

# Crime Prevention: Theory and Practice



## Chapter 2: Situational Crime Prevention




# Outline

- Overview
- Theories of crime causation underlying SCP
- Definitions & descriptions
- Situational vs. social development crime prevention
- Critiques
- Field exercise



# Overview

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- SCP involves the management, design, or manipulation of the immediate physical environment
  - Primary objective: **reduce the opportunity** for criminal activity
  - Opportunity for reducing crime can be pursued by: (i) “organizing” the immediate physical environment or (ii) organizing individuals (e.g., Neighbourhood Watch)
  - Critiques: only addresses symptoms (not root causes); does not prevent crime, may only deflect/displace it



# Theoretical Assumptions of Crime Causation

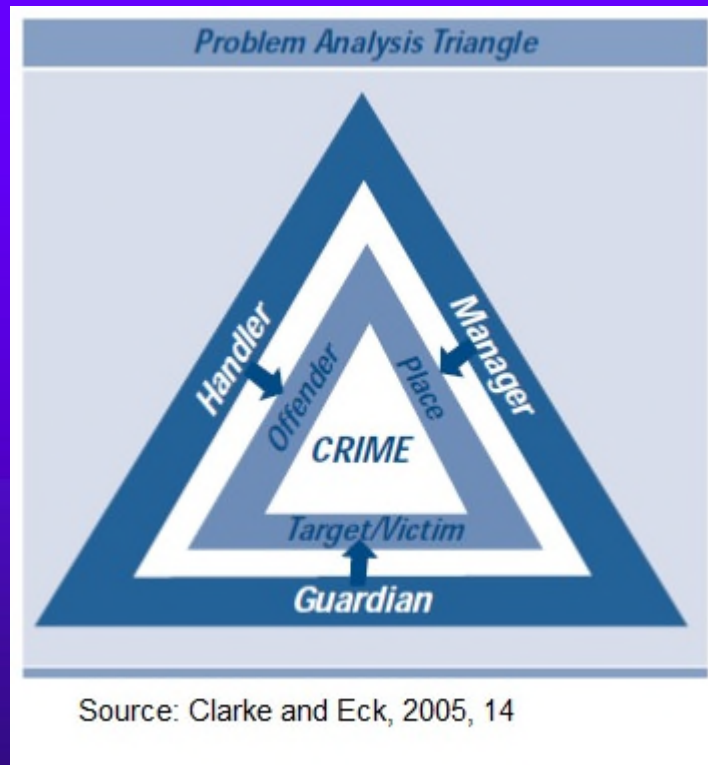
- **Routine Activity Theory** - Every crime involves three elements: an offender, a target, & an insufficiently guarded environment (thus, must address one or all three).
- **Rational Choice Theory** - Criminals make rational choices (not randomly) & thus can be deterred from crime.
- **Crime Pattern Theory** - There exists spatial & temporal paths that bring offenders & victims together at certain locations.
- **Offender Search Theory** - Crime is opportunistic; offenders respond to cues given out by the environment (thus, must focus on reducing opportunities).
- **Broken Windows Theory** - Disorder & incivility problems lead to more serious crime in a neighborhood.



# Routine Activity Theory

- Seeks to explain the supply of criminal opportunities in a particular place & time
- Identifies three minimal elements that must be present for a predatory crime:
  - 1) a likely offender
  - 2) a suitable target
  - 3) insufficiently guarded environment
- As such, prevention should address the convergence of these three elements

# Routine Activity Theory





# Rational Choice Theory

- Theory of human decision-making
- Criminals make rational choices (& not randomly, therefore uncontrollably) & thus can be deterred from crime
- The potential criminal is seen as a self-maximizing decision-maker who calculates advantages & disadvantages associated with specific criminal acts
- Therefore, prevention is aimed at altering the decision-making process to increase the risks/effort or decrease potential rewards of offending





# Offender Search Theory

- Most (property) crime is opportunistic
- Opportunistic behavior is provoked by cues given out by the environment (including specific design features)
- These “releaser cues” stimulate the release of otherwise inhibited behavior
- Releaser cues (e.g., specific design features, low informal social control, etc.) communicate to a potential offender that acts of vandalism or crime are acceptable or attainable in certain situations/environments



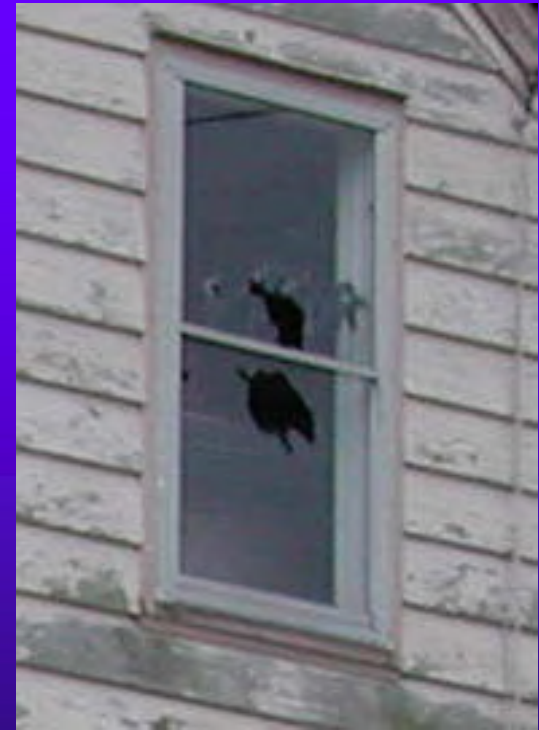
# Crime Pattern Theory



- **Environmental Criminology** is concerned with how environmental or contextual factors (time, space, physical properties) can influence the decision-making process of the criminal offender.
- Analyzes the “location of crimes, characteristics of those locations, the movement paths that bring offenders & victims together at those locations, & people’s perception of crime locations” (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1981, 8).
- Criminal acts do not occur randomly in time or space, but are influenced by the routine movements of offenders & victims.
- As such, criminal victimization can be predicted & prevented.

# Broken Windows Theory

- Minor incivilities, if unchecked & uncontrolled, will promote more serious crimes
- ‘Incivilities’ act as the catalyst: they represent signs of disorder & signify that no one cares, that the environment lacks regulation
- Solution: stop & reverse the cycle of decline in its earliest stages by a focus on “order maintenance” & aggressive policing of incivilities.





# SCP Definition

Situational crime prevention involves:

- ◆ measures directed at **specific forms** of crime;
- ◆ which involve the management, design or manipulation of **immediate environment** in which these crimes occur;
- ◆ so as to **reduce the opportunities** for these crimes;
- ◆ as perceived by a **broad range of potential offenders**.

Source: Clarke, 1997, 4



# Reducing Opportunity, Pt. I

Criminal opportunity is reduced by:

- **Increasing the effort** involved in crime by making the targets harder to get at or hindering the commission of crime (e.g., target hardening, access control, exit & entrance screening)
- **Increasing the risks**, whether real or perceived, of detection & apprehension (e.g., surveillance, screening, profiling)
- **Reducing the rewards** (e.g., target removal, property marking, merchandise ink-tags)
- **Reducing provocations** that may lead to criminal or violent behavior



# Reducing Opportunity, Pt. II

Opportunity for crime can be reduced directly & indirectly:

- (i) **Directly**: “organizing” the immediate physical environment (e.g., target hardening, access control, target removal, etc.)
- (ii) **Indirectly**: “organizing” people to foster or reinforce their individual & collective behaviour to minimize their vulnerability to crime (e.g., CPTED, Neighbourhood Watch)



# 25 Opportunity Reduction Techniques

<b>Increase the Effort</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harden target (deadbolt locks, fences, window bars)</li> <li>• Access control (entry phones, prickly shrubs, psychological barriers)</li> <li>• Deflect offenders (bus stop placement, tavern location, road closures)</li> <li>• Control crime facilitators (gun control, plastic cups, caller ID, credit card photo)</li> </ul>
<b>Increase the Risk</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural surveillance (CPTED, Neighborhood Watch, street lighting)</li> <li>• Surveillance by employees (undercover security, raised kiosks)</li> <li>• Intentional surveillance (security mirrors, CCTV, security guards, citizen patrols)</li> <li>• Entry / Exit screening (airport metal detectors, retail theft exit controls)</li> <li>• Guardianship (being at home, carrying a cell phone, police, security guards)</li> <li>• Place managers (apartment manager, bus driver, teacher, flight attendant)</li> <li>• Reduce anonymity (school uniforms, taxi id badges, "how's my driving truck" decals)</li> </ul>
<b>Reduce the Rewards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Property marking (engraving valuable electronics, automobile VIN, cattle branding)</li> <li>• Remove / conceal targets (removable car stereo, move items to car trunk)</li> <li>• Deny benefits (ink merchandise tags, security codes for electronics, graffiti removal)</li> <li>• Disrupt markets for stolen goods (regulate/crack down on pawn shops, street vendors)</li> </ul>
<b>Reduce Provocations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce frustration &amp; stress (providing needed information to agitated people)</li> <li>• Avoid disputes (standardized taxi fares from airport to city centre)</li> <li>• Reduce arousal &amp; temptation (gender-neutral listings, restricting jobs for pedophiles)</li> <li>• Neutralize peer pressure ("Friends don't let friends drink &amp; drive" ad campaign)</li> <li>• Discourage imitation (regulate violence in movies, remove graffiti &amp; vandalism)</li> </ul>
<b>Remove Excuses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set rules (government laws, code of conduct regulations in taverns &amp; public places)</li> <li>• Stimulate conscience (roadside speedometers, "Shoplifting is stealing" signs)</li> <li>• Facilitate compliance (easy library checkout, public lavatories, public trash bins)</li> <li>• Control disinhibitors (no liquor after a certain time, V-chip, ignition lock)</li> <li>• Post instructions (road signs, code of conduct signs)</li> </ul>





# Critiques of SCP

- Only addresses the symptoms of crime
- Does not prevent crime, may displace it
- Offenders do not always act rationally
- Oversimplifies relationship between physical environment & human behavior
- Overemphasizes property crime (e.g., ignores domestic violence)
- May undermine informal social control
- Surveillance can be intrusive & may infringe upon privacy
- Concentrates crime in poor areas/may be socially divisive





# Situational vs. Social Development

	<b>Situational</b>	<b>Social Development</b>
<b>Foci:</b>	Criminal opportunity	Root causes of crime
	Offence (criminal act)	Offending (criminogenic characteristics)
	(Potential) victim	Offender
<b>Crime problem addressed:</b>	Property crime; strategy geared toward specific type of crime	No particular focus: all underlying causes of any potential anti-social behaviour
<b>Understanding of causes of crime:</b>	Opportunity, motivated offender, unguarded environment	Personal, social, economic, cultural factors
<b>Basic approach</b>	Alteration to physical environment	Alteration of potential offender, including his/her family & social environment
<b>Philosophy:</b>	Pragmatic, realistic (manage risk)	Idealistic (improve lives, society)
<b>Major actors:</b>	Potential victims	Government, communities, families
<b>Institutions:</b>	Place/Community	Family, school, labour market, community
<b>Temporal scope:</b>	Short-term (temporary)	Long-term (permanent)