

Crime prevention
through
environmental design
criminology essay



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Traditionally, crime prevention worked with organized and mechanical strategies. Organized strategies are considered the use of people like law enforcement, patrol, neighborhood watch teams and security personnel to control crime. The mechanical strategies traditionally are target hardening strategies. This includes anything that is electronic and mechanical like alarm systems, camera systems and locks to deny access to an offender. However, this traditional approach overlooks how the environment can provide opportunities. CPTED uses organized and mechanical approaches as a secondary model. Its primary focus is on natural design strategies. A natural approach enhances safety without creating a prison like environment while reinforcing an atmosphere of comfort.

What makes a particular location prone to opportunities for crime? Why does this location jeopardize the safety of people? Why here? These are all questions crime prevention through environmental design asks when problem solving. For example, say there is a park in a nearby neighborhood that is known for drug sales, thefts and assaults. The park has four different entrances from the neighborhood, no fencing, low lighting, and no upkeep of shrubs and trees. What can CPTED bring to the table in response to this problem? The city installs a fence around the park to create a barrier between public and private property. A gate is also included beyond the fence with a camera attached for extra surveillance. They limit the amount of entrances into the park down to one which limits access control into the park. Lighting gets revamped with higher wattage bulbs. Lastly, a maintenance crew must come in a certain number of times a month to keep up the shrubs and trees to clean appearance. As a result to these changes,

we now have better access control (limited entrances), better natural surveillance from residents (maintained shrubs to see in the park), and better territoriality towards to park to show it's a public area (fencing). The residents can now see into the park, report a crime when they see one and perpetrators will now think twice about committing crime for fear of being observed. Asking the question " why here?" shows that opportunities for crime can arise due to environmental conditions, the place and how that place is used (Zahm, 2007).

CPTED contains three categories of actors. These actors involve normal users, abnormal users, and observers (Paxton). These actors are people who relate one way or another to a space. The sole purpose of CPTED is to design an environment where normal users can use a space as desired while abnormal users are influenced to move past it (Paxton). This design also makes it easier for observers to monitor the space around them and report criminal acts (Paxton).

There are four basic overlapping principles of CPTED as shown in the previous example: natural surveillance (will I be seen), natural access control (can I get in and out), territoriality (does anyone care what happens here), and maintenance. The first principle of CPTED is natural surveillance which uses design to see and be seen. This concept takes advantage of the fear of abnormal users of being observed, recognized and detained (). This is turn, reinforces the feeling of safety and security to the user. Criminals don't want to be seen which is why natural surveillance is a great for keeping them under surveillance. Different design features play a part in increasing visibility of a property or building. Normally, surveillance is done by law <https://assignbuster.com/crime-prevention-through-environmental-design-criminology-essay/>

enforcement patrols and camera systems within buildings and businesses. That is the traditional approach which takes a back seat to CPTED. Therefore, natural surveillance can be accomplished by several techniques. Strategically placing of windows, lighting and landscaping will heighten the normal user's ability to observe abnormal users (White, 2000). Natural surveillance can also take the role of normal users taking note of strangers (abnormal users).

Environments need to be designed where normal users have ample amount of chances to go about their day while observing the space around them (Crime). For example, a small day care installs windows on the back wall that way they can monitor the children playing in the playground while they make lunches inside. Windows are very important because they allow you to see the outside perimeter of your space as well. From inside your home or business you can look out the window to observe homes and business across the street (observers). These observers can watch parking areas and sidewalks for unusual behavior. Additionally, window surveillance only works when landscaping outside it well-kept and lighting is good. If you have bushes too high near your window it will provide offenders with places to hide. It blocks the view of non-abusers targeting your space. Outside landscaping needs to be maintained so observation can happen. Convenience stores that have a bunch of clutter and signs on their windows are obstructing the view to outside the store. Robbers will target that store since the normal users did not see them coming.

Lighting is very important for natural surveillance. Efficient illumination is essential for people to see and be seen. Secondly, the placement of lighting is vital to observation and the reduction of fear of crime. Lighting must be focused on roadways and possible entrapment areas like restrooms and vacant spaces under stairwells (National Crime Prevention Council, 2003). When lights are used for the night time the placement can make or break whether an offender will be observed. All paths, signs, walkways, exits, entrances and so on should be properly lit up or opportunities of crimes may arise. Being able to maintain lighting is the glue to the effectiveness of visibility. All of those overgrown landscapes of flowers, bushes and trees that are blocking the light need to be clipped. (National Crime Prevention Council, 2003) Lastly, light bulbs break, die and get vandalized. Maintaining that those bulbs are constantly replaced and fixed will show the offender that this place is well taken care of. This place is constantly under observation so they will be caught. Without maintenance of lighting, offenders will come take advantage of that chance to commit criminal activity.

Natural Surveillance tries to deter criminals by planning various ways for people to observe possible criminal behavior. " In a review of studies relating to residential burglary, Sorenson (2003) observes how burglars avoid targets that are readily overlooked by neighbors and/or passers-by. Properties with low levels of lighting at night, high fences, or thick shrubs can provide concealment opportunities for burglars particularly when close to points of access such as windows and doors (Weisel, 2002)" (Paul, Saville & Hiller).

When natural surveillance is employed to an utmost extent, it increases the

chances to prevent crime by making the offender clearly obvious to a normal users or police (Crime).

The second principle is natural access control which is a strategy used to control access to an area, deny access, reduce crime opportunity and to create a perception of risk in criminals. "The "National Traumatic Occupational Fatalities" project reported that during 1980-1985, 13 percent of all occupational fatalities were a result of homicide" (Thomas, 1992). Another study done in 1992 on injury and fatality found evidence of OVC in employment establishments (Thomas, 1992). The majority of industries that are highly vulnerable to OVC have one thing in common: employment activities occur in what is usually an unsecured environment.

"Control access by creating both real and perceptual barriers to entry and movement. The environment must offer cues about who belongs in a place, when they are supposed to be there, where they are allowed to be while they are there, what they should be doing, and how long they should stay" (Zahm, 2007). Barriers identify property lines (public to private) and prevent trespassers. Thus, natural access control is accomplished by using fences, gates, signage, pavements, lighting and landscaping. Fences and gates are real barriers where signs, lighting, landscaping and pavements are perceptual barriers. Both types of barriers protect the outside of a space by guaranteeing that unauthorized persons don't get inside and create a perception to offenders that there is a risk in selecting the target. An example of a real barrier would be having a fence around an entire house. This fence relays a message to abnormal users, that the home is restricted.

It also shows territoriality that the people who live there care. By <https://assignbuster.com/crime-prevention-through-environmental-design-criminology-essay/>

strategically placing entrances, exits, gates, and fencing, to control or limit access, natural access control occurs (Lancaster Community Safety Coalition). In the example from earlier, multiple entrances into the park were replaced by a single entrance that includes fencing and a gate.

On the other hand, when moving outside private property to public or semi-public spaces, utilizing access control devices needs more care (Iranmanesh & Etaati, 2009). Planned positioning of signs giving information, barriers, landscaping and lighting “ can direct foot and vehicular traffic in ways that decreases criminal opportunities” (Iranmanesh & Etaati, 2009). This is where perceptual barriers could be used to meet the goal of access control. These barriers consist of: signs, paths, walkways, paving surfaces, or anything that announces the uniqueness of an area. All of these barriers guide movement throughout an area. Signs guide movement and provide who the intended users should be. So if a sign says employees only then abnormal uses will be easy to recognize. Public buildings should have paths going to desired location within the space that way people are not wandering and come upon an opportunity to commit a crime. The best example of perceptual barriers is Disney Land. They have colored roads directing you from one ride to another ride or to the restroom and food court. There is a path for wherever you need to be. The reason for a psychological barrier is that if a target appears difficult, it will become unattractive to potential criminals (Iranmanesh & Etaati, 2009).

When contemplating how you want to control access of your space, the importance of surveillance should not be forgotten. These strategies overlap so you can't think about one without the other. These two concepts can <https://assignbuster.com/crime-prevention-through-environmental-design-criminology-essay/>

occasionally conflict with one another. For example, a low-level row of thorny bushes under the windows circulating a house. The low level of the bush results in good surveillance while the thorns effectively reduce access control. In addition, fencing defines boundary lines that deter and delay intruders. When installing a fence, it should be a type of fencing where you can see through it. Therefore, you are preventing access control by adding a fence but also keeping up with natural surveillance. In addition, the height of the fence can make a big difference as well. If you have the fence too high, you won't be able to see past the fence to what is on the other side.

The third principle is territorial reinforcement which uses design to show ownership.

“ The design should provide cues about who belongs in a place and what they are allowed to do” (Zahm, 2007). The design features should clearly show uniqueness towards the home or building. Potential offenders will look at the territory and what they see will determine whether they will offend there or not. There are many communities where places do not look like they are cared for. It could be because of the lack of maintenance on unkempt landscaping, or dark lighting. Whatever the reason, there is a clear message that this place is unimportant. If the owner does not care why should outsiders? Abnormal uses take this as an opportunity to conduct criminal activity. “ A study by Brown and Bentley (1993) showed how some burglars used territoriality to evaluate risk (Perkins and Taylor, 1996). Eliminating any unassigned spaces and ensuring all spaces have a clearly defined and designated purpose, are routinely cared-for and monitored is also a component of territoriality” (Paul, Saville & Hiller).

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There are many things to consider when displaying territorial reinforcement. Territorial methods include natural surveillance and natural access strategies. Each place should be unique in who belongs there. We need to keep abnormal users out of these normal user areas. A company sign is something that shows uniqueness to a company as well as establishes ownership towards that building. Other reinforcements include: landscaping, flags, fences and pavements. All of these things express proprietorship and the vested interest the owner has over their property. Ownership creates an environment where strangers stand out in the crowd.

Using design structures like fences and landscape you can not only show ownership but also define property lines and zones (public, private, semi-public). The use of front porches creates a transitional area between the Public Street and private home. These zones are part of the use of defensible space which was devised by Oscar Newman in 1972 (Remy). As described in his book *Design Guidelines for Creating Defensible Space*, defensible space is “ a residential environment whose physical characteristics, building layout and site plan function to allow inhabitants themselves to become key agents in ensuring their security.”

All of these functions are not intended to stop anyone from actually intruding into a person or companies space. The point of territoriality is to convey a message to abnormal users that the property belongs to somebody and they should stay away. For buildings and businesses it sends a message of fear to offenders. Territorial reinforcement mixed with natural surveillance and access control, encourages more awareness by normal users in protecting their territory.

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Maintenance is the last principle of CPTED which brings together all the other principles. It relates to the neighborhood's sense of admiration and territoriality (National Crime Prevention Council, 2003). The more rundown an area, the more likely it is to attract unwelcome behaviors. This is because it seems like no one is concerned about what goes on. However, if the area is well preserved it will demote the area as a target because it shows people are concerned with their area. The maintenance and image is the main influence on whether a space is targeted. This is also known as the Broken Windows theory by James Wilson and George Kelling. The physical appearance of a place can enhance or detract how its community sees it as well as outsiders. Moreover, its purpose is to heighten the visibility of natural surveillance by keeping trees and bushes trimmed and to make sure outdoor lighting is all working for the night time. Lastly, the upkeep of your access controls (no chipped paint on the fences) will show that the community and residents care about this area and what happens to it.

“ Home security measures is related to burglary victimization. Burglars are rational actors. When these offenders make the decision to strike, they calculate the costs against the benefits. Home security measures increase these costs and decrease the probability of victimization” (O'Shea, 2000). The study surveyed people (victims and non-victims of home burglaries) on security measures that they use. When asked if they have a neighborhood watch the victim's category was . 9 while the non-victim was . 30. “ Does at least one neighbor have a clear view of their front porch” showed that the victims had . 68 and the non-victim was . 89. The same question was asked about their back porch and the victims were a . 38 while

the non-victims were a . 65. (O'Shea, 2000). CPTED strategies should be incorporated when designing and securing a business, institution and home. When designing a business/home you need to ask yourself questions about security. What is the purpose of the space? How do I make it clear that I own this and will take good care of it (CPTED principles)? Lastly, when the design is done check it over to see if the design reinforces the purpose of your space (Iranmanesh & Etaati, 2009).

Crime prevention through environmental design assesses crime problems and the various ways that the environment presents opportunities for criminal behavior. This crime prevention strategy finds the problem areas and strives to eliminate or reduce opportunities. Changing several characteristics of a space and how that place is seen is how CPTED tries to eliminate and reduce opportunities. CPTED is not just utilized for businesses but for buildings, landmarks and neighborhoods. Physical security was always based on target hardening; make the location hard to get inside through barriers and mechanical objects. However, they never took into consideration that those barriers need to be maintained for it to actually work.

<http://www.usak.org.tr/istanbul/files/cr.pr.environmental.design.pdf>

Effectiveness of Crime prevention through environmental design in reducing robberies

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