

Concepts and operationalization research proposal sample

[Law](#), [Criminal Justice](#)



In the journal titled Mapping the Spatial Influence of Crime Correlates: A Comparison of Operationalization Schemes and Implications for Crime Analysis and Criminal Justice Practice, Caplan Joel acknowledges the variety of independent variables that have significant direct correlation with particular crime outcomes that decades of research in the field of criminology have identified. The author admits that despite tremendous amount of research in criminology, researchers still understand little about correlates and research factors. He reiterates that there is a meager understanding of the manners in which the factors and correlates of crime become applicable in ways that represent their spatial influences on particular criminal events. Further, the article discloses that researchers understand little about operationalization of the factors to maps that portray criminal events.

Joel analyzes the framework of Geographic Information System. He notes that GIS enables surveyors to explore spatial influences. He explains that spatial influences refer to the manner in which features of a landscape impact on places throughout the landscape. He gives an example of the relationship between the presence of bars and violence. The author considers the ways in which empirical knowledge of close association of presence of bars and links that to the occurrence of violent crimes. He argues that this can be mapped to reveal less crime-prone places. These include surveys on the basis of examining places with bars against those without bars. Further, researchers gain important information by analyzing the prevalence of violent crimes basing their focus on the distance of research areas from bars and considering the concentration of bars in the

place of research to determine the correlation between bars and violent crimes. Joel acknowledges that rather than just presence of features, the influence of a variable in space is imperative due to a complex correlation of the variables with criminal behavior.

In addition, Joel admits that Geographic Information System enables researchers to have a broader understanding as compared to mere creation of maps of points that coexist with crime. He notes that GIS enables analysts to create visual narratives of manners in which places become conducive to criminal activities. Joel notes that operationalizing crime to geographic units within a landscape is an imperative core that calls for careful consideration. He reiterates that the need for caution becomes even more essential in the face of increased use of predictive modeling and spatial risk assessment tools in the criminal justice community. The article details the three primary methods for operationalizing criminal activities to a particular geographic map. According to the author, one of the maps relates to part of a Risk Attainment Model. This comes along with three other spatially operationalized maps of criminogenic features to generate a composite map of criminology. Secondly, the author gives a detailed discussion of theoretical analysis that is relevant to spatial influence and risk analysis.

Routine Activities Theory

Caplan alludes to Routine Activities which is a popular theory in the criminal justice system. He notes that a high likelihood of crime occurring is usually motivated by convergence of motivated offenders, existence of suitable targets and lacking of capable guardians. He notes that motivated offenders often commit crimes on their targets in places that provide the atmosphere

for easy crime and offers least chances of punishment. He reiterates that crimes are event focused and police must focus on the past events to foreshadow the likelihood of future criminal escapades. He explains that crime rates in crime-prone areas are higher because the areas attract offenders. The observation differs from a popular thought that crime concentrates in places that are highly populated. On the contrary, the author argues that individuals with criminal intent converge at places that provide the best environment for perpetrating crime.

Operationalizing spatial influence of crime factors outlines how the landscape features influence behaviors and enables or attracts crimes in places far from and not near the places of the features. The author records that interaction between motivated offenders and suitable targets spur the possibility of crime instantly. The risk of criminal activity becomes even higher when the motivated offenders interact with suitable targets in criminogenic places. When the motivated offenders interact with suitable targets in places that are not prone to crime, victimization rate becomes lower. GIS produce maps that create visual articulation of these environmental contexts. The maps provide representation of composite likelihood of crime to occur in various places as a result of complex interactions of several factors that affect probability of crime. The author states that criminal behavior is more functional of a dynamic interaction at specific places and less deterministic.

Opportunity Theory

A common trend among opportunity theorists is that they take “ place” as the unit of analysis. Other related scholarly thinkers also believe that the dynamic nature of various places constitute opportunity for crime. In relation to this, Caplan advises that criminal prevention and control activities must consider the nature of environment in which the criminal activities take place in addition to the persons convicted as the offenders. He notes that opportunity is not a dichotomous variable, an absolute value or a static quotient. Opportunity attribute in determination of criminal intent is rarely or never zero. He notes that opportunities changes with time and varies in degree as communities evolve. Further, the attributes of opportunity change as police intervene, as new crimes occur and as suitable targets and motivated offenders move and relocate. Caplan notes that assessing spatial criminogenic opportunities needs a conceptual framework. The scheme must be standardized to producing intelligence and incorporating multiple dynamics that serve strategic tactical actions and decision-making. He concludes that the required intelligence is only achievable through risk assessment.

In the opinion of the author, risk assessment refers to consideration of probabilities of possible consequences. Caplan revisits the fact that the concept of risk is not a novel concept in the criminal justice community. He adds that risk analysis is a concept that has been in use for centuries for identification, controlling and prevention of crime. He notes that risk models provide the tools that can be applied in determining the vulnerabilities and hazards that lead to crime outcome. Risk analysis avails the metrics for tying

different portions of crime together. In the end, analysts get to comprehend the problematic interpretation of crime analysis. This enables analysts and law enforcers to make informed conclusions on the crimes that are likely to happen against those that are preventable basing their intelligence on the risk assessment. Caplan reiterates that opportunity theorists think of risks of crime as opportunities of crime. They evaluate places according to varying degrees of criminogenic risks in relation to certain far away or nearby criminogenic features of the environment.

Concept of Distance from Features

Considering the influence distance from features has on prevalence on criminal activities, the author generates an argument on particular service providers. He considers fast-food restaurants, clubs, bars and liquor stores. The author points out regular conception populaces have that presence of these service provision outlets increase the frequency of criminal activities. In particular, he mentions high prevalence of shootings. He notes that this is probably because most criminally motivated people hang around in these shops and victims become intoxicated and easy targets. High police presence, other security personnel such as bouncers and presence of witnesses prevent crimes from occurring within the vicinities of the facilities. Instead, criminals carry out their heinous activities some distance away from the facilities.

In this respect, the spatial influence of fast-food restaurants, clubs, bars and liquor stores on shooting is a function of distance from the closest criminal activity hotspot. This is independent of absence or presence of the feature at

the time and location of the shooting. Caplan reports that only 1 out of 58 shootings took place inside fast-food restaurants, clubs, bars and liquor stores in 2007. 15 out of 20 shootings occurred within one block from fast-food restaurants, clubs, bars and liquor stores. Researchers and analysts realize that these results are arguably due to identifying a vast attachment area in which shootings become aggregated. Although empirical research suggests that fast-food restaurants, clubs, bars and liquor stores have correlation with shootings, the most sensible conclusion is that shootings have a correlation with the distance from these facilities, not the facilities. The concepts of looking at the relationship between crime and different variables are valid in their own rights. Routine Theory is true and valid since there is a strong correlation between crime and guardianship, presence of criminal minds and presence of suitable criminal targets. Likewise, Opportunity Theory is valid and true since there is a further intricate relationship between different environments with prevalence of crime. Further, a consideration of crime prevalence with respect to distance from the places considered criminogenic is a proper approach as results prove the contrary of popular beliefs. However, none of the approaches or concepts of operationalization provide a self-sufficient framework to analyze crime. Opportunity Theory, Routine Theory and Distance Theory do not independently provide a sufficient scheme to conceptualize crime on its own. Each depends on another. Fortunately, an integration of the three concepts together provides a superior understanding of the variables that escalate crime, and offers a map for eliminating and minimizing them.

Reference

Joel, M. C. (2012, June 21). Crime and Urban Form . Retrieved September 23, 2013, from

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