



# Exploring Crime Analysis

*Readings on Essential Skills*

Second Edition

Edited by:

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Printed in the United States of America

16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

ISBN: 1-4392-2042-5

978-1-4392-2042-9

Library of Congress Control Number: 2008911634

Printed by BookSurge, LLC

North Charleston, South Carolina

Cover photo by Nathan Graham

<http://www.iaca.net/exploringca.asp>

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## ***About the Contributors***

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**Mary Velasco Clark** was previously employed as a Research Associate in the Police Foundation's Crime Mapping Laboratory. Much of the Crime Mapping Laboratory's work is focused on encouraging analysts to conduct in-depth examinations of crime and disorder problems that are both informed by, and contribute to, the growing body of crime analysis and policing literature. This work required Ms. Clark to be aware of which publications are most relevant for crime analysis professionals as well as how to access and interpret the information within these resources. Through training and technical assistance contacts, Ms. Clark sought to acquaint practitioners with practical resources, including government reports, academic publications, and professional books and periodicals. Ms. Clark has also worked as a Crime Analyst for the Tempe, AZ, Police Department, where she conducted a comprehensive study of Tempe's auto theft problem, co-authored protocols on tactical crime analysis, and administered a citizen survey. Ms. Clark received her BS in Justice Studies at Arizona State University and her MS in Justice, Law, and Society at The American University.

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## About the IACA

**T**he International Association of Crime Analysts is a non-profit professional association, established in 1990, dedicated to advancing the effective use of crime analysis by law enforcement agencies. Its activities and goals include:

- Providing training and networking opportunities at annual conferences
- Collaborating with other associations to offer analytical training
- Providing technical support to agencies developing crime analysis programs
- Researching, analyzing, and publishing information relevant to crime analysts
- Fostering multi-agency collaboration and information sharing
- Certifying analysts through its Certified Law Enforcement Analyst program

Membership is open to analysts, police officers, educators, students, and anyone interested in the field of crime analysis. See <http://www.iaca.net> for more information, or contact us at 9218 Metcalf Avenue #364, Overland Park, KS 66212, (800) 609-3419.

### IACA Executive Board 2008

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## Acknowledgements

**T**he editors of both editions of *Exploring Crime Analysis* are grateful to the Executive Board of the International Association of Crime Analysts for its guidance, support, and patience. We must also acknowledge the members of the larger committee who, with the editors, selected the authors for the first edition of this book: Chief Thomas K. Casady of the Lincoln (NE) Police, Dr. Donald R. Dixon of California State University at Sacramento, Douglas Hicks of the Minneapolis (MN) Police, Dr. Jerry Ratcliffe of Temple University, and Susan Smith of the Shawnee (KS) Police.

## ***List of Common Abbreviations***

AFIS	Automated Fingerprint Identification System
CAD	Computer-Aided Dispatch
CFS	Call(s) for Service
CMAP	Crime Mapping and Analysis Program (NIJ/NLECTC Program)
CPTED	Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration (U.S.)
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation (U.S.)
FI	Field Interview
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GPS	Global Positioning System
IACA	International Association of Crime Analysts
IACP	International Association of Chiefs of Police
IALEIA	International Association of Law Enforcement Intelligence Analysts
IT	Information Technology
MAPS	Mapping and Analysis for Public Safety (NIJ Program)
<i>M.O.</i>	<i>Modus Operandi</i>
NIBRS	National Incident-Based Reporting System
NIJ	National Institute of Justice (U.S.)
NLECTC	National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (U.S.)
ODBC	Open Database Connectivity
POP	Problem-Oriented Policing
RMS	Records Management System
UCR	Uniform Crime Report(ing)
USDOJ	United States Department of Justice
VBA	Visual Basic for Applications

## ***Exploring Crime Analysis***



## Foreword

*Thomas K. Casady*

Everyone, it seems, has his or her own definition of crime analysis. Some commentators and experts can spend several pages dissecting the subtle differences between crime analysis, problem analysis, intelligence analysis, management analysis, and investigative analysis. My own definition is basic:

*Crime analysis is the process of finding information that would otherwise be lost in the volume of work being done by police agencies.*

This information might be as simple as figuring out that the connection of two robbery cases to a common suspect based on the words he spoke, or as complex as multivariate analysis of thousands of motor vehicle collision reports uncovering a correlation between right-turn-on-red and increasing car-bicycle accidents. The plain fact is that police agencies are often so busy doing what they do that these findings elude them and an opportunity for intervention passes unexploited.

Crime analysis is about increasing these discoveries. It is not new, but the systematic analysis of data and information is increasingly being valued by police agencies seeking to improve their effectiveness. The crime analysis function is integral to good policing and the efficient use of limited resources.

Today more than any time in the history of policing, we have access to incredible analytical tools and data sets. Geographic information systems, relational databases, investigative analysis software, access to huge amounts of information on the Internet, and a variety of other technological developments have opened new and amazing opportunities. Training, certification, publications, and professional associations have blossomed in the field. In some respects, though, we have made crime analysis seem more esoteric than it really is. Some of the most effective approaches to finding stuff are deceptively simple: reading police reports, sorting columns of data, searching for text strings in lengthy narrative case files, or looking at cell phone records. We should never let crime analysis become more about the technology than the utility of the information uncovered.

The quality of analysis should always be measured by the extent to which it leads to action. Give a graveyard shift Sergeant a handwritten note on the back of an envelope notifying that there have been a handful of robberies this week in the downtown area near automated teller machines at bar closing time, and you have accomplished something that can be acted upon tonight. A detailed analytical bulletin replete with full color bar charts, incident maps, and erudite narrative observations about this trend is a useless waste of paper if it does not find its way into the hands of those who are in a position to act, or if the trend has changed, stopped, or moved by the time they have received the information.

## Exploring Crime Analysis

How we use the information uncovered by our exploration is critical. If crime analysts have one collective shortcoming, it is that they do not participate sufficiently in turning their analyses into action. It is not enough to deliver the report. Crime analysts should be expert consultants not only on what, but also on what to do about it. As the field evolves, crime analysts will need to hone these skills.

Far too many crime analysts are frustrated by their role as technical support for the PowerPoint-challenged, and producer of the monthly statistical report that nobody really wants, needs or uses. At a crossroads in the development of our field, it is time for crime analysts to step forward in policing and become like risk managers in the insurance industry, financial analysts in business, and policy analysts in government: experts not only in finding information, but in applying this new knowledge in order to reduce risk, increase gains, and empower effective public policy. Exploring Crime Analysis provides the fundamentals that will help new and experienced analysts strive toward these goals.

**Thomas K. Casady**

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