

Routine Activity Theory

Criminal Justice

Crime as an event needing three things in one place at one time.

A crime event needs a likely offender, a suitable target and no capable guardian, converging in time and space.

Likely offender + suitable target + absent guardian

Empty platform, late

Add staff or lighting

Guardian absent

Bike, crowded street

Target still suitable

Guardian present

Fixed cash route

Vary or harden it

Target predictable

THE COMMON MISTAKE

× **Crime rose, so motivation rose**

✓ **Opportunity structures changed**

Rates can move because targets and supervision changed, with no change in how many people are willing to offend.

Educational reference. Cohen and Felson's account explains events and rates; it does not explain individual motivation.