

# Violent Times: A Case Study of the Ybor City Historic District

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*This case analysis of an urban historic district tracks the demographic, economic, and public policy trends that influenced its violent crime volumes. Constructs from routine activities theory and environmental criminology are used to explain these crime trends. Findings are (a) macrostructural forces influenced crime volumes; (b) populations drawn to the area's nightlife had an impact on crime; (c) considering the number of people who visited the area, the victimization risks there were greater than was average for all of Tampa; (d) the demographics of the areas surrounding the district had less impact on crime there than has been assumed; and (e) the high density of bars facilitated the occurrence of violent crime beyond what would have been generated with other land uses. Recommendations are presented for guiding the formation of public policy that will affect the future crime trends in the district and may also be generalized to similar areas undergoing economic revitalization.*

**Keywords:** *economic revitalization; routine activities theory; crime trends; urban planning*

The Ybor City Historic District (YCHD), located in the heart of Tampa, Florida, has become an inner city revitalization miracle; however, at the same time, it has endured rising levels of violent crime. According to the Ybor City Development Corporation (2001), since 1990, 250 new businesses have opened, \$200 million in public and private investments have been made, 2,500 new jobs have been created, and more than 1 million square feet of building renovation has taken place. On the other hand, according to data collected by the Tampa Police Department (data provided by Officer Tom Thayer in the Technology Unit of the Administrative Division, 2002), during that same period, the frequencies of robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault reached all-time highs. One might conclude that the success of this economic revitalization has come at the cost of a decrease in social order and an increase in human misery. There are various opinions

about how the ongoing process of economic redevelopment has resulted in the historic district becoming a dangerous place. Some blame it on the bar culture that has evolved there, with the clustering of many youth-oriented bars and nightclubs on or near Seventh Avenue (the heart of the historic district). Others cite the estimated 30,000 people who are attracted to this area on an average weekend night (Ybor City Development Corporation, 2001). Also, the proximity of this area to some of the highest crime neighborhoods in Tampa has been suggested as an important factor relevant to the persistence of the violence in the historic district. Until recently, most of this was speculation without any systematically gathered evidence to support or refute it. No one had carefully examined the problem.

To address this situation, this project made use of longitudinal data to track some of the demographic, economic, and public policy trends that appeared to play a role in the annual variance of violent crime frequencies in the YCHD. This is a case study of changing routine activities in an urban setting that produced findings that were then organized in a way to help understand the underlying dynamics of the evolution of this crime problem. Whatever else has happened in the YCHD over the past two decades, there certainly have been profound changes in the routine activities there. Therefore, the major organizing paradigm by which all these changes were considered was routine activities theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979). Also incorporated were the theoretical perspectives of, and the research findings from, the field of environmental criminology that specify the kinds of routine activities that have been shown to have effects on crime frequencies. Another important facet of this analysis was to develop data sources of the measurable variables that charted the yearly changes in the kinds of economic activity, demographics, and crime prevention programs that are indicative of the variations that have occurred in pools of potential offenders, their access to suitable targets, and the effectiveness of guardianship. These routine activity and environmental criminology indicators were used to help understand trends that have occurred over the past 22 years in the annual frequencies of violent crime. The ultimate purpose of this study was to produce enough information to go beyond mere conjecture and speculation and thus to be able to document and specify the factors that appeared to have most influenced the violent crime problem there. Finally, insights that were drawn from this analysis were used to make public policy recommendations regarding how the fruits of this economic boom can be enjoyed while minimizing the threats to persons trying to enjoy them.

More specifically, the following research questions were addressed: (a) For the three offense types used as indicators of violent crime (robbery,

aggravated assault, and simple assault), since 1980 what has been the reported crime frequency trends in the YCHD? (b) For which of these violent offenses have the YCHD's 22-year trends been consistently higher than for the contiguous surrounding grids and the rest of the city of Tampa? (c) What was the relationship between the 22-year trends in reported violent crime in the YCHD and the trends for these violent offenses for the contiguous surrounding grids and the rest of the city of Tampa? (d) How can the variation in measurable indicators of proximate offender pools and suitable target concentrations help explain the 22-year trends in reported violent offenses? and (e) Was there any evidence that deliberate actions to increase guardianship levels in the YCHD have suppressed the growth of violent crime?

### THE ROUTINE ACTIVITIES MODEL

Cohen and Felson's (1979) routine activities theory explored the link between social change, routine activities, and criminal opportunities. It was first developed as a strictly macrostructural model that focused primarily on the mediating variables between social change and direct-contact predatory crime rates. Based on the assumption of interdependence between legal and illegal routine activities, the essence of this theory can be reduced to the following formula:  $(O + V) - G = C$ , where  $O$  represents the "motivated offender";  $V$  indicates the victim (which can be either the victim's person or property and is thus often referred to as "target.");  $G$  denotes "guardianship," which, in this version of the theory, is any person who can deter the criminal act; and  $C$  is the probability that a direct contact predatory crime will occur. Although the operators between these terms are not here intended to imply only linear additive relationships, this "formula" identifies a condition wherein the probability of a crime occurring is affected by the social and ecological circumstances that bring together an offender and a victim without anyone who might successfully thwart the occurrence of a crime. For this crime model, changes in any one of the variables can influence the probability of crime occurring. It is social and ecological forces that bring motivated offenders, potential targets, and various forms and levels of guardianship together in a geographic location. Routine activities theory can be useful at a macrostructural level as well as for applications involving the criminology of place.

Felson and Cohen (1980) later narrowed their theory's focus to direct contact predation for instrumental reasons and elaborated the role of the victim in terms of "target suitability." In developing the concept of target

suitability, there was a further description of the means by which routine activities combine potential offenders and their victims, thereby influencing the probability that victimization will occur. Acknowledging its assumptions of rational choice on the part of the motivated offender, Felson and Cohen specified four main ways that the potential targets of predatory crime figure into the reasoning process of potential offenders: (a) *Value* is the desirability of the potential target to the criminal predator. Because targets can be a victim's body or property (or both), the value sought can be for pecuniary gain, retaliation, self-concept enhancement, or sexual aggression. (b) *Visibility* is a target's risk of being discovered by a potential offender. (c) *Access* is the suitability of a target's location for legal or illegal entry as well as escape opportunities. (d) *Inertia* is any factor that makes a target difficult to overcome for illegal purposes (locks, size, alarms, defensive weapons, etc.). The routine activities of potential victims affect the levels of these four dimensions of target suitability. In an effort to expand the predictive power of routine activities theory, Cohen, Kluegel, and Land (1981) elaborated it to explain both rates and demographic patterns of victimization. Expanding on the basic constructs, they posited that because greater proximity and exposure increase a potential offender's contact with and knowledge of the potential victim's routine activities, the probability of victimization increases. This would suggest that the routine activities of young people bring them more frequently into interaction with others who are young, and this would explain why younger people are more likely to be victimized and also why they are more likely to be victimized by others about their own age.

Adding what amounted to a qualifier to basic routine activities theory, Lynch (1987), and later Wooldredge, Cullen, and Latessa (1992), cautioned that exposure, guardianship, attractiveness, and proximity are strongly influenced by "activity domains." That is, the crime-causing potential resulting from the interaction between these variables may be strongly influenced by the physical and social setting in which they occur. To increase their validity, the generalization of routine activity theory findings that are domain specific (work, home, school, non-home leisure) should be narrowed to fit the specific type of environments in question. Victimization in each domain involves a pattern of environmental variables unique to that setting. For example, high levels of anonymity decrease guardianship and increase stranger victimization so that, under these conditions, the deterrent effect of people who might observe and report crime occurring is reduced when people are mostly strangers to each other.

In his description of crime-prevention strategies, Clarke (1992, p. 11) suggested that a fourth major variable be added to routine activities theory: *crime facilitators*. He maintained that high crime areas contain conditions, such as alcohol consumption or ease of access, that facilitate the commission of crime. The logical opposite, crime *inhibition*, can be added to the concept of *facilitation* and expanded to include all the routine activity theory factors.

Whenever the economic, demographic, and social forces that shape the urban backcloth bring potential offenders and suitable targets together in the absence of effective guardianship, the probability that a criminal event will occur increases. In terms of analyzing criminogenic locations, the three essential questions are, How does this location influence the motivation, decision making, and presence of potential offenders? How does it affect the supply and suitability of potential targets? What physical and social characteristics of the area inhibit or facilitate guardianship? A survey of the literature on environmental criminology produced numerous environmental variables that have been shown to either inhibit or facilitate criminal behavior.

### **Offender Characteristics**

Routine activities theory assumes a certain level of offender rationality (Felson, 1986). Thus, it is important to consider both the decision-making characteristics of the types of potential offenders who are assumed to be attracted to the place in question and the effects that the environment at hand might have on the choices they make. Research studies have identified four relevant characteristics of potential offenders that, through interaction with the situational factors of place, are likely to influence the potential offender's decision-making process. They are lifestyle proximity, offender knowledge, offender anonymity, and offender impairment.

#### *Lifestyle Proximity*

Lifestyles that regularly bring potential offenders into proximity with suitable targets have been found to facilitate crime (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1981; Cohen & Felson, 1979; Eck & Weisburd, 1995; Felson, 1995). If there exists a congruence between the lifestyles of populations that tend to be at high risk for crime commission, the lifestyles of people who might be suitable targets for these potential offenders, and the activities that

commonly occur at a particular place, then this would tend to increase offender-victim proximity and thus facilitate crime occurrences.

### *Offender Knowledge*

The presence of potential offenders with an extensive knowledge of the areas wherein suitable targets can be found is a facilitator of crime (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1993; Clarke, 1992; Eck & Weisburd, 1995; Reppeto, 1976). Beyond the more obvious advantages of knowing the routes of access and escape, potential offenders who are familiar with the physical layout and social rhythms of a specific environment are also more aware of the local crime opportunity structure. Familiarity with the criminal opportunities and physical layout of an environment should thus facilitate the criminal activity of potential offenders in the area wherein they possess this level of awareness.

### *Offender Anonymity*

The presence of potential offenders whose identity is unknown to possible capable guardians in the area is a facilitator of crime (Felson, 1995; Roncek & Bell, 1981; Roncek & Maier, 1991; Sampson, 1987). This anonymity can result from the sheer volume and turnover of people in an area or its lack of community solidarity, but it may also result from the potential offender's purposeful actions to remain unknown. Whatever the source, it is a characteristic of potential offenders that facilitates their criminal activity because it can reduce the effectiveness of whatever capable guardianship might exist.

### *Offender Impairment*

The presence of potential offenders whose decision-making capabilities have been impaired by the ingestion of psychoactive substances is a facilitator of crime (Block & Block, 1995; Clarke, 1992; Roncek & Maier, 1991; Roncek & Pravatiner, 1989). Although the sales of psychoactive disinhibitors such as alcohol can also be considered a characteristic of place, the condition of being uninhibited or any other form of judgment impairment that results from the ingestion of psychoactive substances is a feature that persons can potentially bring to a specific environment. Obviously, areas in which psychopharmacological disinhibitors are freely distributed and ingested are likely to have a higher concentration of disinhibited people,

and this in turn increases the potential for offending (for a review of the literature examining the connection between alcohol intoxication and aggression, see Fagan, 1990).

### **Characteristics of Targets**

Routine activities theory also implies that people and their property vary in suitability as targets for predatory crime and that these differences influence which are chosen by offenders, or whether or not a crime even occurs at all (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1993; Felson & Cohen, 1980; Miethe & Meier, 1990). At the aggregate level, given a stable exposure to potential offenders and consistency in capable guardianship, the more a place attracts suitable targets and/or increases their suitability, the greater the frequency of crime that will result. Research has identified three constructs that can be considered characteristics of potential targets that, in interaction with the situational factors of place, are likely to influence the probability of a person or his or her property becoming a victim of crime.

#### *Target Value*

The presence of people or their property that have high value as crime targets is a facilitator of crime (Felson & Cohen, 1980; Roncek & Maier, 1991). The most obvious form of target value is economic. However, a target's usefulness as an outlet for retaliation, sexual aggression, or as a means for improving the offender's self-concept is also possible. As a target's value moves from a purely economic-instrumental consideration toward the more expressive end of this continuum, the potential worth of a person or his or her property becomes more subjective.

#### *Target Visibility*

The presence of people or their property that are highly visible as suitable targets is a facilitator of crime (Felson & Cohen, 1980; Roncek & Maier, 1991). Some places attract or produce large concentrations of people with high profile levels of vulnerability. People who are inattentive to their surrounding, appear to lack "street smarts," are physically incapacitated due to medical conditions or intoxication, or any combination of these characteristics, are at a higher risk of victimization when exposed to potential offenders than are those without such characteristics.

### *Target Guardianship*

The presence of people and their property without capable guardianship is a facilitator of crime (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Eck & Weisburd, 1995; Felson, 1995; Riccio, 1976; Roncek & Maier, 1991; Roncek & Pravatiner, 1989; Shannon, 1986; Sherman, Gartin, & Buerger, 1989). Guardianship is defined as the presence of persons who can protect would-be victims through the deterrence power of their potential to intervene in one way or another. Guardians may physically stop the offense from occurring. They may have the potential to report the crime to authorities, identify the offender, or even apprehend or injure the perpetrator. In this sense, guardianship can be a feature of place, but it can also be a characteristic that people bring with them. Although places that consistently have large numbers of people present are likely to increase contact between potential offenders and suitable targets, they can also provide high levels of guardianship. Although the anonymity that results from large and rapidly changing human aggregates can reduce this effect, the presence of an audience should generally increase the probability that a potential offender will choose not to commit a crime.

### **Place of Offender/Target Convergence**

It is the essential nature of a place that influences the interaction of potential offenders, suitable targets, and guardianship. The context of where the place is located, what kind of people it attracts, and the routine activities that occur there are essential to its criminogenic potential. Some elements of this backcloth can work to inhibit crime while other features facilitate it. Research into the environments of crime has identified five characteristics of place that, through interactions with the characteristics of the people who frequent the location, influence the probability of a person becoming a victim of crime.

### *Place Management*

Places in which there is little active management of behavior facilitate crime (Block & Block, 1995; Clarke, 1992; Eck & Weisburd, 1995; Felson, 1995; Mazerolle, Kadleck, & Roehl, 1998; Sherman, 1995). Places where “anything goes” can allow relatively minor incivility to escalate into crime.

Conversely, it has been found that places in which managers and employees are assigned guardianship roles that include the consistent enforcement of clear rules of behavior have lower occurrences of crime.

### *Ecological Labeling*

Places that have been labeled as a “devalued area” wherein deviance is tolerated facilitate crime (Block & Block, 1995; Brantingham & Brantingham, 1991; Sherman et al., 1989). Once a place starts to develop a reputation as an environment in which deviance is tolerated, a deviation-amplifying feedback loop can begin. That is, the more deviance occurs, the more normal it appears to be, and the more it is accepted as normal behavior, the more people choose to act in deviant ways. For places, being labeled as an environment of unlimited personal freedom attracts people who wish to behave without restraint. It is possible that areas with reputations of this type may also repel potential victims who want to avoid dangerous places. Research has shown that this kind of environmental labeling does tend to attract relatively higher numbers of potential offenders and that this “attractor effect” can increase the probability of crime.

### *Place Proximity*

The location of places close to concentrated populations of potential offenders facilitates crime (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1991, 1993; Dunn, 1980; Felson, 1986; Roncek & Maier, 1991; Roncek & Pravatiner, 1989; Sherman, 1995; Sherman et al., 1989). Affluent areas are often victimized by offenders who live in less affluent places that are close by. These more affluent areas attract predatory offenders because they provide a concentration of suitable targets in a conveniently located environment.

### *Youth Attractors*

Areas that attract a high number of young people are facilitators of crime (Block & Block, 1995; Brantingham & Brantingham, 1981, 1993; Roncek & Faggiani, 1985; Roncek & Lobosco, 1983; Roncek & Pravatiner, 1989). Because age is strongly related to both offending and being victimized, places that attract large numbers of young people concentrate, and thus increase, the contact between offenders and suitable targets.

### *Bars*

Areas that contain public establishments that serve alcohol as an important part of their retail activity facilitate crime (Block & Block, 1995; Minnesota Crime Commission, 1980; Roncek & Bell, 1981; Roncek & Maier, 1991; Roncek & Pravatiner, 1989; Shannon, 1986; Sherman, 1995). Not all bars are criminogenic, but certain types of bars and clusters of bars within night entertainment areas can facilitate crime by concentrating a number of the conditions described above. These circumstances can be counteracted through the practice of patron management, providing guardianship, and other types of crime prevention activities. It has also been shown that higher levels of alcohol outlet density are geographically associated with higher rates of violence (Scribner, Cohen, Kaplan, & Allen, 1999; Scribner, MacKinnon, & Dwyer, 1995).

## METHODOLOGY

### **The Crime Data**

The main goal of this case study was to describe and attempt to account for changing violent crime trends. Thus, the availability of longitudinal dependent variable data was essential to its success. The Tampa Police Department has maintained 22 years of “crimes known to police” data for approximately 200 reporting grids in the city. Threats to the validity of this type of crime data have been extensively described elsewhere (see, for example, Maxfield & Babbie, 1998, pp. 122-124), and its aggregation by whole years reduced its value for the various forms of regression and time-series analysis that might have been conducted had there been a sufficient number of data points. There were, however, some positive aspects to the use of the existing data. Although not all reporting grids are of equal size, they are more or less 10 blocks square and frequently cover essentially the same areas as census tract grids. Furthermore, the YCHD fits perfectly within the boundaries of two grids (127 and 128) as do the contiguous areas that will also be considered in this study. The violent crime data used here represented the following three crime categories created by the Federal Bureau of Investigation for their *Uniform Crime Report*: (a) robbery, (b) aggravated assault, and (c) simple assault. An annual mean per grid frequencies of crime for each of the three violent crime types can easily be calculated for Tampa as a whole (aggregated grids referred to as “the rest of Tampa” exclude crimes occurring in the YCHD and the 13 contiguous grids

that are analyzed separately), and this average frequency per grid value can be used to control for yearly crime frequency fluctuations that were due to macrostructural forces not being considered at the more microlevel focus of this case analysis. The grid-by-grid format of these data will also allow for some comparisons to be made between the YCHD and the surrounding contiguous grids that could serve as a source of proximate potential offenders. This case analysis relied on the use of total annual crime frequencies rather than rates per unit of population. Because there was a relatively small (an estimated 2,225 in 1999) residential population within the historic district (Microsoft, 2001) as compared with an estimated 2,632,100 annual visitors (Ybor City Development Corporation, 2001), any calculation of crime *rates* using the residential population data alone would have produced grossly inflated values that would not have included in the calculations the effect of criminogenic conditions created by such a large influx of tourists and business patrons. After the rapid growth of the popularity of the historic district as a night entertainment venue, the residential population of this area may have had relatively little impact on the supply of potential offenders, suitable targets, or effective guardianship. Excluding consideration of the more transitory population would create crime trend values that grossly exaggerate the risk of victimization there.

One means of determining the relative dangerousness of the YCHD as a geographical subunit of Tampa would be to calculate the risk of victimization by dividing its total “population” for any one year by the frequency of a specific type of crime occurrence for that year, yielding an “offense per person” ratio. This can be represented as  $VR_{ychd} = RP_{ychd} / CV_{ychd}$ , where  $VR_{ychd}$  is the YCHD victimization risk,  $RP_{ychd}$  is its estimated residential population for a specific year, and  $CV_{ychd}$  is its annual frequency of a specific type of reported crime. This index of risk can be compared with a similarly calculated risk for the rest of Tampa [ $VR_t = RP_t / CV_t$ ] but, as discussed above, needs to first be adjusted to also include the extremely large number of people who visit the YCHD every year for various reasons. However, it could be argued that the estimated 2,632,100 people who visited the YCHD in 2000 would not have the same criminogenic impact as residents who are potential offenders and/or victims 365 days a year and that this number should be divided by 365 to yield a number of “resident equivalents.” Thus, the 2,632,100 visitors in 2000 would be equated to 7,211 resident equivalents, which when added to the 2,225 estimated YCHD residents for 1999 (the closest estimate to the year 2000), equals an adjusted population of 9,436. Our formula was thus modified to  $VR_{ychd} = (RP_{ychd} + RE_{ychd}) / CV_{ychd}$ , where  $RE_{ychd}$  represents the residential equivalent population of the YCHD.

Although there are, of course, visitors to other areas in Tampa, their cumulative impact would probably not be as great as when a very high volume of visitors are concentrated into an area only a few blocks square. To calculate the relative risk of becoming a crime victim in the YCHD, the 9,436 adjusted population was divided by the number of each of the three types of violent crimes that were reported for the year 2000, yielding for each crime category a victimization risk of reported crimes per resident equivalents. This can then be compared to the city's victimization risk for that year, which can be obtained by dividing Tampa's 2000 estimated population of 303,447 (Bureau of Economic and Business Research, 2001) by the total frequency of the offense in question.

For each of the three categories of violent crime, the five research questions above were addressed using the crime data provided by the Tampa Police Department, the orientation of routine activities theory, and the 12 crime facilitator/inhibitor constructs identified. More specifically, for the 1980 to 2001 period, annual frequencies for each violent crime type were tracked. The annual means of the two crime-reporting grids constituting the YCHD, the annual mean of 13 surrounding contiguous grids, and the mean frequency per grid for all other grids in the city of Tampa were calculated. These three trend lines were examined and zero-order correlations between them calculated. Answers to the first three research questions regarding how violent crime trends in the historic district compared with other contiguous areas and Tampa as a whole were addressed using these analyses. The 1980 to 2001 trends were then considered in light of the facilitator/inhibitor variables derived from the literature on environmental criminology and routine activities theory. From these analyses, descriptions of the apparent sources of the fluctuating violent crime frequencies in this area were identified and the effectiveness of existing crime prevention measures evaluated. Finally, this analysis guided the formation of public policy recommendations.

### **Measures of Crime Facilitator/Inhibitor Variables**

There were six data sources that provided the type of longitudinal information on crime facilitator/inhibitor variables in the YCHD that could be relevant to explaining the violent crime trends there. The number of wet zoning permits granted for each year from 1981 to 2001 was available from the Tampa Business Tax Division. Although the economic revitalization of the YCHD was the result of the activity of enterprises other than alcohol-serving establishments, the growth of the bar scene was at the core of this

boom. Thus, the trend in the total number of wet zoning permits held is generally an indicator of economic activity, but more specifically a measure of the number of bars and nightclubs in the area, as well as a less direct assessment of changes in the potential for offender impairment, target visibility, ecological labeling, and youth attractors. A more direct indicator of a wider spectrum of economic activity was the 1991-2001 sales tax revenue data from the Florida Department of Revenue. The logic by which these data were linked to crime trends was that increased economic activity would be positively correlated with an increase in the volume of the overall pool of suitable targets as well as an increase in overall human activity that would have affected the frequency of contact between these targets and potential offenders.

Variance in the level of formal guardianship was assessed by constructing a timeline of changes in police presence, and also by tracking the implementation of other major crime prevention initiatives. These data were derived from a search of local newspaper articles and interviews with the police administrators responsible for such activities. Although the oft-cited Kansas City Patrol Study suggested that increases in the concentration of police patrols do not reduce overall crime frequencies (Kelling, Pate, Dieckman, & Brown, 1974), that research and more recent studies have demonstrated some deterrent effects of patrols directed to specific problem areas (see, for example, Sherman, Rogan, & Shaw, 1994; Sherman & Weisburd, 1995). The belief that much of the crime problem in the YCHD has been the result of its proximity to some areas in Tampa that have historically had very high crime rates required an analysis of changes in this pool of potential offenders. The surrounding areas that are close to the YCHD correspond to nine census tracts as well as the 13 crime-reporting grids described above. To focus on changes in the pool of the highest risk potential violent offenders, national arrest data were used to estimate the age range at highest risk of arrest for violent offenses (Maguire & Pastore, 1998). Data from the U.S. Population Census was then used to estimate trends in the changes in the pool of 14- to 24-year-old males residing in these areas. An even more direct measure of active offender pools in surrounding areas that was used was the annual crime frequencies within these proximate grids. The results were graphed for each of the three violent offense types. The violent crime trends within these neighborhoods would be reasonably valid indicators of the quantity and activity of the pool of motivated offenders who lived in proximity to an area that abounds with potential targets.

The crime facilitator/inhibitor variable of mixed land use was examined by calculating the proportion of land uses devoted to residential, retail, or commercial activities, as well as those structures standing vacant, and was derived from a block-by-block analysis of Tampa City Directories (R. L. Polk & Co., 1980, 1985, 1993, 1998). The structural use proportions for four sample years, 1980, 1985, 1993, and 1998, were calculated to develop a longitudinal portrait of changing land use in the YCHD. For those crime facilitator/inhibitor variables that could not be measured longitudinally, two sources of cross-sectional data were developed. The 2000 estimate of annual visitors discussed above was used not only to calculate victimization risks but also as evidence of the current volume of human activity in the YCHD that could facilitate offender anonymity.

## FINDINGS

### **Land Use and Economic Trends**

The proportion of land uses devoted to residential, retail, or commercial activities, as well as those structures standing vacant, was derived from a block-by-block analysis of Tampa City Directories (R. L. Polk & Co., 1980, 1985, 1993, 1998). An overview of these data showed that although the proportions of retail and commercial uses stayed relatively stable over the 4 sample years, the proportion of residential and vacant buildings appeared to be inversely related. That is, vacant buildings increased from 20% in 1980 to 32.1% in 1985 and peaked at 42.3% in 1993. Then, the 1998 count showed a dramatic decrease in the proportion of vacant buildings down to 17.6%. Over this same period, residential uses declined from 44.6% in 1980 to 33.6% in 1985 and bottomed out at 22.5% in 1993. Much like the proportion of vacant structures, the proportion of residential uses returned to 1980 levels by increasing to 44.6% in 1998.

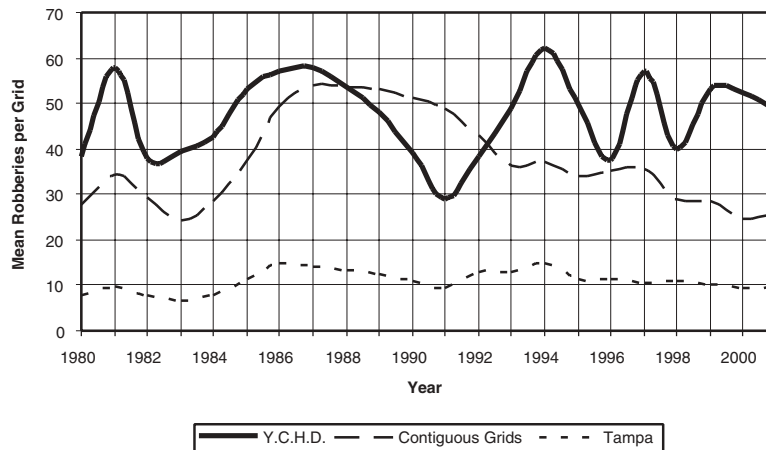
Data that indicate the annual number of wet zoning permits issued to businesses in the Ybor Historic District for each year since before 1981 showed a strong increase in the annual number of permits granted from 1993 to 1997, and some resurgence for 1999 to 2001. What this suggests is that the apparent stability in the proportion of retail land use from 1993 to 1998 belied the reality of an important shift in the type of retail activity that was evolving in the historic district. Although retail merchandising still occurs there, the enterprises that were most often able to succeed were bars

and nightclubs. The early 1990s saw the beginning of a self-amplifying cycle wherein the success of night entertainment enterprises attracted like-minded entrepreneurs. Furthermore, as the number and clustering of bars and nightclubs increased, the rapidly rising rents and the more widely known reputation of the area as a nighttime entertainment district selected against other forms of retail business. Overall, the 1990s were indeed a decade of economic boom for the historic district as the sales tax revenues generated by its businesses steadily increased from about 6 million in 1980 to about 33 million in 2000. Although the residents of the YCHD who live near the Seventh Avenue core have often complained about problems of noise, trash, and rowdy behavior that has spilled over from the increased nighttime activity, the economic growth that occurred there may also have been an important factor in increasing the residential attractiveness of the area. Finally, the estimated pool of 14- to 24-year-old males living in and around the YCHD has somewhat declined over the past 20 years. In 1980, there were 2,780; in 1990, there were 1,999; and in 1999, there were 1,939 (Microsoft, 2001).

## **Violent Crime Trends**

### *Robbery Trends*

Figure 1 confirms that people visiting the YCHD post-1993 are at greater risk of being robbed than is the norm for other areas of Tampa. Although the robbery trends there appear to be somewhat influenced by macrolevel forces (YCHD & Tampa  $r = .54$ ; YCHD & Contiguous Grids  $r = .12$ , and Contiguous Grids & Tampa  $r = .67$ ), the frequency of robberies reported to police that have occurred in both the YCHD and its contiguous areas have always been higher than the per-grid average for the rest of the city. Furthermore, since 1993, they have been consistently higher than for the surrounding high-crime neighborhoods. Also of interest is that, perhaps with the exception of 1990 and 1991, they have remained relatively stable both before and after the revitalization of this area. From 1980 to 1992, there was an average of 91 robberies per year in the YCHD. For 1993 to 2001, that increased to 100 per year. Finally, in 1999 there was 1 reported robbery for every 124 persons in Tampa, but in the YCHD, there was 1 for every 89. Although somewhat influenced by macrolevel forces, the YCHD is more dangerous than is average for Tampa, and this condition has been changed little by revitalization.



**Figure 1: Robbery Trends in the Ybor City Historic District (YCHD)**

### Aggravated Assault Trends

The reputation of this area of Tampa as being a dangerous place was apparently confirmed by the data presented in Figure 2. Although there was a strong correlation between the aggravated assault trends in the contiguous areas and the rest of Tampa ( $r = .77$ ), the correlation between the YCHD and the surrounding areas was minimal ( $r = .18$ ), as was the correlation between the historic district and the rest of Tampa ( $r = .22$ ). Economic revitalization appears to have aggravated the problem. Visual inspection of Figure 2 suggests that the trends of aggravated assault in the YCHD were more strongly correlated with the contiguous areas and the rest of Tampa prior to 1993. Furthermore, in the period from 1980 to 1992, there was an average of 104 per year in the YCHD, and from 1993 to 2002, that annual average increased to 155 per year. In 1999, there was 1 robbery for every 92 persons in Tampa and 1 for every 77 persons in the YCHD. Although somewhat driven by macroforces, the YCHD has always been more dangerous than average for Tampa, and, although the reported aggravated assault volumes have varied since 1995, the danger of being seriously assaulted there has been generally higher since the beginning of this area's revitalization than before.

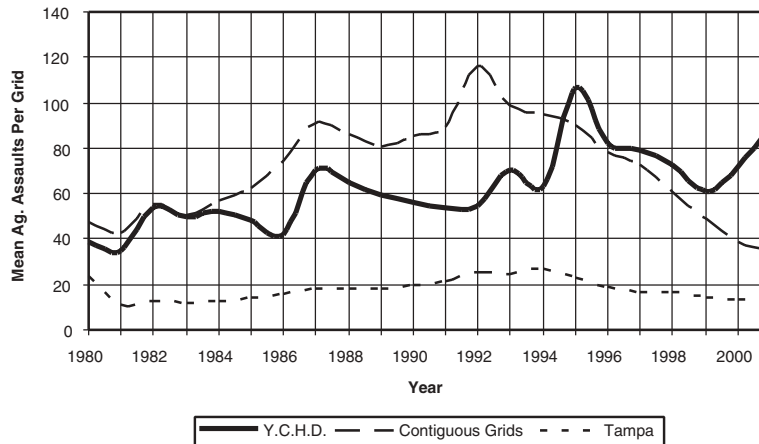


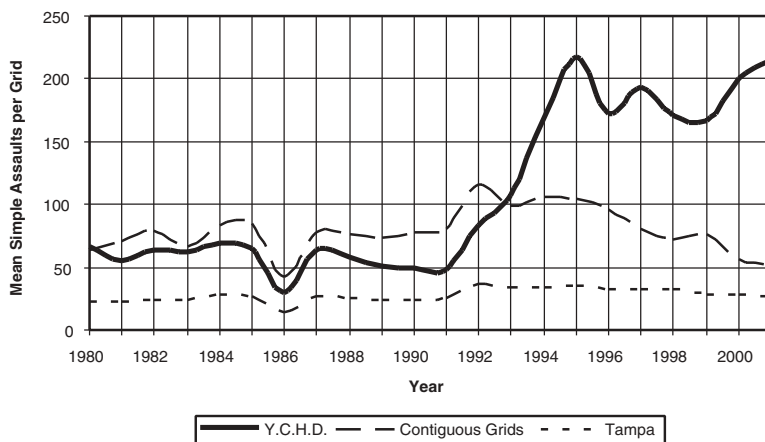
Figure 2: Aggravated Assault Trends in the Ybor City Historic District (YCHD)

### Simple Assault Trends

The data presented in Figure 3 show a remarkable pattern of correlation between the simple assault trends in the contiguous areas and the rest of Tampa ( $r = .80$ ). Visual inspection of this graph also suggests that until the early 1990s, the YCHD's annual averages were also correlated with the surrounding areas and the rest of Tampa. However, this level of correlation did not occur during the 1993-2001 time period. For the entire 22-year period, the correlation between the YCHD and the contiguous areas was  $r = .17$  and for the YCHD and the rest of Tampa  $r = .63$  (most correlation occurring pre-1993). In 1993, the average volume of reported simple assaults in the YCHD exceeded the average volume of these crimes in the surrounding area for the first time in the 22 years of data being considered in this study. In the years following, this volume increased to a relatively stable high of about 175 average simple assaults per year. As might be expected from this trend, on average in the rest of Tampa, there was 1 simple assault for every 44 persons, whereas in the YCHD, there was 1 for every 28 persons.

### Patterns of Guardianship

According to routine activities theory, capable guardianship can deter crime. Increases in an area's level of guardianship often occur in response to



**Figure 3: Simple Assault Trends in the Ybor City Historic District (YCHD)**

increases in criminal activity. Increased guardianship itself is also a change in routine activities. In 1980, the policing of the YCHD was essentially the same as for the rest of Tampa. There was relatively little change in this level of police guardianship throughout that decade. In 1982, one officer was assigned to patrol the area by car during the day, and then in 1984, one walking officer was added. In the early 1990s, as the economic boom that resulted from revitalization efforts began to gather momentum, there was a corresponding increase in police activity there. Three trends can be observed. First, there has been a steady increase in the total number of officers assigned to the area from one to now dozens. Second, police officers focused on specific crime problems (such as motor vehicle theft in 1993) and staffing was made more intense at times of peak activity (weekend nights). Finally, there was an emphasis on community policing efforts such as walking and bicycle patrols. These trends continued throughout the 1990s. Business owners and the city council also got involved in the mid-1990s through the use of extra-duty police officers as security on weekend nights for the larger capacity nightclubs. This practice not only affected guardianship within the establishments but also, since the extra-duty officers could be called at any time to assist in other areas of the district, the overall number of police present on weekend evenings was increased beyond those patrols assigned to the area as regular duty. In 1995, the Tampa City Council passed an ordinance requiring the use of extra-duty officers in

wet zoned businesses whenever their patron capacity was expected to be more than 200.

More physical efforts to decrease the accesses to and increase surveillance along the Seventh Avenue core of nighttime activity occurred in the later 1990s. Two major environmental initiatives were begun in 1997 and 1998, and both were focused on the Seventh Avenue "Ybor Strip" heart of the entertainment district: (a) the installation of closed-circuit television cameras (CCTV) and (b) the installation of high-intensity street lights. In August of 1997, 12 CCTV cameras were installed in highly visible locations along Seventh Avenue in the areas of highest nighttime activity. The behaviors of people on this portion of Seventh Avenue were then monitored during periods of high-volume business at the bars and nightclubs (mostly weekend evenings) by a police officer who could then radio dispatch other officers to any area of suspicious activity. Finally, to improve the guardianship provided both by police, business employees, and patrons, 1,000-watt sodium halide streetlights were installed along the major activity area of Seventh Avenue in January of 1998.

## CONCLUSIONS

### **Robbery**

The YCHD has long had a reputation as a place where muggings were common and, in fact, for every year from 1980 to 2001, there were many more robberies per grid in the YCHD than for the rest of Tampa. Although there was some correlation between robbery trends in the YCHD and those for the rest of Tampa, robberies in the YCHD should also have been deterred by the increased guardianship resulting from the rising density of human traffic there. However, the most striking feature of the data displayed in Figure 1 is the longitudinal stability of the annual mean reported robbery. How could there be such a major shift in routine activities and a long-term stability in robberies? The answer may be that although the post-1992 economic boom changed both offender and target variables in a manner that would facilitate robbery, at the same time guardianship forces increased thereby inhibiting increased potential. One effect canceled out the other, resulting in stability in the reported robbery volume. The role played by "age of risk" males from surrounding high-crime areas in this pattern was unclear. On one hand, their numbers decreased over the 22 periods covered by the available crime data, as did the 1989 to 2001 volumes of robberies reported in the neighborhoods where they lived. On the other hand, the data also supported

a conclusion that the increase in the number and value of suitable targets brought about by the YCHD economic boom attracted predatory criminals there and that a displacement of robberies accounted for the decrease in that offense committed in the surrounding neighborhoods. Although the rest of Tampa was experiencing generally declining robbery volumes during that time period, the decline in the YCHD-surrounding grids was even more pronounced. Whatever the source of offenders, the YCHD is still a high-risk environment for robberies.

### **Aggravated Assaults**

Figure 2 suggested that there has, at least since 1980, been more of this offense occurring in the YCHD than was average per grid for the rest of the city of Tampa. This area has always been a relatively dangerous place with regard to aggravated assault. And, as noted in the findings section above, economic revitalization has somewhat worsened the danger. In 1999, there were more assaults per person than was average for the rest of Tampa. In fact, since 1995, there have been somewhat more aggravated assaults reported there per year than for the surrounding neighborhoods that have notoriously high crime rates. Since there was a particularly high correlation coefficient between the annual changes in mean aggravated assaults per grid for the contiguous grids and also for the rest of Tampa ( $r = .77$ ), macrostructural forces would appear to explain most of the variance in annual frequencies for the contiguous grids. Unlike the strongly correlated relationship between the contiguous grids and the rest of Tampa, there was a 3-year period of time (1992-1994) during which mean frequencies of aggravated assault were dropping in the contiguous grids, staying more or less stable for the rest of Tampa, and, at the same time, rising dramatically in the historic district. Major changes in the routine activities taking place in the YCHD in the early 1990s may have had much to do with this apparent anomaly. Even with declining numbers of 14- to 24-year-old males in the surrounding neighborhoods, the increase in the number of suitable targets drawn by economic development in the YCHD may have resulted in a displacement of violence from the surrounding areas to the YCHD. It may also have been that, as was the case for robberies, the volume of aggravated assaults that might have occurred due to the increase in potential targets was deterred by increased guardianship. The years 1993 and 1994 marked the beginning of a major increase in police presence in the historic district. Increased police patrols, the use of extra-duty officers at some of the bars, and the general increase in the amount of human activity in the area may

have combined in the mid-1990s to increase target guardianship and thus had some inhibitory effect on the commission of aggravated assaults. The 1995 to 1999 downward trend in reported aggravated assaults in the YCHD mirrors similar trends in the surrounding neighborhoods and for the rest of Tampa. That combined with the increases in the mean aggravated assaults in the YCHD for 2000 and 2001 suggests that the street lighting and the CCTVs did not have a measurable effect on the annual volumes of aggravated assaults, other than perhaps as part of the mix of guardianship forces that were instituted at various times after the economic boom began.

### **Simple Assaults**

Legal definitions aside, simple assaults are, for the most part, more or less spontaneous altercations between young males. There are, of course, variations on this theme, but in the context of bars and similar public gathering places that were at issue here, simple assaults were basically “fist fights” of varying degrees of severity. Figure 3 shows that from 1980 to 1992, the degree of annual simple assault frequency correlation between the YCHD, its contiguous grids, and the rest of Tampa was very high. This suggested that up until 1993, macrostructural forces predominated in all three of these areas. It was also apparent that the dramatic rise in the annual frequencies of simple assault in the YCHD was associated with the growth of the night entertainment industry there. The mean number of reported simple assaults peaked in 1995 and then stabilized thereafter at somewhat lower but still record high levels. It needs to be recognized that the validity of the crime data for this offense type is problematic. Because simple assault is a relatively minor offense, it often goes unreported. It has been estimated that nationally only about one third of all simple assaults are reported to the police (Maguire and Pastore, 1998). Although there was no direct evidence to support this assumption, it seemed reasonable to assume that any increase in police presence would also increase the probability that officers would be more likely to hear about, or even directly witness, otherwise unreported altercations, and this condition would facilitate the translation of these offenses into the official data. This effect complicated the analysis of the simple assault trends in the YCHD.

Although some of this increase was surely attributable to the increased likelihood of a simple assault coming to the attention of police, the growing popularity of Ybor nightlife not only brought more offenders and victims together but also had at least some impact on target value. Within a setting where males compete for the attention of females and where the more

traditional rules of civility have less influence, intragender male competition can quickly escalate. Although this effect could have been at least somewhat counteracted by the increased guardianship provided by the expansion of police presence, deterrence is most effective on the reasoning offender, and these types of assaults are often very spontaneous. That combined with the sometimes alcohol-impaired judgment of the participants reduce the inhibitory effect of guardianship. Finally, the street lighting and CCTVs appear not to be having a strong measurable effect.

### **Routine Activities That Affected Crime**

The overarching lesson learned from the YCHD experience was that some forms of economic revitalization are better than others. The relatively rapid economic growth that occurred in the 1990s brought with it a serious violent crime problem with resultant governmental expenses that could have been avoided had they been anticipated. With the guidance of knowledge about the underlying processes, the problems in the YCHD can be insightfully and systematically addressed and other cities embarking on similar revitalization projects can perhaps foresee the unintended consequences of similar patterns of economic development.

The levels of correlation between yearly changes in crime frequencies for the rest of Tampa and those of the YCHD suggested that macrostructural forces, generated outside the scope of the routine activities occurring within the historic district, had a role to play in the violent crime problem there. These macrolevel forces are usually out of the control of local government planners. However, transient populations, such as those drawn to the weekend nightlife in the YCHD, also had a major impact. When the estimated number of people who visited the area was considered in order to standardize rates, the estimated per-grid average violent victimization risks in the YCHD still were greater than the per-grid average for the rest of Tampa. Furthermore, the demographic composition of the crime-plagued neighborhoods surrounding the YCHD may have had less of an impact on the changing crime frequencies in the historic district during 1990s than has been commonly assumed in media coverage and political discussions regarding the source of the crime problem there. It appears that the saturation of this urban area with a high density of bars and nightclubs produced an ecological backcloth that generally facilitated the occurrence of violent crime beyond what would have been generated with other land use activities.

## PUBLIC POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The findings and conclusions presented here are of practical value for guiding the formation of the public policy that will affect the future crime trends in the YCHD, and may also be generalized to similar urban areas undergoing economic revitalization. When communities consider the economic revitalization of deteriorating urban areas, it is critical to understand that the patterns of increased economic activity that are allowed or encouraged will strongly influence the routine activities that facilitate or inhibit criminal activity in the revitalized area. The essential concepts of routine activities theory, combined with the more specific findings of ecological criminology, provide a compass for guiding economic development and public policy as it relates to the control of crime.

### **Urban Planning**

A well-planned process of urban revitalization must include consideration of how changes in local human activities might impact crime frequencies. In the present case, the concentration of bars and nightclubs in the YCHD resulted primarily from a kind of commercial “natural selection” in which night entertainment enterprises have had the advantage over other types of retail businesses. The processes had become a self-amplifying cycle in which the more that bars and nightclubs succeeded there, the greater the area’s reputation as a place to party on weekends grew. Then, the business opportunities created by the growing weekend crowds attracted more night entertainment establishments. When economic revitalization is being planned, economic activities that routine activities theory would suggest might be unusually criminogenic can also be evaluated in light of the cost of increased guardianship that will be required, as is presently done for estimating impact fees that involve infrastructures such as roads and drainage. Investment in proven forms of guardianship early in the development of a revitalization project can reduce the cost of human suffering generated by economic development activities that have the unintended consequences of facilitating crime.

### **Bar Density**

Although any economic development that increases human activity in an area also increases (to at least some extent) the volume of potential

offenders and suitable targets that come within a critical proximity of each other, permitting a high concentration of wet-zoned establishments creates an exponential growth in the interactions between a high-risk population and an environment that facilitates behavioral extremes. Public policies that limit bar density and encourage a more diverse economic development that appeals to a market composed of a wider range of ages and inclinations would counteract that trend. To the extent that these kinds of enterprises reduce the monoculture of youth-oriented bars and nightclubs, they should have a powerful inhibitory effect on crime. Further research that compares entertainment districts with differential bar densities would be useful in determining what other factors beyond levels of bar concentration might have an effect on violent crime.

### **Place Management**

Further research in bar-dense entertainment districts that focus on the patterns of place management and how they correlate with both the volume and geographical placement of violence is warranted. However, findings from environmental studies coupled with the Ybor experience suggest that if bars and nightclubs are an essential part of an economically viable entertainment district, public policy must encourage the responsible management of such establishments. Although the passages of ordinances related to the serving of alcoholic beverages have a long history, they are alone insufficient to curb certain forms of violence. Beyond regulation must be cultivated an atmosphere of cooperation and interdependence between local law enforcement and the owners and managers of such businesses. Maximizing short-term profits by allowing conditions that put patrons at risk cannot be tolerated. Saturating the streets of Ybor with police officers has probably had some deterrent effect on violent crime there, but internal bar security and patron management can inhibit violence before it is “taken out in the street.” Also, discouraging alcoholic beverage sales to intoxicated patrons as well as limiting bar-initiated activities (such as the “drink till you sink” nights) that encourage binge drinking can decrease the impairment of potential offenders as well as the vulnerability of potential victims.

### **Technology-Enhanced Guardianship**

Given the available data, there was inconclusive direct evidence of the effectiveness of the improved street lighting and use of CCTV cameras

along Seventh Avenue as a deterrent to violent crime. This is contrary to what might be expected. Further research here is needed. More data on both the frequencies and location of violence might reveal the dynamics of how violence continues at high levels despite the presence of lights and cameras. If the violence is occurring primarily in areas of camera coverage, then their deterrent effect on impulsive violence might be called into question. If the violence is occurring primarily elsewhere within the historic district, then a displacement effect could be the explanation. The policy implication from the YCHD experience is that the limited use of technology-enhanced guardianship alone is not a complete solution to violent crime.

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