



Where and When are You at Risk and What Are the Stages of a Violence Crime?

Where and when are you at risk to interpersonal violence? Historically the self-defense community has focused on controlling time and place. For example, do not go to dangerous places you do not know and do not go alone, especially at night. Territory you are not familiar with coupled with self-isolation and darkness creates vulnerability and an inability to assess threats.

But in modern societies with densely populated urban centers the dangers of interpersonal violence can be nuanced and even at times counterintuitive. The reality is dangerous people might be coming to you, advantaging for position, using ploys, and attacking with virulency to get a payday. In this increasingly complex and nuanced environment it is important move beyond simple paradigms and explore time and place more situationally which is the focus of today's discussion.

In section one I will introduce where you are at risk exploring categories of places as a framework, as well as the concepts of transitional spaces and resource pools which VO's often target together. In section two I will introduce 'when' you are risk exploring temporal categories of risk under the acronym SHADE, as well as expanding on the notion that the Violent Offender (VO) decision making process is not necessarily bound to time and place, but rather to situation. Lastly in section three I will introduce the four stages of a violent crime helping you to further contextualize the ecology of a violent interaction in time and place.

Today's article is intended to be integrated with previous articles from the Theory of Mind in Self Defense series including: 1) Who You Are and What is a Defensive Persona, 2) Who Is the Criminal Actor and What is the Target Selection Process, 3) Foundational Concepts and Legal Principles in Self Defense, and 4) The Realities of Violence. In doing so this will help you better predict, prevent and react to interpersonal violence with the goal of keeping you and your family safe.

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1. Where Are You At Risk?

How many times have you heard violence can happen anywhere anytime? It is a valid claim and one I have made myself, but in practical terms what does it really mean? It is common place in the self-defense community to historically focus on controlling place and time. For example, don't go into dangerous places alone and don't go at night. This is a good starting point but one still needs to move beyond simple paradigms and explore time and place more situationally as it is often nuanced and at times counterintuitive.

Dangerous places are coming to you

We increasingly live in a mobile society and “dangerous places” are becoming harder and harder to define. In fact, more times than not danger may be coming to you. A question commonly asked is, “is this safe area safe?” Many times what you think may be a safe area with large numbers of people is in fact viewed by violent offenders as a resource pool for efficient predation. When thinking about the question, “where am I at risk”, you can try to take the perspective of the VO and ask yourself, “is this a place with good potential yield; is this a place a VO would come looking for successful predation?” This might seem like a strange and unusual way to think but if you take the perspective of the VO it will change how you see and understand places.

Categories of places

Rather than brainstorming specific places in an overly granular manner, the best way to think about where is to start with categories of places and then rank them by size of the resource pool and potential yield. Some of the more common categories of places includes Places of Residence, Places of Work, Places of Study, Places of Purchase, Places of Entertainment, Places of Travel, and Places of Fitness.

Places of Residence (PR): Your home location will offer the greatest potential payoff in terms of on-site valuables, but you are also more physically guarded and less exposed. If you live in a high crime neighborhood you may have more exposure to break-in's for the purpose of theft that have the potential to turn into situations of interpersonal violence. PR are also more commonly the locations of domestic and sexual violence.

Places of Work (PW): These are typically locations outside of your home where you work. Obviously this is where workplace violence occurs that can take the form of proactive violence and reactive violence. Places of work also include many if not most of the other categories below.

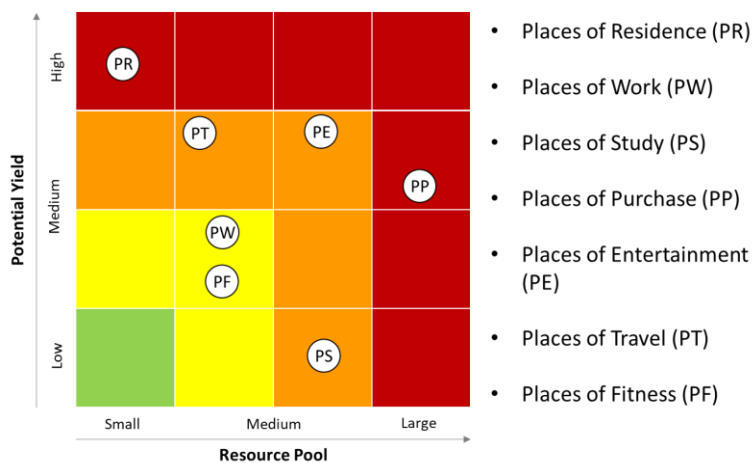
Places of Study (PS): These are educational institutions where people study and can include K12 schools (public and private) and other post-secondary institutes, colleges, and universities. They contain large student body populations, and are typically target locations for bullying, sexual abuse and rape, collective interpersonal youth violence, reactive violence, and the highest profile crimes of all – school shootings.

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Categories of Places is a good way to locations and rank them by the size of the resource pool and potential yield. Places of Residence, Work, Study, Purchase, Entertainment, Health, Travel.

Chart 1: Categories of Places

Reward Matrix by Categories of Places



- Places of Residence (PR)
- Places of Work (PW)
- Places of Study (PS)
- Places of Purchase (PP)
- Places of Entertainment (PE)
- Places of Travel (PT)
- Places of Fitness (PF)

Places of Purchase (PP): This is where people commonly buy things including malls (Walmart, Costco, Canadian Tire) grocery stores, electronic stores, drug stores, convenient stores, gas stations, etc. They often contain large numbers of people where they are carrying cash, and could be leaving with valuable item like electronics, medicine, or even food. Carrying items often leaves you distracted and vulnerable.

Places of Entertainment (PE): These are place where people eat, drink and play. Common examples include restaurants, bars, concert halls, sports stadiums, movie theatres, etc. They include large densely packed groupings of people, carrying cash, wearing valuable clothing items, and often consuming alcohol or other illicit substances making them vulnerable.

Places of Health (PH): These are place where people go to exercise and can include gyms, yoga centers, dance studios, or even biking/running paths. Although people do not typically carry valuables, these places may be targets for sexual predators, particularly in downtown locations.

Places of Travel (PT): These are places where tourists typically visit, domestically or internationally. It can include scenic hotspots (urban, suburban or rural), accommodations, train stations, long-distance bus terminals and even airport terminals. People more often than not are carrying larger denominations of cash, other travel documents, are less familiar with the local surroundings, and are much less situationally aware.

Resource pools as places for predation

We often think about places with large numbers of people as being safer. It is counter-intuitive to think that these could be prime targets for VO's. Afterall, a higher presence of guardianship (friends, security personnel, police, security cameras, witnesses) poses an increased risk to the VO of being spotted, getting caught, or getting injured. But this is the risk-reward tradeoff. Using the "watering hole" analogy, predators will predate where there are larger numbers of prey. In terms of categories of places, VO's

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Places of Purchase and Places of Entertainment are the most common locations where you are at risk to interpersonal violence.

will seek out places of location where there are better quality resources both in terms of the concentration of potential targets and the attractiveness as measured by potential yield and vulnerability. Larger high quality resource pools are key targets in terms of places of location. Some of the benefits of resource pools include:

- Larger concentrations of people provide a larger resource pool, meaning more potential targets and more potential opportunities for greater payoff.
- Larger numbers of people provide a contextual baseline meaning that the presence of people is normal. This means people are generally less situationally aware of their surroundings which increases vulnerability.
- Larger numbers of people provide contextual cover, meaning that it gives the VCA more opportunity to blend in with the crowd (sheep in wolfs clothing).
- In the case of a violent outbreak most bystanders actual scatter frantically rather than sticking around to observe or interfere often negating the guardianship factor.

CRAVED Items

In the context of describing resource pools is it is worthwhile to quickly review CRAVED items - an acronym for Concealable, Removable, Available, Valuable, Enjoyable and Disposable. It describes some of the characteristics of intimate objects that make them attractive to Violent Offenders in theft and robbery.

Concealable. Things that can be hidden in pockets or bags are more vulnerable to shoplifters and other sneak thieves. Things that are difficult to identify or can easily be concealed after being stolen are also more at risk.

Removable. The fact that cars and bikes are mobile helps explain why they are so often stolen. Nor is it surprising that laptop computers are often stolen since these are not only desirable but also easy to carry. What is easy to carry depends on the kind of theft. Both burglars and shoplifters steal cigarettes, liquor, medicines, and beauty aids from supermarkets, but burglars take them in much larger quantities.

Available. Desirable objects that are widely available and easy to find are at higher risk. This explains why householders try to hide jewelry and cash from burglars. It also helps explain why cars become more at risk of theft as they get older. They become increasingly likely to be owned by people living in poor neighborhoods with less off-street parking and more offenders living nearby.

Valuable. Thieves will generally choose the more expensive goods, particularly when they are stealing to sell. But value is not simply defined in terms of resale value. Thus, when stealing for their own use, juvenile shoplifters may select goods that confer status among their peers. Similarly, joyriders are more interested in a car's performance than its financial value.

Enjoyable. Hot products tend to be enjoyable things to own or consume, such as liquor, tobacco, and DVDs. Thus, residential burglars are more likely to take DVD players and televisions than equally valuable electronic goods, such as microwave

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ovens. This may reflect the pleasure-loving lifestyle of many thieves (and their customers).

Disposable. Only recently has systematic research begun on the relationship between hot products and theft markets, but it is clear that thieves will tend to select things that are easy to sell. This helps explain why batteries and disposable razors are among the most frequently stolen items from American drug stores.

Social Isolation versus Physical Isolation

It is common in the self-defense community to identify places of isolation as a risk theme. Common logic reasons that a place of solitude with a lack of guardianship increases target vulnerability and reduces the potential risk of the VO getting caught or being injured thereby increasing the probability of a successful payout. This reasoning is perfectly valid but it is also nuanced. Remember that in proactive violence, VO consideration is a risk-reward tradeoff with the most important factor being potential yield in rank order above vulnerability.

Sometimes rather than directly looking for targets in physical isolation, VO's more importantly will look to first identify themes of **social isolation**. Individuals who do not engage well with others may be perceived as introverts or socially ineffective signaling to the VO vulnerability or a lack of situational awareness. Social isolation within a resource pool group setting moves the VO up favorably on the return-risk continuum. After which, VO's will then look to identify opportunities of physical isolation which almost always comes into play not in specific places of location, but within Transitional Spaces of place.

Transitional Spaces

Transitional Spaces (TS) can be any location in which you are transitioning from one place to another. These are the spaces between the places that you are going to or leaving from. Most people commonly think of a violent interaction occurring in the context of a specific place of location. But the details become increasingly nuanced as we increasingly zero in on VO tactics. Outside of domestic violence in places of residence (PR), and workplace violence in places of work (PW), TS's are the next most commonly sought-after locations for VO's to predate.

TS come in two flavors: indoor and outdoor. Indoor examples can include stairways, elevators, and hallways. Common examples of outdoor TS's can include parking lots, common walkways on entertainment strips, alleyways, parked vehicles, metro stations, and gas stations. A few situational examples could be: 1) walking back to your car after taking in a concert, 2) a common walkway between a popular downtown tourist destination and a hotel, 3) a downtown gas station next to a liquor store, and 4) a stairwell in a downtown condominium connecting.

The VO will always be looking for TS near a category of place that advantages themselves and disadvantages you. TS's often have a number of features that create advantages of relative positioning with regards to the physical surroundings and the target such as physical structures, vehicles, lighting, and natural barriers. VO's will often seek out TS's that offer tactical advantages in terms of accessibility, areas of cover, avenues of attack, and avenues of escape.

Sometimes rather than directly looking for targets in physical isolation, VO's more importantly will look to first identify themes of social isolation commonly associated with vulnerability or a lack of situational awareness

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2. When Are You At Risk?

Temporal Patterns and Routines

The first level of analysis in examining when you are at risk is to look at categories of temporal patterns which are inextricably tied to routines. Routines are the activities that people engage in and can influence the timing of interpersonal violence because they may attract VO's and targets together, or alternatively, they may separate VO's from targets. It is important to remember that routines are contextual and unique, country to country, province to province (state to state), city to city, and neighborhood to neighborhood. We can use the acronym SHADE to highlight some of the major categories of routines: Special Events, Holidays, Annual Routines, Disruptions to Routines, and Everyday Routines.

Special Events. Special events can be sporting events, music events (outdoor concerts) and festivals that draw in large numbers of people, both locals and non-residents, to areas that they may not be familiar with. Similar to categories and places of entertainment, event-goers share similar characteristics making them attractive targets and more vulnerable. They may be carrying more cash on hand with CRAVED items, they be consuming alcohol making them less mentally aware of their immediate surroundings, and they may be staying out into the later hours of the evening or early morning. Additionally police might close normal travel routes to accommodate event traffic so pedestrians might be taking less-familiar and/or riskier commuting routes.

Seasonal Holidays. Seasonal holidays specific to different regions like Christmas and Thanksgiving in Canada, are characterized by increases in retail shopping volumes which corresponds to increased public foot traffic where people are carrying more cash and/or valuable items on hand. This increases exposure and attractiveness. Additionally people may be more vulnerable where they are consuming larger amounts of alcohol at parties such as New Year's Eve, St. Patrick's Day, Spring Break, and Canada Day for example.

Annual Routines. The beginning of the school year, particularly in college towns, will increase the number of valuable items being carried (CRAVED, new clothes, cell phones, laptop computers) along with new students who are unfamiliar with their surroundings or routes of travel on campus. In addition to events tied to beginning of school year, other routines such as home coming could draw large number of people into higher risk areas. Frat parties where excessive drinking takes place may increase vulnerabilities to VO's, and specifically put females at risk of sexual assault and rape. Holiday breaks may also influence temporal patterns, either by removing students from local areas, or by shifting their activities from relatively safe to relatively unsafe areas.

Disruptions to Routines. Street repair and construction may disrupt normal commute patterns and force people to take alternate routes that they are not familiar with potentially exposing them to VO's.

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Everyday Routines. Everyday routines in the form school days (to and from school), commuting patterns (morning and evening rush hour), entertainment routines (dense crowds with heavy foot traffic near periphery of entertainment strips), and pay routines (Fridays at the end of the month including sites near quick loan stores, liquor stores, local and betting parlors) can all influence the patterns of VO's.

Least likely expected time is the most likely

As alluded to earlier the notion of WHEN you are at risk is highly counterintuitive. Situations where you feel you are most at risk is a time when you will be on the most alert. This will be a time when an experienced VO is least likely to attack. Likewise, a VO will predate and attack at a time when you are least expecting it - in other words at times when you are feeling 'safe' and unaware. This means that the times appealing to a VO are exactly the opposite of the times that you are expecting to be defending against one. There is an inverse relationship that makes this concept counterintuitive.

Situational bound parameters

Remember the fundamental question to a VO is how appealing is the opportunity? The VO decision making process is so stripped down that it is mostly modular and not necessarily bound to time and place, but rather to situation. If the perfect situation arises at a novel time and/or unusual place, the VO will make a very quick judgement about yield, the likelihood of success and make a decision of go or no go. In this context, time is not as much of a factor for the VO as we tend to think it might be for the target. The conclusion we can take from this in a self-defense context is that your awareness of the world is more important than any particular time being more dangerous than the next.

Types of Violence in Time and Place

Depending on the type of violence perpetrated and motivations involved, different interactions may transpire in different places and times. In proactive violence where offenders are purposeful with clear goals of material /subjective gain in mind (money, property, other assets, sex), they will be opportunistic and will often find transitional spaces near resource pools such as places of entertainment or purchasing. They will seek to gain positional dominance leveraging the element of surprise and/or ploy tactics. Sexual predation on the other hand will often take place in transitional spaces in or around places of residence, places of work, places of study, and even places of entertainment.

In reactive violence involving hostility and retaliation in response to a perceived threat, provocation, or insult, violent interactions commonly manifest in the form of fist fights and typically occur in places of entertainment where there are large gatherings of people in confined spaces with alcohol consumption. Places like bars and clubs, music concerts, sporting events, and house / block parties are the most common places for reactive violence often falling in evenings. Due to intoxication or drug use that compromises cognitive and emotional regulation, tempers can quickly flair escalating power dominance displays against other peer groups or in competition for the opposite sex, leading to volatile situations of violence. They can occur directly inside the venue itself including seating, in bathroom stalls, in hallways, and/or just outside the premise on the street, but typically there is no strategic or tactical consideration for gaining positional dominance.

The acronym SHADE to highlight some of the major categories of routines: Special Events, Holidays, Annual Routines, Disruptions to Routines, and Everyday Routines.

The notion of WHEN you are at risk is highly counterintuitive. AVO will predate and attack at a time when you are least expecting it - in other words at times when you are feeling 'safe' and unaware.

Understanding the ecology of a violent crime can help you to better contextualize time and place in interpersonal violence.

The first stage is Intent to Commit an offence otherwise known as the mental stage. It is the direction of conduct chosen by the Violent Offender (VO) upon considering their motives which indicates choice.

In the mind of the VO, planning and preparation may include assessment of resource requirements, and advance scanning of external environment including even possibly target selection.

3. WHAT are the Stages of a Violent Crime?

Up to this point I have discussed the where and when in time and space. Next, in order to further contextualize the ecology of a violent interaction I want to conceptually introduce a model of the sequential stages of how a violent crime unfolds from the perspective of the VO. Law enforcement professionals, criminologists, and criminal judiciary systems commonly apply a standard model appropriately called the Stages of Crime Model (Chart 1), which breaks down criminal activity into four basic stages: 1) Intention to Commit, 2) Preparation to Commit, 3) Attempt to Commit, and 4) Accomplishment.

Chart 2: Stages of Crime Model

Stage One	Stage Two	Stage Three	Stage Four
Intent to Commit	Preparation to Commit	Attempt to Commit	Completion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental state • Cognitive and emotional dysregulation • APD, Factor I Psychopathy, BPD • ACE's, toxic chronic stress, dire socioeconomic conditions • Driven by motive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and preparation • Risk-reward assessment • Resource and capabilities planning (means) • Advance scanning (opportunity) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach and positioning • Communication (verbal and non-verbal) • Escalation <div style="background-color: #800000; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 5px;">Violent Interaction</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion and possibly exit or not 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of act • If arrested and detained will be charged granted a hearing in court of law to determine level of innocence and/or guilt

The first stage is **Intent to Commit** an offence otherwise known as the mental stage. It is the direction of conduct chosen by the Violent Offender (VO) upon considering their motives which indicates choice. It may occur well in advance as in a premeditated act, or it may be opportunistic occurring only moments before physical aggression. “**Mens Rea**” means guilty mind or intent in Latin and in the most general sense at this stage no crime has been committed as it is difficult to directly prove the guilty mind of a person.

Second, is **Preparation to Commit** the commission of a crime or violence. It is typically related to the arrangement of any necessary measures before the commencement of the intended act. At this point, intention alone, or intention followed by preparation is not enough to constitute the crime. In the mind of the Violent Offender, planning and preparation may include **assessment** of the **risk reward tradeoff, means** and **opportunity**. This includes assessment of **resource requirements**, assessment of their own **capabilities** (means), **advance scanning** of external environment and even possibly **target selection**.

Stage three is **Attempt to Commit**, and is the physical commission of the offense itself by the Violent Offender. “**Actus Reu**” means some overt act or illegal omission as defined by the local regional jurisdictional criminal code that must take place in pursuance of the guilty intention (mens rea). This will include pre-tactical elements of **environmental scanning, target selection, approach, positioning, communication**

and the physical act itself. This stage may transpire quickly occurring over just a matter of a few seconds, or, over a longer time span of perhaps a few minutes. Part of this process can also include progressive **escalation** depending on the complexity of the act and evolving situation possibly resulting in momentary burst/s of violence.

The fourth and final stage of a crime is the **Accomplishment** or **Completion** in the commission of an offense. If the accused violent actor succeeds in their attempt to commit the crime, and assumingly is later on captured by law enforcement authorities, they will be detained, charged and put on trial to determine their level of innocence and/or level of guilt based on the legal requirement of injury to another person or society at large, illegally caused to any person in body, mind, reputation or property. If the violent actor fails in their attempt they still may be found guilty of attempt but not completion.

Self-Defense and the Violent Interaction

From the perspective of the law-abiding citizen, stage three from the above model (Attempt to Commit), is when a **Violent Interaction** (VI, the Interaction) takes place. This is the realm tactical self-defense systems deal with and is also the focus of most traditional Chinese kung fu systems, including Praying Mantis Kung Fu. Training is about preparation for the defensive use of aggression in order to mitigate and/or neutralize the perceived threat of an attack from a VO. You can refer back to my article, “Foundational Concepts and Legal Principles in Self Defense” to learn in more detail about the natural, moral, and legal right to self-defense, as well as Canadian federal criminal code related to justified defense of person and criminal assault.

Concluding Remarks

In modern societies with densely populated urban centers the dangers of interpersonal violence can be nuanced and even at times counterintuitive. Dangerous people can be coming to you, advantaging for position, using ploys to lower your guard, and attacking with virulency to get a payday. In this context it is important move beyond simple paradigms and explore time and place more situationally so that you can better predict, better prevent, and better react.

In section today one I introduced the concept of places (where) exploring categories of risk, drawing highlight to the fact that many times what you think may be a safe area with large numbers of people is in fact viewed by violent offenders as a resource pool for efficient predation. In section two I introduced the concept of time (when) and explored temporal categories of risk, highlighting that situations where you feel most at ease and unaware are the times when a VO will attack. And finally in section three I contextualized the ecology of a violent interaction and introduced the four stages of a violent crime.

The intention of todays article is to help you to further build a foundational knowledge base in the Theory of Mind in Self Defense that enables you to better predict behavioral patterns of violence (in time and space), and in turn formulate more effective preventative and tactical strategies for self defense.

Be safe, be smart and train hard!

Attempt to Commit, and is the physical commission of the offense itself. It will include pre-tactical elements of environmental scanning, target selection, approach, positioning, communication

Stage three is when a **Violent Interaction** takes place and is the is the realm tactical self-defense systems deals with.

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Who We Are

We are a diverse group of people dedicated to the transmission and promotion of traditional Seven Star Praying Mantis Kung Fu (Qi Xing Tang Lang Quan). We represent the proud family lineage of Master Luo Guang Yu, who made the style famous in the Shanghai Jingwu Association in 1919. In 2019 we celebrated the 100-year centennial anniversary of Seven Star Mantis in Shanghai.

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