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Summary

This thesis presents a new and reliable observational tool for measuring guardianship in action (GIA) at residential properties, by measuring (1) the visibility of a guardian, (2) monitoring by the guardian, and (3) intervention by the guardian. In this way, this thesis attempts to build on previous theoretical and empirical research in this area by focusing on the action-dimensions of guardianship. With this in mind, this thesis offers an integrated theoretical framework for predicting the intensity of active guardianship that is available at micro-places by drawing on explanations from routine activity theory, defensible space theory, the informal residential control model, crime pattern theory, the crime site selection model, and social cohesion/collective efficacy models. In order to elucidate some of the underlying processes that enable GIA in varying residential contexts, this thesis employed multiple methods of scientific investigation—including field observations, qualitative interviews with available guardians and household surveys—and used these in conjunction with recorded police data and other socio-economic data.

Data analysis revealed that active guardianship is significantly influenced by a number of external environmental factors, with the physical and spatial contexts in particular playing an important role in either creating or inhibiting opportunities for active guardianship. Results showed that active guardianship is also determined by individual factors, or characteristics of the guardian themselves. In so doing, this thesis reveals three critical internal dimensions of capable guardianship at micro-places: 1) the willingness to supervise, 2) the ability to detect potential offenders, and 3) the willingness to intervene when necessary. Finally, this thesis demonstrated the significant role of the new GIA measure, compared to several other social, physical, spatial and demographic factors, in predicting the variance in the amount of property crime experienced at the street-segment level.