

# A Quasi-Experimental Analysis of School-Based Situational Crime Prevention Measures

Gary Zhang

## Abstract

In recent years, there has been an expansion of situational crime prevention (SCP) measures in K-12 schools, including physical controls, law enforcement personnel, and security policies that are designed to prevent crime by modifying situational aspects of the school environment. Although SCP measures are now increasingly commonplace in schools, there is inadequate research demonstrating the need for SCP measures and their impacts on school crime. In particular, there is contradictory and inconclusive evidence of their effectiveness and research has largely been limited to examining aggregate outcomes through the use of non-experimental, correlational designs. This dissertation aims to address these gaps in the literature by analyzing a nationally representative, cross-sectional sample of 2,648 schools to explore whether school-based SCP measures cause changes in the incidence of seven measures of school crime and whether the effects of SCP measures differ by the type of crime. A quasi-experimental, propensity-score weighting approach is used to reduce the threat of selection bias resulting from the lack of random assignment in observational data and therefore allow for stronger causal inferences than prior studies. Findings indicate that many SCP measures were observed to have no impact regardless of the crime outcome. However, some SCP measures were reported to have deterrent effects but these effects vary by the type of crime being targeted. Furthermore, several of the measures were found to consistently increase the incidence of crime, suggestive of detection or crime-inducing effects. Explanations for these results and implications for school policy and practice are discussed.