

Situational Crime Prevention, Displacement and Diffusion of Benefits

Developed by Garner Clancey

Situational Crime Prevention

“Situational prevention comprises opportunity-reducing measures that

1. are directed at highly specific forms of crime,
2. involve the management, design or manipulation of the immediate environment in as systematic and permanent way as possible,
3. make crime more difficult and risky, or less rewarding and excusable as judged by a wide range of offenders”.ⁱ

This model of crime prevention assumes that many offenders are rational and respond to available opportunities for offending. If offending is difficult, then there will be a reduced propensity to offend; where offending is left unchecked, then offending will escalate. An offender weighs up the benefits derived from offending, the potential risks of being apprehended and the associated costs of apprehension. The results of this calculation will determine if an offence is committed.

The following should be instituted to prevent offending:

- Increase the effort
- Increase the risks
- Reduce the rewards
- Reduce provocations
- Remove the excuses

Moreover, Cornish and Clarke (2003) have expanded this to 25 opportunity-reducing techniques.

| Increase the Effort | Increase the Risks | Reduce the Rewards | Reduce Provocations | Remove the Excuses |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| 1. Target Harden <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering column locks • Anti-robbery screens • Tamper-proof packaging | 6. Extend guardianship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take routine precautions • ‘Cocoon’ neighbourhood watch | 11. Conceal targets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Off-street parking • Gender-neutral phone directories • Unmarked bullion trucks | 16. Reduced frustrations and stress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficient queues and polite service • Expanded seating • Soothing music/muted lights | 21. Set rules <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rental agreements • Harassment codes • Hotel registrations |
| 2. Control access to facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry phones • Electronic card access • Baggage screening | 7. Assist natural surveillance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved street lighting • Defensible space design • Support whistleblowers | 12. Remove targets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removable car radio • Women’s refuges • Pre-paid phone cards for pay phones | 17. Avoid disputes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate enclosures for rival soccer fans • Reduce crowding in pubs • Fixed cab fares | 22. Post instructions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘No parking’ • ‘Private property’ • ‘Extinguish camp fires’ |
| 3. Screen exits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ticket needed for exit • Export documents • Electronic merchandise tags | 8. Reduce anonymity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taxi driver IDs • ‘How’s my driving?’ decals • School uniforms | 13. Identify property <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property marking • Vehicle licensing and parts marking • Cattle branding | 18. Reduce emotional arousal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controls on violent pornography • Enforce good behaviour on soccer field • Prohibit racial slurs | 23. Alert conscience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roadside speed display boards • Signatures for customs declarations • ‘Shoplifting is stealing’ |
| 4. Deflect Offenders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street closures • Separate bathrooms for women • Disperse pubs | 9. Utilise place managers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCTV for double-decker buses • Two clerks for convenience stores • Reward vigilance | 14. Disrupt markets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor pawn shops • Controls on classified ads • License street vendors | 19. Neutralise peer pressure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Idiots drink and drive’ • ‘It’s OK to say no’ • Disperse troublemakers at school | 24. Assist compliance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy library check-out • Public lavatories • Litter bins |
| 5. Control tools/weapons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Smart’ guns • Disabling stolen mobile phones • Restrict spray paint to juveniles | 10. Strengthen formal surveillance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red light cameras • Burglar alarms • Security guards | 15. Deny benefits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ink merchandise tags • Graffiti cleaning • Speed humps | 20. Discourage imitation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid repair of vandalism • V-chips in TVs • Censor details of modus operandi | 25. Control drugs and alcohol <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breathalysers in pubs • Server intervention • Alcohol-free events |

Source: Cornish, D. B. and Clarke, R. V. (2003) ‘Opportunities, precipitators and criminal decisions: A reply to Wortley’s critique of situational crime prevention’, in Smith, M. and Cornish, D. B. (eds) **Theory for Situational Crime Prevention**, Crime Prevention Studies, Vol. 16, Criminal Justice Press, Monsey, New York.

Exercise

1. Review the 25 opportunity-reducing techniques. Identify those techniques currently being used in your local area.
2. Consider which techniques might be resisted because of financial outlay.

Displacement and Diffusion of Benefits

Critics often argue that crime prevention efforts merely displace crime. This generally relates to geographical displacement, which involves crime moving from one location to another. Despite these claims, it has been generally established that displacement of crime does not accompany all crime prevention interventions. For example, one study by Hesseling (1994) found “no evidence of displacement in 22 of the studies he examined; in the remaining 33 studies, he found some evidence of displacement, but in no case was there as much crime displaced as prevented”.

ⁱⁱ In contrast, there is increasing evidence that rather than displacing crime, preventive measures might actually result in a ‘diffusion of benefits’, which is the reduction in crime beyond the immediate focus of measures introduced.

There are different types of displacement and diffusion of benefits. Complete the following table by providing examples of the different forms of displacement and diffusion of benefits for residential burglary. ⁱⁱⁱ

| Type | Definition | Diffusion |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Geographical | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographical change | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in targeted building and in nearby buildings |
| Temporal | | |
| Target | | |
| Tactical | | |
| Crime Type | | |

One of the challenges posed by both displacement and diffusion of benefits is the ability to establish data capture and evaluation procedures to be sensitive to these possibilities. It is possible that some displacement and diffusion of benefits occurs without ever being captured because of the absence of evaluations or the lack of rigor of the evaluations frequently undertaken.

ⁱ Clarke, R. V. (1997) **Situational Crime Prevention: Successful Case Studies**, 2nd Edition, Harrow and Heston, New York.

ⁱⁱ This study was cited in Clarke, R. V. (2008) ‘Situational Crime Prevention’, in Wortley, R. and Mazerolle, L. (eds) **Environmental Criminology and Crime Analysis**, Willan Publishing, Devon, page 188.

ⁱⁱⁱ This exercise has been modified from Clarke, R. V. and Eck, J. (2005) **Crime Analysis for Problem Solvers in 60 Small Steps**, Center for Problem Oriented Policing, Washington.