



Evidence-Based Security Practices

The Impact of Situational Crime Prevention on Property and Disorder Crimes

**Kathleen E. Padilla, PhD
Frank R. Benton, MS
Wesley T. Smith, PhD**

EBSP-26-01



International Association of Professional Security Consultants

The International Association of Professional Security Consultants (IAPSC) is the most widely respected and recognized security consultant association in the industry. Its rigid membership requirements allow potential clients to select from a unique group of professional, ethical, and competent security consultants. IAPSC members are not affiliated with any product or service they may recommend. The primary purpose of the IAPSC is to establish and maintain the highest industry standards for professionalism and ethical conduct. For more information, please visit: www.iapsc.org.

IAPSC's Evidence-Based Security Practices Committee

The Evidence-Based Security Practices (EBSP) Committee was formed 2022 to evaluate existing research on security, crime prevention, and other topics of interest to security and crime prevention professionals and end-users. The strategic goal of the EBSP Committee is to advance security through research and evidence-based practices. It is our hope that readers use our products to better inform security decisions, deploy evidence-based security practices and measures, and evaluate the effectiveness of crime prevention efforts.

The EBSP is funded through donations from individuals and organizations. While we rely on donations, the EBSP Committee's publication decisions are not influenced by funding sources. Consistent with the IAPSC's core value of **independence**, the EBSP committee's activities and decisions are made without regard to funding sources. We hope that readers find value in our products and help us continue our mission by [donating](#) to the EBSP committee.

To [donate](#) or request assistance from the Evidence-Based Security Practices Committee, please contact the IAPSC at (716) 328-0402 or iapsc@iapsc.org.

Thank you for your support.



Karim H. Vellani, CPP, CSC
Chair, Evidence-Based Security Practices Committee

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	4
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SITUATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION	6
KEY COMPONENTS OF SCP	9
SCP TRANSLATION INTO PRIVATE SECURITY.....	12
RESEARCH INVOLVING SCP APPLICATION IN PRIVATE SECURITY.....	14
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	16
REFERENCES.....	19
AUTHORS	23
Kathleen E. Padilla, PhD	23
Frank Benton, MS.....	23
Wesley T. Smith, PhD	23
APPENDIX: RESEARCH SUMMARY TABLE	24

INTRODUCTION

What started with a runny nose and a sore throat led to the death of an otherwise healthy 12-year-old girl in Chicago, Illinois, the deaths of at least 6 other individuals who ranged in ages from 19 to 35, and a nation in panic over cyanide-laced Tylenol capsules. Johnson & Johnson were able to establish that, rather than occurring in the factory, the capsules were tampered with once placed on the shelves of stores and pharmacies. The 1982 Tylenol Poisonings resulted in the introduction of “tamper-proof” packaging, making it immensely more difficult (and a federal crime, thanks to the 1983 “Tylenol Bill” that passed through Congress) to tamper with consumer products. These two tactics, (1) increasing the effort to tamper with consumer products, and (2) increasing the risks via federal prosecution if caught, highlight the Tylenol Poisonings as a classic example of *Situational Crime Prevention*. Rather than focusing on individual motivation, Johnson & Johnson sought to address the environmental factors that made engagement in criminal tampering possible, continuing a shift in the way crime is examined more broadly.

Criminal justice and criminological theory have historically focused on biological, sociological, and psychological explanations of an individual’s decision to engage in crime. In recent decades, more focus has shifted towards how the environment, and its design, can enable or disrupt criminal decision-making. Situational Crime Prevention (SCP), introduced in the 1980s (Clarke, 1980), has been accepted by the policing sector for its focus on crime opportunity reductions and specific forms of crime. Thus, we can understand crime outcomes by whom is most likely to offend, where crimes are most likely to be committed, and which specific crime is most likely to occur – abilities that are universally lauded by those that seek to protect and serve based on actionable intelligence.

Expanding beyond the traditional police role, this report examines the effectiveness of SCP as a tool employed by individuals working in private security contexts. As private security demands increase globally, the overall goal is to review empirical research on the real and potential intersections between these two concepts. In doing so, there are two overarching goals that are guiding this report. First, we seek to understand how the components of SCP can be applied to private security settings when addressing disorder and property crimes.

While operationalizations of differing crimes vary from state to state, we will focus on how these offenses are defined by the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Uniform Crime Report.

Violent crimes here are defined as offenses against persons that involve force or the threat of force and include four offenses: murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault (FBI UCR, 2019). Property crimes are defined as the taking of money or property without the threat or use of force against the victim and includes four main offenses: burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson (FBI UCR, 2019). Disorderly conduct crimes are far more complicated and nuanced when compared to property or violent crimes. While there is no FBI UCR definition for disorderly conduct, Justia (2025) provides that it refers to relatively minor disruptive or offensive behaviors, such as assault and battery, indecent exposure, public intoxication, or trespassing on private property.

Just as offenses within the “property,” “violent,” and “disorder” umbrellas vary quite widely, so would any potential security measures designed to protect against those offenses. This exemplifies the importance of studying disaggregated *crime groups* (as noted above) and even further, the importance of studying disaggregated *crime types* (e.g., trespassing vs public intoxication or arson vs motor vehicle theft), as compared to examining the impact of crime prevention strategies on the amorphous category of “crime.” Importantly, we will proceed with examinations of property and disorder crime investigations.

The second goal of this report is to examine if existing empirical research focused on private security and crime shows desired reductions in disorder and property crimes. This report proceeds as follows. First, we will provide background on the development of SCP and its constituent components as a criminological theory. Second, we will take the relevant SCP components and directly tie them to the private security sector. Third, we will examine how SCP has been operationalized in empirical research and what the results have yielded. We will conclude this report with a discussion of some of the challenges surrounding this area of research, as well as providing practical recommendations for future implementation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SITUATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION

SCP falls under the umbrella of environmental criminology, which encompasses a series of theoretical frameworks that represent a fundamental theoretical shift from why individuals commit crime to why crimes occurs at these places, alongside an analytical shift in the focus of study, from the person, to the place (Clarke, 1980; Clarke & Felson, 2017; Weisburd et al., 2023). These theories, SCP included, effectively assume that the motivation to commit crime is constant, and the only way to reduce crime is to manipulate the environment in such a way that even a motivated offender elects to not commit crime (Reducing Crime Podcast, Ratcliffe, 2023). While being similar to frameworks such as defensible spaces (Newman, 1973), Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED, Jeffery, 1971), and Problem-Oriented Policing (POP, Goldstein, 1990), these frameworks often are more focused on architectural design or customized-tailored police responses. In comparison, SCP is most attributed to (1) routine activities theory and (2) rational choice theory.

Routine Activities Theory (RAT) is a commonly utilized and reliable framework which requires (1) a motivated offender, (2) a suitable target, and (3) the absence of a capable guardian to converge in time and space, in order for a crime to occur (Cohen & Felson, 1979; see also Felson & Cohen, 1980). RAT was initially conceptualized as a way to simplify research and the noise that goes into understanding why crime occurs and provide concrete, actionable steps to reduce crime (Reducing Crime Podcast, Ratcliffe, 2019). Eck and Weisburd (1995) included what they termed “crime suppressors” that would act to prevent one or more of the required pieces from being present: (1) a handler who is in position to exert some control over the offender; (2) a guardian who has the capacity to protect their own person or belongings, or another person or their belongings; and (3) a manager who has some responsibility over a place (Felson & Boba, 2010). The Problem Analysis Triangle (Figure 1 below) exists as a key component of Problem-Oriented Policing, alongside the SARA Model (Scanning, Analysis, Response, Assessment) to examining and preventing crimes.



Figure 1. Problem Analysis Triangle, Arizona State University POP Center

RAT, SCP, and other environmental criminology theories have been examined at both the macro- and micro-levels. For example, at the macro-level, increased employment post-WWII resulted in changes in target suitability and capable guardianship (Cohen & Felson, 1979), while individual time spent at home and away from home, household activity, and unemployment impacted routine activities at the individual-level (see Pratt & Cullen, 2005; Miethe, Hughes, & McDowall, 1991). Property crime victimization is predicted, both directly and indirectly by routine activities, primarily based on the types of and time spent on leisure activities (Mustaine & Tewksbury, 1998; Franklin et al., 2012; Miethe, Stafford, & Long, 1987). The components of Routine Activities Theory have even been successfully applied to cyber- and consumer crimes (Holtfreter, Reisig, & Pratt, 2008; Reyns, Henson, & Fisher, 2011), as well as harassment and sexual harassment victimization (Mustaine & Tewksbury, 1999; De Coster, Estes, & Mueller, 1999; Franklin et al., 2012). Further, these concepts have held valid in a cross-national context, predicting both property (Tseloni et al., 2004) and violent victimization (Sampson & Lauritsen, 1990).

Rational Choice Theory was developed from situational control theory (Downes, Rock, & McLaughlin, 2016) and modified from economic theories of crime. The assumption here is that crime is the result of deliberate behavior engaged in as a way to obtain money, status,

sex, or other commonplace needs. These behaviors require the individual to make decisions and choices based on time limits, as well as the ability and availability of relevant information (Clarke, 1995). Rational Choice Theory relates to SCP in that it distinguishes between criminal involvement (i.e., criminal disposition) and the criminal event (i.e., the situation). Importantly, one's decision processes and available information vary greatly between types of offenses, necessitating the tailoring of interventions and preventions.

While not the focus of this report, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is similarly concerned with the environment. However, CPTED is centered around architectural design, under the assumption that fear of crime and crime itself can be reduced by properly designing new environments and manipulating existing environments in a way that effectively reduces the attractiveness of a target and/or provides a capable guardian (Crowe, 2000). CPTED provides six broad characteristics that aim to achieve this goal of crime reduction: (1) territoriality; (2) surveillance, both formal and informal; (3) access control; (4) image/maintenance; (5) activity program support; and (6) target hardening (Moffait, 1983). While each of these concepts deserve attention at length, for the purpose of SCP, formal and informal surveillance are most directly applicable.

KEY COMPONENTS OF SCP

In line with the above-mentioned theoretical perspectives, Situational Crime Prevention (SCP) involves “the management, design, or manipulation of the immediate environment” (Clarke, 1983, p. 225) in a way that will increase guardianship over the target and/or reduce the motivation of the offender. All this is done as a means to reduce the opportunities for engaging in crime. Cornish and Clarke (2003) provide numerous recommendations for the reduction of crime and delinquency. There are five broad strategies that encompass situational prevention, including:

- **increasing the effort** associated with engaging in criminal behavior through means such as target hardening, physical barriers, and surveillance measures
- **increasing the risks** associated with engaging in criminal behavior through means such as surveillance, environmental design, and monitoring strategies
- **reducing the rewards** associated with engaging in criminal behavior through means such as removing valuable goods from view
- **removing provocations** through means such as minimizing opportunities for aggressive encounters
- **removing excuses** that would motivate the would-be offender to justify their engagement in criminal behavior through means such as clear signage or rules of conduct.

Within each of these five broad strategies exist five more specific techniques, culminating in the Twenty-Five Techniques for Situational Crime Prevention (see Table 1 below). As a call-back to our discussion of the Tylenol Poisonings in 1982 in the introduction of this report, the implementation of tamper-proof lids on consumer products, combined with the potential for federal criminal charges if caught, align with the first two technique groupings of SCP: (1) increase the effort and (2) increase the risks. In particular, it highlights specific techniques to reduce the opportunity for individuals to tamper with these consumer products: (1) hardening targets, (6) extending guardianship, and (9) utilizing place managers.

Part of the value of a prevention technique such as SCP is that because there is such variety in social problems, what Felson (Reducing Crime, 2019) noted as “local problems,” varying responses are required. The Twenty-Five Techniques for Situational Crime Prevention allow researchers, practitioners, and policymakers alike to examine the specific problem (using the SARA model, for example), and select one or more techniques that are most likely to have an impact on that specific problem. This allows a great deal of flexibility in resources and personnel allocated to addressing those problems. Additionally, SCP allows a level of creativity and innovation on the part of the *Place Manager* (whether that be law enforcement, private security, or other guardian) in terms of being able to “adopt the offender’s perspective” (Guerette, 2025) and try to examine how they might engage in a particular offense, and implement SCP techniques around that.

Increase the Effort	Increase the Risks	Reduce the Rewards	Reduce Provocations	Remove Excuses
1. Harden Targets	6. Extend Guardianship	11. Conceal Targets	16. Reduce Frustrations and Stress	21. Set Rules
Steering column locks and immobilizers Anti-robery screens Tamper-proof packaging	Take routine precautions: go out at night, leave signs of occupancy, carry phone "Cocoon" neighborhood watch	Off-street parking Gender-neutral phone directories Unmarked bullion trucks	Efficient queues and polite service Expanded seating Soothing music/muted lights	Rental agreements Harassment codes Hotel registration
2. Control Access to Facilities	7. Assist Natural Surveillance	12. Remove Targets	17. Avoid Disputes	22. Post Instructions
Entry phones Electronic card access Baggage screening	Improved street lighting Defensible space design Support whistleblowers	Removable car radio Women's refuges Pre-paid cards for pay phones	Separate enclosures for rival soccer fans Reduce crowding in pubs Fixed cab fares	"No Parking" "Private Property" "Extinguish Camp Fires"

3. Screen Exits	8. Reduce Anonymity	13. Identify Property	18. Reduce Emotional Arousal	23. Alert Conscience
Ticket needed for exit Export documents Electronic merchandise tags	Taxi driver IDs "How's my driving?" decals School uniforms	Property marking Vehicle licensing and parts marking Cattle branding	Controls on violent pornography Enforce good behavior on soccer field Prohibit racial slurs	Roadside speed display boards Signatures for customs declarations "Shoplifting is Stealing"
4. Deflect Offenders	9. Utilize Place Managers	14. Disrupt Markets	19. Neutralize Peer Pressure	24. Assist Compliance
Street closures Separate bathrooms for women Disperse pubs	CCTV for double-deck buses Two clerks for convenience stores Reward vigilance	Monitor pawn shops Controls on classified ads License street vendors	"Idiots drink and drive" "It's OK to say no" Disperse troublemakers at school	Easy library checkout Public lavatories Litter bins
5. Control Tools/ Weapons	10. Strengthen Formal Surveillance	15. Deny Benefits	20. Discourage Imitation	25. Control Drugs and Alcohol
"Smart" guns Disabling stolen cell phones Restrict spray paint sales to juveniles	Red light cameras Burglar alarms Security guards	Ink merchandise tags Graffiti cleaning Speed humps	Rapid repair of vandalism V-chips in TVs Censor details of modus operandi	Breathalyzers in pubs Server intervention Alcohol-free events

Table 1. Twenty-Five Techniques for Situational Crime Prevention
 (Source: Arizona State University Center for Problem-Oriented Policing)

SCP TRANSLATION INTO PRIVATE SECURITY

Private security often uses SCP both as a way of designing more secure spaces and as a day-to-day operating strategy. One of the main goals of these *place managers* is to increase the effort it would take for someone to even attempt to commit a crime in their place of employment. For example, setting up barriers or checkpoints such as metal detectors or ID badge scanners creates “choke points” where individuals and their belongings can be more easily monitored. These setups do not just limit who can get into certain areas; they also make it more difficult for someone to sneak in with tools or weapons that could then be used for crime.

On top of that, security patrols, especially when they are random (see Nagin et al., 2015 for a brief overview; as well as Gupta, 2024 for an overview of unpredictable patrolling in aviation security) increase the likelihood of being caught, making property and disorder crime riskier (see SCP Technique Group #2). When security teams move around in a way that does not look like a fixed routine, it keeps potential property offenders guessing. Adding cameras and other surveillance systems to the mix only makes things tougher for criminals, especially when paired with the kind of operational intelligence some security companies use (Holmqvist, 2005). Some private security groups also share information and coordinate closely with law enforcement, which means if something does happen, police can respond quickly. All of this raises the perceived risk of getting caught, which can be enough to deter many crimes. As it relates to disorder and property crimes, individuals will theoretically be less likely to trespass, vandalize, or burgle residential and commercial buildings if a private security individual (either biological or mechanical) is present at the scene.

Security is not just about risk: security is also about reducing the rewards associated with engaging in crime. Take retail theft, for example. Stores that use inventory tracking systems can trace items long after they have been stolen (Madamidola et al., 2024), which makes stealing them less appealing. When these systems are combined with trained security staff on the floor, theft becomes even less rewarding (Smith, Smith, & Baker, 2011). Similarly, cash escorts between banks, where armed security officers are used specifically to protect high-value items, serve similar functions (e.g., Wakefield, 2004). In these cases, the “human element” of security workers makes it clear that there is someone ready and capable of responding if trouble starts.

Another component of the private security function is proactive order maintenance – addressing situations that might spark trouble before undesirable activities occur. At large events, for example, security officers are in a position to catch bad behavior after it happens as well as prevent problems from starting. They might step in to manage overcrowded areas, calm down intoxicated guests, or help direct foot traffic, so tensions do not build. By doing this, security reduces the chance of disorder or other criminal activity even happening in the first place.

Finally, security works best when people know the rules are clear. Security officers often reinforce expectations with signs, announcements, and consistent enforcement of policies. By communicating what is acceptable and enforcing consequences when those expectations are violated, private security helps remove excuses for bad behavior. Someone cannot just claim they “did not know” if the rules are posted and repeated.

RESEARCH INVOLVING SCP APPLICATION IN PRIVATE SECURITY

It is important to emphasize the overwhelming amount of empirical evidence of private security and its relationship with reduction in property and disorder crimes (see Appendix 1). There is a small but optimistic pool of empirical evidence that suggests that private security can have significant impacts on reducing crime, though the limitations of this research will be discussed at the conclusion of this report.

As a brief overview, Arizona State University's Center for Problem Oriented Policing provides a Situational Crime Prevention Evaluation Database. In this database there are 246 unique studies. In order to assess those most relevant to the current essay, the following steps were taken to condense the original 246 unique studies to those focusing on private security-type measures: (1) removal of studies where an environmental design was not taken (such as SCP, COP, POP, or CPTED; resulting in 173 studies); (2) removal of studies that were not solely/partially incorporating a SCP design (e.g., SCP or SCP and POP/ COP/ CPTED; resulting in 132 studies); (3) removal of studies that did not include SCP techniques most relevant to private security – 2 (Control Access to Facilities), 3 (Screen Exits), 6 (Extend Guardianship), 9 (Utilize Place Managers), or 10 (Strengthen Formal Surveillance), resulting in 92 studies; and (4) removal of those studies that did not explicitly mention “security personnel” or some variation. We have included pertinent information from the five remaining studies (Laycock & Austin, 1992; Meredith & Paquette, 1992; Farrington et al., 1993; Barker & Bridgeman, 1994; West, 2001) in Appendix 1 and will highlight more contemporary studies in the same area.

First, a study from MacDonald and colleagues in 2015 examined how the presence of University of Pennsylvania's Police Department (UPPD) could reduce crime in select Philadelphia, Pennsylvania areas. Because the university is a privately funded university, the police department was used to serve as a measure of “private security.” Using regression discontinuity design, findings from the study showed that areas with both UPPD and Philadelphia Police Department (PPD) presence saw substantial reductions in property crime compared to areas with PPD presence only (MacDonald et al., 2015). Though the results are supportive of private security impact on crime, the unique size of UPPD (100 officers) and study setting warrant the call for replication studies of other private security presence in different urban areas and at different size security forces. Nonetheless, this study suggests

that visible private security presence may act as an effective deterrent to University students engaging in property crime.

Second, a study by Ariel and colleagues in 2017 compared train stations in southwest England who were randomly assigned uniformed, unarmed private security agents for six months to those who were not. This randomized control trial (RCTs) of train stations revealed that stations with uniformed agents saw reductions in theft-related offenses, and an increase in police-generated crime detection (Ariel et al., 2017). Though the results are supportive of private security's impact on crime, the context-specific setting of train stations in southwest England and study period of six months warrant the call for replication RCTs, as well as a longer observation period to address concerns of displacement and diffusion. Nonetheless, this study suggests that visible and uniformed private security presence may act as an effective deterrent to theft-related offenses in relatively crowded areas.

Third, a study by Holmes and colleagues in 2023 examined how the private security firm, G4S security, could augment Orange County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) deputies as a collaboration between the two led to private patrols in two high-crime neighborhoods in Orange County, Florida for four months. Using a quasi-experimental design, the study found that patrols were associated with significant decreases in all crimes during the post-implementation period (relative to pre). Though the results are support of private security's impact on crime, the actual collaboration and study period of four months warrant the call for replication studies, given that the study authors noted that specific crimes began to rise after the collaboration ended. Nonetheless, this study suggests that visible private security presence, particularly when in collaboration with local municipalities or sheriff's offices may act as an effective deterrent to crime broadly.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

While society may be far removed from the days of easily accessible medicine being tampered with, we have only continued to progress in a way that makes crime inevitable. As society continues to progress, technologically in particular, there will only be new opportunities for individuals to engage in criminal activities. This must be countered with new ways for place managers to reduce those opportunities, whether it be something more relatively modern, like dual factor authentication to get into one's emails or simply an increased presence of private security individuals at large, crowded events, SCP techniques can play a role in reducing the opportunities for individuals to engage in crime.

SCP represents a major shift in criminology, moving away from explanations rooted in offender motivations and focusing instead on the opportunities that enable crime. By manipulating environmental conditions, SCP seeks to make criminal acts more difficult, riskier, and less rewarding. Increasing effort, raising risks, reducing rewards, removing provocations, and eliminating excuses have been widely adopted by policing agencies and increasingly by private security organizations. This approach reflects the recognition that controlling settings and opportunities can be as powerful as addressing individual dispositions.

Private security plays a central role in operationalizing SCP principles. Patrols, access to control systems, surveillance cameras, and property management strategies are all tools used to alter opportunity structures in ways that discourage property and disorder crime. Security personnel often serve as capable guardians and place managers, visibly monitoring environments, deterring offenders through presence, and coordinating with public law enforcement when incidents occur. They also provide reassurance to communities, which can reduce fear of crime and enhance perceptions of safety, which is an important, though sometimes overlooked dimension of security's impact.

Although the body of empirical evidence is still limited, several important studies suggest private security can reduce both property and disorder offenses. MacDonald et al. (2015) found that property crimes were substantially reduced in Philadelphia neighborhoods where the University of Pennsylvania's private police overlapped with city patrols. Ariel et al. (2017) conducted a randomized controlled trial in English train stations, showing reductions in theft-related crimes and increases in police-generated detections where private agents were

deployed. More recently, Holmes et al. (2023) documented significant short-term decreases in crime in two Florida neighborhoods patrolled jointly by sheriff's deputies and security personnel. These findings indicate that visible private patrols can deter opportunistic offending in specific contexts.

Yet questions about the effectiveness and role of private security are not new. Clotfelter (1978), one of the earliest scholars to examine private security through an economic lens, emphasized that while such patrols may reduce crime, they risk producing inequitable access to safety, encourage displacement of crime, and complicate measurement of true prevention. Later research explored the mechanisms through which private security might influence crime. Steenkamp and Potgieter (2004), for instance, used factor analysis to study South African security officers' perceptions, highlighting the importance of deterrence through visibility, cooperation with police, and reassurance to the public. While useful, these studies also reveal limitations: much of the literature relies on self-reports and officer perceptions rather than objective outcome measures. This raises questions about whether the practices security officers believe are effective consistently translate into actual reductions in crime and disorder. Zimmerman (2014) developed a theoretical framework for the deterrent effects of private security expenditures, finding evidence that security spending could reduce certain types of crime. Meehan and Benson (2017) applied an econometric approach using state-level regulations as instruments to estimate causal effects, identifying some reductions in crime but with results that varied by offense category. These studies represent methodological progress, offering stronger causal claims than earlier descriptive or perception-based work, yet they also highlight persistent inconsistent findings.

Across this literature, four major gaps are apparent. First and foremost, just as the motivations and opportunities to engage differ between crime types, so too must the responses to those crimes. It becomes critical that practitioners, scholars, and policymakers alike begin to disaggregate crime types to better understand how various SCP measures may have an impact. Second, there is no standardized metric for evaluating private security effectiveness, making comparisons across contexts difficult. Third, most studies are short-term, localized, or context-specific, like university campuses, train stations, or specific neighborhoods, which leave unanswered whether effects are durable or generalizable. Finally, few studies integrate detailed analyses of mechanisms with robust causal designs, limiting our understanding of how exactly private security influences different crime types. The interplay between public

policing and private security also remains underexplored: it is still unclear whether private patrols primarily supplement, complement, or substitute for police activity.

To address these gaps, future research should emphasize longitudinal and comparative designs that capture crime trends across multiple sites and over extended periods of time. Evaluations should assess not only reductions in property and disorder crimes but also cost-effectiveness, potential displacement effects, and community perceptions. There is also a need for greater exploration of how SCP principles apply to disorder crimes such as vandalism, loitering, and public intoxication, which are less studied than burglary or theft but central to quality-of-life concerns. By bridging these gaps, scholars can provide a clearer picture of the true capacity of private security to function as a sustainable crime prevention tool within the broader framework of environmental criminology.

REFERENCES

Ariel, B., Bland, M., & Sutherland, A. (2017). 'Lowering the threshold of effective deterrence'—Testing the effect of private security agents in public spaces on crime: A randomized controlled trial in a mass transit system. *PLoS one*, 12(12), e0187392.

Barker, M., and C. Bridgeman (1994). Preventing Vandalism: What Works? Crime Detection and Prevention Series; Paper 56. London: Home Office, Police Research Group.

Clarke, R. V., & Felson, M. (2017). The origins of the routine activity approach and situational crime prevention. In *The origins of American criminology* (pp. 245-260). Routledge.

Clarke, R. V. G. (1980). "Situational" crime prevention: Theory and practice. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 20(2), 136-147.

Clarke, R. V. (1983). Situational crime prevention: Its theoretical basis and practical scope. *Crime and justice*, 4, 225-256.

Clarke, R. V. (1995). Situational crime prevention. *Crime and justice*, 19, 91-150.

Clotfelter, C. T. (1978). Private security and the public safety. *Journal of Urban Economics*, 5(3), 388-402.

Cohen, L. E., & Felson, M. (1979). Social change and crime rate trends: A routine activity approach. *American sociological review*, 588-608.

Cohen, L. E., Felson, M., & Land, K. C. (1980). Property crime rates in the United States: A macrodynamic analysis, 1947-1977; with ex ante forecasts for the mid-1980s. *American journal of sociology*, 86(1), 90-118.

Cornish, D. B., & Clarke, R. V. (2003). Opportunities, precipitators and criminal decisions: A reply to Wortley's critique of situational crime prevention. *Crime prevention studies*, 16, 41-96.

Crowe, T. D. (2000). Crime prevention through environmental design. National Crime Prevention Institute.

De Coster, S., Estes, S. B., & Mueller, C. W. (1999). Routine activities and sexual harassment in the workplace. *Work and occupations*, 26(1), 21-49.

Downes, D. M., Rock, P. E., & McLaughlin, E. (2016). Understanding deviance: A guide to the sociology of crime and rule-breaking. Oxford University Press.

Eck, J. E., & Weisburd, D. (1995). Crime prevention studies. *Crime and place*, 4.

Farrington, D., S. Bowen, A. Buckle, T. Burns-Howell, J. Burrows and M. Speed (1993). "An Experiment on the Prevention of Shoplifting." In R.V. Clarke (ed.), *Crime Prevention Studies*, Vol. 1. Monsey, N.Y.: Criminal Justice Press.

Felson, M., & Boba, R. L. (Eds.). (2010). *Crime and everyday life*. Sage.

Franklin, C. A., Franklin, T. W., Nobles, M. R., & Kercher, G. A. (2012). Assessing the effect of routine activity theory and self-control on property, personal, and sexual assault victimization. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 39(10), 1296-1315.

Goldstein, H. (1990). Excellence in problem-oriented policing. In New York NY: Police Executive Research Forum.

Guerette, Rob T. (2025, October 13-15). Introduction to Situational Crime Prevention. International Problem-Oriented Policing Conference, Madison, WI.

Gupta, H. (2024). Exploring the Implementation of Unpredictability in the Field of Aviation Security. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 6(2), 1-16.

Holmes, S. T., Wolf, R., & Baker, T. (2023). Public-private partnerships: Exploring perceptions and efficacy of community security patrols. *Journal of Applied Security Research*, 18(4), 718-739.

Holmqvist, C. (2005). Private security companies. The Case for Regulation, SIPRI Policy Paper, (9), 1-2.

Holtfreter, K., Reisig, M. D., & Pratt, T. C. (2008). Low self-control, routine activities, and fraud victimization. *Criminology*, 46(1), 189-220.

Jeffery, C. R. (1971). Crime prevention through environmental design. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 14(4), 598-598.

Justia. (2025, October). Disorderly Conduct Laws. Justia. <https://www.justia.com/criminal/offenses/other-crimes/disorderly-conduct/#:~:text=Disorderly%20conduct%20is%20usually%20a%20minor%20crime..lawful%20order%20of%20the%20police%20to%20disperse>

Laycock, G., and C. Austin (1992). "Crime Prevention in Parking Facilities." *Security Journal* 3(3):154-160.

MacDonald, J. M., Klick, J., & Grunwald, B. (2016). The effect of private police on crime: evidence from a geographic regression discontinuity design. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society Series A: Statistics in Society*, 179(3), 831-846.

Madamidola, O. A., Daramola, O. A., Akintola, K. G., & Adeboje, O. T. (2024). A Review of existing inventory management systems. *International Journal of Research in Engineering and Science (IJRES)*, 12(9), 40-50.

Meehan, B., & Benson, B. L. (2017). Does private security affect crime? A test using state regulations as instruments. *Applied Economics*, 49(48), 4911-4924.

Meredith, C., and C. Paquette (1992). "Crime Prevention in High-Rise Rental Apartments: Findings of a Demonstration Project." *Security Journal* 3(3):161-168.

Miethe, T. D., Hughes, M., & McDowall, D. (1991). Social change and crime rates: An evaluation of alternative theoretical approaches. *Social forces*, 70(1), 165-185.

Miethe, T. D., Stafford, M. C., & Long, J. S. (1987). Social differentiation in criminal victimization: A test of routine activities/lifestyle theories. *American sociological review*, 184-194.

Moffait, R. E. (1983). Crime prevention through environmental design—A management perspective. *Canadian journal of criminology*, 25(1), 19-31.

Mustaine, E. E., & Tewksbury, R. (1998). Predicting risks of larceny theft victimization: A routine activity analysis using refined lifestyle measures. *Criminology*, 36(4), 829-858.

Mustaine, E. E., & Tewksbury, R. (1999). A routine activity theory explanation for women's stalking victimizations. *Violence Against Women*, 5(1), 43-62.

Nagin, D. S., Solow, R. M., & Lum, C. (2015). Deterrence, criminal opportunities, and police. *Criminology*, 53(1), 74-100.

Newman, O. (1973). *Defensible space: Crime prevention through urban design*. New York: Collier Books.

Pratt, T. C., & Cullen, F. T. (2005). Assessing macro-level predictors and theories of crime: A meta-analysis. *Crime and Justice*, 32, 373-450.

Ratcliffe, J. (Host). (2019, October). Marcus Felson (No. 16). *Reducing Crime Podcast*. <https://www.reducingcrime.com/podcast>

Ratcliffe, J. (Host). (2023, August). Ron Clarke (No. 62). *Reducing Crime Podcast*. <https://www.reducingcrime.com/podcast>

Reyns, B. W., Henson, B., & Fisher, B. S. (2011). Being pursued online: Applying cyberlifestyle-routine activities theory to cyberstalking victimization. *Criminal justice and behavior*, 38(11), 1149-1169.

Sampson, R. J., & Lauritsen, J. L. (1990). Deviant lifestyles, proximity to crime, and the offender-victim link in personal violence. *Journal of research in crime and delinquency*, 27(2), 110-139.

Smith, A. D., Smith, A. A., & Baker, D. L. (2011). Inventory management shrinkage and employee anti-theft approaches. *International Journal of Electronic Finance*, 5(3), 209-234.

Steenkamp, D. G., & Potgieter, P. J. (2004). Private security and crime prevention: A factor analytic approach. *African Journal of Criminology & Victimology*, 17(2), 71-82.

Tseloni, A., Wittebrood, K., Farrell, G., & Pease, K. (2004). Burglary victimization in England and Wales, the United States and the Netherlands: A cross-national comparative test of routine activities and lifestyle theories. *British Journal of Criminology*, 44(1), 66-91.

U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation. Crime in the United States, 2019. FBI, <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u-s/2019/crime-in-the-u-s-2019> accessed 09 Dec. 2025.

Wakefield, A. (2004). The public surveillance functions of private security. *Surveillance & Society*, 2(4).

Weisburd, D., Maher, L., Sherman, L., Buerger, M., Cohn, E., & Petrosino, A. (2023). Contrasting crime general and crime specific theory: The case of hot spots of crime. In *New directions in criminological theory* (pp. 45-70). Routledge.

West, J. (2001). Bedford Park Break and Enter Dwelling Trial of a Multi-Faceted Crime Prevention Approach: Project and Evaluation Report. Mitcham & Unley, South Australia: Cities of Mitcham and Unley Crime Prevention Program.

Zimmerman, P. R. (2014). The deterrence of crime through private security efforts: Theory and evidence. *International Review of Law and Economics*, 37, 66-75.

AUTHORS

Kathleen E. Padilla, PhD

Assistant Professor

School of Criminal Justice & Criminology

Texas State University

Kathleen E. Padilla, PhD is an Assistant Professor in the School of Criminal Justice & Criminology at Texas State University. She received her PhD from Arizona State University in 2021 and has focused her research agenda on police officer health and wellness, equity in policing, the ethical use of technology, and qualitative/ mixed methodologies. She is also a co-founder of the research think-tank, Applied Justice Group, LLC.

Frank Benton, MS

Doctoral Candidate

School of Criminal Justice & Criminology

Texas State University

Frank Benton is a doctoral candidate in the School of Criminal Justice & Criminology at Texas State University. He received his Masters in Criminal Justice from Sam Houston State University. Mr. Benton's research focuses on data management and advanced quantitative methods in corrections. He is also a co-founder of the research think-tank, Applied Justice Group, LLC.

Wesley T. Smith, PhD

Adjunct Faculty

School of Criminal Justice & Criminology

Texas State University

Wesley T. Smith, PhD is an Adjunct Faculty member in the School of Criminal Justice & Criminology at Texas State University. He received his PhD in Criminal Justice from Sam Houston State University. His research focuses on risk assessment tools and advanced quantitative methods. He is also a co-founder of the research think-tank, Applied Justice Group, LLC.

APPENDIX: RESEARCH SUMMARY TABLE

The Impact of Situational Crime Prevention on Property and Disorder Crimes
Research Summary Table

Study Citation	Study Location	Environment Description	Crime Type(s) / Categories ²	SCP Technique(s) Relevant to Private Security	Results
Laycock, G., and C. Austin (1992). "Crime Prevention in Parking Facilities." <i>Security Journal</i> 3(3):154-160. (#111)	Basingstoke, England, UK	Transport	Burglary/ Theft/ Fraud	10. Strengthen Formal Surveillance	Reduction of car crime in areas with parking lot attendants
Meredith, C., and C. Paquette (1992). "Crime Prevention in High-Rise Rental Apartments: Findings of a Demonstration Project." <i>Security Journal</i> 3(3):161-168. (#129)	Ottawa, CAN	Residential	Burglary/ Theft/ Fraud	6. Extend Guardianship	Reduction in vehicle break-and-enters
Farrington, D., S. Bowen, A. Buckle, T. Burns-Howell, J. Burrows and M. Speed (1993). "An Experiment on the Prevention of Shoplifting." In R.V. Clarke (ed.), <i>Crime Prevention Studies</i> , Vol. 1. Monsey, N.Y.: Criminal Justice Press. (#68)	UK	Retail	Burglary/ Theft/ Fraud	3. Screen Exits 10. Strengthen Formal Surveillance	Uniformed Security Officer had no effect on shoplifting

© 2026

International Association of Professional Security Consultants
All Rights Reserved.



EBSP-26-01

Last Research Update: 251209

The Impact of Situational Crime Prevention on Property and Disorder Crimes
Research Summary Table

Study Citation	Study Location	Environment Description	Crime Type(s) / Categories ²	SCP Technique(s) Relevant to Private Security	Results
Barker, M., and C. Bridgeman (1994). Preventing Vandalism: What Works? Crime Detection and Prevention Series; Paper 56. London: Home Office, Police Research Group. (#13)	Netherlands & Manchester, UK	Various: transport, educational	Disorder	2. Control Access 9. Utilize Place Managers 10. Strengthen Formal Surveillance	Reductions in graffiti; Increase in vehicle broken windows; Reductions in cleaning costs
West, J. (2001). Bedford Park Break and Enter Dwelling Trial of a Multi-Faceted Crime Prevention Approach: Project and Evaluation Report. Mitcham & Unley, South Australia: Cities of Mitcham and Unley Crime Prevention Program. (#192)	Adelaide, AUS	Residential	Burglary/ Theft/ Fraud	6. Extend Guardianship	Reductions in residential break-and-enters

The Impact of Situational Crime Prevention on Property and Disorder Crimes
Research Summary Table

Study Citation	Study Location	Environment Description	Crime Type(s) / Categories ²	SCP Technique(s) Relevant to Private Security	Results
MacDonald, J. M., Klick, J., & Grunwald, B. (2016). The effect of private police on crime: evidence from a geographic regression discontinuity design. <i>Journal of the Royal Statistical Society Series A: Statistics in Society</i> , 179 (3), 831-846.	Pennsylvania, United States	Educational (University of Pennsylvania)	Property Crime	10. Strengthen Formal Surveillance	Reductions in property crime in areas with UPPD presence combined with PPD presence alone
Meehan, B., & Benson, B. L. (2017). Does private security affect crime? A test using state regulations as instruments. <i>Applied Economics</i> , 49(48), 4911-4924.	United States (via FBI UCR)	Various	Crime/ Disorder	10. Strength Formal Surveillance	Reductions in both violent and property crimes

© 2026

International Association of Professional Security Consultants
All Rights Reserved.



EBSP-26-01

Last Research Update: 251209

The Impact of Situational Crime Prevention on Property and Disorder Crimes
Research Summary Table

Study Citation	Study Location	Environment Description	Crime Type(s) / Categories ²	SCP Technique(s) Relevant to Private Security	Results
Ariel, B., Bland, M., & Sutherland, A. (2017). 'Lowering the threshold of effective deterrence'—Testing the effect of private security agents in public spaces on crime: A randomized controlled trial in a mass transit system. <i>PLoS one</i> , 12(12), e0187392.	Southwest England	Transport	Burglary/ Theft/ Fraud	10. Strengthen Formal Surveillance	Reductions in theft-related offenses and increases in citizen-reported crime detection
Holmes, S. T., Wolf, R., & Baker, T. (2023). Public-private partnerships: Exploring perceptions and efficacy of community security patrols. <i>Journal of Applied Security Research</i> , 18 (4), 718-739.	Orange County, California, United States	Residential	Crime/ Disorder	10. Strengthen Formal Surveillance	Reductions in all crimes after introduction of G4S (private security firm) - OCSO Collaboration