

Geocortex Essentials

Supporting Place Based Policing

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Agenda

- 1 Background
- 2 Place Based Policing
- 3 Street Level Analysis
- 4 Strategies
- 5 Wrap-up



The Importance of Place in Policing

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The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, 2010

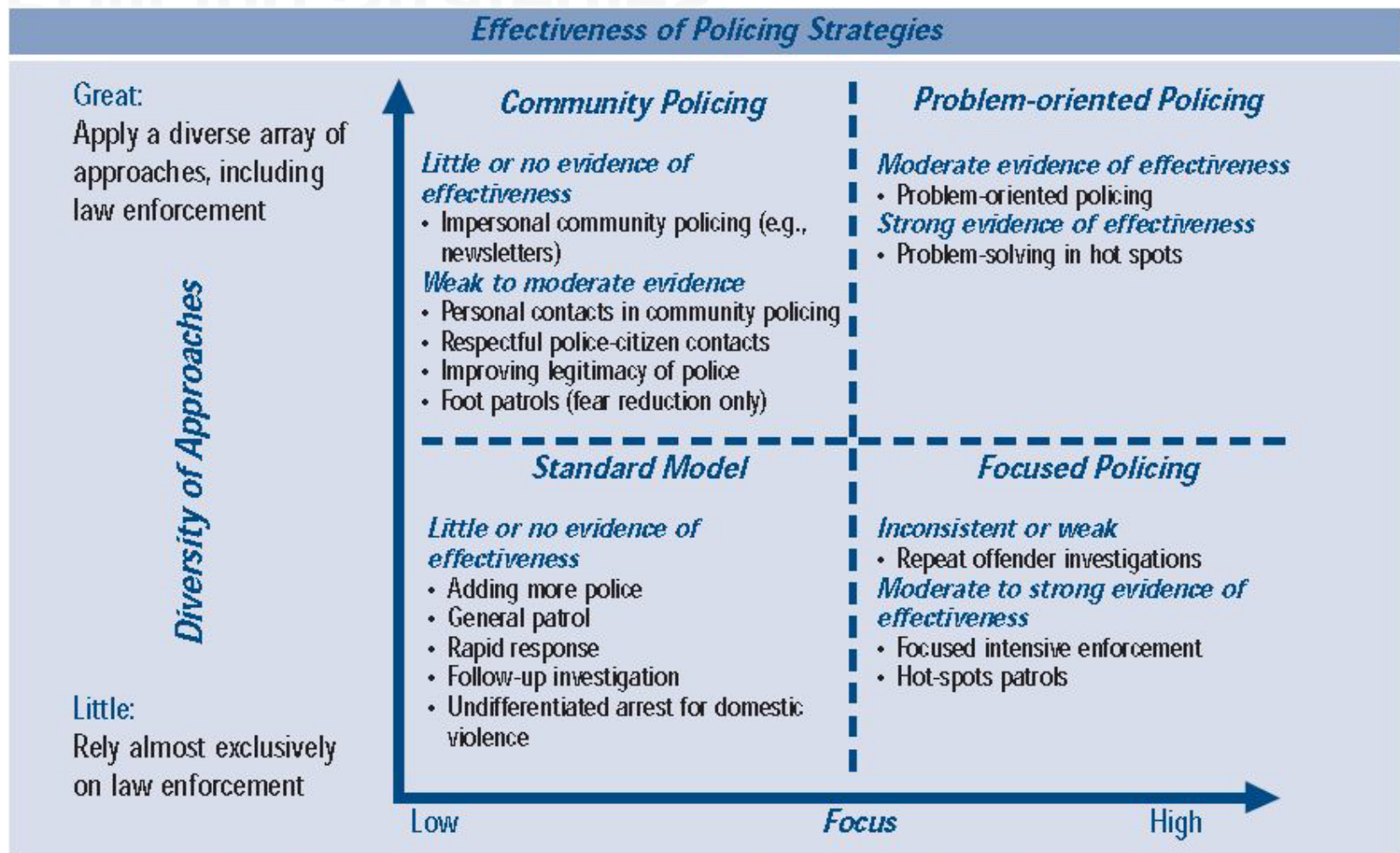


Police Policy and Practice

- Traditionally focused on people
 - Respond to citizens who call the police
 - Identify offenders
 - Arrest offenders and process them through criminal justice system
- Community caretaking
 - Securing communities in emergencies
 - Respond to Homeland Security threats
- Underlying assumption:
 - “***People***, whether victims or offenders, are the key units of police work”

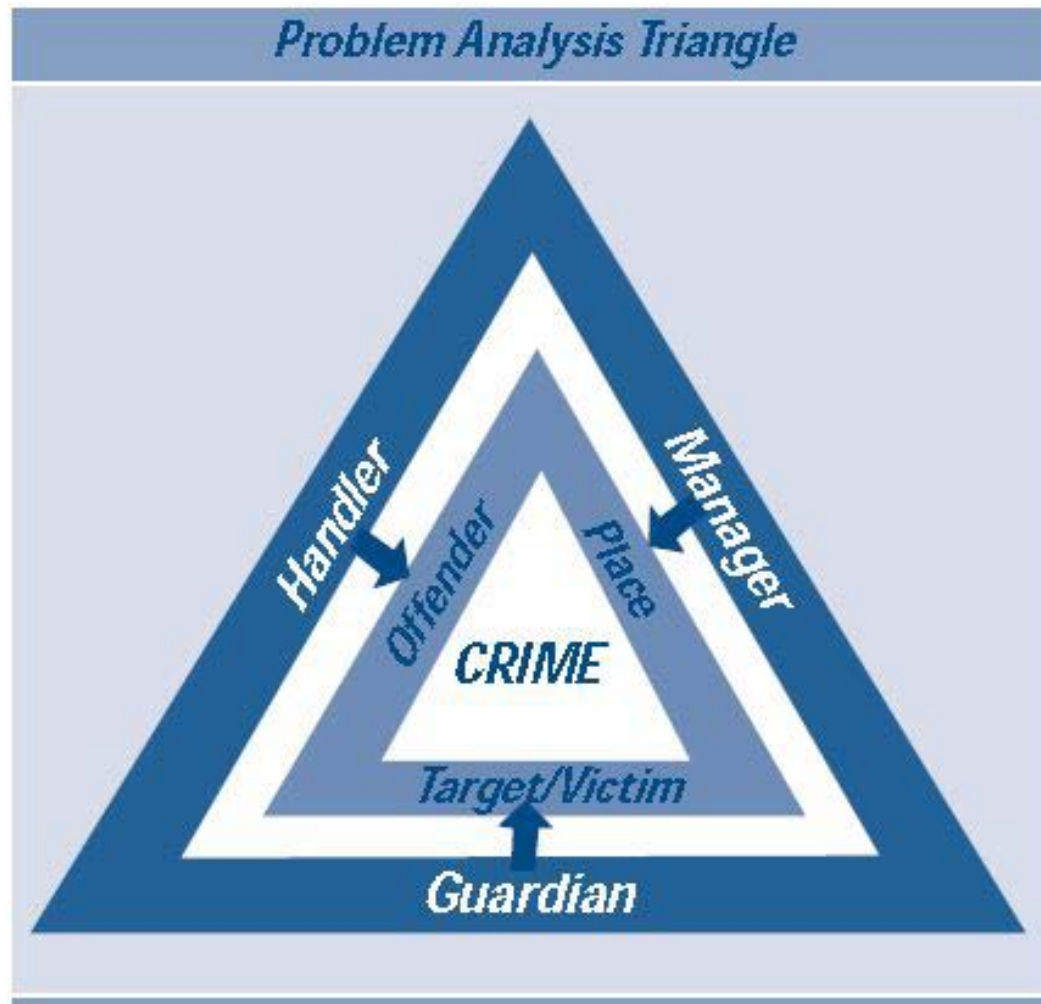


Policing Strategies



Adapted from National Research Council (2003), *Fairness and Effectiveness in Policing: The Evidence*. Committee to Review Research on Police Policy and Practice. Edited by Wesley Skogan and Kathleen Frydl. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. Figure 6.1 and Table 6.1, pp. 248-249.

Crime Elements



Challenges of Traditional Person/People Centered Crime Prevention

- Difficult to predict who is likely to offend and the types of offenses they are likely to commit in the future
- Even where there is strong evidence of prediction (e.g. specialized adult offenders), there are legal and ethical implications for targeting such subjects
- Place based prevention avoids these dilemmas



New Paradigm

Shift policing focus from *people* to *places*, from “*whodunnit*” to “*wheredunnit*”

Places: not large units like neighborhoods or communities, but rather much smaller units such as clusters of addresses, block faces or street segments that have common crime problems



Situational Crime Prevention

- Situations (places) are more stable and predictable than people
 - Shoplifting happens in stores not residences
 - Family disputes don't often happen in industrial areas
- High crime places can't flee to avoid prosecution



Place-based Policing

- Focus on places where crimes are concentrated
- 3.5% of addresses in Minneapolis produced 50% of the calls to police
- Very stable year to year
- Location combined with temporal analysis narrows the target
 - Assaults occur most frequently between 03:00 and 07:00
 - Residential burglaries in the daylight hours



Predictability

- Future crime is six times more predictable by the address of the occurrence than by the identity of the offender
- Seattle study found that approximately 1,500 street segments accounted for 50% of the crime each year of the 14 year study, while about 6,108 offenders were responsible for 50% of the crime each year
- Therefore, on average, the police would have to approach four times as many targets to identify the same level of overall crime when they focus on people rather than places



Stability

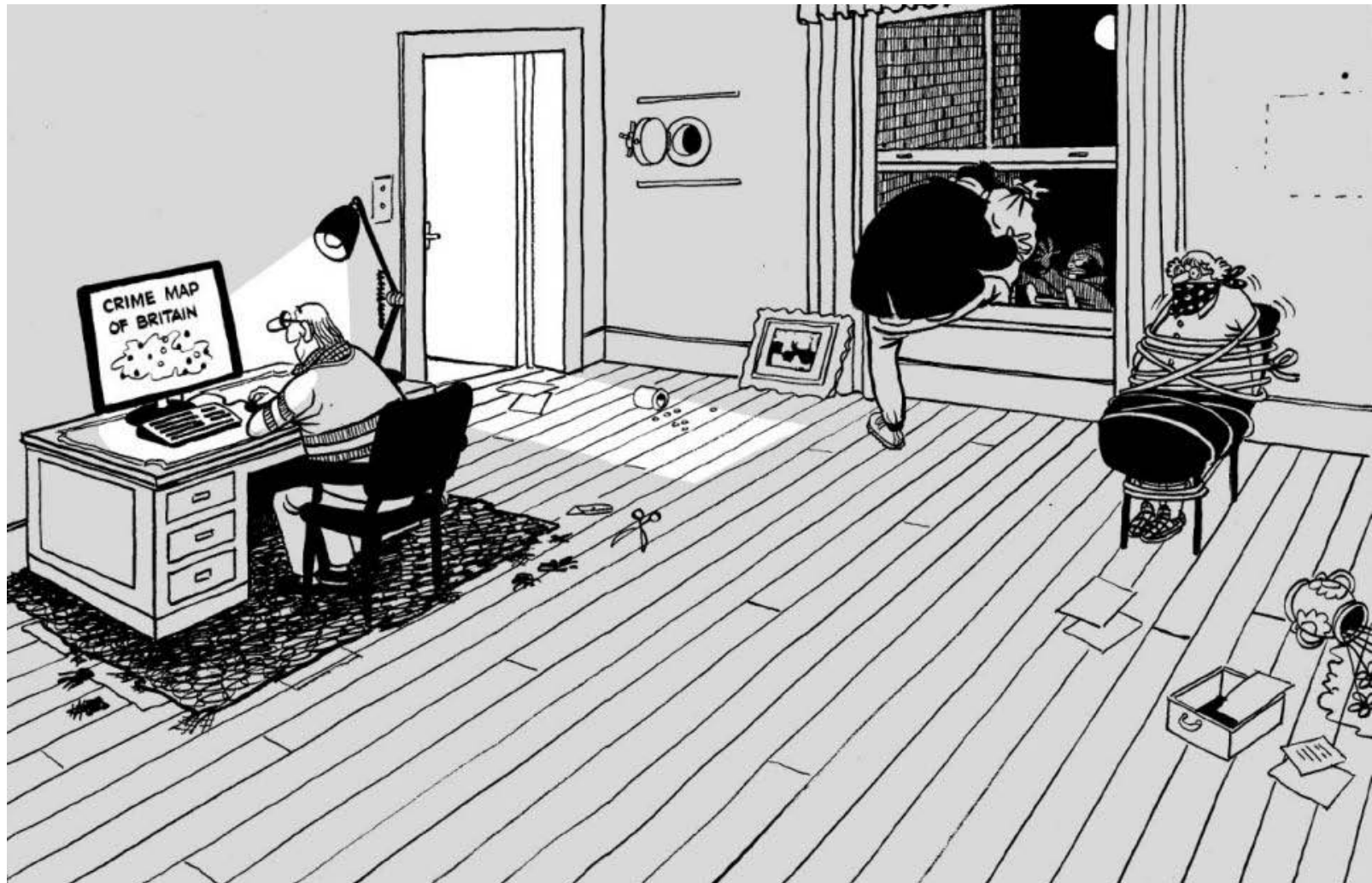
- Crime typically remains stable at places over time
- Individuals often exhibit tremendous change over relatively short periods
 - Most offenders “age out” of crime, often at a relatively young age
- In contrast, hot spots of crime tend to remain hot over longer periods of time
- Similarly, low crime places tend also to be very stable



Street level analysis

- Although “Hot spots” of crime often spread throughout the city, there is tremendous street by street variability within these areas
- Much of the “action” is at micro places such as street blocks (e.g. trains/station/parking lot/direction of travel)
- Much information about crime would be missed by focusing on larger units such as neighborhoods, communities, or census tracts
- Seattle study demonstrated that place level of analysis captures important variability in crime trends that would be lost by focusing on larger geographic units traditionally attended to by police

Street level analysis



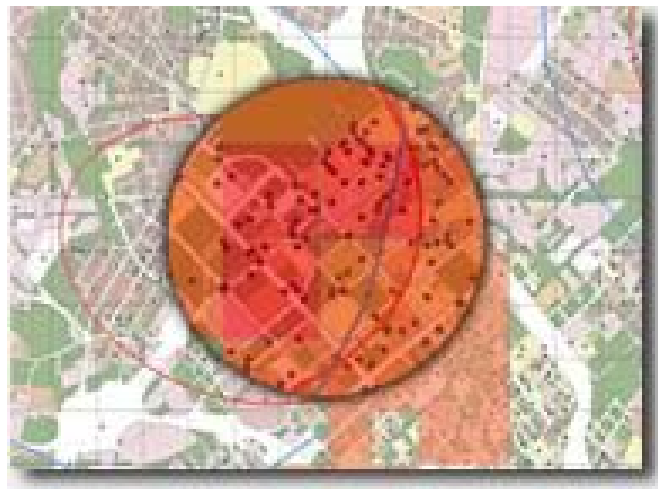
Why “Place”?

- E.g. Juvenile crime focused on “activity spaces”
 - Malls, movie theatres – “hang outs”
 - Attract both offenders and targets
 - Often an absence of authority figures (guardians)
 - Prostitution, drug markets follow similar patterns



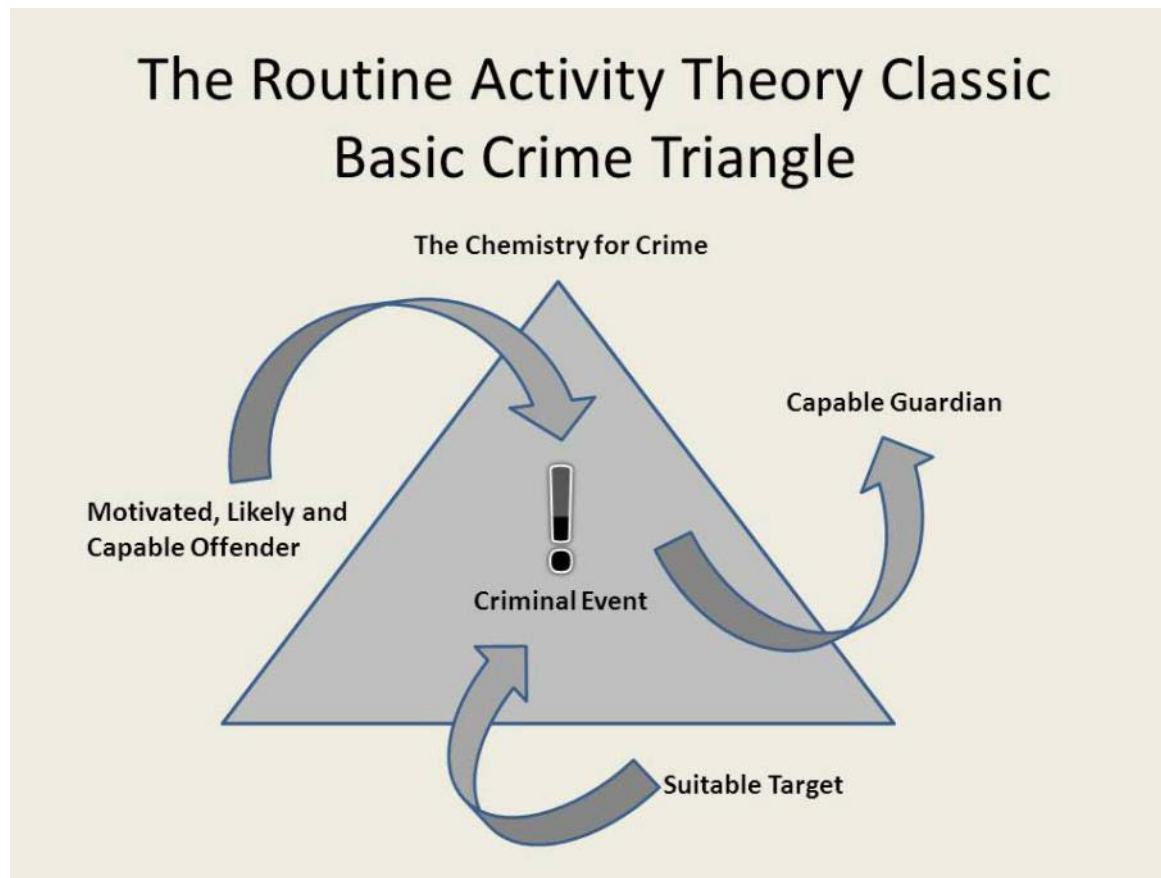
Research Support for Place Based Policing:

“While there is only preliminary evidence suggesting the effectiveness of targeting specific types of offenders, a strong body of evidence suggests that taking a focused geographic approach to crime problems can increase the effectiveness of policing” National Research Council
Committee to Review Research on Police Policy and Practices: (2004:35).



Why Hotspots?

- *Routine Activity Theory* – Criminals tend not to go too far out of their way to commit crimes



Why Hotspots?

- ***Situational Crime Prevention*** – Crime can be prevented by reducing the opportunities for crime – e.g. improved lighting, police presence
- ***Broken Windows Theory*** – Targeting minor transgressions prevents serious crimes from developing
- ***Crime Opportunity Theory*** – Criminals look for an opportunity or practical target
- ***Social Disorganization Theory*** – Crime occurs when local institutions fail



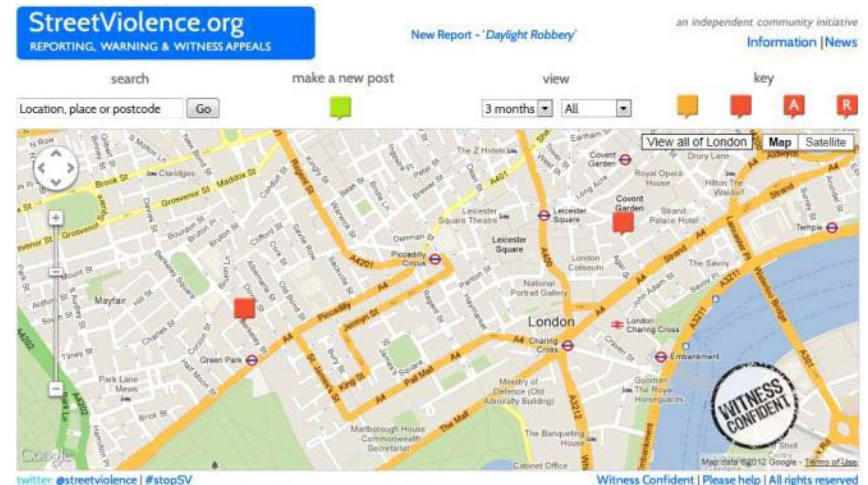
Why Hotspots?

- *Crime Pattern Theory* – Integrates crime within a geographic context
 - Focus on places and the lack of social control or other guardianship measures that are needed to control crime



Strategies

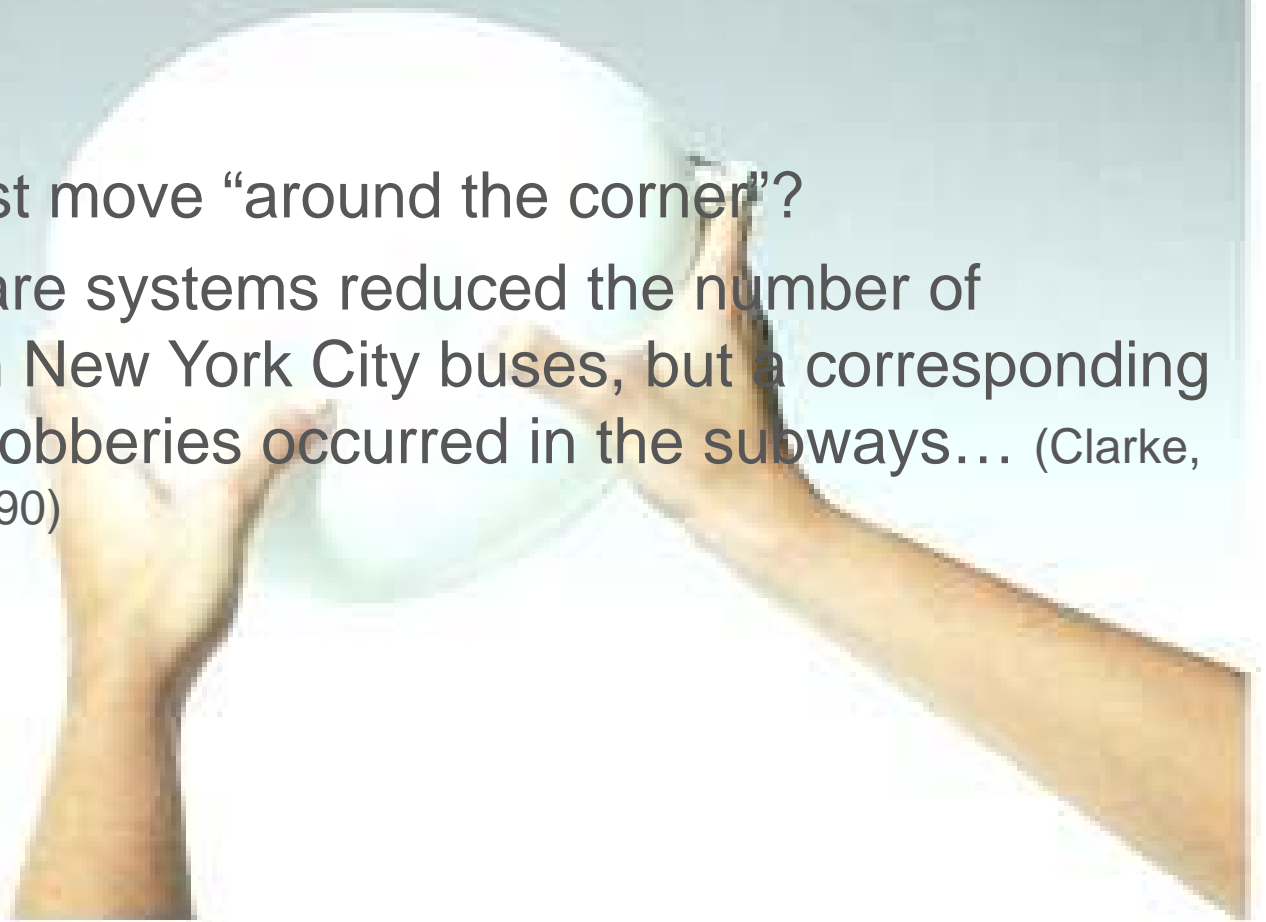
- Hot spots patrol
- Problem oriented policing approach for each of the small areas defined as crime hot spots
 - Identifying and analyzing problems
 - Developing tailored responses
 - Maintaining crime control gains



Squeezing the balloon...

Won't crime just move “around the corner”?

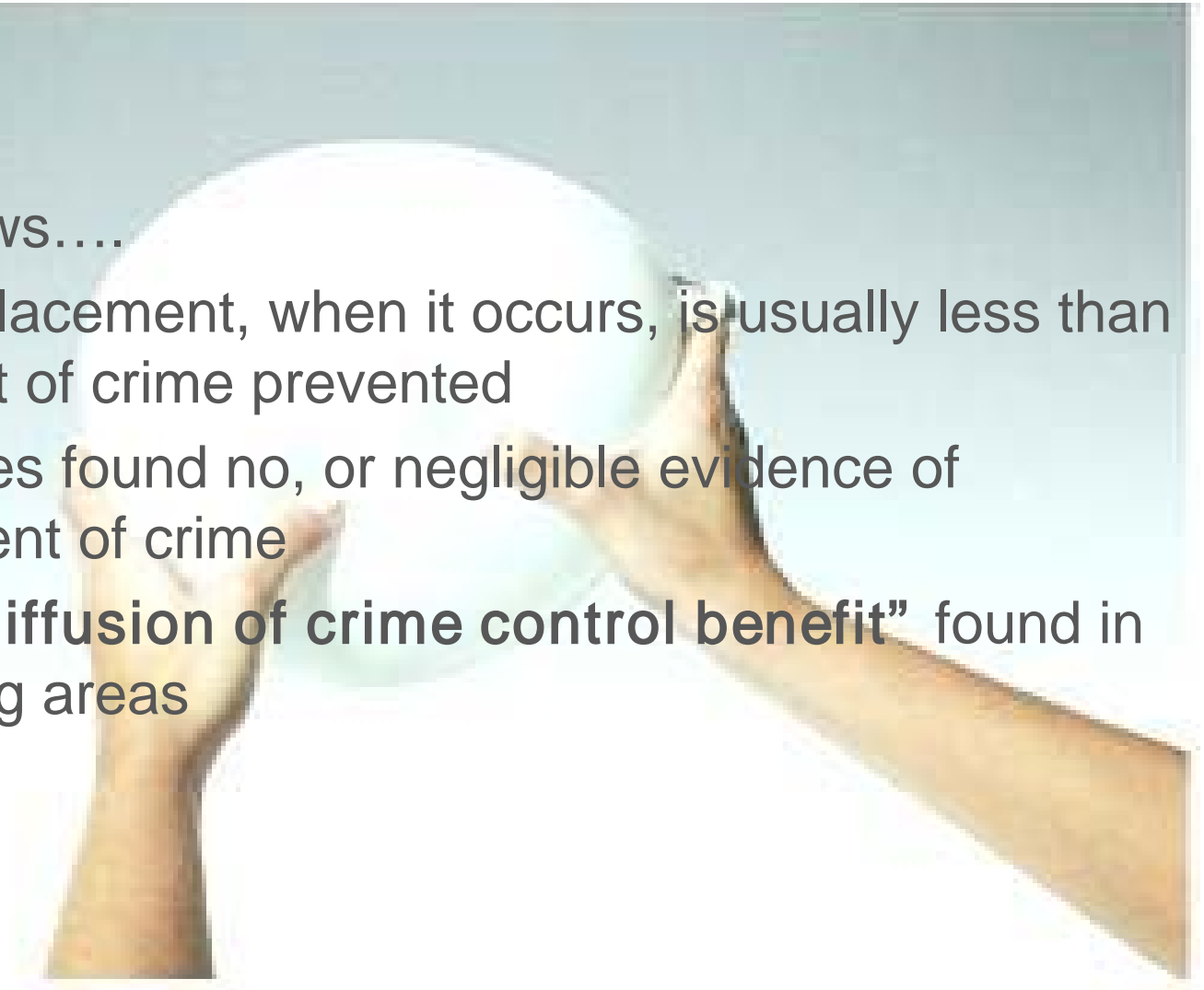
- E.g. Exact fare systems reduced the number of robberies on New York City buses, but a corresponding increase in robberies occurred in the subways... (Clarke, 1980; Gabor, 1990)



Squeezing the balloon...

The good news....

- Crime displacement, when it occurs, is usually less than the amount of crime prevented
- Most studies found no, or negligible evidence of displacement of crime
- Instead, “**diffusion of crime control benefit**” found in surrounding areas



Reduced legal constraints

- Once it is established that places are targets or deserve special attention, it is *easier to justify enforcement* in regards to individual offenders.
- Place based policing may require the police to expand their toolbox to take into account the fact their *targets are places and not people* (e.g. Civil asset forfeiture law may be more successful at interrupting crime at place).



Reduced Prosecution and Corrections costs

- Place based policing emphasizes reducing opportunities for crime at places, not waiting for crimes to occur and then arresting offenders
- Place based policing success not necessarily measured by an increase in the number of arrests, but rather places are safer for the people who live, visit, or work in such places
- Place based policing can increase public safety while decreasing the human and financial costs of imprisonment



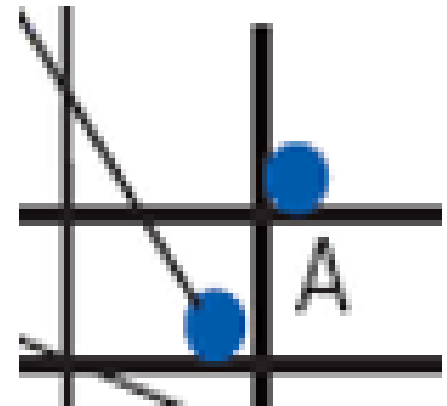
Change of focus

- 74% of PDs surveyed in 192 jurisdictions used “hot spots enforcement” as a strategy to address violent crime.
- Policing continues to place people at the center of police practices
- Place based policing suggests we should know as much about the places that are hot spots of crime as we do about the offenders who commit crimes
- Precincts or beats do not account for the geographic distribution of crime and its concentration at relatively small crime places



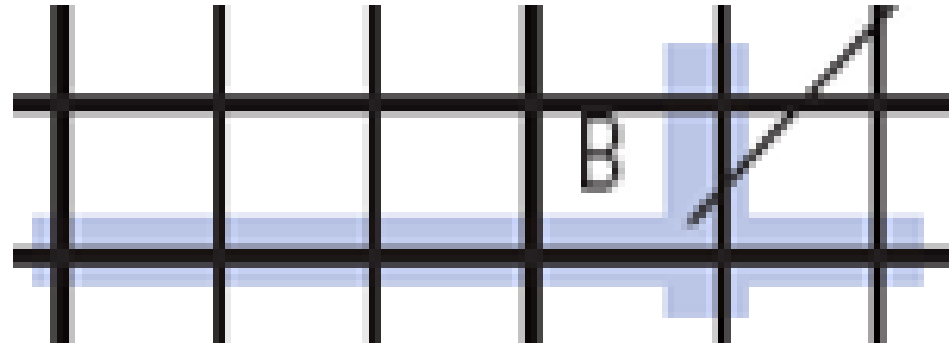
Reading a Crime Map

Points (or dots) draw attention to specific places and suggest that places with many points have local problems unique to that location. A point conveys the message that the hot spot is located at this exact location and should be the focus of police efforts.



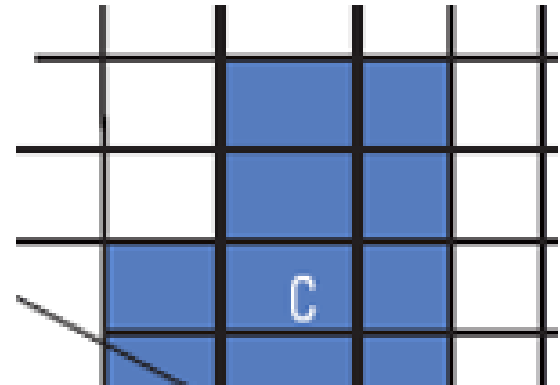
Reading a Crime Map

A shaded **street segment** suggests that the chances of crime are roughly equal along the entire segment and police efforts should focus along this segment but not along other streets.



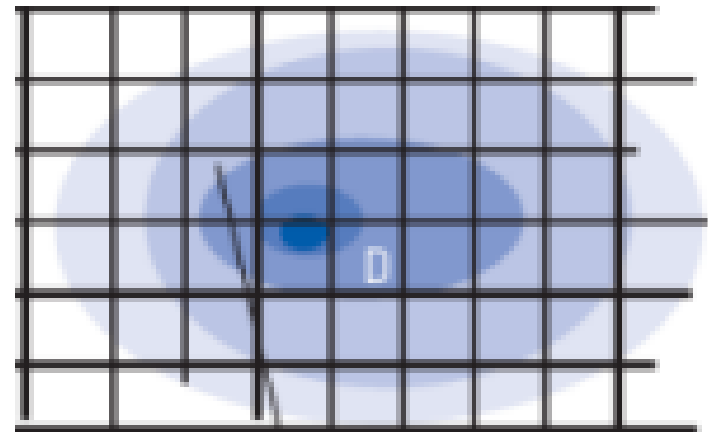
Reading a Crime Map

A **shaded area**, which shows discrete distributions of crime for particular areas such as beats, precincts, districts, counties, or census blocks, also suggests equivalent risks of crime throughout the area with a dramatic reduction in risk at the border. It suggests that police activity throughout the area is appropriate.



Reading a Crime Map

A **density surface**, which depicts crime estimates of frequency or risk as a surface of color gradients that imply a high level of crime activity in its center which gradually tapers off in the outer areas. It directs police attention to the center and its surroundings.



Summary

- Crime is concentrated at a relatively small number of places at small geographic units
- Place based policing provides an opportunity for police to be efficient at tackling crime problems with long term crime prevention benefits
- Places typically represent long term chronic crime locations that do not simply shift from year to year
- Success at ameliorating crime problems at places suggests that focusing on larger areas such as beats, precincts or communities leads to a loss of efficiency and effectiveness in crime prevention

Thank You!

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