DEFINING AND OPTIMIZING DISPLACEMENT

by

Geoffrey C. Barnes

University of Maryland, College Park

Abstract: *As the criminology of place becomes more refined, we become more inclined to put our knowledge into action. Police agencies and others concerned with the security industry have begun to use place-specific crime analyses, and then develop tailored responses to correct the problems of discrete locations. Often, these plans of action include the use of some type of situational crime prevention to influence existing crime patterns. The issue of displacement, which for many years has been a central concern to the proponents of crime prevention, therefore occupies a position of great importance in the criminology of place as well. Indeed, the argument that any effort to solve problems in one place will simply divert offending to other locations is occasionally used by some practitioners as an argument against the implementation of place-oriented problem solving. This chapter examines the age-old issue of displacement, offers some conceptual tools to help define it and discusses how displacement could actually be optimized as a tool for crime control.*

DEFINING AND OPTIMIZING DISPLACEMENT

The developing interest in crime prevention began slowly in the 1970s, gained significant momentum during the 1980s and is now a major topic in criminology. Started as an alternative to the "failures" of punishment and treatment to alter unlawful behavior (Jeffrey, 1977), situational crime prevention has developed, in one sense, to provide a formal theoretical basis for some practical and commonsense methods of dealing with crime (Clarke, 1992). The specific natures of this strategy can be quite variable, however, and it is therefore difficult to define with any precision (Tuck, 1987). Nevertheless, situational prevention is normally discussed as a crime control method that does not rely on "improving society," but simply on reducing the opportunities for crime to occur, usually through changes

Address correspondence to: Geoffrey C. Barnes. University of Maryland at College Park, 2220 LeFrak Hall. College Park, MD 20742.

in the physical environment (Clarke, 1992). By intensifying the effort required to commit a crime, increasing the likelihood of detection or reducing the rewards associated with offending, situational crime prevention aims to alter an offender's cost-benefit analysis and make the crime seem not worth committing (Clarke, 1992).

Table 1: The Six Most Commonly Discussed Types of Displacement

Type of Displacement	Description
Temporal	Offenders shift the timing of their offenses to different hours of the day or days of the week, when offending is seen as less risky.
Target	Offenders forsake well-protected targets and focus their efforts on more vulnerable ones.
Spatial	Offenders move away from areas in which crime has become more difficult to commit, and begin to commit unlawful acts in another location.
Tactical	Offenders change the tactics they use to commit a crime in order to circumvent an obstacle designed to thwart them.
Perpetrator	As the offenders who typically commit certain offenses are either arrested or decide to desist from it, other offenders take their place.
Type of Crime	Offenders respond to the blocking of one specific form of crime by committing entirely different types of offenses.

Adapted from Reppetto (1976), Hakim and Rengert (1981), and Barr and Pease (1990).

Regardless of how they are designed to function, however, crime prevention tactics seem particularly vulnerable to having their net effectiveness reduced by the occurrence of displacement. When offenders, prevented from committing one crime, shift their manner of offending in some way so that they may replace the blocked opportunity with another unlawful act, crime is commonly said to be displaced.[1] There are a number of different ways in which offending patterns may shift to accommodate the introduction of a preventive strategy (the six most common forms are described in Table 1), but with all types of displacement the end result is the same—crime is not ultimately prevented at all, but simply altered in form. Because no overall reduction in offending is produced, displacement

would seem to eliminate completely any benefits that the prevention of crime may bring.

Whenever preventive efforts are focused upon specific geographic locations, displacement is often a common predicted result. Yet the problem-solving initiatives and "hot-spot" analyses that are now being put into practice in many cities often result in proactive interventions designed to alter the nature of crime in small, specific locations (Buerger, 1992). If displacement is indeed a common outcome of these efforts, understanding the costs and benefits that result from its occurrence is critical to determining the utility of place-oriented, situational crime prevention.

THE DISPLACEMENT DEBATE

In examining the impact of displacement on situational crime prevention, it is natural to begin by studying the opinions on both sides of the issue. Yet even with this most basic task, the argument surrounding displacement becomes difficult. During the last 15 years, there has been little more than a one-sided debate on this topic: the utility of prevention has been seemingly accepted throughout the published literature, and there are few critics to be found. Those who have expressed reservations about situational crime prevention have been most concerned with the growing tendency to focus solely on this approach while ignoring the need for "social," or offender-based, methods of reducing crime. These critics have not debated the apparent effectiveness of situational prevention, and displacement has not been seen as a matter of great concern (Bottoms, 1990; Trasler, 1986). Nevertheless, proponents of situational methods have continued to fight a battle against the displacement hypothesis, despite the fact that their opponents on this issue seem nonexistent.

With a lack of external criticism, supporters of situational crime prevention have taken to presenting displacement-oriented arguments against their own views. The so-called "traditional" view of displacement they put forward is well-described in the works of Gabor (1990) and Clarke (1992), if only for the purpose of proving it flawed. No other sources of this "traditional" criticism can be identified within recent literature. The nature of this situation is perhaps best seen in a review of the displacement literature by Barr and Pease (1990), in which all of the assertions discounting the utility of situational crime prevention come from works written in support of it. It appears that both sides of the displacement debate are being argued by the same people.

Irrespective of who makes this particular criticism of crime prevention, the manner in which it is presented and refuted is illuminating. Understanding the displacement controversy is important, if only because

situational proponents believe it to be the primary challenge to their viewpoint (Cornish and Clark, 1987). There are two basic elements to the displacement-centered "opposition." The first holds that displacement is inherently unfavorable, since the prevention strategies that cause it yield no overall decrease in crime (Hakim and Rengert, 1981). The second element concerns the belief that displacement is inevitable. This conception is said to come from traditional, "hydraulic" theories of criminal behavior in which offenders are seen as being almost compelled to commit crimes. As such, they nearly always respond to the blocking of one criminal opportunity by engaging in an alternative illegal act (Eck, 1993; Clarke, 1992; Barr and Pease, 1990; Gabor, 1981). Other research, which has shown offenders to be generalists, highly mobile and flexible in their offending patterns, also seems to support the idea of displacement being unstoppable (Gabor, 1990). The negative aspects of displacement, combined with its inevitability, are used to show that "social" or "corrective" prevention would be more effective (albeit more costly and difficult) alternatives to the use of situational methods (Reppetto, 1976).

In framing their response to this argument, situational theorists have focused almost solely on its second element—the inevitability of displacement. An intensive effort has been made to show that displacement is not *the* inescapable result of any crime control program (Miethe, 1991; Cornish and Clarke, 1986a). Cornish and Clarke (1987:934) have even gone so far as to state that, "[cjrucial to the viability of situational approaches... is the... view that displacement is far from inevitable and only occurs under particular conditions," since the contrary notion leads to an "extreme-case pessimism" in which offenders seem destined to offend regardless of any efforts to thwart them (Cornish and Clarke, 1986a:3).

Even if *some* displacement does occur in response to crime prevention, these theorists have argued that it will not be complete, and thus overall crime should be reduced (Eck, 1993). To further counter the theoretical effects of displacement, Clarke and Weisburd (1994; see also Clarke, 1992) have put forth the concept of "diffusion of benefits," which occurs when crime prevention methods aimed at one specific form of crime or location diffuse their preventive effects and produce unexpected reductions in the number of alternate criminal acts. It is important to note that all of these ideas have been proposed either to disprove or mitigate the view that displacement is inevitable.

With such importance ascribed to the issue of inevitability, empirical researchers have set out to discover the extent to which displacement is destined to occur. Such work takes a great deal of time, however, and there is still only a small amount of systematic evidence available on the

displacement phenomenon (Cornish and Clarke, 1986a). Nevertheless, the majority of research that is available seems to support the idea that" displacement effects can be evaded when a crime control measure is implemented. In his review of 33 studies that examined various preventive and policing strategies, Eck (1993) found that 18 (55%) showed no evidence of displacement. Additionally, none of the research that did find signs of displacement found it to be complete. Since overall crime seems to have been reduced in every academic analysis of situational prevention, the argument of inevitable, complete displacement would seem to have been almost fully refuted.

When considering the research that has been done, however, it is important to recognize that there is a certain "selection bias" in the types of prevention programs that get evaluated, and in the evaluations that get published (Sherman, 1994). This bias has a strong effect that skews the published literature toward positive results. Additionally, nearly all of these studies suffer from flawed methodology. As Eck (1993) points out, a large portion of the research has been mostly theoretical or has only looked at displacement as a secondary concern. He also categorizes the available research into two groups: the interviewing of known offenders, and examinations conducted concurrently with the implementation of a crime prevention effort.

While speaking to convicted offenders has produced some meaningful data on displacement (see, for example, Bennett and Wright, 1984), there are several aspects of this approach that are inherently problematic. In nearly every current form of such research, the sample size of interviewees is relatively "small and the selection method (e.g., dependent upon prisoners volunteering for the study) is both non-random and prone to self-selection bias (Reppetto, 1974). Additionally, the very fact that some interviewees in these studies were incarcerated leads to doubts about how well they represent the entire population of offenders (Reppetto, 1976), and whether their responses to hypothetical scenarios are truly indicative of their actions when faced with real criminal opportunities. Ultimately, this method is likely to be biased toward older, more experienced offenders (Bennett, 1986), who may differ from other criminals in their willingness to be displaced.

The other type of displacement research—studies that have attempted to evaluate crime control programs—have also had methodological problems (Eck, 1993). Many lack statistical power. Low overall numbers of offenses, even before the introduction of methods to reduce crime, have made it difficult for most of these studies to show how effective the crime control tactics were, if at all. For this same reason, there has often been very little crime to be displaced, frustrating attempts to measure shifts to

new areas or forms of offending. Even when such changes have been found, a number of researchers have neglected to test for statistical significance, and those who did typically found that increases in alternative forms of offending could have been due simply to chance. Furthermore, most research has not attempted to measure all six forms of displacement, concentrating instead on just one or two. In reality, we have very little systematic knowledge about how offenders react to blocked opportunities. Current research can only suggest the possibility of displacement; it cannot be said to have conclusively determined its existence, nonexistence magnitude, or form (for a full discussion of these issues, see Eck, 1993).

A primary reason for weakness in the available research is that displacement, like crime itself, is very difficult to measure. Even if no displacement is found in a given study, it could have occurred in a direction that was not examined (Cornish and Clarke, 1986a), or the displaced crime could easily be concealed within the overall crime rate (Clarke and Mayhew, 1988). On the other hand, when evidence of displacement is found, the rising rate of alternative offenses could be due simply to the natural cycle of crime (Gabor, 1990). Such results are not surprising. With a low number of offenses eligible for displacement, and at least six different forms of displacement for offenders to choose from, shifts in individual offending patterns will nearly always be insignificantly absorbed into the overall numbers of alternative offenses. Additionally, the elimination of rival hypotheses can be highly problematic when investigating the effects of crime control measures (Sherman, 1992). These difficulties led Barr and Pease (1990:293) to state that "... no research on crime prevention has convincingly shown that total displacement does not occur. Nor can this be shown." Those seeking to show that displacement is not inevitable, or even that it is not complete, will therefore find their task nearly impossible to achieve empirically.

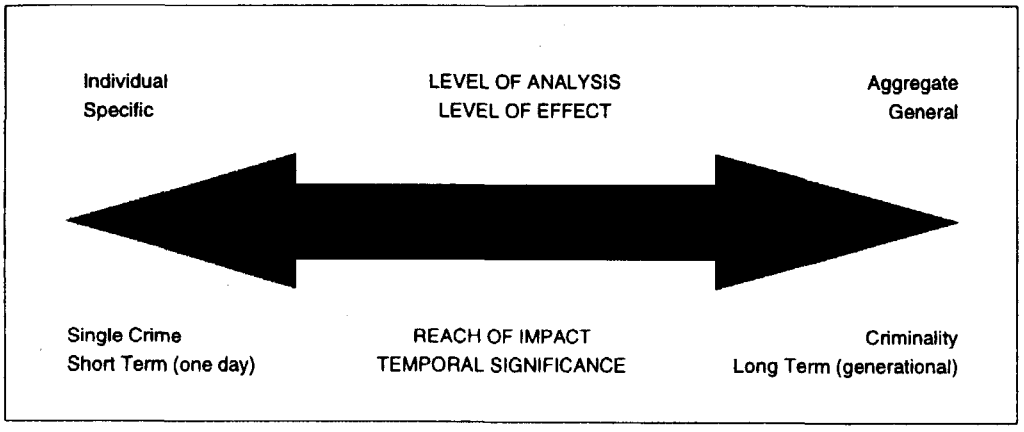
DEFINING DISPLACEMENT

That displacement research is so difficult to carry out is most certainly a problem. This problem is magnified, moreover, by the lack of a consistent definition of what displacement actually is. In his pioneering article on the phenomenon, Reppetto (1976) introduced the term "displacement" into criminological literature without ever fully defining what it meant.[2] Since that time, various researchers have selected their own definition of displacement to fit their particular needs or data. While this problem of definition was discussed briefly by Bennett (1986) and in more detail by Gabor (1978, 1990), the fact remains that behavior patterns categorized

as displacement in one study could be used in another to show that displacement did not occur (for examples of differing definitions, see Cornish and Clarke, 1986b; Gabor, 1978, 1981, 1990; Miethe, 1991).

It is wholly understandable that there should be some confusion on this issue of definition. While theorists in the area of crime prevention are familiar with the five forms of displacement (temporal, tactical, target, type of crime and spatial) put forth by Reppetto (1976),[3] and a sixth form (perpetrator) introduced by Barr and Pease (1990), very little thought has been given to the range of offender actions that could fall into these categories. I propose that there are at least four interrelated continua of micro- and meso-level behavior that could conceivably be defined as displacement. Depending on where offender behavior patterns fall within the range of these continua, various researchers could have different

Figure 1: The Continua of Possible Displacement Definitions



opinions as to whether displacement had occurred. These four ranges of possible displacement behavior, along with their extreme limits, are depicted in Figure 1.

The first of these continua concerns the *level of analysis* used to demonstrate displacement. Various authors (Eck, 1993; Gabor, 1990, 1978; Bennett, 1986; Hakim and Rengert, 1981) have pointed out that the idea of displacement is rooted in the decisions and motivations of the individual offender. Bennett (1986:49) stated the matter quite succinctly: "... to determine whether a person is deterred or displaced we need to know

what he or she was thinking about at the time of the offence." If criminals are to be viewed as quasi-rational decision makers (Cornish and Clarke, 1986b), then the thought processes of the individual offender are key in determining whether a given offense does or does not constitute displacement. For example, consider individuals who are prevented from committing one offense and then commit another one, not because the original opportunity was blocked but because they perceived the alternative to be a more lucrative prospect. These particular offenses should not qualify as displacement (Hakim and Rengert, 1981; Gabor, 1990). Without knowledge of what the motives behind the crimes were, however, they could easily be mistaken as such.

On the other side of this continuum, it may make little sense to focus on individual offenders, particularly from a policymaking standpoint. Police agencies and security managers are not normally interested in deterring crimes by just one person, but instead focus on an aggregate number of offenders and offenses. From this perspective, the offender decisions responsible for a rise in robbery rates after the initiation of a program to prevent burglary are immaterial—crime has apparently been displaced, and there is a new problem that must be dealt with. Within criminology, the persistent focus upon individual offenders, at the expense of studying aggregate crime at the community level, has been criticized as well (Reiss, 1986). As Cornish and Clarke (1986a) suggested, "... the task of accounting for an individual's pattern of offending is... different to [sic] that of explicitly trying to control particular forms of crime, and the former approach is not necessarily the best route by which to achieve the latter objective." While valid arguments can be made to focus on either level of analysis, a scholar's perspective on this issue will most certainly have a drastic effect on his or her definition of displacement.

The second continuum of behavior involves the *level of effect* one expects from a crime prevention method. Although somewhat similar to the issue raised in the previous discussion, this range of behavior does not consider offender motivation at all. Instead, it deals with the issue of whether a "displaced" offense must be committed by the same individual who was originally thwarted in a different attempt to offend (specific), or whether displacement can extend to the actions of other offenders who learn about the prevention measure vicariously (general). Clarke and Mayhew (1988:110) present their opinions on this issue quite plainly, stating that displacement cannot be said to occur when "... the new methods [of offending] are not... identified and used by individuals prevented from using [the removed opportunity]." This debate may not be so simply resolved as they indicate, however. Offenders who decide to commit burglary in a different neighborhood after hearing that another burglar

was arrested in the vicinity of their original target would seem to be "displaced" in every sense of the term, regardless of the fact that they had not actually been prevented—in the physical sense, at least—from victimizing their first choice.

A third dilemma in defining displacement is what *reach of impact* the prevention of a crime should have on the life of an offender. On one end of this continuum is the belief that the offender who is blocked from committing one crime is not displaced unless another offense is committed to replace that specific failed attempt (Bennett, 1986; Bennett and Wright, 1984). Obviously, there can be little dispute that such behavior would qualify as displacement. The other extreme, however, holds that an offender who does not fully abandon criminality after a thwarted attempt, and therefore commits another crime at any point in the future, is also displaced. From this viewpoint, an offender either desists or is displaced (Barr and Pease, 1990). As Gabor (1990) has pointed out, an accurate definition must be found in the middle ground between these two extremes.

The fourth and final continuum is concerned with the *temporal significance* anticipated from situational crime prevention, or how long one expects to see an overall reduction in crime following the introduction of preventive measures. In the study of burglars by Bennett and Wright (1984), the authors only defined an offender as displaced if he would normally commit another offense on the same day as the prevented attempt. This one-day limit was later criticized by Gabor (1990) as being too limiting and contrary to the current thinking about offender decision making. At the other extreme, Clarke and Mayhew (1988) point out that some crimes, such as the burglary of banks, have been nearly eradicated by situational prevention. Successive generations of offenders, they argue, have stopped considering bank burglary as a viable alternative, since it has been made too difficult, risky and unprofitable through the use of security technology. While Clarke and Mayhew dispute that the crimes these new offenders commit instead of bank burglary constitute displacement, such a definition could be rather easily conceptualized.

To extend their example, consider those young criminals who either have never considered committing bank burglary because of its difficult reputation, or who would like to break into a bank but do not know how to commit the crime with reasonable safety. Due to the introduction of situational prevention years before, they know of no one who has ever tried to commit such an offense, and are therefore thoroughly unfamiliar with the methods required to evade the alarm systems and break into the safe. Forsaking the idea of bank burglary, they instead rob convenience stores. These offenders have been dissuaded from committing one crime due to

its induced difficulty, and choose another form of criminal behavior to replace it. Such a decision would seem to constitute a form of "generational" displacement in its most basic sense.

Regardless of one's own stance on each of the four continua, it should be obvious from the preceding discussion that the definition of displacement can be quite variable. Equally apparent is the fact that depending upon the definition of displacement being used, its occurrence could be viewed as either impossible, inevitable or somewhere in between. Recalling the discussion presented at the beginning of this essay, the value of situational prevention has been disputed based on two beliefs about displacement: that it is the certain consequence of any preventive effort, and that it is inherently negative. Given that empirical research cannot be used to show that displacement has not occurred, and that various definitions of the term can make displacement seem inevitable, attempts to argue against the first criticism of crime prevention are doomed to fail. Instead, efforts should be made to show that the occurrence of displacement is not always negative, and to recognize the value of it as a tool for crime control (Barr and Pease, 1990).

BENEFITS OF DISPLACEMENT

The key to such an argument is that situational crime prevention can be quite successful, even when displacement is both inevitable and complete. While such a statement seems contrary to reason (given that no overall reduction in crime is produced), there are still beneficial—if sometimes temporary—effects to be gained from the prevention of crime. In fact, it is important to recognize that only effective means of crime prevention can be capable of producing displacement in the first place (Gabor, 1981, 1990; Barr and Pease, 1990). But the advantages of displacement go well beyond this simple, almost tautological, analogy. They range from the selfish to the selfless and extend benefits to the individual, the community and society as a whole.

At its most basic level, displacement is of extreme value to those who have avoided victimization. Both Sherman (1990) and Barr and Pease (1990) have commented upon this NIMBY (not in my backyard) approach to crime prevention, which is primarily concerned with preventing crime against a specific target—regardless of its effects elsewhere. For many, a change in the patterns of crime will always be considered beneficial, provided that the nature of change places the threat of victimization further from their own lives. Thus even if terrorism has been displaced to activities other than skyjacking since the installation of metal detectors and other security devices (Wilkinson, 1986), there are millions of air

travelers each year who are quite satisfied with this form of complete and inevitable displacement. The avoidance of crime can also be much more widespread, benefiting almost everyone, for at least a short time after the introduction of a crime control measure.

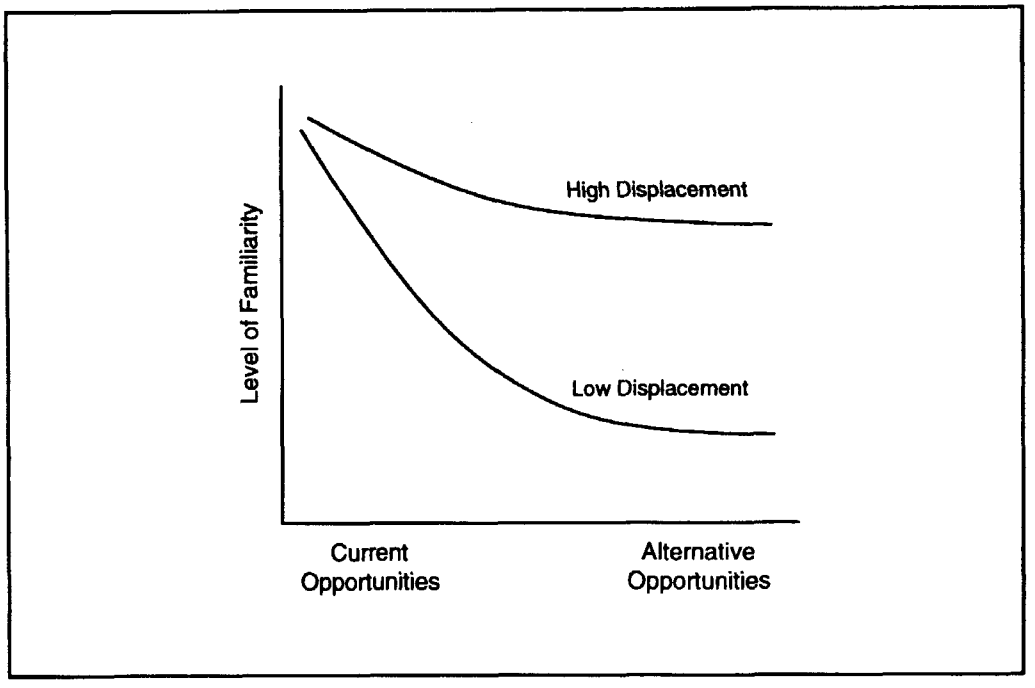
In a review of the deterrence literature associated with police crackdowns, Sherman (1990) reported that 14 of the 18 studies (78%) he reviewed found evidence of an initial, short-term reduction in crime. Even crackdowns that later produced signs of displacement were successful in this respect. While the police strategies examined by these studies do not constitute situational crime prevention in the strictest sense, it seems wholly reasonable to hypothesize this same effect as a possible outcome of attempts to reduce criminal opportunities.

Extending this idea beyond the interests of individual targets, Barr and Pease (1990) introduced the concepts of "benign" and "malign" displacement. According to their argument, displacement can be profitable in a number of different ways. For example, the alternative crimes that offenders turn to may be less serious than those which are prevented, thus reducing the overall harm produced by their criminal activities. Also, crime could be displaced away from areas that suffer from high levels of victimization and into low-crime neighborhoods. In this manner, the distribution of crime would become more even and equitable. If these or other benefits, such as reduced fear of crime, come about as a result of displacement, it may ultimately be more of an asset than a liability. Certainly, there are times that "malign" displacement serves to make things worse, but Barr and Pease's analysis shows that displacement can be beneficial in and of itself.

A final, and potentially most important, benefit of displacement is its impact on offenders. While the bulk of criminal career research has indicated that most offenders are generalists as opposed to specialists in crime, there does seem to be a small amount of preference among types of offending superimposed upon their behavior (Farrington, 1992). Cornish and Clarke (1987) have further suggested that the "choice structuring properties" of different offenses are used by criminals to select preferred forms of offending. According to this concept, offenders will seek out similarly structured forms of crime to commit when their favored method is blocked.

If offenders do develop such preferences among types of criminal behavior, it is logical to believe that they become increasingly more familiar with these crimes as they commit them. Whenever change is imposed upon their normal offending patterns, even when their new methods are similar and have the same choice-structuring properties, criminals will increasingly move toward more unfamiliar activities. The concept of "familiarity

Figure 2: Adapted from Eck's Concept of Familiarity Decay



decay" (Eck, 1993) provides a manner of conceptualizing the effect that an offender's lack of knowledge about a new form of crime could have on his or her likelihood of displacement. The more unfamiliar individual offenders are with their alternative criminal opportunities, the lower their probability of displacement (see Figure 2). Thus, each instance of displacement takes offenders further away from the crimes they have grown comfortable with committing, makes them more unfamiliar with their illegal alternatives and decreases their likelihood of further displacement. If the new methods of offending can then also be blocked, additional displacement becomes more difficult for offenders to accomplish. When this model is pushed to its most promising limit, a succession of displace-

merits could conceivably lead to the desistance of criminal behavior altogether.

OPTIMIZING DISPLACEMENT

To be most effective in this manner, displacement must be as disruptive to common offending patterns as possible. If the attempt to prevent crime situationally focuses on only a single, minor element of an offense, it will exacerbate the displacement pattern and could even lead to increased crime in the long run. Offenders who are forced into new methods of offending in a slow, easygoing manner will have the benefit of learning about them at almost their own pace. When only minor adjustments are required to ease into the new form of crime, this learning process is made simple. Unless a prevention technique recognizes the potential for displacement to occur and attempts to make this process as maximally disruptive as possible, it may ultimately increase the criminal repertoire of the offending population.

Perhaps for this very reason, Gabor (1990:46) suggests that there may be a "hierarchy of displacement" among offenders. Faced with the prevention of an opportunity, criminals may display certain preferences among the various forms of displacement. First, they may attempt to move to a new location to commit the same offense (spatial displacement). If such a change is not possible, then tactical or target displacement may be the next most desirable types. If all other ways of committing the same offense are prevented or unavailable, then offenders are faced with displacement in its least desirable form—switching to an entirely different type of crime. While Gabor never fully explains the reasons behind this hypothesis, and fails to include all of the common forms of displacement in his theory, it is interesting to note that the hierarchy he describes coincides almost exactly with the relative amounts of disruption caused by the different forms of displacement.

In my view, each of the six different types of displacement forces offenders to change their methods, but they do not do so equally. It is useful to recognize that many forms of displacement are essentially broad choice-structuring properties of the kind described by Cornish and Clarke (1987). The time of day during which offenders operate (temporal), the people they choose to victimize (target), the locations they prefer to work in (spatial), and the tactics they are most comfortable using (tactical) are all single properties that will make specific types of offending differentially attractive to them. Taken by themselves, however, they are not essential features of the crime itself. Prevented from working at night, burglars could instead commit their crimes during the day. If elderly victims are

no longer available to rob. then younger women may provide an alternative target. The introduction of security guards to a department store may require a change in shoplifting tactics, but does not require that theft be abandoned altogether. As can be seen in Table 2, these four types of displacement require only unidimensional alterations in previous offending patterns, and therefore run the risk of increasing—as opposed to preventing—the number of crimes committed over the long term.

Table 2: The Differential Effects of Displacement on the Nature of Offending

Type of Displacement	Type of Offense	Person Offending	Tactics Used	Location	Target	Time of Offending
Temporal	-	-	-	-	-	Δ
Target	-	-	-	-	Δ	-
Spatial	-	-	-	Δ	-	-
Tactical	-	-	Δ	-	-	-
Perpetrator	-	Δ	?	-	-	?
Type of Crime	Δ	?	?	?	?	?

Key to symbols:

Δ Aspects of offending that must change with the displacement

- Aspects of offending that remain the same despite the displacement

? Aspects of offending that will most probably have to change to accommodate the displacement

Perpetrator displacement, on the other hand, may require a bit more effort on the part of those who wish to engage in it. As defined by Barr and Pease (1990), this type of displacement occurs when specific criminals, who commonly commit a certain offense, stop doing so due to arrest or desistance. Other offenders then move in to fill the vacuum left by this departure, and the crime is thus displaced to new perpetrators. Because of its particular nature, this type of displacement would probably not involve changes in the type of offense committed, its location, or the targets of offending. If such changes had been necessary or desirable to the new offenders, they could have committed these crimes well before the removal of the original criminal(s).

Nevertheless, it is important to realize that these new offenders may be relatively unfamiliar with the offenses, locations, or targets that they

are inheriting, and that this lack of familiarity may influence their initial behavior. Given that these forms of crime will have had ample precedent in the previous activities of the removed offender(s), however, the learning curve should be rapid enough to remove these sources of anxiety rather quickly. If, on the other hand, the tactics or the time period used by the previous offender(s) are seen as contributory factors to their arrest, then those who replace them may be unwilling to repeat the same mistakes. This form of displacement, therefore, carries along with it the possibility of more extensive change and initial unfamiliarity than those that require just a single element of crime to be altered. As such, perpetrator displacement may be hypothesized to be significantly more disruptive than these unidimensional forms, and thus more effective from a crime control perspective.

When an entire type of crime is affected by a crime prevention method, however, the most powerful effects of displacement can be seen. If criminals are forced to change to a new type of offending, it is highly unlikely that all of the other elements in their normal offending patterns will be compatible with the new crime. Regardless of the degree of difference between two offenses, some less familiar elements will have to be adopted to make the transition successfully.

For example, the skills and knowledge needed to commit credit-card fraud are different from those needed to forge a check. The end results may be the same, and the two crimes fairly similar, but offenders who change from one to the other will face a higher chance of failure or arrest during their first few attempts—at least until the new crime becomes more familiar to them. If they were given the option of learning the techniques required to commit a new offense, many offenders would possibly wish to do so anyway. Few criminals, however, would simply abandon their old methods and jump quickly into a new form of offending that they know little about. Type of crime displacement can make this situation the only option, apart from desistance, that a criminal has. No other form of displacement has this much potential to disrupt the illegal activities of offenders and force them to choose alternatives with which they are unfamiliar.

The six forms of displacement are not, of course, mutually exclusive. It is entirely possible that an offender could be displaced in a number of different ways by the same prevention strategy. While type of crime displacement may be the most efficient method to reduce the level of familiarity that criminals have with the crimes they commit, a combination of the various forms of displacement could have a similar effect.

In any crime prevention program, the emphasis must be placed upon making offenders change their modus operandi as much as possible.

Provided this goal can be accomplished, there are a number of questions that remain unanswered, such as how the initiation of new crime prevention techniques should be approached. Should an entire range of situational methods be introduced simultaneously, to maximize the amount of change forced upon offenders at one time? Should their introduction be spread out over time, "drip-feeding" prevention into the problem so that each minor displacement that offenders attempt to engage in is almost immediately met with frustration (Forrester et al., 1990)? If so, at what frequency should these introductions occur? Regardless of the means, the ends are clear: offenders must not be permitted to stay comfortable with any particular method of offending for any length of time. Changes must be forced upon them until the only rational alternative they have is desistance.

When offenders become uncomfortable with all of their illegal alternatives, either because of unfamiliarity (Eck, 1993; Carter and Hill, 1979), an inability to find similar choice-structuring properties (Cornish and Clarke, 1987), fear of committing a specific type of crime for the first time (Feeney, 1986), a belief that they are too old to change (Cusson and Pinsonneault, 1986; Shover, 1985), or a sense of moral repugnance about other forms of crime (Clarke and Mayhew, 1988), then desistance becomes a much more likely possibility. In this sense, displacement should perhaps be viewed as a vehicle for changing the criminal work environment and forcing offenders to face these types of undesirable decisions. Desistance from crime is more than just a minor modification in lifestyle, however. Offenders must decide that reforming their ways will be less painful or risky than changing their style of offending. On rare occasions, unidimensional threats such as temporal, spatial or target displacement may be enough to justify such a decision. In most instances, however, only the intimidating prospect of massive change in an unfamiliar direction will be sufficient for people to alter their entire way of life.

There has been considerable research and theoretical development in displacement since Reppetto's (1976) introduction of the concept. This discussion has made clear that the recurring argument concerning the inevitability of displacement is unresolvable, and has received far too much attention for too long. As Eck (1993) has pointed out, there is currently a disturbing lack of research into how displacement actually occurs, and what types of situations may lead to its various forms. Such research is essential, and must focus on how best to steer offenders away from their preferred styles of offending and into uncharted waters. Despite the inherent risk of displacement when prevention efforts are aimed at discrete locations, the consequences of such a reaction may prove to be

more of a benefit than a liability. In the case of place-specific prevention, the reduction of familiarity may be the key to the reduction of crime.

NOTES

1. This brief description of displacement combines a number of definitions that have been offered in the literature. As will be discussed later in this essay, however, it is by no means complete.

2. It should be noted that while Reppetto (1976) is widely credited with the introduction of this topic, similar discussions can be found in earlier works, such as Chaiken et al. (1974) and Press (1971).

3. These five categories of displacement were later modified slightly by Hakim and Rengert (1981).

REFERENCES

Barr, R. and K. Pease (1990). "Crime Placement, Displacement and Deflection." In: M. Tonry and N. Morris (eds.). *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, Vol. 12. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Bennett, T. (1986). "Situational Crime Prevention from the Offenders' Perspective." In: K. Heal and G.K. Laycock (eds.), *Situational Crime Prevention: From Theory into Practice.* London, UK: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

——and R. Wright (1984). *Burglars on Burglary: Prevention and the Offender.* Aldershot, UK: Gower.

Bottoms, A. (1990). "Crime Prevention Facing the 1990s." *Policing and Society* 1:3-22.

Buerger, M. E. (ed.) (1992). *The Crime Prevention Casebook: Securing High Crime Locations.* Washington, DC: Crime Control Institute.

Carter, R. L. and K. Q. Hill (1979). *The Criminal's Image of the City.* Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Chaiken, J.M., M.W. Lawless and K.A. Stevenson (1974). *The Impact of Police Activity on Crime: Robberies in the New York City Subway System.* Report No. R-1424-NYC. New York, NY: New York City Rand Institute.

Clarke, R.V. (1992). "Introduction." In: R. V. Clarke (ed.), *Situational Crime Prevention: Successful Case Studies.* Albany, NY: Harrow and Heston.

——and P. Mayhew (1988). "The British Gas Suicide Story and Its Criminological Implications." In: M. Tonry and N. Morris (eds.), Crime *and*

Justice: A Review of Research, Vol. 10. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

——and D. Weisburd (1994). "Diffusion of Crime Control Benefits: Observations on the Reverse of Displacement." In: R.V. Clarke (Ed.), *Crime Prevention Studies,* Vol. 2, Monsey, NY: Criminal Justice Press.

Cornish, D. and R.V. Clarke (1986a). "Introduction." In: D.B. Cornish and R.V. Clarke (eds.). *The Reasoning Criminal: Rational Choice Perspectives on Offending.* New York, NY: Springer-Verlag.

——(1986b). "Situational Prevention, Displacement of Crime and Rational Choice Theory." In: K. Heal and G. Laycock (eds.), *Situational Crime Prevention: From Theory into Practice.* London, UK: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

——(1987). "Understanding Crime Displacement: An Application of Rational Choice Theory." *Criminology* 25:933-947.

Cusson, M. and P. Pinsonneault (1986). The Decision to Give Up Crime." In: D.B. Cornish and R.V. Clarke (eds.), *The Reasoning Criminal: Rational Choice Perspectives on Offending.* New York, NY: Springer-Verlag.

Eck, J.E. (1993). 'The Threat of Crime Displacement." *Criminal Justice Abstracts* 25:527-546.

Farrington, D.P. (1992). "Criminal Career Research: Lessons for Crime Prevention." *Studies on Crime and Crime Prevention* 1:7-29.

Feeney, F. (1986). "Robbers as Decision Makers." In: D.B. Cornish and R.V. Clarke (eds.), *The Reasoning Criminal: Rational Choice Perspectives on Offending.* New York, NY: Springer-Verlag.

Forrester D., S. Frenz, M. O'Connel and K. Pease (1990). *The Kirkholt Burglary Prevention Project: Phase II.* Crime Prevention Unit Series Paper 23. London, UK: Home Office.

Gabor, T. (1978). "Crime Displacement: The Literature and Strategies." *Crime and Justice* 6:100-106.

——(1981). "The Crime Displacement Hypotheses: An Empirical Examination." *Crime & Delinquency* 27:390-404.

——(1990). "Crime Displacement and Situational Crime Prevention: Toward the Development of Some Principles." *Canadian Journal of Criminology* 32:41-73.

Hakim, S. and G.F. Rengert (1981). "Introduction." In: S. Hakim and G.F. Rengert (eds.), *Crime Spillover.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Jeffrey, C. R. (1977). *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design.* London, UK: Sage.

Miethe, T. (1991). "Citizen-Based Crime Control Activity and Victimization Risks: An Examination of Displacement and the Free-Rider Effect." *Criminology* 29:419-441.

Reiss, A.J., Jr. (1986). "Why are Communities Important in Understanding Crime?" In: A. J. Reiss, Jr. and M. Tonry (eds.), *Communities and Crime.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Reppetto, T.A. (1974). *Residential Crime.* Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.

——(1976). "Crime Prevention and the Displacement Phenomenon." *Crime & Delinquency* 22:166-177.

Sherman, L.W. (1990). "Police Crackdowns: Initial and Residual Deterrence." In: M. Tonry and N. Morris (eds.), *Crime and Justice: A Review ofResearchVol.* 12, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

——(1992), "Book Review of *Problem Oriented Policing,* by H. Goldstein." *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 82:690-707.

——(1994). Personal communication with the author.

Shover, N. (1985). *Aging Criminals.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Trasler, G. (1986). "Situational Crime Control and Rational Choice: A Critique." In: K. Heal and G.K. Laycock (eds.), *Situational Crime Prevention: From Theory into Practice.* London, UK: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Tuck, M. (1987). *Crime Prevention: A Shift in Concept.* Research Bulletin (Special European Edition) No. 24, Home Office Research and Planning Unit. London, UK: Home Office.

Wilkinson, P. (1986). *Terrorism and the liberal State.* 2d ed. London, UK: Macmillan.