
EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Crime Prevention Studies will publish theoretical and empirical research on the subject of reducing opportunities for crime. Until recently, this topic was of relatively minor importance in criminology because opportunity was thought to determine, not whether crime occurred, but only the time and place of its occurrence. It followed that manipulating opportunities would result not in reduced crime, but in the temporal or geographical displacement of offending, or perhaps in the commission of different and possibly worse forms of crime. If crime was to be reduced, what needed to be changed was the underlying motivation for crime, deriving from strong biological, psychological or social forces. Consequently, the principal objective of crime control policy has been to modify criminal dispositions through the imposition of treatment or punishment and, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, extensive experimentation took place with different forms of rehabilitative treatment and deterrent sentencing.

This research found that criminal dispositions are remarkably resistant to change and that no one treatment or sentence is clearly more effective than any other. Differing sentence lengths seem to have few detectable effects on subsequent offending; therapeutic regimes of various kinds in prisons and training schools seem to be no more effective than conventional or indeed punitive ones; and non-custodial disposals—fines, probation, community service—seem to vary little in their ability to bring about reform. Faced with these results, the policy focus shifted in the 1980s to simple incapacitation of the "career criminal through lengthy terms of imprisonment. Now, at the beginning of the 1990s, it is becoming apparent that, despite the tremendous criminal justice costs incurred, incapacitation will be no more successful than treatment or deterrence in achieving reductions in crime, and crime policy seems on the verge of another shift. While the future direction is not clear, it seems safe to predict that this will involve increased attention to the prevention of crime if only because this has attracted so little interest in the past.

Much of the new interest in prevention, given criminology's traditional preoccupation with offender dispositions, is likely to focus on measures to prevent the development of criminality, for example, through social and educational programs for young children and juveniles. A second focus is likely to be measures designed to strengthen

social control at the neighborhood or community level through, for example, neighborhood watch or the provision of local youth employment and leisure schemes. Even if these forms of prevention at first attract most of the new policy interest, a third strand of prevention, reducing opportunities for crime, will also undoubtedly grow in importance. There are numerous reasons for this. First, the fundamental premise of a growing body of "opportunity" theory is that crime cannot be adequately explained simply by focusing on criminal dispositions. The occurrence of a criminal event depends as much upon the constellation of immediate situational variables as upon the presence of an appropriately motivated individual. This provides the rationale for focusing preventive effort equally upon opportunities and dispositions. Second, rational-choice formulations of opportunity theory suggest that displacement is by no means the inevitable result of reducing opportunities, but is contingent upon the costs and benefits of alternative action. Consequently, net reductions can be achieved in crime through opportunity reduction. Third, the development of opportunity theory has drawn attention to complex, barely-understood processes of offender decision making that require the attention of gifted researchers. A practical incentive for undertaking creative and publishable work therefore exists for criminologists to enter this field. Fourth, there are now dozens of documented cases in which opportunity-reducing measures have achieved substantial reductions of 50% or better in specific categories of crime. This provides encouragement to seek further applications of opportunity reducing solutions. In short, there are a host of good academic and policy reasons for expecting a growth of interest in ways to reduce criminal opportunities.

Reflecting its primarily governmental sponsorship, most of the existing research on opportunity reduction has been published in government reports. The series of Crime Prevention Unit papers published by the U.K. Home Office, the Crime Prevention Series emanating from the Australian Institute of Criminology, and the various bulletins issued by the Research and Documentation Centre of the Dutch Ministry of Justice are outstanding examples. Government reports are not always readily accessible to scholars from other countries, however, and there is a need for an international forum for academic and policy studies of opportunity-reducing forms of crime prevention. This is the need that *Crime Prevention Studies* has been designed to fill. The series, of which this is the first volume, will include preventive-oriented analyses of specific crime problems, evaluations of crime prevention programs, discussions of relevant theory, and descriptions and analyses of implementation issues. It is anticipated that one or two general volumes will appear each

year, and that these will be supplemented by volumes focused upon more specific areas or topics.

SITUATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION

Opportunity-reducing forms of crime prevention include a number of distinct policy approaches, such as "crime prevention through environmental design," "defensible space" and "problem-oriented policing." In recent years, the concept of "situational crime prevention" has begun to bring together these varied forms of opportunity reduction. Situational prevention can be defined as measures: (1) directed at highly specific forms of crime (2) that involve the management, design or manipulation of the immediate environment in as systematic and permanent way as possible (3) so as to increase the effort and risks of crime, and reduce the rewards as perceived by a wide range of offenders.

Situational prevention consists of three essential elements: an explicit theoretical framework, a standard methodology for addressing specific problems of crime and disorder, and a set of opportunity-reducing techniques. The theoretical framework draws upon concepts from victimology, environmental criminology, routine activity theory and the rational choice perspective. The standard methodology is a version of the action research paradigm under which researchers and practitioners work together to analyze and define the problem, identify and experiment with solutions, and evaluate and disseminate the results. The set of opportunity-reducing techniques range from simple target hardening to more sophisticated measures designed to deflect offenders from possible targets and to reduce inducements to criminal action.

Although situational prevention has been developed within a criminological context, stripped to essentials, much of the thinking is common sense. Indeed, many preventive measures that meet the definition of situational prevention were developed by managers in a variety of public and private agencies who, without any criminological knowledge, were required to deal with specific problems of crime and disorder in their spheres of operation. The experience gained through these individual problem-solving efforts can be consolidated under the criminological framework supplied by situational prevention, with the result that situational prevention will provide an increasingly broad base of reliable information to assist managers who have no prior experience in dealing with crime. In particular, it will give them a continually expanding battery of tried and tested measures to apply. *Crime Prevention Studies* should therefore be of assistance to a wide range of people who would **not normally read criminological journals, and will also serve as a**

publication outlet for their reports. The papers by Masuda, by Carr and Spring, and by Bourne and Cooke in this volume constitute examples of work by non-criminologists.

THIS VOLUME

While submissions to *Crime Prevention Studies* are welcomed, all contributions included in this first volume were solicited from a distinguished international group. They fall into two main categories: case studies of particular applications of situational prevention, and more general discussions relating to theory and practice. Included under the latter category are two meta-evaluations of the effectiveness of crime prevention measures. In the first and more ambitious of these, Barry Poyner surveys 122 evaluations of crime prevention projects in an attempt to compare the effectiveness of six general kinds of measures: publicity campaigns, environmental design, community and social services, target hardening and target removal. He found the greatest measure of success for target removal, and least for social and community measures. In the second meta-evaluation, David Lester reviews more than 20 studies that he and his collaborators have undertaken of the availability of lethal agents (especially firearms) and rates of homicide and suicide. It has sometimes been argued that these strongly-motivated behaviors are among the least susceptible to opportunity-reducing measures, but Lester concludes that restrictions on the availability of lethal agents are correlated with reduced rates of both homicide and suicide. The evidence was more consistent in relation to suicide than homicide, although there was more evidence of switching of methods for homicide when availability of a particular lethal agent was reduced. The conclusions of these meta-evaluations (which, being the first ones to be reported, are necessarily of a tentative nature) may be of less interest than the fact that they have been undertaken at all. Just a few years ago there would not have been enough research to sustain studies of this kind, and this is tangible evidence of the increasing interest in crime prevention.

The third of the general papers, by Maurice Cusson on "situational deterrence," draws attention to the fear experienced by an offender in the course of a criminal event, fear that can provide a strong deterrent to crime and cause the offender to abort his or her action. Cusson's paper illustrates the scope that remains for further development of the "opportunity" theory underlying situational prevention, and, incidentally, exposes some of the weaknesses of current deterrence theory that is **insufficiently anchored in situational analysis**. In the fourth paper,

concerned with the costs of car theft, Simon Field argues that the imperfect market for prevention (it is simply not worthwhile for most individual motorists to invest in prevention) dictates that governments should mandate better security standards for new automobiles. While this might be resisted by manufacturers, it would be to their benefit because reduced theft would lead to lower insurance costs. This, in turn, would mean that motorists would have more money to spend on new cars. Again, perhaps of less general importance than the validity of Field's conclusions, is the example that his paper provides of the potential contribution of economic analysis to crime prevention policy.

Of the six case studies, that by David Farrington and his colleagues is especially noteworthy because it is one of the very first evaluations of situational measures to use an experimental design. It compared the effectiveness of three measures to reduce shoplifting from electronics stores: tagging of merchandise, store redesign, and deployment of a security guard. The guard was found to be least effective (which might give the security industry food for thought), though the researchers conceded that this might have been due to the particular individuals involved, who were neither well trained or imposing in appearance. Incidentally, this concession illustrates the difficulty of employing experimental designs in complex social settings. To adequately control for all the variables that might affect outcomes would require a much more complex series of experiments than would usually be feasible. Nevertheless, the greater evaluative power of experimental designs is likely to mean that they will be employed more frequently in the future.

The remaining five case studies all employ simple time-series or before-and-after comparisons to evaluate a variety of situational measures in a diverse range of settings. The first of these, by Barry Masuda, also concerns electronics retailing and shows that, under pressure of declining profit margins, merchants are beginning to tackle the "shrinkage" that has been too readily accepted as an unavoidable cost of doing business. He demonstrates that a program which included the development of a detailed "profile" of potential offenders substantially reduced successful attempts to make fraudulent use of credit cards at a group of electronics stores in New Jersey.

Two other case studies are concerned with crime on public transport. Clarke's study deals with fare evasion on the London Underground, which had been costing the system about £20 million per year in lost revenues. Clarke evaluated the effect of installing automatic ticket gates at the system's central stations to make it more difficult to travel without payment. He concludes that the gates substantially reduced fare evasion and that the investment of about £20 million in the gates should be

quickly recovered. Clarke suggests that further substantial savings could be achieved by selective installation of automatic gates at some suburban stations, to be chosen by studying patterns of fare evasion. Kerri Carr and Geoff Spring report that a multifaceted program of rapid repair, enhanced surveillance and increased patrolling substantially reduced personal assaults, graffiti and vandalism on the metropolitan railway system of Victoria, Australia.

The final two case studies also come from Victoria. The first, by Arthur and Elizabeth Veno, describes the process through which the Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix, which at its former venue in New South Wales had been marked by extensive brawling between police and spectators, was transformed at its new location in Victoria into a largely trouble-free and much better-attended event. This involved the adoption through agreements among the police, the host community and the visiting bikers of a number of situational measures designed to reduce frustration and confrontation between the various parties.

The last case study, by Michael Bourne and Ronald Cooke, is in many ways the most remarkable of the whole collection. It shows clearly that the widespread deployment in Victoria of speed cameras (or photo radar as the devices are called in the U.S.) has reduced injuries and fatalities on Victoria's roads by over 40% in two years, with an estimated saving A\$800 million dollars to the Victorian community. Almost as impressive is the technological success involved in introducing an automated system that issues over 600,000 speeding tickets per year. To cap it all, the speed cameras enjoy considerable support in the community. This makes it all the more disappointing that attempts to introduce photo radar in the U. S. have met with little success to date. In New Jersey, the use of photo radar was prohibited before the results of its experimental deployment in the state were available. The senator sponsoring the prohibition gave as one of his reasons that insurance rates might increase as a result of the increased convictions for speeding. Perhaps the moral is that whenever situational measures are targeted upon everyday forms of crime committed by ordinary people, care should be taken that they are not too effective and do not provide a sporting chance of escaping detection!

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