

Situational Crime Prevention and White-Collar Crime

Michael L. Benson
School of Criminal Justice
University of Cincinnati

Theoretical Background

- 1970s – 1980s
 - Routine Activities Theory (RAT)
 - Lifestyle – Routine Activities Theory (LRAT)
 - Rational Choice Theory (RCT)
 - Situational Crime Prevention (SCP)
- Overview of talk

Assumptions of SCP

- Opportunity is a cause of crime
- Offenders are rational
- Situational contingencies matter

Criminal Opportunity

- Suitable target
 - Person
 - Property
 - Other entities
- Lack of guardianship
 - Access
 - Low risk of detection
- $CO = ST + LG$

Offenders?

- Largely ignored – assumed to be available
- Criminal dispositions and motivations unimportant
- Rationality assumed

Attractiveness of Criminal Opportunities

- Effort
- Rewards
- Risks
- Provocations
- Excuses

Crime and Criminal Opportunities

- Crime = MO + ST + LG
- Concentrated in time and space
- Depend on routine activities
- Affected by social and technological changes

Strategies to Prevent Traditional Street Crime

- Focus on highly specific forms of crime
 - Increase effort
 - Reduce rewards
 - Increase risk
 - Reduce provocations
 - Remove excuses

Situational Crime Prevention and White-Collar Crime

Applying SCP to White-Collar Crime: Overview

- Requires modifications
- Conceptualizing the nature of white-collar crime
- Rethinking criminal opportunities

The Nature of White-Collar Crime

- Legitimate access to target
- Spatial separation from victim
- Superficial appearance of legitimacy

White-Collar Crime Targets

- Linked to structure of market or industry
- Processes or transactions
- Not obvious to outsiders

White-Collar Crime Victims

- Individuals
- Organizations
 - Private
 - Governmental
- Diffuse effects
- Unaware of victimization
- Willing cooperation

Superficial Appearance of Legitimacy

- Integrated into occupational or organizational activities
- Deception
 - Embellishing (abuse of trust)
 - Mimicking
 - Concealment and conspiracy
- White-collar crime in stock markets
 - Frauds or Ponzi schemes - embellishment
 - Insider trading - Mimicking
 - Stock manipulation – Concealment & conspiracy

Guardianship and White-Collar Crime

- Credible oversight
 - Regulation
 - Criminal law
 - Civil law
 - News media
 - Social media

Strategies for White-Collar Crime

- Increasing effort
- Increasing risk
- Reducing rewards
- Reducing provocations
- Removing excuses

Issues in Using SCP

- Focus on highly specific forms of crime.
- Controls affect legitimate actors.
- Industries, markets, and technologies continually evolve.
- Crime concentration not the same.
- Diffusion of illegal practices likely.

Criticisms of SCP

- Displacement
- Crimes of omission
- Regulation same as SCP

Summary

- Crime control arms race
- Aim for harm reduction