

Space, Time, and Crime

Space, Time, and Crime

Fourth Edition

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Contents

Introduction	xi
Chapter 1 · The Basics of Space, Time, and Crime	3
Crime Places and Spaces in History	3
What Is “Space”?	5
What Is Time? The Language of Temporal Analysis	7
Moments in Time	9
Duration	10
Distance as Time	11
What Is Crime?	11
A Note on Crime and Deviance	12
Defining Crimes	13
Counting Crimes: Official Statistics	14
Calls for Service	15
Incident Data	16
Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reports	17
The National Incident-Based Reporting System: The New UCR?	22
Counting Crimes: “Unofficial” Data	25
Surveys: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly	25
National Crime Victimization Survey	28
Self-Report Surveys	32
Qualitative Techniques	33
Summary	34
Chapter 2 · Positivism, Social Ecology, and the Chicago School	35
Setting the Stage: Chicago at the Turn of the 20th Century	35
Are Certain Groups Inherently Inferior? The “Feeble-minded” Debate	37

Cesare Lombroso and the Criminal Man	38
IQ, Heredity, and Crime: The Thoughts of Henry Goddard	39
Enter the Chicago School	40
The Sociology of Emile Durkheim (1858–1917): Societal Growth and Anomie	40
The Invasion, Dominance, and Succession of Robert Ezra Park (1864–1944)	42
The Development of Natural Areas	43
Burgess’s Contributions: Life in the Zones	44
Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay: Delinquency and Place	46
The Data: Official Delinquency Reports	47
Spot, Rate, and Zone Map Construction	48
The Distribution of Delinquency and Other Social Conditions by Zones	49
Economic Conditions and Population Shifts	50
So, What Is Happening in the Inner Zones?	53
Social Disorganization and Juvenile Delinquency	54
Critiques of Social Disorganization Theory	55
The Saints and the Roughnecks: A Lesson in Labeling	56
Other Critiques of Social Disorganization	58
The Legacy of the Chicago School	58
Crime and Community-Level Factors	59
Crime and Poverty	59
Crime and Ethnic/Racial Heterogeneity	60
Crime and Population Density	60
Crime and Instability	61
Sampson’s Concept of Collective Efficacy and Crime	62
Summary	64
In the Chicago School Tradition . . .	64
Spotlight on Research I	65
Works Cited	75
Chapter 3 • Choosing Crime	77
The Evolution of the Classical School of Criminology	77
Cesare Beccaria on Crimes and Punishments (1764)	80
The Keys to Deterrence: Certain, Swift, and Proportionate Punishments	81
From Classical to Neoclassical and Beyond	82
So What Works? The Never-Ending Debate	84

Contemporary Applications of Classical Criminology	86
Rational Choice	86
Cornish and Clarke's Decision Models	87
Event Decisions	88
Persistence and Desistence	89
Summary: Rational Choice Theory	90
Routine Activities	90
The Crime Triangle	92
The Problem Analysis Triangle: The Addition of Controllers	94
Advances in Routine Activities Theory: The Addition of	
Social Control	96
Summary: Routine Activities	98
Crime Pattern Theory	99
The Language of Crime Pattern Theory: Nodes, Paths, and Edges	99
Crimes and Cognitive Maps	101
Cognitive Maps and Urban Development	102
Target Selection and the Rational Offender	104
Summary: Crime Pattern Theory	105
Situational Action Theory	106
Personal Characteristics	106
Environmental Features	107
Situational Mechanisms	109
Action	110
The Bottom Line: Is Crime Rational?	110
Summary	113
Decision Process: To Rob or Not to Rob	113
Spotlight on Research II	113
Chapter 4 · Theory into Practice I: Building Communities	139
Building Communities	139
The Chicago Area Project (CAP)	140
Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Communities, and	
Renewal Communities	144
Building Communities and the Role of Law Enforcement Agencies	148
The Rise of Contemporary Community Policing	149
"Broken Windows" and Broken Communities	153
Disorder, Fear of Crime, and the Role of the Police	155
Community Policing	157
Community/Police Problem-Solving in Action	160

The Current State of Community Policing	161
Community Policing: Post September 11th	164
Zero Tolerance Policing	166
Problems with Community-Building Efforts	167
Theoretical Summary	167
Can a Community Be Built Where No Community Exists?	168
Do Community-Building Efforts Ignore the “Real” Problems?	170
Summary	172
Chapter 5 · Theory into Practice II: Altering the Physical Environment	173
The Beginnings: The Works of Jane Jacobs and Oscar Newman	174
Oscar Newman’s Defensible Space	175
Will Defensible Space Be Defended?	178
Crime Prevention through Environmental Design	180
The Strategies of CPTED	180
CPTED in Practice	182
Spotlight on Practice I	184
Situational Crime Prevention	187
Opportunity As a Cause of Crime	188
The Opportunity Reduction Techniques of Situational Crime Prevention: An Evolving Typology	191
The Third Evolution: Twenty-Five Techniques of Situational Prevention	193
Situational Crime Prevention in Practice	196
Summary	199
Critiques and Concerns	199
Reclaiming Public Spaces	201
Spotlight on Research III	201
Chapter 6 · The Analysis of Crime	221
What Is Crime Analysis?	221
Historical Development of Crime Analysis	223
The Growth of “Smart” Policing	224
Contemporary Crime Analysis: The Building of a Profession	226
Challenges with Crime Analysis: The “Haves” versus the “Have-Nots”	232
Challenges with Crime Analysis: The Problem of Data	233
Types of Crime Analysis	235
Space, Time, and Crime Analysis: Hot Spots, Hot Routes, & Burning Times	236

Causes of Hot Spots	238
Identifying Crime Hot Spots	240
Types of Hot Spots: Ratcliffe's Hot Spot Matrix	241
Targeting Hot Spots: Directed Patrols	243
Spotlight on Practice II	246
Strategic Crime Analysis: The Next Step	252
Wolves and Ducks and Dens: Oh My!	253
Strategic Crime Analysis and Community Policing	
Problem-Solving Efforts	254
The SARA Model: Analysis in Action	254
The SARA Process: One Agency's Experience	256
Summary	259
Spotlight on Practice III	259
Chapter 7 · The Mapping of Crime	267
The Growth of Computerized Crime Mapping: From Push Pins to PCs	267
Overcoming the Obstacles	268
Uses of Crime Mapping	271
Descriptive Mapping: Computerized Pin Maps and More	277
Analytical Mapping: Beyond the Individual Crime Incident	
Locations	286
Analyzing Domestic Violence in Baltimore	286
Geographic Profiling: Hunting Serial Criminals	287
The Geography of Time: Spatio-Temporal Considerations	291
Crime Mapping for Police Operations: The COMPSTAT Model	295
The Principles of COMPSTAT	296
Specific Objectives: Defining Priorities	296
Accurate and Timely Intelligence	296
Effective Tactics	297
Rapid Deployment of Personnel and Resources	298
Relentless Follow-Up and Assessment	298
A Note on Strategies within COMPSTAT	299
The Future of COMPSTAT	300
Predictive Policing: The PAI and RRI . . . FYI	300
And Don't Forget RTM	301
Summary	303
Risk Terrain Modeling in Kansas City, MO	303
Spotlight on Research IV	303
Spotlight on Practice IV	334

Chapter 8 · Some “Radical” Closing Thoughts	337
Radical Criminology	337
Theoretical Assumptions	337
Conflict Criminology and the Control of Public Space	339
Controlling Street Cruising	340
Outlawing Hip Hop Graffiti	341
Who’s Got the Power? Conflict versus Marxist Perspectives	342
Thinking Outside of the Box: The Radical Perspective	346
Radical Critiques	347
What Could Be Wrong with Rebuilding Communities?	347
The Dark Side of Community Policing: A Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing?	349
Too Much Weeding and Not Enough Seeding?	352
Radical Critiques of Choice-Based Policies	354
Monopoly, Anyone?	355
Crime Displacement: Is the Glass Half Empty?	357
The Ethics of Crime Prevention	359
Is There Something Truly Sinister Going on in Lower-Income Communities? The Issue of Environmental Justice	361
Lead Exposure and Crime	362
Lead and Space: Hot Spots of Crime, or Hot Spots of Lead?	364
Summary	365
Not In My Backyard: Using Laws To Push Out Registered Sex Offenders	365
Spotlight on Research V	366
Bibliography	403
Index	429

Introduction

On July 16, 2012, *The Dark Knight Rises* premiered in New York City to rave reviews. It was immediately considered by many to be one of the best films of the year. The movie featured DC Comics' superhero, Batman, in the third installment of the *Dark Knight* trilogy. When the film was released to national audiences four days later, box offices around the country offered midnight screenings, including the Century movie theater in Aurora, Colorado.

Before the movie began showing, James Eagan Holmes allegedly walked into the Century movie theater, released several gas/smoke canisters, and then opened fire on the audience. According to court documents, Holmes wounded 70 patrons and killed 12 others. He was arrested without incident, next to his car, behind the movie theater. Holmes was charged with 24 counts of first degree murder (one count of murder with deliberation and one count of murder with extreme indifference for each victim), 116 counts of attempted murder, possession of explosive devices, and inciting violence. His trial is scheduled to begin in 2015.

While the case of James Eagan Holmes has garnered international attention, it should be noted that this type of violence targeted against random victims is the exception, not the rule. In fact, one could argue that the lack of a pattern in the location, time, and victim selection is what made this horrible tragedy especially newsworthy. If this same madman had targeted drug dealers or prostitutes in poor urban neighborhoods, more than likely this book would have had a different introduction since few of us would have been able to recall any details from the media reports of the incident (if there had been any national coverage at all).

Our journey through space, time and crime begins with a basic statement of fact: Crime is not evenly distributed across locations, times, victims, or targets. In every city in America, there are "safe" areas where serious crimes are

a relatively rare event. There are also not-so-safe areas where crimes—especially violent, predatory street crimes—are an everyday occurrence. Certain times of the day are safer than others, although this varies with the type of crime. While one is much less likely to become a victim of a violent assault during the daytime hours, one's home is at greater risk for an attack by a burglar during the same time frame. While some will (fortunately) live their entire lives free from serious incidents of crime, others, especially those who happen to be young, single, members of a minority group, and/or urban residents have a much higher likelihood of becoming a victim of crime. Far from being a random event that occurs without rhyme or reason, crime is concentrated in certain areas and at certain times.

The purpose of this book is to explore issues related to the spatial and temporal clustering of crimes. The book is divided into four sections. The first section, which includes Chapters 2 and 3, explores the issues of “why.” Why are some neighborhoods overrun with crime, while others enjoy safety, peace, and harmony among the local residents? In the second section, Chapters 4 and 5 explore the issue of “what.” Once a high crime location or time is identified, what can we do about it? How do the theories get translated into policy? The third section, which is comprised of Chapters 6 and 7, explores the issues of “how.” How do we know where the crimes are located? How do police agencies, security managers, and others identify the areas that need more crime prevention services or special patrol operations? The book ends with a critical examination of the various theories, policies, and strategies that have been presented throughout the text.

In this fourth edition, the research and references have been updated throughout the text. More examples have been provided from practitioners in the field as we have tried to make the book relevant to both students and working professionals. We both hope that you enjoy this book.