

# **Crime Prevention**

**by Nick Tilley**

**Willan Publishing**

**Review by Craig Paterson, Sheffield Hallam University**

Nick Tilley's book, 'Crime Prevention', takes on the potentially dry task of introducing relative newcomers to the subject of crime prevention as well as the multitude of ways in which crime reduction strategies 'work'. In the introduction to the book the author makes it clear that he is not concerned with discussing the sociological, political and economic context that led to the rise of crime prevention from the 1970s. Instead, Tilley restricts the focus to strategic and tactical approaches used in the prevention of crime. In many ways the book succeeds in taking this practical concern with the mechanics of crime prevention to a wider audience than other recent forays into this area. Most obviously, the book will be helpful for students and practitioners who are new to the academic study of crime prevention. Recent texts in this area have focused upon either comparative work (Crawford, 2009) or more in depth analysis of broad changes in the field of crime prevention and community safety (Hughes, 2007) and, because of this, Tilley's book provides an accessible source of information for those new to the subject. The use of learning exercises throughout the book and a crime autobiography ensures students and practitioners are able to make clear connections between theory and practice and in this sense the book provides a very good introduction to the subject.

Unsurprisingly, the book's relatively simplistic account of crime prevention is also its main weakness and, to some degree, the author admits this at the beginning of the text. The discussion of values has insufficient depth whilst more critical perspectives of developments in administrative criminology and crime science are, to varying degrees, sidelined. Most obviously, the politicised discourse that surrounds contested understandings of 'community' as well as the function creep of crime prevention strategies into nuisance prevention are left unexplored. This means that 'Crime Prevention' needs to be read alongside more critical texts to provide students and practitioners with a balanced appreciation of the subject area. Chapter 2 provides some insightful commentary on general deterrence and policing strategies but the 'ethical practice' that accompanies this discussion is treated as a peripheral concern. Chapter 3 works in a similar vein with a helpful introduction to Farrington's work on social risk factors being undermined by an unwillingness to acknowledge the inherent class prejudice that is built into this work. Chapter 4 looks at community crime prevention in more depth and provides some good analysis of the problem of stakeholder bias in implementing crime prevention programmes. Chapter 5 provides a similarly good introduction to situational crime prevention theory and techniques. The section on rational choice theory stands out here as it is a concept that is often left under-explored but much more is needed on the broader social, political and economic context that led to the popularity of a range of right wing theories such

as 'defensible space' and 'broken windows'. Chapters 6 and 7 look at the processes of implementing and evaluating crime prevention programmes and provide some useful case study examples.

One of the main themes of the book is that programme failures are often a consequence of implementation problems rather than theory. This is because Tilley views implementation and evaluation as purely technical issues rather than as contested political processes. This denial of power relations at the local level leaves the analysis in a position where it is unable to make sense of the important role of politics at the micro and macro levels in the strategic administration of crime prevention policy. Once these limitations have been acknowledged, it is possible to appreciate the detailed empirical analysis in the book as well as the multitude of case studies that illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of different crime prevention mechanisms. The book will be particularly useful for students with an interest in crime prevention practice as well as those practitioners whose interests lean towards academic analysis. At times, the book falls into the trap of seeing the world through the prism of 'crime' and consequently demonstrates an unhealthy obsession with the formal mechanics of social control. Thus, the book must be read more as a practitioners guide than as a broad criminological introduction to the subject of crime prevention. In many ways, 'Crime Prevention' fits neatly with the multitude of practice-focused texts that have been produced by criminal justice splinter cells within the criminological discipline. The growth in subjects such as crime science, police studies, forensics, and others are all examples of a managerial turn within criminology that is reflective of the very social and political dynamics that Tilley excludes from his book.

### **Bibliography**

- Crawford, A. (ed.) (2009) **Crime Prevention Policies in Comparative Perspective**. Cullompton: Willan.
- Hughes, G. (2007) **The Politics of Crime and Community**. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.