

HOT SPOTS OF JUVENILE CRIME: A LOGITUDINAL STUDY OF ARREST INCIDENTS AT STREET SEGMENTS IN SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

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SUMMARY

Research related to crime and place has indicated that crime is concentrated in very small geographic areas. This concentration is non-random and suggests some relationship between the routine activities of offenders and the location of crime incidents. Although scholars have had a long standing interest in the places with concentrated juvenile delinquency (Shaw and McKay, 1942), studies of crime and place have rarely separated juvenile and adult offending populations. Furthermore, routine activities theory suggests that geographic restriction of juvenile activities may yield strong concentration of juvenile crime in places. These "juvenile activity spaces"--malls, schools, community centers, and so on--may be important in explaining concentrations of violent juvenile crime and extremely amenable to place-based study. The authors examine the salience of crime and place theory for juvenile offenders by studying incidents of juvenile crime in Seattle, Washington.

DATA AND METHODS

The authors use group-based trajectory analysis of stability and variability of crime at street segments for 14 years of crime incidents in which a juvenile was arrested in Seattle, Washington. The authors used arrest reports to identify all juvenile offenders to measure rates of juvenile crime during this time period and linked these arrest reports to identify crime incidents in which at least one juvenile offender was arrested. Poisson models and a group-based trajectory analysis resulted in the identification eight trajectory groups of juvenile crime.

FINDINGS

The authors found officially recorded juvenile crime is highly concentrated in places, with 83 street segments accounting for 33% of juvenile crime and 3-5% of street segments responsible for all incidents during any given year. Although most trajectory groups in Seattle exhibited a general decline in rates of juvenile crime, a small number of trajectories had increasing rates of crime during the study. Trajectory groups where juvenile crime was most concentrated were much more likely to have arrest incidents at schools, malls, restaurants, and other spaces where juveniles congregate and interact without adult supervision. The authors caution that these findings could be impacted both by different police activity in certain areas and by differences in crime frequencies in this study as compared to earlier studies of crime concentrations in place.

IMPLICATIONS

Juvenile crime appears to be more concentrated in places than adult crime, although further research may be necessary before strong conclusions regarding the concentration of juvenile crime in places can be drawn. The concentration of juvenile crime in places may present significant opportunities for crime prevention; potentially, "place managers" could supervise juvenile interactions in activity spaces and significantly reduce rates of juvenile crime.

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