PROXIMAL CIRCUMSTANCES: A MECHANISM-BASED CLASSIFICATION OF CRIME PREVENTION

by

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Abstract: *The evaluation of England's Safer Cities Programme requires taking account of over 3,000 diverse preventive schemes. A formal, detailed and comprehensive classification system Is required. In developing It, this paper considers why classification Is necessary, Identifies what features a good classification system needs, and examines—andflnds wanting—existing frameworks. Starting from bastes, a definition of crime prevention Is put forwardfrom which paradigmatic models of the criminal event and of crime prevention Itself are developed, centered around causal mechanisms operating In the proximal circumstances of criminal events—i.e., the situation plus the offender's disposition. Only at this point can the classification system be Introduced, on the platform of a minimal theory of criminal events which nonetheless draws In a range of relevant disciplines—law, psychology, sociology and ecology. It is not a single rigid taxonomy, but a toolkit that can generate alternative classifications and descriptions of preventive actlonfor different purposes by users operating at different levels of sophistication. The paradigms and the classification are put forward here, not as the last word, but as an attempt to stimulate discussion, which will produce further refinement of the approach. It Is argued that the approach adopted has the potential to foster the development of crime prevention as a discipline.*

The Safer Cities Programme (SCP) managed by the U.K. Home Office has initiated over 3,000 individual preventive schemes since late 1988. Their diversity—a deliberate feature of the program—is notable, ranging, for example, from a single street light outside a retirement home, to the

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comprehensive target-hardening of the dwellings in a whole public housing estate, to the provision of youth clubs, all-female taxi services and crime prevention publicity with a "lock it or lose it" message. Evaluating the impact of the program (e.g., Ekblom. 1992) has necessitated classifying this chaotic ferment of preventive actions in a way which enables "like to be put with like" that nonetheless captures the variety of the schemes. None of the existing frameworks was found to be adequate to meet these demanding requirements, so it was necessary to begin from first principles to create a new one. This paper introduces that framework, which is intended both to serve the Safer Cities evaluation and to be of wider use. The framework as presented here is not meant to be the last word, but rather a "development rig" that further research, conceptualization, theory and practice can continue to reconstruct, reshape and refine. Ultimately, it will be argued, the framework may help to convert crime prevention from what is currently a haphazard assemblage of knowledge into something more like a discipline—with a single conceptual model covering the whole field and comprising a set of logically and consistently-related parts. These parts can serve as a toolkit for constructing any number of classifications for any number of practical or theoretical purposes within crime prevention—all of which nonetheless are able to connect back to the one underlying model.

The first section considers why classification is necessary, beyond an obsession with orderliness for its own sake. The second identifies what features a good classification system needs. Existing frameworks are examined, and rejected, in the third section. Paradigmatic models of the criminal event and of crime prevention itself are developed in the fourth and fifth sections as a basis on which classification can proceed, while the classification itself is introduced in the sixth. Next steps and wider implications are considered in the conclusion.

I. THE BENEFITS OF CLASSIFYING PREVENTIVE ACTION

Classification is ultimately an exercise in simplifying reality—in the Safer Cities case, the complex reality of several thousand diverse schemes of preventive action. Such simplification can serve to guide practice and policy, to link practice with theory, to promote the interconnection of theories and to contribute to evaluation studies.

Guiding Practice and Policy

Practitioners and policymakers in crime prevention need some way of envisaging, distinguishing between, articulating, teaching and communicating the range of possibilities for preventive action. It is currently all too easy for different practitioners, and also different policymakers, to "talk past" one another because the terms available to describe preventive action are loose and may have different meanings for different people. Experience has also shown that, for a practitioner faced with a particular crime problem, selecting preventive methods to apply can be a very "hit and miss" process, based on what is often a very limited personal knowledge of the field. This, in turn, steins from the absence of a well-organized body of knowledge of "what works." The development of such a body of knowledge (the subject of considerable current interest) needs a classification system to link like with like, in order to provide for efficient generalization of experience and easy retrieval of information.

Linking Practice with Theory

Theorizing about crime prevention needs to draw on the experience of practical preventive action, and vice versa. In the U.K. setting, practical and basic research, innovatory practice, theory and government policy have all served to mutually shape and reinforce one another (Tilley, 1993a).

Promoting the Interconnection of Theories

In most academic spheres, it is possible for "cliques" to evolve around not just the promotion of a particular theory but the employment of a broader paradigm of terminology, concepts and typical research designs, typical problems studied, and typical interventions used to test the theory. In these circumstances, linking up theories in one sphere to those in another (e.g.. the "situational" and the "social" prevention spheres) can be severely inhibited. Consequentially, we are left with "rafts" of knowledge floating on untested assumptions: We do not know whether the occupants of two such rafts are saying something about two distinct and unconnected areas, merely saying the same thing in different languages, saying something about overlapping areas which could be linked up to make a larger raft of theory, or making conflicting explanations and predictions about the same process.

Supporting Evaluation Studies

Taken in isolation, evaluations of individual preventive schemes can do without classification systems. However, those evaluations which involve pooling assessments of multiple and varied schemes (e.g., the Safer Cities Programme impact evaluation, and the Dutch government's evaluation of its five-year programme of prevention (Polder. 1992) cannot. The results of individual evaluations, too, have to be placed in a slot in an organized body of knowledge to be of any lasting use beyond informing an immediate policy decision.

n. DESIRABLE FEATURES OF A CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

At the heart of any classification system is a trade-off: On the one hand, it must be as simple as possible—easy to understand and communicate for a wide range of users, who might include academics, practitioners and administrators; On the other, it must do justice to the real world, with all its complications and convolutions. A classification system must be able to "re-create" the essential reality of the schemes described, to bring them alive from formal coded records sufficient for the purpose in hand. As will be seen, some of the criteria identified below tend to conflict with others—so careful thought and design will be needed to reconcile them.

Clear and Simple Definitions and Distinctions

Definitions and distinctions made at every level of the classification should be clear and simple, and readily supportable by examples. Under such conditions, for example, the task of manual coding is more likely to be done reliably.

Formal Properties: Logical, Set-Based and Hierarchical; Storable, Computable and Retrievable

The classification framework must be sufficiently consistent, rigorous and systematic to be capable of representation on computer, whether for coding preventive action and data entry, data storage, operating on the data or retrieval of exemplars. In particular, the framework should have clear and explicit definitions of concepts, which should interlock rather than overlap, and clear logical-set relations of inclusivity and exclusivity. This allows for the use of relational databases, which operate on logical

sets and are vital for efficient and flexible organization, storage and retrieval of a complex body of knowledge. The classification system should also be hierarchical or tree-like: Such structures enable the user to select a level of detail appropriate both to the requirements of the task in hand, and to the availability and quality of data. (For example, there may be no point in making very fine differentiations between preventive schemes if to do so meant that numbers of schemes in each cell became too small to support analysis.) Clarity, rigor and computability all tend towards constriction of possibilities. A classification system must simultaneously cater for comprehensiveness and flexibility.

Comprehensiveness

The framework should not have the luxury of being confined to a limited, and perhaps arbitrary, part of the field. It should cover the whole range of what might be regarded as crime prevention: All preventive methods, and all crime types—certainly both property crimes and offenses against the person.

Non-Restrictive and Capable of Expressing All Theories

The framework should not restrict future avenues of research and development by an inability to connect with particular concepts and approaches. Rather, it should offer and promote coverage of a growing range of possibilities. Ideally, it should be capable of expressing all theories of crime prevention in the language and concepts it uses, and, therefore, capable of connecting up the diverse "rafts" of theory and knowledge referred to earlier; or of providing an "arena" where rival theories can be brought face-to-face on the same ground. Given that theory is always evolving, the framework should foster such evolution rather than stifle it; and it should be robust enough to accommodate theory that is only partly developed.

Theory-Based

The classification system should, however, be based on a criminological theoretical model itself. Only in this way can consistency and conceptual unity be achieved. The theoretical model, or paradigm, should be as minimalist and conservative as possible so as not to conflict with the

previous requirement by constraining the range of criminological theories that can be accommodated and expressed.

Covering All Aspects of Preventive Action

Classification should cover four aspects of preventive action: (1) how the action is targeted and delivered; (2) what action is delivered; (3) the way this action is supposed to have its preventive effect; and (4) the ultimate objectives of the action—what impact on crime is it intended to have and where. However, the second and third of these aspects should be at the heart of the classification system to ensure that it focuses on the essence of the preventive activity itself.

III. EXISTING CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS AND DEFINITIONS OF PREVENTION

Classifications of Prevention

Frameworks for classifying situational prevention are relatively well-developed (e.g., Clarke, 1002) and link fairly closely with theoretical perspectives such as the rational offender approach (e.g., Cornish and Clarke, 1086) and the routine activities approach (Cohen and Felson. 1970; Felson. 1992). These frameworks also focus fairly clearly on the nature of the action delivered. However, they are deliberately narrow.

Commonly-used schemas of a less formal kind are variants of the "situational versus social" or "physical versus social" divide in crime prevention. The limitations of this conceptually rather sloppy approach are obvious: Some situational or physical methods rely on social processes to work and vice versa. Examples include: physical improvements to the environment to facilitate social surveillance; use of community-development approaches to facilitate victims' implementation of physical situational methods such as pro perry-marking or target-hardening of homes: and use of social policy to improve the physical conditions of housing in order (among other things) to improve parenting). "Social crime prevention" has been defined rather more formally as "...measures aimed at tackling the root causes of crime and the dispositions of individuals to offend" (Graham. 1900:12). This obviously covers only some of the social processes identified above, and. operationally, how does one define "root causes"? The term "community crime prevention" (cf. Hope and Shaw, 1988). concisely defined by Graham (1900) as "...measures which improve

the capacity of communities to reduce crime by increasing their capacity to exert informal social control" (1990:12). not only shares the ambiguities of the term "social," but in introducing "community" imports a concept which is itself extremely problematic (Willmott, 1986).

Perhaps the most widely-used comprehensive classification system is that of Brantingham and Faust (1976). According to this system, primary prevention addresses the reduction of crime opportunities throughout society without reference to criminals or potential criminals. Secondary prevention addresses the change of people, typically those at high risk of embarking upon a criminal career, so that they remain law abiding. Tertiary prevention is focused upon the truncation of the criminal career in length, seriousness or frequency of offending; i.e.. it deals with the "treatment" of known offenders. This framework, based on a public health model, commands wide use but has important limitations (see also Graham. 1990). It serves admirably to characterize aspects of the targeting of preventive action—who or what receives the treatment—but does not directly focus on the nature of the action delivered to the recipients. Nonetheless, the framework "satisfices" because of its broad scope covering the whole of prevention (meeting a clear demand in the market), and because the "targeting-types" that it distinguishes happen more or less to correlate with, and hence serve to differentiate, some common "action-types."

This approach was more recently modified by van Dijk and de Waard (1991), who cross-classified the primary-secondary-tertiary categories with distinctions between situational, offender-oriented and victim-oriented schemes to generate a 3 x 3 table. This is clearly an advance on the one-dimensional approach which preceded it, especially since it seriously attempts to focus on the nature of the action delivered. However, it is not differentiated enough, formal enough or sufficiently theory-based to be fully useful. Moreover, it confuses two functions of the victim: as a target of criminal activity (in which case the victim can be seen as part of the situation), and as a channel for implementing preventive action in the rest of the situation. As will be seen, these are conceptually (and often practically) quite distinct.

Defining Crime Prevention

As well as attempting to differentiate within prevention, there have also been attempts to define the global concept of prevention itself. Perhaps

reflecting the history over the last 15 years of new approaches to prevention, which have had to carve out a niche for themselves in territory previously occupied by the conventional criminal justice system, a common definition goes along the following lines: "Crime prevention seeks to reduce the frequency of criminal behavior by means that operate outside the conventional criminal justice system." Defining something as a negative residual is not conducive to clarity, simplicity or connection with fundamentals. But the definition is also superficial and arbitrary in several ways: (1) At one level, it is possible to identify schemes that are clearly in the "new" prevention camp but which also have quite close links with the criminal justice system—for example, where preventive action is targeted on known offenders (as in "tertiary" prevention) and their criminogenic life circumstances such as debt and drug dependency (e.g., Forrester et al., 1988, 1990). (2) At another level, many preventive schemes ultimately rely, for their influence on offenders, on the normal operation of the criminal justice system—fear of arrest, trial and punishment. (3) In the area of policy and practice, the distinction between the criminal justice system and crime prevention approaches has now perhaps outlived much of its usefulness and may be inhibiting the proper application of the problem-oriented approach (Goldstein 1979, 1990). whose major tenet is that the focus should always be on the *problem,* with the nature of the *solution* being consequential to this. Why restrict the choice of solution to a particular local crime problem *either* to conventional policing and legal strategies, or to preventive action? (4) Finally, the most arbitrary aspect of this distinction, and perhaps the most fundamental, is that it ignores the preventive function of much of the criminal justice system—up to and including the deterrent, reformatory and incapacitational purposes of imprisonment.

The biggest doubt with both existing classifications and existing definitions of crime prevention is that there is no guarantee that they have avoided superficiality—they may be like Aristotle's taxonomy of living things, which lumped together hedgehogs, porcupines and sea-urchins because of surface similarity. Until the arrival of frameworks based on fundamental and widely accepted theories based on evolution and genetics, taxonomists had little way of determining what was fundamental and what was superficial.[1] The same kind of approach is required for crime prevention; the rest of this paper describes an attempt to develop one.

IV. A NEW PARADIGM OF THE CRIMINAL EVENT: PROXIMAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Developing the new approach involves several tasks which have to be completed before embarking on the classification of crime prevention activity. As will be seen, units of analysis have to be identified; crime prevention itself has to be defined; and a "paradigmatic" description of the basic components of the criminal event has to be specified. Only after reaching that stage is it appropriate (in section V) to shift the focus onto preventive methods themselves, develop a paradigm for crime prevention in its turn, and, finally, (in section VI) work towards the classification system. While much new ground is covered, the intention is to build as far as possible on existing concepts.

The Unit of Analysis and the Structure of Preventive Action

One of the difficulties in classifying preventive action is its complex nature (Graham, 1000). and, in particular, its complex structure. It is necessary to pin this down. A single scheme can operate by more than one method (for example, surveillance plus target-hardening plus improved youth facilities). Complexity does not stop there because a given method can operate on the basis of several causal mechanisms in parallel. For instance, target-hardening can work by making the property physically harder to break into; by heightening the actual and perceived risk of detection by neighbors or police through causing greater noise and longer time spent attempting to break in, or through the need to "go equipped" with tools such as a crowbar; by reducing the attractiveness of the individual target or of the area as a whole; by influencing the offender to give up that particular line of crime, or even, perhaps, to give up offending altogether.

The most fundamental of these "units of analysis" would seem to be the *mechanism.* This is a view shared (and indeed, stimulated) by Tilley (Pawson and Tilley. 1093; Tilley. 1993b). In the context of evaluating crime prevention and correctional treatment schemes, Tilley advocates a mechanism- and context-based approach consistent with the philosophy of Scientific Realism.

A Definition of Crime Prevention

Causal mechanism Is therefore identified as the most fundamental unit of analysis for describing the nature of crime prevention, so mechanism will be used in the proximal circumstances paradigm. (However, as will be seen, using mechanism for the purpose of classification is premature.) The causal mechanisms of prevention themselves operate on, and interrupt or divert, the causal mechanisms of crime, which culminate in the criminal event. The causal mechanisms of prevention themselves are legion and divergent. (It is probably this divergence which has led previous attempts at classification to shy away from the nature of preventive action and into aspects of its delivery.) When searching for a way of classifying these mechanisms, it seems sensible therefore to focus on the causes of the criminal event, because here, by contrast, we have a clear convergence of causes to a point. At this stage, it becomes possible to offer an appropriate definition of crime prevention: *Crime prevention is the intervention in mechanisms that cause criminal events.*

Several aspects of this definition require further exposition.

(1) *Causal mechanism is* to be interpreted broadly—it includes anything (any process or condition) that by its presence or absence or its particular state affects the probability of a criminal event occurring, whether alone or in conjunction with other such mechanisms. Mechanisms are linked together in chains of cause and effect.

(2) *Intervention* implies action prior to the criminal event that interrupts a chain of cause and effect which would otherwise have ultimately led to the event. This definition deliberately does not specify who intervenes—it could equally be a professional crime preventer, a police patrol, a neighbor looking out of the window, or a judge passing sentence. As already noted, the intervention is itself a causal mechanism—one that is distinct from the mechanisms that cause the criminal event, but which operates on these.

(3) *Criminal event* is further defined below. The aim of prevention is, of course, that the event never actually happens.[2] It may be aborted (the would-be burglar, having heard the rottweiler growl, walks on by): it may fail (the burglar gives up the attempt having been defeated by the lock, or savaged by the dog); or, it may never be conceived (the burglar, a reformed person, no longer even thinks of looking for likely targets).

We now can claim to have a simple, unitary, all-embracing and positive definition of crime prevention. Defining and classifying crime prevention with reference to causal mechanisms is fundamental and non-arbitrary.

It allows us to splice together mechanisms of crime prevention with mechanisms of criminal events—that is, theories.[3] Focusing on the criminal event allows us to build out from a structured and convergent set of causal mechanisms, providing a framework on which the diversity of preventive action can be brought to order. In so doing, the perspective of this paper shifts, for the moment, from preventing criminal events to explaining them. In particular, we need to build on the concept of the criminal event set out in the above definition by establishing a paradigm which describes its universal features and the causes that converge on it.

A Paradigm of the Criminal Event and its Causes: Proximal Circumstances

Theories of criminal events ultimately seek to explain what causes criminal behavior—which we know to be hard to distinguish in most respects from the causal processes underlying all behavior (e.g.. environment, motivation, emotion, learning, perception, moral values and reasoning, and "rational" choice). Of course, there are many causes of human behavior in general and of criminal behavior and criminal events in particular. To make the task manageable, which ones should be selected as the basis for the paradigm? A key distinction to bring in at this point is that between causal mechanisms that are proximal and those that are distal. Proximal mechanisms are directly linked to the event in question, and generally close in time and space. Distal ones are. obviously, more remote, and the causal chain is longer—e.g., in the case of a violent incident tracing back successively to a troubled contemporary relationship, an abused childhood, an abusing parent and the social conditions that contributed to that abuse—but. Inescapably, the chain connects up to influence the event only via the proximal causes. There cannot be "action at a distance," to borrow an axiom from physics. The current approach focuses on these proximal causes.

Even having set aside distal causes for the moment, the many possible proximal causes of criminal events require further organization to make for a usable framework for the classification of preventive action. Components of the paradigm can be identified on which the proximal causal mechanisms operate or through which they are channelled.

The criminal event, as a special case of the behavioral event, at its bare minimum requires the interaction of a situation and a potential offenders disposition (what that person brings to the situation in the way of more

or less stable "mental and physical baggage.") Together, the immediate crime situation and the potential offender's disposition, as it is activated and as it operates in that situation, are the fundamental components which together can be termed the *proximal circumstances* of the criminal event.

The situation-disposition components are, however, insufficient in themselves to specify the paradigm. Not enough of the essence of the specifically criminal event is captured, and it offers too few links to the various disciplines that must be drawn upon in representing the range of theories of criminal events. Some expansion and differentiation is necessary; a little more complication at this point makes for better classification subsequently.

Other writers have put forward paradigms that are based on situation-disposition, but add more. Felson (e.g.. 1992) has developed a now widely used ecological paradigm of the proximal circumstances of criminal events (and on into patterns of crime) involving a likely offender, a suitable target and the absence of capable guardians. Broadly similar paradigms have been proposed in the rational choice model (Cornish and Clarke (1986). Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) general theory of crime (involving the conjunction of disposition^ lack of self-control and situational opportunity), and the Brantinghams' (1981) definition of environmental criminology (involving law. offender, object target or victim, and a place in space and time). It goes without saying that all these are in the right area, but for present purposes the paradigm needs yet more extension, differentiation and adjustment to cover the full range of crime types, crime situations, and preventive methods and mechanisms—and hence to provide a sufficient basis to move on to classification of preventive methods themselves.

Three scientific disciplines can be drawn upon in extending the situation-disposition paradigm: psychology (cognitive, personality and social); ecology; and sociology. All are useful for their "micro"- scale concepts and processes, which can be related to the proximal causal mechanisms of criminal events, and all contributions should be kept as "minimal" and as conservative as possible. Of course, none of the "donor" disciplines have reached anything like maturity, so the concepts and terms borrowed will not be as clearly conceived as might be desired, and they may overlap more than they interlock. But criminology cannot wait until, say, psychology is "finished" before it starts using psychological ideas!

Defining What is Criminal in a Criminal Event

Before embarking on a search of components and sub-components, however, it is necessary to define a criminal event rather more fully than has been done so far. Following the Brantinghams' lead, it is necessary to identify the contribution of criminal law. What distinguishes a criminal event from other events involving human action is. obviously, the definition of the behavior itself as criminal, and the presence in most cases of criminal intent. This is not the place to go into the stratosphere of legal theory, but it is necessary to consider the essential nature of crime and what is common to events defined as criminal. Here, the central consideration must be the role of conflict. In some respects all criminal events involve conflict: conflict between one individual and another over the ownership of property, over territory, leadership, status, access to rewards; and conflict also between an individual and the state if a law is broken. In certain cases the conflict is intrinsically criminal (for example, a theft, where one party is clearly defined as the injured party): in others, the conflict may be intrinsically civil, only becoming criminal because of the way one or other of the conflicting parties attempts to resolve it (for example, a dispute between neighbors over noise, that erupts into violence, damage or disorder). Until the first threat has been made or the first blow has been struck, it is not possible to identify an offender and an injured party or even a criminal event. To conflict must therefore be added the violation of norms, especially those embodied in criminal law.

The criminal event is usually taken to be a single episode. However, in reality, it is far more like a dynamic process. There are two ways in which this aspect can be captured. First, the possibility that the offender, the target and the environment repeatedly combine to produce a succession of similar events, as with domestic disputes or racial harassment, should be allowed for. Second, even what for legal or administrative purposes may be regarded as a single event may have quite a complex structure. Cornish (1993) uses the concept of "scripts" to describe the linked sequence of scenes through which a would-be offender has to navigate in order to successfully conclude the crime. Scripts are a kind of logistical map of the offense. For example, "ringing" (changing the identity of stolen motor vehicles to facilitate disposal) involves several stages, some of which may be crimes themselves: target selection> theft> concealment > disguise > marketing > conversion or disposal. The pursuit of such specificity within the criminal event is useful in getting closer to causal mechanisms and opening up points of intervention. In many respects (as in the example).

the script is peculiar to the type of crime, and cannot be used in classification of prevention. However, it is possible to identify more or less "universal" scripts which describe the common scenes through which most offenders have to pass in order to reach their goal. For present purposes, until this very new but potentially very useful perspective is developed further, the only differentiation between scenes which can be incorporated in the current definition of the criminal event is the inclusion of conversion. Conversion includes personal consumption (e.g., of stolen liquor), abandonment (e.g.. of a stolen car), direct resale or resale via a fence. In some cases, e.g., where excitement, entertainment or sexual gratification is the motive, there is no separate conversion event. Where there is, however, further specific possibilities for prevention arise—for example, in controlling fencing (Sutton, 1993).

There is, of course, an alternative set of scripts. Criminal events may end up as aborted or failed attempts; if completed they may lead on to discovery, detection, arrest, trial and punishment or treatment. These additional events may involve formal legal processes or their informal equivalents ranging from official cautioning to private acts of revenge.

The final aspect of the criminal event to be included within the paradigm is the method of offending used. This is obviously more significant for crime prevention than for legal considerations: different methods of prevention may be attuned to different methods of offending (and, to follow Cornish [1993], different methods of offending may relate in their turn to different scenes in the script of the offense).

Developing the Paradigm: Defining the Components

The procedure followed in developing the paradigm is analytical. It involves: (1) identifying the key components of the proximal circumstances one by one, and any subcomponents that it is helpful to distinguish between: and (2) for each of these, defining some key characteristics through which the causes of criminal events operate. The purpose is not to differentiate for the sake of it, but to provide a logical, rational, consistent and interlocking (rather than overlapping) tree of components and subcomponents which can serve to make important and illuminating distinctions between different types of preventive action. A full treatment would require a discursive approach, teasing out components and subcomponents through examples and with reference to theories and subtle distinctions made within the various "donor" disciplines. The present.

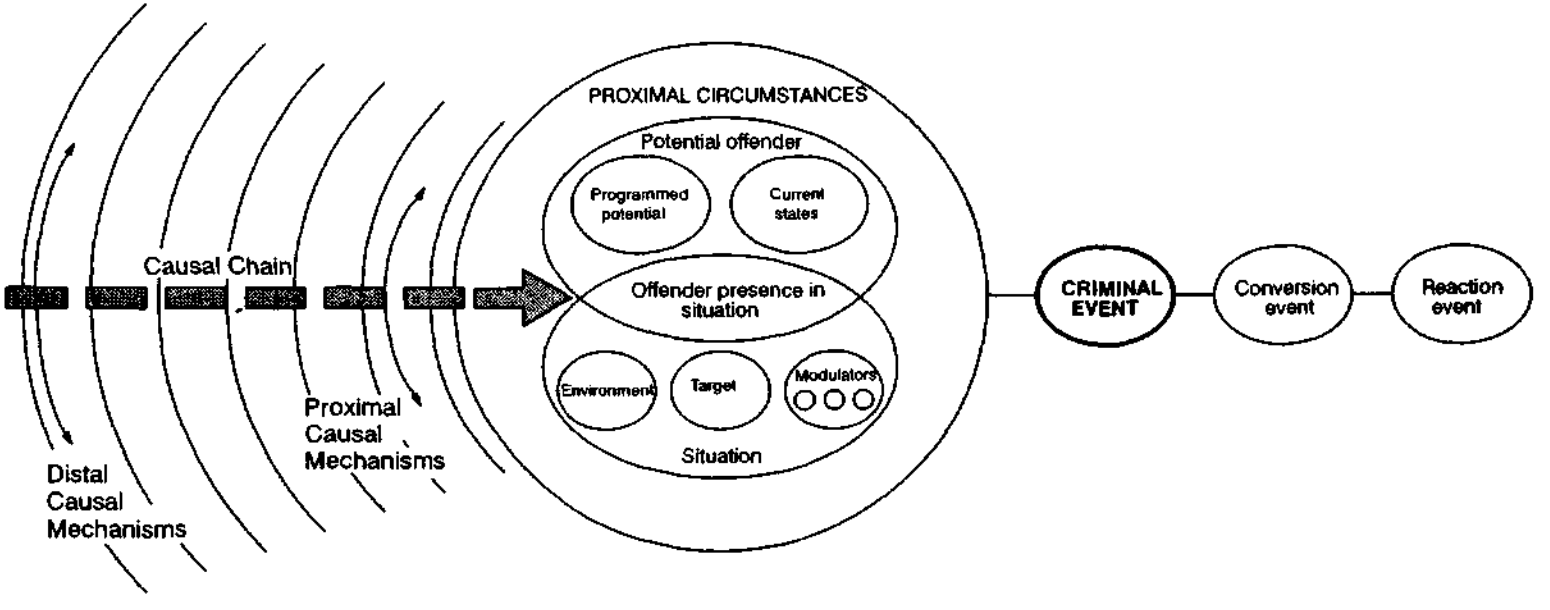
introductory, article has space only for a rather didactic approach, so there is bound to be some oversimplification. One aspect that is worth pointing out is that the paradigm draws quite heavily on the sociological concept of role. For example, a person may at one and the same time be a target of criminal behavior and an intervener in the criminal event; or these two functions may be carried out by quite different individuals. The paradigm of proximal circumstances of the criminal event as set out below is illustrated in Figure 1.

The Potential Offender

The potential offender brings to the crime situation first and foremost his or her physical presence. This may seem a truism, but keeping potential offenders out of particular situations is a major class of preventive methods. Supplementary aspects of presence include authorization (possession of passes, etc.), and possession of tools and weapons.

With this presence comes a collection of psychological and physical dispositions, very broadly defined. (Since some of these dispositions involve habitual ways of perceiving situations, this necessarily complicates the situation-disposition boundary, but not unworkably so provided that some conventions are adhered to.) The various dispositions can be regarded for present purposes as sub-components of the offender. Dispositions are. with the current state of the art in psychology, extremely difficult concepts to pin down in a way that is usable in a classification of preventive action. Therefore, the present exercise cannot proceed as far as might be wished. Nevertheless, it is worth briefly illustrating the range of concepts which implementers of offender-oriented preventive methods ultimately have to tackle if they seek to practice more of a science than an art. One loosely related set of dispositions includes motivation and emotions, attitudes and moral values. A second includes: (1) knowledge and ability—whether in the service of committing offenses (e.g., planning and execution skills), judging risks of arrest and conviction, or avoiding offending (e.g., being able to back down from a confrontation); and (2) rationality, self-awareness/self control and moral reasoning capacity. A third class comprises physiological and neurological dispositions relating to fatigue, stress, drug dependency and mental disorder. A fourth relates to physical aspects—strength, agility and distinctiveness (does the offender look out of place in the proximal situation of the crime?).

Figure 1: The Paradigm of Proximal Circumstances



These various examples of offender disposition are overlapping and hard to differentiate fully, but psychology cannot at present provide much better. But however they are pooled together, dispositions have three general aspects which are important to distinguish in classifying preventive action: what might be called their programmed potential, their current state and their triggering and directing stimuli. Together, these aspects serve to describe how dispositions lead to criminal behavior in particular proximal situations. Programmed potential exists independently of situations: Acquired through developmental processes or even genetics, it gives the person the potential to act in particular ways, and perhaps towards particular targets. To bring the disposition to the surface—from a potential influence to an actual influence on behavior—requires input from specific situations so as to activate the current state and to sometimes to give it direction. For example, the current state of anger may be activated—called forth from potential—by the experience of an hour of stressful train travel, and it may be directed towards the railway and its officials. When the angry individual encounters a specific triggering stimulus in the proximal situation, such as a rude ticket collector, this acts in conjunction with the current angry state to engender aggressive behavior towards the target culminating, perhaps, in a criminal assault.

Of course, this is a simple example. Current states are not always necessary for the explanation of criminal behavior. Programmed potential can be triggered directly in the proximal situation without their mediation, for example, with the propensity to steal being "released" by the sight of a tempting and unprotected target. The distinction between potential, state and trigger is not black and white, nor is it always a mechanical process. Rather, it involves thought, as the concept of decisions can illustrate. Strategic decisions, such as the decision to become an offender, are in effect a kind of disposition, potentially able to influence behavior in a very wide range of situations. Contingent decisions of the kind "I'm short of money, I'll go and steal something" are equivalent to current states. Tactical decisions such as "this target looks suitable" embody the triggering and directing process. Moving from strategic to tactical draws in progressively more influence from the environment, with the last example being directly determined by the proximal situation itself.[4]

Offender presence, programmed potential and current states are taken as the sub-components of the offender in the proximal circumstances paradigm. Changing the presence of the offender includes such preventive methods as curfew, and/or diversion by attraction elsewhere. Changing

programmed potential is the aim of developmental crime prevention or "criminality prevention." which seeks to make permanent alterations in people's predisposition to offend. This may range from changing fundamental motives and values, to supplying skills needed to "go straight." to desensitizing people's reactions to specific trigger stimuli which lead to aggressive behavior. Changing a current state is the aim of preventive action which tries to meet needs legitimately and reduce sources of stress in potential offenders' "current life circumstances." without making permanent changes in the individuals themselves. Changing the presence and nature of triggering stimuli is. of course, not an offender-oriented method at all, but a situational one.

The Situation

In marked contrast to offender-oriented approaches, concepts and methods are now relatively well-developed in the situational field. In developing this side of the paradigm, the aim is to use existing terminology as far as possible. But the need to bestow wider meaning, make new distinctions or introduce new concepts means that some new terms are inevitable. The situation has several components: target, environment and modulators. Modulators are social roles which act on the target, the environment and the offender. They include Felson's (1902) "capable guardians." but. as will be seen, the concept is much wider.

The Target

The target of the criminal behavior in the criminal event can be property or person. The target is defined here as a passive component. Active aspects of targets (such as self-defense) are considered under the modulator roles; with increasingly "intelligent" physical targets and protection systems (perceiving, discriminating and responding), it makes sense to consider these as active too. Targets have several characteristics: their presence in the situation (seemingly obvious, but included to allow for prevention by target removal); attractiveness; and vulnerability. The last two will be described in turn.

Attractiveness to the offender has characteristics such as desirability; provocativeness (human or physical—an abusive fellow-drinker, a glossy BMW. an outrageous work of art); and convertibility (how readily can the target be consumed or sold?). Targets also have a variable capacity to motivate those who might protect them.

Vulnerability in purely passive terms includes characteristics of distinctiveness (how easy is it to spot the wealthy target from the crowd?); concealability (is it small enough to be hidden?); passive resistance (is it big, heavy, bolted down?); passive protest (does it make a noise when broken, like glass?); and traceability (can ownership be traced to incriminate the offender; does it retain identifiable traces of the offender like fingerprints?).

Modulators

Modulators are several closely related and often overlapping roles which act on the environment, the target and the offender in ways that make the criminal event either more or less likely. As already said, the concept of modulator covers the active aspects of being a target, as when a robbery victim fights back or a vandalized ticket machine sends an alarm message to security staff. The modulator roles that it is useful to differentiate are:

(1) The *situation shaper*—who can directly influence any aspects of the proximal circumstances some time *before* the event occurs, making its occurrence more or less likely. This could be achieved through access control (e.g., by leaving the door locked/unlocked, checking tickets and passes), or through a range of other possibilities such as leaving valuables visible in the back of a parked car (or hiding them); disguising wealth (or flaunting it); or displaying warnings of invulnerability or capacity to react—e.g., "beware of the dog" (or, as with some victims of assault, sending signals of submissiveness).

(2) The *Intervener*—who influences the proximal circumstances *during* the criminal event itself by direct action (e.g., stepping in to defend a target); actively resisting attack, if the intervener is also a target; or by protesting (shouts, alarms) or directly summoning help.

(3) The *reactor*—who responds *after* the initial criminal event is complete, by pursuit, summoning help, or identification.

Modulators have several characteristics in common. They have a varying capacity to act in relation to: their presence and opportunity to influence the crime situation; their motivation to do so; their perception (as to whether or not a criminal event is at risk of happening/ is happening now/has just happened); and their resources (e.g., strength, knowledge of how to respond, defuse or resolve conflicts, summon help, *etc).* All these characteristics have been used and augmented in various ways by preventive action.

The Environment

The environment of the crime situation is the residual component—everything other than the target and the modulators. Apart from being the location, the place where the criminal event happens, it comprises two main subcomponents: the logistical environment, which serves to facilitate or inhibit the criminal event by influencing the capacity of the offender and the modulators to perform their respective roles; and the motivating environment, which serves to motivate the offender and/or the modulators. Some preventive methods work on one, some on the other.

The logistical environment describes the physical and social aspects that may make offending an easier or more attractive option, and that render situation-shaping, intervention and reaction harder or less attractive. For example, the logistical environment may: (1) facilitate the offender's detection and assessment of an opportunity (e.g., provide a vantage point from where he can see but not be seen, or simply render the target visible); (2) provide access to the target; (3) assist the carrying out of the offense through concealment or through cornering the target (e.g.. crowded conditions conducive to pickpocketing); or (4) aid the offender's escape. Together, the logistical environment and the vulnerability of the target may influence the offender's perception of risk of intervention, and of the cost and effort of offending in relation to reward—and hence influence the decision to offend. This influence may be confined to the tactical (in this situation only—e.g., robbing this post office), or may be more strategic (ranging over a set of situations—e.g.. robbing all post offices). Logistically. what is good for the offender is almost automatically bad for the situation-shaper seeking to prevent crime (e.g., a communal entrance lock that is too awkward to operate), for the intervener (e.g., poor surveillance possibilities, or vaguely demarcated boundaries of private territory), and the reactor (e.g., crowds making pursuit difficult, or a great distance to a telephone to summon the police). What is good for the various modulators is likewise bad for the offender: the aim of some technical aids like CCTV or one-way door viewers is to tip the logistical balance in the formers' favor.

The motivating environment is somewhat difficult to define, but it may include: thin walls which actually *cause* a conflict between neighbors; the design of a shopping mall that not only brings potential offenders and targets together, but places them in a conflict over which norms of behavior are appropriate (young people wanting loud music and somewhere to mill around, older people wanting tranquility and order when shopping); or the

presence of peers urging a vandal on. The ability of an environment to induce stress, fear or anger in an offender or a victim constitutes a further important set of features.

The situation in general has focal aspects, which relate to that immediate situation alone, and contextual aspects, which relate to the wider area in which the situation is located (Rhodes and Conly. 1981), such as its attractiveness, familiarity or riskiness.

Conjunctions

So far, the discussion has largely focused on defining the individual components of the proximal circumstances of the criminal event and those characteristics of the components which can be useful to discriminate between different methods of prevention. However, ecology would not really be ecology unless the paradigm captured the dynamics of how the components come together in space and time to produce a criminal event. While some of the causal mechanisms operate through a single component (such as mechanisms influencing the motivation of the offender), others may operate through two or more components in conjunction (such as those which lead particular potential offenders into contact with particular attractive targets).

In many cases such conjunctional processes are distal—for example, the operation of local government housing allocation policies (Bottoms and Wiles. 1988; Hope and Foster, 1992) which assign individuals of particular dispositions to live in particular locations with eventual criminogenic effect. Other instances are closer to the proximal circumstances (but still not yet there): for example, offenders who seek to put themselves in crime situations by intent or even planning; and "lifestyle" processes (Gottfredson, 1984) which put people with particular dispositions (such as young excitement-seekers) in particular kinds of situations (such as city-centre discos and bars) where they end up as victims (or offenders). In the proximal circumstances themselves, many conjunctions are possible: for example the social interaction between mugger and soon-to-be-mugged is a conjunction of offender and situation-shaper. The "essential" proximal conjunction, however, is described by Felson's (1992) presence of likely offender, presence of suitable target and absence of capable guardians. In the terms used here, this can be expanded to read: (1) presence of offender with activated disposition to offend (including motivation, and physical and mental resources); (2) presence of attractive and vulnerable target; (3)

location in environment that logistically favors offender and may motivate offending: (4) prior absence of protective action by situation shapers; (5) current absence of capable interveners; and (5) likely future absence of capable reactors.

The usual understanding of the term "opportunity" focuses purely on aspects of the situation. However, with the proximal circumstances paradigm it is possible to define opportunity in terms of the conjunction of offender and situation. It is, in effect, the motivation and mental and physical resources of the offender that combine with qualities of the target and the rest of the situation to make that target vulnerable to a particular person at a particular time and place. The aim of all preventive action is, of course, to prevent these components of the "conjunction of opportunity" from coming together—by one method or another to remove, block or neutralize at least one of the necessary conditions for the criminal event to occur.

To enable the paradigm to handle such conjunctions, so far as possible, the components identified, and their characteristics, have been designed to interlock. For example, the concept of "offender's resources to detect a disguised target" meshes precisely with the concept of "target's distinctiveness to the offender." To take another example, the concept of "logistical environment for the intervener" (e.g., difficulty of summoning assistance) meshes precisely with the concept of the "intervener's resources for acting" (e.g., knowledge of means of summoning assistance and ability to carry it out). For a third example, the concept of "access control" involves the joint operation of virtually all the components of the proximal circumstances: i) aspects of the environment—some sort of way of restricting access to a single entry point; ii) authorization to enter, on the part of the legitimate user and denial of this to the offender: Hi) a means of testing the authorization (use of an intervener, trained in inspection of passes; or installation of a lock which the key has to fit); iv) a means of denial of access (door latch, barrier—aspects of the target) which can be controlled by ill). In each of these examples, the concepts mutually define each other. But this is not mere pedantry or redundancy of description; it is vital to support classification, not to mention the construction of sound theories.

Social and Community Mechanisms

Two further considerations are necessary to complete the paradigm, or at least to define its limits. The terms "social" and "community" crime prevention have frequently been used but poorly defined, as discussed in section III. While for present purposes it is important to acknowledge the importance of social and community processes, it is equally important to define them rigorously and explicitly; otherwise they risk importing much ambiguity into the paradigm. At this point, we are only concerned with those social and community processes that operate within the proximal circumstances—not those which operate distally.

The paradigm is inherently social, given the roles and role relationships at its heart. Social mechanisms that operate within the proximal circumstances to cause or inhibit criminal events are, however, taken rather more specifically to involve relationships which exist before the proximal circumstances come together. Such prior relationships can facilitate or restrain offending. Certain social processes such as reputation, stigmatization or labeling (e.g., reputation as a fighter or as a resolver of conflicts) act in ways akin to dispositions. Through ecological association, they are effectively equivalent to stable properties of the individual: In the situations frequented by the offender, the peers who act as custodians of the reputation may always be present, providing a ready audience and thus a ready influence. For example, fellow gang members in the gang's "home" bar egging an offender on to fight.

The concept of community is notoriously elusive both in general (Willmott, 1986) and with regard to policing (Ekblom, 1986) and crime prevention (Rosenbaum. 1988). But for present purposes those community processes that operate within the proximal circumstances again involve social relationships that preexisted outside the proximal circumstances of the events. Community is more specific than social, however, and is often equatable with "locality"—i.e.. geographical relationships. The two often do go together, but not always; an ethnic community, for example, may be scattered spatially. The key additional elements are, perhaps, common interest—whether this relates to a fixed territory or to something more abstract such as group membership, relationships involving particular roles (e.g., employer/employee, neighbors, teacher/pupil/parent), and networks. Community connects with the proximal circumstances paradigm through the overlapping of its central roles with others such that the occupants of those roles relate in ways external

to the proximal circumstances (e.g., the offender is also the neighbor of the intervener, or the intervener is also the employer of the situation shaper); through their joint membership of networks; and through their common interest in the targets of crime or in the welfare of the community in general.

Between-Bvent Processes

Events do not of course happen in isolation. It is worth explicitly stating in the paradigm that there may be "feed-forward" from the outcome of one criminal event to those that may follow. In particular, there will be feed-forward to the offender (e.g., in terms of experience of success, failure or punishment leading, through learning, to changes in all kinds of dispositions), and to other potential offenders (general deterrence or alternatively vicarious knowledge of how easy it is to succeed). There will also be feed-forward to the affected situation (e.g., in terms of dealing with vulnerabilities revealed by the event) and perhaps to wider sets of situations (e.g., redesigning a car lock that has been discovered to be easily defeated). In all cases the influence is on future events, not the one that has just happened. Failure to make this elementary but easily-overlooked distinction clearly enough has led to confusion.

The paradigm of proximal circumstances has become considerably more complicated than the bald "situation-disposition" one that was taken as the starting point, or even than more sophisticated equivalents like that of Felson. However, the extra complexity has, it is argued, brought with it a far more comprehensive, systematic, detailed, interlocking and rigorous coverage of types of criminal events, their causal mechanisms and the potential means of their prevention. (The complexity also provides a language for classifying and describing methods of offending—but that is perhaps another story, awaiting, in particular, linkage with Cornish's (1093) approach to crimes as scripts.) We now have a far better basis on which to classify preventive action.

Wider Issues

Before moving on to prevention itself, there are several wider points which are worth making about the proximal circumstances paradigm. The paradigm has borrowed concepts and causal mechanisms from psychology, law. ecology and sociology—but only at the micro-level of the proximal circumstances of criminal events. The vast bulk of the subject matter of

these disciplines has deliberately not found its way into the paradigm, and is regarded as covering distal causes that involve their own processes of interest but which ultimately operate only via the proximal causes already sketched. Other disciplines, such as geography and economics, are also relevant for describing distal causes.

Some may think this approach reductionist, but the processes of interest to these other perspectives can be seen as emergent properties that reside in the patterns of proximal causes and their more distal predecessors. In the course of identifying proximal causes and components for the paradigm, a number of leads into distal causes have been discussed. It is to the meso- and macro-levels of ecology, sociology, geography and economics that we might look to try to understand why a particular potential offender (with particular emotional, motivational and moral dispositions, all the product of some set of distal causes) frequents a particular situation, and how the components of the situation itself have come together to produce the proximal circumstances of a criminal event.

Prom a single-event perspective, we may want to broaden out to consider the geographic pattern of events in an area, or the pattern of events in an individual's criminal career. We might also want to understand how particular social and economic processes have led to the distribution and maintenance of commonly occurring proximal situations, such as the vulnerability of the motor vehicle to theft, or city centers which are surrendered to the young at night. Likewise, we may want to know how changes in employment patterns and welfare benefits, privatization of public housing, raising of the school-leaving age, increases in the divorce rate and the operation of the economic cycle all affect individuals' acquisition of particular dispositions and the activation of those dispositions through current life circumstances. Rather than being a liability, this focus on proximal causes may act as a source of discipline, requiring the more complex theories of crime and crime prevention to come down to earth by defining their essential processes in relation to basic behavioral and ecological realities—or at least making them connect up. Likewise, this focus should help, and require, crime prevention practitioners to be rather clearer in specifying what mechanisms they hope their "youth work-scheme (for example) will engage in the course of implementation, will use in monitoring performance and ultimately will employ in evaluation of implementation, process and performance.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that the deliberately broad definition of crime prevention adopted to set the scene for the proximal circum-

stances paradigm is comprehensive. In addition to the "new" crime prevention, it encompasses all informal mechanisms of prevention such as are envisaged in Hirschi's control theory (Hirschi, 1069), and all preventive aspects of the criminal justice system. Through incapacitation. imprisonment is doing no more than keeping particular individuals with a known predisposition to offend out of particular classes of situation. Through correctional treatment, imprisonment seeks to alter the stable dispositions to offend that people bring to situations. And through specific and general deterrence, it aims to influence potential offenders' strategic and tactical decision making. Other sentences available to the courts, such as fines, also seek to prevent through deterrence, whether financial or through the wish to avoid shame. Probation aims to prevent (re-Offending, for example, by seeking to influence the strategic decisions of potential offenders and to improve current life circumstances which may be motivating the individuals to offend. Conventional police action operates through a wide range of mechanisms, often in parallel. For instance, patroling changes the situation (for example, in checking that doors are locked—situation shaping—as well as supplying "capable interveners and reactors" who pose the threat of arrest). And detection and arrest themselves, along with giving force to many situational methods of prevention, are of course the lead into the offender-oriented and situation x offender-oriented preventive mechanisms of the "higher" criminal justice system just described. Police-run youth curfews keep particular categories of people (with particular predispositions to offend in particular public situations) off the streets late at night. They may also serve the situational preventive mechanism of "target removal:" keeping young people (this time as targets rather than offenders) safe from sexual predators or other exploiters. Finally, the criminal justice system as a whole aims to underwrite, and to dramatize, the moral order as a basis for the socialization of the young and the maintenance of collective moral values across communities and throughout individuals' lives.

While the paradigm and the definition of crime prevention used here have now been shown to encompass the preventive functioning of the criminal justice system, they also constitute a way of describing its *dysfunctionlng* so as to make criminal events more likely by labeling, stigmatizing (social reputation), disruption of stabilizing influences such as jobs and family life (changing current states), and teaching criminal skills and attitudes (criminality development).

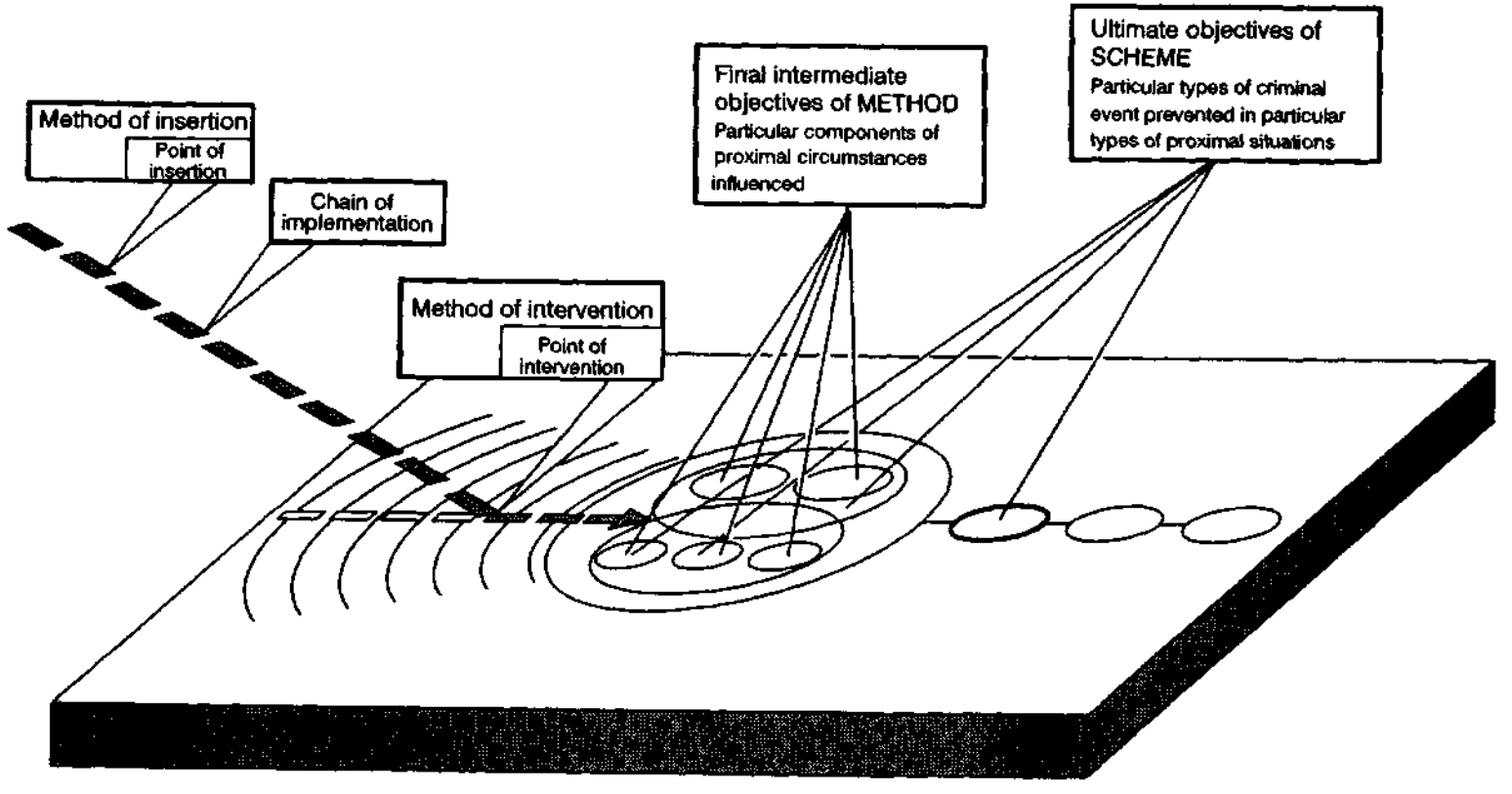
Decrimlnalization and offense removal strategies also come within the scope of the present definition of crime prevention. The former describes a process in which a given piece of behavior (perhaps in a given situation) is no longer defined as criminal; the latter, abolition of the possibility of committing the behavior at all, however defined. As an example, the U.K. government has contemplated abolishing the road fund license paid for by vehicle owners each year and obtaining the revenue instead by an increase in fuel tax, thereby totally abolishing the offense of failure to pay.

V. A PARADIGM FOR CRIME PREVENTION

Given that the primary purpose of this exercise is to unscramble the diversity of preventive action, the focus now has to shift back again from the mechanisms that cause criminal events, operating through the components of the proximal circumstances, to intervention through the mechanisms of crime prevention. As with developing the proximal circumstances paradigm, the procedure again involves being very explicit, specific and analytic. This approach is all the more vital here because trying to pin down the diversity of preventive action, its organization and its delivery, often involves characterizing ill-defined distal causes, social structures and social processes. The particular course taken is to use the proximal circumstances paradigm as the basic framework, and to work backward in time from it. adding components that are specifically preventive.

To give an overview, the description begins at the criminal event itself with the ultimate objectives of the preventive action—which types of crime are to be prevented in which proximal situations. Next in this backward view are what can be called the "final intermediate objectives"—which components of the proximal circumstances are intended to be changed by the preventive action such that the conjunction necessary for the occurrence of the criminal event does not, in fact, take place. Prior to this is the intervention in the causal chain leading to the proximal circumstances—using a particular method of intervention at a particular point. Before even this intervention may come another sequence of actions designed to bring the intervention about—termed here the "method of insertion." The description of the paradigm of prevention can be followed on Figure 2.

Figure 2: The Paradigm of Prevention



Defining Preventive Action

Before embarking on this retrospective sequence, to avoid some confusion it is first necessary to state some more formal definitions of the terms used in describing preventive action, building on the discussion of units of analysis in Section IV.

(1) A *scheme* is a unitary piece of preventive action with a common ultimate objective—i.e.. targeted on a particular crime problem in a particular situation or set of situations. It may involve the implementation of more than one method, but these methods are closely integrated. Operationally, it usually involves one group of implementers. one budget and one start date.

(2) A *method* is an element of preventive action which operates through a particular and indivisible set of causal routes, ending up as influences on one or more components of the proximal circumstances of criminal events. Where a method necessarily operates through more than one component simultaneously (e.g.. keeping particular offenders out of particular situations), it is termed conjunctional.

(3) *Causal mechanisms* of prevention describe the ways in which the methods actually have their effect, whether directly upon the components of the proximal circumstances, or more distally via a longer chain of causation.

(4) A *package* is a collection of several schemes aimed at the same situation or set of situations, the same crime problem, or both—i.e.. unified by the same ultimate objectives. However, implementers, budgets, start dates and methods may all differ considerably.

To illustrate these distinctions, the Kirkholt Project in the North of England (Forrester et al., 1088, 1090) introduced, over several years, a package of schemes aimed at reducing burglary on a particular high-crime public housing estate. One scheme involved setting up mini-neighborhood watches comprising burglary victims and their immediate neighbors, and implemented through the local victim support group. The method of the scheme was surveillance, and the mechanisms included, for example, improving the motivation of interveners and reactors by heightening their commitment to help one another. Another scheme concerned the method and mechanism of target removal—replacing coin-operated domestic gas meters with token-operated ones; obviously the gas company was involved. These schemes together employed situational methods. Yet another set of schemes within the overall package were offender oriented, and enlisted the local probation service in implementing several methods

of reducing local burglars' motivation to offend. These methods included a job club, a credit union and action in support of those with a drugs/alcohol dependency. The methods focused partly on changing offenders' current states (influencing their current life circumstances by mechanisms involving alleviation of needs by legitimate means), and partly on changing their programmed potential (through mechanisms of dependency treatment).

Having defined these basic units of preventive action, we can now move on to describe their essential features.

Ultimate Objectives of the Scheme

Right at the criminal event itself and its proximal circumstances, it is possible to specify the ultimate objectives of the preventive action in the current terms: *What criminal events in what proximal circumstances does the scheme aim to prevent?*

This can usefully be unpacked further. Criminal events can be regarded as instances of particular crime problems, classified by legal category. Problem-oriented approaches to prevention (e.g., Clarke, 1902; Ekblom, 1988) argue that this is insufficiently specific for guiding preventive action. The additional focus required, however, derives from two considerations: (I) the method of offending in the event, and (2) the relevant proximal circumstances in which it took place. With the latter, the components relevant here are the target of the criminal behavior, the environment in which the target is located, and the offender. (Arguably, the method of offending and the type of offender are not quite such "ultimate" objectives as the others.) A complete formal description of the objective of a scheme might thus read: "The prevention of burglary, by breaking rear windows, of private dwellings, in public housing estates, committed by young males." The ultimate specification would, of course, go on to name the houses and name the estates—but that is implementation, not classification. What is needed at this point is some way of classifying targets and environments in sufficient detail to differentiate, but not to overwhelm. Two ways of doing this can be identified—the scope of the objectives, and the social level. These concepts are also applied elsewhere in the paradigm of prevention.

Scope of the Objectives

Scope simply refers to whether the objectives are broad, narrow or in some cases focused on an individual point. Focus on crime types can be on a narrow set (as with treatment to reduce sexual offending, or a situational approach to pickpocketing) or a broad one (as with many offender-oriented schemes that aim to prevent criminality, or situational schemes that aim to improve overall "community safety"). Focus on methods of offending can range from the generalized to the specialized. Focus on proximal situations /environment relates to the location of the criminal events that the scheme aims to prevent: Are they in a broad set of situations (e.g.. the whole country, as with preventing auto crime by improving car security by design); in the whole of a city center (as with some community safety schemes); or in a public housing estate (as with an area or community-based scheme to address life circumstance problems of residents that may be motivating them to burgle dwellings in the neighborhood)? Or are the criminal events in a narrow set of situations (e.g., bus queuing shelters whose redesign might reduce jostling and hence the logistical environment's contribution to pickpocketing)? Or are prevention efforts aimed at a single situation (e.g., one particular hot-spot)? Focus on proximal situations/target can again be broad (e.g., property-marking all valuables), narrow (e.g., a particular vulnerable make of car) or individual (e.g.. a particular house subject to multiple burglary).

Taking all this together it is possible to envisage two extremes. We could have a scheme focusing on a single criminal event in a single environment involving a single target using a specific method of offending (e.g., preventing the theft of the crown jewels at the coronation by a cunning horseback snatch). By contrast, other schemes are so broadly targeted in both crime type and situation that they could be said to cover "everything and everywhere." These need not necessarily be dismissed as sloppy practice: There are certain aspects of "capacity building" which are perfectly acceptable as crime prevention. For example, activities such as awareness raising among local professionals about crime and its prevention; developing a local database for collection and analysis of crime incident information in support of the "preventive process" (Ekblom, 1088); and community empowerment/community development (through setting up residents' associations and other networks with the ultimate aim of enabling people to identify and tackle crime problems themselves (e.g., Forrester et al., 1990) could all come under this heading.

Social Level of the Ultimate Objectives

Scope by itself is a useful organizing concept, but it may not always be differentiated enough qualitatively. To further characterize preventive action, it is necessary to have some fairly simple way of representing the range of "entities" in society that preventive action seeks to protect, whether as targets of criminal events or environments in which they take place. The concept of "social level", which aims to do just this, incorporates the following:

(1) the structural level, involving processes operating within society as a whole, such as employment, parenting or travel practices;

(2) community, involving some kind of spatial or group interest in common, with role relationships and networks;

(3) the area of residence;

(4) institutions, including schools, clubs, churches, work organizations, the media;

(5) the peer group;

(6) family and intimates;

(7) the individual—individual target, individual environment.

This arrangement is not quite a continuum, and it is not necessarily consistent or based on a unified model of society (if one exists). It is more a crude natural history of the Aristotelian kind, but it does offer a fairly general-purpose way of pinning down diversity. Within each level, it may further be possible to list types of unit—e.g., units within the "institution" level can include school, youth club etc. Even further, if desired, it may be helpful to specify the *selection criteria* for identifying which of the units are to receive preventive action (e.g., high-crime schools, schools with vulnerable students etc).

Taken together, the concepts of scope and social level/unit/selection criterion permit a reasonable (and flexible) specification of ultimate objectives—of what crime types, using what method of offending, on what kind of target, in what kind of environment, and committed by what kind of offenders—the scheme aims to prevent. If all preventive schemes had their objectives specified in this way. implementers and evaluators would have a much easier time!

Final Intermediate Objectives of the Method

Just prior to the ultimate objectives of the scheme come what can be called the "final intermediate objectives" of the method: *Which components of the proximal circumstances does the preventive method seek to change?*

The components of the proximal circumstances to be influenced are in effect "where the preventive action ends up"—the penultimate link in what may be a long chain of cause and effect. The final link is, of course, the impact of the changes made to the proximal circumstances on the occurrence of the criminal event itself.

The Method of Intervention Itself

Preventive action has been characterized as intervening in. that is. interrupting or diverting, the causal chain that would otherwise have led to the proximal circumstances and on to the criminal event: *What Is the point qfjlnal intervention on the causal chain, and what action Is performed on what entity there. Involving what causal mechanisms?*

The Point of Final Intervention of the Preventive Method

A very basic way of differentiating between interventions is simply to describe how proximal or distal they are from the criminal event. Many situational methods of prevention involve identifying individual vulnerable situations (such as a crime hot-spot, in the terms of Sherman et al. [1089]) and altering them in situ—that is, the methods are completely proximal. Some methods of prevention focusing on the offender are at the other extreme, influencing, for example, the early development of an individual at risk by provision of parenting support or extra schooling. However, these are not the only combinations. A structural/technological intervention in the labor market might allow for more home-based employment, which could result in more interveners being at home to protect their property against burglary, exemplifying a distal influence on situations. It is difficult to think of a proximal intervention upon offenders alone, but there are many instances involving individuals and situations in conjunction, such as, exclusion of a particular rowdy individual from a particular pub.

Generally speaking, the more distal the point of intervention, the greater the number of future individual criminal events that may be knocked off-course. Unfortunately, in some circumstances this gain may be at the expense of the probability of successful impact, long causal

chains being the embodiment of the expression "many a slip twixt cup and lip." However, this need not necessarily be so: Early and thorough intervention in a child's family or schooling may actually channel the life-course of that child away from further criminogenic influences, in effect amplifying the impact of the original intervention. Further theorizing, research and research synthesis in this area might ultimately underpin the capacity for crime prevention planners to think strategically about where to locate the best links in the causal chain for siting preventive action, trading off cost, breadth of coverage, risk of failure and side-effects such as stigmatization.

The Entities on Which the Method of Intervention Operates

The "social level" of intervention can again be used, this time to identify the entities which ultimately receive the preventive action. The same listing of levels (e.g., institutions, individuals) and units (e.g., schools, potential offenders) that was suggested to characterize the locus of the ultimate objectives of preventive schemes can be applied here. The list of individual units can, however, be expanded a little to include not just environments and targets but also offenders and modulators—because a preventive scheme can seek to influence these too. For example, the intervention can consist of deterrent posters aimed at vandals, or of campaigns persuading people to lock their cars.

On what basis is one exemplar of a unit selected for intervention rather than another—one school, or type of school; one offender; one area; one community; one situation shaper; one model of car; one hot-spot...? It is here that the Brantingham and Faust (1976) distinction between primary, secondary and tertiary prevention fits in, whether applied to offenders (population in general, those at risk of offending, those who have offended already and are known to the criminal justice system) or situations (situations in general, targets at risk, targets suffering from multiple victimization (Farrell. 1992).

The Causal Mechanisms of the Criminal Event which are Interrupted by the Preventive Method

It may be important to consider the nature of the causal mechanisms which would have led to the criminal event, but which the preventive action interrupts. On the situational side, this is relatively simple to determine, because by definition situational schemes generally intervene

directly in the mechanisms that operate in the proximal circumstances. One exception perhaps relates to processes of deterrence, which give offenders advance warning of the invulnerability or unattractiveness of a target or of the presence of capable interveners and reactors, and hence alter their decisions. However, deterrence of this kind can only really be a subsidiary preventive mechanism to a real change in the situation itself—the target has been made less vulnerable, the interveners have been brought in and motivated, etc.

On the offender-oriented side, the mechanisms subject to intervention range from the near-proximal to the very distal; qualitatively, there is immense diversity. At the distal end, the learning process and the socialization process are mechanisms which obviously contribute to the programming of dispositions (as do physiological processes in the case of drug addiction). Structural processes still further back—relating to patterns of mobility and employment and to cultural norms—influence socialization in their turn.

More proximally, the current life circumstances of potential offenders influence the state-setting of their dispositions prior to the criminal event: debt, bad housing, peer pressure, etc. (Such circumstances may also serve to maintain the programmed potential of dispositions.) Lifestyle and routine activity processes direct offenders into particular situations, and there may be many ecological associations between influences on programming, state-setting and presence. Of course, all these processes operate in the context of schools, peer groups, family, etc., characterized for classification purposes by the various social levels.

The Action Performed on the Units at the Point of Intervention—Method and Mechanisms of Prevention

In focusing on the method and mechanisms of intervention, at one level it may be enough merely to give a description in terms of the relevant proximal components influenced and their characteristics. Examples of such descriptions might include: "reducing vulnerability of target due to its lack of resistance," "increasing perceptual capacity and motivation of intervener," and "satisfying the need for excitement." These serve to reverse the perspective and the terminology of the paradigm of proximal circumstances. However, in many contexts this may not be sufficiently informative: it is really just a re-phrase. The missing ingredient is captured in a "by" phrase: for example, "reducing vulnerability of target due to its lack of resistance, by physical strengthening of lock"; "increasing percep-

tual capacity and motivation of intervener by training in detection of suspicious behavior and rewarding for successful interventions"; and "satisfying the need for excitement by providing the challenging activity of white-water canoeing."

The Method of Insertion of Preventive Action

Moving still further backward in time from the criminal event, it is necessary to add a further process to the paradigm of prevention, one that is prior to the intervention itself: *What Is the method by which the implementation of the preventive action begins?*

Consider two school-based preventive schemes. Both operate at the social level of "institutions," but in other respects they are very different. The first scheme attempts to influence the school ethos to affect, in turn, the dispositions of the individual pupils that they will take with them to the outside world. The second involves persuading the school to identify individual pupils at risk of offending and to give them remedial education. In the first, the preventive action intervenes in the causal chain leading to the criminal event right at the point of the functioning of the school as a whole; it begins and ends here. In the second, the action also begins with the whole school but ends elsewhere: There are further actors involved and actions required in the explicit service of crime prevention before the scheme directly intervenes in the original causal chain. This might be described as a separate and distinct causal chain, the *chain of implementation.* The point where this chain begins can be referred to as the *point of insertion;* it is linked by the chain of implementation to the *point of Intervention,* already described.

To take another example, the crime preventer might take direct action in identifying and intervening in a car park which is the scene of frequent auto crime; or. might alternatively work with a national car park-owning company (the point of insertion) to get them to introduce the same range of security measures. As before, the initial point of insertion can be described in proximal-distal terms. Once again, the longer the chain of implementation, the less reliable may be the chances of securing the right intervention in the right place, but the larger the numbers of potential offenders and/or situations that it may be possible to influence.

These chains of implementation describe multiple stages of cause and effect—or a hierarchy of objectives—within individual schemes. It is worth noting that a similar structure may exist in the organizational arrange-

ments behind the commissioning of schemes. The crime preventer role may involve more than just a single individual or a single multi-agency team. It may also involve a hierarchy in which (as with the Safer Cities Programme) there are national team leaders; local coordinators responsible for preparing a strategy and setting up and funding preventive schemes; and implementers of individual schemes (e.g., a local victim support group may receive money from the coordinator to implement security measures in the houses of existing victims of burglary).

As with the selection of units to receive the final intervention, so the units of insertion can be characterized by using the social levels framework. As seen in the previous examples, the levels and units may be the same (inserted in school; intervening in school ethos) or different (inserted in school; intervening with individual pupils). Criteria by which the units are selected for insertion can also be listed. Methods and their hypothesized mechanisms of insertion can also be identified—mass publicity, individual persuasion, teaching, training; negotiation; legislation; incentives; defining standards; and rule-setting.

This retrospective account completes the present attempt at constructing a paradigm to characterize preventive action—although it is readily acknowledged that further elements probably need to be brought in—for example to depict multi-agency or partnership working.

VI. A CLASSIFICATION FRAMEWORK FOR PREVENTIVE ACTION

It is now possible, at last, to draw on both the paradigm of proximal circumstances and the paradigm of prevention to put together a classification framework which should go a considerable way toward having the desired properties listed in section II of this paper. Essentially, *every component identified within the two paradigms can be wsed as a peg on which to hang a separate dimension of classification.*

Reflecting the earlier description of the paradigm of prevention, the dimensions of classification can be divided into three principal realms: the ultimate objectives of the scheme; the final intermediate objectives of each preventive method employed in the scheme (in other words, the components of the proximal circumstances that are targeted); and the methods themselves—insertion and intervention.

It should be noted at this point that the term "mechanism" does not actually figure in this list—an absence that deserves explanation given the

prominence the concept has been accorded up to now. As already suggested, mechanisms themselves may not provide a good basis for general classifications, because of their open-ended diversity and their often hypothetical nature. As such, they are more suitable for dropping into a box in a classification rather than constituting the boxes themselves. (There is always diversity left over at the tips of the branches of any classification tree. Otherwise, it would not be a classification, but an enumeration.) However, mechanisms remain crucial in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of individual schemes, and mechanism-based classifications may be useful within a particular narrow component domain (e.g., schemes using situational methods that operate on physical targets). Methods—which at least are visible and measurable—constitute a far more convenient basis for classification, and methods can be arranged around the convergent set of components and sub-components of proximal circumstances on which the methods and their mechanisms ultimately operate. This, then, is the closest that the present classificatory approach can reasonably get to the fundamental units of mechanism—although the concept remains central.

The Ultimate Objectives of the Preventive Scheme: What Crime Problems Does it Seek to Reduce and Where?

(1) Targeting of criminal events by the scheme can be:

(1.1) specified by crime type(s),

(1.2) specified by method of offending,

(1.3) specified by type of potential offender,

(1.4) broad or narrow in scope.

(2) Targeting of the proximal situation, in which reductions in the frequency of criminal events are sought, can be:

(2.1) specified by situation type(s) (type of target of criminal behavior and type of environment), and

(2.2) broad, narrow or individual in scope.

The Final Intermediate Objectives of the Method(s) Employed by the Scheme: Which Components of the Proximal Circumstances Does the Method Seek to Influence?

The entire hierarchical tree of components identified in section IV can be used in classification. The method can seek to influence the situation

or the offender's disposition: within the former, via the target, the environment or modulators; and within the latter, via programming (developmental, or criminality-reduction approaches), or via current state-setting (roughly equivalent to changing current life circumstances). Conjunctional combinations (e.g.. situation x offender) can also be incorporated within a classification, but are not listed here because there are so many possible combinations of components.

The Method of Prevention Itself: What are the Methods and Mechanisms of Intervention and Insertion, and How Are They Implemented?

(1) Where is the point of intervention in the causal chain?
- **(1.1) proximal or distal?**
- **(1.2) At which social level are the units of intervention?**
- **(1.3) What are the units of intervention?**
- **(1.4) How are the units of intervention targeted?**

(2) What method is used in intervention, which hypothesized preventive mechanisms are engaged, and which hypothetical causal mechanisms of criminal events do they interrupt or divert?

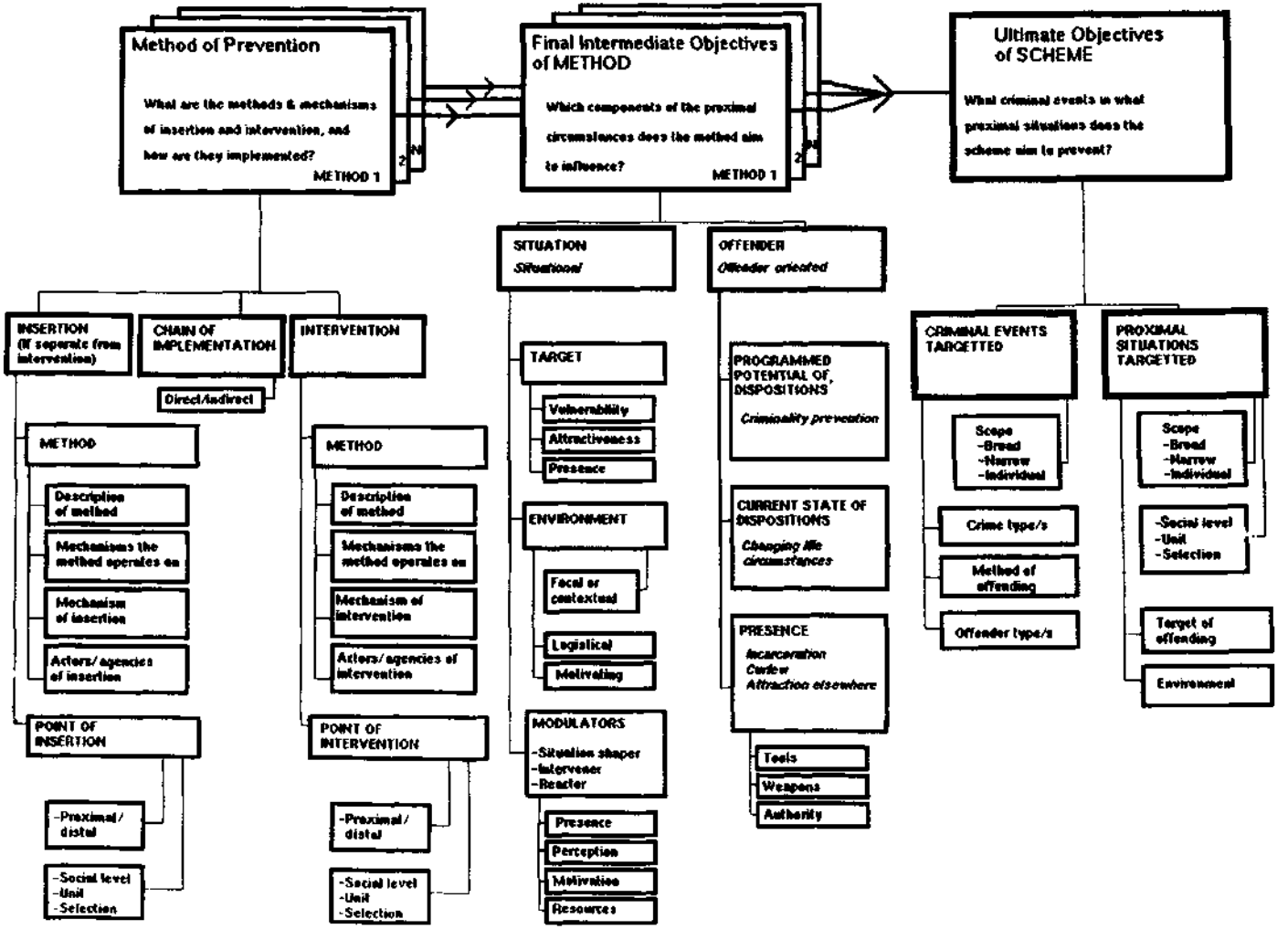
(3) Where is the initial point of insertion?
- **(3.1) Proximal or distal?**
- **(3.2) At which social level are the units of insertion?**
- **(3.3) What are the units of insertion?**
- **(3.4) How are the units of insertion selected?**

(4) What method is used, and which hypothesized mechanisms are engaged, in insertion?

(5) What is the chain of implementation connecting insertion and intervention? In particular, is the implementation direct (straight to the point of intervention) or indirect (via a chain of implementation)? And if indirect, what are the intermediate objectives at each link of the chain?

This is, of course, a "skeleton" classification only, with little tangible content. The important thing to note at this point is that, despite the blandness that comes from its presentation in an abstract form, each element refers to a different aspect of prevention that is significant in its own right. To flesh out the classification would require lists of methods, social levels and their units, and so forth. One realization of the possibil-

Figure 3: Classification of Preventive Action for the Safer Cities Program



ities for classification currently being developed for use in the Safer Citieevaluation is illustrated in Figure 3. (Due to space constraints the illustration only goes down a limited number of levels.)

Choice of Classification—Content and Form

The "components of proximal circumstances" dimension is the core of the classification, getting as close as possible to the mechanisms that underlie crime prevention without becoming entangled in their open-ended diversity and conjectural nature. However, what has been developed is essentially a toolkit for classification and description, rather than a single "take it or leave it" taxonomy. Depending on the user's purpose, any of the features of preventive schemes or their methods can be used for classification, and the classification can take on a range of forms. In all cases, though, the classifications constructed are unified by the underlying paradigms of proximal circumstances and prevention itself.

Classification could be done using a single dimension or a combination, as with van Dijk and de Waard's (1091) two-dimensional framework. Within a given dimension, classification could be broad or specific. For example, in the case of the "component of proximal circumstances" dimension, a broad classification could serve merely to distinguish between offender-oriented schemes, situational schemes and those that operate on situation X offender conjunctions. A specific classification could make more subtle distinctions relating, for example, to which sub-components of the situation were affected by the preventive action—interveners, situation shapers, logistical environment, target attractiveness, target vulnerability, etc.; or even a matrix of combinations.

It would be rare for anyone to want to use every last detail of these possibilities for classification or description unless the circumstances were exceptional: for example, in compiling a computerized knowledge base of "what has been done, and what works?" to provide for retrieval of exemplars using a wide range of specifications; or for compiling a database with multiple and open-ended functions suitable for classifying a wide range of schemes, as in the Safer Cities Programme evaluation.

A Language for Describing Prevention

It is worth pointing out that, as with all detailed classification systems, the proximal circumstances approach could serve equally well as a *language* providing the possibility of formally describing instances of

preventive action. A fairly exhaustive description of a scheme could run for example as follows:

> **The scheme operates by a trade-press publicity campaign inserted at the social level of institution and the unit of hardware shops (with all such shops in the locality being selected): this leads via a chain of implementation that ultimately requires individual residents to purchase home security devices, to the point of intervention—the fitting of the devices: these interrupt the causal chain by the mechanism of giving resources to situation shapers at the social level of "individual" and unit of "households"; which interruption is expressed, in the proximal circumstances of the criminal events, through its influence on situation shapers (in using the fitted devices) and targets (in physically resisting entry of offenders). All this ultimately leads to the non-occurrence of burglary in the households in the area where the campaign was run ... meeting the scheme's ultimate objectives.**

The language could also be used to give firm and explicit definitions of what are currently vague but important entities such as "social" crime prevention. One such attempt, (which is unlikely to command consensus among advocates of social crime prevention, but which is worth trying in order to make the point) could be as follows:

> **Social crime prevention involves methods which are: (1) offender-oriented (in their final intermediate objectives); (2) whose point of intervention is relatively distal ("roots" of criminality, for changing offenders' programmed potential, "current life circumstances" for changing their current state); and (3) whose method of intervention involves interrupting or diverting those causal mechanisms of criminal events that operate at the social levels of structure, community or institutions.**

Note that this definition excludes a lot of methods which do nevertheless involve social processes, such as surveillance. These are methods which proponents of social crime prevention often acknowledge but do not consider to be "social." Perhaps here is an opportunity to force out a positive, explicit and consistent definition. The whole area of social, ecological, community and lifestyle-oriented approaches to prevention could greatly benefit from being pinned down, defined and differentiated in this way.

CONCLUSIONS

In setting out to write this paper, the intention was to produce a better classification system for types of crime prevention activity. In the course

of writing the task evolved, seemingly under its own momentum, into something much more. It began with a definition of crime prevention, and with paradigms for the causation of criminal events and of the implementation and structure of crime prevention itself, centered on causal mechanisms and based on a minimal theory drawn from a range of relevant disciplines. The task ended up not just with a single, rigid "take it or leave it" classification, but with a conceptual toolkit which can be realized in a number of ways in relation to both form and content according to a wide range of needs. Nonetheless all are based on a unitary and consistent set of concepts that (as far as possible subject to the current limitations of their parent disciplines) interlock reasonably well. At times, the language and the concepts developed have been rather abstract and highly differentiated. But this has been necessary, first, to come to grips with the extremely slippery concepts of situation and disposition, and with the discussion of different types of causation; and second, to pull together such immense diversity as one might expect to be encompassed in the range of methods of controlling human behavior.

Casual users of the classification system will obviously not wish to be bothered with the complexity of the full schema, but they need not be. All they require is some simplified version adapted to their circumstances, but nonetheless based on the original. However, practitioners, researchers and evaluators at the "serious" end of crime prevention may find it worthwhile investing in the effort required to become familiar with the terms, the concepts and the whole perspective. In fact, what is offered here may be regarded, without being too far-fetched, as the beginnings of a *discipline* of crime prevention, to replace extremely partial coverages of the field, and often loosely-defined and equally-loosely used sets of terms and concepts. Practitioners, researchers, evaluators and theorists in other fields such as medicine routinely make such a collective and individual investment. *Why not, eventually, crime prevention?*

The establishment of crime prevention as a discipline rather than a somewhat haphazard collection of theory, skills and know-how would have many benefits in fostering research and theory, training and guiding practitioners in selecting preventive methods and setting objectives for implementation, facilitating evaluation and generalization of conclusions, and development of a systematic knowledge base. Other less conventional possibilities might include providing a basis other than pure hunch for the making of "crime impact statements": A predictive approach might involve saying, for example, "if you build that car park here then you will

get a lot of auto thefts"; or. "if you enact that legislation on homelessness. then you will reduce offending by this group of people, but may exacerbate offending in this other group."

Where Next?

There are two ways forward. First, it is hoped that this article will stimulate debate and constructive criticism, not just on the fine detail, say, of the components of the proximal circumstances, but on the definition of prevention, the paradigms and so forth. In so doing the intention is to foster the development of the discipline of crime prevention as a cumulative effort. In this connection, it is perhaps worth restating that most of the concepts incorporated within the paradigms of proximal circumstances and of prevention have a clear pedigree from the ideas of Felson. Clarke and others. (Probably the most influential was a diagram by Clarke, first published in 1977 and subsequently appearing in Clarke and Mayhew [1980:4], identifying a wide range of causes of criminal behavior which ultimately had their influence through situation and disposition.) Despite its origins largely in the situational side, it is hoped that the approach will serve as a bridge to improve links between situational and offender-oriented perspectives—to get them on the same conceptual map.

Second, as well as being debated, it is hoped that the classification will develop through being used. If nobody else does so, it will at least be used in the context of the immediate cause of its creation—the Safer Cities Programme evaluation. The various concepts and distinctions of the classification have already undergone several revisions in the course of coming to grips with the diversity of Safer Cities schemes. In the course of classifying all this activity the intention is to make further adjustments, for example, by adding and sorting out exemplar units within the various social levels (houses, shops, etc.). The classification process has already started to force us to make some quite unexpected distinctions between actions that have usually been lumped together—sorting Aristotle's porcupines from his sea urchins, as it were. Classification is being aided by creating a computerized menu-based "identification key," rather akin to botanical identification keys, which proceed by a sequence of nested questions ("Does the plant have two or four petals? If two. does it have alternate or paired leaves?" ...etc.). This will read straight into the relational database used for the evaluation. Besides identifying "what type of

action is located where" for the purpose of better linking measures of action to measures of outcome (Ekblom, 1993), it is hoped that the information taken in will constitute the beginnings of a cumulative body of organized and easily-retrieved information on preventive activity.

Only after these two avenues of development—discussion and application—have been pursued might it be appropriate to set down a detailed and comprehensive taxonomy of preventive action based on the classification developed here, or its descendant.

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Notes

1. This has not prevented the occasional dispute: The taxonomic world was thrown into ferocious debate a few years ago with the arrival of the "cladistic" approach, which was more closely based on genetics and which overturned some ideas of what was fundamental and what was superficial.

2. Such "non-events" are really best considered as "events that might have been"; for example, had the front door not been locked and bolted, or had the (potential) offender not had the remedial schooling.... These events are "virtual"—but, even so, they are worth retaining because they help to bring to a focus the paradigm shortly to be described.

3. It covers theories of criminal events, but not theories of crime, because that would have to encompass why particular classes of event become defined as criminal. Nor does it cover theories of criminal careers, although the mechanisms that influence individual criminal events and criminal careers should clearly form overlapping sets. Nor does it cover theories of

area crime rates, although—notwithstanding Hirschi (1086)—the two should ultimately be able to be linked.

4. In all these examples, it should be noted that the causation of the criminal behavior is always joint causation—the product of an interaction, or a repeated succession of interactions, between disposition and situation. Reference to "determined by the situation" is therefore always an abbreviation of "co-determined by the situation and the disposition."

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