

# Situational Crime Prevention

## Successful Case Studies

**Second Edition**

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editor

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# Preface

Only five years ago the first edition of this book was published, yet a number of important developments during these years have made necessary this second, extensively revised volume. Most striking is the large increase in the successful applications of situational prevention reported in the literature. For the first edition it was difficult to collect sufficient case studies to reproduce. For this second edition, the twenty-three studies included are merely a sample of the three or four times that number considered. Indeed, the difficulty on this occasion was not in finding enough studies, but in deciding which to exclude. Ten of the case studies in the first edition which had proved particularly informative in classroom discussions were retained and, of the thirteen new ones, three were specially written or adapted for this volume.

These twenty-three case studies encompass a broader range of settings and offenses, including "everyday" crimes committed by ordinary people. Indeed, the wider application of situational measures, together with developments in preventive technology, has led to an expanded classification of opportunity-reducing techniques described in the Introduction. To the twelve techniques included in the first edition that increase the effort or risks of crime and reduce its rewards, four techniques that "remove excuses" for crime have now been added.

Some new concepts that are expanding the reach and appeal of situational prevention are also discussed in the Introduction. As anticipated in the first edition, the concept of "diffusion of benefits" (the idea that focused crime prevention efforts can sometimes bring benefits beyond the targeted settings) has served as a useful counterpoint to hypothesized displacement effects, which, in several recent reviews, have not been found to be as extensive or pervasive as some critics had argued. Another important new concept is that of repeat victimization, which is proving to be as valuable as that of "hot spots" in helping to focus crime prevention effort. Both concepts are also helping to focus experiments in

problem-oriented policing, which shares many common features with situational prevention, and which has been embraced in recent years by many of the Nation's most progressive police forces.

The focus on crime prevention successes has been retained in this second edition, though the Introduction includes discussion of some failures of situational prevention as well as of ethical and other problems of implementation. As evidence accumulates that situational prevention is effective in a wide variety of contexts, evaluations might increasingly probe the limits of the approach and make comparisons between different ways of reducing opportunities. This will require a broader methodological approach, including detailed analyses of the implementation process. As discussed in the Introduction, however, the main purpose of evaluation should be to refine the principles of opportunity reduction rather than attempt to produce concrete data about the effectiveness of situational measures in all settings.

As situational prevention becomes better known, scholars from a wider range of disciplines may be drawn into discussions of the theoretical, political and ethical implications of an approach to crime prevention focused not upon changing offenders, but on modifying the settings in which crimes occur. The implications are indeed profound. They involve questions about the determinants of behavior as well as about criminal justice policy. They raise moral questions about society's attitudes to crime and criminals, and philosophical and political questions about the kind of society in which we wish to live. On the other hand, choice may be an illusion since irreversible social change has already occurred and it is our attitudes that may be lagging. Indeed, it may be that concepts of the State, the family and the community — the mainstays of current criminal policy — have less relevance today in a world that is shaped principally by economic forces, but in which individuals place a premium on autonomy in their daily lives. To adjust to these social changes, new concepts, including situational crime prevention, must be accommodated within the academic and political discourses on crime control.

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### ***Acknowledgment***

Much of the new material in the revised Introduction to this book comes from Clarke (1995) and from recent papers written jointly with Marcus Felson, Ross Home] and David Weisburd. I am grateful to Graeme Newman of Harrow and Heston for guiding me through the process of producing this new edition (as well as for advice on matters of substance) and to students in my graduate classes on crime prevention for helping me focus my thoughts.

# Acknowledgments

The original citations for each of the case studies reprinted are given in the *Editor's Notes* preceding each study. Thanks are due to the authors and publishers concerned.

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## About the Editor

Ronald Clarke is Professor and Dean at the School of Criminal Justice, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Trained as a psychologist, he holds a master's degree (1965) and a Ph.D. (1968) from the University of London. He was formerly Director of the British government's criminological research department (The Home Office Research and Planning Unit), where he had a significant role in the development of situational crime prevention. He also helped to establish the Home Office Crime Prevention Unit and the now regularly repeated British Crime Survey. He has held faculty appointments in criminal justice at The University at Albany and Temple University. He is the editor of *Crime Prevention Studies* and his books include *Designing out Crime* (1980, with Pat Mayhew), *The Reasoning Criminal* (1986, with Derek Cornish) and *Routine Activity and Rational Choice* (1993, with Marcus Felson).