

You Cannot Pick The Person. You Can Change The Room.

Part 1 · Criminology × Aviation · cross-domain analysis from the Ontology corpus — Siegel, Martin, and the three aviation texts

The takeaway

Both fields gave up on predicting the offender and moved to changing the opportunity — independently, and for the same reason.

Neither can say who. Both can say where, when, and under what conditions. Every defence that works in either field is built on that admission.

The common patterns

- **Neither field can produce a usable profile.** Martin's causal list runs from political history to individual idiosyncrasy, and no variable dominates. Siegel offers six theory families, none refuted, none integrated.
- **So both pivoted to situations.** Siegel's situational crime prevention reduces the *opportunities* to commit a particular crime. Martin's target hardening makes a site *harder to attack*. Same move, different vocabulary.
- **Routine activities is the shared equation.** A predatory act needs a motivated offender, a suitable target, and no capable guardian. Airport security removes the third and degrades the second; it never touches the first.
- **Both name the same ceiling, in almost the same words.** Siegel: only the truly irrational attack a well-defended, inaccessible target. Martin: hardening deters the less determined and less resourceful.
- **And both admit the committed actor walks through it.** Martin is explicit that determined attackers design methods to circumvent fixed barriers, surveillance and security posts.
- **Prediction fails at the same resolution in both.** Intelligence is useful for generalised prediction and poor at precise time and place — which is exactly what criminology finds about forecasting individual offending.
- **Both discovered that measures can backfire.** Siegel's example is street lighting: better light can bring offenders and victims into the same space and help attackers judge which targets are worth taking.
- **Both get unearned wins too.** Siegel's diffusion of benefits — cameras installed against shoplifting also suppress vandalism, because deterrence spills past the crime it was aimed at.

On the background of offenders

- **The honest answer is that there is no reliable profile, and that is a finding rather than a gap.** Both literatures tried and both stopped.

- **Martin separates three individual origins** — rational cost-benefit, personal dissatisfaction, and cultural threat perception — and treats none of them as sufficient on its own.
- **Siegel's strongest empirical result is about concentration, not character.** A small chronic group produces most offending, but the field still cannot say in advance who joins it.
- **Where criminology does have numbers, they are demographic patterns, not identities.** Age, gender and urban clustering describe a population; they do not identify a person.
- **Which is why screening looks for objects, not people.** Metal detectors and scanners test what someone carries, because the alternative requires a profile nobody has.

The access problem neither field solved

- **Perimeter security assumes the threat starts outside the trust boundary.** Screening exists to stop that crossing, and it is good at it.
- **It says nothing about anyone already inside.** A person with legitimate credentials has already passed every control the model contains.
- **The corpus is thin here, and that is worth stating.** Martin covers hijacking through case studies and the treaty regime, not through analysis of insider access.
- **Criminology has the concept but not the aviation application** — offending by those with lawful access is a recognised category, and the two literatures never meet on it.

What actually defends

- **Reduce the opportunity rather than screen the person.** Both fields converge here, and it is the only advice either supports with evidence.
- **Harden the specific site, and expect it to be temporary.** Martin is blunt that hardening is short-term protection, not a way to end a threat environment.
- **Expect displacement, and measure it.** The Richmond crackdown in Siegel produced no displacement, which is notable precisely because displacement is the normal assumption.
- **Layer, because any single barrier is designed around.** The value is in raising the attacker's failure rate, not in building something unbeatable.
- **Law enforcement and legalistic responses carry the long run.** Martin's framing: bring the actor into the criminal justice system rather than treating every case as a security problem.

AI's Take

- **The strongest finding is the independent convergence.** Two fields with no shared literature arrived at opportunity reduction, and both stated the same limit on it.
- **That convergence is evidence.** When separate traditions reach a conclusion without citing each other, the conclusion is doing the work rather than the citation.
- **The backfire cases are what make it credible.** A field that reports street lighting increasing crime is not selling its own method.

- **The uncomfortable implication.** If you cannot identify the person, then every defence is environmental — and environmental defence has a hard ceiling against anyone determined.
- **The gap worth naming.** Insider access sits exactly between these two literatures and is covered properly by neither. That is a real hole, not an artefact of this corpus.