

Editors' Introduction

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This special issue of the *Security Journal* includes four papers presented at the 17th International Environmental Criminology and Crime Analysis (ECCA) Symposium, held in July 2008 at the University of Alaska Anchorage. ECCA is a semi-structured group comprising international scholars who specialize in understanding the relationship between environmental factors, opportunities and crime. Some of the main theoretical perspectives advanced by ECCA scholars include environmental criminology, crime pattern theory, problem oriented policing, situational crime prevention, routine activities theory and crime science.

Since the initial meeting of ECCA in 1982, the study of environmental criminology has greatly advanced. Environmental criminology and its associated theories have evolved from being a small subset of criminology into one of the most application- and policy-oriented facets of the field. With the advancement of the discipline has come increased attention and relevance. University-level courses now focus on environmental criminology as a stand-alone topic, rather than as one of many covered in traditional criminology theory courses. The Center for Problem Oriented Policing provides the most up-to-date information on how to assess and respond to crime problems, in a manner easily accessible to researchers and practitioners alike, on the website www.popcenter.org. The advancements made in the study of environmental criminology and crime analysis have led to a greater understanding of the importance of environmental factors and conditions that facilitate crime and the need for crime prevention. It is within this context that ECCA operates and plays a central role in advancing the field.

The 17th annual ECCA symposium was sponsored by the Justice Center of the University of Alaska Anchorage. The program began with a warm welcome from Fran Ulmer, the Chancellor of the university. Anchorage Police Chief Rob Heun thanked the symposium participants for their work in environmental criminology. Chief Heun's remarks are included here. In his speech, he did an excellent job linking environmental criminology to the real problems and issues faced by law enforcement in the field. His comments serve as an important reminder of why criminologists study crime. We think they are indicative of the Anchorage Police Department's commitment to innovation and evidence-based policing. One ECCA participant said he had been 'blown away' by Chief Heun's comments – this is one chief who actually 'gets it', he said.

The increasing importance of advanced crime analysis is demonstrated by the growing number and variety of topics and studies being conducted around the world and presented at conferences such as ECCA. The 30 papers presented at the symposium in Alaska addressed issues such as the spatial displacement that occurs when illegal drug markets are closed down, the geospatial structure of terrorist cells, the geography of identity theft, effective place management in institutional settings, whether urban parks are amenities or nuisances and the emergence of copper theft. The four papers selected for this special issue are illustrative of the wide range of topics examined and methodologies used by ECCA scholars.

In the first paper in this special issue, 'Deterrence and Fare Evasion', Ronald V. Clarke, Stephane Contre and Gohar Petrossian examine the topic of fare evasion on the Edmonton, Alberta light rail transit system. Using a before-and-after design, they examined over



3 years' worth of weekly data on how many passengers were checked for having a valid ticket, how many did not have a valid ticket and how many fines were imposed. Using these three variables, they calculated weekly evasion rates and weekly fining rates, and found that changes in enforcement levels had no effect on evasion rates. Based on the literature on this topic, their finding was unexpected; the authors conclude that potential fare evaders were unaware of the change in enforcement levels. In other words, there was no change in offenders' perceptions of perceived risk. This study points to the importance of a more rigorous experimental design and consideration of additional variables in future research on the effects of ticket checking and fining on fare evasion.

In the second paper, 'The Spatial Dependency of Crime Increase Dispersion', Jerry Ratcliffe documents how geographic information system technology can be used to identify emerging hot spots – parts of a city that are experiencing an unusually high amount of crime such that the crime rate for the entire jurisdiction is driven up. In this very well-explained paper, he shows how to combine dispersion analysis with local indicators of spatial association, such as local Moran's I. Knowing how these emerging hot spots are clustered spatially is quite useful to police leaders who want to deploy their resources most efficiently.

The third paper in this special issue illustrates how theories in the ECCA domain are constantly evolving as new research and understanding come to light. In 'Super Controllers and Crime Prevention: A Routine Activity Explanation of Crime Prevention Success and Failure', Rana Sampson, John Eck and Jessica Dunham extend the routine activities approach through the addition of super controllers – those who regulate controllers' (handlers, guardians and managers) incentives to prevent crime. The authors look to rational choice and the principles of effort, risk, reward, excuses and provocations to further describe the mechanism through which super controllers influence controllers. For those who seek to prevent crime, this new contribution to theory holds much promise.

The fourth paper uses social network analysis to examine the structure of different types of criminal networks. In 'Comparing the Ties that Bind Criminal Networks: Is Blood Thicker Than Water?' Aili Malm, Gisela Bichler and Stephanie Van De Walle conduct a network analysis of data on the familial, friendship, co-offending and business networks of over 2000 individuals in western Canada. They conclude that social networks based on kinship are indeed stronger than those based on co-offending. For law enforcement, this research has several implications. First, it is important to document both the illicit and legal connections among offenders and non-offenders. Second, disrupting networks (perhaps by incarcerating a key member) may be more likely to succeed with co-offending networks than with formal criminal organizations. Finally, this study highlights the importance of tailoring strategies used to disrupt networks to the characteristics of the networks.

Readers should note that all of the four papers selected for this special issue of the *Security Journal* have a strong policy focus. This is one of the hallmarks of research conducted by ECCA scholars. It is rigorous, derived from the most current literature, based on the most useful theory, and most significantly, designed to address real-world problems.

Sharon Chamard
Justice Center, University of Alaska Anchorage, Anchorage, Alaska, USA.

Rashi Shukla
University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, Oklahoma, USA.