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Situational Prevention, Criminology, and Social Values

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INTRODUCTION

Advocates of situational crime prevention have claimed that the systematic reduction of opportunities for crime would lead to substantial reductions in a society's crime rate. Critics have responded that this claim gives too little importance to the social and psychological determinants of criminal motivation. Unless motivation is also reduced, they argue, the removal of opportunities will simply result in crime being redistributed, not reduced.

In buttressing their position, advocates of situational prevention have helped to develop theories portraying crime as the outcome of an interaction between motivation and opportunity. Perhaps the three most important of these theories, which David Garland (1996) has described as 'the new criminologies of everyday life', are the routine activities approach, crime pattern theory and the rational choice perspective. These are complementary theories but each has a slightly different focus (Felson and Clarke, 1998). Routine activities theory deals with the ways that opportunities arise (and decline) in society. Sociologists would describe it as a 'macro' theory because it seeks to explain broad social trends. Pattern theory deals with the ways that offenders encounter or seek out opportunities for crime. Because it considers offenders in the context of the neighbourhoods where they live, it provides explanations at the 'meso' level. The rational choice perspective provides accounts of the various situational influences – motives, desires, emotions, justifications – that result in offenders deciding to take advantage of particular criminal opportunities. Because it focuses on the immediate setting for crime, it could be called a 'micro' theory.

Taken together, these theories show how crime is generated by the interaction of motivational and situational variables. They explain how opportunities for crime draw people into criminal conduct just as much as criminal dispositions lead people to seek out crime opportunities. This helps in making the case that reducing opportunities is as important as reducing criminal motivation. At the same time, advocates of situational prevention have been engaged in applying opportunity-reduction on the ground. More than 100

documented examples of successful situational prevention now exist[1]. Early applications were focused on opportunistic property offences, but situational prevention has been used more recently in preventing a much wider range of offences, including street prostitution, drunken brawling, obscene phone calling, domestic violence and various forms of commercial robbery (Clarke, 1997). In these evaluations of situational prevention, displacement effects have been found to be much less common than often assumed. No evidence of displacement was found in 22 out of 55 situational prevention projects recently examined in a review for the Dutch Ministry of Justice, and only partial displacement was found in the remainder (Hesseling, 1994).

The methodology of many of the evaluations can be criticised, but taken together they suggest that situational prevention can be effective across a broad range of crimes at both a societal and local level. In addition, many studies are discovering that the benefits of situational crime prevention have diffused so that there was not only a reduction in crimes targeted by the measures, but crime supposedly outside the direct reach of the measures (Clarke and Weisburd, 1994). For example, when CCTV cameras were installed on the top deck of three buses in one city, vandalism was reduced not just on those buses, but on the entire fleet (Poyner, 1988). In another example, improved lighting of the streets in one housing estate not only reduced crime in that estate but also in an adjoining one (Painter and Farrington, 1997). It seems that offenders respond to reduced opportunities in a variety of ways, sometimes by shifting their attention elsewhere, but often by reducing their offending as a result of a real or perceived increase in the risks or effort entailed.

As a result of these developments, situational prevention has now gained a place in the crime control policies of many countries, but it is still viewed with little enthusiasm by most criminologists. Some of them continue to question its effectiveness[2], but more now concentrate on its supposed detrimental social consequences, and on its 'conservative' values and politics (O'Malley, 1997; O'Malley and Sutton, 1997; Crawford, 1998; Hughes, 1998). This paper focuses on these more recent lines of criticism. It argues that the harmful consequences of situational prevention can often be anticipated, and with care can also be avoided or ameliorated. As for the criticism of values, it argues that this reflects the preferences of most criminologists for social reform over

[1] Clarke (1997) and Sherman et al. (1997) provide overlapping reference sources to these case studies.

[2] Despite this record of success, important questions about the effectiveness of situational crime remain to be answered. For instance, little has been written about implementation difficulties and about why some measures fail. Nor is much known about how long measures retain their effectiveness before offenders find ways round them. Further, it is not clear how situational prevention can be used to reduce some important categories of crime such as sexual assaults, hate crimes, organised crime and corporate crime. Most important, it is not yet clear whether the piecemeal elimination of specific kinds of opportunities for crime can make a substantial enough impact on the overall level of crime in society to justify an increased government investment in the approach.

opportunity reduction; they need to be persuaded, however, that opportunity reduction equally demands their attention.

HARMFUL SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

The potential harms of situational prevention are difficult to discuss in the space of a single paper, for reasons that include the following:

1. Situational prevention has come to mean different things. In particular, it now has both a broad and a narrow meaning. In its broad meaning, it encompasses any attempt to manipulate the environment to reduce opportunities for crime. In its narrow meaning, it refers to a specific problem solving approach, developed by criminologists, which is the subject of an extensive technical and theoretical literature (Clarke, 1995; 1997). The present chapter is focused on this narrower definition, whereas many other chapters in this book deal with situational prevention defined more broadly. As explained below, the narrower form has more built-in ethical safeguards.
2. Even when narrowly defined, situational prevention encompasses many different techniques to reduce opportunity. In the latest classification, 16 of these techniques are identified under the four general headings of increasing the difficulty of crime, increasing the risks, reducing the rewards and removing excuses (see Table 1). Each of these techniques varies in its potential drawbacks. For instance, 'access control', one technique for increasing the difficulty of crime, has more 'exclusionary' costs than, say, 'target hardening', another such technique. Moreover, specific applications of a particular technique may be more problematic than others are. For instance, improved lighting and 'neighbourhood watch' are both means of improving natural surveillance (one of the ways to increase the risks of crime), but the latter carries more ethical risks because it may encourage vigilantism.
3. Both private and public agencies engage in situational prevention projects. Those undertaken by private agencies may have more injurious consequences than those undertaken by government, because the latter must take a much broader range of interests into account.
4. Harm can be considered from an individual or community perspective as well as an overall societal perspective. Depending on which perspective is adopted, there will be differing assessments of harm[3].

In addition, there seems to be no generally accepted classification of the possible harmful consequences of crime policies to guide the discussion of the ethics of situational crime prevention. Felson and Clarke (1997) have proposed

[3] As noted by Joanna Shapland in her commentary at the Cambridge conference, this paper adopts a 'top down, government' perspective.

Table 1. Situational crime prevention: examples of the main approaches

INCREASING PERCEIVED EFFORT	REDUCING ANTICIPATED REWARDS
1. Target hardening • Strengthened coin boxes in telephone kiosks • Steering column locks on cars • Anti-robbery screens in banks	9. Target removal • Removable car radios • Women's refuges • Phonecards to eliminate cash in public pay phones
2. Controlling access • Fencing around car parks • Entry phones • Concierges	10. Property identification • Property marking • Vehicle licensing • Cattle branding
3. Deflecting offenders from targets • Segregating rival soccer fans • Pub location • Closing streets to stop cruising for prostitutes	11. Reducing temptation • Gender-neutral phone listings • Off-street parking • Rapid repair of vandalism
4. Controlling crime facilitators • Photographs on credit cards • Toughened glasses in pubs • Passwords for mobile phones	12. Denying benefits • Ink merchandise tags • Graffiti cleaning • Disabling stolen mobile phones
INCREASING PERCEIVED RISKS	**REMOVING EXCUSES**
5. Screening entrances and exits • Automatic ticket gates at stations • Baggage screening at airports • Merchandise tags in shops	13. Setting rules • Customs declaration • Harassment codes • Hotel registration
6. Formal surveillance • Speed cameras • Burglar alarms • City guards	14. Alerting conscience • Roadside speedometers • 'Shoplifting is stealing' signs • 'Idiots drink and drive' signs
7. Surveillance by employees • Locate pay phones where employees can see • Park attendants • CCTV systems	15. Controlling disinhibitors • Laws controlling drinking age • V-chips in TVs to block violent programmes • Breathalyzers in pubs
8. Natural surveillance • 'Defensible space' designs • Improved street lighting • 'Cocoon' neighbourhood watch	16. Encouraging compliance • Easy library checkout to discourage book theft • Public lavatories • Litter bins

Source: Adapted from Ekblom (1998)

that three general principles deriving from the ethical standards of a liberal democracy should govern crime prevention policy: it should provide crime prevention equally to all social strata, it should show respect for individual rights, and it should share responsibility for crime prevention with all sections of society. However, it is too early to say whether these principles will be accepted as an adequate framework for discussing the ethical questions raised by situational prevention. While they inform the discussion below they do not govern its structure. Rather, the discussion is focused on some specific claims about the harmful results of situational prevention. In each case, it will be argued that ways to avoid the harms can be found and that the criticisms often take no account of the countervailing benefits of situational prevention.

1. Displacement resulting from situational prevention can lead to crime becoming worse.

This is not simply the criticism, which is incorrect, that situational prevention achieves little net benefit as a result of displacement. Rather, it is that displacement can sometimes result in an escalation of harm so that more serious crimes replace less harmful varieties[4]. For instance, when token booths in the NYC subway system were target hardened, some thieves attacked them by pouring petrol under the doorway and threatening to set the booth alight (Dwyer, 1991). The subway authorities quickly installed fire extinguishers in booths to counter this threat.

In fact, the idea of escalation does not comport with the circumstances of many forms of crime. For example, it seems unlikely that if casual shoplifting were made more difficult, those denied this opportunity would feel compelled to find some other way of getting the goods – such as grabbing the shopping baskets from pensioners. Even so, those implementing situational prevention must be prepared to respond if the threat of escalation becomes a reality (as in the case of the petrol attacks on token booths). This is a recognised part of situational prevention's action-research methodology, which requires an examination of actual outcomes after the implementation of opportunity-reducing measures.

Another version of the increased harm hypothesis is that situational prevention can result in crime being displaced from the rich to the poor. Thus the rich man's burglar alarm may displace burglary to his poorer neighbour. The possibility of this kind of displacement should be considered whenever governments conduct publicity campaigns to get people to safeguard their

[4] It is equally true, as Barr and Pease (1990) have argued, that even if displacement were complete – in the sense that equally many, though different crimes, occurred after the measures than before – this might still result in a net benefit for society. The new crimes might be less serious than the old (what might be called de-escalation) and crimes may be diverted from repeat victims to be shared more equally among the members of a particular community.

property. In fact, there are few documented examples of crime being displaced from the rich to poor, though, for a time, vehicle-tracking devices to prevent car theft carried this risk. These devices are expensive and would not be worth fitting to most 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 stolen cars fitted with tracking devices at the expense of those without the devices. Consequently, many municipalities in America now make it a condition of police cooperation 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, a recent econometric evaluation of the use of these devices in the Northeastern United States suggests that they have 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 poorer communities as the result of more effective crime prevention in more wealthy neighbouring communities.

2. Situational crime prevention reinforces a harsh, uncaring fortress society, of which gated communities are the most recent manifestation.

When first introduced, situational prevention, especially in its 'target hardening' varieties, fed fears about the imminence of a fortress society in which citizens terrified of crime locked themselves in their homes, shunned their neighbours, and emerged only for work and other essential business. The result, it was feared, would be a growing alienation of the population and the gradual destruction of community life. In fact, much situational prevention practice has had exactly the opposite objective of strengthening community ties and reinforcing social controls, by enabling people to keep an eye on the neighbourhood around their homes. Essentially, this is the purpose of the 'defensible space' designs that Oscar Newman (1972) proposed for public housing estates in the early 1970s.

Nevertheless, the criticism has lingered on, though in different forms over the years. Currently, it is focused on the 'gated community', where access is restricted to those residing there on the assumption that much crime is the result of offenders cruising in neighbourhoods, looking for crime opportunities. Access is controlled by walled or fenced perimeters, by gates and by barriers. In many cases, the residents of these communities are seeking protection from crime, but they are also hoping to avoid traffic, litter and other incivilities of modern life. The number of these communities has increased rapidly in America in the past fifteen years. 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).

It is not clear whether the ethical considerations surrounding gated communities are much more troublesome than those relating to restricted entry into apartment blocks, many of which house just as many residents. Nor is it clear how these considerations differ from those concerning walled country estates belonging to the very wealthy. Some of the criticism of gated communities certainly assumes that they are only for the rich. In fact, many of these neighbourhoods recently built in the United States, perhaps most of them, are intended for middle-income residents (Blakely and Snyder, 1998). Gated communities also have their analogues in poorer parts of the city where residents have demanded that street barriers be installed to keep drug dealers and criminals out of their neighbourhoods. Some inner city public housing estates in America have also in effect been turned into gated communities.

No careful study has been made of whether gated communities do protect wealthy and middle-income people from crime. They might do so if the community is located in a high crime area and if security is tight. However, many of the new gated communities do not fulfill these conditions. They are being built in the outer suburbs where crime is already low. Where they began with manned gates, many quickly give these up because of the expense. On the other hand, several studies in poorer neighbourhoods have shown that street barriers can be effective in reducing crime. For example, Matthew's (1986, 1993) work in London suburbs has shown that street closures have been an important component of the successful efforts to reduce street prostitution. Lasley (1998) has recently shown that street barriers installed in an impoverished area in Los Angeles reduced a variety of crimes including homicide committed in drive-by shootings by gang members.

As so often turns out, the truth about gated communities is more complex than portrayed by the critics. Gated communities are not merely for the rich and may not be widely resented by the poor. 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 benefits may be most obvious and direct. 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 purchasing guns. In any ethical assessment of gated communities, however, these and their other possible benefits need to be balanced against their possible harms in limiting public access and freedom of movement (see von Hirsch and Shearing, 2000).

These threats need to be exposed, subjected to critical evaluation, and resisted where they might result in harmful intrusions on freedom. Unfortunately, in their zeal to be the guardians of liberty, the critics of new technology often fail to ask questions about the reality of the threat and about the possibility of it being averted (other than by banning the technology). If some infringements of liberty seem unavoidable, they often fail to consider whether these costs are outweighed by the benefits of crime reduction.

In fact, ideals of freedom and suspicions of technology combine to make it unlikely that situational prevention will result in significant infringements of individual liberties. Rather, the danger is that valuable technologies will not be used, or their introduction delayed, by unrealistic fears about their effects. Several examples of this can be cited:

- New technology making it impossible for anyone but the owner to fire a handgun is being resisted by the gun lobby in America.
- Towns and cities throughout America are resisting the introduction of CCTV in downtown areas and other public places, despite some positive evidence from Britain and elsewhere of its preventative effects (Brown, 1996; Painter and Tilley, 1999). Fears of CCTV are fuelled by stories of the inappropriate use of cameras by security officers to entertain themselves by inspecting passing women or by the inappropriate sale of video footage. These stories less frequently discuss the limitations commonly established on the deployment of CCTV or ways of supervising operators and protecting tapes to reduce the dangers of inappropriate use (for fuller discussion of possible safeguards on use of CCTV, see von Hirsch, 2000).
- The New Jersey State Senate has banned speed cameras on the grounds that these will result in impersonal policing or in raised insurance costs (resulting from the accumulation on driving licences of 'points' for speeding).
- Despite its value in deterring obscene and other unwanted calls, the introduction of Caller-ID in many states in America has been accompanied by the requirement that callers can selectively block the display of their numbers on Caller-ID devices. This puts a premium on the privacy of the caller – which was made possible only by the development of automatic telephone exchanges – at the expense of those called.

The democratic process that produces these outcomes can in time also lead to their reversal. Open discussion about the threats posed by preventive technology may lead to its greater acceptance. In some cases, such discussion may also result in modifications to the technology that lessen its harms without impeding its effectiveness. For example, in the latest technological twist, Caller-ID devices are now being marketed which reject all calls from blocked numbers. This restores some of Caller-ID's preventive benefits and gives more privacy to those called. As a further example, it does not seem unlikely that, as a result of the extensive public discussion of gun controls, the

3. The use of situational crime prevention results in the exclusion of so-called 'undesirables' (vagrants, the homeless, minorities and unemployed young people) from public places such as shopping malls, parks and entertainment facilities.

The use of technology or police and security guards to control access always carries the danger of exclusion, even when exclusion is disavowed as an objective. In fact, this danger is smaller in situational prevention projects than in some of the newer forms of policing. This is because situational prevention (at least as defined in the narrow sense of this paper) seeks to use access control in a more closely targeted manner. Rather than being used to restrict access to public facilities such as shopping malls or downtown districts, it is used to keep people out of private facilities, such as office blocks or factories, who have no business to conduct there. It would tend to focus less on specific groups of 'undesirables' because situational prevention assumes that any stranger might exploit opportunities for crime in these facilities. Where the purpose is to exclude perceived 'troublemakers' from public and semi-public spaces such as downtown districts and shopping malls, it is more likely to be served by 'order-maintenance' policing undertaken by public police forces, or private policing undertaken by security companies. While these forms of policing might fall under a broader interpretation of situational prevention, they are not encompassed within the narrower focus of this paper.

'Deflecting offenders', another of the situational prevention techniques listed in Table 1, also carries some exclusionary potential since its purpose is to keep likely offenders away from suitable targets. For example, the coordination of last buses with pub closing times, an example of deflecting offenders, 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 high schools to prevent pupils from vandalising cars or stealing items left in back gardens on their way to and from school. As these examples again show, however, the use of this situational technique is targeted to particular problems and settings and is less likely to involve a general attempted exclusion of 'undesirables'.

4. CCTV surveillance of public space, speed cameras, and Caller-ID are just three recent examples of the threat to civil liberties posed by many situational crime prevention measures.

Any new technology used in law enforcement and crime prevention poses possible new threats to civil liberties. CCTV raises the spectre of being spied upon as we go about our daily business. Speed cameras can give the authorities information about where we drive and when. Caller-ID can remove our anonymity when making casual enquiries over the phone or can reveal where we are calling from when we wish to keep this private.

United States will soon accept significant restrictions on the numbers and the kinds of lethal weapons in private hands.

5. Situational crime prevention leads to a regimentation of society and achieves its results by requiring law-abiding people to endure irksome and inconvenient precautions.

Many situational prevention measures are entirely unobtrusive or can even improve the quality of life. Most people are unaware of the steering column locks on their cars, while 'defensible space' ideas have helped rid public housing of tower-block designs. In some cases, however, situational prevention does result in greater regimentation and inconvenience. It can certainly be irksome to undergo the security checks now required when checking-in for airline flights. It is also inconvenient to use a PIN with one's bankcard and to remember the PIN or keep its record secret. It is particularly galling that these costs paid by everyone are due to the criminal conduct of a minority. On the other hand, baggage screening and other measures introduced in the 1970s have made terrorist bombings of airliners very rare and have largely eliminated hijackings. Similarly, without PINs, bankcards would quickly become unusable, and the conveniences of carrying around less cash and of obtaining money at any time of the day or night would be forfeited.

People generally accept the need for security, but in some cases they are subjected to inconvenience or annoyance without any compensatory benefits. Other people's car alarms sounding at night is an example of this. Nobody should have to endure this kind of cost (see Duff and Marshall, 2000). In fact, car alarms have been banned in some cities and they could be replaced by alarms that rouse only the vehicle owner. Another example of unwarranted inconvenience is provided by the procedures to prevent fraud imposed on people by insurance companies or by government bureaucracies collecting taxes and dispensing benefits. In the world of commerce, competition will help ensure that irksome and unnecessary precautions will quickly be eliminated. In state-run or public enterprises lacking competition, other avenues exist for procuring change in tiresome regulations and requirements, 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 forever.

6. Situational crime prevention promotes 'victim blaming'.

It is indefensible to blame rape on short skirts and other 'sexually provocative' conduct. Nonetheless, there is a place for giving people information about behaviours that put them at risk of crime. Hence, the popularity of guides to

good crime prevention practice. 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, as the British Crime Survey has shown, 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 or easily knowable risk, they must bear some of the responsibility for the consequences. Where risks are taken in blatant disregard of the consequences 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 may 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 merchants to change.

Other business victims deserving their share of blame include insurance companies which skimp procedures in checking claims and thus make it easier for policy holders to commit fraud, the costs of which can be passed on through increased premiums. Some managers of rental apartment complexes fail to establish codes of conduct and consequently increase the risks of crime, not merely to their own property and persons, but to that of their other tenants (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 raise their risks of robbery, by employing inexperienced and young clerks to staff their stores 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 United States are currently engaged in suing gun manufacturers for the irresponsible overproduction of weapons, which has led to enormous criminal justice and healthcare costs. Under the Tories, the government in Britain tried to shame car manufacturers into improving vehicle security by publishing league tables of the most stolen cars (Houghton, 1992). Under New Labour, this approach is being broadened as outlined by Pease (1998) to include a wider range of criminogenic products.

'CONSERVATIVE' VALUES AND POLITICS?

It has been argued above that the harmful consequences of situational prevention are often overstated. These can often be anticipated and averted and, where this is not possible, more acceptable alternative measures can usually be found. This is particularly the case for the narrower form of situational

prevention discussed here, which is specifically located within the value system of a liberal democratic society (Felson and Clarke, 1997; Seve, 1997). It is carefully targeted to specific problems, which facilitates an assessment of the costs and benefits of intervention. It is focused on criminogenic situations and not on 'criminal' people. It includes a wide repertoire of alternative ways to reduce opportunities that can be selected to minimise harmful consequences in any particular setting. Finally, its action-research methodology includes (1) pre-implementation assessments of the costs and harms of proposed measures, (2) post-implementation evaluations of the actual costs, and (3) a subsequent phase of corrective action where this is needed.

Despite all this, it seems unlikely that situational prevention will be given more than a peripheral role in official policy. This is because much informed opinion believes that the only truly effective way to reduce crime in society is by attacking its 'root causes' – discrimination, disadvantage, poor parenting, unemployment, etc. Many criminologists certainly see the mission of their discipline as being to improve society through exposing the deep-rooted causes of crime. This goal is not assisted by the thesis that crime results from choosing to take advantage of tempting opportunities. Nor does it sit well with situational prevention, which seems in danger of turning criminology into a technical discourse, more compatible with the security industry than with academia. Moreover, by delivering 'quick fixes', situational prevention diverts society's attention from the need to remedy the inequalities and discriminations thought to be at the heart of the problem.

The existing evidence of its effectiveness has therefore done little to garner support for situational prevention from substantial numbers of criminologists. Many continue to criticise its focus on the situational aspects of causation. Others are suspicious of its origins in 'administrative criminology', which they believe is aligned with conservative values and politics. They find evidence for this in situational prevention's neglect of crimes against women and of white-collar and corporate crimes. In fact, not just situational prevention, but criminology in general is focused on predatory crime, perhaps for the reasons given by the Left Realists – this kind of crime causes such direct hardship and fear to so many ordinary people. It can also be difficult to obtain data about the less familiar forms of crime. As Gilling (1997) has noted, however, the pertinent question is not what crimes *have been*, but what crimes *could* be the focus of situational prevention. The answer is that all forms of crime are open to situational prevention since all are dependent on opportunity.

Anyway, there is little 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. Many conservatives might also agree that crime is a choice, but for them it is a *moral* choice not an economic or instrumental one. Consequently, conservatives generally have little sympathy for the opportunity-reducing goals of situational prevention. Instead, they regard it as a

fundamentally irrelevant response to crime because it neglects the need for punishment or incapacitation of those responsible for the harms caused.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite its improved theory and its growing record of success, situational prevention still meets with indifference from many criminologists. Why should this lack of a criminological constituency matter? After all, situational prevention has already achieved a place in crime policy in Britain and elsewhere. David Garland (1996) has shown that it has been widely applied as a consequence of the devolution of crime control to local agencies and private institutions. It has been implemented by a broad range of public and private agencies and has attracted the interest of the security industry and the police. Some commentators have even described it as the fastest growing method of crime control in the world. Surely these facts demonstrate that situational prevention can prosper without the support of academic criminologists?

This argument ignores some other equally telling facts. Situational prevention and other forms of environmental crime prevention have made little headway in the United States since 'defensible space' and 'crime prevention through environmental design' (CPTED) concepts fell into disfavour at the end of the 1970s. In Britain, where situational prevention originated, it is regularly de-emphasised when a new set of politicians comes into power. In government-supported projects, it is subordinated to other preventive approaches such as multi-agency partnerships, safer city initiatives, community safety action, crime reduction strategies, and now risk management.

Situational prevention, at least in its narrower form discussed in this paper, is therefore a somewhat fragile enterprise. Without the support of criminologists, it will lack the scientific and research basis so vital to its successful application and its future development. Equally important, it will lack the kind of philosophical and ethical scrutiny that the papers of this volume have begun to provide. Absent such efforts, it could easily degenerate into a set of techniques applied without much thought, and therefore with increasing ineffectiveness and insensitivity, by agencies unacquainted with its rationale and origins. This seems already to have happened to problem-oriented policing, a closely related approach. Because so few researchers have been involved in the latter strategy's recent applications, most of the work undertaken in its name is inferior to the pioneering efforts in Newport News, Virginia (Eck and Spelman, 1988). In particular, the problem-oriented focus has often been lost in misguided efforts to combine it with underdeveloped notions of strengthening community ties and improving police-community relations (Clarke, 1998).

Situational prevention may need criminology, but there are reasons for thinking the need is reciprocal. First, situational prevention's focus on

opportunity and situational variables is helping to improve criminological theorising, which has neglected these important determinants of crime. Second, its emphasis on specificity has encouraged research into particular forms of crime, which has extended the range of criminological knowledge. Third, concepts associated with situational prevention, such as crime hot spots, crime displacement, diffusion of benefits and repeat victimisation, have led to new directions in research. Fourth, situational prevention has helped to stimulate the development of newer research techniques such as victim surveys, crime audits, crime mapping and Geographical Information Systems (GIS) applications. Fifth, it provides a natural link with other disciplines, such as economics and social geography, which have an important contribution to make to criminology.

Finally, and most important, situational prevention gives criminology a direct and practical role in crime control, which substantial numbers of students entering the discipline would find attractive. Properly trained, they could enjoy absorbing and rewarding careers helping to deal with crime problems, and improving both the lives of ordinary people and the functionality of many social institutions. At the same time, they would be helping to provide a credible alternative to the extremely expensive and intrusive deterrence afforded by the criminal justice system – the centre-piece of current crime policy.

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