

# Routine activities theory (rat) analysis



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Activity space consists of places people associate with in their daily lives. For instance, your home, work, school, places for entertainment and shopping areas are considered activity space. My activity space is a tri-county area which means that it is a large area that consists of smaller towns instead of a huge metro area. Since I commute to work my activity space consists of major travel nodes and pathways as described by Brantingham and Brantingham. These travel nodes and pathways would be interstate 80 (I-80) that runs West through my town and state route 422 which runs South of I-80 and directly into the city of Youngstown. During my routine I tend to use both I-80 and 422 because they are quicker routes which allow me to avoid passing through a bunch of smaller towns and is a straight shot to the city. Within my activity space the highest potential for the development of a crime hot spot would be toward the eastern portion of route 422 going into the city of Youngstown because it is an area between the city and the suburbs that does not have a strong police presence. This particular area is residential and in close proximity to the high-risk areas (i. e. project/public housing development) and has a wide-range of crime generators and attractors such as businesses, homes, bars, gas stations, convenience stores, and heavy pedestrian traffic due to a nearby bus station.

The location of travel routes in conjunction with environmental factors such as impoverished surrounding neighborhoods and the close proximity to major travel routes can be seen as an opportunity for offenders to commit crimes within this area. Brantingham and Brantingham (1999) state that crime generators are particular areas that attract people because of the large number of people that pass through them. this activity space, as

described by Brantingham and Brantingham is between the major nodes of transportation and is close to districts in the city that could be seen as an opportunity, to a potential offender who has observed routine activities conducted by pedestrians, members of the neighborhood, and business owners in the area.

The routine activities theory draws from Amos Hawley's theory of human ecology. Hawley's theory establishes three key aspects of collective human activities rhythm, tempo and timing which are factors in a life-course as well as the criminal lifestyle. Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson (1979) expanded on the principles of human ecology and introduced routine activities theory as an ecological perspective on criminal behavior. The routine activity theory states that there are three components in order for a crime to occur. The first component is a motivated offender or individual that is not only willing but seeking to commit offenses. The second component would be the presence of suitable targets. Suitable targets could be property or individuals that are seen as available or vulnerable. Lastly, the absence of a capable guardian which would be anything that could deter a potential offender (i. e. police patrolling, neighbor outside, alarm system).

Cohen and Felson (1979) emphasize that these three components are conducive to a crime event and especially prevalent in the absence of capable guardians. An example of this would be a potential offender(s) attempting to burglarize a home but changes their mind after seeing a police squad car drive by. This type of guardianship applies to certain areas within the city especially those that are heavily patrolled by police or security (i. e. parking decks and high-risk areas). Furthermore, the capable guardian,

whether it be an individual (police officer/witnesses/neighbors) or a device (home/store alarm) will reduce the suitability of a target, which in turn will decrease the likelihood of criminal events. Moreover, Cohen and Felson (1979) imply that a successful crime event doesn't require an offender who is motivated to engage in crimes, or act on their motivation for the criminal event, instead a motivated offender should be capable of carrying out their desires.

According to the routine activities theory, crime opportunity emerges in the absence of a capable guardian as well as certain environmental factors. For instance, the offender also goes through a routine of sequential activities just like the law abiding citizen does. The combination of what is considered a crime template (the offender's routine intertwined with their prospective targets) and the decisions made by the offender can determine crime patterns. A crime is committed when a triggering event occurs. This triggering event is usually in place when a potential target or victim fits within the offender's crime template (or routine).

Possible targets and victims will usually encounter the offender in some manner within their active location, resulting in sharing the activity space or the awareness space of the offender. The possible targets and victims end up being actual targets or victims once the offender's willingness to break the law is set off. This occurs when the nodes and pathways between these nodes are aligned with the offender's potential targets (at that place and time). When these activities are repeated on a daily basis they provide a rubric or template for the criminal to follow. During a criminal's daily activity they make decisions that rarely vary from their routine and as a result,

breaking the law would be no different from their normal activity and awareness space.

Lifestyles or ones routine activities create criminal opportunity by increasing the frequency and intensity of contacts between potential offenders and suitable targets. When a motivated offender is ready and willing, they will seize the opportunity to engage in criminal activity if it is beneficial to them. A potential offenders' suitable target is an individual or object that is attractive or vulnerable, such as, a piece of valuable property or someone who is wealthy might serve as a lucrative suitable target (i. e. ransom or extortion). In other words, factors that make a target vulnerable or attractive are crime specific and situational and may dictate a motivated offender(s) likelihood of criminal activity (i. e. an unattended running car a convenience store). I believe that the most likely hot spot in my activity space and based off of the course material, would be state route 422 east going into the city. I state this because this area is known for drug activity and has access to the highway and is within close proximity to a wide-range of businesses, churches, schools, and residential areas.

## References

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