

# CPTED PERSPECTIVE

## **CPTED On Campus** **Modelling Prosocial Behaviour**



**Dino CPTED activating the public display areas at the University of Saskatchewan**

*Harold Shiffman, University of Saskatchewan*

The history of CPTED at the University of Saskatchewan dates back to the early 1990s when the campus' first practitioners tackled the university's most problematic parking lot. After 2001, concerns about high-risk assets and infrastructure increased. Through a combination of RCMP-based physical security with CPTED knowhow, U of S Protective Services provided additional support to high-security research facilities.

*Continued Page 2*

## **IN THIS ISSUE**

- PAGE 1: CPTED on Campus**
- PAGE 1: Routine Activity Theory of Crime Opportunity**
- PAGE 2: CPTED on Campus continued.**
- PAGE 3: Hollygrove Revisited**
- PAGE 4: Routine Activity continued.**
- PAGE 5: Laneway Redux**
- PAGE 6: Hollygrove Revisited continued**
- PAGE 7: Sharpening up CPTED**
- PAGE 8: Hollygrove Revisited / Laneway continued**
- PAGE 9: The Final Story: Crime and Trees**

## **The Routine Activity Theory** **Truism Masquerading as Causality**

*Mike Sutton, Nottingham Trent University School of Social Sciences, England*

*This is an excerpt of the a presentation by Professor Sutton at the 2015 ICA Conference in Calgary, Canada.*

Contrary to the Routine Activities Theory and Situational Crime Prevention notion of crime opportunity as an intrinsic quality, a crime opportunity is not at all a set of circumstances that are known in advance of the successful commission of a crime. Crime opportunities are perceived and are always subject to expected or unexpected beneficial or detrimental contingencies.

*Continued Page 4*

*Continued from Page 1*

## CPTED ON CAMPUS

Crime data and perception surveys are used on campus to identify spots where attention is required. Occasionally, areas perceived as being dangerous do not have any actual instances of crime. In these cases, updating or renovating these spaces is usually enough to increase usability and reduce anxiety. Despite having no shortage of spaces to audit, buy-in from stakeholders can be slow as budgets focus on business first and safety second.




Activating unused space beneath stairwells with seating

Students themselves frequently identify unused spaces to create areas for study or socializing. Protective Services has attempted to promote the legitimization of these ad hoc spaces: Stairwell seating and study areas being the most common. The Law and Engineering Student Societies each hold pancake breakfasts outside their buildings which attracts students from

across campus to often unused grounds. Some colleges, unconvinced by CPTED arguments, continue to avoid legitimizing spaces for student use; but students continue to move chairs, or tables, into new areas, much to the chagrin of building managers. A recent rash in property crime sparked the department to examine whether there was an appropriate CPTED solution. Psychology research suggests that helping behaviour can be coerced out of individuals through appropriate modelling.



Bulletin boards and relaxing areas in traditionally unused spaces

However, creating the circumstances for modelling prosocial behaviour in the natural environment can be difficult. The incoming Protective Services Safe Campus Plan will use aspects of crime prevention, risk assessment, and marketing to simultaneously combat crime while also attempting to grow faculty, staff and student morale to increase safety at the University of Saskatchewan. 

*Kevin Brown is Associate Professor at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He spent 16 years as a community developer in the Hollygrove community. This article is an excerpt of his Urban Studies PhD Dissertation: "You Could Get Killed Any Day in Hollygrove: A Qualitative Study of Neighborhood-Level Homicide".*

Hollygrove, a neighborhood in New Orleans, had long suffered high crime and murder rates. After the devastation of Hurricane Katrina to New Orleans in 2005, rebuilding efforts commenced and in late 2009, in the midst of rebuilding our community, my Hollygrove neighborhood experienced an awakening.

Throughout the years leading up to the storm we fought diligently to repair the structural marginalization that marked us as dangerous and crime-ridden. Despite our best efforts we were unable to realize what Sampson (2012) has termed "collective efficacy" or "social cohesion combined with shared expectations for social control".

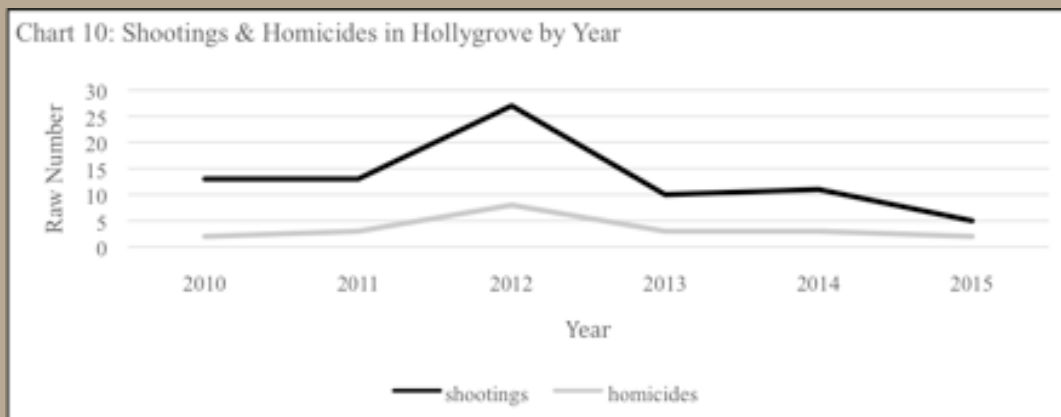
Our community lacked the capacity to combat violence partially due to our misunderstanding of our own role in the process; we were depending upon the police department to do the job for us. Hollygrove's training in Second Generation CPTED altered this perception.

Key to this was a change in the community's ability to delineate between law enforcement, typically a response to crime that has already occurred, and crime prevention. As we toured the neighborhood with SafeGrowth trainers and began to understand the connection between neighborhood disorder and violence, a world of possibilities began to emerge. Ultimately we were able to see elements over which we had control and could willingly change.

### **Combining physical and social strategies**

A number of interconnected strategies were adopted that led to reductions in the homicide rate and an improved quality of life. First Hollygrove residents envisioned repairing physical infrastructure. These included eradicating blight, repairing streets, collecting trash regularly, refurbishing neighborhood parks, and building backyard storm water retention gardens to prevent flooding.

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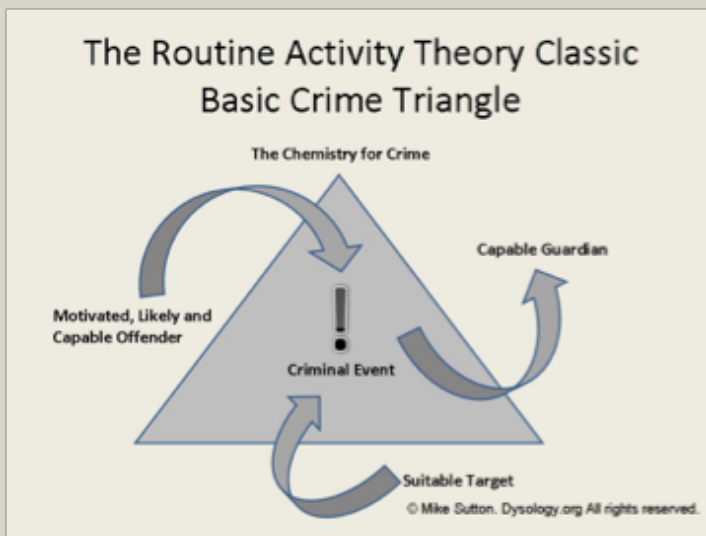


The 2012 peak in homicides and shooting in Hollygrove and results from the subsequent community work to improve quality of life and cut crime.

## Routine Activity Theory of Crime Opportunity

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Where opportunities for criminal acts are concerned, there are no forgone conclusions because a potential offender can have a pre-crime accident, get injured or otherwise thwarted during a criminal attempt. The relative capabilities of any guardian, or any offender can never be known in advance of a crime happening.



Routine Activity Theory's crime opportunity theorem - being no more than an accurate and elegant description of a successfully completed crime - is a truism masquerading as causality. *Crime opportunity theory* therefore, is nothing at all like a real pre-crime opportunity. It is merely a post-event description.

## Conclusion

Just as a description of what a dinosaur looks like cannot explain the existence and extinction of that creature, descriptions of things cannot explain them, which means they are not testable propositions. If something is not testable, and therefore capable of being proven wrong, then it is not a theory and not a good explanation for a thing.



Opportunities actually comprise perceptions of vulnerability and suitability of targets. Knowing that allows us to focus our attention on the fact that, in a world without infinite resources or the will to give all targets the *Fort Knox treatment*, crime prevention measures should aim at altering potential offenders' perceptions of vulnerability and suitability. Crime reduction projects operating on this simple realisation might more effectively reduce both criminal attempts and successfully completed crimes.





*Gregory Saville, AlterNation LLC*

A recent walk in some urban laneways brought to mind stories of a foggy London night and Sherlock Holmes' chasing murderers lurking in dark alleys.

In real life, the laneway is a hidden and complex urban landscape we seldom consider in our formulations for safer cities. We write about them in our stories, but not until the New Urbanists reintroduced them as a modern feature of their residential street design did we refocus on them as a crime location.



Community garden increases neighbourhood traffic next to a back alley

Most experienced beat cops walk laneways, especially at night, because that is where things happen that interest cops. Burglars frequent them because they offer easy access to the rears of homes. And kids

vandalize and steal from cars in them because laneways are traditionally designed to hide trash cans from view.



Clean and colourful alley rejuvenated with a small internet cafe and mini art studios

I compared some lively laneway designs with others that were not and it became obvious that poor laneway design is not inevitable. Laneway research is emerging revealing other options.

Factors that influence laneway, also called alleys, include color, permeability, width-to-length, visibility from the ends, and the number of adjacent residences.

But my recent walks suggest that laneway activation is much more that physical size and shape. It is also about creatively figuring how to retain car parking and trash disposal uses, while creating interesting places.

*Continued Page 8*

*Continued from page 3*

## Hollygrove Revisited

While somewhat unconventional as crime prevention strategies, the neighborhood understood them to be important tools of community revitalization which they connected to reduced homicide.

A second set of solutions they proposed addressed social infrastructure improvements. These included community meetings, economic improvements, community policing, increased homeownership, and a variety of formal and informal educational strategies.

Building a healthy environment requires attention to both the physical infrastructure signaling neglect and thus attracting crime, as well as the social infrastructure which, when empowered, can internally combat violence through collective action.

### Grassroots change

What makes a neighborhood safe, according to Jacobs (1961), is eyes on the street. When a neighborhood is alive and connected, thus organized, residents make eye contact, observe what is happening around them and keep criminal behavior in check. The converse, a neighborhood in decline, is marked by residents who either are afraid to see what is happening around them, fearing retaliation, or who choose to ignore the decaying cohesiveness that delineates a safe community.

It was this realization that led Hollygrove to begin a campaign to shutter a nuisance bar, the site of numerous neighborhood shootings. The year-long process brought neighbors together in a process that cemented our collective efficacy and, more importantly, brought about a significant reduction in neighborhood violence.



**Hollygrove SafeGrowth teams conducting community safety audits to assess crime fears**

Along the way we enhanced our relationships with police and politicians, further solidifying our newfound social capital.

Ultimately Hollygrove's transformation was driven by grassroots efforts driven by resident stakeholders. The city's best policy and programmatic interventions could not achieve what citizens trained in Second Generation CPTED principles managed to accomplish. Ultimately this proved to be the central feature underpinning the emergence of a neglected neighborhood from marginalization toward collective efficacy and informal neighborhood social controls.

One set of strategies Hollygrove residents envisioned involved repairing physical infrastructure. While somewhat unconventional as crime prevention strategies, the neighborhood understood them to be important tools of community revitalization which they connected to reduced homicide.

*Continued page 8*

# SHARPENING UP... CPTED

Paul Ekblom, Design Against Crime Research Centre, Central Saint Martins, UK

This is an excerpt of a presentation by Professor Ekblom at the 2015 ICA Conference in Calgary, Canada

The familiar terms and concepts we use in CPTED evolved from initial theorizing via practical application. They have rarely been explicitly scrutinized as tools for thinking, action and communication.

All the core concepts of CPTED overlap such as where does defensibility end and territoriality begin? It's the same for defense and access control. All fail to distinguish between nature of action and qualities of place, for example defense and defensibility or surveillance and surveillability. Target-hardening has particular limitations: what exactly is the target to be protected, the house or the TV set inside it?

This situation arose from the way CPTED evolved, through a gradual and haphazard accumulation of theory, research and practice, combined with *schools* and *generations* approaches rather than systematic progress and consolidation. The upshot is that both the professional discipline of CPTED and the applied-academic research that supports it are held back from making the progress and the practical contribution that they are potentially capable of delivering.

The situation is exacerbated by confusion within and between security and mainstream situational crime prevention. Knowledge is tangled and difficult to retrieve and transfer. As a result, this confusion:

- limits the scope of the problems we can tackle,
- allows objectives to drift,
- reduces the quality of interventions,
- disadvantages CPTED in the wider planning/development process, and hinders the importation of fresh perspectives from other fields of research and practice

How can we *sharpen up* CPTED to overcome these limitations and help realise its potential? We have to deconstruct the familiar CPTED concepts and build deeper foundations.

My suggestion is to start with environmental *primitives* like containment, movement and resistance to force, that relate to the properties, structures and features of built environments and human activity (and do an equivalent process with more generic security and crime prevention). Then the task will be to reconstruct the familiar CPTED concepts like territoriality on these fundamentals.

Ultimately CPTED needs a controlled vocabulary with sharpened concepts. Designers must combine discipline and rigor with exploration and creativity while covering material, informational, and social dimensions. After all, it is the people stuff in particular that makes or breaks CPTED.





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## Hollygrove Revisited



Neighbourhood groups proposing solutions for physical and social infrastructure

A second set of solutions they proposed addressed social infrastructure improvements. These included community meetings, economic improvements, community policing, increased homeownership, and a variety of formal and informal educational strategies. The consonance between the solutions proposed by both Sampson and Hollygrove residents indicates that effective homicide reduction strategies focused upon building neighborhood capital may prove to be an important avenue for further study. Building a healthy environment requires attention to both the physical infrastructure signaling neglect and thus attracting crime, as well as the social infrastructure which, when empowered, can internally combat violence through collective action.



### **Bibliography**

- Jacobs, J. (1961). *The death and life of great American cities*. New York: Random House.
- Sampson, R. J. (2012). *Great American city: Chicago and the enduring neighborhood effect*.

## LANEWAY REDUX

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Laneway design can include all sorts of inventive features: decent streetscaping, decorative lighting, community gardens, and rear door porches to encourage laneway socializing. It might sound unappealing at first, but if design provides an interesting option that residents need, they will use it and also keep it safe.



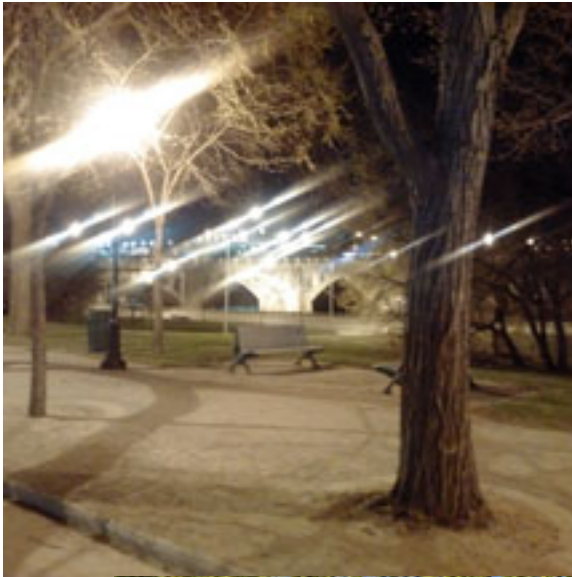
Laneways with attractive social areas provide eyes on the street and territoriality



# THE FINAL STORY:

## TREES AND CRIME

Saskatoon park trees at night



Even colorful tree shrubs contribute if placed well



Google HQ uses trees extensively

Untrimmed trees that obstruct sight-lines into risky areas might be a problem, but overall trees are positive. The Illinois Human-Environment Research Laboratory conducted research in Chicago and found tree areas had up to 58% fewer violent crimes. The U.S. Forest Service discovered tree canopy's in Baltimore corresponded with a 12% reduction in crime. A study in Portland, Oregon revealed similar tree crime-reducing effects. CPTED and trees work together. Trees help spaces, not hinder them. ◇

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Phone: +1- (403) 775-7400 Email: [office@cpted.net](mailto:office@cpted.net)

Address Box 13, site 17, RR 2, Strathmore, Alberta, Canada, T1P 1K5

All ICA members are welcome to submit articles to [gregorysaville@gmail.com](mailto:gregorysaville@gmail.com)

Editor: Gregory Saville Graphics and Layout: Michelle Saville

