

Mapping Crime in Cities

Although they were not the first researchers to use crime mapping, Shaw and McKay (1942) conducted a landmark analysis in criminology on juvenile delinquency in Chicago neighborhoods back in the 1930s. These researchers mapped thousands of incidents of juvenile delinquency and analyzed relationships between delinquency and various social conditions such as social disorganization. After analyzing rates of police arrests for delinquency, using police records to determine the names and addresses of those arrested in Chicago between 1927 and 1935, Shaw and McKay observed a striking pattern that persisted over the years. They found there was a decrease in rates of delinquency as the distance from the Loop (city center) increased. When rates of other community characteristics were similarly mapped (e.g., infant mortality, tuberculosis cases, percentage of families who own their own homes, percentage of foreign-born residents, percentage of families receiving federal aid), the conclusions were stark. Shaw and McKay concluded,

The communities with the highest rates of delinquents are occupied by these segments of the population whose position is most disadvantageous in relation to the distribution of economic, social, and cultural values.

Exhibit 9.2 Symbols Used in Crime Maps

