

**Rochester SACSI Research  
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**Theory, Method and Intervention under SACSI**

This brief note will examine the implications for theory, method and interventions as they flow from the assumptions of the SACSI process.

The SACSI process is a process of developing research-based interventions, implementing them, evaluating their impact and revising them based on data. Under SACSI the preference is for locally based research and interventions. The model presumes that analysis at the local level will provide the best foundation for interventions at the local level. Larger levels of policy are not addressed under SACSI and there is relatively little role for higher levels of analysis. Higher levels of analysis are useful only to the extent they inform the local-level.

The SACSI assumptions thus shape the approach to research and intervention and, therefore, also to the use of theory, since intervention presumes some level of underlying theory. The SACSI assumptions seem most supportive of inductive processes such as grounded theory development (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987). Grounded theory involves the use of research, often qualitative studies, to derive theory which is then tested with additional data. Evaluating interventions that are based on grounded theory may be seen as part of the process of testing that theory.

SACSI assumptions also seem to support other approaches to theory. The time frame of the process, the focus on specific offenses or problem areas, and the goal of developing interventions tends to support theories that do not emphasize the motivations of offenders. Instead, the process seems to favor developing situationally oriented models of the target offenses. That approaches would seem most related to topic areas including victimology, environmental criminology (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1991), and most recently rational choice models (Clarke and Cornish, 2001) and routine activity theory (Felson, 1998). In terms of intervention, the SACSI process would seem to favor what have been described as situational crime control models (Clarke, 1997).

The broadest form of situational theory of crime would look something like this: A crime is an event that occurs in time and space conducive to that specific crime. Under such a theory, time includes both real time (season, day, hour) and social time. Social time is defined as a point in the relationship between the participants. Space includes both physical space and social space. Social space is defined as the number, nature and proximity of persons occupying physical space.

This rudimentary theory at least suggests a process that can refine the theory through induction and ultimately produce interventions based on the refined theory. The methods suggested by such an approach would favor analysis of crimes as distinct events, that is, criminal events. With the Rochester focus on homicide, the case review process provides a potent way of collecting data on homicide events. The value of this process in building models of Rochester

homicide is much more clear now than when the case reviews began.

The case review process provides systematic and detailed analysis of the homicide events. The case reviews have thus permitted an identification of three basic types of homicide: wrong place/wrong time, disputes and rip-off homicides. The reviews have helped focus our attention on the later two and most prevalent types. And, the case reviews have enabled us to draft conceptual models of these types of homicide events. Tentative models of dispute and rip-off homicides are attached below.

These models then can help direct our research and can identify potential targets of intervention. The case reviews will continue to serve the research process through validation of the major categories of homicide and through contributions to refining the models. In addition these models now direct the researchers attention to learning as much as possible about fatal disputes and about drug houses. We will use other methods including quantitative analysis, focus groups and interviews to gather the needed data.

Refinement of the models will serve to guide the discussion of interventions. Thus each model may make clear the points in the process that lend themselves to intervention. Under this approach appropriate interventions can range widely and include such things as deterrence of specific individuals or dispute resolution. The models may also suggest that several very different interventions are appropriate for each type of homicide.

The SACSI process, by virtue of its short time frame, specificity regarding problem focus and demand for interventions, involves key assumptions that help shape the theory, methods and interventions most likely to emerge from it. There would appear to be value in delineating this theory and method and the assumptions that ultimately shape interventions. Likewise, there may be value in continuously questioning the underlying assumptions and their impact on our response to crime.

## REFERENCES

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