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Criminological Highlights is produced approximately six times a year by the Centre of Criminology, University of Toronto and is designed to provide an accessible look at some of the more interesting criminological research that is currently being published.

Contents

- On the first three pages, we have produced a "headline" that summarizes the important points of the article. This is followed by a single paragraph "conclusion" which describes what one might learn from the paper. **We suggest that the busy user of this service begin by reading the headlines** and any of the "conclusions" that seem interesting.
- Next there are one-page summaries of each paper.

Copies of the original articles can be obtained (at cost) from the Centre of Criminology Information Service and Library. Contact Tom Finlay or Andrea Shier.

This issue of *Criminological Highlights* was prepared by Anthony Doob, Tom Finlay, Cheryl Webster, Carla Cesaroni, Myrna Dawson, Rosemary Gartner, Elizabeth Griffiths, Voula Marinos, Renisa Mawani, Andrea Shier, Jane Sprott, Kimberly Varma, and Carolyn Yule.

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The reason that “crime prevention” and “rational” approaches to criminal behaviour have difficulty replacing tough law and order strategies is that these alternatives ignore the “deeper emotional or affective dimensions of crime and its place in society” (p. 265).

“The key to countering the myths of law and order must lie in the ability of programs to help overcome the sense of helplessness and insecurity that crime engenders. They must overcome the ‘compassion fatigue’, the feeling that ‘it is all too much’, the sense that there are no definitive answers to complex social problems” (p. 274). “Successful penal reform must take account of the emotions people feel in the face of wrongdoing” (p. 275).

Reference: Freiberg, Arie. Affective versus Effective Justice: Instrumentalism and Emotionalism in Criminal Justice. *Punishment and Society*, 2000, 65, 547-559. **[Item 1]**

Habitual offender laws -- those that incarcerate apparently high rate offenders for long periods of time -- may have a small impact on crime, but only because of incapacitation (and not deterrent) effects. In any case, even rather draconian laws, like those in the State of Florida, have “not been very effective in reducing crime” (p. 201).

One of the ironies of the habitual offender legislation is that the majority of the more serious offenders caught by these laws would have received harsh sentences under any traditional sentencing regime. Hence, it is not surprising that the new legislation, itself, has little impact. For the most serious offences, huge increases in prison populations would be necessary to produce any benefits in terms of crime reduction. Further, when one considers that these positive impacts will only appear many years after a law is implemented, it would seem that other long term investments (in families, schools, early development, etc.) would be likely to have at least as much crime reduction impact while also producing other positive effects.

Reference: Kovandzic, Tomislav V. The Impact of Florida’s Habitual Offender Law on Crime. *Criminology*, 2001, 39, 179-203. **[Item 2]**

Permitting police departments to keep all or a portion of the “profits of crime” which they help seize seems acceptable until one discovers that law enforcement agencies have become addicted to these funds.

“The most important finding... is that many law enforcement agencies are [now] dependent on civil asset forfeiture.... Nearly 40% of the large agencies... reported that forfeiture is *necessary* as a budgetary supplement” (p. 182). Hence, some have argued that “law enforcement has a vested interest in there being a drug problem because of the money and resources that stand to be gained” (p. 183). Numerous forfeiture reform proposals have been “continually beaten down by the law enforcement lobby.... The struggle may have occurred because of law enforcement’s apparent dependence on civil asset forfeiture” (p. 183).

Reference: Worrall, John L. Addicted to the Drug War: The Role of Civil Asset Forfeiture as a Budgetary Necessity in Contemporary Law Enforcement. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 2001, 29, 171-187. **[Item 3]**

Boys are much more likely to be “life-course persistent” offenders than girls, but only slightly more apt to be “adolescent-limited” offenders. However, the predictors of male and female “life-course persistent” offenders are very similar. In the same way, the factors predicting whether boys and girls will become “adolescent-limited” offenders are also alike.

It is clearly important to differentiate between “life-course persistent” and “adolescent-limited” forms of anti-social behaviour in adolescence. It would appear that the most efficient approach to “life-course persistent” behavioural problems for both boys and girls would be to focus on ways of minimizing risk occurring early in life. In contrast, interventions for adolescent-limited anti-social youths might be more effective if carried out during adolescence. Further, these therapeutic strategies should acknowledge the broadly non-pathological backgrounds of these youths while also making efforts not to “incur social costs” (p. 370) such as those resulting from harsh treatment in the criminal system.

Reference: Moffitt, Terrie E. and Avshalom Caspi. Childhood Predictors Differentiate Life-Course Persistent and Adolescent-Limited Anti-Social Pathways among Males and Females. *Development and Psychopathology*, 2001, 13, 355-375. **[Item 4]**

If one considers minor types of violence (e.g., kicking or threatening) to be equivalent to more serious forms (e.g., beating, choking or using/threatening to use a gun or a knife), the rate of victimizations by male and female spouses are approximately equal. However, women in spousal relationships are much more likely to be victims of serious violence than are men.

“Women were more likely than men to experience frequent and serious types of assaults and, as a result, were more likely to suffer physical injury, to use medical services, to spend time in hospital... to say that they feared for their lives.... [and to suffer] negative emotional outcomes” (p. 40). Not surprisingly, rates from “previous” (as opposed to current) spouses were much higher. Therefore, when one hears that rates of spousal violence are the same for men and women, one needs to remember that this is true only if one is willing to accept that being slapped is the same as being choked, stabbed or beaten.

Reference: Johnson, Holly and Valerie Pottie Bunge. Prevalence and Consequences of Spousal Assault in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Criminology*, 2001, 43, 27-45. **[Item 5]**

Does providing offenders with a job on their release from prison reduce recidivism? It does, but only for those who are relatively mature (at least 27 years old). Arranging employment for younger offenders seems to do little.

“Work appears to be a turning point in the life course of criminal offenders over 26 years old. [Older] offenders [age 27+] who are provided even marginal employment opportunities are less likely to reoffend than those not provided such opportunities” (p. 542). The impact of these programs is age related. In other words, no effects were found for those aged 26 and younger. Because these findings came from a true (random assignment) experiment, it is unlikely that the employment effect is caused by other factors. The findings suggest that “the conditions that stop crime in adulthood are not simply the reverse of those that caused it in adolescence... Whereas parents, peers and neighbourhoods are inarguably among the initial causes of crime... work and family factors take precedence in explaining [the cessation of offending]” (p. 543).

Reference: Uggen, Christopher. Work as a Turning Point in the Life Course of Criminals: A Duration Model of Age, Employment, and Recidivism. *American Journal of Sociology*, 2000, 67, 529-547. **[Item 6]**

Electronic monitoring of offenders is not all that it is cracked up to be. It is not ordered as much as is typically predicted; it seems to create technical breaches, and it does not appear to produce the promised cost savings.

Despite the inability to obtain accurate cost estimates, it appears that, due to the large number of technical breaches, little reason exists to expect more than “at best modest net savings through a reduced use of custody” (p. 210). “There seems [to be] no reason to believe that tagging as a sentence, or part of one, will have any greater effect on offending rates, in the short or longer terms, than any other penalty” (p. 211). This should not be surprising since electronic monitoring does nothing to change the offender. Generally speaking, it would appear that the experience in Scotland with this new surveillance technology should make one question whether electronic monitoring is really capable of having any significant impact on crime or the criminal justice system.

Reference: Smith, David. Electronic Monitoring of Offenders: The Scottish Experience. *Criminal Justice*, 2001, 1(2), 201-214. **[Item 7]**

Sometimes simple programs can reduce crime. Improved street lighting decreased criminal offending in a public housing project in England.

It is clear that relatively minor physical changes in a neighbourhood -- in this case improved street lighting -- can change the level of offending that takes place. Unlike many “situational crime prevention” strategies (e.g., bigger and better locks or security systems), this change is not based on the ability of the resident to pay for improvements. Furthermore, other non-crime benefits existed in this case. More specifically, people apparently felt safer on the streets and were more willing to use them in the evenings.

Reference: Painter, Kate A. and David P. Farrington. Evaluating Situational Crime Prevention Using a Young People’s Survey. *British Journal of Criminology*, 2001, 41, 266-284. **[Item 8]**

The reason that “crime prevention” and “rational” approaches to criminal behaviour have difficulty replacing tough law and order strategies is that these alternatives ignore the “deeper emotional or affective dimensions of crime and its place in society” (p. 265).

Background. Tough law-and-order policies are popular in many countries (e.g., the U.S., Canada, U.K. and Australia) independent of whether crime rates are actually going up, down, or staying the same. “While the policy of fighting crime by increasing imprisonment rates has been described as foolish, misguided, irrational, or uninformed, it has, nonetheless, captured public imagination” (p. 265). In contrast, crime prevention approaches “are regarded by many as defensive, reactive or irrelevant” (p. 266). Hence, crime policy and criminology must deal with “the *affective* as well as the *effective*, with both instrumental and sentimental aspects of penal policy” (p. 266). As David Garland has argued, “the essence of punishment is irrational, unthinking emotion fixed by a sense of the sacred and its violation” (quoted at page 268). To ignore this is to illustrate the conclusion that “academics tend to be emotionally illiterate” (p. 267).

This paper argues that “the urge to punish the criminal is deep-seated and probably universal” (p. 268). People want order and are antagonistic to those who break it. Thus, it is not surprising that those who appeal to these emotions are likely to be successful. Indeed, their approaches resonate with public wishes. As a result, “[t]he discourse is pitched less at the instrumental level than at the symbolic and emotional” (p. 271). It is suggested that people appear to want harsh sentences, for example, for four reasons: security, desert (what is right or proper), the welfare of others, and a desire for change in the hope of creating a better society. Although people can be forgiving of deviance, “they could suffer from compassion fatigue” (p. 271) whereby they are overwhelmed by apparent social problems and “fall back on simpler solutions, on the myths about the effectiveness of severe punishment” (p. 271).

If crime prevention (or other rational approaches) is to be effective, it must go beyond “technical perfection” (p. 272) and “develop philosophies and programs which could compete with law and order at both the symbolic and the practical levels” (p. 272). Unfortunately, crime prevention strategies have a tough row to hoe, particularly because they lack “drama and focus” (p. 272). A necessary condition appears to be that an approach must “stress the ideas of integration, solidarity and cooperation” (p. 273). Restorative justice models seem to have captured the public imagination in part because they “appeal to the creation of social bonds” (p. 273). “Their appeal can... best be explained as expressions of social values, sensibility and morality rather than whether these techniques “work” or not in reducing disputes or levels of crime” (p. 273). In addition, restorative justice approaches may be popular because they remove punishment from the state and return it to the community.

Conclusion. “The key to countering the myths of law and order must lie in the ability of programs to help overcome the sense of helplessness and insecurity that crime engenders. They must overcome the ‘compassion fatigue’, the feeling that ‘it is all too much’, the sense that there are no definitive answers to complex social problems” (p. 274). “Successful penal reform must take account of the emotions people feel in the face of wrongdoing” (p. 275).

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Habitual offender laws -- those that incarcerate apparently high rate offenders for long periods of time -- may have a small impact on crime, but only because of incapacitation (and not deterrent) effects. In any case, even rather draconian laws, like those in the State of Florida, have “not been very effective in reducing crime” (p. 201).

Background. Every U.S. state currently has some form of “habitual offender” laws (e.g., three strikes legislation) that have the effect of incarcerating repeat offenders for longer periods of time than they might ordinarily have served. There are two underlying theories which provide explanations as to how these laws *might* reduce crime. The first is general deterrence and the second is incapacitation. If this legislation were to deter crime in the community, its crime reduction impact would be immediate rather than delayed. If, on the other hand, it were to have incapacitation effects, the impact would only occur several years later since most of those incarcerated under the special “habitual offender” laws would have received a long sentence anyway. Hence, if one is looking for positive impacts, one must look far into the future.

This study looked at the effect of changes that took place in Florida’s laws in 1988. In particular, it examined the impact of an estimate of the “extra prison time” that an offender received because of the longer sentences imposed as a result of modifications in the law. These legislative changes were substantial: an *increase* of approximately 11 years for homicide offences, 12 years for rape, 11 years for robbery, 6.5 years for burglary and 6 years for drug offences.

The immediate effects of the changes in the law are easy to describe: “Florida’s habitual offender law does not reduce crime through [general] deterrence” (p. 190). The impact on reported crime rates of the “extra prison time” which offenders received as a result of the modifications in the law occurred 5-6 years later for some offences. The effects appear to be most stable for robbery, assault, burglary, larceny, and auto theft. There seemed to be no impact on homicide and “the results for rape remain unclear... and subject to debate” (p. 193). Moreover, the effects are small. Not surprisingly, the impact is largest (more than half of the overall impact) on the highest volume, but least serious, crime: theft (p. 193).

Some obvious reasons exist as to why the impacts on crime are so small. Most offenders do not engage in criminal activity with the belief that they will be caught. As a result, deterrent effects of longer sentences are not likely to be large, even if people are aware of the law. Further, sentencing enhancements generally occur when people are beyond their most active crime years. The justice system is not effective at giving long sentences to those particularly likely to re-offend. Finally, in the case of certain offences (e.g., trafficking in drugs), other people take over the roles of those who have been incarcerated.

Conclusion. One of the ironies of the habitual offender legislation is that the majority of the more serious offenders caught by these laws would have received harsh sentences under any traditional sentencing regime. Hence, it is not surprising that the new legislation, itself, has little impact. For the most serious offences, huge increases in prison populations would be necessary to produce any benefits in terms of crime reduction. Further, when one considers that these positive impacts will only appear many years after a law is implemented, it would seem that other long term investments (in families, schools, early development, etc.) would be likely to have at least as much crime reduction impact while also producing other positive effects.

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Permitting police departments to keep all or a portion of the “profits of crime” which they help seize seems acceptable until one discovers that law enforcement agencies have become addicted to these funds.

Background: Many police departments are allowed to keep a share of the proceeds of crime that are confiscated as a result of criminal prosecutions. The argument for seizing assets rests on the notion that this response “strikes at the economic foundations of the illicit drug trade” (p. 183). Further, the police often suggest that “forfeiture proceeds can help to assist law enforcement officials by funding continued drug war activities... or [are] a fortuitous source of income that helps compensate for budgetary shortfalls” (p. 172). These justifications appear neutral until one considers the possibility that police departments could become dependent on such funds. Because of the size and the frequency of these forfeitures, concern has been expressed that “law enforcement agencies come to expect revenue from forfeiture [and, therefore] it is possible that other goals (e.g., service and crime control) are compromised” (p. 172).

In the U.S., “the ‘equitable sharing’ provision of [a federal law] allows federal agencies to divide the proceeds derived from civil forfeitures with all participating agencies” (p. 175). As a result, state agencies can receive money through this process. In effect, “what the police take, they will likely get to keep for their departments under federal law” (p. 175).

This study reports the results of a survey of 770 law enforcement agencies in the U.S. conducted in 1998. Potentially the most important single finding was that 26% of large law enforcement agencies “strongly agreed” and an additional 20% “agreed” with the statement that “[c]ivil forfeiture is necessary as a budgetary supplement” (p. 178). In other words, 46% of these agencies admitted to being dependent on civil forfeitures. Small law enforcement agencies -- those with fewer than 100 sworn officers -- were less dependent. “Only” 31% indicated that they had become addicted to civil forfeitures. It would seem that for larger police forces, receipts from civil forfeitures are more predictable. Consequently, they can afford to depend on the availability of these funds. In fact, an additional analysis suggested that the more money a police department reported receiving as a result of civil forfeitures, the more dependent they admitted to being on them. Hence, regular access to the addictive substance (the proceeds of crime) led to increased reports of addiction.

Conclusion: “The most important finding... is that many law enforcement agencies are [now] dependent on civil asset forfeiture.... Nearly 40% of the large agencies... reported that forfeiture is *necessary* as a budgetary supplement” (p. 182). Hence, some have argued that “law enforcement has a vested interest in there being a drug problem because of the money and resources that stand to be gained” (p. 183). Numerous forfeiture reform proposals have been “continually beaten down by the law enforcement lobby.... The struggle may have occurred because of law enforcement’s apparent dependence on civil asset forfeiture” (p. 183).

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Boys are much more likely to be “life-course persistent” offenders than girls, but only slightly more apt to be “adolescent-limited” offenders. However, the predictors of male and female “life-course persistent” offenders are very similar. In the same way, the factors predicting whether boys and girls will become “adolescent-limited” offenders are also alike.

Background. “Life-course persistent antisocial behaviour originates early in life when the difficult behaviour of a high risk young child is exacerbated by a high-risk social environment” (pp. 355-6). As these children get older, the domain of factors that can be “risks” expands beyond the family to include a large part of their social world. In contrast, most adolescent-limited youths have had a healthy childhood and, for the most part, outgrow their delinquent activities.

This study initially identified, from a longitudinal study of New Zealand children, those who had extreme, and stable, anti-social behaviour problems from ages 5-11. Subsequently, it identified a group of youths who were offending in mid-adolescence, but who were not problematic children. There were about 10 times as many “life-course persistent” boys as girls. For the adolescent-limited youths, there were only 1.5 boys for every girl.

Nevertheless, the “risk predictors” from childhood for the boys and girls who were identified as having “life-course persistent” behaviour problems were more or less the same. The “adolescent-limited” girls and boys had many fewer “risk” factors than the life-course persistent adolescents but, once again, the boys and girls looked very much alike. “The childhood background of delinquents in the life-course persistent path is pathological, but the background of delinquents on the adolescent-limited path is normative” (p. 367).

It is important to remember that there are many more “adolescent-limited” male and female anti-social behaviour problems than “life-course persistent” adolescents. Moreover, even though their backgrounds were very different, their behaviour in mid-adolescence looked very similar. Hence, therapeutic interventions based solely on adolescent-behaviour are more likely than not to be focused on children without problems. Furthermore, although the distributions of types of behavioural problems of male and female adolescents do differ, the findings for females are “broadly consistent” (p. 368) with those reported in studies that focused largely or exclusively on boys.

Conclusion. It is clearly important to differentiate between “life-course persistent” and “adolescent-limited” forms of anti-social behaviour in adolescence. It would appear that the most efficient approach to “life-course persistent” behavioural problems for both boys and girls would be to focus on ways of minimizing risk occurring early in life. In contrast, interventions for adolescent-limited anti-social youths might be more effective if carried out during adolescence. Further, these therapeutic strategies should acknowledge the broadly non-pathological backgrounds of these youths while also making efforts not to “incur social costs” (p. 370) such as those resulting from harsh treatment in the criminal system.

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If one considers minor types of violence (e.g., kicking or threatening) to be equivalent to more serious forms (e.g., beating, choking or using/threatening to use a gun or a knife), the rate of victimizations by male and female spouses are approximately equal. However, women in spousal relationships are much more likely to be victims of serious violence than are men.

Background. There are a number of studies that have reported that “women use violent tactics against their spouses as frequently as men” (p. 28). For example, the recent British crime survey found that women were only slightly more likely than men to report being assaulted or receiving frightening threats from a spouse in the previous year (5.9% vs. 4.9%). Data such as these have been used to suggest that a fearful symmetry of violence exists in spousal relationships.

This study reports results from the 1999 Statistics Canada General Social Survey module on spousal violence. A man or a woman in a household (but not both) answered the questions about victimization. For the first time in Canada, the same questions about spousal abuse were asked of both sexes.

The results are easy to describe: Women are slightly less likely to report being victims of any form of violence from a current spouse in the past five years than are men (but no difference was found for the previous year). Women are considerably more likely to report being the victim of violent acts at the hand of a previous spouse (both in the past year and during the last five years).

More important is the finding that “the types of violence inflicted by marital partners [are] quite different... Women were more likely to be subjected to threats of violence, pushing, grabbing or shoving, being beaten or choked, having a gun or knife used against them, or sexually assaulted. Higher percentages of men were slapped or kicked, bit or hit... Women are almost four times more likely than men to [be the victim of] the most serious and potentially injurious category of assaults...” (pp. 34-35). Furthermore, women are much more likely than men to be a victim of emotional abuse (e.g., name-calling and put-downs, threats to harm someone else, limits on contacts with family or friends, damage or destruction of property).

Conclusion. “Women were more likely than men to experience frequent and serious types of assaults and, as a result, were more likely to suffer physical injury, to use medical services, to spend time in hospital... to say that they feared for their lives... [and to suffer] negative emotional outcomes” (p. 40). Not surprisingly, rates from “previous” (as opposed to current) spouses were much higher. Therefore, when one hears that rates of spousal violence are the same for men and women, one needs to remember that this is true only if one is willing to accept that being slapped is the same as being choked, stabbed or beaten.

Reference: Johnson, Holly and Valerie Pottie Bunge. Prevalence and Consequences of Spousal Assault in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Criminology*, 2001, 43, 27-45.

Does providing offenders with a job on their release from prison reduce recidivism? It does, but only for those who are relatively mature (at least 27 years old). Arranging employment for younger offenders seems to do little.

Background. It is often assumed that getting a job is a crucial life event which marks the transition from adolescence to adulthood and accounts for the cessation of offending. The only problem with this hypothesis is that the data do not support it. On the contrary, “[m]ost experimental efforts to reduce crime through employment have had null or disappointingly small treatment effects” (p. 530). These findings would seem to suggest that it is not work alone, but work in combination with some other variable(s), that is important.

This study re-examines the data from a large experimental program in the U.S. to which 3000 people were referred by criminal justice, social service or job-training agencies. These individuals were randomly assigned to experimental or control conditions. Those in the experimental (treatment) condition were offered minimum wage jobs (in construction or service industries). The participants in the experiment had been incarcerated in the previous 6 months, had participated in a drug treatment program, or, in the case of a youth, often had an official delinquency or criminal record. The experiment was run in nine cities. About $\frac{3}{4}$ of the participants had at least one previous property offence.

The results are simple: Six months after assignment to the guaranteed job (or to the control group in which no employment was offered) differences began to emerge between the treatment group and the control group *but only for those who were age 27 or older*. Further, the “older” individuals in the treatment group were less likely than those in the control group to have been arrested from the six-month point onwards. Three years after the initial assignment, approximately 47% of the (age 27+) control group had not been arrested. In contrast, approximately 58% of the (age 27+) treatment group had gone without any arrests. The results were similar for “illegal earnings”. Almost immediately after assignment to treatment or control, differences existed on whether or not the men reported illegal earnings. Those individuals in the treatment group who were aged 27+ were less likely to report illegal earnings than similar aged people who had been assigned to the control group.

Conclusion. “Work appears to be a turning point in the life course of criminal offenders over 26 years old. [Older] offenders [age 27+] who are provided even marginal employment opportunities are less likely to reoffend than those not provided such opportunities” (p. 542). The impact of these programs is age related. In other words, no effects were found for those aged 26 and younger. Because these findings came from a true (random assignment) experiment, it is unlikely that the employment effect is caused by other factors. The findings suggest that “the conditions that stop crime in adulthood are not simply the reverse of those that caused it in adolescence... Whereas parents, peers and neighbourhoods are inarguably among the initial causes of crime... work and family factors take precedence in explaining [the cessation of offending]” (p. 543).

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Electronic monitoring of offenders is not all that it is cracked up to be. It is not ordered as much as is typically predicted; it seems to create technical breaches, and it does not appear to produce the promised cost savings.

Background. Despite the lack of convincing evidence of its efficacy, electronic monitoring (first introduced in the U.S.) has become popular in a number of places. It was initially used in Britain in 1989 as a condition of bail. Early enthusiasm turned sour when it was imposed less frequently than predicted and resulted in regular breaches of very stringent bail conditions. Sweden and the Netherlands have used electronic tagging more as an alternative to prison (e.g., whereby offenders given short prison sentences can apply for it or those in prison can be granted early release contingent on their consent to be electronically monitored) (p. 20).

This study of the Scottish experience with electronic monitoring suggests that, like other places that have implemented it, more enthusiasm exists in principle than in practice for the procedure. In three locations, very few (fewer than 3%) of all possible cases received it. Part of the reason for this low rate of use is that there were many technical breaches associated with the procedure. Of 152 orders, “only 11 offenders... completed their orders with no unauthorized absences at all” (p. 208). Reasons for breaches were typically that the offender was not at the right place at the right time, domestic disputes occurred which resulted in the offender leaving the home without authorization, or there was damage to the equipment. Long orders were less likely to be completed successfully and the use of electronic monitoring on young repeat offenders was particularly unsuccessful.

Costs, in Scotland, could not be assessed with accuracy because commercial confidentiality agreements made it impossible to know the true cost of monitoring by private sector companies. “The requirement of commercial confidentiality [could] mean that the costs of commercially provided community sentences could never be made available to public scrutiny in the same way as is now routinely done for sentences delivered by non-profit making agencies” (p. 209). One unanticipated “cost” was in relation to the families of those being monitored. Relatives often felt pressure and anxiety related to their role in monitoring their family member. The question of how much responsibility should be devolved to families remains open.

Conclusion. Despite the inability to obtain accurate cost estimates, it appears that, due to the large number of technical breaches, little reason exists to expect more than “at best modest net savings through a reduced use of custody” (p. 210). “There seems [to be] no reason to believe that tagging as a sentence, or part of one, will have any greater effect on offending rates, in the short or longer terms, than any other penalty” (p. 211). This should not be surprising since electronic monitoring does nothing to change the offender. Generally speaking, it would appear that the experience in Scotland with this new surveillance technology should make one question whether electronic monitoring is really capable of having any significant impact on crime or the criminal justice system.

Reference: Smith, David. Electronic Monitoring of Offenders: The Scottish Experience. *Criminal Justice*, 2001, 1(2), 201-214.

Sometimes simple programs can reduce crime. Improved street lighting decreased criminal offending in a public housing project in England.

Background. Various approaches have been used to reduce crime. One of the most direct ways of achieving this goal is to make the immediate environment less conducive to criminal activity. Much ordinary crime is opportunistic. In other words, the crime incident takes place because the conditions were somehow right for it. Had the conditions been less amenable, those committing the offence would not necessarily seek out other places where it would be easier to commit a crime. Studies suggest that “situational crime prevention” efforts do not simply displace criminal activity into locations more conducive to crime.

This study examined the impact of improved street lighting. Comparing an “experimental” area, in which lighting was improved, and a “control” area in which it was not, results from a victimization survey showed that crime was reduced overall by 23% in the “improved lighting” location, but by only 3% in the control location. The control and experimental areas originally had equally poor street lighting. The improved lighting was focused on the main roads. Another effect of the improved street lighting was that “the number of people (especially women) on the street after dark increased in the experimental area, but not the control area” (p. 270).

A survey of youths aged 12-17 was also carried out. In face-to-face interviews conducted in a manner in which the youths would feel safe to admit offending, these individuals were asked whether they had committed each of approximately 30 antisocial acts. The amount of violence that these youths admitted to engaging in at night decreased significantly more in the area in which the lighting had been improved than in the control area. There was also some indication that youths were less likely, under the experimental condition, to be stopped or “told off” by the police. The adolescents in the improved-lighting location also showed a greater reduction in their levels of fear of being victimized than did the youths living in the control location.

Conclusion. It is clear that relatively minor physical changes in a neighbourhood -- in this case improved street lighting -- can change the level of offending that takes place. Unlike many “situational crime prevention” strategies (e.g., bigger and better locks or security systems), this change is not based on the ability of the resident to pay for improvements. Furthermore, other non-crime benefits existed in this case. More specifically, people apparently felt safer on the streets and were more willing to use them in the evenings.

Reference: Painter, Kate A. and David P. Farrington. Evaluating Situational Crime Prevention Using a Young People’s Survey. *British Journal of Criminology*, 2001, 41, 266-284.