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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.