
TAKING OUT THE INTERESTING BITS?

PROBLEM SOLVING AND CRIME PREVENTION

by
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Abstract: National and international experience now leave no doubt that methods other than enforcement of criminal law are effective in reducing crime and associated harm. In particular, initiatives that are based on routine activity and situational theory, and those that concentrate on addressing specific, well-defined problems, have been demonstrated to have greater impact and to be less costly than "law-and-order" reactions. Despite this, problem solving and focused opportunity reduction have been comparatively neglected in Australian policy discourse. Drawing on the practical fieldwork experience of crime prevention students, this paper argues that attempts to apply opportunity reduction and problem-focused approaches often encounter obstacles and resistance not mentioned in mainstream accounts. Inclusion of these elements would ensure better understanding and appreciation of these approaches, and cement their place among strategies to challenge and displace law-and-order reactions to crime.

INTRODUCTION

National and international experience now leave no doubt that methods other than enforcement of criminal law can be effective in reducing crime and associated harm. In particular, initiatives that are based on the application of routine activity (Felson, 1987) and situational (Clarke, 1980) theory, and that concentrate on analysing and addressing specific, well-defined problems (Eck and Spelman, 1987; Hope, 1994). have been demonstrated to have greater impact and to be far less costly than

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"law-and-order" reactions. Whether the issue be crime and insecurity on housing estates (Pease, 1992; Eck and Spelman, 1987; Willemse, 1994) and transport systems (Van Andel, 1989), public disorder (Veno and Veno, 1993), drunken driving (Homel, 1988), alcohol-related violence (Homel et al., 1994; and this volume) or a wide range of other forms of law breaking, advocates of problem solving and opportunity reduction have been quietly accumulating an impressive catalogue of success stories over the last decade or so.

Despite these examples, focused problem solving has had a limited impact on Australian crime prevention policy. Several jurisdictions have embarked on well-publicised strategies in recent years. But emphasis generally has been on social programs—for example, recreational and other initiatives for young people (Dussuyer, 1991) and community development schemes aimed at strengthening informal social ties and controls at the local level (Millbank, 1992). Reservations about problem solving and opportunity reduction also have been voiced in the academic community. With some exceptions (Geason and Wilson, 1989; Homel et al., 1994; James, 1993; Veno and Veno, 1993), Australian theorists seem to have been less concerned with the achievements than with the pitfalls associated with these approaches—for example, their potential to exacerbate social divisions by privatising and commercialising security, creating housing and other fortified enclaves (see Davis, 1990), and extending less accountable forms of social control (see Shearing and Stenning, 1992). In Australian criminology, at least, these forms of prevention often are portrayed as more threatening than promising, and as more likely to complement than replace criminal justice reactions (O'Malley, 1994).

This paper explores factors that might help account for this neglect. Sympathetic to environmental approaches, it nonetheless argues that there may be more to Australian resistance than sheer bloody-mindedness. At least some of the caution is attributable to the ways in which opportunity reduction and problem solving have been conceptualised and presented. Advocates of more focused approaches tend to put emphasis on rational choice theories of offending, and to portray crime prevention as largely a matter of developing and refining appropriate techniques (Clarke, 1992). In doing so, they understate both the broader social challenges encountered once their ideas begin to be translated into practice and the potential these methods have to confront and contest, rather than simply facilitate, vested interests. More overt acknowledgment of these dimensions would help ensure that opportunity reduction and

problem solving achieved proper recognition as viable tactics in the struggle to develop alternatives to law and order.

THE CONTEMPORARY CRIME PREVENTION COURSE

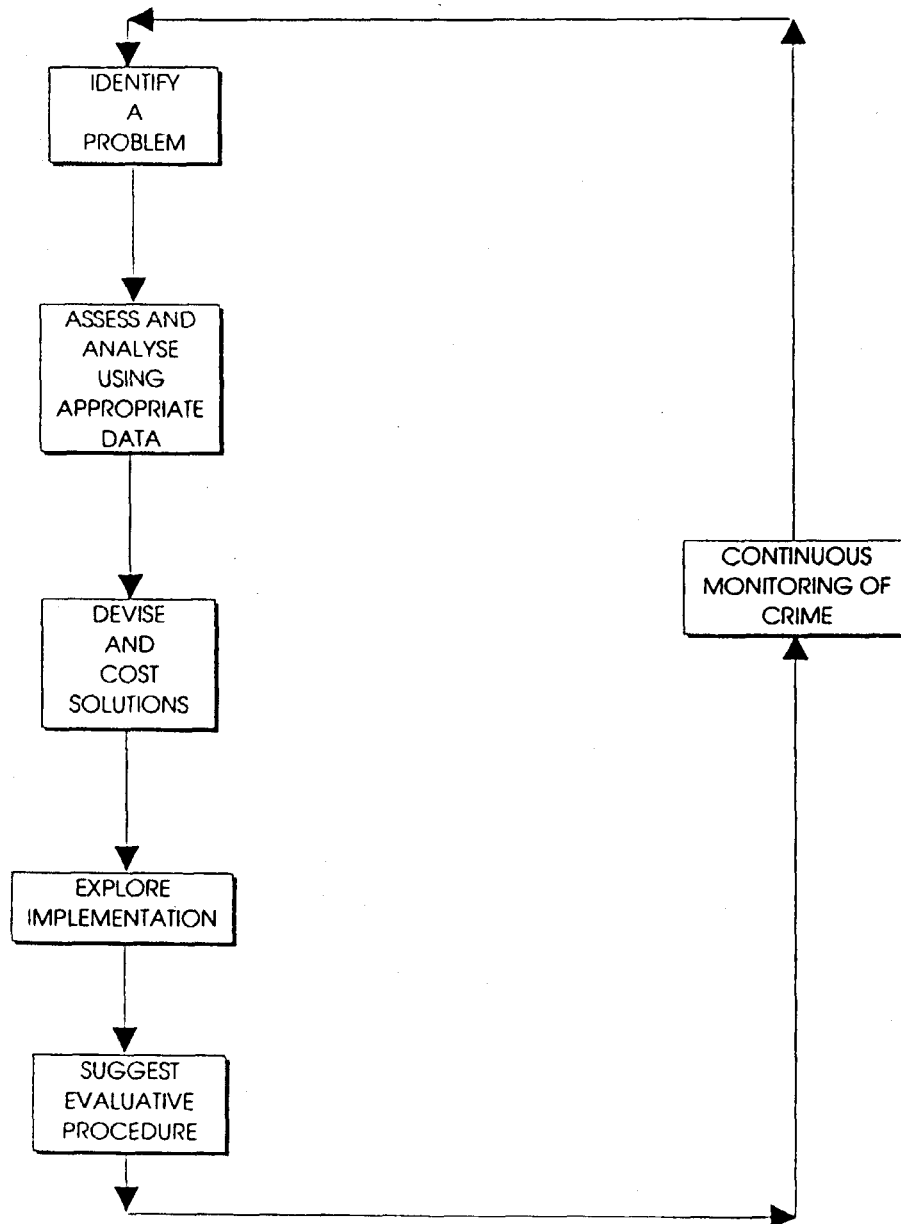
To illustrate and develop these arguments, this paper draws on case studies from a crime prevention course offered since 1992 by the University of Melbourne's Department of Criminology. Established and funded as part of the Victorian Government's *VicSafe* crime prevention initiatives, the full-semester (three-month) program brings undergraduate and post-graduate students together with selected participants from the Victoria Police and other government agencies. A major component, accounting for 60% of final assessment, is a team fieldwork exercise that requires students to identify and analyse specific "real-world" problems, and propose and lobby for cost-effective solutions. Issues tackled by teams in recent years include: thefts from inner-city, suburban, and remote country car parks; high rates of breaking and entering and other crime in selected suburban streets; graffiti, vandalism, and other problems at local schools; alcohol and other substance abuse at a remote Aboriginal community; bike theft and other offences on the university campus; and shoplifting at a department store and crime and insecurity in major shopping complexes.

The course gives emphasis to this "hands-on" component for several reasons. First, it is intended to assist the participants drawn from police and other government agencies to appreciate crime prevention's relevance to issues encountered during their everyday working lives, and to provide them with more suitable learning environments than passive classroom settings. Second, it gives opportunities—not often available in public policy—for people to analyse and learn from failure as well as success (Grabosky, this volume). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, practical experience can help convince participants that crime prevention requires more than a command of abstract ideas—that the most significant and in many ways most exacting challenge lies in translating theory into practice.

In undertaking fieldwork, teams are advised to employ an action research paradigm, adapted from the literature on problem-solving policing (Eck and Spelman, 1987) and situational prevention. This paradigm involves *scanning for and identifying a problem, assessing and analysing it using appropriate data, devising and costing solutions, exploring avenues*

for implementation, and sketching out an evaluation procedure (see Figure 1). At each of these stages students can encounter hurdles rarely mentioned in textbooks: obstacles that require some reassessment of theory itself. The sections that follow provide examples under each heading.

**Figure 1: Action Research Methodology
(from Clarke)**



Scanning for and Identifying a Problem

In tackling the initial task of identifying and agreeing to investigate a specific problem, and persuading relevant private or public-sector organisations to give approval for a team to commence work, students could run into at least two types of difficulty. The first relates to deciding which of a myriad of problems to tackle: members confronted by this question often find themselves involved in difficult debates about their own values and priorities. The second is that even when a group agrees on an issue it can by no means assume that the organisations and agencies approached will share its concerns.

One symptom of the first difficulty is the tendency for many teams to be overambitious in initial project selection; indeed, a few have struggled to agree on any topic at all. As mentioned earlier, the course makes students themselves primarily responsible for problem identification. However, to facilitate decision making, police and other public-sector participants are singled out during the early stages and asked briefly to outline an issue that has come to their notice and that a group might address. In this spirit of "guided democracy," students are inundated during early lectures and seminars with case studies of successful prevention elsewhere in Australia and overseas, and shown selected reports from preceding years.

The vast majority of these examples emphasise specific, localised opportunity reduction and problem solving (e.g., Clarke, 1992), yet groups at this point often still find it difficult to accept that this should be their focus. Generally, the first ideas, which are submitted at the end of the fourth week, are very ambitious. Participants want to tackle such broad social issues as: relationships between police and young people; alcohol, violence, and crime; and family violence. Even when proposals do have local emphasis they tend to be comprehensive, for example, developing, costing, and advising on the implementation of crime prevention plans for a region of Melbourne, based on a thorough assessment of all of that locality's problems, services, and needs.

There is nothing intrinsically unsound in the above approach, which mirrors philosophies adopted during the 1980s in France (King, 1988) and in Great Britain (Heal, 1992). However, as most teams very rapidly acknowledge, programs of this scope can hardly be developed in a single semester. Given the intelligence, experience and commitment of the

students, and their readiness—at the intellectual level, at least—to admit the need to accept some limitations, why are many so reluctant to take a more pragmatic approach?

My assessment, confirmed by feedback from some groups, is that reservations stem at least in part from a feeling that such pragmatism would be inconsistent with criminology's underlying values and philosophies. Often it seems that it is the more active and committed students—those, for example, who already had completed several years at the undergraduate level and are in, or about to commence, post-graduate studies or the final year of an honours degree—who experience the greatest difficulty in narrowing their choices.

The case that stays with me most forcefully is of a group that decided at the outset that it wanted to develop strategies to reduce criminal assaults in the home. As the team pointed out, analysis of police and other data has demonstrated unequivocally that family violence is a significant and recurring problem (National Committee on Violence, 1990; National Committee on Violence Against Women, 1992), and that there is ample scope for developing innovative programs to address it. Having made its decision, however, the group had immense difficulty in determining which line to take. One after the other, they rejected notions of early childhood initiatives, improved support for victims, and programs to try to change male perpetrators' attitudes and behaviour, on the grounds that all simply represented "band-aid" responses. One member was adamant about the need for a more comprehensive strategy that would stem from an analysis of how a basic social institution (for example, one of the major churches) was reinforcing inappropriate patriarchal values and, ultimately, abuse by males of their power.

The team eventually abandoned all its early work, and with minimal time remaining focused on situational programs to reduce theft and vandalism at a local primary school. Postmortems on the group's deliberations, however, yielded interesting insights. Basically, the students' reason for resisting unsubtle pressures ("we knew you wanted us in a car park, but we weren't going to go") was profound conviction not just about the nature and causes of offending but the role of criminologists. Without articulating it, most members had accepted that, ultimately, the origins of crime lay in deep-seated structural problems—economic and cultural dislocations, racism, gender-based power imbalances—and that the majority of "decisions" to commit offences must stem from dysfunctions in institutions such as church, school, business and politics. A

criminologist's role was to challenge and try to transform such systems. All else could only be "tinkering at the edges": addressing symptoms rather than causes and displacing crime rather than generating lasting solutions.

Of course, some criminologists would dispute such assumptions. Felson (1992), for example, argues that increases in many types of crime are better understood as products of changes in "routine activities" and everyday life patterns in complex modern societies. Clarke and Weisburd (1994) contend that while displacement is always a possibility with situational prevention, research suggests it is by no means total or inevitable, and that on some occasions there may be a diffusion of benefits. However, I am convinced that in being adamant that criminology (and hence prevention) should give priority to addressing "underlying causes" this group was doing more than staking empirical claims. Instead, it was reaffirming a value position—on the need for criminologists to question and challenge power rather than comply with it—that many of us in the discipline endorse. The irony is that had they been prepared, temporarily at least, to put preconceptions aside and embark on a practical exercise, the members soon would have found more than enough challenges of this type.

This is amply demonstrated by difficulties experienced by several other teams at the problem-identification stage. I will mention just two. The first was a team wanting to apply crime prevention ideas at a major suburban shopping complex. As well as being interested in crime prevention through urban design, members had been impressed with accounts of an initiative in the Zuidplein shopping centre in the Dutch city of Rotterdam. Funded and evaluated as part of that country's five-year crime prevention program, the Zuidplein centre had been the site of extensive petty crime, and of conflicts between some young people and local traders, private security, and police. Attempts to resolve problems by intensifying security simply provided alleged troublemakers with further challenges and incentives. After forming their own committee, local businesses therefore decided on an alternative approach. Space, facilities and social support were provided for young people, who in return were asked to collaborate in the development and dissemination of a code of behaviour. Such changes seem to have helped bring about significant reductions in relevant problems (Colder, 1988).

Shopping complexes in Australia also make major demands on police services. The group, which contained several members of Victoria's police service, was keen to apply and assess similar ideas. The timing seemed

good because at least one centre was about to undergo major expansion. A spokesperson contacted the owner, briefed him on the incidence of crime at this facility, and asked whether the business would cooperate in the research and development of relevant strategies. After some consideration, this overture was rejected. The businessman explained that while he was attracted to the notion of trying to "design crime prevention in" to future developments, legal advisers had advised that the risks associated with such a venture would be too great. To fund expansion, the enterprise (of which the shopping centre formed part) was being floated as a public company, with the initial share subscription target being hundreds of millions of dollars. Untimely publicity about crime problems could be damaging.

This was not the only major Victorian centre to show a marked lack of enthusiasm about the idea of having prevention groups "on site." With some exceptions, most teams wanting to base initiatives in major shopping centres experienced significant obstacles. That in Australia such centres tend to be closely owned enterprises, rather than smaller-scale collectives as is often the case in the Netherlands, helps account for at least some of these difficulties. It should be noted, though, that shopping centres were not the only entities that could stymie a project at the initial stage.

Another team, impressed by data and research on the extent of alcohol-related violence and crime (Homel and Tomsen, 1991), was keen to apply ideas for reducing the incidence of problems in and around hotels and other licensed premises. Evidence from initiatives such as Victoria's West End Forum (Victorian Community Council Against Violence, 1990) seemed to indicate that significant progress could be achieved. At the same time, Homel and his colleagues in New South Wales and in Queensland (Homel et al., 1994) had been accumulating a repertoire of methods for assisting "high-risk" locations to identify and rectify problems. The group seemed particularly fortunate in that Homel generously had agreed to make available a detailed schedule for assessing all aspects of a licensed premise's physical and social environment.

Armed with this instrument, the team set out to review a business identified as problematic through both local knowledge (e.g., regular media reports of assaults and other crime in and around the hotel) and senior Victorian police. In an effort to ensure cooperation, however, one member decided first to brief the proprietor and other relevant community interests on the group's intentions. This proved fatal. The publican made it clear from the outset that visits by the team would not be welcomed. Moreover,

despite significant evidence to the contrary, police with immediate responsibility for this region were adamant that the location did not pose any particular concerns.

Local police also stated that they would be unable to cooperate with fieldwork, and could not provide access to data on crime in this or other establishments. Faced with such a boycott, the group decided that it had no option but to assess another hotel, in another town. This time, they were careful *not* to brief the enterprise concerned—at least not until after on-site observations had been completed.

The experience of these two groups was perhaps at the extreme end of the spectrum of obstacles encountered in problem selection, highlighting an issue often glossed over in accounts of successful initiatives. Namely, because crime prevention is about identifying difficulties and trying to bring about change, even the most technical and apparently "neutral" approaches can prove unsettling to established interests. To some extent, this may also help account for difficulties encountered during the next phase: problem analysis.

Problem Analysis and Assessment

For several reasons it was critical that the course introduce students to problem-solving philosophies and techniques. Problem analysis can provide a basis not just for technical success in fieldwork but for insight into the circumstances and causes of offending and the need for flexibility in developing responses. Too often, Australian jurisdictions have tended to rush into solutions—whether these be Neighbourhood or other "watch" programs, safety audits, community development, "Bonnemaison"-type local strategies, or even group conferencing programs aimed at "reintegratively shaming" young people—before fully appreciating the nature of issues to be addressed. Greater emphasis on problem analysis seemed to provide at least a possibility of overcoming this difficulty.

As Eck and Spelman (1987) have shown, problem solving can be particularly salutary for law enforcement agencies. There is much this sector can do in crime prevention, but program effectiveness will be hampered if police automatically assume that they must take the dominant role (Sutton, 1994). As the Newport News (VA) and other U.S. initiatives have shown, problem identification and problem solving can help convince enforcement specialists that on many occasions they can be more effective "behind the scenes": encouraging other interests such

as housing authorities, local government and resident groups to assume responsibilities.

In other words, there were good reasons for using a problem identification and analysis model as the basis for crime prevention fieldwork. It is disappointing, therefore, that this often proved the most difficult and frustrating phase. As discussed earlier, the immediate obstacle was that organisations and interests simply could deny teams access. More importantly, though, even when crime and other information was available (and it must be emphasised that, with the one exception mentioned earlier, Victoria Police at all levels have been most cooperative), it was not always useful.

This is best illustrated by the work of two teams that focused on strategies to reduce property and other "public" crimes in specific Melbourne streets. In both instances, reported crime data revealed that these locations were experiencing a comparatively high incidence of offending—mainly breaking and entering and vehicle-related problems (thefts from cars). However, while particularly useful for demonstrating that "hot spots" existed, crime data was comparatively unhelpful for illuminating what factors made these places crime prone. In particular, police systems yielded very little detail on how relevant offences were being committed and why particular targets were selected.

Of course, the most direct sources of such information are the perpetrators of such incidents, but access to them was limited. This was partly because the clear-up rate for crimes in these locations was low. However, teams often found that even when someone had been apprehended and details on modus operandi recorded, these summaries tended not to be linked to databases used for crime analysis. Several factors help explain this, not the least of them being concerns about privacy. However, as a police participant on one team later pointed out, organisational biases also affected the structuring of his department's data files. In amassing information on offenders and suspects, the focus of the police organisation is far more concentrated on its reactive role—apprehending and prosecuting particular individuals—than on broader prevention questions. Overcoming this would require not just a technical feat of linking computer files, but significant structural change within the department.

This is what Goldstein (1990) and others have been trying to achieve in their advocacy of problem-oriented approaches. What they underestimate, perhaps, is the difficulties that moves toward less-hierarchical structures and "lateral thinking" may pose for police organisations and

the public. The very fact that crime prevention and problem solving have significant potential for making inroads against crime also means that they can be a major source of change and conflict. As the fieldwork group trying to assess alcohol-related violence in a small town pub found, it cannot always be assumed that police and other local organisations will welcome such disruption. As the growing literature on consultative committees and other forms of community relations (Bull and Stratta, 1994) shows, most police organisations are far more likely to opt for "managed consensus" and persuasion than head-on contests with vested interests.

It would be a mistake to dismiss this simply as bureaucratic inertia and conservatism. That in some circumstances police are authorised to resort to force—even deadly force—renders their role in modern civil society unique, and ensures that both law enforcement hierarchies and many sections of the broader public often see restricting line officers' discretion as more important than promoting it. There can be no doubt that training in and commitment to problem solving would enhance police effectiveness in crime prevention. However, bringing about these changes will require more than restructuring databases and imparting technical skills. It also demands recognition of the deep-seated social and organisational biases that can limit police involvement in proactive roles—particularly ones with the potential to stimulate conflict with influential groups (see Moore, 1992). Without such reassessment, police will continue to "ignore the obvious" and react to crime rather than try to address its underlying causes.

Devising and Costing Solutions, and Avenues for Implementation

This became apparent for teams that worked their way through to the phase of devising and costing solutions, and onto identifying problems and attempting to get them implemented. Here, too, there were challenges rarely mentioned in textbooks or case study collections. For many groups, the greatest obstacles lay not so much in technical problem solving as in the social task of persuading relevant interests to assume responsibility for solutions.

Again, a good example emerged from the work of the teams addressing public or semi-public crimes in selected suburban streets. As mentioned, police databases did not always lend themselves to problem analysis.

However, one pattern of offending was so distinctive as to make solutions appear relatively straightforward. At least eight cases of vehicle breaking-and-entering during an eight-month period analysed by one team were against cars parked in a single location: an open parking area located underneath a small block of home units. The units were on a corner block close to an intersection, and at night the parking area itself was poorly illuminated. Capacity for surveillance directly underneath the building, which was raised on concrete pillars, was poor. The property lacked fences, gates, or other barriers to segregate private from public, and offenders wanting to break into or damage cars needed only to take two or three steps from the public footpath before being able to commence work.

This was a classic example of poor design and lack of defensible space (Newman, 1972), where a range of possible prevention measures was immediately apparent. Proposals itemised and costed by the team included: better lighting (perhaps movement-activated) for the car park area, a fence and lockable gates to screen off cars and separate the home units' grounds from the public footpath and street, mirrors to improve surveillance, and warning signs to deter unauthorised visitors.

The problem then became one of identifying and persuading relevant parties to authorise and pay for this work. From interviews with residents in the building where cars were being damaged, the prevention team had ascertained that most were renting and had been there a short time. While discussions confirmed that they were the principal victims, it hardly seemed reasonable to expect them to foot the bill for security. As one tenant pointed out, one likely reward for improving the property in this way would be a rent increase, which she personally would have difficulty in meeting. A more logical candidate to meet the expenses was the building's owner. This person, however, proved difficult to locate.

Eventually, the team decided that the best it could do in the short term was prepare a leaflet for residents, notifying them of the problem and suggesting they try to exert pressure on the landlord to implement some or all of the team's recommendations. In the longer term, the group recommended two amendments to Victoria's Residential Tenancies Act. The first would enable tenants experiencing high rates of breaking and entering, vandalism or other property-related victimisation to appeal to the Residential Tenancies Tribunal for an order compelling the landlord to implement appropriate measures. The second would authorise prospective tenants to require individuals or businesses offering a property for

lease to produce a list of relevant offences on, or in the vicinity of, these premises.

Before implementing these proposals there would need to be a close assessment of ethical, economic and other social implications. Reviewing them, though, I find it remarkable that such controversial ideas should have been generated as a consequence of the application of techniques that many in the field almost automatically brand as traditional and conservative. However, such controversies may be far more common than is generally acknowledged. Most student fieldwork groups reaching the implementation-and-evaluation phase found themselves puzzled about, and wanting to argue with, business and other interests who seemed reluctant even to consider proposals. Even in the more general literature on situational prevention and problem solving, where conflict aspects tend to be played down, it is not unusual to find references to the need for vested interests to act more responsibly. Work by Homel and colleagues (1994) on crime in and around licensed premises in Queensland's Gold Coast, and by the Victorian Community Council Against Violence (1990) in Melbourne's King Street are good examples. So, too, is Field's (1993) recent work on motor vehicle theft. While crime reduction may be a factor for business, it often is subordinated to other goals, such as profit and market share. As Challinger (1991) points out in his analysis of Telecom Australia's program to reduce theft from and vandalism to public phones, even this exemplary model of prevention within the business sector was not driven by a desire to reduce offending *per se*. Instead, the perceived need to maintain the volume of calls sold from these outlets was the issue that finally drove Telecom to refocus administrative responsibilities, and to introduce a range of target hardening and other situational measures.

DISCUSSION

In presenting accounts from fieldwork experience, emphasis has been on obstacles encountered rather than successes achieved. In fairness to the individuals and teams concerned, it should be emphasised that most did not allow difficulties to deter them from devising and developing cost-effective, practical and sometimes quite novel proposals. Despite the limited time available, moreover, quite a few teams made significant progress toward persuading public- and private-sector organisations not just that problems existed but that prevention was worth taking seriously.

A review and assessment of reports in the last three years reveals an impressive picture of what "ordinary" cross-sections of people can do, once given respite from routine environments and encouraged to be innovative and to think laterally.

However, there is value sometimes in refraining from celebrating advances and focusing instead on the issues that can make it difficult for people or programs to move forward. As mentioned at the outset of this paper, despite their demonstrated successes, opportunity reduction and other "problem-focused" approaches are still far from entrenched as key components in Australian crime prevention policy. Reviewing setbacks and frustrations experienced by some teams has helped draw attention to system biases that militate against more widespread adoption of these approaches. Accounts of such resistance also are useful for reminding academic critics that problem solving and opportunity reduction often involve far more than the application of technical skills. In addition to having practical potential for reducing offending, used in the right ways focused crime prevention can be a powerful mechanism for helping expose inequities and contest the status quo. In developing and documenting these approaches, it is important that attention be given not just to technical aspects but to these dimensions. No discussion of crime prevention can be complete unless it takes account of the contexts in which techniques are applied, the interests "owning" (see Veno and Veno, 1993) and affected by these measures, and the resistance encountered.

Too often these dimensions are missing. Indeed, a review of the ways opportunity reduction and other focused forms of crime prevention have been presented brings to mind a story about the English novelist Evelyn Waugh. A long-term acquaintance of some fame, possibly Randolph Churchill, recently had been operated on for a tumour, that proved non-cancerous. Most people sent expressions of relief and support. The novelist's only comment was that it was typical of British medicine to rush someone to hospital, open him up and remove the only part of him that was not malignant.

It would hardly be fair to argue that, in failing to mention the contests and controversies that often accompany opportunity reduction and problem-based approaches to crime prevention, criminology has been exhibiting similar perversity. Nonetheless, the fact that both advocates and critics often gloss over these elements does say something about the discipline. As much as any social science, criminology has been afflicted by the twin curses of what Mills (1970) terms "abstracted empiricism" and "grand

theory." In crime prevention, as in other fields, criminologists too frequently have allowed themselves to become engrossed either in applying techniques in ignorance of broader social contexts, or in postponing any action in favour of locating the emergence of specific crime prevention practices in the context of broader interpretative schemes. As characterised by Mills and, more recently, the Foucauldians and left realists, I see these dichotomies between action and theory as spurious. Experience with the crime prevention course alone makes clear that exposure to practice can sometimes stimulate much sharper understandings of subtle and dispersed economies of power (Foucault, 1977; Lukes, 1974, see also Kritzman, 1988) than might be possible from purely theoretical expositions. My sense is that exposure to fieldwork often can also leave students more able and inclined to fight for change—albeit limited—than any number of hours in seminar rooms.

The purpose of this paper has been to defend opportunity reduction and other problem-focused approaches as critical components in any crime prevention strategy. In taking this stance, however, I have argued that expositions must include, rather than exclude, the more contentious elements. I should emphasise, moreover, that unlike some advocates I do not see pragmatism as comprising the totality of crime prevention. The ultimate rationale for becoming engaged in this sphere of policy is to help find ways to displace law and order, not just with practices that are more effective but with alternative frameworks for understanding and dealing with offending and insecurity. Given the scope of this challenge, crime prevention cannot simply consist of interventions that "work" in a limited technical sense. Disciplines such as medicine have long been aware that prevention must encompass both specific programs (for example, diet, exercise, and lifestyle regimes) and broader activity (such as campaigning to improve sanitation and other services for disadvantaged communities, and opposing the aggressive marketing strategies of cigarette companies). Crime prevention also must acknowledge the need to be effective in politics and advocacy as well as in specific practical contexts. Even for these more general roles, however, opportunity reduction and other focused approaches have value. As this paper has shown, they can provide rich opportunities for unmasking and coming to grips with sources of power that, while often dispersed and unobtrusive, nonetheless often play critical roles in frustrating constructive reform and keeping law and order intact as the only viable political response to crime. Criminologists who have

genuine interest in challenging this hegemony should never underestimate the value of focused action.



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