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Preventing Crime: A Holistic Approach, by Tore Bjørger, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, 302pp., £54.99 (HBK), ISBN: 978-1-137-56047-6

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In *Preventing Crime: A Holistic Approach* Tore Bjørger sets out to develop a comprehensive model for preventing crime. The model aims to be comprehensive in both the range of approaches it adopts and also in the range of crimes it can be applied to. Bjørger states that '[t]he general model can, in principle, be used to prevent all forms of crime' (p1).

The model developed by Bjørger brings together underlying mechanisms from different existing crime prevention models: the criminal justice model; the social model; the situational model; and the risk management model. Bjørger argues that, rather than these models being incongruent or competing approaches, they can complement and strengthen one another. He therefore aims to combine them into a unified and more comprehensive approach. He does this by deconstructing the existing models, in order to identify key general preventive mechanisms, and then integrating them into one comprehensive generic model of crime prevention. In this way he develops a model consisting of nine preventive mechanisms: establishing and maintaining normative barriers to crime; reducing recruitment; deterrence; disrupting criminal acts; incapacitation; protecting vulnerable targets; reducing harm; reducing rewards; and encouraging desistance. These mechanisms are seen as 'barriers to committing crime' (pxiv) and Bjørger argues that 'a comprehensive strategy must [...] be based on establishing a series of barriers that can work together: the criminal acts or actors not stopped by the initial barrier may be stopped by one of the other barriers' (pxiv). The order of these barriers are not considered to be 'set in stone' (p15), partly because, in practice, the mechanisms are seen to operate in parallel.

Bjørger states that the model he has developed is strongly influenced by, and may be seen as a development of, the so-called Nordic model which, according to Bjørger 'emphasises social prevention in combination with situational prevention and there is less reliance on and faith in the criminal justice system's ability alone to reduce crime' (pxv). He argues that a comprehensive crime prevention strategy should contain all the above components. He also stresses the need for a large range of crime prevention actors including: the police; parents; schools; youth workers; religious leaders; various public agencies; and private organisations.

The aims of the book, the theoretical framework and rationale for developing a comprehensive crime prevention model, together with the nature of the nine identified preventive mechanisms, are clearly set out in the preface to the book and the first introductory chapter. In subsequent chapters Bjørger makes his model more concrete, and demonstrates its broad utility, by applying it to five very different types of crime, namely: domestic burglary; violent youth gangs; organized crime originating in outlaw motorcycle clubs; driving under the influence; and terrorism. Hence the types of crime addressed include acquisitive and violent offences and are diverse in terms of potential causes. Bjørger seeks to illustrate that 'although the measures for activating the preventive mechanisms

may be different for different forms of crime [...] the mechanisms and general principles for preventing crime are the same' (p34).

Bjørgero lays out the parameters and background to the problem for each crime type, in general terms and also, more specifically, in relation to Norway and Scandinavia. The development of youth gang culture in the Scandinavian context and the crime problems related to outlaw motorcycle clubs in this region were particularly interesting. For each crime type, and each of the nine mechanisms, Bjørgero then sets out: how the preventive mechanism works; which measures might be used to activate the mechanism; who the principal actors are in terms of implementing the measures; who the target groups are; the strengths of the measures employed; and, importantly, the limitations and possible negative side effects of each of the measures. This information should be of great practical utility to practitioners and policy makers seeking better ways to prevent crime. It essentially provides a sort of toolkit. It is particularly useful that for each mechanism and crime type there is a section on limitations and possible negative consequences. In these sections attention is drawn to measures which have been found to actually exacerbate the situation, such as 'stop-and-frisk' (p102) and 'Scared Straight' (p91). If this information is heeded by policy makers, it may cause them to think twice about implementing these potentially counterproductive strategies elsewhere. The sections on limitations and negative consequences also set out the limitations of strategies which have been found to be relatively effective. This information may help to avert unrealistic expectations. The information in these sections may also assist in deciding whether strategies employed elsewhere are likely to be effective within the context under consideration and whether some form of modification may make a strategy more likely to be effective within a different context. Bjørgero emphasises the need to adopt a strategic analysis approach, which takes full account of the local context.

All the information in relation to how the model can be applied to different crime types is valuable and informative. However, if one is reading the book from start to finish, the format in which the information is presented does come across as somewhat repetitive; especially as some concepts, such as 'respect' in relation to violent youth gangs, inevitably crop up in relation to a number of the different mechanisms. Furthermore, the vast number of ideas and evidence presented does make it difficult to assimilate all the information. It may have been useful to summarise some of the content in the form of text boxes, drawing together the main points; thereby making it easier for readers to pick out the key messages. In this way key information, particularly in relation to potential negative consequences, may be less likely to be overlooked by busy practitioners and policy makers. It would also be helpful to set out the key information in a way which allowed the reader to more easily make comparisons across the mechanisms for each crime type, for example in relation to limitations. An overarching discussion at the end of each chapter drawing together some of the main information, and giving more attention to issues such as ethical dilemmas would be beneficial.

In applying the model to different crime types, Bjørgero draws on numerous examples from Norwegian crime prevention practice and research, as well as crime prevention literature from elsewhere. The focus on Norwegian and other Scandinavian initiatives will prove useful to readers who are less familiar with crime prevention approaches and research from this

geographical area. It has the potential to provide practitioners and policy makers with fresh ideas. Just some of the ideas which may prove interesting to those outside Scandinavia include: Oslo police force's strategy of preventive dialogue with outlaw motorcycle gangs and political activists (p151); the development of Exit units in Denmark to enable people to disengage from outlaw motorcycle clubs and other criminal gangs (pp156-157); and the use of building and licensing regulations by local authorities to prevent outlaw motorcycle clubs establishing themselves in an area (p146).

Personally I found the chapters on violent youth gangs and outlaw motorcycle clubs more engaging than the chapter on domestic burglary. This is to some extent a consequence of the nature of the crimes themselves; but also because the chapters on violent youth gangs, and particularly outlaw motorcycle clubs, included some fascinating detail on the causes and evolution of these problems within the Norwegian context. I feel it would have been better if the domestic burglary chapter had been placed later in the book, after gaining the reader's attention, even though domestic burglary is a commonplace crime that merits our attention.

In conclusion, this book should prove to be a very beneficial resource for students and academics, but particularly for policy makers and practitioners seeking to develop crime prevention initiatives. The emphasis on theory, empirical research and adopting a strategic analysis approach, which takes account of the local context, should assist in developing initiatives which are more likely to be effective within the context within which they are applied; thereby helping to target limited resources.

References

Bjørgero, T., (2016). *Preventing crime: a holistic approach*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.