clarke previously conducted research in the Home Office in Britain, where he developed the theory of situational crime prevention in the late 1970s and profoundly influenced a generation of researchers and practitioners. The notion that opportunity caused crime and that reducing or removing opportunities for crime could effect reductions of it without equivalent displacement, was and is a radical one, challenging many assumptions about 'root causes' of criminality and the need to address them to have an impact on crime levels. Clarke's influence is evident in many other chapters in this handbook, where use is made of the typology of preventive techniques which he has developed over the past quarter century. In his chapter Clarke answers seven criticisms of situational crime prevention: that it is simplistic and atheoretical; that it has been shown not to work; that it diverts attention from the root causes of crime; that it comprises a conservative, managerial approach to crime; that it promotes an exclusionary society; that it promotes Big Brother and restricts personal freedoms; and that it blames the victim.

Australian Ross Homel has long been interested in crime prevention and has previously made major contributions to the literature on situational crime prevention and policing. More recently he has led studies of pathways to crime and their disruption. In Chapter 4 he examines the way in which criminality develops and the means by which that development might be averted. Homel distinguishes between interventions that focus on risk factors that have been found to be associated with the future development of criminality, from those that focus on 'pathways' and 'transitions' which may be critical to the stimulus or inhibition of emergent criminality. The former approach is more familiar and Homel reviews the literature relating to it. He highlights the need for early intervention in what is often seen as a linear development of criminality, which

is set in motion in early years. The latter, though not denying the importance of cumulative and connected developments through life, describes a subtle effort to trace patterns in the uneven development of contingencies which occur as we grow up and which may mark turning points leading us towards or away from criminal careers. Certain transitions, for instance those associated with changing schools, are highlighted as potential branching points, where existing trajectories may either be maintained or altered, either leading towards or away from criminal involvement. This way of looking at criminal development suggests points at which there may be a need as well as opportunity for intervention in relation to criminal careers.

George Kelling has been for many years writing influentially about communities and crime prevention in the USA. He is, perhaps, best known for his Broken Windows theory developed with James Q. Wilson. In Chapter 5 Kelling describes in some detail a 'Safer Cities' initiative in Newark, New Jersey, in which he and Rutgers University have played a major part. This scheme has been operating for five years, has involved numerous agencies and organizations, and has succeeded in drawing in members of the community. Kelling describes the slow and at times painful way in which the group developed. He also describes the problem-oriented approach that was adopted, and the need in that for prolonged analysis properly to define and understand issues prior to taking action. He identifies several features that he believes to have been especially important in the initiative. Administratively, these include bi-weekly meetings of a fistful of agencies and community members; case conferences relating to high-risk individuals; and face-to-face 'schmoozing' to contrive to get things done, overcome blockages and build trust. The 'treatment modalities' include: 'notification sessions' that identified problem people must attend, where they are told that their continued behaviour will elicit concentrated enforcement attention, that the difficult conditions in which they live are appreciated, and that they will be helped to turn their lives around; 'accountability sessions' to which notified problem people would return to check on their behaviour and on that of others supposed to help them; "'rev up" sessions' where local clergy with moral authority prepare the ground for practical support; 'enhanced enforcement and service' to improve collaborative, targeted delivery; a 'gun strategy' that requires all individual cases to be reviewed to determine needs, and also involved the local community; and 'public awareness and outreach' promoting the message that violence is unacceptable.

In Chapter 6 Graham Farrell, a pioneer in repeat victimization research on both sides of the Atlantic, provides an up-to-date review of what is now known about patterns of repeat victimization and the ways in which repeat victimization provides points of potential intervention to prevent crime. He describes the consistent and by now quite well established research findings identifying repeat patterns of crime across a wide range of offence types, which provide indications of promising points for preventive intervention. This work has largely focused on repeats of same offence types against the same target, for instance repeat burglary. Farrell highlights in addition other important but less widely recognized repeat patterns, including repeat tactics, repeat offence times, repeat nearby offences, and repeat targeting of the same victim but across different crime types. He also describes the overlaps between varying forms of

repeat. Farrell notes the main, though not exclusive, emphasis so far given to residential burglary as a focus for repeat victimization reduction, and the scope for findings more often to be applied much more widely. He also refers to the shortage so far of well implemented and evaluated initiatives to ascertain best methods of reducing crime by attending systematically to repeat patterns. This may in part follow from a variety of 'tricky issues', which Farrell identifies, in bringing off successful repeat victimization work and learning from it.

Ken Pease has, like Graham Farrell with whom he has written widely, been a pioneer in repeat victimization research. He was also the inspiration behind the development of 'crime science' and the foundation of the Jill Dando Institute of Crime Science at University College London. In Chapter 7 he discusses what the natural sciences have ostensibly done and what science and engineering might do in the future to inform means of controlling crime. He notes, in particular, the scope for much greater and much better integrated application of science and engineering to issues of crime control. He highlights the ways in which crime problems change with new opportunities, the challenges these chronically present to those wishing to prevent crime and the scope there is for science and engineering to be mobilized in the service of crime reduction. He deems it more likely that we shall be able to anticipate and forestall new crime opportunities than to deal effectively with the recurrent stimuli and dispositions to behave criminally. Crime, as he puts it, 'will remain the hum in the machine of emotional, social and economic life'. Science and technology can, he believes, help reduce or eliminate criminal opportunities.

If Pease is right, the social sciences are not the only academic disciplines that can contribute to understanding and preventing crime. Indeed, the other sciences may in the end be found to have as much or more to offer. There may be benefits from the co-operation of those working in the social and physical sciences. There are some signs that this may be happening in the UK through streams of work that are being funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council. Time will tell.

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Chapter 3

Seven misconceptions of situational crime prevention

Ronald V. Clarke

Situational crime prevention has its origins in research undertaken by the Home Office Research Unit in the 1970s. At its most simple, it can be described as the art and science of reducing opportunities for crime – ‘science’ because a large body of theory and research now buttresses situational prevention, and ‘art’ because, despite this research, practitioners still have to rely heavily on their own judgement and experience in implementing projects. In fact, situational prevention is now almost a synonym for opportunity reduction, and most of the work done in its name is implemented without any detailed knowledge of its scientific underpinnings. In brief, these consist of the following:

1. A strong body of theory concerning the relationship between situational factors and crime.
2. An action research methodology that begins by focusing on a highly specific form of crime and then follows through with a) an analysis of the contributory factors; b) the identification of responses tailored to these factors; c) the selection and implementation of those responses most likely to be effective and accepted; and d) the assessment and dissemination of the results.
3. A classification of 25 situational prevention techniques.
4. A collection of evaluated case studies, including findings about displacement.

Lack of familiarity with this research base has not impeded the growth of situational prevention – some commentators believe it is the fastest-growing form of crime control worldwide – but it has resulted in some poorly thought-out initiatives whose failures have fuelled criticisms of the approach, especially by criminologists. This chapter reviews the most frequent criticisms and argues that they are overstated and generally misconceived. They flow from the ideological positions of the critics buttressed by a limited view of the causes of crime.

The first section of the chapter deals with theoretical criticisms of the approach and the second with related criticisms of its effectiveness. The subsequent sections deal more briefly with ethical criticisms and supposed social harms. Each section begins by briefly outlining the criticism without attributing it to particular individuals because in every case it is common and widely expressed. Then, the defence is mounted in considerably more detail. Table 3.1 serves as guide to the structure of the chapter and an aide-memoire of the main points argued.

Situational prevention is simplistic and atheoretical

This is the criticism that situational prevention ignores the vast body of criminological research establishing that the 'root' causes of crime lie in deprivation resulting from genetic inheritance, personality and upbringing, or from social, cultural, racial and economic disparities. This deprivation results in the development of delinquent or criminal dispositions that are the primary drivers of criminal behaviour. Situational and opportunity factors might help to

Table 3.1 Seven misconceptions of situational crime prevention

Criticism	Rebuttal
1. It is simplistic and atheoretical	It is based on three crime opportunity theories: routine activity, crime pattern and rational choice. It also draws on social psychology
2. It has not been shown to work; it displaces crime and often makes it worse	Many dozens of case studies show that it can reduce crime, usually with little displacement
3. It diverts attention from the root causes of crime	It benefits society by achieving immediate reductions in crime
4. It is a conservative, managerial approach to crime	It promises no more than it can deliver. It requires that solutions be economic and socially acceptable
5. It promotes a selfish, exclusionary society	It provides as much protection to the poor as to the rich
6. It promotes Big Brother and restricts personal freedoms	The democratic process protects society from these dangers. People are willing to endure inconvenience and small infringements of liberty when these protect them from crime
7. It blames the victim	It empowers victims by providing them with information about crime risks and how to avoid them.

determine when and where crime occurs, but they do not play a role in whether crime occurs. This being so, opportunity reduction is largely irrelevant. The only effective way to prevent crime is to deal with its root causes through psychological, social or political interventions. This requires theoretical understanding of the complex relationships between the various forms of deprivation and the development of criminal dispositions. Generating this theoretical understanding is the core focus of criminology. To suggest (as do the advocates of situational prevention) that there is a direct link between opportunity and crime is to oversimplify the determinants of human behaviour.

This criticism of situational prevention may have had more legitimacy when first expressed because the early papers outlining the approach based it on a simple 'choice' model of crime (e.g. Clarke 1980). Quite soon, however, this basic model was expanded into the more developed rational choice perspective (Cornish and Clarke 1986; Clarke and Cornish 1985, 2000) and supplemented by routine activity theory (Cohen and Felson 1979; Felson 2002) and crime pattern theory (Brantingham and Brantingham 1993) to give situational prevention a stronger theoretical base. The focus of each of the theories is somewhat different, as follows:

- Routine activity is a 'macro' theory that seeks to explain how changes in society expand or contract opportunities for crime. These opportunities are mediated by the supply of suitable targets for crime (such as the proliferation of high-value, light-weight electronic goods) and the availability of capable guardians who protect targets (custodians, park keepers, shop assistants and so forth).
- Crime pattern theory has a 'meso' neighbourhood or community focus, and seeks to explain how offenders seek or stumble across opportunities for crime in the course of their everyday lives.
- The rational choice perspective, a 'micro-level' theory, deals with the decision-making processes that result in an offender choosing to become involved in crime and selecting specific crimes to commit.

Because these theories give an important role to situational factors in crime they are sometimes called *opportunity* theories. Because they differ from most other criminological theories in that they seek to explain the occurrence of crime, not the development of criminality, they are sometimes called *crime* theories. Finally, David Garland (2000) has called them the 'criminologies of everyday life' because they treat the occurrence of crime as theoretically unproblematic, resulting from normal human impulses of greed and selfishness.

In their original formulations, these theories stopped short of arguing that opportunity causes crime. However, this claim was made more recently by Felson and Clarke (1998) in *Opportunity Makes the Thief*, a pamphlet written for the Home Office. The claim strengthens the case for reducing opportunities for crime because it helps to explain why displacement does not inevitably result from situational prevention. The grounds for making the claim are therefore reviewed below.

The role of opportunity in crime

Nobody familiar with criminology, including the advocates of situational prevention, could deny the importance of the commonly regarded 'root' causes of crime. But those advocates believe that immediate situational and opportunity factors have an equally important causal role in crime. In fact, crime is the outcome of an interaction between criminal dispositions and situational temptations and opportunities, and the offender's decision-making is the medium through which these two sets of factors bring their influence to bear. Dispositional factors might make the offender more prepared to break the law, but the perception of crime opportunities (temptation) also motivates the offender to commit crime. In this model, opportunity not only plays a determining role in the time and place of crime, but it also plays a vital role in eliciting criminal behaviour. It does so in four main ways:

1. Criminally disposed individuals will commit a greater numbers of crimes if they encounter more criminal opportunities.
2. Regularly encountering such opportunities could lead these individuals to seek even more opportunities.
3. Individuals without pre-existing dispositions can be drawn into criminal behaviour by a proliferation of criminal opportunities and temptations.
4. More particularly, individuals who are generally law-abiding can be drawn into committing specific forms of crime if they regularly encounter easy opportunities for these crimes.

In this model, opportunity has a much stronger causal role in crime than the advocates of situational prevention first thought. In a radical departure for the day, they claimed only that opportunity plays an important part in crime. This claim can now be amply documented, but proof is still lacking of the causal role of opportunity outlined in the four points above, partly because few studies have sought to examine this role and partly because experiments to increase opportunities for crime would be considered unethical. 'Lost letter' experiments (Farrington and Knight 1980), the laboratory studies of Stanley Milgram (1974) on obedience, and Hartshorne and May's (1928) early experiments on deceit with children do indicate that a wide range of subjects will take opportunities to behave dishonestly and even cruelly when these are presented to them, but it would be questionable to generalize from these findings to serious forms of crime.

What, then, are the grounds for believing that opportunity is a cause of crime? There are several different sources of evidence, none of which is incontrovertible, but which together provide strong grounds for asserting a causal relationship. First, a large body exists of evaluated case studies (briefly reviewed below) showing substantial reductions in specific forms of crime following situational interventions. Few of these studies employ strong evaluative designs, and all could be criticized on methodological grounds, but taken together they establish that removing opportunities can reduce crime – sometimes dramatically. Secondly, offenders often report in interviews with researchers that opportunity

led them to commit particular crimes (see, for example, Box 3.1). Whilst these statements might be doubted, they do provide strong presumptive evidence that encountering specific opportunities caused the offenders to commit crimes that they would otherwise not have done. Thirdly, many studies have found much stronger than expected relationships between situational factors and the occurrence of specific forms of crime. One example is provided in Table 3.2 that uses British Crime Survey (BCS) data to show the risks of vehicle crime for cars parked in different locations. Thus, the risk of vehicle crime is 20 times greater for cars parked in an owner's driveway or carport compared with those parked in the owner's garage. And cars parked on the street outside the owner's home are nearly 60 times more at risk than those in the garage. Strictly speaking, these

Box 3.1 Perceptions of opportunities for burglary as reported in interviews with burglars

Usually when I get in my car and drive around I'm thinking, I don't have any money, so what is my means for gettin' money? All of a sudden I'll just take a glance and say, 'There it is! There's the house'.

I got a friend that do burglaries with me. He usually the one that sets them up. If he ain't got one set up, then I might go off into somethin' else.

When I was reconnecting the cable line, I overheard the lady talking on the phone and saying they be out of town for a few days. And when I heard that, I knew what time it was, time to come back and help them out; watch they house for them.

I was with this dude. He went to these people's house and took me with him. Just visiting, you know ... So we went in [and we were just sitting around] and I unlocked the window ... There wasn't nobody in the room when I did it ... The next morning I woke up, after I had thought about it all night, and I decided that I was gonna get 'em. So I just woke up, went to they house, raised the window up and didn't have to break nothing. I just went in.

I know a lot of people and they know my game, so they put me up on certain people: 'So and So's leavin' town next week' ... they want something out of the deal, they ain't doing it for nothing.

Then I seen [a well-known regional furniture store] bring another living room set in. Then I said, 'This a pretty livin' room set here. These folks got some money'. So that's what made me decide to [check them out].

Yeah, [I'm and opportunist] cause I find myself walkin' down the street with no intentions on doing a burglary. But I may see somebody leavin' the house and, at that time, the idea [to break in] may pop into my head, right at that instant ... Lots of times I may do it right there on the spot

Well lately I haven't did any [robberies]. But when I was doin' it, I robbed every Friday ... I ain't got no pistol, that's the only reason [I haven't been doing them], ... I swear.

Source: Wright and Decker (1994).

data show only that situational factors determine which cars are victimized, not whether they are victimized, but the findings are so strong that they are consistent with a stronger causal relationship.

A fourth set of examples consistent with the causal role of opportunity is provided by the accumulating research (Clarke and Eck 2003) showing that crime is remarkably concentrated at particular addresses (hotspots), on particular victims (repeat victims), on particular products (hot products) and within different kinds of establishments and facilities (risky facilities). Thus, Sherman *et al.* (1989) found in their classic paper on hotspots that 4 per cent of addresses in Minneapolis in 1986 accounted for 53 per cent of the calls for police service, and Farrell and Pease (1993) reported that 43 per cent of the victimizations reported in the 1992 BCS were experienced by just 4 per cent of the population. Hotspots result partly from the fact that offenders live or spend time at those addresses and some repeat victimization is the result of ongoing interactions or relationships between victims and offenders. But the regular presence of offenders is only part of the explanation for these crime concentrations. Thus, some victims are repeatedly targeted because they live in poorly secured premises and thus provide easy pickings for offenders. Hot products also attract offenders because of the rewards they provide. For example, the Nissan Maxima generates seven to eight times the average number of insurance claims for new US automobiles because its high-intensity headlights can be fitted to older Nissan models originally supplied without them (Highway Loss Data Institute 2004). The theft risk for livestock carriers (including small horseboxes) was found in Home Office research to be 56 times greater than for refuse disposal trucks – almost certainly because there is a much stronger second-hand market for the former vehicles than the latter (Brown 1995). Some shops qualify as risky facilities because shoplifters are attracted to the goods they carry – cigarettes, designer jeans and cassettes or DVDs (Clarke 1999). Once again, it is not the existence of crime concentrations that constitutes support for a causal link between situational opportunities and crime. Rather, it is the *degree* to which crime is concentrated which suggests that the opportunities giving rise to these concentrations are so rewarding, or so lacking in difficulty and risk, that they tempt people into crime.

Table 3.2 Car thefts and parking place, England and Wales, British Crime Survey

Where parked	Car crimes* per 100,000 cars per 24 hours
Garage at home	2
Drive/carport	40
Street outside home	117
Public parking lot	454

*Includes theft of, theft from, attempts and deliberate damage.

Source: Clarke and Mayhew (1998).

Unexpectedly, the strongest evidence of the casual role of opportunity comes from studies of suicide and homicide. Suicide is not a crime though it was once treated as such. But, like much crime, it is commonly regarded as a deeply motivated act committed by desperate people. However, there is conclusive evidence that the detoxification of the gas supplied to people's homes brought about a reduction of about one quarter in the number of suicides in England and Wales between 1958 and 1977 (Clarke and Mayhew 1988). In 1958 almost exactly half the 5,298 people who committed suicide poisoned themselves with gas – to use the common expression, they put their heads in the gas oven. Changes in the manufacturing process for gas in the 1960s substantially reduced the amount of carbon monoxide in the domestic gas supply and then the replacement of manufactured gas by natural gas from the North Sea in the 1970s completely removed carbon monoxide. As a result, in 1977, only 0.2 per cent of the 3,944 suicides in that year made use of domestic gas. This means that whilst there was some displacement to other means of suicide, many people who would otherwise have killed themselves did not do so. The reasons lie in the particular advantages of domestic gas as method of suicide. It was readily available in everyone's home. It required little preparation, older people could readily make use of it and it involved no pain, blood or disfigurement, which are all features that made it attractive to suicides.

Suicide may not be a crime, but homicide is universally regarded as one of the most serious criminal acts. The primary evidence that situational/opportunity variables play a large part in its causation comes from a comparison of homicide rates between England and Wales and the USA. It is well known that the homicide rate is higher in the USA and widely believed that the much greater availability of guns there (a situational variable) provides the explanation. However, it is the details of the comparison that make a compelling causal argument. A study of the two countries made in the 1980s showed that the overall rate of homicides was 8.5 times higher for the USA, the gun homicide rate was 63 times higher and the handgun homicide rate was 75 times higher (Clarke and Mayhew 1988). Most telling of all is that the average number of handgun murders for the USA in the mid-1980s was a little over 9,300; that for England and Wales was just under 12!

For those wishing to deny the causal role of handguns in homicide, it was possible to argue in the 1980s that the USA was a much more crime-ridden and violent society than England and Wales. However this argument is no longer credible. Steady declines in crime in the USA have resulted in crime rates for most common offences now being lower, sometimes markedly so, than those of England and Wales. More particularly, comparative victimization surveys, not available in the 1980s, show that the rates of assault in England and Wales are higher than in the USA (Langan and Farrington 1998). Whilst rates of homicide have declined in the USA, they are still six times higher than in England and Wales and greater handgun availability still provides the explanation. This does not mean of course that the availability of a weapon is the sole determining reason for homicide, but it clearly establishes that opportunity is a powerful cause of homicide. If this is true of homicide, it must also be true of the remainder of crime, which is generally considered to be less deeply motivated than homicide.

Table 3.3 Twenty-five techniques of situational prevention

Increase the effort	Increase the risks	Reduce the rewards	Reduce provocations	Remove excuses
1. <i>Target harden</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steering column locks and ignition immobilizers Anti-robbery screens Tamper-proof packaging 	6. <i>Extend guardianship</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go out in group at night Leave signs of occupancy Carry cell phone 	11. <i>Conceal targets</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Off-street parking Gender-neutral phone directories Unmarked armoured trucks 	16. <i>Reduce frustrations and stress</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficient lines Polite service Expanded seating Soothing music/muted lighting 	21. <i>Set rules</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rental agreements Harassment codes Hotel registration
2. <i>Control access to facilities</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entry phones Electronic card access 	7. <i>Assist natural surveillance</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved street lighting Defensible space design Support whistle-blowers 	12. <i>Remove targets</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removable car radio Women's shelters Pre-paid cards for pay phones 	17. <i>Avoid disputes</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Separate seating for rival soccer fans Reduce crowding in bars Fixed cab fares 	22. <i>Post instructions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'No Parking' 'Private Property' 'Extinguish camp fires'
3. <i>Screen exits</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ticket needed for exit Export documents Electronic merchandise tags 	8. <i>Reduce anonymity</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taxi-driver IDs 'How's my driving?' deals School uniforms 	13. <i>Identify property</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Property marking Vehicle licensing and parts marking Cattle branding 	18. <i>Reduce temptation and arousal</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Controls on violent pornography Enforce good behaviour on soccer field Prohibit racial slurs 	23. <i>Alert conscience</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roadside speed display boards Signatures for customs declarations 'Shoplifting is stealing'

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| <p>4. <i>Deflect offenders</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street closures • Separate facilities for women • Disperse pubs | <p>9. <i>Use place managers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCTV for double-deck buses • Two clerks for convenience stores • Reward vigilance | <p>14. <i>Disrupt markets</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor pawn shops • Controls on classified ads • Licensed street vendors | <p>19. <i>Neutralize peer pressure</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Idiots drink and drive' • 'It's OK to say No' • Disperse trouble-makers at school | <p>24. <i>Assist compliance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy library checkout • Public lavatories • Litter receptacles |
| <p>5. <i>Control tools/weapons</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Smart' guns • Restrict spray-paint sales to juveniles • Toughened beer glasses | <p>10. <i>Strengthen formal surveillance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red-light cameras • Burglar alarms • Security guards | <p>15. <i>Deny benefits</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ink merchandise tags • Graffiti cleaning • Disabling stolen cell phones | <p>20. <i>Discourage imitation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid repair of vandalism • V-chips in TV's • Censor details of modus operandi | <p>25. <i>Control drugs and alcohol</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breathalysers in bars • Server intervention programs • Alcohol-free events |

Sources: Clarke and Eck (2003), Cornish and Clarke (2003).

The role of excuses and provocations

As mentioned above, an important component of situational prevention is a classification of preventive techniques. This classification has grown in step with the expanded theoretical base of situational prevention. Originally, it grouped the techniques under three main categories drawn from rational choice theory: increasing the risks and the effort of crime, and reducing the rewards (Clarke 1992). Some of the specific techniques falling into these categories were derived from other theories – for example, ‘deflecting offenders’ from routine activity theory and ‘reducing inducements’ from social psychological theorizing by Berkowitz and by Zimbardo. Some years later, a fourth category of techniques was added, removing excuses for crime, which derived from Sykes and Matza’s (1957) neutralization theory and Bandura’s (1976) closely related concept of self-exoneration (Clarke and Homel, 1997). The techniques falling under this heading may be most effective in preventing everyday offences that many people commit, such as drunk driving and evading taxes.

The latest modification of the classification was made in response to Wortley’s (1998, 2001) critiques of situational prevention, which, he argued, had focused too exclusively on opportunity reduction and had neglected a whole range of situational precipitators factors that can provoke, prompt, permit and pressure people to commit crime. In making this critique, Wortley drew on a social psychological framework that emphasizes the role of environmental cues in evoking behaviour and research in bars (Homel *et al.* 1997) and prisons (Wortley 2002), which showed that assaults, fights and a variety of other problematic behaviours in these closed environments were partly the result of poor design and management. Consequently, a fifth major category, removing provocations, has been added to the classification, which now consists of 25 techniques of situational prevention (see Table 3.3). This means the approach is extremely flexible and is applicable to the full range of crimes. Not all techniques are applicable to every crime, but there will always be enough techniques applicable in any particular case to allow practitioners to make some choice amongst them. Long past are the days when critics could get away with describing situational prevention as no more than target hardening.

Summary

When first described, situational prevention was dismissed as atheoretical and simplistic, but quite soon its theoretical base was strengthened by the development of three ‘crime’ theories: the rational choice perspective, routine activity theory and crime pattern theory. Those who continue to dismiss the approach on theoretical grounds can therefore only mean that situational prevention fails to make use of the theories that they favour. In recent years, recognition has grown that 1) opportunity is a cause of crime, such that an increase in opportunity leads to more crime; and 2) situational factors can also precipitate crime. The latter insight has led to an expansion of the classification of opportunity-reducing techniques, whilst both insights together have important implications for displacement – discussed in the following section.

Situational prevention has not been shown to work: it displaces crime and often makes it worse

It would be tedious, and probably unnecessary, to list all the examples of successful situational prevention reported in the literature since the concept was first described 25 years ago (Clarke 1980). Some are mentioned below, and they have been regularly reviewed in previous publications (e.g. Clarke 1982, 1992, 1995, 1997; Smith *et al.* 2002). They involve common property offences of burglary, car theft and vandalism, but also various forms of fraud, robbery, assault, street prostitution, drug dealing and domestic violence. Smith *et al.* listed 142 situational prevention case studies at 211 sites, most of which reported reductions, sometimes dramatic, in the specific crime problems addressed. To take two examples of dramatic reductions, a plague of bus robberies in New York and 18 other US cities in the early 1970s was largely eliminated by the introduction of exact fares systems coupled with the installation of drop safes in buses (Stanford Research Institute 1970; Chaiken *et al.* 1974). This form of 'target removal' meant that there was no longer any point in attempting to rob the driver. More recently, US cell phone companies largely wiped out cloning by the introduction of five new anti-cloning technologies (Clarke *et al.* 2001); at its height, this problem had been costing the companies about \$800 million per year in fraudulent phone calls (see Figure 3.1).

Probably no other form of crime control can claim such a record of evaluated successes, but some critics continue to dispute the evidence. They focus on failures – see the 'Introduction' to Clarke (1997) for examples – resulting from skipping the diagnosis of the problem, use of flawed measures such as Neighbourhood Watch, the blanket application of measures such as CCTV surveillance in unsuitable locations, and a variety of other implementation mistakes and failures (Grabosky 1996). They argue that situational prevention has been evaluated using only weak research designs; that the reductions claimed are negated by displacement (i.e. the offenders shift their attention

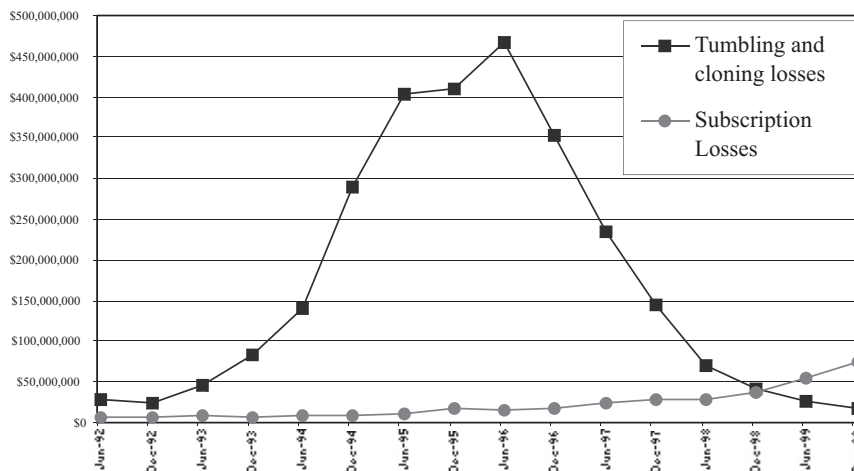


Figure 3.1 Semi-annual fraud dollar losses, USA, June 1992–December 1999
Source: Clarke *et al.* (2001).

to other places, times and targets, use different methods or commit different crimes); that situational prevention results in escalation (i.e. offenders resort to more harmful methods to gain their ends); and that even if displacement does not occur immediately, the criminal population adapts in the long run to reduced opportunities by discovering new ways to commit crime.

Displacement and escalation

The most persistent of these criticisms concerns displacement, which is not surprising considering the extent to which dispositional assumptions pervade professional and lay theorizing about crime ('bad will out'). However, the displacement thesis was always overblown. It is credible for some crimes, but not for all. Thus, it is highly unlikely that motorists prevented from speeding on a particular stretch of road would look for another road on which to speed, or that shoppers prevented from shoplifting at their local supermarket by new security measures would shop instead at some more distant store where they could continue to steal, or would turn to mugging senior citizens. Shoplifting is easier to rationalize and much less risky than mugging.

In fact, almost by definition, any instance of escalation is more costly for offenders. Some of them may be prepared to make more difficult rationalizations or run additional risks, but they will be in a minority. In fact, there are few documented cases of escalation in the literature. Ekblom (1988) found some evidence of increased use of firearms by robbers following the introduction of anti-bandit screens in London post offices, but these attacks were less successful than ones with sledge-hammers or baseball bats, and resulted in no more harm to postal workers. A few years ago, the police and others claimed that improved vehicle security, which had made it more difficult to steal unattended cars, had resulted in increased numbers of 'carjackings'. In fact, carjackings might have increased, but the number of vehicles stolen by these means is a tiny fraction of the reduced number of car thefts by other means. (This might also be true of thefts and burglaries to obtain car keys, which is also said to be a consequence of improved vehicle security.) Any calculation of increased harm resulting from improved vehicle security would have to take account of these differences in the number of incidents. It is also possible that carjackings might have increased anyway, irrespective of improved security. Organized offenders can accomplish them quickly and might more easily obtain a high-value car by this method than by looking to find one left unattended on the street.

The developments in theory underlying situational prevention have further undermined claims about the inevitability of displacement and the risks of escalation. If it is the case that opportunity increases the amount of crime, and that crime can result from a variety of situational precipitators, there is every reason to believe that reducing these opportunities and inducements will result in real reductions in crime. In fact, this is the message of the empirical research. Three separate reviews of the evidence on displacement found that it does occur, but it is not inevitable. In the most recent review, Hesseling (1994) found no evidence of displacement in 22 of the 55 studies he examined; in the remaining 33 studies, he found some evidence of displacement, but in no case was there as much crime displaced as prevented.

Quite often, no real evidence of displacement is found even when those close to the preventive action assert that it has occurred. For example, London Underground officials believed that the appearance of a £ slug soon after ticket machines were modified to prevent use of a 50p slug was the result of displacement. However, Clarke *et al.* (1994) showed that this was unlikely to be the case. The £ slugs required metal working facilities, whereas any schoolchild could make the 50p slugs by wrapping a 10p coin in silver foil. Moreover, the two kinds of slugs were found in different stations suggesting that they were the work of different groups of offenders.

Similar results to Hesseling's would likely be found if his review were repeated today. Many more studies of displacement have been reported, many of which have reported little or no displacement. For example, little displacement seems to have occurred to other forms of cell phone fraud when cloning was largely eliminated in the USA. The lower line in Figure 3.1 shows the numbers of 'subscriber frauds' reported during the rise and fall of cloning. These were the second most common form of fraud during the period. They involved obtaining a telephone service through the provision of a false name and/or address. These frauds increased throughout the period, in line with increases in cell phone use and apparently quite independently of cloning frauds. Always at a relatively low level, they showed little sign of increasing to compensate for the reduction in cloning that began in 1996, probably because they would be difficult to reproduce on a wide scale and would therefore not be attractive to criminal groups. On the other hand, cloned phones were 'mass produced' by criminals who had learnt how to acquire hundreds of legitimate phone numbers and program them into stolen phones.

Whilst this study clearly shows that there was little if any displacement to other forms of cell phone fraud, it illustrates an inherent weakness of research on displacement – it is nearly always impossible to prove conclusively that displacement has not occurred, at least if one were willing to argue that displacement can occur to any form of crime. To quote Barr and Pease (1990: 293):

If, in truth, displacement is complete, some displaced crime will probably fall outside the areas and types of crime being studied or be so dispersed as to be masked by background variation. In such an event, the optimist would speculate about why the unmeasured areas or types of crime probably escaped displaced crime, while the pessimist would speculate about why they probably did not. No research study, however massive, is likely to resolve the issue. The wider the scope of the study in terms of types of crimes and places, the thinner the patina of displaced crime could be spread across them; thus disappearing into the realm of measurement error.

Thus, in the cloning example above, it is possible that the offenders involved might have turned to fraud not involving cell phones; it is also possible, however, that many of them were not exclusively dependent on crime for a living. It might have been a sideline for them, or merely a way of making money for a time.

When cloning was closed down, they might have had to make do with reduced income – like we all must from time to time – or they might have turned their energies to legitimate ways of making money. Such positive outcomes from the application of situational prevention become conceivable once freed from dispositional assumptions about crime.

Diffusion of benefits and anticipatory benefits

Another positive outcome of situational prevention is diffusion of benefits. Sometimes described as the reverse of displacement, the term refers to the fact that situational prevention can often bring about reductions in crime beyond the immediate focus of the measures introduced (Clarke and Weisburd 1994). This greatly enhances the practical appeal of situational prevention, especially as the phenomenon is quite general as shown by the following examples:

1. Security added to houses that had been repeatedly burgled in Kirkholt reduced burglaries for the whole of the estate, not just for those houses given additional protection (Pease 1991).
2. When street lighting was improved in a large housing estate in Dudley, crime declined in both that estate and a nearby one where the lighting was not changed (Painter and Farrington 1997).
3. When 'red light' cameras were installed at some traffic lights in Strathclyde, not only did fewer people 'run the lights' at these locations, but also at other traffic lights nearby (Scottish Office Central Research Unit 1995). (In a smaller city, with more local traffic, this effect might be short lived as people learnt exactly which junctions had cameras.)
4. CCTV cameras installed to monitor car parks at the University of Surrey reduced car crime as much in one not covered by the cameras as in the three that were covered (Poyner 1991).
5. As expected, electronic tagging of books in a University of Wisconsin library resulted in reduced book thefts. However, thefts also declined of videocassettes and other materials that had not been tagged (Scherdin 1986).
6. When a New Jersey discount electronic retailer introduced a regime of daily counting of valuable merchandise in the warehouse, employee thefts of these items plummeted – but thefts also plummeted of items not repeatedly counted (Masuda 1992).
7. When vehicle-tracking systems were introduced in six large US cities, rates of theft declined citywide, not just for car owners who purchased the tracking devices (Ayres and Levitt 1998).
8. Widespread ownership of burglar alarms in an affluent community near Philadelphia resulted in reduced burglary rates for the community at large (Hakim *et al.* 1995).

Potential offenders often know that new prevention measures have been introduced, but they may be unsure of their precise scope. They may believe the measures are more widespread than they really are, and that the *effort* needed to commit crime, or the *risks* incurred, have been increased for a wider range of places, times or targets than in fact is the case.

Diffusion of benefits was identified as a regular outcome of situational prevention only ten years ago and little is known about ways deliberately to enhance it (Clarke and Weisburd 1994). An important method may be through publicity. Thus, a publicity campaign helped to spread the benefits of CCTV cameras across an entire fleet of 80 buses in the north of England, although these were installed on just a few of the buses. One of the buses with CCTV was taken around to schools in the area to show pupils they could be caught if they vandalized the bus, and the first arrests resulting from the cameras were given wide publicity in the news media (Poyner 1988).

The benefits of diffusion are likely to decay when offenders discover that the risks and effort of committing crime have not increased as much as they had thought. Research has shown that this occurred in the early days of the breathalyser in the UK, which had a greater immediate impact on drunk driving than expected given the actual increase in the risk of getting caught (Ross 1973). However, as drivers learnt that the risks of being stopped were still quite small, drunk driving began to increase again. This means that ways will have to be found of keeping offenders guessing about the precise levels of threat, or quite how much extra effort is needed if they are to continue with crime.

Just as offenders often overestimate the reach of situational prevention, they often believe that prevention measures have been brought into force before they actually have been. This results in what has been called the 'anticipatory benefits' of prevention. Smith *et al.* (2002) found evidence of anticipatory benefits in 40 per cent of situational prevention studies whose data could have revealed such benefits. Once again, this provides 'added value' to situational prevention. Once again, however, little is known about how to enhance these benefits deliberately, though advance publicity of measures can undoubtedly help to achieve this.

Adaptation

The concept of criminal adaptation further complicates any consideration of the outcomes of situational prevention (Ekblom and Tilley 2000). It refers to the process through which offender *populations* discover new crime vulnerabilities after preventive measures have been in place for a while. Paul Ekblom (1999) has used the analogy of an arms race between preventers and offenders to describe this concept. It is a longer-term process than displacement, which refers to the ways that *individual* offenders find to circumvent preventive measures. One clear example of adaptation is found in the work of Levi and colleagues (1991, 1998) on the prevention of credit card fraud. They have shown how a partnership between the police, the Home Office and the banks led to successful action in the mid-1990s to reduce credit card frauds. The measures included new lower limits for retailers for seeking authorization of transactions and tightened procedures for mailing new credit cards to customers. As Figure

3.2 shows, these measures brought about a sharp reduction in fraud losses. In recent years, however, losses have begun to climb again. This is due principally to the growth in 'card not present' frauds (due to the expansion of Internet sales) and in the counterfeiting of cards (said to be the work of organized gangs in East Asia). Both these reasons for the recent increase in frauds illustrate offender adaptation rather than displacement.

Evaluation strategies

Situational prevention has been criticized for the quality of the research designs employed in evaluations, specifically for making so little use of random allocation. In fact, it is very difficult to employ random allocation in this field. Those seeking to introduce situational measures are not scientists, but are managers in municipal authorities, public transport companies, businesses and shops, whose primary concern is to reduce crime and victimization as rapidly and as inexpensively as possible. For them, it will usually be apparent quite soon whether the preventive measures have worked. They might on occasion be willing to share data to permit a more formal evaluation, so long as this has some benefit for them and involves few costs of time, effort or possible loss of competitive advantage. Only in very rare cases would they be willing to endure the inconvenience and cost of randomly allocating measures to an

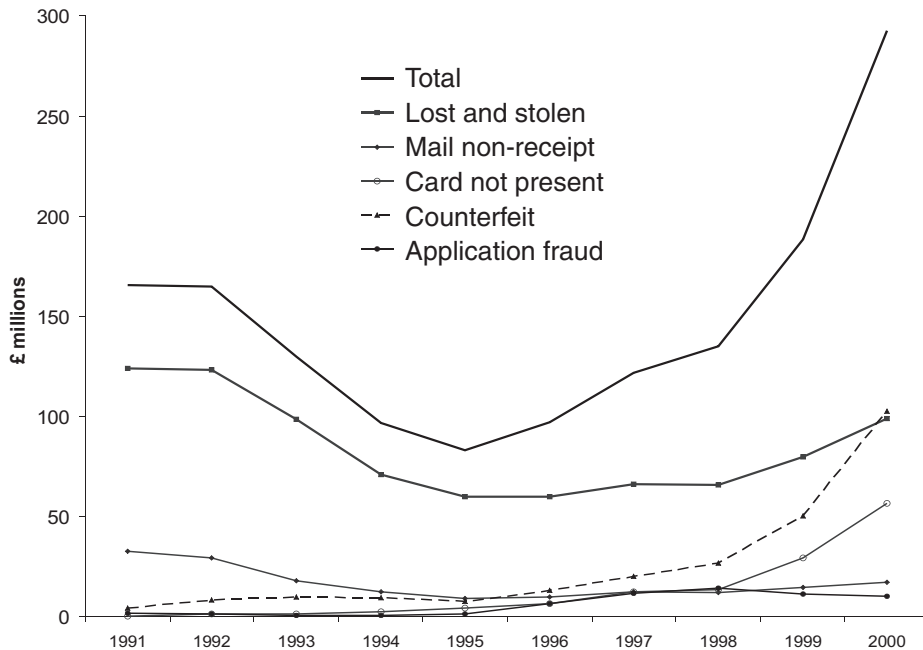


Figure 3.2 Credit card fraud losses, UK

experimental and control group in the interests of scientific study. Even when there might be greater interest in a scientific evaluation, as for example when central government sponsors preventive measures, the logistic (and political) difficulties of incorporating random allocation into the evaluative design will generally be seen as too great.

For the foreseeable future situational prevention will therefore have to rely mainly on evaluative designs involving before and after comparisons and matched control and experimental groups. Fortunately, the results of situational prevention are often so dramatic that this may not matter much. For example, Figure 3.1 showing the time course of cloning provides very persuasive evidence that the anti-cloning technologies introduced in the mid-1990s were effective. To the critics, however, this would be regarded as a weak evaluation. No comparison group, whether randomly selected or not, was employed; no statistical tests are reported of the significance of the decline; and, finally, no replication of the study has been published. To expect this would of course be quite silly. The opportunity to undertake the evaluation only arose serendipitously after the measures had been in place for some time; they were introduced (at great cost) wholesale across the country in co-ordinated action by the phone companies, which means that no control group would have been possible; it was once-and-for-all experiment, not to be repeated even in other countries because of different phone technologies; and given the huge numbers of frauds involved and the dramatic fall in their incidence, statistical tests of significance would be redundant.

Similar points could be made about most other evaluations of situational prevention. Rarely is it possible to use random allocation or to replicate interventions since these have to be tailored carefully to the specific crime problem and the precise circumstances of the setting or environment. In fact, given the highly idiosyncratic nature of situational interventions, and given that the effect of particular measures may be partly dependent on others introduced at the same time in the same package, replication probably serves a much smaller role in building knowledge about what works in situational prevention than it may do in other fields. More important than to accumulate research on the effects of specific measures used in a variety of settings and circumstances is to develop theoretical understanding of the effects of interventions so that informed choices can be made amongst them when dealing with a new crime problem.

Nevertheless, there are several ways in which evaluations of situational prevention should be improved. First, research designs that simultaneously allow displacement and diffusion to be detected should be used whenever possible (Bowers and Johnson 2003). Secondly, more attention needs to be paid to detecting possible anticipatory benefits. Thirdly, longer follow-ups are needed to permit assessment of any criminal adaptation. With the notable exception of Webb's (1997) 30-year follow-up of the effectiveness of steering-column locks, few evaluations of situational prevention have studied outcomes for more than a year or two. Finally, more cost-benefit studies of situational prevention are needed. When undertaken, as in the cloned phone example discussed above, they can show that highly cost-effective results were achieved.

Situational prevention diverts attention from the root causes of crime

Criminology is a highly fragmented discipline, united by little more than its dispositional bias. Whilst criminologists might disagree about the source of criminal dispositions, most of them agree that the only effective form of prevention is to tackle these root causes through the provision of improved nursery schooling, financial support and counselling for families at risk, leisure activities for youth and so forth. They believe that situational prevention diverts attention (and funds) from these efforts to eliminate disadvantage by offering quick and superficial 'fixes' to crime symptoms.

A conciliatory response to this criticism would deny any conflict between situational prevention and addressing disadvantage. These actions are focused at different places in the causal chain. They are the responsibility of different agencies and they can be pursued quite independently, without interfering with one another. Situational prevention measures, which can bring about immediate reductions in crime, can even be regarded as buying time for measures to tackle disadvantage whose results will be apparent only in the longer term. And an undertaking to introduce longer-term measures to tackle disadvantage might sometimes make short-term situational measures more palatable to local communities.

However, there is no necessary symmetry between the causes of crime and effective action to prevent it. Whilst disposition and opportunity act together to produce crime, it does not follow that prevention must address both equally. In fact, there are several reasons for focusing preventive effort on crime opportunities rather than criminal dispositions. First, we know more about how to reduce opportunities and provocations than how to reduce dispositions, despite the much greater investment of research in the latter. Secondly, situational changes are more likely to be effective because these are directed to the near, rather than the distant, causes of crime. There are too many intermediary links between distant causes and crime to be sure that action directed at these causes will be effective. Thirdly, it is much easier to demonstrate the results of situational changes because they are expected to have an immediate impact. On the other hand, the benefits of changing dispositions, particularly of young children, can only be expected to appear many years later. Proving that such action had been effective would be almost impossible without conducting intrusive and possibly unethical experiments.

So instead of diverting attention from criminology's central mission of reducing crime through improving social institutions, situational prevention can help rescue criminology from an impossible quest. In any case, it seems wrong-headed for criminologists to define themselves as social reformers. Surely, the policy role for society's crime experts would be more appropriately defined as finding effective ways to reduce crime, by any socially acceptable and just means? On present evidence, situational prevention offers far more promise of meeting this goal than social reform. The goal of creating a more equal and just society is worth pursuing in its own right and is ill-served by dubious promises of crime reduction. Criminologists can make their greatest contribution to meeting this goal by finding effective and ethical ways to reduce the crime which plagues the lives of poor and deprived people.

Situational prevention is a conservative, managerial approach to crime

Many of the same critics who believe that situational prevention diverts attention from the root causes of crime also accuse it of being a fundamentally conservative approach to crime, content to manage the problem and keep it from overwhelming the forces of law and order. It is damned as 'administrative criminology' because of its origins in Home Office research. It is castigated for its lack of social awareness in its choice of crimes to address and it is accused of paying too much attention to protecting the property and interests of the powerful, whilst neglecting crimes against women and minorities. Finally, it is said to be a creature of the times, lacking any vision and social purpose. In other words, left-leaning criminologists hate it.

It is true that the early applications of situational prevention involved common property crimes of theft and vandalism, but this was little different from the focus of most criminologists of the day. In any case these are volume crimes, which directly affect the lives of many people, particularly those living in the poorest areas of towns and cities. Gradually, the crimes addressed by situational prevention have expanded to include many forms of robbery, violence and fraud, as well as everyday offences of speeding, drunk driving, shoplifting and employee theft. Situational prevention projects have addressed robberies and assaults of taxicab drivers (Smith *in press*), bus drivers (Stanford Research Institute 1970), convenience store staff (Hunter and Jeffrey 1997) and immigrant shopkeepers (Ekblom *et al.* 1988). Other projects have attempted to apply the principles of situational prevention to reducing crime on the Internet and identity theft (Newman and Clarke 2003). One project has even employed situational prevention in finding new ways to prevent deaths of illegal immigrants on the US/Mexican border (Guerette 2004). Today, it is difficult to see any particular pattern in the applications of situational prevention. This is not surprising because no government (or any other entity) has a monopoly on the approach. It can be employed by any agency or organization that seeks to reduce a specific form of crime. Which agencies decide to do so is still largely a matter of chance and is likely to remain so until the approach becomes more broadly accepted.

As for the cosy relationship between advocates of situational prevention and government, it can only be said that there is little evidence of this in government policy. Senior officials are just as likely to buy in to dispositional assumptions about crime as criminologists themselves and, whilst situational prevention did originate in the Home Office in the 1970s, that ministry has given it only sporadic and limited support in subsequent years. During the mid-1980s, for example, all mention of the term was studiously avoided in official documents because of its supposedly simplistic approach. The government is now devoting many more resources to prevention than 25 years ago when situational prevention was launched, but in an attempt to be even-handed, it gives as much support to so-called social prevention (for which there is little evidence of effectiveness) as to situational prevention. In any case, the government resources devoted to all forms of crime prevention still constitute a small fraction of the crime and justice budget.

Finally, there is scant evidence that situational prevention appeals to conservative values. True, there is a superficial fit between situational prevention

and conservative ideas of 'small government', value for money, individual responsibility and so forth. In addition, conservatives might tend to agree that crime is chosen, but for them crime is a moral choice not an economic or instrumental one. Consequently, they generally have little interest in situational prevention. They are more likely to see it as an inadequate response to crime because it neglects the punishment of those who have broken the law and caused harm to society.

Situational prevention promotes a selfish, exclusionary society

When first introduced, situational prevention was seen as the harbinger of a fortress society in which citizens, terrified of crime, will lock themselves in their homes, shun their neighbours and emerge only for work and other essential business. It was claimed that the increased use of situational prevention would result in the growing alienation of the population and the destruction of communities. In fact, much situational prevention practice has exactly the opposite objective of strengthening community ties and reinforcing social controls by enabling people to keep watch on the neighbourhood around their homes. This is the purpose of the 'defensible space' designs that Oscar Newman (1972) proposed for public housing estates in the early 1970s. Fears of a fortress society have also receded as crime rates have begun to decline, but critics still contend that situational prevention promotes a selfish concern of the wealthy and powerful with protecting themselves from crime. This criticism takes three specific forms: that the poor will suffer as the result of self-protective action taken by the wealthy; that the increase in affluent gated communities, fuelled by fear of crime, will lead to a further polarization of the rich and poor in society; and that the use of situational prevention results in the exclusion of those labelled as 'undesirables' (vagrants, minorities, the unemployed and gangs of youths) from places such as shopping malls, parks and entertainment centres and, in the case of gated communities, from residential streets.

The poor will suffer

Having purchased protection in the form of alarms, guards, CCTV cameras, it is claimed that the rich will gradually withdraw their support for public law enforcement, just as they have for nationalized medicine and publicly funded schooling. To date, there is little evidence of this occurring. Wealthy people can afford to protect their homes from burglars, but only the super-rich can buy protection in the wider world. This means that even the wealthy depend upon the public police in their daily lives. In any case, wealthy people have a strong interest in an orderly society, since order is a basic requirement for the production of the goods and services that they consume and the generation of the wealth from which they profit. It therefore seems unlikely that they would support reductions in public spending on law enforcement.

A second charge is that self-protection by the wealthy will drive crime to the doors of the poor. Thus, the rich man's burglar alarm will displace burglary to his poorer neighbour. As argued above, the displacement argument is

overstated and, in fact, there is no clear evidence of crime being displaced from the rich to poor, though, for a time, vehicle-tracking devices to prevent car theft seemed to carry this risk. Because of their cost, these devices are mostly fitted to expensive cars. They also require a receiver to be installed on police cars to pick up the signals from stolen vehicles. As a result, police attention could become concentrated on the more expensive stolen cars fitted with tracking devices to the detriment of those without the devices. Consequently, many municipalities in the USA now make it a condition of police co-operation that cars fitted with the tracking device do not use decals to advertise this fact. Thieves therefore do not know which cars have the devices and which do not, which may help to produce a more general deterrent effect. Indeed, an evaluation of these devices in the northeastern USA suggests that they helped to bring down overall levels of a car theft in the communities concerned (Ayres and Levitt 1998). If so, poorer car owners would have collected 'free rider' benefits from the preventive efforts of more wealthy owners. Felson and Clarke (1997) have argued that similar benefits may diffuse to nearby poorer communities as the result of increased crime prevention in more wealthy neighbouring communities.

Gated communities

In 'gated communities', access is restricted to residents in the hope of keeping out offenders who cruise neighbourhoods looking for crime opportunities. Access is controlled by walled or fenced perimeters, by gates and sometimes by security guards. The number of gated communities has increased rapidly in the USA, South Africa, South America and elsewhere in the past couple of decades. A recent estimate puts the numbers of American families now living in some form of gated community at about 2.5 million (Blakely and Snyder 1998). Gated communities are criticized for limiting freedom of movement and public access to the streets (von Hirsch and Shearing 2000) and, because they are assumed to be only for the rich, they are considered to be exclusionary.

However, many if not most of the gated communities being built in the USA are intended for middle-income residents, who are hoping to avoid traffic, litter and other incivilities of modern life, as much as they are seeking protection from crime (Blakely and Snyder 1998). In fact, there is no clear evidence that gated communities do protect the well-off from crime. If the community is located in a high-crime area and security is tight, then they might, but rather few gated communities fulfil these conditions. They are being built in the outer suburbs where crime is already low. They might begin by employing security guards, but often give these up because of the expense.

Gated communities have their analogues in poorer parts of the city where streets have been closed or alley gates installed to keep out burglars and other offenders. Evaluations have shown that these measures can reduce crime. For example, Matthew's (1986, 1993) work in London suburbs has shown that street closures helped to reduce street prostitution, and Lasley (1998) has shown that, when installed in an impoverished area of Los Angeles, they reduced a variety of crimes including drive-by shootings by gang members. More recently, Bowers *et al.* (in press) have shown that the installation of 3,178 alley gates, protecting 106 blocks of housing in Liverpool, produced a decline of approximately 37 per cent

in the gated areas. A simple cost-benefit analysis indicated that once the gates had been in place for a year or more, they became cost-beneficial, with a return of around £1.86 for every £1 spent.

As so often turns out, therefore, the truth about gated communities is more complex than portrayed by the critics. Gated communities are not merely for the wealthy. They do not simply consist of walled residential neighbourhoods with guarded entrances. Barriers to entering can often be more symbolic than real, and may inconvenience rather than prohibit entry. If their development has been encouraged at all by situational prevention, this is in *poorer* rather than in wealthier neighbourhoods. It is in these poorer neighbourhoods that their crime prevention benefits may be greatest. They may strengthen community bonds rather than weaken them, and they might enhance rather than impede informal controls. Because they might help to reduce fear, they may even reduce the perceived need for other, more harmful forms of self-protection such as (in the USA) purchasing guns.

Exclusion

Two situational techniques in particular, controlling access to facilities and deflecting offenders, have been criticized for promoting exclusion, but both are used in a closely targeted way that avoids this risk. Access controls are designed to keep people out of private facilities, such as office blocks or factories, who have no right of entry. They are not designed to keep groups of 'undesirables' out of public places such as shopping malls or municipal gardens because situational prevention assumes that anybody might exploit opportunities for crime in these places. Where the purpose is to exclude 'troublemakers' from public and semi-public spaces it would more likely be served by 'order maintenance' policing undertaken by the public police or private security guards. Similarly, the use of deflecting offenders is closely targeted to particular problems and settings. One example would be the co-ordination of last buses with pub closing times, which is designed to get late-night drinkers out of the city centre before they get into trouble. Another example would be closing off cut-throughs and alleyways near schools to prevent pupils from vandalizing cars or stealing items left in back gardens on their way to and from school. In neither case is exclusion a likely result of the implementation of these measures. Where a measure does carry this risk, it is likely to be identified at the pre-implementation stage, which (at least in the scientific form of situational prevention) requires that measures be carefully scrutinized for their social costs and acceptability, including exclusion, before they are implemented.

Situational crime prevention promotes Big Brother and restricts personal freedoms

Just as the fortress society has haunted situational prevention from the start, so has the spectre of Big Brother and the threat of intrusive surveillance – a threat given greater credibility by recent developments in technology. CCTV raises fears of being snooped on by the police as we go about our daily business. Speed cameras can give the authorities information about where we drive

and when. Caller-ID can reveal our whereabouts against our wishes. In the minds of the critics, these technologies put too much power into the hands of governments that are only too willing to employ repressive forms of crime control.

This fear might be justified in a totalitarian society, but it ignores the reality of the democracies in which we live. Democratic freedoms combined with widespread suspicion of technology would make it very hard to impose blanket governmental surveillance, though people are willing to surrender some freedoms or endure inconvenience in specific contexts if they gain protection from crime. For example, the security that must be endured when checking in for airline flights can be very irksome, but baggage screening and other measures introduced in the 1970s largely eliminated hijackings (Landes 1978; Wilkinson 1986). Travellers have accepted the need for the additional precautions introduced since 9/11 because they recognize that the new breed of terrorist hijackers are willing to die when they seize an airliner and might know how to fly the aircraft themselves.

Self-appointed custodians of liberty often overstate the dangers of technology and, short of outright bans, fail to consider ways of averting the risks. When infringements on liberty seem unavoidable, they rarely consider whether these costs are outweighed by crime reduction benefits. As a consequence, some valuable preventive technologies are underutilized or underdeveloped. For example, despite their demonstrated value in reducing accidents and saving lives (Bourne and Cooke 1993), the New Jersey State Senate banned speed cameras on the populist grounds that they result in impersonal law enforcement (it would no longer be possible to bribe the traffic cop) or in raised insurance costs (resulting from the accumulation on driving licences of 'points' for speeding). In the UK, the cameras have been painted yellow to make them more visible to speeding motorists. A second example is that, despite the capacity of Caller-ID to deter obscene and harassing phone calls (Clarke 1990), many states in America would only permit its introduction if callers could block display of their numbers on Caller-ID devices. This preserved the privacy of the caller at the expense of those called.

In time, greater familiarity with the technology and more realistic analysis of the actual threats posed to individual liberty can lead to its greater acceptance and ways may be found to reduce the technology's risks without impeding its effectiveness. For example, Caller-ID devices are now being marketed which reject calls from blocked numbers. This restores some of Caller-ID's preventive benefits and gives more privacy to those called.

Much of the new surveillance is introduced not by governments but by businesses. People recognize that businesses must protect their assets from crime and that, if they did not, the costs of crime would be passed on to the consumer. Consequently, few people protest about CCTV cameras in banks or refuse to provide their addresses when registering at a hotel. Some of the precautions instituted by businesses help to protect the customer as well. These precautions can be irksome, such as using a PIN for one's bank card, but without PINs, bank cards would quickly become unusable, and the conveniences would be lost of carrying around less cash and of obtaining money at any time of the day or night.

Of course, people should not be subjected to inconvenient or annoying security precautions without such compensatory benefits. One egregious example concerns other people's car alarms sounding at night. Nobody should have to endure this kind of cost (Duff and Marshall 2000), particularly as the deterrent value of these alarms has never been established. In fact, some cities have banned car alarms and it would be possible to replace them by alarms that roused only the vehicle's owner. In attempting to prevent fraud, insurance companies and government bureaucracies also sometimes unduly inconvenience people who are legitimately claiming benefits or compensation. In the world of commerce, business competition ensures that irksome and unnecessary precautions are quickly eliminated. In state-run or public enterprises lacking competition, other avenues exist for procuring change in tiresome rules, including elected representatives, the press, complaint lines, ombudsmen and other devices of a democratic state. The process of change may take longer, but the problem of bureaucratic roadblocks and delays is not unique to crime prevention. At worst, a higher price will be paid for security, for longer than needed, but there is no reason to be saddled with unnecessary regimentation for ever.

Situational prevention blames the victim

It is sometimes argued that citizens have a right to expect governments to protect them from crime (Kleinig 2000), but David Garland (2001) has described how governments have come increasingly to recognize that they cannot deliver public safety without considerable help from a variety of community partners. These include ordinary members of the public who are increasingly enjoined to take some elementary precautions against crime. Whilst it is indefensible to blame rape on short skirts and other 'sexually provocative' conduct, there is certainly a place for giving people information about behaviours that put them at risk of crime and many people welcome such advice. For example, tourists often ask whether it is safe to use the local taxis or to walk in the streets at night. It is also useful for car owners to know (see Table 3.2) that, if they put their cars away overnight in their garages and do not leave them on the driveway, they can reduce by twenty-fold their risks of vehicle crime (Clarke and Mayhew 1998). They can then decide whether the reduced risk is worth the effort of putting the car away.

In general, if people decide to take a known risk, they must bear some of the responsibility for the consequences. When risks are taken in blatant disregard of the costs for others, responsibility can shade into blame, as in the case of shopkeepers who refuse to alter practices – such as displays to encourage impulse purchases – that they know increase the risks of theft. Despite this, they might continue to expect the police and the courts to deal firmly with any shoplifters. Blaming and shaming them may be a way of getting these shops to change. This may be all the more important since many persistent shoplifters are feeding drug habits and negligent retailers may therefore be helping to fuel the drug trade.

Other business victims deserving their share of blame include managers of low-cost apartment complexes in the USA who increase the risks of crime

to their own property and persons, and to that of other tenants, by failing to establish codes of conduct (Clarke and Bichler-Robertson 1998). Some pubs create conditions that lead to drunken fights by failing to serve alcohol in a responsible manner or by employing aggressive bouncers (Homel *et al.* 1997). And some convenience store owners save money, but expose their employees to robbery, by employing inexperienced and young staff at night (Hunter and Jeffrey 1997).

Blame as a tool of crime prevention can be used legitimately not just against these business victims, but also against those who produce criminogenic products. Many cities in the USA are currently engaged in suing gun manufacturers for the irresponsible overproduction of weapons, which has led to enormous criminal justice and healthcare costs (Fields 2000; Butterfield 2002). The British government shamed car manufacturers into improving vehicle security by publishing league tables of the most stolen cars (Laycock 2004) and this approach is being broadened to include a wider range of criminogenic products (Pease 2001; Ekblom, Chapter 8, this volume; Clarke and Newman in press).

Conclusions

From the start situational crime prevention has had an uneasy relationship with its parent discipline of criminology. The first academic paper describing the approach criticized criminology for its dispositional bias and argued that explanations of crime would be incomplete unless situational factors were incorporated (Clarke 1980). Though radical, this critique was not developed in detail and the paper went largely unnoticed by mainstream criminologists. In any case, criminologists have become accustomed to accommodating a wide range of theoretical explanations in their fragmented discipline and, despite its burgeoning literature and policy impact, most still seem to regard situational prevention as just one more perspective on crime, alongside many dozens of others. If covered at all, this is generally how it is treated in textbooks. As mentioned, some left-leaning criminologists are hostile to the approach, but most other criminologists seem to regard it as peripheral to their main interests. Consequently, few of the criticisms of situational prevention discussed in this paper have been spelt out in detail though they commonly arise in informal discussions. The only in-depth critique (mostly rather benign as it turns out) is contained in von Hirsch *et al.* (2000), which reports the proceedings of two small conferences on the ethical and social issues raised by situational prevention.

Consequently, the development of situational prevention has taken place in relative isolation from the remainder of criminology. This is to the detriment of both. Situational prevention has lacked the informed, critical commentary from outside its small group of adherents that would serve to refine it and help it fulfil its primary mission of reducing the harms of crime. For its part, criminology has not fully benefited from the body of research that situational prevention has generated on specific kinds of crime and their situational determinants; nor has it properly accommodated the 'crime' or 'opportunity' theories that would help correct its lopsided, dispositional bias. It has also turned its back on a

highly effective form of crime control – one that also avoids many of the serious problems of formal sanctioning – to which it could have laid claim.

So what does the future hold? There is little risk that situational prevention will follow the path of many other ‘radical’ critiques of criminology and become a footnote in the discipline’s history. It has too many crime reduction successes to ignore and these will grow as its links are strengthened with problem-oriented policing (Tilley 1999). Its literature is too large (including more than 100 relevant Home Office reports and nearly 20 volumes of *Crime Prevention Studies*, a book series devoted to situational prevention). Its advocates (including some contributors to this volume) are a tightly knit group actively involved in research and teaching. Its consumers include a growing body of crime analysts and crime prevention specialists (numbering in the hundreds if not thousands) in local government and the police. Its research future is guaranteed by the development of greatly improved databases on crime incidents, sophisticated crime mapping software and the growing availability of low-cost computing.

There seems equally little prospect of situational prevention moving any closer to the centre-stage of criminology. Apart from the dissonances of causal theory, situational prevention does little to promote the welfarist, social reform agendas of most criminologists. It also offends many of their attitudes, which include suspicion of governmental authority, distaste for business, fear of corporate power, distrust of wealth and sympathy for the criminal underdog. Moreover, many criminologists are uncomfortable with situational prevention’s crime control agenda. Most see their own roles as being simply to understand and explain crime, leaving others to draw out the policy implications. In their view, situational prevention threatens to turn criminology into a technical discourse more in tune with the police and the security industry than with academia.

Nor does it seem likely that the advocates of situational prevention, and those of related theories such as problem-oriented policing and CPTED (crime prevention through environmental design), will remain content with their peripheral status in a discipline of which they are increasingly critical. This is particularly the case now that an alternative is being offered them in crime science. When the trustees of the Jill Dando Fund decided to establish an academic department at University College, London, they were quite clear that this would not be merely another institute of criminology, conducting research on crime that might (or might not) have long-term implications for prevention. Rather, the Jill Dando Institute of Crime Science was founded to undertake work, including situational crime prevention, which would bring about immediate reductions in crime.

Many differences of emphasis exist between crime science and criminology in their missions, theories and methodologies (Table 3.4), but it is unclear whether these will prove sufficient justification for establishing crime science as a discipline taught widely in universities, separate from criminology. Universities are generally reluctant to establish new departments, but there are two reasons for thinking that crime science might be an exception. First, universities need increasingly to attract research funds. If more academic departments of crime science were established in universities, with explicit crime reduction goals, they would be likely to win more research grants than conventional departments of criminology. This would almost certainly be true if they subsumed terrorism

Table 3.4 Differences of emphasis between criminology and crime science

Criminology	Crime science
<i>Mission</i>	
Understand criminals	Understand crime
Long-term social reform	Immediate crime reduction
Help the criminal underdog	Reduce harm to victims
'Pure'	'Applied'
Theory-led	Problem-led
Shun policy	Embrace policy
<i>Theory</i>	
Distant causes paramount	Near causes paramount
Opportunity secondary	Opportunity central
Crime pathological	Crime normal
The <i>why</i> of crime	The <i>how</i> of crime
Criminal dispositions	Criminal choice
Criminal motivation	The rewards of crime
Anomie, subcultures and conflict theory	Routine activities, rational choice
Sociology, psychiatry, law	Economics, geography, biology, planning, computer science
<i>Research methods</i>	
Cohort studies	Crime patterns
Criminal careers	Hot spots
Regression analysis	Crime mapping
Self-reported delinquency	Victim surveys
Randomized control trials	Crime-specific case studies
Long-term studies in depth	Rapid appraisal techniques
<i>Applications and audience</i>	
Crime and delinquency in general	Specific crime and disorder problems
Sentencing/treatment/social prevention	Detection/deterrence/situational prevention
Social workers/probation officers	Police, planners and security industry
Social policy-makers	Business and management
Scholarly treatises	Policy briefs
Careers in academia	Careers in prevention/security/police

Source: Clarke (2004).

under the crime reduction remit. (It is difficult to see how dispositional theorizing could assist in preventing terrorism, but the potential contribution of situational thinking is much more apparent.) Secondly, dissatisfaction with criminology also helped fuel the mushrooming growth of criminal justice in American universities during the past few decades. These departments were established to undertake operational studies of the criminal justice system (and train those working in the system) – again work disdained by many criminologists as being 'atheoretical' and mundane. Whether this experience will serve as a model or as warning only time will tell.

Selected further reading

Crime Prevention Studies (Criminal Justice Press and Willan Publishing), of which 18 volumes have now been published, is a book series covering research and practice in situational crime prevention. *Situational Crime Prevention: Successful Case Studies* (1997) contains 22 case studies with an introduction by the editor, Ronald V. Clarke. For an appraisal of ethical issues, see *Ethical and Social Issues in Situational Crime Prevention* (2000), edited by Andrew von Hirsch, David Garland and Alison Wakefield. Marcus Felson's *Crime and Everyday Life* (2002) provides an accessible account of some of the theoretical underpinnings of situational prevention. For the fit between situational crime prevention and problem-oriented policing, see Anthony Braga's *Problem-oriented Policing and Crime Prevention* (2002).

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