

**From offender to situation: the ‘cold’ approach to sexual violence prevention ?**

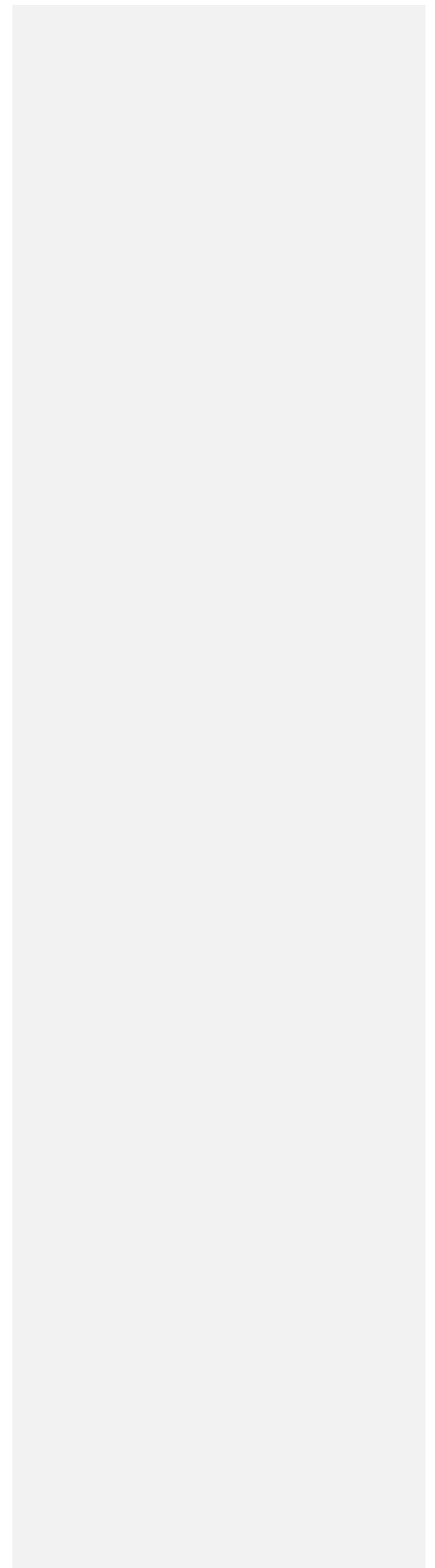
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### Abstract

Many commentators have pointed to the monstrous nature of sexual violence, with its related sense of pollution and disgust. In response, post-release regulation has a 'hot' quality: in the USA, sexually violent predator statutes, residency requirements, GPS satellite monitoring, and variations on the theme of community notification all speak of the expressiveness of the response. 'Hot' signifies and has embedded within it an 'individualist' rather than 'structural' account of action, emphasises a dramaturgical reading of the social world, and privileges the political rather than the problem-solving sphere. What has been far less explored, until recently, is research and prevention policy related specifically to the sexual violence itself, or the situation in which the offense occurs. By contrast to the 'hot' response, elision from offender to situation appears to betoken a 'cold' quality. This paper analyses the conceptual and empirical underpinnings of such a 'cold' situational approach, evaluates existing studies across settings, and assesses the implications of this problem-solving process for prevention policy and practice. It concludes by embedding the analysis within a broader precautionary politics of 'hot' and 'cold' control.

Key words: sexual, violence, prevention, situational, precaution

Word length 9,264

## 1. Introduction

Jenkins (1998) argued that the politicization and institutionalization of sexual crime has now given contemporary conceptions of the sexual offender a durability that their predecessors lacked. While the offender has been constructed in the Anglophone countries of Australia, Canada, England and Wales, and the USA in a broadly similar fashion in terms of public protection, arguably it is in the ways in which the public (community) itself has been constructed that may be more culturally instructive (see Heberton 2009a: pp.268–70; Lieb 2000). While we still await a definitive history of why and how nuanced differences in national ‘publics’ across the Anglophone world have impacted on the contours of the public protection agenda, we do have partial socio-historical accounts of a century of policy response to sexual crime in the USA (see Friedman, 1993; Janus 2007). A response characterized by several major peaks of panic, followed by legal action, , together with the development of a surveillant assemblage of technologies (see generally Heberton and Seddon 2009b). In Australia, as in the USA, we witness a succession of legislative and policy reforms exclusively targeting sexual offenders (e.g. Queensland’s Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act 2003, see Mercado & Ogloff 2007). All of these, of course, designed to intervene only after sexual offenses have already occurred. The UK (England and Wales, Scotland) has witnessed a broadly similar convergence of policies (see McAlinden 2006, 2007; Thomas 2000, 2010; Weaver 2009, 2010).

Concisely captured by Eric Janus’s term ‘the predator template’, the political ‘untouchability’ of this mode of response and its adverse effects lies not simply in it being evidence-*lite*, but in the deeper expressive undertow (Wright 2009; Zilney and Zilney 2009). As one commentator has opined

A common metaphor for the sex offender — “predator” — conveys a medieval image that has never entirely been eliminated from Western images of the

frightening, the disgusting, the horrible, the dangerous and the unbearably, and erotically, fascinating: the human monster. Psychiatric diagnoses ground our loathing of the sex offender in a context of disinterested scientific risk assessment, but in the background of our sex offender civil commitment statutes lurks the pre-modern monster.

(Douard 2007, p. 39)

While it may be possible to connect Douard's 'monster' to broader processes of modernity (see Haggerty 2009), it is evident that in Western societies, there is, for example, no victim more sacred than a child victim and no offender more profane than one who spoils the innocence of children. Our contemporary conceptual frameworks on 'sexuality', 'childhood', and 'innocence' act as levers on modern sentiments, engendering a response which has led us down a path strewn with inconsistencies (Boutellier 2000; Kleinmans 2002).

Accordingly, many have pointed to the monstrous nature of sexual violence, with its related sense of pollution and disgust. American post-release regulation has a 'hot' quality: sexually violent predator statutes (Janus 2007), residency requirements (Yung 2007), GPS satellite monitoring (Murphy 2008), and variations on the theme of community notification (Wright 2009; Zilney and Zilney 2009) all speak of the expressiveness of the response. 'Hot' signifies and has embedded within it an 'individualist' rather than 'structural' account of action, emphasises a dramaturgical reading of the social world, and privileges the political rather than the problem-solving sphere (Lynch 2002). By contrast to the 'hot' response, elision from offender to situation appears to betoken a 'cold' quality. While sexual offender-focussed research has produced its own empirically rich and extensive literature, this arguably has been dominated by a clinical agenda (risk prediction and treatment). In this context, it is important to recognize and consider the scientific imbalance of such studies; the unbalanced nature of research on sexual crime. What has been far less explored, until recently, is research and

prevention policy related specifically to the sexual violence itself, or the situation in which the offense occurs. While it is true that the role of situational factors has been developed within important conceptual offender-based models (eg Marshall and Barbaree 1990), in practice clinicians and researchers working in this area have continued to focus attention on the personal, intrapsychic dimensions of the behaviour and to neglect the contribution of proximal circumstances. Little attention has been given to how these offenses might be prevented from occurring in the first place, and even less has been given to the design and organization of physical and social environments so that the potential for these offenses to occur might be minimized. This paper analyses the conceptual and empirical underpinnings of such a 'cold' situational approach, evaluates existing studies on sexual violence prevention across settings, and assesses the implications of this problem-solving process for prevention policy and practice. It concludes by embedding 'hot' and 'cold' control within a broader politics of precaution. So, the purpose of this paper is quite limited, and lest there be any misunderstanding, the intention is not to argue that the application of situational principles is all that is needed to either understand or reduce sexual violence; instead, it is to remind us of the importance of understanding situational factors in the preventive context and to highlight challenges for situational prevention.

## 2. Conceptual and empirical foundations of the situational approach

Some features of criminal justice systems have important implications. First, criminal justice is largely about processing people. The contribution of criminal justice systems to the reduction of crime is chiefly through incapacitation, deterrence, or rehabilitation. Research has found that while each of these strategies is somewhat effective in general, they are all costly (see Cullen & Sundt 2003; Spelman 2000; Wright et al 2004). Second, for any given crime, most offenders are not touched by criminal justice systems, and those who are do tend not to penetrate

the official system very far (see Ruth & Reitz 2003). This implies that the earlier stages of criminal justice systems are more important than the later stages. Third, criminal justice systems are not designed to reduce, nor are they capable of reducing, crime in specific situations. Fourth, the opportunities to commit crime are not addressed (arguably perhaps by the police). Leaving crime opportunities unaddressed attracts new offenders (Loukaitou-Sideris & Eck 2007). These broad criminological 'truisms' indicate the importance of prevention.

Before considering the crime context, let us note the prevalence of 'situational' preventive thinking in daily life and some associated definitional matters. The 'situational' approach is evidenced widely in seeking to reduce society's harms and improve quality of life by modifying the design of products, systems, and environments. This can range from simple and cheap measures to complex, expensive technologies (see Farrell 2010).

Table 1 gives a glimpse of situational measures across the broad spectrum of social life.

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An obvious fact is that all human action takes place in situations. Yet, because the term "situation" is open to varied interpretations, a (short) working definition is helpful. From within the ecology tradition, Pervin (1978) distinguishes between stimulus and situation. Stimulus refers to "the specific object of the organism's attention or response pattern" (Pervin 1978, p. 79). A stimulus may be an organism, place, or thing and usually has a transient existence. Situations are groups of stimuli, involving "an array of objects and actions which cover a time span" (Pervin

1978, p.79). In brief, they are defined by who is involved, what is going on, and where the action is taking place. When one of the components changes, so does the situation.

Turning to the crime context, Edwin Sutherland in his famous *Principles of Criminology*, distinguishes between historical explanations, which account for crime by past events, and situational explanations, which utilize the circumstances in which crime occurs (Sutherland 1947). Historical explanations focus on the processes operating in the offender's previous history and are therefore what one may term theories of criminality. Situational explanations refer to the processes operating at the moment of the crime's occurrence: they are theories of crime. Sutherland even felt that situational explanation could be "a superior" crime explanation (Sutherland 1947, p.5).

Criminology spent its early years trying to isolate 'criminal man', based on, genes, personality, social group membership. The reasons for this focus on criminality are no doubt complex (see generally Birkbeck & La Free 1993).

Yet, subsequent criminological research repeatedly confirmed that social, economic and psychological variables were at best moderate predictors of criminal behavior. Worse still, general predictive ability on who will commit criminal offenses had not improved over time. In essence, there remained the problem that stable offenders and nonoffender groups have not been verified. Robert Sampson and John Laub summed this up: "We believe that statistical approaches for data reduction have seduced some . . . by giving the appearance of distinct and predictable groupings ('super-predator', 'life-course-persistent offender') that are amenable to direct policy intervention. Substantively meaningful [offender] groups or types do not, in fact, exist" (Sampson and Laub 2003, p. 590).



Broadly, situational analysis within criminology suggests that situations affect crime in two main ways. First, experimental and symbolic interactionist studies emphasize the role of situations in motivating individuals to commit crime by imposing negative experiences.

Second, theories of situational selection and victimization emphasize the role of situations in affecting the extent to which criminal motivations can be realized. This second dimension of situational influence is generally referred to as opportunity.

The opportunity perspective in criminology is concerned with the incidence and location of crime events in social systems, and its theories are based on the premise that some situations are more favorable for crime than others. The origins of these theories are diverse, ranging from the study of victimization survey data, to the application of human ecology, and most importantly rational choice perspectives (Cornish & Clarke 1986). Nevertheless, a common element in all is an image of crime as a situated event.

The study of a crime event for situational prevention is understood best by drawing on the rational choice (Cornish and Clarke, 1986) and on routine activity approaches (Cohen and Felson, 1979). Rational choice theorists assume that offenders are decision makers who commit crimes for a specific gain. Their choices are the result of a process in which the offender weighs the rewards, costs, and likelihood of achieving desired outcomes. Although they may exhibit limited rationality and their offending may be self-defeating in the long run, offenders, nevertheless, generally attempt to minimize their risk of apprehension and to maximize their gains. Cohen and Felson (1979) proposed the routine activity approach. According to these theorists, crime is most likely to occur when three elements converge in time and space, which include a motivated

offender, a suitable target/victim, and the absence of capable guardianship. The suitability of a target involves the following four elements: 1) target value, 2) inertia of the target, 3) visibility of the target, and 4) accessibility of the target. Absence of capable guardianship refers to the absence of any person who could intervene or interfere when the crime is being committed. Cohen and Felson's idea of "convergence" is importantly captures the dynamic process of crime events. Interaction between offense components is crucial to understand crime event outcomes. Examining interactions helps capture which components come together in time and space to produce a crime event and, more specifically, a particular outcome. It gives us more detail to understand a crime event. Two defining features of situational crime prevention therefore emerge (regardless of specific theoretical frameworks): First, the ephemeral effect on offenders; efficacy centers upon the situational dependence of behavior. Second, the reductionist nature of the analysis; it is 'particularising' in seeking detail of the relationship(s) between aspects of the situation and kinds of behavior. Thus, 'situations' are a root-cause of behavior ( Mischel 1968; Ross 1977 ). If behavior is non-trivially mediated by immediate environments, then, in addition to treating dispositions, problem behavior can be changed by altering the environmental conditions that initiate and permit it to continue. In the clinical world, this principle has been applied to relapse prevention. Situational prevention is far wider, including designing those environments in ways that minimize the problem-evoking potential for all who encounter them.

An early formal definition of situational crime prevention is provided by Clarke:

Situational crime prevention comprises opportunity-reducing measures that (1) are directed at highly specific forms of crime; (2) involve the management, design or manipulation of the immediate environment in as systematic and permanent way as possible; (3) make crime more difficult and risky, or less rewarding and excusable as judged by a wide range of offenders.

(Clarke 1997, p. 4) Details of the early and later theoretical underpinning can be found in Clarke (1980) and Clarke and Homel (1997), which also denote a classification of practical techniques.

Such practical intervention relies upon two important requirements: First, the need to be crime-specific; and second a familiarity with the procedural aspects of crime commission in relation to specific crimes. Cornish (1994) drawing broadly on cognitive psychology and decision-making literatures, significantly advanced the theoretical context for, and specification of the above requirements with his idea of “crime-as-scripts”. The “script” framework allows for the elaboration of the whole decision process of crime commission. As we shall see in section 3, the ‘script’ idea has functioned heuristically to improve elicitation of crime-specific reports and detailed accounts of the crime commission process.

In a significant theoretical advance, Wortley suggested a more intimate and deterministic person-situation relationship in which situations may influence people in ways that they may not even be aware and induce them to perform behavior that they would not otherwise perform (Wortley 1998). This approach identifies two situational influences, with aspects of situations that have a regulating function (cost/benefit - ‘opportunity’) and aspects of situations that have ‘motivational initiating’ role in behavior; prevention strategies can integrate both. By separating more clearly measures designed to manipulate internal controls (guilt) from those designed to manipulate social controls (shame), Wortley proposed a reorganization of the "guilt-inducing" approach to include such measures as increasing victim worth and the addition of a range of measures to increase social controls, such as reducing social approval and reducing imitation . A major advantage of incorporating aspects of the non-physical environment into situational analysis is that one has at one's disposal a wider repertoire of techniques.

Crime is not randomly distributed in time and space but is patterned by opportunities and other environmental factors to form 'hotspots'. It is often easier to identify where and when crime is likely to occur than it is to predict who will commit it. By analysing the situational characteristics of crime events the prevention practitioner is in a position to develop environmental counter-strategies. Situational interventions are of two main sorts. Some interventions target environmental features that may actively precipitate unwanted behaviour (Wortley, 1998). Other interventions are aimed at reducing opportunities that enable unwanted behaviour to occur (Cornish & Clarke, 2003). The object of both types of situation interventions is to inhibit unwanted behavior in specific contexts.

There is an accumulating literature of evaluations of situational crime prevention attesting its efficacy. As one leading British criminologist in his recent overview of the science of crime prevention opines "what situational crime prevention offers, which is rare indeed in the social sciences, is a cumulative research and practice programme that has been sustained for over 30 years" (Tilley 2009 p.136). This conclusion is further evidenced by a comprehensive analysis of 206 studies reporting situational intervention programs and their evaluation (Guerette 2009).

### 3. Situational crime prevention and sexual violence

Here we turn to the knowledge base on the application of situational principles to sexual violence prevention, together with a consideration of issues concerning implementation and evaluation. Although it is difficult to disagree with Janus (2007) assertion that primary preventive studies in the area of sexual violence are in their 'infancy', we can learn much from both path-breaking existing studies that suggest promising control strategies and studies that provide a better understanding of offense-commission techniques. For the situational prevention

approach, quantitative research provides important evidence of empirical regularities amongst the variables of interest. Amongst other requirements of this problem-solving process, is a detailed understanding of the particular crime scripts involved so that appropriate situational measures can be matched to each of the stages in the offense commission process. In what follows, both types of study are examined.

The prevalence and incidence of sexual crime is now well documented on both sides of the Atlantic (Finkelhor, Moore, Hamby, & Straus, 1997; Putnam 2003; Administration on Children Youth and Families, 2004;. The US Incidence and Prevalence Survey indicated that seventy eight sexual assaults take place per hour (Tjaden & Theonnes, 2000). Nor are inmates of custodial institutions immune from such predation (see Table 2).

-INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE -

Although in the USA policies targeting sexual crimes and offenders have been in existence since the 1980s (see section 1), until the recent creation of the National Incident-Based Reporting System national data sources were not able to provide specific information on sexual crimes, such as age of victim and other characteristics of the sexual crime incident (see Snyder 2002; Simon and Zgoba 2006). Using NIBRS data for 2000, one study has recently found that direct parents were found to account for only around 15% of child sexual crime; with other family members 15%. In contrast, nearly 50% of all sexual offences against children were accounted for by 'acquaintances', in other words, adults/juveniles known through everyday

routines (Simon and Zgoba 2006). This kind of data should have implications for preventive effort.

The application of situational prevention to sexual offenses arguably involves making the theoretical case for the importance of situational factors in relation to sexual offending, and illustrating the practical utility of devising actual primary interventions. The first systematic attempt to do this in relation to sexual violence against children was undertaken by Wortley and colleagues (see Wortley & Smallbone 2006; Smallbone et al 2008). In their study of 323 convicted CSA offenders, Smallbone and Wortley (2001) reported a number of findings that do not seem to fit the usual sexual-pathology model of child sexual offending, and strongly suggest that immediate environmental factors are important. These findings include:

- Late sexual offending onset age.
- Low rates of stranger abuse.
- Low incidence of chronic offending.
- High rates of criminal versatility.

Low incidence of paraphilic interests The sample included all convicted offenders, not just those in treatment. Because of the widespread implementation of risk/needs principles in corrections, treatment samples are likely to contain a disproportionate number of persistent offenders. Though more inclusive, the Smallbone and Wortley sample is, of course, still biased in that it does not include unconvicted offenders. However, the effect of this omission is most likely to be that the situational trends that were identified are if anything understated. It seems reasonable to assume that the more frequent and serious an individual's offending, the greater the risk of detection to which that individual is exposed.

It is known that the majority of child sexual offense cases are never reported and fewer still result in convictions (Finkelhor 1994; Gallagher 1999). Arguably, many of those undetected offenders are more likely to be at the lower end of the seriousness scale. Taken together, such findings may suggest that for many sexual offenders a 'control model' might be more appropriate, where the propensity to commit offenses is wide-spread, involving an absence of

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restraint. So in relation to children, viewing them as sexual objects may be more widespread than is usually assumed; and opportunity structures and environmental cues may play an important part in weakening controls and facilitating offending (see Smallbone 2005; Hirschi 1988).

To accommodate their research findings, and adapting Cornish and Clarke (2003) recent attempt to incorporate offender 'types' within situational prevention, Wortley and Smallbone (2006) proposed three types of child sexual offenders based on the role that situations play in their offending: First, committed offenders. These are the stereotypical, high-frequency, chronic offenders with a preferential sexual attraction towards children. Second, opportunist offenders. These offenders are sexually adaptable and likely to be criminally versatile, but will not have an extensive record of offending.

Third, reactive offenders. These offenders are not normally sexually attracted to children and are generally law abiding.

Bringing in the characteristics of the offender more accurately reflects the notion of behavior as an interaction between person and environment (see section 2 above) and offers greater potential for prevention. However, the patterns of offense remain the central concern for situational prevention. Applied to child sexual offending much is already known about the settings of such offending. So domestic settings will often be the locations for offenders with the least entrenched interests, but they are also the most difficult to access for prevention. Institutional settings permit a good deal of control over activities. However, organizations are often more concerned with protecting their reputations than instituting prevention. Finally, public settings offer the greatest potential, where authorities can design and operate practices to operationalise situational prevention.

Using the framework provided by Cornish and Clarke (2003), Smallbone and Wortley (2006) apply four opportunity-reducing techniques to child sexual offending: increasing effort, increasing risk, controlling prompts, and reducing permissibility. Increasing effort is the first element to reduce crime opportunities in this framework. By making it more difficult or inconvenient to commit an offense, certain offenders might be completely prevented from committing a particular crime (Wortley & Smallbone, 2006). Cornish and Clarke (1986) provided three methods of increasing effort, including controlling access to facilities, target hardening, and controlling tools. Target hardening, in particular, is a useful method of increasing effort in preventing child sexual abuse by using techniques such as educating children about protective strategies. In domestic settings most strategies must be through the primary caregiver. One risk factor in domestic settings is the presence of step-relations. Smallbone et al (2008) suggest that single mothers, therefore, need to think carefully about who they admit to the home (controlling access). In some cases, accommodation pressures can create opportunities; so sexual offending by adolescents often involves siblings in shared bedrooms. Providing single-room accommodation is a means of deflecting offenders.

In institutional settings, controlling access is easier. But given that around three-quarters of offenders have no previous sexual offense conviction, a personnel screening approach alone is insufficient. It may be better to develop interventions that can be applied situationally, rather than to assume accurate risk assessment (Smallbone et al 2008). In public settings, the most widely known technique for increasing effort is target hardening; thus the teaching of self-protective behaviors to potential victims may be appropriate. In a recent study, Leclerc et al (2010) examined the use of self-protection strategies and circumstances in which children are more likely to resist sexual victimization. This study examined the association between offence-related factors—specifically, the pre-offence situation, the modus operandi strategies adopted by offenders, and victim characteristics—and victim resistance in sexual offences against children.

The study suggests the need for prevention programs to include empirical findings



regarding the circumstances in which children are more likely to resist sexual victimization. Kenny et al (2008) endorse this victim 'target-hardening' approach in terms of practical self-defense skills; and Sochting et al (2004) make similar recommendations in their review of evidence in relation to adult women rape-prevention programs. Terry and Ackerman (2008) in their analyses of situational principles applied by the Catholic Church to priests illustrate practical efforts, for instance restrictions on single access, and by controlling tools, or targeting the facilitators of abuse. The Catholic Church study showed that 17% of priests who abused children used specific enticements, and in 23% of those cases, the priests used alcohol as an enticement. Increasing risk is amplifying the threat of detection for a specific act. Cohen and Felson (1979) maintained that one of the reasons why a crime is committed is because of the absence of a capable guardian. Providing guardianship would encourage people to be aware of certain acts or behaviors (Wortley & Smallbone, 2006). An example of increasing risk for potential sexual offending might include educating parents and guardians regarding effective supervision as well as recognizing behaviors that may be dangerous or indicative of offending conduct. According to Simon and Zgoba's (2006) data, parents only account for 15% of cases of sexual violence against children; so parents can play an effective preventive role in the majority of cases. Through increased public education programs on the risks from others, preventive activity can be enlarged. Again, in institutional settings sensible protocols and changes to the environment to increase natural surveillance may be appropriate. In public settings, use of 'place managers' may help increase risk; according to Smallbone and Wortley (2006) found that around 12% of extra-familial offenders said they located children in shopping malls. Those in charge of security need to be aware of modus operandi. Some 13% had located children in public toilets. The placement and design of toilets needs to take full advantage (Cockfield and Moss 2002). In the Catholic Church study in an effort to increase risk, the Church has instituted a code of conduct for all adults who work with children and youths on a regular basis (Terry & Ackerman 2008).

Controlling prompts would include reducing situational triggers, such as situations where the offender perceives the victim as being vulnerable or provocative (Wortley & Smallbone, 2006). The development of emotional bonds and attachments to children may also serve as a trigger for offending. Triggers are individualistic, however, and what triggers one individual may not affect the next. As such, it is inherently difficult to eliminate triggers. Yet there is some evidence that offenders can recognize and instigate their own situational prevention strategies; almost 30% of callers to a telephone helpline were from individuals concerned about their behavior in settings (Stop It Now ! UK and Ireland 2003).

Finally, reducing permissibility involves clarifying the role the offender plays in the behavior . It is necessary for potential offenders to understand that their behavior is harmful. They need to understand that they cannot remove responsibility from themselves and put the blame on the child or others. Simon and Zgoba (2006) data suggests around 30%of sexual crime is perpetrated in the home by parents or relatives. Using public education and media campaigns to challenge and correct distorted thinking could make use of the situational crime prevention technique of removing permissibility and clarifying the offender's role in his behavior as well as preventing potential offenders from neutralizing thoughts of violence.

In a US review of state prison efforts to reduce sexual violence, states reported efforts to prevent prison sexual violence that reflect measures to address the structure of the facility and its management, as well as measures that involve arming inmates with information to thwart incidents (Urban Institute 2006). Yet as Jones and Pratt (2008) point out, while 2003 US Prison Rape Elimination Act provided financial resources for the purpose of exploring and expanding our understanding of the behavior, there were no financial resources dedicated to the prison institutions for the collection of data on sexual violence. They argue that evidence-based policy making with respect to sexual assault in prison may be premature; conclusive empirical data on the prevalence of sexual violence in prison is still unavailable (see also Hulley and Smith 2005; Cooke et al 2008).

In his review of prison sexual violence and situational prevention, Wortley (2002) points to the lack of pre-post/test studies on situational prevention work ; with most preventive work based on common-sense extrapolations from epidemiological data. Notwithstanding this, he suggests that available research findings are consistent with the view that the prison environment both generates and ‘permits’ prisoner-on-prisoner violence. Promising strategies therefore should use both the controlling of precipitators and the regulation of behavior; so for example, strategies such as single-cell accommodation, eliminating blindspots, age-heterogeneous populations, gender-mixed populations, staff-awareness training, mandatory reporting, institutional protocols containing features of at least one, and some both. He acknowledges that while some suggested strategies are diametrically opposed to one another, direct evidence of counterproductive control is scant.

Situational crime prevention is a problem-solving process, and one requires detailed research on patterns of perpetration and modus operandi (see section 2 discussion of Cornish 1994 and ‘scripts’; and Cornish 1998). A number of studies have added important empirical information about sexual crime events (see Kaufman et al 2006). Yet few preventive initiatives have incorporated this information; moreover, where patterns of perpetration are included, they tend to lack necessary detail to adequately describe the complexity of offending. Nonetheless, modus operandi information can have a sensitizing public role as well as being utilized in identifying high-risk locations and environmental concerns that can be addressed to reduce opportunities. **Beauregard** et al (2007 a,b) investigated the decision-making involved in the offending process of sixty-nine serial sexual offenders who have committed their crimes against stranger victims. Results show that sex offenders, even if traditionally described as “irrational”

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and impulsive individuals, are capable, up to a certain point, of an analysis of the costs/benefits related to their actions.

Moreover, results emphasize the important role of situational factors, such as victim resistance, on the decision-making process of sex offenders. (Beauregard and Leclerc 2007).

Other recent studies have sought to investigate

whether and how the modus operandi might increase the intrusiveness of the offenders' sexual behaviors, and victim participation during the sexual episodes. A crime-commission model approach was used (see Cornish 1994), which is mainly designed to uncover the hidden behavioral complexity of the offending process, and which permits the investigation of offender-victim interactions at various points of this process. Results indicated that the modus operandi may be purposeful and that strategies may be adopted singly or jointly to attain different outcomes. The latter finding suggests that sexual offenders may adapt their modus operandi to the criminal event, which is consistent with recent findings (see Leclerc et al 2005; Leclerc and Tremblay 2007; Leclerc et al 2008). The richness of this kind of data is also evidenced in recent work on 'sequence analysis' of the crime event in sexual assault in the UK (Fossi 2002; Fossi et al 2005). Research using a similar approach has sought to develop situationally preventive practice against violence to sex workers (Soothill & Sanders 2005; Sanders & Campbell 2007).

Recent work on the offense process in the internet realm has also produced useful preventive insights (Taylor and Quayle 2006; Beech et al 2008; Elliott & Beech 2009; Gallagher 2010; Reyns 2010). The virtual world is not the same as the offline environment, bounded by technical limitations that are determined by the structure of the Internet and the way in which computer applications use those capacities. Criminal behaviors, if successful, are likely to be repeated in future criminal acts and refined through experience, and this is likely to be

particularly related to the search for criminal opportunities online, which appear to act as the rate limiting factor on which the other actions depend (Taylor and Quayle 2006). Reyns (2010) using the case of cyberstalking, argues for the applicability of situational crime prevention techniques to the online environment—where the net and websites are treated as ‘places’. So, for example, one can extend prevention by extending guardianship by place-managers (web designers) and so on.

From the foregoing review in this section, it is clear that as yet, there are no pre/post test evaluations of situational crime preventive techniques applied to sexual violence. This remains a key challenge. Situational crime prevention places great emphasis on the *process* of determining suitable interventions that are tailored to the nature of the specific crime problem. Thus preventive interventions need to be problem-led, rather than necessarily universally applicable in all places and times. Whether such interventions are effective is largely determined by the context in which they are implemented. Eck (2002) concisely articulates this point when he argues that sound situational preventive work and evaluation should be based on theory. The implication is that the unguided uniform implementation of any situational crime prevention technique could result in a Type II error, or rather, a false conclusion about the technique’s ineffectiveness if it is not based on a thorough understanding of the problem and its context. Any future evaluations in this area will have to bear this in mind; in addition, conceptual issues of particular significance to situational prevention will also need addressing. These include displacement, diffusion of benefits, anticipatory benefits and length of follow-up periods (Guerette 2009).

#### 4.The politics of precautionary control: a dish best served ‘cold’ or ‘hot’ ?

The premise behind situational crime prevention is similar to the ‘small wins’ discussed by Weick (1984)—by breaking down large social problems (like crime) into smaller and manageable parts, small successes can lead to greater successes. The difficulties of preventing criminality, and the eclipse of rehabilitation as a strategy of choice, provided for the emergence of preventive strategies which focus on the proximal causes and situational control of criminal events (Felson 2006). A number of challenges for situational prevention generally and as applied to sexual violence have been identified (see section 3). The systematic examination of situational variables is theoretically and methodologically complex, requiring the definition of key concepts, the development of conceptual models of the interaction between actors and situations, and the design of appropriate empirical research. Situational researchers will need to look at issues of repeat victimisation, and at questions of displacement, innovation and escalation in reaction to situational controls. They will also need to anticipate the effects of factors such as changes in technology.

There are also issues to be resolved about the use of situational measures within private family settings. Whether they can be used is a matter for empirical inquiry. Whether they should be used is surely less of an issue, given the evidence that most sexual violence against children (and perhaps most long-term repeat victimisation) occurs within the family. Perhaps the most important theme to arise from the earlier discussion is the vital need to gain a better understanding of the crime-commission techniques used by offenders. Quantitative research provides important evidence of empirical regularities amongst the variables of interest. The practice of situational crime prevention, however, has always been driven by the analysis of crime-specific problems at the local level. Amongst other requirements of this problem-solving process, is a detailed understanding of the particular crime scripts involved in sexually violent

events so that appropriate situational measures can be matched to each of the stages in the crime commission process.

Yet, on both sides of the Atlantic the problem of sexual violence in society has become largely the ‘problem of the worst of the worst’. As Janus argues, a hegemonic ‘hot’ response to public safety distorts thinking about sexual violence (Janus 2000, 2007). ‘Hot’ signifies and has embedded within it an ‘individualist’ rather than ‘structural’ account of action, emphasises a dramaturgical reading of the social world, and privileges the political rather than the problem-solving sphere. Sexually violent dangerous offenders are rare, but instead have become archetypal for the purposes of decision-making practices; substituting a part of the problem for the whole. How the distinctive precautionary politics of our times have shaped these decision-making practices in public protection has been explored (see Haggerty 2003; and Heberton and Seddon 2009b). By contrast to the ‘hot’ response, elision from offender to situation appears to betoken a ‘cold’ quality: the ordinary versus the pathological; the crime event versus the criminal; immediate situations versus enduring dispositions; largely bypassing blame or punishment for harmful behaviour and, instead, seeking to design it out. However, decision-making under the politics of precaution deals with worst-case scenarios; one seeks to avoid the worst eventuality that can be imagined, not (as with situational crime prevention) seek to reduce the likelihood that a probable event will occur. As such, the logic of precaution is concerned with avoiding the subjectively defined personal catastrophes of criminal victimisation, and of course mass media sources do their part by offering examples of the ‘worst case’ happening, sharpening our fears (Svendsen 2008). Significantly, the ‘hot’ response to sexual violence under such precautionary politics does not exist in a vacuum, but draws on existing cultural wellsprings. Attempts to adopt a situational ‘problem-solving’ approach may, in the context of precaution, be

missing the point of how cultural considerations inform 'hot' precautionary practices (Douglas 1992; Sparks 2001). Freed from a rational calculus, such practices are open to the allure of selective incapacitation and other non-evidence based activities (Levenson and D'Amora 2007). Such collective practices also communicate meaning about who we are, both to ourselves and others (Loader 1999). Cross-national empirical research is sorely needed on how 'hot' and 'cold' approaches to sexual violence are differentially developed and implemented, helping to illuminate the connections between our collective norms and values, fears and insecurities.



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**Table 1 Situational measures to reduce harms and improve quality of life (adapted from Farrell 2010)**

Context	Examples
Road safety	Speed limits; driving on one side of road; safety belts; crumple zones; prohibition of injury-causing bonnet ornaments; traffic lights; airbags; indicator lights; pelican crossings; 'traffic-calming' measures; cycle helmets; cycle paths
Child protection	Child-proof lids on toxic substance containers; 'safe' toys without swallowable parts or lead paint; fire-guards; stair-guards; school crossing guards
Health and safety at work	Safety helmets; protective guards on machinery; work time limits
Climate control	Catalytic converters; recycling; patent protection for safe-emissions technologies; tradable permits, feed-in tariffs and other market-based incentives; cleaner power technologies (wind, tidal, solar)
Food safety	Content and temperature-sensitive labels; tamper-proof containers; best-before and use-by dates; restrictions on additives; quality control checks
Fire safety	Fire-retardant materials; safety matches; fire doors; fire extinguishers; escape-route maps; maximum population policies in night clubs
Crime	Garden hedges that define territory; self-locking front doors; immobilizers; barcodes; car licence plates; property marking; entry-phones; office receptionists
Health	No salt on dining table; calorie content labelling; condoms; increased tobacco prices; smoking bans; surgeons' face-masks; opt-out organ donation
Disability	Disabled parking bays; many measures mandated under disability discrimination legislation
Sports	Electronic timing; slow motion replays; weigh-ins; drug tests; provision of facilities
Education/academia	Anonymous marking; peer-review; external examiners; professional body practising requirements
Drugs:	Medical licences; drug trials; systems to prevent diversion. <i>Illegal drugs</i> : Provision of bleach or clean needles; safe injection 'shooting galleries'; testing pills for impurities
Art	Art Loss Register; signatures ('tags' for graffiti); provenance establishment

**Table 2. Youth in custody reporting sexual victimization, by type of incident**

<b>Sexual victimisation</b>	<b>National estimate</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Standard error</b>
<b>U.S. total</b>	3,220	12.1%	0.4%
<b>Youth-on-youth</b>	700	2.6%	0.2%
Nonconsensual sexual acts	530	2.0	0.2
Other sexual contacts only	140	0.5	0.2
<b>Staff sexual misconduct</b>	2,730	10.3%	0.4%
Force reported	1,150	4.3	0.3
Excluding touching	1,030	3.9	0.2
Other sexual contacts only	90	0.3	0.1
No report of force	1,710	6.4	0.3
Excluding touching	1,560	5.9	0.3
Other sexual contacts only	150	0.6	0.1

Source: US National Survey of Youth in Custody, 2008-9.