

SITUATIONAL LOGIC IN SOCIAL SCIENCE INQUIRY:
FROM ECONOMICS TO CRIMINOLOGY

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Karl Popper proposed that the model of explanation in economics should become the general model of explanation across the social sciences. His own interest in 'situational logic' did not, however, take him further than economics. Economists, for their part, have debated whether situational logic (the rationality principle), accurately describes economic methodology.

Extending the rationality principle to criminology, arguably the most 'dismal' of the social sciences, offers a good argument for the utility of situational logic. Nobel economist Gary S. Becker used the essential features of situational logic in his 'economic approach to crime' of 1968. Becker incorporated situational logic, as explicated by Noretta Koertge, in his pursuit of a rational choice view of crime. Becker's model demonstrates the applicability of situational logic to economics, and to criminology, except that he proposes a national crime policy not entirely consistent with Popper's general philosophy of social science.

Ronald Clarke's 'situational crime prevention' yields an even better demonstration. Clarke, a psychologist, developed situational crime prevention techniques while at the Home Office during the 1970s. This model, which implements opportunity-reduction measures in local contexts, has become an important part of national crime prevention strategies in the UK, as well as Australia, Canada, and the USA. Clarke's model incorporates the elements of situational logic Koertge defined. It also incorporates Popper's general philosophy of social science; specifically, his view of piecemeal social engineering and his concern with unintended social repercussions.