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Research Notes



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Comparing Tourists Crime Victimization

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This research note focuses on comparisons of tourist and resident populations' crime experience in five international locations. Since many standard data resources do not report separately the crime experience of tourists, some researchers have relied on interviewing them as they leave a destination (Strangland 1998). Other researchers have looked to police reports that identify victims as tourists and using an average daily census of this population, developed equivalent measures of this crime experience to the resident population (Chesney-Lind and Lind 1986; de Albuquerque and McElroy 1999).

In most instances, the rate of tourists' crime experience, particularly larceny, theft, and robbery, is higher than that experienced by the local population. A useful first step in developing a comparative criminology of tourism would be to determine if the magnitude of difference between the experience of crime between tourists and non-tourists is significant and to what degree the rate of victimization for tourists correlates with the local crime rate. In other words, is any difference between tourist and non-tourist crime rates just a chance variation? The high rates of tourists' victimization occur at destinations that also experience high rates of crime generally. These observations would provide some further preliminary support that tourist crime is a separate type where the victim, because of the tourist role, is singled out and targeted for victimization (Harper 2000).

Table 1 includes comparative data from five studies of tourists' criminal victimization, in six locations worldwide. It includes data for years from 1978

Table 1. Comparing Tourist Crime Victimization^a

Research Studies	Years	Daily Crime Rate (per 100,000)		
		Tourists	Non-Tourists	
New Orleans, USA: ^b	78	30.1	22.2	
	79	42.5	25.0	
	80	42.0	25.0	
	81	41.3	26.4	
	theft	74.8	58.1	
	robbery	12.7	8.6	
Hawaii, USA: ^c	Honolulu	81-82	20.2	15.6
		robbery	.7	.43
		larceny	14.3	10.0
	Kauai	78-80	15.6	15.4
robbery		.3	.06	
larceny	12.2	9.5		
	Malaga, Spain: ^d	93	3.9 ^s	2.5 ^h
robbery		.40	.003	
theft ⁱ		1.4	.712	
Barbados: ^e	89	16.5	4.1	
	robbery	.86	.16	
	theft	7.9	.66	
	91	17.8	4.9	
	robbery	3.6	.57	
	theft	8.8	.77	
	93	14.2	5.8	
	robbery	2.6	.58	
theft	7.7	.62		
Miami, USA: ^f	93 ^j	23.9	36.4	

^a One-tailed paired samples Rest of means between tourist and non-tourist crime experience, t Stat=2.919, $P < .007$. Correlation (Pearson's R) of tourists, non-tourists crime experience. $r = .73$. Correlation (Pearson's R) of tourists, non-tourists robbery experience. $r = .97$. Correlation (Pearson's R) of tourists, non-tourists larceny, theft experience. $r = .99$.

^b Harper (1983).

^c Chesney-Lind and Lind (1986).

^d Strangeland (1998).

^e de Albuquerque and McElroy (1999).

^f Scheibler, Crofts and Hollinger (1996).

^g $N = 3424$; median stay=2 weeks.

^h $N = 876$.

ⁱ Excludes auto theft and theft from autos.

^j Visitor est.=5,813,000.

to 1993. Also included is comparative data on robbery, larceny, and theft. The criteria for selecting these studies is that comparative data for the crime experience of the tourist population and the resident population are both reported. This report is based on information extracted from tables contained in the respective articles. Crime rates, which are conventionally reported as the number of crimes per 100,000 population, have, in the studies cited in Table 1, been converted to daily crime rates (annual rate per 100,000/365). This procedure allows for a valid comparison of the crime experience of residents and tourists.

As the tests briefly described in the footnotes of Table 1 show, the crime experience of tourists and non-tourists is significantly different and this tends to hold true for all the locations reported in the studies cited. Only in the Miami study is the crime experience of the host population greater than tourists. However, as the crime experience increases for the host population it also tends to be higher for the guest population. This is particularly true for larceny, theft, and robbery, the crimes tourists are most likely to experience (theft and robbery accounted for 87.5% of the crime experience of tourists to New Orleans with thefts outnumbering robberies by a ratio of 6 to 1). Conversely, in those locations with low rates of crime, such as the coastal area near Malaga, Spain, the crime experience of tourists is correspondingly low. Nevertheless, theft accounts for most of the crime experience at this location. These observations tend to hold true for all the locations in this analysis.

These findings support the notion that tourists' locations can be "hot spots" for certain crime types (Sherman, Gartin and Buerger 1989). Where there is a high concentration of adult entertainment venues, such as bars and night-clubs, tourists will tend to congregate. To the extent that they are viewed by the criminal element as easy targets of victimization, tourists will tend to be disproportionately targeted. As Ryan (1993) has so aptly observed, tourism is often the provider of victims. Moreover, to the extent that the crime experience of tourists and resident populations is different, both qualitatively and quantitatively, the development of a criminology of tourism that focuses on the situational context of tourism seems appropriate at this time. In a recent article, Pizam (1999) has similarly identified a need for a comprehensive theoretical approach directed at understanding the effects of crime and violence on destinations. Further, from a practical and business perspective, managers of tourism enterprises should take cognizance of the local crime situation and warn their guests accordingly.

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