
BOOK REVIEW

St. Jean, P. K. B. (2007). *Pockets of Crime: Broken Windows, Collective Efficacy, and the Criminal Point of View*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

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With the publication of *Pockets of Crime*, Peter K.B. St. Jean (2007) upholds the Chicago School's longstanding tradition of examining crime from an ecological perspective in a sociological framework. Engaging and provocative, *Pockets of Crime* is a synthesis of methodological approaches to the study of urban crime. St. Jean weaves the stories of neighborhood insiders and outsiders into his innovative examination of crime in a historically infamous neighborhood on Chicago's south side. The "reputable" and the "disreputable" alike poignantly expound on their lived experiences in the complex microcosm of their physical and social milieu. Beat 213 in the Wentworth police district comes alive as St. Jean recounts his participant-observer role over a five-year period in conjunction with the Wentworth Area Neighborhood Study (WANS). He carefully guides the reader through the substance of his research and his logical extension of the theories of broken windows and collective efficacy.

St. Jean earned his Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Chicago (UC) in 2002 (St. Jean, 2008). *Pockets of Crime* is an offshoot of St. Jean's doctoral dissertation entitled "Not on My Block: The Criminogenic Life-course of Place on Chicago's South Side" (St. Jean, 2002). Robert J. Sampson, now the Henry Ford II Professor of the Social Sciences and Chair of the Department of Sociology at Harvard University, was St. Jean's dissertation advisor at UC (Sampson, 2008). Sampson, a leading scholar in neighborhood and urban studies of social disorganization, states in the Foreword to *Pockets of Crime*, "One is tempted to say that science has perhaps for the first time met urban ethnography in this book" (p. x). St. Jean's innovative approach is a blend of ethnography, traditional survey research, official statistics, and contemporary technology. *Pockets of Crime* embodies UC's motto: *Crescat scientia; vita excolatur*—Let knowledge grow from more to more; and so be human life enriched (University of Chicago, 2008).

Currently, St. Jean is serving as an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology at the State University of New York at Buffalo (St. Jean, 2008). Since 2002, he has extended his research to the Buffalo Area Neighborhood Study (BANS): A Study of the Relationships between Neighborhood Contents, Neighborhood Action, and Neighborhood Outcomes, among other Buffalo area projects (St. Jean, 2008). His most recent research focuses on the impacts of crime and incarceration, as well as issues in community policing in his native country of Dominica (St. Jean, 2008). His first book, *Lessons from Grand Bay: Prospects for Maintaining Low Crime in Dominica, Nature Island of the Caribbean*, was published in 2006.

Although qualitative data are the core of *Pockets of Crime*, St. Jean offers a detailed methodological appendix of his statistical findings, complete with tables and maps of crime hotspots, warmspots, and coldspots in each neighborhood block. The richly detailed descriptions provided by the neighborhood's law-abiding residents ("neighborhood experts"), law enforcement

agents, and offenders reveal the links between ecologically advantageous and ecologically disadvantageous locations and the offenders' motivations to select particular locations within the neighborhood as sites for concentrated criminal activity or "hotspots." These hotspots form the "pockets of crime" that St. Jean explores.

St. Jean's data collection methods include: official crime statistics, neighborhood surveys, in-depth field interviews, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping, participant observation, and Systemic Social Observation (SSO). St. Jean devised an innovative combination of SSO, video ethnography, and audio recordings that he simply refers to as "SSO video ethnography" (p. 27). St. Jean explains:

SSO is a data gathering method that uses video data from cameras mounted to each side of a vehicle while it is slowly driven through neighborhood streets so that physical and social appearances can be captured for in-depth analyses. Such analyses include quantitative coding of the conditions of buildings, properties, and vacant lots, and the prevalence of behaviors like loitering, public drinking, and panhandling. Qualitative analyses of the video data were also used as a cross-reference to obtain a visual sense of the features of street blocks that make them attractive to offenders such as drug dealers. (pp. 26-27)

St. Jean converted the SSO videos into uploadable digital movies and transferred them to a laptop computer for use in the field. Interview subjects were able to view the movie while their running commentaries were recorded on audio tape. These narratives, in concert with SSO video ethnography, provide the foundation for St. Jean's conclusions concerning methodological implications for future studies of neighborhoods and the issues that are embedded within their ecological contexts. Cross-referencing and cross-validation are key factors in assessing the reliability and validity of St. Jean's integrated methodological approach, and he leaves few stones unturned in his assessment of these multiple data gathering techniques.

The purpose of *Pockets of Crime* is best stated by Sampson in the Foreword: "[St. Jean] specifically wanted to collect data that would allow him to interrogate two theoretical perspectives on crime—'broken windows' and 'collective efficacy'" (p. xi). Sampson asserts that St. Jean, "true to ethnographic form," sought to "challenge and revise" some fundamental aspects of these theories, and St. Jean did just that. His concepts of "ecological disadvantage" or "ecological advantage" are derived from the integration of ethnographic techniques, official statistics, and the critical step of defining and mapping geospatial hotspots.

St. Jean's basic research question is: "Why [do] crimes occur more frequently in certain neighborhood locations as opposed to others?" (p. 31). The underlying aim of St. Jean's research is to revisit broken windows and collective efficacy theories and fill an empirical void by "...utilizing intensive field research and extensive interviews with offenders and others to understand how abstract measures of neighborhood disorder and collective efficacy influence their crime-related actions in everyday life" (p. 46). This is the essence of the book's contribution to the literature.

St. Jean focuses tightly on the crimes of robbery, drug dealing, and battery and dedicates a chapter to each (i.e., Chapters 5, 6, and 7, respectively). In Chapter 2, St. Jean thoroughly walks the reader through the logic and limitations of broken windows and collective efficacy theories. The concept of ecological disadvantage is proposed as an extension, and as a criticism of two "reactive" theories, in contrast to "the proactive aspects associated with offending" (p. 32). St.

Jean asserts, "...the presence of crime is attributed by conventional theories to the failure of others, not to the successful strategies of offenders" (p. 32).

The upshot of St. Jean's research is that offenders will strategically evaluate and select locations that are ecologically advantageous to the success of their criminal enterprises—an ecological advantage for an offender is an ecological disadvantage for a neighborhood. St. Jean found that the prevalence of drug dealing, robbery, and battery are dependent on the specific characteristics of favorable locations. For example, successful drug dealers rely on the stability of three ecological advantages: "high demand," "high supply," and "high exchange opportunities" (p. 100). Robberies frequently occur in spaces where potential victims are most likely to have money in their possession and are easily distracted (i.e., near businesses such as convenience stores, liquor stores, and check-cashing outlets). St. Jean further finds that neighborhood blocks housing a core of disruptive families are concentrated hotspots for battery.

These types of neighborhood characteristics provide context-dependent structures of opportunity for criminal activity, especially when inequality of geospatial zoning, development, and use result in a concentration of factors that represent an ecological disadvantage to a neighborhood. Broker, whom St. Jean described as a "serious, steady, and discreet drug dealer," sums it up nicely, "Similar to the business of real estate, it is an issue of location, location, location" (p. 115).

At times, St. Jean's carefully crafted prose seems to indicate a quiet patience with readers who may reluctantly be drawn into the minute details of a big picture. St. Jean aptly captures images of Wentworth's Beat 213 and deftly conveys them to the reader. He describes his journey through this neighborhood in a manner that renders its inhabitants and its visitors immediately "knowable" in a dense and closely-knit contextual fabric where fine threads are revealed on closer inspection.

In addition to the Methodological Appendix, *Pockets of Crime* includes appendices with lists of recent studies related to the theories of broken windows and collective efficacy. Each study is described under headings of author and citation, research methods, research focus, major findings, and a heading that indicates the level of support for the respective theory. Appendix B (broken windows) and Appendix C (collective efficacy) are useful to readers who desire a short summary of the relevant literature without combing through pages of references and conducting a search and retrieval mission. *Pockets of Crime* is adequately structured for ease of reference, is a fast read, and leaves the reader with an accomplished sense of understanding of St. Jean's explanation, exploration, and extension of broken windows' and collective efficacy's theoretical components and their application to the contextual intricacies of a neighborhood and its ecology.

Pockets of Crime is a must-read for sociologists and criminologists who desire a fresh look at broken windows and collective efficacy theories. It has the additional benefits of comprehensive explanations of multi-method approaches to the study of crime, and the innovative SSO video ethnographic approach to ecological micro-analysis. The book is also appropriate for graduate students in sociology and criminology as supplemental reading in courses related to integrated qualitative and quantitative research, or for any level of instruction in the areas of theory, policy, or urban geography and planning.

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