



Introduction to Situational Crime Prevention

International Problem-Oriented Policing Conference
Boulder, Co August 7 - 9th 2023

Rob T. Guerette, Ph.D
Florida International University, Miami



The Tylenol Poisonings

- In 1982, seven people died in Chicago as a result of taking Tylenol poisoned with cyanide
- Mass murder - terrorism
- Perpetrators not caught and motivation never discovered
- Caused widespread fear about safety of such products
- Significant losses for makers of Tylenol
- Some copycat offences in US and other countries

“Tamper-proof” Packaging

- U.S. quickly introduced “Tamper-proof” regulations for food, drugs and cosmetics
- Two guiding principles:
 - Breaks in seal must be highly visible
 - Should be convenient for consumer (!)
- The packaging has been effective (till now) – and is constantly improved
- Classic case of situational crime prevention (SCP)





Overview

- What is SCP?
- How is it deployed?
- Effectiveness of SCP
- Compatibility of SCP and POP
- Implementing SCP
- Thought exercise
- Closing questions/comments



What is Situational Crime Prevention?



Situational Crime Prevention (SCP)

1. Focuses on reducing opportunities for crime
2. Not exclusively for police
3. Like POP, it focuses on specific forms of crime or disorder
4. It analyzes the “opportunity structure” that facilitate these crimes:
 - a) the immediate physical and social settings
 - b) the wider societal arrangements
5. Identifies design and management changes to block the crime opportunities with fewest economic and social costs.
6. The changes increase the difficulty or the risks of crime, make it less rewarding or excusable and reduce temptations or provocations.



Situational Crime Prevention

- These categories of tactics include methods of:

- ☐ *Increasing the Effort*
- ☐ *Increasing the Risks*
- ☐ *Reducing the Rewards*
- ☐ *Reducing Provocations*
- ☐ *Removing Excuses*

TWENTY FIVE TECHNIQUES OF SITUATIONAL PREVENTION

Increase the Effort	Increase the Risks	Reduce the Rewards	Reduce Provocations	Remove Excuses
Harden Targets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steering column locks and immobilisers Anti-robbery screens Tamper-proof packaging 	Extend guardianship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take routine precautions: go out in group at night, leave signs of occupancy, carry phone "Cocoon" neighborhood watch 	Conceal targets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Off-street parking Gender-neutral phone directories Unmarked bullion trucks 	Reduce frustrations and stress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficient queues and polite service Expanded seating Soothing music/muted lights 	Set rules <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rental agreements Harassment codes Hotel registration
Control access to facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entry phones Electronic card access Baggage screening 	Assist natural surveillance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved street lighting Defensible space design Support whistleblowers 	Remove targets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removable car radio Women's refuges Pre-paid cards for pay phones 	Avoid disputes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Separate enclosures for rival soccer fans Reduce crowding in pubs Fixed cab fares 	Post instructions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "No Parking" "Private Property" "Extinguish camp fires"
Screen exits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ticket needed for exit Export documents Electronic merchandise tags 	Reduce anonymity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taxi driver IDs "How's my driving?" decals School uniforms 	Identify property <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Property marking Vehicle licensing and parts marking Cattle branding 	Reduce emotional arousal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Controls on violent pornography Enforce good behavior on soccer field Prohibit racial slurs 	Alert conscience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roadside speed display boards Signatures for customs declarations "Shoplifting is stealing"
Deflect offenders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Street closures Separate bathrooms for women Disperse pubs 	Utilize place managers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CCTV for double-deck buses Two clerks for convenience stores Reward vigilance 	Disrupt markets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor pawn shops Controls on classified ads. License street vendors 	Neutralize peer pressure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Idiots drink and drive" "It's OK to say No" Disperse troublemakers at school 	Assist compliance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easy library checkout Public lavatories Litter bins
Control tools/ weapons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Smart" guns Disabling stolen cell phones Restrict spray paint sales to juveniles 	Strengthen formal surveillance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Red light cameras Burglar alarms Security guards 	Deny benefits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ink merchandise tags Graffiti cleaning Speed humps 	Discourage imitation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rapid repair of vandalism V-chips in TVs Censor details of modus operandi 	Control drugs and alcohol <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breathalyzers in pubs Server intervention Alcohol-free events



Downloads Classes, Training, Modules and MOOCs

Model POP Curriculum

An adaptable 14-module undergraduate course, including detailed PowerPoints and links to required texts. It's a complete



University at Albany

Learn about POP from the School of Criminal Justice, University at Albany online course offerings. These courses have been designed by the Center for Problem Oriented Policing in collaboration with the University at Albany. They are available at the undergraduate level and from time to time at the graduate level. Availability depends on semester and session.





Situational Crime Prevention

- Not all tactics are suitable for all problems and some tactics may serve more than one purpose (for instance, deflecting offenders may serve to increase effort and increase risk of apprehension).
- Requires specificity. Each specific problem is the result of different processes and situational structures, different interventions and their combinations should be tailored to prevent the intended behavior.



How is SCP deployed?

Oriented by Crime Triangle

- Places
- Victims or Targets
- Offenders
- &
- Time
- Systems





The 80-20 Rule

Generally, a small number of things are responsible for a large proportion of outcomes.

- For example, a small number of hurricanes account for a large amount of the overall damage.
- Similarly, small numbers of offenders (20%) are responsible for a large number (80%) of the crimes; or, 20% of the victims may account for 80% of the victimizations; or, 20% of places are the locations for 80% of the crimes.
- The percentages vary by the particular problem, but the rule is important because crime is highly concentrated on particular people, places, and things.

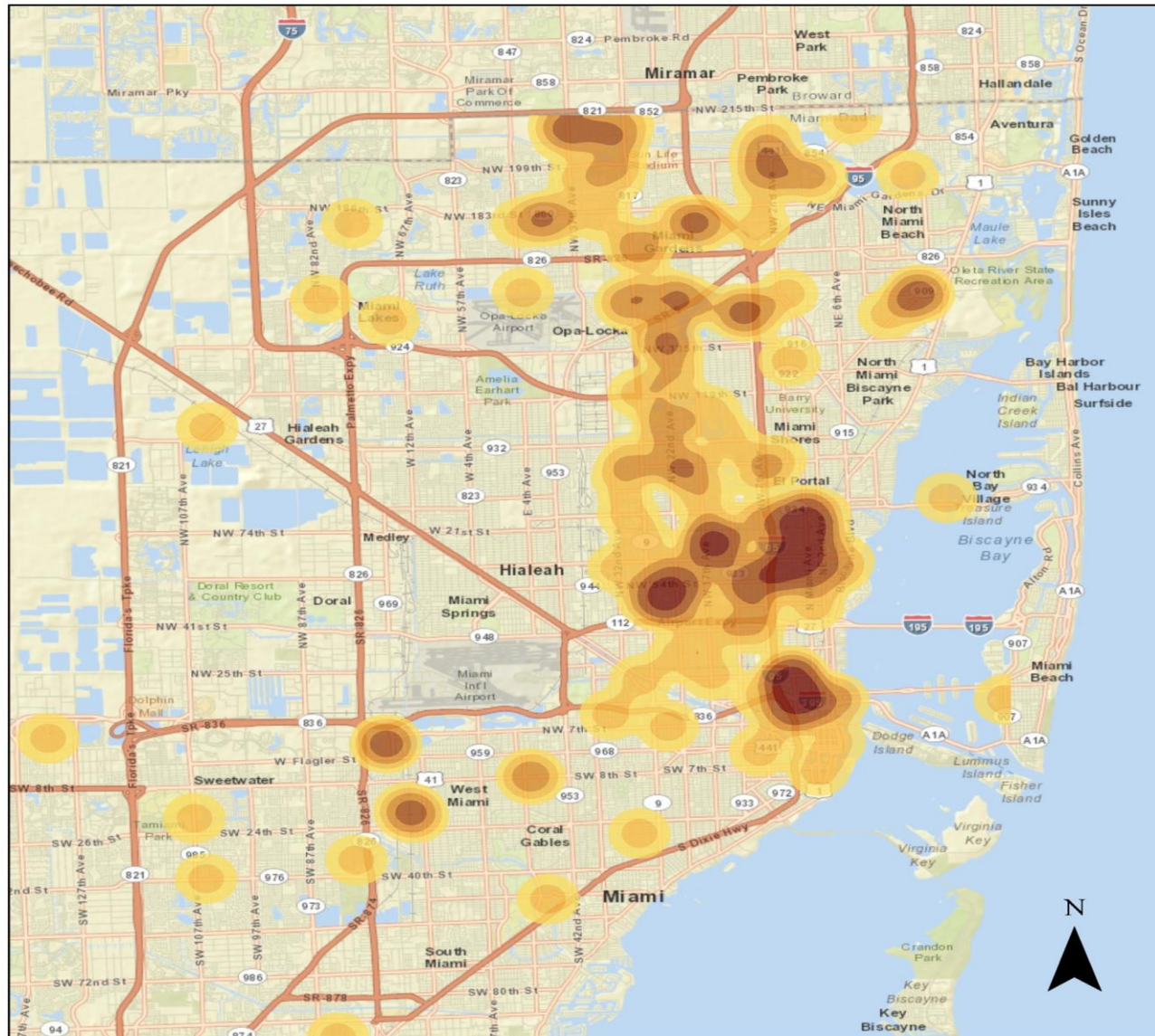


Does the 80-20 Rule Apply?

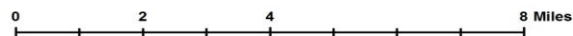
- Repeat Offenders
- Repeat Targets/Victims (Hot Products)
- Repeat Places or Hot Spots (Risky Facilities)
- Repeat Times – crimes may also be concentrated in time (e.g., DWI on Friday nights).

Homicides, 2012

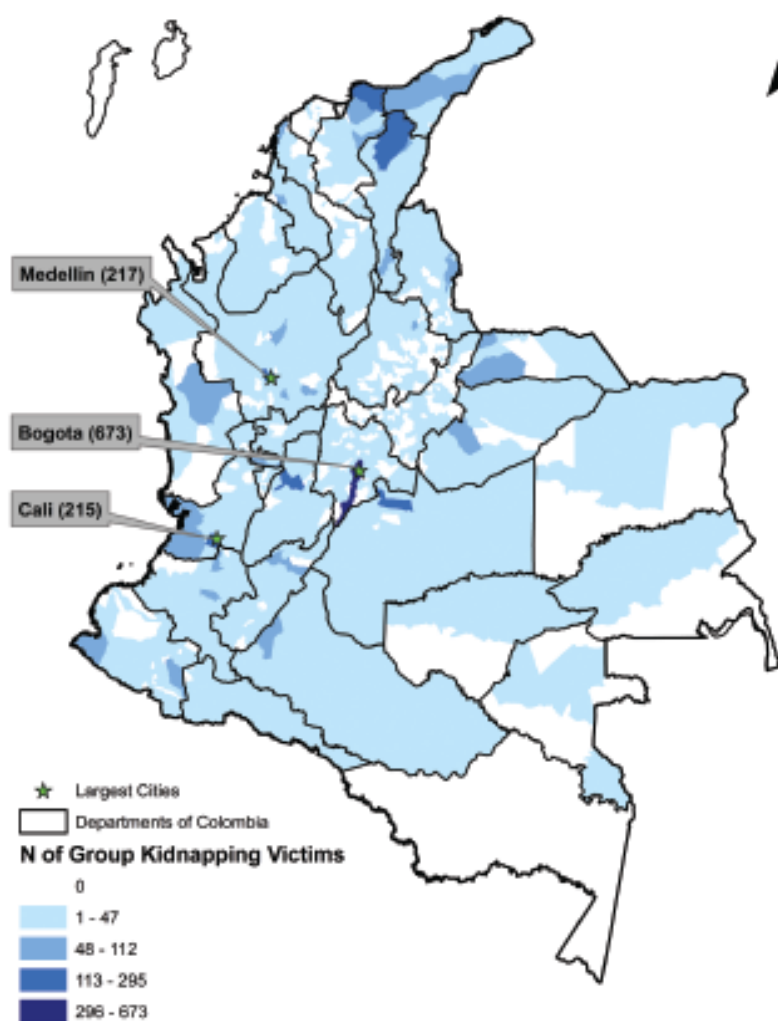
Miami-Dade County, FL



Data Source: Miami-Dade Medical Examiner's Office



(a) Total Kidnappings



(b) Group Kidnappings

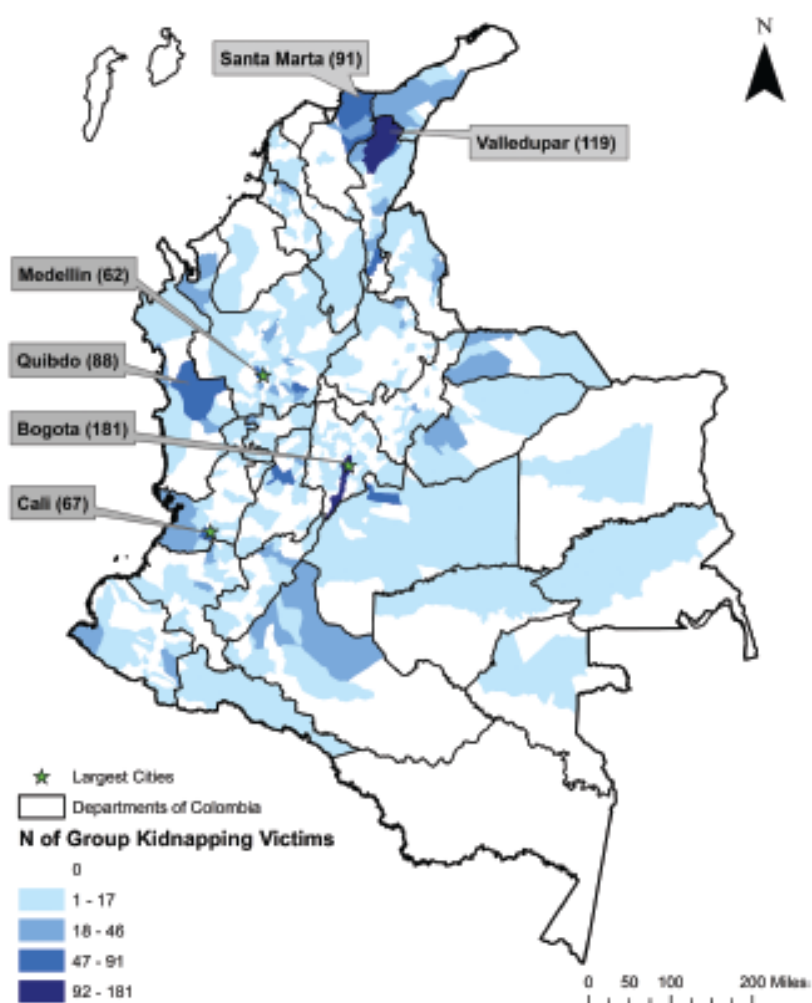


FIG. 2 Municipality analysis of the number of kidnapped victims in Colombia (2002–2011).
(a) Total kidnappings; (b) group kidnappings.



Research Findings of Repeat Victimization

Offense	Proportion of Repeats	Location
Domestic Violence	15% w/in 24 hrs 25% w/in 5 weeks	Merseyside, England
Bank Robbery	33% w/in 3 months	England
Residential Burglary	25% w/in 1 week 51% w/in 1 month 11% w/in 1 week 33% w/in 1 month	Tallahassee, FL Merseyside, England
Non-residential Burglary	17% w/in 1 week 43% w/in 1 month	Merseyside, England
School property crimes	70% w/in 1 month	Merseyside, England



“Risky facilities” (80-20 rule)

1. USA Convenience stores: 6.5% have 65% of robberies
2. UK Banks: 4% have robbery rates 4-6 times higher than other banks
3. Stockholm schools: 8% suffered 50% of violent crimes in 1993/4 school year
4. Liverpool bus stop shelters: 9% experience 40% of vandalism



Why Repeat Victims and Places?

- **Risk heterogeneity** - also called a flag explanation; a prior victimization or some other factor identifies the victim or location as an appropriate target for further victimization.
- **Event dependency** - also known as a boost explanation; situations in which (usually) the same offender commits another offense based on the past experiences with that victim or location; successful past offending leads to another attempt against the same target.



How is the crime committed?

1. Adopt the offender's perspective
 - “Think thief” (Ekblom)
2. Study how rather than why
3. Study the offense, step by step.
 - For example, Shoplifters must decide:
 - ☐ Which store to hit
 - ☐ Which goods to steal
 - ☐ How to accomplish the theft
 - ☐ How to escape from the store
 - ☐ How to sell the items and at what price
 - ☐ etc



Effectiveness of Situational Crime Prevention

246 Evaluated SCP Case Studies

(See Popcenter SCP database)

- Responsible drinking practices in Australia
- Cash reduction in US convenience stores
- Anti-robbery screens in London post-offices
- Car immobilizers in Europe and Australia
- Automatic checking of income statements by housing subsidy applicants in Sweden
- Ink tags on merchandise in clothing stores
- Speed cameras and random breath tests in Australia
- Safes with time locks to prevent betting shop robberies
- Removal of gas and electric coin meters from public housing in England to prevent burglary
- Video cameras in housing for retired persons
- And many, many more



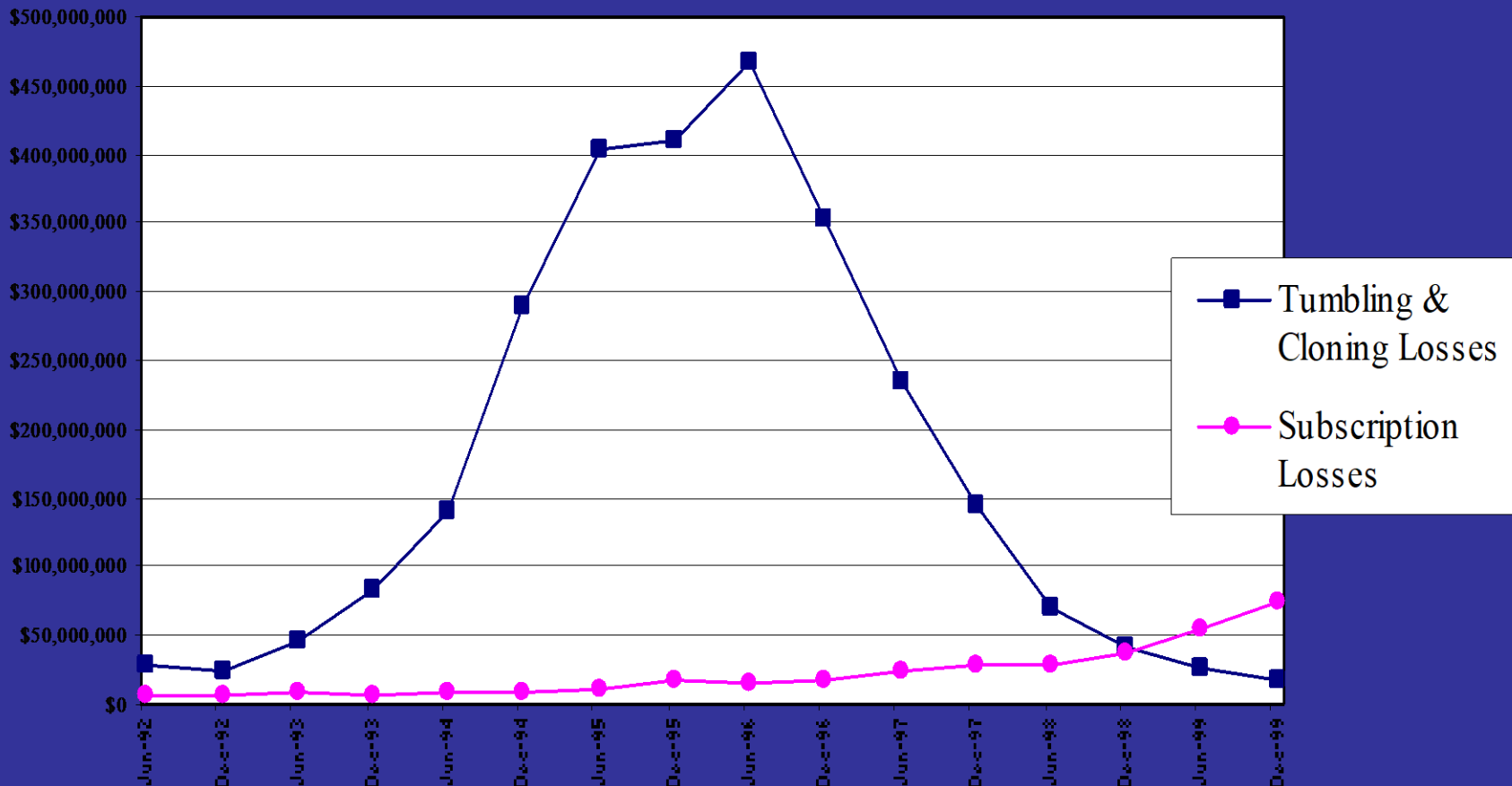
Systematic Reviews of SCP and Displacement Effects

- Of 206 SCP evaluations 75% reported effective.
- Review of 102 situational prevention studies in which displacement was examined:
 1. Displacement found in 26% of examinations.
 2. When found, displacement was never complete.
 3. Diffusion of benefits found in 27% of examinations.

Cell phone cloning in U.S.

Figure 1

Semi-Annual Fraud Dollar Losses
United States, June 1992 - December 1999



[Home](#) > [Electronics](#) > [Smartphone thefts drop as kill switch usage grows](#)

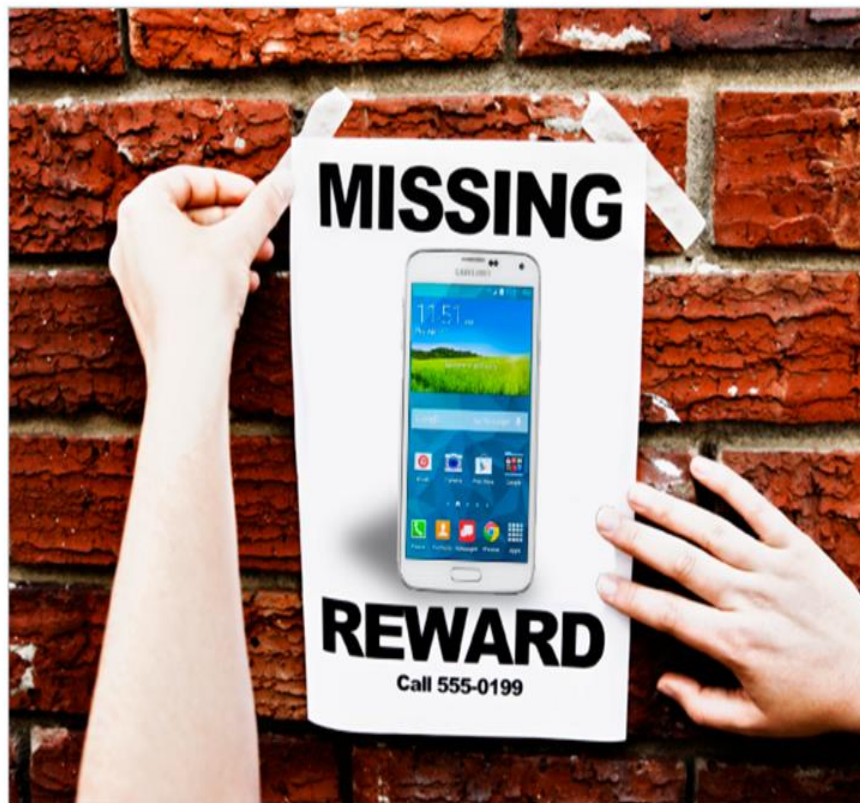
162



Smartphone thefts drop as kill switch usage grows

But Android users are still waiting for the technology

Published: June 11, 2015 12:15 PM



SUBSCRIBE ONLINE

Join today & get
24/7 digital access to:

- > Expert Ratings
- > Buying Advice
- > Much, much more!

Subscribe Now!

Consumer Reports Magazine



Get expert, unbiased advice on how to save hundreds, even thousands on products and services with *Consumer Reports* magazine.

Subscribe to the magazine

E-mail Newsletters

FREE e-mail Newsletters! Choose from cars, safety, health, and more!

Alley-gating in Liverpool

- 3178 gates installed
- Burglary reduced by 37% in first year
- No significant displacement
- Cost benefit ratio of gates in first year was 1.86
- Resident satisfaction and preventive gains sustained in later follow-up



Society inadvertently creates crime...

1. Through manufacturing “criminogenic goods”
 - ☐ Cars with weak door and ignition locks
 - ☐ Credit cards with poor security
 - ☐ Unprotected software
2. Through “leaky systems”
 - ☐ Inadequate checking of insurance claims
 - ☐ Banking systems that facilitate money laundering
 - ☐ Inadequate controls on deliveries and shipping
3. Through poor management and design of facilities
 - ☐ Shop displays facilitating theft
 - ☐ Disorderly, overcrowded pubs and clubs
 - ☐ Poorly secured parking lots



Consider the following....

Suppose all situational controls were abandoned: no locks, no custom controls, cash left for parking in an open pot for occasional collection, no library checkouts, no baggage screening at airports, no ticket checks at train stations, no traffic lights, etc.

Would there be no change in the volume of crime and disorder?

Source: Nick Tilley and Gloria Laycock



Compatibility of SCP and POP



Why is SCP helpful for POP?

1. It is a problem solving approach just like POP
2. It provides a sound basis of criminological theory for opportunity reduction:
 - a) Routine activity theory (Cohen and Felson)
 - b) Crime Pattern theory (Patricia and Paul Brantingham)
 - c) Rational Choice perspective (Clarke and Cornish)
3. Helps in thinking about displacement
4. Supplies many ways to reduce opportunities for crime
5. Provides many evaluated examples of successful opportunity reduction

The Crime Triangle







The Methodology of Situational Prevention

- Focus on highly specific categories of crime or disorder
- Focus on crime concentrations
- Understand how the crime is committed
- Use an action-research / problem solving model
- Consider a variety of solutions



Action research

POP

- Scanning
- Analysis
- Response
- Assessment

SCP

- Data collection
- Analysis of problem
- Choice of solution
- Implementation
- Evaluation

Effectiveness of Policing Strategies

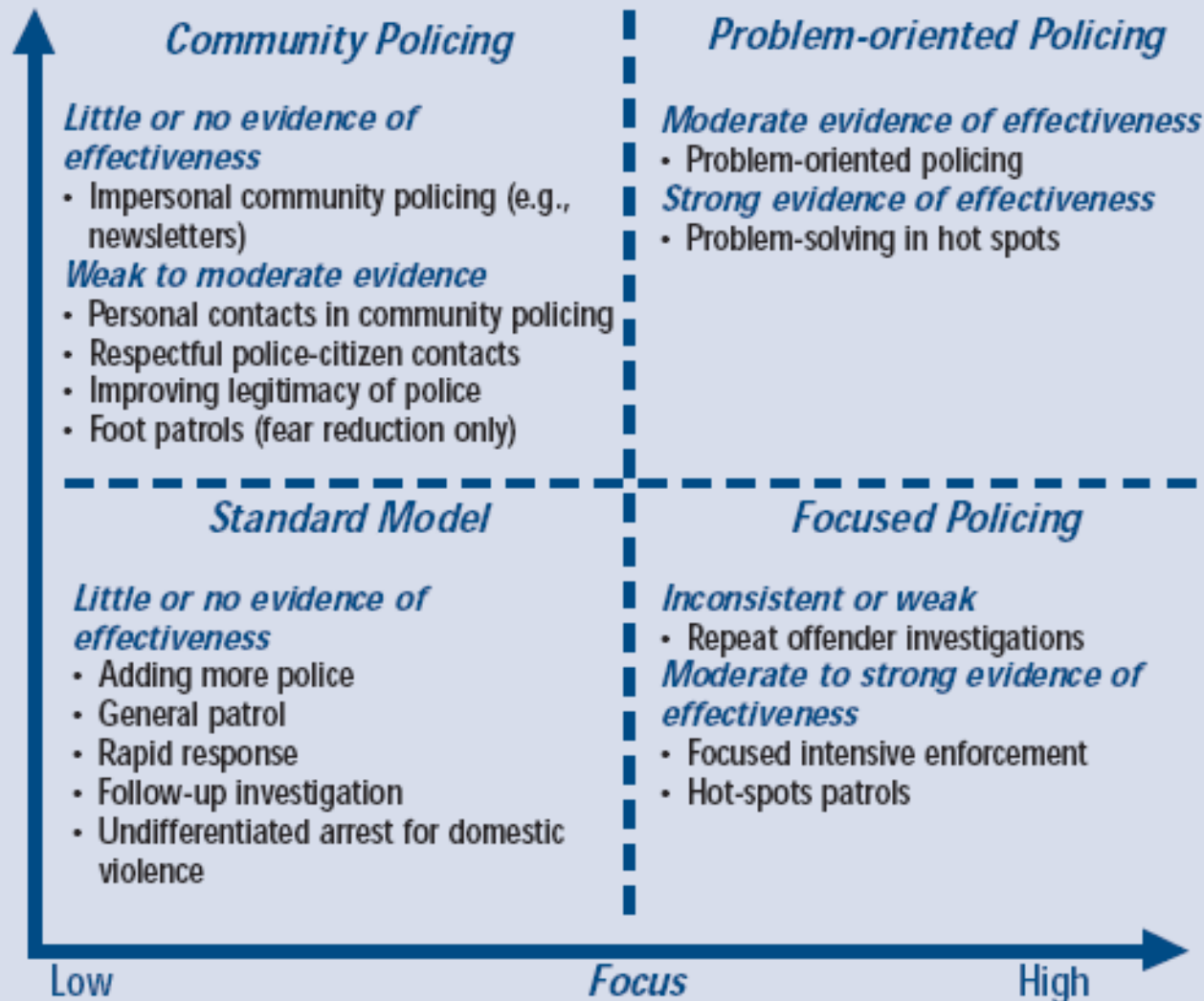
Great:

Apply a diverse array of approaches, including law enforcement

Diversity of Approaches

Little:

Rely almost exclusively on law enforcement



Adapted from National Research Council (2003), *Fairness and Effectiveness in Policing: The Evidence*. Committee to Review Research on Police Policy and Practice. Edited by Wesley Skogan and Kathleen Frydl. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. Figure 6.1 and Table 6.1, pp. 248-249.



Implementing Situational Crime Prevention

Table. The General Problem-Solving Matrix (GPSM)

		Elements of Problem Being Addressed			
The intervention takes effect		Offender (Handler)	Target/Victim (Guardian)	Place (Manager)	Context (Facilitators)
Temporal Focus	Before				
	During				
	After				

Source: Ceccato, Vania, Rob T. Guerette & John Eck, In progress

Table. Problem-Solving Matrix of an Off-Campus Burglary Reduction Project

		Elements of Problem Being Addressed*			
	The intervention takes effect...	Offender (Handler)	Target/Victim (Guardian)	Place (Manager)	Context (Facilitators)
Temporal Focus	Before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watchlist of known burglary offenders • Focused deterrence messaging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knock & talk awareness (Parental notifications) • University resource center to educate student tenants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Landlord education) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media awareness
	During	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted monitoring of offenders during peak times 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of alarm systems for high-risk properties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directed patrols • Visibility improvements • CCTV and LPRs placed at hotspot thoroughfares 	
	After	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knock & talk with known offenders following incidents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cocooning "near repeat" neighbor knock & talks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood notification post-incidents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community social media notifications of burglary incidents



Methods for Shifting and Sharing Responsibility

- Educating Victims and Offenders
- Making a Straightforward Informal Request
- Making a Targeted Confrontational Request
- Engaging Another Existing Service Agency
- Pressing for the Creation of a New Organization



Methods for Shifting and Sharing Responsibility

- Shaming Delinquent Parties
- Charging Fees for Police Services
- Pressing for Legislation
- Bringing Civil Action

A-K FOOD & LIQUOR MINI MARKET

Gainesville, Florida Robbery Case Study





Gainesville, Florida

Convenience Store Robberies

SCANNING

- Police noticed a increase in convenience store robberies



Gainesville, Florida

Convenience Store Robberies

ANALYSIS

- ❑ **Officers researched what other departments were doing with similar Robbery problems**
- ❑ **Gainesville Robbery data showed:**
 - **Average of 72 robberies annually**
 - **47 different stores were robbed**
 - **Some robbed as many as 14 times**
 - **75% occurred between 7pm - 5 am**
 - **Only one clerk on duty during 92% of robberies**
 - **Robber waited for clerk to be alone in 85% of robberies**



Gainesville, Florida

Convenience Store Robberies

RESPONSE

- ❑ a partnership with convenience store owners formed
- ❑ improved natural surveillance/ordinance required 2 clerks on duty during late night hours
- ❑ improved lighting inside and outside
- ❑ window obstructions (sales signs) removed
- ❑ limited cash handling policies implemented
- ❑ drop boxes installed
- ❑ upgraded access control through fences and walls to slow robbers and removal of obstacles to hide
- ❑ enhanced formal surveillance through alarm and video cameras; encouraged visits by police to stores



Gainesville, Florida

Convenience Store Robberies

ASSESSMENT

- A 6-month follow-up study conducted
- Robberies decreased by 65% from the same period in the previous year
- A study two years later showed 70% reduction



Thought Exercises

- Scenario 1 – Residential burglaries of condominiums.
- Scenario 2 – Texting while driving fatalities among teens.
- Scenario 3 – Fights between rival football fans as they depart stadium.
- Scenario 4 – Homeless inebriates living in bushes at public park.



Rob T. Guerette, Ph.D

Florida International University, Miami

Introduction to Situational Crime Prevention

International Problem-Oriented Policing Conference
Boulder, Co August 7 - 9th 2023