THOSE WHO DISCOURAGE CRIME

by

Marcus Felson
Rutgers University, Newark

Abstract: *Even by their simple presence, people can discourage crime from happening at specijic times and places. Such direct-contact discouragement can occur when "guardians" keep an eye on potential crime targets (Cohen and Felson, 1979), or when "handlers" do the same for potential offenders (Felson, 1986). Eck (1994) adds a third type of discouragement role: "managers" who monitor places. Eck presents the routine activity approach as two triplets, with potential offenders, targets, and places monitored by guardians, handlers, and managers, respectively. Clarke (1992) notes the varying degrees of responsibility for discouraging crime. His ideas are adapted to current purposes, listing four steps of crime discouragement. Personal discouragement is exerted by family and friends; assigned discouragement, by those so employed; diffuse discouragement, by those employed but not assigned to that specific task; and general discouragement, by unpaid persons lacking a personal tie or occupational responsibility. The multiplication of these four steps by Eck's triplets gives us 12 types of discouragement against crime. These types help us also to think about other aspects of crime prevention.*

A case can be made that the offender is not the most important actor for explaining crime. From the perspective of the routine activity approach (Cohen and Felson, 1979; Felson, 1994; see also work on lifestyles by Hindelang et al., 1978), those who interfere with offenders, however inadvertently, play an even more central role in crime and its prevention. The "capable guardian" against crime serves by simple presence to prevent crime, and by absence to make crime more likely. For example, a retired person at home might well discourage daytime burglary of his or her own home or even the home next door. Conversely, someone working away from home during the day contributes by that absence to a greater risk of burglary. Two persons walking down the street might serve as effective

Address correspondence to: Marcus Felson. School of Criminal Justice, Rutgers University, 15 Washington Street, Newark, NJ 07102.

guardians for one another against a mugging or other attack, while each individual serves as a guardian for his or her own immediate property.

UPDATES IN THE ROUTINE ACTIVITY APPROACH

Originally the routine activity approach took offenders as given, but later work (Felson, 1986; see also Felson and Gottfredson, 1984) took into account informal social control of offenders. This was accomplished by linking the routine activity approach to Hirschi's (1969) control theory. The result is a two-step version of control theory. As a first step, society establishes social bonds and thus attaches a "handle" to each individual. In particular, parents develop among their children an emotional attachment to themselves. The parent becomes an "intimate handler" whose proximity to and knowledge of the child's behavior becomes an instrument for informal social control. Anyone who recognizes the youth or can determine his or her name can also grasp that handle and impose such control, not needing to resort to physical coercion. This leads to the second step of social control: the task of identifying exactly who is breaking the rules. In a village or small town, or within an urban village, this second step of social control may not be problematical, since each person is widely recognized. However, as the ecology of everyday life changes, it becomes easier to evade social controls by breaking rules in places where one is not recognized. Thus, the large metropolis and widespread use of automobiles by youths helps them escape informal social control, even if they have the usual social bonds (see Felson, 1994). In short, informal social control requires both attaching handles to youths and organizing community life so that such handles can be grasped.

Just as a guardian supervises the suitable target, a handler supervises the likely offender. In both cases, direct physical contact serves to discourage crime from occurring. Thus, social control in society requires keeping suitable targets near capable guardians and likely offenders near intimate handlers.

This two-step informal social control was extended by Eck's (1994) recent study of the spatial structure of illegal drug markets. For Eck, important roles in discouraging crime go to those who control or monitor *places.* The homeowner, doorman, concierge, building manager, janitor, resident-owner, facility manager, close neighbor, receptionist, private security officer, bus driver, restaurant manager—each of these can serve to discourage crime by looking after particular places (see relevant studies

included and reviewed in Clarke, 1992). "Place manager" is the broad term Eck uses to describe this general role.

Indeed, Eck, (1994) describes an important presentation of routine activity theory as two triplets, described in Table 1. Integrating Felson's 1986 work with his own, Eck notes three objects of supervision: the suitable target of crime, the likely offender and the amenable place for crime to occur. (Here we have added the adjective "amenable," since a place that has no potential for crime does not need a place manager.) We can state these triplets in several ways. Crime opportunity is the least when targets are directly supervised by guardians; offenders, by handlers; and places, by managers. Or we can state that these various actors directly discourage an offender by proximity to targets, to places, or to the offenders themselves. Or we can emphasize that such discouragement depends upon social ties with targets or offenders or places, respectively. Whichever way it is put, an offender has to get loose from his handlers, then find a target unprotected by guardians in a place free from intrusive managers. Handler, guardian and manager can all interfere with criminal behavior, however inadvertently.[1]

Table 1. Depiction of Eck's triplets

	Eck		
	——Felson, 1986——		
	A.	B.	C.
1. Supervision of	Target	Offender	Place
2. Directly Supervised by	Guardian	Handler	Manager

FURTHER VARIATIONS IN CRIME DISCOURAGEMENT

Those who discourage crime fit many descriptions. When Newman (1972, reflecting Jacobs, 1961) spoke of "natural surveillance," he included strangers and bystanders whose proximity and visibility could serve to discourage offenders. Thus design of places became a central feature in prevention. Many windows overlooking an area was one of his recommendations. Mayhew (1981), in contrast, emphasized the import-

ance for crime prevention of employed persons with assigned responsibility, such as store employees, bus drivers, lifeguards, hotel clerks, etc.

In an important classification of crime prevention methods, Clarke (1992) distinguished varying responsibility for crime discouragement, including formal surveillance, employee surveillance and natural surveillance. His notion of varying levels of responsibility for crime discouragement is modified for current purposes. We begin by describing responsibility for places, later turning to the other two objects of responsibility. *Personal responsibility* for places is taken by those who own them or who are intimately related to owners. Thus, one takes responsibility for one's own home; a similar concern can be expected if one owns an apartment building and resides there. *Assigned responsibility* for places is taken by employees who are specifically assigned to look after those places. Such an employee might be disciplined or even fired if crime occurs in that place; thus he or she has a strong incentive to manage against crime. For example, an office receptionist's job may include recognizing other workers, admitting clients and politely intercepting those who have no right to enter. *Diffuse job responsibility* for places is taken by other employed persons with less precise responsibility. Thus, a member of the office secretarial pool might take note of somebody loitering in the building or entering the suite of offices without justification, even if not assigned the job responsibility of checking. *General responsibility* for places is taken by any bystander or visitor whose presence discourages crime or who notes an illegal activity that is or might be occurring there. Such a person has neither the personal responsibility of an owner, friend or relative, nor the assigned or diffuse responsibility of an employee.

Note that this scheme distinguishes among types of employees, some of whom have assigned responsibility for crime prevention, while for others responsibility for crime prevention is diffuse. Moreover, extra emphasis is given to personal ties, which impels more responsibility than any of the other three categories.

HYBRID EXAMPLES

· Note that these are analytical distinctions only. These categories of responsibility are sometimes crossed in everyday life. For example:

> 1. An employee may form personal ties to a customer. When that customer enters the store drunk, the employee may exercise informal control as well as formal responsibility in getting him or her to leave with no harm done.

2. Some delivery personnel, cab drivers and other employees with strategic jobs act in an unpaid auxiliary role, assisting police with information to prevent crime. Thus they combine general responsibilities with employee status.

3. Cash awards are sometimes offered to the general public for information leading to arrest or other crime prevention cooperation. Similarly, employees can be rewarded by employers for crime prevention that is not part of their own daily job assignment. Thus organizations seek to focus responsibility with extra efforts and incentives.[2]

Despite these interesting hybrid examples, the original analytical distinctions remain useful for understanding varying responsibility. We continue with the four categories stated earlier.

RESPONSIBILITY AS AN ORDINAL VARIABLE

In general, one's tendency to discourage crime will vary with the primacy of responsibility. That primacy decreases in this order: personal, assigned, diffuse and general responsibility. In the same order, we can expect directness of response to decrease. Thus, those with personal responsibility will be most likely to talk directly to a potential offender. In contrast, if those with general responsibility do anything at all, they probably would ask someone with more responsibility to talk to the potential offender or wait until a crime occurs and call the police afterward. If it takes three steps of human interaction to get somebody to confront a potential offender, the crime may already have taken place and the offender may have fled. Thus, level of responsibility affects not only the likelihood that crime will be discouraged but also that such discouragement will occur directly and quickly. On the other hand, offenders do not always know what threats to their illegal acts can be found among a group of strangers. Thus the general public still has some prevention power.

CONTROVERSY OVER WEAKNESS OF GENERAL RESPONSIBILITY

The weakness of general responsibility is a matter of controversy. Newman (1972) and Jacobs (1961) believed in the power of natural surveillance, hence, general responsibility in the terms of this paper. The

contrasting argument from Mayhew (1981) and Clarke (1992) emphasizes the relative power of assigned responsibility.

Titus (1994) argues that new technology may enhance the impact of general responsibility. He notes that wide ownership of videocameras and cellular phones gives new power to general discouragement of crime. Modern telecommunications systems can be used not only to commit crime but also to prevent it. For example, electronic bulletin boards can help citizens share information about local criminal activity, extending general social control electronically (Titus, 1994).

Numbers of people play a role in the controversy over the effectiveness of general discouragement. Number is not a simple issue. Presumably two persons should discourage crime better than one. Yet Mayhew (1981) finds that too many people nearby leads to a diffusion of responsibility. Nobody acts to report or prevent crime; hence, natural surveillance proves weaker than expected.

On the other hand, Weisburd (1994) reminds us that bystanders in Israel take strong responsibility to prevent crime. He notes the cultural and ethnic contributions to this responsibility. We might apply basic sociology to argue that size, density, heterogeneity and migration common to the American metropolis serve to reduce general responsibility. Even so, will a crowd of Israelis who do not know you take more responsibility for your briefcase than you will take yourself? We continue in this paper to assume that general responsibility, person for person, is the weakest of the four types.

RESPONSIBILITY LEVEL FOR GUARDIANS AND HANDLERS

These four types of responsibility apply not only to place management against crime, but also to the other two members of the crime-discouragement triplet. Table 2 depicts a 4 x 3 matrix. Across the top of the matrix are the three objects of supervision: suitable targets of crime, likely criminal offenders and amenable places for crime. These are linked to those who supervise: guardians, handlers and managers. The responsibility, levels are presented in the four rows of the matrix, from personal to general. Table 2 mixes together violent and property offenses, since its focus is upon human discouragement of crime rather than variations in crime types.

The 4 x 3 matrix yields 12 cells. This allows for the possibility that an assigned employee might look after various types of objects, and that various objects might be supervised by people with different types of responsibility. Within each cell a variety of crime discouragement can be

Table 2. Four-by-Three Table of Crime Discouragement

Disaggregating Types of Supervisor (and Objects of Supervision) by Level of Responsibility, with Examples

	Types of Supervisor and Objects of Supervision		
	A.	**B.**	**C.**
	GUARDIANS (Monitoring Suitable Targets)	**HANDLERS (Monitoring Likely Offenders)**	**MANAGERS (Monitoring Amenable Places)**
LEVEL OF RESPONSIBILITY:			
1. *Personal* (Owners, family, friends)	Student keeps eye on own bookbag	Parent makes sure child gets home	Homeowner monitors near home
2. *Assigned* (Employees with specific assignment)	Store clerk monitors jewelry	Principal sends kids back to school	Doorman protects building
3. *Diffuse* (Employees with general assignment)	Accountant notes shoplifting	School clerk discourages truancy	Hotel maid impairs trespasser
4. *General* (Strangers, other citizens)	Bystander inhibits shoplifting	Stranger questions boys at mall	Customer in parking structure

subsumed. In Table 2, an example is offered for each cell. We shall go through the table column by column. Beginning with suitable targets for crime, cell A-1 mentions the student who keeps an eye on his or her own bookbag. Such personal responsibility might also be taken by a friend, relative, or fellow student. This discouragement is most likely to occur inadvertently, but the occasion may arise when it is necessary to challenge someone who grasps the bookbag without having a right to do so. Cell A-1 would also include two friends walking down the street and thereby affording one another informal and inadvertent protection against violent attack, protection that would not occur if they were walking alone.

Cell A-2 gives the example of assigned responsibility for a target. The store clerk assigned to the jewelry cabinet is responsible for making sure that its contents are not stolen. Even when removing merchandise to show to a customer, that clerk is expected to watch the merchandise and return that which is not bought to the cabinet and then lock it. However, a store or other enterprise may also have employees with no such specific

responsibility. For example, as in Cell A-3, an accountant who works behind the scenes in the department store's business office has only diffuse responsibility to prevent crime. He or she might, on the way to lunch, notice someone suspicious hovering around an area of high shop-lifting risk. Asking that person, "May I help you," this employee may thwart a shoplifting effort without being assigned to that as part of his or her job description. Cell A-4 illustrates a bystander not employed by the store discouraging shoplifting or other illegal acts simply by being near or by saying something, despite having no personal or occupational responsi-bility to the target of crime. Note that we are assigning analytical credit to those who discourage crime, regardless of whether they show courage or a willingness to intervene.

Column B considers handlers discouraging potential offenders from engaging in criminal acts. Such discouragement is often inadvertent, as when families spend time together (see Felson and Gottfredson. 1984; Felson, 1994). Discouragement also includes reminders from parents to children or other instructions to cease any given behavior. Although most informal control may be unspoken, there are times when silent social control does not suffice. Column B modifies the handler presented in Felson (1986), who used the term "intimate handler." We now change this term to "personal handler," referring to family or friends of a potential offender spending time nearby. We also include other types of handlers (see below).

Because some handlers are not intimate with the potential offender, we apply our same four categories to Column B. When a father makes sure his son gets home on time, this fits into cell B-1. When a school principal or dean, in the context of the job, finds children playing hookey and talks them into returning to school, that exemplifies cell B-2. A school secretary, going beyond her special duties by intercepting children sneaking out of school and encouraging them to remain, fits into cell B-3. Adults with no connection to the school system might also convince children they notice in the mall to go back to school (Cell B-4).

PLACE MANAGEMENT BY RESPONSIBILITY LEVEL

Place management to prevent crime fits into Column C. When a homeowner monitors her own home or its immediate vicinity, this fits into Cell C-1. An owner-occupied apartment building affords the same type of crime discouragement. But when the owner no longer resides in or near the owned building, discouraging crime becomes a problem. When no one is hired to carry out that function, crime becomes more likely. When someone is so hired, security increases (Eck, 1994). Cell C-2 includes a

doorman or concierge, building superintendent or manager, parking lot attendant, or assigned guard, whether in a residential, commercial, or industrial setting. When a hotel maid discourages a trespasser, this fits into cell C-3. When a customer in a parking structure makes the place safer by being present, that would be classified as Cell C-4.

Newman (1972) suggested that urban space could be divided into four categories: private, semi-private, semi-public and public. It is interesting to consider how our third column of Table 2 corresponds to Newman's categories. It stands to reason that private spaces are primarily looked over by those with personal responsibility, such as owners, family and friends. It also makes sense that purely public spaces are monitored only by those with general responsibility, such as strangers. However, semi-private or even semi-public spaces may be within the distant vision of owners, family or friends who feel less responsibility for those spaces. Moreover, private spaces may be monitored by assigned employees. Thus, the correspondence between these categories and Newman's are not perfect. Within Newman's four types of urban space one can expect to find different types of intervention, but not at equal probability levels. Thus, the high crime risk in semi-public and public areas partly reflects their reliance upon diffuse and general responsibility, neither of which are completely dependable. However, those assigned to monitor playgrounds or other public areas sometimes take seriously the importance of discouraging potential offenders (Cell C-2). Moreover, proximity of strangers (Cell C-4) may discourage some burglaries (see Cromwell et al., 1991) or other offenses, even if these persons are located in semi-public or public locations.

The 4 x 3 matrix presented in Table 2 goes beyond predatory crime prevention. As Eck's (1994) work indicates, place managers play a central role in discouraging illegal drug places, as well as fights and other crimes associated with alcohol abuse. The term "handler" originally (Felson, 1986) emphasized the effort to keep youths under gentle, informal control, far from the scene of potential offenses. But sometimes people are already drunk or among others who are drunk, with an argument underway. Preventing that argument from escalating into something worse is the role of the "peacemaker" (see R.B. Felson, 1993). When a peacemaker is protecting a place (such as a tavern owner telling the combatants to fight outside), that action belongs in Column C. When a peacemaker worries more about the likely combatants and seeks to prevent fighting entirely,

the action fits into Column B. More precisely, a friend preventing a fight between other friends would be classified as fitting Cell B-1.

POLICE, PLACE AND DISCOURAGEMENT

One of the most interesting applications of Table 2 is to policing. Note that we have not given police their own line or cell. The reason for this is that police are not always operating within the same role. Some police mainly watch places; others follow people or targets. Although some police are assigned quite specifically, others have more diffuse responsibilities (such as patrolling ten square miles with no particular assignment). Thus, we see police as spanning the two middle rows of the table, covering six cells. However, police are also responsible for reporting crime observed while off duty, and many carry a weapon while off duty. Police, therefore, have a general prevention responsibility, too.

One might describe police patrolling of wide areas as going beyond the place assignment intended by Column C; hence Table 2 is less than complete in covering police responsibilities. Moreover, it raises the issue of whether police are themselves vulnerable to the diffusion of responsibility that applies to other human beings and what that might have to do with the non-enforcement of laws. Police reform ideas (i.e., problem-oriented policing and community policing) might be linked to Table 2, narrowing down the personal and place responsibility while linking police more directly to others taking part in discouraging crime. Among police, those officers with specific community assignments may be more responsive to localized problems than those with wider areas to cover. Precision of responsibility is a general organizational principle for all parts of the crime prevention system, including this one. However, the main goal of discouragement is to prevent crime without arrests and punishment.[3]

SYSTEMS, PLACES, AND TOOLS

We can further illustrate the cells of Table 2 by examining crime prevention in terms of the movements of people and things over space and time (see environmental criminology as described by Brantingham and Brantingham, 1981.) Let's begin with the tools of prevention, as elaborated by Clarke (1992) and Poyner (1983). which vary by cell in the table and by place in the environment. For example, in Cell A-2, a jewelry clerk may benefit by having a mirror to watch the merchandise and a button to summon supervisory help. However, neither are important if these tools of prevention are badly placed and cannot assist those involved in discouragement. In cell A-3, a beeper for all employees to report suspicious

circumstances may suffice, if the beeper indeed alerts others with spatial precision; for Cell A-4, the dissemination of portable cellular phones may prove to enhance crime discouragement. For Cell C-2, a loudspeaker may help the manager to control a metro station if control over access and exit is also strong. A given prevention tool may not apply to all types or levels of responsibility. Those planning crime prevention should always be clear which type of discouragement they wish to assist.

TARGETS AND OFFENDERS, PLACES AND SYSTEMS

Modification of crime targets also relates to Table 2. For example, Clarke and Harris (1992) recommend manufacturing automobiles that are more difficult to steal. Such target-based prevention is related systemically to the 12 crime discouragement roles. How loud should car alarms be, and should the lights blink when the alarm is tripped? The answer to such questions may depend upon who is the likely guardian and what the level of responsibility is (Column A), and on where the car is parked and who is responsible for that area (Column C). Should a locking mechanism be designed as complex to overcome, or should it merely make noise while being broken? The answer to this question may depend, too, upon the relevant guardians or managers and places.

Nor should we forget offenders themselves. Groups of offenders (a third aspect of systemic thinking) may vary, even for the same crime. Clarke and Harris (1992) emphasize the distinctions between car theft carried out for different purposes (e.g., chopping parts, joyriding, transportation, export), which, in turn, relates to the age of offenders. For control of young offenders who might engage in joyriding, supervision by parents and school (Column B) is more relevant. Do such measures have similar significance for preventing theft of cars for export? For enhancing guardianship, changes in manufacturing include designing cars to remind the owner to remove the keys (see Cell A-1) and stamping car parts with serial numbers to enable honest mechanics to recognize stolen parts and thus impose social control (see Cell A-2). In sum, knowing more about the varieties of crime discouragement can assist in understanding the broader system of crime analysis and prevention, including tools, targets and offenders.

PLACE, PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

Systemic thinking about discouragement can also inform community planning. This includes designing places for more personal and assigned management (Cells C-1 and C-2), building smaller schools for better

supervision of youths (Cells B-1 and B-2) and writing building codes that mandate transparent fences and lines of vision in parking areas (Column A).

Places and place management itself need to be situated within a larger system. Places belong to a larger class of social-environmental entity: the behavior setting. This entity was defined and measured by Barker (1963), whose environmental psychology traced human activity patterns as people interact in everyday life. A behavior setting was specified not only in space but also in time. Thus, history class is a behavior setting in room 101, but that same room later houses a meeting of the stamp club, a different behavior setting. We might derive from Eck's (1994) "place manager" the concept "setting manager," such as the homeroom teacher (earlier in the day) and the stamp club adviser (later in the day). The same place may have different shifts of managers and/or activities, and of property suitable for theft. Places are easier to present for this chapter, but future work should go beyond fixed places to a "behavior setting" environmental system. This would also mesh well with the Brantinghams' (1981) environmental criminology, with potential offenders and targets of crime moving about among settings in the course of their daily routines.

Moreover, places and behavior settings often coalesce into a larger entity: the facility (see Felson, 1987). School, apartment complex, condominium, industrial park, amusement park, shopping mall—each of these is a facility and contains several places and behavior settings. We suggest that the concept of "manager" needs to be divided into its systemic components: place managers, setting managers and facility managers. Each of these has significance for crime prevention. Perhaps the setting manager has the most chance to focus crime discouragement in time and space. The place manager can focus prevention in space. The facility manager can coordinate place managers and setting managers, or otherwise design systems to prevent crime.

In general, crime is most readily discouraged when people have personal and assigned responsibility and a clear focus on places or settings. If society continues its dependence upon diffuse and general responsibility, the chances for reducing crime diminish accordingly.

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NOTES

1. We distinguish discouragement from coercion against crime. In practice, the two are often mixed, and any discouragement of crime might have an

unspoken threat behind it. However, the idea of discouragement is to relegate coercion to a backup tool in crime prevention. Inadvertent interference is the most frequent factor in crime discouragement.

2. I thank Richard Titus for reminding me of these potentially important hybrid examples.

3. Throughout this paper, we have maintained the convention of treating three processes together: informal social control, non-coercive crime prevention and prevention occurring outside the criminal justice system. However, this coalescence is not required in real life. Coercion can be used to prevent crime by those who are not agents of the state, just as gentle persuasion may be employed by those who are agents of the state. Informal control can include informal threats. Even if that coalescence oversimplifies reality, it remains useful for this presentation.

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